

PARTITION AND WOMEN'S IN (DEPENDENCE) IN SELECT FICTIONS OF KHAJIDA MASTOOR

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Abstract

The proposed title of the paper attempts to have a critical study of the formation of a woman through the enclosures with a view from the inner courtyard of her space, amidst all the hindrances of the Partition struggling period and the dominant ideology of patriarchy. The novels selected for the study are *A Promised Land* and *The Woman's Courtyard* written by Khajida Mastoor in Urdu and translated by Daisy Rockwell. Both the novels serve the purpose of the aim of the paper as Mastoor has tried to project the inner lives of the women struggling dually amidst the chaos of Partition struggle in the outside of the political scenario. Partition Literature aims to highlight the experiences of the survivors; however, Mastoor's literary piece has not only depicted the Partition Survival but also the experiences of women as both a survivor of partition and patriarchal trauma. Thus, the present paper has attempted to study analytically with textual interpretational trajectory of women's experience at the center of a male narrative.

Keywords: Partition, patriarchy, ideology, subjugation, Mastoor.

INTRODUCTION:

Khadija Mastoor, an Urdu writer from Pakistan, wrote several collections of short stories. Her novel *Aangan* has highly been admired as a literary history in Urdu. Her younger sister Hajra Masroor is also a skillful short story writer. Khadija began writing short stories in 1942. She has published five books of short stories and two novels. Her stories are based on social and moral values and as well as political. During the writings she has no model before her, she looks around and simply describes her experiences. She has been winner of the "Adamjee Literary Award". In 2010, on publishing Khadija Mastoor's novel *Aangan*, Chairman of Pakistan Academy of Letters, Fakhar Zaman said that the novel was one of her biggest literary achievements. Khadija Mastoor was a Pakistani short story writer and novelist who was highly regarded in Urdu Literature. Her novel *Aangan* is widely considered a literary masterpiece in Urdu Literature, which has also been made into a Television Drama.

Mastoor has tried to project the evolution of women through the challenge of disregarding the stereotypical norms of the ruling ideology. The difficulties in their establishment of an independent woman were doubled because they were confined within the Partition period, where the already the societal consequences were experienced with a great torment. In both the novels, through the projection of women as the protagonist, Mastoor has represented the issues faced by the women in their struggling period during partition from the inner courtyard of their space. Mastoor has focused more into the inner lives of the women than the historic struggles in the exterior movements of Partition.

Literature Review:

There have been good number of researches and articles written on Partition Literature encompassing varied perspectives such as identity, race, colonization and so on. To mention a few; Anita Desai's novel, *Clear Light of the Day* tracks the story of the Das family through the story of their childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, from Partition to modern day. In Siddharta Deb's *The Point of Return*, partition has been a major concern and cause of displacement leading to identity crisis and the consequences still haunt the once oppressed. The novel reflects the trauma and dilemma faced by the subaltern communities. Another work, "What the Body remembers" by Shauna Singh Baldwin Roop, it reflects and exposes the anguish felt by those who suddenly became penniless and landless due to no fault of their own and the alacrity with which a young girl is forced to grow up and deal with displacement. In the above-mentioned books, Partition has been reflected with a major concern diffused into the lives of the residents, however, in the proposed title of the present paper, the novels reflect the inner lives of the women and their formation within the edge of the four walls of their courtyard. Their establishment has been

amidst the consequences of both Partition struggle and Patriarchal ideology where the dominance of men over women has been projected with a deep concern amidst the chaotic society of Partition period.

Discussion:

A Promised Land is the story of Sajidah, a woman whose life gets blighted due to the Partition. She forgoes the trauma of being raped by marrying and thereby finding herself a "home". However, Taji, another woman of lower class, who is rescued from a refugee camp suffers exploitation and sexual challenges as she becomes a sexual property at the hands of her saviours. The female characters do not have much voice as they silently go through the domination imposed upon them. Once when Sajidah dared to reply back to Nazim in the presence of her father, he burst out with anger: "You...you... Sajjo, my dear!... Did you really need to say such things? What need was there for you to interfere in men's conversations?... your tongue and feet have become too free" (Mastoor 25). The refugees face displacement and alienation as they move to the refugee camps and further to different households where life takes more drastic changes. Sajidah remains an outsider in the house though she is married into the household and faces prejudice, scorn and abuse. She suffers from constant displacement and dislocation; firstly, she left her home to stay at the refugee camp, then she was taken to Nazim's house and later she shifted to another house after her marriage. Moreover, the title of the book is apt and depicts the importance of a piece of land to gain stability and identity. It aims to unravel how during partition women metaphorically represented land, honour and other things.

The woman's Courtyard has aptly figured out the battles and the war women have been fighting internally within their bounded boundaries. The women during the partition period have faced comparatively more disturbances than men because they were affected both internally due to the stereotypical traditions of patriarchal society and the political influences outside that affected their lives in general. In this novel, we can have a fresh perspective of historical movement, as it is not simply the retelling of the Partition trauma, agony, violence and bloodshed, rather it has portrayed an inverted perspective of partition which has been displayed through the lens of the confined women who stayed indoors. Mastoor has focused prominently on the preoccupations of women in the courtyard and how they make sense of the different battles that are going on in their lives. It has drawn its attention to transformation and moral growth of the protagonist of the novel, Aliya, who falls prey to these stereotypical traditions of the culture. She is bounded within the four walls of the domestic environment yet seems to develop an independent feeling and attitude being a Muslim woman, surpassing the societal expectations and traditional limitations.

Fredric Jameson in his essay "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" has rightly commented that "The story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society" (Khan 154). Khadija Mastoor's writings reflect the breakdown of social order during the Partition and the impact of this public affair on the private experiences. The portrayal of brutality meted out to the female characters makes her stories more realistic. In "Speaking for Themselves: Partition History, Women's History", Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin said: "Official memory, after all, is only one of many memories" (Menon 8). Mastoor's *A Promised Land* brings forth such experiences which cannot be confined to official accounts only. It brings forward many truths, from marginalised perspectives, particularly from women. The social and communal order was fragmented during Partition and the suffering and pain was not only inflicted by the members of opposing communities but from the immediate family members as well. It is women who invariably tend to be deliberately targeted during such communal clashes. Women were raped, married off to their captors, and in most cases remained a means of physical pleasure behind the doors as seen in case of the housemaid Taji. "As many as 100,000 women were raped or abducted during the violence that occurred leading up to the Partition" (Mastoor 218). Susan Brownmiller, in her book, *Against Our Will*, states that rape "is nothing more than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (Brownmiller 5). Taji is worried about her state but does not have enough courage to speak out her mind. She is blamed by Khala Bi saying that she trapped her innocent child. "She said I was inciting her innocent boy, but... now her innocent boy, her beloved officer, he swallows me whole, just like his bribes, whenever he wants" (Mastoor 156). He also hit her if she protested and threatened that no one even get her corpse if she tried to go away.

Mastoor has divided the book, *The Woman's Courtyard* into two parts, consisting two time periods in the growth of Aliya: the first few chapters narrate her childhood days and the next part relates the present matured phases of her life. The novel itself begins with the flashback of memories from past which were constantly affecting Aliya's

thoughts for which she couldn't sleep properly. She compares the darkness of the night to the dark reality of her life and the helpless situation which she can't escape yet powerful enough to endure it. But she also feels that it was because of the past that she has learnt the life lessons and has realized the greater hardships of life and it's tackling possibilities. The narrator relates this in the beginning of the text, "Her past from which she'd learn'd so much. How could she wrench herself away from it now? (Mastoor, 2).

Aliya has been brought up in a traditional Muslim Family where in fact, the elder female characters portray typical traditional gendered notions. There's always a gap maintained between male and female expectations. One such stereotypical character was Aliya's mother who even has the division of work according to gender. This is clearly seen in the first few pages of the novel when she asked their Chaprasi to search a matured woman maid who can do household stuffs properly telling him, " Your responsibilities are outside the house. You can't do any inside work. Arrange for a maid for us right away..."(Mastoor,7). Women such as Aliya's mother get so much engaged with the homely stuffs that they are totally detached from the outside scenarios; they rarely know about the political disturbances of the Nation. Once when Aliya's Abba discussed about the struggling scenario during the Partition period, Aliya's mother could barely understand anything except words such as "freedom", "Gandhi" and "Azad" and also showed a disinterested attitude as "she grew bored and moved away from the door". Because of her typical notions she disliked the fact that Aliya has a close relationship with Safdar, the guy whom she hated much. Aliya had an interest in singing but because of her mother's fear she remained silent. It was until she had known that her mother had fought for her daughter's right with Abba, she hugged her with a sympathetic feeling. Her mother has felt insecurity that their daughters might not get deserved right due to the patriarchal notions of Abba, when he always supported Safdar. But her typical notions regarding women cannot be ignored, when she even taunted Kusum for not remarrying as she believes that keeping young women at home is a torture.

Khadija Mastoor's *Zameen* was translated to *A Promised Land* by Daisy Rockwell. *Zameen* is a presentation of characters who were indulged in hankering wealth in a disgraceful manner after forgetting their past. The novel traces the journey of the protagonist Sajidah as she looks for her "promised" homeland. Sajidah is an independent woman of dignity and courage who aimed to study further and establish herself. However, her life is blighted by the Partition and by women's lack of agency over their own lives and bodies. The new country was born with the promise of removing every blood stain and relieving the pain carried by its people. However, Mastoor has presented a country which was denied its promised land, i.e., a place free of anguish, tears, bloodshed and trauma. The survivors of the Walton Camp carry a history of violence and a close encounter with death. While people hoped to pick up their broken lives and rebuild a better tomorrow, Mastoor highlighted how the promise of a free and egalitarian society remained a mirage. As some people left the camp, others like Sajidah's father consoled his daughter and himself that they too would find a home soon: "One day, we too will leave-very soon- do you hear me, darling? It's not like we'll stay here forever" (Mastoor 30)

Edward Said defined the refugees as "a creation of the twentieth-century state" (Said 387), they leave their homeland because of inner conflicts within the country or with foreign countries. The residents of these countries consequently have to act as "large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance" (Said 387). In the wake of Partition, Sajidah and her father, like millions of other refugees who move towards Pakistan amidst a welter of chaos and deprivation, take shelter in the Walton refugee camp, uncertain of their future, their new home. Sajidah is also tormented by her separation from her beloved Salahuddin and longs to reunite with him. After the death of her father, she is taken into another refuge family where she meets the passionately beseeching character Saleema, her domineering mother Khala Bi, the kind but forlorn Amma Bi, and the feisty young housemaid Taji. Through the eyes of Sajidah, Mastoor conjures up a dynamic portrait of spirited women whose lives are wrought by trial and intra-community misogyny and violence even as they cling defiantly to the promise of a better future.

Similarly, *The Woman's Courtyard* has focused more on the inside battles and struggling familial issues during the partition period. Aliya's mother and her Abba has rarely exchanged any good conversations to remember, most of the time they have been arguing with each other's decision, and this has greatly influenced the children of their family who felt stucked by the patriarchal ideological aspects and at times quite suffocating. All the female characters of the novel such as Aliya's mother, her grandmother and Kareeman Bua have always represented the role women play in perpetuating the patriarchal belief system. But there were also vibrant characters such as Chammi who is much adventurous in comparison to Aliya's nature. She has a very familiar relationship with the males such as Jameel with whom she was in love with and Manzoor who was interested in her, but his joining in

the Second World War had made him abandon her. Chammi's marriage has been secretly arranged without her recognition, after her marriage she strongly stood against her husband and not only returns to the fold but also finds happiness there herself. Although this strong step by her as a woman is satisfying but the ones close to Aliya, her elder sister Tehmina and dearest friend Kusum, both brought tragic end to their lives, unbearable to adjust and follow the rigid strictures of patriarchal society. These two incidents have affected Aliya enough to realise the unjustified codes set for the women in the society. And her skepticism about love is aroused after the suicides of her elder sister Tehmina and her best friend, Kusum, whose lives have overturned by the traditional narrative of romantic bliss.

Though Aliya was familiar with all the male characters such as Safdar, Jameel, Shakeel and Asrar Miyan but she has never aroused any romantic attachments with them, resisted her developing relationship with Jameel specially because of the experiences her dear ones have gathered in their marital relationship. Aliya's romantic sentiments disappeared with the developing hatred towards the gendered society which has always reaffirmed the gender inequality between male and female. She has in a way resisted herself towards any affectionate feelings towards men of the patriarchal society, she has always questioned the definition of love in this relationship between men and women where the females are always targeted by the society if something bad happens and she is the one who has to suffer. While observing the Kusum's broken fantasy of love and relationship after her beloved left her, she says, " But why don't people say that man who ran off and left her is bad?...they only think of the girl as bad..." (Mastur,51).

In *A Promised Land*, Sajidah is an educated women who comes across Nazim, a rehabilitation officer. She carries hatred for Nazim as she has witnessed her father lying about his lost assets under Nazim's coaching after a lifetime of honest bookkeeping. Even though she expressed sheer hatred towards him, Nazim takes her into his dysfunctional household after her father's death without her permission. She did not allow herself to be treated as a servant, rather she expressed her interest in further studies. She considered herself to be abducted by Nazim as her interest or desire was not taken into concern. Sajidah's journey in the post-partition era is marked with pain, both physical and mental. As she struggles to deal with the absence of her father, she is dragged into another refugee household. She also had to bear the imprudence of Kazim during her stay there.

Khala Bi was the head of the female counterparts of the family. Initially, she expressed resentment towards her, but eventually comes to identify and sympathize with her especially as she becomes her mother herself. In the house, Sajidah was wholeheartedly accepted by Saleema, Nazim's sister. Saleema's character is an enigma, as her inner thoughts are never revealed in the novel. She is young, emotional and shy on one hand, and argumentative and resentful on the other hand. She is the daughter of Amma Bi's cousin, Aminah (Khala Bi), who had an affair with Malik, Amma Bi's husband and master of the house. She shuns herself from the intimacy of sexual relationships. Her anger, her independence, her attitude towards love and romance, all give her character a startlingly contemporary tone.

Displacement is also seen in the character of Sabirah, also referred to as Amma Bi. She is portrayed as a priestly woman who has hidden her sorrow at being displaced by her husband's as well as her sons' affection. She tries to find new love and acceptance in Sajidah: "Now that you're here, I'm a little less lonely. I've been completely alone for twenty years" (Mastoor 76).

Taji was feisty, assertive and young, another female character who suffered during Partition. Her mother abandoned her and she was taken up into Malik's household from the refugee camp and put to work. Her life takes a drastic turn when her saviours become her enemies. She is regularly raped by Kazim, in exchange a few coins and half-smoked cigarettes, and forced through repeated abortions. Initially, she was quite fond of Kazim as she said that "Kazim Miyan is extremely nice. He's the only sympathetic person in this household" (Mastoor 67).

When Sajidah understands how Taji was exploited, she was enraged and confronted Kazim and Khala Bi but failed to protect her as his mother acted like a shield to protect her son. Khala Bi protected Kazim's name by using someone else as the scapegoat. "Enter the chowkidar's name as her husband" (Mastur 157). Sajidah realizes that the weak have always become the "playthings" at the hands of the powerful. While Taji suffered, Kazim slept peacefully. Kazim declared with authority that Taji was "born into the world for just that purpose" (Mastoor 165). Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* stated that the body of man is considered to make sense in itself, apart from that of woman, whereas the latter's cannot think of herself without man. She is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the

Subject, the Absolute while she is the Other. She argues that, throughout history, across cultures, women have always occupied a secondary position in relation to man. She says that such dualities are constructed by myths. Here, she has shown how myths perceive a woman as an image of sex woman, as child woman, the sister woman or the mother woman. In all these cases, a woman is always submissive to the man and lives under his domination (Beauvoir 83-91).

It is seen that Mastoor basically deals with intra-religious rapes and abductions, a conflict which is usually not dealt with in other Partition novels. It is common to see inter-religious conflict but here, Mastoor has added only one such incident- the old man who keeps longing for his daughter at the camp cries that his daughter's fate was sealed the moment violence was unleashed upon the two nations. "I was left holding the ripped hem of her kameez. Where is my daughter? Where is she?" (Mastoor 12) Deepti Misri, in her paper entitled, "The Violence Of Memory: Renarrating Partition Violence In Shauna Singh Baladwin's What The Body Remembers states, "It is now a commonplace that in 1947, as Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh mobs fought one another in the violence of India's Partiton, women became, in the way that is typical of war, the primary symbolic and literal targets of communal violence." (Misri 2)

The influence of a patriarchal period was also seen in the household of Lali, the wife of a neighbouring zamindar. She is regularly beaten by her husband, on the basis of some forty acres of land, that her father promised in dowry and never given. Despite the assault, she defends and 'loves' her husband, blaming her father for not giving him the 'promised land'. "No, it's just that he has a bad temper, and my father also wronged him. He deceived him," she said, coming to his defence. 'I couldn't live in a house like the one you live in, Sajidah Apa! I don't even wash my own feet!... There are so many servants at our house. One girl is employed just to bathe my feet" (Mastoor 139). The novel is an incisive, "feminist critique of the patriarchal underpinnings of territorialism and feudalism" (Mastoor, Preface). It is a critical study of post-Independence Pakistan and how the hopeful visions for the country's future and betterment crumbled after the Partition. They were overshadowed by a corrupt bureaucracy. It is a political allegory as well as an account of gender injustice.

Similar to Aliya from *The Women's Courtyard*, Sajidah too, wants to break the stereotype and believes in creating her own faith. She refers to a folk-tale as her source of inspiration. Her mother once narrated a story where a princess refused to admit defeat and decided her own fate. She asserts that she too, is capable of making her own fate. In spite of being independent, like most women, she is aware of the fate of single women in her society. She wants to break free from such constraints but knows that for her survival, she needs to 'belong' to a family; to a husband and ultimately gives in to a marriage without love.

The turmoil of Partition left many women abandoned, just like the several pieces of uninhibited property. Just as the abandoned property must be allotted, so too must the women. Nazim's family stands as an example here who occupied a Hindu house which was lying vacant as the residents migrated during Partition. The consequence of this idea was that the men who possessed the most property and land had the greatest authority over the unclaimed women. This is an ancient tenet of feudalism which Mastoor brings forth in her novel and we see it in the regular beatings Zamindar Sahib administers to his wife Lali because she did not come with the promised land of her dowry, and in Kazim's increasing brazenness towards Taji, and then Sajidah, as his status climbs from student to Deputy Commissioner. He feels he deserves an upgrade in the choice of women, "a fitting reward for his promotion" and thus, after receiving the news of his promotion, he attempts to rape Sajidah (Mastoor 220). Land is predominant aspect of identity. Mastur's male characters are driven by the idea of having land, of claiming a space of their own by any means. Land provides shelter and comfort and protects one from the outside world. They even go to the extent of making false claims of owning abundant wealth, specially, fruit orchards, on the other side of the border and thus need to be compensated on an equal footing. However, Mastoor shows that even within the protected four walls of a home, women are not safe as danger lurked inside the house as well.

Mastoor portrays a remarkable difference between the attachment of men and women towards their land and identity. On one hand, men can assert their identity through any land. They are willing to give up their previous selves easily in order to re-establish themselves with more wealth. On the other hand, women are seen struggling to shed the constraints of their previous life. Sajidah could never forget her lover Salahuddin and always restricted a part of herself to be united with her past even after her marriage with Nazim. While it is seen that Salahuddin married and moved on easily and did not show the slightest regret. Salahuddin, like other men, have become the land-grabbing man who was not delighted to see her but wanted to take advantage of her relation to the powerful

brother-in-law, Kazim to gain privilege and get his work done. He turned into a weak-willed and opportunistic person seeking favours from the commissioner Kazim has become.

Sajidah is a romantic at heart and hold on to her dream of reuniting with her lover. She is of the view that when two persons are in love, they can overcome any trial or tribulation. Mastoor creates Sajidah's character in contrast to Aliya who solely believed in the importance of education and considered job as the means of her freedom. Aliya refused to get entangled between familial ties whereas Sajidah found herself drawn back to family at all times and devotes herself to the new family she starts with Nazim and her children. A similarity is seen between Saleema and Aliya, as Saleema rejects love and establishes her identity in the progressive world through her education and career. She is against the idea of letting a man define her identity or tying her identity to some man. Freire stated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that education was a means to building a critical consciousness that would enable people to create change in their lives. At the end she chose a solitary, independent life away from her family while detaching herself from her mother and her favorite cousin, Sajidah. Mastoor has depicted the contradictory roles between a submissive and the emerging new independent women, residing under the same roof. During the entire time, Sajidah suffered from pain and anxiety, loneliness and idleness as she could never feel at home. At the same time, another character Saleema is presented who stands in contrast to Sajidah. Saleema is the "new woman" who emerges from the shackles of patriarchy and is always vocal about her thoughts and feelings. Both Saleema and Sajidah walk on different paths in the patriarchal world trying to establish their individual identity. Jacqui Alexander said that those women who attempt to assert their individuality by going "against the diktat laid down by the patriarchy, which is passed off as being good for the whole community, can lead to serious repercussions from one's own community" (Khan 184). Thus, Sajidah's rejection of a man in her life could be viewed as a refutation of her expected role as a heterosexual woman. Her rebuff, especially during a period of strife, where she is supposed to be 'protected' from the men of 'other,' provides an example of women feeling strong enough to challenge patriarchal constructions even at the risk of physical danger (Khan 184). With subtlety and insight, Khadija Mastoor conjures a dynamic portrait of spirited women whose lives are wrought by tragedy and trial even as they cling defiantly to the promise of a better future. Sajidah's character grows into a strong woman with motherly feelings and she also finds empathy in her heart for the women she initially despised, specially Khala Bi.

Nazim was arrested and this left Sajidah alone to face the harshness and cruelty of life. She is left to fight her own battle in a world dominated by males. She is vulnerable to the forces outside as well as inside her own home. Her fear of being a single woman without the support of a man somewhat turns into reality as she had to face repeated prejudices, scorn, and abuse for being a woman and an outsider, in that very house that promised shelter to her. After the demise of her father, she "felt the menace of loneliness and worried for the future" (Mastoor 34). Later the women in the camp insisted on her marriage but she felt they were "dismantling her self-confidence" (Mastoor 36). Marriage is considered to be an institution of security and support and for the women in the camp, Sajidah was a "poor thing" without the presence of a male figure in her life.

Sajidah did not want to stay there but at the same time she also realized that a single woman does not have many options to look out for. She does not have a place to take shelter and thus she cannot turn back, she has no means of leaving Nazim's family. Nazim's offer of keeping her at his home is not altruistic, he clearly desired Sajidah, but he being a man of true spirit did not offer any sexual threat to Sajidah. Kazim, on the other hand, does not have good intentions. After exploiting Taji sexually, he also tried to overpower Sajidah. When she denied him any access to her body, he taunted her by saying "Taji is so much better than you. She eats our salt and repays the debt... you'r nothing, you're really good for one thing..." (Mastoor 112). In order to escape the prospect of rape at the hands of one brother, she accepted the other brother's marriage proposal. Thus, once again, she had to give in to the power bestowed upon the menfolk.

Khadija Mastoor has penned down a story that narrates the birth of two new nations, namely, India and Pakistan along with the gender struggles, particularly the struggle of women. The female characters were not just battling poverty, homelessness, lawlessness, being uprooted from their homelands, but they were also suffering a dual struggle, firstly because they are refugees and secondly because they were women in a world dominated by misogynists and patriarchs.

Sajidah vociferously fought for her self-respect while Taji was incapable of fighting her fate of rape and abuse. Even though Sajidah was an educated lady who was aware of her rights and desires, she had to ultimately compromise with her fate and get married in order to avoid his ruthless younger brother Kazim who exploited

Taji, who, without education and support became as easy prey for him. Mastoor has presented how class and education are poor defenses in a male-dominated society and as seen it does not give any advantage to the women. Mastoor reflects the sexual violation of women of all religious communities and exposes the enormous unprecedented violence that coexisted amongst different communities, especially during migration and upheaval. She narrates her stories with the help of male characters who witnesses the violence; this voice underscores an absence of women who were abducted, raped, and killed during the upheaval. She uses male characters to recover the particular stories of female victims who were killed before they could tell their stories. As seen through the plight of Sajidah and Taji, the danger to women was not only restricted to the public sphere, but within a domestic hierarchy enforced by male privilege. When Taji was lying at her deathbed, "No one knew what she was saying, no one listened, no one stopped to see her" (Mastoor 191). She died quietly, as expected, she didn't say anything. All the men included in the narrative of *The Woman's Courtyard* have been associated with the harsh realities of life including physical fight, battle and showing muscular strength which, they believe women are not capable of. Aliya's father is increasingly outraged by the struggling scenario of the Britishers to the extent that he can't hold back, and gets physical with a British officer, so that he ends up in jail, sentenced to seven years. As a result, his family members moved into her uncle's house who is a supporter of Congress, working towards an independent but united India, while his son Jameel supports the Muslim League, with its ambitions for a separate Pakistan. The men are increasingly obsessed on receiving independence to the frustration of the women in the households, who wish they would focus more on day-to-day life (and, for example, running their businesses) with Aliya's father lost to them because of his fixation on it, and her uncle also imprisoned for a while because of it. The men in the novel think that the outside struggle is the only hardship for gaining Independence and remained aloof from the internal battles and fight for liberation which was dominating the women's mental state. Jameel at times has shown his skeptical thoughts regarding women out of excitement, "...a woman cannot keep from loving a man; according to tradition, she was even born of a man's rib" (Mastoor 141).

Most of the women are shattered when they lost their male support of the family, similar was with the case of Aliya's mother, she was so dependent that she couldn't even make any decision alone and went to Uncle's place with Aliya after Abba was arrested being included in a fight with British officer and imprisoned for seven years. Though she enjoys and feels safe in her uncle's house yet she still misses their own home, their own space. "She could not understand why she still felt the stirrings of love in her heart towards these agents of the households' sorrows and ruination" (Mastoor 85). But her mother seemed helpless at that time and had no other space to take shelter under after her father's departure. Her Amma portrays a demotivational mother-figure who thinks that the scenario would have been different if Aliya was a boy and could have supported their family living, she regrets saying her, "Aliya, What will become us of now, child?..If you were a boy, I wouldn't be so depressed, but now, you're all I have got, and you will have to do everything" (Mastoor 236).

Aliya has always disregarded the traditional notions of women, but she is also very polite and respectful towards her family members, she has disliked her mother's typical perspectives toward society and her Abba's indifferent attitudes but she is also worried about the increasing issues and distance between her parents and wished for bringing happiness in their lives. The narrator adds, "She wished she could make Amma happy and was anxious to bring Abba back into the home" (Mastoor 64). She never hates the interior spaces of her home though she hemmed at times and always longs for a cheerful familial environment which they lacked.

One of the crucial times in Aliya's life is when Pakistan is created and Amma decided to shift there at her brother's place along with Aliya. Many members of the uncle's family never wanted them to go some other country, also Jameel went mad thinking he may lose Aliya and tried his best to stop them. The familial issues raised much higher when there arises an ugly argument between Aliya's mother and her uncle, she blames her uncle responsible for the tough times they have been enduring including Abba's involvement. Though Aliya herself never wished to go to Pakistan leaving her own country but she is also matured enough to understand that she is the only support her mother has now and also that she can't abandon her, a sorrow of separation dominated the home's environment. With the progress of the novel, there's a complete growth of Aliya, who once stayed more voiceless during her childhood days and has transcended to a woman having good judgmental thoughts, avoided much interference in other's business unnecessarily until she is being poked at by some typical women such as Najma Aunty. She has strongly opposed her and shot back leaving her defeated through words. One such instance where they exchanged their opinions is when they were having a conversation on marriage and Najma Aunty has tried to make fun of her disinterest in marriage which she replies strongly, "What is this nonsense you are sprouting?"

Aliya's disappointment was not against the people but the unequal traditions and perspectives of the patriarchal society which few women naturally follow and believe to be the only belief systems. She has spoken on behalf of the same Najma Aunty with whom she always had opposite opinions. Najma Aunty was once criticized for following her own choice of bridegroom and Aliya replies very satirically, "if a woman moves beyond the status of the puppet, her brain is clearly defective. A man feels true joy seeing a woman stupid. Najma Aunty's way of doing things is wrong, but she has the right to arrange her own marriage" (Mastoor, 275). Unlike Najma Aunty who always love to put on an act having the Master's degree in English, Aliya is truly educated who has never once demanded false appraisals for achieving the degree in English. she is in fact much happier when she gets engaged with her job as a Teacher in Pakistan and often visits the Walton camp (for refugees) to teach the poor children with an exemption from all the tuition charges.

Aliya's growth from childhood to a mature woman has been gradual, though at times it is questionable if she has transcended too passively despite Aliya stepping outside often without purdah (after her Mamoo left them) and getting empowered through education and employment. But she has been brought up in such a rigid constriction of society, especially inside her courtyard, in fact, her mother has been much more judgmental in comparison to all the female characters in her life, it has been quite challenging for her to gain her liberation maintaining all the dignity and relationships with her utmost respect and affection. She could have easily broken her relationship with her mother for her existing rigid opinions and actions but her moral growth has never led her to lose her mother's only support because she knew her mother's dependent nature pretty well and also cared about her. And this unique characteristic of her inner growth makes the protagonist more prominent and remarkable. Thus, the paper has projected a critical outlook of the protagonist's coming-of-age including the vicissitudes of life being influenced by the political upheavals during the Partition period and also surpassing and enduring all the internal obstacles and hindrances from the inner courtyard of her life.

Conclusion:

Mastoor presents how women resist, subvert, and challenge the normative behaviors prescribed in the masculine discourse. She highlights the different ways her women characters negotiate their own agency, however limited, among expectations of colonialism and native patriarchy. Thus, at the centre of her narrative are female characters who struggle to establish selfhood or gain a measure of autonomy within ideologies that privilege masculine dominance. Menon writes in "No Woman's Land", "The weak, they say, have the purest sense of history, because they know anything can happen. The weak and the powerless, one might add. Historically speaking, women, even if not 'weak', have almost always been powerless in the larger meaning of the word, and the question that interests us here is: how does this situation influence their sense of history? It is not usually asked of women—they are presumed to be outside history because they are outside the public and the political, where history is made." Through this novel, Mastoor has portrayed how patriarchy has been the major obstacle to woman's advancement and development and has given a voice and story of women behind the four walls. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin comments,

"In their recall, the predominant memory is of confusion, dislocation and a severing of roots as they were forced to reckon with the twin aspect of freedom — disintegration and bewildering loss: of place and property, no doubt, but more significantly, of community, of a network of more or less stable relationships, of community, and of a coherent identity. Overriding all these was a violence that was horrifying in its intensity, and one which knew no boundaries; for many women, it was not only 'miscreants', 'outsiders', or 'marauding mobs' that they needed to fear — husbands, fathers, brothers and even sons, could turn killers" (Menon 120).

Mastoor in both the novels has presented the women fighting for their freedom but without any violence and within the familial barriers in their lives. The leading female characters of the novel have established themselves maintaining a balance between their enclosures of courtyard and their inner desires. They have surpassed their challenges and constrictions gaining independence for them maintaining all their dignities and attributions.

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