



## RECENT TRENDS IN TEXTS BY MUSLIM WOMEN IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

*Writing any piece of literature is reflection of self and the mirroring of society. The voice of women through literature is wide and extended throughout world; it becomes a weapon of expressing the problems of self and the issues of the society at present age. There are various media but the literature is considered the most accessible and easy to address their problems. The women of today is rather satisfy as per their recent strategies adopted in various ways whether these are through their own consistent struggles, national movements, by governments since four to five decades or by this media of literature. There are still loopholes and big patches in the way of their progress and empowerment in the society. In the nineteenth and twentieth century changes occurred still it requires the implementation on the ground level. The present scenario of the Muslim women is attracting the world's attention towards their position and empowerment in the society. They are voicing out loudly through different sources of media. This is an effort to bring the real and portrayed picture of society by Muslim women writers through this research paper. Efforts have been made to analysis the texts of women in the context of their themes of writing. It presents the relevancies and burning issues existing in the social world of Muslim women writers.*

**Key Words:** *literature, society, world, strategy, implementations, Muslim, texts and writers.*

### INTRODUCTION

The English literature of today has settled a stage of transitional studies for every genre and for every writer. The aim of writing is to inspire the humanity about the social circumstances



and to express the self in its proper condition of the society. Writing in the English dialect is the passion of everybody because this is the only dialect of today by which a person can recognize himself and can produce cause of sensation among the readers through his /her writings. The age is witnessed for the growth of interest and affiliation to the subject of English language and literature. This language has produced lot writers not only from the majority section of the society but also from the minority section of the society. The subject of context is Muslim women writers and their texts. The subject of concern is their writing which is intended to give the wing to the women hood in the Muslim dominant world of male counter parts. The aim of this research paper is to make you aware about the central voice of the Muslim women writers through their novels. There are a lot of female writers but the concerned subject of present paper is about the writings of Begum Rokeya, Tehmina Durrani and Rajathi Salma. What is interesting is that women from different sides of the world, with different cultures and different religion, seem to face the same reality lack of freedom oppression by their male counter parts indifferences in the society on the biases of various things in the social economic and political sphere of life, . To an observer the facts and indicators in the Muslim societies where the narrators like Sare, Zuhora, Zahida, Heer and other characters survive but ironically the scenario that prevails in various Muslim societies presented by the writers from various cultural and social background.

## Begum Rokeya

Begum Rokeya is pre independent women writer now belong to Bangladesh. She is a now known as famous Bangladeshi woman writer commonly known as Begum Rokeya. She was born on 9 December 1880 and died on 9 December 1932. She was a Bengali writer, thinker, educationist, social activist, and advocate of women's rights. She is considered the pioneer feminist of Bengal, she wrote novels, poems, short stories, science fiction, satires, treatises and essays. Her writings advocated that both men and women should be treated equally as rational beings. Her works Sultana's Dream and Padmarag is boldly provocative works, particularly in the context of the era that spawned them. Written in English in 1905, Sultana's Dream is a delightful satirical work set in Lady land, where men are in purdah and women firmly in charge of home and government. Resonant with autobiographical undertones, the novella is both a powerful indictment of male oppression and a celebration of Rokeya's faith in a Universalist society where women, regardless of race, class, creed and religion, reject the diktat of a tyrannical patriarchal society in favors of a life devoted to improving their lot. Rokeya tirelessly fight for the freedom of women their education and their status in the society. By analyzing her text we come to know that she had down a lot for the betterment and empowerment of the Muslim women. Rokeya's phase of inspiration and joy came from her husband Sakhawat Hossain. He was highly educated, progressive and a real gentleman who believed in the education of women. He always inspired her and opened a wider world



to apply her dream with courageous steps. Rokeya began to write about her thoughts on social issues of womanhood and women's degradation. We can better understand this with the help of Tazim's article in the following lines that how Rokeya has built the world of imagination for the smooth life of women hood.

*Ironically enough, even in the dream the narrator experience, the lady land where Sara is guiding her to, has its own limitations. The female of the Lady land cannot move freely outside the Lady land but are only free inside the Lady land. Moreover, the sudden ending of the dream and the awakening of the dreamer function as a warning signal, to remind the readers that women's empowerment was nothing but a temporary dream for woman in colonial Bengal, that the whole utopian structure of a perfect society was also stigmatized essentialist patriarchal ideology, that such dream would continuously recur and vanish until the awakened female consciousness reinvented the method becoming free. (Tazim P 669)*

In an article titled *Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Tireless Fighter of Female Education and their Independence* by Rashid, he categorically said that Rokeya is the only woman she has started the journey to voice out the plight of all Muslim women in the society.

*Rokeya witnessed the sufferings of women within the Bengali Muslim community and believed that it was her duty as a practicing Muslim woman to right the wrongs of society. One of the major wrongs that Rokeya identified was the lack of education offered to Bengali Muslim women of her age. She was determined that all women should have education. She started writing various articles, essays, books, short pieces and social-critical essays where she again and again motivated women to receive education. In this way Rokeya started the movement for the emancipation of the Bengali Muslim women. She was the first among the Bengali Muslims who publicly raised the question of equal status for women, and thus she started a new era in the history of Bengali Muslim society. (Rashid P 41)*

Begum Rokeya is the first women in the Muslim pre feminist era who has started to step out for this literary trend where women gradually started their journey to promote their interest against male counter parts. She has struggled a lot for the cause of women empowerment in early twentieth century. Rokeya had started girl school for Muslim community in her locality and she faced stern criticism for this positive step but she never felt disgrace. She has not proved herself by writing only but she had also put all her efforts into practical against the parochial tradition.



## Salma

Rajathi Salma was born in 1968 in Tamil Nadu India. She is an Indian muslim author, columnist, social worker and speaker. Rajathi Salma is now a celebrated Tamil writer, her novel *The Hours Past Midnight* has been long-listed for the Man Asian Booker Prize. When Salma was 13 years old her family stopped her studies and forced her into marriage. She started composing poems on scraps of paper and sneaking them out of the house. Salma is a Tamil poet and novelist. Her original work 'Irandaam Jaamathin Kadhai' is translated as '*The Hours Past Midnight*', in English by Lakshmi Holmstorm. Salma has described her childhood memories in her book. She expresses her anguish at the treatment of girls belonging to Muslim community. The novel tells the story of a community of Muslim women and men living in a Tamil village, from the perspectives of the women. The book sings with different voices, from the child Rabia, a girl who is about to come of age but as yet is still a young girl, her mother and aunt Zohra and Rahima, and the cousins, neighbors and women who make up their small and intimate community. It is a book that rings with laughter and female friendship, and yet can quickly turn heartbreaking and frightening. The novel's action takes place over a couple of weeks, as the families prepare for Ramadan and the marriage of Rahima's daughter Wahida to an older man she has never met. Jamal in her article defined the condition of women in the Muslim dominant society in the Indian states where the majority population is Muslim.

*Over the past millennium the status of women in India has been subject to many changes such as from equal status with men in ancient times, through the low level of the medieval and finally to the promotion of equal rights in the present century. Thus, the history of women in India is a testimony of the changes the position of women gone through. It is reflected by the positions of women as the President, Prime Minister, Speaker, and Members of Parliament and so on. Yet, women in India are generally exposed to numerous social issues. Several stories reveal women as victims, oppressed and beaten down by systems that they did not construct and that hold them powerless. Their agonies are narrated by themselves to their children, friends, neighbors, lovers and husbands. These narratives are open to discussions and debates by several administrators. Women raise their inner voices in the forms of stories and novels throwing light on their pathetic conditions in the family and society (Jamal, P 1, 2)*



The aim of writing is to express the self and to show the people the actual condition prevailing in the social world. In another article by Ayshath an interview from Salma shows that she has very big concern for the empowerment of Muslim women in the society.

*A woman's freedom is decided by her family in the foremost place. The religious constancy of that family decides her movements further. Religion redesigns her femininity, the way she talks, walks, dress up everything is structured in the childhood itself. Society further facilitates such chores. Either they watch her movements or control the movement itself. To cross all these barriers and walk off is very difficult in south Indian context. (Ayshath, P 409)*

Salma has thoroughly educates through her novel that the present system is heinous for the prosperity of women the time needs to eradicate the injustices and inequalities among the social sects.

## **Tehmina Durrani**

Durrani a Pakistani women writer she became very famous among women of the muslim society by her publications for her works like the *Blasphemy and My Feudal Lord*. The autobiographical truth and fictional aspects combined bravely by Tehmina Durrani in her writings to bring forth the unknown realities and unspoken plight of suppressed women in the male hegemonic society. *My Feudal Lord* is the true archetype of women's plight and their repressed condition. In her another novel *Blasphemy* she has revealed the innermost thoughts, hidden experiences, secret fantasies, family issues and unbelievable facts of muslim male dominated society of the modern world. Durrani has been interviewed by Mehar a journalist from Pakistan in a news paper named The Down and published in it.

*She came into our lives and our living rooms guns blazing, breaking the tradition and expectation of silence. Tehmina Durrani is one of the most powerful feminine and feminist voices in Pakistan today and she gives us her view on men and women, society, traditions and culture. (Mehar)*

The purpose of her autobiography *My Feudal Lord* published in 1995 becomes quite clear when she dedicates it to the people of Pakistan the act of writing about her personal life is equal to breaking her silence because the society expects her to remain silent. Women autobiographies talk about patriarchy which establishes values, and gender prescriptions. Despite rejecting male hegemony these autobiographies celebrate motherhood and wifhood clearly. Women replace their individual identity with the maternal one. Durrani's



autobiography though not the first of its kind attracted lots of public attention. My Feudal Lord is the true archetype of women's plight and their repressed condition. It has been written unambiguously and specifically in Pakistani context referring to the plight of women in patriarchal symbolic order. Durrani's work illustrates that in third world countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, India and in other Muslim dominant countries women are taken as personal properties and possessions of men since men control every sphere of lives of women even their behavior and movements where the religion is mere a written documents. Men have the right and full command to make decisions for women and women have to follow their decisions in family, tribe, community and society. We find that feudal lord Khar does not allow Durrani even to talk to her own brother. Once, he grew very upset when she talked to her brother Asim on the phone.

All through history women's voices have been suppressed, leaving them as the other. While some have accepted this dominance and taken refuge into silence, others like Tehmina Durrani, Salma and Begum Rokeya equipped themselves with art to fight against male hegemony, patriarchal dominance and Islamic fundamentalism to assert power and control over their own lives. Tehmina's My Feudal Lord is the reflection of such an effort. She does not limit herself to the revelation of her own traumatic life, but tries to bring to light the unknown dark lives of thousands of other women leading such turbulent lives under the distorted social norms and conditions. Seeking Different Ways for Freedom the narrators in all the texts describe in Sultana's Dream, the narrator finds her share of freedom via dreaming a Utopian Dream where women would find their freedom through education and scientific advancement. The narrator in Sultana's Dream feels women are violence free, so if they are empowered with tasks like ruling the country and producing solar power, they can do it skillfully. So according to her, for a country to become prosperous and peaceful, there is no need for men's strength. The need of strength is to educate the girls in the Muslim societies. This is the need and demand of the present age. Muslim writers have voiced out the vulnerable position of women, who are caught in the complex web of society. These writers have shared their experiences and frustrations through their works that women have always been made to suffer from disappointment, disillusionment and frustration which arise from social restrictions.

The novel by salma presents the same theme which the Rokeya and Durrani have illustrated in their works. The characterizations in all the novels like in *The Hours Past Midnight* the characters like Zohura, Rahima and Wahida in *Blasphemy* the Heer and in *Sultana's Dreams* the Sara suffer the same circumstances in the same manners in the dominant society of male counter parts. It is the vision and hope that arguments made and the insights gained in this research paper will effectively contribute to the vigorous debates on the realization of human and the status of women in the social sections of the women world. There are other Muslim



women writers as well whose themes and critical stand is also against the prevailing old and orthodoxy traditions in the society. These writers are like Anees jung, Tehmina Anam, tasleema Nasreen not only Muslim women but there are non Muslim writer who have broke their silence against the male dominance society.

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