

Portrayal of Gender Roles in Pakistani Literature: A Critical Analysis

Mahmood Ul Hasson Mujahid

M.Phil Scholar,
Department of Education,
Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari,
Karachi, Pakistan
Mahmoodszabist@yahoo.com

Abstract

Introduction: This critical analysis delves into the portrayal of gender roles in Pakistani literature, exploring how societal constructs, cultural traditions, and historical contexts shape the representation of men and women. The study compares Tehmina Durrani's 'Blasphemy' and Qaisra Shahraz's 'The Holy Woman,' both by Pakistani women, to analyze the depiction of gender roles within Pakistani society.

Methodology: The analysis focuses on the roles assigned to men and women, the hierarchical power structures that govern their interactions, and the resilience of individuals who challenge traditional gender norms.

Results/Findings: The analysis underscores the significance of literature as a reflection of societal values and aspirations and a catalyst for challenging and reshaping prevailing gender norms.

Future Direction: *This analysis aims to initiate a discourse to embark on a constructive journey toward a more inclusive and equitable society in Pakistan. By shedding light on diverse gender experiences, fostering understanding, empathy, and respect, and creating safe spaces for dialogue, we can challenge preconceptions and take meaningful steps towards building a more just and equal society for all.*

Keywords: *Gender roles, Pakistani literature, Cultural traditions, Historical contexts, Resilience, Catalyst for change.*

Introduction

English is evolving into an essential lingua franca in the contemporary globalizing world. Scholars argue it is becoming a language of transcultural mobility, hybridity, and the third space (Ngai & Janusch, 2018). This implies that English is a means of communication and a tool for navigating complex cultural and social identities. It serves as a bridge that connects diverse cultures and facilitates the creation of new social "Imagine a space where individuals from various backgrounds can gather to interact, learn from one another, and forge connections that transcend cultural differences. Such spaces provide a unique opportunity to expand one's viewpoint and cultivate deeper comprehension and appreciation for diversity. Join us in creating these spaces where our differences are celebrated, and our shared humanity unites us all." exchange ideas. The emergence of English as an international language underscores the importance of linguistic diversity and the need to embrace multilingualism in today's interconnected world. In contemporary intercultural contexts, the assessment of English students is a challenging task. Social norms are constantly in flux, and determining appropriate behavior is contingent upon the participants' unique linguistic and social experience and the context in which they find themselves.

These nuances were addressed by (Baker and Sangiamchit, 2019). Gender portrayal is a prominent and recurrent theme in literary works, including romance, tragedy, and satire. Gender representation is achieved through language, which assigns distinctive traits to each gender in every genre. The tool of language offers diverse voices to these portrayals through imagery, discourse, and style. Gender representation is also salient in classic literature, particularly Jane Austen's novels. Austen's works revolve around gender and employ language to allocate distinctive positions to each gender. Her construction of gender roles and their development reflects the society that dominated the English public during the Romantic period and prefaces the models of masculinity that dominated the Victorian era, as illustrated by (Ailwood, 2008).

His analysis centers on the socio-political depiction of women in Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), delving into how they were portrayed in Delhi while governed by their male counterparts' will and the sway of tradition and custom. As a result, they had been negatively impacted by British colonialism, and their only social identity was that of guardians of indigenous Mughal culture. The analysis (Ahmed, 2009; Dey, 2018) centers on Sidhwa's *'Jee-Candy Man'* (1988), which depicts the physical and mental consequences of women's dual colonization of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent by men and the British. A pre-existing theme is explored in Sidhwa's *'The Bride'* (2006) (Bapsi Sidhwa, 2006), wherein Qasim forcibly marries Munni against her will by the clan's decision after discovering her on a train. Her spouse severely assaulted her after their marriage; she attempted to flee and was subsequently rescued by the army. Consequently, female characters were depicted as subjugated and feeble beings under the dominion of their male counterparts. Years after partition, contemporary literature mirrors gender roles, as stated by Shaheen et al. (2014).

In Mohsin Hamid's *The Moth Smoke* (Hamid, 2000), a novel set in an urban environment, the female protagonist, Mumtaz, struggles with her husband's neglect but successfully overcomes it. Similarly, in Muhammad Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (Hanif, 2011), the female lead confronts the patriarchy and religious majority pervasive in Pakistani society. Through magical realism, Hanif portrays the varied struggles and experiences of male and female characters in society, with a detailed focus on the challenges a Christian girl faces. This work highlights the persistence of gender roles in contemporary literature and provides a nuanced perspective on the experiences of females in a male-dominated society. In literature, it is expected to observe that the gender roles assigned to characters remain fixed, where female characters are often portrayed as oppressed, and male characters are shown as part of a patriarchal society. This central theme has been present in various works of contemporary Fiction, where many writers have used their novels to criticize and protest patriarchal norms.

Interestingly, from the 1990s to 2015, this theme has been consistently explored by male and female authors alike, highlighting the significance of this issue in society. This research specifically focuses on the works of two female authors, Tehmina (Durrani, 1999) and Qaisra Shahraz (Haleem, 2014), who have written novels over three years. Despite the time gap, their works highlight the same theme of gender portrayal, indicating the need for further exploration and discussion on this topic. In the realm of literary works, the trend in gender portrayal appears

to be consistent across various periods, as is evident in recent works such as 'A Season for Martyrs' (Shah, 2014) and 'The Upstairs Wife' (Zakaria, 2016). However, while there have been studies focused on the representation of female characters in literature, this research aims to explore the gender roles of both male and female characters in more depth. Specifically, this study will analyze 'Blasphemy' (1998) and 'The Holy Woman' (2001), written by female novelists, to compare the gender construction roles assigned to male and female characters.

By delving into the portrayals of gender roles in these works, this research seeks to generate new theories that explain the underlying factors that guide the choices made by female writers. It will explore the numerous factors that may influence the gender construction roles assigned to characters, including societal norms, gender biases, and other cultural aspects. This study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender portrayal in literature and how it may shape how we think about gender roles in our society.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the experiences and challenges faced by English language students throughout their learning journey.
2. To explore the factors contributing to the growth and development of English language students over time.

Research Questions

1. What are the main experiences and challenges encountered by English language students during their learning journey?
2. How do various factors, such as educational environment, teaching methodologies, and personal motivation, contribute to the growth and development of English language students?

Literature Review

Gender is a complex and multifaceted identity marker characterized by social, psychological, and physical constraints. It is an essential aspect of human lives, and its understanding is crucial in various fields, such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. According to (Nikolayevna, 2013), language shapes gender identity. Gender has been approached from multiple theoretical perspectives, each reflecting different traits.

Biological theories divide gender based on physical characteristics, such as genitalia and reproductive organs. They argue that these physical differences determine the roles that each gender will play in society. However, this approach has been criticized for over-emphasizing the role of biology and disregarding the influence of social and cultural factors.

On the other hand, social theories view gender as a product of society and the roles assigned to each gender in each community. They suggest that gender roles are socially constructed and vary across cultures and historical periods. Ethnographers have identified distinct roles assigned to men and women in various societies, such as hunting and defense for men, child-rearing, and food preparation for women.

Psychological theories predict the roles assigned to each gender. They suggest that psychological factors, such as personality traits and cognitive abilities, determine gender roles. This approach has been criticized for overlooking the influence of social and cultural factors on gender identity(Hoffman, n.d.).

Language plays a crucial role in defining gender by affirming the style adopted by each gender. For instance, male characters are often portrayed as brave, courageous, bold, reserved, confident, and rational beings, while female characters are typically portrayed as weak, expressive, shy, submissive, emotional, and irrational. These themes tend to divide human characteristics into two categories, reinforcing gender stereotypes.

In conclusion, gender is complex and multifaceted, and its understanding is crucial in various fields. While biological, social, and psychological theories have different perspectives on gender identity, language plays a vital role in defining gender by affirming and perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Comparatives are syntactic constructions commonly used to compare two or more elements. This method is widely employed in research studies to contrast the elements of one text with another and identify similarities and differences between them. It is an effective way to generate comparative data within research. (Bovarnick, 2007) provides an in-depth definition of comparatives, describing them as syntactic constructions that compare two or more elements. Comparatives are frequently used in discourse analysis, enabling researchers to evaluate texts'

linguistic features and structure. They are also used in cross-linguistic studies to compare the grammatical structures of different languages.

Comparatives can be formed in several ways, including adjectives, adverbs, and nouns. For instance, adjectives can be compared using the comparative and superlative forms (e.g., "brighter" and "brightest"), while adverbs can be compared using the comparative form (e.g., "more brightly"). Nouns can be compared using the use of "more" or "less" (e.g., "more apples" and "less oranges").

Using comparatives in research is a critical aspect of generating reliable and valid data that can be used to understand a given phenomenon better. Comparatives enable researchers to identify patterns, trends, and differences in data that can be used to formulate hypotheses, develop theories, and draw conclusions. Literature is not just a form of entertainment but rather an influential tool that can challenge traditional forms of expression. Using images and language in literary works can evoke strong emotions and convey complex meanings. While some may argue that using images to represent gender is an art form, it is not entirely accurate. Specific photos tend to be associated with each gender, and their contextual meaning is built only through language.

In a study conducted by (Kesarwani, 2014) 2014 Blasphemy (1998), the concept of power and religion is explored and associated with the oppression of women. The research raises questions about the true meaning of the Islamic faith regarding the role of women. The protagonist, Tehmina, serves as a voice for the oppressed women in the story and challenges societal norms. The author contextualizes the data using a psychoanalytic approach, relating Tehmina's experiences to other male and female characters in the novel.

The use of vivid vocabulary and imagery in the novel is not arbitrary but rather a reflection of the influence of society on the author's writing. The author's writing style is a product of their cultural and social background, which is evident in their portrayal of gender roles and the use of imagery. The author's psychoanalytic approach contextualizes the novel's data and sheds light on the author's awareness of society's impact on their writing. The text provides a detailed insight into the plight of women living in rural areas. The use of power and religion by males serves as a potent tool for the oppression of females. Scholars (Haleem, 2014) and (Zia, 2009) adopt a similar standpoint and delve into it. Gain a deeper understanding of gender roles by exploring our analysis of "The Holy." This thought-provoking and insightful piece will give you a fresh perspective on

this important topic: "Unlock the doors to boundless knowledge and seize this golden opportunity to broaden your horizons!" and challenge your assumptions. (BGB-Staff, 2023) "Uncover hidden treasures by exploring further." of gender roles in "The Holy." "Gain a deeper understanding of gender roles by exploring our analysis of "The Holy." This thought-provoking and insightful piece will give you a fresh perspective on this important topic. "Take advantage of this incredible opportunity to broaden your knowledge and expertise. "Embrace the chance to explore the complexities of gender roles in the film "The Holy Woman" (2001) using feminist and gender theories. These theories provide a positive framework for questioning and challenging the status quo, allowing us to work towards a more inclusive and equitable society."

The study reveals that women have historically been relegated to the status of the "other" gender. This concept has been elucidated in classic French feminist texts such as "The Second Sex." Women have often been defined in opposition to men, and their roles have been limited to domesticity and nurturing. This has led to a power imbalance in society, where men have traditionally held more authority and control.

The study's authors argue that challenging traditional gender roles is essential for promoting gender equality. They assert that women have the right to occupy public spaces, participate in decision-making, and pursue their dreams and ambitions. The study also highlights the need for education and awareness-raising campaigns to eliminate gender stereotypes and promote a more inclusive society.

In conclusion, the text comprehensively analyzes gender roles and their impact on women in rural areas. It underscores the importance of challenging traditional gender roles for promoting gender equality and creating a more just and equitable society.

Using language and imagery, authors can offer insights into complex issues and provide a voice for the oppressed. The significance of the contextual meaning of gendered images is just one example of how literature can be used to challenge traditional forms of expression. The novel's detailed analysis reveals that the male and female characters conform to their respective traditional gender roles and biases, as depicted by Zarri Baano, Siraj Din, and Habib Khan. However, the novel also explores the transition in gender roles, particularly during momentous events. For instance, early in the novel, characters like Zarri and Shahzada display traits of obedience and submissiveness. Still, as the story progresses, they become confident, authoritative, independent,

and dominant individuals who challenge societal norms and expectations. Similarly, the male characters, such as Xawar, Musa, and Sikendar, break away from the traditional masculine image and openly express their emotional vulnerability, providing insight into the changing attitudes towards masculinity. The novel also sheds light on the impact of globalization, education, and awareness on society and how they contribute to the gradual transformation of cultural norms.

Throughout history, authors have used their works to critique societal practices, especially in political and social upheaval times. In Pakistan, Fatima (2012) and Ali (2015) are among the authors who have explored their country's social and political realities. Their judgments are based on the impact of the Islamization principle introduced by Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) on women in the decade following his death (1988-99).

Both authors take an in-depth look at the construction of the veil and the ambiguity it generates through their characters, Hiir and Zarri Baano. According to (Jadoon, 2015), the veil reveals complex categories and meanings in the context of modernity, patriarchal power, tradition, and rural principles, reflecting the ideology of Zia's laws. However, the same veil also challenges these notions and shifts towards Western ideals of choice, gender equality, and free access to the public. Despite this shift, the weakness of female characters is more apparent, while males are associated with power as they control religious, social, and political affairs in contemporary writers. By addressing these issues, these authors are giving a voice to the societal practices in their country and contributing to the ongoing conversation about the role of women in Pakistani society.

Society is primarily responsible for illustrating the landscape of behaviors that its members embrace. To produce data on gender portrayal, (Mubarak, 2015) integrates several subthemes, including sexual and physical abuse, gender inequality, the erosion of moral and social values, and the distortion of Islamic values. By integrating postmodern theory, she analyzes the character Hiir. She concludes that the novel is a work of factual elements infused with fiction, given the prevalence of such themes in contemporary society (she cites daily newspaper articles that provide substantial evidence that men still wield power over women).

Images play a key role in determining the role assigned to each gender (L. Khatwani, 2014) and Zaibet. Al (2015) explores this key feature in Blasphemy (1998). The study reveals that society's

perceptions can create multiple identities within individuals. These identities are often based on the context they find themselves in and the images assigned to them. However, writers can use these images to represent society. The study helps us to analyze gender roles in literature and understand how writers use physical appearance and societal barriers to distinguish between male and female characters. These themes allow one to explore deeper aspects of male and female characters, such as their emotions, values, and self-identities. This study reminds us of our ability to shape our identities and the importance of recognizing the influence of society on our perceptions.

This study delves into the intricacies of gender roles in contemporary literature written by female authors. It offers a comparative analysis of two novels, Durrani's 'Blasphemy' and Qaisra's 'The Holy Woman,' exploring the unique ways in which each author portrays male and female characters. Rather than focusing on one aspect, this study examines various elements, including the language used by the characters to shape gender perceptions and beliefs. By taking a comprehensive approach, aims to provide a holistic understanding of how gender roles are constructed in these novels. The assimilation of both novels allows for a deeper exploration of the different methods separate female authors use to construct gender roles. Through this study, readers can gain a greater insight into the discourse between characters and its impact on shaping gender representations.

Constituents and Approaches

The authors have directed their attention toward exploring the portrayal of gender roles in suburban society. This study aims to investigate how writers shape and contribute to gender roles while also seeking to minimize any effects of gender bias. To achieve this, a qualitative case study has been conducted, using content analysis as the primary data collection method. This approach is dependable in gathering data effectively, while content analysis enables retrieving data from relevant sections of the two novels. By analyzing the content of these novels, the study hopes to gain deeper insights into the depiction of gender roles in suburban society as heavily influenced by the contributions of female writers.

The central objective of this research study is to analyze and compare two prominent Pakistani novels - Blasphemy (1998) by Tehmina Durrani and The Holy Woman (2001) by Qaisra Shahraz - that share common themes such as life in rural areas and the specific roles assigned to each gender

based on cultural traditions. The researchers utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, to gather data more efficiently. This method was chosen as the researchers wanted to obtain data that directly compared the two novels.

By concentrating on Pakistani fiction in particular, one can bring attention to how literary works construct gender identities. The objective of this study is to investigate how gender roles are depicted in Pakistani society and the extent to which the novels' characters either uphold or contest these roles. The recognition of the societal position that each gender holds facilitates the identification of such occurrences in the works of female authors.

The researchers used observation as the primary tool for data collection. They analyzed various quotes from the novels to reveal the nature of the portrayal and position of the male and female characters. This included identifying how the characters interacted with each other and how their behavior reinforced or challenged gender stereotypes. The study also examined the narrative techniques employed by the authors to convey their messages.

This study aims to understand better how Pakistani female writers construct gender identities in their work. Through this research, the authors hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender roles and representation in literature.

Findings and Dialogue

After thoroughly analyzing two literary texts and their corresponding contextual frameworks, it becomes evident that the writers attempt to assign gender roles within distinct categories. This assignment of gender roles is observed through the portrayal of the lead characters in both texts. Data collection procedures focused on the principal lead characters of each novel, but minor characters were also included in the study. The inclusion of minor characters is critical to obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the gender roles present in the texts. By analyzing the portrayal of gender roles in both major and minor characters, a more in-depth examination of the texts can be conducted.

Gender's Role in Society

"Blasphemy" (1998) is a groundbreaking novel revolutionizing South Asian literature. The author expertly exposes the deeply ingrained patriarchal social norms prevalent in the region that use

religion to oppress and subjugate women. The novel is a powerful critique of the societal circle that restricts the true meaning of religion and uses it as a tool to exploit women. With its insightful and thought-provoking perspective, "Blasphemy" has succeeded in illuminating the evils of gender-based discrimination and has sparked a much-needed conversation about gender equality in the literary world. (M. K. Khatwani, 2008). Let us delve into the intricate layers of this narrative:

Setting and Characters:

The tale unfolds in South Pakistan, focusing on two key figures:

Heer (Hiir): an ordinary girl yearning for joy and liberation.

Pir Sain (Piir Sae~): a revered Sufi mystic seen as a divine figure.

Marriage as Submissive Compliance:

The concept of marriage is depicted as a submissive compliance for women, where they are bound always to obey their spouse's desires.

Due to her financial plight, Heer is coerced into marrying Pir Sain.

Heer's Metamorphosis:

Despite enduring suffering out of duty and respect, Heer's life takes a tragic twist.

She transitions from a regular girl to a prostitute (piyari) within the Malkani community.

This change leaves her devoid of both humanity and respect.

Irony and Freedom:

The irony lies in that only after Pir Sain's demise does Heer find the freedom to voice her true sentiments about him.

She exposes him as a fraud, predator, killer, and child abuser.

These emotions are powerfully echoed in her deeds and words.

Dark Side of Patriarchy:

Throughout his existence, Pir Sain preys on the 'vulnerable' and uninformed in the guise of Allah and Islam.

The story unmasks the duplicity of religious figures who exploit their authority.

Heer's marriage descends into a series of agonizing episodes, both physical and emotional.

Heer's Ordeal:

In Pir Sain's realm, there are no laws except his decrees.

Heer confronts brutality, degradation, assault, violation, and psychological anguish.

She is trapped in a realm where reason holds no sway, and she has no one to confide in about her suffering.

A Tragic Chronicle:

"Blasphemy" is more than just a story; it is a grim and unsettling portrayal of realities in regions and villages lacking education on religion and the world.

It illustrates the plight of women, the marginalized, and the extremes of religious extremism.

"Blasphemy" unflinchingly depicts the harsh truths women endure, the abuse of religious power, and the dire outcomes of blind faith. As the narrative unfolds, the shadows of Heer's suffering cast a stark light on the harsh realities that many women face in societies where patriarchal norms reign supreme. The tale of "Blasphemy" serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of freedom and the dangers that lurk beneath the veneer of religious sanctity. Through Heer's harrowing journey, we are confronted with the chilling truth of how power can corrupt even the most revered figures, twisting faith into a weapon of oppression. In a world where voices are silenced, and justice is a distant dream, Heer's story stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unspeakable adversity.

Qaisra Shahraz 'The Holy Woman' (2001) novel, various characters play significant roles, including Zanni Baano, her parents (mother and father), her grandfather Siraj Din, and other male figures like Sikendar and Ibrahim Musa. Zanni Baano, the protagonist, grapples with the oppressive forces of patriarchy. Despite her youth, education, and feminist beliefs, she finds herself trapped in feudal traditions. Following her brother's death, she is compelled to assume the role of a holy woman, as dictated by her father. Zanni Baano's struggle for independence is vividly portrayed as she confronts the limitations imposed upon her. Her poignant words—"I am not only

your daughter. I am me!"—reveals her desire to break free from societal expectations and reclaim her identity. Sent to Al Azhar University for religious education, she eventually became an empowered woman, traveling to Muslim countries for educational purposes. Ironically, only after her father's demise does she gain permission to marry Sikandar.

The novel skillfully explores themes of gender, tradition, and personal agency, highlighting the complexities faced by women in patriarchal societies. As Zanni Baano navigates her newfound freedom, she grapples with balancing her desires with societal expectations. Despite her independence, she faces backlash from those who seek to control her. Through her journey, she discovers the power of resilience and determination in adversity. The novel delves into the intricacies of womanhood, shedding light on the strength and courage required to defy norms and carve out one's path in a world that seeks to confine. Zanni Baano's story serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring power of self-discovery.

However, the writer has challenged gender-stereotyped roles by depicting a unique gender role in Sikandar's case, as he portrays an unconventional role. He gets angry at the decision to make Zarri a Holy woman and requests her not to be one because that will challenge her freedom. His liberal thinking is reflected when he is going to marry Zarri Baano, who has become a Holy woman. "All I can assure you now is that everything will be in your hands; I will make no demands on you." I will be a friend and companion to her". Another unconventional character is that of Xaawar, a feudal lord who wishes to marry a girl of lower class, Firdous. However, another character is Ibrahim Musa; like Sikendar, he loves Zarri Baano, but she refuses him as his father and grandfather have deprived her of marriage. These characters confirm that gender roles are social constructs and can be changed.

Gender Bias Expressed Through Names

Language is a manifestation of the attitude of the speaker. Characters in fictional works are frequently introduced by their names, comprehensively representing their disposition and demeanor. Female authors frequently ascribe the nomenclature of characters to an air of inferiority and authority. The nomenclature of masculine characters in Tehmina's blasphemy predominantly connotes power, physical prowess, and dominion qualities. Piir Sae (the sacred head), Chotte Sae

(the youthful head), Rajaji (the prince), Maharaja (the king), Pathaan (members of the tribe from the west), Baloch (a man from the province of Baloch), and Fauji (a soldier) are among them. Conversely, the nomenclature applied to female characters assumes a more discriminatory connotation, as it represents personal qualities. Chiil (the eagle), Jamdani (the female sweeper), K.aali (the dark-skinned girl), Toti (the talkative one), Piyaari (the beautiful one), Miisani (the cunning girl), Munni (the slim girl), SaXi bibi (the liberal lady), Sukki (the thin person), and Badrung (the ugly one) are among these individuals. These characters influence female characters' names, and some of them have been derived from male characters, such as Amma Sae~ (madam mother). It is worth noting that sae~ is primarily used with male characters.

The difference in names given to each gender clearly reflects the cultural mindset, revealing a great deal about the roles and positions assigned to each character. In Qaisra's novel, this distinction is particularly noticeable, as descriptive adjectives often accompany women's names, while men continue to hold power and authority with their names. For example, men are called Baba Siraj Din (the family elder), WaDeraa Xawar (landlord), and farmer Faisal. At the same time, women are named Lahori women, Shahzaadi Ibaadat, Chaudhari kaniiz, second Chaudhari, washerwomen's daughter, and izzat (honor). This contrast highlights the unequal distribution of power, as men are often defined by their accomplishments and status, while their relationships or societal roles define women.

Gender Ideology Construction and Its Influence

Certainly! Pakistani fiction authors display great skill in using language to portray character qualities and effectively convey the power dynamics, morality, and gender roles within their fictional narratives. Male characters are often depicted with powerful and vivid imagery highlighting their strength and protective role in Islam and family. Meanwhile, female characters are shown to hold a position of moral authority, with their words functioning as commands to be obeyed by others. This careful portrayal of characters and their roles in Pakistani society offers readers a deeper understanding of the cultural values and societal norms at play. It is a testament to the author's craft and ability to create compelling narratives that resonate with readers from diverse backgrounds.

The depiction of women in the narrative illustrates their perceived inferiority to men, as their strength and identity are frequently tied to male characters. Instances like obligatory

submission, physical comparisons emphasizing male dominance, derogatory language, and objectification reinforce this idea. Female characters are portrayed as inherently seductive, with their value often reduced to their appeal to men, perpetuating stereotypes of women existing solely for male pleasure and reproduction. Emotions and experiences are framed about men, with desires and needs frequently unfulfilled. In summary, the text underscores the widespread subordination of women and their confinement to roles shaped by male perspectives and desires. The narrative fails to challenge these traditional gender roles, instead perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing the patriarchal system. Women are denied agency and autonomy, their voices silenced, and their potential stifled. The limited and narrow portrayal of female characters upholds the status quo, denying them the complexity and depth afforded to male characters. This one-dimensional representation limits the narrative itself and reflects and perpetuates real-world inequalities and injustices. It is crucial to critically examine and deconstruct these harmful narratives to strive toward a more equitable and inclusive society.

Physical features play a crucial role in portraying characters, particularly their gender. Unfortunately, female characters are often depicted with dark, almond-shaped eyes and wistful expressions. In contrast, male characters are described with brown eyes, prominent brows, and an iron timbre in their voices. Sadly, these depictions only serve to reinforce gender stereotypes.

The women in these narratives are often portrayed as weak, grappling with dilemmas like sacrificing their beloved daughters or standing by their husbands, even when it means betraying their own beliefs. They face immense societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles and their roles as mothers. At times, they question their integrity and fight against male domination and patriarchal traditions.

Furthermore, some female characters exhibit ambition and greed, aspiring to become landowners with substantial wealth. These nuanced portrayals expose complex gender dynamics and societal issues. We must consider how female characters are depicted in literature. How women are represented in stories profoundly impacts society's perception of them. By ensuring that female characters are portrayed accurately and with depth, we can challenge harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality. Let us work towards creating a literary world that uplifts and empowers women. Frequently relied on metaphors and comparisons that serve to detract from their humanity. Such comparisons often liken female characters to non-living objects or animals, reinforcing

stereotypes and diminishing their status to commodities rather than fully realized individuals. In contrast, male characters, despite their crimes, often evade such dehumanizing constructions. This disparity can be attributed to the power and authority associated with male characters.

Several specific examples illustrate this trend. For instance, "showing like wolves" implies that female characters exhibit behavior associated with wolves that can be interpreted negatively. Similarly, comparing female characters to cats, as in "female cats... pulling them by tails... tomcat among them," emphasizes supposed cunning or mischief. The metaphor "you are the peacock; I am just a dull brown peahen" suggests that female characters lack vibrancy and are overshadowed by their male counterparts. Describing a woman's body as "boneless like a snake" implies weakness or a lack of substance. However, associating a woman with a serpent in a beautiful setting, as in "serpent in her rose garden," further perpetuates negative connotations. The direct insult "show yourself, you rat" dehumanizes the female character by comparing her to a rodent.

These examples underscore the need for a more nuanced and empowering portrayal of female characters in literature. Fortunately, there are strong and influential female characters that defy these stereotypes. Hermione Granger from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series is brilliant and brave; Elizabeth Bennet from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is witty and independent; Katniss Everdeen from Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy is courageous and resourceful; Jo March from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* is ambitious and creative; and Jane Eyre from Charlotte Brontë's novel is resilient and passionate. These characters challenge traditional norms and serve as role models for readers. It is essential to continue creating multifaceted female characters that break free from limiting comparisons and stereotypes.

Durrani's work is a masterful portrayal of the human condition as one of constraint and vulnerability. The individuals in the narrative are depicted as ensnared and limited, much like distressed animals trapped and helpless. The comparisons to a rabbit caught in a net or a lamb awaiting slaughter illustrate the feelings of entrapment, helplessness, and resignation to fate experienced by the characters.

Moreover, the narrative includes expressions of disdain, as seen in references to slow-moving donkeys or the derogatory comparison of people to insects or worms. These comparisons emphasize the characters' sense of worthlessness and exhaustion, as if they have been used up and discarded like a squeezed lemon or an old date.

The imagery of a pawn in a chess game further accentuates the lack of agency or control over one's destiny, with the characters feeling like they are mere pawns in a larger game. Overall, the text conveys a keen sense of despair and powerlessness. However, occasional glimpses of hope shine through in the form of the bird's wings or the untethered kite, symbolizing the natural human desire for freedom.

Conclusion

This analysis reveals that social norms and the societal standing of each gender heavily influence the characters in both novels. Through a close examination of the works of these female writers, it is possible to discern the criticism and opposition they express towards the patriarchal society in Pakistan. However, the female writers' use of language, comparisons, and character development raises important questions about why female characters are portrayed as less refined than their male counterparts, even though the novels center around female characters as the protagonists. Hence, the gender portrayals in these novels can be viewed as a reflection of social life, which is incorporated into the story by dramatizing various traits and characteristics of the characters. Furthermore, these portrayals and character constructions are based on a theory that aims to protest the political and social spheres. Laws restrict these themes, and the writers' portrayal of them in their work can be seen as expressing their opposition to these restrictions. The shift in the plot of the novels provides a clear indication of the writers' intentions.

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