

Purdah: Opportunity or Adversity: From Attia Hosain's Fictions

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Abstract:

In every day language gender refers to the biological differences between male and female which shows as superiority and inferiority. If that is male then he is made for outdoor work and if that is female she will remain at home for her house work course. Since the age of stone women at home does so many things and taking care of children but she never appreciated for that because we suppose she is born to do so. This what society construct the ideology.

After observation of this stereotypes feminism moments take its place. Its roots are very undergoing and its stems and branches are exceeding with a never ending fruit full solution. Feminism is just about equality, nothing else. Everyone thinks feminism is about making women stronger but no, she is already very strong. It's just about changing the way the world perceive their strength. Religion take very countable role of women in society. The myth which is in very lime light that if the women is Muslim and observes Purdah then she must be unfortunate and not able to built her choice for her career and husband. Islam teaches equal treatment and equal rights The glamming example of it is wife of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) she was a successful businesswoman. Which is a clear massage that women are allowed to go and to do what she wants.

Keywords: Purdah an opportunity, Status of women in Islam. Illiteracy

Introduction

So many dissertation and articles on Purdah n Muslim and feminism have been submitted since ages. Many research, caller and social reformer talked in favour and against it. Scholar like Allama Fa and Maulana Sayeed Abul Ala Maududi and their co-workers have been most fecund advocate . So many myths and misunderstanding are spread for the religion, Islam that Islam does not promote women education, equal rights and freedom when we listen, name of any Muslim women, then there is always a reflection of sorrowful, uneducated, and veiled woman. This is not what I slam teachers. This is only what society made. The holy Quran is filled with such words that promote women equally educated and equal rights. Islam says there are no comparison of men and women because women are superior to men from every aspect. She has paradise under her feet. Quran say's "Al lamal insan ma lam ya lam" that means Humans are incomplete without education. It clearly explain that Islam promotes education either it's men or women. Another Sureh of Quran named Al-Nissa is completely all about the rights of women.

Attia Hosain a famous feminist writer of post independence India known for her female character specifically Muslim women, are true reflection women empowerment and women suffrage. Her work ,

particularly her stories set in colonial and postcolonial India, purdah serves as both a symbol of opportunity and adversity for women. In her fiction, purdah—the practice of secluding women from public observation, typically through physical separation and veiling—is explored not just as a social limitation but also as a nuanced cultural practice that affects women’s autonomy, identity, and agency. Hosain often portrays purdah as a confining force, limiting women’s social and intellectual freedoms. It reinforces patriarchal control, keeping women in domestic spaces and restricting their exposure to the outside world. This seclusion serves as a metaphor for the broader oppression women face in traditional society, where their roles and identities are tightly bound by family honour and male authority. In her stories, women under purdah struggle with the isolation it imposes, leading to a sense of suffocation and lack of personal agency. In Attia Hosain’s fiction, purdah is presented with a dual nature, serving both as a source of adversity and as an unlikely space for opportunity in the lives of her female characters. Hosain explores purdah—the seclusion of women from the public sphere through physical separation and veiling—as a complex social construct with profound effects on women’s lives.

Purdah as a Adversity

In many of Hosain’s stories, purdah operates as a symbol of patriarchal control that confines women within strict boundaries. The practice limits their physical mobility and isolates them from public spaces and social interaction, reinforcing their dependence on men. Women under purdah often experience alienation, as they are restricted to domestic roles and have limited access to education, employment, or public life, suppressing their sense of agency and self-expression. She often created purdah as a confining force, limiting women’s social and intellectual freedoms. It reinforces patriarchal control, keeping women in domestic spaces and restricting their exposure to the outside world. This seclusion serves as a metaphor for the broader oppression women face in traditional society, where their roles and identities are tightly bound by family honour and male authority. In her stories, women under purdah struggle with the isolation it imposes, leading to a sense of suffocation and lack of personal agency.

Purdah as a Opportunity

Interestingly, Hosain also explores how purdah offers women a space to cultivate inner lives and forge emotional bonds within the domestic sphere. Within these protected boundaries, women find creative ways to assert themselves, develop their intellect, and connect with other women. Purdah creates a sense of solidarity and shared experience among women, which can foster resilience and collective empowerment. Despite its restrictive nature, purdah in Hosain’s work also opens up an inner world where women can cultivate personal strength and foster deep relationships. Within the seclusion, women find ways to build emotional and intellectual connections, particularly with other women. This solidarity creates a kind of resilience, as they share experiences and insights, nurturing personal identity and mutual support. In some instances, purdah serves as a “safe space,” allowing women to develop unique perspectives and ways of expressing themselves without external scrutiny.

Duality of Purdah in women’s life

Hosain’s depiction of purdah is neither wholly negative nor positive; rather, it captures the layered experience of women in traditional societies. While purdah restricts their freedom, it also acts as a shield, offering a unique form of strength and solidarity among women. Hosain’s characters demonstrate that even within the constraints of purdah, women negotiate their identities, find forms of resistance, and

foster self-discovery. Through this nuanced view, Hosain suggests that women's resilience and adaptability can transform even limiting practices into opportunities for personal empowerment. She says portrayal of purdah reveals it as both a cultural tool of suppression and a potential space for autonomy and self-discovery. While it limits women's mobility, it also provides them with a unique perspective and a sense of shared identity, shaping their strength and enabling them to navigate the restrictions placed upon them. Through her characters, Hosain emphasises the resilience of women who, even within the confines of purdah, find ways to assert their voices and desires

Conclusion

In conclusion Attia Hosain figure of purdah in her fiction creat its complex impact on women's life. Some says purdah is adversity other says it is resilient. After all it serves as a weapon of patriarchal control. It also gives a protective area of female to cultivate internal power personal agency and self expression. Hosain emphasises the profound ways to women navigate and transform the boundaries imposed upon them, ultimately revealing their enduring strength and agency.

Every story have their own key theme and with different character characters peoples got influenced with different impact. Which doesn't means that we should finger out on any religion because purdah is not only in Muslim. There are numbers of religion and cultures where to cover head is symbol of cultural identity. Purdah and freedom both are different topic purdah is to cover our self which doesn't means that you are not free you don't have power to choose your life partner and career.

In this 21st century apart from all these topic and blaming each other religion we must thinks for our education, either women is going in purdah to literate her self or without Purdah. Attia Hosain played well with her female Muslim character question is with us how we all adapting the literature's words. Hosain advocates and says personal freedom and opportunities, yet within these confines, women find ways to build deep connections, foster self-awareness, and sometimes even subvert the constraints of tradition. This duality reflects the complexity of cultural practices and the resilience of those navigating them. Hosain's work serves as a testament to the strength, adaptability, and quiet defiance of women who transform adversity into a source of empowerment, challenging societal expectations and expanding their inner worlds. Through purdah, Hosain invites readers to question the dynamics of oppression and agency, revealing that even within restrictive structures, women carve out spaces for self-expression and solidarity.

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