

that the heroine was always pure,
untouched; nevertheless
poured out her breasts to fill the cup
of his white hands
(the mad old artist with the pigeon chest)
and marvelled at her own strange wickedness.

Bought and sold, and worse,
grown old. She married back home,
as good girls do,
in a flurry of red the cousin –
hers or mine, I cannot know –
had annual babies, then rebelled at last.
At last a sign, behind the veil,
Of life;
found another man, became another wife,
and sank into the mould
of her mother's flesh
and mind, begging approval from the rest.
Her neck is bowed as if she wears a hood.
Eyes still tragic, when you meet her
on the high street,
and watchful as any creature
that lifts its head and sniffs the air
only to scent its own small trail of blood.

Naseem, you ran away
and your mother burned with shame.
Whatever we did,
the trail was the same:
the tear-stained mother, the gossip aunts
looking for shoots to smother
inside all our cracks.
The table is laden
and you are remembered
among the dead. No going back.
The prayer's said.
And there you are with your English boy
who was going to set you free,
trying to smile and be accepted,
always on your knees.

There you are, I can see you all now
in the tenements up north.
In or out of purdah. Tied, or bound.
Shaking your box to hear
how freedom rattles...
one coin, one sound."

- 10) **Four corners of a room:** Symbolizes confinement or restriction within a limited space.
- 11) **Clod of earth:** A lump of soil or dirt; metaphorically represents the speaker's sense of heaviness or burden.
- 12) **Roots:** Metaphorically represents one's foundation or essence.
- 13) **Hands:** Symbolizes agency or control over one's actions or destiny.
- 14) **Doors:** Symbolizes opportunities or barriers to freedom and autonomy.
- 15) **Opening inward:** Suggests a cyclical and relentless cycle of confinement or restriction.

1.11.4. Glossary

- 1) **Purdah:** The practice of secluding women from men or strangers, often through the use of veils or curtains.
- 2) **Shame:** A feeling of embarrassment, guilt, or disgrace, often imposed by societal norms or expectations.
- 3) **Safety:** A state of being protected from harm or danger.
- 4) **Cloth:** Refers to the veil or covering used in the practice of purdah.
- 5) **Coffins:** Containers used for burying or containing dead bodies.
- 6) **Angles:** Refers to changes in body language or posture, often indicating shifts in behaviour or demeanour.
- 7) **Aslant:** Slanted or tilted; suggests a change in the direction or focus of one's gaze.
- 8) **Sin:** Immoral or wrongful behaviour, often associated with religious or societal norms.
- 9) **Voices:** May refer to internal thoughts, emotions, or subconscious experiences.

1.12.1. Multiple Choice Questions

- 1) Purdah is a collection of poems by
 - a) Adil Jussawalla
 - b) Imtiaz Dharker
 - c) Agha Shahid Ali
 - d) Sujata Bhatt
- 2) What is the primary theme of the poem "Purdah"?
 - a) Love and relationships
 - b) Gender inequality and societal restrictions
 - c) Nature and the environment
 - d) Spiritual enlightenment
- 3) In the poem, what is purdah compared to?
 - a) A blanket
 - b) A coffin
 - c) A window
 - d) A mirror
- 4) How does the woman in the poem feel about learning shame?
 - a) She finds it difficult to learn
 - b) She finds it comes naturally to her
 - c) She rebels against it
 - d) She is indifferent to it
- 5) According to the poem, what purpose does purdah serve?
 - a) It promotes freedom and equality
 - b) It provides safety and protection
 - c) It encourages self-expression
 - d) It symbolizes cultural heritage
- 6) What imagery does the poet use to describe the cloth of purdah against the skin?
 - a) Like a river flowing
 - b) Like the wind blowing
 - c) Like the earth falling on coffins
 - d) Like the sun shining
- 7) What do the people around the woman do differently in the light according to the poem?
 - a) They speak louder
 - b) They stand up and sit down
 - c) They walk faster
 - d) They make different angles with their bodies

- 8) In the poem, what does the woman half-remember?
- a) Her childhood memories
 - b) Things from someone else's life
 - c) Her dreams
 - d) Her favourite songs
- 9) What is the woman's experience when she stands outside herself according to the poem?
- a) She feels disconnected and alienated
 - b) She feels empowered and liberated
 - c) She feels joyful and ecstatic
 - d) She feels indifferent and apathetic
- 10) What metaphor is used to describe the woman's struggle to find herself in the poem?
- a) A river flowing between mountains
 - b) A bird soaring in the sky
 - c) A clod of earth scratching for a hold
 - d) A flower blooming in the garden

Answers:

1) b
6) c

2) b
7) d

3) b
8) b

4) b
9) a

5) b
10) c

PURDAH - II

Purdah-II : This poem is structured into various sections, each of them vividly illustrating the mistreatment and commodification of women within Muslim society.

The duality of the society is focused by Dhaukan by throwing light on the sexual harassment and exploitation to the Muslim girls even by the so called preachers of the strict custom and religion through the characters of the muslim victim girls Saleema, Naseem and others unnamed in common and also through the fifteen years old Hajji who tries to seduce a young girl.

The poem purdah concludes with meaning of the real freedom in the hidden way as the poetess remarks that however a nation is announced free from outsiders. on the inside too, the freedom for muslim girls is fake and out of reach.

Theme of Purdah

Theme of the poem 'Purdah' revolves around the duality of the religion, fake preaches of the saints and Fakeen, the crawling future of females in society, specially in the Muslim society.

1.11.3. Poem: **Purdah-II**

*"The call breaks its back
across the tenements: 'Allah-u-Akbar'.
Your mind throws black shadows
on marble cooled by centuries of dead.
A familiar script racks the walls.
The pages of the Koran
Turn, smooth as old bones
in your prodigal hands.
In the tin box of your memory
a coin of comfort rattles
against the strangeness of a foreign land.*

*Years of sun were concentrated
into Maulvi's fat dark finger
hustling across the page,
nudging words into your head;
words unsoiled by sense,
pure rhythm on the tongue.*

The body, rocked in time
with twenty others, was lulled
into thinking it had found a home.

The new Hajji, just fifteen,
had cheeks quite pink with knowledge
and eyes a startling blue.
He snapped a flower off his garland
and looked to you.

There was nothing holy in his look.
Hands that had prayed at Mecca
dropped a sly flower on your book.
You had been chosen.
Your dreams were full of him for days.
Making pilgrimages to his cheeks,
You were scorched,
long before the judgement,
by the blaze.

Your breasts, still tiny, grew an inch.
The cracked voice calls again.
A change of place and time.
Much of the colour drains away.
The brightest shades are in your dreams,
A picture-book, a strip of film.
The rest forget to sing.

Evelyn, the medium from Brighton,
Said, 'I see you quite different in my head,
not dressed in this cold blue.
I see your mother bringing you
a stretch of brilliant fabric, red.
Yes, crimson red, patterned through
with golden thread.'

There she goes, your mother,
still plotting at your wedding
long after she is dead.

They have all been sold and bought,
the girls I knew,
unwilling virgins who had been taught,
especially in this strangers' land, to bind
their brightness tightly round,
whatever they might wear,
in the purdah of the mind.
They veiled their eyes
with heavy lids.
They hid their breasts,
but not the fullness of their lips.
The men you knew

were in your history, striding proud
with heavy feet across a fertile land.

A horde of dead men
held up your head,
above the mean temptations
of those alien hands.

You answered to your race.
Night after virtuous night
you performed for them.
They warmed your bed.

A coin of comfort in the mosque
clatters down the years of loss

You never met those men
with burnt-out eyes, blood
dripping from their beards.

You remember the sun
pouring out of Maulvi's hands.

It was to save the child
the lamb was sacrificed;
to save the man,
the scourge and stones. God was justice.
Justice could be dread.
But woman. Woman,
you have learnt
that when God comes
you hide your head.

There are so many of me.
I have met them, meet them every day,
recognise their shadows on the streets.
I know their past and future
in cautious way they place their feet.
I can see behind their veils,
And before they speak
I know their tongues, thick
with the burr of Birmingham
or Leeds.

Break cover.
Break cover and let the girls with tell-tale lips.
We'll blindfold the spies. Tell me
what you did when the new moon
sliced you out of purdah,
your body shimmering through the lies.

Saleema of the swan neck
and tragic eyes, knew from films