

Feminism in Khadija Mastoor's Aangan: Exploring Gender Dynamics in Urdu Literature

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Abstract

Feminism has inculcated in women the sense to recognise their potential to lead a better life. In this way, a great change and improvement has been added to the social outlook as now we have women contributing their share in its construction. Although, Feminism started off as a political movement but it can be seen an important part of the literature, that is being written all over the world. There has been a lot of research work conducted on feminism and its application to different literary pieces. Khadija Mastoor is a well known Urdu writer and is famously studied from different perspectives. Khadija Mastoor has very skilfully dealt with theme of feminism in the novel Aangan. Within all the political and social issues, we see the female characters of the novel emerging as prominent individuals, each playing their own role and highlighting the aspects of feminism. This particular study is significant as it attempts to evaluate the concept of feminism as presented in Khadija Mastoor's novel **Aangan** which is usually dealt as a novel based on partition and its related phenomena. Also, it focuses on how feminism which is considered a western concept is practiced and perceived in writings of Urdu literature, thereby highlighting the worldwide application of the philosophy.

Keywords: Khadija Mastoor's Aangan, Gender Dynamics, Urdu Literature

INTRODUCTION

Literature or Art is often said to be the reflection of 'society' but it is not a simple phenomenon. In fact, it is a system that comes into existence as a result of various other sub-systems which evolve over the passage of time. There are rules set by the individuals which design the social structure. Among the many other relational aspects, the major ones are class, age, gender, ethnicity, and religion. For the current research our focus will be somewhat

on the gender oriented issues. Gender can be understood as the attributes, characteristics, and behaviours that are assigned to men and women by the society they are a part of. This division is usually dealt with on the basis of biological makeup of the two genders defining females to be at a pedestal lower than males in most of the cases. A phenomenon or concept that emerged as a result of this biased division is 'feminism'. It grew as a worldwide concept and became a part of discussions in various disciplines, the most prominent one being the literature, ultimately bringing forth the formulation of the 'feministic theory'. We shall discuss in detail the concept of feminism and the feministic theory.

Feminism

Feminism refers to movements that aim at establishing equal rights and opportunities for women at social, political, and economic level, ending all kind of sexism. Feminism was a historical political and intellectual movement that originated in America and Europe for demanding equality for women. According to Susan James "Feminism is grounded on the belief that women are oppressed or disadvantaged by comparison with men, and that their oppression is in some way illegitimate or unjustified" (James, 2000). Feminists believe that 'sex' and 'gender' are distinct from each other. Sex pertains to biological traits while gender is a socially oriented concept. Feminists aim to end all kinds of gender bias against women and campaign for women rights in property, politics, career opportunities, and against sexual harassment and domestic violence.

Urdu Literature

Urdu Literature is studied with reference to the historical development of the Urdu language. The most dominant genre of the literature is poetry with ghazal and nazm being the most prominent verse forms, which led to the development of other forms of writing styles, such as the short story of afsana. Urdu literature is mostly popular in Pakistan as it is the national language of the country, also enjoyed in India and Afghanistan where it is widely understood by the people.

Origin of Urdu Literature is usually linked back to the 14th century in North India, basically among the Persian community. There was influence of Islamic and Persian traditions that largely influenced the Urdu language, since Urdu speaking community shared the cultural heritages as a common entity. This amalgamation of cultures was also reflected in the vocabulary of the language that evolved with words carrying impressions of Sanskrit-derived Prakrit and Arabo-Persian. Amir Khusro is known for his great contribution to music and poetry which also served for the initial growth of the language itself. Some of the basic genres that evolved over the passage of time are discussed briefly.

Urdu Novels

Shaista Akhtar Banu Suhrawardy has written her PhD thesis titled *A Critical Survey of the Development of the Urdu Novel and Short Story* in which she gives a complete account of the novel and how Urdu novel developed with time. She talks about novel in general and says that literature is said to be the depiction of human life and it is through novel that this realistic approach towards life has been achieved (Suhrawardy, 1945: 3). While talking about the factors that led to origin of novel in Urdu, she writes that it was due to exposure to English

literature and the western culture that Urdu was affected. By being exposed to the English life and its values, thought pattern of the people was revolutionized and it brought a change in their lives as had Renaissance in the Europe (Suhrawardy, 1945: 12). This often termed as Renaissance in Urdu because a new spirit was thought to have been inculcated in the Urdu language writers, taking prose form to the peaks of perfection. It was basically that sense of realism that the writers became aware of because the poetry that had established by then was usually laden with imaginative and fantasy ideas. Thus, the actual purpose of literature i.e. to present incidents of life accurately was seen as being fulfilled due to affiliation with English Literature (Suhrawardy, 1945: 14).

Themes that were initially included in the Urdu novels were related to social life and later on the scope shifted to rural social life. The horror of partition and questioning the identity was also treated as a theme in many of the novels. Later, the focus turned towards themes based on realities of young generations and contemporary life.

Deputy Nazeer Ahmed's novel *Mirat-ul-Urus* (1868-69) is considered to the first novel in Urdu literature. This novel was also translated into other languages like Bengali, Kashmiri, Punjabi, and Gujarati and its English translation was published in 1903 by G. E. Ward in London. Other prominent writings of Deputy Nazeer Ahmed are *Bina-tul-Nash* and *Taubat-un-Nasuh* (1873-74) which are based on guidance for moral values and character building of young generation. Chaudhry Afzal Haq wrote the novel *Zindagi* (1933-34) which particularly relates to the historical truths and the precious memories aiming the young generation for developing their moral values. Some other major novels are *Umrao Jaan Ada*, *Khuda ki Basti*, *Makaan* and many others.

Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar, Mirza Hadi Ruswa, Premchand are the major Urdu novelists of the 19th century while Qurat-ul-ain Haider, Bano Qudsia, Ashfaq Ahmed, Fatima Surayya Bajia, Shaukat Thanvi, Mustansar Hussain Tarar, and Umera Ahmed are few popular names among 20th century novelists.

Afsana Nigari

It has been more than a hundred years since short story form was included in Urdu literature. Short story developed as a regular form of Urdu literature as a result of the writings of Munshi Premchand, the most famous being *Kafan* and *Poos Ki Raat*. Towards the end of his life, a collection of short stories by different writers was compiled called *Angaare* was a great achievement. Short story developed as a major genre as a result of the writings of the writers like Ghulam Abbas, Manto, Ismat Chughtai, and others. Other prominent names in this regard are Qurat-ul-ain Haider, Joginder Paul, Paigham Afaqui, Moinuddin Jinabade, Zahida Hina.

Among the many other dimensions, the sufferings and violence that resulted from partition of the sub-continent has been the subject of the most famous stories. Stories of the recent past are based on complications of the daily life as expressed in the short stories included in Paigham Afaqui's collection *Mafia*. Mumtaz Mufti, Krishan Chander, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Quadrat Ullah Shahab, Ashfaq Ahmed, Khadija Mastoor, Mansha Yaad, Jamal Siddiqi are some of the major short story writers of 19th and 20th century.

Urdu Drama

Urdu Drama emerged from the dramatic traditions prevailing in North India that were

shaped as a result of the works that were being practiced by proponents like Nawab Wajid Ali. Parsi theatre was founded as a result of the experiments in this way. Tradition of theatre in Urdu influenced the Indian theatre increasing the demand for writers and artists in not only Urdu (which was known as Hindi earlier) but other theatres as well including Gujarati, Marathi, and Bengali. It has been more than hundred years that Urdu dramatic tradition has been a source of entertainment and most of successful theatre dramas have been converted into films.

Drama focuses on themes related to life and other aspects, imitating the drama in life. In Modern Urdu tradition where Iranian, Turkish, Indian folk stories were adapted for stages presentations with poetry laden script, influence of Great English dramatists like Shakespeare is evident. Imtiaz Ali Taj, Krishan Chander, Ghulam Rabbani, Prof. Mujeeb are some of the writers who established this tradition. Urdu Drama has been flourishing as a result of the contribution of the playwrights like Prof. Hasan, Ghulam Jeelnai. Shameem Hanfi from old generation and Danish Iqbal, Shahid Anwar, and Iqbal Niyazi who are some from prominent contemporary figures in the field. Some of the outstanding works produced by Danish Iqbal are *Dara Shikoh*, *Sahir*, *Kuchh Ishq Kia Kuchh Kaam*, etc which are known for the newer techniques of theatre and contemporary perspective introduced in them.

There are some of the writers who have been producing plays for the sake of being performed at theatre and among them are Zaheer Anwar, Shahid, Danish Iqbal, and Iqbal Niyazi (his play *Aur Kitnay Jalyanwala Baugh* won National award and other awards as well).

Urdu Literary Criticism

There have been some prominent movements that originated as a result of literary criticism of Urdu Literature.

Progressive Writers Movement

Originally termed, *Anjuman Taraqqi Pasand Musannafin-e-Hind*, the Progressive Writers Movement is considered the strongest movement next to Sir Syed's education movement. The writers belonging to this movement made great contributions in the form of fiction and poetry and they were undoubtedly the trend setters in this regard. The prominent members of the movement are Rashid Jahan, Saadat Hasan Manto, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Habib Jalib, Josh Malihabadi, Firaq Gorakhpuri, Ismat Chughtai, and many others.

Modernism

The modernist movement in Urdu literature started in 1960 and the two most significant names are Shams-ur-Rehman Farooqui and Gopichand Narang. Some famous poets linked to this movement are Noon Meem Rashid, Meeraji, Nasir Kazmi, Bashir Bader, and Shahryar. They emphasised the symbolic and subtle presentation of ideas instead presenting them directly.

Halqa-e-Arbab-e-Zauq

This movement began in Lahore, British Raj India, in 1936. Urdu poets Noon Meem Rashid, Meeraji, and Qayyum Nazar are the prominent and active members of this group. This Urdu poetry movement is the second modern literary movement which started after the

Progressive Writers' Movement and is considered to have been the most influential one in Urdu language.

Post-Modernism

Post modernism can generally be said to have been majorly prompted by Gopi Chand Narang, with many other critics of Urdu literature who are related to this approach. The critics of post modernism suggest that contemporary literature should be interpreted keeping in view the content therein focusing on features like feminism, regional link of the text instead of analysing it on the basis of trends established internationally.

Independent Writers

Towards the end of the 1980s, the progressive movement and the modernist movement began turning infertile and coming to an end. There was a new spirit of creativity that sprung from the new mode of life as a result of the socio-economic atmosphere in the days after partition and freedom. An era of fiction started anew when Paigham Afaqui's novel *Makaan* was published. These writers were tired of the suggestions from literary movement groups about adopting particular styles and thoughts and the politics among the supporters of these movements. They promoted the idea that these movements misuse the awards and resources by confining them within certain chosen writers by the members of the movement. Thus, writers like Paigham Afaqui declared themselves independent and to follow their own writing style and philosophy of viewing life, without being identified to any particular movement. Thus, the theme shifted from partition to existentialism which is the dominant theme of modernism. Major writers of this group are Ghazanfer, Musharraf Alam Zauqi, Jagan Nath Azad, Altaf Hussain Maulana Hali, Shibli Nomani, Ali Sardar Jafri, Aslam Farrukhi, Muhammad Bashir Ranjha including many others.

Khadija Mastoor is famously known for her contribution in the genre of short story and novel. For the present research, one of her novels *Aangan* has been selected. It is imperative to take a brief account of her biographical details.

Biography of Khadija Mastoor

Khadija Mastoor is a very prominent figure in Urdu Literature. Rashida Qazi compiled a thesis *Urdu Afsanvi Adab Ki Riwayat Main Khadija Mastoor Ka Muqam* (1997), as a Ph.D student at Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan. It was published in the year 2003. The thesis is a comprehensive and detailed account of the entire life of the author, touching all the major aspects of her life. The biographical details given below have been extracted from Rashida Qazi's (2003) thesis.

Khadija Mastoor was born on 11th December, 1927 in India. Her father was a British Army Doctor and her mother used to write essays that were published in different magazines such 'Ismat', 'Aligarh' etc. Khadija Mastoor had five sisters and two brothers (Qazi, 2003: 2). She studied at a local Government school for few months and then a teacher was appointed to teach English, Urdu, and Mathematics at home. This system also ended soon and with that the educational career as well (Qazi, 2003: 2). Among some of her favourite games were kabaddi, guli-danda, cricket, and chess (Qazi, 2003: 3-4). In the year 1937, when Khadija Mastoor was almost ten years old, her father passed away which was a great loss for the family. This

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affected the financial condition as well, as there was no saving left after their father's death whose salary was the only source of income (Qazi, 2003: 5). The environment of the family was of a literary sort with a mother being a regular essay writer, thus Khadija Mastoor's interest towards literature developed with the passage of time. Later, the family migrated to Pakistan and settled in Lahore (Qazi, 2003: 5-6).

In 1942, she composed her first story which could not be published but she received great appreciation for her effort and many of the prominent literary figures praised her writing style. A newspaper mentions that Khadija Mastoor

"wrote stories for a children magazine and (was) encouraged by the response (she) received from prestigious literary journals like *Adbi Dunya*. Maulana Salahuddin Ahmad, editor of *Adbi Dunya* published the stories with adoring remarks and an advice." (*Daily Dawn, 2005*)

This encouraged her and she started writing on regular basis and the process never ended till she lived (Qazi, 2003: 4). Khadija Mastoor wrote several collections of short stories and two novels. The books of short stories were *Khel* (1944), *Bochhar* (1946), *Chand Roz Aur* (1951), *Thhakay Haaray* (1962), and *Thanda Meetha Pani* (1981) and *Aangan* (1962) and *Zameen* (1983) (Qazi, 2003: 6-7). Most of her writings are based on issues related to social, moral, and political aspects. For her writings, she usually wrote about things that she experienced in her surroundings and inspired her. Khadija Mastoor passed away on 28th July, 1982 while she was in London and was buried in Lahore (Qazi, 2003: 15).

Her novel *Aangan* is considered to be landmark in history of Urdu Literature and was awarded the 'Adamjee Award'. In this research project, the novel will be analysed from the feminist viewpoint.

Summary of the novel *Aangan*

Aangan is novel written by Khadija Mastoor depicting the social, cultural, and political scenario at the time around partition. It is with the excellence of her skill that Khadija Mastoor highlights the family relationships and the psychological impacts of the overall situation on characters in the novel. The title of the novel *Aangan* is very relevant in the sense that *Aangan* means 'courtyard' which is basically the central place in a house, similarly, this novel serves as the central point of depiction of the lives of the so many characters involved in the story. It caters all the major factors that affect the behaviours and thoughts of the characters in the novel, thus justifying them to some extent.

The major character in the novel is that of Aliya and it is through her that most of the incidents have been narrated and characters have been named in relation to her. The story is revealed to us through her perspective. The novel opens at the point when Aliya and her mother have moved to their ancestral house with her uncle (Baray Chacha) after her father was sentenced to imprisonment for seven years. With a flashback, we are taken into the past of Aliya, to her own home where she lived with her parents, her sister (Tehmina Aapa), her cousin (Safdar Bhai), and a maid (Maama). She remembers the voices of her mother complaining about the careless attitude of her father towards matters of the house and more involvement in the political activities against the British. Another reason that offended her mother was her father's inclination for his nephew, Safdar Bhai, who was at their mercy after the death of his parents. Also, Aliya's father had intentions to get Tehmina Aapa married to Safdar Bhai which increased her mother's hatred for him. Later, Aliya also became aware of the fact that

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Tehmina Aapa and Safdar Bhai also liked each other, but remained silent on the issue. Aliya's father decided to send Safdar Bhai to Lahore for educational purposes so that he can become capable of earning a better life. After his departure, her mother arranged Tehmina Aapa's marriage to a cousin of theirs, Jameel Bhaiyya, Baray Chacha's son. Tehmina Aapa did not protest at all, rather she silently committed suicide which enraged her father to the extent that he stopped communicating with anybody at home and used to stay away for most of the time. After few months, her father was sent to jail for he had injured a British officer during a dispute. Seven years was a long duration for them to stay alone in that place and therefore, they were brought to their ancestral home.

With this, we are brought into the present and we are introduced to Shameema, given the nickname Chhammi who is Aliya's cousin and has been living here since childhood. Next, Aliya meets Bari Chachi who is a clear contrast to her mother. She is kind and soft-spoken and unlike her mother makes no complaints against her husband's too much interest for politics, although that has made them face serious financial crisis. She realizes the fact that her complaints will be of no use. Aliya meets her grandmother but truth of her father being imprisoned is kept secret from her due to her bad health. However, her grandmother yearns to see her sons, but her desire is never fulfilled and she passes away after few months. Kareeman Bua is a maid who has been serving the family faithfully since many years and has a considerable voice to comment on the happenings in the family. Lower than her, is the status of Israar Miyaan who is one of the illegitimate children of Aliya's grandfather and lives separated from all family members. Jameel Bhaiyya, to whom Tehmina Aapa was engaged, turns out to be a surprisingly odd person to Aliya and she is really upset to know the kind of person he is. He grows interested towards Aliya and attempts to express his inclination through different gestures. Later on, he also tells his feelings openly but Aliya is never able to convince her heart due to the horrible consequences of failed love stories that she had witnessed in her past; her neighbor Kusum didi and her sister Tehmina Aapa. Chhammi reveals to Aliya how Jameel Bhaiyya had been after her before Aliya's arrival and had been taking financial benefits from her for his education, which further disappoints Aliya of Jameel Bhaiyya.

Baray Chacha is arrested by the police due to his involvement in some political activities and the family's situation worsens as time passes by. Jameel Bhaiyya leaves for Lahore in search of job. In the meanwhile, Najma Phupphi enters the scenario and her presence adds to the depression at home due to her cunning remarks. Baray Chacha is released after some days and he arranges to get Chhammi married. Aliya's father dies while he is still in prison. Aliya starts her education again and finally gets a job as a school teacher. After partition, Aliya and her mother migrate to Pakistan with her uncle (Mamu) who buys them a separate house of their own. Aliya starts working at a school and later joins Walton Camp where she serves as a volunteer teacher. While in Pakistan, Aliya learns about Baray Chacha's murder and also that Chhammi has been divorced and married to Jameel Bhaiyya. Shakeel is Jameel Bhaiyya's younger brother who had eloped long time back and Aliya meets him when he accidentally enters her home in Pakistan and she recognizes him. She takes care of him but to her disappointment, he steals her money and runs away the next morning. Safdar Bhai also returns at the end of the novel. He has grown weak by now and informs Aliya that he never got married for he could never forget Tehmina. He requests Aliya's mother to allow him to

marry Aliya but Aliya refuses his proposal. In the end, Aliya cries bitterly out of frustration and feeling of loss.

The novel will be analysed from feministic viewpoint focusing on the female characters present in the novel.

Significance of the Study

There has been a lot of research work conducted on feminism and its application to different literary pieces. Similarly, Khadija Mastoor is a well known Urdu writer and is famously studied from different perspectives. This particular study is significant as it attempts to evaluate the concept of feminism as presented in Khadija Mastoor's novel *Aangan* which is usually dealt as a novel based on partition and its related phenomena. Also, it focuses on how feminism which is considered a western concept is practiced and perceived in writings of Urdu literature, thereby highlighting the worldwide application of the philosophy.

Research Objectives

- To analyse the concept of feminism as presented in the novel *Aangan*.
- To evaluate the female characters in the novel *Aangan* as presented by Khadija Mastoor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminism is a concept that originated in western countries and spread as a result of the efforts and writings produced by different writers and philosophers. This project is an attempt to highlight the fact that it is no more confined to western writings alone; rather it has grown as an international phenomenon and has been taken as a subject of expression by writers belonging to literature in other languages such as Urdu. In this chapter, such writings have been reviewed which mention the spread of feminist philosophy into different literatures and particularly, the Urdu literature. Some concepts have been talked about that are relevant and helpful for developing an understanding for the analysis in the next chapter.

Feminist Literary Criticism

Bijay Kumar Das (2010) composed the book titled *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism* which consists of chapters dealing with the major literary theories. There is a chapter in the book 'Feminist Literary Criticism: An Overview' which gives a detailed account of the literary theory that evolved as a result of the feminist movement. Feminist literary criticism basically looks at the presentation of woman in literature on two grounds i.e. the way male writers present 'woman' from their viewpoint known as "phallogentrism" and how 'woman' is represented by female writers from their own perspective which is known as 'Gynocriticism' (Das, 2010: 92). In other words, there are two major dimensions of feminist literary criticism; one of them is concerned with 'woman as reader' of the literature produced by male writers while the other with 'woman as write' or creator of the literature (Das, 2010: 92-3).

Bijay Kumar Das (2010) explains that according to feminists, we need to understand the system of patriarchy in the first place if we want to understand the status of woman in the world. It is a worldwide system where men perceive women according to their own viewpoint so much so that they have influenced women to look at themselves from males'

perspective (Das, 2010: 93). Das (2010) quotes Shirin Kudchedkar who talks about the social status of women and says that patriarchy emerged as a combination of the characteristics of sex and gender. Feminists accept that male and females are different on the basis of biological sex but due to the extra inclination towards one sex while ignoring the other, is what has made the feminists re-evaluate this distinction. Also, the socially oriented gender roles of males and females are constantly associated to the biological distinction which is the basic point being challenged by the feminists. The generally assigned roles to women are those of mother, wife, and housewife in both public as well as private domains (Das, 2010: 93-4). Woman's status is usually shifted to the secondary level, as a subservient to man as can be seen in Simone de Beauvoir's phrase 'the second sex' and that of Milton's statement "He for God only, she for God in him" (Das, 2010: 94). This shows that woman's main responsibility in life is to serve man (paralleled to kind of worshipping him) and also that woman's status has been termed as inferior and lacking. There are contrastive distinctions made between masculine and feminine traits. Kudchedkar states that generally held notions are that men are 'bold, strong, assertive, independent, aspiring, rational, and logical' whereas women are thought to be 'timid, yielding, gentle, self-sacrificing, emotional, and intuitive' (Das, 2010: 94). Although, women are praised and admired for their 'womanly' qualities but there are incidents where the actual belittling of their image and treating them as secondary beings can be observed. We can find a number of such stereotypical examples in literature as well (Das, 2010: 4).

Feminism aims at not only to understand the ideological functioning of the world but also to bring changes that will benefit women. Simone de Beauvoir created the phrase 'the second sex' to preach the fact that idea that women are inferior to men as dependent upon them emerges from their accepting the notion that "the world is masculine on the whole, those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today are men" (Das, 2010: 94). Therefore, women in general and feminists in particular do not accept the inferior position of women to men, although they do agree upon the biological distinction between them. According to Simon de Beauvoir "one is not born but becomes a woman", which pertains to the social attitudes and stereotypes attached to woman which design their mental makeup as well and they are forced to fix themselves within that social definition (Das, 2010: 94). Even in language such as English, we can observe this discrimination where the pronoun is largely male-oriented. The trends have changed and we can see women being appointed at high positions such as Presidents, Prime Ministers, Scientists, Commanders, Administrators, and many others. Once again, Das (2010) quotes Shirin Kudchedkar who defines the major aim of feminist movement to end all kinds of social practices that become the reason for oppression of women, and free women of the social bonds that confine women within the gender roles. It seeks to present women as subject of their own stories instead of being an object to males as fulfilment for their desires and frustrations. Women try to figure out for themselves their own needs and desires and this search for self-realization and self-knowledge helps in developing relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. Hence, individual and social change is the required to bring change in the way males perceive things (Das, 2010: 95).

Helene Cixous demands in clear words the self-assertion by women writers and leaders of feminism in the words "Woman must put herself into the text – as in the world and into history – by her own movement" (Das, 2010: 95). It is generally presumed that the feminist

era came to an end in the 1970s, and the era of 1980s is often referred to as the post-feminist era. Margaret Atwood attempts to correct this misconception in the following words:

"It would be a mistake to assume that everything has changed [...] the goals of feminist movement have not been achieved, and those who claim that we're living in a post-feminist era are either sadly mistaken or tired of thinking about the same subject" (Das, 2010: 95)

Feminist writers reject the image of women presented by male writers, as the characters there are not sketched faithfully, rather tinged with males' perspective of how they see women not as women themselves would see it (Das, 2010: 95).

The concepts of masculinity and femininity are based in the way society is designed around males and females. According to the idea of 'sexual politics' presented by Kate Miller in her book *Sexual Politics* the dominant sex tries to find ways to retain and extend their authority over the inferior sex (Das, 2010: 96). She does not agree with the approach of 'ahistoricism' by the New Critics and suggests that in order to understand the proper dimensions of a text, it should be seen in the light of the social as well as the cultural contexts. She believes that a text is never independent of the social and historical influences of the time it was produced at. Critics of literary feminism say that if stereotypes regarding women are studied as observed by male critics and the limited roles that women have played in history of literature, we would just get to know what males think women should be like and not the reaction and experiences of women themselves (Das, 2010: 96).

Gynocritics attempt to design a framework of analysis which is based on the study of female experiences instead of adopting the theories and models proposed by male critics. They take into consideration the feminist research conducted in the fields of history, sociology, anthropology, and psychology to come up with the critical principles of their own. For this purpose, women read the texts written by males and produced a category of 'women-centred criticism' (Das, 2010: 97). Thus, feminist critique is a process that involves the reading of a male created text by a feminist reader who then offers different interpretations regarding the image of women as promoted therein. Women writers challenge the males' view by rewriting and recreating their texts from their own feminist perspective (Das, 2010: 97).

Das (2010) agrees with N. Geetha who observes that feminist critics and writers are sensitive to the fact that in literature, there is complete negation of female experiences and the image projected has been confined to certain roles that they think acceptable. Women are usually characterized between stereotypical roles. They may be presented as independent, intelligent, and heroic to propagate a positive image of theirs while the hatred for women is usually depicted through their characters as the witch, the vamp, and the virgin/goddess (Das, 2010: 97).

Das (2010) mentions that feminism and post-modernism are often linked to each other, as pointed out by Linda Hutcheon that both the phenomena have hinted our attention to the modes of representing the dominant ideologies in our society. Feminism, particularly, focused the female subject of representation through dominant features presented in mass culture and high art, and suggests ways to change the stereotypical practice. Feminists do not allow to blindly accepting the rigid representations without questioning them for that way we ignore the social system where power structure serves as approval for some images of women. Feminists have made efforts to draw our attention to the fact that it is the social context and the ideology being followed in a system that give rise to the cultural realities (Das,

2010: 98).

Feminist literary criticism has developed in us the sense to analyse the literature based on women from their own perspective. Das (2010) quotes John Stuart Mill who exclaims that: "We may safely assert that the knowledge that men can acquire of women, [...] is wretchedly imperfect and superficial and will always be so until women themselves have told all they have to tell" (Das, 2010: 99)

It can be concluded that the main concern of feminist criticism is to establish the trend of "woman as the producer of textual meanings with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women" (Das, 2010: 99).

Feminist Movement and Urdu Literature

Sangh Mittra and Bachchan Kumar (2004) in their book *Encyclopaedia of Women in South Asia: Pakistan* talk about the developing relationship between feminist movement and Urdu literature. They acknowledge the fact that 'feminist consciousness' has grown to be a globally evolved concept gaining acceptance and attention among the writers of modern spirit (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 66). They go on to elaborate upon the concept of 'feminist consciousness' whereby women have grown out of the stereotypical patriarchal social notions. They have shunned the male-dominated values for life and started living as independent individuals, thus giving rise to a new philosophy of life and cultural values (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 67). Feminists have been defined into two categories; Anglo-Americans and Gynocritics (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 67). Anglo-Americans consider women are as creative as men and they contribute to value system on an equal level. Gynocritics are usually said to have their roots in the French tradition for their approach is fundamental and of a revolutionary sort. They believe that writing is such mental activity that is purely independent and based on originality, so males should not attempt to criticise it for they will never be able to discover the true essence of a woman's work (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 67).

Although, feminism started as a movement in the western countries but now it is not confined to any social boundaries, rather people with cultural sense have adopted it as a code of thought all over the world. Henrik Ibsen is said to have written the first feminist play *A Doll's House* where he presented the character of Nora as a sufferer of the male-oriented system. Mittra and Kumar 2004 mention that the play was directed by Seema Afridi for dramatic presentation at the DHA College for Women to benefit the students of English literature and help them understand the concept of feminism (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 67).

Virginia Woolf was the first one to mention about the feminist consciousness in her essay *A Room of One's Own*. Another prominent name in this regard is that of Simone de Beauvoir, a French feminist novelist and thinker, who wrote a philosophical treatise *The Second Sex* which explains the conditions of women where they are not given the right to think or express themselves independently. *Being and Nothingness* is another remarkable piece of the sort composed by Jean Paul Sartre where he presented the phenomenon of 'bad faith' with which women are thought to have been born into the world (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 67).

Some of the prominent names with regard to awakening the feminist consciousness and driving it in the right direction are Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 67). Mittra & Kumar (2004) say that Gynocriticism is the essence of the feminist movement. Elaine Showalter coined the term 'Gynocriticism' to refer to the writings of

women including poetry, drama, novel, essays, and journals to study the female language, their imagination and the experiences expressed in their writings. New aspects of the feminist culture have been discovered through major writings such as Julia Kristeva's *Language and Desire*, Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, and Helene Cixous' *The Newly-Born Woman*. The basic underlying objective of the entire feminist movement can be summarized to rediscover the hidden traditions in women's writings and also to rediscover and republish many of the works by women, including the novels. Virgo, Pandora, and Women's Press are the three major publishing houses that popularized the feminist movement all over the world by publishing women's literature (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 68).

Mittra and Kumar (2004) state that Pakistani women are also educated enough to be aware of their rights and issues, and they have enriched Urdu literature with their writings presenting and expressing their thoughts freely. History of women's contribution in writing literature in Urdu began with the poetic compositions starting from Malaya Chanda Bai till the current times (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 68).

Bilquis Jamal, Rabia Pinha, Kaneez Fatima, and Ada Jafri are some prominent and talented women who are given the credit for establishing traditions of women's writing styles and modes of expression (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 68).

Mittra and Kumar (2004) further mention some women writers in detail and their contribution towards empowering feminist writing styles. First of all, they mention Ada Jafri in the words of Qazi Abdul Ghaffar who describes her to be a highly talented and accurate artist in expressing female emotions and thoughts through her poetry (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 68). Qazi Abdul Ghaffar particularly admires her for being intact with the traditional values of the society she was born in yet expressing her views independently through her art. Such sensible blend of modern and traditional elements has gained her acceptance among both schools of thought and a significant place in Urdu literature. Badan Darida's collection of verses is considered a landmark in the development of feminist in Urdu poetry which shows her maturity of expression (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 69).

Fehmida Riaz is said to be more expressive in her thoughts, strongly believing in freedom of expression. She is more influenced by Marxist theory that talks about gender conflict emerging as a result of class conflict (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 69).

Kishwar Naheed is a very dedicated writer of feminism. She has translated Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* into Urdu in order to present the difficult language and concepts in simple and understandable way, which has inspired many of the feminist writers (Mittra & Kumar, 2004: 69).

Similar views have been presented by Zamir Ali Badaiyuni in his article *Feminist Movement and Urdu Literature* that was published in Dawn Magazine on January 12, 2003. He says that Fatima Hassan is known for pioneering Gynocriticism in Urdu literature. Urdu literature can be enriched by gynocritical studies since it is Gynocriticism which is the actual spirit of feminist movement (Badaiyuni, 2003: Dawn Magazine: para 16).

Feminist writings can also be observed in Urdu fiction which is an important genre. Ismat Chughtai is the first Urdu fiction writer with other important writers like Qurat-ul-ain Haider, Fatima Hassan, Khalida Hussain, Bano Qudsia, Jameela Hashmi, Jillani Bano, Mumtaz Shireen, and Azra Abbas known for their enriched contribution to Urdu literature (Badaiyuni, 2003: Dawn Magazine: para 18). However, Qurat-ul-ain Haider stands out among all and her novel

Aag ka Dariya which is considered as one of the masterpieces in fiction. The novel is written in 'stream of consciousness' pattern, a technique that was significant in works of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce as well. *Sita Haran* and *Jila Watan* are her famous short stories and *Gardish-e-Rang-e-Chaman* is an autobiographical novel which talks about the historical and cultural changes (Badaiyuni, 2003: Dawn Magazine: para 18).

Badaiyuni ends at a positive note, filled with hope that increasing trend of feminist philosophy in Urdu literature will help in emergence of more writers to come forward and contribute their skill (Badaiyuni, 2003: Dawn Magazine: para 19).

Khadija Mastoor – The Writer

Hasan Abidi reported in the Daily Dawn on 3rd September, 2005 that a seminar was held at the Arts Council, Karachi which was organized by Historical Event Committee of the Arts Council for paying a tribute to Khadija Mastoor's art of writing in Urdu fiction. Her sister, Hajra Masroor was invited as the chief guest at the event along with a poet and critic, Prof. Saher Ansari. He admired the fact that Khadija Mastoor skilfully blended the symbolic and the narrative style, thus coming up with a unique tradition of her own. Her stories depicted the social, moral and political aspects of the society she observed around her and simply made them the subjects of her writing. She never followed any particular style that was already established and being followed by other, but she was versatile in her art of writing. Abidi (2005) mentions further that Prof. Ansari quoted a remark that was once made by Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi regarding Khadija Mastoor's skill at letter writing which he paralleled to that of Mirza Ghalib's who was a great poet in Urdu Literature. Prof. Ansari suggested those letters to be published in order to help further evaluate the writing style of Khadija Mastoor (Abidi, 2005: *Daily Dawn*).

When Hajra Masroor came for the address, she mentioned that for her Khadija Mastoor never was concerned with the usual trend being followed by other short story writers, instead she picked to write about things that she experienced in her life and particularly childhood. She further mentioned that they both used to write for magazines like *Alamgir*, *Saqi*, *Khayyam*, and others. Firdous Haider who is a famous story talked about Khadija Mastoor's novel *Aangan* and her collection *Thanda Meetha Pani* being the most influential pieces of writing. Ahmad Hamish, a poet and a story writer, mentioned examples from English and Hindi writings while reviewing works of Khadija Mastoor (Abidi, 2005: *Daily Dawn*).

A staff report was released in Daily Times magazine on October 26, 2010 mentioning that a project titled *Makers of Pakistani Literature* is going to be published by Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL). Fakhar Zaman, Chairman PAL gave an account of the books *Hijab Imtiaz Ali Taj: Life and Works* and *Khadija Mastoor: Life and Works* that were being released. He said that this project is an attempt to compile the biographies and analytic studies of the major writers as a way to reinforce the fact that the works produced in Urdu by Pakistani writers are of great significance as any other literary piece in world literature (Daily Times, 2010).

Fakhar Zaman elaborated that Khadija Mastoor stands out among the other literary figures due to her exclusive style of presenting the bold issues courageously. Among the many writings that she composed, Khadija Mastoor's novel *Aangan* is considered to be a remarkable achievement in literary world.

ANALYSIS

This research project aims at analysing the concept of feminism in the selected novel. Feminism started off as political movement which later turned into a social, cultural and ultimately a literary one. Among the many literatures that picked feminism as subject, Urdu literature also included writings that cater the feministic issues quite remarkably. For the current study, Khadija Mastoor's novel *Aangan* has been selected for feministic analysis. In this chapter, major aspects of the novel will be discussed. Also, in order to conduct the feministic analysis of the female characters, the male characters involved in the novel will also be discussed in order to give a complete picture and reason the development of the female characters.

It is an established fact that an individual's personality is developed as a result of the social as well as family influences that one experiences around them. As a person matures, they start contemplating things and develop their own perspectives about leading life. The major factor that operates in the process is the already held notions and ideas about certain issues in the system that a person lives in. In the novel *Aangan*, Khadija Mastoor has presented to us the story which is based in the time period around partition. On a surface level, it seems a political novel but it is the skill of the author that she has inculcated the social as well as cultural influences and how in the midst of this the characters emerge, each holding their own significance in some way or the other.

It has been discussed in the previous chapters that gender oriented concepts play a vital role in the development of the social as well as family structure. There are particular responsibilities that are thought to be performed by males and females respectively. Also, there are cultural realities that are built over the passage of time and individuals are expected to follow them so that they are acceptable to the society. Certain characteristics are suggested and fixed as defining features of males and females. Some of the commonly held notions are that males are superior to females since they are strong, independent, and logical in contrast to females who are of fragile nature, dependent on men for most of their needs, and are not capable of logical sense. In this way, there is a divide that is created that leads to severe discriminating attitudes, often making the females victim of suppression and male domination leading to an unjust social system. As women grew educated, they made themselves heard to the world and demanded for better rights for themselves. They shunned off all the patriarchal implications that had bounded them since long and struggled to develop a new definition of life as they perceived it.

The novel *Aangan* presents a similar picture in this regard where we can observe that most of the characters have been presented as acting out of the stereotypical definitions. The most interesting aspect of the novel is the way Khadija Mastoor has empowered her female characters in a writing so much laden with the political impact. Another important factor to be noticed is the inappropriate approach of male characters towards significant issues. Therefore, it is imperative that we take into account the attitudes and behaviours of the male characters as well and see how much they are responsible for such an outlook of the novel. The analysis has been designed in a way that both male and female characters will be analysed in order to sketch the actual picture and how things culminate as result of their behaviours.

The Impropriety of the Male Characters

The novel *Aangan* is not just a narration of the story rather it serves as a commentary on the social attitudes prevalent at the time. The male characters in the novel are not shown as the typical men are supposed to be and this is being said in terms of their actions which portray an impractical and too much idealised approach of living a life. Although, we do not get to see Aliya's grandfather in the novel, but through him a very significant social trend has been highlighted. Israr Miyan, who lives at Aliya's ancestral home, is the illegitimate child of her grandfather and this is to highlight the trend that was common at the time where men used to keep mistresses and have children with them. This speaks of the way men used their authority, committing highly immoral acts. They were not answerable to anyone and since Aliya's grandfather was one of the richest men of high status, he was not concerned about any social problem as a result of such a life style.

Similarly, Baray Chacha and Aliya's father also stick to their ideals of leading a life. To them, it is their interest and idealism that is the utmost priority. The only source of income for the family is the shop but he does not take care of it which shows that he is not concerned about earning for the family. He leaves the shop at the hands of Israar Miyaan, who afterwards takes its responsibility but is not able to make much money out of it because it soon gets emptied and there is nothing to sale. Khadija Mastoor highlights the approach of the males of the time who were struggling for their political interests and made every effort to fulfil their aims. They risk everything for the sake of their passion for politics. It is not to say that they were wrong in pursuing their aim or passion, but the way their families were being affected due to their negligence is condemnable. Aliya's father used to stay away from home for most of the time and when he came back home, he had friends to visit him who would sit for long hours and discuss about the political issues and the situation. This is a fact that at the time when efforts were being made for partition, people and particularly the males, had devoted themselves completely to fulfil their aims no matter whatever political party they were in favour of. They put aside their family and business, focusing merely upon their personal interests and passions.

If we analyse the attitude of the younger male characters like Safdar Bhai and Jameel Bhaiyya, we see that they were also not very serious about their professional career nor did they think it to be their responsibility to earn for their family. This attitude they had received as inheritance for their forefathers were landlords, so never really had to bother about their financial income. But, now the situation is not the same but is lack of sensitivity on their part that they do not realize the condition of the family and play their part as responsible members of the family.

We have analysed the attitude of the male characters depicted belonging to three generations and we notice that they all had in common the non-serious attitude towards the most significant matters of life. They never calculated the consequences of their actions and what affects that will have on their family life afterwards. Now, we shall look at the female characters to see how different they are than the male characters and how Khadija Mastoor has portrayed them which makes this novel a feminist one. There are equal female characters present in the novel who present a clear contrast to the male characters and we shall discuss them as well.

Female Characters

There are a number of female characters in the novel, each significant in their own way depicting a different perspective of female psyche to deal with the kind of circumstances they were living in. Khadija Mastoor has presented such a picture where female characters stand out prominently in terms of their actions and thought patterns; much more sensible and logical in comparison to the male characters.

If we look at the character of Aliya's grandmother, we are told that she used to be a very strict lady and nobody could ever dare to go against her rules. She is shown as the most authoritative woman in the house. But at the same time, we see her kindness by keeping Israar Miyaan who is the illegitimate child of her husband at home. She provides him shelter to stay in, or else she would have left him at the mercy of his fate and luck. His life would have been ruined but it is her feeling heart that despite her strict nature, she was sensitive enough not to put a human being through any tough condition.

Next in discussion, is the character of Bari Chachi, a woman who has been presented as the most understanding one and plays the role of a peace-maker in the family. She is the wife of Baray Chacha and although he does not seriously take part in important matters and takes no responsibility of maintaining or earning for the family, she never complains about it. Financial state of the family is worsening day by day which is mainly due to the reason that Baray Chacha spends all the money along with his time and energy in his political activities. Although, she is aware of the reasons for family's sufferings but she never complains about it to her husband. She has that dignity and honour in her personality and thus maintains her mannerism as a decent person. She realizes that it is not possible for a woman to keep a man from his passion for it is impossible to convince them to retreat from it. When Aliya's mother tells her that she should ask her husband to stay away from the political scene or else he will face the same consequences as his brother, she answers her that she will not take any stand against him. She does not believe in spoiling the peace of the family by getting into arguments about something which cannot be resolved. She further exclaims that men are very passionate about their interests and it is not possible to stop them from it.

Through the character of Bari Chachi, Khadija Mastoor has not only highlighted the complying nature of females but also their sense of understanding and flexibility in matters to deal with in a peaceful manner. It is commonly observed in our surroundings as well that women usually try to avoid situations which can spoil the peaceful state of the family. It is very clear to them that men usually never give importance to what women say, so it is no use arguing with them for it never leads to resolution. So, women have to be very careful and patiently deal with matters of home without conflicting with males in their matters of interest and favour. Women's job is not only to maintain the routine chores, but also to be sensible enough in dealing the matters and effectively convey their thoughts to male members without disturbing the situation at home.

It was thought imperative to deal with the above discussed characters in order to give a complete picture of the circumstances that our major characters Aliya and Chhammi are exposed to. In this way, we can see more effectively how they both emerged as individual characters as a result of their life experiences and relationships they lived.

Character Analysis of Aliya

One of the major female characters in the novel is that of Aliya who can be termed as the major feminist character as she stands out the most prominent one throughout the passage of the novel. We can say that she serves as the carrier of the story and all the notions that the author intended to portray and the plots moves along with her. It is through her that most of the cultural and social aspects are depicted. Also, the major stereotypical notions, as held by the people of older generation like Khansaman Bua are narrated when they are being transferred to her. They also serve as an insight into the cultural values that are inculcated in the girls from young age, for instance, the kind of games that the young girls played. Khansaman Bua suggests her to play games that are most appropriate for girls, which Khadija Mastoor narrates in the words:

“Sehan kay aik konay main guriyon ka bara sa gharonda banaya gya. Iss gharonday main guriyon ki shadi hoti, dhoom say baraat nikalti ... Khansaman Bua shadion aur paidaish per khajoorain bana kar daiteen.” (Mastoor, 1962: p. 9)

This tells a lot about the kind of social mindset of the people regarding girls and the values that are inculcated in her from the very start of their life. Khansaman Bua can be taken as a voice of the society and culture when she refers to appropriate theme for girls to design their games. Through such tactics, the mental built of girls is shaped around such culturally bound framework, thereby limiting them to adopting roles where they are to abide by in subjugation. Aliya, in her young age, had examples of her elder sister Tehmina Aapa and a neighbour of theirs Kusum Didi who were die hard followers of the romantic notions of love, but faced failure in the end. Both of them had committed suicide. These two characters fit in the typical definition of women that they are thought to be emotionally weak.

Aliya grows up as a strongly willed individual who is not bound to follow any particular set of obligations as designed for her by others. We observe that element of self-willed actions in her behaviour from the very beginning of the novel when she confronts her mother. She is well aware of the fact that her mother dislikes Safdar Bhai to the extent that she cannot bear his sight and has been treating him badly, even worse than animals. Aliya goes by her own her likings and decisions and although her mother tells them horrible stories regarding his parents and calls him a low creature, Aliya never distances herself from him for she is well aware that he is a good man by nature. She likes his company and often spends long hours with him making him tell her different kinds of stories. Her attachment with Safdar Bhai is a way of indicating that he is not as bad as her mother has been telling them which is so unlike her elder sister Tehmina Aapa who never dares to even look at him when their mother is around and silently obeys whatever her mother orders.

Similarly, Aliya's mother never sounds satisfied with her father's activities and often blames him for bringing tyranny to the family. Aliya proves to be a sensible girl who has her own brain to think with, instead of blindly believing what is being told to her. She is still more inclined towards her father and respects him as a daughter should. She never finds any fault with her father's actions or indulges herself in thinking of what is wrong with his activities. It is important to take into account a major aspect of Aliya's character which her feeling heart for everyone and an understanding nature. Despite all the wrong that her mother has done to Safdar Bhai and the ill words that she has been using for other people, Aliya still maintains a sense of sympathy with her. She never thinks bad about her for she understands that she

definitely is not at peace and that is making her so hyper. However, she never supports her treatment of Safdar Bhai.

Aliya realizes that the main dispute between her mother and father is also the lack of financial security that her mother complains to have lived through all her married life. Her mother is always mentioning about how rich a background she belongs to and her brother is so wealthy. In this way, the social mentality which is being is highlighted is that males are responsible to earn money for the family. Later, when they move to Baray Chacha's home, we observe that economic condition of the family is really bad and is declining day by day. The main reason there is also the same that Baray Chacha does not pay attention to the business and little money that is earned from the shop, he spends that for the political campaigns and other purposes. Jameel Bhaiyya is qualified enough to start his professional career but he never thinks about it. Rather, he stays at home the whole day long wasting his time in useless things. Bari Chachi is really worried because of this situation and scolds Jameel Bhaiyya for such non-serious attitude towards life, pushing him to utilize his education for some purpose.

Aliya realizes that she cannot rely on anyone for her needs be it in terms of financial security or some emotional fulfilment. Therefore, while she is at her Baray Chacha's home she reflects over the life that she has to lead forward and realizes that it is her who has to make some effort for herself. She knew that the financial state of the family is not such to bear her education but she is determined that she will try for completing education. As she one thinks to herself: 'Ab wo kisi college main na parh sakay gi, phir bhi usay parhna hai, apnay pairon per khara hona hai, Abba kab ayen gay ye koi nahin janta...' (p. 97). This shows that she is not expecting anyone to fulfil her needs and also that her she cannot wait for the time when her father returns. But she is determined that she will strive to improve her position so that she is no more dependent on anyone else for her needs. She does not want to wait till her father, therefore, she asks her mother to get the money from her uncle, which is actually their own money and had been given to him by her mother to keep it safe with him. She knows how to devise ways for her needs and that is her right to do so. It is after all the money that was supposed to be spent for their own needs but her mother gave it to her brother. Aliya is bold enough to stand for her rights and make her way to the progress. Thus, she joins college again and completes her education. When she returns, she soon gets a job as a school teacher and earns for herself. In this way, she becomes independent of looking for somebody's mercy to be favoured to her.

It is important to mention here that Aliya's mother does try to convince her to marry Jameel, emphasising the fact that it is the only way to secure her future in terms of social as well economic aspects. Her mother's major motivation is to ensure a secure future for Aliya where she will face no problem as they would be living in their ancestral home thereafter, and she will not have to worry about the economic matters as her mother has been all her life. But Aliya has no plans to get married since she feels that it is not a necessity of life and also she does not think Jameel Bhaiyya a competitive partner for herself. Later, when Aliya moves to Pakistan with her mother, she continues to earn by herself and does not have to depend for her needs on her uncle.

Aliya is not a stubborn person who sticks to her ideals rigidly. She is flexible enough in accepting life with maturity and begins to accept that she may get married if she comes across an appropriate person. Aliya is of the view that not only companionship but a relationship

between two competitive individuals should be the basic aim of a marriage. Therefore, she declines the proposal of the doctor whom she meets at the Walton Camp for she grows doubtful about his intentions and thinks that his actions do not conform to what he says. Similarly, on meeting Safdar Bhai, she agrees that a bond can be developed between them two but that is also shattered soon. As soon as Safdar Bhai shows his will to give up his ideals and strive for attaining a high status in the society as per her mother's wish, she feels disgusted about his approach. She realizes that he is like every other ordinary man who is so weak at his heart that he can easily give up his long held notions for the sake of attaining social appreciation. Aliya thinks that this kind of attitude towards life is not acceptable for her and therefore refuses to get into any kind of relationship with any man ever, for she is utterly disappointed of the males because of her experiences in life. Here, we see her as an individual with very strong decisive power which women are usually thought to be lacking in their personality. Once she takes a decision, she stands by it and fulfils all that she claims to do. So, Khadija Mastoor has portrayed a picture of a very strong, determined, self-willed, self-reliant, and a woman with decisive capabilities through the character of Aliya.

Character Analysis of Chhammi

Another female character who is the most prominent one that stands in sharp contrast to Aliya is that of Chhammi. She is very different from Aliya in many ways due to the reason in difference in the kind of environment she lived as compared to that of Aliya. She has developed into a very strong character despite many depravities that she had to live with, the major one being the unavailability of the love of her parents. Her mother is dead and her father sends her to live with her grandmother at Baray Chacha's home. She openly shows the dislike and anger that she has in her heart for her father and how he has wronged her. She complains about being provided very little amount of money by her father and although he sends her pocket money regularly, she is unhappy at getting such little amount. Although, apparently Chhammi may be seen at a submissive state as she is living at the mercy of the family of Baray Chacha, still she maintains an air of dignity in her mannerism and her ideals. She does not accept a submissive position or treatment of herself by any member of the family. In fact, she secretly provides money to Jameel Bhaiyya which he uses to pay his fee for graduation degree. It is a great favour of hers for she has made possible for Jameel Bhaiyya to earn a lifelong advantage of the qualification that he has achieved through his qualification. He has better chances of getting a reasonable job for himself and earning money for his family. It is usually thought that women are majorly dependent on men for their economic or financial needs, but through this action, Chhammi inverts the entire ideology. It was Jameel Bhaiyya who had been gaining benefits from her in terms of financial help and she sacrificed her needs for his sake just because she liked him. She tells Aliya:

"jis saal Bhaiyya F.A ka imtehan day rahay thay, tau unhon ne mujhse rupay maangay. Maine inkar kar dia tau unhon ne mujhe aisi nazron se dekha keh maine saray jamaa rupay unhaian day diye ... apnay khanay k paanch rupay Bari Chachi ko day deti, baqi saray Jameel Bhaiyya ko ... main kaisay kehti keh maine B.A kara dia hai tau M.A bhi kara dun gi. Kisi ko kya pata maine kitnay dukh jhailay" (Mastoor, 1962: p.111)

She suffers the trouble for the sake of her love for Jameel Bhaiyya but never complains, nor

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does she reveal this secret to anyone except Aliya. Jameel Bhaiyya has become completely indifferent towards her and does not regard her anymore, for he has achieved his aim out of her but this does not bother her at all. She has a big heart and is kind by nature; therefore, she likes to be good and helpful to others. It is her kindness and innocence that she does not even realize how major an act has she played by supporting a man financially whatever purpose that might be. In this way, the idea of men being the sole providers of financial security is reversed as we see a female providing that need of survival.

Women are usually thought to be not very much interested in politics as it is a field more appropriate for men. If we relate back, it was the political aspect that was the initial step of the feminist movement when women demanded their part in political rights. Chhammi has great interest for politics and expresses it openly. There is a constant tension between Baray Chacha and Chhammi because he is in favour Congress party and Chhammi supports Muslim League. She is very enthusiastic and passionate for her political interest. She confronts and arguments with Baray Chacha, often accusing him of supporting the party of non-muslims which shows his disloyalty to his religion. Chhammi often holds small processions consisting of small children that are available to her in the neighbourhood. She gathers them all at her home, they all prepare small flags, and then roam around in streets raising slogans in favour of Muslim League and Pakistan (p. 92-3). Chhammi makes hard efforts at learning for she wants to be a literate person and as she mentions, she does not want to be a lagging individual. Therefore, she tries to be at some equal level with Aliya and gain as much acceptance and respect that she thinks Aliya gets because she is educated.

The birth of Chhammi's daughter is a way of Khadija Mastoor's telling us that this progressive approach of women to improving their state of life and better living standards will continue in future as well.

CONCLUSION

Feminism has inculcated in women the sense to recognise their potential to lead a better life. In this way, a great change and improvement has been added to the social outlook as now we have women contributing their share in its construction. Although, Feminism started off as a political movement but it can be seen an important part of the literature, that is being written all over the world. Khadija Mastoor has very skilfully dealt with theme of feminism in the novel *Aangan*. Within all the political and social issues, we see the female characters of the novel emerging as prominent individuals, each playing their own role and highlighting the aspects of feminism. Through the characters of Aliya and Chhammi, Khadija Mastoor has presented a very bright picture of feminist thought prevailing in the society. They are more empowered as compared to the male characters since they are stringer than them in terms of intellectual as well emotional aspects. They put up a great display of self-worth and self esteem and never give up themselves to emotions or falling weak. Although, Aliya and Chhammi are staying at Baray Chacha's home and this might hint to Jameel Bhaiyya that he technically has some edge over them or being a male can treat them the way he wants to. But, both of them turn out to be stronger than him and ultimately providing financial support in some way. Thus, the concept of men as providers of economic security has been shattered through this novel.

Aliya's rejects the notion of marriage as a means of providing a secure social status. She makes

efforts to make herself a strong individual so that she lives a life where she does not have to depend on anyone for emotional or financial support. It is often related that during partition, there were many families whose male members had all died or got imprisoned as a result of the political scenario, so there were women who played important roles as they had to support and look after their families. So, in this novel we observe that women have the potential to live a life of respect and independence, and can earn a life for themselves. Women are much educated now and they know how to fight for their rights and make their place in the society without being suppressed by the patriarchal system. They have been successful in creating a new picture of themselves as they are more enlightened than before. In this way, they are contributing to the social makeup in a constructive manner.

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