

BENEATH PATRIARCHAL LAYERS IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY: FEMINIST INSIGHTS INTO SHAMSIE AND MASROOR'S SELECTED SHORT STORIES

Hassan Bin Zubair

*PhD English (Literature), Head of English Department (BS Programs)
Superior College Mian Channu (Pakistan)*

Email: hbz77@yahoo.com

Itrat Zahra (Corresponding Author)

The Government Sadiq College and Women University Bahawalpur (Pakistan)

Email: itratzahra79@gmail.com

Rida Fatima

BS English, Superior College Mian Channu (Pakistan)

Email: ridafatima147@gmail.com

Abstract

*This research examines the role of women in the male-dominated hierarchy, aiming to empower them to survive with dignity. In the current research, the foundation of patriarchy established by Gerda Lerner (1989) is applied as the basic theoretical framework. Voiceless women are provoked by patriarchy in several beliefs and doctrines. This research has been accomplished by textual analysis of Pakistani Short stories and focusing on various practices and occasions as reflected by Pakistani feminists to bring out the male-dominated systems. It depicts the way women have been exposed to treatment as commodities without considering their aspirations. Their disregard for patriarchal ideas can leave them without their lives as individuals. It also highlights that women are suppressed and persecuted by patriarchal frameworks. This study examines female figures in the selected literary works of Pakistani Short stories authored by Muneeza Shamsie's *Shahrazad's Golden Leopard* and *The Monkey Wound* by Hajra Masroor. Every character attempts to emancipate themselves from oppression leads to misogynistic violence.*

Keywords: *Dignity, Patriarchy, Female Rights, Persecuted, Misogynists, Violation.*

Introduction

Feminism is a great shift, which started in 1960s, most female writers are confronting their writings representing literature related societal perspectives against the masculine perspective and the women's perspective. It is a reaction to the male-dominated literary studies, which had not given due attention to literature created by feminist writers. "Women do not have the right to release their works in a female capacity; hence they adopt a masculine pseudonym" (Shahzad, 2017). Women are objectified in the works of literature, as women express their perspective through conversation. Females are twice as long as males; females are longing for those lures that can make males crazed. On the contrary, "they are viewed as defenseless, and fragility is a poor excuse for bad men to exploit their appearance" (Sugihastuti, 2010). The 7th and last of the autobiographical books authored by Angelou was published in 1969 and titled "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings". Her memoir covers her life from early childhood to adolescence. Her childhood was chaotic, and, at times, tragically, she was raped and exposed to bigotry. Her autobiography talks of the struggles and identity as a black writer and poet. She often believed that due to her skin tone, they were not listening to what she was saying. She described how the racial discrimination and the liberation versus confinement are all traced in it. Dickinson insisted

on the significance of female rights as a scholarly and political dedication to women. “Feminism is the faith in society accommodations, economic, political moments, and judicial imbalances of certain regulations” (Angelou, 1969). “Men and women are discriminated against in settings that embrace the conventional culture, where, in most cases, the male gender is referred to” (Dickinson, 2003).

The organizing of writing, according to Mambrol, is also by a binary gender divide, which was in favor of men and subjugated writing to their laws. Male writers can write anything, but the same cannot be said about female writers. Women usually talk like men and tell stories to the world in order to share their experiences. As such, there is hardly any amount of flexibility on the part of individuals due to writing. “The writing that a woman must have will become a stream of surplus, unrestricted, infinite, and radiant streams, repressive thought or authority” (Mambrol, 2017). In *My Feudal Lord*, by Durrani, is a feminist writing-based novel that created controversy upon its publication in 1991. Also, this novel was rejected, scoffed at, and outlawed by Pakistan and Egypt. She penned down some graphic information and the abhorrent reality of the dilemmas of women, which were very much stigmatized in the past and the 1990s in Muslim cultures. When the book was published, her father left her alone. This tendency to the stories of Women authors can be condemned, discarded, and even imprisoned. By the words of Nasreen, she made it clear that the so-called ‘Insecure Misogynists’ are those who berate on the so-called male insecurity or sexism, and the point she made is that it is only a symptom rather than the illness itself, which is the patriarchy. This disease will continue to manifest in society until its elimination. The current paper picks up the literature of Pakistani female authors, who expounded on the problems of women within the patriarchal societal framework. “The term Patriarchy is the main focus of the study borrowed out of the production of male domination by *Lerner*, and also covers the problem of subordination, masculine authority, and exploitation are also put forward in the short narratives from Pakistan”(Nasreen, 2017). In Pakistan, most of the individuals have the perception that feminism is wrongly perceived, which a wrong interpretation of the term is. The women authors who have addressed numerous women-related issues are always attempting to dismiss women’s expressions, and as such, women remained voiceless for decades under a male-dominated society. Literature Review Feminist fiction regularly uses female characters who are battling a patriarchal and often, masculinist society due to their quest to gain freedom. “The non-traditional female characters in such books have attracted criticism, sarcasm, disregard, and even ridicule” (Rollyson, 2010). *Lerner* (1989) argues that male authority as we presently know it took some 2500 years to develop, that is, between 3100 BC and 600 BC. During the same period, the evolution of patriarchy was a process and not an event. *Gerda Lerner* (1989) focuses on the historical contributions of women in the struggle for equality and the dismantling of male domination in the opening paragraph. According to her, patriarchal systems emerged before class society and property. Different feminist writers define the terms particular to patriarchy and subordination (Bhutto & Ramzan, 2021; Ramzan & Javaid, 2025). According to the patriarchal system of family, where women are traded in with men is known as patriarchy (Mitchell, 1990). “The social structures and practices that are referred to as patriarchy are those where men are always dominant and exploit women” (*Lerner*, 1989).

Literature Review

“Patriarchy refers to the social relation in existence involving both genders; they possess an economic base, which, though hierarchical, instills independence and solidarity among men that help them exercise authority over women” (Rosenberg, 1984). Other feminist authors define

subordination. “It means that one thing is not very crucial as compared to the other item” (Cobuild, 2010). Subordination, as defined by the Advanced Learner Dictionary, refers to the situation where a member of an organization lacks authority or power compared to others. “Patriarchal structure of women being viewed as meaningless creatures and trampling down their rights took place thousands of years ago” (Hornby, 2003). Even feminist women should not have the freedom to emotional expression, or express their emotions in their narratives. “The females tirelessly strive to submit to men and are deprived of their rights. They live an exhausting existence where there is no liberation of the female gender. (Engels, 1940) Hence, women are the most effective conveyors of these problems in their writings than their male counterparts since they are victims of these patriarchal principles. Similarly to the case in these Pakistani narrative fictions, authors described the problems and misery of women within a patriarchal system (Ramzan & Khan, 2024 a, b). As men think by their mentality, they believe that they are dominant creatures and that females are suppressed. Such unfairness is typical on the side of women, and they stay voiceless in society. Consequently, they are not vocalized on their part and subordinate their femininity. Through feminism, a social reform movement, a moral theory, and a sociological framework, one can face hardships and suffering, able to be an advocate of the civil rights of women as individuals. “It is a political move aimed at causing change in the world instead of making sense of it” (Fetterley, 1978). Based on the historical considerations of the female feminist writers, society is dominated by men (Miller). When describing the strength, a male must seduce females, as Brown Miller demonstrates how this has affected the male supremacy over women and the male superiority. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen was the subject of various writers whose writings focused on feminist ideology. In this paper, it was pointed out that the contribution of females in the early 19th century was never perceived as strong and was stripped of rights to education, marriage, and property. “The social, legislative, political, and financial organization of many different civilizations is all male-centered” (Cushman, 2016).

The research showed the acceptance of the patriarchal culture in society. The father and the mother want their daughter to get married to a rich guy. “The researcher also discussed Elizabeth, who was the main character. She illustrates that she can turn around the wishes of her parents and rediscover them and discover love independently” (Wilujeng, 2010). By concentrating on the image of the housewife, critic Davis noted that they had erroneously believed that conventional feminine norms of dominant and/or lower rank women in the second half of the 20th century were the totality of the women’s lived experience. She says that the policies of the Apartheid South Africa that sought to intentionally disrupt [black] family structure show that the household labor. “Women are actually not a mandatory part in the capitalist wage labor and the fact that the household life may actually be dispensed by the South African form of capitalism” (Davis, 1981). “Feminist critique is a special form of political rhetoric that concentrates on the fight against gender discrimination and male dominance instead of merely dealing with gender issues in literature” (Auerbach, 1953). “The critic claims that men are commonly considered competent, forceful, autonomous, masterful, and goal-driven in patriarchal society” (Eisenclas, 2013). The case of feminist writers not gaining access to the classical literary canon explains the impact of their works on the existing body of literature. Ideas that have been particularly sensitive to women, including the issue of household and public oppression, rape, silence, etc., have also received particular interest among writers.

Research Objectives

1. The research is devoted to the patriarchal structure used in Pakistani short tale narratives, Muneeza Shamsie's *Shahrazad's The Golden Leopard*, and *The Monkey Wound* by Hajra Masroor, to emphasize the opposition that females showed to the domination and possessiveness of men who consider women their property.
2. To analyze how Pakistani feminist authors revealed the enormous oppression compelling women to escape cruel conditions and attack the patriarchal environment.

Research Questions

1. In which ways do the feminist writers define the plights of actual women in Pakistani short stories within a drastic culture of patriarchy?
2. How do men oppress women in a patriarchal society, as is the case in the Pakistani Short stories?

Research Methodology

This paper will be a description of concepts presented by a Pakistani short story author. In this study, the views of the writers are involved, which they have expressed in two brief tales, i.e., Muneeza Shamsie's *Shahrazad's The Golden Leopard*, and Hajra Masroor's *The Monkey Wound*. The quality of this text is analyzed in the work produced by Lerner in her publication about the Creation of Patriarchy, published in 1989. We find the portrayal of females, their misery, and cruelty, all of which are depicted as they were under the prevalent force of men. The data collection and analysis of the text have been conducted through textual analysis. This paper is a critique of two short stories by Pakistani authors. As it was a quality concern study, the data contains the words and phrases. The current research relies on the deep analysis of the work in order to locate the remains of the information. Hence, textual analysis is the best approach that can be used in the current study.

Theoretical Framework

Each one of the two short story texts helped reveal the theme of the repute of females in the male dominated set up, as well as to analyze the specified question through the application of the knowledge in feminism. We have followed the framework of the book by Lerner called *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Lerner says that. Patriarchy indicates the integration of masculine supremacy over females in the broader surroundings and the outside approval of masculine domination towards females and young ones in the house. "All societal institutions are characterized by the power of men and withheld from women. It does not, however, mean that females are totally stripped of rights, authority, and access. In this regard" (Lerner, 1989), comparable theories were proposed by Aristotle, stating that men are portrayed as dominant while women remain passive. He perceived women as mutilated males or soulless people. In his perspective, a woman is inferior because of her biology and her abilities, capacity for logical thinking, and finally, the power of decision- making. "Men are considered inherently superior, and women are regarded as naturally subordinate since men are superior to women" (Lerner 1989). He said that the courage of a man is manifested in his ability to order a woman to obey. Thus, we embrace the Lerner perspectives of the feminist writer, i.e., the primary issue of Lerner's creation of patriarchy, but other authors develop their voices against the patriarchal idea of women. The feminist authors experienced numerous issues in these two stories because of the patriarchal society. They are regarded as inferior, subordinate, and powerless. They were quietened down and learned to endure the cruelty of the male, both bodily and psychologically. Therefore, we adopted Lerner's manufacturing of male dominance as a framework for the article.

Discussion and Findings

Muneeza Shamsie is a Pakistani female writer, a public defender of women's rights, a great author for women's rights, and a bibliographer. She is a famous writer who highlights the role of women in Pakistani society. To impact readers in the modern world, she has written a number of stories that revolve around the perception of women. The Story of *Shahrazad's Golden Leopard* portrays the patriarchal authority according to the Lerner theory. When creating a patriarchy, the male is always attempting to suppress women in the hierarchical framework. The contemporary society is patriarchal, where men control every aspect of life (Chen & Ramzan, 2024; Nawaz et al., 2021). Tales of women being exploited are, at times, in abundance. "Women are the most crucial elements of our society" (Firestone, 1974). The feminism topic is often raised in the story of the *Shahrazad's Golden Leopard* of Muneeza Shamsie. The story is masterfully crafted by Muneeza Shamsie. Should we take a voyage by it, we can easily understand the dominance of males, and the personality of Shahrazad is presented as an oppressed woman. She is the protagonist who is a victim of sexual discrimination. She is completely ignored by her family, in contrast with her brother. Her mother was considered the adopted child. She was incessantly attempting to get her to love herself, with no success. Her mother had to take her to the birthday party of her Malcolm Carter, but she was unwilling to do this, hence she could not get what she wanted. Her mother is invariably making comparisons of her with her brother, and this makes her a much more disgusted personality in the short narratives. Similar to the several lines of the short narratives, "although Shah had torn Mummy, Shah Rukh apart, one must love her first" (p.22). Although Shah Rukh had played it wrong, no one would have raised a finger since he is a male supremacist, and he is always attempting to suppress the persona of Shahrazad since her originality is getting curtailed. Consequently, gender discrimination takes place in the character of Shahrazad due to the male-centered social system she has to contend with, where women are continuously regarded as subordinate to men. "The author describes the liberal manner of Shahrazad in a couple of lines of Shamsie's narration, including the body bullying, as something her parent ignored" (p.24), as she was raised by other slave women in the imperial period, in the brief passages that they shared (Nawaz et al., 2022). The sentences above show that during the colonized time, women were reduced to slaves, as in the story of Shamsie, since they are lesser beings and have no right to a voice in the patriarchal structure.

"A subjugated female is supposed to follow the command and act like a powerless creature" (Bhasin, 2006). Similar to the short narratives, Muneeza Shamsie conveys the character of the enslaved females and the way she copes with the house and takes care of the children. Thus, females are making attempts to repress in the masculine-centered world. Another Pakistani Short story that we will analyze is the one written by Masroor. She is the Pakistani female dominant, leading feminist author of Pakistan. She has elevated the social, political, legal, and economic rights of females to be equal to those of males. Similar to the short narratives, *The Monkey Wound* by the Hajra Masroor. She presents the pain of a female in a male-dominated society. Lerner's creation of Patriarchy is used as the structure of the study. "The male in this theory has been identified with the active role, and the role of the female is passive as they lack power structure" (Lerner 1989). The author tells about the misery of women. What happens to the women in a male-dominated society? The female character narrates her misery at the onset of the story as seen in the subsequent lines. Her illness was one of fever and excessive heat. She could feel it in every fiber of her being, and it would feel as though she were being sucked out of her bones. She is experiencing a fever and cough, and her body is as hot as the sun. Even the

fever was melting her bones and making her as frail as Jharu. The feminist writer equated her looks with the term straw in the Urdu language, which signifies jharu. She likens herself to a monkey due to her suffering in life, which has weakened her. “The social order was manifested in the description of the attacks by the monkeys on her, which were male-dominant” (Miller, 1976).

This attack can be described as the way males belittle and restrict women. The ban symbolizes patriarchal social principles through which women are required to stay within the domestic circle and follow the strict regulations of social hierarchy, which is male-controlled. Her family is a patriarchal structure where women are deprived of their rights and are always striving to oppress them physically and mentally, as in the story. The names of the characters in the story are all nameless. Marriage was also a societal issue that was given prominence in the patriarchal society. In the case of a girl not getting married, it will be a liability for the parents, as seen in the story *The Monkey Wound*. In the subsequent lines like these. Then suddenly the burden of never having been married would sink on him, etc. (p.93). The womanish character is contrasted with the other girls of her age, who are married at an early stage, years, and have four or five children. Similar to the Lerner theory of Patriarchy (1989), the biological distinction between a male and female is that the role of women is to bear children and manage household duties in a patriarchal society. The Masroor mentioned the problems that girls experience so much and take as a burden. “The women are in the homes of both parents and the husband in the patriarchal society, despite all attempts to paint the limitations” (Barry, 2002). The patriarchal structure always practices women as subjects of private property. The entirety of these norms was constructed by patriarchal norms and oppressed women for over a century.

Conclusion

Conclusively, Pakistani short story authors promote the idea that women must tolerate all forms of patriarchal atrocities without any form of resistance, and they should not question societal norms lest they fail to meet societal expectations. They are in search of salvation, and they are submissive to their men. The greatest challenge that women struggle with is a limitation within a male-dominated society. Similar to feminists, they push themselves and raise their voices against the limitations and the bias that they are placed into because, without doing so, they would remain suppressed by patriarchy.

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