THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN BANGLADESH IN RAZIA SULTANA KHAN’S SEDUCTION

A SARJANA PENDIDIKAN FINAL PAPER

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the Sarjana Pendidikan Degree in English Language Education

By
Kartika Puspaningrum
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS EDUCATION
FACULTY OF TEACHERS TRAINING AND EDUCATION
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Faculty of Teachers Training and Education
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Dean,

Rohandi, Ph.D.
God makes everything happen at the right time.

—Ecclesiastes 3:11a—

I dedicate this final paper to:

My Late Beloved Father and My Mother,
My Lovely Four Sisters,
My best friends
STATEMENT OF WORK’S ORIGINALITY

I honestly declare that this final paper, which I have written, does not contain the work or parts of the other work of other people, except those cited in the quotations and the references, as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, July 29th, 2015

The Writer

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ABSTRACT

Puspaningrum, Kartika. (2015). *The Portrayal of Women in Bangladesh in Razia Sultana Khan’s Seduction*. Yogyakarta: English Language Education Study Program, Department of Language and Arts Education, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education, Sanata Dharma University.

Women have become an interesting topic to discuss nowadays. The issues of sexual harassment, women’s rights, women’s role in the society and family are becoming public concerns nowadays. In some countries, women have some obstacles to raise their life because they live within boundaries. One of them is women in Bangladesh. The portrayal of women will be the main point in this study.

This study tries to discover the portrayal of women in Bangladesh society based on the short story, *Seduction*. *Seduction* is a short story of Razia Sultana Khan which tells about a little girl forced to marry in her young age. The main character is Halima. She is a little girl who becomes wife and daughter-in-law at her sixteen years old. In her new life, she tries to be a good wife to do her obligations as wife and daughter-in-law in her mother-in-law’s house. She lives within boundaries, which makes her difficult to communicate with others and even to look outside. In conducting this study, the writer uses sociocultural-historical approach because this study would find out the explanation by proving the socio-cultural and historical facts. Besides, the writer does the library study to find and collect the supporting data. Later on, the findings will be elaborated with the theory of character and characterization, and the review of Bangladesh culture and society.

From the analysis, the conclusions that can be drawn is that Halima, portrays a Bangladeshi woman which characterized as a obedient person but also a curious person and brave, and also a cheerful person. By portraying Halima’s characterization, Bangladeshi women live within boundaries and through her life she reflects the women’s position in Bangladesh. Halima’s life also reflects the women’s positions in Bangladesh even live within no authority and minimal right, and being restrained from outside influences; she tries to break the boundaries.

Finally, the writer gives some recommendations to the future teacher/lecturers. Moreover, the writer proposes a teaching-learning material taken from the short story to teach Basic Reading II course. The writer also invites other researchers to analyze the short story deeper.

**Key words**: portrayal, position, women
ABSTRAK


Pada bagian analisa, kesimpulan yang dapat diambil adalah bahwa Halima, menggambarkan seorang perempuan Bangladesh yang berkepribadian patuh, namun mempunyai rasa ingin tahu dan berani, dan juga bahagia. Melalui penggambaran dari karakter Halima, perempuan Bangladesh hidup dalam batasan dan melalui kehidupannya itu ia mencerminkan posisi perempuan di Bangladesh. Kehidupan Halima pula mencerminkan posisi perempuan di Bangladesh yang mana walaupun ia hidup tanpa wewenang, mempunyai hak yang minim, dan diawasi oleh lingkungan, dia mencoba untuk keluar dari batasan yang dibatasi oleh pengaruh luar.

Akhirnya, penulis memberikan beberapa saran untuk guru atau dosen di masa yang akan datang. Selain itu, penulis mengusulkan sebuah materi pengajaran yang diambil dari cerita pendek ini guna mengajar kelas Basic Reading II. Penulis juga mengajak para peneliti lain untuk menganalisa cerita pendek ini lebih dalam.

Key words: portrayal, position, women
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of two parts. The first is the research background of the study. The research background provides information related to the reasons of choosing the topic and the short story as the subjects of the study. This part also discusses the benefits of the study, the problems formulation and the objectives of the study. The second is the approach of the study. It discusses the object of the study, the approach and the method used in the study as well as how this study is implemented and elaborated.

A. Background of the Study

Talking about literature is an interesting thing because the work of literature is the reflection of human life. Through the works of literature like novel, short stories, and many others, the reader can feel the sweetness and bitterness of life by reading the story. The society itself has a big role in the story where it makes the story becomes more real and it can be an issue to discuss nowadays. Langland (1984, p. 5) says that if society is a concept and construct in art, it is also a concept and construct in life.

Inside the story, the character also has a role in telling the story from character’s behavior, attitude, and society. For example, women have become an interesting subject to discuss nowadays. The issues of sexual harassment, women’s rights, women’s role in the society and family and others issues are now
becoming public concerns in the world. Zaman (1996) says that violence against women appears in various ways, ranging from wife abuse to rape, dowry killing, sexual harassment, sexual slavery through international trafficking in women, and acid throwing. Women are everyday targets of discrimination, exploitation, and violence in Bangladesh (as cited in Arens & van Beurden, 1977; Jahan, 1994; White, 1992).

Women and girls in Bangladesh face some obstacles in their development because of the society and the gender discriminations. According to Noorani (2010) girls are considered as financial burdens of their family therefore many of them marry at their young age. Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. More than two-thirds of adolescent girls are married (of those aged 10-19). Nearly two in five girls aged 15-17 are married. The legal of marriage is 18 for girls, however three-quarters of women aged 20-49 were married before age 18 (as cited in UNICEF and BBS, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2006, Bangladesh 2007). Giving a birth in young age can give some bad risks for girls. Their youth doubles the risk of fatal complications in pregnancy. About 11,000 women die in child birth every year. Almost half of all mothers are malnourished. Women are likely to die before their husbands.

While in Bangladesh most of girls are forced to marry in their young age, it also happened in India. Rajadhyaksha (nd) says where marriages in India tend to be arranged by parents in the family (as cited in Uberoi, 2005). It seems that in both countries, having a family in a young age is a common thing there. Yet, girls in there are too young to become a wife and a mother in part of a family. Because
of the forced marriage, they lack of information about the family itself. In a family, there should be a person who leads the family. Both countries believe in patriarchal system where man is the head of household. According to Hadi (2005) in the patriarchal family structure in Bangladesh, the women are taught to consider themselves as inferior to men and husbands were socialized to “own” their wives including to the use of force when necessary (p. 181). It means that, men and husbands can do anything to their wives as they wish because they have the authority.

In family, men and women have their own tasks. Where men become the head of household and breadwinner, women become a housewife. Budiman (1981, p. 1) states women cooked meals, gave birth, raised children, and dealt with all daily household. Women did not make a living as men. While according to Montagu (1953) women believe that they are inferior to men and it is the fact of nature. Because men stand as the superior positions in societies, and superiority itself is taken to be a natural one. Man’s place is in the counting house and on the board of directors, “Woman’s place is in the home”, women should not meddle in men’s affairs” (pp. 23-24).

The issues and information above represent the concern of this study. In this study, the writer chooses one of Asian short story from Rainbow Feast New Asian short stories. It tells about a family where a young girl is forced to marry in her young age and become a young wife. She can only stay at home. The topic of this study focuses on the portrayal of the Bangladeshi women as in Seduction short story. The writer chooses Razia Sultana Khan’s Seduction short story
because the writer wants to find out the portrayal of women in Bangladesh, by comparing between the story and the socio-culture of the country in the real life.

This study is expected to give benefits for others. Since this study discusses the Bangladeshi woman situation, it can give knowledge for the readers. By reading the short story and this study, the reader will know about the culture of the country where the culture in the story does exist in our real life. This study also can be useful for another researcher who wants to conduct the same case and story.

Based on the study, the portrayal of women in society is the main topic of the study and the writer proposes two problems formulation as the focus of this study. The problems formulation is how the character is portrayed in Razia Sultana Khan’s *Seduction* and how women’s positions in Bangladesh society reflected through the character in Razia Sultana Khan’s *Seduction*. By conducting this study, the writer wants to reveal the women’s position in Bangladesh through the character in the story.

Based on the problems formulation mentioned above, the objectives of this study is to portray the woman character in short story, and to reveal the women’s positions in Bangladesh as reflected in the characters of the short story.

**B. Approach of the Study**

Concerning Bangladesh culture is presented and portrayed in this short story, the discussion needs socio cultural approach. Socio cultural approach is used to describe how the character in Razia Sultana Khan’s *Seduction* portrays
women in Bangladesh society and culture. This approach is the appropriate approach in finding the culture and the society in that country and also in this literary work. In conducting this study, the writer uses sociocultural-historical approach in order to find the data and the fact related to the study that happened in reality. According to Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural approach is to learn and develop the concept that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development (as cited in Vera John-Steiner and Holbrook Mahn, 1996, p. 191). According to Kennedy and Gioia (1999), sociocultural-historical approach is aimed to examine literature based on cultural, economic, and political context that produces the literary works (p. 1955). It also explores the relationship between the artist and the society. Therefore, sociocultural-historical approach analyzes the social content of literary works. According to Wellek and Waren (1956), the relation between literature and society is usually discussed by starting with the phrase, derived from De Bonald, that ‘literature is an expression of society’ (p. 95). Rohrberger and Woods (1971, p. 9) also state that sociocultural-historical approach as a way to define civilization, where the attitudes and the actions shown by subject matter of literary works. It means sociocultural-historical approach is designed to analyze the culture, economic, social and also political in particular literary works.

The object of the study is a short story in Rainbow Feast New Asian Short Stories edited and introduced by Mohammad A. Quayum entitled Seduction by Razia Sultana Khan. It was published in 2010 by Marshall Cavendish
International (Asia) Private Limited. It is a short story about the life of family in Bangladesh. Halima, a young girl is forced to marry at her young age with her family. In her sixteen years old she becomes a new bride in the Mir family, in which The Mirs are a well-to-do respectable family. She lives in a small room under the Aga Sadeque Road, with a wooden window where she can directly face the dirty road. The window has a slat that enables her to look outside. The Mirs are kind of family that live with no privacy. They always have the slats pointing downwards.

She always spends her days only inside the house. Besides doing the household, she is asked to do embroidery by her mother in law. She makes it while sitting in her room faces the window. There is something outside that makes her really want to see it. So, she opens the slat and everything that she sees are legs of people passing her window. One thing that she likes the most is the man who sells \textit{chai}, which is a kind of drink. Then one day, her mother in law knows about this. Yet, it does not make Halima afraid to do that again. Because of her courage, not only to look outside but also go outside. She meets Mizan, her sister’s son; he gets a job in selling a chai. She surprises when know Mirzan wears a blue blouse, and the fact is, Ma gives it to him. Based on the story, the writer is interested with the struggle of Bangladeshi women, Halima, in her daily life. The discussions of this study are supported by sociocultural-historical facts and the related theories.

The writer uses library study in conducting this study. In finding and conducting the data by reading books and takes some notes on it. There are two
kinds of data that is used to conduct the study. They were primary data and secondary data. The first is the primary data. The primary data is the short story itself. The writer reads more to understand the story well so that it can give clues to answer the questions. The second is the secondary data. It is done by reading some books to support in finding the data.

After doing those steps above, the next step is to determine the approach that is being used. The writer uses sociocultural-historical approach in conducting the study. It is used because it can help the writer in seeing the portrayal of women in that social and cultural era of the story. By using the theory of character and characterization it can help the writer in making the explanation of Halima depictions.
CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of the review of related literature and the portrayal of women in society through the story. The related literature ranges over some theories which is relevant that can be used in this study to support the study. The portrayal of women is the main topic of the discussion.

A. Review of Related Literature

The writer uses some theories to answer the research problems. There are two main points in this part that is presented to support the study. The first one is the theory of character and characterization. The second one is the review of Bangladesh culture and society. Those theories will be discussed as follows.

1. Theory of Character

Since this study portrays the character of the story, theory of character is the suitable one to be used. Before it is going to understands deeper about this theory, it is better to know the definition about this theory. There are some definitions of the character based on some experts stated below.

1.1. A Definition of Character

Abrams (1985) describes the word character into two ways. First, he describes character as a literary genre; it is a short, and usually witty, sketch in prose of a distinctive type of person (p. 23). Second, he describes “characters are the person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the
reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional, and emotional qualities that are expressed in what they say – the dialogue – and by what they do – the action” (p. 23). According to Rohrberger and Woods (1971:20) characters have particular personalities and physical attributes that distinguish them from other characters. Characters must be realistic; therefore readers must accept them as believable people.

Forster (1972) defines characters into two types, flat and round characters. A flat character or “two-dimensional” is built around “a single idea or quality” and is presented without much individualizing details. Therefore it can be described adequately in a single phrase or a sentence. A round character “is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity; such a character therefore is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and like real persons, is capable of surprising us” (as cited in Abrams, 1985, p. 24).

2. Theory of Characterization

There is a connection between the theory of character and the theory of characterization. Theory of character is used to understand more about the definition of characters while theory of characterization is used to find out the characterizations of character. This part is divided into two parts, the first one is the definition of characterization and the second one is the methods of characterization.
2.1. A Definition of Characterization

Rohrberger and Woods (1971) state characters have certain personalities and physical attributes so it can distinguish them from other characters. Therefore, the characterization is a process of creating a character (p. 20). Another theory, according to Baldick (1991, p. 34) characterization is the representation of persons in narrative and dramatic works. While, Jacob (1989) states

Character in literature generally, and in fiction specifically, is an extended verbal representation of a human being, the inner self that determines thought, speech, and behavior. Through dialogue, action, and commentary, authors capture some of the interactions interesting by portraying characters who are worth caring about, rooting for, and even loving, although there are also characters or whom you may laugh or whom you may dislike or even hate (p.143).

In other words, that characterization can be seen through the way the characters act. It can be his or her personality, attitude, and behavior. Kennedy and Gioia (1999, p. 60) also state that the reader can recognize the character by their human personalities. If the story seems “true or life” it is because the characters act in a reasonably consistent manner and the author has provided them with motivation: sufficient reason to act like they do. In studying a literary character also, the reader should determine the character’s trait or traits. According to Jacob (1989) the definition of trait is

A trait is a typical or habitual mode of behavior, such as acting first and thinking afterwards, crowding another person closely while talking, looking directly into a person’s eyes or avoiding eye contact completely. If we learn about a person’s traits, we can develop an understanding of that person. Sometimes a particular trait may be the primary characteristic of a person, not only in literature but also in life (p. 144).
2.2. Methods of Characterization

According to Murphy (1972, pp. 161-173), he points out nine ways to help an author to present the characters of the story understandable and more alive for the readers.

The first one is the personal description. The author describes the characters by explaining the character’s appearances and clothes (Murphy, 1972, p. 161). By looking at character’s clothes the reader can describe the character’s appearance. This characterization also deals with the character’s physical appearances in detail such as the face, the body, the facial expression, and the way the characters wear clothes.

The second is characters as seen by another. Instead of describing directly, the author describes the characters through the eyes and the opinions of another. Therefore, the reader will get such a reflected image of the characters. The author also let the other character in the story conveys another characters’ personality and characterization (Murphy, 1972, pp. 162-163).

The third is a speech. A speech is used in order to give an insight into the character of one of the characters through what that character says. The author gives clues through the speech which is done in the conversation. Whenever the character speaks to others, the character gives an opinion, the character gives us some clues about it (Murphy, 1972, p. 164).

The fourth is a past life. The author gives description by letting the reader knows about the past life of the character and also gives a clue of particular event that have helped to build a person’s character. It is done by direct comment of the
author, through the person’s thoughts and through person’s conversation or through the medium of another person (Murphy, 1972, p. 166).

The fifth is a conversation of others. The author gives us clues to a person’s character through the conversation of other people and things in saying about him. When people talk about other people and the things they say, it may give us some opinions. Therefore, having conversation with others may give us clues to the character of the person spoken about (Murphy, 1972, p. 167).

The sixth is the reaction. The author gives us clues to a person’s character by letting us know how the reaction of that person to various situations is. The reaction itself occurs from the action of the characters. Therefore, the readers need to know and see the character’s reaction (Murphy, 1972, p. 168).

The seventh is giving a direct comment. The author describes or comments to the character of the person directly (p. 170). Giving comments to the person that she or he observed directly.

The eighth is the thought. By seeing thought, the author gives us direct knowledge of what a person is thinking about. Then let the readers think about it. This step, the author is able to do what people cannot do in real life and tell the reader what different people are thinking. Then the reader is in a privileged position, a secret listening device plugged into the inmost thoughts of a person in a novel (Murphy, 1972, p. 171).

The ninth is the mannerism. The author describes a person’s mannerism, habits which may also tell us something about his character (Murphy, 1972, p. 173). The mannerism itself can portray the real characteristic of the character.
3. **Review of Bangladesh Culture and Society**

Bangladesh’s socio-cultural environment contains pervasive gender discrimination. Therefore, girls and women face many obstacles to their development (Noorani, 2010). It can be seen even in their childhood, where girls and boys are treated differently. Girls are fed last and less than their brothers. Girls just only an object to be a burden to their family when later on they want to marry off their child.

3.1. **Child Marriage**

Child marriage or early marriage of girls is a very common thing in Bangladesh. Many children, especially girls are married in their young age. Many girls before age 18 were married despite 18 being the legal age of marriage. According to Onneshan (2011), early marriage is one of the vital barriers to women’s and girls’ education, health and employment. It also limits the young women to access the education (as cited in Gender Equality in Bangladesh, 2011).

In marrying their children, parents from bride’s family should pay a dowry to groom’s family. Dowry is the first step and also a symbol if parents want to marry their child. According to Odhikar (2013, pp. 121-122)

In Bangladesh, dowry related violence is considered to be root cause of domestic violence. Women are treated as [a] burden in mainly poor, rural families and thus many parents try to marry off their daughters by giving dowry. Poverty and lack of security contribute to stop a girl’s education at the primary or secondary level. As a result, she is unable to become self sufficient. Parents, however, save money for giving dowry for their daughters’ marriages. However, the demand for dowry does not end at the marriage ceremony. According to the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980, giving and taking dowry is a punishable offence and according to the section 11 (Ka), (Kha) and (Ga) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (Amended in 2003) the punishments to such crimes have been mentioned.
In one study, Noorani (2010) states women aged 46-60 reported that dowry was practically non-existent when they married, while 46% of women aged 15-25 reported that they had to pay dowry (as cited in World Bank, Whispers to Voices: Gender and Social Transformation in Bangladesh, March 2008). Further information related to the dowry stated from Country Information and Guidance (2010).

Despite the cost of dowry, poorer families consider early marriage financially beneficial. Dowry generally increases as girls become older and more expensive. Early marriage also relieves families of caring for their daughters, because they live with their husband’s family once married. But early marriage threatens girls’ education, mobility, health and safety. A child bride usually drops out of school and begins full-time work in the home of her husband’s parents, where she often lacks bargaining power and may be reduced to the status of a bonded laborer (pp. 18-19).

3.2. Motherhood

Because of marrying in young age, there is a high risk to young wife when give a birth. They are too young to have pregnancy and give childbirth. Young motherhood is associated with several risks such as higher maternal mortality rates, pregnancy complications and low birth weight babies. There is nothing that they can do to refuse it. It is because mans’ power as the head of household in patriarchal system. According to Noorani (2010) about 12,000 women die every year from pregnancy or childbirth complications (as cited in Government of Bangladesh, Millennium Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report, 2008).

3.3. Education

There is no hope for girls to get education or even go to the school or university. Even girls cannot go outside the house after married. They just stay at home and do the household. Noorani (2010) states that about 55 per cent of
married women lack of the freedom to go alone to a hospital or health centre, or outside their village, town or city (as cited in Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2004, National Institute of Population Research and Training, 2005).

B. The Portrayal of Women

This part is to answer the problems formulation that is stated in the previous chapter. The first problem formulation is how the character is portrayed in Razia Sultana Khan’s Seduction. The second problem formulation is how women’s positions in Bangladesh society are reflected through the character in Razia Sultana Khan’s Seduction. The writer analyzes the problems formulation by dividing into two parts.

1. Characterization of Halima

Halima is the major character in Seduction short story. By using the theory of characterization, this part discusses about Halima’s characterization. There are four characterizations of Halima, those characterizations will be explained as follows.

1.1. Obedient

Halima is such an obedient person. She does everything that someone asks her to do, especially her parents. At her sixteen years old, she gets married and become a new bride in the Mir Household. Halima’s mother tells her that she is a lucky woman so she wanted to arrange a marriage. Her mother was the one who arranged the marriage. “We’ve found you an excellent husband. The Mirs are a
well-to-do respectable family. You will be respected and have responsibilities. I pray that you do not shame us” (p. 120).

Halima is one of the young girls in Bangladesh who is married in her sixteen years old because of her family demand. Her family believes that her daughter’s life becomes better and being respected if she marries with a well-to-do respectable family. This condition leads them to accept any respectable men who ask the family to make their daughter to be men bride.

1.2. Curious

Halima is also such a curious person. Even though she is so obedient but truly inside her heart she feels so curious. It starts when she tries to look outside her window.

Gradually, the quite of the afternoon seduced her to it and she noticed that when the slats pointed downwards she could see the legs of people passing by her window. In the beginning that was enough to command all her attention. She saw loose cotton pajamas, and a few bare hairy legs which made her close her eyes.

The majority of the legs, however, were wrapped in lungis furling and unfurling as they passed. What a variety there were! Checks of all colours and sizes. Small checks and large ones, filled ones and double line ones. Most had a white base, but there were other colors: blues and browns, greens and yellows. But no red lungis. Red was her favorite color and she kept her eyes focused on the furling and unfurling lungis just to catch a glimpse of a bright red one. When a rickshaw passed she saw the bottom half of wheels with the driver’s feet rotating round and round, repeating an incomplete circle.

There were afternoons which offered Halima a visual feast, from horse-drawn tangas squeezing through, to a grey moving wall lumbering past with the ropelike tail switching this way and that, warding off the swarm of flies attracted to it. One day a snake charmer passed, the undulating notes of his bamboo flute coiled and uncoiled around him. Another day the bioscope-man passed with his box on wheels of exotic pictures waiting to be viewed through a peephole. As he pushed his cart he chanted, “Come and see! Come and See! The Taj of Agra, the minaret of Kutub, the Palace of Air. Come and see! Come and See! Come and see the whole world. One paisa, only one paisa!”

On such days Halima’s eyes sparkled and her muscles rippled with excitement as she tilted the slats for a better view. She sat entranced to think such places existed
and only for the price of one paisa. That’s how her mother-in-law found her one day, eyes glued to the world outside, oblivious to the sounds inside (pp. 121-122).

Based on the quotation above, it seems that Halima feels so curious of how and what kinds of things that are exist in outside. She really wants to see it with her eyes. Once she looks outside, her eyes and soul feel like being seduced by the outside view. Starts from the majority of the legs, the color of the furling and unfurling lungis until comes to the bioscope-man who sells chai.

1.3. Brave

Because of her curiosity about the outside view, it makes her brave. She is brave because she can cross the boundaries about keep it the slat of the window downwards. She always tries to look outside. Then every 4 p.m. she sits beside the window and waits for the bioscope-man came.

Now, at the sound of the bells Halima raised the slats a little and was soon rewarded with the sight of an open pushcart coming into view. The man pushing the cart maneuvered it into a little alcove formed by two adjacent buildings just opposite Halima’s window.

There was a mobile gas cooker on the cart and on top of that a large aluminum kettle. Halima folded her embroidery, put it aside and gave in to the novel sight. A horde of children pressed around the cart. A few of the younger boys were naked except for a black thread around their waist warding off the evil eye. One boy had a little bell attached to the string to echo his movements, a mother’s vain attempt to keep track of her boy. The children laughed as they jostled each other to get a better view of what the man was doing (p. 123).

Halima feels so excited about those situations. Where she can see other people are happy out there. Therefore, with her bravery, she tries to look deeper what is going on out there. Then, there is one moment that makes heart stop when the man looks her.

An uncanny feeling of herself being watched made Halima look up. The man was staring right at her! He was a big man, dark and sinewy with a thick drooping
moustache. There was a twinkle in his eyes and a smile lurked on his lips. The slats dropped with a snap. Heart pounding, Halima moved away from the window. She waited a minute or two, but all was quite. The house slept. Halima arranged her sari so that it covered not only her head but most of her face, and tiptoed back to the window. Cautiously she slanted the slats to their original position pointing downwards. A fraction at a time, she angled the slats till the cart was once more visible. Even more slowly she worked the slats so that his body opened up to her: the red and white safari shirt, the mat of black chest hair swirling up where the top button had come undone, the thick sinewy neck – Halima stopped. She brought he hand up to check that her ghumta still covered her face and only her dark, kohl outlined eyes showed (p. 123).

After her first action in order to look outside, the man who sells chai wants to give her chai through a little boy. She is so brave to let someone enters her room.

“Yes, come in.”
“Bhabi, the Chai Bhaia said to give this to you.” He stood cradling the clay cup between his small hands.
“What is it?” Halima sat in a flat tone. The stitches needed her full attention.
“It’s a drink… sherbet.”
“What?”
“It’s called chai.”
“Well?”
“He’s giving it to everyone.” Ahsan looked at her, a little puzzled at her attitude.
“But what is it?”
“He called in chai.”
Halima still made no move to relieve him of the bowl.
“It’s really good. It’s something new they’re trying out. As the bearer of the exotic drink Ahsan felt bound to defend the concoction.
“How much?” Halima finally ventured in a low voice.
Ahsan’s face cleared, “It’s free, Bhabi! It’s free!” (pp. 124-125).

Halima does not make any move until the boy already gone. Because of her bravery, she can get the chai that she really wanted to have. Starts from that day, because her bravery, she can get chai and also see the man every day. Beside of her daily activities, now looking outside also becomes her daily activities. As days goes by, she is not brave anymore but braver. Now she can compare her husband to the bioscope-man.
With each passing day she became a little less timid and adjusted the slats as soon as the Chaiwallah came into view. She noticed how his eyes turned to her window and the corner of his mouth turned up in a smile while one eyebrow shot up. She thought of her husband and realized suddenly that he seldom smiled. And when he did she never thought to wonder at it. There were other ways that the two men differed. Her husband, though fair, was thinner and less… she wondered what was less as she focused on the Chaiwallah’s biceps. They bulged through the half sleeve of his safari shirt as he stood poised over the cup of tea with the heavy kettle in midair. She wondered how it would feel to the touch. She closed her eyes and a stillness came over her, and when she opened her eyes the stillness was mirrored in the eyes of the Chaiwallah. His left brow shot up and he gave his quirky smile. Halima’s heart thundered away but she did not lower her eyes” (p. 128).

1.4. Cheerful

In her young age, sixteen years old, Halima is married a man that her parents chose for her. She tries to be a good wife for her husband and her mother-in-law but still she just a young girl. In her new life, she looks cheerful with that. ”Married just four months, Halima at sixteen was a new bride in the Mir household. Free for the first time from the protective cocoon of her parents’ house, she was happy in her new life” (p. 120).

2. Bangladesh Women’s Position Revealed in the Seduction

Bangladesh is one of the countries that profess Islam. This country is also rich with the details of cultures and traditions. Halima as the major character in the story is one of the young girls who live in that situation; “Married just four months, Halima at sixteen was a new bride in the Mir household.” (120). She lives in her husband’s house with her mother-in-law also. Every day, she does the routine households. All that she can do is doing the household activities, including the embroidery. “We always have the slats pointing downwards; otherwise there’s no privacy in this room. Ma is very particular about this” (p. 121). This quotation shows that her mother-in-law does not allow her to see the outside view.
Otherwise, Halima’s mother-in-law gives her the embroidery. The purpose of giving her embroidery is to prevent her to look outside; looking out of the windows so that it makes her keep busy, doing the embroidery. Bangladeshi women positions in the family can be seen in the major character. Halima does not have authority and minimal right, and being restrained from outside influences.

Talking about literature is like talking about life because the work of literature is also the reflections of human life. Through the work of literature, sometimes the readers can feel like the stories really happen or exist like in real life. Seduction short story which was written by Razia Sultana Khan represents how a Bangladesh woman make a little change in her life through her action. As her mother-in-law said, “Stitches are like women’s steps. Small and neat, careful but steady, keeping within its space, not crossing boundaries” (p. 122). This quotation highlights the important point from the short story that Halima, as the major character symbolizes how she represents Bangladeshi women who are surrounded by boundaries in being a wife. Bangladeshi women do not have many choices because they have no authority or rights to cross the boundaries. Halima tries to keep going on that boundaries however she cannot. It is proved when she notices that some stitches are out of the outline. Which is mean Halima fails to follow the outlines as the boundaries. In other way, Halima believes that she can cross any boundaries given to her by doing another action. In this case, she tries to look outside through the tiny slats of her room’s windows. Which means, Halima had cross the boundaries by looking out of the windows as the outline of the
boundaries. Halima represents Bangladeshi women who try to raise their position in society.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter the writer presents the result of the chapter II, the discussions and recommendations. This section provides the answer of problems formulation in the form of conclusion and suggestions. The recommendations are going to be divided into two ways, for future researchers and future teachers.

A. Conclusions

This part discusses the conclusion of the analysis in chapter II. There are two conclusions based on the analysis of the problem. The first is the characterization of the character, Halima, and the second is how Halima’s life reflects women’s position in Bangladesh.

Halima, as the major character in the Seduction short story is a kind of obedient person. What her parents say, what they ask her to do, she does it without any objection. Halima is also a curious person. It starts when her husband tells her about the window which has a slats pointed downwards and her mother-in-law very particular about that thing because she does not want to have no any privacy in the room. After that, she feels so curious about outside so that she tries to set the slats and looks the outside’s view. Halima is also brave. Since she looks outside, she is brave to communicate with others. One of them is Ahsan, the one who gives her the chai from Chaiwallah. Not only to communicate, but she let the
person come into her room. And the last but not least, Halima is also a cheerful person. Even she lives within the boundaries but at least she tries to break it. It makes her happy at least. She can look outside the window, she can talk to other, and the important thing she feels happy with all this happened in her life.

The Bangladeshi women live in many boundaries in her life and that happens in Halima’s life. Halima’s life reflects women’s position in Bangladesh. Because of the marriage, they are insisted to marry at their young age. They have no authority and minimal right, and being restrained from outside influences. That one reflects the Bangladeshi women’s position in the family. Even Halima lives within no authority and minimal right, she tries to break the boundaries from being restrained from outside influences. Her action is proven when she has enough bravery to look outside when the slats pointed downwards. She can see the outside’s view and can communicate with others. That one represents the Bangladeshi women who try to raise their position in the society.

B. Recommendations

After making the conclusions of this study, the writer makes some recommendations for the readers. This part gives some recommendations for two sides. The first one is for the future researchers and the second one is for the future teachers.

1. For Future Researchers

_Seduction_, a short story of Razia Sultana Khan, one of the collections from Rainbow Feast is a good and interesting short story. Even it is only a short story
not a novel, but the writer thinks there are still many things that can be explored from this story. It has a content of sociocultural-historical facts about the life of the main character, Halima, as the Bangladeshi woman. For the future researchers, this short story can be analyzed in other aspects. The future researchers can do further researches on relationship between characters in the short story, which means what are the aspects that differs one woman to another. Another recommendation is by using the same story but comes from different country so that the future researchers can do their observation on marriage in different culture.

2. For Future Teachers

The writer provides the recommendation for the future teachers related to this issue. The short story that is used contains the Bangladesh women who have no authority, have rights, etc in their life even they have no chance to look outside. It means women cannot see the social life and also cannot enter the school. Through the education, the writer hopes the teacher can build an open-minded idea toward the students. This story can be used for the teacher as the source of teaching-learning activities. By using this story, the teacher can develop student’s awareness toward the values. In this study, the writer recommends for future teachers or lectures to use this story to teach reading skill. By reading this story, the students can enrich their knowledge about Bangladesh, about the culture and moreover about the Bangladeshi women.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF THE SHORT STORY

Seduction is a short story written by Razia Sultana Khan. The short story itself is one of the short stories compiled in Rainbow Feast New Asian Short Stories edited and introduced by Mohammad A. Quayum. The story tells about a young girl, Halima, who forced to marry at a young age as per society’s expectations, is rendered a pawn in a loveless marriage that demands loyalty and submission from her to a husband who treats her only as a sexual trinket.

Married just for months, Halima at sixteen years old was a new bride in the Mir household. Her mother is the person who arranged the marriage. She found an excellent husband for her daughter. The Mirs are a well-to-do respectable family. Her mother hoped that Halima will be respected and have responsibilities. Besides, she prayed that Halima would not shame her family. Halima was acclimating to spend her days with a new family. She spend her nights to do the discovery of physical pleasure in her husband’s bed. There were only Halima, her husband and her mother-in-law in the house. Halima’s room was unique and the room had a window overlooking Aga Sadeque Road, a dirty road about twelve feet wide lined with houses where the windows face the road. The large wooden window folded in half vertically when shut completely blocked out the lights. However, there was a wooden frame with slats that enabled the residents to control the ribboned view of the road.
Then everything started, when Halima seduced to look outside when she tried to point the slats downwards. She could see the legs of people passing by her window and she enjoyed to see it. One day she saw the bioscope-man passed with his box. Her mother-in-law caught her red-handed talking to a stranger one day so she gave her embroidery to avoid her to look outside. After that, in every afternoon she sat with the embroidery. “Stitches are like women’s steps. Small and neat, careful but steady, keeping within its space, not crossing boundaries”; but her stitches had crossed the penciled outline. She finished the embroidery so that her Ma gave her another one to keep her busy doing the embroidery.

One day, Ahsan, Bilqis’s nine-year-old son gave her something from bioscope-man named Chaiwallah; its called chai; and that was free. Halima felt so happy so that she did not want to taste the drink. Then, Shahina found that she had the chai. Halima did not know that it was free for anyone she guessed it was only for her. Next day, the price for a cup of chai was one paisa, and the price was going to go up again. Therefore, Shahina came to visit Halima. She told that a house next to the Munchi’s bakharkhani shop opened a restaurant, and they served chai. The price for a cup of chai was four paisas. Then, the next day when Ahsan came that afternoon, she handed him four paisas.
APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHY OF RAZIA SULTANA KHAN

Dr. Razia Sultana Khan is a multi-award winning fiction writer and poet. Her short stories have appeared in anthologies, nationally and internationally. Her story, “Alms,” appeared in the *Best New American Voices*, 2008. At present Dr. Khan is Professor and Head of the Department of English and the Department of Modern Languages at Independent University, Bangladesh. She earned her Ph.D. in English (Creative Writing) from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and her M.A in Linguistics and ELT from the University of York, UK. She also has an M.A. in English Literature from the University of Dhaka (DU), Bangladesh.

Dr. Khan has taught at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; North South University; The British Council, Dhaka; Institute if Modern Languages (DU); Dhaka College; Kabi Nazrul College and College of Music. In an administrative capacity she was the Head of Courses at the British Council Direct Teaching
Operation for six years and Chair of the English Department at North South University for four years. She was the Director of Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Organization (BELTO), a consultancy which she founded.

Dr. Khan is a creative writer and writes short fiction and poetry. Her short stories, poems and interviews appear regularly in local dailies and magazines. She was the Editorial Assistant for Prairie Schooner, Quarterly publication of University of Nebraska Press and Creative Writing Program of UNL, English Department. She won place at the University of UNL’s Mari Sandoz Prairie Schooner Short Story Award for two consecutive years. While at UNL she won the following scholarships and fellowship: Master class fiction scholarship; The Nebraska Summer Writers’ Conference-2007; The Franklin and Orinda Johnson Fellowship (2005-06); Dudley and Sue Bailey Fellowship (2005); Marguerite C. McPhee and Clare McPhee fellowship (2002-2003). Prior to that she was awarded a Bangladesh Technical Training Scholarship for Graduate Studies in York, UK (1983-1984).

Her areas of research interest include post colonialism, gender studies and South Asian fiction. Her personal interests include travelling and oil painting.

Taken from:

APPENDIX 3

LESSON PLAN

BASIC READING

Subject: KPE 115 Basic Reading II
Topic: Reading literary texts
Meeting: 1 meeting
Semester: 2 of English Language Education Study Program
Time Allocation: 2x50 minutes class meeting
Material: Seduction short story by Razia Sultana Khan

A. Basic Competences:
1. Understand various reading strategies: previewing, skimming for main ideas, scanning for details, summarizing the text.
2. Use appropriate reading strategies to improve reading comprehension
3. Develop English vocabulary
4. Write summaries and simple responses to the ideas of issues presents in the texts.

B. Indicators:
1. The students are able to apply some reading strategies
2. The students are able to find the meaning of some vocabularies found in the text
3. The students are able to find the important information of the text
4. The students are able to find the main ideas of the text
5. The students are able to give response to the text

C. Teaching Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Time Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Pre-Reading Activities  
1. The teacher greets the students 
2. The teacher asks the students what they have learnt in the previous meeting 
3. The teacher gives the pre-reading questions related to the topic for today’s learning activities 
4. The teacher and the students shares (asking experiences, opinion) together related to the main issue that they found in their society. 
5. The teacher explains the topic which is going to be learnt for today | 15’ |
### Whilst-Reading Activities

1. The teacher distributes text and handouts
2. The teacher explains the text and exercises briefly
3. The teacher asks the students to read the text first
4. The teacher asks the students to answer some vocabulary words
5. The teacher and the students discuss the vocabulary words
6. The teacher asks the students to answer the comprehension questions within groups

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### Post-Reading Activities

1. The teacher and the students discuss the comprehension questions
2. The teacher asks the students what they have learnt from today’s lesson
3. Closing

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<td></td>
<td>35’</td>
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</table>

### D. Assessments

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<th>SCORE</th>
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<td>Not assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary building</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension questions</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15+50+35 = 100</strong></td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 4

TEACHING MATERIALS

A. Pre-reading Questions

1. What do you think about women’s position in this society?
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

2. What is your opinion about patriarchy?
   ______________________________________________________________

3. In your opinion, is there any country which perceives women as subordinate?
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

B. Find the meaning of these words below using dictionary!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Sentences Using the Words</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chimes</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Drowsy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pastime</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Particular</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Glimpse</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Embroidery</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Jaunty</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Sinewy</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Token</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Quirky</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Partial</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
C. Discuss these questions in a group of four and prepare your answer to be presented in class.

1. What is the story about?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

2. Who is Halima? What do you think about this character?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

3. How is Halima relationship with her mother in law and Chaiwallah?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

4. Why does Halima break the rules to do not look outside?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

5. Based on the passage, what do you think about women’s position in Halima’s family and society?
D. Retell the story with your own words!
SEDUCTION

Razia Sultana Khan

The chimes of bells wafted over the narrow winding lanes of Aga Sadeque Road, slinking into houses soporific in the mid-afternoon heat. The notes snaked their way to the dark recesses of homes, gliding into ears of drowsy residents fanning themselves into fitful naps.

The chimes were different from the jingle of the chanachur man’s brisk stride as he passed by each evening with his basket of savories hanging from a strap round his neck. The basket swayed rhythmically to the beat of his wide anklet of tiny bells. Little containers of crisp fried rice, steamed chickpeas bursting out of their skins, roasted peanuts and mouthwatering condiments, jostled gaily in the basket. The sound was different from the jangle of rickshaw bells as the driver indiscriminately thumbed the metallic orb attached to the handle, reveling in his power while alerting pedestrians to his total lack of control of the vehicle.

Married just four months, Halima at sixteen was a new bride in the Mir household. Free for the first time from the protective cocoon of her parents’ house, she was happy in her new life. Her days were spent acclimating to her new family, her nights to the discovery of physical pleasures in her husband’s bed.

Each morning after a quick bath from the family well, she rushed to the kitchen to help in the breakfast preparation. Most days it was plain chapattis and bhaji, made of whatever vegetable was in season. Other days, especially holidays, there was thick succulent paratha or deep fried puri so round and puffy that they looked like little brown globes. No matter how early Halima woke, her mother-in-law was always in the kitchen before her. After two months Halima was content to give a helping hand before the men trooped in for the first meal of the day. After breakfast, the routine household chores took over till the arrival of
‘bazaar’ signaled another session in the kitchen.

Halima was a lucky woman. Her mother had told her so. A few weeks before the wedding her mother had said to her, “We’ve found you an excellent husband. The Mirs are a well-to-do, respectable family.”

Halima had been playing with cowry shells. Throwing them on the dull red cement floor and picking them up with the single one she threw in the air.

“Listen when I talk to you!” The sharpness in her mother’s voice made Halima stop and the cowries clattered onto the floor.

“You’ll be the eldest daughter-in-law.” Her mother looked deep into the clear eyes of her teenage daughter and continued in a milder voice, “You will be respected and... have responsibilities.” Halima’s attention moved at the squawking of birds in her backyard. Tuni and Mooni! The two sparrows that had been enticed to eat khud, bits of leftover rice, straight from Halima’s hands. She wondered if they’d fly off at not seeing her.

“I pray that you do not shame us.” Her mother looked sad and Halima had a sudden urge to give her a hug, but Tuni-Mooni’s chirping had reached a crescendo and Halima jumped up and ran to see what was happening.

Her mother’s words seemed a thing of the past now as Halima sat in front of the window looking out. This was her favorite pastime in the afternoon when the men returned to their work and Halima’s mother-in-law retired to her room to take a long nap. Halima was on her own.

Halima’s room had a window overlooking Aga Sadeque Road, a dirt road about twelve feet wide lined with houses where the windows faced the road. The large wooden window folded in half vertically and when shut completely blocked out the light. There was, however, a wooden frame with slats that enabled the residents to control the ribboned view of the road.

Helping her to settle into the customs in their house, Halima’s husband had mentioned the
windows. “We always have the slats pointing downwards; otherwise there’s no privacy in this room.” He had paused, then added, “Ma is very particular about this.”

As the days passed Halima did notice that whenever her mother-in-law came to her room, her eyes invariably went to the slats even as she talked to Halima.

The first couple of weeks Halima stayed away from the window. Gradually, the quiet of the afternoon seduced her to it and she noticed that when the slats pointed downwards she could see the legs of people passing by her window.

In the beginning that was enough to command all her attention. She saw loose cotton pajamas, and a few bare hairy legs which made her close her eyes. The majority of the legs, however, were wrapped in lungis furling and unfurling as they passed. What a variety there were! Checks of all colors and sizes. Small checks and large ones, filled ones and double lined ones. Most had a white base, but there were other colors: blues and browns, greens and yellows. But no red lungis. Red was her favorite color and she kept her eyes focused on the furling and unfurling lungis just to catch a glimpse of a bright red one. When a rickshaw passed she saw the bottom half of wheels with the driver’s feet rotating round and round, repeating an incomplete circle.

There were afternoons which offered Halima a visual feast, from horse-drawn tangas squeezing through, to a grey moving wall lumbering past with the ropelike tail switching this way and that, warding off the swarm of flies attracted to it. One day a snake charmer passed, the undulating notes of his bamboo flute coiled and uncoiled around him.

Another day the bioscope-man passed with his box on wheels of exotic pictures waiting to be viewed through a peephole. As he pushed his cart he chanted, “Come and see! Come and See! The Taj of Agra, the minaret of Kutub, the Palace of Air. Come and see! Come and See! Come and see the whole world. One paisa, only one paisa!”

On such days Halima’s eyes sparkled and her muscles rippled with excitement as she tilted the slats
for a better view. She sat entranced to think such places existed and only for the price of one paisa.

That’s how her mother-in-law found her one day, eyes glued to the world outside, oblivious to the sounds inside. The older woman gently adjusted the slats and said, “It works both ways, you know. When we look out they look in.”

The following day before going for her midday nap she brought Halima a piece of white cotton, a pair of hoops and yellow and green skeins of embroidery thread.

“Your mother said you’re very good with a needle and thread,” Halima’s mother-in-law smiled.

Halima lowered her eyes and nodded, her face glowing at the compliment.

“Well, would you like to do this embroidery? We can frame it and put it on your wall when you’re done. Would you like that?”

Halima accepted the objects and nodded again. The piece of cotton had an outline of a parrot with a large envelope in its beak penciled on it. On the envelope, in uneven letters, were the words: “Forget Me Not.”

Every afternoon after that, she sat with the embroidery running her needle in and out of the material, taking small and even stitches. When her mother had first shown her the basic stitches, she’d said, “Stitches are like women’s steps. Small and neat, careful but steady, keeping within its space, not crossing boundaries.” That’s what Halima tried to do, take small stitches, keep within the boundary. But when she stopped and looked at her work, she noticed that some stitches had crossed the penciled outline. The colors, too, were limiting: yellow and green. Just a bit of red would have made a difference to the beak!

Now, at the sound of the bells Halima raised the slats a little and was soon rewarded with the sight of an open pushcart coming into view. The man pushing the cart maneuvered it into a little alcove formed by two adjacent buildings just opposite Halima’s window.

There was a mobile gas cooker on the cart and on top of that a large aluminium kettle. Little clay
bowls and other kitchen paraphernalia surrounded the kettle. Halima folded her embroidery, put it aside and gave in to the novel sight.

A horde of children pressed around the cart. A few of the younger boys were naked except for a black thread around their waist to ward off the evil eye. One boy had a little bell attached to the string to echo his movements, a mother’s vain attempt to keep track of her boy. The children laughed as they jostled each other to get a better view of what the man was doing.

An uncanny feeling of herself being watched made Halima look up. The man was staring right at her!

He was a big man, dark and sinewy with a thick drooping moustache. There was a twinkle in his eyes and a smile lurked on his lips.

The slats dropped with a snap. Heart pounding, Halima moved away from the window. She waited a minute or two, but all was quiet. The house slept.

Halima arranged her sari so that it covered not only her head but most of her face, and tiptoed back to the window. Cautiously she slanted the slats to their original position pointing downwards. A fraction at a time, she angled the slats till the cart was once more visible. Even more slowly she worked the slats so that his body opened up to her: the red and white safari shirt, the mat of black chest hair swirling up where the top button had come undone, the thick sinewy neck – Halima stopped. She brought her hand up to check that her ghunma still covered her face and only her dark, kohl outlined eyes showed.

The large aluminium kettle was on the stove and she could see his hands moving little clay cups and shuffling items about on the cart. The kettle was soon spitting out vapor. The man put a long handled ladle into it and made a motion of touching the brim of the clay cup, then reached up and poured from up high, so that the mud-colored liquid cascaded down in a smooth swirl, forming a thin layer of delicate foam. A jaunty smile touched the lips as he sneaked a look at Halima’s window, then looked away. So when had the slats moved up! She lowered her
eyes but let the slats be. The man’s eyes roamed the little group of scantily clad children and a number of brown scrawny hands shot up. Obviously this was not new to them. The man’s eyes picked up those of a thin boy of eleven or twelve, and he gave the cup to the boy and pointed in her direction.

Halima turned pink under her ghumta, sure now that he had seen her behind the wooden slats. Her heart skipped a couple of beats as she imagined the boy coming with some message from the stranger.

She pulled her chair away from the window and directed her attention to the parrot’s yellow beak. Sure enough, soon she heard the paddle of soft feet coming closer and even they stopped but she didn’t look up.

“Ehm!Ehm!” an imitation of adult throat clearing – perhaps a couple of notes higher. “May I come in?”

“Yes, come in.”

When the boy entered, Halima saw that it was Ahsan, Bilqis’s nine-year-old son. Bilqis often stopped by to chat with Halima’s mother-in-law and sometimes she had him in tow.

“Bhabi, the Chai Bhaiya said to give this to you.” He stood cradling the clay cup between his small hands.

“What is it?” Halima said in a flat tone. The stitches needed her full attention.

“It’s a drink… sherbet.”

“What?”

“It’s called chai.”

“Well?”

“He’s giving it to everyone.”

Ahsan looked at her, a little puzzled at her attitude.

“But what is it?”

“He called it chai.”

Halima still made no move to relieve him of the bowl.

“It’s really good. It’s something new they’re trying out.” As the bearer of the exotic drink Ahsan felt bound to defend the concoction.

“How much?” Halima finally ventured in a low voice.

Ahsan’s face cleared, “It’s free, Bhabi! It’s free!”
As if that clinched matters, he parked the cup, sloshing a few drops on her dresser, and hurried out of the room, back to the cart.

Halima didn’t move till the last tinkle of the bell died down. Then she pushed the slats down and sat frowning at the cup of *chai*. A thin skin, a shade darker than the liquid, was beginning to form on top. A distinctive aroma swirled up lazily. Milky with the touch of something else, neither flower nor fruit. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply, trying to differentiate the smells but just couldn’t place them.

The shuffle of Shahina’s slippers brought Halima back to the present but before she could act, Shahina had drawn the curtain aside and pushed her head in. Halima looked up ruefully, but didn’t say anything.

Shahina was a widow in her forties who lived with her brother’s family and lacking the privilege of the rich made up by availing some degree of physical mobility. Her black *burka* clad figure weaving its way in and out of houses was a familiar sight in the neighborhood.

When she visited the Mir house she was happy to give out bits of “local news” and gossip in exchange for tokens of sweets or *pan*. From the titbit of what the Mullah’s wife had cooked for lunch that day to the hot topic of who the mullah was planning on marrying next, nothing seemed a secret to her and in her generosity she was happy to share her knowledge.

She now burst in with, “You’ll never believe what’s happening.”

Her eyes lighted on the clay bowl with its stagnant liquid and some of her exuberance left her. “Aha! You got one too.”

She waited, then said, “Well, what do you think?”

“What do I think of what?”

Halima held her work at some distance and examined the effect of the yellow beak on the green parrot. “The *chai*!”

She followed the direction of Shahina’s eyes and frowned. “You mean you haven’t tasted it yet?” Shahina was incredulous. “Take a sip,” she
coaxed. “It has a funny taste and hey, it’s free.”

Halima looked at the cup, but still hesitated.

“They’re sending these cups of drinks to each and every house!” Shahina continued conversationally.

Halima looked up, “To all the houses?”

“Yes. And it’s all free!”

“You mean we don’t have to pay at all?” Halima hesitated. Nothing like this had ever happened before.

“What am I telling you?” Shahina’s voice rose with excitement. “They’re giving it to whoever wants it, old and young, boy or girl….”

“But why?”

“I don’t know.” Shahina paused, and gave the question some consideration. Then she shrugged.

“Who cares? As long as we don’t have to pay for it.”

“So how does it taste?”

“Unusual. Try it.”

“I don’t know.” Halima hesitated.

“Aunt is fast asleep. I heard her snores as I came in.” She gave Halima a speaking look. Halima still hesitated and Shahina understood that she didn’t want to try it in front of her.

“Don’t mind me,” she said and pulled out a low-legged _piri_ which was half hidden under the bed, and slid onto it.

“Allah,” she continued with a long sigh and fiddled with her sari till she had untangled one corner. She undid the knot and looked at the scraps of betel nut peeping from within the folds. She grimaced and in the act of putting one into her mouth, stopped.

“You don’t happen to have a wisp of a _pan_ leaf, do you? Even a withered corner would do. I seem to have finished whatever I had.” She gave a big smile, displaying teeth stained red with _pan_ juice.

Halima reached for her _pandan_ from the top of her dresser. The casket shaped container in brass filigree had a lid with a large horse shaped handle attached to it. She moved the latch and raised the lid disclosing six little brass lids with
tiny knobs. In the centre lay dark green pan quarters. Halima picked one up and as her fingers hovered over the pandan, Shahina let out a long “Oooo.” She accompanied her words with an exaggerated sniff dragging in the fragrances wafting around the pandan and said, “What a heavenly smell! What do you have in there?”

Halima smiled, unable to hide a look of pride. She matched Shahina’s sniff with a dainty one of her own and smiled at the sweet aroma of fried condiments that floated in the air. Halima raised the lids one by one and took a pinch from each container. Soon there was a small pyramid of coriander seeds, cardamom, clove, asafetida and toasted coconut shreds on the pandan bed. The different browns and greens blended well together and the shredded coconut flaunted its candy-pink color. Halima stopped and her eyes sparkled as she noted Shahina drooling. She gave a satisfied smile and rolled the pan into a cone. It barely held the filling and she did not bother to tuck the top in but came up to Shahina and held it out to her.

Shahina promptly popped it into her mouth, rolled her eyes, then closed them entirely and let out a deep sigh. She stayed like that for a full minute, lost in the gustatory sensations. Then she got up slowly and fixed her burqa top, leaving the loose flap off her face, and with the words, “Let me know what you think of the chai,” shuffled out of the room.

Halima eyed her cup. She took a tentative sip. It was cold. She took a longer sip and a sweet herbal taste filled her mouth. She grimaced. Why would anyone want to drink that? Slowly she poured the rest down the drain.

The following afternoon Halima had quite forgotten the episode of the previous day as she sat working on her embroidery. The parrot’s beak was done and she was ready to move on to the feet. She wondered what color they should be. She’d only seen pictures of parrots and either of the colors she had seemed debatable. As she contemplated, the clock inside the house chimed 4:00 pm. Before the last notes had died down, the
Chaiwallah’s chimes insinuated themselves into it.

Just like on the previous afternoon, the cart stopped in front of the house, and the man set about his task of making chai. Halima hesitated for a few seconds but something impelled her to move to the window. She adjusted the slats just a fraction, so that the children’s feet and bodies came into view. I just need to see how he’s making the chai, she said to herself as she adjusted the slats to show the wheels of the cart, and then the chest of the man came into view. A clay cup steaming with chai was in his hands.

The man handed the cup to Ahsan.

Halima turned back to her embroidery, and fiddled with the stitches.

“Bhabi, can I come in?”

“What is it, Ahsan?” she said softly.

“Your chai.” His voice had a lilt of pride in it as if he alone was responsible for the making of it. He set it on the table and scooted out.

Halima approached the cup. Perhaps it tasted different when hot. As she held the cup between her curved hands she thought of the Chaiwallah’s fingers touching the same places, and felt her body turning warm. It’s the heat from the cup, she told herself. She looked at the muddy liquid with the wisp of white curly smoke. She let her lungs fill in with the new aroma. It was hot, sweet and herbal. Another sip, she thought, before I pour it down the drain. She kept taking little sips until, to her surprise, it was all gone.

After the first week, Halima accepted that the Chaiwallah with his cart of chai would be coming daily. She hastened with her embroidery without questioning her motives. With each passing day she became a little less timid and adjusted the slats as soon as the Chaiwallah came into view. She noticed how his eyes turned to her window and the corner of his mouth turned up in a smile while one eyebrow shot up. She thought of her husband and realized suddenly that he seldom smiled. And when he did she never thought to wonder at it.
There were other ways that the two men differed. Her husband, though fair, was thinner and less... she wondered what was less as she focused on the Chaiwallah’s biceps. They bulged through the half sleeve of his safari shirt as he stood poised over the cup of tea with the heavy kettle in midair. She wondered how it would feel to the touch. She closed her eyes and a stillness came over her, and when she opened her eyes the stillness was mirrored in the eyes of the Chaiwallah. His left brow shot up and he gave his quirky smile. Halima’s heart thundered away but she did not lower her eyes.

Halima looked at the new design her mother-in-law had made for her. It was a rose bud starting to bloom. A bee, somewhat large in comparison to the rose, was hovering over the flower. A month had passed since that first cup of tea. Her ears were alert to the sound of the Chaiwallah. The clock chimed four, then five without any cart passing her window. She heard her mother-in-law stirring in the house, adjusting the slats, putting away her embroidery and leave for the kitchen. She wondered if something had happened to him.

There was no sign of the cart the following day or the day after that. On the fourth day she heard the tinkling and flew to the window. She left it ajar as she watched it approach. It came as before and parked opposite her house.

“One paisa a cup. Hot chai. One paisa a cup.” He did not look up from his chai preparation. She raised the slats so that they allowed anyone interested to look in for a partial view. Most people walked by without looking up. And so did he. She saw cups of tea going forth to different houses, carried by willing hands.

“One paisa a cup. Hot chai. One paisa a cup.” His voice sent tentacles of awareness up her skin.

“He wants one paisa a cup.” Ahsan’s squeak broke into her thoughts.

“Oh!” Halima turned, startled at Ahsan’s silent approach and slowly moved away from the window.
“He wants one paisa a cup,” Ahsan repeated.

“He didn’t give any tea to us today. He wanted one paisa.” He paused then continued, “I asked Ma for one paisa, but she said ‘No.’” His eyes held a silent plea and after a moment’s hesitation, Halima went up to the tin cupboard and took the single key knotted to one end of her sari and opened the wardrobe. She took out a circular tin marked XXX cigarette, where Abdul put in the change at the end of the day. Halima took out two of the large copper coins. Ahsan grabbed the coins and loped away. She took the few quick steps to the window and peeped out. She saw Ahsan run up to the man and give him the money. As the man pocketed the money he raised two fingers in a little salute and though he did not look at her, she knew it was for her. In the confines of the room she blushed.

Three weeks later only one coin remained at the bottom of the tin. Abdul hadn’t said anything and she wondered if he had noticed. It was just as well because the next day the cart did not show up.

“The price is going to go up again,” she thought as she worked the blue thread into the body of the bee. The stitches were uneven and the wings had merged into the body. The boundaries were blurred.

She looked up as Shahina’s slippers shuffled into view. She was in the middle of a sentence before she entered the room.

“I’ve spent the whole morning doing errands for Bilquis’s mother. Her daughter is visiting and I had to go to the market. She wanted tongue. So I got two, two large cow tongues. So fresh you could smell the grass on them.” She paused and sat down on her haunches to probe under the bed for the piri that was kept there. She pulled it out and moved it closer to the wall. She let herself down on it and leaned against the wall.

“You know Munshi’s bakharkhani shop? The one that was next to that bakery? He’d been saying for months that he was going to move elsewhere. Well, I guess he was serious.” Shahina’s eyes met Halima’s and she said, “My throat
feels so dry. What about a little pan eh?”

Halima had started doing her hair, pulling the comb through the strands before plaiting it. She seemed not to have heard Shahina.

“There’s a new owner and he’s opening a restaurant. They’ve already set it up with plastic chairs and tables and guess what they’re serving?” She paused for full effect and when no response came exclaimed, “CHAI!”

She looked at Halima, who gave her a quick look but said nothing.

“Who’s going to pay money to buy the warm washed off water from some leaf, I ask you?”

Halima still said nothing as she worked out a knot with the large teeth of the comb. Shahina closed her eyes and leaned against the wall.

Halima finished plaiting her hair and reached for the pandan.

Shahina’s eyes flicked open and she was back on track.

“So I said who’ll pay money to get one of those drinks. But you know what even as I passed by, I saw Manju, the one who lives across from the school, pick up a small kettle and head home. Now what do you think is in that kettle I asked myself; chai of course. And guess who’s got a job at the shop? Mizan. My sister’s son. So I went up to him and asked him what he was doing there. ‘I work here,’ he said. He looked good, too, in his blue dress. So I said ‘Where did you get that dress?’ ‘Why, the owner gave it to me; told me to wear it whenever I was on the job. Ma was awfully pleased.’”

When the pan was done, Shahina made herself comfortable, popped the pan into her mouth and lost herself to the enjoyment. She was quiet for so long that Halima thought she had fallen asleep.

“Then as I was passing Hasina’s place her daughter beckoned me inside.” Shahina had no problem picking up where she had left off. “She asked me if I could get her two cups of the chai and gave me a five paisa coin. And well she might. When I asked Mizan how much I should pay, he said four paisas. That’s two paisas a cup. Can
you believe that? You can get four bananas for that!”

Halima was silent. When Ahsan came that afternoon, she handed him four paisas.