For the purpose of the present study, Muslim women characters are considered under two categories:

1. Conservative women characters
2. Liberal women characters

According to Cambridge encyclopedia, a conservative person is:

a. Characterised by a tendency to preserve ideas or to keep them intact or unchanged.

b. In psychological language, it means the phenomenon of retention.

c. A tendency to observe laws, customs, traditions, as have come to be associated with being the member of a religious group, such as Hindu or Muslim and son on.

In brief, a conservative is a retainer. He retains what has been given to him or her by tradition. He cannot make suitable alterations, additions or subtractions to the customs and traditions. A conservative, by nature, is timid and he considers that tampering with the age-old customs and traditions is sin. He is incompetent to believe that customs and beliefs, which he has embraced, could be out dated, hence irrelevant, in the context of the contemporary society. He thinks that the ancient law-givers were omniscient and omnipotent. Therefore, they cannot err and our business is to obey them because disobedience would be sacrilegious. These are the people, who cling fast to the very chains with which they are tied down for centuries.

Who is a liberal, then? He is not a liberated person in philosophical terms, but a free individual who can think and act without inhibitions. Therefore, a liberal is one,
a. who is directed to general intellectual enlargement and refinement.
b. Who is bountiful, generous and open-hearted.
c. Who is free from restraint on speech or un-restrained by prudence, and
d. Who is free from bigotry or un-reasonable prejudice in favour of traditional opinions or established institutions, open to the reception of new ideas or proposals of reform.

In brief, a liberal is free from prejudices and bigotry. He is an intellectual and a refined soul, who loves humanity.

If one reads this specification, in the context of liberal women, it would mean that,

1. A liberal woman gives an image of the 'New Woman', who is free from the clutches of the patriarchal slavery and who considers her husband a friend rather than an enemy.
2. who is capable of doing white or blue collar job to live independently, if so warranted and,
3. who thinks herself an independent person, besides her roles of wife and mother.

Thus, a liberal is not a rebel, or a revolutionary but only a progressive thinker. She does not deny her roles as wife, mother, daughter and so on and does not wish to part ways with her husband in the event of differences of opinion. She considers her husband a friend. She is capable of reacting very strongly to male chauvinism, because she is confident of her ability to lead life independently. These women bear good opinions of their husbands, love their children and household, but at the same time maintain their separate identity. They utilize their spare time for the promotion of their skills and arts. Such progressively thinking women could be found among the pardah-nasheen or pardah wearing women also.

In countries like Egypt, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, Muslim women who are working as scientists, pilots, bank-executives, managers of big firms, move in Purdah. On the other hand the girls out of pardah are conservative and timid. Therefore, purdah, cannot necessarily be taken to be the sign of backwardness of Muslim women. For instance, the girl Nur, in Chaman Nahal’s novel Azadi, goes to college. She falls in love with
Arun. She cannot think of living, even for a moment, away from him. When the question of marriage comes, the college going girl, who is supposed to be bold and liberal, enters the cocoon. She asks Arun to convert himself to Islam, lest her parents prevent her from marrying him. Nur, though out of pardah, is thoroughly a conservative character.

After the division of Muslim women characters into liberal and conservative characters, one would like to see which of the characters belongs to which division and the reasons thereof. One more thing, that needs a mention at this stage, is that all the Muslim women characters created by non-Muslim fiction writers, cannot be taken here and it is not necessary also. Even in famous novelists like Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan, one finds scanty reference to Muslim women, because they have not produced significant Muslim women characters. On the whole, care has been taken, while choosing these Muslim women characters, to see that there should be something unique, something different that makes her look like a real Muslim woman than just a stereotype. Some of the fiction writers have depicted Muslim woman so briefly that nothing could be said about the progression of these characters or sometimes, such characters are so insignificant that nothing could be written about them. To begin with, the liberal Muslim women characters shall be taken for discussion.

Bhagawan S. Gidwani, the writer of the novel, The Sword of Tipu Sultan, quotes Aristotle on the first page of the novel to suggest that he has undertaken a serious task of presenting history in an artistic form.

'The artistic representation of history is a more scientific and serious pursuit than the exact writing of history.'

When history is told as story, the reader would fear that the fictionalised history might tell him the half-truth. That is why, on the next page, the novelist writes, with emphasis, that his effort is to tell the truth to the youth of India. Why has the novelist selected only the youth to tell the truth? It may be, probably, for two reasons: the young minds are free from prejudices and that is why the truth told to them, would definitely grown into a big tree and bear good fruits. Secondly, the youth of India should be told only the truth.
that would prevail in future. So, it is wrong to think that Bhagwan Gidwani has told the half-truth. Hence, the women characters like Fakr-un-nissa and Ruqayya Banu should be taken as they are presented. Some years of research in Paris, on the life and letters of Tipu, emboldened Gidwani to write the truth about Tipu's life in the form of a novel. A little colouring of imagination, to make the truth tolerable, cannot be ruled out. In fact, it is an artistic necessity also.

Fakr-un-nissa, the wife of Hyder Ali and mother of Tipu Sultan, has been depicted by the writer in a distinctive manner. She excels in her role, first as the wife of Hyder Ali, then as the mother of Tipu Sultan. However, her role as the mother-in-law of Ruqayya Banu is limited. Hyder Ali and Fakr-un-nissa are more like intimate friends than husband and wife. Hyder, a flamboyant soldier often teases his wife for being simple. He tells her one or two innocent lies, permissible between the husband and wife. When the wife asks why he is late, Hyder Ali tells that urgent state work holds him back with Purniya. However, it is not always the work of the state which holds him back but some kind of merry making.

Fakr un-nissa is mad after flowers. That is why Hyder Ali calls her 'My lady of flowers'. He presents white flowers to his queen when he is going out on a campaign and multi coloured flowers when he returns. In fact, the multi coloured flowers speak a lot more than the herald, who brings the flowers along with the news of Hyder Ali's arrival. Both these events are beautifully dramatised by Bhagwan Gidwani.

After the birth of Tipu Sultan, Hyder Ali becomes deeply involved in politics. Therefore, his coming home from Purniya's becomes very irregular. Fakr-un-nissa, though she knows the gravity of the situation, does not forget to take a dig at her husband.

'In fact, ever since our son was born, you return late every night and I am told that you are at Purniya's. Surely, you don't go to share his milk. He does not drink wine, I am told. How is it that Purniya's is better than the wine I our house? Or is it that there is something more than some music and some company?'

1 Gidwani, Bhagwan, The Sword of Tipu Sultan, (Allied Publ., Bombay, 1976) P-64

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To this friendly enquiry from his queen, Hyder Ali tells that it is politics that keeps him away.

'Not love making', Fakru-un-nissa taunts him.  

The husband replies in the negative and the quarrel for the night ends. There are many such instances where both of them are found quarreling, but those quarrels deepen their mutual love. In such quarrels, the queen is always the happy loser.

After the birth of Tipu Sultan and Kareem, the royal physician declares that the queen shall not have the third child. Hyder Ali wants more sons. Therefore, Fakr-un-nissa suggests to Hyder Ali to marry another noble lady. She has even prepared a long list of eligible brides, from which the lucky girl could be picked up by Hyder Ali. He does not like the idea of second marriage and sternly warns his queen.

'Enough' Hyder cut in, 'I forbid it.'

Then he raised his voice, for the first time, before her,

'Fatima, I repeat, I forbid it, now and never. Do you understand.'

He strides away in anger.

Another loving quality of Fakr-un-nissa is her art of drawing and painting. In the high-walled private garden outside her bed chamber, there is a profusion of flowers. Fakr-un-nissa loves to watch them grow and blossom. Their living fragrance hold for her a fascination far greater than all the perfumes with which her dressing table was littered.

"When a flower stood out alone, growing away from its companion, she loved to take out her sketch book, to recapture it in pencil or paint. At times, she would draw a flower as it stood proud and alone, in the universe desiring no companionship... Whatever the mood that she caught them in her sketch book, flowers were her passion."
As a wife, as a mother and as an independent artist, in pursuit of little beauties that life offers, Fakr-un-nissa is convincingly a liberal character. In fact, three pictures of Fakr-un-nissa have been taken into view to consider her a liberal character. In the first place, when she mildly taunts her husband that he does not go to Purniya's to drink milk and that there must be bouts of drinking and rounds of singing and dancing. Here, Fakr-un-nissa appears like a careful wife, who does not want her husband to stray.

The second picture is that of a good friend of Hyder Ali. Fakr-un-nissa asks him to take one more wife. No wife can willingly give this suggestion, but a friend.

In the third place, she shines as an artist also. In fact music, dance, painting or any other art is a taboo to the Muslims, but Fakr-un-nissa has this natural gift. Her meaningful painting, her large heartedness and progressive thinking made her a liberal individual. Her words and actions are supported by her conviction. As a wife, she is a friend, philosopher and guide to Hyder Ali. As a mother, she is tender yet stubborn in the matters of training her son Tippu Sultan rigorously. As an artist, she has a down to earth perception of life. Her imagination is sharp and fancy subtle, that is why her drawings give symbolic meanings. One proud flower standing alone in a defiant mood, symbolises Hyder Ali and the sad, dejected and lonely flower, shorn of its companions, is the queen herself.

Chaman Nahal's novels are written mostly on India's freedom struggle, partition and Gandhian politics. As he has selected the most turbulent part of Indian history as the background for his novels, often plot over takes characters in his novels. With his compassion and irony, a meticulous attention to details and truly humane understanding of people and situations, Chaman Nahal recreates a part of our glorious national history.

Thakur Shantinath's son Sunil has married Kusum and they have a two year old son Vikram. Sunil is a social worker, presently engaged in popularising Khadi in rural Punjab. Sunil's house is in the middle of two Muslim families of Imtiaz Hussain and Muzaffar Ahmed.
Imtiaz Hussain was a big burly man of Ajitha village near Amritsar. His house is always full of his children and two wives. On the other side of Sunil’s house, there is another Musalim family of Muzaffar Ahmed and his wife Rehana. Both of them are practical and self-effacing. Muzaffar, who is a teacher, is thin and weak and is very lively in conversation. Rehana is dark, has deep set eyes and an elegant nose.

She is a liberal person. Since she has no child, she was a willowy, girlish and very attractive figure even at twenty-seven. She is bold, independent and comes out of Purdah at an early age.

“Muslim women still wore veil, when they went out of doors, but under the influence of Gandhi, Rehana had altogether discarded it. Like Kusum, she too had some years in school. Very often, Rehana also went with Sunil, to different houses for propagating spinning work.”

A confluence of all India Khadi Bhandar Workers is held in Bombay. Rehana is a Muslim and the Congress is out to present a national and non-communal image of itself. So, Rehana is also invited to the said conference, by the organisers. Sunil and Rehana travel in a train silently for sometime.

“It was Rehana who took the lead ultimately. She was a little older than Sunil. Her Muslim up-bringing helped her in that bare, raw manner of speaking. As a Hindu, she might have couched her thoughts in wordiness, might have crushed the essence of her thoughts. Being a Muslim, she was more down to earth without being crude.”

Without mincing words, Rehana asks Sunil in a straightforward way,

“We are attracted towards each other, are we not, Sunil?”

“No”, he said, at once hiding behind his Hindu vagueness

“I am towards you”

This was no way he had known any woman speak.

“It is totally wrong”

“That is not the point. Are we attracted towards each other or not?”

6. (Ibid) P.146
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6. (Ibid) P.146
Sunil remained silent.

'It is better to face the truth'

'Even if it hurts?'

'You know nothing can come of it'

'Why can't anything come out?'

'We are both married'

'So what?'

'Our religions too forbid us'

'Do they?'

'The village will only throw dirt up on us'

'Dirt can always be thrown back'

'And your conscience?'

'Can you hear it clearly – what it wants?'

Then Rehana laughed heartily and said,

'I was only thinking aloud. Don't take me seriously'

She continued,

'Why can't two persons desire each other without hurting convention? Why can't there be roohani love between us, spiritual love?'\(^7\)

This lengthy conversation is taken here because it forms the theme of the novel. One must not fail to notice that these two persons, Sunil and Rehana, are debating the problem of which type of love is greater, Roohani (spiritual) or Zismani (physical).

\(^7\) (Ibid) P-149
However, the crucial point under discussion is, whether the Roohani love or the spiritual love, in the ultimate analysis, also includes the demands of the human body? The existence of spiritual love is possible according to Sunil. As a Hindu, Sunil believes that soul and body are different. To him soul is all that matters. Body is perishable whereas the soul is deathless. Rehana, a Muslim, cannot rule out the importance of body. Muslims cannot accept the dualism that body and soul are different. The Hindus believe that human body is unreal. The Muslims, on the other hand, argue that if human body is unreal, then why all human beings are feeding it with the best food and why are they covering it with the best clothes available. In short, according to Rehana, the terminology 'spiritual love' is a misnomer because human body is the focal point of the sentiment of love.

Love, hate, hot, cold, young, and old all such attributes do not go with the Soul. So, 'spiritual love' is a misleading idea. Rehana is sure that when Sunil proposes to have spiritual love between them, in fact he hints at physical love. The following lines make it very clear.

While they were still in Bombay, Sunil and Rehana go to the beach for swimming. Sunil was very anxious to take Rehana into his life. So he begins.

'I love you Rehana'

'How long will you love me Sunil?' she asked

'All my life ... I will divorce Kusum. I will take on the whole world. Will you divorce Muzaffar?'

The self same Sunil has told Rehana earlier that only the spiritual love was possible between them. Now he expresses his real desire.

Rehana does not answer this question but goes on pondering. Yes, she has desired Sunil, but the desire in it is not enough to have what one desires. Achievement needs extra, concentrated efforts. If a person desires the undesirable, as does Rehana, what is the way to get it? Rehana interprets the issue in the light of The Quran as she understands the Holy Book. She says mere desiring and indulging in fulfilling the desire
are two different issues. Allah does not punish a person for his or her bad desires but He punishes individuals, when they get indulged in fulfilling those illegitimate desires.

Now, from where does Rehana derive this wisdom that the Almighty punishes us for our indulgences in fulfilling desires and not merely having them? The Quran says,

‘Our actions are judged by our intention’

It means, if one person intends ill towards others, it is also sin. Then, from where does Rehana get this wrong idea that one is free from sin till one actually indulges in doing it. Mere intention of doing ill to others is a punishable crime in Islam. Sunil knows what Bhagawadgit says in this connection.

‘Think evil and you are evil’

Or the Biblical statement,

‘Adultery in the mind is as bad as adultery in fact’

When all religious books confirm in one voice that, doing apart, mere thinking of ill towards others is also sin, then from where does Rehana or her creator Chaman Nahal, gets this half-truth fostered on Islam? Probably, Chaman Nahal knows that his idea will not be accepted by Muslims, so he writes on the next page,

‘Theologians would differ. Let them differ. That was her interpretation.’

Let Rehana say anything but what The Quran says is, not only our thoughts and actions must be good, our intentions behind them must also be good. In other words, good intentions or right attitudes give birth to good thoughts and good thoughts beget good actions. Therefore, Rehana’s interpretation of The Quran, that merely having bad thoughts is not sin but indulgence in bad thoughts and then in bad actions is sin, is un-Islamic.

9. The Quran, 7-143
10. The Bhagawadgita, 7:19
11. (S.M.H. Kidwai, Muslim Woman Under Different Social and Religious Laws) P-78
In spite of these odd statements and strange behaviour, Rehana is considered a rebellious character for the reasons mentioned below.

She gets attracted towards Sunil, who is a Hindu and who is already married. Human desires are not subject to the diktats of religion. A Muslim woman, who is already married, thinks like this, is the first reason for Rehana being rebellious. The question of morality or ethics or propriety is not so much tenable here because if Rehana was forced to marry Muzaffar, against her will, then such thoughts are bound to occur in Rehana's mind.

Her second characteristic of rebellion is her interpretation that roohani love or platonic love also include one's physical desires. There is nothing like love of the spirit or love of the mind. Being a Muslim, she cannot segregate body and soul and contribute to the ideology that what is related to body is impure and what is related to soul is pure. She is against the accepted meaning of the terminology 'platonic love'. In her final judgement, the platonic love is nothing but man's trick of camouflaging his physical needs as spiritual ones.

Her third typical quality is her pleading that Allah does not punish any individual for having bad thoughts but for his indulgence. Her interpretation of The Quran is erroneous. With her little schooling ('I too spent some years in school like Kusum') and less study of The Quran ('my father repeatedly asked me to study The Quran'), Rehana is not competent to quote The Quran so fluently.

Despite these weaknesses, Rehana is a liberal character because she speaks what she thinks right. She is bold and she is ready to hit back if the society obstructs her love for Sunil.

Hasina Begum, a singer in the novel Train to Pakistan, written by Khushwant Singh, is also a liberal character, in a slightly different way.
The human tragedy caused by the partition of India, has found explicit expression in Train to Pakistan by Khushwant Singh. The predominant quality of Train to Pakistan is its stark realism, the absolute fidelity to the reality, its trenchant expression of one of the great moving events of contemporary Indian history. The individual in Khushwant Singh’s fictional world is silhouetted against the vast panoramic background and ghastly and inhuman events.

Two things are made clear in Singh’s novel: total failure of the two-nation theory and the partition tragedy and the subsequent suffering of human beings and human relations. The writer associates himself so closely with the tragic events that he creates some authentic characters like Jugga, Iqbal Singh, Nooran, district magistrate Hukum Chand, Hasina Banu and others. Against the background of the partition and the resultant holocaust, the drama of delicate human relations, inspires hope in the goodness of man’s heart.

Here are two Muslim women characters in the novel and both of them have been described as women of easy morals. One is Nooran, the daughter of Imam Bux, the mullah of the mosque. She carries an illicit relation with Juggat Singh, ‘budmash number ten’ of the village. The second woman is Hasina Begum, a singer. Though she comes from the lower strata of society, she has the spark of self-respect. That is why, she is considered a liberal character. The district magistrate is busy during the whole day in supervising the repartition activities of the Muslims going to Pakistan and during night he invites Hasina Begum for entertainment.

That night, the girl sat on the edge of the bed, with her chin in her hands, thinking very deeply. When Hukum Chand enters the hall, she stands up and covers her head. There is an awkward silence. After some time, he asks,

‘What is your name?’

‘Haseena, Haseena Begum’ the girl replies

‘How old are you?’

‘I don’t know. Sixteen or seventeen. May be eighteen. I was not born literate. I could not record my date of birth.’
The district magistrate continues,

'How long have you been in this profession?'

'What a silly question to ask! Why, ever since I was born. My mother was a singer and her mother was a singer.'

'I don't mean singing. Other things' Hukum Chand said.

'What do you mean, other things" She asked haughtily.

'We do not go about doing other things for money. I am a singer. I dance. I don't suppose you know what dancing and singing are. You must know about other things. A bottle of whisky and other things. That' all...’

What are the reasons to consider Hasina Begum a liberal character? It is her boldness and frankness that make her a singer to her own tune. She hits back at the old magistrate saying that she doesn't go on doing 'other things' for money. She continues that singers are neither Hindus nor Muslims. All come to hear her sing and pay for their entertainment. She also condemns the old man saying that people like him do not know what dancing and singing are. They just know a bottle of whisky and a plate of salts. If these things are the pre-requisites of men to live, such people cannot understand music and dance. It is slap on the face of Hukum Chand, the district magistrate who has his own theory of understanding woman. If Hasina Begum were, as Hukum Chand thinks her to be, she would have collected enough money by fooling the old man. On the contrary, she reprimands the district magistrate, who thinks that his power and money can buy any person. For her frankness, fearlessness and her fortitude, she becomes a liberal character.

Besides these liberal Muslim women characters in the novels, there are one or two such characters in the short stories also. Mulk Raj Anand’s Barber’s Trade Union and Other Stories, is a good collection of stories with varies interests. "On the Border" depicts

Karima, who jumps into the raging fire to save the life of her son Ismat, who was her husband's gift. Shamus was taken prisoner by the Angrezi sarkar because he attended the public meeting, addressed by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan.

Karima and Shamus are husband and wife, living happily in a village near Peshawar. Shamus is imprisoned by the Angrezi sarkar because he attends the speech of the Sarahad Gandhi or The Frontier Gandhi. Since the Ramzan last year, Shamus is in Peshawar jail. Karima fondly remembers the song sung by Shamus to please her or even to tease her.

"Karima, Karima, daughter of Abdul Rahaman; whose cheeks are the envy of the pomegranate and rose, you are the most seductive". 14

It is rumoured that the white men are laying a new road to bring their soldiers to shoot the sons of Adam. She starts working in the construction for her survival and that of the child. The white men pay an anna a day. Some women are getting little more also but all these women get bad name in the village. The Mullah threatens to declare them heretics.

"But she had a clear conscience before the Prophet of Allah, because when one for the soldiers whistled to her and given her a sly wink, she had flashed her scythe at him. The father of Ismat will find me exactly as he left me." 15

In the second half the story, Karima is put to more severe tests of time. When she goes away from her village in search of her lost goats,

"Then she heard the steel bird flying and bombing. She was afraid and ran for life." 16

15. (Ibid) P-123
16. (Ibid) P-35
The entire village starts burning because of bombing. Karima’s son, Ismat, is sleeping in her house. She runs and runs to save her son. Once again the steel bird comes, one doesn’t know from where and suddenly it disappears dropping some more bombs. She continues to run. Abdul Majid, the brother of Mullah, implores Karima to stop because, there is danger of being hit by bombs. She rushes into her burning house and with the child in her arms, she runs back.

‘She jumped desperately across the rampants of the fire, her child was tossed out of her arms into the pit of straw roof and lay across the flame, groaning with the torture of heat... My child, my child, she cried helplessly as she stood beyond the danger of seeing her young one burn.’

Karima is a liberal character because of her exemplary courage to face life as it comes. Seondly, her steadfast commitment, even at the cost of her child, to the filial bonds which the institutions like family, marriage and society have made obligatory to her. She often repeats that Ismat’s father should find her, on his return, as he has left her.

Thirdly, she is very proud of her husband for his patriotism. She does not know anything about the political game that is being played in the country but she thinks that what Gandhi Mahatma and her most respected leader, Badshah Khan, the frontier Gandhi tell, must be correct.

In short stories, characters are generally shown in glimpses, highlighting some significant traits of his or her personality. However, Mulk Raj Anand has devoted enough space for Karima to present her in an appreciable way. Finally, she remains, as Ismat’s father has left her. Her tribal steadfast adherence to the moral traditions, her courage, her patriotism make her a distinct woman.

Brevity is the soul of beauty. All of Mulk Raj Anand’s novels are not voluminous, but the writer has the capacity to say in brief, what he intends to say. His novels, Death of a Hero, Death of the Master of Arts, Confession of a Lover and Coolie are small in volume but great in content. Anand tells something to begin with and the reader has to understand the remaining part himself. Mulk Raj Anand’s pen is at its best, when he is writing about the sufferings of the oppressed people, as is seen in Coolie.

17. (Ibid) P-37
In Confession of a Lover, Krishen Chander and Noor are college fellows in Lahore. Noor marries a girl, Naseem, even when he is a student. Krishen falls in love with Yasmin, the younger sister of Naseem. Yasmin is a talented lady. Once, in the company of Noor, her brother-in-law and Krishen, she has an occasion of meeting the famous urdu poet Iqbal. Yasmin sings the poet's famous song - 'My innermost desire comes to my lips as prayer' (Lab pe aati hai duwa ban ke tamanna meri) in such a touching way that the poet expresses,

'What a talent there is among our women. The education of women is going to be a great boon.'

Naseem does not want her younger sister's talents wasted. That is why she encourages Krishen to marry her younger sister Yasmin. Naseem thinks of Krishen, as a boy of liberal outlook and he will certainly be a proper match for her sister. Herself being in purdah, she asks Yasmin to move out freely. She takes the responsibility of convincing their parents that Yasmin should marry Krishen. All her frantic efforts go waste because Yasmin is hurriedly married to a dull witted man and soon she dies.

Though Naseem appears at intervals, she impresses the readers, as a liberal character, for the following reasons.

She thinks independently and insists that what is right should be done. Though being the wife of Noor and daughter-in-law of Nargis, she has maintained her separate identity. When she comes to know that Krishen Bhai and her sister Yasmin have fallen in love, she encourages both of them to marry. She knows that what she is doing might endanger her married life, but she is confident of her liberal husband.

Secondly, she considers her husband Noor as her friend. As a friend would, Naseem tells everything to her husband about Krishen-Yasmin affair and asks for his help to which Noor readily agrees.

The third quality that makes her a liberal character is her bounty and generosity. She often requests Krishen to eat in her home, though she knows that her father-in-law may not like this "Kafir boy" spoiling their religion.

The fourth characteristic that makes her an impressive character is that she is free from religious narrowness. She thinks that true love is god's gift. As such, it does not recognise status, caste, class and so on of man.

Naseem's exemplary courage can be seen here.

"My sister loves you. She is wasting away, she is yours. And she will come to you as soon as she can." 19

19. (Ibid) P.124
Conservatism, as has been seen, is a tendency to remain unchanged and the tendency to observe laws, customs and traditions, as they have come to be associated with a member of religious group. In brief, a conservative is a retainer, he is timid who thinks that tempering with traditions, though out dated, is sin.

There are some conservative Muslim women characters in the novels of non-Muslim fiction writers. In fact, the conservative characters are always more in number than the liberal characters, among the Muslim and non-Muslim fiction writers.

Azadi, the last of Chaman Nahal’s novels, written on India’s freedom movement, is actually based on the partition of India in 1947. Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant from Sialkot, lives happily with his wife and children. However, his peaceful world was shattered by what comes to pass. Murder, looting and arson become daily events in Sialkot from where Lala Kanshi Ram is forced to go to India. Similar agony was faced by the Muslims in India. Against this background, the love affair between Arun and Nur develops, as though declaring loudly that political events cannot subdue human sentiments.

Lala Kanshi Ram, his wife Prabha Rani along with daughter Madhubala and son Arun, live happily. Their neighbour, Choudhari Barakat Ali with his wife and two children, Munir Ahmed and Nurul-Nisar, also live happily like good friends of the Kanshi Ram family.

Arun and Nur go to the same college and fall in love with each other. Arun and Nur meet each other secretly which is not liked by the Muslim students of the college. Then, all of a sudden, communal frenzy grips Sialkot and Kanshi Ram’s family plans to migrate to Delhi. Arun tells this to Nur. She does not believe this because on many occasions in the past, Arun has sworn that he is ready even to embrace Islam to marry her. He ruminates.
“What is Islam, any way? Seen as faith, it was as good as any. Seen as intellectual enquiry, it was as superstitious and wanting. If by switching a few rituals, he could hold Nur, next to him in bed, that would be small price for the ecstasy of living.”

After sometime, the petty pride of their respective religions burst out as follows:

“Why should I become a Muslim?” Arun asks.

“Why shouldn’t you? That is, if you love me”

Arun asks in anger, ‘Why shouldn’t you become a Hindu?’

“Because I am a girl and am defenceless and cannot force my will on my family and because you are a man, more independent than me and I expect you to defend me and make sacrifices for me, that’s why.”

Both of them betray their lack of experience of life. Arun, who is ready to embrace even death in order to embrace Nur, suddenly backtracks saying why Nur should not become a Hindu.

Coming to the character of Nur, one has to consider the following points to judge whether Nur is a conservative character or otherwise. Nur is going to college, a co-educational institution. She does not observe purdah. She is also in the habit of singing popular film songs in her house, as her father, Choudhari Barakat Ali humorously puts,

“My daughter is no good Muslim. The way she sings the film songs.”

She is bold to love a Hindu boy. These things would have helped any one to consider her a liberal character.

20. (Nahal, Chaman, Azadi) P.81
21. (Ibid) PP.81-2
22. (Ibid) P.86
Nevertheless, there is the other side of the argument that cannot be overlooked. If Nur really loves Arun, as she often confesses, then why does she want Arun to embrace Islam? True love does not brook religious hegemony? If she really Arun, his religion, his wealth and other considerations are useless. Nur’s first priority is Arun. His religion comes next. This is nothing but stark conservatism in Nur. One loves a person at the same time one considers that the other’s religion is an obstacle in one’s love, is not a healthy proposition. Therefore, Nurul-Nisar is a conservative character.

Ruqayya, Tipu Sultan’s wife, in Bhagawan Gidwani’s novel The Sword of Tipu Sultan, is also a conservative character. Tipu Sultan has to marry two women. The first one is Raushan Begum, the daughter of Imam Saheb Bakshi of Arcot. She was Hyder Ali’s choice, for the reasons that the girl’s mother bore eight sons and the grand mother eleven. Nothing is known of this woman after sometime. Tipu’s second wife Ruqayya Banu, the daughter of Lalamiyan was a suitable partner for Tipu Sultan. He marries Ruqayya in the spring of 1774.

Ruqayya was a slender but beautiful girl. Besides being religious, obedient and kind hearted, she was a good student of history. She is a poet in her own right.

Ruqayya tells the story of Mughal Prince Dara Shikov and Nadira Begum, his wife, to Purniya, suggesting that she prefers to play a supporting role to her husband as is done by Nadira Begum. Dara was on the run, chased by his brother Aurangzeb. Nadira Begum falls ill on the way. She immediately disperses the soldiers around her, lest her serious condition will be known to everyone and her husband, Dara Shikov, would not move away from her. She sends Dara marching ahead with a word that she will follow him. After sometimes, she dies but she is able to save the life of her husband from Aurangzeb.

Ruqayya Banu tells another story of Jaswant Sing of Rathor, who runs away from the battlefield to Jodhpur and whose proud wife shuts the gates of the castle on her husband. Ruqayya tells these stories to Purniya so that the shrewd man might draw his own conclusions. Hearing these stories, Tipu says,
'Do you think that Ruqayya Banu believes that a husband on horse-back is more beautiful than a husband at home?\textsuperscript{23}

Ruqayya's death on 9\textsuperscript{th} February, 1797, in the arms of Tipu Sultan and the laments of the Sultan, remembering her child-like prattling and finally his passionate embracing of the dead body, are the best part of the book.

'He remembered her letters, quite innocent of punctuations, scrawled at a tremendous speed, very long and packed with entertaining laughter. How she babbled light heartedly, this vivacious, gleeful girl, half woman, half child. When she was sad, she came with a burst of song, free as wave.'\textsuperscript{24}

The Sultan also remembers the definition of love once she has attempted, 

'A passion which balances against the entire world, against the person loved, and that finds the world much lighter.'\textsuperscript{25}

Ruqayya is slender, beautiful, well read, but she was not fully blossomed into womanhood like her mother-in-law. Fakr-un-nissa is like an experienced doctor diagnosing the disease correctly and prescribing different medicines for different ailments, the skill which Ruqayya lacks. However, her tender heart and her total sentimental attachment to marriage and wifedom, appear through her last wish that she should be buried in her nuptial garments and her last act in this world should be the kissing of her husband's hand. For Ruqayya Banu every thing begins and ends with her husband. She does not grow beyond this typical obsession.

If Ruqayya is a conservative character of a Royal family, Nadira, in Nayantara Sahagal's \textit{A Situation in New Delhi}, is a conservative character of an aristocratic family.

Nadira is the wife of Usman Ali, the Vice Chancellor of Delhi University. She represents that class of women who think that Pakistan is an ideal place for Muslims. Nationalist Muslim, Usman Ali, prefers to stay in India because of his sentimental attachment to this country and also due to his commitment to his duties. Small disturbances in the society

\textsuperscript{23} (Gidwani, Bhagwan, \textit{The Sword of Tipu Sultan}), P-159.

\textsuperscript{24} (Ibid) P-265

\textsuperscript{25} (Ibid) P-265
do not deter Usman Ali to stray from his accepted path or lose faith in humanity. That is why he remains calm even when he is attacked by the students.

Usman Ali is the Vice Chancellor of Delhi University. Once, three boys raped a girl student and the Vice Chancellor prohibits them from attending classes. There were riots on the campus and Usman Ali was hurt. His wife, Nadira, reacts as below:

“What have they done to you? They are going to kill you. They are after you because you are a Muslim."^26

Nadira’s religious narrow mindedness comes as a shock to Usman Ali. He thinks that Islam being such a radical religion, how could it produce such intellectual pigmies; who cannot look at other religions with tolerance. He ponders

“Of many roomed mansions of Islam, its language, its art and architecture, its scholarship and brotherhood and piety, she has chosen to dwell spiritually in the blind alley that ran past it, the dark breeding ground of superstitions.”^27

After some days of incident, Nadira says,

“I never set foot on the campus any more. I am afraid of what might happen.”^28

Usman Ali coaxes Nadira to come to the campus because she is very much missed by the members of the ‘poetry club’ of which she is the Founder President. However, no efforts of the husband succeed in appeasing his wife. She finally breaks out.

“It was terrible mistake to stay in this country”

“This is my country. Where else do you want me to live?”

‘It isn’t mine’

^26. Sahagal, Nayantara, A Situation in New Delhi, (Arnold-Heinnemann, Delhi, 78) P-28
^27. (Ibid) P-28
^28. (Ibid) P-81
'You chose to marry me'
'We could have left. We could still leave. I know you don’t want to go to Pakistan but we could live abroad somewhere.'

Unlike other women characters of Ms Sahagal, Uma, Leela and the like, Nadira loves her husband and wants to reach him. Failure of their relationship is not due to any contrary pulls but due to the limitations of their individual natures.

Nadira is both beautiful and faithful, but Usman Ali needs a different kind of woman, who is intelligent enough to grasp the tension and turbulence he is passing through. For every problem ‘going to Lahore’, ‘going to Pakistan’ cannot be the solution, as Nadira thinks.

Beyond the physical level, there is an intellectual level also, where Usman Ali wants to take Nadira. But it appears to be the final irony that a Vice-Chancellor fails to teach his own wife.

‘Wherever he might have succeeded, with Nadira he had failed. May be she had erected an Islamic fortress around her, imprisoned herself, a princess in a tower.’

Nadira is a charming lady, everybody on the campus wants to talk to her. She has proved that she is a perfect housekeeper. However, she has certain limitations to her perceptions. ‘India cannot be our country’ is one such limitation. On the other hand, Usman Ali thinks that India is his country. He and his whole family have sacrificed much for this country. He also points out that how badly Muslims from India have been treated in Pakistan. Nadira finally understands the meaning of Usman Ali’s words.

Compromise is the best remedy when human relations develop cracks. Nadira adopts the middle path in saving her marriage and ultimately she succeeds.

29. (Ibid) P-82
30. (Ibid) P-190
Nadira's vision of life is restricted. Moreover, she is the victim of her own myopic political ideology. Pakistan cannot be the home for every Indian Muslim, lest more Muslims could not have been living in India than the entire Muslim population of Pakistan. Nadira does not grow or mature along with the passing of time. She ultimately compromises with the ideology of Usman Ali. Therefore, she is a conservative character.

If Ruqayya Banu is a conservative character of royal family, Nadira of an aristocratic family, then Saira belongs to a feudal family. High status of man or woman, in the society is not an indication of his or her high intellectual capacity. Even though the husband is in Indian Civil Service or holding any other high office, his wife could be as dull witted and conservative as is Saira in Nayantara Sahagal's *This Time of Morning*.

Saira is the beautiful wife of Saleem, an officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is a happy-go-lucky sort of woman, whose only aim in life is to move in the company of high-class people and enjoy life at all costs. She is a young woman of porcelain prettiness, with gray eyes, fair skin and brown hair, curling to her shoulders. She should have gone for hair-do but Saleem, her husband has warned her that,

'Hair should look like her' 31

So it remains in its natural state, making her look much younger.

Once she stood looking at herself in the mirror, she has bought at an auction. Her reflection gives her as much pleasure, as her surrounding makes her discontented. She wants to have a beautiful house, built in a posh locality of Delhi, as her friend Sally, the Rani of Mirpur has. That is why she grumbles,

'We shall have to live in these dreadful flats every time we come home from abroad. I will be old before any thing happens.' 32

32. (Ibid) P-12
Shopping with Sally, invariably leaves Saira discontented. Returning home she shouts at every one in the house and curses her fate for having tied her to such a household. Saleem thinks that he should have Sally out of their lives but for Saira. He never understands what she and his Saira have in common for such a thick relationship.

One evening Saira tells Saleem to seek transfer to New York. She also feels that Saleem is over due for a country like Italy in the delegation of ‘Art Treasure’. The husband pleads his inability to do so, saying that some rules are to be followed. Saira gets angry.

‘There are all kinds of rules and all kinds of ways getting round them. It is a rule that no married woman can remain in the foreign service, but there is one in it.’\textsuperscript{32A}

On such occasions, there used to be a lot of noise in the house, but Saleem always maintains his calm. Saira is as much a part of him as his eye or arm. He could have managed without these parts but not without Saira.

Saira wants comforts and more comforts in life. She is very beautiful and this makes her quarrel with Saleem because, not so beautiful wives of other officers have more to enjoy in their lives. In order to come out of this inferiority complex and to impress the other women of her class, she makes friends with the Rani of Mirpur. However, this friendship makes her even more miserable.

Another point to be noted is that Saira has scanty regard for rules and regulations. Mrs Sahagal has aptly described this new breed of civil servants and their dependents, who are busy in snatching pleasures at all costs. After independence, for some years, there is commitment and seriousness among the bureaucrats but all such qualities gradually disappear and the bureaucrats also start imitating the ministers. To such an army of self seekers does Saira belong. Her character rotates around only one idea, how to get pleasure in life. Her insatiable wants make her more and more miserable. Her good attributes like beauty, turn to be her enemy and she remains a grumbling Saira at the end.

\textsuperscript{32A} (Ibid) P-105
Interestingly, Keki Daruwallah, a city dweller, has given an authentic picture of the tribes living in the Rann of Kutch. The tribal practices, their inhuman rules and their raw sentiments regarding love, human life and marriage and so on, are so correctly depicted that the writer must have had the first hand information of all these things.

In Keki Daruwallah’s *Sword and Abyss*, a collection of short stories, there are two stories, ‘Sword and Abyss’ and ‘Love Across the Salt Desert’, wherein the Muslim life, across the Rann of Kutch, has been described. The tribes, living across the desert, have their own code of life. All the tribes have almost common characteristics. The woman is their proud possession and she is kept, as far as possible, away from the other’s sight. Adultery, elopement and the like attract very severe punishment to male convicts. It is generally believed by them that it is the man who induces woman to immoral act.

Irfan is an army abandon. He takes the job of guarding the bridge over the small river. There is a rule that none should cross the bridge after sunset.

Zubeda comes to cross the bridge one evening. Irfan sees that the girl has not even cared to cover her face with the traditional veil. He says,

‘It is not safe to go further now. You can stay the night at the chauki (out post), if you wish.’

The invitation of Irfan to Zubeda is with humanitarian concern and not with any malicious intentions. During the night,

‘She opened the abyss of her soul to him, her innermost thoughts, her grieves, the loneliness of her unloved body, and the seeping terror of the raid.’

To this miserable story of Zubeda, Irfan’s reaction was that of a good companion. She opens the flood gates of her misery and all that she has undergone, comes out fluently. This news of Zubeda staying overnight in the hut of Irfan reaches the Panchayat and both of them are summoned to appear before the Panchayat, the next day. Zubeda

33. Daruwallah, Keki, *Sword and Abyss*. (Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1979) P-21
34. (Ibid) P-27
does not show even a little courage to face the Panchayat when she is charged with false allegations. She believes that Panchayat is god's voice and the decision of the Panchayat cannot be challenged. The wise men of the village ask Irfan whether he makes every woman to stay back when she comes to cross the bridge at dusk, more so if she is young and good looking.

The Panchayat, which includes the Hajis, does not pronounce any judgement instantly. The next day, Irfan is taken out and he is tied to a tree the whole hot day. He was given water to drink in between because,

'No one wanted the sin of Karbala on his soil.'35

Ultimately, Irfan is eaten away by hyenas that night. If this is the fate of Irfan, what must have happened to Zubeda. A little voice of protest in the name of The Almighty or her assertion that she is ready to marry Irfan, would have made both happy.

Another story of Keki Daruwallah, 'Love Across the Salt Desert', describes the meeting of two lovers and their subsequent elopement, against the background of the two-nation theory of India and Pakistan.

Fatima is the daughter of Kalesha, spice smuggler, who lives in Pakistan just across the Indian border of the Thar Desert. Najab Hussain, the son of Aftab Miyan, a spice merchant, lives in a village on the Indian side of the border. Najab meets Fatima, when he goes to Kalesha's house, along with his father, on a business tour. He falls in love with Fatima,

'Who smelt of clove and cinnamon, whose laughter had the timber of ankle-bells, whose eye-brows were like black wasps of the night and whose hair was the nightfall itself.'36

In these border villages, life is so closely knitted that if a man is absent, along with his camel, it is taken for granted that he has made foray across the desert into Pakistan.

35. (Ibid) P-28

36. Daruwallah, Keki Love Across the Salt Desert in Abyss and Sword, (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979) P60
Najab silently escapes, along with his camel, to the Kala Doongar or black hill. At dawn, he pays homage to the footprints of Panch Mai Piran on the hilltop. He leaves some food there and starts beating his thali. According to popular belief, the jackals come to eat the food. If the jackals partake of the food, then the work undertaken by the donor of food will be fulfilled. If this does not happen, the intended work is postponed.

Najab Hussain reaches the house of Fatima under the cover of night. He goes to the back yard into which the window of Fatima’s bedroom opens. Najab enters Fatima’s bedroom. She does not make a hue and cry because her father is sleeping in the next room. The dógs of the Pakistani rangers are barking from very near, which means the animals must have smelt intrusion. Fatima hides Najab in a safe place because the rangers ask her father whether any stranger has arrived. Khalesha utters many oaths and says that so long as he is alive, not even a sparrow can beat its wings. The ext early morning Najab elopes with Fatima. The girl is so happy that she feels like a bride going to her in-laws after marriage. As they come very near the house of Aftab Miyan, it begins to rain. The hot desert becomes cool and the people feel that their prayers have been answered.

There is some symbolism in this story. The two countries, which are politically estranged, are like the hot desert of Thar. The barrenness of the land represents the barrenness of finer sentiments between the two countries. The union of Najab Hussain and Fatima is a hope for friendship between the two countries. It also hints at the fact that political rivalry cannot put human sentiments in chain. The heavy rains represent the beginning of a new era of mutual love, friendship and prosperity between them.

Optimism expressed in this story is worth noticing. Generally speaking, the political rivalry separates two lovers, as in Azadi and Train to Pakistan. However, it does not come in the way of the union between Najab and Fatima.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s depiction of Begum Sahiba in Heat and Dust appears to be a very feeble attempt. The novelist uses some stock concepts, which are generally found among the aristocrats, like ‘chain smoking’ and so on, rather than highlighting some special traits to make the character authentic. Begum Sahiba, who is affectionately called
'Sandy', whose real name is Zahira, is the only Muslim woman character in Heat and Dust. She comes from the royal family of 'Kabab Pore' and marries the Nawab of Khatm. Their son, the present Nawab, is a wayward young man, who falls in love with an English lady who is married to a British officer. The Queen mother does not like this relationship because she has a grudge against the British rule in India. It is a case of East-West encounter.

The Begum's early schooling is done in Switzerland. Even then she speaks 'broken English'. How does she look?

"She was woman in her fifties. She could have been handsome except a large wart on her cheeks. She was a chain smoker or cigarettes out of a holder. She had relaxed manners."37

Her chain smoking and English speaking do not make her look like an intelligent person, hence not a liberal character. She is a status-conscious lady as every one of her class is bound to be. Her racial prejudice against the British is not due to political rivalry but her personal rivalry.

The old Nawab, her husband, has brought some chorus girls from York Shire and has given much wealth to each of them,

"After the old Nawab's death, the Begum had not permitted the girls to leave without first surrendering all the valuables the Nawab had given them."38

After independence, the Begum escapes to New York, with her jewelry to avoid the claim of the Indian government, while the old Nawab went to England.

The Begum is very superstitious. The stars play a great role in her life. Mere hooting of an owl is enough to create panic in her palace. Sometimes she cancels her journey at the eleventh hour because of owl hooting.

37. Jhabvala, Ruth Prawar, Heat and Dust, (Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1983) P.171
38. (Ibid) P.146
'Either she is not feeling well or the stars are not right for her journey or an owl hooted at the wrong time, the Begum used to cancel her journey.'

Despite her early efforts at Western education, the Begum has refused to see the good things in the west. Calculating always the financial loss or gain, she has no value for human sentiments. She doesn't want to learn anything from life. At the end of the novel, she remains a person running from country to country, holding her jewelry close to her bosom.

In small measures also things can be beautiful. It is not a wishful thinking of a poet but a proven fact that to be beautiful, size is not an important factor. The character of Rahti, for instance, in Mulk Raj Anand's *Death of a Hero*, though appears for a short while, still makes good influence on the readers.

Maqbool Sherwani, a Kashmiri patriotic youth, is up in arms against the Pakistani soldiers, who have illegally occupied some parts of Kashmir. After many days of hiding, Maqbool reaches his village in the dark of night, because the Pakistani soldiers are after his life. He manages to go near the convent and the Missionary Hospital, where Rahti, his distant relation and her husband Salaam are working.

Rahti escorts Maqbool in to her room and gives him hot tea and some snacks. She tells Maqbool that the Pakistanis raided the hospital the previous night and killed the 'small mother'. Salaam, who is a watchman of the hospital, is also wounded in the exchange of fire. Rahti brushes aside her personal grief and comes forward to help Maqbool to go out of the danger zone. Maqbool tries to console uncle Salaam who is groaning with acute pain,

'Ya Allah' Salaam pronounced the Islamic incantation.

'The ache is terrible' he said,

'Ya Allah... forgive us... but crush those sons of Shaitan, the murderers.'

39. (Ibid) P-133

40. Anand, Mulk Raj, *Death of a Hero*, (Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1963) P-38
In his fit of anger, he swears that he will teach the Pakistanis a lesson. Rahti brings his cup of tea.

'Drink up your tea first. You haven't the heart to kill a sparrow. So, why boast so much? There is no choice for the poor but to suffer like YussuhMessih.'

Maqbool is moved to see the sufferings of uncle Salaam and his determination, to oust the mercenaries from the holy land of Pirs and Sants, becomes stronger.

Rahti provides Maqbool her bicycle and plans a safe passage for him through the back lane. She wants to avenge the death of 'Small Mother'. There is nothing in Rahti's character that helps readers to consider her a liberal character. She doesn't plan to harass the intruders, who are walking freely. She only helps Maqbool to escape. Rahti is too well-known in the region for her philanthropy. She should have taken the help of the youths, till Maqbool returns. Rahti should have led them from the front but the death of 'Small Mother' and serious wounds of Salaam must have deterred her from taking strong action.

Before a critical analysis of the Muslim women characters, created by the non-Muslim fiction writers in Indian English is made, it is better to mention, at the outset, not much, that is worthwhile, has been written by the non-Muslim fiction writers, on liberal and conservative Muslim women characters. In the case of historical novels, the writer is saved from the trouble of creating new characters because the women characters like Fakr-un-nissa, Ruqayya are not his creations. They are already existing in history. The writer has to add some extra colour, according to the need, to make the characters a little more beautiful. Bhagawan Gidwani has done a marvelous job of balancing history and art while presenting these two women characters.

In the novels and short stories with social themes, the writers appear to be not so accurate. They lack proper perspective of Muslim womanhood. That is the reason why
most of the Muslim women characters, created by non-Muslim novelists and short story writers are stereotypes and at places they are un-convincing. The reasons for such lack-luster creations will be discussed later but it would suffice, at this point, to mention that except on rare occasions, the Muslim women, created by non-Muslim writers, appear rather dimly silhouetted against the large panorama of life.

Though the non-Muslim writers have succeeded, to some extent, in acquiring enough range while depicting the Muslim women, they lack in penetration and purpose. They have created characters ranging from singing and dancing girls to queens and princesses. Some women hail from the posh localities in and around Delhi, while some other Muslim women come from the mud-huts in the Rann of Kutch. Some are literate and others are not. Some are artists like Fakr-un-nissa and Nadira while others like Karima and Rahti are far from such cultural sophistications. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the range adopted by the non-Muslim writers, while creating Muslim women characters, is wide enough.

As regards the scope of characterisation and the space allotted to the Muslim women characters, vis-à-vis their non-Muslim counterparts and the gradations of experience of life, the Muslim women are made to pass through, vary with various characters. Fakr-un-nissa, Saira, Nadira, Ruqayya occupy much space in their respective novels. Except Ruqayya who appears from her childhood till death, other characters are introduced only after their marriages. While depicting the Begum Sahiba in Heat and Dust, Mrs Jhabvala does not appear to be serious. Some of the words and events, used in the novel confirm this view. She hails from the royal family of ‘Kabab Pore’, her ‘chain smoking at her fifties’ her ‘broken English though she is educated in Switzerland’ and son on. She makes the Yorkshire chorus girls, whom her husband has brought and has given them enough jewelry, stand in line, after the death of her husband, and cough up what the old Nawab has given them. She appears like an ‘anti’ heroine in a crime fiction.

Chaman Nahal, for instance, has given enough scope to the Muslim women characters but the misinformation that he has about some verses in The Quran, rather dampens his sincere efforts at faithful characterisation of the Muslim women. When Rehana says that Almighty does not punish any Muslim for immoral ideas, unless one is indulged in
bad actions. However, the correct interpretation of *The Quran* is, even the intentions of a person or persons should be good while doing any work. Muslim women, created by non-Muslim writers, range from Queens to beggars and women from palaces to those of huts. However, due to ignorance of many things, on the part of their creators, most of them appear to be stereotypes.

As far as the range and scope of Muslim women characters, created by non-Muslim writers are concerned, it can be said that, by and large, justice has been done to them. Therefore, there cannot be any scope for dissatisfaction on the part of readers. However, there is certain amount of insufficiency with regard to the penetration of mind of these characters. That is to say, beyond the physical presence of a character, is there any symbolic meaning in the creation of such characters? That means a character is not merely an agent to further the action in a drama or a novel, but an individual with a specific role to play within the limits of the story. In the ultimate analysis, a character is not just a husband of someone or a wife of someone, but a role-specific individual with multiplicity of actions and relations. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that except in rare cases like Fakr-un-nissa of Bhagawan Gidwani and Rehana in the *The Crown and the Loin Cloths*, the Muslim women characters appear stereotypes. They do not appear to be fully blossomed individuals. Only one mood or trait of the personality is highlighted and the rest of the journey of the character passes without a ripple. Such characters are flat and hence they can be described in one sentence or one phrase. For instance, Nadira's character (*A Situation I New Delhi* – Mrs Sahagol) can be summarised in one sentence 'India is not for us... let's go to Lahore'. The entire life of Nadira is rotating around only this idea. Saira (*This Time of Morning* – Mrs Sahagol) keeps on saying 'there are all kinds of rules and all kinds of ways of getting round them'. Saira and Nadira are just the grumbling partners of their husbands. While commenting on the psychology of incompatibility, psychologists say:

‘What comes out of marriage depends on what goes into it. Whether by nature or by nurture, there are persons so lacking in qualities which make for compatibility that they would be incapable of finding happiness in any marriage.’

In this way, the non-Muslim writers have met with partial success as far as the range and scope are concerned. But as far as the psychological study of the Muslim woman is concerned, much needs to be said. The only reason for this lapse is lack of social interaction between these two communities.

On the other hand, when the Hindu writers of Indian English describe the Hindu women characters, they appear to be more confident and more professional. There are some very good Hindu women characters created by the Hindu writers. For instance, Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*, is a very good treatise on Indian womanhood.

> ‘Woman is the Earth, ether, sound; woman is the microcosm of the mind, the articulation of space, the knowing in the knowledge.’

In addition to Madeleine, Savithri and Laxmi in Raja Rao’s book, there are some other impressive Hindu women characters created by other writers. Sunita in *Shadow from Ladakh*, Mohini in *Music from Mahim* are good ones. The submissive woman Savitri in *The Dark Room* mutters.

> ‘No one who could not live by himself should be allowed to exist... what is the difference between a prostitute and a married woman? The prostitute changes her men, but a married woman doesn’t, that’s all: Both earn their food and shelter in the same manner.’

In these works, there is fire, agony and a bold invocation to the strength and courage of the woman. There is a social purpose behind the creation of this woman. Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* by R.K.Narayan is also a dynamic character. From Daisy to Savitri, is a complete story of woman’s suffering, struggle and her emancipation as well. In fact, among Gouri, Bharati, Savitri, Rosie and Daisy of R.K.Narayan, there appears to be a progression of feminism or the dialectical change appears to be in operation. Other novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arun Joshi, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal have also created some bold and courageous women characters. Mulk Raj’s Gouri is compared to Ibsen’s Nora.

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44. Nayaran, R.K. *The Dark Room*. (Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1978) P-80
Not only Hindu men novelists but women novelists have also created some fascinating Hindu female characters. For the sake of comparison, some examples have been taken. In Anita Desai’s novel, there is a world of radical female resistance against a defined concept of normality. Her women are mostly failed questers with the existential predicament of a woman in a male dominant society. Through such characters, Mrs Desai makes a plea for better living of women. Monisha in Voices in the City, is an example.

Shashi Deshpande’s women wish to be the architects of their own fate. She portrays the swinging mind of woman caught in dilemma. In The Dark Holds No Terror, the heroine is a medical doctor, who is brutally treated by her husband. If a female doctor is not safe, who else is?

In Raji Narsimhan’s novels, we encounter the new liberated woman. In The Sky Changes, Krishna returns home after living separately from her husband and blossoms into a writer. Krishna asserts confidently,

‘My body is not my jail! It is my boat. I will row to freedom in my boat.’

The list could be lengthy.

As we study these Hindu women characters created by Hindu men and women novelists, there appears to be a gradual blossoming up of Indian womanhood from a shy, dry and matter-of-fact sort of woman into a bold, courageous woman with strong achieving instincts. Such a dialectical pattern does not emerge when one studies the Muslim women characters.

Why did not then, the non-Muslim fiction writers in Indian English, project the Muslim woman authentically in their writings? Meena Shirwadkar writes,

The rigid custom of Purdah did not allow an outsider to have closer glimpses of Muslim women. Proximity of two communities for centuries could have provided a dim look of Muslim woman but even this was conditioned by the biased race superiority and the arrogance of self-righteousness and omniscience. This narrowness of vision could have placed Muslim woman out of the focus of Hindu writer.46

In addition to this, some of the non-Muslim writers have gross ignorance of some of the basic principles of Islam. An English writer confuses veil for Purdah and sari for dupatta. Therefore, the entire argument boils down to four main points.

1. The Purdah system has kept Muslim woman out of the vision of most of the non-Muslim fiction writers.

2. The racial arrogance of the non-Muslim writers, especially the Hindu writers, made them blind to the finer qualities in the Muslim community in general and Muslim woman in particular.

3. Ignorance about some of the basic principles of Islam among the non-Muslim writers made them create un-impressive, stereotype female characters.

4. Their fear that Muslim contact might make their religion impure.

It is a fact that the racial and other prejudices, bias and arrogance of being omniscient and omnipotent, make one despise others, howsoever better human being one may be.

There is another interesting parallel one would like to study at this juncture. What some of the non-Muslim fiction writers have done to Muslim women, the same has been done by the British novelists to Indian women. Bhupal Sing writes,

"The British novelists depicted Indian women in a very unfavourable light, which have little relationship to either truth or reason."47

When we make a strong case against misrepresentation of the Indian woman by the British novelists, we can also make a similar case saying that the Muslim woman is also not adequately represented by non-Muslim fiction writers in Indian English.

46. Shirwadkar, Meena, Images of Women in the Indo-Anglian Novel, (Sterling Publishers, Bangalore, 1979) P-7
47. Sing, Bhupal, Survey of Anglo Indian Fiction, (Mittal Publishers, New Delhi, 1994) P-118.
Bhupal Sing, enumerates the reasons why the British writers believe that all Indians are criminals at heart. The reason they give is,

“They live south of latitude 30°.

Those who live to the south of latitude thirty are criminals and those who live above it are saints, such statements do not deserve any comment. Similarly, it is wrong to depict Muslims as inferior creatures because their food, dress, religion are different. Many of the British novelists put emphasis on the master race qualities of the British characters and of the servility of the native characters. For instance, I.A.R.Wile’s novel, The Daughter of Brahman, uses words like ‘evil’, ‘fiendish’ and ‘hideous’ for Hindus. There are many novels to show that the British writers have belittled their Hindu characters.

This type of an attitude has a long history nurtured by the British writers. Their encounter with the dark-skinned people elsewhere, had created in their mind, the picture of semi-human beings of beastly passions. Any physical or marital contact with them was dismissed as abnormal. Hence, the British fiction writers describe the native characters in poor colours. Sometimes the British writers use abnormal devices like killing or eliminating the Indian characters in their novels unceremoniously. In Flora Annie Steel’s famous novel, On the Face of Water, Zohra, an Indian girl, is sent to an early death enabling her British husband, Jim Douglas, to love another Englishman’s wife. In Jewel of Malabar, Kamala, a beautiful Nair widow, is converted to Christianity and sent to a convent to facilitate Sir John Bennvile to marry her. Bhupal Sing quotes Donald Sinderby,

*An Englishman cannot marry a black woman as that would make him live in this god-forsaken country... the Indian girls are dangerous.*

The reverse, that is, an English girl marrying an Indian boy is simply un-imaginable. In Alice Askew’s novel, Potter’s Thumb, an Englishman refuses to kiss an Indian girl saying

48. (Ibid) P.118
49. (Ibid) P.122
It is needless to say that such biased views of the British writers betray their gross ignorance of Indian culture. It is not likely that they might not have heard of the Indian models like Sita, Savitri, Anasuya and so on. Their fixation against Indian culture and Indian women had been so strong that they refuse to see the reality.

The image of Muslim woman created by the British fiction writers, is also not better than the image of the Hindu woman created by them.


However, the fact cannot be ignored that the depiction of the Muslim woman, by the British fiction writers, is better than that of the Hindu woman. There are reasons why this had happened.


b. Secondly, Muslims, like Christians, came to India as invaders. So they thought that they understood the Muslims better than the Hindus. For instance, Manson’s character Sher Ali, Mrs Steel’s Fatima Shureef, Futteh Deen, Feroza, Winter Worth’s Imam Bux have been depicted sympathetically.

c. The educated, mercantile and intellectual Hindu is a more potential threat and challenge to the British Empire than the soldier and peasant Muslim.

d. The Hindus considered themselves socially superior. They refused to dine with the British. The ruling class could not digest this terrible insult. That is why the British writers depicted Hindu men and especially women in poor light.

After this explanation, it is very easy to understand why the Hindu writers depicted the Muslim woman in poor light. The reasons are the same; racial superiority, arrogance of being omniscient and omnipotent and the Purdah system which prohibited the Hindu

50. (Ibid) P-124
writers from having intimate contacts with the Muslim woman. The Hindu writers also failed to take note of the galaxy of the brilliant Muslim women like Bibi Fatima, Bibi Khanssa, Bibi Umme Salma, Bibi Umme Ammar, the first woman commander of the Islamic army in the Battle of Uhad, Fakrunnisa Shohada, the woman saint, who used to address the Friday congregation in the Grand Mosque of Baghadad. Instead, they chose to depict the Muslim woman as a woman of easy morals. It is a serious question and hence needs due attention.

It is strange that some prominent Hindu fiction writers have depicted Muslim women as prostitutes, as if prostitution is not known to the Hindu society. Here are some examples of Muslim prostitutes, singing girls and nautch girls. Haseena Begum (Train to Pakistan), Ashila Banu (The Sword of Tipu Sultan), Hasarat Ada Jan (Dusk Before Dawn), Ajizan (The Devil's Wind), Ameena and Zareena (The Princess). In the same way, the following are the examples of illicit relations between a Muslim girl and a Hindu boy. Rehana and Sunil (The Crown and the Loin Cloth), Yasmin and Krishen (Confession of a Lover), Nooran with Juggat Sing (Train to Pakistan), Farida and Nathan (Onion Peel), Nur and Arun (Azadi). It is, as if, Hindu girls cannot choose to marry Muslim boys or they don’t elope with them in practical life. The understanding, that Muslim women have easy morals, appears to be one of the patent misconceptions of some of the Hindu writers. They are like the British writers, who have depicted Indian women in very poor colours without justifiable reasons. Some Hindu writers like Mrs. Sahagal and the like have presented Muslim woman in a dignified way. In reality, the Hindu women out number the Muslim women in the profession of flesh trading. Muslim women might have resorted to it due to poverty, but amongst the Hindus, prostitution developed as an institution.

Kautilya in his Artha Shastra, chapter twenty-seven, has given a detailed account of how to run the state controlled brothels. There was a ‘Ganikadhyakshya’, superintendent of prostitutes. He, alongwith the ‘Nagaradhyaksha’, the chief of the town, was collecting taxes from those women. He was the final authority in appointing or dismissing Ganikas or prostitutes. In short, it was a public sector unit run in huge profits.
In the Vijaya Nagar empire of Krishna Deva Raya, there were 1300 women selected for this job. Each was paying one Panam a day. Out of this revenue, some soldiers were appointed to protect them.

Not only men, but gods also need the services of such prostitutes. That is why such prostitutes are called 'Devadasis', god’s servants. Doctor Marglin, the Professor of Anthropology, Smith’s College, Northampton, Massachusetts, the U.S.A., in his research work titled *Wives of the God Kind*, gives a touching description of the Devadasis, appointed in the service of Lord Jagannath of Puri in Orissa. The researcher met many Devadasis like Amrapalli, Brundabati, Radha, Lata and others who live in the premises of the temple. They told that they were the wives of the Lord during the day and during night, they had to entertain the Brahmin priests, rich men in the city and even the King himself. When Amrapalli refused to obey the King,

‘The king ousted her from temple service’

It is not necessary to go into further details of how prostitution was institutionalised, legalised and spiritualised in Hindu India. After the Greeks, it is only the Hindu society, which has so devastatingly impurified the female body.

Prostitution during the Mughal period did not get royal patronage and it never had religious sanctions. Santosh Kumar Mukerji classifies the singing and dancing girls, whom the Hindu writers have called prostitutes.

1. Lolonis, the word came from the Persian word Loli or Public singing. They sing in Persian only. They do not indulge in flesh trading.
2. Domnis, sing in Hindustani and other local languages.
3. Hockenis, low-caste dancing girls, converted to Islam
4. Kenchens, are respectable, well trained singers. They used to sing during marriages of the Amirs and Omrahs.

It is only the second and third variety of girls, who were an easy prey for the pleasure hunters. The Lolonies and Kenchens were so respectable in their over all bearing that soon after their job of entertainment, they used to leave the scene quietly. Tara Ali Beg writes in her novel,

"The dancing women always understood that their task was, in the great houses, only to entertain. Give men a vicarious sensation roused by the Music and certain coquetry and then leave modestly in the early hours of the morning. What happens later was no body's concern."52

When the Mughal kingdom was liquidated, the British made Calcutta their capital. The rich Bengali landlords were entertaining their British guests with grand evening parties of wine and women. The Asiatic Journal of London, dated 7th October, 1823 bitterly criticizes the parties thrown by one Motilal Mullick to entertain his British guests. The British officers also considered it a profitable business and they wanted to make money by importing western beauties.

'It is a historical fact that one time the East-India Company itself engineered in slave girls as highly profitable concern."53

So, the women in red light area of Calcutta are not due to the liquidation of the Mughal empire, as is misunderstood by some. It is in fact, due to the encouragement given by the rich Bengali landlords. Here is a religionwise chart of such women in Calcutta.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>No. of Prostitutes</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01.</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>6995</td>
<td>8,22,293</td>
<td>0.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>0302</td>
<td>3,11,155</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>0086</td>
<td>47,484</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.</td>
<td>Others (Jain, Sikh, Parsi, Jew)</td>
<td>0030</td>
<td>12,781</td>
<td>0.283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1931 census

53. Mukherji, Santosh Kumar, *Prostitution in India*, (Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1968) P-102
This chart shows that one such woman is found nearly among one hundred Hindus, whereas it is one in a thousand Muslims. In fact, it is the lowest number mentioned in the chart.

The attempt of non-Muslim fiction writers in English in India, to depict Muslim woman thus met with half success. About the range of Muslim women characters and the scope provided to them, there can't be two opinions that the non-Muslim Indian English fiction writers have done justice. However, no serious efforts are made to describe the psychological dialectics of these characters. They live only on physical level. No tangible motive appears to have been ascribed to them. Bhagawan Gidwani and Nayantara Sahagal have penetrated the minds of their women characters to some extent. Reasons, for the lapses, have already been discussed. Depicting the Muslim woman as a woman of loose characters is highly prejudicial and improper.

For the sake of comparative study of the vision and perception of the non-Muslim fiction writers in India and Pakistan, about Muslim woman, a Pakistani non-Muslim, novelist is selected. Bapsy Sidhwas, a Parsi woman writer from Pakistan, was born in Karachi in 1938. She has been a key person in promoting various women's organisations in Pakistan. Her's is an important voice in the world of commonwealth fiction.

Her novel, The Bride, is about the interaction between two cultures: of the mountain tribe and the urban plain in Pakistan. This book is a powerful depiction of the struggle for survival of the heroine Zaitoon, fleeing the brutal and barbaric tribal society of Kohistan in North-west Pakistan.

Zaitoon, whose parents are dead at the time of partition of Punjab, is brought up by her relative Qasim. She grows up in Qila Gujjar Singh, Lahore. At sixteen, her marriage is fixed by Qasim with Sakhi, Qasim's cousin. Miriam, Qasim's wife, warns him about the differences between hill-life and urban-life. Then Major Mustaq and a soldier Ashiq, whose army base is nearby, also try to dissuade Qasim from his resolve. Zaitoon begs Qasim not to force her for marriage, but the latter did not agree because he has promised Sakhi. If the words are broken, the tribal community ex-communicates the culprit. He is not ready to bear this ignominy. Qasim has learnt from his father that
woman has no will or desire of her own. What man wills, will be done. Qasim himself is forced to marry a girl, who is five years older than himself, because she comes in lieu of the loan, the girl's father has taken from Qasim's father. In this way, the first chapter itself reveals the ill treatment meted out to women there. They are, like commodities, traded and bartered. Being a woman almost implies being owned and being treated like a beast of burden. There was no marital sanctity and in the perverse value system, the honour of man is judged by how well he can oppress women.

Once Sakhi, Zaitoon's husband, starts beating his mother. Zaitoon intervenes and is severely thrashed. Unable to bear such daily beatings and humiliations, Zaitoon decides to escape from the hell. Zaitoon's retaliation and her decision to run away is not her militant feminism, because she does not know what feminism is. It is a spiritual struggle, a last ditch battle of the weak and oppressed against the strong. That is why her victory is marvelous and inspiring. Willy nilly, she becomes a symbol of all the oppressed and exploited Muslim women in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world. Zaitoon is a symbol not only of woman fighting oppression in a tribal society, but of a human spirit, struggling against all physical odds to survive and maintain dignity.

After seven days' journey through forests and valleys, Zaitoon reaches the other side of the river, where the soldiers help her to save her life. Thus, Zaitoon survives at last.

If this is the story of the tribal people, the story of highly placed people in Pakistan regarding the treatment of women, is no better. There is a sub-plot in this novel, which includes Carol, a middle class American girl, who marries Farukh, an engineer. Unable to bear humiliation and physical torture, Carol gradually moves towards Captain Mustaq. He too, like the other Pakistanis, exploits her sexually and abandons her. Every man in this novel exercises his right of proprietorship over women.

Zaitoon's triumph can be appreciated properly, only when she is compared with the other women characters in the same novel, who are struggling for salvation. Afshan marries Qasim, a boy of ten and she is fifteen, in lieu of the loan. Hamida, broken by the hard life; Shahanaz, a high class courtesan; Carol, the American wife of Farukh; the beggar woman of Lawrence Garden, who depends on the charity of her rapist and the
decapitated tribal woman refuses to obey the tribal code and whose head is floating in a dirty pond, all these women are sufferers due to their husbands' ill treatment. Zaitoon stands very high among the suffering womanhood, as the messiah of liberation. Mrs Sidhwa uses poet Iqbal's words to pay tribute to the fighting spirit of Zaitoon.

'Heighten your Khudi (self) to such majesty
That before turn of fate
God Himself asks man
Tell me what do you wish'

Woman should have words to tell, she should have wisdom to tell, she should have courage to tell that she can survive on this god's good earth. Such an effective portrayal of Muslim woman is very rare in the fiction of non-Muslim fiction writers in English in India.