

I. Critique of Religious Orthodoxy in *The Da Vinci Code*

Dan Brown's bestseller novel *The Da Vinci Code* published in 2003 is a combination of murder mystery, thriller, conspiracy, romance, religion and history. In *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown tantalizes its reader with fascinating digressions into the history of art, explanations of pagan cultic practices, insight into secret societies and it unfolds like a murder mystery that took place some 2000 years ago. Dan Brown dismantles the earlier claims of Christianity about the divinity of Jesus Christ and challenges the authenticity of its history. Dan Brown's agenda behind dismantling the history of Christianity is to bring the woman on the forefront of Christianity. By doing so, Brown not only promotes his claim about the sacred feminine but also nourishes it by bringing it in to the center of his novel. According to him Christianity has suppressed woman, oppressed them and highlighted the male chauvinist ideology to dominate woman and undermine their voice. According to the novel the history that we are inheriting is not the real history, but rather, that recounted by the winners: white, patriarchal, Christian, men. Dan Brown merely puts the thesis in a form that is accessible and interesting to the modern reader.

Christianity, the widespread religion, was established somewhere around 2000 years ago in the Middle East by Jesus Christ and now it has become one of the major religions which has spread throughout the world. The main motto of any religion is to worship god and Christianity is not also out of it. Jesus Christ is the 'Holy Spirit', the only god and the source of inspiration to the Christians and they worship him as their sole god. In this context Christians are the monotheist.

As we read the history of the Christianity and its holy book, it pays less attributes to the woman and always undermines their role marginalizes them and presented them as secondary to men. The book asserts that primitive Christianity

believed in the concept of sacred feminine, but the church later omits this archetype from its creed. From the gospels of Christianity what is known is that it has paid equal attribute to the woman in ancient time and worshipped the female god too. In all prehistoric cultures, the central cosmographic figure, the power of creative force behind the formation of the universe was personified by the female forms. Her generative and performative power was portrayed by highly pronounced female attributes. Those females who were the sources of everything through which the nature cycle regenerates were presided over humanity's religious expression in an exclusive manner from approximating 30,000 BC.

What we learn from the history is that, in ancient time the society was based on matriarchal paganism where women were at the prominent place and the centre of the society through which it passes on. With passing time, this type of matriarchal culture where the female principle was fundamental, gradually disappeared. Through a cumulative transformation, the male god take its place, dispossessing woman of their ancestral power, while dispossessing the power in the in the hands of men and male deity who represented them. The process of creation ceased to be understood through a simile invoking female reproductive physiology and went on to be portrayed as end of male power instrument. The omnipotent and even authoritarian male god is strikingly different from the female goddess, a nurturing mother who loves her children unconditionally.

The book illuminates how the feminine halves of the human equation have been deliberately suppressed for political reasons by the institutionalized power of the roman church. Though women were in prominent place in ancient era, but the new testament of Bible which is compiled by the Roman Emperor Constantine I in 325A.D., has omitted the earlier role of woman and only highlighted the male

chauvinist ideology and proved divinity of Jesus Christ. The New Testament bible not only presented Christ as a holy spirit but also marry Magdalene as a whore who is supposed to be the wife of the Christ. The novel presents the brutality of Christianity which has killed the woman who have free thought and rebellious nature. Christianity always denied the role of woman as their counterpart male and obliged them to be oppressed by creating certain ideology which dominantly brings man at the centre and woman to be the secondary part of it.

Christianity is an institution which is run by the male and it has manipulated history according to its will only to fulfill the vested interest of the then authorities and male ideology. Ideology is something which is constructed to dominate and so is in the case of Christianity too. The male successor of Christianity had manipulated the truth and created another history which is the devoid of the real one. They did it only to create their hegemony and to inferiorize woman. it caused the vanishedness of woman and in its place the male will to power emerged. Old Testament asserts that a father god made nature and that differentiation in to objects and gender was after the fact of his maleness.

Christianity is another form patriarchy and it serves the male attributes, values, and the male deity, worships its authority and undermines the Gnostic cult. The male ideology is dominant in Christianity and women are always marginalized. Female are the object of consumption and always considered as subordinated and inferior. It is supposed that women are imperfect without their counterpart. Christianity has always inferiorized woman and created a dominant ideology according to which women are subjected to be inferior and slave of man. Dan brown mentions that how the roman emperor and his male successor in 325 AD. has successfully converted matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity and also

considered marry Magdalene as a whore. Though, Brown makes a claim that Marry Magdalene as a sacred feminine and her close affinity with Jesus Christ is merely a false.

Dan Browns *The Da Vinci Code* has got immense popularity when it published in April 2003. Due to its groundbreaking claims about the history of Christianity and heart rendering thrilling atmosphere, the novel had got instant success. Glowing reviews from newspaper and magazine he famous and also created controversy. In a short while of its publication, it has become the best selling fiction. It has topped the New York Times bestseller list at the end of the year 2003. Simultaneously, it has topped bestseller list at walstreet journal, publisher's weekly and Sanfransisco chronicle and has been in the top two or three spots for most of the time at the same year. The book is now reported to have sold more than 70 million copies worldwide and has been translated in to thirty languages. It has become the fastest selling novel ever and has reputedly earned Dan Brown fame and economical upsurge. After its immense popularity, it has been brought in to the screen by Columbia pictures in 2005 under the direction of Ron Howard. so far its popularity is concerned; numbers of scholars, intellectuals, professors and theologians has given their own opinion, interpretations and analysis after the publication of the novel The Da Vinci Code. Many criticism were published in different journals either praising the work of Brown or critiquing it for its claims which is supposed to be true are in general merely fictional and has no any convincing agenda behind it. It has created much controversy about the history of Christianity and the intellectuals and theologians nearer to the orthodox Christianity blamed it as fictional and criticize Brown's effort as fruit less and just for popularity.

The Da Vinci Code has become the hot cake of discussion in Medias, libraries, journal, television after its publication. It happened because of its controversial speculation about the authenticity of the history of Christianity and the earlier claims which seemed to be fictional rather than factual. It has been interpreted from various perspectives.

Lauding the novel *The Da Vinci Code* as an icon of postmodern culture, David Coachman in his article “Dan Brown: what can the church learn from the pied piper of post modernity?” Writes, “*The DA Vinci Code* is an example of the spirit of our age relativizing of truth claims, the suspicion towards established institutions and the promotion of interests that are seen as marginalized” (72).

Similarly, another critic knight, Philip in his article, “Dangerous fiction: the popularity of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*” writes:

he whole of western history now appears as two huge interlaced conspiracies, locked in life and death struggle for victory [...] the reader is assumed throughout to be on the side of Robert and Sophie as they discover these truth themselves a male female couple standing out against a dominantly male Christian background. (4)

Another critic, Tim Cooper, in his article “Gnosticism then and Now” writes: “as much as dan Brown has done a woeful job of handeling the history, his voice will resonate with much more strengthsince his book engages the deepest impulse of postmodern culture” (20).

Besides this, brown makes anti reading of the history of Christianity and claims that all the facts presented in the novel are true and accurate. His foregrounding claims about Christianity brought him at the centre of discussion and

many scholars gave their thesis on it. Most of them claimed that *The Da Vinci Code* has fictionalized history and manipulated the truth for popularity.

According to *The Da Vinci code* Constantine and his male successor manipulated the history and recommissioned *The New Testament of Bible* which omitted the facts and truths about sacred feminine and successfully converted the matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity and politicized the movement by using power. Constantine, to strengthen his collaboration and to gain power, held a ‘Council of Nicaea’ which voted and decided what to include and what not to in orthodox Christianity. Brown argues, Constantine called the ‘Council of Nicaea’ to settle the controversy and to subdue the voice raised against patriarchal Christianity and against the divinity of Jesus Christ. The ‘Council of Nicaea voted’ Christ and immortalized him that caused the strengthening of Christianity. This sort of political shift brought male in to power and through which it has been governed.

Moreover, Dan Brown himself claims all the issues that have been presented in the novel are factual and accurate. Nevertheless, Brown himself seems wanting to create controversy and environment of suspense among the readers’ to create thrill, mystery, or publicity the fact about Christianity which remained unknown throughout the history. But the readers are left wondering because at the very end of novel all the whirlwind created by Brown is calmed and everything seems to be in harmony with the general environment.

As stated above, the novel has been analyzed from various perspectives and scholars have used different critical spectrum. Some scholar took the novel as mere fiction, some interpret it as factual, and other analyzed it as anti catholic novel and also from the perspective of myth.

In a nutshell, these distinguished intellectuals and scholars have given their thesis on the novel, which seems like a spectrum of single ray of light which has passed through a prism. Indeed the present research breaks away from all the perspective and is tries to apply feminism as a tool to conduct research which will be concerned mainly within the ideological construction of the images of the woman and their status in ancient Christian society. Though the main focus will be given to feminism, it will also acknowledge the idea of Mitchell Foucault, Louis Althuser, Gayatri Chaudhary Spivak and Judith Butler, Chandra Mohanthy Talpade and Kristeva. My research paper's main gist is to show how the women are being presented in the novel and their status in Christianity which is always in margin. It will analyze the manipulation of woman and their role in patriarchal Christian society.

II. Feminism: Critique of Ideological Formation of Women

Feminism is a discourse that involves various movement, theories and philosophies about gender differences, advocates equality of women with men, campaign for the women's rights. It has altered the predominant perspectives in a wide range of areas ranging from cultural to law, sex, political etc. and by now has become a global perspective.

As British author and critic Rebecca West says, "I myself have never been able to find precisely what feminism is" (219). Feminism is a very difficult term and it has many orientations, to confine it into a single set of concepts is just to limit it which cannot encapsulate the whole concept of feminism. However, it is concerned with the issues of woman's suffering or suppression or subordination that has been imposed by patriarchy. It studies women as others who are either oppressed or suppressed from the freedom of personal expression. Most of the women writers have struggled with patriarchy. By rejecting masculinity they started to debate about the equality of sex, socio-political rights, economic equality, literary freedom and legal rights. They themselves considered human beings instead of women and started to take pride in their femaleness. In this sense, feminism is a perspective or a political theory which advocates against the traditional norms of society which has been formed in favor of patriarchy. Focusing on silencing and marginalization of women in a patriarchal culture and criticizing other modes of criticism. In *A Handbook of critical Approaches to Literature*, Wilfred L. Guerin and et al. says:

Indeed feminism has often focused upon what is absent rather than what is present, reflecting concern with silencing and marginalization of women in patriarchal culture, a culture organized in the favor of men. In its diversity feminism is concerned with the marginalization

of all women that is with their being relegated to a second position.

(219)

Onwards what the feminist started too sought is how they became subordinated to patriarchal culture which only allows freedom and superiority to male and marginalizes woman. So their concern is focused on the marginalization of woman who are forced to be relegated as secondary to male.

The patriarchal society, where the position of woman was always subordinated and secondary, marginalized not only by confining them in to domestic appliances but also deprived of basic rights. So, the main concern of feminism is the marginalization of all women whether it is of western developed countries or of any part of the world. What the feminist believed is that the culture they are inheriting is patriarchal and such type of masculine culture does not allow them to exercise personal freedom. This trend is not only applicable at cultural level but also in other areas such as literature, politics, and in gender. This type of bondage compelled the woman to protest the injustice through which they are being suffered. Whenever the woman started to advocate against the male hegemony that caused some of change on the perspective toward woman, because of which woman also talked about the equality with male.

Moreover, the growing feminist movement sought to change society's prevailing stereotypes of woman such as secondary, passive, dependent, weak and less rational as well as more emotional than male. It also sought to achieve greater freedom for woman to work and remain economically, psychologically independent. Feminist criticized on society's prevailing emphasis on woman as object of sexual desire and sought to broaden both women's self awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality with men. Feminism, in a broad sense, can be considered as a

political movement which gives due respect to writings of non-canonical woman writers. Earlier the whole writing tradition was based on masculine culture where the great and historical characters like Dr. Faustus, Oedipus, Odysseus etc have been presented as dominant and daunting. So, what feminism tried is, it studied sexual, social and political issues which were once thought to be excluded from the study of literature. It examined the experiences of woman from all areas and classes, disregarded the patriarchal culture, raised voice against the sexual exclusiveness and protested the marginalization of woman.

If we go through the history of feminism, feminist and scholars have divided the movement's history in to three waves. The first wave refers to woman's suffrage where as the second wave refers to the ideas and actions associated with the woman's liberation movement beginning in 1960s which campaigned for social and legal equality for woman. On the other hand, third wave refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to the second wave of feminism, beginning in 1990s. Mary Wollstonecraft, a well noted woman writer, who is famous for her ideas which paved a way to feminism. Mary Wollstonecraft, the English born writer, who wrote a book '*On the Vindication of Rights of Woman*' which is considered to be the first feminist work, brought some of her groundbreaking ideas such as 'mind doesn't know the sex ' and society is wasting its assets if it only treats woman as domestic slave, denies her economic independence and presents always as docile and emotive. She not only attacks on the sentimental novel of that time but also advocates the pernicious influences on woman's intellectual development. In her essay she writes:

Women are subjected by ignorance to their sensation and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feeling and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which leads them

shamefully to neglect the duties of life and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (396)

What she focuses is on empowerment of woman and imagines the role of woman without sentimentality where instead of heart mind becomes dominant. And for it she insists on education which helps to use reason to be free. She writes: "...it is the right use of reason alone which makes us independent of everything -excepting the unclouded reason - whose service is perfect freedom" (396).

The precursor of modern feminism, Virginia wolf, one of the most distinguished feminist: though she herself denies the feminist stance, give the idea that social and economic obstacles extended before woman always restrict their creativity. Being imprisoned within the domestic premises woman can not create their literary work. According to her, due to patriarchal social norms and values in the past prevented woman writers to write openly because their work was considered as sin. At the same time, the woman writers who attempted to write were disfigured or deformed. They weren't provided separate room for literary freedom, though they posses the capability to create as the men do. In her essay Virginia Wolf writes:

'woman are supposed to very calm generally but woman feel just as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; [...] it is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more then custom pronounced necessary for their sex. (822)

In these lines, she advocates about the abilities of woman with their counterpart male but sex plays important role to determine ones status. Women are not less capable then men but they are economically, culturally and biologically inferiorized which not only marginalized them but also destroys or discourages their creative faculty.

Simone De Beauviour's book *The Second Sex* which was published in 1949, established the modern principle of feminism. It appeared as an encyclopedic in its coverage offering historical, biological and psychological perspective on woman, a consideration of prevailing patriarchal myth about woman, and as an account of female love and sexuality in virtually all of its forms. As the critic Fiona Tolan says: "Beauviour constructed an epic account of gender division throughout history, examining biological, psychological, historical and cultural explanations for the reduction of woman to a lesser sex" (320). Simone de Beauviour argued that was no such thing as 'feminine nature'. There was no any physical or psychological reason why woman should be inferior to men, and yet throughout history and across cultures, woman had always been second class citizen.

What she argues is that there was nothing natural about the hierarchical division of men and women in to a first sex and second sex. De Beauviour was heavily influenced by existentialism, which denies the existence of preordained 'human nature' and emphasizes the freedom and responsibility to each person to create him or herself as a self governing individual. It is this philosophy that she brought to her examination of her femininity. According to Tolan: "...de Beauviour formed an image of 'the modern woman ' and this woman, she imagined, would be equal of men and instead of bemoaning her inferiority to men, she would declare herself their equal" (320). According to Tolan De Beauviour has formed an image of woman who is equal to men, work like and with men. She not only provided the image of woman but also resented the woman as bold and more like masculine. Beauviours's *The Second Sex* contained the seeds of different feminisms. By examining just some of the issues that she touched upon become quite apparent.

The American radical feminist, who was also contemporary to Beauvoir, Betty Freidan exposed the frustration and psychological distress of 1950s housewives in America and labeled their secret suffering the 'problem with no name' in her book *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963. Freidan founded the National Organization of Woman (NOW) to campaign for the legal rights of woman and become one of the leading figures of the equal rights movement. As the critic Tolan says: "...Freidan was encouraging woman to enter into a male orientated social system, and failing to recognize that the system itself was corrupt, funded on male principles of value and worth that were alien and destructive to woman" (320). According to the critic, Freidan was consciously invading the norms of patriarchal culture and encouraging her fellow de Behavior has done in England was done by Freidan in America.

Sublimity Firestone wrote a book *The Dialectics of sex* (1970), which contains the idea that the technology could be employed to free woman, from the premises of the classification of men and women and advocates the equality that can be achieved through the application of technology as the critic Tolan says:

Firestone believed that it was not biological difference in itself that created inequality- 'man' and 'woman' were for her neutral categories of difference but rather it was the reproductive function that happened to fall to the female body; by employing technology to lift the task of reproduction from women, equality could be achieved. (323-24)

After the woman's liberation movement of late 1960s, the impact of feminism began to felt in literary criticism which was known as the contemporary feminist criticism. It moved forward progressively with Marry Wollstonecraft's *Thinking About Woman* (1968) and Kate millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970) and reached in its height during the 60s with American Showalterian concept of gynocriticism. Kate Millet in

Sexual Politics, emphasizes that woman should be given power to develop their personalities, economic status and literary career. She thinks that patriarchy is the main cause of woman's suppression and subordination.

Elaine Showalter in *Feminist Poetics*, expresses that the female psyche is influenced by the generally culture but the general culture there is their own sub culture which forms a collective experience of woman. Showalter has divided feminist criticism in two distinct varieties, the first one is woman as a reader where she adopts the male produced text as it is and the second one is woman as a writer where the woman has been presented as the producer of the textual meaning with the history, genres and structures of literature by woman, and this stage is also known as Gynocriticism. Gynocriticism is concerned with female framework for the analysis of woman's literature; it developed new model based on the study of female experience rather than to adopt male models and theories. Showalter talks about biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural difference that plays great role in the study of feminism.

In her essay, she examines the British woman novelist from Bronte to Leasing from the point of view of woman's experience. She takes the view that while there is no fixed or innate female sexuality or female imagination. There is nevertheless a profound difference between woman's writing and men's. She thinks that the new language or the language with sexism can integrate woman's intelligence, experience, reason, suffering, skepticism and vision. She writes:

The task of feminist critic is to find a new language, a new way of reading that can integrate our intelligence and our experience, our reason and our suffering, our skepticism and our vision. This enterprise should not be confined to woman. I invite critics, poetics and Plutarch

us to share it with us. One thing is certain feminist criticism is not visiting. It is here to stay, and we must make it permanent home.

(1233)

She enforces on the femaleness and talks about the language that only represents their experience and not of male sexist and biased language which paves a prominent stance to feminist criticism.

Showalter has identified three phases of modern woman's literary development: The feminine phase (1840-80), during which woman writer imitated the dominant male tradition; the feminist phase (188-1920), when woman advocated for their rights; and the female phase (1920 to present) when dependency upon opposition- that is on uncovering misogyny in male texts-is replaced by the rediscovery of woman's text and woman.

During the eighties, Sandra Gillbert and Susan Gubar in the *Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) appeared concentrating on the figure of the suppressed female and investigating the typical motifs and patterns among 19th century woman writers. The work is a kind of realization of female identity where Gillbert and Gubar locate the female territory in it's longer context. Examining the woman writers defined themselves as free as men writers, they expose the true identity of patriarchy and realize the significance of their own identity. Toril Moi in "feminist criticism" says about the work as:

Gilbert and Gubar's monumental study, *The Madwomen in The Attic* furnish the instructive example of the consequences of the confusion, not only of the femaleness with femininity with feminism [...] one of their central argument is that nineteenth century woman writer choose to express their own female anger in a series of duplicitous textual

strategies where by both the angel and the monster, the sweet heroine and the raging mad woman are aspects of the authors self image as well as elements of her treacherous anti- patriarchal strategies. (217)

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system in which structural differences in privilege, power and authority are invested in masculinity and the cultural, economic or social positions of men. The concept and widespread use of the term ‘patriarchy’ grew out of feminist debates about gender in the 1960s and 70s. It is still used to indicate a social system in which maleness and masculinities confer a privileged position of power and authority; where man is the self to which woman is other. It is organized constructed in such a way that is to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: Familial, religious, political, economic, legal, social and artistic. From the ancient time to the present, men have defined woman negatively and as less important being. In *The Glossary of the Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams writes: “from the Hebrew Bible and Greek Philosophy to the present , the female tends to be defined by negative reference to the male as human norm, hence as an other kind of non mass [...]”(235). In this sense patriarchy represents the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power.

Sex is determined by anatomy, the prevailing concepts of gender, the traits that constitute what is masculine and what is feminine, are cultural constructs that were generated by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilizations. In such a way the masculine in our culture has come to be identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational and creative. The feminine by systematic opposition to such traits has come to be identified as passive, timid, conventional and emotional. Another concept in patriarchy is that male centric ideology pervades in all literary writings

which have been considered as great literature. So the task of feminists remains not only protesting patriarchal norms and values rather creating their own literature and languages.

Ideology

Ideology plays the vital role to represent something into a particular shape; it not only highlights the positive aspects of something but also undermines some of its vibrant characteristics. Ideology is always constructed and it may have different forms such as political ideology, religious ideology, ethical and legal ideology. In general ideology is a representation of imaginary things, ideas as real. The critic Louis Althusser, in his essay “Ideological state Apparatus” says that “ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individual to their real condition of existence” (123). He also writes “ideology is the system of ideas and representation which dominate the mind of a man or a social group” (120).

Through these lines what we can say is that ideology does not correspond to the reality and it is always imaginary. Though it is deviated from reality, it is dominant in person and within social norms and values. In his essay Althusser states ideology as pure illusion, a pure dream and its reality is external to it. Ideology is, thus, thought as an imaginary construction whose status is as like of dream.

So is the case with patriarchy too. The whole base of society is based on ideology whether it is the ancient Christian society or it is the modern society. Our society is based on patriarchal ideology throughout history and it is dominated by certain patriarchal ideology where male is always superior and female is always inferior to their counterpart. Such male chauvinist ideology always subordinated women; constructed their image and inferiorized them, dominated them. Though women were also considered equal to men, in course of time patriarchy omitted the

earlier truths and claims and constructed an imaginary ideology to oppress them. Such patriarchal ideology always kept male at the centre as a subject and marginalized and woman as an object, passive and secondary.

Ideology has been governing the whole social norms by forming a mechanism and patriarchy is also a part of it which roots in such a imaginary mechanism and creates certain ideology that only fulfills the vested interest of male chauvinism not only oppressing female but also creating false image of women such as an object, passive, inferior and secondary.

Gender

Gender typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities. Therefore gender divides human into two categories male and female. Not only it divides entire human race in to two categories it also privileges men over female. It operates as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in modern society which makes the masculine halves of the equation positive and feminine negative. Anne Cranny –Francis et al in *Gender Studies* quotes Aristotle’s opinions as “men were stronger, women weaker, men courageous, women cautious [...] men educate children, women nurture them”(20). Gender, in western society, refers to a binary division of human beings and social practices to the point that of this division even being constructed as oppositional. It brings the concept of opposite sex and the two categories are not merely regarded as distinct and opposed, they are also put in to a hierarchy in which one is typically cast as positive and the other negative.

Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* took Beauvior’s idea of self and other, along with the statement ‘one is not born but rather becomes a woman’ and developed an argument about the fluidity of gender. Butler argued that masculine and feminine as two opposing and mutually defining positions, were artificial constructs

supported by imposed heterosexuality. By subverting gender norms and by refusing the characteristics socially assigned to a particular biological sex, binary gender categories could be deconstructed and a multitude of possible gender 'positions' would then become available.

Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* probe and questioned models of sexuality and identity which cohere around the assumed stability of heterosexuality. Her investigations also display a similar indebtedness to the work of Foucault. Tony Purvis in his article "sexualities" writes: "What Butler interrogates in 'Gender Trouble' are the seemingly inevitable contradictions between sameness and difference which marked identity formulations based around gender and sexuality" (442). According to the critic what butler has done is she brought the binaries of sameness and the difference which is deeply rooted in gender studies. Butler does not underestimate the knowledge and power associated with this matrix and notes how one effect of such hegemonic heterosexuality is the attempt to neutralize and stabilize sex, gender and identity.

Judith Butler's initial take up of the Foucauldian concept of the disciplinary body has produced the notion of performativity as distinct from the less nuanced term performance- to explain how the deployments of the body through acts and gestures, especially in terms of gender sexualities are through a process of reiteration productive of a discursive identity, that is both open and constrained. Butler sees a whole range of normative binaries that are used to characterize embodiment - male/female, health/ill health, heterosexual/homosexual and so on -may be exposed in their instability- but also paradoxically confirmed by the performativity of object bodies. To her what seems important is that although the female body may provide the primary point of interest, the body throws light on those marginalized by sex,

sexuality, skin color, disability, age and the condition of the difference but on the fully normative body itself.

Drawing on Foucault's account of the historical construction of sexuality and the part played by the category of sex in this construction, Feminists have been able to rethink gender not as the cultural meanings that are attached to a pre-given sex.

Foucault, Power and Sexuality

Although Foucault makes few references to woman or the issue of gender in his writings, his treatment of the relation between powers, the body and sexuality has stimulated extensive feminist interest. Foucault's idea that body and sexuality are cultural constructs rather than natural phenomena, has made a significant contribution to the feminist critique of essentialism. While feminists have found Foucault's analysis of the relations between power and body illuminating, they have also drawn attention to its limitations.

An analysis of power relations is central to the feminist project of understanding the nature and causes of women's subordination. Drawing on traditional models of power as repression, many types of feminist theory have assumed that the oppression of women can be explained by patriarchal social structures which secure the power of men over women. Increasingly, however, this assumption is being called in to question by other feminists who are concerned to counter what they regard as the over-simplified conception of power relations this view entails, as well as its problematic implication that women are simply passive, powerless victims of male power. Foucault's redefinition of power has made a significant and varied contribution to this project. In his book *The History of Sexualities* (1978), Foucault writes:

the notion of sex brought about a fundamental reversal: it made it possible to invert the representation of the power to sexualities, causing the latter to appear, not in its essential and positive relation to power but as being rooted in a specific and irreducible urgency which power tries as best it can to dominate. (155)

Foucault's perspective functions to preclude the possibility of feminist politics which he claims, is necessarily an identity based politics grounded in a conception of the identity needs and interests of woman.

Foucault suggests only in being exercised and is thus a permanent struggle against what will otherwise be done to and for individuals, it is dangerous to imagine it as a state of being that can be grounded by laws and institutions by insisting that liberation from domination is not enough to guarantee freedom. Foucault points to the importance of establishing new patterns of behavior, attitudes and cultural forms that work to empower the vulnerable and in this way, to ensure that mutable relations of power do not congeal into states of dominations. So, Foucault enforces the role of power and the discourse which not only affects the truth but also subverts it by exercising it and it is always dominant in the hands of who is in power.

Kristeva, Spivak and Talpade on female Identity

Kristeva about identity presents two terms the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic'. The semiotic phase occurs within the pre-linguistic state of maternal closeness. It is the moment before language in which the child knows no boundaries and does not distinguish self from other. As the child gets mature it undergoes through a socializing process which Kristeva calls symbolic realm. The symbolic is the social state in which the bodily desires are controlled and repressed and the authority of father is recognized – it causes the repression of motherhood. According to Kristeva, social

order is conceived through language then it follows that language is masculine articulating male ideology and a male view of the world. As Fiona Tolan writes:

Kristeva argued that western philosophy is founded on the repression of difference [...] Thus, in language , female difference was suppressed until only the male norm remained as the sole voice [...] The subjective women does not exist in the male view – she is other, different, lacking – it follows that women as a speaking ‘I’ does not exist in language.
(335)

What Kristeva argues is that women’s voice is always mute and they are mere an object in a social structure. Though she states language that really matters on determining subjectivity which is repressed by male chauvinism she never rejects such male centric language.

Similarly, Spivak’s deconstructionist idea considers overtly political commitment to champion the cause of minority groups. Spivak has examined the status of women in which their identity is constructed by certain social norms and condition which is deeply rooted in nexus of power. Spivak has challenged the predominant assumption of western society and culture over woman; that women’s reproductive labor is unwaged domestic work. What Spivak argues is the gender identity is reinforced and regulated by powerful patriarchal institution. According to her:

my own definition of woman is very simple: it rests on the world ‘man’ as used in the texts that provide the foundation for the corner of the literary criticism establishment that I inhabit. You might say that this is a reactionary position, should I not carve out an independent definition for myself as a woman? (quoted on Morton 74)

Spivak explains clitoris as symbolic repression of female sexual pleasure which is also the general condition of women's social and economic condition. By putting clitoris, Spivak tries to demonstrate how patriarchal social relation has objectified women's body. What she means is that the multiple body that is marked not simply by sex, but an array, an infinite array of differences- class sexualities and age and in such model the universal category of body disappears not as the result of the disembodiment characteristics of masculine discourses but in favor of a fluid and open embodiment.

Chandra Talpade Mohanthy in her book *Feminism Without borders* presents how the woman, through the evolution of human civilization and across the class and culture, have been made the object and mere a puppet in male dominated patriarchal norms they are deprived of social and economic freedom and has become an agency of material advertisement. Through which they are characterized as singular group on the basis of shared oppression. Thus the discursively consensual homogeneity of woman as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women and it results in an assumption of women as an always already constituted group, one that has been labeled powerless, exploited, sexually harassed and so on. She writes:

the homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials but rather on the basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals; thus [...]women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of shared oppression. (22)

Moreover, as Talpade writes:

it is at this point that an elision takes place between women as a discursively constructed group and women as material subjects of their

own history; [...] this focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitutes a particular group of women as 'powerless' in a particular context. It is rather on finding a variety of cases of 'powerless' groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless. (23)

According to her women are being treated as secondary and are deprived of certain thing that makes them weak and powerless. So they are always identified as object, passive and mere a conjunction which do not have its own value and identity without male.

Since the main focus of this research is on the play of patriarchal ideology which created women as always oppressed, subjugated, subordinated, objectified and secondary, the thesis is based on the notion of patriarchy on ideology, gender sexuality and among others to examine the status of women in Christianity as depicted in Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code*.

III. Critique of Ideological Formation of Women in *The Da Vinci Code*

It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that how power, ideology and gender plays a role to construct the image of woman which is not real. This research analyzes the Christianity, patriarchy and status of women relating to power, its manipulation, ideology and its construction of gender biasness. Every text does have a literary, socio-political, religious and intellectual context and it is always bound within it. While acknowledging these shaping ideas, this thesis claims that *The Da Vinci Code* has questioned all the predefined truths about Christianity and its obliterated the history of Christianity which is dominantly patriarchal, its treatment to women: either it has been manipulated to prove the superiority of male or it has been done to fulfill the vested interest of the then authorities.

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* begins with the grisly murder of the Louvre's curator inside Parisian museum. The crime laden with enigmatic clues in symbolic code which must be broken to reveal the truth brings Robert Langdon, a professor of symbolism at Harvard University and the victim's granddaughter, a police cryptologist named Sophie Neveu. Langdon is suspected of being the killer, and along with Sophie and a crippled millionaire Leigh Teabing, they must flee the police and a mad albino monk named Silas. Along the way they must crack the secret codes found in the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci, which will not only reveal the identity of killer, but also the location of the grail. Silas, representing the patriarchal catholic order of 'Opus Dei', is a sociopathic killer who will stop at nothing to prevent them from discovering the grail, because church authorities believe that the truth about the grail will destroy the integrity, authority and power of Roman Catholicism.

Dan Brown has successfully wedded two genres, the thriller and the romance novel, and ends each of the short chapters with an unresolved dilemma that demands turning pages to find what happens next. He has presented the issues related to the history of Christianity, its authenticity where how the patriarchal Christian church manipulated it, and developed in favor of patriarchy by obliterating the truth and claims of sacred feminine and matriarchal paganism of ancient time. Brown draws issues from history and questions them which are believed to be the truth and factual and seeks to prove the status of women and their ideological formation throughout the novel.

Patriarchy, Christianity and Women

Everything is bound within a structure and it is argued that religion contain a patriarchal structure that is to say, they are institutionally biased towards male supremacy in all areas and decisions that reflect largely male concerns; more than this, these structures create a male culture, ways of thinking and acting that reflection and preoccupations, and they challenge the spirituality of women and limit their role in deciding on forms of spirituality and belief.

Christianity is a religion governed by male principle which has traditionally given male the position of authority in marriage, society and government this position places women in submissive roles and usually excludes women from church leadership, especially from positions requiring any form of ordination. Orthodox Christianity is deeply rooted on patriarchal ideologies, norms and values where women are regarded as inferior and secondary and are being objectifying and ruled by the powerful male ideologies. Christianity is by nature dominated by the male successor and highlighting the male chauvinistic values which always presents man as supreme and autonomous being in comparison to their counterpart women. In

Christianity women are denigrated and being oppressed. Brown, in his novel, presents the status of women whose original value has been altered by patriarchal Christianity and gave the forced identity as passive and secondary. Brown writes: “Men enter the building through the main doors on Lexington Avenue. Women enter through a side street and are ‘acoustically and visually separated’ from the men at all times within the building” (30).

Christianity is another form of patriarchy and it serves the male attributes, values, the male deities, worships its authenticity and undermines the Gnostic cult. The male ideology is dominant in Christianity and women are always marginalized. Female are the object of consumption and always considered as subordinated and inferior. It is supposed that women are imperfect without their counterpart. Christianity has always inferiorized women and created a dominant ideology according to which women are subjected to be inferior and slave of man. Brown, in his novel, shows the clash of two religious organizations– Opus Dei and Priory of Sion; the former one is favoring orthodox Christian patriarchal principle and the later one is favoring feminine cult. In his book Brown shows the unseen struggle between these two organizations where each of them try to prove its own superiority. Opus Dei is dominant by the orthodox values and has certain rules and regulations for women through which they have to pass. As Brown writes:

Opus Dei has always made her uneasy [...] she had been shocked to learn that female numeries were forced to clean the men’s residence hall for no pay, while the male were at mass; women slept at hard wood floors while the male had straw mats; and women were forced to endure additional requirements of corporal mortification.....all as

added penance for original sin it seemed Eves bite from the apple of knowledge was a debt women were doomed to pay for eternity. (46)

Through these lines we came to know the pathetic conditions of women in Christianity where they do not possess the harmony of sex with their counterpart male and are obliged to live as a governed and oppressed obeying the male dominant patriarchal ethos without any resistance.

In his book, Dan Brown tries to show the harmony between two sexes: - male and female and valorizes the feminine principles that entails us the view of sacred feminine and seeks to establish the matriarchal paganism which was the truth of history of Christianity in the past; and in course of time it lost its originality which has been altered by the male successor of the Christianity. The male successor of Christianity not only redefined the history of Christianity but also omitted the truth claims which represent the reality of feminine cult. Because of which the harmony between two sexes has been lost and men have overpowered female and possess the power everywhere. They become omnipresent everywhere and established their supremacy. It caused the death of the freedom and dignity of women and become passive within the society confining themselves within their houses. It not only oppressed women but also tortured them and punished too.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown reveals the truth of the orthodox Christianity, how Christianity has altered the history and demonized women. As brown writes:

The Priory's tradition of perpetuating goddess worship is based on belief that powerful men in the early Christian church 'conned' the world by propagating lies that devalued the female and tipped the scales in favor of masculine. (133)

It shows the obliteration of the truth by using the power by orthodox Christianity and its conversion to the masculinity. The earlier belief of feminine value has been altered by the male successor of church, they conned lies regarding women just to demonize them and to prove their masculinity as dominant through which masculinity can rule the world. In course of it Roman emperor Constantine, one of the dominant figure of Christianity altered the history of Christianity and omitted the earlier truths and claims about Christianity which contained the harmony of the relationship of male and female, the feminine values, female goddesses and demonized them for the sake of male superiority. As brown writes:

The Priory believes that Constantine and his male successors successfully converted the world from matriarchal paganism to patriarchal Christianity by waging a campaign of propaganda that demonized the sacred feminine, obliterating the goddesses from modern religion forever. (133)

According to Brown, the Roman Emperor Constantine and his male successor successfully converted the matriarchal paganism, which was fully based on the worship of goddesses and feminine cult where women were at prominent place in the society, female were used to worship as a life bringer to the human world and thought to be very sacred in comparison to male and there was harmony in the world and it was quite balanced; to the patriarchal Christianity and they altered the earlier truths and claims about the woman, they created propaganda to demonize them. The Christian successor omitted the fact and created a new testament of Bible in which we can see the spirituality of Jesus Christ and divinity of him. Though Christ is said to be a mortal man; Christianity and Christ's disciple heroized him and changed his mortality to the spiritual divinity. This kind of shift brought male in to power and their

influence was growing everywhere that caused the oppression of women woman, misrepresentation of female deity and demonization of them.

Christianity converted the matriarchal paganism to patriarchal orthodox Christianity and misrepresented women and labeled them as inferior, secondary and passive. They not only omitted the facts of feminine part but also denigrated them. According to the book, the true version of Christianity was Gnostic Christianity, but orthodox Christianity became more powerful and won over the Gnostics. Because the orthodox Christians won over the Gnostics, they wrote history in a way favorable to their version of Christianity.

Brown also claims only those gospels which agreed with the authority of church were chosen for the New testament of Bible. Church used those gospels which confirmed them power and church overshadowed those gospels which contradicted to the manipulated version of Bible. So church used power to suppress those marginal gospels that were on behalf of women. Church destroyed those gospels which gave Christ the attribute of human. To create his own version or discourse and to gain power over the subjects Constantine used his own power as emperor and commissioned and financed a new version of Bible in favor of patriarchy and undermined the female value and misrepresented the female value. As Brown writes:

...Constantine commissioned and financed a new bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned. (316)

Constantine's manipulation of *The New Testament* of Bible omitted the female values and they created false image of woman where less attribute has been given to the

woman to prove the superiority of male and to rule over them. Christianity highlighted Jesus Christ as divine and proved the spirituality of Christ.

Constantine, to strengthen this collaboration, also held a council known as council of Nicaea which voted and decided what to include and what not in to orthodox Christianity. Brown argues, Constantine called the Council of Nicaea so the bishops could settle the controversy. Brown writes, “[...] many aspects of Christianity were debated and voted upon – the date of Easter, the role of the bishops, the administration of sacraments and of course, the divinity of Jesus” (315). This short of shift brought men in power and ruled the Christianity and they overpowered women in every sector, the bishops and saints developed certain principles that misrepresented woman, demonized them and forced to be secondary and passive.

Later on, Christianity, lead by male chauvinist ideology, was dominated by male principle and just for the sake of it, they denigrated women. Once the women were considered as sacred is now considered as the cause of original sin. This concept was constructed to humiliate female value and prove supremacy of patriarchy. As Brown explains in his novel:

The power of the female and her ability to produce life was once very sacred, but it is posed a threat to the rise of predominantly male church, and so the sacred feminine was demonized and called unclean. It was man not god, who created the concept of ‘original sin’, where by Eve tested of the apple and caused the downfall of the human race, women; once the sacred giver of life, was now the enemy. (258)

Similarly Brown explores the destruction of historical truths by Christian Genesis where Leigh Teabing, a religious historian explains:

[...] that the concept of woman as life bringer was the foundation of ancient religion. Child birth was mystical and powerful sadly, Christian philosophy decided to embezzle the females creative power by ignoring biological truth and making man the creator. Genesis tells us that Eve was created from Adam's rib. Woman became an offshoot of man, and a sinful one at that. Genesis was the beginning of the end of the goddess. (259)

Here, brown explains the shift of value and concept once that was said to be sacred and is now considered to be the sinful act and evil and the sacred deity as devil. According to him, in the ancient pagan world women were praised and worshipped as the symbol of purity and life bringer to the human world but later in course of time Christianity altered the very fact and claimed men to be the creator of life not women. They subordinated as a part of their body and created a myth of Adam and Eve where Eve was created from Adam's rib and is responsible for the sinful act that she has committed by testing the apple of knowledge that caused the downfall of human kind and later on have been treated badly. The sacredness of woman had been lost forever and they got oppressed, subordinated and forced to live as secondary, passive and are being dominated by consent.

According to Brown, once Christianity converted the matriarchal paganism to the patriarchal Christianity, they created different myths to prove the male supremacy and dominate the resistance over the transformation of historical truths. Christian male successor heroise Christ and prove him as a god from a mortal prophet and started to worship his spirituality.

Dan Brown, in his book , explains that Christ was engaged with a women whom we know as Mary Magdalene, whom he loved most – is also considered to be

the 'holy Grail' and claimed as sacred feminine, has been omitted by the orthodox Christianity and they presented Mary Magdalene as a whore, a prostitute and has nothing to do with Christ and Christianity; though she was the chosen person to lead the church and the original heir of Christ and Christianity. But the powerful motivations of church to conduct such a cover up to the relation between Mary and Christ and their physical relation is just to undermine the critical notion of Christ's divinity and therefore the Christian church which declared itself the sole vessel through which humanity could access the divine and gain entrance to the kingdom of the heaven. This sort of denigration of Mary Magdalene and spirituality of Christ has become beneficial to the Christianity. So, Christianity represented Mary Magdalene as unclean, a whore and discarded her divinity and affiliation with Christ. Brown, in his novel *The Da Vinci code*, writes:

... the threat Mary Magdalene posed to the men of the early church was potentially ruinous. Not only was she the woman to whom Jesus had assigned the task of founding the church, but she had also the physical proof that the church's newly proclaimed deity had spawned a mortal bloodline. The church, in order to defend itself against Magdalene's power, perpetuated her image as a whore and buried evidence of Christ's marriage to her, thereby defusing any potential claims that Christ had a surviving bloodline and was a mortal prophet.

(274)

Here, what he tells us is that Christ as a mortal prophet has been converted to the spiritual divinity by denigrating Mary Magdalene as a whore by the orthodox Christianity just to cover up the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ. Christianity, by covering this truth, presented Christ as a god and has nothing

to do with mortality of human world and with Mary Magdalene. Though Christ chose Mary to run the church that proves that Jesus loved Mary Magdalene and had a physical relationship with her. Brown, in his novel, explores different evidence that is cited from different gospels about Christianity which presents Mary Magdalene as the champion savior. But Christianity converted these truths about Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ made a cover up of their relationship which once thought to be sacred now became a false.

Christianity presented Mary as a whore, a prostitute and unclean and has no any affiliation with Jesus Christ, church and Christianity. This sort of cover up made Christ divine, spiritual and god from a mortal prophet and Mary Magdalene a whore and unclean. Christianity has done it only for the sake of male superiority by creating false image of woman that remained as the truth forever. This sort of historical distortion has been done only to increase the power of patriarchy and that sort of ideological shift caused the down fall of woman and increasing influence of patriarchy.

Similarly Christian orthodoxy subordinated, oppressed women and created false ideologies and images of women which caused the oppression of woman in the Christian world, and vigorously voices for their equal status in the society. According to Brown, since the women were subordinated, the harmony between two sexes was destroyed. The relationship between male and female was not that of equal status but that like of monster and slave. The women were considered as an object to be used, and have constantly been exploited since then. But *The Da Vinci Code* claims that in the ancient time there was religious balance between male and female and it has lost the balance between two sexes and only male has been considered and valorized as superior and sacred instead of woman. As Brown writes:

The ancient envisioned their world in to two halves – masculine and feminine. Their gods and goddesses worked to keep the balance of power. Ying and Yang. When they were balanced there was harmony in the world, when they were unbalanced there was chaos. (39-40)

Moreover, Brown describes that how the denigration of ancient female symbol and goddesses took place in Christianity in which Christian symbols and orthodoxy got triumphant and objectified the female deity. Brown writes:

... a newly emerging power will take over the existing symbols and degrade them over time in an attempt to erase their meaning. In the battle between pagan symbols, the pagans lost; Poseidon's trident became the devils pitchfork, the wise crone's pointed hat became the symbol of witch and Venus's pentacle became a sign of devil. (41)

During the course of time Christianity favored male principle and its shift towards the newly established principle destroyed the earlier established truths and symbols and redefined them from the perspective of patriarchy, from the perspective of the Christianity as a orthodox religion where women has no any respect and dignified identity. Once the female deity like Poseidon's trident and Venus's pentacle was worshipped as a sacred, has been labeled as evil and devil by the orthodox patriarchal Christianity. The church erased the pagan symbol of female just to create the masses to the Christianity; the church launched a smear campaign against the pagan gods and goddesses, recasting their divinity as evil and devil.

The Da Vinci Code claims that this kind of shift not only took place on historical facts and pagan symbols but it also affected the modern time period too. Once the matriarchal paganism was converted to the patriarchal Christianity, patriarchal Christianity also did not have any respect for women. They did nothing

good to women. After the conversion of Christianity, it created a heart rendering violence over woman which remained a deceitful and violent history. Their brutal crusade to reeducate the pagan and feminine worshipping religions spanned three centuries employing methods as inspired as they were horrific. In his novel, Brown writes:

The catholic inquisition published the book that arguably could be called the most blood soaked publication in human history, *Malleus Maleficarum* or ‘The Witches’ hammer – introducing “the dangers of freethinking women” and instructed clergy how to locate, torture and destroy them. (134)

Similarly, church not only planned to torture the women but also destroyed them who were favoring pagan culture. As Brown writes:

... These deemed “witches” by the church included all the female scholars, priestesses, gypsies, mystics, nature lovers, herb gatherers, and any women suspiciously attuned to the natural world. Midwives also were killed for their heretical practice of using medical knowledge to ease the pain of childbirth – a suffering, the church claimed, that was god’s rightful punishment for eve’s part taking of the apple of knowledge, thus giving birth to the idea of original sin. During three hundred years of witch hunts, the church burned at the stake an astounding five million women. (134)

Orthodox Christianity, which was governed by male ideologies, tortured woman in the name of reformation of the history of Christianity. The women who were governed by free thought were labeled as witch and the most ruinous enemy of the church and Christianity. So, the church ordered the clergies of the church to locate

torture and destroy them for the sake of patriarchy and for the sake of Christianity. The church declared the witches includes the women scholars, priestesses, gypsies, nature lovers and any types of women who are attuned to the natural world. The orthodox Christianity killed them, tortured them and blamed entire female race as the main cause of original sin which caused the downfall of entire human world. During the years of transformation of orthodox Christianity, church burned millions of woman at stake in the name of witch and devil. Such kind of labeling and killing is just for the establishment of male ideologies through which they can rule the woman and oppress them.

Moreover, Christianity not only tortured and destroyed the woman of free thought as witch, it created false image of them; denigrated them and banished them from church and temples to rule the church by creating dominant male ideologies for which they redefined the ritual religious cult in which male and female were remained as counterpart to each other and thus full of harmony has become now shameful act and they recast it. As Brown writes:

Women once celebrated as an essential half of spiritual enlightenment, had been banished from the temples of the world. There were no female orthodox rabbis, catholic priestess, norislamic clerics. The once hallowed act of Hieros Gamas [...] had been recasted as a shameful act. Holy men who had once required sexual union with their female counterparts to commune with god now feared their natural sexual urges as the work of devil, collaborating with his favorite accomplice...women. (135)

According to *The Da Vinci Code*, Christianity created false ideologies which altered the image of women. In ancient pagan era, women were at prominent place in

Christianity. They were leading the church and always were worshipped as spiritual. The religious cult of 'Hieros Gamas' was considered to be the spiritual and a medium where male and female's sexual intercourse was the medium through which man could achieve to the god, thus, it was a source of harmony. But Christian orthodoxy banished priestesses from temple, church and the sexual ritual Hieros Gamas considered as unclean and it is a work of devil that caused misery and downfall of Christian value and tradition. Christianity blamed feminine halves as inferior, demonic and unclean which ruined the principle and ethos of Christianity. Such kind of male chauvinist ideologies had been developed to rule over the women by denigrating them and has given a forced identity of secondary, passive, witch, evil and devil just to exploit them and to fulfill the vested interest of the then authorities.

According to the novel, Christianity created the concept of 'Left' and 'Right' to dominate and denigrate women. The 'Right' wing represents male and the 'Left' has been represented by female. The right gives the positive meaning which stands for righteousness, dexterity and correctness where as the 'Left' stands for woman and gives negative meaning which is the symbol of irrationality, evil and sinister. Patriarchy created such types of imaginary concept and valorized the superiority of masculinity over femininity. As Brown writes:

Not even the feminine association with the left hand side could escape the church's defamation. [...] while their right hander counterparts rang of righteousness, dexterity and correctness. To this day, radical thought was considered left wing, irrational thought was left brain and anything evil, sinister. (135)

Similarly, the concept of left and right has worked on Da Vinci's creation, the enigmatic beauty, Mona Lisa. He made Mona Lisa larger from left side. Leonardo Da

Vinci, one of the finest painter and the prominent member of 'Priory of Sion' described Mona Lisa to be his finest creation and he enjoyed the sublimity of feminine beauty itself sounds patriarchal where the beauty of a women has been commoditized and has been presented her sex as consumed object, where female beauty is merely being objectifying and represented as a source of entertainment by labeling a stereotypical image and interpretation.

Mona Lisa has been presented as mysterious by her physical beauty; many art historians misrepresented her and gave mysterious representations of her enigmatic smile, but a male has described her as one of the finest creation and sublime of her female beauty is itself misrepresentation which has been done to create propaganda and objectified the female. Through which what we can see is the objectifying of female beauty and manipulation of her identity and manipulation of her identity in terms of her physical beauty which is not original to her. This sort of ideological formation of women by the male gives the glimpse of the status of women in ancient Christianity where women are known for their physical beauty. As Brown writes:

The Mona Lisa's status as the most famous piece of art in the world, [...] had nothing to do with her enigmatic smile. Nor was it due to the mysterious interpretation's attributed to her by many art historians and conspiracy buffs quite simply the Mona Lisa was famous because Leonardo Da Vinci claimed she was his finest accomplishment. He carried the painting with him everywhere he traveled and, if asked why, would reply that he found it hard to part with his most sublime expression of female beauty. (127)

As we have discussed above from the excerpts of the text about how the patriarchal Christianity, its power and political motivations has established orthodox Christian

religion and oppressed women and created a forced identity of them. We can see above the status of women, their representation and formation of identity which claimed to be impure and labeled as source of original sin that caused the downfall of human world. Patriarchal male ideologies dominated the women and subjugated them by forcing them to be the secondary, object and altered their identity only for the sake of patriarchy and Christianity.

In this present chapter, we discussed the relation between patriarchy, Christianity and woman and their representation. Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* accounts various issues and evidences from history of Christianity and entails the vivid picture of the contemporary period as well as the modern time and formation of historical truth and obliteration of original one. In the following chapter my research will be focused on the representation of Sophie Neveu, the protagonist of the novel, and her status in the novel.

Sophie Neveu

In the previous chapter, I presented how was the status of women, their ideological formation of identity and the suppression through which they have to encompass within Christianity; in a nutshell, the relation between Christianity, patriarchy and women. Now on, we will discuss how the dominant character, Sophie Neveu, of the novel has been represented and the formation of her role in the novel which not only unveils the mystery behind the code but also some heart rendering truth and mystery regarding orthodox Christianity and about herself.

Dan Brown seems to be given equal attribute to the character for the chronological development of all the events and incidents of the novel. Sophie Neveu, Brown presents, as a cryptologist and the granddaughter of the Louvre victim, has been presented as an agent and agency through which he is advocating his agendas

keeping her aside in the novel. She always seems confused with the issues and development and discoveries of truth about Christianity. In contrast to her, Robert Langdon has been presented as a Harvard symbolist and code breaker reveals every secret and has been presented as a dominant and knowledgeable person. Brown has paid contrastive attribute to both protagonist- Sophie Neveu and Robert Langdon, where Langdon speaks as dominant dealing with every know and how of the inquisition of orthodox Christianity. On the other hand Sophie Neveu has been presented as a supplementary part of the development of the plot where she is always experiencing new thing and being enlightened through Langdon who settles the queries of her.

Brown has portrayed her as a typical female character attributed and embellished her with physical beauty and gave her a glamorous look. As Brown describes Sophie:

Langdon turned to see a young woman approaching. She was moving down the corridor toward them with long, fluid strides...a haunting certainty of her gait. Dressed casually in a knee length cream colored Irish sweater over black leggings, she was attracting and looked about thirty. Her thick burgundy hair fell unstyled to her shoulders, framing the warmth of her face. (56)

Moreover, Brown shows the attraction of her with her glamorous look undermining her other aspects and portrays as a mere object over which a male is experiencing and consuming. As Brown writes: "Langdon took her soft palm in his and felt himself and momentarily fixed in her strong gaze, her eyes were olive green-incisive and clear" (56).

Here, Sophie has been attributed all the physical qualities and has been presented as glamorous girl embellished with physical beauty by undermining her real image. The predefined concept about women has worked on Brown. He gave her all the female attributes and that remained dominant rather than her knowledge and experience.

In *The Da Vinci Code* Brown presented Sophie as an agency for the development of plot where she is always aside in the novel and supporting Robert Langdon on discovering the truth of history of Christianity and secrets of 'Holy Grail'. She is always confused and questioning herself and remains in dilemma throughout the novel. Such type of characteristic development has made her an agency through which a male is fulfilling his queries and able to manipulate her attraction. As Brown writes: still unsure, Sophie sensed in Langdon's patient smile that empathized with her confusion, and yet his eyes remained earnest. "but if the Holy Grail is not a cup" she asked, "what it is?" (176).

Similarly, Brown has portrayed Sophie Neveu in such a way that her life, either it be of her childhood or it be the present time, entangled within complex patriarchal social system through which she has to encompass. Sophie's life has been revolved around the codes and riddle and throughout the novel; she has been entangled within it as stated in the novel:

Eagerly she pored over the riddle until she solved it. The solution pointed her to another part of the house, where she found another card and another riddle. She solved this one too, racing on to the next card, running wildly, she darted back and forth across the house, from clue to clue, until at last she found a clue that directed to her own bedroom. Sophie dashed up of the stairs, rushed in to her room, and stopped in

her tracks. There in the middle of the room sat a shining red bicycle with a ribbon tied to the handlebars. Sophie shrieked with delight.

(119)

Such a kind of codes riddle reflects the complex social system through which a woman have to pass, and Sophie has been decoding the codes and riddles all the time to get rid of it and she has accumulate her within it.

Brown has presented Sophie as an agent through which he is challenging the aura of Christianity and making alternative reading of history of Christianity. Though Brown has presented her as an agent and advocating his agendas and issues through her, he has given less attribute to her and presented her as a submissive character where she is only playing supporting role to develop the chain of the plot of the novel by arousing emotion, feeling, ignorance and confusion in contrast to a male character who is fulfilling the queries and settling the issues and riddles. Brown has also followed the predefined social conception where male has been taken as perfect, a subject, a ruler and female has been considered a passive, object and ruled. Such kind of male chauvinist ideology has worked on the development of the character of Sophie Neveu.

Moreover, Sophie has been involved in unveiling of the truth of 'Holy Grail' and the murderer of her grandfather throughout the novel but she was unknowingly leading herself to her own real identity which has been hidden to her. She was leaving in a confusion that her family has been killed in a car accident and her grandfather has up brought her. But at the end of the novel, she finds out her real identity and about her family which has been hidden and lied to her by her grandfather. When she finds her grandmother and the truth about her family and her identity, she is quite shocked. As Brown writes:

Sophie heard her final word and immediately thought of her grandfather, who had called her princess for so many years. The sound of his voice seemed to echo now in the ancient Roslyn, settling through the earth and reverberating in the unknown hollows below. (475)

Here, the meeting with her grandmother shocked Sophie, she knew that why her grandfather had called her 'princess Sophie'. She has been encountering every truth about the childhood and her life which has been hidden from her.

Similarly, the meeting between Sophie and grandmother reveals the real identity of Sophie and her family which has been hidden to her and she was living in dilemma. As Brown writes:

The women threw her arms around Sophie, the tears flowing faster "your grandfather wanted so badly to tell you everything. But things were difficult between you two. He tried so hard. There's so much to explain. So very much to explain." She kissed Sophie's forehead once again, then whispered in her ear. "No more secrets princess. Its time you learn the truth about our family. (475)

Moreover, Sophie's quest of the grail truth and the murderer of her grandfather lead her to the revelation of her new identity which has been hid by patriarchy and led her to live with a false one; though she belongs to the royal bloodline and direct descendent of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. By Sophie's such type of representation, Brown formulates the role of her which is only supportive and secondary in comparison to the other character. He shows that she is discovering the new truth of her own and her families which had been hidden since a long time. After the revelation of her real identity, she has to know everything about her and her family as Brown writes: "she smiled quietly. "I have a family. That's where I am

going to start who we are, where we came from will take some time” (483). Here, Sophie got her family and her identity which had been hidden to her.

Thus, Brown presented her as a submissive character; an agent and agency at the same time to advocate his agendas and to reveal the hidden history of orthodox Christianity where we can see the patriarchal ideology has governed and ruled women, created the false image and obliterated the truth. But Brown, to dismantle the truth, followed the dominant patriarchal ideology and formed the role to Sophie which portrayed her as a submissive, ignorant, passive, confused and only supportive to reveal the truth about Christianity and patriarchy. Brown has made her mere a medium, an agent for development and promotion of his own agenda about Christianity.

IV. Conclusion

In the novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown portrays the status and role of women in ancient Christianity where women were suppressed by patriarchal male ideology and for the promotion of male values and tradition, the male successor of Christianity successfully converted the matriarchal paganism to the patriarchal Christianity which caused the denigration of women and female deities and loss of the original values of them. This sort of shift brought male in power and suppressed the femininity which was once thought to be sacred.

Dan Brown makes many claims about Christianity, its claim and questions the historical facts related to Christianity which is deeply rooted on patriarchy and leads its reader to another part where we can see the denigration, suppression and subjugation of women and their status from ancient period to present. Christianity oppressed women and created certain ideology to rule over women and to prove its superiority. It is known that, Christianity is deeply rooted on patriarchy; its male successor manipulated the history of Christianity and re-commissioned *The New Testament of Bible* which omitted the truths and claims about the feminine half and immortalize Jesus Christ, prove the divinity of him. On the other hand, to highlight the male dominated ideology and principles, Constantine and his follower manipulated the history of Christianity and politicized it by illuminating the facts and conned lies about female deities and women.

Dan Brown presents his agendas through his character, about the use of power in earlier era to shape the Christianity which is established in modern period. He shows the power relation which is at the center of his novel and accordingly at the centre of orthodox Christianity. Christianity is governed by male principle and has formed certain ideologies through which it has been ruling the world. It has

obliterated the truth about femininity and denigrated them, defined it in favor of patriarchy. It has omitted the truths of history and politicized the movement, misrepresented women, oppressed them and labeled them as a passive, secondary and governed them by patriarchal norms and ideologies.

The basic premise of the book is that the church has hidden the real truth about Jesus for centuries. As Langdon tells Sophie, “every faith ion world is based on fabrication”. Brown systematically portrays the church throughout the history as deceitful, power crazed, crafty and murderous. As Langdon pontificates “the church may no longer employ crusades to slaughter, but their influence is no less persuasive. No less insidious”.

Church, to preserve the aura of Christianity, denigrated the female deities, blamed them and labeled them as witch, banished the women priestesses and clergies from church, oppressed the female scholars and killed the free thinker women who have raised voice against patriarchal Christianity. Church suppressed them by using power that resulted the triumph of patriarchy over matriarchal paganism.

Moreover, brown portrays Sophie Neveu as the perfect foil for the great male symbolist, ideally equipped to appreciate him, understanding what he is explaining, occasionally even able to contribute something herself, although usually just lagging a bit behind. She functions of course as a reader figure, representing in the narrative, and the reader’s discoveries of the hidden secrets Langdon is revealing one by one. She also provides a fragile ‘feminist’ gender balance in a story containing on an otherwise entirely male cast.

The reader is assumed throughout to be on the side of Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu as they discover these ‘truths’, ultimately themselves a male female couple standing out against a dominantly male Christian background.

Thus, *The Da Vinci Code* entails us the real image of women, their status in orthodox Christianity, their oppression and denigration of female deities and defamation of them by orthodox patriarchal Christianity. Christianity has formed certain ideologies which caused the loss of female values and helped to establish Christianity as a major religion in the world. This sort of shift brought male into power and misrepresented the women and denigrated them.

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