

# A Space Gendered Feminine: Gender Dimensions of Historiography and Qurratulain Hyder's Historical Novel *River of Fire*

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**Abstract :**

This paper attempts to foreground a historicized account of the silent discourses of Muslim women within the structures of power, which are fictionally revised in Qurratulain Hyder's novel *River of Fire* as a fictionalised historical metanarrative. Qurratulain Hyder is a colossal figure among Urdu writers in postcolonial South Asia, with subtle feminist tendencies in conformation with the syncretic culture of the Indian subcontinent, unlike the theoretical tenets of middle-eastern Islamic feminist scholars and activists who contest Muslim women's rights under the Islamic law of Shariat. Her trans-created novel, *River of Fire* (AagKa Dariya), is a historic example of an early post-colonial novel by a woman writer, which opens space for a historiographical analysis of her fictional account from the locus of both the pre-independence and post-independence periods. An embedded gender concern within feminist historiography often gives little attention to the minority discourse of Muslim women in colonial India. It is insufficient to perceive Muslim women's discourse in India on the same plane of Islamic feminist activism as in the middle-eastern world based on reinterpretation of Islamic texts from a feminist praxis. The paper takes a deconstructionist approach in revisiting the female spaces of history as represented in Hyder's novel.

**Keywords:** Feminist historiography, Colonial India, Muslim women, Zenana