

**EMPOWERMENT THROUGH FEMALE SOLIDARITY:
INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTRAGENERATIONAL BONDS IN *THE
PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL AND THE HENNA ARTIST***

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Abstract

*Women across the world frequently face systematic oppression and restrictive societal norms that limit their autonomy. Literature reflects women's individual struggle and experiences within oppressive structures, but the role of female alliances in fostering empowerment remains underexplored. Despite extensive feminist literary research, there is a critical gap in examining how female alliances function as tools of strength and survival, as most studies focus on individual females' struggles. Therefore, using Lazar's Feminist Discourse Analysis model under the broader umbrella of Radical Feminist Theory, the current study aimed to examine female solidarity as a survival strategy in *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* by Hashimi and *The Henna Artist* by Joshi. The findings revealed that female solidarity functions through shared experiences, emotional support, mentorship, and collective resistance, allowing women to gain strength within restrictive social structures. Through language, shared memory, and women-centered relationships, solidarity becomes a key means of empowerment across generations.*

Keywords: *Female solidarity, intergenerational bonds, intra-generational bonds, female empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment has been traditionally conceptualized in terms of individual triumph over structural domination. Contemporary feminist literary critique has abandoned this emphasis and shifted towards collective resistance and solidarity among women. This is particularly within postcolonial and patriarchal realms, where institutionalized gender roles and cultural norms limit women's voice and agency. For bell hooks (2000), "*sisterhood is still powerful*," especially when it is based on a common lived experience of oppression and a shared will to freedom. The concept of women's solidarity-- intergenerational (between generations) or intra-generational (within the same generation) - offers a different framework from isolated resistance, with a focus on the necessity of emotional, psychological, and material support among women as a survival strategy. In feminist literary criticism, particularly that of Radical Feminism, female solidarity is not only articulated as emotional solidarity but as a productive act of resistance against patriarchal structures. Radical feminist Tong (2009) argues, argue that "the root cause of women's oppression is the patriarchal system itself" and that real empowerment must be crafted out of the destruction of such bases by collective efforts. Women in the majority of cultures are denied agency, and their resistance has to find its place in the limited space granted to them—most frequently through

support networks available within the family, between friends, or through shared experience of violence. Such bonds are increasingly visible in literature not as setting, but as primary vehicles of character construction and social critique.

Within South Asian and Middle Eastern cultures - both the locations of Hashimi's *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (Post-colonial Afghanistan) and Joshi's *The Henna Artist* (Post-independence India) - women's collective relationships take on added importance. Both types of cultures are historically based on rugged gender hierarchies, religious conservatism, and social restrictions on women's mobility, choice, and agency. Within such repressive regimes, women are most likely to form informal networks to survive - mentoring one another, sharing information, and creating safe emotional spaces within isolating circumstances. According to Spivak (1988), the subaltern woman is frequently denied speech, and it is through collective speech - frequently oral, domestic, or underground - that she begins to recover it. Literature is, therefore, a significant location in which these other stories of survival and resistance are told.

Given the centrality of women's bonds in shaping gender narratives, literature serves as a critical medium for exploring female solidarity. *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* (2014) by Hashimi and *The Henna Artist* (2021) by Joshi exemplify this dynamic, as both novels highlight the transformative power of female relationships in patriarchal settings. In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, Rahima and KhalaShaima's relationship is initially defined by distance and resignation; however, it eventually becomes a strong intergenerational bond where wisdom and resilience are passed down, empowering Rahima to resist oppression. Through such a bond, they defeat their oppressor and reclaim their dignity (Hosseini, 2020). The same applies to *The Henna Artist*, which traces the path of independence for Lakshmi and how her relationships with Radha and other women provide her with emotional, financial, and psychological nourishment to overcome societal boundaries (Joshi, 2021). Such descriptions bring out the prominent role of female support networks towards empowerment, survival, and transformation.

This research draws on Radical Feminist Theory, which holds that patriarchy is structurally built into all society and that its eradication will come through mass resistance. The study is qualitative in approach, employing close reading and comparative analysis in the examination of the depiction of intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity in Hashimi's *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* and Joshi's *The Henna Artist*. Through close textual analysis, the study aims to illustrate how women's support networks in the novels are empowerment tools, thus enabling women to build alternative and transformative futures. The findings of this study will contribute to feminist literary discourse by reaffirming the significance of collective female resistance as a way of enduring and overcoming patriarchal oppression.

Problem Statement

Women in patriarchal societies often face systemic oppression, which limits their autonomy and opportunities. However, literature reveals that female solidarity can serve as a powerful tool for empowerment, enabling women to resist oppression and reclaim agency. While much research focuses on individual female strength, there is a gap in exploring how collective female bonds-mentorship, friendship, and sisterhood- function as mechanisms of empowerment in literature. Thereby, this study aims to explore how Hashimi's *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* and Joshi's *The Henna Artist* depict female solidarity as a means of resistance, survival, and reform in oppressive societal structures.

1.1 Research Gap

The gap lies in the limited exploration of generational female solidarity as a survival strategy in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist*.

1.2 Aims of the Study

The current study aimed to explore the role of generational female solidarity as a tool against patriarchal oppression in *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist*.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the role of intergenerational female support towards female empowerment in the selected texts
2. To examine intra-generational female support as a source of women's empowerment in the selected texts

Research Questions

1. How does intergenerational female support contribute to women's empowerment in the selected texts?
2. How does intra-generational female support contribute to women's empowerment in the selected texts?

Significance of the study

This study is an addition to feminist discourse as the findings of this study can be used to develop academic discussions, seminars, and workshops on collective female empowerment, fostering awareness in social and educational settings. It will expand feminist literary criticism by shifting the focus from individual struggle to collective empowerment. The findings of this study can further motivate activists and women's organizations to design programs that promote female support systems and economic independence for women in patriarchal societal settings. By showcasing women's strength and empowerment through unity, this research offers narratives and role models that inspire women to challenge societal oppression by seeking collective strength in real-life situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Solidarity has long been known as a significant empowerment tool in feminist literary studies. Senchuk (1990) argues that emotional and psychological strength to oppose the system of patriarchy is found in the relationship of women that is usually defined by care and support networks. In literature, "female solidarity is represented as a counter-narrative to individualism, which has long been revered in patriarchal ideologies" (Tong & Botts, 2018). Recent studies suggest that the relationships between women, both intergenerational and intra-generational, "are not only emotional support but also political acts of resistance against oppressive systems" (Miller, 2015; Butler, 2018). The distinction between intergenerational and intra-generational unity has been explored in feminist studies. "Intergenerational support, where older women teach younger women, has been seen as a way for women to transfer knowledge and survival strategies" (Phoenix, 2006), which assists women to deal with social frameworks that attempt to control them, by offering them both emotional and practical assistance.

In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, KhalaShaima, a woman who has gone through a lot, assists Rahima in overcoming the limitations of marriage and patriarchy, establishing a bond in which the power is passed on between generations through narration and advice. Solidarity among the same generation of women or intra-generational solidarity is also necessary, as Tisdell (1998) contends that, "solidarity between women is encouraged through peer support and builds resilience and

solidarity that empowers women to resist oppression actively”. In *The Henna Artist*, Lakshmi and the women in her age group, especially Kanta and Parvati, demonstrate how “solidarity and sisterhood among women of the same generation help them deal with patriarchal demands and navigate towards freedom on both a personal and professional level” (Joshi, 2021).

These support systems are group survival systems, which allow self-realization, autonomy, and social justice. The chosen texts have strong cultural and historical contexts that influence the formation of female solidarity. In *The Pearl that Broke its Shell*, the social and political conditions in Afghanistan, particularly the occupation by the Soviet forces women to form solidarity groups to survive. Akseer (2011) argues that “the war-torn setting worsens women's oppression, and thus female solidarity is essential for ensuring mental and emotional well-being”. Similarly, *The Henna Artist* is located in post-independent India, where women are restricted in their freedom due to gendered assumptions and their membership of a class. Joshi (2021) explains how the history of Indian society around patriarchy and caste requires the unity of women to empower them.

The scholars have gone ahead to discuss how solidarity has been used to portray women's endurance in postcolonial and transnational feminist fiction. In accordance with Spivak (1988), the testimonies of feminist empowerment should be examined through the lens of subaltern struggle, in terms of how the voices of females are suppressed in the existing narrative histories. *The Pearl that Broke its Shell* also breaks the conventional gender norms of the relationship between Rahima and her aunt and her sisters when the women form a loving sisterhood that eventually empowers them women empowered. Similarly, in the book *The Henna Artist*, mentorship between women is presented as a primary factor in the capacity of the main character to become independent, and the fact that the solidarity of women reinvents their fate. This study enhances the existing literary research by looking at how solidarity among women is both a survival strategy and the force of change, and presents new insights on the topic of women's alliances and their significance in modern literature.

Bell hooks (2000), in her classic book *Feminism is for Everybody*, emphasizes the power of sisterhood, which can transform things, because in the book she says that “female bonding is not merely a strategy for survival, it is a necessary condition for liberation” (p. 15). Hooks assumes that women's solidarity is a psychological anchor and political necessity, and it can withstand fragmentation by patriarchal societies. The narratives exchanged between women who have experienced domestic oppression to social rejection are what produce distinctive empathy and solidarity that is politically intense. In literature, this type of solidarity usually takes the form of narrative forms that pre-empt relationships rather than personalistic journeys.

This theme of female solidarity is very much emphasized in the South Asian and Middle Eastern literature. Other feminist thinkers like Mohanty (2003) and Narayan (1997) have opposed the tendency of Western feminism to universalize its approach and suggested a more culturally specific approach to female resistance. Here, women's solidarity in non-Western literature is frequently not a rebellious one, but a strategic one that is realized through mentorship, narrating, a collective trauma, and nurturing connections. To take a case, maternal mentorship, sisterhood, and generational narrative in such narratives can be critical instruments of survival. In *Women Writing in India*, Tharu and Lalita (1993) believe that storytelling as such can be an empowering act. They postulate that literary texts turn into spaces where “the female self is allowed to emerge against the grain of dominant discourse” (p. 41). This idea forms the basis of a lot of the feminist literature on solidarity, particularly when the emotional and mental connections between women challenge male hierarchy.

The generational support between women of the same generation is especially emotional and material, and it can be observed mostly in modern feminist literature. According to scholars such as Toril Moi (2002), the relationships undermine the conventional narrative structure based on male-female relationships. Moi, in her interpretation of women-oriented writings, points out that when women establish lives around each other emotionally, professionally, and intellectually, they not only transform the roles assigned to them, but also the form of the narrative itself. The impact of this structural change is evident in *The Henna Artist* because the relationships of Lakshmi with other women but not with her love interests, are what dictate her growth. Tharu and K. Lalita (1993) also emphasize that the literature of South Asian women tends to dismiss linear Western ideas of empowerment in the collective change. They write, “the act of women coming together is itself revolutionary in a culture where their isolation has been systematically constructed” (p. 118). This revolution is not perceived in the rebellious sense, but in the power to persevere in the face of desperation, exile and abuse, as in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. Intergenerational relationships such as the one between Khala Shaima and Rahima- serve as a continuum between the memory and action, the trauma and the survival.

One of the most subtle ones is provided by Sara Mills (1995) who postulates that female solidarity is usually concealed in the subtleties of linguistic code, indirect speech, or silence. Mills observes that in the society where direct disobedience results in a penalty, women tend to rebel using words that are subtle, emotional, and communal and this is a punishment in itself. These nuances are very thick in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* when telling a story, metaphors, and silence have a heavy load of rebellion. The concept of a “language of women” which is nonlinear, non-hierarchical and based on bodily experience and emotional resonance. This “feminine language” is opposed to patriarchal reason and turns into a place of solidarity and subversion. The dialogue between women in *The Henna Artist* and *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* is usually full of multiple meanings that are caring and educative, personal and political at the same time. Such literary decisions are in line with the thought of Irigaray who believed in a female subjective and relational discourse.

To sum up, the reviewed literature has shown that there is an increasing academic interest in solidarity-based empowerment, especially in non-Western feminist fiction. However, there still has been a lot of scholarship to point to individual acts of rebellion over collective connections as a means of strength. *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist* dispute this tendency by making female networks, intergenerational storytelling, and mutual care the main pillars of resistance and resilience. These readings depict empowerment as a cooperative process, which is not only informed by personal determination but also influenced by emotional, cultural, and social interdependence. This view demands more critical approaches to feminist literary criticism- approaches that put emphasis on relationships and community instead of individual successes. These novels have been analyzed through the Feminist Discourse Analysis and Radical Feminist Theory to offer a useful contribution to the modern feminist discourse. They provoke scholars and readers to rethink the nature of power and resistance, not as something imposed and claimed but something that is grown in solidarity, maintained in community, and fostered through compassion and continuity.

A careful review of the existing critical research on feminist literature shows that no full-length study has been adequately conducted on the idea of female solidarity as a source of strength, specifically on the texts selected by the researcher. Therefore, the current study seeks to evaluate

how generational female alliances function as mechanisms of strength and survival in the face of oppression within patriarchal societies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research can be defined as the process of gathering data, collecting information, discovering facts, and presenting them (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). It is a means to gather, examine, and make sense of information to comprehend the phenomenon. It is a methodological procedure of specifying the goals, overseeing the information, and conveying the results that takes place within the particular framework in the context of current guidelines (Payne, 2005). Moreover, the directions and the guidelines give the researcher a direction to follow, what to involve, and how the research is to be conducted.

The present work is qualitative in nature, which rests predominantly on the premises of feminism, and the profound examination of the chosen texts is going to locate the social and personal issues of women and their constant mutual struggles against the established patterns of patriarchy. According to Hancock, “*qualitative research focuses on creating explanations of social phenomena, or in other words, the way they are*” (p.1). Qualitative research is a methodology that entails discovery. It gives the researchers the ability to define the details based on the real experiences (Payne, 2005). It seeks to find out how emotional, social, and intergenerational relationships allow female characters to resist oppression and reclaim their agency in patriarchal environments. For this purpose, the researcher will rely on the theoretical data collected from research papers, relevant books, articles, journals, and feminist literary criticism, along with the viewpoints of critics on the selected text and theory.

The paradigm of the study is the feminist interpretive paradigm, which is based on Radical Feminism and uses Feminist Discourse Analysis (FDA) as the model of textual data analysis. This methodological approach is useful in revealing the latent power relations, linguistic strategies, and discursive practices that create and reproduce gender inequality, as well as emphasizing how female solidarity works as a counter-discourse to these narratives. The researcher reveals patterns of resistance, mutual support, and empowerment that the texts contain through close reading and thematic interpretation. The methodology ensures that every detail of the analysis is consistent and valid with the theoretical framework and research questions.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is grounded in the Radical Feminist Theory, which offers the foundation of the analysis of women's empowerment by solidarity in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Hashimi and *The Henna Artist* by Joshi. Radical Feminism is an emergent feminist movement that arose as part of the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s, and aims to reveal and eliminate patriarchy, a system where men are privileged and women are subordinated by controlling culture, social structures, and institutions (Millet, 1977; Firestone, 1970). It discusses the role of power in all aspects of life, including family and politics, and how the collective resistance of women can be a way of liberation.

It also highlights the structural aspect of patriarchy and the subordination of women as a structural issue that is deeply entrenched in social, cultural, and historical institutions. According to Firestone (1970) and Millett (1977), “*patriarchy is not an incidental or individual phenomenon but an institutionalized hierarchy that reproduces gender inequality*”. This viewpoint enables the researcher to view the two novels as the product of the larger patriarchal structures that restrain

the autonomy of women, and to examine how women resist these structures through concerted female effort. This framework aligns with the purpose of the present study, which investigates how women in both novels transform their suffering into strength through intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity. This framework is in line with the objective of the current study, which explores how women in both novels turn their suffering into power by intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity.

In this context, the selected novels are interpreted through discourse, gender, and solidarity. The dialogues, inner thoughts, and interactions of female characters are analyzed to demonstrate the reproduction or subversion of dominant ideologies. The linguistic patterns, including the supportive language use, emotional connection, and symbolic expression, are viewed as the discursive empowerment strategies. The FDA assists in defining how the female characters build a counter-discourse that re-conceptualizes the meaning of womanhood not as subjugation, but as strength and endurance in mutual.

Feminist Discourse Analysis (Model)

The analytical framework used in the current study is Feminist Discourse Analysis (FDA) as suggested by Michelle M. Lazar (2005). The FDA is a critical and interpretive method that analyzes the construction, maintenance, and resistance of gender, power, and ideology in discourse. The model provides a methodological and analytical approach to the discovery of linguistic and discursive processes by which patriarchy is either reinforced or undermined in literature. As Lazar (2005) explains, "*Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis aims to show how power asymmetries are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in various contexts*" (p. 10).

The model is a complement to Radical Feminism because it is concerned with how language and communication transform into the site of both oppression and resistance. Through the FDA lens, the researcher examines how speech, silence, and narrative structure are used by the women in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist* to show resistance, solidarity, and empowerment. FDA allows the researcher to read between the lines to understand how discourse operates ideologically to perpetuate gender hierarchies, and how counter-discourse by women re-constructs their subjectivity and agency.

ANALYSIS

In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist*, female solidarity is the defining element that supports and sustains women in extremely patriarchal societies. Although the settings of the novels lie in two contrasting cultures, namely, Afghanistan and postcolonial India, respectively, the antagonist that the heroines have to face, as well as the type of support that they receive, have striking similarities. Lakshmi from *The Henna Artist* and Rahima in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* are both women born into restraining cultures that restrict their choices, define their roles, and sanction autonomy. However, their way to empowerment does not lie in individual acts of rebellion, but in female support networks that they form with other women- mothers, sisters, mentors, and even female employers. This research suggests that intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity processes help these women gain agency, oppose oppression, and construct alternative futures for themselves.

According to Lazar (2005), "*feminist discourse analysis examines how discourse upholds gendered power dynamics and how women's voices challenge patriarchal domination. It emphasizes how language and interactional patterns create gendered identities and power*

hierarchies in addition to what is stated.” FDA enables the close study of the dialogue, narrative structure, and descriptive choices in both *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist* to demonstrate how female solidarity undermines dominant discourses of subjection and redefines agency within culturally constrictive contexts.

The metamorphosis of Rahima in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* is linguistically connected to her relations with other female allies. Rahima’s aunt, KhalaShaima, addresses her in a caring but educative tone, counsels her: “*Sometimes, to survive, you must play the part they expect of you, until you can be yourself*” (Hashimi, 2014, p. 112). This statement, according to the FDA, displays the discursive strategy of coded resistance, the tactic of being autonomous privately and conforming publicly. The lexical word choice "survive" places female solidarity in a survivalist context, emphasizing resilience over victimization. Likewise, in her advice to her younger sister Radha (a 14-year-old girl) in *The Henna Artist*, Lakshmi (30 years old) employs the same discursive strategies, reminding her, “*We can't change what we've been given, but we can decide what to make of it*” (Joshi, 2020, p. 174). The parallel between the two novels is a discourse of empowerment since women mentor and support other women by redefining subjugation as an opportunity to determine themselves.

From the perspective of the FDA, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist* demonstrate that solidarity is not only a social phenomenon but a discursively constructed phenomenon, which is produced, reproduced, and presented with the help of some speech patterns, silences, and narrative constructions. The application of the linguistic modes that women use is the mentoring discourse, coded resistance, common patriarchal narratives, etc., all of which are constituents of the solidarity as a survival mechanism and as a process of transformation in patriarchal societies.

Intergenerational Solidarity as a Tool for Empowerment

The female solidarity across generations in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist* works as a main channel through which women are passing on the knowledge of survival based on cultural restriction and historical trauma. The concept of womanhood as realized by Rahima in Hashimi’s novel is greatly shaped by the life experiences of her mother and great-great-grandmother Shekiba whose life story comes as a caution and guiding force. The patience of Shekiba in the face of forced marriage, social marginalization, and political instability is passed down as a lesson, which teaches Rahima that sometimes the key to survival is flexibility, as opposed to direct opposition (Hashimi, 2014).

Likewise, in *The Henna Artist*, the survival of Lakshmi is educated on the advice of senior women who shape persistence in patriarchal frameworks. Lakshmi is taught, through their guidance, silences, and tales of caution how to bargain respectability, economic independence, and safety in post-independence India, where social development exists alongside the firmly upheld gender hierarchies (Joshi, 2020). Intergenerational relationships used in both stories serve as cultural memory storage where younger women can predict danger and act in restrictive settings with a knowledgeable resiliency. These intergenerational relationships are reinforced in the form of indirect language, silences and narrative restraint as viewed through the Feminist Discourse Analysis of how women negotiate their survival strategies without necessarily defying patriarchal authority (Lazar, 2005).

This transmission through Radical Feminism contextualises the continuity of the patriarchal power over historical periods when the structural inequality of the time remained intact regardless of the political or social circumstances (Walby, 1990; Millett, 1977). Empowerment, then, is not a

disruption but a continuity: older women do not lose their experience but rather pass it on to the younger ones, enabling them to live in oppressive regimes. Making memory a form of guidance, intergenerational solidarity guarantees the survival of female resilience through time, even in the situations of violence, displacement, and social control.

Intra-generational Solidarity as a tool for Empowerment

Female solidarity between the same generation in both novels is an immediate and practical reaction to the similar oppression, where women of the same generation can resist loneliness and weakness. The relationships of Rahima with women in her domestic and social setting in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* are used to give emotional validation and mutual protection to women in a society where women are prohibited to move freely and talking. Through these relationships, women can exchange tips on warning, provide a sense of security, and collectively bear the conditions instilled by the patriarchal family systems and political unrest (Hashimi, 2014). Equally, in *The Henna Artist*, the female relationships that Lakshmi has with her clients and colleagues are the key support that helps her remain economically independent and safe. These women have their own stories to tell, give tips to each other, and defend each other with discretion, establishing a female-oriented environment in a male-driven societal hierarchy (Joshi, 2020). Intragenerational solidarity in both texts helps women to endure the immediacy of their situations not by fighting but by collaborating.

The intragenerational solidarity is discursively supported by coded speech, selective silence, and shared understanding, which Feminist Discourse Analysis recognizes as techniques of communication under surveillance (Lazar, 2005). Radical Feminism regards such practices as everyday resistance in patriarchal systems, instead of any overt resistance (Firestone, 1970; hooks, 2000). The idea of empowerment in these settings is interpersonal and communal: women reassert their constrained agency through mutually supporting each other, both emotionally, socially, and practically. Women can alleviate collective vulnerability into collective power through intragenerational solidarity and prove that survival is a strength of resistance in itself in the oppressive conditions of cultural and historical circumstances.

FINDINGS

The current study aimed to explore the role of female solidarity as a tool against patriarchal oppression in *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist*. The study focused on the strategies women opt to empower and support one another in patriarchal societies, as visible in the selected texts. The research explored three main dimensions of women's solidarity – intergenerational solidarity, intra-generational solidarity, and female solidarity shaped by historical and cultural contexts to see how these bonds help women gain strength for survival.

In response to Research Question 1, the study found out that intergenerational female solidarity is a form of empowerment since it passes across generations of cultural knowledge, survival tactics and historical memory. In *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* and *The Henna Artist*, women of color mentor younger women on the basis of lived experience, cautionary stories, and strategic silence, which helps them to predict and avoid patriarchal restrictions. This type of solidarity gives women strength in that they retain collective memory and turn past oppression into useful knowledge that enables women who are younger to survive within a restrictive socio-cultural system instead of fighting against it. The results suggest that intergenerational relationships are very important in maintaining female resilience over time and historical transition.

Responding to research question 2, the research showed that intra-generational female solidarity provides women with power by comprehending each other, emotional affirmation, and survival in the patriarchal world together. Same-gender women establish supportive networks that oppose isolation due to cultural and social limitations and provide realistic support, protection, and encouragement. These relationships help women to overcome pressing issues on the spot in both novels using mutual trust, discretion, and communal power. The results indicate that intra-generational solidarity is an everyday act of empowerment, which enables women to be agentic and psychologically strong when they act within, and not outside, prevailing patriarchal systems.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate the role of female solidarity (intergenerational and intragenerational) as a mechanism of empowerment within patriarchal societies, especially in the socio-cultural settings of Afghanistan and India, in the novels: *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* by Hashimi and *The Henna Artist* by Joshi. The study revealed that female characters in both novels employ solidarity to resist subjugation and to redefine their identities within societies that systematically silence them. By analyzing the narratives through the feminist discourse lens, the research illustrated how the characters' language, dialogue, and relationships become tools of resistance that dismantle patriarchal dominance and restore agency to women.

The conclusion of this study is structured on the basis of the three research questions and comments on the way the analysis of the selected texts sheds light on the empowering nature of female solidarity in patriarchal societies. Through close reading of the selected novels, the study discussed the ways in which women supporting each other, collective resistance, and intergenerational relationships are transformed into survival and empowerment. The results affirm that solidarity among women is a social and psychological instrument that empowers them to confront oppressive structures and create new identities of self.

To conclude, the research confirms that female solidarity, both cross-generational and inter-generational, turns out to be the most important empowerment tool in patriarchal societies. Through experience and mentoring, as well as solidarity, women can overcome their social constraints and reassert their independence. The study not only provides support to the theoretical premises of Radical Feminism but also adds to the discourse of feminist literature by highlighting solidarity as a linguistic and emotive survival mechanism. This work by predicting the power of women as a group adds to the overall comprehension of feminist empowerment, as it shows that the real liberation is not in being alone but in being together and collectively redefining the stories of power and survival.

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