

PROBING THE PHASES OF WOMANHOOD IN FAIQA MANSAB'S THIS HOUSE OF CLAY AND WATER

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ABSTRACT

This present research aims to scrutinize Faiqa Mansab's portrayal of women in her majestic creation This House of Clay and Water on following grounds. Firstly, unveiling of the various phases of womanhood in This House of Clay and Water. Secondly, in patriarchal Pakistani society women are oppressed under the tag of domesticity and matrimonial bonds. Keeping these grounds in focus, the research deliberates upon Mansab's exertion to debunk men's hegemony and pitiable condition of women entrapped in the shackles of patriarchal Pakistani society. The research is carried in the light of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theoretical perspective and different phases of womanhood projected in her trailblazing work, The Second Sex. The technique of close reading is used to scrutinize and interpret the text through qualitative approach. Through critically analyzing the text, it is concluded that being oppressed creatures, women are trapped in a web of societal norms and expectations.

KEY WORDS: Oppression, Phases of womanhood, Patriarchal Pakistani society.

INTRODUCTION

The present novel, This House of Clay and Water by Faiqa Mansab deals with dilemma, wretched and horrendous state of womenfolk in patriarchal Pakistani society. In her novel, Mansab has become successful in presenting an influential yet overwhelming story that has themes which would normally be discussed in hushed murmurs. Sexual assault, sexual molestation, wedlock deprived of woman's assent, gender-prejudice, monetary privation, mental and psychological shocks are the chief problems of womenfolk and most of them have been fated to such issues, paying the cost of being alive in a patriarchal society as portrayed in the novel. However, women's depiction as victims replicates several stages but it is usually observed that misconducts of males give rise to the undeserved anguish for women and consequently, women have to tolerate dreadful shock in number of ways. The novel brings to limelight how religious conviction, societal norms, values, traditions and culture are convolutedly entwined in curbing women's control and liberty in social actions. Some women struggle to preserve their distinct identity so to sabotage the dominations enforced on them by a patriarchal society and the suggested roles and representations of females with which they are branded with but they do not emerge as triumphant.

Through Nida, Mansab discloses women living in Pakistani male dominated society and how they are forced to abide by their husband's commands. Through Bhanggi, Mansab displays how the transgender community of Pakistan, especially of Lahore, is maltreated and assaulted. Through Sasha, Mansab narrates the life of a mislaid soul who slowly transmutes into a hijab-wearing woman. The depiction of the patriarchal culture cuts close to the bone. From Mansab's delineation of colonnade of un-redeemed and incorrigible men— whether it is Saqib, Nida's husband; or Luqman, Sasha's husband; Sasha's numerous lovers; as well as the entire array of minor men who appear and disappear like broken comets, from Idrees the rapist to Aufaaq the dargah clerk who excruciates Bhanggi— no one and nobody escapes unscathed. The author thrives in the way that she retaliates the masculine and insensitive version of religion that the men in her chronicle wish to impose on their worlds. Through the novel This House of Clay and Water, the current research will examine the distressing effects of patriarchal Pakistani society on women, oppression of women and various phases of womanhood in male dominated Pakistani society. The researcher will scrutinize the present novel with the lens of feminism denoting to Simone de Beauvoir's stance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher explores oppression and different phases of womanhood in patriarchal Pakistani society as delineated in Faiqa Mansab's *This House of Clay and Water*. The aforementioned novel is an effort to bring to forefront the themes of physical and mental abuse, religious exploitation and women oppression from the feminist viewpoint. The novel appears to be bursting with images in which women have been trained not only to accept man's world but to grind under societal pressures, norms, customs and traditions. The study draws attention towards the depiction of brutal patriarchal Pakistani society victimizing women. Furthermore, efforts are made to trace out the diverse ways in which women are presented in the novel.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the various phases of womanhood in the novel
2. To scrutinize gender issues that oppress woman of patriarchal Pakistani society in the selected novel

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the various phases of womanhood depicted in the novel?
2. How do gender issues oppress woman of patriarchal Pakistani society in the selected novel?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Silva, N. (2003) in her article explores the construction of gender in South Asian countries. She contends that while the hegemonic realm of nationalism that unite the masses in battling against imperialists and oppressors, nations in South Asia were however built on an ideology of heteropatriarchy that casts a challenge to women in post-colonial nation states. Silva also proposes that postcolonial feminist theories can act as a remedy against this gender biasness.

According to Bala, P. (2014) women's suppression and inequality goes on for generations, affecting all such as people, families and culture. South Asian culture tends to depend on many patriarchal standards and values and women have to contend with rituals. Bari opines that it is clear from all three selected novels that everybody, men and women alike have a fixed concept of which conduct is adequate when it comes to woman. Women are supposed to adhere to standards, values and expectations which men have created for them. He concludes in the end that a woman's life is classed as a public matter. Thus, woman's personal rebellions are viewed as an uprising against society and men.

According to Ranjan, R. (2017), Nimi portrays the subaltern role of women in Indian society in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. Bela's name is officially changed by Jemubhai's family on the day Jemubhai and Bela get married and she is renamed as Nimi. Through this, Desai emphasizes the repression of individual identity of women and portrays the subjugation of Nimi in her own marriage. Jemubhai's attitude towards his wife deteriorates as time goes by. He abused her not just physically but also emotionally. Ranjan concludes that by the end of the novel, the feminist voice of Desai rings out clearly and she speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Bhutto and Ramzan (2021) have elucidated the issues of feminine injustice and Ramzan et al. (2023) explained the psychological discursiveness in the language use. Salahuddin, A., Zakar, M. Z., & Usman, A. (2016) explores the emblematic implication of the home, a perceptual barrier built between male and female spaces, taking in view various works of Pakistani female authors. There are popular maxims: "It is the world of a man" and "The place of a woman is within the house." This sums up the truth as seen by patriarchy. Taking these ideas as a foundation, it describes spaces for women. They concluded that these Pakistani female writers selected for the study are aware of the restriction imposed in the form of a home onto the women of Pakistani

society. Javaid et al. (2024) discussed the religious coping and mental wellbeing as a systematic review in Muslim university students.

Yadav, S., & Yadav, A. (2016) opine that *Mill on the Floss* illustrates in depth the misery women face in a patriarchal society and illustrates the absurdity of traditions and practices that help perpetuate the illusion of patriarchal society. They come to conclude that Maggie is a prey of gruesome discrimination between the sexes. As a child and as an adult person, Maggie aches deeply. In the characters of Maggie, Tom, Mrs. and Mr. Tulliver, and most of the others, George Eliot aimed to provide a relatively full image of women's problems such as education and career opportunities

Jingrui, H. U. I. (2015) expounds in his article that Mrs. Ramsey and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* though apparently are different but have something in common and both of them signify two sides of a woman—the natural and the social. Mrs. Ramsey is the epitome of goodness and embodies virtues of love and beauty. Jingrui opines that focus on Mrs. Ramsay's beauty is a central factor in defining her as the conventional characteristic of women. Mrs. Ramsey's knitting, according to Jingrui is used as a metaphor of traditional role of women. On the other hand, Lily reflects the independent side of a woman looking for her own identity and respect for herself. She still does self-improvement and as the ultimate target she pursues her own identity. Woman is spiritually split under patriarchal system.

Greer, C. (2003) describes that Shakespearean female characters assume various roles and personalities depending on the play's genre. To some extent, the women of Shakespeare's comedies are in charge and make life exciting to their male counterparts in their search for love. On the other hand, Shakespeare's tragedies and romances disclose that women are tangled in greater philosophical scuffles and are far more multifaceted beings. Greer concludes that the primary aim of Shakespeare in his women's portrayal was to promote the patriarchal male values that were in place throughout England. *Othello* and *Measure for Measure* completely support this patriarchal view.

The focus of Whitehouse, S. C. (1977) thesis is centered on the female characters in the plays of Christopher Marlowe. The four female figures in the canon of Marlowe — Dido, Zenocrate, Abigail, and Isabella represent a steady shift in the way these females respond to damaging power. Dido, incapable to cope with the refusal effectually, commits suicide. Zenocrates understands Tamburlaine's viciousness and accepts it, though not without considerable discomfort. Conversion of Abigail to Christianity is a passive and optimistic way of rejecting the power of Barabas upon her. And Isabella responds so fervently to Edward's exploitation that she becomes crueler than the man whose meanness has triggered her conversion. There is a gradual strengthening of female character in the plays, a growing capability to struggle, if not contradict. The main female characters have values or expectations that contradict those of the male characters. In all of Marlowe's works Whitehouse concludes, devastation happens because the desires of women are not met or due to the moral code they reveal or portray is disregarded.

Weber, M. (2017) states that the Victorian period through depictions of life and culture, a picture of an inflexible culture marked by prudence, tradition and stringent moral codes is what Wilde focused on and lampooned in his comedies. *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance* and *An Ideal Husband* all deal with the contemporary tension between male and female, private and public spaces where women are held in the tight grip of patriarchal society and gender distinctions. Female characters in these plays contravene their gender restrictions, often successfully but ultimately conforming to orthodoxy. Weber opines it is a theme seen in all

three plays: female characters attempting to transgress their stereotypical roles, their efforts being eventually interrupted by the power of the patriarchal Victorian society.

Rai, M. K. (2016) explains in his article that females in India are still in search of their identity like the female protagonist Jaya in *That Long Silence*. She like every other educated middle-class woman complies with the society's rules and constraints. Jaya attempts to write and becomes successful but her husband and children do not support her. When she realizes that her career has been nothing but a futile endeavor, she experiences a kind of depression. Rai concludes that Shashi portrays how various kinds of women, with their silences, play out their positions. The title underlines the silence that Jaya, the protagonist, needs to crack and search for her own self, her role as a wife and her real self.

Stone, A. (2017) elucidates that Beauvoir is not a mere antagonist of motherhood rather strives to expose the female motherhood encounters with all its depth. Spurning stereotypes and glorifications, referring to motherhood as women's life and giving connotation to it, Beauvoir is eventually driven to aspects of experiences of maternity that challenge her prior perception of motherhood keeps dragging women towards finitude. From the work of Beauvoir, Stone concludes, it appears that maternity is an origin of higher significance and existentialism.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The researcher has conducted her study in the light of different phases namely, "Childhood", "The Married Woman" and "The Mother" offered by feminist theorist Simone De Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* and applied her theory of feminism on Faiqa Mansab's work *This House of Clay and Water*. The researcher has applied aforementioned phases on Mansab's *This House of Clay and Water* to dig out how female characters in the novel are struggling for social validity in a society dominated by male gender, how oppression is being exercised on women and to highlight various phases of womanhood in the patriarchal Pakistani society depicted in the novel. To allow the researcher to unmask different phases of womanhood and oppression women experience in the selected novel, she has chosen to do a textual analysis. A technique of close textual analysis is used. This provides researcher with opportunity to go deep to explore the intrinsic as well as extrinsic connotations rather than shallow meanings.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

CHILDHOOD

Right at the outset of the novel, Nida, the protagonist tells reader about her childhood. She says she was taught to look for a husband who can be overwhelmed by her appearance, humor and individuality and to fall in love with her desperately (Mansab 2017, p. 24). This is much in line with Beauvoir's proposed point of view that a girl is taught that to be contented, she must be treasured by someone and for this she must wait for true love. Nida tells Sasha how she along with her family used to celebrate Eid in her childhood. Nida's mother was very strict when it comes to appearance and dressing sense. Nida was forced by her mother to apply henna and wear bangles on Eid but Nida always tried to rebel against the female standards of dressing and embellishing herself. She is shamed in submission and years later after marriage whenever she views herself in mirror on Eid, wearing same expression like her mother did every Eid, she recognized it as depression and took medication for it (Mansab, 2017, p. 37) Nida's mother always seeks to enforce the societal standards on Nida. Beauvoir (1949) also has the similar viewpoint concerning social conditioning.

Sasha shares a close bond with her elder daughter Alina aged 13 while Zoya being 12 is the ignorant child of the house. She pays special attention to the physical appearance of Alina. She buys designer clothes for her and instructs her to attend every party which her class fellows

throw in order to remain inside social circles. Sasha trains Alina to be a social butterfly like she is, "Get dressed for the birthday party Alina and wear the clothes I got for you from NEXT. She had a very active social life. It was extremely important to have a social life, their mother always insisted" (Mansab, 2017, p. 55). On the other hand, Zoya is looked down upon by Sasha based on her physical appearance. Sasha nags Zoya owing to her dark complexion, thick features, bulky body, stupidity and poor sense of clothes selection "Mama hardly noticed her unless it was to criticize about Zoya getting fat. Mama had begun to complain. Mama had looked at Zoya with sadness as if it had been her own fault Zoya hadn't known till then that it was. There was something very wrong with her, she just knew it" (Mansab, 2017. p. 55-59) This highlights Beauvoir's (1949) opinion that a mother actively attempts to control her daughters, imposing decisions that clash with the increasing attempts of a girl to be independent.

Nida was trained in her infancy that she would be good as a daughter if she was quiet and respectful and evil if she wasn't. As a wife, if she is not caring, submissive and selfless, she is not a good wife. She was given numerous religious references by her mother to validate superiority of males over her. If she had liberated herself with that one act, by redefining boundaries of selfhood which she had learnt from her family and society, she would no longer be one of those roles which had been described and outlined for her by the society and family (Mansab, 2017. P. 220-221) Throughout her childhood, Nida is programmed not by her mom only but by society also to be passive and submissive to the wills of father, brothers and would be husband.

THE MARRIED WOMAN

The in-depth study of *This House of Clay and Water* reveals that Nida is married to politician Saqib without her consent. In patriarchal Pakistani society, parents have complete authority to decide marriage of their children. Nida mentions "My education had successfully vested in me the vision to defy the usual womanly roles, but my parents, especially my father, had given me none of the tools that would allow me to change those roles to fit me. It was I who had to change to fit them, just like my mother had. After all, it was my mother who'd been party to the arrangement of my marriage. Wifehood and motherhood had been thrust upon me at a time when I had hardly reconciled myself with being a person, a woman" (Mansab, 2017, p. 114). Societal conferred inherited parental right to choose a husband for their daughter, denied the Nida from her very basic right. Nida was not willing to get married at this tender age but was forced to do so basing on multiple assumed factors. Firstly, because society expects from a girl to get married at early age and secondly, usually daughter is considered as a big burden on parents' shoulders from which parents want to get rid as soon as possible "My mother was glad that someone was marrying me and taking me off her hands. A daughter was a huge responsibility" (Mansab, 2017, p. 116). Girls are programmed by parents and society in such a way that they hold obedience to parents above their own wishes.

Alike Nida, Sasha is also made a scapegoat of parental will enforcement. With a heavy heart, she tied knot with Luqman in purely arranged marriage which turned her into a rebellious brat. "I didn't want to marry so young but my parents... It was every woman's story" (Mansab, 2017, p. 11). This is much in line with Beauvoir's viewpoint that "The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage whether she is frustrated by, disgusted at, or even indifferent to this institution" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 502). Pawar (2016) explicates "women are held subordinate to men. She is stuck in a unique social framework, that is, to cook and produce children. This is nothing but a gender role difference in the socio-cultural context" (Pawar, 2016, p. 79).

Exuberant dalliance and delighted coquetry bound to a newlywed couple, faded a few months after the marriage in the case of Nida and Saqib. Saqib made himself busy in political matters keeping Nida confined within the four walls of house all alone doomed to subjugation, loneliness and oppression. After her marriage, she merges her identity, her lifestyle her likings and dislikings with that of her husbands and in-laws as she says “A begum wasn’t human. She was the wife of so and-so and mother of his children. She bore his name and his inadequacies in grateful silence. She didn’t need any brains or a will of her own” (Mansab, 2017, p. 213). She attempts her level best to keep others happy and satisfied but everyone takes all her efforts for granted “It was a slow process of hypnosis that lasted a lifetime I was trying to win the approval of my in-laws. I was reassuring Saqib every hour of every day that I was no threat to his masculinity, rather, he was indeed my one true love, like he insisted he be” (Mansab. 2017, p. 24).

Saqib fails to emotionally connect with Nida even after five years of marriage. This emotional disconnection makes Nida feel hollowness and emptiness in her life. Trapped in a loveless marriage, Nida seeks love, affection and emotional connection outside her house when Saqib failed to provide any. Patriarchy represses sexuality of women to regulate and restrict women in a Pakistani society. Saqib happily deprives his wife from her sexual rights but not bold enough to temper his own sexual cravings” After two years, he’d got tired of the call girls and the fear of being caught at it by some nosy journalist” (Mansab, 2017, p.149). Faheem, another side character, is also leading a double life. He deceives his wife Seerat by enjoying his nights with Sasha in a hotel’s room. For a woman, having an extra marital affair is something intolerable in Pakistani society while man is free enough to fall for any woman even outside his marriage “Any woman who had been with more than one man, even if it was within the bounds of holy matrimony, was considered a slut Islam failed to impress men here” (Mansab, 2017, p.213). This quote holds enough proof that in a patriarchal Pakistani society the parameters to measure debaucheries are quite different for men and female.

THE MOTHER

If we closely evaluate the novel *This House of Clay and Water*, we’ll come across the fact that motherhood depicted in the novel is very much in line with Beauvoir’s concept of “enforced maternity”. Beauvoir claims that women are not yet born with a motherly, maternal and tender penchant instinct, irrespective of the norms of the patriarchy to the contrary. Ward (1995) believes that “motherhood isn’t an immense source of joy for all women” (Ward, 1995, p.37). Kirkpatrick (2014), proposes misconceptions about motherhood still affect women from within and without” (Kirkpatrick, 2014, p.63) Maushart (1999) notes that motherhood is “the most powerful of all biological capacities, and among the most disempowering of all social experiences” (Maushart, 1999, p. 73)

Patriarchal fabricated proclamation that it’s a natural desire of all women to become mothers is negated in the novel through the major female characters of the novel as they both don’t want to become mothers at least not so soon after their marriage. Both Nida and Sasha face not only the societal pressure but also the pressure exerted by their spouses to become pregnant as early as possible. Nida confesses, “Wifehood and motherhood had been thrust upon me at a time when I had hardly reconciled myself with being a person, a woman” (Mansab, 2017. P. 114). The concept of enforced maternity becomes crystal clear from this quote. Meanwhile Sasha has similar grievances against her husband and in-laws “Sometimes, she wondered what it would’ve been like to have been free, to have had choices” (Mansab, 2017, p. 69). After becoming a mother, she says “If only she were younger, without the encumbrances posed by children. The

cruellest was this being a mother No matter how hard you struggled against it, it changed you, this whole business of motherhood” (Mansab, 2017, p. 69). Sasha opines that motherhood puts a bar on your wishes, dreams and ambitions. It’s the master stroke of Mansab to expose patriarchy by delineating that kind of female characters who are devoid of that very instinct to be a mother. Both the female characters don’t think that motherhood completes a woman as per indoctrination and inculcation of patriarchal norms.

In a Pakistani society, a mother always exercises the powers of her emotional influence to control her son even after his marriage. Manifestation of the same so-called code of ethics can be seen in the selected novel. Mothers of Saqib and Luqman exercise control over their sons even after six years of their sons’ marriage. Kandiyoti (1988) describes, “Aged women have a strong interest in suppressing romantic love among young couple to keep the conjugal connection largely irrelevant and claim primary allegiance of the son. They see the romantic association of their son with his wife as a potential danger to the bond they have with their son” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 173). Overpowered by same very trance, Saqib has abandoned sleeping with Nida after the death of his daughter Fatima on the advice of his mother. Nida has tried her level best to win her mother-in-law’s heart sometimes by serving her, other times by silently enduring her intolerable tantrums but all her efforts bore no fruit. Saqib’s mom commands him to marry again as a punishment for Nida after Nida delivers an abnormal daughter but Nida comprehends the disguised jealousy her mom-in-law harbors for her as Nida states, “I didn’t even ask her what she thought I needed to be punished for I understood. It was because I’d married her son. I had taken that part of him she never could and she hated me for it. She exulted in my misery and pain” (Mansab, 2017, p. 115).

The novel tells the story of various mothers having different and contradictory relationships with their children. Nida is a mother who has lost her only daughter to Down Syndrome. Saqib never owns his own special daughter. Instead of giving Nida moral and emotional support, he blames her for having an abnormal daughter “He would strike again at that damaged little thing I’d brought into being, all on my own. I didn’t want to feel like I was the only one responsible for the baby” (Mansab, 2017, p.113). Nida’s mother-in-law tortures her emotionally for not giving birth to a baby boy. She forbids her to bear more children “I’d been pronounced tainted after I’d borne a damaged baby. It was considered my fault that the baby had Down Syndrome and a damaged heart. I was labeled unfit to give birth and was ordered never to try that again. My mother in law said do not even think of having another child. We cannot repeat this disaster God has punished you. Why should my son suffer with you? You will anyway be considered weak because it wasn’t a son. Imagine having a girl who isn’t even normal” (Mansab, 2017, p.115).

Being a mother to an incapacitated girl has dropped down the position of Nida in a patriarchal society. However, things would have been different had she given birth to a baby boy. After realizing that Saqib doesn’t consider their children’s death worth enough to be mourn at, heartbroken Nida starts visiting Dargah for peace and calmness of her soul “Just like things had been fine after my mother died, after Fatima died, after my abortion, all my tragedies were mine to bear in silence, and with patience, like Allah commanded. All of Allah’s commandments were for me-none for him” (Mansab, 2017, p 263) She is unable to get over from her children’s death, thereafter, Nida speaks her heart out by saying. “A part of me died with those babies. My dead child had become a tune in my head I could not hum, and could not get out of my head I didn’t know whether I cried for them, my daughter, my unborn child, the loss of innocence and love, all that had died” (Mansab, 2017, p.159) Nida cannot get over from her daughter’s death. She feels that she has finally lost the purpose of living as Beauvoir (1949) opines that eventually a mom is

doomed to unhappiness if she focuses the whole purpose of her life and motherhood is likely to cause women depression and frustration (Beauvoir, 1949, p.647)

Both Nida and Sasha do not share a healthy and normal bond with their spouses which eventually affect all of them in numerous ways. They have terrible pregnancies and period thereafter. Both failed to become a good mother (in Sasha 's case) or normal mother (in Nida's case). Things would have been different if both are having normal and contented married life, a good home atmosphere, satisfied desires and flawless childhood.

WOMEN AS AN OPPRESSED LOT

By careful scrutinizing the novel, the researcher has observed that all the female characters in the novel are oppressed by men in different ways. The common oppressive tools in men's hands are societal norms, religious values and marital constrains.

PATRIARCHY IN PRAXIS - SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND WOMAN'S QUANDARY IN A PAKISTANI SOCIETY

Throughout the novel, it is observed that Nida has demonstrated vociferously as well as virtually for being trained, programmed and constructed according to standards of patriarchal Pakistani society. In her childhood, like a blank sheet of glass, Nida's mind is ready to be stamped on and it's engraved with patriarchal values, principles and norms by her mother who upholds patriarchy because it's the only mean for a woman to survive in a patriarchal society "For the longest time I'd seen the world through my mother's eyes. I had loved and hated, approved and disapproved with the neuron patterns instilled in me over the years. No number of shocks could rid me of the notions that were ingrained in my very skin and bones. Even with the blinkers off, I didn't have the courage to do anything" (Mansab, 2017, p. 35). The above quoted lines from the novel reveal that patriarchal norms and standards have been inculcated in the minds of women since generations. The values and principles that Nida's mom had learnt during her childhood are being transferred to Nida exactly in letter and spirit. Mill (1851) maintained that "the prevailing paradigm of patriarchy was a way of depriving access of women to control and there was no clear basis for societal constructions of gender identity" (Mill, 1851, p. 22).

Nida has been programmed loudly and clearly by her mother about the expectation attaches to her as a sister and a daughter, furthermore, she was very clearly instructed about her responsibilities as wife after her marriage. She must be obedient, submissive, docile towards every command she gets from males of her house, "I looked at myself through lenses that were fitted with censures I had heard all my life for other women, other women's wrongdoings. As a daughter I was good if I was silent and obedient and bad if I was not. As a wife, I was good if I was loving and selfless and bad if I wasn't" (Mansab, 2017, p.220-221). Nida voices out her anxiety by putting question which has agitated her for quite long "Who was it who had placed a woman's honor between her legs—and that of every man in her life too? Man or God? Or both? Was I confusing patriarchy with God? Were they the same? (Mansab, 2017, p. 170). These lines are one of the most powerful lines of the novel depicting hypocrisy of patriarchal norms . "All my life I had censored my feelings, my emotions, according to what is supposed to be right and wrong. My feelings had to be approved by my significant others. I'd always had to repress my reactions and emotions and so that night I searched my soul to find the right feeling" (Mansab, 2017, p. 212). The above-mentioned quote reflects how women become ambivalent and indecisive to spend a robotic life in a patriarchal society.

MARRIAGE AND RELIGION - OPPRESSIVE INSTITUTES AGAINST WOMAN

Male characters of the novel, Saqib, Luqman and Faheem impose their dominance over their wives because of being the earning hands of the house. As dependency is a key feature of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, all wives in the chosen novel are not only physically and emotionally dependent on their men but also financially dependent upon them. Seerat is monetarily dependent upon Faheem yet being submissive she never asks for any extravagance things "All he had to do to silence her few monetary demands was tell her he'd cut down his own expenses to accommodate hers, or sulk. It made her feel so guilty; she wouldn't ask for money for months on end" (Mansab, 2017, p. 16). The above-mentioned quote reflects hypocrisy of Faheem. He exploits his wife to make her guilty. Women are shown innocent, easily exploitable, manipulated and victimized. On the other hand, Nida being financially dependent on Saqib endures his suppression like most of the Pakistani wives. She doesn't buy designer clothes though her husband can afford them, because she knows very well that there is nothing men dislike more than parting with their money. Secondly, she feels humiliated on being inquired by Saqib about her spending: "I had to ask Saqib for money and then give him a long explanation of the whys and hows and whats and whens. It was demeaning" (Mansab, 2017, p. 106). Not only Nida has been told about the liabilities of her gender but also has been stuffed in her brain with the instructions about her duties as a wife. She uses to get a dose of reality from Saqib "It's not a man's job to look after children. That's the way our society functions. My job is to look after my family financially and emotionally. Responsibility of this house lies on you Nida. You must mend your ways to be a perfect wife" (Mansab, 2017, p. 204-205).

The greatest issue in Pakistan is that religion exists in theory and rarely in practice. The Holy Quran emphasizes that 'women have rights too over men equivalent to men's rights over women' (2, 228). This was also preached by The Holy Prophet (P-B-U-H). In his most popular and widely quoted Last Sermon, he explicitly states the necessity of remaining fair to women, of their privileges and to take care of women. All the powerful males take the lead from false preaching of Islam done in tribe, family and countryside. In the chosen novel, Saqib, has deceitful sense of superiority over his wife and he demands complete complicity from his wife "Saqib had the need to feel superior and I had that terrible itch to please; so I would look blank while he droned on" (Mansab, 2017, p. 104). The quote signifies that men in a Pakistani society consider themselves above women. In the chosen novel, all the male characters use religion as a tool against women to subjugate them. Satyr, Saqib's brother tells Nida to be an obedient wife because this is what Islam teaches us "Try and do what is good for him. A selfless woman is the most exalted. Ungrateful wives will fill the maw of hell" (Mansab, 2017, p. 39). Satyr is a pure hypocrite who molds religion according to his will "Using and abusing religion for control had become a habit for men and unfortunately, Satyr was a master of hypocrisy" (Mansab, 2017, p. 39-40).

In Chapter 4 of the Holy Quran, human beings are told: "And if you worry that you will be unable to deal fairly with the orphaned girls then marry a woman of your preference, two or three or four, however if you doubt that you will be unable to deal equally with them, then only one is right to have. This is closer to stopping you from doing inequality (Al-Quran, 4). But males like Saqib have interpreted this verse in wrong sense to accrue benefits for themselves "The Quran says women are subordinate to men. They got one half of property, and I can have four wives if I want to. I can take all this freedom away from you any time I want. And I can walk away from this marriage any time I want. It's part of that religion" (Mansab, 2017, p. 151). Though men knows very well about their right of having four wives but looks down upon a women when she desires to remarry after her husband's death or divorce as Nida contemplates "Though the

religion they expounded upon every waking hour permitted a woman to remarry in case of death of the husband or divorce, she was deemed promiscuous if she took advantage of said law” (Mansab, 2017, p. 201). She is given blows of reality by Saqib and Sasha not to deviate from the limitations prescribed for her “Women who love and serve their husbands faithfully are good women. Those who don’t possess this single-minded devotion are bad” (Mansab, 2017, p. 158). Female characters in the novel are shown as oppressed, while the male characters whether spouses or illegitimate paramours are persecutors using religion and societal norms as the tools in their attempts justify their activities as Faheem tells Sasha “That’s different. I’m a man.... Men and women are poles apart. It’s a man’s world. A woman’s reputation is all she’s got. This is not something you’d want your daughter to do” (Mansab, 2017, p.13). The dual standards of patriarchal Pakistani society are quite evident in the quote mentioned above. Both Nida and Sasha are fed up with their married lives as Nida remarks, “All marriages end up unhappy. Marriages are a trap anyway. They’re just a crutch for control. Behind closed doors and within the sanctity of marriage, violence is worse because it is unnamed, hidden, mute. Doesn’t mean it isn’t there. It’s just a social contract to enable legitimate children. It’s not a choice. For generations, women have fallen into marriages and motherhood like sleepwalkers, like you did, like I did” (Mansab, 2017, p.169). For centuries, women have been oppressed by the superior class- men, in the name of marriage and religion and *This House of Clay and Water* stunningly depicts that.

CONCLUSION

The study of the selected novel in Beauvoir’s feminist perspective shows that women in the novel are subscribing to their respective roles in Pakistani society in the very same way as delineated by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. Pakistani society is a society where a woman’s life is made up for men, by men, in which a woman must submit to survive. Thus, Mansab highlights pitiable conditions of her female characters i.e. Nida, Sasha and Zoya, who are caught in the web of societal expectations. After dissecting different phases of womanhood, the status of women in patriarchal Pakistani society is made clear that they are treated like inferiors. From a woman of Pakistani society, nothing else is required more than getting married in the easiest manner available. So, it’s common for Nida and Sasha to constrain themselves to exploring the ways a man can be impressed. Women’s education, confidence as well as effectiveness are destroyed to physical appearance as seen in Nida’s life since a conventional blind belief in marriage as a sole objective is instilled in her mind.

A detailed analysis of the female characters implies that they are oppressed based on gender in the substructures of orthodox Pakistani society. Women at different phases of life are exposed to male’s oppression. A large percentage eventually succumb to the indoctrination which starts at early childhood and continues lifetime, leading many females believe that aspiring for equity will be either unethical or sinful. Nida and Sasha are victims of same programming since their childhoods. Mansab has revealed diverse methods of embezzling religious guidelines and doctrines by Saqib, Faheem and Luqman in victimizing Nida, Seerat and Sasha.

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