

## Intersectionality, Matrix of Domination and Female Agency in Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*

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### Abstract

*This paper investigates how Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column presents the oppression of women in the socio-political and cultural contexts of the Indo-Pak society. Patricia Collins's views of intersectionality and matrix of domination and Wrede's concept of agency serve as a theoretical framework for this research. Intersectionality works through a matrix of domination that includes four domains of power:*

#### Key Words:

Discipline, Female  
Agency, Gender,  
Hegemony,  
Intersectionality, Matrix of  
Domination

*structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal, which further serves to organize, regulate, maintain and internalize oppression. The study is significant as it intends to unravel the fact that in Sunlight on a Broken Column, gender is not the only factor causing subjugation. Oppression keeps on multiplying with the inclusion of several aspects of individual identity in general and female identity in particular, including age, color, creed, religion, race and sexual orientation. The research establishes that despite intersecting forces of suppression, there still is room for the female agency as the character of Laila foregrounds the fact that the existing situation can be challenged and reverted by few individuals found inside the suppressed groups.*

### Introduction

Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1988) reveals intersectionality that is a way of understanding "social location" in terms of "crisscross systems of oppression" (Collins, 2006, p. 7). Social location refers to the status of women in an oppressed society. The novel highlights how different systems of social organization like bureaucracy, feudalism, law and interpersonal relationships combine to shape a structure of domination that works to subjugate women in pre-and post-partition India. Muslim women are thrice marginalized through the intersecting identity markers of gender, religion and nationality as highlighted in *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. Each female character in the narrative suffers differently due to varying degree of overlapping markers of her socio-political and cultural identity. While women in the novel are victimized through the organized system of suppression, the female agency finds expression through the character of Laila, the protagonist who challenges the existing norms of bureaucratic, feudal, patriarchal and communal Indian society. Intersectionality here deals with intragroup differences and interconnection of forces of oppression and works through a matrix of domination that consists of four inter-related domains of power: structural, hegemonic, disciplinary and interpersonal. The structural domain of power includes law, religion, economy and polity that organize power relations. The disciplinary domain works to maintain oppression through bureaucratic organizations. The hegemonic domain consists of ideology and consciousness and manages to legitimize suppression and the interpersonal domain operates to internalize it through personal relations.

Born in 1913, Hosain was an eye witness to changing socio-political and cultural shifts in the first half of the twentieth century. Narrated from Laila's perspective, the narrative focuses on the life of a rich Muslim family of Taluqdars in Lucknow. During her stay at Baba Jan's house, Laila observes and describes the life and sufferings of many women who live in or outside Ashiana, her grandfather's house. Laila is often critical of the prevalent forces of domination. At the beginning of the novel, she is denied any agency to stop them from being operational, and this denial provokes her to choose Ameer as her life partner against the will of her family. In doing so, she exhibits female agency that, according to Patricia C. Wrede (2014), is "an actor's ability to make purposeful choices" (para 3). Laila succeeds in recognizing this innate ability and makes it her strength in the later period of her life.

## Literature Review

Hossain's novel and short stories are charming and significant as they serve as monuments to the past. Anita Desai, in the introduction to *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, writes that reading Hosain's writings is like "wrapping oneself up in one's mother's wedding sari, lifting the family jewels out of the faded box and admiring their glitter, inhaling the musty perfume of old silks in a camphor chest" (as cited in Hosain, 1961, n.p.). Along with details of the political record of the sub-continental past, Hosain also focuses on the various social and cultural narratives, like religion, patriarchy and festivals, shaping the then society. Parmer (2013) also argues that Hosain's work shows a "tenacious hold of feudalism and patriarchy" (p. 2347) in the pre-partition subcontinent. Siddiqui (2013), on the other hand, contends that Hossain conveys "the personal and political turmoil that marked the partition of India through the coincidental dissolution of the Muslim landholding and feudal lifestyle" (p. 4). Hosain has explored both the rural and the urban cultures and landscape in the backdrop of the partition of the Indian subcontinent as an adventure by men that marginalized the women further. Jasmin Mairhofer-Mehmood (2013) is of the view that "for women in South Asia, partition was an event that affected their lives in several ways, but their subordinate status in Indian society was an omnipresent issue they had to deal with" (p. 83). Usman and Yousaf (2019) also argue that Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is "a glorious example of existential crisis on the part of women or more precisely of the female characters – Laila and Aunt Abida" (p. 60). The current paper foregrounds the role of the female agency as a challenge to socio-culturally and discursively structured power through the intersection of four different domains, i.e. structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal.

## Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality tends to acknowledge the interconnection of different social forces of categorization like gender, race, religion, age, color and creed that sometimes overlap and intersect with one another and cause varying degree of oppression on the basis of individual differences. The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who argues that "the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite [...] that it frequently conflates and ignores intragroup differences" (as cited in Felluga, 2015, p.155). The term was further explained and elaborated by Patricia Collins in her book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (2000). Collins argues that intersectionality works at two levels: It observes and analyses the power imbalances and then finds the tools that can be used to eliminate these imbalances and, in so doing, addresses the issue of agency. Though the term was first coined in the context of Black Feminism and Critical Race Theory and dealt mainly with race, class, gender and sexuality, it is now used to refer to different types of identity markers that intersect and overlap one another, causing oppression. Intersectionality tries to find intragroup differences that may lead to varying degrees of oppression on an individual level. Even a single individual's life would be affected differently at different times of his life by these intersecting and interchanging identity markers. As Collins puts it:

Oppression is constantly changing, different aspects of an individual U.S. Black woman's self-definitions intermingle and become more salient: Her gender may be more prominent when she becomes a mother, her race when she searches for housing, her social class when she applies for credit, her sexual orientation when she walks with her lover, and her citizenship status when she applies for a job. In all these contexts, her position in relation to and within intersecting oppressions shifts. (as cited in Felluga, 2015, p.156)

Hence, intersectionality refers to the fact that oppression varies from person to person on the basis of intragroup differences. A person's race, social status and gender intervene and sometimes co-relate and thus, aggravate oppression by creating intra-group differences. Collins (2000) defines intersectionality as an "analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape black woman's experience and, in turn, are shaped by black women" (p. 299). Intersectionality works through the matrix of domination which can be defined as an "overall organization of power in a society" (Collins, 2006, p. 8). Matrix of domination has a "peculiar arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression" (p. 8) and works through "four interrelated domains of power: Structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal" (p.8). The structural domain of power refers to social structures such as law, religion, economy and polity. This domain decides the structural parameters that manage and organize power relations. The disciplinary domain works to maintain oppression through bureaucratic organizations that work to regulate human behaviour through rationalization, routinization and surveillance. Collins is of the view that any change or challenge in this domain comes through "insider resistance" (p.8). Those who are part of the bureaucracy and are interested in social justice can find the fissures and spaces to work upon and bring change even though the change is very slow. Then comes the hegemonic domain that "legitimizes oppression" (p.9). Max Weber is of the view that "authority functions because people believe in it" (as cited in Collins, p.8). Ideology and consciousness function together to establish and strengthen the hegemonic domain. It is induced through curriculum, religious teachings,

family histories and community cultures. The fourth domain is the interpersonal domain that is related to our everyday life. Personal relations and different interactions in everyday life shape this domain. Collins argues that any change in this domain starts through the “intrapersonal sphere” (p. 9) which means, how a person views and understands his or her own self and experiences and especially how our own “thoughts and actions uphold someone else’s subordination” (p. 9). She suggests that change in each domain is possible if particular individuals try to find the gaps and fill them through internal desire and determination.

## **Analysis**

*Sunlight on a Broken Column* reflects intersectionality and oppression of women in general and varying degrees of individual oppression in particular. In this novel, we discover that Aunt Abida is withdrawn into “a tight cocoon of anxious silence” (Hosain, 1988, p. 14), and aunt Majida is “dissolved into tearful prayers” (p. 14). Laila and Zahra find their “girlhood a heavy burden” (p. 14) and have “nothing in common” but their “kinship” and “fears” (p.15). Mushtari Bai’s “large, ruined muddied” eyes (p. 64) reflect her agony and poor servant Nandi is depressed because she is considered to be “a scourge to her parents” (p. 27). All these women face common gender discrimination but every one of them suffers differently due to the intersection of different markers of identity. Aunt Abida’s growing age and delayed marriage transect and create so much social and psychological pressure that she finds solace in silence and prayers. After Baba Jan’s death, she feels lonelier, keeps almost quiet and spends most of her time offering prayers. Her religious inclination makes her a subject of constant reproach. She became a victim due to intersecting forces of age, gender and delayed marriage and suppressed by the hegemonic and interpersonal domain of matrix of domination. In Aunt Majida’s case, her gender, status of being a widow and a young daughter of seventeen co-relate to intensify her marginalized position both in the family and the society. Interpersonal and hegemonic domains of power joined together lead to her suppression. Nandi, the maidservant, is oppressed as her class and gender intersect to demand obedience from her. She is unable to defend herself when she is accused of adultery by the driver. She is not allowed to defend herself and is labeled as “shameless Hussy, a liar and a wanton” (p. 28). She is mistreated by everyone, including her aunt. Nandi’s sarcasm and scorn for constructs like respect and social acceptance are evident when she replies to Zainab that “[r]espectability can be preserved like a pickle in gold and silver” (p. 97) and later referring to another maid’s, Saliman, misery she says that poor women are “prey of every man’s desires” (p. 168). Poverty and gender serve as intersecting markers of identity in the case of maidservants Nandi and Saliman and intensify their oppression through the co-relation of structural and hegemonic domains of power. Aunt Majida and Abida are hurt emotionally while Nandi and Saliman are tortured physically due to the intersection of different markers of identity like gender and class and varying degree of connection between the structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal forces of domination. Hence, all the women in the novel, from rich aunts to poor maidservants, suffer from one or other form of oppression, but intragroup differences make the nature of suffering varied from woman to woman. How the matrix of domination finds expression is dependent upon specific historical and social conditions. In *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, there are many socio-cultural and historical situations, including marriages, festivals and communal riots during partition, that reveal the actual working of the matrix of domination.

The first domain in the narrative, through which this matrix works, is the structural one that includes religion, law and polity. Religion’s role and place in the lives of the various characters keep on shifting from the beginning till the end of the narrative. Laila is reprimanded by Hakimian Bua for reading non-religious books and advised instead to recite the Holy Quran as it is the only criteria made by rich women for the selection of wives for their sons. Zahra, on the other hand, is praised because she offers prayers five times daily and recites the Holy Quran for an hour every morning. As the novel proceeds, religion transforms from a homogeneous to a heterogeneous force. In chapter five, Laila, in a state of nostalgia, recalls that when her father was alive, her house was “a house of feasts and festivities” (p. 40) as Shabrat, Eid, Bakreid, Dewali and Holi were celebrated with the same enthusiasm and respect without any discrimination. Asgher’s remarks about the month of Moharram and the mourners offer another view of religion and its impact on individuals and society: “[C]an genuine grief be organized [...] people cry for crying’s sake only” (p. 69). Asad opines that “personal grief” (p. 69) can be part of “a general sorrow” (p. 69) but it is worst if there is “hypocrisy in grief” (p. 69). Zahid criticizes and highlights the manipulation of the Shia-Sunni divide and says that people use religion to discard their “hysteria” and “distort” (p. 69) thirteen centuries old historical facts and divide Muslims when they need to be “united against great dangers” (p. 69). Hosain implies that religion is exploited and misused as an organized system of oppression by those who want to gain personal benefits out of it. In chapter twelve the news of the mass murder is released by the cook’s brother. Aunt Majida associates it with evil spirits. Hakimian Bua, however, makes it clear that during the Moharram procession, “*tazia* was stuck in the branch of a *peepul tree*” (p. 75) which outraged the Hindus as it was their sacred tree. Talking about Hindu-Muslim animosity Gill (n.d.) writes that in her novel Hosain depicts the “causes of growth of communal

hatred and partly blames the British and partly the leaders of both communities” (p. 5). Stabbing Muslims to death was the result of cutting the branch of Hindus’ sacred tree. The life of a Muslim was so cheap that it could be taken easily in the name of religion and no one could question it. Religion and identity intersect simultaneously as markers of identity and forces of oppression to marginalize poor Muslims living in the pre-partition India.

Whenever there is killing and murder in the novel, law and polity both combine to oppress the minority groups in pre-partition India. During Hindu-Muslim riots in the month of Muharram, Police are everywhere but fail to control violence as “hatred breeds hatred and violence and sorrow” (p. 69). Asad manages to escape the bloodshed in the city somehow but feels guilty for not saving a woman, her child and an old man from the violent mob. Rani Sahiba’s remarks that “learn to live with sorrow, my child, for it will be your constant companion” (p. 85) sum up the future of the Muslims in the pre-partition India. The past Muslim rule and the glory begins to affect their present whereas their future also seems to be “lost in conflict” (p. 88). On many occasions in the novel, whenever there is a matter of confronting the British politically, both the Hindu and the Muslim communities, along with their representative political parties, Indian National Congress and All India Muslim League, reconcile and join hands for the cause, but this reconciliation always proves to be futile because of the religious differences. Hence, the law and the polity intersect to gain material benefits and work to regulate oppression.

Part four of the novel highlights the injustices done to those who migrate to Pakistan. They are not compensated for the property they owned in India and are called ‘evacuee’, and their property is declared as an “evacuee property” (p. 278) to be controlled and occupied by the custodians. Laila serves as the writer’s mouthpiece when she comments on the situation of refugees and evacuees:

Their presence here and Saleem’s in their erstwhile homeland, was part of a statistical calculation in the bargaining of bureaucrats and politicians, in which millions of uprooted human beings became just numerical figures. The official words describing them had no meaning in terms of human heartache (p. 272)

Politicians and bureaucrats exploit the refugees and evacuees by occupying their homes and lands. Aunt Saira is filled with rage and hatred as a part of Ashiana, their home, is occupied by the custodians after Saleem’s migration to Pakistan. “What right have they to steel what is ours?” (p. 279). She criticizes Hindus for their hidden unlawful motives to occupy land and the properties earlier owned by the Muslims. She rebukes Kamal for trusting “the Baniyas”, accuses him of “having sold himself to a Muslim-hating Government” (p. 279) and supports Saleem’s decision to migrate to Pakistan. Hence, the partition becomes only a matter of distribution and occupation of property and land, whereas bureaucracy and law serve as tools of exploitation of the poor Muslims during and after partition.

Feudalism also appears as a major oppressive force in the Indian subcontinent as most of the land was owned by feudal lords until tenancy acts were passed. Taluqdars’ introduction to the Viceroy in an honorary reception is revealing when the speaker says that, “[w]e are aware that the property – er – the prosperity of our tenants is our proper – prosperity” (Hosain, 1998, p. 152). This slip of the tongue highlights that the feudal lords commodify not only land but human beings as well. Aunt Abida’s cruelty towards her tenants by throwing them out of their huts and demolishing their homes is reflective of the feudal oppression. When Kamal accuses his father Uncle Hamid of having a feudal mindset, he is outraged: “I am a part of feudalism, and proud to be. It is my heritage – and yours. It is, in fact your only livelihood” (p. 234). When feudal practices decline in the subcontinent, in part four of the novel, as a result of revolution, many feudal lords go mad while others are “retired to anonymity in their villages” (p. 277). Feudalism exploited and manipulated the peasantry and deprived the native farmers of their basic human and democratic rights for centuries.

The second domain in the matrix of domination is the disciplinary domain. Collins (2006) is of the view that this domain of power manages oppression through maintaining power relations and surveillance. Mrs. Wadia’s proposal that some steps must be taken to keep undesirable or common people away from the park during the visit of the Governor’s wife by fixing the admission fee of four to eight annas reveals her bureaucratic mindset. Mrs Waheed, her close friend and aide, also thinks on the same lines and believes that the local women “will learn to want it” (p. 130). The behavior of the people is strategically shaped and disciplined by those who are in a position to exploit power relations. In the last chapter, Laila tells about her cousin Asad who was arrested though he believed in “non-violence” (p. 318). In the narrative disciplinary domain is so oppressive that even devoted and sincere people like Asad are kept under surveillance without any specific reason. Collins (2000) is of the opinion that the change in this domain can be brought through insider resistance which is highlighted through the character of Kamal, who is critical of his father’s dogmatic views. Kamal’s status as a civil servant pleases his father, but he is unable to accept his son’s enthusiastic and sympathetic attitude towards the changing social structure. Kamal’s thoughts and actions are revolutionary and he represents what Collins calls insider resistance.

The hegemonic domain of power legitimizes oppression. Ideology and consciousness combine to form this domain. Our selection of words, the values we preach and hold, our ideas and images to which we respond all contribute to this domain. Curricula development, religious teachings, family histories and community cultures are

the sources through which this domain works. The hegemonic domain can be challenged by inducing critical thinking and an elated sense of the self in particular subjects. Max Weber (as cited in "Patricia Collins", 2006, p. 9) opines that people's belief in power or authority makes it functional. Collins (2000) too is of the view that if sexist and racist ideologies are rejected, they will surely lose their impact. In *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, the hegemonic domain finds expression through patriarchy and the dominant ideology of the characters. Baba Jan's patriarchal character is an oppressive character about whom Laila thinks that he cannot die because he is so powerful that "he lived the lives of so many people for them, reducing them to fearing automatons" (Hosain, 1988, p. 31). Even during his illness, his voice had been "devoid of its power, but not of its authority" (p. 32). When he was young, there was a little chance that any woman could smile and talk in his presence. He and his friends shared "a strange arrogance and a will to exercise power" (p. 34). He dies in the holy month of Muharram. To Laila, it seems to be another way of expressing power by choosing the very month of Muharram for death, when "the city's black-clad, bare-armed women and bare-footed, bareheaded men sorrowed for the martyred grandchildren of the prophet?" (p. 67). Baba Jan acts as an agent of the Foucauldian Panopticon by keeping all the women of his house under his surveillance in a condition of conscious visibility. Similarly, Uncle Hamid considers women's freedom of choice and expression an "absurd wish" (p. 19). Socio-cultural oppression is a lived reality for the women of the subcontinent. Patriarchy plays a central role in shaping the ideology of the women of Ashiana. Their views about marriage, education and life are shaped by the system in which they exist. Laila is criticized for being buried in books all time. Whether it is Hakiman Bua or Saira, they all believe that the sole purpose of education for women is to train them to be better wives (p. 110). As the hegemonic domain consists of images people respond to, the novel consists of many cultural references. Recurrent images of *Dupatta*, *shawl* and *pardah* indicate the exertion of power and control. *Dupatta* (the headcover) also serves as an image of class. However, it is not that only Muslim women are oppressed in the narrative. When Laila reunites with her friend Romana, an English girl, she discovers that the only real thing about her was "her beauty and she was its prisoner" (p. 307). Laila's friend Sita, though apparently a successful lady, is unhappy because she is forced to live her life with a man whom she does not love. Once, she was in love with Kamal but could not marry him because of religious differences. Religious differences were the main cause that induced the spirit of nationalism among Muslims and served as the basis of Two Nation Theory. Collins suggests that the change in this domain can be brought through critical thinking and Laila and Kamal are the two characters in the narrative with the ability to think critically. Laila is critical of the prevalent socio-political conditions in the subcontinent. She says, "[h]ow can we live together as a nation if all the time, the differences between the different communities are being preached" (p. 245). So deep was the impact of religious prejudice in pre-partition India that Muslims and Hindus prefer not to eat together. Ranjit's grandfather did not "eat with Baba Jan, but was his greatest friend" (p. 197). Saleem also urges to "think not in terms of India now, but India and Pakistan" (p. 285). Though the hegemonic domain serves as a major source of oppression, Hosain endows a few of her characters like Laila and Kamal with critical thinking so that the existing situation and ideology can be challenged and reverted.

The fourth domain of the Matrix of Domination is the interpersonal domain shaped through our everyday experiences and interactions. Through interpersonal communication, ideology and stereotypical attitudes are induced. Judith Butler argues that "when we act, we are not so much independent, self-willed agents as we are "actors" performatively repeating conventions, especially gender conventions" (as cited in Felluga, 2015, p.14). In *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, the attitude and behavior of young girls like Laila and Zahra are shaped through constant reminders of the traditional family values. Uncle Mohsin is outraged at the presence of Zahra and Laila while the matter of their marriage is being discussed. "Is the girl to pass judgment on her elders? Doubt their capability to choose? Question their decision? Choose her own husband?" (Hosain, 1988, p. 20). Obedience is demanded from Zahra indirectly by saying that she, unlike Laila, is not spoiled by education. So through interpersonal relations, Zahra's mind is prepared to accept whatever uncle Mohsin decides about her marriage. Laila's decision to marry Ameer is opposed by Aunt Abida as she rebukes Laila, "You have let your family's name be banded about by scandal-mongers and gossips. You have soiled its honour on their vulgar tongues" (p. 312). So intense is the interpersonal influence upon the life and existence of the female characters that they are unable to think beyond the defined boundaries of imagination. Collins Suggests that the change in this domain comes through intrapersonal resistance. An individual can stop the oppression only if he achieves a new sense of the self. So, the change starts from within. This is the point where the question of agency arises.

Agency deals with the ability or capacity, not the action of making choices. It depends upon the person whether he makes use of the agency or not. Patricia C. Wrede (2014) argues that "[a]gency is an actor's ability to make purposeful choices" (p. 69). She is of the view that in fiction, agency finds expression in three ways: First, a character might have made a wrong choice in the past or has made a wrong use of his agency and repents over it now and suffers due to this reason. Second, the character is denied of agency and wishes for it. Third the character is currently involved in the process of making choice. To what an extent an individual is free and independent in

making the choices regarding his life is the central issue in the concept of agency. In *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, female agency finds expression through Laila's character. From the very beginning, she is critical of whatever is going on around her. When Laila comes to know that Nandi would be married soon after she was found talking to the cleaner, she satirizes, "the cure for the good girl is to get her married quickly" (Hosain, 1988, p. 29) and questions this mode of punishment. Female agency finds full expression in Laila's decision to marry Ameer against the will of her uncle and aunt. Everyone turns against her. Aunt Abida opposes Laila's decision to which Laila responds that, "understanding was impossible between us. She was part of a way of thinking I had rejected [...] no one could stop me marrying Ameer if only to prove purity of love" (p. 312). Nita is another character that exercises her agency. Laila has her differences with Nita but wonders why she cannot stop liking her. Nita replies, "because I talk as I do. I take out the sting from what your conscience whispers to you, by saying it loudly" (p. 125). Nandi, though from the lower class, rebels against the tradition and takes revenge from Ghulam Ali on Saliman's behalf. Hosain portrays female characters like Laila, Nandi and Nita who have the ability to think critically, challenge the performative roles assigned to them by the society, make use of their agency and never repent over it even if they have to pay a price for valuing their individuality. Dey (2016) highlights such strong characters in Hosain's narratives and is of the view that Hosain presents "an alternate gynocentric narrative of the partition of India" (p. 2).

## Conclusion

To conclude, Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* displays the intersectionality of different markers of identity like gender, class and religion that cause varying degree of oppression. It also highlights how forces of power like politics, feudalism, bureaucracy, law, patriarchy, ideology and interpersonal relations combine and intersect to design a matrix of domination that consists of structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal domains and works to aggravate, regulate, internalize and maintain gender segregation. Each woman in the novel is repressed somehow or the other. Intersectionality not only intensifies the oppression of lower-class women like Nandi and Saliman but also aggravates the suffering of upper-class ladies like Aunt Abida and Majida. On the one hand, gender and class intersect to intensify the sufferings of Saliman and Nandi, on the other, age and marital status overlap to deepen the sorrows of rich Aunt Abida and Aunt Majida. The nature and degree of gender oppression differ due to the variation in the overlapping forces of oppression and intersecting markers of identity. On the one hand, feudalism and law exploit the peasants, whereas, on the other, socio-religious differences oppress the Muslim women living in the Indian subcontinent. Amidst these socio-political and religious forces of oppression, the female agency finds expression through the character of Laila, who symbolizes resilience and freedom for the women of Ashiana in general and of the Indian subcontinent in particular.

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