

## **Courtesan or a Patriot: A Case Study of Heeramandi (The Diamond Bazar) by Sanjay Leela Bhansali**

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### **Abstract:**

Women played an integral part in India's freedom struggle since the beginning of colonization by the British. Heeramandi (OTT series by Sanjay Leela Bhansali) portrays an apt picture of 1920 India before it was brutally partitioned into two religious (India-Pakistan) entities by the British Raj. The women of Heeramandi were not just courtesans they were freedom fighters, feminists, artists, and loyalists.

The present article will focus on the role of women in the Indian freedom struggle with special reference to Heeramandi. The characters of Bibbo Jaan and Alamzeb are evident as freedom fighters when Mallika Jaan says, "My daughters were not born to be courtesans." The song "Azadi," sung by the women of Heeramandi on the death of Lajjo, shows the psychological trauma of the courtesans as slaves, only death gives them "Azadi" (Freedom). Who else can understand the pain of slavery or colonization better than the courtesans? They were freedom fighters from childhood, first as courtesans and then as Indians. Heeramandi is laced with various shades of characters: Queens, Courtesans, Patriots, Lovers, and Villains. Each character gives the feel of an emotion it portrays with courage, depth, reality, and grandeur.

### **Keywords:**

Tawaif (courtesan) culture, pre-Indian independence freedom struggle, British Oppression.