

PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL READING OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN ATIA HOSSAIN'S *SUNLIGHT ON A BROKEN COLUMN*

Arifur Rahman Choudhury

*M.Phil (English), Department Of English, Modern European and Other Foreign Languages
Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Uttarakhand
Email: arifurchoudhury786@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This paper is based on Atia Hosain's English novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. The paper at length delineated the condition of women during India's independence movement; how they faced countless turbulations within their rigid Patriarchal society and at the same time in fulfilling their personal ambitions. It is not only the single aim of this paper to portray the historical facts in fiction but also to highlight the original psychological trauma of female characters appeared in the novel. The female characters in this novel represent Indian women of the time. This pure blending and mingling of history and fiction would unmask the hidden and repressed emotions of female characters in particular and during the time of independence they had serious obligations towards nation's cause. In order to do something for the country they faced numerous hardships but rarely history and literature mentions their contribution. This paper would encompass all such aspects by keeping in touch with literature and history.

Keywords: Atia Hosain, British Government, India, Patriarchy, Women

INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is the primary hindrance to advancement & development of women. Despite of the dominance's degree, the primary principles remains the same that men are still in charge. It is probable that the nature of the control would differ. Women are viewed as commodities for the honour of the family, not only as sexual slaves of men, but also as victims of their own personal choices. Women's lives are littered with failed loves, forced marriages, and, eventually, divorce. It's a life of struggle and submission without the option of making your own decisions. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* seeks to convey the idea that women's enslavement is a global problem. Even in the domestic environment, which is meant to be their unique domain, women are victims of the patriarchal system. As represented by the characters of Nandi and Laila, the story re-emphasizes the power of a woman's will and choice in her quest for selfhood. This work also looks at how women contribute to the revival of their history and identity.

ABOUT ATIA HOSSAIN

Atia Hossain was a pioneering Indian Muslim novelist and short story writer. In most of her novels and short stories, she is most known for recounting incidents that evoked nostalgia for United India's bright past. Her body of work also dealt with the repulsive representativeness of the heinous atrocities perpetrated against women during mass marginalisation, partition, and various instances of feudal exploitation. Atia Hosain was a renowned pre- and post-independence Indian creative writer who was born in the year 1913 in Oudh, she is one of the colonial India's United Provinces. Shahid Hosain Kidwai, a Taluqdar in the United Provinces' Gadia Barabanki district, had a beautiful daughter named Attia Hosain. Shahid Hosain Kidwai received his education at Cambridge, following in the footsteps of the other Taluqdars of the time. Attia Hosain's mother, Nisar, was a descendant of a wealthy Kakori family who valued education equally for boys and girls. Nisar's polite attitude, as well as the kind of people that used to come to their

Characterization is a great strength in Attia Hosain's work. Baba Jan is on his deathbed as the novel begins. There's apprehension in the air about what will happen to the three-generation family living under the same roof after the patriarch passes away. After the patriarch's death, the family gradually disintegrates, and the storey is told via the political and social changes that affect the Ashiana family.

Attia Hosain wrote a semi-autobiographical novel named '*Sunlight on a Broken Column*' in the year 1961. Life of Hosain and the narrator-protagonist Laila's story have numerous parallels. Laila's life from the age of fifteen until her mid-thirties is narrated in the first person by her. She loses her parents and moves in with her grandfather, her aunt Majida & Abida, as well as with the seventeen-year-old daughter of Majida, whose name was Zahra. Aunt Abida, a strict yet conscientious woman, raises her. She benefits from a western education thanks to her father's wishes. Like her aunts, she must observe purdah. However, upon her grandfather, Uncle Hamid and her father's older brother's death becomes the new head of family of household and her new caretaker. Uncle Hamid is an autocratic guardian, despite his 'Liberal' views. Laila starts college after she is no longer in purdah. Her friends from university, and her faraway cousin Asad, become active in against the demonstrations of the government. As a result, it's a big clan. The tale begins with a suggestion of the Taluqdar family's tradition going away, as well as its feudal system. Laila hints to it when she adds, "Baba Jan is on his deathbed", "We knew Baba Jan had not much longer to live." (SOBC, 14).

The novel's second half depicts the family's dissolution. There are various characters in the novel, all of them are married couples. Saira's out-of-the-box, westernised personality is a carbon copy of her husband's. If she has given up purdah or is working in social services, it is at her husband's request. Her Westernization is so overt that she reverts to traditional values following her husband's death. Marriage is an escape for Zahra from the purdah culture and the strict discipline that it imposes on unmarried girls. She has the freedom to socialise now that she is married. Abida's marriage is a union of two incompatible people. Individual satisfaction comes second to her family's honour and reputation. Sita, like Saira, is just westernised on

the outside. Even her deep love for Kemal does not give her the strength to battle against family, social, and religious constraints. Laila is one of the novel's main characters. The marriage of Laila is neither a capitulation nor an escape, a compromise, a societal obligation, or a matter of family honour and respectability. It's a mixture of love and faith in the loved one for who he is. Her love for Ameer, who has no social standing or wealth, gives her the confidence to defy uncle Hamid's authority and confront aunt Saira's wrath. Love provides her the fortitude to face the emotional separation she feels from her dearest aunt Abida. Ameer conjures up images of safety and life completeness for Laila.

A woman in Laila's family doesn't have much of a say because marriages are arranged within the close family or among relatives. Laila defies her uncle's authority by marrying Ameer. Her marriage to Ameer, a low-status individual, is also a protest against women's subjugation in the name of family honour and respectability. As a result, her choice concerning her future is a victory over the social world she lives in. Nandi develops as a person from an illiterate lower caste family, demonstrating her ability to survive in the most difficult of circumstances. Nandi represents the "slavery of marriage," according to Jasbir Jain and R.K. Kaul (Jain and Kaul, 166).

PATRIARCHY IN INDIA

Through patriarchy, the advancement & development of women hampered. Despite of the dominance's degree, the primary principles remains the same that men are in charge. There is a probability that the nature of control would differ. Thus, to fight for the development of women in a systematic fashion, it is vibrant to understand the system, which maintains women submissive & controlled, and to workings of unravel. Patriarchy provides obstacles for women in order to advance in the modern world's society, when women are promoted on the basis of their abilities. Originally, the term 'patriarchy' was employed to designate the specific form of family dominated by male — the huge home of patriarchy, which comprises of women, children, younger males, slaves & domestic servants all under the control of male. Patriarchy is now more generally defined as "male dominance, power relationships in which

men dominate women, and a system in which women are kept submissive in a variety of ways." (Bhasin 2006:3).

Patriarchy is described in various ways by various thinkers. In describing the 'system of kinship', where men swap women, Mitchell, a female psychologist used the term patriarchy. (Mitchell 1971:24). "Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practises in which men rule, oppress, and exploit women," (Walby 1990:20). As a result, men retain complete control over the family, community, and state. As patriarchy's result, women have been refused of their legal rights & prospects. The attitudes of patriarchy limit the mobility of women & denies their autonomy over their bodies & property.

The system in which women are confined in different subordination's forms is Patriarchy. Disdain, insult, Discrimination, exploitation, oppression, violence & control, are all a kind of subordination, which we look on a regular basis, despite of our social class. Some instances are shown below in order to represent a particular kind of prejudice & a patriarchy's specific component. Preference of son, gender discrimination in distribution of food, household's work burden on women & young girls, educational opportunities' absence for girls, absence of freedom & girls' mobility, control of male towards women & girls, wife battering, absence of rights for women on tradition & property, sexual harassment at work, control of male towards the bodies & sexuality of women, and absence of control on the fertility & the rights of reproductive are just some issues that a woman face.

So, in our families, religious laws, social relationships, textbooks, schools, factories, offices, & media, the norms & behaviours, which recognize women as inferior towards males & imposes controls on them are existing. As an output, patriarchy is described as the accretion of the different forms of male dominance, which we witness in our circle. In this philosophy males are superior to women, & they are considered as men's property. Therefore, women should be ruled by men, which results in subjugation of women. "instead of the word 'oppression', the usage of women's phrase subordination has a significant benefit" which was written in the novel 'The Creation of Patriarchy' written by Gerda Lerner.

PATRIARCHAL PLIGHTS OF WOMEN

Women are viewed as commodities for the honour of the family, not only as sexual slaves of men, but also as victims of their own personal choices. Women's lives are littered with failed loves, forced marriages, and, eventually, divorce. It's a life of struggle and submission without the option of making your own decisions. *Sunlight on a Broken Column* seeks to convey the idea that women's enslavement is a global problem. Even in the domestic environment, which is meant to be their unique domain, women are victims of the patriarchal system. As shown by the characters of Nandi and Laila, the story re-emphasizes that a woman can exercise her will and choice in her desire for selfhood. Zainab likes Asad, but she can't marry him because they aren't blood relatives. Aunt Saira and uncle Hamid grudgingly agree to Kemal's marriage to a Parsee, Prein Wadia, and Laila's marriage to Ameer. Sita's disillusionment with love caused her to look at love in a different, even rebellious way: Kemal's love for Sita could never materialise since Sita is Hindu:

"What has love to do with marriage? It is like mixing oil and water. Love is anti-social, while matrimony preserves the world and its respectability. Follow my example. I married with my mind unblurred by sentiment and everybody is happy". (SOBC, 296)

Nandi may defy patriarchy after marriage, according to her parents' wishes. Even after her marriage, she continues to see Kemal whenever and wherever she is able. She admits to Laila:

"I had children by my husband though my body revolted against the touch of any man I did not love. But it was bearable if I had a hope of being with Kemal, as if that cleansed me. After he stopped seeing me it did not matter what happened. If my body could accept one man without love it could accept others. One discovers so many reasons for sleeping with a man once love is put out of the way. I think hate is as good as any. Certainly it is the only feeling that remains in memory". (SOBC, 297)

Attia Hosain does certainly reveal and bare the limitations of patriarchy, which knows nothing else than dominance. It's a terrible system that ignores a woman's true feelings and desires. During the 1930s and 1940s in India, this was the fate of Hindu and Muslim women alike.

Laila, like Nandi, takes on sexism and oppression in her own unique way. The declaration of Laila's uniqueness and the struggle for freedom have a lot in common. The novel's major and minor characters were both influenced by the divide.

Responsibility of women in Nationalism:

A character named Laila, in the lone novel of Hosain

'*Sunlight on a Broken Column*' is similarly a Taluqdari

Muslim from Lucknow. She appears to have benefited from

modern Western schooling. Hosain's work examines the

protagonist's consciousness in connection to her family's

restrictive traditions, the convoluted interactions among her

civic members, & the bigger national politics in relation to

Hindu anti-colonials & colonialists of British. The lives of

many inhabitants in the family of Laila are depicted by

Hosain. Their ancestral houses are in both places Hasanpur

& Lucknow. He had depicted their lives by tracing her

aristocratic family's fortunes before & after independence

across many generations. While purdah-observant auntsof

Laila, named Abida & Majida, are not affected by the

greater world's events& the myriad arguments that

surround them, her niece Zahra was devoid completely of

ideological conviction/ political consciousness. She

transforms herself traditional Muslim girl to a well-travelled

woman who attends parties dressed in contemporary finery,

joining herself with the interests of Naseer, who is

politically ambitious husband. The storey also criticises the

community's top members for their cooperation in the

British colonial dominance and their insensitivity to their

own lower-class members. During the visit of Laila to her

destitute village residence of on of their tenant, elder brother

of Zainab made a critical criticism of nationalism.

"What difference does anything make? Look around this village. The people rotted under the rulers of our own race, as they do under the English and as they will do if we rule ourselves again..." (Hosain102)

After closely observing political manipulations on the ground level, Laila refuses to stick by any homogenising political narrative in the middle of the stances' jamboree within the same ridge:

"It was as...a gigantic game of chess or some mathematical problem of permutations and combinations. There was no political passion, only an implacable wish for power" (Hosain 225).

She was correspondingly pessimistic regarding today's ostensibly superior democratic politics: "That's nonsense! They just utilise slogans and appeal to our baser feelings, such as fear and fanaticism " (Hosain 245). In other places, with the above statements, Attia Hosain demonstrates how patriarchy is untouched by the premature imposition of Indian democracy as concept. In the time of provincial elections in the aftermath of Indian government act, 1935, Laila says to a former classmate whocame to vote

"I think I'll go home. Nothing is happening and it doesn't matter anyway. Everything will be

decided by the men. I came only because I was asked To" (Hosain 257).

Hosain also shows how Laila's family's patriarchs, Baba Jan, Syed Mohammed Hasan & Hamid, efficiently dominate & mute the family's women through their representations of Muslim anti-colonialism and Western modernity. Baba Jan, traditional grandfather of Laila, in his lifetime, stresses a complete obedience from his female dependents. On the other hand, Baba Jan's westernized son is the 'new patriarch,' who permitted women to come out from purdah & receive the modern-day education, yet, as just as dictatorial & dismissive. Laila and her uncle had divergent political views on nationalism, he openly states his role as a guardian-controller:

"I respect an independent mind, but while you are in my charge and until I consider you are fit, you will be guided by me. I will not allow any action of which I disapprove" (Hosain 160).

He acts in the same way with his wife Saira as he does with his small niece. When she inquires about inviting a specific acquaintance, Waliuddin the lawyer, after learning that he had orchestrated a disturbance among Sunnis & Shias, Hamid instructs her to do so, claiming that he had engineered a riot among Sunnis & Shias "I'm not bothered by his tactics. All I am concerned with are the results" (Hosain). Women & men from both the Hindu and Muslim communities have been demonstrated to be unable to marry of their own free will, based on love regardless of religious/ class affiliation. While Nadeera & Saleem are the blessed ones, who suffer just minor annoyances due to their shared backgrounds, Laila and Ameer confront fierce opposition due to Ameer's unrivalled ancestry and money. Even the idea of a love marriage is considered sacrilege. Sita and Kemal's love is tainted by their religious differences, and their romance ends in bitterness. Controlling people's marital 'choices' is demonstrated to be vital in the formation of a national community, because communities are reinforced through marriages.

CONCLUSION

Finally, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* the novel of Attia Hosain depicts the women's situation patriarchal society through the quality

of Hosain's metaphorical sunlight. In some way, every woman in the narrative is oppressed. Intersectionality exacerbates the lower-class women's oppression such as Saliman & Nandi, as well as upper-class women like Aunt Abida and Majida. Gender and class collide to exacerbate Saliman and Nandi's pains, while marital status & age collide to exacerbate the Aunt Majida & Aunt Abida's grief of rich. Because of the diversity of overlapping oppressive forces and intersecting markers of identity, the type and degree of gender oppression varies. Peasants are exploited by law & feudalism, whereas Muslim women in India are oppressed by socio-religious inequalities. In the midst of these oppressive socio-political and religious forces, Laila, who represents freedom & resilience for the Ashiana's women in general and the subcontinent of India in specific, finds expression. Unlike many other authors who have written about patriarchy and women's participation in and responsibility for nationalism, Attia Hosain has acknowledged the saner voices of communities, the voices of those individuals who have stood by humanity and moral values even in the most difficult of circumstances and during crisis movements.

References:

1. Hosain, Attia. "Sunlight on a Broken Column. Penguin." 2009.
2. Hosain, Attia. "Sunlight on a Broken Column. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann." 1987.
3. Bhasin, K. "What Is Patriarchy. Women Unlimited: New Delhi" 2006.
4. Mitchell, J. "Women's Estate. Harmondsworth: Penguin." 1971.
5. Walby, S. "Theorizing Patriarchy. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.: Oxford, UK and Cambridge USA." 1990.
6. Kaul R.K., and Jain, Jasbir. "Writers of Indian Diaspora: Attia Hosain, Jaipur, New Delhi: Rawat Publication." 2001.