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## **TO STUDY ABOUT THE FEMINISM REVISITED: A MUSLIM NOVELISTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The visual imagery on the cover of the book (a caricatured drawing of two Egyptian women, one baladi and one afrangi), taken from the 1934 Egyptian journal *Al-Ithnayn*, speaks volumes, but not to the volume at hand at the beginning. The title of the illustrated magazine is *Beauty of Today and Beauty of the Past*. The irony in the message of the picture's title and the juxtaposition of local imagery in the picture are lost without analytical commentary supporting the adoption of this image. It is a missed opportunity to seek insights through visual and ethnographic analysis to keep the 1934 reading of the picture, "past versus present beauty," without examining its intersection with Egyptian cultural notions of baladi versus afrangi women (see Early 1993 here). Today, the reader sees only an exotic illustration used to market another book about women from the Middle East. There is obviously a deluge of Middle East women's publications claiming a "feminist" genre that many put together in haste, mostly using non-analytic, discourse-focused polemics, and an eclectic orientation of Women's Studies - a popular genre that appears to disregard disciplinary canons of inquiry and breach the culture and system of discipline of both people.

One year has passed after millions of Iranians poured into the streets to protest the rigged presidential elections that returned Ahmadi Nejad to office for a second term. The world was mesmerised by the strong yet surprisingly nonviolent protest movement, in particular the photographs of glamorous young people in the front rows of street protests, their clearly secular appearances, their brave encounters with police and plane-clothed thugs, and the murder of a young woman Neda Aghasoltan whose murder was caught on video. These photos have helped question the long-held conceptions of 'Muslim religious women or the political and/or emotional commitment of individuals to the Islamic State and its practises and intentions. They also helped silence, at least temporarily, the cultural relativist scholars and commentators who have been pounding the drums of the end of secularism in Iran since the mid-1990s and who have



attempted to promote Islamic feminism as the only homegrown, locally generated and therefore culturally relevant project to change the number of women in Iran or indeed in Muslim-majority countries.

**KEYWORDS: visual, intentions, mesmerised, irony, disciplinary, emotional**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Women around the world crave equal justice and equal rights like their male counterparts want. Misogyny has been prevalent among human beings for millennia, and thus, feminism has flourished to give voice to the unheard, unnoticed, and oppressed portion of the human race - women as a debate seeking a conscious individual identity for women. Feminism, as a movement, has served incalculable people in countless forms in human history. The dynamic scenario of suppression by patriarchal authorization is clarified by women through various expressions.

Do I fancy you?

Do I fit and do I comply with your specifications and approval?

Are you going to accept my ideas?

Are you going to turn those plain breasts under your gaze into beauty?

Am I the victor? Is that stirring in your groin going to win me?

Could I become the pin-up of your life and find a face for myself?

So do I fancy you?

Ok I'm so sick of this.

Dina Butler's short poem fiercely challenges men's certification of the appearance, dignity and individuality of women in both a cynical and furious tone.

Women have been conditioned and mentally educated to look at themselves from a male perspective. The poem is plain in terms, but shows amounts of psychoanalysis of women and men who are socio-culturally conditioned; and raises questions about patriarchy from deranged women. With thousands and millions of views versus reality, sex and gender are most much discussed topics of the orb. The critical understanding of Simone De Beauvoir demystifies the word 'woman' harshly in *Second Sex* (1956):

Female Very plain, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a woman, enough to describe her by this term. The epithet female has the sound of an insult in a

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man's mouth, but he is not ashamed of his animal nature; on the contrary, he is proud if he is proud. Somebody says to him, "He's a male!"

**“The word 'female' is negative not because it emphasises the animality of women, but because it imprisons her in her sex; and if even in harmless dumb animals this sex seems to be contemptible and inimical to man, it is obviously because of the unpleasant animosity stirred up in him by her. In their sex, women are incarcerated, which imposes some restrictions on it itself. Male patriarchy is a socio-cultural phenomenon; the socio-cultural hammering starts and deforms an individual's psyche forever from the very birth of an infant, regardless of sex”.**

In the 14th century, with the growing success of "nude" portraits, women were regarded as objects. Nadine Yonka's thesis on Women's Poetic Responses to the Male Gaze: Cutting Them Down justifies that those paintings "in the 14th century" were typically drawn by men with beautiful naked, passively positioned women" objects. Berger says in Ways of Seeing that "men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at and describe the psychology of male painters when painting a woman, the "individual who is the focus of the actions of their [male painters]-woman-[is] viewed as a thing or an abstraction. And more than that, "the 'ideal' viewer is always believed to be male and the woman's image is intended to flatter him". Joy Schaverien, on the basis of collected social and anthropological research evidence, asserts that gender identities imply that gender has no biological roots, that the relations between sex and gender in Desire and the Female Therapist: Engendered Gazes in Psychotherapy and Art Theory in 1995 are not really 'natural' at all to explain the artificial and conditioned behaviour patterns. It is not at all natural how a woman (or a man) behaves, thinks, speaks, acts, and responds.

The male gaze taught women how to look, behave and feel in a way that women ought to do. The Second Sex of De Beauvoir stands out remarkably as a manifesto of feminism which claims that one is not born a woman but becomes one". She has excavated complexities from history, genetics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, culture, philosophy, literature, mythology, etc. in pursuit of research into the subjugation of women worldwide that determine and cause an inequality and thereby affirm gender oppression. Her theories have been used by many feminist academics around the world as a foundation for more reflections. Judith Butler, among the theorists of the late twentieth century, uses the work of De Beauvoir in her theory to state:

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**“Not only is gender a cultural construction placed on identity, but gender is a method of creating ourselves in some way. Becoming a woman is a purposeful and necessary collection of actions, learning an ability, a 'mission,' using the Sartrian word to assume a certain style and significance of the body. Gender determinants are also unnatural and often temporary. Sex confirms that one biologically is 'female or male'. But gender identifies one as 'feminine' or 'male' and thus establishes, according to their culture, a dichotomy of 'female' or 'man' in society”.**

And thus the clearly normative roles of gender are simply a constructed phenomenon.

### **REVISITING FEMINISM**

A single term or concept does not clarify the word 'feminism'. It has, according to its appropriateness and importance, very subjective meanings. There are as many definitions of feminism today as there are feminists, it has been said. Many factors, including one's own values, history and culture, govern each concept of feminism. "Significantly, in "Feminist Paradigms," Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan write and defend the essence of today's approach to 'feminism' as a striking discourse:

**“If the student of literature in the early 1970s was moved to question why there is no feminist criticism, the student of literary theory in the late 1990s could well be moved to change the focus and ask, but why is there no feminist critique? It is also possible to view the frustrations of proliferation as the pains of change, and if the tone of feminist critique has lost the celebratory unity of its early days, it has acquired a much-needed analytical depth”.**

It is important to point out that many women activists deny tagging themselves as feminists while taking all the political and cultural successes of the feminists for granted. Feminism-initiated steps. "Culler asks, "Is this the end of feminism or the victory of feminism, because it goes without saying the values it struggled for?"(Culler,)" (Culler 17) this should be seen most definitely, as a triumph of this theoretical debate In a little free world for women to live in the pains and problems and allegations and scandals have been brought about

The contribution of women was ignored and discouraged in the literary and theoretical world, while men's perspectives were considered universal truths. It is possible to see the various feminisms and their development as the necessity of the time and place they belong to. There



was female literature, but it was not examined with zestful interest or criticised. In *Feminist Writings from the Ancient Times to the Modern World: A Global Sourcebook and Background*, Wayne unexpectedly notes that "Enheduanna", "estimated 2350 BCE" is the first identifiable female poet in history, with the evidence of historical records, literary documents and archaeological discs. (1) In the temples of Ur and Uruk, two Mesopotamian cities situated near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is known today as Iraq, she was not only a poet but also a priest. 2000 years before the Bible, the poem Inanna represents the destiny of a goddess who doubts sexual discourse. In the University of Pennsylvania Museum, which states that a woman, Enheduanna, performed the first ever written script in Sumerian. This suggests that there was female writing, but objective review or at least appreciation of such literature became unacceptable. In their terms, such investigations undertaken by feminist critics explain their pain, misery and anxiety.

Feminist critics have created some of the facts in conventional approaches to literature and several significant theories by studying the role of women in literature and the works of women writers. Women's alienation from the literary canon can be found, and the explanation may be that male writers' literary works mainly reflect a male view of life that is not simply the reality of women, but considered universal truth. Literature is seen by feminist critics as a representational art whose role is to imagine life, and the part played by language and patriarchy is what is overlooked or put aside. Consequently, structuralism and deconstruction-influenced analytical approaches have challenged the view that language is a stable predictable medium and questioned the notion that writing is merely writing.

Expression, thought or knowledge are represented. Based on these, from different viewpoints, feminist critics examine women's writings. Different feminisms/feminist philosophies have various agendas in broader ways to address and explain female writers' literature and life. At different times and locations in the world different feminisms and feminist philosophies of different agendas play different roles. Their political viewpoints interlink or simply contradict the fundamental concepts. With objectivity, it is interesting to notice these variations as every collection of beliefs is formed with its contextual necessities. Feminism can no longer be limited to British writing in English literature, but to begin the investigation, British feminist writing can be used to argue that British colonial mindsets have had to understand the importance of their

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women through feminist movements and literature in all fields.

The British literary canon was enriched by the unearthing of literary history in British literature, many movements and several feminist authors. In a 1578 preface to Mary Anne Raddcliff's 1799 assault on male usurpation of female professions and the prevalence of prostitution, "Margaret Tyler's mild protest against restrictions on women" (Ferguson xi), Britain had passed through immense patriarchal roles, but at the same time, in many areas, feminist consciousness took over the male hegemony. Study Team Sisterhood and After writes:

**“Aphra Behn (1640-89) was one of the first woman authors to make a living through her pen, opening the door in the 18th century to other professional women writers. Most notably, literature from the 18th and 19th centuries was influenced by Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters and George Eliot, and the views of the readers who read their work. It is a symbol of the patriarchal culture of the time that both Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot used male pseudonyms to publish their works... Women writers such as Virginia Woolf led the way in the early 20th century to modernism and the reinvention of the novel. ('Research on Sisterhood and After')”**

Estimation in a nutshell offers an image of British feminist debate from the early days to the 20th century. These women are guided by British ideas of emancipation and resistance towards their recognition as social reformers, subjects or signifiers and more importantly, as essential individuals. A clear voice to be heard has been achieved by contemporary authors, including Doris Lessing. White and/or British Feminism

Feminism is also criticised because inequalities based on ethnicity, caste and class are not considered globally. It turned out that their claim to be universally absolute was patriarchal and authoritarian. The growth and progress of feminism as a discourse should therefore be seen, apart from any nation and time series, through the lenses of various strands of feminist discourses worldwide. Feminism is a theorization of a 'ism' that draws on literary ideas and practises. Over all, another collection of feminist thoughts appears to be opposed by one theory of feminism. As a consequence, it is ironic to say that a specific theory of feminism versus another, while all the strands propagate equality and gender justice in distinct fields such as economy, class, caste, race, culture, religion, etc.

Radical Feminism, one of the major and significant strands of feminism, propagates that in order

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to erase sexism, culture must be transformed at its heart. Radical feminists are seeking to remove the male gender stereotypes that have been placed on them by society. And finally, they condemn the philosophy of sex-gender, patriarchy and men themselves. In both social and economic aspects, they believe in the "reordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated." (Willis 117) Radical feminism falls into several groups, where there are two primary schools of thought in general: radical-libertarian feminism and radical-cultural feminism. With her harsh beliefs about men and their superiority, Mary Daly, the American radical lesbian feminist, is the epitome of Radical Feminism. Radical-Libertarian feminists believe women's ability to contribute to society is constrained by femininity and reproduction, so they should be androgynous. They break sexual norms and thus regulate every aspect of their sexuality. The views of Radical-Cultural Feminism vary significantly from those of Radical-Libertarian feminism. It calls for women to accept their femininity because it's better than masculinity. By forming a link between sex, female subordination, porn, rape and violence, they contradict their beliefs by claiming that reproduction is the source of power for women and men feel jealous of women. (Gardner 187) Although the main focus of Liberal Feminism was on emphasising the same educational opportunities and equal rights for women during the 1950s and 1960s, when many campaigns for civil rights took place. In the 20th century in the United States, Betty Friedan, the author of *Feminine Mystique*, the first president of NOW (National Organization of Women in America), began the sparkling Second Wave feminism. (Rappaport 234) Liberal feminists are producing and encouraging actions of Laws that eliminate obstacles for women. Equal access to work and equal pay will eliminate obstacles and liberate women.

### **ISLAMIC FEMINISM**

The Quranic Verses were interpreted by various Islamic feminists and theorists to unleash the age-old oppressive patriarchal viewpoints to suit their purpose. These scholars investigate the manipulations performed on the holy words in detail. Many male feminists have also contributed to research in an independent way. In addition, the Sunnis are divided into four schools (madhahib) 1. The Muslim world is divided into two main parts: the Sunnis (orthodox) and the Shi'ites (literally, schismatic). The Malikis, after Malik Ibn Anas, . Following Abu Hanifa's education, . The Hanafis Following al-Shafi'i and 4, The Shafi'is Ibn Hanbal is accompanied by the Hanbalis. They all have variations on the specifics of legal procedures between them. Every



community has unique fiqh (religious knowledge) texts based on Shari'ah and Hadith sources (documents of rules and laws based on the words of the Prophet during his life span).

Islam is a tradition with an intellectual heritage that has evolved over the past fourteen hundred years, often continuously and systematically, and often not only from previous centuries, but even within a single generation, in conflicting directions. (Wadud "The Gender Inside" 55)

Over the years, disagreements have been the subject of dramatic shifts in perceptions and interpretation of sacred words. It is ironic to see the varying variations in rules and laws among the various sects of a common religion, their different interpretations, and ideological differences. Anything that is systematically and officially documented after the Prophet's death has been inculcated into it by different power politics. Al-Jabiri terms the age of bringing religious texts into writing ('asr al-tadwin') with numerous and detailed references and cross checks as the "beginning of censorship institutionalisation." It is possible to accept four essential documents as the primary source for undermining both the fallacy of contemporary fundamentalism and the so-called 'Islamophobia.'

First and foremost the supreme revelation of authoritative, common-for-all mutual knowledge of life to discipline it and control it the universal verses – The Quran – is the foundation of Islam. Second is Hadith, which is the 'Prophet's reported deeds and sayings'; third is fiqh, i.e. religious understanding, based on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet, the theory or doctrine of Islamic law. The fourth is referred to as tafsir. This term in Arabic stands for the Quran's exegesis. This refers to assigning some of the symbolic Ayaat to a particular meaning, often resulting from inspiration or dreams (the verse). The ultimate figure remains the same in all honesty, the Prophet Mohammed; his portrayal of a new faith, his propagation of the same, his relations with the Almighty Allah, his spreading words of revelation in the Qur'an, his spiritual teachings, his insight and struggle, his acknowledgments, his actions and his life as a message to humanity. It is said convincingly that, The tale of Islam is the saga of a happy man who dreamed of a different world in his youth and realised all his dreams in his maturity and robust old age, when he bent the most recalcitrant of his enemies to his will, filled with success with women and military triumphs.

The word Islamic Feminism will concentrate on its very preaching, revelations, morality and ethics on women when it is justified that Islam is the storey of the Prophet (in a broad sense).

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This is again a thought-provoking question that determines the role of women by a Prophet-man in gender-giving meanings to their life.

In the creation of a new faith, no woman seems to be a deciding factor. In a different way, before Islam, before the Prophet interfered in the social realms of people's lives, the state of women was much more pathetic than one could ever imagine. Extensive historical evidence affirms that women were miserably regarded as slaves by their counterparts in the age of 'boot parasti' (worship of stones). The devices used for the subjugation of women were slavery and abuse. Equality, brotherhood and harmony for all regardless of gender was the ultimate motive of this new religion. Following the exile of the Prophet to Medina (around the year 622 in the Christian calendar), the In Medina, women sought asylum from Mecca in order to be safe and rescued from ill-treatment. They have been able to gain full citizenship and freedom of expression.

All her research shows that during this time, women were treated fairly, and Islam never blocked any way for women. Islam, of course, in every walk of life, propagates dignity, brotherhood, tolerance and liberation. However, in every way possible in today's scenario, the general image of this faith has been tormented, skewed and tagged as cruel, callous and violent. It is definitely ironic that while 'Peace' is the literal sense of the word Islam, today it is perceived as aggressive and malicious. It is seen, especially in the case of women's liberty that the Muslims who adhered to their religion are conservative and fanatical; behaving as if their wives were their property and a matter of subjugation. "Saliba begins her article "Sex, Politics and Islam" with a very suitable example of how Islam is portrayed after the demolition of the World Trade Centre's Twin Towers, i.e. "the image of a veiled woman entitled "The Face of Islam." "In addition, Saliba adds in the interpretative mode that "Harkening back to colonialism, the dominant discourse means that the face of Islam" is to be unveiled by U.S. military men, whose victory over the Taliban forces is portrayed by celebratory photographs of Afghan women removing their burqas (Saliba 1) In its context and activities in general, the word 'Islamic Feminism' itself has a number of variants. It has a broader disagreement and dilemma as a concept or theoretical debate shared in the world of thinkers, theorists, feminists and scholars. Here, Valentine M. Moghadam is well versed in the often asked questions: Is there anything like feminism that is framed in Islamic terms? Is Islam aligned with feminism? Is it right to identify

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those feminists and academics, including veiled women who carry out their work in an Islamic discursive context towards women's advancement and gender equality, as feminist or even as Islamic feminist? May reformist men and women's actions... aim to improve the status of women... be described as constituting Feminism in Islam? Or are they enhancing the gender agenda of the state and legitimising it?

Therefore the term, its meaning, treatment in various Islamic nations, its impact on the universal point of view and its various phenomenological attributes are the things to peep into. In describing Islamic feminism, Crooke tries to separately describe both terms as:

**“The word "Islamic" places a person somewhere on the spectrum between on the one hand, a cultural identity that is Muslim and easily coexists with secularism and occasional expressions of religious observance, and Islamist, which defines a way of life dedicated to fighting for the development of an Islamic state. 'Feminist' refers to an understanding that women are treated unjustly solely because they are women”.**

In order to do something to reform this oppressive system, this consciousness can, but should not be galvanised into action. Khan goes on to say that Islamists talk about the needs of contemporary women and present islamically influenced solutions by persuasion and often intimidation that raises an inquiry to explain the principle of equality, whereas Orientalists "offer Islam as articles of faith descriptive and devalued essentialist images." "Islamic", honestly, depicts a convenient mindset where they pursue an amalgamation of everything which renders them secular and liberal in their life styles/thinking patterns with religious identity too which ultimately results into conflicting realities of existence. The term "Islamic" implies a penchant for religious heritage, preaching and theological adherence to Islam as a "interconnected" paradigm with contemporary, modernised, conventional cultural values.

The conflicting ideals of Islamist fundamentalism and Orientalism placed the identity of Muslim women for themselves as well as for non-Muslims in a confused state throughout the world.

Although the workable solution lies between these two discourses, where 'Islamic' can simply be accomplished where A view of cultures as interconnected will be created by deconstructing racist discourses, especially those that emphasise the need to modernise traditional cultures and religions. Such a structure helps to diffuse the The strict borders between Islam and the West provide women with individual freedom of choice at the intersection of the two, without their

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families and societies being labelled anti-Islamic or as "fanatics" by those outside.

In any field of life for women, the term 'feminism' clearly stands for an acute fight to achieve equality. The word "feminism" was coined "in France in the 1880s by Hubertine Auclert," according to Margot Badran, who introduced it in her journal "La Citoyenne," to condemn male predominance and to make claims for the freedom and emancipation of women promised by the French Revolution. The joint expression "Islamic Feminism" (Badran "Islamic Feminism") operates precisely on the notion of achieving equality as a theological doctrine within the context of Islam. There has been a conflict about the existence of the word among Westerners. Many Westerners simply oppose the idea with their conviction that "feminism is an oxymoron and Islam" because Islam does not allow feminism to be created by Muslims. On the other hand, Westerners who embraced it were merely "showing a feigned concern for "her" plight in order to justify colonial and neo-colonial incursions into Muslim societies or simply to demonstrate arrogant superiority" (Badran "Feminism in Islam" 1).

This shows that in their beliefs they were not so feminist and were bound to their social and religious responsibilities. While Qurrat al'Ayn was a clerical daughter, an ulema, who opposed the Shi'i faith in Iran and was arrested and killed in 1852 by monarchical superintendents. Qurratul-Ayn was 'arguably the most fascinating woman in Iran's history,' a beautiful beauty as well as a brilliant, independent thinker. Her rejection of the veil was an aspect of her rejection of Shar'iah, conventional Islamic law that limited women's lives. (Rappaport 560) The second and third step in Iran tends to be more expressed with activists such as Tuba Azmudeh (1878-1936), Ma Azmudeh (1878-1936), Ma Many others continued their efforts, promised to stand up and advocate the causes of women's liberation. Not only in the domestic sphere, but also in public life, their social activism was focused on their quest for equal rights. Since 1979, the wife of the fifth Prime Minister of Iran, Mir Hussein Musavi, has been instrumental in "reinterpreting the emancipation of Iranian women within the scriptures of true Islam" (Rappaport 563). In order to respect the conceptual renaissance, she advocated education for women and embraced veiling as a code of modesty, not only for women but also for men.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is no justification to portray misogyny as a pre-modern, pre-capitalist phenomenon since misogyny is as old as humanity and as prevalent as flu or chicken pox anywhere in the East and

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West, between rich and poor, rural and urban areas. There is no reason to portray it as a pre-modern, pre-capitalist syndrome. (Hashmi 1) Therefore, misogyny in the religious sense is indeed not religious but its meanings and stereotypes are primarily contextual. In the name of Allah, the critical analysis and review of the past of feminism and feminist ideas that have existed for a long time with an emphasis on Islamic feminism seeks to identify the bare realities that prevail in society. The purpose of the historical survey is to make up the scene of feminism's need, both globally and nation-wise. The realistic approach to principles and procedures is mutual. It is shown that theories are used to write fictions, and theories are used to construct fictions. The relationship is complementary between theory and fictional work. And so as examined, Islamic Feminism as a discourse should be used as a prism to examine fiction that seeks to create the similar reality that Islam as a religion does not obstruct ways of freeing women; but misconceptions play a vital role in subjugating women from all potential development due to patriarchal interpretations.

Two key aims of this study are the introduction of the debate on novels and the review of the findings. The two neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which were actually part of 'The Akhand Bharat' before independence in 1947, are therefore taken into account. The psyche of Muslims and non-Muslims in general has been split up by 'fragmented India'. After these many decades, after their own individual identities, the trio - India, Pakistan and Bangladesh actually have a lot in common while providing enormous contrasting overviews.

In the literary scenario for these two nations, India still remains like a mother figure. Among liberal Muslim writers and many non-Muslim writers alike, the female writers of the pre-independence period have already provided a foundation for the emerging consciousness. In feminist literature, Sulatana's Dream (1905) by Roquia Sakhawat Hussain (1880- 1932) can be named a benchmark. In many of the feminist Muslim writers and many non-Muslims too, her 'Feminist Utopia' played a significant role in imbuing inspiration where the dream has taken the readers into an ideal world of research, peace, development and women. Ismat Chughtai (1915-1991) and Qurratulain Hyder (1928-2007) are other important feminist Muslim writers in Urdu who stand out with the fierce feminist ideology in Urdu literature that discarded the very basic patriarchal voice in Islam when the word 'feminist' was not in a fashionable way. It can be accurately said that after their interference, the Urdu literature in India earned tremendous twirls.

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In English, the path breaking novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* by Attia Hosain (1913-1998) is "considered[as] a precursor to later Indian feminist novels" (Miller 146), which depicts the struggle of a young woman to free herself during a time of national struggle within India at large from her traditional Muslim upbringing. Her storeys usually speak of vibrant pre-independence, pre-partition colours in India's Muslim Northern society. One can see the rebellion against the new patriarchy in Indian feminist literature, while the revolt roars with a far higher voice in Muslim writing against the Islamic fanatical approach to women's emancipation.

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