

## 'Controlled by' and 'Controlling with' Sex: Comparing Portrayal of 'Nooran' and 'Haseena Begum' - Two Female Characters of Khushwant Singh's Modern Classic: *Train to Pakistan*

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### ABSTRACT

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), a quintessential post-colonial novel and a lucid modern classic - is based on the societal conditions and upheavals of during and post-liberation Pak - Indo subcontinent in 1947. Having set the plot of his novel in a fictional Punjabi village 'Mano Majra' - located near to the India - Pakistan border, Singh attempted to analyze how human relationships change in a tormented - apocalyptic society. However, this paper aims at studying how in an overtly masculine society as portrayed in the novel, amidst the fright of religious persecution, sexualized violence, the fallaciousness of mob rule, and formation of new identities via displacement - two of the novel's main female characters - Nooran, who is sexually subjugated within the text, and Haseena Begum, who uses her bodily charm to meet her days ends, stand out differently due to the disparity in their social orientations, and life choices. To explore the posed query, this paper will use Virginia Woolf's ideas from -"Professions for Women" (1942) an article apparently archaic today, but the ideas posited in it were very much contemporary to the novel's setting, as well as Julia Kristeva's apparently contemporary ideas in - "Woman Can Never Be Defined" (1974), where these critics talked about women's sexuality, their professions, their privileged relationship with father/paternal figure of their family, and how all these lead them to abidance towards prejudiced masculine norms set by the society.

### 1. Introduction

"His companions rose and brushed the sand off their clothes. They formed a line with their hands joined in prayer. One of the gunmen stepped in front and began to mumble. When he stopped, they all went down on their knee and rubbed their foreheads on the ground." (Singh, 2009, p.7)

This solemn scenario from Khushwant Singh's celebrated novel *Train to Pakistan*, (first published in 1956), where a group of people has just finished their prayers towards the deity they worship, is a good point to start this discussion. It would give us a good understanding of the societal context in which we are going to assess the situation of women from different backgrounds. People pray before the initiation of a good job. They pray to God or deity in which they believe. They pray for the safeguard of their venture. They also ask for blessings from people around them. However, here in the quoted lines above, just one of these reasons of prayer stated above is met. It is the opening scene of the novel *Train to Pakistan*, and we find a group of people praying for the safeguard of their venture. However, considering the quality of their mission, we can hardly point at it as a good one. They were plain - "dacoits or professional robbers" who were going to loot a house in a Punjabi village, and eventually would end up killing a person while doing this (Singh, 2009, p. 6). This information may give us an idea about the bizarreness of the society in which context we are initiating this discussion about representation of gender and gender-based violence in post-partition Punjab.

The setting in which a famous Indian writer in English, Khushwant Singh narrates his story in his celebrated novel - *Train to Pakistan*, is a post-colonial dystopia. Why we are calling it a dystopian situation? The reason can be explained by borrowing Karl Marx's assessment of Indian society during the colonial era. In Irfan Habib's article "Introduction: Marx's Perception of India" (2006), Habib

quotes from Karl Marx's seminal article "On Colonialism"(1853) - "Indian society has no history, at least no known history. What we call its history is but the history of successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society." (Marx quoted in Irfan Habib, p. XX.). Time and again, the land beside the Indus valley has been occupied by different intruders, which hindered undivided India's growth as a sovereign society and culture. That is the bizarre idea of seeking God's mercy and assistance before robbery and killing are plausible to them. Again, being colonized for such a long period of time, freedom from a colonial power has no special meaning to the peasants of Punjab. For them, it means the exchange of power from the high officials of British raj to the elite educated Indians. Also, to become a 'nar - admi' or exemplary/ideal masculine man - one may cheat and lie to save his friend. Police and bureaucrats are the ultimate kings in society. Finally, their peasants are obsessed with sex, and they can exploit their women physically or mentally - through using violent abusive words for any possible reason. Sometimes, even without any reason. (Singh, 2009). If that is not a dystopia, then what is?

## **2. Societal Conditions in a Fictional Post Colonial Punjabi Village:**

To understand the formation of the female psyche in the post-colonial Punjabi rural community, we need to retrospect the formation of the masculine psyche in the beginning. Like all other binary opposites, the female identity in their peasant community is inexplicable without dissecting the masculine mindset that exists in the posited timeframe of the novel. However, even before that, we need to understand the societal and cultural contexts, where all these Sikh - Hindu - Muslim males and females have been born and brought up, and have built up their characteristics. Novelist Khushwant Singh does not disappoint us on that. Though Singh's novel is a work of fiction, his depiction of society, societal norms, and existing ideologies have been very relatable, and non - fictitious. He has dealt his society with stern and merciless criticism, sometimes with sheer irony, and then he has narrated them in a pretty straightforward manner. He starts Exploring his idea of the ultimate 'He Man' or masculine man, or 'Nar Admi' (as they say it in Punjab) stating that –

"The Punjabi's code was even more baffling. For the truth, honor, financial integrity was 'all right' but these were placed lower down the scale of values than being true to one's salt, to one's friends and fellow villagers. For friends, you could lie in court or cheat, and no one would blame you. On the contrary, you become a nar admi - a he-man..." (Singh, 2009, P. 44)

This quotation above explains truly the difference between Mano Majra, the Punjabi village, and our known world of ethics and morality. For them, safeguarding friends and members of the fellow village is more important than truth, honor, and financial integrity. If you cheat and lie to help your friends from the same locality, they will not consider you as a bad human being, rather you would be considered as the 'he-man', or ultimate masculine figure of the society.

Interestingly, this society full of he-mans are not interested to earn the freedom of their land, because, freedom from colonial rulers would not bring improvement on a personal level - "Educated people like you, Babu Sahib, will get the jobs the English had. Will we get more lands or more buffaloes?" (Singh, 2009, p. 52)

However, these males who assess the value of national liberation from a very narrow personal perspective are very open-hearted regarding some other aspects of life. For example, they are simply obsessed with the idea of sex.

"It (sex) obsessed their minds. It came out in their art, literature, and religion. One saw it in the law courts and marketplaces, where hawkers did a thriving trade selling oil made of the skin of sand lizards to put life into tired groins and increase the size of the phallus. One read it in the advertisements of quacks who claimed to possess remedies for barrenness and medicines to induce wombs to yield male children."(Singh, 2009, P.113)

In this quirky situation where God can be used for any purpose, manhood means lying and cheating for the safeguard of acquaintances, idea of freedom from the British Raj is disowned due to a calculation made on a very narrow personal scale, and peasants act like sexual predators in every possible situation, we get a chance to look at the womenfolk of rural Punjab, and their lives represented in the text.

## **3. Practice of Masculinity and Formation of Female Identity in *Train to Pakistan*:**

Throughout the novel, women are treated disrespectfully, within or outside their households. They are not financially solvent, They do not have any individual identity, they are objectified, judged, and abused often by their male counterparts. The women within the text vary in their age, character traits, and experience of life, but all of them share a very common ground. All of them face verbal or physical abuse at various periods of their lives.

In the post-colonial - post-independence rural Punjab depicted by Khushwant Singh, people do not need any specific reason to abuse and exploit their women. It is mostly habitual. For example, in the very first chapter of the book, when Malli the robber and his gang loot Mano Majra, they shout - "'Come!' they yelled. 'Come out, if you have the courage! Come out if you want your mothers and sisters raped! Come out, brave men!'" (Singh, 2009, p.11) Here, abusing women is a way of showing dominance over a group of people.

On the contrary, when Jugga, or Juggat Singh, the arch-enemy of bandit Malli, and protagonist of the novel gets arrested because of the police's wrong assumption about the Mano Majra robbery, Jugga abuses womenfolk of Malli's family. Whenever he mentions Malli, he calls him - "That incestuous lover of his sister!", or "That penis of a pig who sleeps with his mother, pimps for his sister and daughter" (Singh, 2009, p. 117). Even when Jugga finally gets Malli in his hands, he uses stern abusive words towards women of Malli's family - "Each jerk was accompanied by abuse - 'This to rape your mother. This your sister. This your daughter. This for your mother again. And this... and this.'" (Singh, 2009, p. 122)

Using abusive words in anger is understandable. However, the post-partition Punjabi peasants abused their womenfolk when they tried to cut a joke - when they tried to soothe someone, even when they tried to sound logical. For example, when Jugga was arrested and was being carried to the jail on a vehicle called *Tonga*, he exchanged a few words of humor with the driver of the vehicle, which turned into disgusting abuses towards the women of the post-independence situation in Punjab: " 'Bholeya, I hear a lot of women are being abducted and sold cheap. You could find a wife for yourself.'" (Singh, 2009, p. 73) Juggat Singh is suggesting to the vehicle puller that, in this messed-up situation of partition, when women are being kidnapped and sold, later on, he, the Tonga puller may find an appropriate wife. The reply of the vehicle puller is equally abusive. He replies - " 'Why, Sardara, if you can find a Mussulmanni without paying for her, am I impotent that I should have to buy an abducted woman?' " (Singh, 2009, p. 73) That means, if a badmash like Jugga can manage a date with a Muslim girl of her village, even without abducting her, without spending any money, the vehicle puller is quietly confident that he would find a woman without abduction.

Then again, in the third part of the book named 'Mano Majra', when the situation of the village turns worse because of the arrival of a ghost train full of dead bodies of non-Muslims from Pakistan, the Muslim folks of the village Mano Majra were found in great danger. Sikh and Hindu refugees coming from places where their fortunes were looted, their girls were raped, and the elderly members, as well as youngsters, were killed would certainly start a communal riot as soon as they see the Muslims of Mano Majra. In this tense situation, their Sikh neighbors tried to calm them down. Unfortunately, even these men with good intention use abusive words towards a woman just to give condolence towards their endangered Muslim community -

" 'If anyone raises his eyebrows at you we will rape his mother.'

'Mother, sister, and daughter,' - added the other." (Singh, 2009, p. 130)

Even when the peasants tried to sound logical, they abused women in one way or the other. For example, after the arrival of the ghost train full of dead bodies of non-Muslims, the Sikhs in the village arrange a meeting to tackle the grave situation. A young hotheaded Sikh suddenly jumps in and states -

"Lal is dead: why bother about him? The police will do that. Let Jugga, Malli, and Sultana settle their quarrels. As for the babu, for all, we care he can sleep with his mother. Our problem is what are we to do with all these pigs we have with us?" (Singh, 2009, P. 130)

Noteworthy here is, his suggestion that - someone Babu "may sleep with his mother". This "Babu" is a young Marxist politician from the cities who was visiting the village for political purposes during the time of extreme political turmoil. In a time of turmoil, he may sleep with his mother - is the solution, which is an expression for - the Babu may do whatever he wants.

Even the magistrate visiting the area in turmoil asks for women, as evening arrangements. For him, womenfolk are just a medium of the fulfillment of carnal desire -

" 'Well', said the magistrate hesitantly, 'have you made any arrangements for the evening?'

'Is it possible for me to have overlooked that? If she does not please you, you can have me dismissed from service.' "

(Singh, 2009, p. 25 )

Interestingly, in this strictly male-dominated societal condition, the males have also defined "pure" woman, using the lens of religion - "Our Hindu women are like that: so pure that they would rather commit suicide than let a stranger touch them." (Singh, 2009, p. 22) So, for their womenfolk, committing suicide is better than letting a stranger touch their body. Even in situations where their lives are in danger.

The duties of women, as assigned by the male-dominated society, is to preserve their chastity before marriage, be good in household chores, and be fair-skinned, even if the last task is not in their hands -

"The qualities they required in a wife were identical. All wanted virgins. A few, more broad-minded than the rest, were willing to consider widows, but only if they had not been deflowered. All demanded women who were good at h.h.a. , or household affairs. Beauty, they recognized, was only skin - deep." (Singh, 2009, p. 76)

The Only time a woman is equally treated with a man within the novel, or in that timeframe within the Punjabi society is when they are just dead bodies - " he watched corpses of men and women and children being dragged out, with as little interest as if they had been trunks or bedding." ( Singh, 2009, p. 89)

The dead bodies of women were mingled and mixed up with the corpses of men and children within the burning train. Only in this situation, throughout the whole text, the women are receiving equal treatment. Their corpses were being dragged out like trunks or beddings equally, as like the male corpses.

#### **4. Orientation of Nooran and Haseena Begum's characters:**

Retrospection towards the buildup of the female leads in this hostile and unruly societal condition would give us a clearer vision, though, it must be mentioned that, though Nooran and Haseena Begum is mentioned here as the female leads, they hardly are in leading position anywhere within the text.

Nooran, the weaver's daughter, is a Muslim girl from Mano Majra. Her father is Imam Bakhsh, the blind and aged Mullah of the local mosque. We receive a very derogatory, and sexualized introduction of her in the novel through dialogues exchanged between robber Malli and his gang:

"What is her name?" The leader turned off the torch and took it from his mouth. 'Nooran,' he said.

'Aho,' the spearman said, 'Nooran. Did you see her at the spring fair? Did you see that tight shirt showing off her breasts and the bells tinkling in her plaits and the swish-swish of silk? Hai!'

'Hai!' the spearman with the bangles cried, 'Hai! Hai!' (Singh, 2009, p. 7)

While Malli and his gang were busy in robbery, Nooran was secretly meeting her lover Juggat Singh then. This silent visit turned into almost a rape scene. If we go through the verses, we would find the necessary hints -

"She caught it (Jugga's hand) and put it back on her face ... The girl slapped it (hand) and put it away...She shook her head violently from side to side, trying to avoid his hungry mouth...The girl continued to wriggle and protest...' No', cried the girl hoarsely" ... trying to keep Juggat Singh from renewing his lovemaking...That is all you want. And you get it. You are just a peasant. Always wanting to sow your seed. Even the world was going to hell you would want to do that ... Wouldn't you?" (Singh, 2009, p. 14 - 15.).

Jugga was imposing forced physical intimacy upon Nooran, as we understand from the text above. Nooran had to pay a heavy price for this incident. She was impregnated and was tormented before leaving India because of carrying a child without a legal father.

Living in this stern masculine bondages, the only time Nooran rises her voice is against her father, who, being a poor, blind, aged Muslim cleric of the Sikh village, does not have any authority upon anyone -

"Get up and pack. We have to go away tomorrow morning' he (Imam Baksh) announced dramatically.

'Go away? Where?'

'I don't know ... Pakistan!'

The girl sat up with a jerk. 'I will not go to Pakistan' she said defiantly.

Imam Baksh pretended he had not heard...

'I will not go to Pakistan,' the girl repeated fiercely." (Singh, 2009, p. 136)

However, Nooran agrees to leave for Pakistan, because she does not find her lover, Juggat Singh in the village, whose baby she was carrying. The situation was hostile for Muslims to live there anymore, and it would be horrific for a young woman to be left alone, with a child growing inside her. As she leaves, what happens to her character finally, we do not get to know that, as the author does not give us a hint. Nevertheless, we find that she remains alive in her lover Juggat Singh's memory as she leaves for Pakistan -

"Jugga's immediate concern was the fate of Nooran... At the back of his mind persisted a feeling that Nooran would be in Mano Majra. No one could have wanted Imam Baksh to go. Even if he had left with the other Muslims Nooran would be hiding somewhere in the fields, or would have come to his mother. He hoped his mother had not turned her out. If she had, he would let her have it. He would walk out and never come back. She would spend the rest of her days regretting having done it." (Singh, 2009, p. 173)

To sum up, Nooran, a feeble peasant woman from the feeble Muslim community of post-partition India is represented as a victim of the sexualized male gaze most of the time. Directly or indirectly she has faced abusive, harassing comments throughout the text for her gender and religion. She even cannot avoid forceful physical relation with her boyfriend, and later on, impregnated, she had to leave her birthplace for Pakistan, with an uncertain future waiting for her. The only commemoration she received is from her lover, who, driven by his love towards her, ultimately sacrifices his life for her safeguard. The rest of Nooran's future remains unknown to us.

"As a moth that loves the flame

By that flame is done to death

Within myself, I have lit a fire

That now robs me of my breath" (Singh, 2009, p.29)

This is a song that singer come prostitute Haseena Begum, the other significant female character sang for the magistrate Hukum Chand, for whose entertainment purpose, she was brought. In an oppressive masculine society, a woman's love for freedom is akin to a moth's love for flames. Thus this song gives a perfect metaphorical representation of Haseena Begum's life.

Haseena, a singer come, prostitute is another female figure in the novel who has a brief presence. Her character is significant because it helps us to unfold the magistrate's psyche in a hostile lunatic period. She arrives at the magistrate's bungalow as "arrangements for the evening", (p. 25) and we find her being exploited sexually from the earliest possible time. In Hukum Chand - the magistrate's eyes, this is her first perception -

"The frame of the lamp threw a shadow over Hukum Chand. He stared at the girl who sat sheltered from the light. She was only a child and not very pretty, just young and unexploited. Her breasts barely filled her bodice. They could not have known the touch of a male hand. The thought that she was perhaps younger than his own daughter flashed across his mind. He drowned it quickly with another whisky." (Singh, 2009, p. 30)

As soon as she finishes her song, if I quote from the text -

"Hukum Chand exploded with an appreciative 'wah wah' when the girl finished her song, he did not throw the five rupee note at her but asked her to come and take it from his hand. The old woman pushed the girl ahead ...

The girl turned around obediently and went to the magistrate. Hukum Chand put his arm around her waist." (Singh, 2009, p. 31).

After that, he - "pulled her onto his lap and began to play with her hair ...." (Singh 2009, p. 31)

Hukum Chand, the magistrate not only puts her lustful drunken hands around the young girl's waist and play with her hair but also tries to make Haseena drink from his whisky - " 'Drink a little. Just a sip for my sake,' he pleaded.. " (Singh, 2009, p. 31). Haseena refuses to drink, and the anxious old woman who was with her immediately tries to explain the situation by stating that - Haseena has never drunk before. She is just sixteen years old and innocent of all guilty pleasures. She has been raised and nurtured for serving the "honor's pleasure" (Singh, 2009, p. 33)

While doing so to a girl of his own daughter's age, Hukum Chand the magistrate does not suffer from the pangs of morality. Singh's words explain it more vividly -

"The magistrate was not particularly concerned with her reactions. He had paid for all that. He brought the girl's face nearer his own and began kissing her on the back of her neck and on her ears. ... The girl allowed herself to be dragged onto the table amongst plates covered with stale meatballs and cigarette ash. Hukum Chand swept them off the table with his hand and went on with his lovemaking. The girl suffered his pawing without a protest." (Singh, 2009, p. 33)

The girl cannot save herself from Hukum Chand's sexual gaze, even when she was sleeping -

"She slept with her mouth slightly open. She looked dead except for the periodic upward movement of her breasts vainly trying to fill her bodice. Her hair was scattered all over her face. A pink celluloid clip made in the shape of a butterfly dangled by the leg of the chair. Her sari was crushed and creased, and bits of sequins glistened on the floor. Hukum Chand could not take his eyes off her while he sipped his tea ..." (Singh, 2009, p. 101)

Haseena seems much more outspoken than Nooran. Though the old lady coming with Haseena claimed that Haseena was "reared" (p. 33) for Hukum Chand's pleasure, her harsh experiences from life may have taught her to be argumentative and vocal. For example, when Hukum Chand asks her for how long she has been in this profession, doing "other things", the magistrate receives an angry outburst from Haseena -

"What do you mean, other things? Asked the girl haughtily. 'We do not go about doing other things for money. I am a singer and I dance. I do not suppose you know what dancing and singing are. You just know about other things. A bottle of whisky and other things. That is all!" (Singh, 2009, p. 107)

Haseena is different from Nooran in another way. In the scene where we find Juggat Singh trying to have sex with her, Nooran reacts and refuses violently, and with all her force (p. 14 - 15). However, in the case of Haseena, she does not refuse Hakim Chand - the magistrate when he tries to make love to her. (p. 33) Although she makes an angry remark when she was asked by the magistrate about the "other things" that she needs to do in order to earn her living. (p. 107)

Unfortunately, her self-esteem itself is not enough to save her from the turmoil of the partition. She has to seek refuge and shelter from the man who was taking her advantage in lieu of money. When asked by the magistrate, whether she was afraid of all the riots going around due to partition, she responds -

"I am not frightened. We know so many people so well and then I have a big powerful Magistrate to protect me. As long as he is there no one can harm a single hair of my head." (Singh, 2009, p. 110)

Nevertheless, seeking the shelter of a whimsical magistrate could not save her by the end of the novel. We see her getting lost amidst the riot and turmoil caused by the partition -

"Why had he let the girl go back to Chundunnager? Why? He asked himself, hitting his forehead with his fist. If only she were here in the resthouse with him, he would not bother if the rest of the world went to hell. But she was not here; she was on the train. He could hear its rumble.

Hukum Chand slid off his chair, covered his face with his arms, and started to cry. Then he raised his face to the sky and began to pray." (Singh, 2009, p. 188)

Finally, we understand that in a torn and tattered societal system, love is the only form that may have actual consequences and bring larger impacts. This idea becomes firm when we find Juggat Singh sacrificing his life for Nooran, his love interest, so that Nooran may leave for Pakistan safely from Mano Majra. As Hukum Chand - the magistrate's relationship with Haseena Begum - the singer prostitute was mostly financial, and based on carnal pleasures, Haseena's future remains uncertain.

### **5. Girls and their Dependence on their Male Counterparts - in Eyes of Woolf (1942) and Kristeva (1974):**

A decade earlier to this novel's publication, Virginia Woolf shared her idea of - "The Angel in The House" (1942). This angel-like character is the combination of all the characteristics that contemporary European society had marked as feminine. This angel in the house was the imagery of an ideal woman, an image that was hugely praised and expected from a woman in contemporary Western society. The characteristics of the angel that Woolf shared are - being "intensely sympathetic", "immensely charming", "utterly unselfish", excellent in "the difficult arts of family life" etc. In general, this angel in the house is a self-sacrificing human being. Woolf gave an example to explain what she exactly meant by the word sacrificing - "If there was chicken, she took the leg". Then again - "she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred or sympathized always the minds and wishes of others." Finally, this angel in the house has a kind of purity in her, which is - "her chief beauty - her blushes, her great grace" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 78)

This idealized angel always pulled the critical mind of Woolf from the back. Whenever she is trying to write a critical essay on a book written by a male author, the angel said -

"My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic be tender, flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure." (Eagleton, 1996, p. 78)

It is significant how the concept of the angel in the house hindered Woolf's critical ability to think and write, especially to write critically on contemporary male writers' books. Rather, it suggested she preserve her purity by being sympathetic, tender, flatterer,

and decisive while making her commentaries. It lures her in using her feminine charm, the "arts and wiles" of her sex so that her appearance is not considered as a threat in the male-dominated literary scenario. (p.78)

However, this idea of "the angel in the house" may affect women of every walk of life by making them submissive towards their male counterparts. Irrespective of their personal and professional life, this idea would create a hindrance on a woman's path of refuting male dominance. Nooran, the weaver's daughter from the novel, is not educated and intellectually charged like Woolf, but she still seems to be possessed by this angel in the house. She is noticed by all because of her blushes and graces, because of her arts and wiles of feminine charm, as mentioned by Woolf (1942). She cannot refuse her lover's forceful lovemaking which impregnates her with a child. Being pregnant, she could not leave for Pakistan suddenly, because she felt the necessity of retaining her purity by giving her upcoming baby its father's identity. That is why she visits her lover Juggat Singh's household and seeks refuge in Juggat's mother. Only after receiving a coarse and bitter response from Juggat Singh's mother, weak and feeble Nooran decides to leave for Pakistan. She does not challenge her abuses, she does not blame Juggat in front of his mother. She submits herself to her ever-darkening fate.

On the other hand, Haseena Begum seemed a bit quirky due to her profession, elocution, and her repartee. She also gets lost among the hue and cry of partition, because of way too much dependence upon the magistrate. From the discussion regarding her orientation above in this article, we have seen her courageously stating that she has a big and powerful magistrate to protect her. That is why she is not anxious about the tense time through which the whole of India was going. Throughout her presence in the novel, we do not see her complaining about her profession, blaming the magistrate, or any other males who have dragged her on this dark path. Bodily purity may not mean anything to her, but she seemed content with her mental purity, with her devotion towards music and dance. This could not save her anyway by the end of the novel as we see her getting lost on her way to Chundunnager.

We find Woolf reacting violently towards the Angel -

"I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defense. Had I not killed her, she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing." (Eagleton, 1996, p.79)

She not only chokes the Angel to death, but she also has an excellent justification for this violent activity. For her, it would be an act of self-defense. Had she not killed the angel, the angel would have definitely killed Woolf. Neither Nooran, nor Haseena Begum had the courage of doing something equally, and that is why we find them embracing their indecisive future.

Then again, Julia Kristeva, in her seminal paper of 1974 - "Women can never be Defined", says something almost similar -

"Because of the decisive (pivotal/significant) role that women play in the reproduction of the species, and because of the privileged relationship between father and daughter, a woman takes social constraints even more seriously, has fewer tendencies toward anarchism, and is more mindful of ethics." (Eagleton, 1996, p. 268)

Women, in general, consider their motherhood as an essential and inseparable part of their identity. They also do not want to challenge the sweet relationship that they have with their father or with any other fatherly/authoritative figures. Even if they are exploited, even if they are forced to work against their will, they do it because they are more serious about not crossing the social constraints. They are far more ethical, with fewer tendencies to anarchy.

This statement of Kristeva (1974) works as a mirror for Nooran and Haseena Begum. Being impregnated with Juggat's child, Nooran's psyche was occupied with her pivotal role of motherhood, which leads her to all her future sorrows in the novel. Though she raises her voice against her old and feeble father for a while, we cannot consider it as a revolt, and a step towards anarchy. Because ultimately she followed his dictation and left for Pakistan with uncertainty in her future.

On the other hand, Haseena is pleased with the relationship that she has with Magistrate Hukum Chand, whom she has entertained, and he, who has also paid back for the provided entertainment. She even states very clearly that, though it was an unsettling time, she has no fear because she has a big powerful magistrate to protect her. Thus, because of having a "privileged relationship" with the fatherly/authoritative/ masculine figures, mostly Nooran, then also Haseena Begum, take the social constraints with grave seriousness, abducting their chance to revolt and anarchism. Their psyche remains chained to morality and social ethics practiced in a masculine society.

## **6. Towards Conclusion: "Controlled by" and "Controlling with" Sex:**

In the concluding remarks, I would like to touch on the terms that I used in the title of this paper - the issue of being "controlled by", and "controlling with" sex. Here, the word "sex" refers to its uses as a verb. Considering the situation through which the text takes us, we can see the sexual life of both the women, Nooran, and Haseena Begum plays a very important role in shaping their fate, as well as the novel's fate. Without Nooran having an intimate relationship with Jugga, which impregnates her eventually, we cannot assume the dramatic end of the novel, where Jugga sacrifices his life so that the train carrying his love interest may leave for Pakistan safely. Then again, without the seducing presence of Haseena Begum, many shades of Hukum Chand, who is represented as the mouthpiece of the Indian government in the time of partition turmoil, were not possible to discover.

Nooran is presented in an attractive stature, similar to Haseena Begum, though the latter one is much more directly into the sex business. Nooran does not have the courage or capacity to control situations and the minds of people around with her seductions. On the contrary, Haseena Begum is very much aware of the power of being beautiful and seductive, and she attracts the most powerful character within the text, the magistrate with that. So, women, within the given timeframe and social strata of the text, have mostly a singular scale of judgment. Their beauty, and their sexual activities within their peasant community. This is the unfortunate derogatory reality they had to deal with.

However, the concluding question here is - in the situation where both of these female characters are posed in, which one is good? Being submissive, or being playful in sex? The premise to consider here is - lover of the submissive girlfriend saved her beloved's life who is carrying his child by sacrificing his own life, on the other hand, the powerful magistrate was not willing enough to safeguard the playful woman, who can entertain him, but eventually had a deep impact on his heart.

Honestly, in my understanding, it does not matter. In a blunt patriarchal peasant society, where women's identities are built on their affiliations with their male counterparts (for example- Nooran, the weaver's daughter, or Jugga's mother, or Haseena Begum, magistrate's form of entertainment), where women are barred from having an individual identity, financial solvency, even from basic human rights, it does not matter whether they are being subjugated by their sexuality or whether they are attracting, manipulating, and controlling the men folks around with it. The only thing we may care for, such situations may not sustain in any society anywhere in the world.

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