

I. Introduction

Bina Sharif's *My Ancestor's House* and the Issue of Resistance to orthodox Patriarchy

The study focuses on how Sharif's *My Ancestor's House* depicts the real picture of females in Pakistani Muslim society. The play explores the suffering of females in Muslim society and their struggle for equality. Bindia is the main character of the play who goes abroad in the pursuit of freedom, higher studies and betterment of life. She marries an American man there and tries to settle but unfortunately, she cannot adjust herself to the American culture. When she returns to her homeland, she is criticized for doing things that are against the Muslim culture, that is, marrying American man and having American notion of living such as, smoking and dressing.

Deedi is Bindia's young sister; she is educated and is rebellious toward the Muslim society's patriarchal norms. She chooses to marry in her own choice and chooses her own pattern of living. What she does is all against the culture of her society, so from the time she is married she is abandoned from her own house, family, and society. One mistake she has done by choosing her own pattern of living and the other mistake she does is to choose a wrong man for her who never stands up to be a man enough to take care of his family. Thus, she is compelled to live compassionate life that has been burden for her. Roona, Bindia's another young sister is also revolutionary character of this play. She is an educated woman having her own job that is enough for her survival; however, she is not happy in her life. She wants to get rid of the society's traditional rules and regulations made for female. She is always seeking the chance to revolt against the so-called patriarchal norms and live in peace in her own desire. She is treated like slave in house and at office too. Though she earns more than her husband does, he never treats her compassionately, does not try to

understand her, and never supports her. She is not happy in her married life and wants to get divorced but she cannot because of the Muslim society where it is regarded as a taboo. So she is compelled to live under the domination of her husband and patriarchy. She is drowning into loneliness. No one is there to help her and she has no one to share her feelings and support her.

Nazo is elder sister of Bindia who is traditional and supports the patriarchy. She supports her brother but not her sisters who are against male made norms. She pretends to be happy in her life being in the same culture, society and country. She is in opposition of Deedi's marrying in her own and Bindia's going abroad. Shahid is the eldest son of the family. Bindia's elder brother a brigadier in the Pakistani army. He seems to be selfish; though his parents spend a lot for his best education that made them under the loan where the house was only their property and great surprise is that he never cared to pay the debt. He doesn't care about his parents and his sisters. He even does not come to attend his father's funeral anniversary. He pretends to care and comes near them only for the property that he will gain after his mother's death. Though he earns a lot, he does not support Deedi who is living her poor life in her mother's house instead tries to kick her out. He never has good relationship with Bindia because she is against him and his useless ideas of cheating others.

Ali Buksh is the family servant in the play, who works at Nazo's house in fewer amounts. The amount he earns is not enough for the survival of his family but he is compelled to keep quiet because of his poor condition. He only likes Bindia and her arrival to Pakistan has made him happy and he does not want her go back. He has expectation on Bindia to raise his salary talking to Nazo. He is a traditional man and does not like Bindia smoking in Muslim country, being a Muslim woman.

Rulers of Pakistani society are almost all men who manipulate the customs, rules, and religion in their own favor. Even if women try to get higher education such as law, medical degrees, there are some things, which females are still confined to. And the thesis mainly focuses on the female existential issue to show the pathetic condition of females of Pakistani Muslim society and the alienation they suffer from the so-called norms and values. It analyzes how female characters have been alienated from their family, society and from themselves when they try to challenge the patriarchal society. It is clear through the characters Bindia, Deedi and Roona that they have lots of problems being in their own country or abroad and are alienated. They are isolated from the patriarchal society so they have to struggle hard. These female protagonists are alienated and go against the patriarchal society for their own freedom and happiness.

The setting of the play is of 1992 that depicts the real picture of Pakistan's Muslim Society. In the opening of the play, the actors are already placed when the audience walks in. Tablar, sitar, and harmonium are heard. The musicians are on stage; their music is the reminder of the lost good old days. The costumes are in accordance with the hot climate of Pakistan; they are thin cotton and linen of light colors. Only Deedi is in bright costumes as a Pakistani bride. At the end of the play in the funeral of Deedi, the Pakistani folkloric songs are heard as suggested for Deedi. To describe this event Irene Backalenick in *Theatre for New York City*, New York writes:

“*My Ancestor's House*” is doomed by atmosphere, by mood rather than plot. Aided by incense, the eerie half tones of sitar and tablar, and the songs of the exquisite Raj Shree Daryanani, we are, indeed, transported to Pakistan.

According to Irene Backalenick, the play is conquered by the perspective of mood and environment rather than the plot because of the use of intrinsic and contemporary discriminating music of Pakistan. The music played in the beginning of the play, the entry of actors, and the maintenance of the stage is adequate for the audience to estimate the destiny of the play. The music is so powerful that automatically drives to Pakistan.

At this period of 1992, the Muslim society was totally based on Quran. It was the age of rule of men over female on the basis of sexual category and the rights of women were limited. Females were depicted as low-grade human beings; they were taken as devastating factor and were treated in a stereotypical manner. They were alienated from society and from their own family too. Patriarchal tradition has been depicting females stereotypically since time immemorial. Under the Pakistani tradition, from the very beginning of human civilization female had not been able to occupy any significant place in the society and family. For e.g. Roona is educated; she has a job and she earns good as much as her husband but she has no any freedom. She is living under the control of her husband. She is capable as the males and earns more than her husband but this all is not perceived in the eye of patriarchy but when she does a small mistake, it becomes a big issue but does not think that she too is busy and gets tired. From the beginning, males are taken as physically strong brave and able to tackle with hazards. Generally, males are prescribed to handle outer activities but females are confined within the household works, like cooking, washing, caring etc. due to their sensitive physical structure. Normally they start to perform the role of mother, wife etc. but later it became a norm, which males have established. The traditional role structure of the society monolithically impose the male rules and regulations upon women. From that very area, females and girls are victimized by the

name of tradition and culture. Traditionally females have been treated inferior, weak, and secondary to males.

Dealing with the patriarchy and its customs and rules towards female, Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* asks what a woman is and she herself declares, as she is a woman to represent the foundation of an answer and writes:

I am sometimes vexed during abstract discussions to hear men say to me, “You think thus and such because you are a woman.” But I know that my only defense would be to respond, “I think it because it is true,” thereby eliminating my subjectivity. It would be out of the question to reply, “And you think the contrary because you are a man”; for it is understood that the fact of being a man is not a singularity. A man is in the right in being man: it’s woman who is in the wrong.

(LDS 1:14, TM; TSS xxi)

While talking about the question what a woman is, Beauvoir is not discarding her experience as a woman, and she is asking what it means to be called a woman, to be treated like a woman, to think of her as a woman. To find suddenly and often, that her subjectivity, her personhood has vanished because of man and that she is—she feel like—nothing more than a representative of males. These questions for Beauvoir are firmly rooted at the level of the ordinary at which she finds herself declaring, “I am” to her question. Beauvoir has established the fundamental issues of modern feminism by arguing that man defines the human, not women. The women are not born women; they are made women, which is just a gender concept. She attacks the patriarchal instinct and concept toward women.

Muslim society does not give any freedom to women. Men are supposed as the providers, protectors for the wife and the children support them from their own

means. They also have their power over them and the right to limit their movements, choices, and relationships outside the family. Females are just expected to live under the protection of men in their family and society. Women are much more seen as compassionate people who can never be doctors, nurses, and teachers, hold an office as a judge or religious leader or hold administrative positions. Muslim culture is derived from Quran and codified into law by Sharia, which is the civil code for the Quran. Muslim society is based on Quran that codifies into law every aspect and exaction of a practicing Muslim's life. It is difficult to separate the norms and mores of Islamic society. And according to Quran female have got low status, they are made as the representative of male. They ought to be passive, submissive, loving, obeying and so on. Before marriage, she has to live under her father or brother's command and after marriage under husband's. Man in the Muslim society can easily beat his wife; make her do the things, as he likes and she can never say no to her respected husband. She cannot wear whatever she likes, cannot go anywhere she likes and she is compelled to live her hell like life pretending it as heaven. Taking about similar to this situation, Shari Goodman, in *The Mistreatment of Women in Muslim Countries* puts forward the view of Dr. Joan Lachkar, a noted psychologist in private practice in Los Angeles:

In this ever-changing world of multiculturalism, we are continually faced with contrasting dynamics. What is considered "normal" is another; you cannot beat your wife. That is considered abuse in the west and you would get arrested for domestic violence, but in Islamic societies wife beating is permitted when they are disobedient

Through these lines, Lachkar shows the difference in the behavior men towards female in east and west. While in west value is equal for all, Islamic attitude towards

women is quite offensive to those of us who believe that women are equal to men in intelligence and status. Though women fought for the right and equal pay in foreign, other doctrine never relegate women to the back but that is not the case in Islamic doctrine thus women are relegated to secondary status as illustrated by Quran.

In *My Ancestor's House*, Sharif analyzes the evil practices of the society that are made to women. Human beings realize their existence only by searching and bearing wounds. To show that existence, the writer creates some problem in the play. Bindia leaves for New York for her better future, she goes there for the freedom that was restricted in her own homeland but with the pursuit of freedom, she loses her trust by the deep and dark horrifying alienation and loneliness. Because of the lack of understanding between Eastern and Western values, she could not accept the culture neither could return to her homeland.

Culture, as the source of belonging gives individuals their identity, shapes, human behavior and guides their action. But the same culture makes them feel alienated when it is made discriminating. Moreover, the change of culture brings identity crisis in the lives of individuals as they get confusion in adjustment with new culture. In the same way, Bindia's story of moving America for her betterment of life brings the same problem of cultural dislocation and rootlessness. Because the Islamic culture is not made for females, constructed by patriarchy in their own favor, Bindia in the hope of better future goes abroad and marries with a man there. She does not see any better future in her land so she tries to settle in America but finally returns to her own country where her sisters and mother are living. She was not success in her life. She could not handle the new culture there in America. As a result, she could never be established in America and finally returns her homeland. In this context,

Saurabh Charttegee writes review on *South Asia League of Artist in America*

(*SALAAM*) that:

In *My Ancestor's House*, we follow the return of Bindia, a Pakistani woman who has chosen to marry and live in the west, to her native land and the world of her sisters and dying mother. Sharif's *MY ANCESTOR'S HOUSE* is a beautiful story that reminds us that no matter how far one travels, they must answer the call of their motherland. (Page no.157-162)

Here, Charttegee interprets the play as representing Diasporas and alienated circumstances of the female character. Bindia, in the hope of better future goes abroad and marries with a man there. She tries to settle there but finally returns where her sisters and mother are living. As a whole, it presents that nothing can replace the love of homeland. While interpreting her return, Culture comes as one of the reasons for her failure. She could not accept the culture there, though she was living in America she could not be away from her own culture. She got the freedom there in America that she was longing for but could not get the culture she needed; she felt homelessness, loneliness, alienated and dislocated. She wandered around aimlessly being an educated penniless, homeless woman. And finally returns to her homeland.

In comparison of Bindia another revolutionary character of this play, Deedi is also unsuccessful in her life; her failure is her own culture that is constructed by males to victimize females. Deedi tries to rupture the notions created by patriarchy to dominate or inferiorize female. She struggles to choose her own life when she chooses her husband and her own pattern of living. It is the effect of the superiority of Muslim men and the rules of their Islamic religion that deteriorates the soul of women in Pakistan, which suffocates Deedi. Born in Muslim family, she does not have the right

to marry in her own. Deedi in her life is completely lost, sick a lot and mentally shattered. Though she is not happy with her husband, she cannot leave him because Muslim society does not allow doing so. She has no house to live in so goes to live at her mother's where she is not expected to stay on. She is treated as second-rate citizen right at her own country, own homeland and by her own. Her husband drives her towards destruction and she is blamed for bringing a bad name to the family. Her family never forgives her. Though she wants her family's love back, she can never gain it. Her life is hell on the earth. In addition, she has no hopes, no ways, no any support to survive, and finally she dies. Similar to this context, Rashna B. Singh, in *Journal for commonwealth Literature* writes:

My ancestor's house is a potent and powerful play that grapples with fusion and turmoil of a family and extension of the Indian sub continent where they abide. It is however, play that depends greatly on the strength of production for its impact on audience. (85-118)

According to Singh, the play explores the impact on the readers by showing the ups and downs in the relations among the family members. He finds family in turmoil in the play. In the ancient days, everything was good and all were happy with each other but with the running of time, everything has changed. All are engaged in their own different business. Now there is chaos and turmoil in the family because one is not satisfied with other and cannot stand for another member for their own family. Deedi goes against the Muslim patriarchal norms and values and gets married on her own choice from the time; she is punished in her life. No one does justice to her, nor her family, nor the society nor the god and even not her husband for whom she leaves her family and goes against the society. She has miseries in her life ever. Her own loving

family denounces her that she cannot struggle alone and do justice for her herself and drives her life towards the death.

The main problem to be discussed in this project is female alienation, frustration, destruction, and too the cultural alienation that introduces the poor living condition of females in this play. The struggle of female characters to stand by themselves against the hostile patriarchal norms and values has been dramatized in the play. Bindia chooses to go abroad for higher studies alone in the backdrop of Pakistani society. She lives by her own choice. In the same way, Deedi too chooses her life partner and pattern of living. Bindia and Deedi assert their individuality as they have choices in their own hands. Bindia's struggle for survival and her violation of Islamic norms and values establish her as individualist female. Deedi too struggles to choose her own life when she chooses her husband and yet she suffers and ultimately dies. Deedi's death is the result of her own choice. These two are the women who realize the existential possibilities of womanhood against the norms set by patriarchy. Both Bindia and Deedi got excessive pain and were forced to live the life in the part of tragedy. The characters stories disclose the miserable life experiences because of violent behavior, trauma, and their pathetic situation. The females have become the victim of patriarchal society and its culture.

This research will be a critical analysis of those issues dragged out by the writer. It is oriented toward how females have been alienated from the time of their upbringing to her present life and how they assert their individuality. So, the purpose of the study is to make a thorough study of existential alienation of female in this play. It has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces the objective of research including literature reviews and discussing on the property and significance of its hypothesis. The second chapter deals with the theoretical modality,

which revolves around Muslim Feminism. This research falls back mainly upon concept of Muslim feminists Margot Badran, Hirschkind Charles, Abdullahi-an-Na'im, Fatima Mernessi, Riffat Hassan, Farida Shaheed and others. It seeks to surround the given texts, hypothesis and objective. It applies the theoretical tool in the text to prove hypothesis. It brings forth the writer's tendency of politicizing of rebel characters in order to explore the female existence. Finally, the last chapter summarizes the major contention of the research.

II. Textual Analysis: Depiction of Alienated Female in Bina Sharif's *My Ancestor's House*

In the play *My Ancestor's House* Bina Sharif portrays the Muslim female protagonists as rebel who fight against the unwanted rigid norms and values of the Pakistani Muslim society. She comments on discriminating practices of Muslim society based on the customs, rules, and religion, which still are prevalent in Muslim society. Liberty, freedom, equality, justice are not for women; females should live under the control of men. They are not allowed to marry on their own choice; they are not allowed to go anywhere they like to.

The male-dominated society always marginalizes and has treated females as inferior to males from the time immemorial and considers that women should serve males, obey them, and stay within the home circle. Females cannot voice their disapproval and even if their voice comes fore, nobody cares or listens. Their voice is suppressed, that is not heard. It is really challenging work to awake the Muslim people and especially Muslim females are deeply devoted towards the religion, whose roles are to serve the family, do house hold work, rear children and remain away from outside affairs like decision making, understanding politics, getting education, working for earning and many more. The dominant discourses characterize them as 'feminine' who are shy and introvert and who are ignorant and secondary human beings. The dominant groups or discourses keep the women dominated and rob them of their freedom to speak and show their capabilities. Talking about Islam and its treatment to females Margot Badran says:

Islamic feminism, which derives its understanding and mandate from the Quran, seeks rights and justice for women, and for men, in the totality of their existence...Islamic feminism advocates women's

rights, gender equality, and social justice using Islamic discourse as its paramount discourse, though not necessarily its only one.

Badran mainly focuses on the rights of female and their existence. She further says that males are dominant only because of the ideological construction of gender and the Quran. Based on that construction, they create gender roles and due to that, females have no access in mainstream and decision-making. This shows how subserviently women have been treated. To be a female means serving patriarchy under strict domination and male hegemony. Before marriage they suffer in the hands of their father and after marriage from the grasp of their husband, female have been victimized since time immemorial.

Generally, religion has a patriarchal view of the relationship between the genders. The relationship between Adam and Eve signifies how religion views women. In this regard, Al Hibri writes, “God was declared male; Eve became the symbol of temptation and sin. The woman was consequently judged as a less likely candidate for salvation and an everlasting life in heaven than man” (176). In the patriarchal social system, the status of women is no more than that of a mute animal. Women are dictated to follow the hierarchal norms of the society where they cannot find their respectable positions. The patriarchal society regards female-sex as secondary to male-sex. Regardless of caste, class or religion women are subjected to gender discriminations and are differentiated as secondary objects. The society keeps them aloof from social matters like decision-making, participating in political matters, problem solving, social, and familial discussions and in financial sectors. They do not even think about what women think and what they want. As Muslims, it is important for both women and men to aspire to be good persons, which according to Islam means being compassionate, generous, God-loving, committed to Allah, fighting for

Islam, loving the faith, doing good for others, and gaining knowledge. Focusing on how human rights end gender discrimination Leyla Sahin says:

We do not talk about women's rights but prefer to speak about human rights. If you give rights to human beings, then also women and men will gain their rights. What is a human being? This is the most important question ... First, we must know what being a human means and then we can give rights to everybody, whether they be men or women.¹⁴

In *My Ancestor's House* Sharif attempts to show the different status of male and female relation and how patriarchal societies treat women and how women are separated from the world outside and how they are, alienated and dislocated when they try to go in opposition to patriarchy. Bina stresses that treating each other as human beings is the possible way to minimize gender discrimination. Deedi is a Muslim girl who marries on her own choice and from the day she marries, she is punished forgetting that she is also a human being. In this context, her sister Nazo says:

“Imagine a Muslim woman marrying on her own. Where do you think we live? We live right here in an Islamic country. We have responsibilities toward our religion, our society, our parents. Our father became the laughing stock of the whole city. An Islamic man-who had never missed a single prayer in his life-could not face people in mosque. He was a broken man-he died a broken man. He never recovered after that.”(396)

Marriage plays a vital role in women's life but in Muslim society, it is as if simply a task in her life and she requires nothing further. Women are expected to get married

arranged by the parents with the girl's compromise but she cannot raise her voice against it. In Muslim society religion and custom plays a vital role. But here, Deedi crosses her own religious boundary and marries in her own wish going against the culture. As a result, she is abandoned from the family and society. She is a revolutionary type of character who revolts against the unwanted norms and values of the Muslim society. She is accused for going against the Islamic culture and for not fulfilling her responsibility toward her society, religion and her parents. She is blamed for bringing a bad name in the family because of what they lose their prestige in the society and cannot face the people. Her father is broken and is never recovered again and he dies a broken man.

Culture and religion are related with the totality of belief system, social manner, political values, and economic system. They are the product of social consciousness that provides identity to a nation. In the global context, it vitalizes nation. It is supposed that religion aims at peace and tolerance. But here it creates disorder, destruction and unrest because it is used by power holders. Instead of saving society and humanity, it creates complexities.

Muslim society values women in terms of secondary objects. Females are compelled to follow the path shown by her father, husband, and community in the name of rules and regulations or norms and values constructed in patriarchal society. Females are denied by religion, culture, and society too. The social construction in the patriarchal mind in such societies is so rigid that it does not think other than what the conservative norms dictate. Roona's husband represents the rigid and blind follower of conservative male-dominated norms and an oppressive male who feels superior while dominating the opposite sex. He is such a traditional, conservative, and narrow-minded man whose social thinking promotes female exploitation in the society that

marginalizes women's status and uses women as their objects giving way to their alienation. The following extract by Roona shows how women are exploited in society:

“I work so hard... I get up every morning at six o'clock, make breakfast for my husband, get children ready...take them to school, take the little girl to the baby sister's. Work in the office the whole day, with the man who treat us like slaves-slaves, yes, now they call us “educated slaves.” Then I come home, cook dinner...by nine o'clock in the evening I am so exhausted I can hardly keep my eyes open, and my husband sits and watches TV and reads newspapers. He thinks he is the last intellectual left in the world, and then he yells that one button of his shirt was missing and he felt embarrassed in the office because other men's wives sew the broken buttons on their husband's shirts. He forgets that I bring three thousand rupees home every month, more than he makes. He forgets that, but never forgets the broken button in his shirt. And still I cannot leave him. Where am I going to stand in this society if I leave him? A divorced or unmarried woman has still no place in this damn country. The men only seem modern, but they are modern for themselves. Not for us.”(389)

Females are not as free as males in the patriarchal society. The attitude of society towards male and female is quite different. Roona is living a fragmented self and she thinks herself as weak though she is educated, and has her own job but she is isolated physically, psychologically and emotionally from her husband. She is alienated from her own self. She can observe the power and freedom of male but she herself is trapped within the patriarchal norms and social values where her own desires are

killing herself and she is living for the desire of other. She cannot do what she wants. Though she is not satisfied with her husband she cannot leave him because females do not have right to perform divorce in Muslim society. Therefore, she is suffering from identity crisis. Her self is not her own original self. Her originality, thinking, and feeling do not make any sense in her real life. Males always control and dominate females. Roona performs a role of an obedient wife and caring mother and does whatever her husband wants. She does not possess her own unique identity though she wants to possess her own. She is afraid of the customs of the patriarchy. In order to live her life and gain love, affection, sympathy she is shown as willing to lose her own identity.

Bina Sharif is not in favor of the religion, customs, traditions held in Muslim society. Generally speaking, male and female are equal by birth. In the play Sharif includes the stories of women belonging to different religions, different status, and different ages in order to show the different ways of dominations these women are made to endure. A girl does not get opportunity to be educated, they are perfect being illiterate. In comparison to girls, boys get higher education and facilities they need though their family is not financially good. In the hope of good future parents spend their property for their son but girls worry about their family, the boys never do. When their house is in mortgaged Shahid, is never worried about it. But his sister Bindia is worried and she has to return the house back. Instead, he feels ashamed to return his house, because the house they have been living is not so good and his sisters and parents can't speak English as he does. It is clear through these lines:

Somewhere-somewhere...with the misery and poverty, and when you got back...afterall your education... you were too good for us. We

couldnot speak English like you. You couldnot bring your friends home because the house was too ugly for you. (395)

Females are always shown to be a supporting, dependent and gaping for help. Shahid treats females as commodities. He tries to control his sisters and never cares his old mother. This conversation clarifies that women are conditioned to remain in the state of indecisiveness, vulnerability, terror, and dependency. Whether males are good or bad, females are compelled to depend on them. They have expectation on them and the males being literate or having good status suppress females showing their ego and superiority. Sharif vociferously refuses the social notion of females and attacks patriarchal myth of women.

The play depicts the position of females in Pakistani Islamic society. Females feel alienated because the culture, religion, and norms created by patriarchy are neither acceptable nor can they go against them. In this play, we see Bindia moving to America alone from conservative Pakistani society in the pursuit of freedom and better future. When she returns her homeland to visit her ill mother, she is confronted with family jealousy and strife that questions her very existence. She can't live in America; she is not strong enough to survive there. When she was living in America she is in massive loneliness, disillusionment and poverty but she has to return to America because in her homeland she is not accepted. Her tension heightens when she sees extreme domination of women in her homeland Muslim society. Being angry with male domination Roona says, "Our religion, our parents, our Qur'an, our men, had weakened our soul."(386). this line shows that Muslim fundamentalism is an obstacle and danger to modern life and freedom. Muslims emphatically defend the different roles of males and females, because God has distinctly ordained them differently in society. They think that their oppression of the women is not really

oppression. This is the God who has given place and role to her. The tragic consequence is that the males determine her life here on earth. They decide what to do, whom to associate, where to go, and how to please themselves best. The conduct towards them also influences females life after death. Her obedience is not optional; it determines her eternal destiny. And the females are bound to follow the religion because they have to cling to the verses in the Qur'an, "men and women who do righteous acts will enter paradise" (Surah). They need place in their community to feel no matter it is a place of oppression and little freedom. Allah will be too angry with them, if they bring shame to their family clan, by venturing out or breaking some of their boundaries. Therefore, they are made weak, innocent, sensitive, and emotional by their own family, parents, society and Qur'an based religion. Purity, chastity, devotion, innocence are tagged upon them. The following passage from Charles Hirschkind supports this idea:

The conscious and rigorous Muslim who loves Allah and who wants to satisfy him is more in the domain of duty, no matter what domain, than in the domain of rights. [...] The woman is not there to say: 'I have my rights,' no, I have duties, and the same is valid for the man. [...] It is much more complex, and exactly as far as the self-reform is concerned, it has to begin with myself, it is not about claiming something from someone else, I start with myself. This is why the big jihad, this effort of oneself, is about starting with me. I do what I have to do.⁴⁶

Females are obedient and try to fulfill their necessary duty appearing an elementary part toward faith. It makes females more difficult to avoid or misuse the strategies of authority. In their desire to fulfill their Islamic duties means to adapt their lives to Islamic norms. Women agree immense importance to religious authorities, from

whom they demand practical capability, which supplies them with concrete rules to guide their behavior in day-to-day life. Most of the women in Muslim societies are brought up with the concept of innocence and silence, which is the indication of good wife, good daughter-in-law, and well brought up women. Because of the internalization of such stereotypical roles, women prefer to remain silent although they are beaten and humiliated. Such silence sometimes becomes very dangerous for women. Such mistreatments are rooted in traditional practices and institutional arrangements. Patriarchy always expects females to obey their rules and regulations. According to patriarchal rules, females should be cool and passive but not aggressive or revolutionary. It is a kind of exclusion and a well-planned strategy to lengthen the dominance of patriarchy. Islamic discourse has passed through the public and private spheres that those who wish to remain a part of public discourse need to know how to use it. Women are asking how new technologies and the cultures and values they entail will be adapted to a well understood notion of the Qur'an and the Sunna as eternal. Discussing on its effect Abdullahi an-Na'im, a Sudanese scholar of Islamic law, has written that:

The advocates of the human rights of women should realize that they have no alternative but to engage in an Islamic discourse. Whatever they may think of it, the fact of the matter is that Islamic groups have already succeeded in 'Islamizing' the terms of reference of public discourse in most Islamic societies (an-Na'im 1995:59).

These lines represent the whole concept of the then society towards women in which male is more privileged. They generalize their norms as culture and make women obey them. The oppression, domination and control over women are deeply rooted in

culture or tradition. It promotes the hierarchical gap between male and female that brings a pathetic condition of women.

In the play alienated Bindia, Deedi and Roona represent how female are misbehaved, how they are dominated and alienated from the society. Alienation is the estrangement of individuals from a specific situation or process. Mainly, the individuals feel a loss of their cultural belonging under the cultural estrangement. In a sense, it is a kind of powerlessness, meaninglessness and finally self-estrangement. The female characters of the play Bindia, Deedi and Roona expose the trauma of the female alienation and their effort to establish their belongings. The characters in this chain of stories are dislocated and therefore a sense of alienation haunts them all through the course they take in their circumstances. Each of them represents their alienated condition through different ways because the causes of their alienation are not similar.

The females who are living under the patriarchy are looking for some change in their situation. They want freedom but fail to get it. As a result, they feel alienated and frustrated. Men do not cooperate with women and harass them all the time by enslaving and abusing them. Then they lose their belief in themselves and find weaker. The following lines by Roona reflect the women's miserable situation in Muslim society.

The men only seem modern, but they are modern for themselves. Not for us. There is no one I communicate with. I have no social life. I am an intelligent woman. I am struggling to find out why my spirit and my mind are failing. I had an absolute belief in myself...that was, and is, to some extent the only thing that keeps me going...I had belief in my father...and my brothers and my homeland, but I did not depend on

them. I depended and trusted myself. That belief and trust I am losing. I feel as if I go down every day, there is a hollow, a space, a hole, inside me, which keeps getting bigger and bigger. I want to look around and find somebody-who can hold me tight and tell me not to be afraid. (389-390)

In this abstract Roona's voice reveals the feeling of alienation within her own country, her own society, and her own family. The patriarchal society always inferiorizes her all the time. She is an educated, independent, intelligent woman but she is oppressed. She is taken simply as a childbearing machine, who has only the duty to give services to other family members. Dealing with this, masculine cultural practice, and treatment of females in their culture, Fatima Mernessi, states:

In western culture, sexual inequality is based on the belief in the biological inferiority of woman. In Islam, it is the contrary: the whole system is based on the assumption that woman is a powerful and dangerous being. All sexual institutions (polygamy, repudiation, sexual segregation, etc.) can be perceived as a strategy to constrain her power (Mernissi 16).

Mernessi, explains why Islam maintains man's superiority and domination over woman. It is men's responsibility and duty to keep women under their protection and control. Muslim feminists point out that the picture of Islam as a hard patriarchal religion is based on the dominating view of Islam, which is not necessarily original Islam. The above extract opines that western feminist writings situate Islamic women as an oppressed group depending upon the race, class, ethnicity and location. And though the Islamic women struggle for liberation they suffer from patriarchal oppression and gender inequality. They are compelled to live under patriarchy.

Muslim women who write about feminism and Islam have raised questions about the male domination. Riffat Hassan writes, “Men have taken on the task of defining the ontological, theoretical, sociological and eschatological status of Muslim women.”(41) The argument is that females are tied up in patriarchal society regardless of interpretation, even though every act of understanding is an act of interpretation. Hassan raises the important point that as long as women are defined as theologically inferior, the battle for sociological, political or economic rights will not go very far. Male privileges all powers and facilities. They generalize their norms as culture and represent females as weak, submissive, irrational and timid. They have constructed gender roles in order to prove their own superiority. Behind the construction of gender roles and their social identities there is the functioning of male ideology. In this context, Margot Badran writes:

Islamic feminism is a global phenomenon. It is not a product of East or West. Indeed, it transcends East and West. As already hinted, Islamic feminism is being produced at diverse sites around the world by women inside their own countries, whether they be from countries with Muslim majorities or from old established minority communities. Islamic feminism is also growing in Muslim Diaspora and convert communities in the West.”¹⁶

She tries to clarify that Muslim feminism has a liberal view of Islam and tries to adapt it to modern time. Muslim feminism argues that for a long time, our imagination about Islam was dominated by a patriarchal vision of Islam, but that this is not necessarily an authentic Islam. They argue that we should primarily focus on the teachings of the Quran because it is a patriarchal reading of Islam. The myths describe females in terms of mysterious and they see the world from their point of view as absolute. They

are created to support male discourse. That is why females of Islam are not independent. For believers, the theological definition of human equality and the equality of men and women's soul is as important as other aspects of gender equality. The solution to female alienation is not equality, being a man, replacing male, having education and profession only but these are the things they are now influencing girls to do their "only choice." In other cases, none of them entails feminine inclination. As a result, none will solve their alienation and the effect of alienation in their lives and consciousness takes an even more oppressive form.

Culture as a source of human identity appears to be one of the issues of feeling alienated. Culture, as the source of belonging, gives individuals their identity, shapes human behavior, and guides their action. Moreover, the change in culture brings identity crisis in the lives of individuals as they get confused in adjustment with new culture. Once, their ties with the native culture are cut off, there is dilemma of cross-cultural assimilation since their identities depend on the community thousands of miles away. Regarding to this Henry M. Piironen's theory on cultural alienation can be supportive:

Cultural alienation is to devalue one's own culture and cultural identity. It is to abandon one's own culture, cultural background, and cultural identity. An alienated individual thus invents little or no value to them. And instead, he values the new host culture he has adapted his own.

Human component of the culture and its closet part upholding them against the world has become alien to men. The superiority of new culture dominates individuals as they feel inferiority of their culture in new culture. In this play, the character Bindia, a Pakistani Muslim woman moves to America, New York in search of freedom and for

her better future. Her life there completely drowns into cultural displacement, realizing a sense of being away from her place, culture, and people. The foreign culture and the unknown people there confuse her. She attempts to be part of some mainstream, but her attempt to locate herself fails and she becomes a dislocated and displaced woman:

I survived in New York City. I could not breathe but I survived. I could not scream but I survived. I could not eat but I survived. I could not tell anyone who I was and where I came from and what happened in between. An educated woman with nothing to do except go mad...but I survived. . .but none of you knew how I did it. (395)

The common thread of Bindia's failure is the trauma of the cultural alienation and her hopeless effort to establish her belonging, which is evident in her situation. Such situation of alienation and frustration results from rootlessness and dislocation. When her attempt to be assimilated with new culture is thwarted, she is in confusion, frustration, and dislocation that further foster her in the sense of alienation because of the lack of specific location to posit her. America has become the capital of world since people from different culture come to live there that creates problem in identifying one another. This is the true potential dislocation individuals like Bindia, who always become stranger in the new land. She is facing the same problem. Being an educated woman, she can do nothing, except experiencing the American ways. She becomes more alienated in the world where she thought she would embrace so perfectly. She was never happy there as she says, "I am so totally unhappy there. . ." (388). Since she is away from her homeland she gets confused in day and night and the passing of the time she never could go through her studies and pass her medical exams. She on times forces herself to do but she instead feels like going mad. She

cannot take turns in the right way. She feels lost; she cannot cooperate with people and is totally alone in the mass. Her despair and frustration are revealed in the following lines:

Too many lights, too many avenues. I wanted to follow a straight path and could not handle the turns. I got lost somehow. I have a personal weakness. In my heart of hearts, I wanted to destroy myself. People over there were different but they wanted me to be part of them. I kept feeling too small...too little...like nobody. I did not know better. Lights kept blinking in my eyes. I kept missing home. My heart kept shrinking with some kind of unknown fear of losing something. Not belonging anywhere. My heart was not there. (390)

Here, Bindia develops alienation who has been culturally displaced, and finds herself among the people and culture that she does not belong to and cannot collaborate with. So, she feels alienated and dislocated with the feeling of fear and anxiety. She notices a tramp that she belongs to nowhere. She bears in mind herself as an exilic vagrant in the strange land where the sense of insecurity surrounds her. She is from a small country Pakistan and moves to America a huge country where she finds different people, different cultures, roads full of vehicles, huge market, many streets and she cannot recognize her path, she feels lost, alone and horrified. She misses her home, remembers her family, and she is haunted by the images of her homeland. She is living there in America but her heart is in her homeland and with her near ones. As defined in Oxford Talking Dictionary, "It is the result of transportation from one country to another by slavery or imprisonment, by invasion or settlement, a consequent of willing or unwilling movement from a known to unknown location." Alienation is the result of being displaced from the root culture and it demonstrates

the very complex interaction of language, history, and environment in the experience of dislocated ones and the importance of space and location in the process of identity formation. Regarding this Ashcroft says, “Many post colonial texts acknowledge the psychological and personal dislocation that results from the cultural denigration” (key 75). Alienation thus, not only involves slavery but also includes the psychological and personal dislocation that results from the cultural change. One feels dislocated and alienated in new socio-cultural milieu. Ashcroft, further says, “Displacement demonstrates the very complex interaction of language, history and environment” (reader 391). That is to say, if one is devoid of his language, history and environment he or she is displaced and the sense of displacement of the lack to ‘fit’ between language, culture and place, creates alienation. It is the sense of dislocation from historical homeland. Here, Bindia is dislocated in America and therefore a sense of alienation haunts her all through the course she takes in her circumstances. According to the definition of *Your Dictionary*:

The feeling of alienation is the state of a person who has disengaged themselves or have been alienated from the attentions from a person, place or thing they once enjoyed. It is most often associated with minorities, the poor, the unemployed and other groups who have limited power to bring about changes in society.

That is, alienation is a powerful feeling of isolation and loneliness and stems from a variety of causes. It may occur in response to certain events or situations in society or in one’s personal life. Leaving home for the first time, shifting to foreign land, living in the culture feeling inappropriate can be the strong reason for experiencing alienation. Depending on this play, females are mostly shown to be alienated from their society, family, and foreign land too. It is because women have no value in the

society their voice is not heard and when for the freedom when Bindia moves to New York that culture is far more different from her that she could not just hold on.

Culture has become the main issue of the female character's alienation in the play because the society and people there are associated with culture and that culture is not made for the sake of female. Bindia's story is related to this when Bindia moves to America it is difficult for her to live there she misses her land and wants to get back but she cannot because of the fear of society that would be in opposition to her activity. The extract clarifies her trauma of being abandoned from what she wants to do:

I was stronger than Deedi. I... left...but wasn't strong enough to survive in another jungle. In a massive jungle of loneliness, of poverty, of disillusionment, with the shame...with the shame of leaving my own...with the shame of not- returning, with the shame of abandonment, with the shame of being abandoned...with the shame of being dark...I was not strong enough. (386)

Bindia is against the social norms of Pakistani Muslim society that always expects female to be under men's domination. She feels confined from her ideas thoughts desires of living so she intends to go abroad for her better future. She is strong enough to leave her land for her good sake. Finally, she does it. But when she leaves it is not as easy and simple as she thought. She is more depressed there, the new place, new culture and many people from different places. She cannot mingle herself with the crowd. She is very alone in the big mass of people. She is frustrated; she has no one to cope with. She wants to return but the shame of being ridiculed among people and being abandoned from society she cannot return. Once she leaves ignoring the society and when she returns being failure what respect she will have after returning. She

achieves nothing there; she has no respectable profession, she leaves home, loving ones and is isolated being alone there. She never establishes herself in America. Her family members always try to call back her in her homeland when she fails there but the more she is pressured to be back the more she feels low as she says, “I never established myself in America. And all the pressure from back home...the pull...“come home”...“come back.” The more I suffered there, the less I wanted to come back...” (388). The call from her home always makes her frightened. Her hopes are all shattered and she is too weak; the strength in her when leaving is lost forever. Finally, she feels dislocated, isolated, and alienated, that is created from her cultural displacement, poverty, failure, unemployment and the uncompleted dreams. Her religion has made her weak; the culture in her own society has made her weak that she decides to leave. She wants to get rid of the social construction. She moves from one country to another because she feels weak there and so she leaves her own homeland to break the taboo:

Even before I left I felt weak. But I left...from one brilliant country to another...from one brilliant job to another...from one brilliant nervous breakdown to another...I crossed the ocean...I wanted to cut the cord...the cord...stretched, and stretched across the Atlantic like a strong nylon that never breaks...distance was so long...it stretched...and stretched...soon it will get tangled...soon it will suffocate me. (386)

Bindia in this play is a revolutionary character, she tries to break the unwanted rigid norms, and values made for women but that norms are not suitable for women to live accepting them. She is a female of this modern society and wants to live her life in modern ways. She wants her freedom, and her own way of living. But her society

doesn't allow her to fulfill her wish. Being a Muslim woman, she should follow the Islamic value and live according to the norms. Though she tries to revolt, her voice is not heard as she is a female, she has no power to change, and she is not capable of it. Here, Kalekin Fishman's lines are worth to deal with her situation, as he says, "A person suffers from alienation in the form of powerlessness when she is conscious of the gap between what she would like to do and what she feels capable of doing" (1996:97). Here, due to her alienation she has become estranged to herself in the quest to stay alive, where she has lost her true existence in the struggle for her subsistence. Therefore, she feels alienated in her own country due to her own customs and finally decides to leave her country to another to cut the strain. But there too she missed the right track of her life. She cannot diminish the frustration instead her problems are stretched. Whenever she tries to eliminate her disillusionment, it stretches so long that she feels too weak day by day. She feels as if she is living in an exiled land. She never succeeds, and her all aspirations turn out to be shattered and she feels like she has no space anywhere as she remarks, "I feel as if I have no right to take any space anywhere. . ." (387). She has the loss of her freedom, culture, people, and geography. She has no freedom in her own country and now in New York too she feels suffocated. She is so completely lost and is sick of being deserted from all the sides. Her situation resembles to what Pakistani sociologist Farida Shaheed says:

Despite the wide diversity of the Muslim world, the cultural articulation of patriarchy (through structures, social mores, laws and political power) is increasingly justified by reference to Islam and Islamic doctrine" (Shaheed 1995:79).

Social and cultural beliefs play such an important role in bringing about or averting a feeling of alienation. In many cases, place does not become an issue of the female

alienation but it is because of the society's cultural discourse created by patriarchy. It is when an individual is estranged from the traditional community or made to feel different by others in general. The alienation of a woman is a key issue that is created from the perspective of gender issue. The effect of alienation in their lives takes them even to their collapse. We can use the following extract spoken by Roona for Deedi as an example:

Victims of traditions like Deedi, our forgotten sister...who is never a part of this loving family anymore. It is a sin to love ourselves in our beloved society but when one destroys oneself by its demands and taboos-they are the first ones to blame you for your own self destruction like they have been blaming her for so long that she finally let the exhaustion set in the willingness to let anything be done to her. (386)

The human component of the culture has become the issue of alien to man. It is related with the problems caused by traditional people on the one hand and the breakdown of the tradition on the other. Culture is the process through which man is created capable of being. Culture is attached with the human being. But culture is constructed by the males of patriarchal society where male have high status and females are have low status. Males have all boundless rights but females have limited ones. Women are always taught the concept of male superiority and are conditioned to cooperate in their subordination. So, women are powerless because of this unequal gender relationship. Here, Deedi has married to a man on her own choice and resists patriarchy by breaking the tradition.

III. Issue of Female Alienation and their Resistance to Patriarchy

Bina Sharif's play *My Ancestor's House* protests the patriarchal domination. Her portrayal of female characters in the play are stereotypical. She has depicted female characters in various hierarchal categories, as householder, submissive and rebellious and how they are failed when they try to go against the so-called mores and feel alienated in their lives. Her play is a broad political movement especially rigid against Islamic religion and its norms. She often raises such issue as women domination, resistance, religious fundamentalism, and female alienation. This patriarchal society attributes women as negative. Society ignores women's desires and voice.

Different Muslim women characters seek to subvert patriarchy in order to attain freedom and happiness in life. Patriarchy manipulates the knowledge to believe that women are unable to know and do anything that men would do. The dominant power and discourses never provides Muslim women an access to opportunities. Some women who get privilege to exercise their minds and innate qualities of critical thinking, they resist the domination and marginalization. In the play, Bindia is in somewhat privileged position and she has realized the domination imposed upon women. So, she resists and liberates herself though she experiences her separation from her culture. She abandons her own culture and cultural background and moves to New York, a new place and new culture but she cannot find own position and can't accept the culture, so she is culturally alienated.

Sharif realizes the undermining of female potentialities by males, and therefore attempts to subvert patriarchal gender bias, that is women are unable to speak for themselves and represent their sex so that somebody else has to represents these mute creatures. But the author has made it quite visible and males are most of the time mistaken about the potentiality of the females. Bindia is a protagonist, who as

rebel fights against the unwanted rigid norms and values of the Muslim society. She crosses the boundary of conservative norms and values. She goes abroad for her freedom and further studies. She challenges the discriminating practices of the Muslim society. She is not a dreamer she is a practical person. She gets married to an American man. She is always in the thought that unity among females is essential for their empowerment. She breaks the walls of restrictions imposed upon her and liberates herself from that extreme subordination from the conservative society.

Sharif explores the lives of woman in different places, their social status, and religion in order to study heterogeneity of their problems and various types of discriminations imposed upon them. Females' marrying on their own choice with a man from another country is restricted in Muslim society but Deedi marries on her own choice and Bindia marries with a man from foreign country. Both of their marriage is not accepted in the society. Muslim girl is expected to hide herself and assist in household activities from her early childhood. Parents and guardians teach her how to behave with her husband and teach how to make her family members happy in order to make her place safe in her husband's house. The play depicts the restricted women's psyche. Roona is worried for her own existence. She is an educated female, having good job but she has no right and space in her society and in her own house. Though she knows her self-existence she can do nothing, she is helpless. She is a female so her position is stereotyped to serve and satisfy the male members in the society.

Culture is the source of identity that gives meaning to individuals, shapes human behavior and it is a whole way of life of a social group. It provides a home for people. And when someone feels confined in their own culture and try to change it from its traditional viewpoint or be placed in another new culture they may face

cultural shock and the result may be alienation. Alienation is the state of meaninglessness, powerlessness, and self-estrangement. The concept of alienation is theoretically powerful because it facilitates the description of the degradation of human life without allowing the assumption that this degradation is natural or inevitable. Females in this play have become the victims of tradition and feel alienated because in their society the ways of living are conventional. Their behavior is traditional, spontaneous, uncritical, and personal; there is no legislation or habit of experiment and reflection for intellectual ends. The sacred prevail over the secular. According to the tradition, females are degraded but the females want their own space in the society. But the patriarchy never allows them so the restriction in their freedom has made them alienated. They seek for their identity but do not find it and also are unable to establish themselves. They feel like prisoners in their own land.

The second point of alienation is that it is related to displacement, dislocation, and exile. It involves the idea of Bindia's separation and distancing herself from her cultural ethnic origin. Society does not give females any space and so devaluing the so-called tradition Bindia moves to foreign land and it brings her to a different place and culture and thereby she is the victim of cultural alienation. Bindia in her land feels dislocated and leaves her native place but the different culture has created psychological alienation in her. She feels insecure among the strangers and she is disappointed humiliated and alienated. The three female character's resistance against patriarchal domination shows that women cannot get liberation until and unless they are aware of domination and empower themselves to resist it. The struggle becomes more complicated when they have to negotiate with patriarchal oppression simultaneously.

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