

## I. Introduction

### *Girls of Riyadh* and Islamic Feminism

The novel that is analyzed for the study is *Girls of Riyadh* (2007) by a Saudi Arabian writer Rajaa Alsanea. *Girls of Riyadh* depicts the domination of women through the means of divorce which is prevailed in Saudi Arabian society. Moreover Alsanea has knowingly chosen the college aged girls as her character to show the real picture of divorce.

Rajaa Alsanea is a Saudi writer. *Girls of Riyadh* was first published in Arabic in 2005 and translated in English in 2007. The book was long listed for the Dublin Literary Award in 2009. Rajaa Alsanea was born in 1981 in Saudi Arabia. She received her bachelor's degree in Dentistry from King Saud University in 2005. She is a daughter of a family of physician. Her parents restricted her reading literature because they thought that literature might hamper her study. But due to her keen interest in literature, she made herself a good writer. *Girls of Riyadh* is her first novel. Alsanea is currently living in Chicago, where she is pursuing a degree in endodontic. She intends to return to Saudi Arabia after obtaining her degree. Originally released in Arabic in 2005, *Girls of Riyadh* was immediately banned in Saudi Arabia due to controversial and inflammatory content.

Showing the problem of morality in marriage in Saudi Arabia, the novel *Girls of Riyadh* deals with the subject of divorce and loss of faith. The novel, *Girls of Riyadh* depicts the marriage of heroine Gamrah that ends tragically after getting divorce. Likewise Sadeem's fiancé also leaves her after having physical relationship.

The novel begins with the marriage ceremony of Gamrah with Rashid, who begins to study for a PhD. Rashid was chosen by Gamrah's family for her life partner. After marriage, both of them go to Chicago where Rashid starts his PhD course.

Rashid as a husband does not care Gamrah. He is always indifferent towards her. His carelessness heightens day by day. He goes out in the early morning and returns evening lately. Even in the holiday, he spends all the day either by watching movies or sleeping whole day. He never thinks about Gamrah's feelings and emotions. He also forces her to take birth control pill in spite of Gamrah's interest to have a child. Gamrah becomes so worried about his behavior. But later she finds out that her husband has illicit relationship with a Japanese woman, Kari. Due to this relationship, he does not care her. After the recovery of Rashid's extra-marital relationship, she tries to stop Rashid but he becomes angry with her. When all things become clear to Gamrah, in the hope of love from Rashid she stops to take birth control pills because her mother says to have a baby helps to close both husband and wife but it goes on vain. When Rashid knows about her pregnancy he slaps and sends her Riyadh, her father's house with a divorce paper. After that he never tries to meet Gamrah and his son, Saleh.

Another main character of the novel is Sadeem who has studied business management. She is brought up by her father after the death of her mother when Sadeem was a baby of three years old. Sadeem and her father meet Waleed Al-Shari in her house who is the chosen suitor for Sadeem by her father. In their first meeting they exchange some feelings. After that Waleed requests Sadeem's father to give permission to phone Sadeem because he could talk with her and able to know about each other. Sadeem's father agrees with him and gives him Sadeem mobile number. In that day Waleed calls Sadeem late night. After that Waleed calls her dozens of times a day. Both of them become too much crazy to meet, to see and to talk to each other. Waleed and Sadeem sign the marriage contract in a small ceremony. After the marriage contract, Waleed's visit to Sadeem grows more and more. Waleed starts to

take her out for dinner in a fancy restaurant and brings foods or sweets that Sadeem loves. One evening, she invites him without informing her father, who was out camping with his friends in the desert. At that time, they spend night together. There is no barrier between them. As usual, Waleed leaves the house after the dawn. After that night, Waleed never tries to call and meet Sadeem. Sadeem waits for his phone call till three days but he does not call her. When she tries to call him, his mobile is always turn off and the private line in his room is always busy. After that, Firas is another person who comes in the life of Sadeem but later he also betrays her and to marry another girl. Furthermore Firas offers her to make relationship secretly but Sadeem against with him. Later on Sadeem marries with her cousin, Tariq.

Michelle is another female character in the novel, who is also dominated in the patriarchal Saudi society. She is born from an American mother and a Saudi father. She has arrived Riyadh first time when she was in school. Michelle meets Faisal first time in the big shopping mall in Al-Olayya Street. At that time he offers her to accompany him in her group while entering into mall because of the rule of the Saudi society, to prevent male entering into the public place while female are inside. Before leaving them in mall, Faisal gives two five hundred riyal notes to her after writing his mobile number in one and his full name on the other. After the first meeting in the shopping mall, they start to meet regularly. They fall in love in each other. They agree to marry but Faisal mother does not accept this marriage because she is born from an American mother. So that Faisal also gives up his desire to marry Michelle.

Um Nuwayyir is a Kuwaiti woman, a divorcee, who works for the government as a school inspector of mathematic curricula. Her Saudi husband divorced her after fifteen years of marriage and to get married another woman. She has a child, son named Nuri. She is neighbor of Sadeem. Sadeem respects and loves her as a mother.

Sadeem often visits and arranges to meet her friends at Um Nuwayyir's house. She is too much kind and lovely women. She helps them in every difficult situation. So that girls are feeling easy and comfortable in her house. They share every feeling there freely. So they often visit her.

Lamees, another female character in the novel, is only one lady who success in her study as well as love and marriage. But she is lost her first love with Ali because they are caught by police when they are in a café. She is also fortune teller of her group. Later on she is fall in love with Nizar when they both are engaged in hospital. They love each other very passionately so that they marry and live happily.

As a partial requirement for earning MA degree, in English, I have chosen Rajaa Alsanea's novel *Girls of Riyadh*. It deals with the issue of divorce where husband wants to leave his wife legally. So that, it is appropriate to analyze this novel from the feminist point of view. If a husband leaves his wife without any fault it is not justice but it is the ego of man being male. It is true that even if wife is highly educated she has to stay under the husband to maintain her marital life. Furthermore, a wife can praise her husband's progress but a husband hardly praises a wife's progress because it is the ego of male. If a wife wants to work like a husband then either she has to live separately or has to divorce her husband. It is the real picture of patriarchal society. Patriarchy gives only private sphere to women but both private and public sphere to men.

The tools of my methodology in this thesis are:

- a. Documentary analysis of novel *Girls of Riyadh* by Rajaa Alsanea and some other relevant novels including previous MA thesis
- b. Journals and articles etc.

In other words, the thesis uses qualitative analysis through the use of feminism in the context of domination and divorce as Alsanea's novel deals with it. Feminism is applied, as from the beginning women are suppressed and oppressed from the freedom of personal experience. Feminists were struggling against patriarchal society. In the past, patriarchy had made its own assumption where male made female position secondary. Women have no right to raise their voice against male as well as no right in the matter of love, marriage and property. There is always man before woman. She is not free to identify herself without a male. Male is always the guardian to female. Within this context, T.A Nafjan writes:

Every Saudi woman has a male guardian. At birth, the guardianship is given to her father and then upon marriage to her husband. If a woman is a widow, her guardianship is given to her son-meaning that she would need her own son's permission for the majority of her interactions with the government, including the right to travel abroad.

(10)

I am using Islamic feminism for this research. Islamic feminism is a form of feminism concern with the role of women in Islam. It aims for the full equality of all Muslim, regardless of gender, in public and private life. Islamic feminists advocate women's rights, gender equality, and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework. Although rooted in Islam, the movement's pioneers have also utilized secular, western, or otherwise non-Muslim feminist discourses, and have recognized the role of Islamic feminism as part of an integrated global feminist movement.

Quasim Amin is an early advocate of women's rights in Islamic society. He is also the author of the book "*Women's Liberation*" (1899), is often described as the father of the Egyptian feminist movement. Isabel Coleman is one of the Islamic

feminist, as she had raised her voice in support of women's emancipation as well as women's education. She advocates women's rights in public sphere. Likewise SheebaAslamFehmi is one of India's Islamic feminist writer and one of the Indian Muslim woman scholar who writes on Islam. She is written extensively on gender-just understanding of Islam, articulating equality for Muslim women using Quranic arguments. Margot Badran defines Islamic feminism, in the book "*Feminism in Islam Secular and Religious Convergences*," "Islamic Feminism insists on full equality of women and men across the public-private spectrum. Secular feminist historically accept the idea of equality in the public sphere and the notion of complementarianism in the private sphere. Islamic feminist argues that women may be heads of state, leaders of congregational prayer, judges, and muftis" (250).

The significance of this research in terms of the novel, *Girls of Riyadh*, by RajaaAlsanea, she uses domination of women by relating with divorce as well as the plight of women, mistreatment of women and how they are treated as inferior persons. By linking divorce with the Saudi Arab, Alsanea wants the equality between male and female and autonomy in Saudi Arab in coming days.

Various critics analyze the novel from different points of views. Isam M Shihada, an associate professor of English Literature & Gender Studies, criticizes novel in title *Breaking Silence in RajaaAlsanea's Girls of Riyadh*. Isam argues:

Alsanea's *Girls of Riyadh* can be seen as awakening call for enhancing and improving women's rights in Saudi Arabia and visionary in its scope in the light of the Arab spring which is raging through the Arabic world. RajaaAlsanea's *Girls of Riyadh* is not only an endeavor to shatter stereotypes perceived about Saudi women living in Saudi Arabia but also sheds light on the status of Saudi women and their

struggles to negotiate their survival in a patriarchal oppressive society still ruled by tribal traditions, customs and misuse of religion. (59)

The heroines, Gamrah and Sadeem, are slapped with rejection, desertion and finally divorced. Within this context American Bedu comments on the high rate of divorce in Saudi Arabia:

When a couple marries in Saudi it is generally a joining of families. Honor and face of a family (or tribe) may be at stake when a couple divorce. There is always a cost to the Saudi women who becomes a divorcee. She may lose regular access to any children. She must have a male *mahrem* (male guardian) who is responsible for her and her actions. If she is perceived as responsible for a divorce from an honorable and respectful man she may become ostracized from her own family and society. (32)

Nawal EI Saadwi also comments the image of the divorce which terrifies the women of Saudi Arabian society. For EI Saadwi “the great majority of Arab women ...are still terrorized by the mere word, divorce which means hunger, no home and the unrelenting remarks of those around them” (91).

In review article “*Girls of Riyadh: A New Technology Writing or Chick Lit Defiance Girls of Riyadh*” Moneera Al-Ghadeer argues that *Girls of Riyadh* inaugurates a chick lit narrative as a new wave of writing along with a few links to cyber fiction. Al-Ghadeer writes:

*Girls of Riyadh* portrays a rite-of-passage narrative about four twenty something, well-off girls, Sadeem, Gamrah, Lamees and Michelle, focusing on their concerns while they wrestle with different restrictions at home and outside. The narrative depicts their courtship, marriage,

divorce, shopping, and parting mostly set in Riyadh but it also tracks the young women's travels to different European and American metropolises, as we shall see. Some of these characters are superficial; some are defiant and critical of gender role in Saudi Arabia and social deceit. The text describes the themes of love-gone-wrong and highlights troubled social dynamics between men and women that eventually create dysfunctional relationships and psychic disturbances. (299)

Focusing on the women difficulties in the Saudi Arabia which is shown in the novel, Joel Gwynne writes an article, *the Lighter that Fuels a Blaze of Change: Agency and (Cyber) Spatial (Dis) Embodiment in Girls of Riyadh* ". In this article he writes:

As a novel that portrays the difficulties that Saudi women confront when attempting to become active agents in public and private life, Rajaa Alsanea's *Girls of Riyadh* is a valuable text for exploring question surrounding women's movement within both physical and virtual space. (46)

The thesis is organized around three chapters. The first chapter deals about the introduction of the whole thesis. In addition, in this chapter I have tried to mention the methodology. This chapter discusses the Islamic feminism as the theoretical tool or methodology in which it mentions the various theorists' ideas. Similarly second chapter deals with an analysis of Alsanea's novel *Girls of Riyadh*, where the events and experiences are linked by using the tool to meet the objective of the research paper. At last, the last chapter is conclusion which ultimately sums up above mentioned chapters and gives idea on how women can retain equality and emancipation in Saudi Arabian society.



## II. Textual Analysis

### Women, Domination and Divorce

This section tries to describe the novel *Girls of Riyadh* from the feminist perspective. While analyzing the novel, the main focus is on a female who is dominated by a husband. Although it is an analysis but this novel represents a women are victimized by a divorce in a Saudi Arabian society, during the 21th century.

Rashid's superiority to Gamrah in the context of divorce is more significant when a husband who is supposed to love and protect his wife, deserted her. For a woman to be deserted by a man, whom she trusts, became a shattering experience. Rashid's divorce symbolize the male chauvinism to destroy Gamrah's confidence in her powers, to lesson her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and hopeless life.

Saudi Arabia is one of the Muslim countries where Sharia (Islamic law) is dominant, which refers to Muslim family law (MPL) or Muslim personal law. MPL include the thorny issues such as polygamy, divorce, custody of children, maintenance and marital property where male assume the position of the head. Islamic feminist are objected to the MPL legislation in many countries, arguing that these pieces of legislation dominate women. Within the same idea, Ziba-Mir Hosseini writes:

It contend that patriarchal interpretations of the sharia can and must be challenged at the level of *fisq*, which is nothing more than human understanding of the divine will, that is, what we are able to understand of the sharia in this world at the legal level. In other words, sharia is the transcendental ideal that embodied the justice of Islam and the spirit of the Koranic revelations. This transcendental ideal, which condemns all relations of exploitation and domination, underpins

Muslim women's quest and the critique of patriarchal constructions of gender relations, which are to be found not only in the vast corpus of jurisprudential text but in the positive laws that are claimed to be rooted in the sacred texts. (633)

In the Muslim country, people discriminate girls and boys through the childhood. There is restriction for girls to go outside and play but the boys are free to do everything which they like. There is always restriction up on the girls. The text explains, "You barely walk, you barely talk, you barely smile, you barely dance, be mature and wise, you always think before you act, you measure your words carefully before you speak and you do not behave like a child"(7).

Many Islamic feminist support bans on the hijab, for various reasons. They think the veil is the visible symbol of the subjugation of women. Like hijab, abaya (an abaya is a long, loose black robe worn on top of clothes whenever a woman is outdoors) is also the symbol of the domination of women which is wear by the women in the novel. Through the "abaya" Alsanea tries to show the restriction of female. In the marriage ceremony of Gamrah and Rashid, all the girl friends –Sadeem, Michelle, Lamees and Tamadur – are dancing on the dais, and suddenly the men came through the door. They go straight on the dais where the bride is seated. All the girls become furious because they are without abaya. Abaya is compulsory for women to wear in Saudi society when they are in front of males. The text describes:

When the groom and his companions were just steps away, Lamees yanked up the corner of the tablecloth to cover her cleavage. Her sister Tamadur used a shawl that matched her dress to cover her hair and open back, while Sadeem whipped her embroidered abaya and silky veil, enveloping her body and the lower half of her face. (9)

According to Simone de Beauvoir, “For girls, marriage is the only means of integration in the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage. This is why mothers have always eagerly sought to arrange marriages for them” (427). Similarly, Gamrah marriage is fixed with Rashid after the shoufa, it is an act of seeing the possible bride and groom to each other and give their final decision in the presence of their family. After the marriage, Gamrah leaves the ballroom with her new husband to go to the hotel where they would spend the night before heading off for a honeymoon in Italy. In her room at the Hotel Giorgione in Venice, Gamrah sit on the edge of the bed. She rubs her thighs, legs, and feet with whitening lotion of glycerin and lemon that is made by her mother. But Rashid does not try to touch her as well as talk with her. When she returns from the bathroom she finds him asleep. It refers to the negligence and unwillingness of Rashid towards Gamrah from the beginning of marriage day. The text explains, “...on her wedding night she came out of bathroom to find him ...asleep”(12). Rashid never thinks Gamrah as his life partner. In the reality, wife is such a person who should be the nearest person for the husband. He can share every despair and happiness with her. But for Rashid, there is no change in his life because of arrival of wife. He takes her as a paltry thing which is not valuable for him.

Gamrah’s mother believes in the theory “woman is to man as butter is to sun” (13) but this theory is not matched in the matter of Gamrah, “it has been seven night and her husband hadn’t touched her”(12). Um Gamrah doesnot teach her daughter about how to attract husband and what is the relationship between husband and wife. Gamrah dreams much more caresses, love, tenderness and emotion from a husband that excited her heart when she reads romance novels and watches romantic movies. But now, she faces a husband who has not any attraction towards her.

Gamrah becomes too much worried about her husband's behavior. Gamrah thinks shyness nature of Rashid keeps him away from her. Therefore, to make him excited towards her, she makes a plan. Her activities are explained in the text as:

After dinner in the elegant hotel restaurant, Gamrah had made an irrevocable decision that this would be her true wedding night, something for which she had waited too long. As long as her husband was so bashful, she would have to help him out, smooth the way for him [...]. They went up to their room and she began to flirt with him shyly. After a few moments of innocent seduction, he took things into his own hands. She gave herself up to it despite the enormous confusion and anxiety she felt. She closed her eyes, anticipating what was about to happen. And then she surprised her with an act that was never on her list of sexual expectations. Her response, which was shocking to both of them, was to slap him hard on the face then and there! Their eyes met in a stunned moment. Her eyes were filled with fear and bewilderment, while his were full of an anger the likes of which she had never seen. He moved away from her quickly, dressed hurriedly and left the room amid her tears and apologies. (29)

When the honeymoon is over, Gamrah and Rashid go to Chicago where Rashid is working for his PhD in engineering. From the moment of their arrival in Chicago, Rashid is completely immersed in the university and his research. He leaves apartment at seven o'clock in morning and returns sometimes as late as ten in the evening. When Gamrah would ask him why he was always so late getting home, "he simply inform her that he was carrying out research on the Internet using the easy-access computers in the university library" (84). He does not want to spend a moment

with her wife. Even on the weekends, he indulges in many non sense activities which helps him to live far from Gamrah. His weekend activities are:

On the weekends, he seemed determined to occupy himself with anything he could find to take him away from her; he would sit for hours staring at the computer or watching TV. He often fell asleep on the sofa while watching a boring baseball game or the news on CNN. If he didn't go into their bedroom to sleep, he kept on the long white underwear that Saudi men always put on underneath their thobes - we call them 'sunni underpants' – and T-shirt. He would collapse onto the bed as if he were a very old man depleted all of his energy, not a brand-new husband. (28)

Rashid does not treat Gamrah as his wife. He always wants to flee from the all responsibilities towards her wife. But poor Gamrah always loves and cares him. Furthermore, she tries to find out good things among the bad in Rashid and announces herself “a lot luckier than many women of her age and circumstances” (82). Indeed, she feels satisfied with Rashid because she wants to sustain the marital relationship with him. She knows that to break in relation with Rashid brings many difficulties in her life. She wants to long lasting relationship with Rashid, even though she doesn't find any good thing in him. She is ready to live with him only because deserted women are taken as a stigma in the Saudi society. So that she tries to see good thing in him. “Once she had lived with Rashid for a while, Gamrah begins to see his good side revealed, even though this goodness never emerged openly in his dealing with her” (82). She does not know why she loves her husband due to his negligence which is explained in the text:

Although her husband was rough and rude to her, Gamrah loved him. She even devoted to him, in spite of everything, for her he was the first man she had ever spent time outside of the company of her brothers, father and uncles. He was the first man who had come forward to ask for her hand, and by doing so he had made her feel as though there were someone in this world who knew - maybe even appreciated – that she was alive. Gamrah did not know if she had come to love Rashid because he was worthy of being loved, or if she simply felt it was her duty as a wife to love him. (57)

Gamrah tries to do everything to win his heart but all the effort of her goes into vain. She always suffers from Rashid's ice coldness towards her. Rashid's mistreatment continues towards her. He does not like wearing hijab by Gamrah. Muslim women wear loose garments to conceal their body. They normally wear hijab for social, moral and religious reasons. Women sometimes wear the hijab to please their family, husbands and society also. In the case of Gamrah, Rashid forces her to give up hijab which is the source of irritation and embarrassment to him because they both live in USA, a different western culture where women do not wear hijab. Rashid says, "Why don't you wear ordinary clothes like the women here? It's as if you are trying to embarrass me in front of my friends with the things you wear! And then you wonder why I don't take you out me"(54)! But while Gamrah wants to please him by taking off her coat and hijab at the theatre in the hope of winning his heart, he thinks she looks very ugly and asks her to wear hijab again to hide her ugliness. "He studies her with a sidelong stare, and after just a few seconds, he said, 'Taking them off isn't making you look any better. So just put them on again'" (55).

She understands that Rashid's behavior towards her is not just a matter of feeling shy or embarrassment with the wife who is suddenly arrived in his life. It is the sign of male superiority. "The way Rashid treated her was not a whole lot different from the way her father treated her mother"(56). She is dominated by Rashid as her sisters also suffer in the hand of their husbands. But she does not want to live patiently under her husband. Ziba Mir-Hosseniin her "*Muslim Women's Quest forEquqlity*" says, "only the elite and minority of highly educated women have the luxury of choice, of rejecting or challenging these beliefs and laws" (645). Unlike her mother and sisters, Gamrah tries to challenge with Rashid and his domination. Um Gamrah and her sisters, Hessah andNaflah, are silent and dominant, but Gamrah does not. She tries to raise her voice. But this is not acceptable for Rashid. He wishesGamrah to be silent and dominant.

In spite of good education, Gamrah is unemployed. She is not utilized her education. It is not only in the case of Saudi Arabia, but also in the many countries of the world, women ought to give value for house work rather than office work. Husband wishes for full time mothers and wives. A woman who wants utilize there are only the part times jobs, lower paid and inferior position in option. Women obsess with doing their domestic duty in spite of physical exhaustion but they feel guilty when they ask help from their husband. But a husband never encourages his wife to do other things rather than household activities. He only wants a perfect wife in the matter of child caring, loving and totally devoted to himself. Many questions rise about the man's nature in the mind of Gamrah which are explained in the text:

Do men sense a threat to their authority when they begin to catch on that a woman is developing some skills in some area? she wondered.

Are men afraid of any moves towards independent action on the part of

their wives? And do they consider a woman reaching independence and working towards her own goals an illegal offence against the religious rights of leadership God bestowed up on men? And so Gamrah discover a crucial principle in dealing with men. A man must sense the strength of a woman and her independence and a woman must realize that her relationship with a man shouldn't just be built on needs: her need for his money, his share of domestic responsibilities, his support of her and her kids and her need to feel her own significance in the universe. (84)

Gamrah accepts to be a Rashid's "bread winner" though she has education but she ought to stay home even if she has a qualification for a job. Similarly Prasannatrata Gupta, an Indian writer shows the distinction between man and woman in her essay about the family life. She writes:

Male and female distinctions are natural; men are usually tall, well built, efficient, hard working and firm in determination. Among men, qualities such as, power of thinking, courage, determinations are quite prominent. Female nature, on the other hand had just the opposite. As their physique is delicate, their nature is also mild. Because of the lack of physical power they are unable to do hard work, and even a little mishap make them anxious. They possess relatively less courage thinking power and working ability. That is why women always require the help of men and are dependent on them. (21)

The men always keep women in dependence. Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, and her son protects her in old age: a woman is never fit for independence.



Gamrah is optimistic in her relation with Rashid. She is convinced that with time, Rashid comes to love her. She thinks in the very start their married life, he is always remote and even a little rough with her, but as time pass he will accept her. But Rashid never changes towards Gamrah. Once Gamrah visited Riyadh during the New Year. She spends nearly two months with her family, hoping that Rashid asks her to come back because “he had had enough of being alone. But he never did ask her to return” (57). But he feels relief without Gamrah. After that her feeling says her that “he was hoping she would stay in Riyadh and never come back” (57).

As time goes on, Gamrah's doubt increase about Rashid's nature. She feels agitation and insecure. Her heart says, “*My husband, whom I love, hates me. He wants to me throw me out*”(54). Her eyes fills with tears as thinking that “*can Rashid possibly be in love with someone else*”(57)?

Gamrah does not understand why Rashid is so annoyed. What is the source of the constant irritation and tension? In spite of her distress and misery, Gamrah is ready to do everything to make marital life stable. Furthermore, she tries to find out the cause of Rashid's behavior. For that she asks herself time and again: “So why would he marry me if he didn't want me” (55)? She even asks her mother whether she is heard anything from Rashid's family to suggest that he is forced to marry her. She does not find any answer but she is not in the favor of remaining silent. She watches Rashid critically in the hope of find any cause that is described in the text:

Gamrah kept cataloguing instances of Rashid's difficult personality and they began to grow and mass like a snowball rolling down a mountain, swelling to more and more gigantic proportions. Gamrah kept up her investigation, turning over in her mind every little detail, trying to unearth the real reason why he was hostile to her- even, it

seemed clear, repulsed by her. What, Gamrah puzzled, was the truth behind his contempt? What was it that had driven him, through all of these months, to positively insist that she take birth-control pills, even though she was dying to have baby with him? (56)

In the case of investigation, when she is going through some files containing in the screen in the computer, her eyes fall on a file which holds a great many photos of an Asian woman, a Japanese woman, Kari. In some photos they are side by side. In one photo they are draped across the sofa in this very apartment in which Gamrah is living. However, after the long time she is able to find answer to her question. That is Kari with whom Rashid has extra marital relationship and he becomes rude to her. But she does not talk with Rashid about his relation with Kari. More than she wants to collect all information between them. Rashid spends day by calling Kari while he is in the school. He goes out from apartment for two days in every month with his friends on some excursion at this time he goes to meet Kari. She does not know everything about Rashid and Kari but one thing she knows is that Rashid makes extra marital relationship with Kari. Knowing about this, she does not want to break up the relationship with Rashid so that she does not ask anything about Kari to Rashid. But she wants to avoid Kari from Rashid's life. Therefore, she is ready to fight with Kari to defense her marriage.

Gamrah comes up with Kari's phone number and address from Rashid's pocket diary. Gamrah calls Kari and asks to meet her. Kari becomes ready to meet Gamrah after two months later. In this period, Gamrah hardly controls her chasing emotions. She does not want Rashid sense any change in her before she makes her appointment with his lover because she is afraid that if he knows about this he may stop the meeting of her with Kari. She has uncontrolled anger but she does not show

any sign of it in front of him. She also thinks, Rashid may deceive Kari or Kari keeps relationship without knowing about Rashid's marital situation. But Kari is well known about Rashid as well as Gamrah's present situation.

It is true, where extreme domination and exploitation there is explosion also. According to Biblical Allusion of Adam and Eve, Satan destroyed the *Garden of Eden*, which was God's favorable creation because Satan was dominated by God. Like that Langston Hughes concluded his poem *Harlem* with the line: "*Or does it explode*" (365)? This line indicates, if there is more domination which is unaffordable after that there must be explosion. In the same manner, in the novel, *Rajaa Alsanea* depicts the same idea through the character Gamrah. Gamrah accepts all odd behavior of Rashid without any limitation. She does everything ordered by Rashid and she becomes the puppets in the hand of Rashid. But now she comes in to the stage of explosion or challenge. Her challenge with Rashid is explained as:

Gamrah stopped taking pills without consulting her mother, whose opinion she knew anyway. 'All you've got is children, my dear. Children are the only way to bind a man.' Gamrah did not want children to be the one bond between them- or, to put it plainly, the one thing that forced Rashid to stay with her, but he was forcing her into this- let him bear the consequences of his own deeds! (87)

A husband who should share his all happiness, despair and all things which are related to him but Rashid instead of doing this, he shares everything with his lover, Kari. In the meeting of Kari and Gamrah, Kari is too much bold and confident as if she is a wife of Rashid not a lover. "It was Kari who steered the conversation, beginning, and ending her words with firmness and confidence without any sign of confusion,...(90). Kari is too much bold because Rashid who supports as well as loves her. More than

that, Kari also gives a suggestion to Gamrah about what Rashid wants and how to come up to her level. She feels proud about Gamrah's visiting:

It pleases me, naturally, for you to see me, so that you can form an idea of what your husband loves. Rashid has suffered a lot, and you must work to improve yourself, from the inside and out, so that you can move up to the standard he wants and needs. So that you can come up to my level (90).

Gamrah does not expect an insult from Kari. She becomes too much angry and scolds her. But Gamrah's anger does not frighten her. In spite of that "Kari took out her mobile and called up Rashid while his wife watched" (90).

As a husband, Rashid should protect her wife. He must rescue her from other's humiliation and bad behavior or activities. Unlikely, Rashid also wants to humiliate his wife in front of his lover. In the reality, wife should have much more power than lover but in the case of Gamrah, Gamrah has no power as well as she is no more important for Rashid. He does not bear the insult of Kari but he does not care about Gamrah.

Rashid comes home after less than an hour after Gamrah meets with Kari. At that time, he is too much angry and forces her to go and apologize to Kari. More than that, he also blames her family who does not raise her properly because she does not know how to behave with other. For him Gamrah is nothing but Kari is everything. Rashid says:

You're going to apologize to Kari for what you did to her and for garbage you said to her. These stupid things you do aren't going to work with someone like me. Got that? If your family didn't know how to raise you, well, then I'll have to do it myself! (91)

Now Gamrah is not in the favor of remaining silent. She is ready to defense with Rashid. Gamrah said, “You’re not going to tell me what to do! I will never apologize to that Filipina! And for what? Which one of us is it who should apologize? Me, or you and her” (91)? After Gamrah’s reply Rashid’s anger becomes out of control. Man always wants woman remain in silent and silently does her own work rather than to give advice and to defense for right. If wife does not agree with him, he uses physical power to control her. Text describes:

Rashid grabbed her arm and yanked. ‘Look, lady! You’re the one who is going to apologizing. And after that you are getting on the first plane out of here and you are going back to your family and I don’t want to see your face her ever again. I’m not a man that a woman like you is going to order around!’ (91)

Gamrah’s anger does not decrease due to Rashid’s threat but in the ratio of increase. When the people have much more pain they do not fear about other pain. Like that, Gamrah has no sense of fear with Rashid. After the marriage, shesustains everything but now she does not accept any humiliation made by Rashid. She also blames him to cheat her with Kari. She said, “Yeah, right! So I’m the one who wasn’t raised properly! And what about you, mister? Cheating on me with that Asian housemaid” (91)! When the truth is revealed, to conceal it man raises his hand. Similarly, Rashid cannot accept such reality unclosed by Gamrah and slaps on her right cheek to make her stop. And he talks in the favor of Kari which is described in text:

That “maid” is as good as you, and she’s worth your whole family, too do you understand? At least her father didn’t come kissing up to my father so he could marry his to a man who he knew loved someone in America and had been living with her for seven years! This housemaid

loved me and stood next to me a place to live when I wasn't getting penny from home, when my family refused to let us get married and cut off my money for three years! She didn't run after me because of money and my family's reputation! The one you hate so much is more honest and more honorable than you are and more than your family is, much, much more! (92)

Gamrah is almost stopped after the painful slap of Rashid and his insult towards her and praise for Kari. She does not know what to do and what to say. She is not in the condition of thinks anything. 'She said, amid her tears, touching the spot on her cheek with one hand and putting the other on her belly, 'I'm pregnant'" (92). After hearing that Rashid's voice gets loud. Rashid becomes a mass of anger, his eyes glow like a pair of bright-red color. His voice booms out:

What? Pregnant? You are pregnant? How did that happen? Who gave you permission to get pregnant? You mean you're not taking the pills? Didn't we agree there would be no pregnancy until I finished my PhD and we go back to Saudi? You reckoned you could twist my arm with these filthy tricks! (92)

It is male dominated society, where woman needs permission from her husband for pregnancy but husbands can do everything which they want. Rashid blames Gamrah to make filthy tricks when she is pregnant. But he thinks himself as pure even if he keeps a woman outside even though he has a wife. At this point, he does not think he tricks his wife. When Rashid blames her making filthy tricks Gamrah's anger arouses once again. She says satirically:

Me? I'm the one with dirty tricks? Am I the one who wanted to keep an innocent wife dangling for two years, having her work for you as a

servant until you get your diploma, and then planning to through her out like trash? Was it me who married a good girl from a good family while I was playing around with a cheap whore? (93)

In reality, wifeshold be obedient to her husband, she should not do anything that might displease him, and should be faithful to his memory even after his death. Even though the husband has a bad character of seeking pleasure elsewhere she must be a faithful wife. If a wife shows disrespect to her husband then she will be deserted. Similarly, Rashid deserts Gamrah because of her disrespect over him.

After the quarrel between them, Rashid sends Gamrah her family in Riyadh with the threat of divorce but she does not think so. Likewise, her mother gives the name of 'A summer cloud' to Gamrah's quarrel with Rashid and his threaten to divorce. But it is totally different what is thought by Gamrah and her mother, the divorced papers are delivered to Gamrah's father two weeks after Gamrah lands in Riyadh. It appears as Rashid is waiting for the moment in which he can leave her or he can justifiably rid himself from the wife that is imposed on him by his family. Gamrah shocks after reading the lines of divorce paper and screams unknowingly, "Yummah! Yummah, Mama, he divorced me" (107)!

Caroline Norton, an upper-class socialite of Britain is discarded by her husband and she is not allowed to see her three sons. Norton's own view is described in the book called *Women's Rights: Search for identity* which is given below:

The natural position of woman is inferiority to man. Amen! That is a thing of God's appointing, not of man's devising. I believe it sincerely, as a part of my religion: and I accept it as a matter proved to the wild and ridiculous doctrine of equality. I will even hold that (as one coming under the gender rule that the wife must be inferior to the

husband)... I am Mr Norton's inferior. I am the clouded moon of that sun. Put me then (my ambition extends no further) - in the same position as all his other inferiors! In that of his housekeeper, whom he could not libel with immunity ... of an apprentice, whom he could not maltreat lawlessly...: of a scullion, whose wages he could not refuse ... put me under some law of protection. (11)

Similarly, Gamrah is Rashid's inferior. Since marriage Rashid never treats her as his life partner. He never loves and cares her as a protector or a husband of her. He always comments her each and everything. Moreover, he has not any emotional feelings for Gamrah. And he always searches for a point from which he can get relief from her.

After divorce, male can live with freedom. He does not fear about his future whereas Gamrah is always hunted by her unknown future. Rashid is free as a bachelor unlike that Gamrah gets a tag of widow. He gets a new life after divorce but Gamrah gets a pathetic life. In a patriarchal society, it is true that not only the poor and illiterate are neglected or dominated but their husbands also dominate even the rich and highly educated women. Likewise in general, even those women who earn and are economically independent have also to face humiliation in a male dominating society.

In a patriarchal society, only male has identity and prestige. Female has no place for to identify herself alone. She must occupy with male to identify herself. When she is related with a father, her identity is a daughter and if she with a husband, she is wife and if she is with a son, she is a mother. Therefore when Rashid deserts Gamrah, she begins to worry about her future identity. She does not know what to do but for Rashid, all the ways of life are opened after releasing himself from Gamrah.



After divorce, he is totally vanished from the text that refers to his freedom. The text describes Gamrah's unknown future:

Would she remain parked in her father's house like an old piece of furniture in the back storeroom? Would she return to the university to finish her studies? Would the university administration even allow that, now that she was a whole year behind her classmates? Or should she sign up for one of the courses offered by private institutes and women's associations to fill her free time and obtain some kind of certificate? (131)

In the Saudi Arabian society, divorced women are openly criticized. Divorced women are taken as ill reputation of the family. Therefore, Gamrah's family stops her going outside to prevent her from divorced situation. Her mother claims, "all eyes were fixed on her, waiting for a single misstep and prepared to spread the most lurid rumours about her"(133). Therefore narrator poses serious questions to the readers and wonders why divorced women are rejected and why divorced women are taken as a social stigma:

Is divorce a major crime committed by the woman only? Why does not our society harass the divorced man the way it crushes the divorced woman? I know that you readers are always ready to dismiss and make light of these naive questions of mine, but surely you can see that they are logical questions and they deserve some careful thought. We should defend Um Nuwayyir and Gamrah and other divorcess. Women like them don't deserve to be looked down on by society, which only condescends from time to time to throw them a few bones and expects

them to be happy with that meanwhile, divorced men go on to live fulfilling lives without any suffering or blame. (185)

To avoid such disgrace, Gamrah uncle, Abu Fahad, arranges Gamrah's meeting with Abu Musa'ed for the purpose of marriage. Abu Musa'ed gives divorce to his wife after ten years of marriage because of his infertility but he is looked for a younger wife who may bring children for him. Male thinks himself always superior even if he has weakness. He cannot accept his weakness because of male arrogant. Likewise Abu Musa'ed does not accept his weakness and searching a young girl who may bring children for him. Therefore, he directly expresses that he is not in the idea of accepting Gamrah's son with her. He says:

Now, as you know very well,' he started in talking to her uncle, 'I'm a Bedouin and a soldier, and I ain't interested in makin' clever little chitchat what you fancy city types. I heard your niece has a little boy from her first husband. So the fine point as I see it is, the boy stays here with his grandmother. ... I am not gonna bring up a kid who isn't my own; he is not welcome in my house. (205)

After hearing such arrogant and humiliation, Gamrah walks out of the room with anger at Abu Musa'ed's arrogance, her father's passivity, uncle's coldness and mother's helplessness. She resists herself being victimized twice at the altar of patriarchal traditions and customs. Her activities are explained:

She went on ranting about this shameless man and his small print, this man who demanded so brazenly that she give up her little boy for his sake- even though the man was clearly not going to produce any children himself! How could he possibly dare to take away her only son? How could he demand that she make such a conceited, self-

important way? She had heard about those Bedouin men and their difficult natures, but never in her life had she had the bad luck to encounter someone as offensive as Abu Musa'ed. (206)

After the resistance of Gamrah to marry with Abu Musa'ed of forty years old, her uncle becomes too much angry. He wants to throw Gamrah from house at any cost for that he finds Abu Musa'ed. Therefore, her uncle becomes too much angry and vomits his anger addressing her mother:

Your girl has no shame, Um Mohammed! She is spoiled. I say we go ahead and marry her to this man. There's nothing wrong with him, and praise to be God, the girl already has a son, that is, she isn't completely without children to fill her life. And we all know that leaving her here to sit around without a man to shield and protect her isn't a good thing. People always talking, and besides, we have other girls in the family that should not pay for what people say about your daughter. (206)

Gamrah's uncle wants rid of her by marrying her to an old infertile man, Abu Musa'ed. She is agitated after her uncle's behavior. She thinks, "he wants to dump me on that old defective junk of a man just so he can be rid of me and clear the way for good men to marry his own daughters"(207)? Gamrah resists herself by questioning at her mother:

Why? Why do I need a man to shield and protect me? Does your brother think I'm disgraced, or I cannot protect my own self? You people do not realize that I am a grown woman now and I have a son! My word should count and I should be listened to! But no! You think absolutely the opposite from how any reasonable family would think.

That's even worse than what you did to me in my engagement to Rashid! (207)

Here, Gamrah asks her mother legitimate question which deconstruct the oppressive, patriarchal mentality which look women as passive sexual objects. But, her mother has no answers to these questions because she is also victimized by patriarchal society. She is always dominated by male but Gamrah tries to raise her voice against male domination. However, Gamrah's story ends with a note of resistance and defiance. She refuses to be victimized in the patriarchy society. She tries to assert her own identity.

When we come to Sadeem, we find that her story is no less tragic than the story of Gamrah. She is raised by her father after her mother's death after her birth. Her despair is grew after her meeting with Waleed. Waleed is a person who comes to see her for the purpose of marriage. In the first meeting in the shoufa, Waleed is attracted towards her. After that he starts to call her:

Waleed called her dozens of times a day- he called the minute he woke up in the morning, before going to work, at work, after work and finally for long conversation before going to sleep that would stretch on sometimes until the sun was peeping over the horizon. He even woke her up in the middle of the night to have her listen to a song he had dedicated on the radio. (32)

Mary Wollstonecraft says traditional education system inspires woman to study novels only but not intellectual. In the novels, there are always brave heroes and weak heroines. Because of these, they are obsessed with sentimental, imagination and they become emotional. They create their dream hero to be romantic rather than an

intellectual. So they chose romantic brave rake. Mary Wollstonecraft says in her essay:

Woman subjected by ignorance to their sensation, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (398)

Sadeem gets education but her education is based on traditional system. So, she becomes crazy towards Waleed and his flowery words. Waleed respects her choice and buys whatever she favors. Text describes, “Everything he wore would be completely to her liking” (32). Sadeem does not exercise her intellectuality, but she is trapped with her sentiments. She dreams loving, romantic and brave hero like Waleed. Therefore, Waleed and Sadeem sign the marriage contract in small ceremony.

Through the marriage contract of Sadeem and Waleed, Alsanea exposes the plight of women, mistreatment of women and how they are treated as inferior or lesser persons. For instance, we find that men can sign their marriage declaration, while women ought to print their thumb even though they are highly educated. In the case of Sadeem, we find that she is not allowed to sign her marriage certificate but to print only her thumb although she is educated which is explained in the text as:

During the official proceedings Sadeem pressed her finger print in to the page in the enormous registry book after her protest about not being allowed to sign her name was dismissed. ‘My girl’, said her aunt, ‘just stamps it with your finger print and called it a day. The sheikh says finger print not signature. The men are the only ones who sign their names.’ (33)

After the signing ceremony, Waleed's visits to Sadeem grew day by day. Every few weeks Waleed takes her out for dinner in a fancy restaurant and brings the foods and sweets for her. They spent time together by talking and laughing, watching a film that is borrowed from a friend. "Then things began to progress, and they developed for enough that she experienced her first kiss" (34).

The wedding celebration is planned to occur over the summer vacation, a week or two after Sadeem's final exams Sadeem is requested to delay marriage ceremony because she is worried about her exams. But her decision upsets and distress Waleed, who wants to get marriage as soon as possible. To make him happy, she invites him one evening and gives herself to him:

Since Sadeem had vowed to make her beloved Waleed happy that night, and since she wanted to erase disappointment over her insistence on delaying the wedding, she allowed him to go further with her than ever before. She didn't try to stop him – as she had got used to doing – when he attempted to cross the line that she had drawn, for herself and for him, in early days after the signing of the contract. (35)

But, Sadeem's hope turns into despair. Waleed leaves after the dawn call to prayer but he does not come back. She waits anxiously for his actual phone call but he does not call. After three days, Sadeem decides to call him but his mobile is turned off and private line in his room is always busy. Waleed eventually sends her divorce paper claiming that he feels no longer comfortable with her. Sadeem blames herself because she does not wait until the wedding party. The text explains her psychological and emotional torment:

Had she been wrong to give herself to Waleed before the wedding celebration? Did it make any sense at all to believe that that was the

cause of him avoiding her? Why, though? Wasn't he her legal husband, and hadn't he been her legal husband ever since they signed the contract? Or did getting married mean the ballroom, the guests, the live singer and the dinner? And what had done- did it somehow deserve *punishment* from him? Hadn't he been the one who initiated it? Why had he encouraged her to do the wrong thing and then afterwards abandoned her? And anyway, was it wrong, was it a sin in the first place? Had he been testing her? And if she had failed the test, did that mean that she was not worthy of him? But what kind of stupidity was this? Wasn't she his wife, his lawful partner? Hadn't there been acceptance, consent and commitment, witnesses and an announcement to the world? No had ever cautioned her about this! ...

So where was the error? Where was the sin? (36)

She blames herself as she is not waited until the wedding party. Sadeem does not tell her family about what is happened between them. According to Sadeem, Waleed thinks, "she was one of those girls who were easy" (36)! is the reason behind's Waleed's desertion. In the customs and tradition in Saudi Arabian, man and woman are officially engaged when they sign in marriage contract. Hence, the period which is between the time of signing the documents and the night of the wedding is called engagement period. Engaged woman should remain virgins till the wedding night though they are officially wed. But Sadeem action is viewed as a huge mistake in a patriarchal society. After that, she leaves the Saudi Arabia to the London to recovery from her emotional and psychological trauma. Because of her trouble situation she finds London unattractive. "London was nothing but gloom, she decided; the city was as dark and cloudy as her mood. The silent apartment and her empty pillow add to her

unhappiness, leading her to shed more tears than she had known it was possible to produce” (66). She lives in London very painfully. The text describes:

Sadeem spent a lot of time crying. She wept tears that burned her eyes, for the wrong, the darkness that had enveloped her, that had shrouded her defamed femininity. She cried and cried, mourning her first love, buried alive in its infancy before she could find pleasure in it. She cried and she prayed, she prayed and prayed, in hopes that God would set guidance before her in her plight,[ ...]. (67)

Sadeem does not only pray to comfort herself but also she prays God to stop Waleed to scandalize her by revealing why he divorced her to protect herself from disgrace in society. She prays to God, “Allah, shield me! Keep his evil from me! Allah, I have no one but You to come to, and You are the most knowledgeable of my condition” (67).

In the London, Sadeem joins in bank for the purpose of summer internship. At this moment, Sadeem comes to know Firas Al-Sarqawi from Saudi. Firas sees Sadeem in the Piano Bar first time when she is playing a piano. From first sight, he falls in love with Sadeem. Sadeem is also attracted by him. “Sadeem was stunned by his sophisticated appreciation of, and familiarity with, music and art” (117). She thought, “This Firas was no ordinary man! He was an extraordinary marvelous and divinely made creature” (154).

After the internship, she decides to bury her grief in London’s dirt and returns to Riyadh with the high spirits a young woman of her age ought to have. But her grief does not vanish whereas her grief is again loaded by Firas.

Amani Hamdan, in the title of *Women and Education in Saudi Arabia*:

*Challenges and achievements* criticized the education system. She wrote:



Women's schooling at all levels- elementary, secondary, high school and university- remained under the Department of Religious Guidance until 2002, while the education of boys was overseen by the ministry of education, this was to ensure that women's education did not deviate from the original purpose of female education, which was to make women good wives and mothers and prepare them for 'acceptable' job such as teaching and nursing that were believed to their nature. (44)

Sadeem makes a dream to marry with Firas. Moreover she is made a beautiful picture of her married life where she imagines herself as a good, benevolent and obedient wife living at home. Sadeem is happy because of arrival of Firas in her life. Firas is a diplomat and a politician, and a successful man with a fertile brain. Sadeem loves him passionately and draws a picture of her marriage with Firas. She regularly buys two copies of every newspaper or magazine containing an interview or news about him. "She made a scrapbook of articles and photos of him. She had a plan: she would give him the scrapbook on their wedding day" (155). She imagines and explains her married life with Firas to the aunt, Um Nuwayyir:

I imagine myself welcoming him home in the evening once we're married. And of course, he always comes home tired. I sit him down on the sofa and I sit on the floor in front of him. I imagine myself rubbing his feet under salted warm water and kissing them! Do you understand what this picture I have in my head does to me, Aunt? It drives me mad! (183)

Firas is little odd by nature due to the upbringing in the patriarchal society like Saudi Arabia. He has utter devotion to religion in spite of lives abroad more than a decade. He shows no signs of western influence upon him. Therefore, he denies to get

married with Sadeem. In Saudi Arabian society, a man who gets married with a girl who is divorcee is unacceptable. He loves her very much but he does not dare marry with Sadeem. “Only one thing disturbed Sadeem’s serenity, and that was the relationship she’d formerly had with Waleed” (157). Therefore, he is engaged to a girl chosen by his family which makes Sadeem more painful. The text describes how much justifiable Firas’s decision is:

Was it possible for Firas to marry someone other than her? How could such a thing happen? After all this love and years they had spent together? Did it make any sense that a man of Firas’s strength and resourcefulness was unable to convince his family that he could marry a divorced woman? Or was it just that he was incapable of convincing himself of it? Had she failed, after all of her attempts, to reach the level of perfection befitting a man like Firas? (224)

Firas’s decision to reject Sadeem not only hurt her but his desire to keep secret relationship with her makes Sadeem more desperate. Male are too much selfish by nature which are clearly shown by Alsanea through the character Firas. Firas thinks only his status or position. He fears to marry with Sadeem because of his position of society but he does not think about Sadeem’s situation after the rejection of him. Firas selfish nature is shown through the lines:

In this incessant text message, he hinted to her that he was willing to remain her beloved for the rest of his life. That was what he wanted, in fact, but he would be forced to conceal it from his wife and family. He swore to her that the entire business was out of his hands; that circumstances were stronger than they were; and that he was in more pain at his family’s decision than she was. But there was nothing that

he could do. There was no path before them but patience. He tries to convince her that no woman would ever be able to replace her in his heart. He told her that he pitied his fiancée because she was engaged to a man who had tested perfection in another woman and that taste would remain forever on his tongue, making it impossible for any ordinary woman to erase it. (226)

Sadeem sinks into pain after Waleed's decision. Sadeem becomes a victim once again in the patriarchal society. She believes one and other man but she is always dominated by them. To be tried in the patriarchal society, she decides to get married to her cousin Tariq, who adores her.

When I come to Michelle, she is born from a Saudi father and an American mother. She meets Faisal Al-Basran by chance in the shopping mall. At that time, he offers her to occupy him to enter with him in the shopping mall as her brother. In Saudi Arabia, men are not allowed to enter such areas where women are present because to avoid any harassment towards women and to keep religious society. After that, Michelle and Faisal use to meet regularly. Their love continued for a year. But when Michelle offers Faisal to marry her, he backs off because his mother refuses to allow him to marry a girl which is not his family's choice. The text explains:

The minute Um Faisal heard the English name Michelle, one hundred devils swarmed into her head. Faisal hastily tried to correct his mistake. People called her Michelle but her real name was purely Saudi, Mashael, he assured his mother... The family of that girl was not of their sort. They must ask Faisal's father, since he knew infinitely more about genealogies and families. But from the start, his mother suggested, this line of conversation did not augur well. The girl had

tricked him! Aah, the girls of this generation! How awful they were! And aah, for her young, green son – she never would have expected him to fall into the trap of a girl such as this! She asked him who the girl’s maternal uncles were and as soon as she heard that the girl’s mother was American, she decided to bang the door shut for good on this fruitless dialogue around this utterly ridiculous topic. (102)

Besides this, Michelle is born from an American mother who is viewed negatively in Saudi Arabian society. Her family also refuses to accept her mother when her father brings her mother with him in his house. Similarly, Michelle is not accepted by Faisal’s family because she is born from an American mother. After that, she is against tradition of society and reveals anger through the several questions. She asks questions to Faisal. “Why doesn’t this society respect the difference between my family and other Saudi families? Everyone considered me a bad girl just because my mother is American! How can I live in such an unjust society? Tell me how, Faisal” (100)!

After that Michelle remains absolutely silent and staring across the table. Michelle does not believe thinking that Faisal who leaves her because his mother does not want her son married with a girl who is not her tribe. She also shocks at Faisal:

Was this the Faisal who had dazzled her with his open-mindedness? Was he seriously letting go of her as easily as this just because his mother wanted to marry him to a girl from their own social circles? A stupid naïve girl who was no different from a million others!? Was this how Faisal was going to end up? Was he really no different from the other trivial young men who she despised? (120)

Faisal is also sad because of his mother's decision. But he does not dare to challenge society. He thought society is superior rather than him. When separating from Michelle, he says:

... she was lucky, because she was not from the kind of family he was from. Her life was simpler and clearer and her decisions were her own, not those of the 'tribe'. She was better off without him and his family. Her wonderful spirit would not be sullied by their rules; their poisonous thoughts and insidious ways would not destroy her goodness. (121)

Faisal betrays her through showing the disturbance of culture. After the tragedy in the first love she moves to San Francisco for further study and never returns in the Saudi Arabia.

When we come to Lamees, we find that she is also suffered from male dominating Saudi society. In the Saudi Arabian society, the meeting of a girl with the boy in the public park or restaurant is taken as a crime. Once when Lamees meets Ali, whom she loved, in a café, they are arrested by Police of Moral and Virtue where dating is not allowed. After that their relation had end.

One day, as Lamees and Ali sat together in a café on Al-Thalatheen Street, band of men from Al-Hai'ah swooped down on them and led the pair off swiftly to two separate SUVs and headed immediately for the organization's nearest bureau. There, they put Lamees and Ali into two separate rooms and began interrogations. Lamees couldn't bear the hurtful questions put to her. They asked her in detail about her relationship with Ali. They used course language and they forced her to hear words that would have embarrassed her even in front of her

most intimate girlfriends. After trying for hours to appear self-confident and completely convince of the rightness of everything she had done, she collapsed in tears. She really did not believe that she had done anything that was cause for shame. (150)

When we come to Um Nuwayyir, she is in bad situation. She is a Kuwaiti woman who is married with a Saudi man. But after the fifteenth years of marriage, her husband gives divorce to her and goes to marry with another woman. She has a son also. She bearings up him alone. She is more kind and helpful to the four girls- Sadeem, Gamrah, Michelle, and Lamees. They also respect her as a mother. They share every feeling in her house. Moreover, she advices them when they are in confusion. But in the Saudi society, divorced woman is taken as bankrupt of social prestige and comment about the regular visit of girls to her. In this context, narrator wrote the responses of the people about four girls visiting to Um Nuwayyir:

I'm getting many, many response rebuking and insulting Um Nuwayyir, and censuring the families of my friends who have allowed their daughters to spend a single evening at the home of a divorced woman who lives alone. (185)

Raja Alsanea shows the female domination in the novel through the issue of ban on driving for female in the Saudi Arabia. Women are banned from driving in Saudi Arabia. It is only one place of the world where women are legally not permitted to drive vehicles. Resisting the ban on women's driving in the Saudi Arabia, Menal al-Sharif, the Saudi woman, starts 'Women2Drive Campaign' which creates uproar in Saudi Arabia, defying the prohibition imposed on women to drive. About this campaign, Gay Adams says, "Menal al-Sharif became a global symbol of the struggle for gender equality in the Middle East after a video of her driving through the streets

of Khobar was uploaded to YouTube last April, at the Height of the Arab Spring. She was later arrested and imprisoned for nine days.” If a woman wants to drive she must keep written permission from their closet male relatives. Therefore, in the novel, Michelle borrows the car from car showroom in the name of her male driver in the occasion of outing after Gamrah marriage. “Michelle had an international driver’s license. She took charge: she drove the BMW5 SUV with its dark-tinted windows. She had managed to rent it through one of the car showroom by putting the rental in the name of her family’s male Ethiopian driver” (16).

### **III. Conclusion**

#### **Feminism, Domination and Suffering**

In the beginning of the novel, all the girls are shown as a determinate and a confident lady with good education. They do not hesitate to do anything openly but when a play began, they are dominated by patriarchal norms and values. Male made rule always dominate the female. Male occupy themselves in the higher position whereas they place female in low position in social hierarchy. Therefore, a female always becomes the victim in the male dominated society. A male as a husband or as a lover dominate girls but they are not able to overcome from the domination.

Gamrah is very devoted to Rashid. She does not feel Rashid's love and devotion to her but she always tries to do everything for her husband. She had always tried to make him happy. She does not show the anger over him when she had known about his extra marital relationship with Kari. Moreover, she does not want to lose him because of the presence of Kari in Rashid's life. Therefore, she attempts to avoid Kari from his life. She meets Kari alone but Kari informs Rashid about the meeting of Gamrah through calling him in front of Gamrah.

Rashid gives divorce Gamrah when she is pregnant. She stops to take pills while she knows about Rashid's relationship with Kari. Her mother believes a child brings the love of a husband to wife. But all the attempts are useless. Rashid, after knowing about what is happened between Gamrah and Kari, sends Gamrah in Riyadh following with divorce paper. Even after the desertion she imagines arrival of Rashid in her life. She gives the name of his father to her son in the hope of return of Rashid in her life. But her hope turns into vain he never comes to her life.

Gamrah is showed as a failure character. She is lived alone and becomes helpless after her husband's desertion. In her father's house, after divorce, she feels



not comfortable because her family restricted her in each and everything. She has not permission for outing. Moreover, her uncle tries to avoid her by marrying her with a man of forty. This shows wives to be submissive to their husbands and they have no right to question the judgment of their husbands.

Raja Alsanea shows the life of the woman who like neither to be dominated by the husband nor to live without a husband. When Gamrah is with her husband, she tries to interfere with his extra marital affair with Kari. She even quarrels with him. But she feels alone when she is abandoned by Rashid. After Rashid's abandonment of her, she lives like a widow.

Moreover, the novel depicts the life of the deserted girls in her father's house. After the divorce, Gamrah lives in his father's house, but there she is stopped in each and everything. She has not permission to go outside. In the Saudi Arabian society, deserted girls are taken as a symbol of the bad reputation of family. Therefore, to protect prestige of the family, her family restricts her to go outside. Moreover, her uncle chooses a man of forty to marry her who is infertile. His uncle wants to avoid Gamrah from his house to save family reputation.

Sadeem also becomes victims in the male dominated society. She is deserted by his fiancé, Waleed after signing the marriage contract. She gives up herself to please Waleed but he has leaves her saying that he does not feel comfortable with her. After that, she meets with Firas. They love each other but he refuse to marry her only because she is divorcee. But he requests her to keep relationship secretly. A man always thinks about his reputation and prestige. But he does not think about the impact of his up on girl. Firas directly refuse to marry Sadeem but he proposes her to keep relationship secretly. He does not think about Sadeem life.

Michelle's love is ended because Faisal's mother does not want her son marry with a girl who is from an American mother. Faisal also loves her but he does not dare to go against his mother's decision. Therefore, he gets marriage to a girl who is chosen by his family. Likewise, Lamees love has ended after Lamees and Ali are arrested by Police of Moral and Virtue when they are dating at café. In Saudi Arabian society, dating is not allowed in public places. The novel also presents the painful life of Um Nuwayyir who is divorcee in the novel from the beginning. She has a son also. Her husband gives divorce her after fifteen years of married. She bearings up her son with the hatred of society.

To refer back what I am mentioned earlier the novel is appropriate for using Islamic feminism as from the beginning women were suppressed and oppressed from the freedom of personal experience. Islamic feminism is a form of feminism concerned with the role of women in Islam. It aims for the full equality of all Muslim regardless of gender in public and private life. Islamic feminists advocate women's right, gender equality and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework.

Raja Alsanea in the novel, *Girls of Riyadh*, shows the real picture of Muslim country through divorce, it shows the women are always suffered in her several roles as a daughter, as a wife and as a mother. In a male dominating society men keep extra marital affairs. Men can marry with a girl while he is playing with another girl. Rashid gest married with Gamrah while he is in affair with Kari. But when a girl becomes a wife legally she does not to keep sexual relation with her legal husband. Sadeem, after marriage contract, keeps sexual relationship with Waleed but he gives divorce her thinking that she is easy girl.

In reality, in the patriarchal society, wife should remain obedient to her husband, never does anything that might displeases him, and always be faithful to his

memory after his death. Even though the husband has bad character to seeking pleasure elsewhere he must be constantly worshipped as God by a faithful wife. If a wife shows disrespect to her husband then she is avoided. Likewise Rashid deserts Gamrah for her disrespect over him.

The novel shows in a patriarchal society a woman has to suffer even though she is educated or uneducated. Being uneducated Um Gamrah, and Gamrah's sisters live under the husband's domination. They are silent and keep themselves in their home. On the other hand, despite being educated Gamrah lives life as a deserted wife. She is not looked in a respectable way because she is a divorcee. She lives like a widow. But Rashid is free and he lives as an unmarried man.

The society discourage divorcee. Thus women kill their desires and surrender themselves up on their husband's will. They try their best to resolve the quarrels so that they are not to be a divorcee. The social norms and values of the patriarchal society compel women to live miserable marriage life. They do not try to maintain a harmonious marital life. Men show their quarrels between husband and wives externally by announcing the divorce. They only see mistake on their wives rather than on themselves. Gamrah does not think about a divorce even after the quarrel but Rashid tries to end their quarrel through a divorce.

To conclude from the feminist perspective Rajaa Alasnea's novel focuses on female's plight, misery and the isolated life after divorce. Moreover, the novel, *Girls of Riyadh*, depicts the girl's restricted life in Saudi Arabia. I find out that the male's superiority over the female in Saudi Arabia even in the twenty-first century. In other words because of the patriarchal society's norms and values, Rashid is free marry or to divorce. This shows the dominance of men up on women in the one hand and women are the victims of patriarchal society on the other hand.

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