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Displacement of women after Partition in Qurratulain Hyder's selected short stories and novellas

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Abstract: Qurratulain Hyder the renowned grand dame of Urdu literature explicitly denies to be labeled as a feminist. Women are surely a concern in her work but her major concern are time, life philosophy and the chaos after partition between India and Pakistan. The present paper focuses on the displacement of women after partition in Qurratulain Hyder's selected short stories and novellas. The paper also focuses on the pain, loss and displacement that her men and women characters confront because of partition. Another concern in the paper is the complete subversion of ideologies and principles in the male and female characters of the selected short stories and Novellas.

maturely philosophic and she was way ahead of her time in her writings. She wrote for women but she shied away from the tag of a feminist. She wrote on many issues and displacement of women and men during and after the partition is an engaging concern in many of her works. Many of her women protagonists are left waiting by their love interests. The present paper also focuses on the above mentioned issue through few selected short stories of Hyder. The short stories are The housing Society, My Aunt Gracie, The Sound of Falling Leaves, Honor. Hyder is the contemporary of Ismat Chughtai. Unlike Qurratulain Hyder, chugati was a staunch feminist. She wrote many short stories and novellas. To Ismat Chugati , writing for women was the only concern whereas to Qurratulain Hyder writing for women was one of the concern.

Keywords: displacement, subversion, ideologies, pain and loss, trauma.

Qurratulain Hyder was one of the most intensive writers. Her approach was

In the above selected stories Hyder delineates about the trauma and rootlessness that women experienced due to partition and especially loss of love. The multidimensional catastrophic loss has been captured by Hyder appropriately. She depicts women losing their careers, jobs, and love and of course homeland, to men

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also the loss is not less. Men lose their social standing, business, and home. All the characters are in a mental flux of some or the other kind. The sporadic changes due to partition in the life styles of the characters also show a change in the mindset, thinking and principles of their lives. Mehr Ali in her under Graduate theses aptly says this regarding Qurratulain Hyder's Novel *The River of Fire* but it remains apt for most of her works and the above mentioned short stories. The scholar says that her work shows," the effect that partition had on the lives and psyches of characters who were invested and believed in the idea of a pluralist and united nationalism. It features individuals that were caught in the middle of a nationalist divide and born into a political reality which was at odds with their idea of a united India." (41)

The Sound of Falling Leaves focuses on the trials and tribulations of the progressive Tanweer Fatima. An Msc student, she did not mind becoming the mistress of Major Khushwakt singh. She loved his manliness and desired more and more to be with him. She was progressive enough to study and be a mistress to someone and regressive enough to reject his marriage proposal. Tanweer Fatima is a complex character because she chose to get beaten rather than to reply in assertive for Major Khushwak's marriage proposal. A sudden enlightenment about her elegant family background restrained her from

accepting khushwakt's proposal. Khuswakt left for Lahore and Tanweer Fatima became a mistress to his dear friend Faarukh. Partition occurred and ironically Tanweer Fatima is sent to Pakistan by her dotting father to save her honor. Her move over to Pakistan rendered her helpless and from then on she moved from one person's hand to another. She became a mistress to Khushwakt's friend Farukh and Farukh to an old Friend of Farukh Mr Viqar Sahib. Whenever she thought about her flirtatious tendencies she ascribed it to several reasons including," that's why parents do not like to educate us".(80) even though Tanweer moved from one hand to another but at last we find her thinking about Khushwakt sigh,"Kushwakt singh! Khushwakt singh! What can you possibly have to do with me now"? Although so much transpired between Tanweer's life between Pakistan and India yet she remembers and waits for khushwaqt Singh.

It is surprising to know that when Qurratulain Hyder was strictly against being dubbed as a feminist and still there is a pang of being left out and kept waiting in many of her women characters. The stories selected for this particular paper depicts that many of Hyder's women protagonist keep waiting for some good turn of life but to no avail. They all yearn for a sort of belongingness. Aunt Graice in her story desires for a sense of belongingness and love. My Aunt Gracie is the story of Gracie

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aunt who works for the widower Nawab sahib but is very protective of his son. The Nawab is worried for his son's refinement in Gracy's company but he refrains from marrying again or employing a governess so that Gracy does not feel bad. After the partition when the narrator goes to see the Nawab he is an old peevish man. He is constantly agitated because of his son's careless behavior and 'big business plans' which he was sure would not see any fruition. Gracy evinces a hankering after for belongingness. When the Narrator addresses her as Gracie she insists, "my bacha, call me Gracie Auntie". Her eyes lit up when the narrator addresses her as aunt and a wait seemed to get over.

Suriya Begum of the Housing Society and staunch socialist in India chooses to forego her ideology and gel with the capitalists. Her love interest Salman continues his socialistic ideas and gets arrested and dies a vague death about which nobody knew. Many termed it as a suicide and many others as third degree torture death. Suriya Begum was a lower middle class Basanti Begum in India. The camouflage from Basanti to Suriya happened in Pakistan after changing sides. Salman's sister Choti bitiya once from an affluent family in India is compelled to act as a personal secretary to Jamshed a businessman. Jamshed's wife Manzurya in India dies a sad and lonely death in the poor and lowly hut that stood on near his

unkempt farms in India. In Pakistan he also switched sides and became a rich and successful businessman. The statuses of Suriya, Choti bitiya and Jamshed subvert totally in Pakistan from that in India. Suriya's tryst with Jamshed is a compromise after searching for long in Pakistan. Salman's mother, Jamshed's wife Manzurya, Suraya the artist and Choti Bitiya all are left to languish and wait for the improvement of their lot.

Shamsad begum in Honor though not a victim of partition is sure among those women who wait for the betterment of their lot in the stories of Qurratulain Hyder. Her belief on the traditional values and purity of family roots is just like Salman's belief on an equal society. Salman chose to forego his life for his belief and Shamsad begum chose to stay unmarried for the sake of her values. She was not hurt at fiancé Aziz abandoning her, but her major concern was that he married a lowly woman. She was not heartbroken that her long wait had come to a naught, but that the honor of her family had been mutilated by her fiancé. Cheated of all her money when Shamshad Begum finds a job in Bomabay she realizes that had been hired as a servant by a woman who did not care about values or honor. The reader is given to understand that the place where she had been hired might be a brothel. Shamshad begum was angry at her cousin for marrying woman from brothel but she hardly knew that

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inadvertently she had found a shelter in a brothel. The honor for which she had given up her life has been already displaced.

Carmen in the short story A Candle for St. Jude is another woman whose lot is to wait for her beloved.

The narrator shares lodge with her in the YMCA and notices teddy bears and toys in her Almirah. On being asked she tells her about her love interest Nick who is a surgeon by profession. The narrator discovers the innermost emotions of Carmen when she tells her that she has collected soft toys for her unborn baby. She was also worried about flat nose of her unborn baby. She saved money for the sake of thing that she would like to have in her house. The narrator gifts her kanjivaram Saree for her wedding. Carmen could not marry till late because she had to look after her father after the Japanese and American war, as all her family members had died. It is only later when the narrator discovers that Carmen's boyfriend Nick was the son of her own hosts and happily married and never cared to meet Carmen. On the other hand Carmen collects teddy bears and waits for his arrival and a better life.

Kamal kumar in her novella Exile goes through the same fate. She had warned her love interest Aftab Rai not to go to London and but he went and she was married away to somebody else. Aftab Rai was upset at her wedding but not at leaving

her back in India despite her warning that she could be married off to somebody else. Aftab Rai immersed in his sorrow and talking non sense, his cousin scolded him and questioned him, "Who the hell had stopped you from marrying her that now you are boring me with your insane questions"? (35)

On the other side Kamal Kumari asks few questions to Dr Aftab Rai in her mind,"Aftab Bahadur why had you gone away? I had not harmed you in any way. I would have just sat in the corner of your life docilely frying puris for you. Perhaps you got a fright. Perhaps you did not want an intelligent wife who might outshine you."(50)

Kishwari is another character in the novella Exile who is forced to stay in India due to the failing health of her father. Her brother had joined the Pakistan army and her father did not want to leave India. She did not understand her father's interest in India but led a miserable life as a Muslim League student in India. Her realistic mother wants to send her to Pakistan for joining her brother there so that she could find some suitable boy and marry off in Pakistan but her father detests the idea of sending her away. Therefore she has to be with her father and wait.

In a nutshell the displacement of women and a wait for a sorted life is also

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one of the concerns in Qurratulain Hyder's short stories. The new political reality and a new found verge of falling into the trap of capitalism along with the traumatic experiences of the women characters due to partition are intricately and intensely carved by Qurratulain Hyder. The change of Psyche and belief systems is also an issue to which Qurratulain Hyder renders minute attention.

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