



Original Article

Patriarchal Practices and Exploitation of Women: Walby's Feminist Reading of Durrani's Blasphemy

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ABSTRACT

This study is a comprehensive critical account of Patriarchal Practices and Exploitation of Womanhood by the patriarchal society in the novel “Blasphemy”. Blasphemy, a 1998 novel by Pakistani renowned feminist author Tehmina Durrani, draws inspiration from a real-life incident. This study aims to analyse the patriarchal society in the novel Blasphemy. The study employs qualitative methods and draws on Silvia Walby’s theoretical framework in “Theorizing Patriarchy” to analyse the culture of patriarchy and the subjugation of women. Within this framework, the research explores the appalling atrocities committed in the name of religion to oppress women, as depicted in the novel “Blasphemy.” Durrani conducts a thorough examination of the misrepresentation of Islam by exploitative religious leaders, highlighting how pseudo-clerics like Pir Sain manipulate Islamic principles to exploit his wife, Heer. Trapped in her husband’s brutal and corrupted world, she faces extreme exploitation. Despite Pir Sain proclaiming himself a man of God, his cruel actions towards his wife, other women, his daughter, and his son contradict this facade. This narrative sheds light on how contemporary religious leaders exploit their power and believers’ faith for personal gain.

Keywords: *Durrani’s blasphemy, Patriarchal culture, Sexual abuse, Walby’s feminist reading, Women exploitation*

INTRODUCTION

Blasphemy, a 1998 novel by Pakistani renowned feminist author Tehmina Durrani, draws inspiration from a real-life incident (Saleem, 2020). This novel contains horrifying descriptions of crimes like violence generate by male dominance, rape, and murder, molestation, distorting holy texts, hypocrisy, and much more. The novel portrays a patriarchal society, the relationship between men and women is viewed in a way that makes each man the dominating one, and each woman the subordinate one. The patriarchal society in Pakistan is the primary cause of the extensive gender inequality that exists there. Men are seen as the superior gender, enjoying greater status and reverence while women are given less weight and privilege (Haqqani, 2010).

This results in women facing oppressive circumstances, as Welby declared in “Theorising patriarchy” that, patriarchy is split into two private or domestic and public aspects. Domestic patriarchy is a sort of gender stereotype that exists in households. In the home, women perform tasks including cooking, cleaning, and child care. While on the other hand, public patriarchy is a type of patriarchy that takes place in public spaces and is then separated into 6 sections which can be shown at extreme level in this novel. The aim of the study is to analyse the patriarchal society in the novel Blasphemy and to examine the cruelty and ruthlessness faced by women at the hands of male characters; males as a superior gender who enjoys higher status and respect.

Objectives

- To analyse the impact of patriarchal society on women in blasphemy.

- To examine the exploitation of womanhood at the hands of male-dominated society
- To analyse in-depth how Tehmina Durrani portrayed the main male character Pir Sain.

Research Questions

- What are the impacts of patriarchal society on women in blasphemy?
- How womanhood gets exploit in male dominant society is shown in the novel blasphemy?
- Which characteristic of the main male character is Pir Sain portrayed in Blasphemy?

The major issue that has been focused on in this study is the unidentified and heart- wrenching sides of patriarchy in the novel Blasphemy. An international phenomenon called patriarchy is to blame for the unequal distribution of privilege and power between men and women. It has long been recognized as a system that oppresses women and their rights and supports male nomination in the name of religion. This study also explores the main male characters in Blasphemy.

This research is expected to make some theoretical contributions. Theoretically, this research may develop theoretical knowledge of literature about the patriarchal system in Sylvia Walby’s theory of patriarchy. “Blasphemy” Tehmina Durrani’s third novel, Blasphemy, is a collection of stories of male dominance over women and corrupt religious practices. Through ‘Blasphemy’, she made an effort to portray the sufferings of women at a deeper level in her novels.

Sylvia Walby is a British sociologist and feminist scholar who has been influential in the field of gender studies (Walby, 1996). As such, there isn’t a specific date or single instance when she presented her

theory. Instead, her ideas on patriarchy have evolved and been refined through numerous publications, research papers, and lectures over time. Walby's work on patriarchy and gender inequality can be traced back to the 1980s and 1990s when she published various influential works on the subject notable publications include *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), *Gender Transformations* (1997), and *The Future of Feminism* (2011).

The development of Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy has been a continuous process over her career and remains an important topic of feminist inquiry and social analysis. Sylvia Walby is a prominent sociologist known for her extensive work on the theory of patriarchy. Her theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how patriarchy operates in society and how it intersects with other forms of oppression. Here are the key elements of Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy:

- **Definition of patriarchy:** According to Walby, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices that systematically empower men and subordinate women. It operates at various levels, from the individual to the institutional and structural levels.
- **Patriarchal structures:** Walby identifies six interconnected structures of patriarchy that sustain gender inequality:
- **Paid work:** Women's concentration in low-paying, precarious jobs and their underrepresentation in higher positions.
- **Housework and caring:** Unequal distribution of domestic labour and caregiving responsibilities, where women often bear the burden.
- **Sexuality:** Control over women's bodies and reproduction, objectification, and sexual violence.
- **Violence:** Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment, as a means to control women.
- **Cultural institutions:** Norms, values, and stereotypes that reinforce male dominance and female subordination.
- **State institutions:** Laws, policies, and institutions that perpetuate gender inequalities and discriminate against women.
- **Intersectionality:** Walby emphasizes that patriarchy intersects with other forms of oppression, such as class, race, and ethnicity. These intersections create different experiences of oppression for women, depending on their

social identities.

- **Transformative potential:** While Walby's theory acknowledges the pervasive nature of patriarchy, it also highlights the potential for change. She argues that challenging patriarchy requires collective efforts and policy changes at multiple levels of society.
- **Complexity of patriarchy:** Walby's theory acknowledges that patriarchy is not a singular, monolithic structure. Instead, it varies across cultures, historical periods, and social contexts. Understanding its complexity is crucial for effective resistance and transformation.

Walby's theory of patriarchy provides a nuanced and multidimensional analysis of the power dynamics between genders and highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the intersecting inequalities that women face. It has significantly contributed to feminist scholarship and activism, fostering discussions on gender equality and social justice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Blasphemy, Tehmina Durrani's third book, is a collection of stories about male dominance over women and immoral religious practices. She attempted to portray the sorrows of women at a deeper level in her novels through "blasphemy". The fact that men routinely take advantage of women and show no remorse for their horrific actions is shocking in and of itself. *Blasphemy* is a grave allegory of the difficulties that Muslim society in general and Muslim women, in particular, must overcome. The entire novel's episodes focused solely on men's attitudes towards women with just sporadic mentions of religion.

The Notion of Patriarchy in Blasphemy

Literature and patriarchy have a connection. According to the patriarchal idea, men are treated as inferior to women in the world or in society. The story of how predatory religious leaders or peers, as they are known in Pakistan-abused religion and misrepresented Islam for blasphemy is unflinching, upsetting, and heartbreaking. In *blasphemy*, the terrible tale of Heer, a woman who is married to a man of God and who has brutalized and perverted her, is told. But it's not just her nightmare that she's trapped in. Anyone who is obligated to a peer is impacted. The writing of Tahmina is unfiltered and potent. *Blasphemy*, according to Durrani, was influenced by a real-life incident. It requires a lot of strength (Khurshed et al., 2020).

Walby (as cited in Musalliya, 2018) states that

patriarchy is described as a system of social practices and structures in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. By doing so Walby highlights what she calls the six “structures” of patriarchy- paid work, housework, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state. As Bano (cited in [Ayoub et al., 2022](#)) defines, in a deeply ingrained system known as patriarchy, men frequently hold the dominant position in both household and societal systems. The writing style of the novel *Blasphemy* is rooted in both fiction and fact.

The abuse and “othering” that many low-status women experience is demonstrated by Pir Sain, who uses his position of spiritual authority to mistreat Heer. As [Ayoub et al., \(2022\)](#) points out, gender is an ideological construct in which the strength of women is often overlooked and undervalued. This is demonstrated in Sidhwa’s portrayal of a little girl who develops into a lady under the control of a man ([Qayyum et al., 2024](#)). Similar to this, in Sidhwa’s work, “Shanta” is a female who experiences double enslavement in a postcolonial, patriarchal society in Pakistan ([Basu, 2007](#)).

Tehmina Durrani highlights the backward status of women and the perpetuation of gender inequality in Muslim society. Along with that, it tries to emphasize that while women in Muslim nations undoubtedly lag behind their male counterparts, this is not because of Islamic teachings but rather the unfair imposition of socially oriented gender roles. Using this as a measuring stick, an attempt is also made to explain how males in Muslim countries have misappropriated the Islamic scriptures and used their interpretation of them to exert control over women ([Rahmani, 2024](#)).

Tehmina Durrani is one of the most vocal feminists and advocates for women’s voices in Pakistan. She is not just a well-known novelist but also a social activist. After an abusive marriage to one of the most prominent feudal lords in the nation, she wrote her first autobiographical book, *My Feudal Lord* ([Habib et al., 2013](#)). By using her personal story to advocate for the rights of repressed women, she gave them a voice. *Blasphemy*, which is also based on a true story, provides the basis for this study. Incest, prostitution, child marriage for the sake of religion, and the feudal and Pir systems of religion were all issues covered in this novel, which turned out to be groundbreaking. The work of Durrani was a daring first step to revealing the horrible atrocities ([Khan et al., 2019](#)).

[Saleem \(2020\)](#) defines Durrani’s *Blasphemy* and explores Heer’s marginalized individuality. Heer is compelled to wed Pir Sain, a prominent member of society. Her marriage turns out to be a source of conflict

and suppression of self-satisfaction. Heer rebels against patriarchy that marginalize women in the name of religious principles and beliefs when she is unable to stand by and suffer horrific abuse and exploitation. Varied views about the concept of patriarchy are expressed by traditionalists, radical feminists, Marxist feminists, and Sylvia Walby’s Dual System Theory. Modern thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir, Firestone, and Sylvia Walby conformed to the above-stated views, whereas postmodern thinkers like Carole Pateman are of the view that gender discrimination has been checked at the political level but continues to thrive at the domestic level ([Ali & Asim, 2024](#)).

METHODOLOGY

This study is categorized as a descriptive study and the research design adopted for this study is to analyse the problem through qualitative research. The theory applied to this novel *Blasphemy* is the Theory of Patriarchy by Sylvia Walby. In addition, the type of qualitative research employed to analyse the novel is content or textual analysis. The collected data is analysed and processed manually through the lens of Patriarchal theory. Various segments in the novel are analysed using content analysis. The data for this research study was collected manually by reading the novel *Blasphemy* carefully, and for analysing the data, patriarchal theory was used. Furthermore, secondary data in support of research questions and objectives is collected through secondary sources such as research papers, articles. In the book, the data has been captured by observing the themes of the book by analysing the characters of females, by analysing how the women in the book get tortured, and seeing the overall women’s dilemmas given in the book.

Procedure

This research is based on qualitative studies and has employed content analysis for analysing data and answering research questions. Various segments of text taken from a novel are analysed through the lens of Patriarchal theory by Sylvia Walby to her the concept of patriarchy must remain foremost in a feminist understanding of society. To Sylvia Walby, the concept of Patriarchy must remain central to a feminist understanding of society. She contends that there are six patriarchal structures that limit women and uphold male dominance and aware that women from various social classes, ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations interact with these structures in various ways.

Textual Analysis

The aim of the research is to tell about patriarchy practices found in the novel "Blasphemy" as viewed by six structures of patriarchy by Walby. Patriarchy is a system that unfairly treats men and women differently, and it still affects many aspects of our lives, like how much people get paid for their work, the responsibilities of the government, and the opportunities available to women. To address these inequalities, various feminist movements have emerged. Sociologist Walby has proposed that we can understand patriarchy through six structures. However, in the novel we're discussing, which is about young girls in a school dormitory, there aren't any actions related to men and women's roles in the workplace, their relationships and sex lives, or violence by men. Instead, the novel focuses on three aspects of patriarchy: the way society is organized, how the government operates, and the culture in that society. Patriarchy, as explained by the sociologist Walby in 2014, is a system in society where men use various structures and practices to control and dominate women. Walby is a well-known British sociologist who is deeply concerned about the issue of patriarchy.

Patriarchal Society in the Novel Blasphemy

Patriarchy means a system where men are seen as more important than women. They have more power in things like politics, religion, and property. This system makes men the boss and keeps women from having the same rights and opportunities. It can lead to unfair treatment, limits on what women can do, using them unfairly, and even hurting them. We need to work on fixing these problems to make sure men and women are treated the same and our society is fair and welcoming for everyone. According to Walby, a patriarchal system is a facet of social institutions and male behaviours that exercise authority, dominance, and mistreatment over women. Patriarchy has unquestionably emerged as a significant framework for gender inequality in the world (Klingorová & Havlíček, 2015).

Heer suffers badly in the book as she condemns Peer Sain's life and his follower-ship. She says that peer sain has raped killed and robbed people on the basis of religion he is devil but yet people are unable to recognize the fact and adore him blindly. Heer recounts the latter's true brutal self:

"To me, my husband was my son's murderer. He was also my daughter's molester. A parasite nibbling on the Holy Book, he was Lucifer, holding me by the throat and driving me to sin every night. He was bhai's destroyer, Amma Sain's tormentor, Ma's humbler and

the people's exploiter. He was the rapist of orphans and the fiend that fed on the weak. But over and above all this, he was known to be the man closest to Allah, the one who could reach Him and save us" (p.143).

As Peer Sain the main male character in the novel is shown as the holy and pious person whose orders are blindly followed and the adoration of his personality is as much as whatever comes from his mouth gets done in no time. He is in reality a person of bad deeds a monster and a devil in the shape of human he has destroyed lives of many women and of his people. According to Walby, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices that systematically empower men and subordinate women.

"We felt he only used the privileges given him by god for having been born a man" (p.43)

In simpler terms, patriarchy is a system where men have more power and control than women, and this affects many aspects of life, from work to relationships and even the way society expects women to behave. As a socially constructed concept, patriarchy has become a substantial social issue in society. The patriarchal system is built, institutionalized, and ingrained through various institutions that are part of our daily lives, including family, education, community, religion, workplace, and even government policies. Walby (1989) identifies two types of patriarchy: private and public. Private patriarchy pertains to the power dynamics within families, where dominant males control and oppress submissive females. Public patriarchy, on the other hand, is the form of patriarchy that operates in the public sphere, especially within the working community, where patriarchal forces continue to exert influence. Walby breaks down patriarchy into different parts. These parts continue to promote gender inequality. According to Walby, these patriarchal structures are found in:

- **Patriarchal Production Mode:** Women are primarily responsible for taking care of children and doing household chores.

"Even the maids were luckier than me for they could go home" (p.49).

The wife of pir was not even allowed to go home, do whatever she wanted to do. Even when was not allowed to breathe on her will. Long cut short, she was living in a hell created by the God on earth.

- **Patriarchal Relations in Sexuality:** This means society values heterosexual relationships, and there are unfair expectations and double standards. In the novel, Heer the protagonist suffers a lot in her marital life.

“The preparation, the rituals, the ceremony and the slaughter. I had been sacrificed to a god on earth. The contract had signed away my life. Its terms were specified by our faith, sealed with social and familial norms and this, our first night, had been its first dawn. Was this repeated in every corner of the world over and over again?” (p. 39).

Heer started thinking before marriage that how her husband would be, how her married life would be, but all dreams get shattered on the first night of her marriage. She was not loved but raped brutally by her husband Peer Sain. Heer, could not processed what just had happened to her. As it was very new to her. She experienced such a violation on her first night. Hence, she got shattered.

- **Male Violence:** This is related to men using physical, psychological, and verbal violence against women.
- **Patriarchal Culture:** There are expectations for women to fit a certain ideal in family, education, religion, and the media.

“Amma sain had informed me, “Unintelligent violence makes the culprit resilient, stubborn, and fearless. My son’s actions are corrective.” (p.52)

There is an idiom “Women is the enemy of another women”. Hence these lines depict how even women were also saving the culprits. Pir Sain regularly took advantage of his power, imposing rigid “purdah” (veil) norms to restrict the women in his family to the confines of his mansion. Ironically, it was the same “purdah” that he recklessly tore away every night, at noon, and occasionally two or three times a day. In simpler terms, patriarchy is a system where men have more power and control than women, and this affects many aspects of life, from work to relationships and even the way society expects women to behave.

Impact of Patriarchal Society on Women

Dhote (2016) highlights the profound impact of patriarchal society on women, particularly in the context of Pakistan. The impact of such a society on women is evident in several ways:

- **Gender-Based Violence:** Dhote (2016) discusses how women in this patriarchal society often face physical and psychological violence. This includes instances of domestic abuse, child molestation, and sexual exploitation. Women are portrayed as silent bearers of this pain, and their suffering is deeply ingrained in the society’s fabric.

“When I became pregnant, nothing changed for me, except that my bearing became heavier, the risk of

violence more frightening, and my duties even more unbearable. Around me, there was only one prayer every mouth, when so many were needed. Allah grant a son to the master and six more after this one, they said every time I passed by”. (p.52)

She needed care and attention on the time of pregnancy, but what she got was horrible. Nothing got changed in her life in fact the abuse got double and she lost her first child.

- **Forced Marriages:** The practice of forcing young girls to marry much older men is a clear manifestation of patriarchy. This not only disrupts the dreams and aspirations of these girls but also reflects the control men exercise over women’s lives. The novel portrays the practice of forced marriages, where young women are married off to much older men against their will. Heer, the central character in the novel, is forced to marry Pir Sain, a religious leader, when she is only 15 years old.

“We are extremely lucky. After your father’s death, people did not think we were worth anything. Your marriage will restore our dignity in the community. Your sister will marry well, your brother will get a good girl and good job”. (p.25).

Her mother just blackmails her emotionally and Heer finally gets ready for the marriage to Peer Sain.

- **Religious Justification for Oppression:** Dhote (2016) suggests that religious dogmas and patriarchal interpretations of religious scriptures are used to subjugate women. This highlights how religion can be manipulated to maintain and justify male dominance and control over women’s lives.

The one scenario which portrays the situation of religious rigidity in the novel is that when Heer asks her grandmother to translate the Quran Pak’s words and she denies saying that only the reading of original texts is mandatory not it’s meaning.

“It is unnecessary. Only the original words are divine. Only they will give you Sawab”, said her grandmother. “Did Allah reveal the Holy Book for us to gain sawab for reading? Was His aim not to instruct us? To give us direction?” (p.104).

- **Lack of Autonomy:** Women are depicted as having limited autonomy and decision-making power. Decisions related to marriage, employment, and even their own movements are made by male family members, reflecting the low bargaining power women have in society. Heer, one of the major character r in the novel, is forced to marry

Pir Sain, a religious leader, when she is only 15 years old. This reflects the lack of autonomy women have in patriarchal societies, where their futures are often determined by male family members.

- **Emotional Death:** The emotional toll on women living in such a society is significant. The constant exposure to violence and the denial of basic rights can lead to a sense of emotional death, where women's emotions, desires, and identity are sacrificed for the sake of conformity.

Patriarchal State

The male dominance and patriarchal mindset which certainly is the central theme in the book plays huge role in women's torture as some lines in the book show the male religious power, Where the males are shown as the only heirs of shrine neither women nor any other. Amma Sain had told me,

"We are direct descendants of the prophet. The power of the Shrine is fourteen hundred years old. It cannot be challenged." (p.61).

The novel does shed light on the patriarchal society and religious exploitation that exists in Pakistan, which indirectly influences the broader societal and political dynamics. While the novel primarily focuses on the difficulties of women within the confines of their families and religious institutions, it indirectly highlights how patriarchal norms and religious dogmas contribute to the overall subjugation of women in Pakistan. The patriarchal system in the novel is evident through the character of Pir Sain, a religious leader who exerts complete control over his family, particularly his young wife, Heer. No one Questions his authority, he makes strict and unfair rules. He represents a glimpse of the patriarchal power structures that exist in many parts of Pakistani society, where men dominate and exploit women. These power dynamics are deeply rooted and are reinforced by cultural and religious beliefs.

Amma Sain had informed me,

"Unintelligent violence makes the culprit resilient, stubborn, and fearless. My son's actions are corrective." (p.52)

Amma Sain is saying that using violence in a way that is not well thought out or intelligent can actually make the person doing it become even stronger, more determined, and unafraid. She believes that her son's actions, which might seem wrong, are actually intended to correct something or make things better. She is suggesting that her son believes he is doing something

necessary or right, even if it involves violence and these actions of Pir Sain represent the concept of patriarchal state.

Patriarchal Culture

The concept of the "cultural state" as described in the provided paragraph refers to the dominant cultural and societal norms and values. It highlights how these norms are manipulated and exploited by religious figures known as "Pirs" in Pakistan and by traditional customs and practices in India. In Pakistan, the "cultural state" is depicted as one where these Pirs exploit people's emotions and trust, using religious tactics for personal gain. They distort the true Islamic values and manipulate women, forcing them into roles that go against Islamic principles. This reveals a significant distortion of cultural and religious values within the society, reflecting the negative impact of these religious leaders on cultural and gender norms. Mostly societies get disappointed on the birth of female child:

"When a girl is born, we mourn her as a risk to our honour," she would lament. "When a son is born, we celebrate, because a protector has arrived" (p.132).

These lines suggests that when a girl is born, the community or society views it as a negative event. The term "mourn" indicates a sense of sorrow or regret. The reason for this negative view is that having a daughter is seen as a threat to the family's honour or reputation. This is because of traditional gender roles, and patriarchal cultures. On the other hand, when a boy is born, there is a sense of joy and celebration. This is because boys are seen as protectors, providers, or someone who can carry on the family name. In many patriarchal cultures, sons have been historically expected to support their parents in old age. Therefore, their birth is welcomed and celebrated. These mentioned lines from book highlight the gender biasness, inequality and that can exist in certain societies. They reflect a common cultural pattern where girls are devalued or seen as burdens, while boys are elevated and celebrated.

"Blasphemy" vividly illustrates how patriarchal norms limit women's agency and opportunities, portraying the struggles women face in a society that restricts their autonomy and reinforces their marginalization. Walby's theory acknowledges that patriarchy is not a singular, monolithic structure; instead, it varies across cultures, historical periods, and social contexts. The novel reveals the patriarchal society's unfair treatment of women, who are suppressed and never afforded the same standards of life as men. They face oppression on physical, emotional, social, political, and religious levels, as prestigious status is exclusively

bestowed upon men, granting them all life's privileges. In the shrine, the Peer Sain, his son, and his father are all treated as worldly gods.

Exploitation of Womanhood

The novel clearly shows how women in Muslim society are treated unfairly, with gender differences hidden behind Islamic teachings. It reveals the many cases of injustice, discrimination, sexual abuse, and suffering that women go through. These problems persist because of traditional gender norms and stereotypes influenced by these teachings. It's clear that these roles for men and women aren't natural but are created by society, showing that gender is more about social and cultural ideas than biology. Heer, the main character, is subjected to physical and emotional abuse by her husband and his family. She is treated as property, and her independence and individuality are denied. Her life becomes a symbol of the harsh realities faced by many women in traditional, patriarchal societies where women's rights are often disregarded. The novel depicts how women in such societies are often oppressed, silenced, and restricted by male-dominated power structures. Heer's story sheds light on the exploitation of womanhood, as she's made to live a life where she can't make her own choices and is treated poorly. Her fight to be free and express herself when society tries to control her is a strong way to show how women are mistreated in such places.

"You are his wife and he will handle his affairs himself. If you keep his wishes foremost in your mind, you will become exactly as he wants you to be." (p.50).

The lines suggest that the husband should take care of his own responsibilities and affairs without constant interference or control from his wife. It represents independence and self-sufficiency for the husband in managing his own life. Main role of a woman is to prioritize and fulfil her husband's desires and expectations. This can be seen as a traditional or old-fashioned view of a wife's role, where her identity and actions are closely associated with what her husband desires, and her own needs or aspirations may be secondary. Lines reflect the exploitation of womanhood, where the wife is expected to prioritize her husband's wishes and desires above her own, and the husband is expected to handle his own affairs independently.

Sexuality and Sexual Abuse

The concept of women being treated as sexual object is a disturbing issue that goes against the teachings of Islam and the fundamental principles of

respecting women as human beings. "...live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good" (Qur'an 04:19). In the Quran, there is a clear directive to treat women with kindness and equity, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with them. Unfortunately, some individuals, like Pir Sain exploit their positions of authority and manipulate religious beliefs and treat them as an object of sex. Pir Sain pretends to be a very religious person and takes advantage of this fake image to mistreat women and do bad things. He makes people think he's perfect and holy, and they believe in him without questioning. This makes him very powerful because he can control what people think and hide his bad actions, like taking over their beliefs. Heer uncovers the hypocrite nature of Pir Sain, showing how he uses women only for his sexual needs and doesn't care about them as individuals. He treats them like objects for his own enjoyment and then discards them when he's done.

"Pir Sain spoke, but only of sex. Planning the next act, discussing the last one, seeking opinions on new one, comparing it to another one, until the matter took up my entire life" (p.138)

Pir Sain's conversations revolve entirely around sex, whether it's talking about past experiences, making plans for the future, seeking opinions on new sexual acts, or comparing one sexual encounter to another. "Amma sain had told me, 'when a wife has secured a hold over her husband's bed, she can use it on everyone" (p.55).

They were objectifying woman as if she is any kind of toy. Her personality was only limited to sexuality. She had no recognition as a human. "Amma sain confirmed the rumour when she said, 'All women know that nothing except sex can hold a man, and yet most women fail in keeping him" (p.55). Women were only used to give pleasure to their husband. This was their all-time job.

Physical Abuse by Male

Heer seems to be victim of male violence in the novel, who get tortured by Peer Sain. "My first beating began in full view of everyone and ended inside. I had also disobeyed Allah by not observing purdah from a male whom I could marry, but he was only six years old" (p.43). These lines describe Heer's experience of being publicly beaten and later in a private place. She begins to question herself, wondering if she did something wrong by not observing purdah (veil or modesty) in front of a six-year-old boy. She was beaten by Pir Sain for this action, which symbolizes male dominance or violation of religious rules in the novel. "In another flash

his hand went up in the air and came down on them like axe. The bangles splintered. Sharp shards of glass cut into my wrists. I heard a lion roar and registered fragments of a sentence about my wretched family” (p.43).

According to Salvia, Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment, as a means to control women. Tehmina Durrani shows the mirror to the world that how women are always the victim who faces physical abuse, and how man is the one who uses his physical power negatively.

Silencing of Women

In this patriarchal society, women are expected to remain silent about their suffering. Speaking out or taking unconventional actions, such as writing a book, is often considered immodest. This silencing of women perpetuates their oppression. Heer's suffering is exacerbated by the fact that she is expected to remain silent about her abuse. The novel portrays the fear and stigma associated with women who dare to speak out against their husbands or male authority figures. Heer, despite her usual values, found herself compelled to go against her principles due to difficult circumstances. Despite her modest and decent upbringing, she chose not to speak up when her mother arranged for her to marry a significantly older Pir Sain. Heer realized her family was struggling financially after her father's death, and her mother's insecurity highlighted their difficult situation. Marrying Pir Sain was seen as a fortunate turn of events that could provide a better future for her siblings. Despite feeling destined for this path, Heer accepted it. She gave up her intense feeling of falling in love at first sight with her friend's brother, 'Ranjha.' Just like a typical girl from a middle-class family in the East, she agreed to the proposal without expressing any disagreement or unhappiness.

Heer's early hardships under Pir Sain's control provided her with valuable lessons on navigating life in a daunting and oppressive household. *“Survival meant avoiding the master's wrath” (p.51).* The avoidance of this wrath was her sole concern which led her to understand and devise her own strategies. The book exposes the exploitation and suppression of women within a male-dominated society. Durrani showcases instances of control and abuse, highlighting how societal norms stifle women's voices and aspirations. Pir Sain crosses the limits, subjecting Heer to extreme levels of physical and sexual abuse, silencing her attempts to raise her voice. Her desires and wishes are

eliminated from her thoughts, and she, like any other woman in a traditional male-dominated society, bears all pain silently.

The Characteristics of Male Character Pir Sain in the Novel Blasphemy

In the literary landscape of “blasphemy,” pir sain emerges as a multifaceted character whose intricacies contribute significantly to the thematic richness of the narrative. At the core of his portrayal is an unmistakable exploitative nature, where he unabashedly leverages his position of power to take advantage of the vulnerable, notably the women in his family. This exploitation is symbolized by the stringent enforcement of “purdah” norms, effectively confining these women within the walls of his mansion. Pir Sain's authoritarian practices underscore his desire for dominance, creating a palpable atmosphere of control within his familial domain.

Moreover, the character is marked by a stark duality, revealing a pronounced set of double standards. While imposing conservative values and the veil on others, pir sain paradoxically engages in a wild and reckless behaviour, tearing off the “purdah” with apparent abandon. This dissonance in his actions not only serves as a narrative device but also offers a poignant commentary on the hypocrisy that can exist within individuals who wield authority. The recurrent act of tearing off the “purdah” becomes a symbolic manifestation of Pir Sain's inner turmoil and the tumultuous nature of his existence. It serves as a metaphorical tearing away of societal norms and expectations, laying bare the contradictions that define his character. In doing so, the novel invites readers to contemplate the complex interplay of power, societal expectations, and personal conflict that shape Peer Sain's character, adding layers of depth to the unfolding story. Thus, within the tapestry of “blasphemy,” Peer Sain's character emerges as a compelling study in the intricate dynamics of human behaviour and the nuanced exploration of societal norms.

Physical Appearance of Peer Sain

“Fear of pir sain became ingrained somewhere deeper. I never dared glimpse at him again, not even when he was not looking. I only knew his hands were large and square like his shoulders, but that his fingers were tapered. Signet rings of stones engraved with holy verses left only his thumbs free. On one wrist he wore a bronze band engraved with a prayer, on the other, a complicated watch. In one hand, he carried a white cotton handkerchief, changed

along with everything else in the evening. In the other hand, prayer beads made from sacred earth dangled, he move them constantly". (p.44). Here Tehminna Durrani is crafting the antagonist's physical appearance that by looking pir sain, a person gets what kind of idea that how that person is.

Pir Sain as a Guilty Person

"I learnt that pir sain's first wife died of a weak that collapsed in the middle of her wedding night. The second wife lived to see the day, but come dusk, she had a nervous fit that she seemed to not want to come out of. Two days later she shuddered and trembled to death. I also heard that my husband had not wished to remarry until he saw me under my desperate mother's wing". (p.49). Peer Sain was the real culprit his two wives were died and he was abusing his third wife and had raped many women.

Incestuous Eyes

Heer, who was tormented by her tormentor in her early teens, is faced with the worst kind of sexual, physical, mental, and emotional agony as she tries to coexist with pir sain in his household as nothing more than a lurking shadow. The family was infested with incest under the same "man of god" guidance, daughters were molested by their fathers, and issueless couples were miraculously blessed with children following prayer by pir sain, wherein each young maiden servant was regarded as blessed in the care of the vengeful Peer Sain. Heer's action of incest tried to preserve her daughters from their father's ferocious and indefatigable sexual appetite and lust. "Guppi comfort his mother and said, "he put his hand inside my shalwar. He also put it in my shirt and PRESSED me hard" (p.111).

Peer Sain, who is full of lust. He did not even spare his own daughter. After knowing this, Heer was completely shocked and surprised. She for a moment thought that Guppi might have taken it wrongly, but then she also realized that Peer Sain is a kind of person who can do any kind of sin. After that Heer started providing girls to fulfil his lust or sexual desire and his paedophilic needs. When it was not enough, he forces his wife Heer in the field of prostitution. Heer was suffering all this silently. She was mortified by the chilling and horrific enterprise of Pir Sain when he laid his lustful hands on his twelve years old daughter "Guppi". Already tormented by the incestuous relationship of one of Pir Sain's brother with his own daughter (Meesni), Heer was horrified beyond bounds. "Fear, shock, anger and confusion spread from my head, through my body, into my feet, and darted back up again. Meesni's secret life,

buried in her father's haveli had always haunted ours like ghost. Now it came alive" (pg.111).

It was the fear which sowed the plantings of selfishness and dire urge of survival, no matter at what cost, in the heart of Heer. She suffered from guilt and anxiety at her horrendous and abhorrent accomplice ship in the cruel and tyrannical deeds of Pir Sain. She produces an orphan girl "Yathimri" in front of Pir Sain in order to divert his attention from Guppi. She was relieved when Pir Sain accepted Yathimri as new bait to nibble upon. She harnessed her sense of guilt at her selfishness by the thought that "Child rape was a lesser evil than incest" (p. 112). She maintained her composure even at the sight of small orphan girl, brutally shattered by the lusty claws of Pir Sain. "His eyes bored into me, searching to catch a glimpse of sympathy for her and disapproval of him. He saw nothing" (pg.112).

She was worried that she had satiated the hunger of Pir Sain for now; what she would next if he planned to plunge again on some other young girl? So, the mild inclination of sending Yathimri to some safe heavens vanished completely she thought Guppi in place of Yathimri. She was in deep conflict. She knew what she had done but the urge to save her own daughters hardened her heart towards Yathimri. She thought to keep the orphan girl in Pir Sain's service. "She had been through the worst the first time. I would feed her well and make her strong to face the rest. My heart softened towards her, but hardened when it softened towards Guppi" (p.114). In the heart of her heart, she knew that it won't be the first and last endeavour of Pir Sain. She had to send the child in his service again and again. But her thoughts only hovered around the safety of her own daughters. "Oh Allah!" I worried, "will she sustain his lust until all my daughters are married? Will I sustain the evil" (pg.115).

Her heart was further torn into pieces with sympathy for her own daughters when Guppi consoled her as if everything Heer did was justified, "Amma, don't feel guilty for the choice you made. You replaced the impossible with possible. Whereas Yathimri is Jaiz (legal) for my father, I am not. She can be Halal (lawful), for he can marry her. I can only be Haraam (forbidden act)." (.pg126). Durrani presents a spectrum of male characters, some enforcing oppressive norms and others challenging them to different degrees. These characters mirror broader societal attitudes, adding depth to the discussion of power dynamics and their impact on women. The Peer Sain in the novel can be seen as the filthiest man, representing religion. With religious and cultural dogmas, he owns the power of control over people's lives in every aspect, whether

personal or social. He torments them, and they, in turn, happily accept their pale fate.

CONCLUSION

In patriarchal societies, women facing blasphemy allegations endure disproportionate discrimination and harsh consequences due to societal power imbalances. The novel "Blasphemy" showcases the exploitation of womanhood within a male-dominated society, highlighting how women often bear the brunt of societal judgment and punishment for blasphemy-related accusations. The main male character in the novel exhibits characteristics of dominance, entitlement, and a reinforcement of societal norms, perpetuating the unequal treatment of women in such a setting. Transformative potential: While Walby's theory acknowledges the pervasive nature of patriarchy, it also highlights the potential for change. She argues that challenging patriarchy requires collective efforts and policy changes at multiple levels.

The novel depicts the harsh treatment of women in a society where the freedom of choice, freedom of speech, freedom of dress and religion all are virtually banned and are not supposed to be seen as good omens but rather a bad form of rebellion. The main character Heer suffer is from chronic issues like anxiety panic attacks rapid depression and some other psychological disorders. She has been portrayed as the forlorn victim of patriarchy of a society where liberalism and an acceptable secularism don't find any place. Genocide of her wishers the slaughtering of her desires all are being performed on the basis of religious rigidity. Which is the root cause of Islam phobia precisely in the colonies of west where Islam contrary is increasing on a rapid note and also being attacked from the extremists. Heer the main character a girl of mere 16 years has been fallen in love with her Ranjha the dashing charming boy of her colony, The mode of communication is the letter only which she often gets from her lover's sister who seems fine with their affair.

Things suddenly change and the chaos begin when peer Sain the monster in the face of spiritual character demands for her marriage and her family unconsciously not knowing and even not trying regarding any information or anything is happy puppet and has fallen in the dreams of seeing their girl in the palace of peer Sain. The family does the marriage and Heer is happily married with the person of 38 years. The troubles begin in the early days as Heer suffers from domestic violence and some other mistreatment and things go on to worse situations. Overall, the novel shows that religious patriarchy can be devastating and

can eradicate the basic fundamentals of rules rights and ethics in the society.

Competing Interest

The authors had no competing interests.

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