

Zeenuth Futehally's Zohra: A Gentle Rebel

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Abstract: In the fictional engagement with social history, Zeenuth Futehally has worked on retrospective in her debut novel *Zohra*, a woman centric novel, published by Zubaan in 2012. The novel is set in chaotic pre-independence India and the writer has attempted to construct the period in a very subtle way trying to 'penetrate into the inner worlds of characters and the contemporary atmosphere'. The writer has not used "history as a lump" but instinctly she has appropriated revised and re-interpreted history of Hyderabad depicting Muslim life, culture and attitude of the early twentieth century very subtly. The major socio-political movements, national and state upheavals have invariably drawn the attention of the novelist and her "essential aim of the novel is representation of the way the society moves".

Keyword: social history, reminiscences of the Hyderabad, Indian National Movement, marginalization,

To capture the lived experiences of the past, novel as a genre, befits to record the event filled with soul. Social history as a discipline looks at 'the lived experiences of the past'. 'It is the history of an entire society from a social historical viewpoint'. Social history uses the approach of women's history to understand the experiences of ordinary women, as opposed to "Great Women". Having a historical event as its theme, the novel acts as a mirror which reflects 'not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face and the unconscious prompting and conflicts which sway it.' Mark Schorer rightly asserts, "The novel seems to exist at a point where we can recognise the intersection of the stream of social history and stream of soul".

In the history of Indian English literature, the period from 1920 to 1947 has been the most interesting period due its political developments in the country that evoked a strong sense of nationalism where 'The Gandhian Whirlwind' was all around and the Indian national movement became, "a grand reservoir of literary material." Gandhian ideals and his lofty principles fascinated the writers. Novel as a literary genre was the most apt way to write elaborately to express the events sensibly. The impact of the Gandhian movement on the writers encouraged them to use it as a theme in their novels. M.K. Naik also ruminates upon the domineering presence of Gandhi in the novels written during the freedom struggle, "The Indian English novel of the period was deeply influenced by the epoch-making political, social and ideological ferment caused by the Gandhian movement". Along with the mainstream writers, Muslim novelists also emerged and made a significant contribution in this field. In case of women writers, Meena Shirwadkar ascribes that they lacked understanding or experience of the Movement, as they were not active participants. Shirwadkar further makes observation that very few novels portray women's participation in social life and in the Freedom Movement, which in turn brought them tremendous change in individual lives and personality. The compelling fact is that the number of Muslim women novelists wrote evocatively about life in Muslim households with religious sensibilities.

In the fictional engagement with social history, Zeenuth Futehally has worked on retrospective in her debut novel *Zohra*, a woman centric novel. The novel is set in early twentieth century Hyderabad in chaotic pre-independence India and the writer has attempted to construct the period in a very subtle way trying to 'penetrate into the inner worlds of characters and the contemporary atmosphere'. The writer has not used "history as a lump" but instinctly she has appropriated revised and re-interpreted history of Hyderabad depicting Muslim life, culture and attitude of the early twentieth century very subtly. The major socio-political movements, national and state upheavals have invariably drawn the attention of the novelist and her "essential aim of the novel is representation of the way the society moves".

The novel's editorial introduction, states that *Zohra* is an 'intensely nostalgic historical record of a city and a social commentary on a unique way of life'. (*Zohra* p.vi.) As Chandra Nisha Singh comments that the novel is 'nostalgia, which evokes the old order of life in a reminiscent mood and depicts the graces of old culture, pervades in Muslim families.' The life of the feudal Nawabs of Hyderabad, yet another centre of Islamic culture in India, is represented. Zeenuth Futehally felt the urgency to record the Hyderabad Muslim culture before it completely fades away. The reminiscence of the Hyderabad, as the city is described as a 'replica of paradise itself' and its way of life and culture is presented vividly. The writer has also shown a central concern on the life of the Muslim woman. Futehally is a lesser-known name in the literary world. Though much is not known about her, brief information about the writer is gathered from different sources.

Zeenuth Futehally (1904-92) was born in the princely state of Hyderabad, Deccan, in South India to an aristocratic Muslim family. Born to Hashim Yaar Jung Bahadur also called as Mulla Hashim Ali Moizuddin and Dilbarunnisa binte Haji Subhan Ali in Hyderabad. Her father was awarded the title of Nawab in the late nineteenth century by the Nizam of Hyderabad for his work in a plague in 1897. Futehally was brought up in a culture of privilege, wealth, courtesy, and constraint. She studied English, Urdu, art, and literature at the prestigious Mehubia Girls' School. As a young girl, she developed the flair to write. As Daya Patwardhan & Savita L. Bhatt say that she was "Unaware of her own talent, she rightly belonged to an era of culture,

refinement, simplicity and values. Her's was an age when people of talents were quite aloof from the noisy world of publicity." She was married off at the very young age to one Mr. Abu Nazar Mohammed Futehally from Mumbai, an engineer by profession who travels on a business trip often. In one such trip to Japan along with her husband, while participating in the lecture at women's gatherings, the idea to write Zohra was conceived. Zeenuth Futehally lived most of her life in Mumbai with her husband, son and two daughters.

Zeenuth Futehally's only novel, Zohra was first published in 1951 by Hind Kitab, Bombay being endorsed with a foreword by E.M.Forster, who glorified the book both for its "vivid . . . picture of the old Moslem society of Hyderabad . . . before it disappeared" and for its "convincing and charming" eponymous heroine who makes the book "not only an interesting document but a creative achievement"(261). In Futehally's first edition, the introductory note also cites, K.P.S. Menon, Indian Foreign Secretary praising the novel as a "moving" story of a young girl "Wandering 'twixt two worlds/The one dead, the other yet unborn," where the dying world of "dignity and decorum, scents and sherbets, Nawabs and nautch girls" is challenged by modern "different values, vital, iconoclastic, antinomian"(264). Though Futehally published in 1951 she had written mostly during the final phase of the nationalist movement focusing on the freedom struggle which forms a backdrop to this tale with the mention of Gandhi inspiring everybody during that period. An important point to be noted is that Zohra depicts a period before the rise of the Muslim League. "Both Ahmed Ali and Zeenuth Futehally look back at 1857 as an important event. This is the point from which the British gained real power, their rule became more ruthless and brutal than ever before and they began playing the Hindu against the Muslim in real earnest".

Zeenuth Futehally's daughter Rummana Futehally Denby edited the second edition of Zohra in 2004 and was published by Oxford University Press that included material originally cut from the first edition. Denby confesses that she was not able to find more on the life history of her mother Zeenuth Futehally. Zohra, an upper-class Muslim girl of eighteen years old, born in the early twentieth century is characterized as a sensitive, inclined to learn, creative bent of mind for painting and quite passionate for Persian poetry. She has great value for education and continued to pursue in spite of the resistance from the women in her house. But Zohra soon became fully conscious of the limitations set in the Muslim household and any transgressions would tarnish the image of the family. Though she was not mentally prepared for this marriage and the change that she would have to face in her life with the new people away from her home and her own people yet had to yield. Bashir, a practical man, quite detached man, became loving and caring husband after marriage. Though he had concern for his wife yet failed to recognise her strong creative inclination towards arts that she cherished, which is worthless for his scientific and practical thinking. She valued his devotion to her, but the distance from her husband increased. She felt her life would be complete by the arrival of her kids and gave birth to three children but her hungry soul was longing for something and that something brought near to her brother-in-law Hamid, a representative of modern India, who shared the same wave-length of Zohra with the common passion, ideology and Gandhian principles. An infidel cupid bloomed which was forbidden. Futehally portrayed the intensity of their passion with a great deal of sensitivity. Zohra perceived it as spiritual union while Hamid spelt out the physical desire, though it was never consummated. Zohra controlled her desire for Hamid out of inalienable duty for her husband and children. Futehally was influenced by Jane Austen style of writing, and can be said to be the first "Romance . . . that broke taboos," or "a novel of forbidden love." With her persisting desire for Hamid, Zohra could achieve the only escape from the social conventions that bound her, and that was through her untimely death. Visalakshi Menon in The Hindu puts it in her words "novel is calm, soothing and flows easily." The major concern that the writer projected was Zohra's 'unrequited love'.

The novel is worth reading because of its rich illustration of Zeenuth Futehally's hometown, Hyderabad and the way of life of its people. Dr. Roshan Benjamin Khan with great admiration for the novel comments "The reader, the reviewer, the critic can claim himself as a true connoisseur of this interesting novel only if he/she allows his heart and intellect to taste this novel as a wine taster would or as a bee seeking nectar from an orchid. Futehally's novel Zohra is written in a third-person omniscient narrative style. The language is simple. The narrative is lucid, coherent and has a heavy flavour of Hyderabadi culture expressed through a language that is bespeckled with few Urdu words, some native expressions translated into English." Zohra's life runs parallel to that of our nation's life where Futehally has remarkably brought out the oppressed young woman's struggle for liberty, a new way of resisting rather passively is being intertwined with colonial's tyrannized India struggling for freedom, politics and Gandhian ideology. Futehally's perception of women, who were deprived of freedom of choice and expression at that time in the Muslim household, had to yield to the wishes of their parents and husbands is exhibited clearly. Rummna Futehally observes, "Zohra's personal struggle for self-expression paralleled by India's growing desire for Independence, which was spreading throughout the country, Mahatma Gandhi's new weapon of non-violence, this quietly cultured but stagnant Hyderabadi society igniting a patriotic consciousness in a whole generation of young Muslim men and women and bringing them into conflict with their elders, a confrontation that would previously have been inconceivable." The national movement is contextualized within the purview of the text "The novel's mood is

of a strong attachment to the national movement of the country and of reverence for Indian leaders fighting for her freedom... There is a vivid reflection of modern politics and Gandhian movement...”

At the beginning of the novel from the conversation of Zohra’s mother, we get the glimpse of Mughal decline, which forced the royal line flee from Delhi losing all their fortune and settling in the far off place which patronized Muslims. The ancestry of Zubaida Begum, Zohra’s mother could be traced back to Akbar and Babar, the Mughal emperors ‘her demeanour proclaiming her a scion of that proud dyansty’(8) Aftermath of the Mutiny of 1857, Begum’s grandfather had to flee from Delhi, the capital of the Mughals. She remembered vividly her grandfather recounting the tales of those harrowing days:

‘I was prepared to die serving my emperor, but his humane soul not bear to see any more of this futile bloodshed. For, although not endowed with the fighting spirit of his great ancestors, he was an idealist, a poet. How well I remember Bahadur Shah, standing in the Red Fort and bidding farewell to his army: “The sword of Hind must now be sheathed”, said he. It was then that my parents decided to flee from this beautiful city’(8)

Her grandfather further stated they could not see the British taking over the palace and rule on them. Hence they were forced to leave. Could we have watched, with any equanimity, the English firangis walking through our marble palaces where flowed the Nahr-i-Bihisht, the Stream of Paradise, keeping the halls cool and fresh? Could we have tolerated a stranger delivering judgement under our scales of justice etched so beautifully on the arch of Diwan-e-Am, where the Emperor Shah Jehan first held public audience? And what about Amir Khusraw’s immortal proclamation engraved on the archway of the Hall of Private Audience – If there be a Paradise on Earth, it is this, it is this, it is this! Could we have stood aside and watched Paradise turn to infernal hell? No, No! Our eyes had to turn away from these scenes of humiliation.’(8-9)

He would then recount how after long years of dangerous wandering they had ultimately come to Hyderabad and found shelter there. Even though the Nizam had declared himself an ally of the British, at least here, there was still some vestige of Muslim culture left.(9)

In the Muslim household those days, girls were not encouraged to study and were married off young. Zohra, as a young girl was not prepared for the marriage and contemplated different options. She cherished the nationalist feeling and wished to implore her parents to let her go and work with Mahatma Gandhi. Recently she had developed a longing to be part of Gandhiji’s movement of non-violence and she understood the need for the youth of India to fight alongside him. She knew the hundreds of thousands of people flocked to see him, to hear and touch him wherever he took his message of ahimsa. And was he not bringing emancipation to the women of India, even causing a number of Muslim women to shed purdah in the zeal to work for the national cause? But reality in Hyderabad was very different. Politics was not a topic easily discussed in this house, and she knew she must rid herself of patriotic desires.’(35)

Zohra wished if her parents could allow her to study at Shantiniketan, the ‘Adobe of Peace’ to develop her art and learn to write poetry at this school in Bengal, started by India’s foremost revolutionary poet, Rabindranath Tagore. After all, it was the centre of the revival of national culture, and Tagore was not only a great poet but also a man of true understanding and high idealism. Zohra had only been ten years old when Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature, but she still remembered the pride and excitement that had run through the house. And only recently he had surrendered the Knighthood, the British had bestowed on him, as a protest against the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar.(35)

Zohra longed to be a useful part of the events that were stirring her country. Marriage and children should come later. But even as these thoughts sped through her mind, she came face to face with the inevitable truth. She lived in a world where women did not have luxury to exercise freedom of choice was not available to women. Any deviation from the accepted norm would deeply wound her parents. They might survive the shock but they would never be able to lift up their heads again for shame and sorrow. She had agreed to this marriage for her mother’s sake. She could not, in the end, destroy her family. Life must take its destined course.’(35-36) This shows that Zohra has been socially conditioned to believe that parents have every right to decide her future and it is her duty to oblige. She did not even make an attempt to revolt to come out of the situation as she did not want to be inconsiderate towards her parents. Zohra wept her heart out and was bewildered. Futehally expressed Zohra’s predicament,

The spirit of revolt having passed, she had resigned herself to the idea of marriage. But her thoughts ran over and over again in the same vein: Allah alone can foresee what the future holds for me. My kismet has been sealed for good or for evil, who can say? My parents have done their best to find a suitable husband for me and whatever manner of man he proves to be, I must make the marriage work. There is no retreat... Allah forbid that I should bring shame upon my parents. It is they who have arranged this marriage, but I shall be held responsible for its success or failure. But what if he does take a dislike to me? This last possibility often startled and disturbed her. She knew that by Hyderabad standards she was not beautiful.’(44)

Zohra relented to the obligation as an obedient daughter much against her wishes at the cost of her creative interest. Her desire to pursue studies came to a full stop with the arranged marriage to Bashir, twelve years older to Zohra, a man of her parent’s choice. He loved her but never appreciated her creative bent of mind.

If Zohra revered Gandhi and his ideologies, her husband, was sceptical and disillusioned of Gandhian ideologies. He disagreed over the utility of Gandhian's non-violence as a path for freedom. Bashir's practical bent of mind thought from the modern perspective. He didn't believe in the old system which is slow and meaningless and opined that 'life is much too short to waste on foolish formalities'.(68) He thought that the general upheaval like a revolution of thought, revolution of methods, and revolution of systems are needed. According to him Europe is advancing in science and people are getting used to quick changes while in India, people are resisting new influences. Zohra expresses that Mahatma Gandhi is also doing the same 'Only, his is a new way of revolution. But it will surely lead to the regeneration of India'.(68) To this Bashir counters, 'I, too, was of that opinion when I was about your age. I was in England then and longed to be back to do my bit. But frankly, I have never had faith in Gandhiji's methods. Metaphorically speaking, and in some cases literally too, we live in an age of aeroplanes and high-speed cars, but continue to travel cautiously by bullock cart in the absurdly leisurely manner reminiscent of prehistoric days. This is the Mother India of whom our poets sing in high-flown terms.'(68) Zohra could not argue on this topic as she was still too shy as a young bride.

Zohra and her brother-in-law, Hamid are inspired by the Gandhian ideologies. When Hamid, returned to India from his Europe trip, Zohra was curious to know about Europeans and their view about India. He told her that they are friendly to Indians and they showed great interest in India's ancient philosophy. It is all due to Mahatma Gandhi, people there were anxious to know something about him. His non-violent movement had caught their imagination. Italian educator Maria Montessori wrote: "Everybody knows him, even the smallest child, in every corner of Europe. Everyone, when he sees his picture, exclaims in his own language: That is Gandhi!"

Bashir's predilection for European life and science was high. Hamid mentioned the contribution of Science in Europe which has made the place much cleaner and healthier place to live in, with a standard of living being much higher. Bashir, as a scientist himself feel proud of the contribution of science to the society and took pride in its manifestation 'You will admit that science has made the people of Europe both physically and mentally more fit. Isn't it amazing how even the poorer class of children look healthy and happy there? Their life span is always increasing'.(124) Hamid counters it sarcastically 'I call it prolonging the agony of existence'. He feels that there must be some more drastic method of revolutionizing society and expressed with great zeal that India needs it more than any other country. Bashir was perturbed about Hamid's perception of revolution as he had socialist leanings and said 'Anarchy and bloodshed! Murder of decent people, destruction of everything worthwhile! Is this where you lovers of India want to lead her to?' He further continued with frozen contempt in his voice,

Besides, the Islamic social order is the best. There is no class distinction; no accumulation of wealth. I really don't think you can improve upon it.' Bashir was a staunch supporter of the Muslim social structure though he hardly practiced the precepts of Islam. Hamid said that though Islam may not encourage class distinction, but for the regressive society all kinds of radical changes is required. With great intensity he continued that more than anything what is imperative is to 'get rid of foreign rule, and for that Mahatma Gandhi's way is the only way'.(124)

Bashir was disillusioned with congress and Gandhiji during the Khilafat Movement which was damaging their secular views. The Muslim withdrew their support for the Congress and split from them after Mahatma Gandhi's announcement to stop all protests in the wake of the Chauri Chaura incidents. Bashir felt that they were let down by this and became the voice of the Muslims and expressed his discontentment and said retaining his equanimity, I have lost faith in Gandhiji's methods since he suspended the mass Civil Disobedience movement in 1922. At that time, England's embarrassments were many – Ireland, the Middle East. Had Gandhiji provided unflinching leadership then, we may well have gained our independence by now. Now we can only move in a constitutional manner, and swaraj will come gradually. The time for revolution is past.'(124)

According to Wikipedia, "The Ali brothers criticized Gandhi's extreme commitment to non-violence and severed their ties with them after he suspended all non-cooperation movement after the killing of twenty three policemen at Chauri Chaura in 1922. Although holding talks with the British and continuing their activities, the Khilafat struggle weakened as Muslims were divided between working for the Congress, the Khilafat cause and the Muslim League."

Futehally indicates the factionalism between Bashir and Hamid when they argue with each other on the nationalist movement, intermittently religion, about Hindus and Muslims. Bashir felt that Hamid was influencing Zohra about Congress, Gandhi and Satyagraha movement. He sarcastically expressed that 'by wearing the coarsest homespun clothes and by submitting to violence in the sacred name of non-violence, you will indeed get your swaraj!.. Your faith in non-violence is quite nauseating!' Hamid realized that controversy on this subject would lead to collision with his brother yet he said "Last time it almost succeeded. It united the Hindus and Muslims as seldom before, at least since the British Raj. Why, even you were in agreement then.' Bashir expresses that it failed. Hamid retorts by saying that it was not a failure 'Non-violence is not only best suited to our conditions, but it is also the most civilized way. It is without doubt the highest form of courage, to

suffer and not to hit back... Only the land of the Buddha could have produced the Mahatma. It requires the boldness of one's convictions; not a creed for the weak, it is a creed for the bravest.' Bashir with cold finality said, 'We fight in the open battlefield. This method is certainly not suited to our Muslim genius.' Hamid losing all self-control, bursted out: 'Why do we have to talk of the Muslim genius and the Hindu genius? After all, the majority of us come from the same stock. We are mostly converts, and have the same background of thought'. Bashir replies to this, 'Even so, once converted, our social order has changed radically. In Islam, we have complete equality. With us, there's none of that inhuman caste system. You cannot shut up human beings in tight-fitting compartments in the name of religion. It is against the very spirit of Islam. The servant can rub shoulders with his master in the mosque. Before God, they are equal. By contrast, a Harijan may not enter a caste-Hindu temple. A Brahmin will not allow even the shadow of an untouchable to pollute him. What indeed is there in common between us?' Bashir asked in exasperation.(202-203) Hamid told, 'I don't claim that Hinduism is free from abuses. But who is crusading more strongly against them than Mahatma Gandhi himself? And look at the tremendous effect of it even among women. Look at Zohra's friend Nalini. She never ate with us before because her elders would not allow it. Now her family accepts it. Then, again, is Islam free from such abuses? Look at the way we have kept our women in the darkness of purdah. Is that human? Are we following the laws of the Prophet?' Hamid's voice rose as his temper spiralled.

Bashir responds to this 'Certainly, there are abuses in Islam too. I am all for reform, but you can't deny that Islamic Law, the Shariat, accords women more rights than any other religion. The laws of marriage, divorce, widow-remarriage, inheritance, they are all in favour of women. With the Hindus, on the contrary, child marriages and the plight of child widows are positively inhuman.' Hamid squirmed, he felt like shouting: 'But how many of these rights you boast of are translated into practice? Can a girl really marry of her own free will, or get a divorce on any reasonable grounds?' But he restrained himself and said: 'Hindu philosophy is one of the world's oldest and greatest. One has to study it in order to understand the Hindu mind. It's no use attacking a system without any appreciation of its roots. And Hindu and Muslim cultures did reach a synthesis in the glorious days of Akbar. Look at Jawaharlal Nehru, isn't he the idol of everyone? Is there any Muslim to rival him?' For which Bashir commented icily, 'Yes, handsome and impetuous, performing daredevil feats like a cinema star, he's at least the idol of all women,' He was forgetting himself in the heat of the argument; for he had often confessed that Nehru was the only Hindu leader whom he could understand. Hamid told in an equally calculating voice, 'I didn't know there was anything wrong in being idolized by women. I'm sure we should all like it. Only, Jawaharlal is respected by men and women alike.' Bashir broke in caustically, 'This is just another form of idolatry. If you can't have a stone deity, you must have a clay one.'(203) Hamid returned, 'If that deity symbolizes some ideal, some perfection, then I for one see no harm in it. We're all doing it in one way or another.' Bashir retorted: 'Muslim culture encompasses a graciousness of life, large-heartedness, tolerance.'

Hamid wondered if Bashir possessed those qualities in him and remarked: 'Yes, Hindus don't squander money foolishly as we do. They have greater wisdom. I only wish, however, we would stop talking about different cultures. The differences are more provincial than religious. Religion is now being exploited only for power politics. The British used it in their policy of divide and rule. We are foolish enough to play blindly into their hands. And the way certain Muslim leaders are talking now, I dread to think of the future.... We must all unite and fight the battle for freedom. The youth of our country is mostly on our side.' Bashir said, 'Yes, you can always rely on the young to get excited over anything revolutionary, they are carried away by your slogans. It's just mass hysteria!' It provoked Hamid when Bashir gave a cold stare. Hamid said, 'To me, Hindus and Muslims are one, possessing a common heritage, belonging to a common Motherland, fighting common battles. We are intermingled, living together side by side. Surely, you can't divide up each little plot of land and say this is Hindu India and that is Muslim India? To me that sounds like a graveyard!'

Bashir spoke in a hard metallic voice, as if dispensing judgement 'I don't say that we have to divide the country up. I only say that there is justification for what some Muslims have started saying.... In a democracy we shall always be under the Hindus. We cannot tolerate that. We belong to the race of conquerors.' Hamid said with an impatient gesture 'History has never shown a race of permanent conquerors. Besides, Muslims can have their majority provinces with safeguards at the Centre. The British Raj can't last indefinitely. World opinion is already against them. And on the same basis, Hyderabad Muslims have no right to rule the Hindu majority. We must all be prepared for changes'(204). Hamid spoke with intense conviction. Bashir asserted with disdain that 'The Hindus were not born to be rulers, they are yogis.' 'The Muslims never accepted British domination easily. Don't forget that we were the first to strike a blow at British rule. The Mutiny of 1857 was our attempt at freeing India. We fought an open battle, and not this ahimsa – non-violence. From the entire conversation we understand that the disgruntled Muslims had in their minds for the division of the country. The brothers continued to argue on the trivial issue of the Hindu diet.

Bashir felt that Hindu diet is all wrong. 'No one can be strong on mere vegetables!' Hamid disagreed with him 'But anyway, in a free India, nobody is going to tie you down to sectarian habits. Even amongst Hindus, there are many non-vegetarians.' Bashir said, 'Altogether, it's their way of life against ours - the two can never meet. How can we come closer to each other when they won't even eat with us?' Hamid said

heatedly, 'I am not defending Hindu conservatism but I cannot defend Muslim narrowness either'. Bashir emphasised 'Muslims are not narrow' Hamid replied, 'That's our difficulty. Like the camel, we can never see our own hump'. Bashir told Hamid, 'You have no right to call yourself a Muslim!' Bashir's tone was so offensive that Zohra, no longer able to contain her anger, suddenly burst out: 'It is people like you who make one almost wish one were a Hindu. There should be some tolerance, a spirit of give and take. We all have Hindu friends, and what is the difference? Except, perhaps, that they are cleverer!' Bashir told scornfully to Zohra, 'Hamid has been indoctrinating you. I do not think his influence is good for any susceptible young person.' Zohra speaks, 'A little while ago you asked me when I would stop acting like a young girl. I should now like to know when you will stop treating me like one,' she asked haughtily, rising from her chair, 'If I am susceptible, you cannot change me. I shall be influenced by whomsoever I like!' With this retort and her head held high she left the room.(205)

Hamid's forbidden love for Zohra never consummated. So, knowing his limits he decided to be out of sight from her and joined the national movement. He left for Bombay and participated in Salt Satyagraha by breaking Salt Laws in 1930. This had now come to represent the destruction of alien power. The levy on salt by the rulers was a detested tax, for peasants looked on salt as a gift of nature. In March, Gandhiji began his march to Dandi Beach – a distance of 240 miles from Ahmedabad – with a group of his followers. There, in a symbolic gesture, he picked up a handful of salt from the dunes. This was a signal for million of Indians within reach of the sea from the dunes. This was a signal for millions of Indians within reach of the sea to do the same. Thousands were beaten with lathis and injured. Many thousands more were imprisoned. It was said that criminals were released from gaol to make room for political prisoners. (213)

Hamid also had been arrested and sentenced to two years, a very long term for such a trivial offence. When news reached Hyderabad of Hamid's arrest, his friends accepted it with mixed feelings. They grumbled, cursed, felt strangely elated, and celebrated the occasion. But Bashir and his mother were hurt in different ways. (213) Since Hamid's final release from gaol, he had again become the subject of Bashir's derision. Hamid had been released once, within a year of his being sentenced, when the viceroy – Lord Irwin – had prevailed upon Mahatma Gandhi to call off the non-violence movement and attend the Round table Conference in London. Gandhiji had gone, hoping for a settlement, but had returned disappointed and given the call for a renewal of Satyagraha. Hamid, who had stayed in Bombay during the intervening months, was again sentenced to two years' imprisonment. He could have had his sentence reduced by paying a fine, but this was against the Congress creed. They would not in any circumstances aid an alien country to carry on its domination of India. Hamid was finally released after completing his full term. Apart from finishing his second novel in prison, he had written the book on rural arts he had wanted to write, and for which he had been collecting data. Everyone now expected him to return to Hyderabad; but, instead, he wrote to say that as the Satyagraha movement was over, he would go to Shantiniketan, Tagore's 'Abode of Peace', and study the Model Village system, on which a number of students there were experimenting. He said this would be useful in Hyderabad too.(230-232)

Zohra showed her true patriotism in her fondness for khadi. She was taken to Bombay by Bashir to pick Hamid who arrived from Europe. They went to shopping along with her sister-in-law, Safia. In the Swadeshi Market, khaddar-hand-spun-saris appeased her and suggested with great enthusiasm to Safia of buying it. But Safia showed contempt towards Khadi and preferred mill-made ones. 'Zohra was sorry that her sister-in-law should express contempt for khaddar. It had come to signify the fight for freedom since Mahatma Gandhi's advocacy of the use of hand-spun cloth, as a double-edged weapon – political and economic. Bombay was the cradle of this new life. Khaddar-clad women and white Gandhi-capped men, symbols of a newly aroused nationalism, were to be seen everywhere.'(119) Zohra was fascinated with the sari and stroked the rough khaddar saris with her hands 'They look so pure. I feel as if perhaps they have a soul.'(119) According to M.K.Gandhi, 'India's freedom hangs solely by a cotton thread'. It was in 1920s pre-independence it was seen that khadi was used as a tool to achieve three important goals firstly Constructive Programme and the Non-Cooperation movement, secondly removal of untouchability and the third being Hindu-Muslim unity. 'Gandhi sought to right the Khilafat and Jalianwalabagh wrongs through the unique weapon of khadi. He believed khadi was the way to swaraj as it safeguarded both 'dharma' and 'arth'. Gandhi used Khadi as a medium to address a whole lot of issues-poverty, boycott of foreign goods, utilization of time, self-sufficiency, solidarity and compassion among people, involvement of women and children a new aesthetic and fashion sense, and finally a non-violent challenge to the British government. Gandhi reasoned that 'swadeshis' would inflict losses on Lancashire and thus pressurized the government into a settlement of the Caliphate and Punjab questions. The intention was to paralyse the government and compel justice from it. The sartorial challenge was a non-violent weapon and yet a weapon which could be easily yielded by the teeming millions'. The wide spectrum of sartorial elements became the focus of imperial oppression and the launching pad for Gandhi's quest for purna swaraj. He gave to khadi a meaning that transcended the common understanding of cloth and clothing as instruments of bodily protection, adornment or identification. He invested khadi with such semiotic power as to promote eco-political independence, psycho-cultural dignity, and socio-religious harmony. This was sartorial

communication at its most creative, it's most daring. It stretched the meaning of clothing to produce a symbol above symbols that was to defy, once and for all time, centuries of colonial occupation.

Sarojini Naidu's name is frequently heard in the novel. As Zohra remarks "She is one of Gandhiji's staunchest lieutenants and so often travels around with him". Zohra miss the chance of meeting Naidu during a meeting of the Poetry Society which Hamid attended. He told Zohra that 'She has returned home (Hyderabad) to say goodbye to her friends and family, for she expects to be in prison again soon. The songs of "India's Nightingale" may be hushed under the burden of politics, but poetry is still her first love'.(187)

Dr. Meenakshi Mukherjee, opines that the independence movement in India 'was not merely a political struggle, but a pervasive emotional experience for all Indians in the nineteen-twenties and thirties....' Zeenuth Futehally was so obsessed with the Nationalist movement that she has depicted it in a different dimension dwelling into the emotions of the characters and the ideology they held. Zohra had the progressive and reformistic attitude. But she passively protested against the society through her attack on the conventional arranged marriage by having clandestine relationship with her brother-in-law, Hamid. Her suppressed dreams for creativity and participation in National movement were all buried in her final mute self-sacrifice, which manifested her vulnerability as a Muslim woman.

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