**Abstract**

This paper aims to explore the representations of women after the establishment of Pakistan in the short stories of Hameedullah and Abbasi in the light of Postcolonial Feminist Theory and interprets the recolonization of women in the post-independent Pakistan. Holst-Petersen and Rutherford claim that the women in the postcolonial societies are doubly colonized: first by the colonizer and second by their own men. Soon afterwards, the spirit of freedom movement started to dwindle very fast, especially after the death of Jinnah in 1948. Like many other British colonies, men tried to re-colonize the bodies of women under their newly won freedom and, in imitation of their former colonizers, asserted their role as the masters willing to find obedience in women and hence legitimize their control over them. Once again, social values were stressed and women were required to maintain the strong cultural tradition of the Muslims and Islam. The social and political changes influenced the images of women in the English literature written by them in Pakistan. In order to discover the post-independence representation of women in fiction of Hameedullah and Abbasi, the lead women characters have been studied critically and analyzed with reference to the double colonization of women proposed by Holst-Petersen and Rutherford. The study reveals that the women have been represented as colonized subjects still struggling to win their freedom, even after the independence, from the oppression and control on their bodies.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Colonization, Double Colonization, Patriarchy, Recolonization

**Introduction:**

In his book *A History of Pakistani English Literature*, Dr. Rehman¹ says that by the 1950s, writers in Pakistan began to agree with the “prescriptive dictum that their work must have an extra literary purpose, namely to ‘serve society’ … This propagandist and chauvinistic view of literature was one which gained official support later”. This was further supported by the religious colonizers of the society who wanted to control the lives of women in accordance with the strict Islamic code of conduct as interpreted by them. The result was the backward drag in the progressive quality of the life of women generated with the Freedom Movement because of the newly resurrected forces of culture, religion and politics asserted in Pakistan and women were the obvious target of this assertion. Therefore, women were forced to wage a new struggle to fight against this re-colonization. Writers were aware of the gaps between men and women, which were being created deliberately to control the lives of the women in Pakistan in the name of tradition and custom.

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They felt that the conservative Pakistanis were just not ready to accept the new role of women acquired by them because of the independence movement. The writers in Pakistani postcolonial society responded to this double colonization.\textsuperscript{2,3}

This phenomenon in the postcolonial nations has been termed double-colonization of women.\textsuperscript{4} “The term refers to the observation that women are subjected to both the colonial domination of empire and the male domination of patriarchy. In this respect empire and patriarchy act as analogous to each other and both exert control over female colonial subjects, who are, thus, doubly colonized by imperial/patriarchal power”. When seen in this context, the feminist theory and the Postcolonial theory seem to work parallel to each other because both critique the marginalization of the colonized ‘Other’ and precludes that nationalistic waves immediately after the decolonization failed to alleviate the sufferings of women in such nations leaving women in struggle phase to dismantle the power of the patriarchy. Ashcroft asserts that patriarchy and Imperialism both needed to be resisted and these women of the formerly colonized countries have to wage even after the pullout of the Imperialistic forces\textsuperscript{5}.

Postcolonial\textsuperscript{6} theory is male centered and gives very little space to the female gender and proves his point of view by alluding to ‘Orientalism’ by Said where Said gave little space to the representations of women. Orientalism, however, does talk about the construction of non-white ‘Other’ in order to prove its inferiority. Same is the case with the women representations in the postcolonial literature that in the world of patriarchy women is represented as an ‘Other’ who is constantly marginalized as a subservient to the hegemonic controls exercised on her body and movement. So not only woman is colonized by the white colonizer but also by the brown colonizer and so she suffers more as a result of being doubly colonized. “The concept of double colonization is one of the crucial issues for showing the status of people, and especially women, in colonized societies. The marginalization and subaltern are broad categories that characterize individuals, whose voices and actions have been muted, drastically reinterpreted, lost, or consciously swept away”.\textsuperscript{7} They further argue that this double colonization is based on the creation of binary opposition of center/margin. The margin is hence supposed to work for the centers. Claim that in a postcolonial set up where patriarchy is powerful, the women become doubly colonized because culturally they are marginalized and are assigned an inferior and subaltern identification with reference to Said and Spivak. This paper attempts to explore the subaltern and marginalized identity of the women characters in the short stories of Hameedullah and Abbasi.\textsuperscript{8}

**Hameedullah’s Women:**

Hameedullah is one of those writers who had taken up the cause of developing the society by influencing through literature.\textsuperscript{9} Her short stories in this volume may not be a pure social propaganda, yet it does highlight certain oppressive social values. “Alongside, these stories portray the conflict between the rural social values and the individual women. Her stories revolved around social pressures in the daily lives of women”\textsuperscript{10}. For example, her story ‘The Peepul Tree’\textsuperscript{11} shows the predicament of a woman who could not give birth to a child and is, therefore, all the
time taunted by the society for her barrenness. Her prayers are granted by nature and she gives birth to a male child. But this does not bring any end to her sufferings because the child is born blind and once again she continues to face the taunts of the society on the blindness of her child. It shows the sufferings of the women in our rural and traditional society where a woman is required to fulfill certain reproductive obligations. If she fails to do so, her sufferings never end and she is bound to face many social stigmas which may be harmful or damaging to the women.

Her stories like ‘Motia Flower’ and ‘The Wonder Bloom’ give the tragic endings especially related to women. But this does not explain the true portrayal of women which is rather like the Gothic and medieval romances and does not suggest that the writer has a tragic vision. The title story ‘The Young Wife’ can be called the representative of her feminist views and the portrayal of male dominance in Pakistani society. The heroine of the story, Aliya, saw her father treating her mother as badly as possible. She resented more on her mother for her inability to react against him. When she got married she found that her husband loved her and was a reverse to her father. She went back to correct her father or her mother. She becomes disappointed when she listens her father suggesting to her husband, “we men must never allow women to get the upper hand; they must never be allowed to guess how much we love them”.

Alyia reconciles to the idea that there is no possibility of change and settles down on her own as an ideal traditional wife. This is the very influence of the custom that has lent an upper hand to man. Hameedullah makes her heroine submit to the demands of customs and traditions in the society, yet she has not failed to portray the grievances of women and their helplessness when they have to succumb to these demands. Besides these feelings of the young women, Hameedullah has portrayed the feelings of the women who get hurt when they feel abandoned and left alone by their young ones. These stories are special about the feelings of the old women.

Hameedullah seems to advocate the idea that in Pakistani society of the 1950s, it would be appropriate to curb the individual tendencies of women. Instead of their individualism, the collective benefit should be looked upon and taken care of. Most of the tensions of the families are because of the conflict and struggle between the two generations: the young and the old. This is aggravated because of the individual assertions of the young women. Social set up of that time was never ready to accept this individualism of the young women and the result was the break-up in the family system. Most of the troubles of women in Pakistani families are also because of this individual assertion of the modern women for which society is mostly unprepared. These tendencies represent the struggle of women in Pakistan society and it indicates that resistance of women going on in the face of the difficulties generated by the efforts of recolonization of women as ‘others’. In both of the above mentioned stories, the protest has been launched against the Pakistani view that if the young women should assert themselves beyond limits, the overall harmony of the society would be disturbed. In fact, this is the very issue that Hameedullah has tried to raise in her fiction but she was the only voice at that time of the 1950s.
On the other hand, the heroine of the story ‘The Bull and the She Devil’ also suffers because of the complex psychology of her husband. Her husband has been a simple villager but with the passage of time falls in love with his own wife and feels enticed by her because of her physical charms. But he feels it disgusting that he should be enslaved by a woman. The woman described here has been named as ‘She-Devil’. This name is suggestive of the evil nature assumed about women in the rural areas of Pakistan. “Even if she possesses some physical charms and due to this she can attract her man, is also thought to be devilish in nature”, besides the paradoxical belief that men are always in search of the woman with attractive physical charms. Through the character portrayal of ‘She-Devil’, the writer wishes to propagate the idea that even the extreme physical charms and the qualities of women do not stop men from becoming jealous of female powers, and their love turns into hate because they cannot bear the superiority of women in anyway.

‘The Bull and the She Devil’ describes violence and suppressed sexuality in Pakistani village Hameedullah tells us about the feelings of Qadir in the story about his young wife. “… He found his thoughts turning towards softness and roundness of her slender form; the fairness of her complexion, the way her (eye) lashes curled upon her cheeks and fluttered as fearfully as the wings of a bird fallen from a bush when he shouted at her”16. The writer portrays her as a wife who does not utter even a single word when her husband slaps her on the face and beats her in public. She remains silent and bears all this with a smiling face. Her patience and silence is projected by the writer. But her husband commits suicide in the end of the story. Perhaps this is the reward that a woman is shown successful even after keeping silent. But the man loses all, even his life, for being harsh and hard upon his woman. Hameedullah has portrayed the scene in the following words,

“With a quick fling of his powerful arms he caught hold of a handful of his wife’s long black hair and with it dragged her to the ground before him. Then he hit her with a stick in his hand. Once, twice and thrice the blows fell, each time more forcefully. Yet even so, the woman did not cry out.”17

The women from the poor sections of society, like the women characters of Hameedullah, still carry on struggle to keep their family going. But it should be mentioned that if some women enjoyed the benefits of education and social well being, it was at the higher level of society where mostly women were educated. This was an extension of the political will of the leaders along with the nationalistic demand for the participation of women in the political struggle. This political freedom and empowerment felt by the women had started to decline even at the elite social level as soon as the struggle for independence was over. Once again, the process of ‘Marginalization’ and ‘Othering’ of women was initialized under many plans and schemes introduced for preservation of Islamic values in Pakistan, as shown above in the form of the women characters of Hameedullah.

Just after a few years of the establishment of Pakistan, not only Jinnah died but also democracy and its values were left in shambles. Military took over the civilian government in the end of 1950s and gave an impression of making Pakistan
modern and progressive. This fiction of this era shows the characters whose sole aim of life was to get rich and show off their wealth in whatever way it was possible. The changed socio-political environment of the country did not raise the social status of women, and instead it brought further deterioration in it and the process of objectification and subordination of women continued.

**Abbasi’s Portrayal of Women:**

Abbasi’s portrayal of portrayal of poor and working women from the selected short stories of Abbasi is also indicative of the same trends even after the gap of almost 50 year. For example, Abbasi’s stories portray the struggle and the courage of the young poor women to survive in the modern Pakistan. They are ready to face the bitterness of the relatives and the society in general, but would not budge from their stance.18 ‘Pumice Stone’ also presents the life of a woman who continuously takes care of her young brothers and family members and is rejected at the time when she needed others. There are many such women living in Pakistan who sacrifice their lives and the bliss of marriage for the sake of their young brothers and the sisters, especially when their parents die and they, being elders of the family, have to assume the responsibility of maintaining the home and the hearth. When the younger ones, especially males, become fully grown up and are expected to take their turn in giving back, the elders are rather denied their right and are left alone indeed. Miss Anjum is such a woman, portrayed by Abbasi in this story. She takes care of her younger brother with full devotion and sacrifice. She feeds, grooms, teaches, and even polishes his shoes. She teaches him manners and the ways of the world. But as soon as he grows up, he considers Miss Anjum the biggest enemy in the way of the fulfillment of his desires. He goes further than this and wants to marry a young girl, not for love but just to show that he is capable of leaving the loving and protective cover of the care of Miss Anjum. Miss Anjum is one of those women in Pakistan who sacrifice their happiness in order to take care of their younger brothers and sisters, especially when parents are no more available. But all their energies are consumed in training and equipping their family while their personal life is ruined. The reward, at least a sense of gratitude expected from their family, is also denied to them; rather, they are accused of exercising dictatorship. This is also one of the injustices that are meted out to women in Pakistan.19

The short story ‘Sari Petticoat’20 also signifies the issue of the marriages arranged between the men and women of two different age groups. Sometime, social obligations are involved and, sometime, the girl and the boy succumb to the emotional crises created by their parents. In Pakistan, the custom of marrying a young girl to a man of fifty or sixty has continued even today, especially in the remote and far-flung areas. This custom is more than harmful. The story very interestingly puts before us the condition of the woman who is herself advanced in age and is married to a quite young boy because of her parents’ wishes. How much neglected and hurt she feels, can be found in the following words of the narrator,

“He was only ten and I was sixteen when he was orphaned...But he was fatalistic, he agreed to marry me. Now they all tell him he never should have but how could he have said, No. Consider the scene. My father lay on his deathbed. I lay on
the shelf. He pretended not to see. But than from his death bed my father begged. She is twenty-five, he called out. The anguish in that cry… Or that when he brought me down from that shelf to bed, he’d turn the other way. Dark, shapeless and hairy. He slept for ten years on his left side and dreamt of buffaloes”.

Abbasi further describes about the sufferings and the hard labour that women have to undergo because of the unwanted and unequal matches. The story, ‘The Birdman’ throws light on the life of a sweeper-woman Shano whose husband, unfortunately dies, and afterwards, her in-laws also became dependent on her. These in-laws not only got her money but also demanded an account of the money earned by her. She had no opportunity of spending for herself. Abbasi says that “she was losing money from her pay, a bit more every time. They beat her and warned her that there wouldn’t be a next time. They would throw her out, even though she was their dead son’s widow”.

The character of Shano is designed to show the aggressive yet vulnerable side of the female whose income is snatched from her and is accused of having illicit relations with the other people. She grows irritated at this and, at first, tries to find consolation in a bird whose name was Mithoo, which is also a symbol of silence. Mithoo, the parrot, is unable to speak other than uttering a few meaningless sounds, is another side of Shano. But very soon, she falls into the trap of the criminals involved in the prostitution and human trafficking. One of them is Ghulam, the birdman. He gets her hard earned and hard saved money on the false hope of marrying her and taking her to Dubai. But, as ill luck would have it, she is abducted beyond recovery and falls into the ugly den of the prostitution when her supposed lover Ghulam comes in a car to take her away from that (as he says) hell to the paradise of Dubai. But in reality she was now going into the hell of the criminal world because “… they are all forgetting one thing—the most obvious really—that though it was broad daylight when the car drove off, inside where Shano sat, it was dark as night”. She too falls into the trap of a false lover like the character Shanta created by Sidhwa. But the fate of Shano is worse than Shanta because the latter is rescued to the normal life while in case of Shano the writer leaves us thinking about the probable end of Shano without any possibility of rescue. Such simple, uneducated, and poor women would continue to be cheated at the hands of their false lovers if the society does not take positive steps to bring a behavioral change among the men of the society. Abbasi raises the issue of humiliation of women because of the crime of human trafficking and prostitution.

‘Pye-Dog’ is even more significant with respect to the unequal marriages. The wife of Kallan Khan is at least 30 years younger than he is. He keeps her in a small room, almost locked all the time except when he is also present in the room. She develops a lot of frustration during the summer season when she could not compromise anymore with the heat of the room. She asked him to let her out of the room and sleep out side in the open. She tells him, “then neither will you for I shall scream and scream till you tell me what I’ve done to deserve being locked up in that hole, night after night”. This request or a protest is designed to show that she wanted to be out of the life of old man Kallan Khan.

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She uses every excuse to get rid of the miserable life that her ill-match with Khan had developed. She even tells him that she wanted to go back to her uncle but has to keep quiet because Kallan Khan had bought her after paying a lot of money. She reaches the height of her protest when she openly declares that the child in her lap whom Khan loved was not his. She says, “You love the child, don’t you? Well listen carefully, you clever old man.’ She seized his feet. ‘Listen. He-is-not-yours! She spoke very slowly and with each word the grip of her clammy hands tightened.” But Khan could not prepare himself to let her go. This is the story of all those women who are sold out by their parents or relatives to fulfill the desire of old but wealthy men. They suffer continuously when they have no other way out. However, they develop a bad thinking and behaviour, when they find themselves helpless against the men to whom they have been sold.

The Stories ‘Simple Question’ and 'Swatting Flies’ portray the characters of women who show the unsuitability of the lives of women who somehow remain unable to marry and even if they marry, their lives remain upset because of the number of female children they give birth to. A woman suffers from the scowling and hooting looks and remarks of the society when she does not get married in accordance with the norms of the society. Similarly, Halima’s mother in the story ‘Simple Question’ is a typical woman who represents the physical and mental condition of those women who fail to give birth to a male child and continue to give birth to female children in the hope of getting a male child. They do so, on account of the social preferences of the society for male babies. This, not only embitters their lives but also that of the girls who remain a target of hate and dislike.

Abbasi does not stop at the issue of too many children born to a woman; she also touches the subject of education by portraying the character of Masterni Ji, in the same story, to show that education could play a role in the upbringing of the children to make them proper citizens of the country and the useful members of the family and the society. In the story, Munni’s mother finds that, due to the teacher, her daughters start to comb their hair and brush their teeth. The teacher is so dedicated that she has come to the house of Munni to ask her mother for the continuation of education of Munni. But the whole family does not want to do so because of the reasons of their own. Even the opportunity provided by the teacher is lost. The mother of Munni shows her regret and desire of education of her girls in the following lines,

“Now! But first you answer my questions please! Simple question for I’m a simple woman but all the same I’m wanting a few things to know myself. I’m wanting to know just what good all this reading and writing, which I’m hearing about will do. Will it get her a husband I’m wanting to know. Will it get a male child I’m wanting to know. Will it get her even a dowry I am wanting to know.”

The Pakistani writers continued to protest against such losses to the individual identity of women and to portray the status of women in Pakistan as they saw it in the society of Pakistan at that time. But they were unable to voice their
opinion loudly. They protested against the miserable condition of women by portraying such characters that should become the models of suffering and survival under the umbrella of the re-colonization by the patriarchal masters. This trend is visibly available in the short stories of Hameedullah. It was her collection of short stories titled *The Young Wife and Other Short Stories* which made her a famous champion and vocalist for the women of Pakistan. It was a great and daring step on her part because it was she who had taken a bold step ahead of any other women after the establishment of Pakistan. Shamsie writes about one of the short stories included in the book of Hameedullah that “The Bull and the She Devil”, a story about sexuality, was considered a rare and courageous story for a woman to write in the puritanical Pakistan of that time.

It was because of the changed scenario about the portrayal of Pakistani women that we find the writer, Hameedullah, portraying women with a different angle as compared with the portrayal of women by Shahnawaz, but still trying to raise the issue of domestic violence against woman and considering her responsible for the ill-luck of the family. Her short story ‘The Young Wife’ proved to be a courageous attempt by a woman writer. This story deserves to be treated as a serious work also with respect to its theme of sufferings of the young married women in Pakistan. The young wife is treated maliciously and is held responsible for all kinds of bad happenings to her husband. Hameedullah’s fiction is also important because it protests, though silently, against the new trends adopted to control the lives and bodies of women, which appreciated silence of women as virtue of women. It reflected the attitudes and ways of the people in the lower section of society to show the popular norms of the newly independent Pakistan.

Abbasi throws light on the sufferings of women because of these values. Most of her stories depict feministic trends. The portrayal of the poor women is even more significant in the short stories of Abbasi. Her stories portray poor working women through different angles of their lives. “The book, *Bitter Gourd and Other Stories*, is permeated with a feminist consciousness and her stories capture the predicament of women trapped in oppressive marriages”. The above discussion shows that the Pakistani postcolonial writers have portrayed women in Pakistan as doubly colonized subjects which have extended their sufferings under the colonial regimes to the patriarchal forces of the society.

**References:**

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15. Ibid, p.27
17. Ibid, p.110
19. Ibid, pp.40-45
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