



Baghdadi Jewish Woman- Flower Sillaman

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ABSTRACT

Breaking the life of stereotypes, there are stories of women during the Partition of India and Pakistan, there are also minorities, who has strived hard in silence made parallel ways to patriarchy and constructed trajectories for themselves and the society. During the days of Partition in India actually opens up many a vistas that dismantles binary oppositions and creates a public space at the same time builds a domestic space in their own terms. 1947, Indian Independence and the Partition are one of the traumatic happenings that has dislocated people physically and spiritually then at the same time there were people for whom the golgatha of Partition, riot, displacement and violence became instrumental in liberating them and their soul. The present paper speaks about the women empowerment, contribution and identity formation of the Baghdadi Jewish women who are a part of the ethnic minority the Indian Jewish Community. Amidst this colonization, partition, lies the life of the ethnic minorities like the Jews of India who were not Indian thought by British, Judeo British in their dress or food but was part of the patriotic uprising movement of India and uprising women empowerment of Bengal. Flower Sillaman the theme and focus of the present paper is one of the minority woman who has seen the pre- independence days and post Independent India, amidst which stands the life of the Jewish community in India.

**Introduction:**

Identity for the Jewish community, the ethnic minority is a story of marginalization and effort to identity formation. This write-up on the Flower Sillaman, the noted expert on Jewish food and Baghdadi Jewish activist otherwise led a very quiet life. Flower Sillaman's life story collected through series of interviews of the ninety eight years old lady strong masculine in her voice does not forget to lull her interviewer with handmade cakes and dishes typical of a Jewish mother. Kitchen is it her identity, asked she firmly replies the community resides on the theory of purity, it has to be pure, Kosher at the same time never fails to update her face tab/ipad to hear the new writers and their work. Some memories, a slice of real life experiences, real life journey, and a witness of the pre-colonial to post-colonial India Flower Sillaman opens up to the kaleidoscope which is unknown and unseen history of Baghdadi women in Calcutta in the nineteenth century a cosmopolitan city with minority communities presently Kolkata still remains shelter, refuge and home to communities which are otherwise marginalized.

Flower Sillaman last of the custodian of the Baghdadi Jewish community with her knowledge of the rare cuisines of pre-colonial traditional food from Jewish kitchen till today, is a witness to many a wars, many changes in the community, many transformations and has seen young India grow up and with it rose Flower and many like her-

Judaism as a religious practice and a way of life structured Farha's and Miriam's life worlds Judaism is more a cultural identity for my mother and me.

Writes Jael Sillamanⁱ.

The outbreak of World War II in the year 1919 deeply affected Jewish community life and the Calcutta in which it grew and flourished, and a new Calcutta and a larger was getting shaped thinks Flower Sillaman as noted by Jael Sillaman in the book *Jewish Portraits Indian Frames*ⁱⁱ. Flower Sillaman says as noted by writer, activist and painter Jael Sillaman,

I suddenly saw a new Calcutta. There was an influx of foreign, uniformed men in the streets. They rode around in jeeps and trucks and I clearly remember seeing airplanes for the first time. The planes landed on the Red Road a strip of concrete beyond the maidan[.] we passed the billets and wondered where these men came from, [..]ⁱⁱⁱ

When the war took a centre stage Flower Sillaman a little growing child became witness to many a happening to the Jewish homes and her much loved city Calcutta. English newspaper, Radio Ceylon,



along with other friends she started writing headlines news on blackboard at the entrance board of her school. The war the happenings the Jewish soldiers who took refuge in Jewish homes all became a part of her growing up tutelage which mapped her self into rebel self. Amidst a war zone in Calcutta when the Burmese refugees sought shelter in 1943 and the Jewish refugees travelling through Rangoon had harrowing experience where people lost their lives Flower Sillaman was sent to Nagpur in a missionary school as Calcutta was not considered to be that safe.

My mother remembers the Burmese refugees who also sought refuge in Calcutta in 1943,

And as the war progressed and came nearer there we saw the refugees from Burma trek their way into India This included members from the Jewish Community of Rangoon who told us to Nagpur, of their harrowing trek[...] continued air raids led to the evacuation of entire families evacuate to Darjeeling, Madhupur, Bombay, or Delhi because Flower's mother did not want to leave Calcutta. She decided to send Flower to Nagpur^{iv}.

The whole gamut of her existence changed as she got introduced to Church, Christianity, and New Testament and a world full of new food, cuisines, tasting new cooking Kosher and non Kosher. In Jewish world Kosher was the ultimate word of purity, experiencing different diverse made Flower open liberated and independent minded though religious Jew at heart. Bishop Cotton Nagpur is a missionary school in central India. And this led to a opening in Flowers life, she was happy as well as anxious to be away from the 'claustrophobic environment'^v Thus, there was three Jewish students heading towards Nagpur, in Bishop Cotton Nagpur though it was far away from revolutionary aggression but Flower became open to New Testament scriptures, a total new world with different habitat, lifestyle and thought process with no kosher strictures, or food open to different social norms, Flower broadened her outlook, though later her mother called her back and she was forced to return but still she kept contact with her non- Jewish friends. Though her mother disgruntled on her decision of sending her daughter to Nagpur especially due to exposure into the non- Jewish ways but for flower it was a opening to a be Indian within India, and for her it was a learning process of her character. This knowing the home and the pangs of the pain of homeland still now thrives in the depths of Flower's heart, so much so that in the hot sultry afternoon she goes on to check the proceedings of the synagogue and her daughter Jael Sillaman's paintings on different aspects of life. Coming back to her Bishop Cotton days Flower was an active as well as a founding member of the Young People's Congregation along with Ezekiel Musleah though it was Seligson Chaplain of the American army who brought new ideas to the group but Flower like the concept of the inclusion of women in the services of the synagogue the services also conducted



programmes both in English and Hebrew. Probably this experience of coming to Kolkata with a revitalized mind from Nagpur became more invigorated in Lady Irwin college. A part of the project of All India Women's Conference (AIWC) Lady Irwin college became the hub of Flower's flight of freedom. Flower found the active involvement of women in the Nationalist struggle though the Jews were never actively involved in the struggle but this feeling for nation and nationality created separate gallows for women like Flower, a new woman rose in the middle of things. It is point of discussion that was the new woman that Flower imagined and witnessed in Lady Irwin College was it the presence of nationalist maestros like Sarojini Naidu, Rajkumari, Amrit Kaur, Vijay lakshmi Pandit or it is the rising spirit of Flower herself. Breaking the stereotypical roles of a home maker and making the domestic space an extension of her enfranchising spirit Flower became a iconoclast for the later progeny. The Jewish woman typical strutting underneath the patriarchy in this period was moving a way to construct her own home coming out of the ambit of typical home maker the angel of the house couching beneath the ritualistic norms. Conditioned to live in a world defined and designed for women a Jewish woman is supposed to keep the home *kosher*, the kosher that infuses thought of purity the concept of purity and matrilineality on which the whole theory of Jewish community exists, the women in India Like Hannah Sen or Flower Sillaman or Sulochana or Nadira breaks the sheltered domestic aura does not distance away from the male members of the society but rather strikes back to go along with the male dominated system and crafts out their own genre to break the constrained isolated space. The story of Flower Sillaman or many like them who worked within the Jewish system to bring out different paradigms of life is seen to have different dramatic shifts in their life. Flower's disguised attire as army personnel in the train to Delhi to join her college, or her active participation in college in the Nationalist politics and Nation's struggle, Flower's concept of home and her bonhominess with India further sees her interest in women upliftment programmes in Delhi.

Women from all over India of different faith, [...] few students from Asia, Africa, Ceylon attended Lady Irwin. Most students were Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Ceylon but there were very few Indian Christian but there were few Indian Christians and Jewish girls at the college.

The Life Story of a Baghdadi Jewish Woman

Flower Sillaman's grew up in Tottee lane in the most guarded environment in Calcutta. Flower reminiscences a pre-colonial ambience but within her house it was a strict Jewish ambit. Schooling in the Jewish Girls school is again a different experience it was very different from today's environment as there were only Jewish students in the school but outside her home was the Anglican as well as the



Indian neighbourhood created a different self which almost always thought of experimenting with certain new things. Living in the Tottee lane she is a witness of the Independence movements the years like whenever it takes to speak or do anything about her community. The family of the Abrahams was a camaraderie of people, aunts, cousins, grandparents, a tight knit family of the community. The protected ambit was never for Flower though her days were full of joy with fun when Flower was fifteen when the riot spurt out the outgoing life of the Jews of Calcutta was almost forced to be indoors, silent roads, curfew, the American soldiers and blood spattered streets amidst this the bubbling mind of Flower and her cousin and friends did not want to be indoors they sought out to get together in their own houses rather than Saturday Clubs. This attitude of breaking free or making a new pathway was always in Flower Sillaman

My mothers homework was supervised by her mother Mary who drilled Flower in mathematical tables and spelling exercises. Flower was always precocious and loved to read. She excelled in School and proved a gifted student. She ranked among the first ten students in Bengal in her senior Cambridge examination. [...] Miss Luddy the Principal of Jewish Girls School led an active Girl guide troop that went on camping trips outside Calcutta. Though Flower longed to be an Girl guide troop that went on camping trips with them her mother did not allow her to do so. On returning home from school Flower and most other girls of the community visited cousins. Flower spent days with both her grandmother Simcha and Farha and also a great deal of time in her aunty's Matty's home^{vi}.

Reading beyond stereotypes does not involve any falsification of reality and Flower's Sillaman's life rose amidst these women, her mother her grandmother, aunts, but she never wanted to claustrophobised in sameness and always tried to cross the borders. Dismantling of binary oppositions and growing up beyond that has always been the effort of women rising from domesticity, Maria and Farah Flower's mother and grandmother in their own way has been pathway makers. Flower Sillaman during the interview uses a myth 'food is life and life is food' the aged custodian of Calcutta Baghdadi Community smilingly comments^{vii}. The community and the contribution of the women is not mythical there are different epistemologies that leads to self-discovery and each of the women works out to do so in their own efforts Flower is one of them, every effort of recovering the traditions through cuisines, restoration of heritages both Flower and her daughter Jael Sillaman has been working untiringly for it, the Calcutta Jewish Community has certain tussle in the community patriarchal society but a matrilineal community the Jewish community is divided between different thoughts which speaks about their claimants and non-claimants of purity, as the community is matrilineal. Dismantling the hegemonic construction which govern the political, social and gender relations women like Flower Sillaman chalks out their own



cartographies maps out many a options of empowerment not merely of the community but also of the women and their own self. The picture of women in Talmudic times all the laws concerning women as discussed though in Rabbinic laws certain rights were expanded yet was still denied direct inheritance, the 'Ketubah' provided the protective rights but the women were passive in creation and dissolution of marriage. As long as the women remained in opposition of dependency, her rights were generally ensured. The Talmud also contains varying judgements about women these generally reflect the feeling of the individual the Rabbi who expressed them the prevailing attitude of the Talmud regarding women is captured in the biblical statement. It is mostly seen that the women of the community enfranchises to make a mark in the community beyond their rights. The stories of the women of the community breaks the power politics, 15th January 2023 Flower just back from hospital, is again seen in the Maghen David synagogue with the community members she and her daughter Jael Sillaman saw to the fact that the gates of the synagogue is opened to the public^{viii}.

Judaism becomes more of a cultural identity for my mother and me My mother and great grandmother was deeply religious from the early morning prayers till their *Shema*^{ix}. Jael Sillaman noted Baghdadi writer and activist feels that her mother Flower Sillaman grew up in this world knows Jewish rituals and traditions yet is very liberal and modern who with her work always strived for the upliftment and development of the Jewish Community of Calcutta and minority women.

Flower never felt herself to be in a foreign land ie Calcutta the geographical reconstructions of borders long faded with time. Judaism as a religious practice and a way of life structured Farha's and Miriam's life, Jael Sillaman opines. Flower through her small gestures in life breaks the stereotypical strictured ways expected of the women and tries to create her own trajectory. For many people ethnicity is a central element of self-definition and becomes an important social identity^x but where lies the standpoint of women Jewish women always has been the carriers of norms and rituals Where the women were the most important edifice to bind the family and members. Community^{xi}.

Middle class Jewish lives writes Jael Sillaman moved around the family and community with numerous Jewish festivals, sabbath, and weddings^{xii}. Flower says she saw her mother and aunts making the house as well as contributing their part for the community.

People in ethnic identity is seen to be choosing whether to have ethnic identity or what identity to claim [...] or maintaining identity with their country of origin and developing to new identification with the host country^{xiii}



In the case of Flower Calcutta is her home, and her identity has been always of a Indian Jewish woman, who has been travelling far and wide and experiencing the newness of herself and also for her small Baghdadi Jewish community in Calcutta. Flower grew up in a new light of freedom for herself she opens her light of space while studying in Lady Irwin College, though the strong walls of Jewish Girls School Calcutta never could erase any of her dreams she mentored to her own herself. Though in her school days it was her education and academics under her mother's strong vigilance, but she had bigger plans and that saw her beyond the limits of Calcutta. Mary Abraham was no way wrong as the purity of woman is seen simultaneous with purity of Kosher and restoration of the kosher which symbolizes the purity of the race, according to 19th century gender construction a woman was not granted 'sexual agency', thus protection and measures for her daughter Flower or for any Jewish girls was not wrong. Flower Abraham was a woman who asserted constantly for a space she did not adopt a colonial voice and at the same time in her own community as a woman rejected the process of othering that included denial of individuality.

Flower Sillaman takes part in this composite Nationality from the diverse cultures of India organized by the college under the leadership of the Principal Hannah Sen here flower doesnot merely takes part but actively participates in the prayers and rituals of different religions.

Her involvement in such college activities as prayer ceremonies, marches, singing of Nationalist songs and through better understanding of Congress ideals of 'Unity in Diversity' she realized for the very first time that being Indian could encompass being Jewish for the very first time she saw a way to proclaim her Indianness and her Jewishness and not have these two identities conflict with one another. It was a revelation to her and directly contradicted what she had learned in the Jewish communities where Indianness was seen as a threat to Jewish identity^{xiv}

This brief period of three years was full of activity, and zeal she almost travelled all over India, she tasted Indian food eat with hand which was all new world for her right from learning popular hindi songs or sumptuously gulping into *Biryani, matter paneer and gajar halwa*. Flower played piano and led the Christian choir, travelling to Punjab lighting firecrackers with the Independence of India was all these mere adventure for Flower as along with this she was fully aware of her Jewish frames of life. Jael Sillaman writes that Flower's formative encounter with Indian Nationalism made her feel that she was both an Indian and Jew. Flower structured herself in new tunes, that was beyond her small gamut of Jewish community she wanted to do something larger. Flower's job as a teacher at Loreto House where she taught Home Science but her philanthropic side never got evaded and she worked relentlessly at



Mother Teresa's newly opened then orphanage Shishu Bhavan. This was the time when openly smoking, taking classes, explaining human anatomy to the young students Flower was taking a grip of her own life. Married to David Sillaman in 1951, mother of five children Flower with her growing up children and later after her divorce never compromised with her life. Her working on her cooking culineries, innovating with Jewish dishes working as an assistant to the chef in a restaurant bringing restaurant business she tried and empowered herself in all. Her books on Jewish cuisines, a chronicler of taste and culture brings her books *Around the World with Skillet*, and *Three Cups of Flower* captures the mind and kosher culture of the Indian Jews. Flower today noctogenerian smilingly retorts any food is a part of the daily food as long as they are *kosher*, Calcutta was and still today is the kaleidoscope of culture, Armenian, Parsis, Anglo Indian and Bengali and the food also is a feast of that culture says Flower the last of the restorers of the recipes, Flower is the sole custodian of many unknown dishes from the traditional and ancient histories of the community. Sillaman served as Chef at the Plaza in Jerusalem, and launched the world's only Kosher Jewish restaurant *Maharaja*.

David and I grew apart in the second decade of our marriage^{xv}

In the past the contentious issue of custody over the children had always remained unresolved. It was not possible to get a legal Jewish divorce in Calcutta at that time. Thus, flower decided to seek one from Israel, at the age of forty eight with some meagre settlement from David Flower moved to Jerusalem. When asked the reason of the choice of Jerusalem she answered that mostly all English speaking immigrants moved towards Jerusalem. Here too she never compromised on her identity, she capitalized both on her Indian identity and her culinary skills to start her cooking ventures and came up the Maharaja restaurant. This was then the first of its kind to provide Kosher non vegetarian restaurant, there were Jewish as well as non-Jewish customers. Flower's sense of belongingness with her Nation and identifying herself as Baghdadi but Indian Jew might have rose from the place validated by the larger plural culture which one is a part of and feeling secure and content with ones place within it. They are Iraqi Jews Flower firmly says but India is the home with which she never compromised. Rooted in the life and rhythm of the community the Jewishness, gender and class Indian Jewish women like Flower or her mother Mary or grandmother Farha. Farha travelled far and wide as well as Flower's mother Mary due to their marriage ties and adopted the nation but for Flower the Nation became her breathing space of freedom and she for the same reason co related with the Nationalistic fervour as well as the patriotic zeal in India.



Jael Sillaman writes in her memoir narrative that her grandmother Mary settled her life in Jerusalem in a small non-Kosher flat and made a corner space for her kosher arrangement and called it the East bank and kids were warned humorously not to cross it. If community made borders and maintained and then these women also made boundaries and maintained it in their own terms. Mary led a liberated life in Calcutta India and took up every academic opportunities for herself and her children. Flower growing up amidst colonial insurgencies and different rhetoric for nation and motherland thus she always returned back to her home at the age of eighty or forty it is where she belonged she felt. Flower witnessed the colonial upheaval, the British sympathy towards the Jews at the same time she did not deny the making of India as a Hindu nation, was Flower relating her identity with all that was happening around her? Flower Sillaman, or many Indian Jewish women then identity was it only a mere self-representation, many Jewish women worked Katherine Wypeters comments that like her there were many who worked in offices as secretary to British bosses to make up to the economy of the home. Wypeters laments at the age of eighty eight that life could have been according to her terms yet the liberation and freedom that she felt in Calcutta was not elsewhere, they felt themselves as Indian. But for women like Farha and Mary like many influx of memsahibs in colonial India who accompanied their husband in any country when they travelled

they were British as subjects by virtue of living in India they saw themselves neither as British or Indian [...] they were Iraqi Jewish women their identification was with Judaism, a shifting community, and with the memories and practice of their inherited religion and cultural traditions.^{xvi}

Historical Journeys

Memories and the stories related to it sets a range of issues of interest, in this particular story 'it challenges the stereotypical and dominant paradigms and also presents a different colonial experience. Flower Sillaman ninety eight years old Baghdadi Jewish woman daughter of Mary and Elias Abraham born in the year 1930 she witnessed many a war and her community upheavals, the Nations, disruption s amidst which lies her own rising and making her pathway. One of the few left still in the Baghdadi Jewish community, this faction of the Indian Jewish community which is itself a minuscule minority still prevails in Mumbai, Kolkata and in some scattered parts in various regions of India, and Flower represents that community where the women of the community has always made a made a mark in the society.

Calcutta among all other states numbered the highest population of Baghdadi Jews. The Abrahams parents of Flower Sillaman never led a Arabic way of life. though Iraqi Jews Calcutta was then quite



anglicized, cosmopolitan hub and Flower grew up in world of the colonized and colonisers amidst which lay her small community. The orientals and the Occidentals all imbued in Flower created a different self. The stories of the Jewish women are vital as they would help in divulging a community its rise and fall at the same time a time that would be a peep into the time which has transcended long back. The Indian Jewish community is of three factions the Bene Israel, the Baghdadi Jews and the Cochinites there are very few left of the members its almost a dwindling community today, amidst which the Baghdadis numbers most in Kolkata though number has ebbed to some twenty five members. The stories like this particular real life story of Flower is important in the sense that it is not only interesting but it is essentially that which gives way to know the self-making of a woman and culture making in being a part of a community.

Long ago travelling from Aleppo, Basra, through the pathways of Rangoon settling in the eastern part of India the Baghdadis like many for trade chalked their own settlement. The Capital of British India until 1911, Calcutta became the second largest center of Baghdadi Jewish settlement there were around two thousand Jews during 19th century, the Baghdadi community lived in an area of Calcutta north and West of the trading center. Flower grew up in a seeing the community growth, prayers together in the synagogue, visiting each other's house and eating together in the festivities, Friday Passovers together, again the sabbath with the family and friends. Flower Sillaman came into life in this city when the Nation was going through a tumultuous position the dawn of a Independent state, exasperations of Partition, violence, riots, blurred boundaries of the homeless, midst of which lay the life of the small ethnic minorities in Kolkata their world was torn between the colonized and the colonisers though their sympathy belonged to neither the colonisers or the colonised or may be the belongingness was a different paradigm for them. Amidst this slurring battles of colonial imperialism was lying a young girls life who was watching with her blue eyes the changing world around her. Family togetherness, friends but at the same time there was a different self which was getting transformed within this,

Standing silently during the Amidah part of the prayer service I listened intently to the noises all around..as drums and cymbels beat loudly from the puja procession Church bells toiled from the Portuguese Catholic Church near the Neveh Shalome where we worshipped [...] All these insistent, impassioned entreaties to God filled me with awe.

The Community life flourished and was probably at its peak in Calcutta during Flower formative years^{xvii} With more than three thousand or so Baghdadi Iraqi Jews was living in Calcutta in the 1930s, thus for Flower it was a humdrum of the community that filled her life 2023 and there are a few twenty



five Baghdadi Jews left in Kolkata. In 1930 there was an entire set of Jewish institutions, synagogues, Jewish trusts and foundations.

I suddenly saw a new Calcutta. There was an influx of Foreign uniformed men in the streets. They rode around in jeep and trucks and I clearly remember seeing airplanes for the first time. The planes landed on the Red Road [...] Jewish soldiers came into our homes and we closely became familiar with them.^{xviii}

Along with the Armenians, Greeks, and Parsis, Chinese, Jews brought a special cosmopolitan flavour to colonial Kolkata says Lahava Sillaman. Flower adds to it that streets like Ezra, Pollock, Kyd Street flourished with Jewish families settling down and the community life was very different, thriving in Saturday Clubs, thronging in movie halls, sabbath and Passover celebrating together. Though there was not much mixing or knowing the other community like Hindus but at the same time the time period must be remembered was pre independence times and there was the galore of freedom fighters, victims of riots, which persistently put a indelible mark on growing up childhood minds like Flowers'. Jael Sillaman writes that though conservative in minds, but with the influence of the Indians and Europeans there was a lot of transformation in the Jewish community of Calcutta then, thus *Rosh Hashanah*^{xix} the Jewish New Year was celebrated with much fervour as being a part of Christmas or Durga Puja though the community midst of all circumstances never forsook the core Jewish rituals and norms. Flower Sillaman grew up with a cosmopolitan mind, later on studying in Lady Irwin College where Hannah Sen was the principal who was very much a part of Indian Freedom movement who later became the member of Rajya Sabha and is counted as Jews. The blend of the Jewish culture and the Indian ethos both of it ingrained in Flower gave a different image. Flower's grandparents were Arab Jews and her mother Mary who was a Kindergarten teacher in the Jewish Girls school. Her childhood was just like any other child under strict parentage Mary and Abraham was very vigilant towards their children especially Mary who being a teacher did not allow the children to dovetail their time and put their effort in studies, her vigilance can be perceived when one reads *Jewish Portraits Indian Frames* (2001) that she did not approve Flower's interest in politics being a devout religious person, but Flower Sillaman was a rebel especially her disguise as a military person in the train during her journey to Delhi or interest and taking part in political activity in Lady Irwin College. Identity it is said is not merely a matter of the past it is a reality of the present, memories and legends are not properly in the domain of the past they are the assemblages created out of fragments of past, here Flower Sillaman's story is a tale of identity, assemblages of different aspects like food, her interest in politics her small endeavours in her own liberation. Hence, with the identity of the shifting community, did the identity of the women also change, The Baghdadi Jewish women like Flower Sillaman are seen creating a parallel ways for themselves



within their geographical boundaries and chalking out a separate space for themselves. Relegated to a subservient and marginalized by the patriarchal society women like Flower Sillaman, Mary Abrahams or many creates their own place out of woman's quest for freedom, expression and identity, Flower sought out different trajectories at times disguised in soldiers attire, at times, trying out ordinary clothes like *salwar kameez chappatis in charpoys* slicing out the plush upper class Jewish ambit of rules, trying out in Nationalistic work or as a divorced woman with five children opening her own restaurant. In these Jewish identities are conditioned by the past, when asked to say who they are a group, like an individual is likely to tell a story, a story about themselves their struggle. Flower Sillaman's books on culinary Jewish dishes, and recipes is again a recipe of life, musty aromas to garnish the broken pathways that they lost, the gaps that they compromised, scattered, but elements of plausibility perhaps even the truth that she tries to bring out the in the form of attempts to know-

What one has no way of knowing

Flower Sillman leaves a gaze that captures the apathy, colonial ruptures and within that the Baghdadi woman and her journey, her life story, she herself between the colonial and post-colonial shows the resistance, changes and breaking paths of apprehension, fear and discovers the wonder that their self, a irrepressible self that mirrors the revulsion and intense journey with the new world to discover oneself. Sillaman s life is a live document, that witnesses India through intricate power relations and her gaze voices out the Jewish women living the life of both minorities, immigrants of Colonial matrix but incessantly moves to discern that self that suppressed to ascertain that self that was irrepressible, and that saw a new life for the community and for the women of the community to create their own exigency in a public space.

Flower's brief but formative encounter with Indian Nationalism made her feel for the first time that she was both Indian and a Jew^{xx}

A place, struggle of many now hers that she could identify herself, Flower Sillaman brought new flavours to the cuisines of the Jewish community experimented with Bengali food and Jewish recipes blended and harmonized yet following the Kosher dietary laws brought a aesthetic pathway to food and culture.



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- ⁱ Jael Sillaman. Narratives of Diaspora. Jewish Portraits Indian Frames. Seagull Publications. 2001. Pp6
- ⁱⁱ Ibid pp 112.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid pp 112-113
- ^{iv} Meeting India Jewish Portraits Indian frames, pp119. Seagull Publications Pp 114
- ^v Meeting India. Jewish Portraits Indian frames, pp119. Seagull Publications. Pp 115
- ^{vi} Jael Sillaman, Narratives of Diaspora. Jewish Portraits Indian Frames. Seagull Publications. 2001. pp110-112
- ^{vii} Conversation with Flower Sillaman at her residence in Kolkata in the year 2022
- ^{viii} Jael Sillaman interview on 18th february 2025, through phone.
- ^{ix} Jael Sillaman, Narratives of Diaspora. Jewish Portraits Indian Frames. Seagull Publications. Pp 5
- ^x Judith Warell. Encyclopaedia of Women and Gender L-Z. Volume 2. University of Kentucky. pp1061
- ^{xi} *ibid*
- ^{xii} Meeting India. *Indian Portraits Jewish Frames*, Jael Sillaman. Seagull Publications. Pp103
- ^{xiii} Judith Worell, Women and Gender . Social Identity. University of Kentucky Pp1061
- ^{xiv} Pp129
- ^{xv} Pp131
- ^{xvi} Pp168
- ^{xvii} Ibid pp112-113
- ^{xviii} Ibid 112-113
- ^{xix} Jewish New Year.
- ^{xx} Jael Sillaman. Narratives of Diaspora. Jewish Portraits Indian Frames. Seagull Publications. 2001.Pp 128