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**Intersecting Shadows: Class and Gender Discrimination in Danyal
Mueenuddin's Saleema —A Postcolonial Feminist Reading**



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Abstract

This study examines Saleema's character for class and gender discrimination in Danyal Mueenuddin's short story Saleema (2009), using a postcolonial feminist framework. Set in rural Pakistan, the narrative presents the intersecting oppressions experienced by Saleema, a lower-class domestic worker whose life is shaped by structural poverty, gendered violence, and feudal hierarchies. Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), this analysis explores how patriarchal social norms and class stratification combine to produce the subaltern woman. The study explores the intersecting dynamics of power structures, colonial legacies, and patriarchal norms that immortalise Saleema's subjugation. Through a comprehensive examination of her relationships with other characters, setting, and themes, this paper elucidates how Saleema's experiences epitomise broader societal injustices rooted in classism and sexism. By incorporating insights from Postcolonial Feminist theory, this analysis offers a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in Saleema's narrative, shedding light on the intersecting forms of discrimination she confronts. The paper argues that Saleema's story exposes the systematic nature of oppression in postcolonial societies, demonstrating the necessity of reading South Asian literature through the lens of postcolonial feminist critique. This study contributes to a deeper comprehension of the intricate interplay between class, gender, and power within the socio-cultural fabric of postcolonial societies.

Keywords: Saleema, Class Hierarchy, Gender Discrimination, Postcolonial Feminism, Subaltern, Pakistani Literature

Introduction

Background of the study

Saleema (2009) and Danyal Mueenuddin's collection of short stories, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009), gives us a strong look at how society worked in Pakistan during the 1960s and later. The main theme is about rich people taking advantage of the poor. The character of 'Saleema' in the story represents the gendered disparities, and she has been presented as a play object or a sex toy for the male characters. "Her father became a heroin addict, and died of it, her mother slept around for money and favours, and she herself at fourteen became the plaything of a small landowner's son." (Mueenuddin, 2009, p.17). Saleema opened her eyes in an impoverished family. She had been seeing the criminal and corrupt activities of her parents since childhood. While opening up her past and background before Rafik, she said, "What shall I say? I was brought up with slaps and harsh words, we had nothing, we were poor" (Mueenuddin, 2009, p.35). Hence, her exposure to dark realities and dark experiences since her childhood made her sensual (left her with no other option but to tread the promiscuous life path inadvertently). "These experiences had not cracked her hard skin, but made her sensual, unscrupulous romantic" (Mueenuddin, 2009, p.17). Being a daughter and a wife of a poor man, she had always yearned for the riches and valuables of life. She wanted to jump the ladder of the social class. She extended the illegitimate relationships with Hassan and Rafik for economic security, but all in vain since she could not lead a life

of a virtuous woman, and neither Hassan nor Rafik loved her with purity; rather, they fulfilled their physical desires from her and left her alone.

Pakistan, a nation created by South Asia's decolonization in 1947, bears the indelible scars of British colonial control throughout its cultural, social, and political fabric. Pakistan, as a postcolonial country, is grappling with colonial legacies that continue to affect its identity, power structures, and socioeconomic hierarchies. The junction of gender and class, which is intimately woven into the fabric of society, is one of the basic aspects of this postcolonial experience. Pakistani literature emerges as a potent tool for examining the complexity of postcolonial life in this environment. Mueenuddin's *Other Rooms and Other Wonders* (2009) provides a captivating literary prism through which to investigate the lived realities of Pakistanis from all social strata. Mueenuddin's stories go through feudal landowners' realms, working-class workers' domains, and middle-class professional domains, revealing the complexities of a society contending with tradition, modernity, and the lingering legacies of colonialism. The setting of the story is the countryside of Pakistan. It shows us the life of a young girl, Saleema, who works as a maid for a rich man named K.K. Harouni. The story is filled with the customs and values of this closely connected community. Saleema faces many difficulties every day because her family doesn't have much money. Her dad works hard, and her mom takes care of their household affairs. The main problem in the story surrounds their financial issues. (Mueenuddin, 2009).

The story of Saleema (2009) also explores the firmly set patriarchal roles for men and women in a typical Pakistani village. Saleema's family wants her to follow the usual tasks women do at home. Saleema, however, has dreams that go beyond these expected roles. This creates a strong emotional conflict between what Saleema wants and what society thinks she should do. A major idea in 'Saleema' is the continuous mistreatment of women, shown through the main character, "Saleema". Her story is like a small version of the bigger problem of patriarchy in Pakistani society—a system where men have a lot of power and women are often not treated fairly. Women are made to feel less important, especially when it comes to money. This leads them to work in rich people's homes, where they are paid very little and sometimes treated badly.

Postcolonial feminism started with scholars of colour applying a critical lens to "mainstream" feminism, which was often based on the assumption that the movement in the Global North could speak to the experiences of all feminists, everywhere (Mohanty, 1991). The theory of postcolonial feminism highlighted the need to include and represent the experiences of women and other marginalised groups from the Global South, who were instead represented through stereotyping or in some cases completely erased from the narrative whereas Spivak states that "Postcolonial feminism examines how gender relations are shaped by colonial and imperial histories, and how these intersect with issues of race, class, and sexuality." To better understand this perspective, let's first consider the history of feminism in general. (Spivak, 1988)

Postcolonial feminism is directly linked to postcolonialism and looks to consider the complex layers of oppression that can co-exist (Ziarek, 2011). He says that postcolonial feminism is directly associated with the analysis of how colonial and imperial histories have shaped gendered subjectivities and power nations and with the project of decolonizing feminist theory and practice. Postcolonial feminism arose both as a critique of traditional feminism for not considering the perspectives of individuals from the Global South living in patriarchal structures, and as a critique of postcolonial theory for its failure to adequately examine issues of gender. As with feminism in general,

postcolonial feminism aims to throw light on all forms of oppression and marginalisation, so they can be addressed and resolved. However, postcolonial feminists argue that to achieve this, it is important to promote a wider viewpoint of the complexity of oppression in society.

Nadje (2012) claims that Postcolonialism overall is the practice of studying cultural impacts and legacies of colonialism, which have manifested themselves in human and political consequences. Postcolonial theory or postcolonialism is the study of the economic, political, and social impact of colonialism. Through a broader study of history, culture, and literature, postcolonialism challenges the narrative perpetuated by the colonising countries. Postcolonial feminism, therefore, aims to understand and undo the legacies of colonialism within feminist activism. In other words, postcolonial feminism focuses on decolonising feminist activism — reclaim it as more than just a pursuit of the Western world and its people. Postcolonial feminist academic writing seeks to understand and interpret everyday lived experiences through a postcolonial perspective, de-centring the white, western, Eurocentric experience. (Nadje, 2012). Postcolonial feminism is a way to look beyond the whitewashing of feminism and to understand the nuance of power, geopolitics, and money at play in the oppression and exploitation of various people, and thus for each feminist to become accountable for their own actions and activism. In reality, feminism is not feminism unless it is postcolonial. (Nadje, 2012).

Postcolonial feminism aims to make feminist action free from colonial influence, focusing on the experiences of people from the Global South dealing with gender-based unfairness (Nadje, 2012). This approach is a strong tool to break down systems like patriarchy, racism, and the lasting effects of colonialism, which all keep inequality alive in postcolonial societies. Postcolonial feminism is a branch of feminism that aims to bring to the surface and include the experiences of individuals from the Global South into the feminist discourse. Their experiences are influenced by lived racism and the impact of colonialism and imperialism.

In her seminal work, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), Spivak looks at the problems faced by marginalized individuals, especially women, in societies shaped by colonial history. Her work emphasizes how crucial it is to understand both class and gender discrimination, connecting with the struggles we see in Saleema's story. As Spivak (1988) says it so well, 'The subaltern cannot speak,' capturing the idea that voices like Saleema's are often silenced, highlighting the urgent need to address their difficult situations through the lens of postcolonial feminism.

Saleema' challenges class and gender discrimination more clearly. Postcolonial feminism acts as our guide, helping us break down and understand these complex ideas. As we follow Saleema's story, we're on a journey that goes beyond just rural Pakistan, giving us deep insights into the widespread fight against unfair treatment and the determined push for gender equality.

Research Objectives

To examine the influences of gender and class discrimination on Saleema's character and shape the dynamics of her interactions with different social classes

To explore other characters' diverse social classes' interaction with Saleema within narrative contexts.

Research Questions

Why does gender and class discrimination influence the dynamics of the encounters between Saleema and the social classes?

How do characters from different social classes interact with each other within narratives?

Statement of the Problem

The study examines Danyal Mueenuddin's Character 'Saleema' from his short story Saleema (2009), using a postcolonial feminist approach. It focuses on understanding how social classes and the mistreatment of women come together in the rural Pakistani society as described in the story. The study aims at exploring how women like Saleema are treated badly in many ways, and this mistreatment is made worse by the rules that state men should have more power in financial matters. Furthermore, it aims to learn more about how class and gender discrimination work in 'Saleema' and what this can teach us about similar issues in other postcolonial societies.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the sense that it carefully looks at how social class and gender discrimination are portrayed in Danyal Mueenuddin's Saleema (2009), using a postcolonial feminist perspective. By exploring Saleema's character and the story's portrayal of rural Pakistani society, the research adds depth to our understanding of how class, gender, and postcolonial factors interact in complex ways. It helps us to see how societal influences, economic status, and gender roles play out in the life of Saleema and contribute to a more detailed picture of rural Pakistani society. This study highlights the ongoing problem of gender-based oppression, using Saleema's experiences as an example. It underscores the pressing need to address this kind of discrimination. The analysis digs into the economic and class differences in the story, showing how unequal distribution of wealth plays a role in the unfair treatment of women. In simpler terms, it points out that the mistreatment of women is connected to how money and social class are unevenly distributed.

By using postcolonial feminist ideas, this study takes a closer look at how historical influences and traditional gender norms work together to keep inequality going. This approach gives us important ways to understand the bigger consequences of gender and class discrimination in societies that have been through colonization.

Beyond just looking at the story's literary value, the study is socially significant too. It acts like a mirror, reflecting real-world problems and starting conversations for positive changes. The study adds to the talk about intersectionality, showing how class and gender discrimination are connected. Overall, this analysis moves forward the discussion on these important issues and gives a base for future talks and actions to lessen the impact of discrimination on groups that are often left out in postcolonial societies.

Delimitation of the study

This study specifically examines the character of Saleema in the short story of the same title in Danyal Mueeddin's collection of short stories, In Other Rooms, Other Wonders (2009). The research does not encompass an analysis of the entire collection, but instead concentrates on this individual narrative to offer an in-depth exploration of class and

gender discrimination within it. The research is delimited to the application of a postcolonial feminist approach in the analysis of Saleema (2009). It does not engage with other literary or theoretical frameworks in depth, as the primary focus is on how postcolonial feminist perspectives contribute to understanding class and gender discrimination in the selected short story.

Literature Review

Women across religious, cultural, and geographical contexts experience similar forms of oppression, a reality reflected in patriarchal narratives that position Eve as responsible for human downfall, thereby normalizing female subjugation. Women worldwide confront torture, forced marriages, hysteria, and persistent inferiority. Pakistani feminist consciousness has long roots in Urdu literature, where writers such as Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Hyder, and Kishwar Naheed challenged traditional gender roles (Sidhwa et al, 2021). Feminist resistance gained force during Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization, when activists and writers publicly opposed regressive interpretations of religion and discriminatory Hudood laws, ultimately forming the Women's Action Forum. This historical trajectory provides essential context for examining contemporary Pakistani texts such as Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009), which reflect the intersections of gender, class, and political power within postcolonial feminism.

Mueenuddin's collection offers a complex exploration of postcolonial Pakistani society, particularly highlighting how women remain confined within structures of servitude, domesticity, and moral judgment. In Saleema (2009) and related stories in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009), women are valued primarily for their sexuality, reproductive roles, and obedience; they lack individual identity outside these constraints. Scenes such as Nawab's wife eating last or forever bending over the stove symbolise colonial-style hierarchies replicated within patriarchal families, where loyalty and silence are demanded from women—echoing Spivak's (1988) formulation of the voiceless subaltern. Critics such as Hae (2014) and Chakraborty (2019) reveal how the text exposes deep class servitude and gender inequality, where women internalize their inferiority and navigate systems structured to deny them agency.

The cultural policing of femininity is not unique to South Asia; Victorian ideals demonstrate similar global norms requiring women to embody piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Hae, 2014). Although Victorian women gradually secured legal and educational reforms (Mitchell, 2015), their prescribed roles mirrored the restrictions faced by Pakistani women in Mueenuddin's work—especially those of the lower classes. Contemporary feminist critics argue that patriarchal societies continue to objectify women, treating them as interchangeable objects lacking agency. In Pakistani fiction, women's sexuality remains a contested terrain, with writers depicting how female bodies are regulated through forced marriages, honour crimes, and social surveillance (Karim, 2019). Such portrayals underscore how gender oppression is reinforced through cultural, economic, and linguistic structures.

Within this context, postcolonial feminist theory becomes essential for analysing women's representation in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009). Scholars emphasize that Western feminist frameworks cannot fully capture the lived realities of colonized women whose histories differ radically due to slavery, colonialism, displacement, and feudalism (Mohanty, 1991). Postcolonial feminism, therefore, advocates rewriting histories through the experiences of poor and marginalized women (Mohanty, 1991).

Studies of Mueenuddin's stories reveal that women—whether elite or impoverished—remain constrained by patriarchal and class-based structures, often defined only through their relations to men (Chakraborty, 2019). These narratives align with Spivak's (1988) conceptualization of the subaltern: individuals, especially women, who lack access to representation and remain excluded from dominant cultural discourse. Thus, the reviewed scholarship collectively highlights how Mueenuddin's fiction exposes the intersecting mechanisms of gender oppression, class hierarchy, and postcolonial power that silence women and constrain their agency.

Scholarly discussions on postcolonial feminism highlight the multidimensional nature of oppression in former colonies. Spivak's (1988) foundational essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Argues that the subaltern woman—positioned at the intersection of patriarchy, colonialism, and class oppression—cannot speak within dominant systems of representation. Her voice is reinterpreted, suppressed, or rendered invisible by structures of power. Saleema embodies this condition: her desires, fears, and aspirations are largely unacknowledged within the world of the story, and her narrative is mediated by others.

Mohanty (1991) critiques Western feminist scholarship for its tendency to treat “Third World women” as a monolithic category, often defined solely through victimhood. She argues that the experiences of women in postcolonial societies must be understood through specific cultural and socioeconomic structures. Saleema's oppression cannot be reduced to gender alone but must be understood within the context of poverty, feudal labour systems, and patriarchal cultural norms. Her lack of education, domestic servitude, and sexual vulnerability exemplify Mohanty's argument that women in the Global South occupy positions shaped by local histories, not by universal conditions.

Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality expands this analysis by identifying how simultaneous identities—such as class, gender, race, and ethnicity—produce unique forms of discrimination. Saleema is not simply a woman or simply poor; she is a poor woman in a postcolonial feudal society, and these overlapping identities intensify her marginalization. Intersectional oppression becomes visible in her interactions with male servants, employers, and her husband, all of whom wield authority over her in different ways.

Scholars analysing Pakistani fiction emphasize the centrality of class and gender in its narrative structures. Sidhwa et al (2021) observe that Pakistani literature frequently portrays women's struggles within patriarchal and class-bound societies where honour, sexuality, and morality remain tightly regulated. Chakraborty (2019) argues that Mueenuddin's portrayal of female characters exposes the entrenched inequalities of Pakistani feudalism, noting that women in his stories often navigate limited choices shaped by male authority. Karim (2019) adds that female sexuality in Pakistani fiction intersects strongly with socioeconomic status, as lower-class women remain particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2009) has been praised for its documentary realism and its insight into the cultural and economic dynamics of rural Pakistan (Javaid and Ranjha, 2017). Critics highlight the collection's depiction of landowners, servants, and the complex relationships between them, illustrating the persistence of colonial landholding structures. Rahman (2011) argues that Pakistan's feudal legacies still shape rural power distribution, limiting mobility for the lower classes. In this context, Saleema's experiences become a literary representation of broader socio-political realities, making Saleema an ideal text for postcolonial feminist

analysis.

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative textual analysis. The primary text, *Saleema*, is examined through close reading to identify themes of class discrimination, gender oppression, and structural marginalisation. Secondary academic sources on postcolonial feminism, Pakistani literature, and intersectionality support the interpretive analysis. This methodology allows for examining how literary form and narrative representation reflect broader socio-political realities.

Research Design

This research is qualitative in nature, aiming to conduct an in-depth analysis of the short story 'Saleema' by Danyal Mueenuddin within the framework of postcolonial feminism. The research adopts a literary analysis approach to explore the main idea of class and gender discrimination as portrayed in the narrative. It involves a close reading of the text to uncover the nuances and intricacies of how class and gender oppression are depicted within the context of Pakistani society, specifically in the 1960s. The research is interpretive, seeking to uncover the underlying meaning and significance of the themes of oppression and exploitation as experienced by the character Saleema and other women in the story. It employs a hermeneutic approach to look into the layers of the narrative and to interpret the characters' experiences in the context of postcolonial feminist theory.

In addition to literary analysis, the research takes help from postcolonial feminist theory and its core concepts, such as intersectionality, the subaltern, and the decolonization of feminist activism. These theoretical frameworks are employed to understand the multidimensional nature of class and gender discrimination and how they intersect in the lives of marginalized individuals, especially women, in postcolonial societies like Pakistan. The methodology includes a critical examination of scholarly literature on postcolonial feminism, subaltern studies, and related theories to provide a theoretical foundation for the analysis. It also involves close engagement with the selected short story, 'Saleema,' to extract evidence of class and gender discrimination and to explore the characters' responses and resistance.

The primary objective of the study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of class and gender discrimination in postcolonial settings, as depicted in the selected short story. The findings are expected to shed light on the complexities of these issues and their broader implications within the framework of postcolonial feminism.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in postcolonial feminist theory, emphasizing Spivak's (1988) concept of the female subaltern, Mohanty's (1991) critique of Western feminist universalism, and Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality. Postcolonial feminism interrogates how women's oppression is shaped by colonial histories, cultural expectations, and class inequalities. This framework is suited to *Saleema* because the protagonist's narrative is embedded in structures of feudalism, patriarchy, and poverty. These theorists collectively highlight the necessity of understanding women's oppression not as a singular experience but as the outcome of overlapping power structures.

Discussion and Analysis

In Danyal Mueenuddin's short story *Saleema* (2009), a postcolonial feminist approach unveils the intricate web of class and gender discrimination. Through vivid imagery and nuanced characterisation, the narrative exposes the oppressive structures governing Saleema's life. The analysis skilfully captures the intersections of these discriminations, emphasizing Saleema's consistent labelling as a 'girl.' This echoes the enduring societal expectations and constraints imposed on women, underscoring the lasting influence of patriarchal norms. Mueenuddin's portrayal intricately weaves together the challenges faced by Saleema, offering a poignant exploration of the complexities within a postcolonial context. The author's use of evocative language and insightful character development sheds light on the multifaceted layers of discrimination, providing a compelling lens through which to examine Saleema's narrative. This can be seen in the selected short story.

Class Discrimination

"Her father became a heroin addict, and died of it, her mother slept around for money and favours..." (*Saleema*, 2009, p.26).

The description of her father's addiction to heroin and her mother's engagement in transactional relationships for survival highlights the socioeconomic struggles faced by individuals in postcolonial societies. The lack of economic opportunities and social support networks, often exacerbated by the legacy of colonial exploitation and resource extraction, contributes to the cycle of poverty and marginalization experienced by Saleema's family.

"He was gone for the day, aimless and sloping around the streets, unwanted at the edge of the crowd in a tea stall..." (*Saleema*, 2009, p 26).

It portrays the individual as directionless and perhaps idle, wandering the streets without purpose. The use of "aimless" and "sloping" implies a lack of purpose or ambition, reinforcing a stereotype often associated with lower socioeconomic classes. "...unwanted at the edge of the crowd in a tea stall." – It further suggests that the character is marginalized, relegated to the outskirts of society. The mention of a tea stall, which can be a common gathering place, implies that even in such communal spaces, there are divisions and exclusions based on social standing.

"The cooks tempted her, lording it over the kitchen, where she liked to sit..." (*Saleema*, 2009, p 27).

"The cooks tempted her..." – suggests that the cooks hold a certain power or authority, likely due to their position in the kitchen hierarchy. They can entice or allure the other character, indicating a dynamic where the cooks possess a level of control or influence over the situation.

"...lording it over the kitchen..." – The phrase "lording it over" conveys a sense of dominance or superiority. The cooks are portrayed as exerting their authority over the kitchen space, perhaps asserting their control in a way that reinforces their perceived superiority over others, including the character being tempted.

"Saleema counted for nothing. Nor did she have patronage." (*Saleema*, 2009, p 28).

"Saleema counted for nothing." Implies that Saleema is deemed insignificant or of little value. In societies where class discrimination is prevalent, individuals from marginalized or lower socioeconomic backgrounds are often overlooked or disregarded, while those from privileged classes are afforded more recognition and

respect. "Nor did she have patronage." The absence of patronage suggests that Saleema lacks the support or sponsorship of influential individuals who could potentially elevate her social or economic status. Patronage, in many contexts, is a form of social capital that provides access to opportunities, resources, and networks. Without it, individuals like Saleema may struggle to advance or improve their circumstances.

"She had been hired on approval, to serve the master's eldest daughter, Begum Kamila, who lived in New York, and who that spring had come to stay with her father. Haughty and proud, Kamila allowed no intimacies." (P, 29).

The sentence illustrates class discrimination through the portrayal of hierarchical relationships and power dynamics within the household. Saleema, hired to serve Begum Kamila, the master's eldest daughter, occupies a subordinate position, emphasizing the social hierarchy that privileges the wealthy and powerful. The employment arrangement suggests Saleema's economic vulnerability and dependence on the patronage of the elite, reflecting broader disparities in access to opportunities and resources based on class. In the context of postcolonial feminism, this scenario underscores the legacy of colonialism in perpetuating social stratification, where individuals from marginalized backgrounds like Saleema are relegated to servitude while those from privileged classes like Begum Kamila assert dominance and control. Kamila's haughtiness and the absence of intimacy further highlight the dehumanizing effects of class-based exploitation and how colonial power structures continue to shape interpersonal relationships and reinforce systems of oppression in postcolonial societies.

"Rafik sat in the servants' courtyard on one of the dirty white metal chairs, smoking a hookah, not looking at her as she sat down on a low wooden stool, almost at his knees." (Saleema, 2009, P 29)

The quote illustrates class discrimination through the physical and social distance maintained between Rafik and the unnamed woman, likely a servant, as they occupy separate spaces and furniture within the same courtyard. Rafik, sitting on a relatively comfortable chair and smoking a hookah, occupies a position of relative privilege and authority, while the woman is relegated to a low wooden stool, emphasizing her subordinate status. This physical arrangement reinforces the hierarchical power dynamics inherent in the social structure, where individuals like Rafik, often belonging to higher social classes, exert control and maintain distance from those deemed beneath them. In the context of postcolonial feminism, this scene reflects broader patterns of exploitation and marginalization perpetuated by colonial legacies, where individuals from marginalized communities, typically women, are confined to subordinate roles within domestic spaces, while men like Rafik enjoy relative freedom and privilege. The disparity in their seating arrangements symbolizes the unequal distribution of power and resources along lines of class, gender, and social status, highlighting the intersections of oppression experienced by individuals like the woman in the context of postcolonial societies.

"Unlike the house in Lahore, where the doors were smudged with fingerprints, and the paint flaked off the walls in strips, these rooms had been newly painted." (Saleema, 2009, p. 33).

"The rugs were bright and clean, the brick floors had been washed, vases of flowers, badly arranged, had been placed all around, marigolds and roses." (Saleema, 2009, p 33).

The description of the house in Lahore, with smudged doors and flaking paint, suggests neglect and a lack of resources to maintain the property. These signs of wear and tear indicate a lower standard of living and likely reflect the economic challenges faced by the inhabitants. In contrast, the depiction of the other household, characterized by newly painted rooms, clean rugs, and fresh flowers, signifies affluence and attention to aesthetics. The presence of such luxuries, including decorative vases filled with marigolds and roses, suggests a higher social status and the ability to afford not only basic upkeep but also decorative elements to enhance the living space. Through this comparison, the text highlights the disparities in living conditions based on socioeconomic status, with the wealthier households enjoying greater comfort and luxury while the poorer households struggle with basic maintenance.

In the context of postcolonial feminism, this discrepancy underscores broader structural inequalities perpetuated by colonial legacies, where certain groups are marginalized and deprived of resources, while others benefit from economic privilege and social prestige. The contrasting descriptions of the two households serve as a poignant commentary on the enduring impacts of colonialism on patterns of wealth distribution and access to resources within postcolonial societies.

“She heard the men outside around a fire telling stories about the old tough managers and light-fingered servants, now dead, or about happenings on the farm, cattle thefts, and dowries.”(P, 34).

“Hassan and Rafik and even the drivers, who had after all been in service fifteen or twenty years, had old friends here.”(P, 34).

Through storytelling about past managers and servants, the dynamics of exploitation and resistance within the labour force are revealed, highlighting the power imbalances inherent in employer-employee relationships. References to happenings on the farm, such as cattle thefts and dowries, underscore the broader socio-economic challenges faced by the working class. Despite years of dedicated service, individuals like Hassan, Rafik, and the drivers remain entrenched in subordinate positions, reflecting the limited upward mobility for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This portrayal exemplifies the intersectionality of oppression within postcolonial societies, where class, gender, and colonial legacies intersect to shape complex power dynamics. The quote illuminates the resilience and solidarity within marginalized groups while also emphasizing the systemic barriers to social mobility and equality.

“But now he held his tongue, not wanting to cross Rafik.” (Saleema, 2009, p 41).

“I beg your pardon, sir, about the maid Saleema who has been serving Begum Kamila. She’s a poor girl and her husband is sick, and she’s useful in the kitchen.” (Saleema, 2009, p 41).

In the context of postcolonial feminism, these excerpts illuminate how intersecting systems of power, including class and gender, shape the experiences of individuals within the household. Rafik’s ability to silence others and assert control reflects broader structures of patriarchal authority and class privilege, while Saleema’s plea for empathy underscores the economic exploitation faced by marginalized women within the domestic sphere. These dynamics reinforce the entrenched inequalities perpetuated by colonial legacies, where individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds are marginalized and disempowered, while those from privileged classes maintain dominance and control. These lines shed light on the complex interplay of class differences and gender oppression within postcolonial societies, emphasizing the

importance of intersectional analysis in understanding and challenging systems of oppression.

Gender Discrimination

“She herself at fourteen became the plaything of a small landowner’s son...” (Saleema, 2009, P 28)

The line highlights gender-based discrimination and exploitation within the context of a postcolonial society. The phrase “she herself at fourteen became the plaything of a small landowner’s son” suggests that a young girl, likely from a lower socio-economic background, was subjected to sexual exploitation by a member of the upper class. This scenario underscores the vulnerability of marginalized girls and women, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds, who are often targeted and victimized by individuals with social and economic power. In the context of postcolonial feminism, this passage reflects broader patterns of gender oppression and colonial legacies that perpetuate the marginalization and exploitation of women within postcolonial societies. Colonialism often entrenched patriarchal structures and norms, reinforcing gender hierarchies that subjugated women and limited their autonomy and agency. The exploitation of the young girl in the passage exemplifies how intersecting systems of power, including class and gender, intersect to perpetuate cycles of oppression and inequality. Furthermore, the use of the term “plaything” to describe the girl emphasizes the dehumanizing nature of the exploitation she experienced. It reduces her to an object for the gratification of others, stripping her of agency and reinforcing her subordinate status within the social hierarchy. This reflects the broader objectification and commodification of women’s bodies within patriarchal and colonial systems, wherein women are often reduced to their sexual utility and denied autonomy over their own bodies and lives. It highlights the intersectionality of gender-based discrimination and class-based oppression within postcolonial societies. It underscores the urgent need for feminist analysis and activism to challenge and dismantle the interconnected systems of power that perpetuate the exploitation and marginalization of women, particularly those from marginalized communities, within postcolonial contexts.

“Though he knew right away that she slept with Hassan the cook, in this house where she served as a maid, the first time he opened his mouth she made to slap him and pushed him out of the room...”(Saleema,2009,p 28).

“She had been a maidservant in three houses so far, since her husband lost his job as peon in an office, and in every one she had opened her legs for the cook” (Saleema,2009,p 28).

This part of the text illuminates the intersection of gender-based discrimination and economic exploitation experienced by women in domestic service roles. The woman is immediately judged and physically assaulted based on assumptions about her sexual relationship with the cook, highlighting societal attitudes that vilify women for their sexuality. This reflects the harsh scrutiny and punishment women in service roles face for behaviour deemed unacceptable according to patriarchal norms. The second excerpt further perpetuates gender-based discrimination by reducing the woman to a sexual object, reinforcing harmful stereotypes about women in domestic service roles as promiscuous and morally inferior. This characterization underscores the economic vulnerability of women in such positions, who may feel compelled to exchange sexual favours for job security or support. Overall, these excerpts reveal how women in domestic service roles are objectified, judged, and punished for their perceived sexual

behaviour, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing power imbalances within patriarchal societies.

Postcolonial feminism seeks to challenge and dismantle these structures of oppression, advocating for gender equality and social justice within postcolonial societies.

“She could cry whenever she wanted, she thought of herself, alone, her husband on drugs, that dried-up stick who picked her out of the village, when she thought he was saving her.” (Saleema, 2009, P 36).

The woman’s reflection on her situation reveals the gendered power imbalance within her marriage. She feels isolated and powerless, lamenting the fact that she is married to a man who is addicted to drugs and incapable of providing support or companionship. The derogatory language used to describe her husband as a “dried-up stick” suggests a lack of respect and dehumanization, highlighting the unequal treatment and disrespect often experienced by women within marital relationships. Additionally, the woman’s realization that she was chosen by her husband from the village under the guise of “saving her” reflects the manipulation and exploitation of vulnerable women by men in positions of power. This scenario underscores the broader patterns of gender-based discrimination and exploitation within patriarchal societies, where women are often viewed as objects to be controlled and discarded by men.

“You think I’m a slut, you think I poison my husband. Because of him I’m alone, and you all do with me as you like. I’m trying to live here too, you know. I’m not a fool. I also come from somewhere.” (Saleema, 2009, p 38).

Postcolonial feminism seeks to amplify the voices of marginalized women and challenge the intersecting systems of oppression that perpetuate discrimination and inequality within postcolonial contexts.

“She brought the cups and handed one to Rafik, hoping as she sat down on a bench that someone would come and see them together.” (Saleema, 2009, P 41).

“Touching the hot tea to her lips, she peered at him.” (Saleema, 2009, P 41).

“She wanted to stop it, because it seemed too soon after her tears, but a smile came over her, rising.” (Saleema, 2009, P 43).

“She beamed, her girlish yet knowing face lit and transformed.” (Saleema, 2009, P 43).

The woman’s actions in the first excerpt reflect a desire for validation and recognition of her relationship with Rafik. By bringing him tea and hoping someone would see them together, she seeks acknowledgment of their connection, suggesting a desire for social acceptance and approval. This highlights the significance of public perception and societal norms in shaping women’s experiences within patriarchal contexts, where relationships and interactions are often scrutinized and judged based on traditional gender roles and expectations. The second one portrays the woman’s physical proximity to Rafik and her subtle observation of him as she touches the hot tea to her lips. This moment of quiet observation underscores the woman’s agency and autonomy, as she asserts her own desires and emotions within the interaction. It also highlights the complexity of her feelings towards Rafik, suggesting a mix of curiosity, attraction, and perhaps apprehension as she navigates their relationship. The next two excerpts further depict the woman’s emotional state and internal conflict as she grapples with her feelings towards Rafik. Despite her initial hesitation, she finds herself unable to resist smiling and beaming in his presence, revealing a sense of joy and contentment that transcends her earlier tears. The transformation of her demeanour from sadness to happiness reflects her emotional resilience and capacity for self-expression, challenging stereotypes of women as passive and submissive. In the context of postcolonial

feminism, these excerpts illustrate how women navigate and negotiate their identities and relationships within patriarchal structures. They highlight the complexity of women's experiences and emotions, as well as their agency and resilience in asserting their desires and asserting their own agency within oppressive systems. Additionally, they underscore the importance of recognizing and validating women's experiences and emotions, as well as the need for solidarity and support within marginalized communities.

Conclusion

The study reveals that class discrimination in Saleema (2009) is depicted through rigid social hierarchies inherited from colonial and feudal structures. Saleema's poverty restricts her opportunities and defines her value within society. Gender oppression intersects with these class dynamics, making her particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, moral judgment, and physical insecurity. Her marginalization exemplifies the postcolonial feminist concept of the subaltern woman, whose voice is suppressed through overlapping structures of power. The study concludes that Mueenuddin portrays class as an inflexible determinant of identity and that gender functions as an additional layer of oppression that intensifies the protagonist's vulnerability. Saleema (2009) thus stands as a powerful narrative that exposes the systemic inequalities faced by lower-class women in postcolonial Pakistan, highlighting the need for continued scholarly attention to the intersection of class, gender, and historical power.

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