

NARRATING STORIES OF CULTURE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC READING OF HARIS QADEER'S THE SILENCE THAT SPEAKS-SHORT STORIES BY INDIAN MUSLIM WOMEN AND ATTIA HOSAIN'S DISTANT TRAVELLER

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to explore the stories of culture and religion portrayed through the diverse voices of female writers in Haris Qadeer's edited anthology of Indian Muslim women's short story collection titled The Silence that Speaks and Attia Hosain's Distant Traveller. Both these collections consist of a wide range of stories that deftly represent the socio-cultural and political epoch of the writers that seamlessly blend with the fiction. Also, the chapter intends to study the texts through the lens of feminist autoethnography in order to understand the role of the authors as autoethnographers. A close reading of both the collection delineates the lives of Muslim women who silently fought against the patriarchal and traditional norms that relegated them to the margins. The essay has made an attempt to analyse those voices against the backdrop of their socio-political epoch and the role it has to play in situating the select texts within the ambit of Indian Muslim women's literature.

Keywords: Anthology, Socio-Cultural, Socio-Political, Autoethnographers, Patriarchal

The best collection of Attia Hosain's short story was put together by her daughter Shama Habibullah and Aamer Hussein. It was first published posthumously in the year 2013 which also marked her birth centenary year. *Distant Traveller* consists of chapters of an unfinished novel and short stories roughly spanning over a period of 20 years that describe the intrinsic literary landscape of Hosain well established through her critically acclaimed semi-autobiographical novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*. She chose not to publish any of her writings after the first novel – the rationale behind this decision remains unexplored and continue to kindle the interest of her readers.

A parallel study of Hosain's novel will enable in bringing her non-fiction into a sharper focus as both the body of texts play a significant role in portraying stories of her community. Hosain moved to England after India gained independence and started exploring the world of journalism by working as a broadcaster with BBC. Hosain's exilic years in England was pivotal in bringing her closer to her roots, which she attained through her writings. Her yearning for the proximity of her motherland was achieved through the act of storytelling as her daughter rightly calls her 'Kissahgoh' – the storyteller. Narrating story as a way of

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