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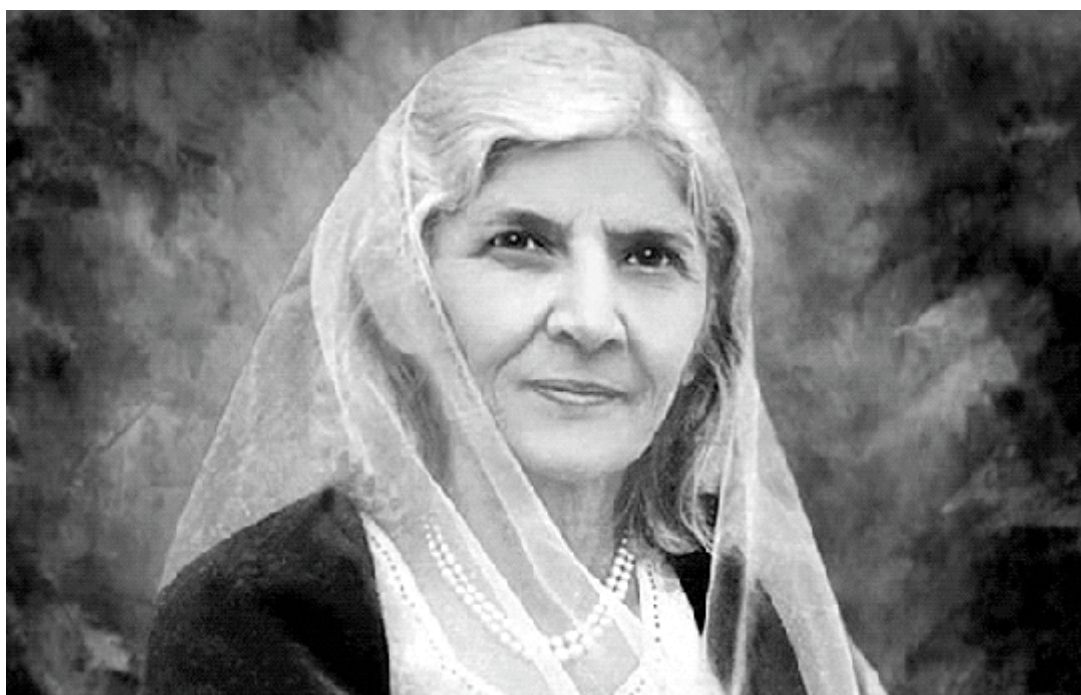
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Dedication

Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah Edition of the Journal of Gender and Social Issues, (HEC recognized in Y category) Spring 2021, is being published to mark the 128th birth anniversary of Madr-e-Millat Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah.

“Pakistanis! You who constitute the nation, are its true builders. It is your duty to do everything you can to preserve the freedom and independence of your country. This you will be able to achieve if you will follow the principles laid down by Quaid-e-Azam.”

(Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah’s speech on the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam's 3rd death anniversary, September 11th 1951)



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Reiterated Biographical Epistemes: A Grounded Theory Study of Miss #fatimajinnah #motherofthenation

Abstract

This is a study on Miss Fatima Jinnah, one of the leading female figures of the Pakistan Movement, and also a sister and close companion of the founder of Pakistan, Mr Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Constructive grounded theory method is used to generate a substantive theoretical understanding of the hashtags #fatimajinnah, #pakistanmovement, #rolemodel among others, across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The users show a spontaneity of love and reverence for Miss Jinnah and view her as the #motherofthenation. The study is an endeavor to prompt an effective use of social media via hashtags rather than relying on repetition without substance. The theoretical formulation is: "Hashtags unless supplemented with pertinent information presented in a systematic way, lose their punch: the portrayal of Miss #fatimajinnah across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook shows the nation's deep reverence but fails to propagate her values and teachings to the social media users".

INTRODUCTION

This research project is based on how Miss Fatima Jinnah (1893-1967) is portrayed in select social media networks viz Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Data from these sites are collected with the help of the hashtag, a symbol that is used with key topics to garner a wider coverage and accessibility. Miss Fatima Jinnah was not only a sister and companion of the founder of the Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, but played an important and active role in the politics of Pakistan both during the life and after the death of the Quaid. It would not be amiss to acknowledge her importance in the cultural and political entity of the country even today - fifty-three years after her death. As such it is only befitting to conduct a study on how she is portrayed on Pakistani social media. Since not much can be found on Miss Jinnah as a way of academic research using social media data, a grounded theory method (GTM) is employed in this project. This method aims at theory generation, and is used in situations "where little is already known, or to provide a fresh slant on existing knowledge". Grounded theory method as "an interpretivist mode of enquiry" is dependent on "language, gestures, expressions and actions" (Goulding, 1998, p. 51) for understanding a social phenomenon. The details of the method are explained in the section titled methodology. Kathy Charmaz (2006), an architect of a variant of grounded theory method, writes that "[t]hese concepts give you initial ideas to pursue and sensitize you to ask particular kinds of questions about your topic" (2006, p. 16). Sensitizing knowledge is what a grounded theorist starts with but may not necessarily end at. It is the knowledge that already exists in the research environment in which the project is taking place. This project starts with three sensitizing

Dr Shehr Bano Zaidi

Assistant Professor, Department of English, NUML. Islamabad.

perspectives: how Miss Fatima Jinnah is viewed in the society given her already established status, the place of language in social media research and a view put forward by Silvana K. Figueroa-Dreher (2008) regarding the study of audio-visual data in a grounded theory study. Armed with the disciplinary knowledge, I enter the research site.

Sensitizing knowledge

Miss Fatima Jinnah

Reza Pirbhai (2017), the celebrated biographer on Miss Jinnah notes that in Pakistan, public places like educational institutions, hospitals, parks etc. are “festooned” with the name of Miss Fatima Jinnah testifying to the reverence in which she is held by the Pakistani nation. She was not only the first ever First Lady of Pakistan but was conferred the loftier title of Madar-i-Millat or Mother of the Nation. It is a commonly documented fact that Miss Fatima Jinnah was “a professional dentist and an unveiled social worker” (2017, p.2). Pirbhai further writes (p.3) that most historians writing about the Pakistan Movement often neglect to give due mention to the crucial role of women. Therefore, there should be an effort at “gendering” the accounts surrounding the creation of Pakistan. Fatima Jinnah and her close associates are bound to find a prominent place in a gendered history of the country (2017, p.3) if it is ever written.

Another study carried out by Zaheer & Chawla (2019, p. 46) informs that the title “Mother of the Nation” was given to Miss Jinnah in 1947 and that the Pakistani nation loved and supported her. This study also notes that the historians often ignored her populist appeal in a conservative society. She played a significant role in the Pakistan movement and turned inactive after the death of her brother.

Three points emerge from these citations. Firstly, there is a consensus amongst most researchers/historians that the title “Mother of the Nation” is the most frequently cited title when it comes to Miss Fatima Jinnah. Secondly, despite the nation’s reverence for Miss Fatima Jinnah, most mainstream historical accounts are not gendered in the sense that they do not dwell on the efforts of women in a prominent way. Women are portrayed as standing a step behind the menfolk. They are not referenced independently but always in the context of men. Thirdly, there is no research on Fatima Jinnah as portrayed on social media. These three points serve as sensitizing knowledge regarding Miss Fatima Jinnah.

Language and social media

As this project is based on data taken from three social media sites viz Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, it is instructive to take stock of the existing knowledge in this regard. Social media are defined as “forms of electronic communication” for sharing “information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020). Taprial and Kanwar (2012, p.8) in their book define social media in the following way: “Social media is the media that allows one to be *social* or get social online by sharing content, news, photos, etc. with other people”. The main intent seems to be to socialize digitally. Another research study conducted by Larissa Hjorth and Sam Hinton (2019, p. 37) concludes that social media is “situated within national, cultural and political environments which means that social

media has evolved in different ways in different countries”. The writers exhort scholars in the West not to miss the fact how social media is used in the East as it would not give a complete picture of the way the phenomenon of the internet is evolving. This is important for my research in two ways. Firstly, the western theories/practices may not be wholly practical to the study of social media everywhere in the world. Secondly, this automatically raises the need for indigenous theoretical and methodological frameworks. In other words, researchers in the East should not shy away from developing their own scheme of things rather than relying on importing ideas.

Since this project aims to theoretically understand how the personality of Miss Fatima Jinnah is presented primarily through language (there are some images involved also, making this a multimodal study), a perspective on language use is in order here. Page, Barton, Unger & Zappavigna (2014, p. 26) point to the need for redefining the concept of language as it is used on social media. They place “language within a wider semiotic system that also involves image, sound and kinetic resources found typically in digital interaction”. They also report that “[m]uch mainstream linguistic research has largely ignored social media to date” which sits well with the aim of the project in hand. Page, Barton, Unger & Zappavigna (2014, p. 27) also point to the act of sharing “norms and values” through social media. Users perform identity acts through sharing content however they like to. It needs to be pointed out that most people sharing content on Miss Fatima Jinnah have no outside obligation to do so. Larissa Hjorth and Sam Hinton (2019) further inform us that the existing frameworks may or may not prove to be adequate for studying social media language and there is a need to remain open to the possibility of generating new frameworks (Page, Barton, Unger & Zappavigna, 2014, p. 93).

The present study uses the symbol hashtag (#) to explore how Miss Jinnah is portrayed on three social media sites. The importance of the hashtag is well-documented in studies on social media (Rauschnabel, Sheldon and Herzfeldt, 2019; Fedushko, Syerov and Kolos, 2019). All research in this regard mentions the ease in the flow of information with the help of a hashtag, since a hashtag acts both as a search and a dissemination tool by organizing information around topics.

There are a number of sensitizing perspectives derived from the above discussion. The first one is that social media allows ordinary folk to share ideas and norms and to connect with like-minded people. The acts of public persuasion are no longer restricted to a select few and as a consequence are not regulated. The second is that language on social media is not used in the traditional sense and needs redefinition in a multimodal capacity. The third is that every country/society uses social media in its own way and therefore, needs separate frameworks to understand the uniqueness of the phenomenon. This all calls for a fresh theoretical formulation which is the aim of the present endeavor.

A methodological sensitizing concept

The last of the sensitizing perspectives that this project uses is methodological rather than theoretical. Figueroa (2008, p.1) claims that the grounded theory method can only be successfully applied to the study of audio-visual data if they are viewed as two different

albeit closely connected and overlapping entities: a lens and a phenomenon. She writes that “the use of audio-visual material as medium (‘window’ or ‘lens’) to analyze other social phenomena will be called the AVM-perspective, whereas the AVO-perspective will designate the use of audio-visual data as the object of analysis” (2008, p. 3). AVM studies the processes involved in producing the material whereas AVO being the lens, studies how this “lens” is constructed. A study of language, images, etc. is involved in the latter type of analysis. According to Figueroa the problem arises while doing grounded theory coding for which she suggests looking at audio-visual data only from the perspective of a phenomenon and not as a lens since it is difficult to code language. The sensitizing perspective derived from this study is that audio-visual data (images and written language included) have to be divided into two types and it is slippery to code language using the grounded theory method.

METHODOLOGY

This research project employs a grounded theory method for studying the social media data which includes language and accompanying images. The view of reality that this multimodal data constructs is the objective of the project in hand. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss presented grounded theory in 1967 as a method in qualitative research to “forestall the opportunistic use of theories that have a dubious fit and working capacity” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.4). The duo discourage “examplifying” which means looking for instances to validate a theory, and instead advocate rendering a research phenomenon in a new theoretical formation. Glaser and Strauss make it clear that initial grounded theories based on fresh data are “substantive” and not “formal”. Substantive theories are more contextualized and less generalized. A number of substantive theories can be studied together to generate a formal theory that cuts across subjects and disciplines (Zaidi, 2020, p. 53)

A grounded theory study starts like any other research study. There is a problem, or phenomenon that needs to be investigated. In my case, it is the portrayal of Miss Fatima Jinnah across three social media sites. An effort was made to locate extant theories or works, but, as the phenomenon was unique, there was not much methodological or theoretical knowledge directly illuminating the issue under consideration. I collected data through initial sampling by using the hashtag #fatimajinnah. As GTM is an iterative process, data collection continued till no new concept/category emerged.

A finished grounded theory passes through some key stages marked by certain strategies. As the approach taken in this study is a variant of the original grounded theory called constructive grounded theory (ConsGT) (a view that social realities are constructed and are not givens) as propagated by Kathy Charmaz (2006), an initial stage of locating and selecting sensitizing knowledge is added. These sensitizing perspectives are only a point of departure for the process of analysis and must earn their way into the final version. Once this is done, initial coding is carried out. The quest for finding important patterns starts right from the beginning. A researcher initially codes whatever he finds “significant in sections of discourse” (Hadley, 2017, p. 31). The codes may be in gerunds or descriptive language as suits the situation. The next stage is secondary coding or focused coding. As the process is emergent, I remained vigilant for unexpected leads. I selected the most significant of the initial codes and compared and contrasted them with each other and mined more data to get a

better picture of the phenomenon. As this is a language study, I used in vivo codes where needed. In vivo codes consist of the verbatim data and is the language of the participants (Belgrave and Seide, 2019, p. 184). After deliberating on the secondary codes, a category was developed by collapsing several codes into it. The next step is theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation. The emergent category was theoretically sampled in the sense that I went through more data to theoretically saturate the concepts. Theoretical sampling is the second type of sampling done in GTM and is geared towards sampling emerging concepts rather than population. A concept is considered to be saturated when there is nothing new to be found about it. The core category was then compared with the existing disciplinary concepts to refine the emerging substantive theory and finally a theoretical rendering of the phenomenon is presented which is called the substantive theory of the phenomenon.

Findings and Discussion

Initial descriptive coding (#fatimajinnah)

This section starts with the initial descriptive codes. Every description is an abstraction of reality as portrayed in the data selected. The data for the primary stage consist of a total of thirty posts generated by using the hashtag #fatimajinnah. More are added as the process continues. Ten most recent social media posts from Twitter, Facebook and Instagram on Miss Fatima Jinnah are analyzed. The hashtag used for initial codes is #fatimajinnah.

The initial abstractions are based on the language as well as the pictures shared on Instagram. The Instagram accounts are purana_pakistan (2020), uddaari (2020), breorderlifestyle (2020), aneeslodhi09 (2020), splendid.art (2019), aamiriat (2020), nichelifestyle (2020), capturecrew79 (2020), afsarnama (2020), pakistanarchives (2020).

The abstractions to emerge are:

1. Supervising women exclusive activities: sewing, cutting, etc.
2. Short hair, arresting pose, stylish for her times, girlish/feminine side highlighted
3. Quaid keeping women in the forefront in the Pakistan movement.

A total of top ten Twitter posts were selected from the following accounts: Ahmed Waseem Hashmi (2020), Hafeez Ahmed Ranjha (2020), Bilal (2020), Qurat Ul Ain Tabassum (2020), Shaan (2020), Mir Tamoor Ali Channa (2020), Samina Qasim (2020), Aamir Raja (2020), Anees Khan Lodhi (2020) and Mubeen Ch. (2020). The descriptive codes capturing a slice of reality are:

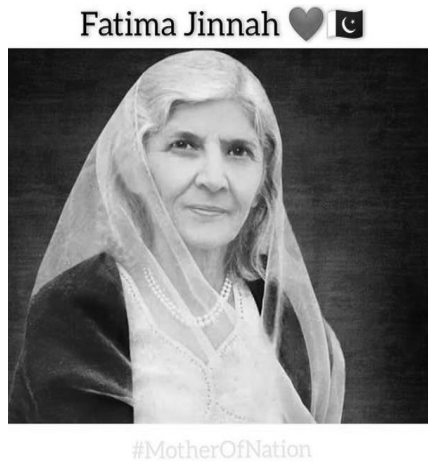
1. Fatima Jinnah brought to bear relevance on current events/politics (PML-N/Malala)
2. Feminine side of Fatima Jinnah alluded to by bringing in Malala.
3. Fatima Jinnah asking women to work alongside men; supported the founder of the nation

Facebook posts selected are from the following accounts using the hashtag #fatimajinnah: Proud Pakistan Awards Inc (2020), American Muslim & Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council (2020), De'Montmorency College of Dentistry (2020), Womanistan (2020), Perveen

Sarwar (2020). NUST (2020), Team Karachi (2020), Tehzeeb Haafi Fan Club (2020), Sultan's Construction & Real Estate Consultant (2020) and Pakistan State Oil (2020). The initial codes for Facebook are:

1. More commercial and targeted posts by interest groups
2. A prayer for Pakistani women to become like her
3. Fatima Jinnah's sense of style is mentioned through #ghararas and #stylediaries. FJ shaking hands with a man, sitting with a dog.

There are two types of pictures emerging here: a modern FJ and a motherly figure



Secondary descriptive codes (#fatimajinnah, #maryamnawaz; #fatimajinnah, #rolemodel)

There are two sets of hashtags used for secondary abstractions. The hashtag #maryamnawaz was selected along with the core hashtag #fatimajinnah as there was a reference to her being compared to Miss Fatima Jinnah in the previous data set. Maryam Nawaz by leading her father's party has become a strong politician and it seemed befitting to understand how the world of social media reacted to it. There were just five (05) posts visible when these two hashtags were used together. As Instagram can only work with a single hashtag, I used #maryamnawaz to mine data. There were millions of posts using this hashtag. It was not possible for me to go through each and every post separately so I just took the help of the pictures as this is a multimodal study. There were just three pictures that indicated that there could be some relevant material. It was easier to mine data from Facebook as it does not restrict the number of hashtags. There were two posts using these two hashtags. The Twitter accounts for the first set of hashtags are Khawar Akram (2020), Waqas Raja (2020), Sadia Malik (2020), In The News (2017) and Muhammad Obaid Khan (2017). Following are the Instagram accounts that use the two hashtags together: Sameer_write (2020), thefashion_file (2020) and officialmetronome (2020). The two Facebook accounts are: Jubroon (2018) and Samaa TV (2017).

There are four Twitter accounts that use the next set of hashtags (#fatimajinnah, #rolemodel) and they are Diya Mughal (2016), Surraiya Hasan (2018), Gleam Info (2015) and Just Trust Khan (2018). The sole Facebook account is Mahnoor Shahbaz Khan (2015).

The second set of hashtags are #fatimajinnah, #rolemodel. There are four (04) Twitter posts with these two hashtags. There is not a single Instagram post that could be mined as the single hashtag #rolemodel yielded millions of Instagram posts from across the world and the algorithms work in such a way that it was not possible to spot a relevant post without the help of a software. As for Facebook, there is just one post available that has these two hashtags.

Keeping in view the scarcity of the data, two descriptions of the data are generated:

1. Miss Fatima Jinnah is incomparable
2. A motherly figure

The next set of hashtags is #fatimajinnah #rolemodel. After going through the data, it is clear that out of the four Twitter users three suffice at using hashtags like #graceful, #awesome, #respect #love, #Pakistaniwomen, #inspiration. One Twitter and the sole Facebook account, however, provide quotations of Miss Fatima Jinnah giving us a glimpse of her personality. The quotations are "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream" (Suraiya Hasan, 2018) and "Think a hundred times before you take any decision, but once a decision is taken, stand by it as one man" (Mahnoor Shabaz Khan, 2015). It is pertinent to note that no other information as to when and where Miss Fatima Jinnah uttered these words is provided and social media usage is not regulated (Page, Barton, Unger & Zappavigna, 2014, p. 27).

The above data analysis generated just one secondary abstraction:

A portrayal with repetitive hashtags across the select social media sites. Admittedly this is a clear departure from the descriptive codes but it is necessitated in view of encountering the same data in the form of hashtags and pictures.

Category development (#fatimajinnah, #pakistanmovement)

The next step in the grounded theory method is to generate a category for theoretical sampling and saturation. Due to the repetitive nature of the data (hashtags used by bloggers), the last abstraction "Miss Fatima Jinnah's portrayal with repetitive hashtags across the select social media sites" is raised to the level of category. A category in GTM is a representative for the entire data. This category is theoretically sampled by gathering more data so that a saturation of its features can take place.

Instagram predictably has millions of posts that use the hashtag #womenempowerment. With the help of pictures of Miss Fatima Jinnah, twenty posts were located. And out of the twenty the following accounts were chosen: yehafsanay (2018), officialmetronome (2019), maatitvpk (2020), pakistanfacts1 (2020) and mindseyeentertainment (2020). Most of these accounts have information (again repetitive) on the Quaid and Miss Fatima Jinnah is in the background.

There are only nine (9) Twitter posts that carry these two hashtags. There are, however, 110 posts with the hashtag #pakistanmovement. The accounts are KalabaghDam (2019),

Womenpreneurs50 (2018), Syed Khurram Shahzad (2017), PeacefulPakistan (2018) and Afzaal Akram Gujjar (2017).

The situation on Facebook is no different: 15 posts for #fatimajinnah #pakistanmovement out of which 6 are by one account and only one is actually about her. The others are for other figures. The Facebook accounts are 6th Sense Group - Pvt.Ltd (2020), Sitara Hilal Foundation (2020), Peaceful Pakistan (2018), Believe Network (2020) and Pakistan Movement (2018). There are 204 Facebook posts that use the hashtag #pakistanmovement but only 61 that have some information (even repetitive) regarding the movement. The rest use it to garner more traffic.

As is evident from the above analysis, there is a scarcity of relevant data on the three social media sites using the hashtag #Fatimajinnah in conjunction with other hashtags like #pakistanmovement, #rolemodel. Even when #fatimajinnah was used, no new or credible information came to the surface. It is evident that year after year the same information is given and social media bloggers feel content in wishing her a happy birthday. The love for the lady is visible in all posts. Hashtags like #dedicatedherlifetoPakistan, #rolemodel, #Madar-e-Millat, #happybirthday, #leadingfigure, #graceful, #awesome, #love, #dentalsurgeon, #sisterofthefounder, #respect, etc. are repeated on her birthday (July 9) and death anniversary (July 31) every year by different bloggers. There are some posts that are at least five years old. There is just one blogger on Instagram and Twitter (Anees Lodhi, 2019) who repeated his post on both sites otherwise there seems to be just one post per user.

The iterative process of abstracting data makes sense of the reality: “Hashtags unless supplemented with pertinent information presented in a systematic way, lose their punch: the portrayal of Miss #fatimajinnah across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook shows the nation’s deep reverence but fails to propagate her values and teachings to the social media users”.

Conclusion and recommendations

The research project is concluded in this section. Important insights have emerged through this exercise. Social media can be used more effectively to disseminate values and teachings of the founders of Pakistan. The media is being used for channeling politics in Pakistan but it can be used for nation building also. An effort needs to be made to share thoughts of Pakistan Movement’s leading figures with the ordinary public. Moreover, a gendered account of the Pakistan Movement can be built and disseminated with the help of social media. It is an effective tool but is under-utilized. It can be mainstreamed and made official. More scholarly endeavors are needed in this area from all social sciences disciplines and a theoretical and methodological convergence be sought.

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The Pakistani Woman in Western Eyes: Self-exoticization in Afzal-Khan's *Lahore with Love*

Abstract

This paper comprises a critical study of recollection of life events in the memoir titled: Lahore with Love: Growing up with Girlfriends Pakistani Style henceforth (LWL) by the Pakistani female writer Fawzia Afzal-Khan. We illustrate through our analysis that Afzal Khan looks at and represents Pakistani women's identity with a Western lens. We argue that Afzal-Khan portrays herself as an independent and anglicized woman who is in control of her sexuality, positioning herself at the center like the orientalists, constructing a monolith identity of Pakistani women in the narrative. Hence it is not only Western or white writers that exoticize the Pakistani woman, but migrated writers like Khan misrepresent this identity as she subjects herself to self-exoticization in her memoir with an orientalist approach.

Keywords: *Memoir, Pakistani woman, Orientalism, exoticization*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Pakistan and other Third World countries, memoirs have their own significance. They provide cultural representation to the marginalized nations and groups. Female Identity of Muslim or Third World women in the past has been associated with the historical accounts of Western women which could be regarded as their way of strengthening their identity at the center, compared with the "Other" (Fanon, 2008). Hence, memoir-writing by Pakistani women can be viewed as an attempt to produce counter narratives against the stereotypical Western views about Pakistan and its cultural identity. After the 9/11 attack on World Trade Center, there was a dire need on the part of Pakistanis to reclaim their identity against the stereotypical Western perception of Pakistan as a terrorist state. More recently, the events that followed the attack by Taliban on Malala Yousafzai further raised questions about the identity of Pakistani women and the circumstances they live in. Against this backdrop, it is significant to study Pakistani women's memoirs as a new form of cultural, literary and linguistic expression in their indigenous and international contexts. To fill the gap of representation of Pakistani women's identity within international narratives, Pakistani women writers such as Durrani (1995), Naheed (2003), and Suleri (2014), have used memoirs as a

Noor-ul-ain Lashari

MPhil scholar, Department of English, Kinnaird College, Lahore
Email: noorulfakhar32@gmail.com

Dr. Shirin Zubair

Professor, Department of English and Linguistics, Kinnaird College, Lahore.

LWL is a memoir by Fawzia Afzal Khan, a US based writer/activist of Pakistani origin. Belonging to an elite urban family, she left Pakistan in 1979 when she was twenty-one years old. At that point in time, women and minorities in Pakistan were facing inevitable oppression at the hands of the military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq. Afzal-Khan mentions that this memoir is her way to “see from a distance of age and location, the life challenges of Pakistani women of the socio economic class I belonged to.” (Afzal-Khan, personal interview, April 11, 2019). It is about her life back in Pakistan with her family and especially with her girlfriends. This is a story about how her girlfriends belonging to upper middle class, with Western education and liberal backgrounds underwent profound changes of identity under the complex religious and social structures. It narrates how her girlfriends who chose to live in Pakistan met tragic ends of murder, suicide, mental or emotional breakdowns.

In the sections that follow literature review we illustrate through examples from her memoir that she wrote this narrative for the Western audience adhering to the stereotypical Western frameworks of representing Muslim or Pakistani women. Mohanty challenges the politics of solidarity by Western feminists. In her groundbreaking book “Feminism without Borders”, she argues that the Third World Woman is produced as a “singular, monolithic subject” by Western feminists. It is done at the cost of appropriation of their experiences and Western feminists are unaware and unconcerned about the implications such writings have on the lives of these women. She does not only criticize the Western writers for this marginalization but also the Third World scholars, who write about their own people and culture but use the same strategy of positioning themselves at the center. (Mohanty, 1988, p. 17)

LITERATURE REVIEW

We draw on the work of two schools of postcolonial theory for the theoretical framework: The postcolonial theorists, Said and Fanon study the subject of colonized identity: Fanon analyzes the experiences of colonized people in the white-controlled societies; the inferiority complex associated with their non-white identity and their desire to overcome it by becoming white. Edward Said looks at academic scholarship about the former European colonies by scholars in the imperialist countries as being actually a project to conjure up the forces of imperialism, justifying governance by foreign rulers. However this school is not very sensitive to the gender(ed) and anti-feminist aspects of such representations which have been addressed by the school of postcolonial feminist theory, although the white feminists (Hosken, 1981; Jeffery, 1979,) cited by Mohanty (1988) have also represented or researched on Asian and/or Third World women with an orientalist lens. The postcolonial feminists of color who identify with this school of thought including Mohanty, Suleri and Loomba, critique the representation of Third World Woman’s identity by the First World white feminists. These theorists critique the appropriation of a non-white woman’s identity: an average Third World woman (Mohanty, 1988), oppressed postcolonial woman (Suleri, 1992), a Harem girl or a sati (Loomba, 1998). The argument is that a non-white woman is represented as a monolithic subject to cater to the interest of its producer, the white feminists whose privileged position not only blinds them to the harsh realities of the Third World but with that they also tend to forget their powerful status in the world of academia which positions them in such a way that whatever they say has grave implications. These women of color stress upon the fact that those who truly belong to these cultures and have life

experiences in their respective societies, should write about them. They state that history needs to be rewritten not only from a woman's perspective but from a woman of color's viewpoint. For instance, Suleri contests the idea that "the outsidedness of cultural criticism is being translated into that most tedious dichotomy that pits the academy against the real world" (Suleri, *Women Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition*, 1994). Critiquing the martial law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq and his 'Islamization' curtailing women's rights in Pakistan during the 1980s, she stresses upon the fact that the indigenous people and the natives who have experienced this ethos are able to write with more authenticity. Suleri, however, states that diaspora writers like Afzal Khan and Laaleen with their Western lens are as much outsiders as the white Western writers (Suleri, 1992).

Textual Illustrations

The (Fe)Male gaze

Afzal-Khan names each chapter of her text after one of her friends by giving their names as chapter titles. It is interesting to note that Afzal-Khan introduces each of her friends to her reader by giving details of their physical attributes and beauty; this being the first feature of their personality that she directs her audience to keep in their minds. Sam or Samina whose chapter is named "Sam's secret", is a dearly loved friend of Afzal-Khan' from Convent School, Lahore. She describes her physically: "her straight brown hair down to her lower back, like a chamois sheath I want to feel on my bare skin," and she is the "loveliest thing" she has ever seen (p. 1). It is a significant aspect to note that none of Sam's other traits of personality appealed to Afzal-Khan but her body, hair and "wafting aroma of *chambeli*¹ hair" (p.1).

It is noteworthy to point out that all of Afzal-Khan's girlfriends had a better womanly figure than her and she goes on to draw a comparison between her own body and theirs. Hajira's chapter opens up with a kind of visual treat, "she has on her chest, a midget with melons oh gawd!" (p. 28) and then a quick comparison to hers, "I have the straighter nose and the height, but no boobs to speak of." (p. 28) Such descriptions of feminine beauty in her friends in contrast to her own height, flat chest and flat bottom, her not-so-perfect manlike figure suggests not a rebellion against the "toxic body culture" but a voyeuristic interest in a woman's body from a male perspective.

Chapter three is devoted to Saira and Afzal-Khan gives a customary start by describing her physically:

Tiny silver peas tinkled ever so slightly every time she moved her creamy golden legs. We sensed rather than saw them behind the billowing cotton shalwar, which draped but couldn't quite hide the curvy texture of her womanliness...We gawked and gulped as only twelve-year-olds can, knowing our flat-chested, flat-bottomed bodies looked pitiful in comparison. (p. 59)

¹ Jasmine flowers.

It is important to note that such physical descriptions of woman's bodies are usually found in representations of women by male writers, artists and painters. As Mulvey (1975) pointed out: "the male gaze denies women human identity, relegating them to the status of objects to be admired for physical appearance". Females only exist in relation to the male. In the same way, Afzal-Khan looks at and represents Pakistani woman as an Orient as opposed to her own Occidental self. The oriental female only exists because of the occidental female and her girlfriends live in the minds of her readers as bodies not identities. Thus, her girlfriends are represented as the exoticised Other; as "erotic delights" (Shabanirad and Marandi, 2015, p. 23) since their bodies qualify them as 'feminine' compared to Afzal-Khan's 'masculine' body and character. A reader can trace a pattern in her treatment of her friends. Her fascination with her friends' bodies, their anatomy particularly their breasts reeks of an erotic interest: "The breasts that had so held me in awe on the verge of adolescence... You can see them heave even behind the silk *dupatta*² she wears modestly across her bosom" (p. 64). The idea of feminine beauty that she maintains through such details is that of a firm body, perfect figures as compared to her "flat-chest" and "flat-bottomed body". (p. 59) And yet simultaneously, her self-representation embodies a rebel against all the traditional notions of femininity, be it body, ideologies, or emotions hence a superior 'self' who is "essentially rational, normal and masculine". (Shabanirad and Marandi, 2015, p. 23). In the traditional sense of gender, she is the man to all the women in the text as they are represented or read as the inferior others to her masculinity.

An Orientalist Lens

Afzal-Khan draws a boundary of self and other in her memoir and the distinction she makes can be traced by following the definition of a Third World Woman in the West. This explanation is also found in Mohanty's article, an average Third World Woman who lives "an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender" (p. 34). Being from the "Third World" means she is ignorant, uneducated, tradition bound, domestic, family-oriented, and victimized. This, she suggests, is in difference to the "(implicit) self-representation" of Western women as educated, modern, having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the independence to make their own decisions." (Mohanty 1988)

This definition is very important as these are the traits which recur throughout the memoir where Afzal-Khan— a woman with an anglicized vision— portrays her girlfriends as the average third world women. An example can be found in the portrayal of Sam who is an "Other" to Afzal-Khan in many ways. The most crucial point of difference is that Sam is a typical girl caught in a love affair with a soldier away at war who is "desperate to write to her, to be assured of the love of a good woman" (p.7). Here again Afzal-Khan reaffirms that Sam is an average Third World woman, a typical Pakistani woman, an emotional being, dependent on a man's love to save her. When her lover marries a woman of his mother's choice, Sam gets her hair cut very short out of depression and is found dead on a bench in Ganga Ram hospital, Lahore showing herself to be a perfect example of the crippled portrayal of a Third World woman, totally dependent on the menfolk for happiness in her life.

² A large scarf worn by most women in Pakistan to cover their heads and breasts.

It is worth mentioning that Afzal-Khan clearly draws a line between her own character and that of Sam. Afzal-Khan's point in writing about Sam's love affair is to highlight the feminist idea of romantic love as a debilitating state and a weakening process for women. She comments: "I lost interest in Sam and the supreme silliness of true confessions...yuchh! Who needs that when Kinnaird College for Women is materializing within our very reach." (p. 10) She paints herself as a modern woman having control over her own body and emotions: when Sam is trapped in a petty love affair, Afzal-Khan was thinking about the fun, freedom and the exciting world of Kinnaird College Lahore.

Similarly, Hajira, another friend who had a "cooler" (p. 29), meaning a more Westernized family than Afzal-Khan, becomes an inferior Other to Afzal-Khan when she rejects her Western way of life for her boyfriend: "She shushes me up with great ferocity, Madame...that was all done under the influence of the western propaganda as we've been victims for all our lives. It's cutting us off from our roots! It's turning the likes of you and me into parasites who prey on the lower classes of our wretched society" (p. 43). Under the influence of her lover Sufi, Haji did not only change her way of thinking but her appearance too underwent a change. She started wearing *shalwar kameez*³ made of cotton stuff called *khaddar*⁴ "the poor person's cloth" (p. 44). She acquired a love for Urdu language and culture which Afzal-Khan viewed as a mistake. Afzal-Khan tries to tell this to Hajira and save her friend but she is insanely in love. From a feminist perspective, it can be stated that a friend who was more modern, had more prospects of life than her, was not wise enough to make the right decision. However, when Sufi's friend Bakri falls in love with Afzal-Khan and proposes to her, she rejects the idea of a modern woman: "a flirt..you know I string guys along, I don't mean anything serious by it" (p. 47). At this incident Afzal-Khan yet again represents herself "as having control over her own body and sexuality and the freedom to make her own decisions" (Mohanty 1988). Although she is persuaded by Hajira and Sufi to reconsider her decision, she does not pay any heed. This is, yet again, an assertion of her agency against societal norms and expectations. As she says: "So I stand my ground against all that romantic moral pressure. I say no, and Bakri weeps" (p. 48). Unlike her traditional friends, she flirts with men unabashedly, she rejects their romantic advances including a marriage proposal despite coaxing and cajoling by her friends: "I turn my heels on them all and walk out in my signature gesture," (p. 48) this turning of heels is actually turning away from a regressive Pakistan, "a place of romance, exotic beings" (Burney, 2012, p. 44). However, much later in the narrative, when she desires an extra-marital affair with the same Bakri in her forties, their relationship is consummated.

Even at the age of twenty-one, in the 1970s Pakistan, when women from her social class and age group including her friends would be keen to catch an eligible bachelor to settle down, Afzal-Khan had made up her mind to pursue a PhD degree in the USA. Not only was she autonomous in her decisions, she could foresee the repercussions of Hajira's poor judgement in deciding to marry a communist. When she admonishes Hajira, the latter replies:

³ Baggy trousers and tunic worn by both men and women.

⁴ Cheap coarse thick fabric.

I know what I'm doing—and sooner or later, you're all going to see how wrong you were about Sufi: he is truly a man of principle. He believes in living simply—and so do I. I spit on this bourgeois, decadent, westernized class we all come from...I embrace my roots now, and I am happy to give up material comfort in pursuit of a classless society. (p. 50)

Hajira will pay with her life for going against her elitist sociocultural background and a code of life (upper class) that is the norm. Hajira suddenly married Sufi two months after Afzal-Khan went abroad. Both of the families were unhappy with this mismatch of bourgeoisie and lower socioeconomic classes and the so-called communist turned into a greedy person after the marriage being quite happy with the house and car given by Hajira's parents whom he had earlier criticized. After six months of marriage, Hajira became mother to a baby boy. With a drastic change in her life coupled with Sufi's attitude, she slides into postpartum depression and the promising painter is further disheartened when her husband asks her to not pursue her studies and to let him be the only artist in the family.

He tells me my work isn't very good any more, that I should simply let him be the artist in the family, and reserve my energies for the baby; perhaps he's right. I really don't want to bog him down, and I certainly have no desire to be in competition with him. (p. 55)

Having lost faith in a husband who used her to make his way into becoming a successful artist and realizing her fault in leaving her class and lifestyle for him, she commits suicide in the very house they used to meet in when she was madly in love.

Saira— a friend from Kinnaird College, Lahore, (known as a finishing school for the elitist girls) too is portrayed as inferior to Afzal-Khan in many ways. First she comes from an “Urdu-medium upbringing” that justifies the kind of backward thinking she has regarding the institution of marriage and, therefore, is very critical of Afzal-Khan's modern views. She taunts Afzal-Khan for her lack of interest in the household training: “You'll end up on the shelf, high and dry, while we bring you ribbon sandwiches from our oh-so-married households!” (p. 61) to which Afzal-Khan replies “Maybe some of us don't want to get married!” (p. 61) This taunt and reply depicts the dichotomy of good and bad girls in this memoir. Mohanty argues that Western writers portray the Third World woman as tradition-bound, domestic and family-oriented in contrast to the self-representation of an educated woman with modern ideas, in this instance a woman who does believe marriage to be the ultimate goal of life.

Years and several pages later in the text, on one of her frequent visits to Pakistan, the expatriate Afzal-Khan is invited by her old friends Saira and Numana. They are both married, having children of marriageable age, grown to be extremely narrow minded under the influence of a conservative society in Pakistan and are offended with Afzal-Khan due to the “shameless reference” to their “legs and bosom” (p. 65) A crucial point they both make is that life turned out to be different for them than for Afzal-Khan because they were living in the patriarchal and oppressive Pakistan while she went to USA. “You managed to escape,

Madame and it shows...” For them escaping Pakistan has afforded Afzal-Khan all the fun, freedom and pretend-teenager life. (p. 66) They show their ‘ignorant’ (Mohanty 1988) perspective of life by asking irrational and personal questions like “do you pray?” making a point that if Afzal-Khan had been a God fearing woman she would have never decided to write the kind of vulgar memoir she wrote. Naumana who had been a victim of Sharia law, allowing her divorced husband to take away her seven year old child is so naïve and unreasonable that she does not realize it to be an exploitation of women by male interpreters of Islam but rather believes it to be the will of God:

It is true I suffered from the Sharia’s laws which give the man, the father, the right to his offspring no matter what. But Madame, if that is God’s will, we must accept. Who are we to question his infinite wisdom? (p. 69)

Where Naumana is a victim of ‘Islamic code’, Saira is a prey to the ‘familial system’ and is married to her cousin who was a medical student. Her wedding was a typical Pakistani extravagant event, where the bride wore “twelve sets of heavy gold jewelry adorning her neck” (p. 75). Her husband sexually abused her by having anal sex “when he made her hold to the side of the bed and stick her tush into the air, while he proceeded to do unnamable things from behind” (p. 76). Saira didn’t see this as an abuse but accepted it as the duty of a wife to provide every kind of (sexual) pleasure a husband asks for. Saira’s mother-in-law got her son married during his education because she thought having a wife available for his physical needs would save him the chances of distraction. He could not complete the degree and blamed it on the distraction of family life caused by Saira who was producing child after child like a machine. His mother sent him to England away from the stress of his wife and children to concentrate on his studies but there this innocent boy fell for an Englishwoman. Again to save her baby boy, she sent Saira, his wife after him to get him back on track but the latter could not endure the psychological torture inflicted by him and had a nervous breakdown. Through the depiction of such incidents, Afzal-Khan is commenting on a patriarchal society which she was fortunate to escape; where sexual pleasure is a male prerogative while the women are slut-shamed if they own their sexuality. Afzal-Khan’s tongue-in-cheek humor and underlying irony is apparent in her narration of the ‘politics of pleasure’ when Saira initially claims to be madly in love with “H- Bhai”(p. 75) after her wedding night.

Good Girl Versus Bad Girl

It is interesting to note that Afzal Khan constructs the identity of “self” and “other” with the naming of her character and her friends. In Sam’s chapter, she introduces the readers with the nicknames, she and her girlfriends had decided for themselves according to their personalities. The names are “Sam, Shelley, Honey, Haji and Madame Sin” (p. 4). Madame Sin was the name given to Afzal-Khan for her unconventional thoughts and breaking away from the social, religious and familial constraints which her friends thought to be a sin. She introduces her character to the reader as Sin, an outsider who does not fit with Honey, Shelley or a “good woman” like Sam. As their names suggest they are good girls “modest, timid, self-sacrificing and nurturing” (Tyson, 2006, p. 89) Afzal-Khan glorifies the character of a rebel and hence a bad girl. “Bad girls violate patriarchal sexual norms in some way: do

not accept their traditional gender role, disobey the patriarchal rules, they're sexually forward in appearance or behavior..." (Tyson, 2006, p. 90). This dichotomy of good and bad girl starts Afzal-Khan's project of representing Pakistani Woman, "as a singular monolithic subject." (Mohanty 1988)

Her exoticization of her friends stems not only from the process of naming but also through her construction of her friends as good-but-crippled girls fearing the constraints of family, society and religion without realizing that they were being exploited by these institutional structures. The only exception to this exoticization of Pakistani women is her friend Mad/Medea — a bad girl like Afzal-Khan. As the name suggests Mad/Medea, Madina is a mad woman like Medea: a character in Greek mythology who took revenge on her unfaithful husband, Jason by murdering his new wife as well as her own children. Naming Madina (or Madhu) after a character, who did not hesitate to kill her own children in order to punish a man for bringing shame on her, Afzal-Khan introduces her reader to a woman like herself. She is not submissive, family-oriented, tradition-bound or a victim but is a strong character who does not let anyone take advantage of her.

Madhu always did look like she had blood on her mind, she was ready to beat the living daylights out of any man—or woman, girl or boy, animal or human, older or younger, fatter or thinner, bigger or smaller—who dared say or do anything she perceived as taking advantage of her. (p. 105).

Afzal-Khan celebrates Madina's character in the memoir since she is an alter-ego of the author. She breaks all the stereotypes and each and every act and trait of her character shows her as a rebel against set ideas about a woman's conduct. She abuses "rickshaw drivers and best friends alike" she is Afzal-Khan's Viola, "an image of fresh-faced violence". Like Afzal-Khan, she comes from an elite background. Her character embodies all the attributes of Western women, she is 'educated' in the right meaning, 'modern', has 'agency', 'free' to make her decisions and 'control over her body and sexuality' (Mohanty 1988). Her representation is of an 'essentially rational', 'developed', 'superior', 'normal' and 'masculine' person (Shabanirad and Marandi, 2015). A worthy change comes in Afzal-Khan's self-representation in this chapter. The 'bad girl' she has celebrated in her character throughout the previous chapters fades here. The dichotomy of 'good girl' and 'bad girl' blurs here when she is in comparison with another 'bad girl'. When Madina is caught in an abusive argument with the rickshaw driver over twenty rupees, suddenly Afzal-Khan is embarrassed: "I want to shrivel up,...anything to stop these terrible words flying out of her mouth at breakneck speed" (p. 108).

Madina is a successful theatre director, who introduced street theatre in Pakistan that raised a voice against the oppression women faced by religion and state. She is a strong headed woman who refused to take no and made her way through every barrier that came in her way.

Madhu's production was not permitted to be performed on the main stage, for fear of the competition it might—and did—offer the long-standing resident director. In typical Mad-ina fashion, she refused to take no for an

answer, and proceeded to claim the outdoor stage where no plays have ever been performed, as her special space. (p. 113)

Madina flirts with every man she likes, she has physical relations with a Japanese man abroad and people in Pakistan do not approve of her “scandalous behavior abroad”. Despite her reputation, she got married to a *desi*⁵ man. In Afzal-Khan’s point of view, any man who would marry Madina would need the “patience of a saint if not a prophet”, these are the kind of remarks that Afzal-Khan’s other friends passed about her also and which she regarded as a result of their living in a narrow minded community like Pakistan. Madina is articulate about sex and loose talk is her idea of fun talk that is uncomfortable for Afzal-Khan suddenly and unexpectedly. “Tarranum...laughs raucously, immensely enjoying Madina’s vulgarity, while I, newly conscious of having turned into an elegant swan, refuse to be drawn in to the hilarity” (p. 115)

Another aspect of Madina’s life that confirms her status as an Other to Afzal-Khan’s self-at-the-center is that Khadim Bakri whom Afzal-Khan rejected and who wept for her, married Madina as her second husband. When Bakri realized his mistake, he wanted to get rid of Madina, “a whore not a woman” who eats and drinks “like there’s no tomorrow” (p.124) He leaves for “Janat-ul-Amrika” begging Afzal-Khan to be his rescuer. Afzal-Khan, whose character has undergone a change, provides the expected comfort to him. “I pull up the sheets to cover him, following the female tradition of the East at least in this instance” since Madina is now “something too terrible to name” for him. To soothe him, Afzal-Khan assures him that he would be taken care of: “Come on, yaar, I roll on to him, relax, shake off this Madina obsession, you’re with me, remember?” (p. 125). This affection turned into a love affair that was not serious as expected and ended with his return to Pakistan. Afzal-Khan was in an unhappy relationship with her husband but she never agreed to marry Bakri. A month later “Bakri, who only ever wanted to be a *Khadim*⁶ (lover), is dead” (p.133).

CONCLUSION

The detailed study of the text concluded that Fawzia Afzal-Khan portrays her own character as superior to all her girlfriends who represent Pakistani Woman’s identity in the memoir. She constructs her identity throughout the memoir by a constant contrast with her girlfriends portraying them as victims: ignorant, irrational, exotic, romantic, domestic and feminine in contradiction with her self-representation as a woman who is modern, independent, rational, developed, normal and masculine. She also establishes the idea that Pakistan is not the right place for a woman like her who wants to be free and successful and the USA is a suitable land offering the kind of freedom and independence she needs; in other words an “appropriate grazing ground” (Afzal-Khan 63).

⁵ A Pakistani.

⁶ Servant.

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A Historico-Cultural Review of Native American Woman's Double Spatial Marginalization in the Post-Contact Era

Abstract

The present study explores Native American woman's spatiality in the post-contact or post-colonization era and its implications on the Native American woman of contemporary America. The paper offers a historico-cultural critique of Native American woman's spatial marginalization as a result of the US Government's assimilation and acculturation policies. The present study employs Tim Cresswell's notion of normative geography to explore the socio-cultural construction and reconfiguration of Native American normative geographic structures in the post-contact era. This study claims that Euro-Americans used religion, land treaties, education institutions, and legislative acts to destabilize Native American woman's positionality within Native American normative geographies. The research concludes that the Euro-American expansionist agenda that resulted in Native American woman's double spatial marginalization continues to mar Native American spatiality in contemporary United States. Hence, to obtain socio-cultural emancipation, Native American woman needs to contest her spatially marginalized position.

Key words: *Native American Spatiality, Marginalization, Native American Woman, Post-contact Normative Geographies*

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Rock tribe protest against the North Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) is one of the major resistance movements of contemporary Native American history. What made this protest an important resistance movement in the history of Native America is the role that the Native American woman played in it. On the one hand, for the spatially marginalized Native American woman, this resistance movement was an opportunity to redefine her spatial location within the Native American normative geography. On the other hand, her participation in the anti-DAPL protest exposed the deep rooted spatio-gender inequalities prevalent in Native American society. The discussion in the following study surveys the spatialization of the Native American woman in the post-contact era and the implications of her double spatial marginalization in the contemporary era.

Fasih ur Rehman

Ph.D Scholar National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad

E-mail: fasihrkk@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Shaheena Ayub Bhatti

Director, Women Research & Resource Centre, Fatima Jinnah Women University

Mrs. Asma Qazi

Space and place are multidimensional entities. On one hand, they refer to the geographical coordinates of a physical structure, while on the other hand, they signify an individual's positionality within social hierarchies. In both scenarios, they possess meaning and thus influence the behavior of the people. However, these entities do not have inherent meaning. Rather, their meanings are inscribed by powerful entities and processes that socially or physically control the meaning-making process within a particular geographic and social setup. The subsequent meanings assert influence in multifaceted dimensions. The meaning of a place influences an individual's relationship with that particular space and establishes an individual's relation with the *other* and thus constitutes the foundations of spatial *otherness*.

The notion of spatial otherness is constituted upon certain "expectations about behavior" concerning a place (Cresswell, 1996, p. 3). Hence, a general idea about what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior concerning a particular space is developed by those agencies and processes that hold social powers. Tim Cresswell (1996) maintains that individuals and groups constitute the notion of appropriate and inappropriate conduct in the reciprocity of a place's "naturalness" (p. 5). An action is considered in place when it complies with the expected appropriate behavior, and action is considered as out of place action when it defies the expected behavior (Cresswell, 1996). The actions that are out of place are considered as transgression because they contest the naturalness and take for granted the meanings of a particular place. Consequently, it impacts the normative landscape of a particular society. Likewise, Cresswell (1996) defines normative landscapes as the social orientation of space that designates appropriateness or inappropriateness to an action within a geographical space. In other words, the constitution of normative geography takes place when some socially powerful agency entitles certain actions as right or wrong about a particular space and place.

The present study offers an historico-cultural survey of the Native American woman's positionality within Native American social and geographic spaces in the post-contact era. This study argues that Euro-Americans employed religious teachings, educational reforms, legislative acts, and land treaties to reconfigure Native American normative geographic structures upon Eurocentric models. Consequently, Native American woman, who was already spatially marginalized in the pre-contact era, became doubly marginalized in the post-contact era. In the present study, the term post-contact era means the intersection of time and place when the United States government implemented the assimilation and acculturation acts that began a new era in Native American history. The arrival of Columbus in 1492 did not altogether change the socio-cultural patterns of Native American societies, rather the Native American culture received Euro-American cultural values slowly and gradually. It is pertinent to mention here that Columbus was not the first European to discover the Americas, however, the present study takes this iconographic moment in order to signify the initiation of Europe's encounter with the region. Therefore, in this study, the term post-contact normative geographies are composed of those spatio-cultural practices that the United States government implemented under the aegis of the assimilation and acculturation programs.

Euro-Americans invaded Native America for various purposes. For instance, the Spanish colonized the Southeastern and Southwestern Native Americans to create a local peasant class. The French occupied the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River in search of saleable

goods, natural resources and engaged in fur trade with the Natives. The Russians used the Northwestern coasts and the Arctic to trade marine mammal furs with China. The British focused on expanding their territorial jurisdiction in Native America (Luebering, 2001, p.21). However, these conquests were not “one-way” events; rather, Native and Euro-American contact brought socio-cultural changes to both populations and Europe as well. With the growing territorial dominance of the Euro-Americans, European culture also exerted its influence through different ways into the Native American society. This happened particularly, during the latter half of the millennia, when settlers and Native Americans came into close contact and thus influenced each others’ cultures. Euro-Americans cherished the legacy of a centralized government, authoritarian religion, well-defined class structure, and socio-economic models and hierarchies whereas the Native Americans did not use these socio-cultural structures (Nichols, 2004, p.27).

Native American societies were culturally diversified groups that were established upon individualized socio-political, and socio-cultural patterns. For instance, the migratory Ojibwa tribes were matrilineal societies, whereas the Algonquin tribes followed patrilineal social hierarchies. In tribes like the Huron, the man worked in the fields and gathered seasonal fruits and berries, while the woman headed councils and selected the chief (Leubering, 2010, 50). On the other hand, Euro-Americans, coming from different parts of Europe, brought with them shared cultural norms. Early conquest of the Native American lands and people instilled an attitude of superiority where they considered themselves civilized and felt a responsibility to make the Native Americans socially civilized and cultured by organizing Native American societies upon Euro-American socio-cultural patterns (Nichols, 2018, p.3). To reorganize Native American society upon Euro-American models, the Euro-Americans used Christianity and military force to transform Native American societies into so-called civilized societies. Besides this, when Euro-American and the United States government was established and wielded substantive power, legislation contained Native Americans into Eurocentric socio-cultural arrangements; these laws included the establishment of reservations, land allotment acts, and creation of boarding schools on reservations.

Additionally, the socio-cultural influence informally seeped into the socio-spatial dynamics of Native societies. On one hand, these multidimensional pressures reconfigured the socio-cultural landscape of Native America, while on the other hand, they reified the spatially suppressive normative geographies of Native American society (Perdue, 2001, 7). The Native American woman became double marginalized spatially because the Eurocentric socio-cultural patterns of the eighteenth and later centuries divided Native American society into the public and private spheres that dominated Europe. This division was supported through religious teachings, definitions of gender roles, and legislative acts. According to Luebering (2010), the mission “mandated that native individuals be separated by gender”, which augmented pre-existing physical and sexual abuse of Native American woman by man (p.187). Native American patriarchy readily accepted the gendered division of the spheres for it assured them of retaining the supremacy of the Native American man over the Native American woman. Elements that supplemented Native American woman’s double spatial marginalization also included boarding schools. These schools were established on the notion of the gendered division of labor. Male children were taught subjects that would make them

useful workers in the public sphere whereas woman was taught homemaking and the art of domesticity (Perdue, 2001, p.8). Legislative acts like the 1887 General Allotment Act further compromised Native American woman's spatiality by assigning arable lands to the male heads of families (Perdue, 2001, 8). The following section presents an in-depth analysis of these different schemes that contributed and paved way for the double spatial marginalization of the Native American woman.

Spatial Marginalization through Religion

Just as they were culturally diverse, Native American societies were religiously diverse. In other words, Native American societies did not follow a single religious or belief system like the invading Christian Euro-Americans. There were hundreds of Native American tribes and clans, and the majority of them had their own belief systems, which were different from other tribes. For instance, the Ojibwe religion was founded on the Grand Medicine Society that would arrange religious ceremonies. The Grand Medicine Society is an esoteric group that acts as a "center of spiritual knowledge and a source of social prestige" (Luebering, 2011, p.39). The Carrier Natives' religion had a "great sky god and many spirits in nature" which could be contacted through dreams and visions, and they believed in "reincarnation and an afterlife" (Luebering, 2011, p. 43). The Tanaina Native Americans were "animistic" (Luebering, 2011, p. 44). The Iroquois believed in an elaborate religious cosmology that consisted of the woman falling from the sky, the deluge that is the great flood narratives, and supernaturalism, cannibalism, and star myths (Luebering, 2011, p. 49). The Natchez "venerated the Sun, which was represented by a perpetual fire kept burning in a temple" (Luebering, 2011, p. 43). The Pawnee Indians believed in star gods and performed ceremonies to entreat their presence (Leubering, 2011, p. 76). The Sioux performed the annual Sun Dance (Leubering, 2011). The Cheyenne Native Americans believed in two deities, "the Wise One Above, and the god who lived beneath the ground" (Leubering, 2011, p. 88). The Pueblo Indians believed in the Kachina religion, which is a complex belief system that comprises "hundreds of divine beings act[ing] as intermediaries between humans and God" (Leubering, 2011, p. 97). The Yuman religious belief was established upon a "supreme creator" (Leubering, 2011, p. 101) while the Navajo Indians practiced an array of ceremonies and rites that celebrated the emergence of the first people from many worlds that exist beneath the earth (Leubering, 2011, p. 104).

These multifaceted religious belief systems governed the Native American tribes. The presence of different religious belief systems made the Native American religious setup vulnerable against the institutionalized religion of Euro-Americans and thus during the contact era gave an opportunity to the Euro-Americans to impress their own socio-religious beliefs upon the Native Americans. The French, among the earliest Euro-Americans who interacted with Natives, relied on Jesuits to teach Christianity to the Native Americans. Since the French came to exploit the natural resources of America, they were not primarily concerned about the religious conversion of Natives to Roman Catholicism. However, as they established settlements on the coast, they needed the services of missionaries. Even at this stage, the work of missionaries was not necessarily to spread Christianity; rather, they worked mainly to pave the way for the colonization of Native Americans. These missionaries established churches throughout the Native lands and invited people to Christianity. English

colonizers also came to America in pursuit of commerce and territorial expansionism. The Evangelization of the Native Americans was never on the agenda list of the English. Clergies of both countries used the same methods of preaching that ranged “from fairly benign to overtly oppressive” (Leubering, 2011,p. 170). One difference between the two nationalities was that the early English brought with them a Puritan version of Christianity. These missionaries were “extremely doctrinaire ” in their religious affairs, and would torture Indians who would attempt to maintain their traditional religious practices (Leubering, 2011,p. 171). Eventually, the Quebec Act of 1774 and the U.S Bill of Rights ensured free practice of religion to the Native Americans, however, these rules never materialized.

The spread of Christianity in Native America by the Euro-Americans exerted tremendous influence on indigenous religious belief systems. The monotheistic religious culture destabilized the polytheist religious beliefs of the Native Americans. The monotheistic religious culture destabilized the polytheist religious beliefs of the Cree, Ojibwa, Chipewyan, and other Native American tribes. Christian theology cut deep into the very belief of the Native Americans that all people came from the worlds beneath the earth and that they are all equal. Christianity also taught the supremacy of the Euro-Americans and their cultures over the Native Americans, and this idea was reiterated through the lessons derived from Genesis. Native Americans were placed at the lowest level of the social strata, both culturally and spatially with the “cultural supremacy” of the Euro-Americans being extended to the spatial. Christianity stipulated spatial hierarchies, where the Euro-Americans occupied the higher position, allowing them to capture, occupy or take any portion of Native American land. At the same time, Native Americans as a whole were placed in a subordinate and secondary position to Euro-Americans and Native women were placed in the lowest strata of the spatial hierarchy of Native America.

While the Cree, Ojibwe, and Chipewyan polytheist tribes had always considered the world and its people as a product of the coupling of male and female entities, Christianity distorted this image to a great extent and propagated a “notion of single, male deity who was superior to all other deities” (Paper, 2007,p. 63). Although the linguistic barriers made it difficult for the Native Americans to understand this concept, the notion further destabilized the already ambivalent gender relations of the Native American society. It is pertinent to add that the notion of ambivalence in this study refers to the inherent discrimination prevalent in the gender relations of the Native Americans. Christian teachings enforced the “patriarchalization of Native traditional cultures” (Paper, 2007,p. 65). This imposed patriarchalization and the attitudes of the early misogynist missionaries of Christian monastic orders extended the cultural marginalization of the Native American woman, which in turn resulted in her spatial marginalization. Christian missionaries, thus, imposed Christian values upon Native Americans, which would strictly confine the Native American woman to home and the church.

Native American men and women received the teachings of Christianity differently. Traditionally, Native Americans continued their religious practices in the early contact period; however, in the era of reservations, Christianity became a means to survive the harsh privations on reservations (Luebering, 2010, p.84). Therefore, Native American men did not

readily accept Christianity until it was forced upon them. The Native American man's aversion to the new religion was rooted in his long-held superior position in comparison to that of the Native American woman and they believed that the new religion threatened their dominant position (Nichols, 2018, p.95). On the other hand, Native American women accepted Christianity because it granted them freedom from the Native American patriarchal authority. Native American woman's socio-cultural marginalization made her an easy target for Christian missionaries. She was eager to accept Christianity in the hopes of achieving cultural and spatial emancipation; however, the new religion did not give the cultural and spatial freedom that it promised or propagated. Thus neither the Native American traditional religion, nor Christianity, offered any spatial freedom to the Native American woman (Perdue, 2001, p.89).

Christianity also reinforced the Native American gendered division of labor by restructuring the Native American society upon patriarchal standards. The Christian missionaries' exaltation of male superiority and admonition that females were "lesser beings" (Paper, 2007, p. 65) widened the gender gap. Furthermore, Native American religion "mandated identification by matrilineal descent" (Paper, 2007, p. 90). However, with the arrival of Christianity, patrilineal descent was recognized in an effort to discourage matrilineal social systems, which significantly hurt women's social status. In addition, Euro-Americans dismantled Native American matri-local ritual centers that were used for different religious ceremonies. These centers were run and supervised by clan mothers who would choose and instruct the leaders. With the building of churches throughout Native American lands, the matrilineal ritual centers were destabilized and clan mothers lost the power of socio-religious preeminence. This further destabilized the normative geographies of the Native American society and put the Native American woman in a doubly marginalized position in the social hierarchy.

Furthermore, the new religion destabilized the Native American religious relationship with nature and land. In many Native American societies, farming, hunting, and food were essentially religious activities. Food, whether received through hunting or farming, was treasured as a gift of spiritual beings, and elaborate ceremonies were organized to celebrate food. Native Americans established a relationship with nature and land through these quasi-religious ceremonies. The rituals performed during hunting and after harvesting meant renewed relationship with the earth. In many tribes, like the Pawnee and Nitsitapi, female members of the tribe performed these ceremonies (Paper, 2007, p. 109). Christianity had no such traditions and discouraged Native American women from being part of any such gathering. With the passage of time, these ceremonies were rarely celebrated and Native American women who would often form the center of such ceremonies thus lost the esteemed spatial position that these rituals lent them. These religious interventions further deteriorated the Native American woman's spatial position in the Native American geographies of the post-contact era. In other words, Christianity contributed in maintaining the ambivalent normative geography of the Native American society.

Spatial Marginalization through Land Treaties and Acts

Religion was not the only way in which Eurocentric spatio-cultural norms were implemented. Euro-Americans used forced occupations, land treaties, land acts, and policies that influenced the overarching structure of normative geographies of Native America and adversely affected—indeed, disenfranchised—Native American woman's space within the normative geographies of Native America. In the following section, I discuss different acts, treaties, and legislative procedures that paved the way for destabilizing the normative geographies of Native America. However, it is important to inform the reader that since all treaties deal with the issue of land and space, I discuss only those treaties that influenced the overarching socio-spatial set up with reference to the Native American normative geography. In the present section, I explore the role of the U.S Government Civilization Fund Act 1819, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and the Dawes Act of 1887 in augmenting spatial marginalization of the Native American woman. These acts are of particular importance since they paved the way for the assimilation and acculturation of the Native American society into the Euro-American social system. In this analysis, the study does not indulge in the assessment of the acts, treaties, and policies as to whether these treaties were good or bad for any of the party; rather, it offers an analysis of the impact that these acts and treaties had upon the normative geographies of the Native American culture and spatiality. Nor does the present study dwell on what situations led the Natives and Euro-Americans to reach agreements or treaties under these acts, and whether these treaties were fulfilled or not; instead, it explores the ways these treaties changed the normative geographies of Native America and caused woman's double spatial marginalization.

Euro-Americans invaded America with a deep-rooted ethnocentric view of the world, which also developed a sense of re-organization of the Native American society upon Eurocentric socio-cultural norms. The first step towards this socio-cultural modeling began with the arrival of the missionaries and the establishment of churches in different Native American villages. The process of Christianization was slow but sure. Meanwhile, Euro-Americans also established their settlements across the present-day United States by occupying Native American lands through treaties, battles, and forced removal. Until the 1775 War of Independence, all Euro-American nations exploited Native America and its people by different means, which included the occupation of land, natural resources, and trade. After the Revolutionary War of 1775 and the foundation of a federation of states, a large portion of the North American continent came under the territorial jurisdiction of the United States. On the other hand, since the time of the arrival of the Euro-American, Native American tribes had tried to maintain their spatio-cultural sovereignty by either engaging in wars or treaties with the Euro-Americans. However, after the War of Independence, Native American tribes began to enter different treaties with the United States government. In other words, the colonization of Native Americans did not culminate until the establishment of the United States government.

The United States government continued the colonization process and considered Native Americans a challenge to their territorial expansion. Therefore, the U.S government entered into different treaties where needed and passed different laws and acts to resolve the so-called Indian issue. In this regard, the first major act that was passed by the United States

government was the Civilization Fund Act of 1819. The act was constituted to initiate a civilization project to bring Native Americans into the mainstream American socio-cultural fabric. The Civilization Fund Act of 1819 was targeted at introducing among the Native Americans the habits and art of “civilization.” Indeed, these habits and art of civilization were modeled upon the Eurocentric, or now, White Euro-American socio-cultural norms. The 1819 Act brought two decisive changes to Native American society. Firstly, it changed the means of production of sustenance so that Native Americans were coerced to abandon pre-contact modes of food production like hunting and were asked to develop agriculture as a means of food production. Second, the Act introduced the education project by which Native American children would be educated in arithmetic, reading, and writing. An annual amount of ten thousand dollars was appropriated for the implementation of the Act.

The Civilization Fund Act 1819 played a vital role in shaping the normative geographies of Native America in the nineteenth century. With the changes in the means of production, the normative geographies of Native America also changed. With the abandoning of hunting and initiation of agriculture as the primary mode of sustenance, the gender roles and spatial positioning of the Native American man and woman changed drastically. In the past, hunting had constituted not only the means of sustenance for the Native Americans, but it also established the spatially superior position of the Native American man. Hunting was an activity that required physical strength and freedom to move freely; therefore, it was considered as a masculine activity. It also allowed the Native American man to exhibit and impose his strength, and spatial control of a territory. The Native American woman rarely participated in the hunting expeditions, remained at home, and waited for the Native American man to bring the game home. Abandoning hunting meant Native American man’s resignation from his spatially superior position. On the other hand, the limited reliance on agriculture in Native American societies prior to the Civilization Fund Act had lent Native American women an important role in the field. Although Native Americans had not developed the Eurocentric model of farming, Native American woman was mainly responsible for what cultivation was performed, and these spaces were considered hers. In these spaces, the Native American woman contributed to the family income, which buoyed her status. However, the implementation of the act forced Native American women to retreat to the domestic sphere since the Native American man occupied the space of agriculture under the new law. In the pre-contact era, the gendered division of labor between hunting and cultivation defined the Native American geography. In the post-independence era, this division altogether changed and the Native American society was re-established upon a new normative geographic structure where man occupied the field, and woman was relegated to the spaces of home and domestic work. Native American woman’s limitation to home space and her labor to domestic chores further compromised her spatial position.

The second part of the Civilization Fund Act of 1819 that severely damaged the spatio-cultural orientation of the Native American normative geography was mainly related to the education of the Native Americans in areas like arithmetic, reading of the Bible, and writing English. In order to implement this section of the Act, boarding schools were established throughout Native America. In the beginning, these schools were established under the supervision of churches and were run by Protestant missionaries. Later, these church schools

were remodeled upon the format of the Carlisle Industrial Indian School. Native American children were forcibly taken from their parents and indoctrinated in Euro-American ways of living (Reyhner, 2006). These schools trained Native American boys in fields related to public spaces, whereas women were taught tasks that were compulsory in the private space of home. The process of forcibly assimilating the Native Americans into the dominant society began in these schools, and that ultimately influenced the normative geographies of Native America. Euro-American gender roles and gendered spatial allocation were enforced upon Native American children, which in later years became profoundly influential in reshaping the normative geographies of the Native American society.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 also jeopardized the normative geography of Native America. It disturbed the overarching geographic location of the Native American tribes. With the passage of time, the number of Euro-Americans in Native territories increased while the number of Native Americans decreased every passing day due to murders in wars and deaths caused by diseases like smallpox and influenza. When they had first arrived in Native America, Euro-Americans had established their settlements in the areas that were of little or no use to the Native Americans. However, with the passage of time, the settlers began encroaching on lands that were significant for the Native Americans. These encroachments were triggered by either the lust for occupying lands that were suitable for residential purposes, valuable for their agriculture, or offered valuable natural resources. With the American War of Independence and the establishment of the United States, the ever-increasing lust for land grew among Euro-Americans and with it, the greater mistreatment of Native Americans.

The United States government's assimilation project failed miserably in the first quarter of the nineteenth century in which the notion of the Native American's otherness played a pivotal role in shaping the U.S government policy towards the Native Americans and their lands. Consequently, the United States government passed different legislation to usurp Native American lands. These acts began with the voluntary removal programs that included financial settlements and culminated in the 1830 Indian Removal Act. Before the 1830s Indian Removal Act, Native American tribes, including the Cherokee and Choctaw, were coaxed into voluntarily relocating with fringe benefits. After the passage of the 1830 Indian Removal Act, the tribes located on the east bank of the Mississippi River were forced to move towards the west bank of the river into specifically allocated reservations. These reservations were established in "Indian appropriation bills" passed by the United States government. Among these different bills, the most famous is the Appropriation Bill for Indian Affairs of 1851, which paved the way for the Indian Appropriation Act of 1871. Many of these displaced and relocated tribes not only lost their lands, but they were also forced to adopt the Euro-American socio-cultural patterns in the newly allocated reservation. According to Perdue (2001), the United States government, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), enforced the Euro-American construction of gender by "issuing ration to men for their nuclear families" and employed matrons to teach "domestic skills" to the Native American woman which made women "submissive" to men (p. 7). The relocation and subsequent devaluation of the Native American woman drastically changed ancient relationships with the lands. The normative geographic structure that developed in these

reservations engendered a sense of alienation in the Native American woman. The Native American woman, who was at the margin at her ancestral lands, became further marginalized and lost even that sense of location in the reservation land. This lack of association hindered her emotional attachment to the space of the reservation. Consequently, the Native American woman developed a sense of out-of-placeness or displacement on the reservation.

Since the United States government held power in the post-contact era, it dictated the normative geographies. The Dawes Act of 1887 or the General Allotment Act was crucial in reshaping the overarching normative geography of Native America since it introduced an era of individual land ownership, which had never been practiced by Native Americans previously. According to the Act, the male head of the family was eligible to purchase the allotted land, and the woman was denied any such power to possess land. The act aimed at equipping the Native Americans to take responsibility for their socio-economic conditions as per Euro-American socio-economic systems. However, the Act caused huge disintegration to the tribal family system, consequently making the Native American woman more dependent upon the Native American man. Native American woman's socio-economic dependency compromised her spatiality with reference to her roles and position in the Native American society. In short, in order to synchronize the normative geographies of Native America with those of the United States spatio-cultural norms, the United States government implemented the Dawes Act in 1887, and this had a profoundly negative effect on the status of a Native woman.

CONCLUSION

Religious teachings, educational programs, land acts, and treaties augmented the gender bias in the Native American normative geographies in the post-contact era. Consequently, the Native American woman's spatial position changed adversely. The Eurocentric hierarchal pyramid was imposed on Native societies to the degree that a woman who had been in the lower stratum originally became spatially double marginalized. This spatial double marginalization is still prevalent in contemporary Native American society, making Native American woman's socio-cultural and socio-economic emancipation challenging. The Dakota Access Pipeline (DPAL) is a contemporary example of the US government's attempt to occupy Native American lands of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and reconfigure the Native American normative geographic structures. Hence, the anti-DPAL protest offers an opportunity for the Native American woman to contest the said reconfiguration of the normative geographic structures and thus challenge Native American patriarchal and US spatial hegemony. Within this context, contemporary Native American women may use the Standing Rock protest as an opportunity to spatially transgress the normative geographic structures that the US government aims to implement in the backdrop of the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. In this context, the present study suggests that the issue of the Native American woman's marginalization may further be explored to understand the impact of the anti-DAPL project on the Native American woman's emancipatory movements.

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Remarriage of Elderly Widows and Widowers in Pakhtun Culture

Abstract

This study explores the trend of re-marriage among elderly widowed persons in the Pakhtun culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The universe of this study is Tehsil Timergara of District Lower Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Respondents were identified through purposive sampling techniques. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview guide from 10 elderly widows and 10 widowers. Being male researchers, we conducted in-depth interviews with widowers, while data was collected from widows by a female research assistant. This study reveals that in Pakhtun culture the re-marriage of elderly widowed people, particularly among widows, is rare. Female respondents were not interested in re-marriage. The barriers identified in the way of their remarriage are biological, cultural, and economic factors. Very few widowers get remarried and remarriage depends upon their physical condition, authority status, financial position, and socio-cultural background of the concerned family.

Keywords: Remarriage, Pakhtun culture, Elderly widower, Elderly widow,

INTRODUCTION

Old age is a relative term that varies from society to society. In developed and developing countries, old age is seen from different perspectives. In most developed countries, where the average life expectancy is comparatively higher than the developing countries; the chronological age of 65 years is marked as the beginning of old age, while in developing countries the chronological age of 60 years is considered the beginning of old age. However, according to UNO, the age limit for becoming old is 60+ years (Gorman, 1999). In Pakistan, being a developing country, the age limit of 60 years is considered as the beginning of old age or retirement age limit (Ashiq & Asad, 2017). The aged population consists of a significant number of elderly widows and widowers, though elderly widows outnumber the widowers due to their higher life expectancy and marriages with older men than themselves. As a result, widowhood in old age is a common experience for most women (UNO, 2015). In the context of Pakistan, the demographic transition and the resultant increase in the population of elderly population began in the 1990s (Arif & Ahmed, 2010).

Hamid Alam

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Malakand, Chakdara, Dir Lower, KPK

Email: hamid.alam@uom.edu.pk

Dr. Basharat Hussain

Email: basharat@uop.edu.pk

Dr. Sajjad Hussain

Email: sajjad.hussain@uom.edu.pk

According to the 1998 population census of Pakistan, there were 2.7 million widows in the female population of 69 million. The largest number of widows (442,179) was found in the age group of 75 years and above, followed by 416,773 in ages between 60 to 64 years, and 326,176 between 50 to 54 years (Hasan, 2010). At the same time, in 2013, 19 percent of older men were widowers against 52 percent of widows aged 60+ (Zaidi, Stefanoni, & Khalil, 2019). A study of existing literature reveals that very few studies have been conducted regarding the trend of re-marriage of elderly widows and widowers (Osamani, Matlabi & Rezaei, 2017) even though re-marriage may bring a positive impact on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). Peng (2016) argues that the practice of re-marriage of aged people is increasing; however, they face certain hurdles in the way of their re-marriages.

The trend of re-marriage is different among elderly women and men (Osamani, Matlabi & Rezaei, 2017). The practice of re-marriage is found to be higher among elderly widowers than elderly widows. Regarding remarriage of elderly widowed persons, it is believed that “women mourn while men replace”. It is considered more difficult for an elderly widow to absorb the loss of her husband's death. The bereaved elderly woman mourns the loss of her deceased husband. In contrast to elderly widows, widowed men quickly find a helpmate and confidante to take the place of their late wives. Older women outnumber their male peers, and many of them face demographic obstacles to remarriage, even if they are willing to the idea of remarriage (Davidson, 2002; Carr, 2004). Two factors are considered responsible in the way of elderly people's remarriage i.e. Biological and socio-cultural

Reasons for variation in the trend of remarriage

Biological factors, in terms of physical and reproductive health, are considered responsible for gender differences in the remarriage of elderly widowed people. Men and women having good health status are expected to be sexually more active than those elderly widowed people having weak health status. Overall, men are more likely than women to be sexually active and will demonstrate better sexual interest and performance. Gender differences in terms of remarriage increase with old age (Lindau & Gavrilova, 2010). In Pakistan, women face different socio-cultural and economic challenges in the form of gender inequalities, limited employment opportunities, paid work, access to health services, and health outcomes. Women are confronting illiteracy, economic dependency, early marriages, poor medical facilities, and a weak standard of life and this situation negatively affects women's health (Nasrullah1 & Bhatti, 2012). It is argued that, as a result of weak health, elderly widows are less interested in sex and re-marriage compared to elderly widowers. Men are more likely than women to be sexually active, and are therefore more interested in sex. These gender differences increase with age and are greatest among the group of 75 to 85 years: 38.9% of men compared with 16.8% of women were sexually active, 70.8% versus 50.9% of those who were sexually active had a good quality sex life, and 41.2% versus 11.4% were interested in sex.

Multidimensional socio-cultural factors create hurdles in the way of elderly widowed people's remarriage. Usually, socio-cultural hurdles in the remarriage of elderly people include the negative attitude of children towards their parent's remarriage, poverty, and

loyalty to the ex-spouse (Burch, 1990). Socio-cultural factors, particularly in rural areas, are considered more responsible for the lack of widows' remarriage. Moreover, the low level of literacy and low socio-economic status of women throughout the course of their life leave older women in a vulnerable situation and widows are not therefore interested in remarriage (Zaidi, Stefanoni, & Khalil, 2019). It is argued that the desire of elderly widows for remarriage may create conflict with children. Resultantly, the children may withdraw their financial support. In addition, gender difference in remarriage may be linked with social support which they receive in old age. Some researchers opine that men are least interested in availing the required and available social support. In addition, men are less active in seeking social support, while women usually receive more social support from their family and friends. As a result, elderly women receive more financial and emotional support from adult children than men (Sutor, Gilligan, Johnson, and Pillemer, 2014). As elderly widows avail more psycho-social and economic support, so they do not feel the need for remarriage, unlike the elderly widowers. It is considered a challenge for the well-known theories to explain the phenomenon of remarriage among elderly people. However, this research study follows the rational choice model to explain the practice of remarriage among elderly people. Elderly people get remarried if they perceive that remarriage brings more benefits than singlehood (Carr, 2004). Elderly people perceive benefits in the form of emotional intimacy and other related advantages.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantification of the remarriage trend among elderly widows and widowers was not possible, therefore qualitative methodology was adopted. The universe of this study is Tehsil Timergara, District Lower Dir. Respondents were categorized into two groups on the basis of gender i.e. elderly widowed women and widowers. 10 respondents were interviewed from each group. The marital status of all the female respondents was single after widowhood. Results showed that the trend of remarriage does not exist among elderly widows in Pukhtun culture. Among male respondents, data is collected from 5 elderly men who had experienced widowhood and got remarried while 5 male respondents, who were still widowers, were selected. Respondents were identified through the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling techniques are suitable for this study because only the bereaved person can fully explain the experience of widowhood and the hurdles in the way of remarriage. Data is collected from the respondents through a semi-structured interview guide and observation. There were ethical hurdles during the data collection process. In addition, there was a wide gap of age between the researchers and respondents, and it was not an easy task to collect data from elderly men about this sensitive and personal matter. The local culture does not allow young people to talk with senior citizens regarding personal matters. Moreover, there were possibilities of discussions regarding the sexual experience of the respondents. To overcome the issue of data collection, we took two steps.

1-For data collection from male respondents, I requested and involved those elderly men in the data collection process with whom the male respondents could frankly discuss their feelings and widowhood experiences. Before the involvement of facilitators in data collection, we briefed them about the purpose of data collection as well as the ethical considerations of the research. With the help of such facilitators, we got the consent of the

respondents for data collection and collected data from respondents in their houses or other suitable places where it was possible to ensure privacy.

2- Pakhtun culture is strictly sex-segregated. Being a male researcher, it was not possible for me to collect data from female respondents. Data from female respondents was, therefore, collected by a qualified female research assistant after the necessary guidance and training. From female respondents, data was collected in their houses and recorded in an audio recorder which was later analyzed thematically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biological reasons of elderly remarriage and singlehood

Biological needs and sexual satisfaction are considered important reasons for remarriage among elderly widowers. Kalra, Subramanyam, and Pinto (2011) also argue that sexuality among elderly people is misunderstood. Human beings can enjoy a healthy sexual life even in old age. In Pakhtun culture, the single living of an elderly widower is considered culturally acceptable behavior, while remarriage is a social stigma. Usually, family members resist the remarriage of elderly widowers since it is considered to be reprehensible behavior by society. However, if the children realize that the biological needs of their widowed father are uncontrollable, then they favor the remarriage of such elderly widowers. The remarriage of such elderly widowers depends upon their socio-economic status, nature of relationship with children, physical condition, and authority status. A male respondent of 67 years who got remarried comments:

“I have sexual needs and remarriage was the only legal way to satisfy it”.

Another male respondent of 63 years stated:

“My late wife was old and often remained ill, hence unable to satisfy my sexual needs. My sexual desires were unfulfilled for the last so many years. For the fulfillment of such needs I got remarried”. \\\

Another male respondent commented:

“It is a blessing for me in old age to have a young wife, who can easily fulfill my sexual needs”

Unlike the male respondents, female respondents were reluctant to discuss their sexual life. The reason behind this is their socialization in Pakhtun culture which restricts sexual discussion with any person other than the life partner. Women are strictly expected to observe *Purdah* (veil) so that there is no chance of illegal sexual engagement for women. Female respondents briefly handled such questions that in old age (60 years and above) women lack the sexual drive and hence do not welcome participation in sexual activities. Kalra, Subramanyam, and Pinto (2011) found that women have a comparatively low level of sexual desire in their old age. Usually, working women have more active sexual lives than non-working elderly women. Elderly women usually face the challenge of a low level of vaginal lubricants and resultantly painful intercourse (Granville & Pregler, 2018). In addition, painful body condition, lack of sex-related facilities in the form of a separate room, easily accessible

bathroom and water with suitable temperature also contribute towards limited or no participation of elderly women in sexual activities. Moreover, women show less interest in pro-sexual activities such as kissing, hugging or holding hands etc (Kalra, Subramanyam & Pinto, 2011).

Sociological reasons of elderly singlehood and remarriage

In addition to biological factors, sociological factors also play an important role in remaining single and the remarriage of elderly widows and widowers. As Pakhtun society is a male dominant society, some elderly widowers can challenge the sociological barriers which create hurdles in their remarriage. However, the remarriage of an elderly widow is considered almost impossible. In addition to biological factors, various personal, psychological, and socio-cultural factors are considered responsible for the lack of remarriage among elderly widows. Widows themselves as well as the culture discourage the elderly widow's remarriage. Although Islam, being a major religion of the people of the universe, favors the remarriage of widows, yet people prefer cultural values over religion. Elderly widows having children prefer to live without marriage. Children are considered an asset and a hope for old age. Moreover, remarriage in old age is considered disloyalty with the deceased husband. If an elderly widow agrees to remarry, then also there are few chances of the remarriage because in case of remarriage the new husband is usually not willing to accept the care of her children from her previous husband (Thomas, 2008). In addition, men's preference of marriage with an unmarried woman is also considered a barrier in the remarriage of elderly widowers.

Social status and remarriage of elderly widowers

Analysis of the views of male respondents shows that the remarriage of widowers depends upon their social status in the form of authority, decision-making power, personal income, and control over resources. Male respondents with such resources can easily enter into remarriage, since economic stability plays a more dominant role in the remarriage of elderly widowers. Peng (2016) also argues that economic stability is a major factor in remarriage. Some poor widowers were single despite their desire for remarriage while economically stable respondents having the desire of remarriage were married. In this regard a respondent commented:

“I had financial resources and could afford the expenses of remarriage. My remarriage was impossible if my children had to afford the expenses of my remarriage”.

Another male respondent who was remarried expressed his views as

“At the time of marriage I was lacking cash in hand, however my property is in my control. I sold a piece of land and then got married”.

Analysis shows that usually, the trend of elderly widower's remarriage is higher in families with low educational background. However, in educated families, the widowers themselves as well as their family members condemn such marriages.

Children's pressure and remarriage

Pressure of children prevents elderly widows and widowers from remarriage. In Pakhtun culture, remarriage of elderly father/mother is considered a stigma for children. Sometimes, the sons of widowers resist their father's re-marriage on the ground that such marriage may lead to the birth of children and this will affect their share in property and inheritance. Moreover, the adult children of elderly widowers resist their father's marriage on the grounds of their worries about the future of their stepmother. Usually, men prefer to marry young women. A young wife of an elderly man is expected to have a higher life expectancy than such a man. In the case of the father's death, the remarriage of the stepmother is considered a stigma by children. In addition, the care of a stepmother is also considered a burden by stepsons and daughters. If she remains single, then there are chances of illegal sexual activities. Pakistan is geographically located in a region that has been called the "Patriarchal Belt" (Tabassu, 2016). Society acknowledges men to be more authoritative than women. Furthermore, financial resources in the form of property are usually in the control of elderly males. Consequently, some widowers absorb the pressure of children and remarry. A male respondent who was willing despite his willingness for remarriage commented:

"At the time of widowhood, I was physically strong and willing for marriage. My adult children, particularly my sons threatened me in case of marriage....."

Sometimes, the widowers ignore children's pressure if they feel that the children are unable to take care of them. In this regard, a male respondent who was remarried stated;

"Although my children were resisting my remarriage, however, none of them were ready to take the responsibility of my care....."

Under such circumstances, the economically stable widowers prefer to remarry with a woman of weak socio-economic status at the cost of financial incentives for the bride as well as her family.

Miscellaneous reasons for remarriage and singlehood

Although family members usually resist the remarriage of their widowed father, if the children come to know about the illegal sexual involvement of their father, then children favor such remarriage. Some male respondents, who got remarried, had faced the charges of sexual relations with women of weak socio-economic background. This situation compels the children to arrange the remarriage of their elderly widowed father.

Sometimes, the remarriage of elderly widowers is allowed under genuine conditions. In Pakhtun culture, sons, daughters, and daughters-in-law are considered responsible for the care of elder members of the family. During the daily routine of the house, men are usually not present and are busy in their work outside the house. Under such circumstances, the daughters and daughters-in-law have to take care of the elderly widowed person in the house. At times there may be physical exposure to female family members, e.g. during help in dress change or help in the toilet. In addition, sometimes the elderly widower suffers from such a disease that there are chances of his physical exposure to family members. In Pakhtun

culture, physical exposure to any person other than a life partner is condemned by society. Some family members foresee this situation and permit the remarriage of their elderly widowed father.

CONCLUSION

The practice of remarriage is rarely found among elderly widowed persons in Pakhtun culture. Very few elderly people get remarried. The practice of remarriage is higher among widowers than widows. Biological and socio-cultural factors are considered responsible for the remarriage of widows and widowers. Usually, elderly widowers, having strong biological and socio-cultural status get the opportunity of remarriage. Moreover, economic position also plays a pivotal role in the remarriage or singlehood of elderly widowers and widows. Weak physical condition and socio-cultural status may prevent elderly widows from remarriage. Elderly widows have weak biological drive and are least interested in sex and remarriage. Furthermore, social factors are also responsible for the lack of elderly widows' remarriage. Remarriage of elderly widows is considered disloyalty to the deceased husband. Elderly widows having children, avoid remarriage because children are considered a source of socio-economic and psychological support and mature children, resist the remarriage of their elderly widowed mother, considering it a matter of their honor to provide for her financial and social needs.

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Subverting the Trope of ‘Agentic West and Passive Rest’ In *Shadow of the Crescent Moon* and *The Miraculous True Story* of Nomi Ali

Abstract

*The white Western feminism essentializes “Third World” women as monolithic passivity in binarist relationship with Western women’s supposed agency, a colonial theoretical position on eastern women. Mohanty subverts this universalization of Eastern women’s praxis in homogenized colonial discourses which conceptualize eastern women’s situation with totalizing indifference to the diversities of their socio-cultural life. Employing Mohanty’s theoretical stance on white western feminism’s essentialism, this article analyzes two works of Pakistani literature in English *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2015) and *The Miraculous True History* of Nomi Ali (2019). The article focuses on how these works place their female subjects with varying agencies into their particular historical political praxis and portray agentic individuals who lay claim to their body and sexuality on one hand and demystify the West’s essentialism on the other.*

Keywords: *First World Feminism, Third World Feminism, agency, essentialism, Pakistani Literature in English.*

INTRODUCTION

Feminist literature and theories from Third World locations have sought to challenge and displace First World feminism’s ethnocentric and essentialist tropes about non-Western “Third World” women. The constitution of “Third World women” as a monolithic subject by the Western Feminisms and their binarist logic of ‘an agentic West and passive rest’ has been a focus of scrutiny since the publication of Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s *Under the Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* (1984). Mohanty, in her seminal work, stressed the need for placing the agency/passivity of the third world on “concrete historical and political praxis” instead of employing “sociological and anthropological universals” (Mohanty, 1984, pp. 334,337) which were widely popular with First World feminists of the second wave. She suggested to deconstruct and displace the essentialism of Western

Noor ul Qamar Qasmi

Lecturer, Department of English, Government College University, Faisalabad

Dr. Ghulam Murtaza

Associate Professor, Department of English. Government College University Faisalabad

Qasim Shafiq

PhD Candidate, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad

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discourses by situating the multifaceted and diverse agency of particular subjects within specificities of their ethnic, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. Taking a cue from Mohanty (1984), many theorists and anglophone novelists from postcolonial locations like Pakistan have subscribed to her politics of historical praxis. The postcolonial writings from these locations showcase a variety of “Third World” female subjects who are seen negotiating their multilayered and complex agencies in their particular contexts. Aroosa Kanwal (2018) argues with reference to Pakistani Anglophone writings: “Rooted in the multifaceted and multi-dimensional nature of women’s subjection and agency, Pakistani Anglophone writing indubitably calls for new as well as alternative ways of thinking and acting” (p. 129). This recourse to alternative ways of thinking by Pakistani novelists becomes more pertinent in the aftermath of 9/11 as the West’s essentialist representation gained a neo-orientalist currency. The fictional writings of Fatima Bhutto and Uzma Aslam Khan stand out in this regard as they foreground the diverse agency of their female subjects. Taking insights from the theoretical notions of Mohanty and her predecessors, this research paper seeks to interpret and analyze the multifaceted and diverse agency and subjectivity of the particular ‘Third World’ female subjects portrayed in Fatima Bhutto’s *Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2015) and Uzma Aslam Khan’s *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* (2019).

Theoretical Framework: Rescuing Third World Women From Eurocentric Discursive Regimes

Mohanty’s *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* (1984) is a groundbreaking and enduring contribution to the polemic on agentic first world women vs passive third world women binarism which manifests itself in the liberal and radical First world feminist critiques. In this essay, she deconstructs First World feminism’s monolithic, essentialist and ethnocentric construction and representation of third world women in their writings. She reveals how these efforts at theorizing “third world women” are totally oblivious to the diversities, material realities, ideologies, cultural and historical mores, and institutional dynamics that surround the lives and bodies of the women they seek to theorize. Mohanty (1984) accuses Western feminists of the preconceived construction of eastern women as a coherent group, the view that conveniently ignores the differences of class, location, race, and ethnicity (p. 336). This presumptive and stereotyped representation of all western women as a coherent homogeneity can be seen as a “colonizing move” which paves way for universalizing colonial strategy that obscures women’s agency through homogenous systematization of the varying experiences of women’s different groups, erasing thereby the resistant specificities of the margins (Mohanty, 1984, p. 352). This is how the Western feminist discourse reduces the non-Western women to ‘colonial others’ by subjecting them to the lenses of “secondary sociological and anthropological universals” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 337). Mohanty detects the orientalist, essentialist and ethnocentric imperative behind western feminism’s one-size-fits-all construction of other women as passive victims of oppression, hegemonic patriarchy, and violence. For Mohanty, this totalization and oversimplification operates in an utter denial of the complexities and diversities of feminine experience in different spatiotemporal settings and effectively decimates any arguments on the difference. This construction sorts the women into two categories: western women who are active, liberated, and regulating their own bodies and sexuality, and third-world women who are uneducated, victimized, and passively subservient to sexual repression. This archetypal

grouping fixes them into socio-politically powerless fixity (Mohanty 339) which problematizes any possibility of transition. This myth of the active west and the passive rest operates on the trope of victimized women: universally dependent, condemned to masculine sexual and colonial violence, passive cogs in the patriarchal family system and developmental procedures, incorrigibly worsened by religion.

Mohanty argues that western feminist writings homogenized third-world women on the assumption of “shared dependencies”. She cites these lines from Cutrufelli (1983) as a specimen of homogenization as in the claim that “all African women are politically and economically dependent” (cited in Mohanty, 1984, p. 343). This presumptive sociological grouping, according to Mohanty, imbues an ahistorical powerlessness without due consideration to the specification of location and social networks of power that subordinate them (Mohanty, 1984, p. 340). Mohanty deems it as discursive colonization which subjects them to sexual and political manipulation before their placement into social patterns (p. 340). Mohanty (1984) finds similar lacunae in the western feminist analysis of kinship systems and their religio-cultural contexts. The patriarchal family system that affects the whole sociological group of women operates independent of class and cultural variations system. Consequently, it results in positing an unchanging model of family over time and space. For example, *all* Arab and Muslim women are put into monolithic oppressed communities, homogenously subservient to patriarchy since the era of the prophet Muhammad. This argument conveniently places them “outside history” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 342). Mohanty asserts that many like Juliette Minces are guilty of perpetuating and popularizing this skewed and “almost identical vision” (p. 342) for Muslim womanhood. She contends that reductive and simplistic ascription of veiling to internalization of Islamic injunction is given as the only explanation without any recourse to economic and security perspective. She mentions Modares to assert that Muslim women are seen as an unrelated category upon whom an ‘Islamic Theology’ has been superimposed (p. 342).

A similar reductionism plagues western feminism’s analysis of the relationship of third-world women to the economic system. Mohanty (1984) reveals how such analysis homogenizes women as universal dependents across cultures and classes. This practice results in producing a category of women that is devoid of its socio-economic-political agency. These simplistic formulations cement the oppressive binarist constructions which nullify any possibility of the attribution of agency to the non-western women.

Mohanty (1984) explains how this attribution of passivity/victimhood/subservience to non-Western Third World women through collective othering is born out of ghettoizing tendencies. “Beyond sisterhood, there is still racism, colonialism and imperialism!,” laments Mohanty (p. 348). Patricia Hill Collins (1986) validates Mohanty’s stance on the imperial and colonial impulses of the second wave white feminism by asserting that the oppositional differences between the First World and the Third world women cement into the binary of superiority/inferiority, a hierarchy strengthened by “political economies of domination and subordination” (p. 520). Therefore, Mohanty (1984), justifiably, detects the so-called “colonialist move” in this constitution of a colonial Other. Taking a cue from Foucault and Said, she asserts that Western feminism engages in the discursive politics of sexual difference

about third world women to posit a positive self-representation. The tropes like “the veiled woman, the powerful mother, the chaste virgin, the obedient wife” (p. 352) are circulated in order to cement an image of non-western women as a universal category frozen in time and space. On the other hand, the western woman is established as progressive, unfettered, and enlightened. This maneuver buttresses the sense of superiority of the western women which automatically hinges on depriving others of their agency and subjectivity.

Mohanty suggests countering these imbalances and retrieving the agency of third-world subjects through the strategy of ‘context-specific differentiated analysis’ which carefully historicizes Third World women. She cites Maria Mies’ work (1982) as an example of a context-specific, situated, and politically focused analysis: “Mies’ analysis of this particular group of women is situated at the center of a hegemonic, exploitative world market” (Mohanty, 1984, p. 345). For Mohanty, situatedness should be employed as a countermeasure to rid the knowledge of its “hegemonic humanistic problematic” (p. 352). She cautions against trivializing the nature of specific acts of oppression and struggle by uprooting them from their situatedness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mohanty’s theoretical underpinnings resonate across theory and imaginative literature. They have engendered an array of scholarly critiques within feminist scholarship on the parameters set by her. Western feminism has been questioned by a variety of intersecting feminist strands, for example, black feminism, postcolonial feminism, transnational feminism, ecofeminism, and Islamic feminism that have derived their inspiration from her to propose alternate epistemologies that disturbed anthropocentric maneuvers of Western epistemes. For example, the reductive trope of oppressed veiled Muslim women has received an additional focus owing to its wider political implications. Khan (2005) points out the flaw of (Canadian Nation’s) imagination that conceives Third World women as static fixtures and subservient victims to patriarchal violence and Islamic practice of veil further deteriorates the situation for the oppressed women (pp. 2023-2024). Myra Macdonald (2006) argues that discursive representation of veil serves as a strategy against Muslim women and Islam:

Expressions of surprise, even in the twenty-first century, that veiled Muslim women can appear as Olympic athletes, “suicide bombers,” feminists, politicians, musicians, or even comedians, underline the tenacity of beliefs that Islamic veiling is intrinsically incompatible with women’s agency in the construction of their identities. (p. 7)

As a consequence of Mohanty’s intervention, the notions of feminine agency, which was defined by western feminism exclusively with reference to the opposition and resistance to patriarchy, have been subjected to the element of historical analyses of the relation of particular subjectivities to power. Joseph D. Parker’s (2012) insight on the issue is that feminist resistant agency emerges from non-totalizable, incommensurable contradictions that refute Eurocentric monolithic subjection. These contradictions resist totalizing coherence under the modern power/knowledge paradigm and expose exploitative epistemic violence (pp. 15-16). The third-world feminist agency now stands poised to challenge the local and

global patriarchy as well as to rescue itself from the discursive regime of orientalist/neo-oriental epistemic violence of its own gender from the West. It can now be seen, says Parker (2012), as re-envisioning the stance in a social locational specificity to dismantle modern discursive regime (p. 1).

Mohanty's article has been instrumental in initiating certain lines of inquiry that have focused on the representation of the "Third World women" in the western discursive regimes. The scholarship has been preoccupied with essentialism and monolithic constructions about the "Third World women". Parameswaran (1996) appropriates Mohanty's theoretical notions to analyze the media or journalistic coverage of "Third World women" in the US print media. Mabro (1991) combined Said and Mohanty's theoretical lenses to examine the Western travelogues' tendency to ascribe an essentialist and monolithic identity to Arab women. Mabro concludes that these elitist and racist travelogues employ generalizations and stereotypes to deny the Middle Eastern women of their complex and multivalent agencies. In the same vein, Doezenia (2001) focuses on First World feminism's obsession with the 'third world prostitutes'. She too detects the colonial interventionist agenda of Western feminism which is aimed at advancing the feminist interest of the first world feminism instead of those which truly benefit the sex workers.

Chela Sandoval (2012) followed Mohanty to become one of the leading proponents and advocates of black, third world, and postcolonial feminism. She examines the "oppositional consciousness" that exists between the First world feminism, which she labels as hegemonic feminism, and the Third world feminism. Uma Narayan (2009) expands the scholarship on the representation and counter representation. She warns against the pitfalls of answering essentialism with essentialism. She deems cultural essentialism as counterproductive and harmful for the global feminist cause. She champions Mohanty's agenda of situatedness and contextualism to analyze women's subordination. She asserts that the abstract generalization drives the authentic concerns about the women's agency and subjections out of the limelight. Asma Mansoor (2016) examines how the third world feminist discourse employs the theoretical notion and terms borrowed from First world feminism. These derivative terms carry the cultural baggage and further solidify the colonial binarism between First world feminism and the Third world feminism. She stresses the need to radically revise the theoretical notions like 'marginalization'. Mansoor (2016) explicates her attempt at reconfiguring this term in her Third world conceptual mould. She, on the contrary, herself a Third World woman, views herself not as a disempowered margin, rather as a space of agentic reconfiguration, processed by discursive permeability (p. 2). Vanja Floryd (2019) views *Burnt Shadows* (2009) by Kamila Shamsie as a representative work of anglophone Pakistani writings that subscribes to Mohanty's manifesto of counter representation by investing its characters with a greater degree of agency and subjectivity.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Feminist Agency in *Shadow of the Crescent Moon*

Pakistan fiction writers have a knack for delineating agentic feminine individuals who are in control of their bodies and sexuality. Bhutto's debut fiction *Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2015) disrupts the above-discussed homogenized constructions by portraying the

multidimensional and multi-layered nature of women's agency, subjectivity, oppression, and resistance. She replaces a reductive one-dimensional image of women with a pulsating and vibrant portrayal like that of Samarra and Mina from *Shadow of the Crescent Moon*. By staying clear of any essentialist portrayal of its female characters, the novel subscribes to Mohanty's double-edged strategy of "internal critique of hegemonic "Western" feminisms" on one hand and on the other, formulates "autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 51).

Bhutto rebuts a totalized image of "third world" women by positing radical and subversive agency with her female characters. She ably deconstructs and destabilizes the assumptions about Western women's Others. *The Shadow* (2015) establishes itself as the work of a politically conscious author who has exhibited a cognizance of the ethnocentric and colonizing practices. Her approach is one of her interviews resonates with Mohanty: "I also realized that the notion in the West about the status of South Asian women is skewed and that is why millions of South Asian women are reduced to merely one idea" (Bhutto as cited in Banerjee, 2013).

The Shadow (2015), set in war-on-terror-struck tribal regions of Pakistan, relates the story of five young people – two of them women – living in a turbulent world. The novel which at the beginning promises to be the story of three brothers, winds down to the analysis of how Sammara, the female protagonist, forms and exercises her complex and fearless agency in a place where fundamentalists, the state, society, and deeply entrenched patriarchy jostle with each other in complex power relations. She emerges as an extraordinarily powerful, real, quite poised to break stereotypes of homogenization. Sammara, along with the other women of Mir Ali, a town in erstwhile FATA, lies at the epicenter of torment and turbulence caused by Talibanization and the War on Terror. Like the women of Sean O'Casey's plays of war-torn Ireland, they are undaunted in their bond and a sense of ownership to that town while the men around them flee.

Fatima Bhutto's novel is a classic example of Mohanty's call for situatedness as it accords due diligence to the locatedness of spatio-temporal setting. Bhutto delineates violence, seeping fundamentalism, insurgency, sectarian tensions, and its devastating consequences. The surveillance from drones and military presence as a part of the war on terror adds to the complexities of the place, which makes it too risky for a family to be all together in one mosque (Bhutto, 2015, p. 101). The turbulence resulted from the fact that "two aeroplanes hit foreign buildings, this is what people in Mir Ali heard" (Bhutto, 2015, p. 40). The five main characters carve out subjectivities when "betrayal, allegiances, family ties and resilience come head-to-head with love, liberalism, progression and changing ideology" (Sethna, 2014). Sammara's agency is shaped by this particular historical and political praxis.

Bhutto has portrayed Sammara as fiercely autonomous and non-submissive. The seeds of her rebellion lie in her childhood and girlhood. Being the daughter of a dissident Ghazan Afridi, she had caught the wind of dissidence and nonconformity. Samarra liked cricket and horse riding and shooting pellet guns. She mastered driving her father's 150cc bike which he had got smuggled from Kabul. She accompanied her father during the chilliest of winters and

survived on fishing trout. “When Ghazan Afridi went fishing for brown trout in the icy streams of the northern valleys, Samarra held the spotted fish with two fingers hooked into its mouth as it thrashed against the rocks, its gills bursting with fresh air” (Bhutto, 2015, p. 9). When her father brought AK47, she “field-stripped them with her father” (Bhutto, 2015, p. 9). She retained her composure and “walked straight across the gravel with her head held high” (Bhutto, 2015, p. 10). When she was stopped from going to bigger cities for higher education, she did not give up. She started reading second-hand physics, comic books, and Rahman Baba’s poetry. Through her indomitable spirit and resistance, she extracted permission to study at a university in the city close to the tribal areas.

When her father does not return, she helps her mother cope with the loss. In the hue and cry of visiting mourners, she consoles her mother with her resilience. She says to her mother: “Nothing ever happens to the brave” and “[y]ou don’t cry for a man in hiding. You don’t mourn for a man you have not buried” (Bhutto, 2015, p. 25). She refuses to leave her city in turbulent times because she does not like to leave Mir Ali, to walk on the roads that carry no memory of her life (Bhutto, 2015, p. 95). Later on, when she is abandoned by lifelong love-interest in Aman who moves to the US, Samarra grows stronger than ever after Aman’s betrayal: she does not feel dejected, rather she realizes her individuality. She finds an ally in Aman’s younger brother Hayat a separatist, who is in turn fascinated by her courage and sense of initiative. They both are impelled by the convergence of the understanding that “pain is of no consequence when fighting for the collective” (Bhutto, 2015, p. 150).

As Samarra moves towards the final act of subversion, she is invested with ‘white rage’ against the multilayered forces she is faced with. As a fully empowered agentic individual, she has several subject positions available to her. She chooses one at her will. She wields her anger and loss as a weapon for forming an agency that is mired in the situatedness of her experience and socio-political ethics of specificities. There is no singular explanation for what she does at the end. She is impelled by a plethora of motives and factors outside the knowledge framework of western feminist agency and passive formulations about Third World women. She appears as an agentic individual when she proposes to attack the convoy of the visiting CM of KPK. She feels this assault large enough to change everything: “Every security, every informer, every policy will be unmade by it” (Bhutto, 2015, p. 195). The assault is carried out, but it is uncertain if the CM is indeed assassinated or not. Aman discloses his knowledge of Samarra’s activities to the authorities in exchange for a student visa. As a result, Samarra is apprehended and presumably tortured. Thus, Sammara challenges the power hierarchies in her own specific way. She eludes the labels of sexually oppressed/victim women or a brainwashed maniac. Rather, she charts an agentic position that is in line with Spivak’s view of agency which “centres on a politics of decolonization and negotiation with structures of violence” (Parker, 2012, p. 7).

Feminist Agency in *The Miraculous True Story of Nomi Ali*

U. A. Khan’s *The Miraculous True Story of Nomi Ali* (2019) brings to the fore the untold stories of the prisoners incarcerated in British Raj administered Andaman Islands, circa 1936-42. She asserts in the ‘Acknowledgements’ of her novel that “women prisoners were ‘almost entirely written out of history’; they ‘rarely merited even a footnote’” (p. ii). *The Miraculous*

True Story of Nomi Ali (2019) debunks the essentialist and homogenizing construction of South Asian women subjects. It has done so by delineating a range of feminine personae ranging from agentic, passive, resistant, and complicit. Uzma paints striking and extraordinary women assorted from multi-ethnic and multi-religious locations, going beyond the categorization based on homogenization and coherence. The novel features the multiple agencies like that of Nomi, the eponymous 12 years old daughter, a prisoner; the Burmese Aye, an enterprising islander slightly older than Nomi; Nomi's mother Fehmida who is the sole breadwinner of the family due to her husband's inertia; the fascinating Shakuntala, the Indian wife of a former deputy commissioner of the island named Thomas and her docile daughter; and Aunt Hanan.

The eponymous protagonist Nomi is the daughter of a convicted Indian prisoner Haider Ali who was condemned for a minor crime to the dreaded Cellular Jail in Andaman along with his pregnant wife. Nomi and her well-liked older brother Zee were born on the Island like many of their mates like Aye. Their lives are played out in the shadow of the terrible Central Jail in the Andaman. During WWII, the island became a theater of war between two empires, Britain and Japan. As a critic says, "the novel, an archipelago of atrocities (hundreds are pushed off the boats into the sea) during the war, lends human terms to suffering, juxtaposing the beauty of the setting with the brutality of the war" (Agrawal, 2019). Nomi's brother is executed by the Japanese and since then "she had carried the weight to Zee's torture" (Khan, 2019, p. 183). This traumatizes Nomi to the point where she develops temporary dissociative disorder. Nomi experiences barbarism, poverty, deprivation on an unimaginable scale. These experiences diversify the nature of Nomi's agency and subjection.

Throughout the course of the novel, Nomi's paths intersect with those of Prisoner 218D. Uzma explains this intertwining as crucial to the understanding of the narrative. In one of her interviews, she says: "Nomi and the prisoner were a kind of dual compass. The prisoner started the journey to this book. Nomi completed it. Their meeting in the book has special resonance for me" (quoted in Quadri, 2019). This resonance extends itself to the analysis of their respective agencies. The agentic positions and identity formulations of both have uncanny and grim similarities. Nomi can be seen as the Prisoner's younger self or vice versa. Like Nomi, Prisoner had possibly been "the keeper of seas that flowed into each other, into her bowl" (Khan, 2019, p. 15). But, she has chosen to engage herself in decolonization through subversive activities against colonial apparatus within the narrative of the novel. On a discursive level, her potent agency displaces the epistemic colonization of Western Feminism.

Nomi witnesses the Prisoner's arrival on the Island clad in 'the heavy chains around her like a skirt'" (Khan, 2019, p. 20). Nomi instantly notes her resilience and indomitable spirit. Inside the prison, she is the only woman political prisoner. Her sociopolitical agency gains its strength from unshakable faith in her belief: "The opposite of peace is not war. The opposite of peace is inertia" (Khan, 2019, p. 90). She wages a war on her captors with only her body and her memory. Cillian – the terrible jailor "who was born to never die" – subjects her frail body as a testimony to unimaginable monstrosity. After incessant torture throughout the night, "her body hung from all sides, as though it belonged to someone else. And she burned,

inside” (Khan, 2019, p. 130). In the morning, she does the only things she could with her battered body; she joins the hunger strike of other prisoners. Infuriated by this act, Howard, the jailer, tries to force-feed her by holding her jaws open with an iron contraption.

During the Japanese invasion of the Island, Nomi manages to break out and find shelter in a neighboring Island inhabited by aborigines. There, before her violent death, she contemplates the path while hiding in a pit resembling a grave. The novel captures her conditions in this revealing statement: “Yet no space seemed to fit her anymore, which could again cause her to fly out of her burial nest” (Khan, 2019, p. 203). This assertion is the key to properly interpreting her agency. The novel seems to suggest that no essentialist or tailor-made analysis for this particular third-world female subject would suffice. Third-world subjects like her demand a more specified and multivalent analysis which puts to shame the binarist logic of agentic west and passive rest.

CONCLUSION

Bhutto and Khan do not succumb to the reductionist strategy of answering essentialism with essentialism. Literary representations and critique have a tendency of portraying excessively romanticized, essentializing visions of previously silenced or misrepresented women. In order to contest the trope of victimhood, authors bring forth an essentialist vision of third-world-woman-as-authentic-heroine. Resonating with Mohanty’s vision, both have been careful about lapsing into this pitfall. Instead, they have placed their characters with varying agencies into their particular historical political praxis to produce portrayals of agentic individuals who lay claim to their body and sexuality on one hand and debunk west’s essentialism on the other. Bhutto’s female protagonist fighting against all odds including war – which has traditionally been a thoroughly male affair – comes out as an emphatically agentic woman, raising a big question mark against the western trope of eastern woman as submissive passivity to masculine violence. Khan’s presentation of a variety of femininities rooted in their varying ethno-political contexts dismantles the exploitative monolithicity of western representation of eastern women. This study shows that Bhutto and Khan have emerged as strong Pakistani voices for the situated indigenous view of eastern in general and in particular Pakistani woman’s agency.

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Can the Subaltern (as Woman) Speak? Inversing ‘Male-chauvinism’ in the Film *Rakkushi*

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to probe into the instances of discrimination against Muslim women in Britain. The truth behind this discrimination may indicate the stigmatization of Muslim women who wear head or face covers (HWMW). Critical discourse analysis (CDA), through Van Dijk’s framework (1991) is used to deconstruct the language of newspapers’ headlines in electronic media. The qualitative study encompasses the headlines’ pursuing force in political terms to construct the social order and people’s mindset. The data is taken in the form of a corpus from various British newspapers during the years 2016-2017. The analysis determines the manipulative use of language to build the societal and political hegemony and direction of public opinion. The findings may also provide awareness into the discourse practices to depict potentially obscured and intense messages displaying and inciting racism in a multicultural society (Kelly, 2005).

Keywords: *Prejudices, Rakkushi, Subaltern, Inverse, Screen*

INTRODUCTION

“Rakkushi” is considered as one of the renowned short stories of Islam which advocates women’s empowerment and dignity. Matin Rahman, one of the most prominent Bangladeshi directors has taken an audacious initiative by filming Islam’s “Rakushi” for the screen in 2006. He has taken Ferdous Ahmed (Bhola) as male lead character, and Rozina (Bindi) and Purnima (Kunti) as female artists. According to the movie, Bindi is an active woman who primarily takes care of her old drunken father. In the early part of the film, she falls in love with Bhola and marries him a few days later. Everything goes well and they start living in an idyllic environment. As both Bindi and Bhola are arduous workers, they soon become solvent and soon a baby boy is born in their family. So far, everything has been well with them but in the climax, Bhola is embroiled in drug addiction and falls in love with Kunti who has been married thrice and has seduced almost all the rich and innocent men of the village. Bindi cannot accept her husband’s illicit relationship with Kunti and kills her husband Bhola for exploiting and persecuting the family in various ways. Thus, a man is murdered by a woman in a patriarchally dominated society in the early Indian Hindu family (found in the story, as well in the film) which is highly unconventional and unexpected. However, as a feminist writer, Islam’s intention was to show women as ‘Devi’ or Hindu goddess because he shows in his writings that whatever has been done in this existing world, has been done by

Md Sajib Miah

IELTS Instructor, Meiji Education, Dhaka, Bangladesh

E-mail: sajibalshad@gmail.com

women too. Islam's inner thought has been portrayed on the screen conspicuously by Rahman where he illustrates that women can inverse their subverted subaltern conditions.

Problem Statement

A scrutiny of the Bangladeshi national poet Qazi Nazrul Islam's writings and the behavior of his characters shows that Islam rejects 'male-chauvinism' towards women. I have been unable to find relevant articles on Islam and the relevant issues. The majority of the articles are based on Islam's rebellious voice and resistance against colonial domination or geographical independence but do not relate to the most important resistance which is 'Anti-male chauvinism' by which the subaltern women can be freed from all types of social stereotypes as well as exploitation. This study will help the subaltern, orient, other, or different women to conceive and take action against these discursive, hegemonic and 'male-chauvinistic' processes on women's brain, knowledge, and physics. This study will also attempt to decrease the gap between male and female prejudices to free them from the various kinds of patriarchal thinking.

Objectives of the Present Study

The paper critically examines the reasons behind the decision of embroiling Bindi in the killing of her beloved husband Bhola and transforming herself into a Rakkushi (Witch) from an introverted yet lively young lady. It also scrutinizes the stereotypes and ingrained hegemonic 'male-chauvinistic' discourse on the subalterns, and especially women in society. One of the major functions of dealing with this study is to inverse subalterns in every level of society to be freed from male domination as well as to entrench women's dignity and rights. In my opinion, the film *Rakkushi* (2006) brings out the resistance against the ingrained male-dominated social prejudices which help subaltern (as women) readers to conceive the world differently at the same time assisting them to be conscious about concealed discourses. The core objective of conducting this research is to prepare the subaltern (as women) readers to understand the discursive construction of inferior others through ingrained misogynistic discourses in society as well as women's (as subaltern) psyche.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the criticism of Islam's "Rakkushi" (1925) portrayed on the screen by Matin Rahman (2006), varieties of books, and critical essays have been collected for the study. Different books and critical writings were compiled by many prominent feminist critics. Barry (2002) raises an important question of whether men and women are different in biology or, socially constructed others? Supporting him, Brison (2003) inverses that males are not born male but rather become one "You are not born a male; you become one" (P.200). The most resounding feminist writer de Beauvoir (1997) stands by subordinated subalterns and emphasizes equal amenities and dignities where Islam (1999) strongly speculates about women's facilities, empowerment, equalities, and strength in his short story "Rakkushi" as well as the poem "Nari" while, prioritizing equal rights like Begum Rokeya. Both critics have been supported by Goldberg (2010) and William (1994). Bartens (2001) defines conspicuously who the subalterns are and how they are accounted for. Haque (2016) sees Islam's "Birangona" or prostitutes as mothers where Tajuddin (2015) states that Prostitutes are also our mothers. He feels that a prostitute is "one of the families/ of all our mothers and

sisters" (p.57). Besides, Yeasin (2013) finds a significant idea of recurrence in Islam's "Nari" where he believes mother Durga will rise again to get back the country's power. Undoubtedly, mother Durga epitomizes women's empowerment and strength. However, the film *Rakkushi* (2006) is a rudimentary source of information to analyze data. In short, some literary websites also support the argument to reach a healthy, new, and prolific consequence on the issue of subaltern and 'Anti-male-chauvinism'.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a qualitative and theoretical method to analyze and comment on the content and data from different sources. The research has referred to de Beauvoir (1997) and Spivak (1994) to justify feminist theories to resist male-chauvinistic attitudes towards women. The study also uses historical contexts to emphasize the theories. Rahman's film *Rakkushi* (2007) has also been used as a primary source to analyze available data.

Rationale

It is commonly believed by critics that Bindi's metamorphosis into the audacious Rakkushi (witch) from a devoted and lovely young woman is nothing but the exposition of the transgression of societal rules and regulations. In contrast, it is also thought that Bindi and Kunti's transgressing attitudes in the stereotypical patriarchal society are a result of extreme repressive and suppressive wrath to make women (subalterns) free from all types of 'male-chauvinistic' prejudices. It is, therefore, the researcher's main concern to find out the real issues of their transformation into Rakkushi by applying feminist theories and criticism.

Delimitation

This study is dependent on printed books and journals available in my country. A few books were accessed from Amazon while others were downloaded from the internet. The paper is delimited to an analysis of Bindi's transformation into Rakkushi in the male-dominated society.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Can the Subaltern (as Women) Speak in History as well as in Islamic Writings?

The term Subaltern is difficult to explain in a single paragraph since it varies from situation to situation: a small group or community might be subaltern to the big ones, classless to the elite class, the East to the West, Orient to the Occident, subverted, and dominated women to phallogocentric men etc. However, the term has been explained in detail in Spivak's (1994) "Can the Subaltern Speak?" where she speculates how a Satti (a Hindu widow) sacrifices her life by casting herself on the funeral pyre, so as to be incinerated and reconciled with her husband in the afterlife. The researcher here tries to bring out the Subaltern's voices through history as well as in Islam's "Rakkushi" (1925), aired on the film *Rakkushi* (2006) which has been directed by Rahman. History is a witness to how women have been subverted and persecuted in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia. History also speaks of how women have inversed themselves from subaltern to dominating powers, for example, Nusaybah bint Ka'ab from Saudi Arabia, Joan of Arc from Orleans in France, Zenobia the Queen of Syria, Boudica the queen of Icenii tribe during Roman Nero, Artemisia the Queen of Halicarnassus of Turkey, Tamar the Queen of Georgia, Tomoe Gozen the revolutionary

warrior during Genpei War in Japan, The Trung Sisters from Vietnam, Fu Hao from China, Joanna of Flanders during the Battle of Auray just before the hundred years war in England, and Lakshmibai the Rani of Jhansi have been life-changing women warriors in human history who saved the lives of millions of people by participating directly in the war, fought for the motherland as well as to ameliorate women's dignity in the well-constructed patriarchal society.

Interestingly, Islam as a feminist writer spoke on behalf of subverted women's condition in the 'male-chauvinist patriarchal society. As Islam (1925) states in the poem, "Nari"

I sing the song of equality;

In my view, the gender difference is essentially a triviality.

Everything great in the world,

All the works, beneficial and good,

Half must be credited to woman,

And to a man half only we should. (lines 1-6)

He strongly demands women's liberty by standing against the disparity between men and women. Islam believes that good has been done not only by the men but women also have played their part in the great work in the history of the world. In "Birangona" or "Prostitute", he addresses the prostitutes as "mother" (Haque, 2016 p.57). He thinks that the prostitute has also been suckled by someone who is as chaste as Seeta and the son of an unchaste father is as illegitimate as the son of a prostitute. In the same way, Taijuddin (2015) feels that a prostitute is "one of the families/ of all our mothers and sisters" (p.57). Islam and Islam (2012) in "Emancipation of Women through Education and Economic Freedom: A Feminist Study of Begum Rokeya's Utopias" notes that Nazrul Islam, like Begum Rokeya, persists on the equal rights of men and women in his poem "Nari". In *Nazruler Jibanbodh O Chintadhara*, Taha Yasin (2013) emphasizes the Durga goddess of the Hindu religion who Islam thinks will rise again to get back the country's power. Islam also speculates in the same poem,

"All the great victory of the world

And all the grand voyages,

Gained grandeur and nobility from sacrifice of

Mothers, sisters, and wives throughout the ages". (Lines 44-48)

showing that Islam believes in the power along with the freedom of women as individuals because almost all the greatest wins in history have been achieved by the active participation of women.

Islam has also depicted women characters in his short story "Rakkushi"(1926) as the embodiment of the women power which has been vividly pictured in the film *Rakkushi* (2006), starred in by Ferdous, as Bhola, Rojina as Binti and Purnima as Kunti. Binti is considered as Rakkushi (Witch) for killing her beloved husband who is abusive to her. Killing a man in the male-chauvinist patriarchal society, as well as Kunti's sexual transgressing and crossing the boundary of the restricted male-dominated society, are nothing but the inverting subaltern (as women) in the society. Islam's Binti and Kunti can speak as

subaltern since Islam inverse the whole system of patriarchy following the example of the dominant women figures in world history.

Referencing Beauvoir and Spivak: Anti-Male Chauvinist Criticism

Practices like sati, child marriage, restriction on widow remarriage, dowry, domestic violence and trafficking are not only cohesive to Indian women in Islam's time but have existed in world history. St. Thomas Aquinas represents women in the famous text *Summa Contra Gentiles* "Adam was formed first...and woman second like an imperfect/incomplete thing that takes its origin from what is perfect/complete" (Summa I.92.1), or contemporary Bangladeshi YouTube viral singer Arman Alif's song "Maiya O Maiya Re Tui Oporadhi Re" (line 16) are the basic grounds of discursive subjugation of women rooted in 'male-chauvinist' attitudes, or misogynistic gaze towards women in the society. Bangladeshi national poet Islam, following the tradition of Beauvoir and Spivak raises his voice through his writings, where Virginia Woolf (1979) also elucidates "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer" (60) to be freed from these ingrained stereotypical hegemonic discursive ideologies. Like Islam, the Indian writer Bharati Ray believes in the empowerment of women and explains in her book *Early Feminists of Colonial India* (2002) that "The new woman was to be an educated and brave wife as an appropriate partner of an English-educated nationalist man, able to run an 'efficient' and 'orderly home' like her Western counterpart, be high-minded and spiritual like the women of the 'golden age'" (41). However, both in world history as well as in the Indian situation, women were stigmatized for years. Islam's initiative started the revolution towards women's emancipation which will continue until the destruction of the world; this is the message which has been portrayed on the screen by Rahman in the film *Rakkushi*.

Feminism as a critical theory focuses on symmetrical righteousness between men and women. Peter Barry's (2002) *Beginning Theory* marks that the core functions of the feminist writers being to raise the question of whether men and women are different because of biology or are socially constructed as different, other, or subaltern. 20th-century French writer Simone de Beauvoir (1986) in her (1949) feminist masterpiece *The Second Sex* (Trans.1997) points out that women are not being given any rights in society. She asserts "one is not born a woman; rather, one becomes a woman" (p. 296). de Beauvoir sheds light on the circumstances of married women who could not speak in family affairs and decisions. Women are always the *Other* as man is the master and the wife is the slave. The first guardian of a woman is her father and after marriage, her husband becomes her guardian. She becomes his half since she is subordinate, secondary, and labeled as a parasite after her marriage. This leads to asymmetry where man is subject and women is object, dolls or just existential beings like 'being-in-itself'. Michelle Goldberg (2010) the reviewer of *Women as Other* states that women develop deformed psyches and being an existentialist, de Beauvoir feels that women become 'Other' as they lack freedom. Women should keep their caring nature of giving time and intelligence to others and men should learn to acquire it. She comments "You are not born a male; you become one" (Brison, 2009, P.200). According to her "Woman is a human being with a / certain physiology, but that physiology in no way makes her inferior, nor does it justify her exploitation" (pp. 202-3). Therefore, we can see that she raises a voice about women's empowerment and rights.

In the same way, Bertens (2001) in *Literary Theory: The Basics* defines subaltern as the category of those who are lower in position or who, in the military terms are always lower in rank. 21st-century Indian postcolonial writer Spivak in her interview with Leon De Kock in 1992 states that everybody thinks the subaltern is just a classy word for the oppressed, for others. She studies the *Sati* pratha or ritual where the Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it (93). This helpless widow cannot fight against the injustice of this ritual and so she becomes the powerless subaltern who was not allowed to speak. If she speaks, even she herself cannot hear what she speaks, which means the women are always being subverted and dominated to the superior ones like male or patriarchal society. Thus the woman is a victim, a secondary other who has no position in her society. She accepts this inferior role and submits to it. In short, Beauvoir (1997) and Spivak (1994) are the figures in feminist studies who have some symmetrical attitudes with Islam because as a feminist writer he also believes that women have all the qualities of men, and asserts in his poem 'Nari' "Half must be credited to woman, And to a man half only we should" (lines 4-6) meaning that whatever has been done in this world, almost half of the tasks have been done by women but they are not being praised for their contributions. These ideological understandings of the male-dominated societies might assist feminist readers to be freed from 'male-chauvinism' or hegemonic discourses entombed in society.

Islam's "Rakkushi" on the Screen: A Feminist Interpretation

One of the most resounding films in Bangla cinema based on Islam's writing was released in 2006 and starred Rozina, Ferdous, and Purnima in prominent roles where *Rakkushi* or the Monster revolves around Bindi (Rozina) who kills her husband Bhola (Ferdous) for having an illicit relationship with Kunti (Purnima) in the traditional, stereotypical patriarchal Hindu society of India for which Bindi is called *Rakkushi*. In the portrayal of both Bindi and Kunti, Islam has portrayed women as powerful, dominating, and strong beings. This depiction of women during his time proves that his writing and ideas are connected with the 20th and 21st century theory of Feminism. The researcher has described the movie from a feminist perspective where females have been shown with unparalleled strength and annihilative forces against misogynistic and patriarchal tendencies.

Bindi has been chosen as the protagonist of the movie *Rakkushi* (2006) She presents herself as a powerful woman in the agricultural and patriarchal society of India. She loves her husband Bhola but considers him a subservient man who rarely knows anything about dishonesty and conspiracy. All of these shed light on her powerful role in this marital relationship where she is not a subaltern; neither is her husband dominating and persecuting. In other words, she can easily share her opinions with her husband.

In the movie, Bindi beats her husband with a broom when she becomes aware of his infidelity and angrily asserts "I have killed my husband, not only killed but also cut him into pieces" (*Rakkushi* 02:14:18-02:14:23). She is not ready to accept the illicit relationship of her husband Bhola and refuses to be a parasite after her marriage in a society where women are usually considered as others or orientals. Although she compares Bhola with the Hindu god Shiva, she decides to kill him as he might go to the Inferno because of committing untenable sins with a prostitute. As a wife, it is her moral responsibility to bring her husband back from

the path of vice. If she lets him follow the path of evil, she will also be a sinner and doomed to diabolic conditions in the afterlife. She decides to sacrifice her husband to God as she wants God to take away all his sins. Spivak describes in her essay that "white men are saving brown women from brown men" (p.33) showing the subdued situation of women in society; this has been inversed in Islam's writings because he shows how an early 20th-century woman can kill her husband. Despite being considered as the second sex in society, she dismantles her husband and proves women's strength against all the ingrained subjugations. Here, the killing is not of a Sati woman, instead, a woman who prefers to be a widow in a society where husbands are acknowledged as the head of a family (so-called gods) and masters of their wives. However, in delineating Bindi, Islam has depicted Bindi as empowered woman in the established patriarchal society because Bindi once says to her drunken father "Today, I will kill you, and after killing, I will be hanged" (*Rakkushi* 02:14:18-02:14:23).

It is noteworthy that Bindi could have tolerated the forbidden relationship of her husband with Kunti, but she refuses to remain silent. She protests for her marital rights and states that men will despise her as men have always killed women but for the first time a wife has killed her husband in their society. She thinks that other women would never have retaliated if Bhola had killed her for her adultery. Only because she is a woman, she is accused of murder to such a great extent. Her inverse or opposite of subaltern attitude makes the traditional Hindu society condemn her as a monster or *Rakkushi*. The word monster signals the societal discrimination of women. However, Bindi surpasses all the prejudices through ameliorating her inner spirit and conscious psyche as well as opening a new path for the up-coming dominated women in the hand of patriarchy.

The title vividly sheds light on her aggressive killing and also on the idea that no one expects women to kill their godlike husbands. Whoever does such a heinous thing is an abnormal being. The same society will never despise husbands who kill wives. No one tries to conceive her tribulation though she suffers while killing Bhola. Her life becomes a graveyard when Bhola commits infidelity. Widow marriage was not allowed in her society, so Bindi would have to live alone after killing Bhola. The killing is a fearless act and she will be executed for her crime. Bindi knows it but, still, she decides to end the vice of her husband. Ironically, no women support Bindi and they run when they see her. Still, she acts as her supporter. Instead of committing suicide, she decides to live her own life because she understands that if a man can survive, she will survive as well. She believes that she has all the qualities of her husband while Beauvoir explains in *The Second Sex* "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, physical, or economic destiny defines the figure that human females take on in society" (p. 293). As civilization or society makes women as women, Bindi wants to inverse these hegemonic social ideologies and stays in the society as man does. The brave attitude of Bindi towards life unveils that Islam is a proponent of women empowerment just like Beauvoir and Spivak.

Reversing to the character Kunti as exhibited in the film, it is conspicuously identifiable that she also has a dominant and transgressing personality. She chooses to develop a physical relationship with not only the Saheb for acquiring power and money but also a married man

Bhola. Not afraid to roam around the village at night, she is a widow and has been married thrice in the movie. The whole Battipara village is bewitched by her enchanting beauty. She loves to draw the attention of each and every man and also is not concerned about her defamation in the male-dominated societal norms and systems of the village. She is not afraid to sacrifice her body to Bhola. After the destruction of Bindi and Bhola's marriage, we find that she still loves Bhola, despite everything.

In the film there are many differences from the short story (1925). For instance, Islam has not given any serious depiction of Kunti in the story but Rahman has done it because this character is the creation of the director who has divulged the pure love of Kunti for Bhola. Along with this, Bindi has a very small son in the film but in the story, she has two daughters and one son. Interestingly, there are no disputations or altercations between Bindi and Kunti, and two couples like Kunti and Bhola are displayed in the movie. These scenes have been added to make the film more emotionally appealing to the audiences because the readers are a particular group of people who can read but a film is seen by all types of people, mostly for entertainment. The most significant part of the film is that the relationship between Bindi and her father and her killing of the landlord who wanted to marry Bindi are not part of the original story. These incidents are added to create psychological pathos within the spectators. Overall, a movie needs spice and twists and turns to captivate the audiences on whose verdict, it will either be successful at the box office or a flop film. It is a marketing strategy that includes songs and love scenes. Still, it is praiseworthy that Kunti and Bindi are manifested as women who have their individual flaws but both are in love with Bhola in the movie.

CONCLUSION

Women as subaltern, orient; other, or different to men have been idealized since the inception of human civilization. These ideas have been injected by the dominant group (patriarchy) into women's brains through a discursive hegemonic process. However, women's inversion against these ideologies has seldom been found in history. The resistance has reached the extreme level both in practice and praxis over the last two centuries. Simon de Beauvoir in her resounding text *The Second Sex* (1949) speculates about women's dignity and power at the same time raising voice for disparities in terms of getting fundamental amenities. Along with de Beauvoir, post-colonial writer Spivak also comments on women's equality and empowerment in her famous text "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" (1983). However, in referencing both of them, women are not any more subaltern or puppet of patriarchal society rather they are adroit, half of the men, able in praxis, prolific in studies, and finally, able in inverting themselves from patriarchy, hegemonic, and in short, 'male-chauvinistic' stereotypical societies. However, Islam's Bindi and Kunti speak as women are speaking, and will speak in the years to come against all sorts of 'male-chauvinistic' prejudices as both Beauvoir and Spivak dreamed.

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Milk and Honey: Kaur's Poetic Cure

Abstract

Psychological trauma and more importantly trauma after sexual abuse disempowers the victim and shatters their sense of safety and self-confidence. Retelling the tale of trauma has been done in various genres of literature. Of these, Rupi Kaur's poetry is confessional and presents aspirational philosophy. Titled milk and honey, her first collection has four sections referring to the stages the survivor of trauma undergoes, namely: the hurting, the loving, the breaking and the healing. This article examines the cardinal aspects of psychological trauma to see how Kaur's poetry mirrors the stages of recovery described by Judith Herman in Trauma and Recovery. The paper first identifies the three key aspects of trauma, hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction, defined by Herman, in Kaur's 'milk and honey' and then examines how the process of recovery unfolds in three stages—through establishing safety, reconstructing narrative of trauma and restoring connection with community to reclaim and empower the self.

Keywords: *Psychological trauma, confessional, narrative of trauma.*

INTRODUCTION

Traumatic events in our lives cause damage to our being in such a way that it becomes difficult to restore the self to the state it was in before trauma. Psychological trauma manifests itself in various ways such as fear, anxiety and feeling of worthlessness. The damage that is caused by trauma is difficult to overcome without therapy and medication. This article explores how Rupi Kaur uses the expression of poetry as a therapeutic medium to overcome the feelings associated with trauma. Kaur faced sexual abuse, both as a child and as an adult. The psychological trauma caused by this abuse is reflected in her collection of poetry. Kaur's own website states that each section in *milk and honey* serves a different purpose, “‘deals with a different pain.

Heals a different heartache’ (Kaur, 2018).

As an Indian-Canadian writer, she has become the voice of the voiceless. Her success is attributed to the themes that she tackles in her work, some of which are considered taboo, such as rape and sexual abuse (Kudhail, 2018, p. 3). Roy (2018), notes that Kaur's audience,

Dr. Neelum Almas

Assistant Professor Department of English, Foundation University Islamabad

Email: neelumalmas@fui.edu.pk

Amna Nuzhat

MPhil Scholar, Department of English, Foundation University Islamabad

Syeda Sajhia

MPhil Scholar, Department of English, Foundation University Islamabad

a huge chunk of which is younger women, look up to her for voicing their trauma. The concept of trauma has undergone considerable evolution since Freud. In general, it is understood as a disturbing event that negatively affects human emotion and their views about the world (Mambrol, 2018, p.19-20). According to Freud, trauma's impact has the capability to break through the defense mechanism and get lodged in the human subconscious: "Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive, and will come forth later in uglier ways" (Freud, 1955). When this happens, the immediate reaction which would have sprung up in the presence of a normal defense mechanism is stalled. The pain of the incident shows in the form of neurotic behavior since the survivors of trauma find it difficult to proceed with their lives, being victims of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literary scholars have examined Kaur's poetry as cyber-poetry, insta-poetry and digital poetry as her poems first appeared on Instagram, Tumblr and Twitter. One of the questions that researchers consider when discussing electronically published poetry whether by Kaur or others is how modern technology has changed the way young poets in the present era express their feelings through this medium. The focus of this research is on language and style of digital or cyber poetry. Discussing Rupri Kaur as an insta-poet, Amritha states that "the simplicity and frankness of her poems made them easily relatable to her audience" (2019, p.3105). Her short and terse poems are in prose and lyric form. The critic attributes it to the demand of the medium, i.e. electronic or cyber poetry that demands fluidity and pithiness (2019, p. 3015).

Other critics have examined Kaur's poetry through various critical lenses including psychoanalytic, postcolonial and feminist criticism. In a thesis, *Rupri Kaur's Poetry: Trauma and Healing*, Masini (2019), examines the issues of post-memory with reference to trauma with special focus on "female oriented post-memory." She also explores the theme of gendered violence and relates it to the Indian patriarchal culture by comparing Kaur's poems to the works of two other female Indian writers Krishna Mehta and Shauna Singh Baldwin. She also discusses the postcolonial diaspora discourse, exploring the issue of ethnic and cultural identity in Kaur's poems as she is an Indian Sikh diaspora in Canada. The last chapter of her thesis touches upon the idea of healing from trauma and the role of poetry in this process. However, she does so by focusing only on the section "Healing" in Kaur's *milk and honey*. She finds that Kaur's poetry on trauma is deeply connected to the themes of post-colonialism, diaspora, feminism and postmodernism, and relates her work to the theories of Appadurai, bell hooks, Bhabha, Braziel, Caruth, Hirsch, Luckhurst and Rothberg. Masini's research is useful in the context of the present research paper as she has discovered connections of the depiction of trauma in Kaur's poetry with abuse, gendered violence, othering, alienation and hybridity. This paper examines Kaur's poetry through the lens of Herman's theory of trauma in order to show that Kaur's confessional poetry demonstrates that recovery or healing is possible through narration of poetry.

The current research paper builds on the existing body of research that highlights the first-hand account of a person undergoing trauma due to abuse in childhood as well as in adulthood, and endeavors to examine what processes are involved in the recovery and how does she come to terms with the harsh realities after the traumatic experience of abuse, using

poetic expression as a therapeutic process for her recovery. This study will analyze, in the light of Herman's theory, the phases that a victim of abuse undergoes and how the poetic expression helps in therapeutic healing and restoring of the self from trauma.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Textual analysis is adopted as the method of analysis. Alan McKee states that "[textual analysis] is a methodology—a data gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are and how they fit into the world they live in" (2003, p. 1). The text makes certain demands on the interpreters or the analysts. They cannot randomly assign to it whatever meaning they like, in fact they must let the text participate in the process of meaning making and signification as "every utterance is an iteration" (Belsey, 2005, p. 168). Using textual analysis for interpreting the messages and meaning embedded in Kaur's poems, the authors intend to get an insight into the effects of trauma on the victim's self and the therapeutic effect that narration—telling of the tale of trauma through poetry—had on the victim.

Remembering the Unforgettable, Speaking the Unspeakable

Trauma is the result of an incident or incidents that cause emotional disturbance in individuals. This emotional disturbance affects the way they see themselves and the world around them. They usually have trouble trusting other people and often have a very low opinion of themselves. For the purpose of analyzing Kaur's *milk and honey*, the researchers in the current study have taken the concept of trauma detailed by Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992). Herman asserts "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (Herman, 1992, p. 1). In the light of Herman's theory of trauma, it can be observed that Kaur's poetry is a way to lead her out of the abyss of pain and humiliation that the abusive treatment caused to her. Her narrative is the tale of suffering and abuse, often as striking one-liners that convey the pain associated with the experience. Herman goes on to state that the people who undergo "... atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner..." (1992, p. 1).

Breaking the silence over one's suffering and voicing the horrors caused by the abusers is a first step towards recovery. Herman calls it "the power of speaking the unspeakable," which results in the release of "creative energy" that works as a healing force "when the barriers of denial and repression are lifted" (1992, p. 2). Such denial and repression, of course, are the result of the silencing that is an aspect of most forms of child and familial abuse because the perpetrators threaten to retaliate if they are reported or because the victim feels great shame because of the abuse and conceals it. Silences surrounding abuse have been ingrained since childhood, and reclaiming the voice comes with great effort. Kaur's poetry addresses the silencing of abuse victims. She states, "you were so afraid / of my voice / i decided to be / afraid of it too" (Kaur, 2018, p. 14). Through the denial of voice, the abusers made her powerless and she developed fear of her own voice.

Kaur identifies the first step out of trauma is to recognize and value one's thoughts and voice. Herman states that the recovery process in the victims of abuse and trauma follows a common pathway such as, "establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring

the connection between survivors and their community” (1992, p. 3). Analysis of *milk and honey* establishes that Kaur also undergoes these three stages identified by Herman, which are detailed in Kaur’s collection namely, hurting, loving, breaking and healing. The reconstruction of her traumatic experiences of childhood and adulthood leads her to the path of recovery through poetry, which establishes a connection between herself and people.

It shows the importance of confronting the fears and the demons that haunt the survivor of trauma by voicing the tragedy. As Kaur writes in the epilogue of *milk and honey* “my heart woke me crying last night/*how can i help* i begged/ my heart said /write a book” (2018, p. 4). Kaur states that the way out of the pain was through expressing it. Significantly, Kaur adds that the psychological therapy sessions she may have after the trauma did not help restore her the way she wanted. In “midweek sessions,” she describes the session with the therapist, “*how are you feeling/* you pull the lump in your throat out/*with your teeth/* and say *fine/ numb really*” (2018, p. 11).

One reason that the therapy was not restorative is that it was too clinical. Herman (1992) has found, for example, that US veterans who suffered from PTSD of the 1970s Vietnam War experienced greater healing through informal art therapy groups. For instance, some veterans who were against the glorification of war formed a “rap group.” They would narrate and vocalize their traumatic experiences of the battlefield in small group meetings as they felt uncomfortable in going to conventional medical institutes to seek help. They invited sympathetic psychiatrists to provide assistance to them. Herman states that one of the psychiatrists, Chaim Shatan, explained why these soldiers sought help outside the traditional medical facility: “. . . a lot of them were ‘hurting,’ as they put it They needed something that would take place on their turf, where they were in charge” (1992, p. 18). This shows that the victims of trauma need “safety,” leading Herman to claim that “need for safety” is the first step on the pathway to recovery from trauma. The informal setting or forum of intimate group meetings was a less intimidating platform for the war veterans. Similarly, we can see that the medium of poetic expression provides Kaur a more authentic platform where she can express her dark experiences and vocalize the unspeakable.

The first section in Kaur’s *milk and honey* (2018) is called “Hurting” and contains poems that deal with themes of child abuse and parental neglect. Perhaps the most powerful lines in terms of the father daughter relationship are “A daughter should/not have to/beg her father/for a relationship” (Kaur, 2018, p. 25). The lines point to a part of the cause of her trauma. The idea of “begging for a relationship” shows that her relationship with her father lacked warmth. It also suggests that many daughters around the world crave a strong emotional bond with their father but don’t have it. In another poem she says, “your father is absent” (2018, p. 29) and “you still search for him everywhere” (2018, p. 12). This absence isn’t physical, it is on an emotional level. In “to fathers with daughters” Kaur points towards the fact that the environment that the parents give to their children during their childhood has a significant impact on them in their adult life. This fact is underscored by Herman when she states that survivors of childhood abuse are more likely to be victimized than others. She also observes that such survivors usually select authoritarian partners because they get a sense of security with them that they didn’t get during childhood. Oftentimes, these partners fail to meet abuse survivors’ expectations. Kaur identifies a father figure who failed to give her a

sense of security: "if I knew/What safety looked like/I would have spent/less time falling into/arms that were not" (2018, p.17).

The poetess echoes Herman's idea that the child who has not been shown what a secure home feels like repeatedly falls victim to relationships that are unsafe. The poem above and "to fathers with daughters" are thematically similar, the key difference being the fact that "to fathers with daughters" describes the abusive environment through the use of words like "yell". The clause "Every time you tell your daughter you yell at her out of love" (2018, p. 15) shows that this action of yelling is a routine. She falls for such partners who treat her in a similar manner, yet she feels they do so out of love. A victim of trauma, specifically triggered by child abuse, finds it difficult to liberate herself from the authority of the abuser as she longs for security. It is through the telling of her tale that Kaur finds an escape from oppressing authority as well as reclaiming her 'self'. This is consistent with Schafer's contention that the idea of one's self or identity is based on one's account or narrative of it (1994, p. 88). He also highlights the 'narrative' nature of psychoanalysis which Herman emphasized, which demonstrates that by telling the story of herself in poetry that Kaur is restoring the "self" from which she was alienated by abuse.

Feeling Empty yet Full of Pain, Talking Poetry When Silent

The study of psychological trauma in domestic and sexual realms is important because the attempts to silence victims and deny their experiences has been used to further disempower the survivors of abuse: "When the victim is already devalued (a woman, a child), she may find that the most traumatic events of her life take place outside the realm of socially validated reality. Her experience becomes unspeakable" (Herman, 1992, p. 5). Silencing is an important trope in the section "Hurting". Herman believes that silence is enforced by perpetrators as a tool first to invalidate the pain and agony of the traumatized and secondly to defend themselves (1992, p. 8). In, "you were so afraid /of my voice / i decided to be / afraid of it too" (Kaur, 2018, p. 14) Kaur indicates that her voice threatened the one who was silencing her, or it made him feel less powerful. The girl is made to feel powerless and helpless through the act of silencing. These are the two feelings that victims of abuse feel constantly (Herman, 1992, p. 98.). Through the authoritarian act of silencing, the victims of abuse lose the power to speak up and voice their harsh experiences. Charcot, who is considered the pioneer in modern neurology studied the patients of hysteria and termed the narrative accounts they produced "Vocalization" (Goetz, 1995, p. 67), which Herman considers one of the steps towards healing. Breuer, one of Freud's companions, names this concept the "talking cure" (Lanska, 2014, p. 538), "a cure based on reason, on the unraveling of tangled mental health associations (Herman, 1992, p. 90). Another poem by Kaur describes another strategy that her abuser uses to prevent her from vocalizing her abuse: "You tell me to quiet down cause my opinions make me less beautiful" (Kaur, 2018, p. 26). As in other pieces, the topic is forced silencing. Kaur is being made to believe that her "quieting down" is for her benefit and it is intense psychological manipulation on the part of the one silencing her.

Another idea that Kaur presents in part one of *milk and honey* is "shrinking". In the poems "the idea of shrinking is hereditary" and "emptying out of my mother's belly" she shows how women have been conditioned to take up as little physical and social space possible.

Shrinking is so ingrained in women's and girls' psyche that they have been made to believe that doing so comes naturally to women. Not surprisingly, Kaur finds the idea of expanding an uncomfortable challenge (Kaur, 2018, p. 26). In "emptying out of my mother's belly", the idea of shrinking is correlated with disappearance and nothingness. She mentions that shrinking is learned, and asserts that, contrary to what the patriarchal system would have a woman believe, it isn't instinctive. It is not unusual in the Indian household (to which Kaur belongs) to expect obedience from women. This is manifested through their silencing. She repeats, "I am nothing" (2018, p. 29) as an act of disappearance that she has to learn and which makes her feel empty; being a denial of her existence. This relates to the idea of trauma because trauma stems from oppression and curtailing an individual's space is oppressing that individual, much like imprisoning a person and defining their attempts to break free as a crime (Herman, 1992, p. 30).

In "Remembrance and Mourning" Judith Herman discusses the role of narrating trauma and stresses on the importance of remembering the trauma. Like Herman, Naomi Mandel emphasizes the importance of narrating trauma. Mandel goes on to criticize the notion that any kind of abuse is or should be "unspeakable" and argues that attempts to silence victims' narratives are a deliberate strategy or rhetorical tactic to silence and invalidate the experience and reality of the victim of trauma. Thus, the negation that "un" in unspeakable refers to the "taboo" surrounding and "prohibition" against (2006, p. 7) making the abuse public. It is evident through Kaur's poetry that she is revealing her experiences which the victims of abuse keep secret due to fear of being ostracized. Since the experiences of traumatized abuse victims are often invalidated by silencing them or expressly denying the veracity of their accounts, many victims of trauma develop the belief that the abuse or catastrophe was their own fault. Thus, the act of narration of trauma is empowering. It gives survivors back the very power that was usurped by the perpetrator (Herman, 1992, p. 161). It also serves to heal the victim by making her face the very emotions that are troubling, a step in the restorative process for some survivors because it is painful. Feelings of worthlessness and inferiority dominate the victims of trauma and they begin to see themselves through the eyes of others. Opening up about their ordeal is also considered a taboo. Hence the victims cannot muster up courage to talk about the event. Building upon Herman's theory of Trauma with reference to the victims of sexual abuse Binder and Weisberg argue that talking about trauma is not only the first step towards healing but also a political act "...effective treatment of psychological effects of trauma are political acts of resistance... (2000, p. 206) because it empowers the victims by giving them a voice which was denied to them. "...narration triumphs over not only a psychological process of repression but also a social process of 'silencing'" (Binder & Weisberg, 2000, p. 207). They agree with Herman that the primary purpose of the narrative of trauma is to "empower" the victim rather than to record the "history" (2000, p. 207).

It is also important to note that narration is different for survivors of repeated trauma. To them, many similar incidents often take the shape of one narration. Therefore, one or a few episodes stand for many (Herman, 1992, 175-195). This is the case in many poems from *milk*

and honey that remember and mourn the poetess' physical and emotional trauma poetess. The poem "midweek sessions" is a testimony to the fact that the narrator has suffered trauma and has also sought professional help as a remedy. This is the aspect of Kaur's poetry which researchers have referred to as confessional (Miller, 2019, p. 4). In mourning and remembering the trauma of sexual abuse at the hands of uncles and cousins, Kaur is resisting the perpetrators rather than admitting defeat. According to Herman, it is an "act of courage rather than humiliation" (1992, p. 188). It is noteworthy that she doesn't detail the trauma verbally here. "you point to the spot/ between its legs/ the one he fingered" (Kaur, 2018, p.5) She merely points at the part of the doll to indicate the place of trauma. This resonates with Herman's reference to the reluctance and disjointedness of survivors' narration of their abuse in the initial phases of therapy. The fact that this poem has a place in the beginning of the book is also significant. Reconstructing the narrative of trauma is the second step in the path of recovery for the survivors of psychological trauma: "Traumatic memories lack verbal narrative and context; rather, they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images" (Herman, 1992, p. 27). Kaur's terse and brief lines of poetry express the traumatic memories. It is important to reassemble the narrative of trauma in order to come to terms with its reality. The narrative of trauma is assimilated in the form of "an ongoing life story". Through the organization and recital of the situation the survivor of trauma seeks to validate it for others and for herself as well. The restatement and narration of trauma is also significant for "putting this recital in its place as one of the chapters in our personal history. . ." (Herman, 1992, p. 27). Kaur through her poetry does the same. The disjointed and episodic memories of intense pain are re-lived and recreated to be confronted and analyzed in the moments of sanity as well as to make it comprehensible for others who look at it from the perspective of the observer.

The first poem of the last section, "Healing," describes another dilemma that most victims face: "perhaps I don't deserve nice things ..." (Kaur, 2018, p. 137). Mourning and accepting the pain that survivors of abuse experience has its benefits: "Because reliving a traumatic experience provokes such intense emotional distress, traumatized people go to great lengths to avoid it" (Herman, 1992, p. 30). In the poem "to be soft is to be powerful" (Kaur, 2018, p. 156) Kaur is acknowledging the strength that comes from embracing the pain. She admits that the process of healing is empowering (1992, p. 159). The title of the collection *milk and honey* also resonates with the same feeling of softness that Kaur associates with healing and recovery. Milk and honey are the cure and nourishment to the aching and ailing being. The pouring out of the narrative has therapeutic effects that serves as a soothing balm, a cure to the distress and pain. Herman emphasizes the significance of "truth-telling and full discourse" for therapy and healing (1992, p. 104). She states that some patients of trauma insist that the truth be known and discourage efforts to cover it up despite the secrets of trauma being too painful to recount. Kaur is in this category in that her poetry shows resilience gained through "truth telling" and creating a poetic discourse: "As the patient becomes involved, she inevitably re-experiences the intense longing for rescue that she felt at the time of the trauma" (Herman, 1992, p. 105). The pouring out of the narrative helps in mediating the pain as it leads to catharsis of emotions.

Discussing the process of recovery from psychological trauma, Herman identifies the role of resilience: "The capacity to preserve social connection and active coping strategies, even in

the face of extremity, seems to protect people to some degree ...” (1992, p. 42). This is evident in Kaur’s poetry, particularly in the last section, “the healing,” which shows that through resilience she recovers herself and restores her trust in the community while also restoring other victims’ trust in self and community. In “you look at me and cry” (Kaur, 2018, p. 172), the poetess seems to have surpassed her pain and arrived at a point where she can offer hope and healing to the emotionally distraught: “... everything can heal” (p. 172). Through her poetry she has created a safe space not only for herself but also for the other victims of trauma like her, to whom she gives voice and hope. This has been identified by Herman (1992) as the third stage in the process of healing and recovery from trauma: restoring connection between survivor and her community: “Once a sense of basic safety has been reestablished, the survivor needs the help of others in rebuilding a positive view of the self...The restoration of a positive view of the self includes not only a renewed sense of autonomy within connection but also renewed self-respect” (p. 45-47).

Some of the poems in the last section sound like advice. For instance, “accept yourself as you were designed” (Kaur, 2018, p. 185) indicates that the poetess has also developed the capacity to embrace herself the way she is. Her own healing seems to have brought her to a point where “you have to stop searching for why at some point. You have to leave it alone” (Kaur, 2018, p. 187). She advocates letting go of the painful question of “why me?” and urges other victims of abuse to come to terms with reality. Herman suggests that the survivors of trauma must reconstruct a belief system to understand their own grief. While doing so, the survivors might discover that the people that they hold most dear don’t share their beliefs. This poses a threat to the survivors’ reconstructed and restored sense of self-worth. Herman states that the first principle of recovery of a survivor is “empowerment” and recovery takes place in the context of relationships. The capacities for trust, autonomy, intimacy and identity are shaped in sustained relationships with others and when they are damaged by traumatic experiences they are to be rebuilt as recovery cannot take place in isolation (1992, p. 94). The last section of Kaur’s *milk and honey* also emphasizes rebuilding this connection.

milk and honey (2018) is a testimonial of Rupri Kaur’s pain as well as the pain of many other women. Her poems rightly assert that “our backs tell stories no books have the spine to carry” (Kaur, 2018, p. 161). She has unloaded the burden of her spine and has helped other women and victims of psychological trauma by voicing their fears and narratives. Though her work has been regarded as a subversion of colonialism and patriarchal values, this study has explored it as a means of countering trauma and stigma associated with trauma of sexual abuse. Breaking silence and speaking the unspeakable requires a lot of courage. She has shown how to restore the torn and damaged self through narrating pain: “Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control; the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor” (Herman, 1992, p. 112). The narration of trauma may feel painful but it ends up empowering the victim. Kaur has also shown that it is possible to step out of the cycle of repeated victimization. Freedom is achieved by confronting and voicing your fears.

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Feminine Beauty in the Hyperreal World: A Postmodern Analysis of *Esquire's* Women We Love

Abstract

We attempt to look at the concept of beauty in the hyperreal world of today to assert that beauty has moved from a cultural construct to being a consumerist entity. The article grounds itself in the seminal works of Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco to provide the context for the analysis. We look at Esquire's images of Hollywood divas—over ten years—selected as the most beautiful women of the year as part of its series Women We Love. The textual analysis shows that the present day concept of beauty is no longer a cultural construct but a concept steeped in the postmodern consumer culture that de-culturizes beauty and through stock frames, poses and styling turns it into consumable, desirable—at times erotic—images of beauty.

Keywords: *visual analysis, hyperreality, consumer culture, postmodernism, Baudrillard*

INTRODUCTION

Babies, even when they are just a few days old, prefer attractive faces—deemed attractive by more culturally conditioned college students—to less attractive ones even with nil cultural knowledge as shown in studies by Langlois (1987), Slater (2000), and Quinn et al (2008). When they turn into toddlers they are nudged into pondering the question “who is the fairest of them all” through fairy tales like *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Rapunzel* or a number of prince charming reincarnations. Later years see them being driven by a concept of beauty whereby beauty is “that quality or those qualities in bodies, by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it” (Burke 1757, 83). The contours of the issue remain the same when it moves into the higher echelons of philosophy. Aristotle's aesthetics was a debate on the abstract nature of beauty and the sophists discussed beauty as being useful. Beauty was always linked with the human form. Paris chose Aphrodite because she promised him the most beautiful wife. Current literature on beauty discusses fat-shaming, the psychological issues related to fairness being a mark of beauty and acceptance, fairness from a postcolonial perspective. In the present study we intend to link the postmodern notion of consumer culture with the

Selina Aziz

Department of English, Foundation University Islamabad

Email: selina.aziz@fui.edu.pk

Dr Neelum Almas

Assistant Professor Department of English, Foundation University Islamabad

Email: neelum.almas@fui.edu.pk

Dr Amer Akhtar

Assistant Professor Department of English, Foundation University Islamabad

Email: amerakhtar@fui.edu.pk

concept of beauty to explore how consumerism has shaped the idea of beauty and aim to analyze Hollywood's model of beauty through the portrayal of American cinema's leading ladies to test the thesis that beauty in the contemporary world is beauty of consumption where beauty is created and sold to people on the same model as any consumer product.

The key significance of the research is that it deculturizes beauty to link it with consumer culture and adds another dimension to the debate on beauty. Thinking of beauty as consumption is significant for it paves the way for exploring corporatization of beauty where beauty will be malleable according to the business interests of the corporations and where the individual's perception of beauty—at both the personal and the cultural levels—will be marginalized. We believe a key aspect of the study is its interdisciplinary nature where it brings together gender studies, visual culture and media to show how these fields are interrelated and how visual culture enriches the experience of the world and contributes to the ideological makeup of societies.

Umberto Eco, Italian academic, literary critic and filmmaker par excellence, wrote *On Beauty* (2004) to trace the concept of beauty as it evolved from ancient Greece to the media-driven world of the new millennium. Eco asserts that beauty had always been a cultural phenomenon in its essence with some African cultures considering scarification to be beautiful (Frith 2006) while others—Korean and Chinese—found beauty in plumpness (Han, 2003) till the postmodern world brought about a change in the concept. Beauty of provocation” is Eco's term for the concept of beauty in the postmodern era where people look towards fashion magazines and celebrities to discern what they must do to be beautiful. That people follow media images to determine what is fashionable is not a unique claim. Eco, we believe, misses out on delinking beauty from fashion or current style and does not see beauty in terms of mediatized, created images imposed on the people through pervasive advertising. This is what we propose to do in the present study by unifying the beauty of provocation and Baudrillard's hyperreality. French sociologist Jean Baudrillard is a well-known postmodern critic who developed the concepts of hyper-reality, simulacrum and consumer culture. *The System of Objects* explores the culture of consumption and probes into the notion of consumerism. Baudrillard presents consumer culture as a significant aspect of postmodernism and defines it as a culture which requires people to consume the objects based on their sign value. When people derive their identity from material goods and consume objects because of the sign value those objects confer they indulge in the process of consumption. Baudrillard (1996) asserts that to “become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign”. In other words, consumers do not consume an object to fulfil a need but to acquire the sign value of an object.

Baudrillard (1996) asserts that consumer culture only gives an illusion of freedom. In this culture, “There is a profusion of freedom, but this freedom is imaginary” (p. 178). He argues that advertisements fuel the process of consumption as they give meaning to the objects. Consumer culture is not restricted to material objects and extends to abstract notions as well. For this reason, it will be worthwhile to observe beauty in connection with consumer culture. Such an approach will unveil a new aspect of beauty—one that is not limited to culture or nationality but is propagated by popular media and employs simulacra to create a hyperreal

beauty—beauty that is not a cultural or even a Universal construct as Tom asserts but a hyperreal construct where beauty is based on other images of beauty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer culture has attracted a lot of attention in literary circles as it has altered the way people interact with material objects. According to Prasad Raj Singh (2011), it is a culture “in which mass consumption and production both fuel the economy and shape perceptions, values, desires, and constructions of personal identity” (p. 67). The process of consumption is facilitated by advertisements as they craft a sign value of the goods and induce the desire to consume. Consumption and possession of material goods are central to consumer culture which is facilitated predominantly by advertisements which induce desire and craft a significant relationship between consumers and consumer goods. Grant McCracken (1986) asserts, “Advertising is a conduit through which meaning constantly pours from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods” (p. 75-76). Gray, Amos and Currie (1997) claim that the seductive power of advertisements influences people to adopt habits that are hazardous to their health (p. 507).

The process of consumption has altered the way people interact with various aspects of life including sports, religion and personal identity. John J. Stewart (1987) opines that in sports, “Attention is given to the dramatic, the spectacular, and the theatrical—the thrills and spills, the knockout punch, the winning hit, the brawls in the stands and on the field” (p. 178). In a somewhat removed field of religion too, consumer culture has reduced religion to a commodity and one can project oneself as a follower of religion by purchasing religious accessories. Noor (2016) opines that “religious entrepreneurs” have combined the process of preaching and business. Research has also looked at the concept of beauty over time to discuss its permanence or transience. The idea of beauty has evolved with time which suggests that the concept of beauty lacks permanence. Amber Petty disapproves of the notion of universal beauty and asserts that beauty is “an ephemeral ideal, bound to change and transform.” What was beautiful for the Greeks was not accepted as beautiful by the Romans. The concept of beauty changed from time to time and from place to place. Andrea Uku (2010) shares the same views as Petty and opines that the concept of beauty is ever-evolving. David Robson (2015) says “although our concepts of beauty may seem ethereal and timeless, they may just be the direct product of our immediate circumstances.”

It is not just the concept of beauty that has evolved but also the medium through which beauty is depicted. The previous era relied on sculptures and paintings whereas the postmodern era shapes the idea of beauty through mass media. According to Lindsey Conlin and Kim Bissel (2014), “Mass media can reflect basic beliefs, attitudes, and values toward female beauty, and can even change attitudes and beliefs when people are exposed to images of ideal beauty and attractiveness” (p. 1). Film stars and models gracing the covers of beauty magazines have shaped the idea of female beauty, and women emulate these celebrities. Icons like Audrey Hepburn, and Marilyn Monroe continue to inspire women as shown by (Tanya, 2020), Coan (2020), Warlick, (2020), Nickens and Zeno (2012) which strengthens the study’s stance that the idea of beauty is constructed and promoted through Hollywood.

The concept of beauty has garnered philosophical, social and even psychological interest but has also materialized as a tool to exercise power. The Western standard of beauty and its stress on fair complexion has instilled a hierarchical concept of feminine beauty. Margaret L. Hunter (2011) contends that the European standard of beauty has a detrimental effect on non-European women. Evelyn Yeung (2015) claims that “the yearning for a pale complexion exists because of nonwhite populations’ desire to physically mimic those who are in power” (p. 40). Naomi Wolf (2002) writes that beauty is a social construct which suppresses women socially, economically and politically. Wolf thinks of beauty as a “belief system that keeps male dominance intact” by keeping women too busy obsessing over clothes and curling their eyelashes to have time for political action (p. 20). The postmodern notion of beauty studied in connection with the consumer culture adds a new dimension to the meaning of beauty. It looks at the idea of beauty like a commodity which is bought and sold like consumable goods. The current study aims to understand a new aspect of beauty and one that has not been much explored.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Gillian Rose (2001) maintains that the acknowledgement of an image is of paramount importance in visual analysis. Rose asserts that in visual analysis, the image must be given precedence over theoretical framework. This means that it is the image itself not the selected framework that determines the contours of the discussion. She claims that an image must be scrutinized as images abound in messages. The visual analysis cannot do justice to an image unless it recognizes the message embedded in it. Rose asserts, “there is no point in researching any aspect of the visual unless the power of the visual is acknowledged” (p. 33). Nigel Whiteley (1999) also advocates that “careful scrutiny of the artwork” (p. 120) should be the first step in visual analysis. The present study treats the image as being of primary importance and looks to the image to provide material for the analysis and look at the elements within the image such as framing, pose, clothes, colors, body type etc to obtain material for its discussion.

To assess the depiction of Hollywood prima donnas in Esquire magazine, the study requires a method of visual analysis. The selected photographs are analyzed using compositional interpretation as the method provides “a detailed vocabulary for expressing the appearance of an image” (Rose, 2001, p. 33). The selected method focuses on the composition and looks carefully at the constituents of an image to understand the importance of the picture. According to Rose, “Compositional interpretation pays most attention to the compositionality of the image itself” (p. 38). The composition refers to the use of color, spatial organization, expressive content and focus. Compositional interpretation looks at the saturation, hue and value of the color in an image. In addition to different attributes of color, it also looks at the way space is used in an image. The method also focuses on the expressive content of an image as images negotiate with readers.

Delimitation

The study of beauty is a vast area, but this study focuses on the photo shoots of Hollywood’s famous faces selected by Esquire. The delimitation helps to concentrate on the presentation of women in the magazine over the years and to understand the role of Hollywood in the

propagation of beauty ideals. The current study analyzes the photo shoots of the following actresses:

1. Emilia Clarke (2015)
2. Penelope Cruz (2014)
3. Scarlett Johansson (2013 and 2006)
4. Mila Kunis (2012)
5. Rihanna Fenty (2011)
6. Minka Kelly (2010)
7. Kate Beckinsale (2009)
8. Halle Berry (2008)
9. Charlize Theron (2007)

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

We have analyzed many of the constituent parts of the images of Women We Love including hair, body type, posture, and setting to critically examine the underlying ideological currents and consolidate the discussion to formulate the essence of feminine beauty in the hyperreal world.

The Hair

Feminine hair has long been panegyricized by writers and eulogized by poets. Hair also entails cultural, social and religious significance. The consumer culture treats feminine hair as an accessory, an embellishment and a consumer product instead of a mark of cultural or ethnic identity. Working in conjunction with consumer culture, Hollywood has conferred a sign value to hair which imparts the desired look of beauty. Hair is one of the most substantial elements of the photographs. Be it Scarlett Johansson, Minka Kelly, Penelope Cruz or Emilia Clarke, the hair is a blend of chocolate brown and raven black strands. The darker shade is a sign of dominance and gives an intense look. Amerley Ollennu (2018) observes that Hollywood cinema portrays dark-maned women as mysterious like Uma Thurman in *Pulp Fiction* or intimidating like Angelina Jolie in *Maleficent*.

Esquire, like other popular magazines, also recreates the platinum blonde look of Jean Harlow and Marilyn Monroe as it is accepted as an image of seduction. Jean Harlow forged a separate identity for herself in Hollywood by bleaching her hair platinum blonde in her film *Bombshell*. The look has long been associated with enamour and its repetitive recreations in magazines and films have further cemented its status as the image of an ideal woman. The look was further popularized by Marilyn Monroe and Yona Zeldis McDonough (2002) opines that Monroe's image is "embalmed in public memory" and Monroe is "immortal on the scale of Napoleon or Cleopatra" (p. 16). McDonough further states "the culture still needs her and has sanctified her" which has led to her status as the embodiment of beauty (p. 13). To deliver a verdict on how beautiful hair should look, actresses flaunt loose curls. The dishevelled hair adds a natural element, making the hair look unstyled. The bedhead hair is repeated in each photo shoot to delude consumers into thinking that natural is beautiful. "No matter how artificial the setting, a fashion photograph must persuade individuals that if they

wear these clothes, use this product, or accessorize in such a way, the reality of the photograph will be theirs” (Duncan). By analyzing the photographs, it is evident that *Esquire* equates beauty with voluminous, glossy, dishevelled hair. Halle Berry and Rihanna, the two dusky beauties also follow the Caucasian standard of beauty by choosing to wear their hair like the other actresses. Ethno-hair profiles show that African hair is flattened and has a slow growth rate which makes it more likely to curl. So in the image the straight hair indicates some treatment to make the hair fit into the norm. Uniformity in the way the actresses wear their hair provides a standard of beautiful hair devoid of cultural associations.

The Body Type

Esquire’s photoshoots reveal that physical beauty, though an abstract notion, can be quantified. Skin complexion, symmetrical features and weight are some of the metrics employed to gauge beauty. *Esquire*, like other magazines, adheres to the general “cultural and social system within which femininity and women are defined and constructed into an ideal of female beauty: a young, thin, white, toned, and flawless body” (Albani, 2005). *Esquire* breaks down physical beauty into sellable elements and modifies the features which do not fit the standard such as square shoulders, boxy waist, wrinkles and plump limbs. While *Esquire* may be versatile in body shapes, it does not deviate from the general model of female beauty i.e. a slim, young, white, flawless body. With the rise of Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly as fashion icons, slimness became a condition for an idealized body. Similar to popular media, *Esquire* associates slimness with beauty and has never embraced actresses such as Melissa McCarthy, Demi Lovato or Drew Barrymore. All the actresses featured in *Esquire* flaunt a slender physique as slimness is equivalent to a beautiful female body. Eric J. Bailey (2008) opines that young girls tend to associate beauty with slimness because of media influence. Bailey states that slimness also connotes association with the upper class and also represents “unconventionality, freedom, youthfulness”. The inclination towards slimness in the context of Hollywood started with Lillie Langtry and was cemented with the arrival of divas like Katharine Hepburn, Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, Mae West etc. To fit the beauty standard, the actresses rely on clothes, makeup, camera angle and lightning. Emilia Clarke looks ethereal because the light focuses on her slender upper body whereas the clever camera angle and body posture elongate her legs. Unlike Clarke, the magazine features full body shots of Penelope Cruz as she has a statuesque physique. Scarlett Johansson’s hourglass figure steals the limelight to mask the lack of height. The use of solid colors in the photographs is not accidental but serves a purpose. Charlize Theron and Mila Kunis don solid colors and avoid long flowy gowns which would add width to their physique. The camera captures Theron from a side angle to mask what Theron herself calls broad shoulders (Donnelly, 2015). It is not only the body shape which is modified but facial features are also enhanced or contoured to fit the beauty standard. Each actress flaunts fuller lips colored with soft hues of pink or nude; eyes are shaped like almonds with the help of dark eyeliner and cheekbones are made prominent with the help of highlighter. Such a representation robs the women of their individuality. Moreover, photographs offer a standard of beauty and it is only when one conforms to that standard that one is considered beautiful.

Selective Representation

Esquire has tried to present itself as an all-inclusive platform for women. For this reason, it has included Halle Berry and Rihanna. Both Berry and Rihanna are biracial and are among a few celebrities of color who are featured in beauty magazines. Rihanna, Beyoncé and Halle Berry have been preferred by magazines mainly because of their ability to sell magazines. The present study contends that while Esquire labels both Berry and Rihanna beautiful it makes sure that the representation is not culturally unique and does not bring out the fact that they are culturally or ethnically different from the normative white actress. The culturally distinguishing features including the hair and the facial contours have been made to conform to the white conception of beauty and thus their difference is all but erased. The props and the setting too have been chosen to exclude any notion of their cultural heritage. They are moulded into the normative figure by eliminating traits such as hair that would foreground their ethnicity and also by placing them in settings which have come to be seen as white elitist settings.

The Posture

Emilia Clarke is breathtakingly beautiful but lacks the height of Penelope Cruz, Charlize Theron has well-toned limbs but lacks the curvaceous physique of Scarlett Johansson. Halle Berry's skittle-shaped body is not as photogenic as Kate Beckinsale's. Despite such characteristics, each actress looks perfect and weaves magic on the pages of the magazine. To make up for the short height, Clarke prefers horizontal poses and props up her legs. Similarly, Mila Kunis and Scarlett Johansson stretch their bodies to appear taller. Another trick employed to make the actresses look taller is to eliminate a frame of reference. The actresses can be seen fitting the entire frame to appear taller. The perception of length is also created by crossing one leg over the other or the actresses are captured in motion to mask the lack of height. Fashion photographer Jeff Smith (2010) says, "Posing can do more to hide client's flaws than any other technique-and probably as much as all of the others combined." The appropriate body postures enable the actresses to look flawless in the photographs.

Charlize Theron poses with an arched back and rests one hand on her waist to create angles with her body. By propping one shoulder higher than the other, she adds curves to her body. Kate Beckinsale creates clean lines with her flexed leg and reveals her toned abdomen by arching her back. Each actress poses with her side towards the camera, each poses with one shoulder propped higher than the other and each diva poses with her head tilted to one side. The clichéd postures are recreated year after year as the female body looks ethereal in such postures and the arrangement works well for the actresses.

Esquire is rich in clichéd poses. Jennifer Aniston's photographs for 2007 Esquire look similar to Halle Berry's shoot. Emilia Clarke's photoshoot looks similar to Angelina Jolie's photographs for Maxim. Eva Longoria's 2017 Maxim shoot is similar to that of Kate Beckinsale. The repetition robs the actresses of individuality and offers a standard of beauty. The beauty standard endorsed by Esquire incorporates elements from various mainstream magazines to cultivate an ideal image of feminine beauty and sell a pre-established idea and ideal of beauty.

Photo Manipulation

The current study is aware that the photographs featured in *Esquire* are digitally enhanced. To enhance the aesthetic appeal, the photographs are digitally modified, which is a norm for all mainstream magazines. “Altering digital imagery is now ubiquitous. People have come to expect it in the fashion and entertainment world, where airbrushing blemishes and wrinkles away is routine” (Hany Farid, 2009, p. 42). The photographs do not represent the natural aspects of the actresses but idealize beauty. Rune Pettersson (2002) states that each published beauty shot is subjected to pre and post-modification and “parts of the picture can be deleted, added, altered, moved or changed in shape” (p. 51). Anne-Sophie Brändlin (2015) claims “The ways in which a person's appearance can be changed through Photoshop are endless.” Photoshop serves an important purpose “from lengthening neck and legs to cutting out ribcages, raising cheekbones, filling in hair and changing skin color.”

Beauty magazines edit the photographs to make the models look young, slim and beautiful. Similarly, *Esquire* presents the actresses as flawless women who personify feminine beauty so that the pictures can be consumed. Scarlett Johansson’s mole on the right is visible only in some photographs. Charlize Theron and Penelope Cruz also pose as embodiments of physical beauty. Both the actresses defy age as the wrinkles are smoothed out digitally to make them appear younger. Dennis Chamberlin claims that it is not “unusual for a magazine like *Esquire* to have a budget for the cover photo that included up to \$100,000 for photo retouching” (as cited in Diederichs, 2009). The retouched photographs make the actresses look impeccable with dewy skin and perfect proportions to attract the audience.

The Setting

Esquire makes the actresses the nucleus of the photographs. The wardrobe, the makeup, the props and the setting make the divas look glamorous and add to the appeal of the actress. The charm, aesthetic quality, and even the opulence of the setting reflect on the actresses and contribute to adding to their appeal. Although a new face graces the cover each year the setting remains similar year after year. The background in most of the photographs is impassive and is dull in color. A darker shade enables the actresses to shine and is a fashion-forward choice as well-known brands such as Prada and Gucci often opt for dull shades. Moreover, a blank background does not distract the onlooker and neither does it fight for attention.

There is a change in the setting from the dull background to luxuriant living space as the frame changes from beauty shots to full-length shots. The opulent setting draws a connection between wealth and beauty. Helga Dittmar (2008) claims that mainstream magazines retail two types of images; an ideal body type and a “good life” to correlate happiness with expensive consumer goods (p. 14). The photographs endorse a life of affluence and the identity of the actresses is derived from the material objects in the shoot. The minute material details in each photograph convey a message. Comfortable beds covered with white sheets and fluffy pillows are a uniform feature in the shoots because they represent an image of comfort. The deluxe interior, leather sofas, indoor pools and ornate rugs all depict a rich lifestyle. The exuberant setting has an aesthetic appeal and pleases the eyes and is therefore repeated in the photoshoots. The photographs provide a pleasurable visual experience. The

pleasure that the consumers get from these pictures is that of voyeurism. The indoor setting, including the bedroom and the living room, is a private space which is invaded through the photographs. *Esquire* presents consumption as voyeurism through such a setting. Moreover, by depicting the women in an indoor space it reinforces the gender roles.

CONCLUSION

We have attempted through the visual analysis of photographs of Hollywood prima donnas, to present a discussion of how the idea of beauty is created and propagated as a commodity in the media. *Esquire* constructs the ideal form of female beauty through stereotypical postures, setting and makeup in the photographs. The photographs delink beauty from the culture and turn it into a consumable commodity packaged this way to boost consumption. Our study also shows that *Esquire* does not adhere to or promote a universal or globalized ideal of beauty—something that Yan and Kim (2014) argue drives the media's selection of beautiful women—but a commodification that can present anything as beautiful, through its power of representation.

The visual analysis reveals that feminine beauty is broken down into consumable chunks such as slender physique, intense eyes, dewy complexion, voluminous hair and flawless skin. The use of similar makeup, similar hairstyle provides a mechanism to gauge beauty and also set a standard of beauty. The setting, clothes and makeup work in combination to mask the flaws and draw attention to the desired features. The feminine beauty is packaged to attract the audience, to please the palate and thereby to allow the process of consumption. To present the beauty ideal as a consumer product, the actresses are presented as airbrushed objects who are wrapped in eye-catching clothes. Furthermore, *Esquire* labels the women as beautiful thus seals the deal as each year the magazine comes up with a new face and consumers accept the verdict of the magazine. This highlights that the media shapes the perception of the audience. The idea of beauty endorsed by *Esquire* has a sign value as the declaration comes from a popular magazine.

The study further reveals that as beauty is a consumer product, it gives an illusion of freedom. It makes the women believe that they can emulate the actress with their body type to be beautiful without realizing that the image of beauty is deceptive. Upon close inspection, it can be observed that the makeup and camera angles allow only a slight difference among the actresses as all the faces look similar with similar features. The image of beauty lacks variety and reduces it to certain elements such as luscious hair, flawless skin and contoured features. Moreover, the image is illusory as Goodman and Cohen claim that consumerism prohibits “personal style” and the apparent choice of objects “makes the expression of individuality especially difficult” (94). This happens because “the availability of an item in a consumer product invariably means that many others are purchasing the same item” (94). The idea of beauty is as paradoxical as consumer culture itself. It allows one to be more beautiful and distinct from others by advocating the beauty ideal but at the cost of individuality.

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Notes To Contributors

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Authors are also encouraged to submit photographs that are relevant to their articles. Photographs (high quality) must be captioned and labeled within the text. The size should not exceed 16 x 12.5 cm (5" x 8"). Electronic images must be submitted in high resolution digital format (at least 300 dpi). If not produced by the author/s, the photograph source must be mentioned.

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