

I. Introduction

Salman Rushdie reconfigures the traditional fairy tale in his novel *Shame* which rewrites the "Beauty and the Beast" motive so common in fairy tales. Sufiya Zinobia Hyder combines both the qualities of beauty and beastliness. This is the consequence of her shameful birth as the first daughter in a family which was so proud of its tradition of begetting male children aplenty. Sufiya Zinobia's suppressed feelings eventually surface and her childlike beauty— she has been mentally retarded by a brain fever— gives way to beastliness. She falls under the spell of violence, unleashed by the overpowering sense of shame, and changes into "one of those supernatural beings, those exterminating or avenging angels, or werewolves, or vampires, about whom we are happy to read in stories" (197). Her monstrosity is evident both in her looks and in her behaviour. She develops a habit of tearing her hair, kills 218 turkeys, then her sister's bridegroom a painful bite on the neck, and finally, after her escapade from the confinement contrived jointly by her father and husband, begins to murder people. So, Sufiya comprises both the beast and the beauty, as the novelist also concedes, "the opposing fairytale elements combined in a single character" (139).

Traditionally, fairytales are given to representing women in some definite and set roles evoking either a noble or a wicked image of women. If the women are to be portrayed as noble and good characters, they must necessarily conform to the established norms and modes of behaviour endorsed by the patriarchate. They are expressed to be beautiful, submissive and tender, sacrificing their personal desires and identity for the good of their husband, family and society. They have to comply with the rules and principles of modesty and myth of femininity. On the other side of the issue, the same women would be labeled as wicked and

monstrous and mad if they fail to conform to the patriarchal mainstream pattern of life. If women try to assert their individuality and volition, they are sure to be termed aberrations or misfits in the society. Thus, we have two sets of images for women in the majority of literature informed by patriarchal ideology.

Shame goes against the expectation of the readers of conformist literature by portraying its female characters in roles that are defiant, and rebellious. They are violent and murderous as the characterization of Sufia Zinobia Hyder shows.

Likewise, Arjumand Harappa, 'the virgin Ironpants,' is trained by her political father to be self-defendant, self-dependent and assertive. But for all this, they do not repeal the compassion of the reader. Rather they leave a strong impression upon us for their very attempt to create space for themselves.

Rushdie's third novel *Shame* (1985), an allegory of the political situation in Pakistanis, won the Prix du Milleara Livre Etranger and was short listed for the Booker Prize for Fiction noted for its exposure of the fraudulence in the Islamic society, as well as for its portrayal of the turmoiled politics of Pakistan. Playfully, Rushdie writes the novel is about Quetta, a province in P. (Piccavistan, Pakistan, or any country of the world). The leg-pulling and mud slinging game so typical of South Asian political culture, the military coup' de tat so often staged in the same land to overthrow of the popularly elected but incorrigibly corrupt and ineffectual governments (as in Pakistan, Manyamar, to wit, and Thailand, recently)

First published in 1983, *Shame* has been acclaimed as a groundbreaking fictional work which celebrates rootlessness, post-colonialism and anti-androcentric values. The destruction of the military regime, defiance by a mentally retarded and physically tiny woman of the code of sanity and decency in butchering the males, and the play upon the setting of the novel (which is Pakistan) make the novel the more

engaging, the purely fictional touches aside. The political dimension of the novel cannot be missed in its very many utterances against the patriarchal social codes which would consign the female characters to the marginal and at best a decorative or spicing role. In *Shame*, it is the story of the women which gets the greater weightage. Rushdie has effectively subverted the master narrative of Euro-American androcentric practice of representing women as always weak characters whose rescue is ensured by some charmed and charming prince or knight. The novel is decidedly feminist at its heart though some instances of misogyny are present there. The laudable act on the part of Rushdie is that he has ventured upon a novel way of dealing with the concern and stories of women. The very fact that he has written on women and their plight— something uncommon in that light in the traditional literature— legitimizes him for his feminist authorial enterprise.

Critic Lotta Strindberg examines the novel in relation to the concepts of power and shame. She brings in the reference to the Hindu goddess Kali who is powerful but is activated as per the need and invocation of the male gods who fail to conquer demonic forces. They turn to her as the last resort, though in times of victory achieved on their own they do not feel the need to confer the status of the supreme goddess to her. This bias against Kali might have the product of misogyny in an androcentric culture. Though a powerful goddess, Kali is made to act for the favour of the gods. This helps us how women are denied a subject position; they are divested of their volition or will to act as and when they would. In short, agency is denied them. But, *Shame* ridicules the concept of almighty female who is to be guided by males. Strindberg, in her article “Images of Gender and the Negotiation of Agency in Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*,” compares Sufiya Zinobia, the girl around whom the novel spins, with Kali:

Sufiya Zinobia's abjected position alters when she turns into a beast, with all its resemblances to Kali [...]. She challenges the prevailing gender images and problematizes the dominant gender system. Earlier, she occupied an objected position where she was acted upon and where violence was inflicted upon her. Now she is the one executing violence [...]. Hence the allegorical connection to Kali does convey a form of agency. The beast is able to act and her actions have an impact on the dominating structure. (Strandberg 150)

Christopher Lehmann studies *Shame* along with *The Moor's Last Sigh*, by the same author, and concludes that the novels, contrary to the modern and western mainstream literary practices, portray female characters as powerful individuals as if they were living in a matriarchal society:

In both *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shame*, Rushdie depicts prominent female characters as the matriarchs of their families. Although this may seem odd in such a male-dominated society, in southern India matriarchy is actually a common family organization, and women even own property jointly with men. Historical records dating back to early South Indian people frequently include metonyms, perhaps signifying a lingering influence of the old Dravidian mother right in an otherwise patrilineal ordering of society. (Lehmann 25)

So, Lehmann finds these two novels are important for the space they offer the female personages in their familial circle. This is an important and meaningful gesture from so postmodern and radical a writer as Salman Rushdie.

Thus critics such as Strandberg and Lehmann value the novel for its strong treatment of women. Women are endowed with the capacity to act upon and even

against men; they are portrayed as capable of manipulating their opposite sex. This thesis rests on the fundamental assumption that a male writer has produced a feminist work of literature by daring to treat the history of a nation by presenting the story of the women there. This also intends to explicate how *Shame*, by conferring the power of volition and action to its female characters, goes against the dominant practice of characterizing women as the weaker beings. Here below is my plan for furthering this thesis.

I will carry out this thesis in four divisions or chapters beginning with introduction, critical method, textual analysis, and conclusion. Each chapter is interlinked with the other chapters, so the division will function as a methodological convenience rather than as a rigid and specific compartmentalization. The totality of the thesis is to read, analyze and reveal the feminist concern as expressed in the novel *Shame* in terms of characterization, narration and authorial comments interspersed here and there.

This thesis is guided by the conceptual consciousness of feminism, that brand of feminism known as radical feminism. It will study and interpret the novel *Shame* as a text that gives recognition to the common life of female kind by recounting their experience and stories. The images of gender become an area of interest for this thesis, as do the roles assigned to the genders. This thesis will focus on one particular character, Sufiya Zinobia, for analyzing the fundamental structures of gender with respect to the two important concepts in the novel, shame and power. To be born a female is a matter of shame, the novel presents, because to be female means to lack power. This flawed conceptualization by the common people, in case of the novel the Pakistani people, is at the heart of the socio-political critique the novel makes. This is how my thesis reads the novel *Shame* as a feminist text.

This thesis shall make a study of the concepts of fairy tales so that it would be pertinent to examine the novel as a reverse rewriting of the same. In fairy tales women are portrayed as beautiful and good. Their beauty causes danger to them, but the same beauty inspires valiant knights to undertake the venture of redeeming and retrieving them. But Rushdie does away with this trend and depicts women as cunning, even immoral according to the patriarchal yardstick of morality, destructive and hungry for the desire to express their autonomy. In this respect, Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, a much acclaimed and pivotal work in the field of modern feministic discourse, would be a reference point for my theoretical underpinning. Concepts such as radical feminism would be relevant in this section for further application while reading the novel.

This thesis is divided into four chapters which will be divided into subtopics as and when necessary. The first chapter states the hypothesis of the thesis and gives general background information about the writer and his writing. The hypothesis is forwarded and elaborated in this very section.

The second chapter is for discussing the conceptual tools with which the novel will be analyzed. Here, the thesis presents the concept of feminism and fairy tale. Also discussed are the conceptual obverse of them, that is, patriarchy and masculism, and the technique of rewriting of the fairy tale so as to question the traditionally accepted but too simplistic and gender-biased stereotypical images of women as incomplete human beings.

The third chapter analyzes the novel *Shame* and shows in detail the ways it is a pertinent text from the point of view of feminist awareness. This chapter presents several references, with elaboration and their textual context, so as to reveal and support the hypothecated feminist stand of the novel. This chapter explains how

Sufiya's case can meaningfully be read as representation of woman as "an enraged prisoner" (Gilbert and Gubar 15). Hence, the childlike beauty of the simple and frail character produces a most violent beast, an anathema to the fairy tale motive in which the beauty is endangered by the beast. But in the novel under study, the beauty and the beast are combined in the same persona.

The fourth chapter concludes the thesis explaining how the thesis has maintained its hypothesis with necessary textual evidences. This chapter will prove the novel *Shame* was an authentic feminist text in that it questioned the accepted but unfounded norms of gender inequality that emerged through the valorization of male perspectives and positions at the cost of the female values. Gender roles are social constructs, not naturally determined traits, so they can be negotiated and even disrupted as the beast working under Sufiya Zinobia proves.

II. Feminist Perspective on Fairy Tales

Feminism is social theory and a political movement primarily informed and fuelled by the experience of women. Inaugurated by such critical minds as Mary Wollstonecraft and Germaine Nicole de Sainte Beauve, this movement was later strengthened by Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoire. Simply put, feminism can be understood as a doctrine which advocates equal rights and dignity for women vis-à-vis men. Feminism acquired a more or less concrete set of beliefs in the nineteenth century articulating the thesis that women are inherently equal to men in every way conceivable. As a concerted social and political movement that went global, feminism got momentum in the twentieth century. The aim of this movement can be designed as spiritual as it seeks to establish a human society based on the mutual understanding and respect between the two sexes.

Feminism questions why women have been consigned to a subservient status in relation to men, and explains the social system controlled and constructed by men, as the cause behind women's subordination. It also studies how women's lives have changed throughout history. Also, one of its central concerns is, to explore how women's experience is different from that of men's, either as a result, as Michael Ryan writes, of "an essential ontological or psychological difference or as a result of historical imprinting and social construction" (101). The guiding norms of patriarchy to the extent that they make unfounded claims about the inferiority of women are called into question by this awakened social-political movement called feminism.

Basically, viewed from the feminist perspective, fairytales are complicit with the masculist project of keeping women subjected to the men by inculcating in female readers the conviction that only by remaining under male protection, only through marriage, can they attain social status and wealth and garner moral plaudits. As

Karen E. Rowe, a feminist scholar, explains, this genre promotes universal models of female dependency. Referring to such widely read and enjoyed tales as Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty which praise female subjugation to male power, Rowe writes that they “encourage women to internalize only aspirations deemed appropriate to our ‘real’ sexual functions within a patriarchy” (Rowe 211). To further explain the matter, “by showcasing ‘women’ and making them disappear at the same time, the fairytale [. . .] transforms us/them into man-made constructs of woman” (Bacchilega 9).

Fairytales have been perpetrating sexist and misogynist stereotypes of women despite the claims of some that the tales are dominated by female protagonists and narrators. The fact remains that the powerful women are usually wicked witches or stepmothers, whose assertiveness and independence prove self-destructive in the end.

Thus, after setting the premise that fairy tales are complicit with the masculist mission of subjugating the female kind, it is relevant here to cite a critic in this context. As Donald Haase writes in “Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship”, fairy tales have accrued a variety of response and so it would not be very easy to make generalizations about their effects. By quote:

Questions about canonization and the male-dominated fairy-tale tradition would lead to the discovery and recovery of alternative fairy-tale narratives and to the identification of the woman’s voice in fairy-tale production, from the earliest documented references to the present. The initial and rather simplistic debate over the effects of fairy tales on “the masses of children in our culture” and “the meaning of fairy tales to women” would require more detailed study of the relation between the process of socialization and the development of the classical fairy

tale, as well as more convincingly documented studies of the fairy tale's reception by children and adults. (Haase 2)

In this light, the fairytale becomes an elastic frame within which contradictory gender images can be exposed and reformulated in multiple ways. Revisionist feminist stories such as Angela Carter's or Margaret Wood's focus on recycling old paradigms or on experimenting with themes, structures and styles in ways that de-emphasize male centrality or domination. Thereby, they show that the existing social arrangements are not natural but artificial.

Masculism, Sex, and Gender

Masculism is in part the mistaking of male perspectives, beliefs, attitudes, standards and values and perceptions for all human perceptions. Masculism has been the root cause behind women's social and intellectual disenfranchisement. And the major problem with this is that masculism is unconsciously embedded even in the female psyche. As Sheila Ruth writes, the goals of feminism acquire the status of a supremely noble ideology, a sort of spiritual dignity. As she records the goals of feminism are: to change women's sense of themselves; to change women's aspirations, based on an increased sense of worth and rights, their presence in the world; to alter the relations between women and men, to create true friendship and respect between the sexes in place of "the war between the sexes"; to give all people, women and men, a renewed sense of human worth, to restore to the center of human endeavours a love for beauty, kindness, justice, and quality in living; to reaffirm in society the quest for harmony, peace, and humane compassion (9).

The relation between sex and gender is fraught with confusion and even a degree of complexity. One line of argument goes that sexual characteristics are fixed as per the law of nature and therefore account for gender role arrangements. That is,

since men and women are differently endowed by nature, their duties, and capacities also differ. But others, especially the ones armed with the latest theories of nature/nurture controversy deny such simplistic differentiation between the two. Gender is not the same as sex, the biological fact, they argue; it is composed of a set of socially defined character traits.

Ambivalence: Angel versus Preying Mantis

The images of women in all patriarchates are fraught with sharp contradictions. Sometimes women are extolled for their feminine virtues of modesty, submission, and tenderness. At other times, they are criticized for being weak, dependent and sensual. Woman is the sublime, the perfect, the beautiful; she is the awful, the stupid, and the contemptible. She is, according to the Christian tradition, the Mother of God as well as the Traitor of the Garden. She is the lovely, tender creature man marries and takes pride in as well as the treacherous, manipulative sneak who tricked him into a union he never sought. A woman is supposed to be the keeper of virtues; she is yet a base and petty creature. Women are thus represented as having dual natures, of being all that is desirable, fascinating, and wonderful, yet destructive and dangerous. Ambivalence toward a whole range of real and imagined female powers expresses itself in subliminal patriarchal beliefs that women are unknowable, docile but dangerous, caring but preying at times. Sheila Ruth calls this bifurcation of images, the negative versus the positive ones the 'Mary/Eve dichotomy' (87).

Women are thus at once presented as the divine manifestation as well as an incarnation of evil. It was a woman who caused the primal fall of man: we know well the Biblical story of Adam's fall from the Garden of Eden. It was because of Eve, his beloved wife, that Adam, though he knew the consequences, took the fatally adventurous misadventurous step of eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of

Knowledge. In doing so he disobeyed God and incurred the curse of expulsion from the Garden of Eden, of toilsome life and of death. In short, women are mystified by the men either because they cannot understand them as they do not try to, or because the cooked-up mystique of femininity serves the male interest well. It goes without saying that, in a patriarchy, like everything else, the images of and injunctions about women have been exclusively male created. The dichotomy in the representation of women is a strong indication of the ambivalence on the part of men, because all the representations are done by men. Beauvoir's observation in her noted text *The Second Sex* is relevant in this regard:

But if a woman is depicted as the Praying Mantis, the Mandrake, the Demon, then it is most confusing to find in woman also the Muse, the Goddess Mother, Beatrice. As group of symbols and social types are generally defined by means of antonyms in pairs, ambivalence will seem to be an intrinsic quality of the Eternal Feminine. The saintly mother has for correlative the cruel stepmother, the angelic young girl has the perverse virgin: thus it will be said some times that Mother equals Life, sometimes the equals Death, that every virgin is pure spirit or flesh dedicated to the devil. (996)

This dual representation of women has kept them at a disadvantaged position. They can be the good mother or friend only at the cost of their individual identity; and if they try to be on their own, they are depicted as the very evil incarnate. In patriarchy, the images of women, like other conceptualizations, have been male created.

Therefore, it takes no extra perception to see that the contradictory and conflicting stereotypes of women are male projections, and as such they ought to be understood as the outward expressions of male attitudes. As Sheila Ruth writes, “the dichotomy

in the representation of women, therefore, is a strong indication extreme ambivalence on the part of men” (87).

Patriarchy and Effects of Stereotypes

A society can be called patriarchal to the extent it valorizes male values at the cost of female ones and helps perpetuate the domination of women at the hands of men. This sociological and anthropological meaning retains its relevance in the political and philosophical movement of feminism too. Feminists would like to contend that patriarchy would refer not simply to a society where men hold power, but rather to a society ruled by a certain kind of men wielding a certain kind of power. And such a society reflects the deep-rooted values of traditional male ideal. In this sense, patriarchy denotes a culture whose central and driving ethos is an embodiment of male or rather masculist ideals and practices conforming to those ideals. Patriarchy has determined to a considerable and virtually indelible extent the nature and quality of human societies across the world—irrespective of time and space—the values and priorities, and the place and image of women within the societies, and the relation between the sexes. Feminism, therefore, as socio-political movement which aspires to enhancing healthy and just relations between the two sexes, has to expose how masculist ideals have been dehumanizing and subordinating women on the basis of grossly unfounded myths and norms.

The males know well how easy it is to control women by the mere strategy of mind control. To inculcate certain beliefs, to indoctrinate the women into believing their inherent fragile, sentimental and altruistic nature, to continuously remind them of their secondary and subservient status ever since the creation of human beings by God—these all are the tools of mind control. To give constancy and currency to such brain-washing and mind-controlling precepts, stereotypes are formulated and given

currency. Stereotypes—images based on limited experience of one time but accepted as true ever after—serve the great purpose of the men in subjugating the women. The stereotypical images of women stamped and circulated as truths have been destructive to the self image and esteem of women. These myths and stereotypes function as social norms, and direct the attitudes and conducts of both the males and the females in the society. What is problematic with the female stereotype is that it forces, rather indoctrinates in many instances, the women not only to appear and accept that they are substandard, but to become substandard so that they can gain approval of the society as the embodiment of ideal women. And the social factors help sustain and enhance such an ideal. Limited education, experience, and critical faculties—deemed ideal for women because they are not expected to be wise in the ways of the world, or to compete with the men—along with the demand that women be of delicate and attractive body to be desirable for male consumption, and countless other influences collude in the masculist mega scheme of persuading the women to believe the myth and act accordingly. Explaining how much pressure such myths, stereotypes and curbs exert upon females in twisting and narrowing their intellectual and moral qualities, Mary Wollstonecraft writes in her landmark critical text *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792):

Females, in fact, denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have their attention naturally drawn from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts through the private duty of any other members of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important

concerns by political and civil and civil oppression, sentiments become events, reflections deepens what it should, and would have effaced, if the understanding had been allowed to take a wider range. (398)

Women are deprived of the right to natural expression of their psychological and physiological needs and drives. They are expected to live up to the images men have conjured about them. This all eventually creates a diseased and unnatural personality in women. The influence of stereotypes and the need to live accordingly destroys the humanity in females. This is what Simone de Beauvoir also notes in “Myth and Reality” section of *The Second Sex*:

[. . .] as against the dispersed, contingent, and multiple existences of actual women, mythical thought opposes the Eternal Feminine, unique and changeless. If the definition provided for this concept is contradicted by the behaviour of flesh-and-blood women, it is the latter who are wrong: we are told not that Femininity is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine. (996)

So powerful is the myth of femininity that the females are forced into complying with the myths. Otherwise they would be termed aberrations, but the myths would never be questioned as to their authenticity. One of the most powerful myth produced by men against women is the myth of the ‘us’ and ‘them,’ the ‘self’ and the ‘other.’ The men are the natural component of humanity; whatever they see, say or do is right and universal. Their mode of acting and thinking is the human mode, the right mode of thinking; but the female mode of perception is merely of the female. But in reality, both men and women are of the same category in their nobility and weakness as human beings. The effort of the men to establish and claim superiority over women is

spurious. Commenting upon the false notion of feminine mystery and the usefulness of the same mystery for the men, Beauvoir writes:

We can see now that myth is in large part explained by its usefulness to man. The myth of women is a luxury. It can appear only man escapes from the urgent demands of his needs; the more relations are correctly lived, the less they are idealized [. . .] surely most of the myths had roots in the spontaneous attitude of man towards his own experience and toward the world around him. (999)

So, the real issue is not what is true but how much the patriarchal mode of perception damages the personality of the women.

Sheila Ruth makes a similar observation to how women are rendered weak in character and self-assertion:

Many factors in the environment conspire to impede women's competence and accomplishments in many areas—hostile or deprecating attitudes of incumbent men, lack of support and assistance from all quarters, dual and/or incompatible professional and nonprofessional functions, pervasiveness of the male (alien, inhospitable) ambience, and socialization that erodes confidence and self-assertion. Rather than being inferior, women are hampered in developing competence in the most profound ways. (160)

Given these odds against their success in life, it is hardly surprising that so few women come to be counted as successful personages in life. This accounts for the relatively backward position women occupy in every public domain in comparison to men. How can one expect women to be somebody with their distinct mark in a field when what the society and family confines the definition of good women to those who

are beautiful and attractive, fragile, domestic and self-effacing—that is, ready to renounce themselves for the integrity of their family and the honour of their husbands?

Deliberating upon the impact of tales and literature on the psychic make-up of the female readers, Karen E. Rowe also makes similar observation:

Romantic tales exert an awesome imaginative power over the female psyche— a power intensified by formal structures which we perhaps take too much for granted. The pattern of enchantment and disenchantment, the formulaic closing with nuptial rites, and the plot's comic structure seem so conventional that we do not question the implications. Yet, traditional patterns, no less than fantasy characterizations and actions, contribute to the fairy tale's potency as a purveyor of romantic archetypes and, thereby, of cultural precepts for young women. (11)

The masculinist images of women and the roles that these images support are constructed so as to create a situation many ways very convenient for men. Women are expected to help and serve men physically, taking care of their homes, property, clothing, or persons; economically, doing numerous household chores for which women are paid so little or not paid at all; sexually, as wives, mistresses, or prostitutes who satiate men's sexual needs; and reproductively, assuring men of their family line, the continuity of dynasty.

The image of woman as man's complement offers an extremely effective support mechanism for the masculinist self-image: the softer, weaker, and more dependent the woman is, the stronger and more powerful the man appears; the more

servant the woman, the more master the man. Hence the complicity of the patriarchal social pattern in sustaining and propagating such stereotypical images.

Radical Feminism

The fundamental difference radical feminism holds with other isms included in feminism is its thesis that the oppression of women is the most fundamental form, the most radical form of suppression. Since these feminists viewed the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of oppression, they came to be nomenclatured as the radical feminists. As they propounded, the situation of women as subordinate to that of men was universal: women—irrespective of class, culture, and race—were abused, oppressed and deprived of human dignity throughout the globe. In this context the term ‘radical feminism’ emerged in the late 1960s in the wake of the civil rights peace movements in America. This movement is also called ‘get to the roots’ movement.

Radical feminism enjoyed a wide currency and clout for a decade in the seventies. It was accepted as the only true feminism during that period. Buttressed strongly with the conviction that women are of absolute positive values, radical feminists question the system of patriarchy which has been a strong tool for the men to oppress women. Patriarchy, in their view, is the Pandora’s Box, the source of all evil and violence in society. To radical feminists, patriarchy is “the least noticed and yet the most significant structure of social inequality” (Lengermann and Brantley 462). Patriarchy remains in power because it has gone deep down the psychic unconscious of both the males and the females. It prevails in such ideas as fashion and beauty, marriage and motherhood, chastity and virility. The radicals believe that patriarchy, the biggest mechanism of women’s subjugation, can be challenged and overthrown by awakening women’s consciousness. Only through awakening them up

can women be able to come out of the spell of patriarchy which has been a crippling spell on them.

Lesbianism, as the radical feminists believe, is one of the ways to subvert the domination of the patriarchal system. Through lesbianism, they argue, women move away from patriarchal domination to the realm where they can love person from their own kind. Lesbianism also provides the ground to the feminists to contend that women can exist and can have a fulfilled existence too despite their distance from the males.

Radical feminism is also centered on the necessity to question gender roles. In this respect, it can be compared and identified with the current “gender politics” which questions why women are supposed to assume certain roles based on their biology, and by the same logic, why men adopt certain roles based on theirs. It is the foremost job of the radical feminists to differentiate the biologically determined functions and behaviours from the culturally determined ones so that both the sexes will have the scope to free themselves from the narrowly determined gender roles. It is not that it is only women who would be emancipated from this kind of skepticism of gender roles; the men too would have a wider space to do act as they feel if this stereotypical gender role construction is critically reviewed. One burning example, in Nepali context, is that men are not supposed to weep—for it is a symptom of weakness, therefore of femininity, to weep. But are not men prone to the same kinds of emotions as women are? Don’t the male kinds ever feel the need to weep?

Gender, viewed from feministic perspective, is used for dominating women. Gender is nothing more than the division of sexuality and men’s domination over women. Sexuality constitutes gender, not vice versa. As Catherine Mackinnon says:

Sexuality, then, is a form of power. Gender, as socially constructed embodies it, not the reverse. Women and men are divided by gender made into the sexes, as we know them, by the social requirements of heterosexuality, which institutionalize male sexual dominance and female sexual submission. If this is true, sexuality is linchpin of gender inequality. (qtd. in Freedman 60)

The power is exclusive to men. If women exercise any power emanating from their sexuality, that power is precarious at the best, always at the mercy of men. This power is a disadvantaged privilege which ultimately cripples the human personality in women. To elucidate by example, a woman is more adept at looking after a baby or a sick person. This very skill renders her a mere caretaker—either as mother or wet mother, or as a nurse. She is deprived of the right to act like a father or a doctor. In heterosexuality, men occupy the first or upper position. Lesbianism, on the other hand, provides a space for female love for female. In the postmodern era, it is argued that lesbianism does not mean women are prone to having sexual relation with women, but rather women are declined to having sex with men. As Freedman argues, “the very essence, definition and nature of heterosexuality is men first” (61).

Heterosexuality reinforced men’s supremacy over women. Women who had sex with men were supposed to be surrendering themselves to the dominance of men.

Therefore, lesbianism had to be preferred with its enlarged scope. Adrienne Rich, a noted feminist poet and critic, explains the new terrains of lesbianism:

If we expand [lesbianism] to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support [. . .] we begin to grasp breadths of

female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of lesbianism.

(qtd. in Freedman 62)

The bond between females, rather than the one between males and females, is prioritized by lesbian feminists. In the context of the novel *Shame*, the deep bond among the three Shakil sisters works as a strong defiance of the patriarchy.

III. Dismantling Fairytale Representation of Women in *Shame*

This chapter is divided into three subchapters so as to elaborate the interrelated but different aspects of the novel. At this point I have used the critical ideas developed in the earlier chapter to examine the text.

The novel *Shame* is replete with the frequent use of the word shame in connection with its female character. This cursory observation might consign the novel to condemnation as a sheer misogynist text, so it would be necessary here to mention that the novel is not complicit with this negative representation of women. Rather, it holds such generalizing and unfounded bias against the female kinds up to ridicule and scrutiny.

Omar Khayyam Shakil, the embodiment of shamelessness as the novel itself tells us, is the result of the shameful act of one of the three Shakil sisters. After the death of their father, the old Mr Shakil, the three Shakil sisters throw a riotous party in their newly found and much coveted liberty from the fatherly dominance.

Shortly after the party ended [. . .] it began to be bruited about the bazaars of Q. that one of the three nose-in-air girls had been put, on that wild night, into the family way.

O shame, shame, poppy-shame! (16)

It is worth noticing here that the male participant in this family project remains totally unnoticed. His participation goes unmentioned. It is only the women who have to bear the brunt of satire and mockery. It is very much like a rape case in which despite the enormity of the crime, the male does not suffer from dishonor or shame even if he is arrested and penalized; it is the female who has to live through the sense of shame. Patriarchal social conditioning of consciousness has led to this sorry state of affairs

that irrespective of the fact that two parties are required to perform the act of shame, the whole burden is passed onto the female kinds only.

In this regard it is important to see how much their confined upbringing and lack of touch with the outside world, resulting in their spiritual and intellectual development, has made them shameless and insensitive. When old Mr Shakil is about to give up his ghost, the three daughters are not troubled much.

They found him in the grip of an asphyxiating fits of shame, demanding of God, in gasps of imperious gloominess, that he be consigned for eternity to some desert outpost of Jahanuum, some borderland of hell. Then he fell silent, and Chhunni, the eldest daughter, quickly asked him the only question of any interest to the three young women: ‘Father, we are going to be very rich now, is that not so?’ (14)

A normal human being cannot talk so insensitively about getting rich because their parent is dying. But whose fault is this really? Not the daughters’. It is the result of their upbringing enforced by their father in a patriarchal social structure where female are not supposed to be intellectual or wise. The three sisters are happy that their father is dead. This lack of sensitivity is clearly indicative of what Wollstonecraft points as ignorance:

There are many follies, in some degree, peculiar to women: sins against reason of commission as well as omission; but all following from ignorance and prejudice [. . .] Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in live, 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. (Wollstonecraft 399)

The sensitivity-deadening strictures and social structure, supported by the twisted exegetics of the scriptures have rendered the female kind less than human beings. The sisters, free because their patronizing and restrictive father is dead, cannot help throwing a party on this occasion. Their insensitivity can be seen in the guest list they have prepared: they discriminate against the native dignitaries and invite the foreign ones. This again leads to the sexual liaison which brings for them a son whose father nobody knows.

It became clear, however, that the snobbishness which their father had bred into the sisters' bone-marrow had fatally infected the guest list. [. . .] Now the crimes of omission were compounded by those of commission, because it was seen that the sisters had committed the ultimate solecism: invitations, scorning the doormats of the indigenous worthies, had found their way into the Angrez Cantonment, and into the ballroom of the dancing sahibs. [. . .] The imperialists! –the grey-skinned sahibs and their gloved begums!-raucous-voiced and glittering with condescension, they entered the mirror worked marquee. (15-16)

Fertility, the capacity to beget children is accounted a must for a woman if she is to be accepted as a member into the family she joins in consequence to her marriage. If she does not bring forth any child within the earliest period from the marriage, she is sure to arouse suspicion in the family as to her fitness for providing lineage to the family. Bilqius, married to Raza Hyder and living with his Bariama's extended family, fails in this account for some time. This earns her a taunting remark

from Raza's vicious cousin Duniyazad, who despite being a female, is ready to put all the blame of barrenness and the consequential shame upon her sister-in-law:

The disgrace of your barrenness, Madam, is not yours alone. Don't you know that shame is collective? The shame of anyone of us sits on us all and bends our backs. See what you're doing to your husband's people, how you repay the ones who took you in when you came penniless and a fugitive from that godless country over there. (84)

Bilqius has failed to reciprocate the kindness extended to her by Raza Hyder when he married her, a parentless fugitive from India at the time of partition. Her failure in conceiving might have arisen from the congested household where all the females share the same room and the husbands are supposed to go into their wives at the dead of the night under the pretended snoring sound of Bariama. And finally Bilqius experiences gestation, but that results in a miscarriage: the babe is stillborn with a noose around his neck. After this, Bilqius protests against the oppressive environment of the big household where one could not tell who was who in relation. So Hyder takes his wife to stay with him at the army officer's quarter in the city of Q. which is Quetta. There, Bilqius readily enters the family way, and her husband is cocksure that the child would be a male one. The question of begetting a male child so as to ensure the family line as well as to prove one's family is potent enough is of great importance in the South Asian societies, not least in Pakistan, the fictional setting of the novel. Prior to their joining the big family, Raza Hyder had told Bilqius that they would have "sons", because, as he puts it, in his mother's family, "boys grow on trees" (74). This sureness comes from the imperative that if only to keep face in the family, the couple has to have a son. A daughter is not acceptable as the first child; it is below family dignity. It is a shame.

But, to their utter surprise and shock, Bilquis gives birth to a female child. She is a small-sized baby, “the wrong miracle” as the novelist astutely comments in relation to her unexpected or more appropriately, unwanted birth (89). The birth takes place at the army hospital. When the midwife talks of the baby as so beautiful a daughter and wants to congratulate the father, Raza is stunned. He is not ready to accept that it was a daughter that he had become a father of: ‘Mistakes are often made!’ Raza shouted. ‘Terrible blunders are not unknown! Why, my own fifth cousin by marriage when he was born...! But me no buts, woman, I demand to the hospital supervisor’ (89). It is a terrible mistake for a daughter to be born into someone’s family who used to boast that in his family boys grew on trees. Hyder sees the supervisor, a senior staff to him. The supervisor declares the question of gender beyond dispute; that is whether Hyder likes it or not, he has fathered, better, his wife has mothered a daughter. The mother too is rendered speechless on the face of such a disaster. But it is not the parents who undergo a terrible sense of shame; it is the baby herself! And this fact is going to have irreversibly terrible consequences in the life of the baby as well as those associated with her. The narrator makes a suggestive observation at this point:

‘And at this point’ - I am quoting from the family legend again- ‘when her parents had to admit the immutability of her gender, to submit, as faith demands, to God; at this very instant the extremely new and soporific being in Raza’s arms began – it’s true! –to blush’

Then, even then, she was too easily shamed. (90)

No doubt, the blushing on the part of the baby is an effect of the fairy tale quality of the novel, but the parental discomfiture is understandable. They are so

utterly ashamed of their baby that the baby herself starts feeling uneasy, and in an exaggerated vein so common in fairy stories, she begins to blush.

The issue of 'daughters-who-should-have-been-sons' runs throughout the novel, since it is a novel foregrounding the female story. A reference to Sufiya Zinobia and Arjumand Harappa goes like this:

Sufiya Zinobia was the 'wrong miracle' because her father had wanted a boy; but this was not Arjumand Harappa's problem. Arjumand, the famous 'virgin Ironpants', regretted her female sex for wholly non-parental reasons. 'This woman's body,' she told her father on the day she became a grown woman, 'it brings a person nothing but babies, pinches and shame.' (107)

So, Sufiya Zinobia was made aware of her shame by her parents, she was forced to feel shame. But Arjumand Harappa, so pampered by her father, Iskander Harappa, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, is not free of this sense of inferiority and shame for being a woman either. The biological unavoidability and fact that the power of procreation is given only to the female has been associated with their being vulnerable to taunts, rapes, and pinches. Instead of being proud of this generating capacity, the female kinds are forced to feel inferior to the male kinds. The reason lies in the devastatingly pernicious effect of false consciousness in the patriarchal social construction.

Another reference worth a critical gaze is the unanimous premonitory tone the villagers speak in when they see Farah Zoroaster back to her father's home after months from her running away with her English teacher in consequence to her rape by Omar Khayyam Shakil in a hypnotic trance. Omar Khayyam had hypnotized her and had her carnal knowledge with a forced consent. The total fault lies in the charmer

than in the charmed being, but the society is wont to blame the girl only. So, when she returns to the village, the villagers warn each other of the possible corrupting influence she might exert over the boys in the village. But it is imperative for us as critical readers to mark that “She is back so lock up your sons” (55) attitude of the townspeople toward Farah Zoroaster is totally lopsided and flawed. It was a male who really deflowered her; it was Omar Khayyam Shakil who had raped her after hypnotizing her. Now the real culprit is escaping the scene: he is leaving the village for the city the same time Farah has arrived there, he is assured with the sense that “he had finally managed to escape” (56).

The book III, chapter seven, sub-titled “Blushing” is once again on the theme of shame. The novelist begins with the report that not long ago a Pakistani father living in the East End murdered his only child, a daughter because by making love to a white boy she had brought dishonor upon her family that only her blood could wash away the stain. The novelist’s preoccupation with the girl is deep as he admits his “Sufiya Zinobia grew out of the corpse of that murdered girl” (116). He goes on to giving a name to the girl—Anahita Muhammad for whom “Mecca meant ballrooms” (116). One cannot help noticing the suggestiveness of this observation in the light of the fact that the girl is from an Islamic community. In Islamic tradition, Mecca is the sacred birthplace of the prophet Muhammad. And ballroom dancing is something of promiscuity, intolerable for true followers of Islam. By justice, then, at least from the bigoted believers of the Al-Quran, the girl deserved punishment. The love making incident then just provided the needed pretext for her capital punishment. The executioner here is no other than her own father. Nothing is more important for a male, be it father or husband, when what is at stake is his honour. Even death of his daughter is acceptable to him in an attempt to absolve him of the dishonour brought

by her acts. Thus the crime, the violence of human life is precipitated by the need to purge oneself of the blemish of shame brought by the female members of one's family. The narrator comments fittingly: "Shamelessness, shame: the roots of violence" (116).

That was the incidental connection Sufiya Zinobia Hyder had with a girl murdered by her father who thought to get rid of the dishonour brought by his daughter's love making with a white boy in London. Sufiya Zinobia, "whose mother called her 'shame' and treated her like mud", must now take her revenge against the murderous society and relatives (119).

Her blushing acquires double connotations at this point: she is either genuinely and merely ashamed, cannot help blushing on account of the shame she has caused to her parents; or she is inwardly getting fiery, is burning with rage against the repressive social system that dehumanizes a female individual and even does not hesitate in writing off her name from the book of life. It is possible as the textual evidences too support that she was really irate with the patriarchal system that divested its women of their fundamental human rights to life. Her blushing is a sort of angry gesture: "Blushing is a slow burning" (123). Deprived of the love of her mother, and treated with contempt by her sister, Sufiya Zinobia is gathering strength engendered by dissatisfaction with one's life and the sense of being undermined on account of one's weakness or smallness. This smoldering sense of extreme hate and dissatisfaction gets vented one hot, windy afternoon when she goes out stealthily and wrings the neck of 218 turkeys Atiya Aurengzeb, the former Chief of the Army Staff's wife, had reared in her retired days. Everybody is shocked as to how she could gather the strength, and how she managed to escape from the eyes of the guards. The novel offers an explanation of a sort about this mysterious occurrence:

What seems certain is that Sufiya Zinobia, for so long burdened with being a miracle-gone-wrong, a family's shame made flesh, had discovered in the labyrinths of her unconscious self the hidden path that links *sharam* to violence; and that, awakening, she was as surprised as anyone by the force of what had been unleashed. The beast inside the beauty. Opposing elements of a fairy-tale combined in a single character... (139)

Thus, the explosion happens consequential to the repression of the sense of shame and anger. Even the poor girl herself cannot understand what lent her that much force and drive to act so violently. Here we see how a weak, mentally retarded, physically small-sized beautiful girl turned into a murderous monster, a lethal beast wrecking death havoc upon the birds. Next she would start tearing the heads of animals and men (yes, it were only men that were found without their heads). This is novelistic warning about the consequence of any kind of repression, not least social ones, upon the women as it in reality is in countries like Pakistan and other theocracies where women are looked down as second grade human beings.

The practice of naming a kind and caring male person as a woman has a serious implication: that to be considerate, emotional and protective is the task of a woman; it is a symptom of weaker personality trait. The patriarchal mode of thinking has trained us into believing that child rearing is in indissociably associated with child rearing. That is, a father cannot be a good caretaker of his child. If he does that, he is womanish. The word woman is apparently used negatively in such a context. But is there any proven standard to prove that bring mannish or manly is positive but being womanish or womanly is absolutely negative? Is there any essential difference between the character of man and woman? We are reminded of Beauvoir when she

definitely refuted any possibility of essence prior to existence. It is the way we work; we occupy positions that define us.

As Beauvoir puts it: “An existent is nothing other than what he does; the possible does not extend beyond the real, essence does not precede existent: in pure subjectivity, the human is not anything. He is to be measured by his acts” (998)

Mahmoud Kemal, Bilquis’s father, who runs a Talkie, cinema hall named Empire, is addressed as the woman at first by the children because he had to perform the role of the mother too to Bilquis who had lost her mother at the age of two. But later on, the word gained on dirty connotations:

On the opening day of his double bill of his destruction the meaning of his nickname changed forever. He had been named The Woman by the street urchins because, being a widower, he had been obliged to act as a mother to Bilquis ever since his wife died when the girl was barely two. But now, this affectionate title came to mean something more dangerous, and when children spoke of Mahmoud the Woman they meant Mahmoud the Weakling, Shameful, the Fool. ‘Woman,’ he sighed resignedly to his daughter, what a term! Is there no end to the burdens this word is capable of bearing? Was there ever such a broad-backed and also such a dirty word? (62)

The role Mahmoud plays in raising his only daughter earns him the designation of a woman. Ultimately, in the hot atmosphere of communal clash between the Muslims and the Hindu-Sikhs in the wake of the partition riot, Mahmoud becomes an object of hatred for his fellow Muslims because he runs films in which the exploits of the godless, stone washer Hindus are highlighted. He comes to realize how demeaningly the word woman can be used for humiliating a man. But, is the word naturally so

fraught with meanness? Is it not that the patriarchal society has given negative shades of meanings to it?

In a society where men are supposed to take charge of all public and important affairs of life, women are not required to have much brain or intelligence. It would be a disadvantage for women to be intelligent: their intelligence would pose threat to their husbands and the society. This is the line of thought Bilquis expresses when they are talking over the marriage proposal of Omar Khayyam Shakil regarding their daughter. Bilquis is all determined to get rid of the shame, Sufia Zinobia. So, to prove her a marriageable one, she argues with her husband vehemently: 'In a woman's body,' she replied, 'the child is nowhere to be seen. A woman does not have to be a brain box. In many opinions brains are a positive disadvantage to a woman in marriage' (161). Yes, a woman is advocating that the intellectually weaker a girl is, the more her chances of a happy matrimonial life. The complicity of Bilquis Hyder with this male-propagated ideology only proves the insidiousness and power of the stereotypes one is fed with in a patriarchate.

Female Concern and Negotiation of Agency

The novel *Shame* deserves special attention not merely for its fairy tale elements neither for its politically engaging commentaries on the oppressive social systems in countries like Pakistan. The first important fact for a feminist reader concerning Rushdie's novel is that female characters occupy the central concern. The central concern of the novel is Sufiya Zinobia Hyder, a mentally and physically retarded girl. The novelist makes it clear by his own admission:

This is a novel about Sufiya Zinobia, elder daughter of General Raza Hyder and his wife Bilquis, about what happened between her father and Chairman Iskander Harappa, formerly Prime Minister, now

defunct, and about her surprising marriage to a certain Omar Khayyam Shakil, physician, fat man, and for a time the intimate crony of that same Isky Harappa, whose neck had the miraculous power of remaining unbruised, even by a hangman's rope. Or perhaps it would be more accurate, if also more opaque, to say that Sufiya Zinobia is about this novel. (59)

The verbal play asides, the novelist states definitely what he would write about in the novel. To make an idiot, a moron the protagonist, if one may use the term for the girl, is to take an extremely daring and out-of-the-way step. A novel normally, at least in line with the expectation of the convention, should be about some really worthy characters, not about a handicapped girl, who is termed a shame to her family. But the novel violates this expectation, and takes to recounting the story of women. It is itself a feminist gesture on the part of the novel and the novelist.

The narrator turns to this issue once again in the middle of his narration. He might have begun to write a political novel, a novel on family feuds, but ultimately happened to end up with one in which the women came to claim the central position.

Once upon a time there were two families, their destinies in separable even by death. I had thought, before I began, that what I and on my hand was an almost excessively masculine tale, a saga of sexual rivalry, ambition, power, patronage, betrayal, death, revenge. But the women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities, to see my 'male' plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its reverse and 'female' side. It occurs to me that

the women knew precisely what they were up to – that their stories explain, even subsume, the men's. Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honor and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well. Contrariwise: dictators are always – or at least in public, on other people's behalf – puritanical. So it turns out that my 'male' and 'female' plots are the same after all. (173)

Rushdie has ample commentaries to make in this connection. First, his female characters come forward to a deserved coverage in the novel so long denied to them. This reminds one of the shift modern literature took in replacing the practice of recounting the story and history of the so-called nobility comprising the royalty, knight, and supernatural powers by the story of the common, downtrodden people. The only problem was that even with this shift, half of the human race, the female race, was left unaccounted. The stories and histories of the female were neither seriously told nor heard with interest. So much so that, even the few successful female writers of the nineteenth century had to assume pseudonyms for the fear that they might lose the respect and trust of their readers if the readers knew the writers were women. But Rushdie's novel boldly gives more space to the female characters than it does to the male ones. Next, the equality of male and female is established, at least in their shared plight under unfavorable political systems: they both live under the same social and political systems, both are victims of dictators, though from time to time women are exposed to more than their fair share of humiliation and brutality in such repressive regimes.

The next obvious feminist drive of the novel lies in its conferring the active role onto its female characters. As a rule, patriarchal societies confine women within some or other sorts of walls be that church, kitchen, children or, veil. This confinement has a debilitating effect upon the female characters of literary works since what literature does is once again to reflect the reality of the lived world. But the same confinement might be generating a possibly fatal strength within the suppressed gender. Repression of any sort is threatening to the very safety of the repressor. The pent-up emotions, violent therefore uncontrollable ones, are likely to burst open blowing up with them the torturer and the tortured. Hence, this warning about the looming threat cannot be lightly ignored. This is the premonitory and pleading aspect of the novel.

Chapter ten of the novel is especially interesting in this respect. It is about Sufiya Zinobia's secret turning into a murderous beast that tears off the heads of young men after having sexual intercourse with them. One sentence there reads "The Woman in the Veil" which refers to Sufiya Zinobia, "also known as Shame" (197). The veil is symbolic both of the sense of shame as well as of confinement imposed on the Muslim women in Pakistan, and in other Islamic countries. Open is veiled means one cannot see the world, cannot have knowledge and understanding. Deprived of freedom and light, one can easily become a beast in such a circumstance. Exploiting this possibility, the novel transforms the poor girl into a beast, as is not uncommon in the fairy tale tradition.

Appearances notwithstanding, however, this Sufiya Zinobia turned out to be, in reality, one of these supernatural beings, those exterminating or avenging angels, or werewolves, or vampires, about whom we are happy to read in stories, sighing thankfully or even a little smugly

while they scare the pants off us that it's just as well they are no more than abstractions or figments; because we know (but do not say) that the mere likelihood of their existence would utterly subvert the laws by which we live, the process by which we understand the world. (197)

If such transformation of human beings into beasts were possible, the danger would be enormous to all. The novel recognizes this and clarifies we are happy to read about such stories but cannot accept the same in our life. But Sufiya Zinobia had turned into a beast, no question about that. "Lurking behind Sufiya Zinobia Shakil there was a beast" (197). The beast has now come out, overpowered her, and has started taking tolls on human and animal life alike. But young men are the chief victims of the beast. Clearly, the beast is an intricate product of the sense of shame, hatred for the male kinds, and sexual dissatisfaction. Sufiya's husband, Omar Khayyam Shakil has never slept with her. Instead, he has been going into her ayah, and has made her pregnant. Sufiya Zinobia knows it all. She has heard the nocturnal gasping, has visualized what a husband does with a wife.

In relation to subversive gender roles, it is necessary to understand what has been accepted as the lotted roles to men and women. As Lois Tyson writes in her commentary volume *Critical Theory Today*, "traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (83). This is even more so in fairytales which are all based and told from a masculist perspective. But the novel exposes the strong, the defiant, the murderous power latent in the female kind and goes against the portrayal of women as 'sweet and soft'.

Modern Fairytale: Anti-Fairytale Motive

Fairytales begin with “once upon a time there was a...” type of opening. The purpose was to compensate for the obviously impossible elements in the tale such as fairies, angels, demons, and other supernatural beings. How would a modern fairytale begin? One may wonder. The novel *Shame* provides an answer to this question. For this it is necessary to establish here at the outset that the novel is really a modern fairytale and not a realistic novel, though elements of realism are evident. The citation below tells much about the political concern of the novel about Pakistan:

But suppose this were a realistic novel! Just think what else I might have to put in. the business, for instance, of the illegal installation, by the richest inhabitants of ‘Defence’, of covert, subterranean water pumps [. . .] And would I also have to describe the Sind Club in Karachi, where there is still a sign reading ‘Women and Dogs Not Allowed Beyond This Point’? (69)

So as we see, the socio-political reality in Pakistan is presented in the garb of non-realistic writing. But no one can miss the tone of satire contained in the line which equates women with dogs by denying the entry right to both categories. He goes on claiming how his novel cannot be called a realistic novel based on Pakistan- it does not contain the various historical details about the country:

How much real-life material might become compulsory!- About, for example, the long ago Deputy Speaker who was killed in the National Assembly by elected representatives; [. . .] or about the attempt to declare sari an obscene garment; or about the extra hangings- the first for twenty years-that were ordered purely to legitimize the execution of Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto . . . (69-70)

But the very act of making the admission that the novel has not included the above mentioned incidents refutes the claim of the novel not being related to Pakistan. We know why Rushdie the writer makes the narrator clarify that he is not writing a realistic book on Pakistan: it would have provoked the intolerant elements and “the book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned” (70). The writer would not have reached his reader and his intention would have been made impossible. That is why, after making sure his readers would not miss the point that Pakistan is the real setting of the novel, the novelist goes on to defend the book from the possible attacks. One of the easy ways is to name it a fairytale whose details need not be taken so seriously: “Fortunately, however, I am only telling a sort of modern fairy-tale, so that’s all right; nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously. No drastic action need be taken either” (70).

So, after establishing the premise that the novel was intended as a fairytale by the writer, it is worthwhile to examine to what extent it follows the norms of fairytales. Once again we confront the conflicting elements in the novel – though it begins some of the sections with ‘once upon a time’ type of structures, the content is unmistakably the present day Pakistan:

Once upon a time there was a plot of land. It was attractively situated in the heart of the First Phase of the Defence Services Officers’ Co-operative Housing Society; to its right stood the official residence of the national minister for education, information and tourism, an imposing building whose walls were clad in green onyx marble streaked with red, and to its left was the home of the widow of the late Joint Chief of Staff, Marshal Aurengzeb. (133-34)

This 'once upon a time' (133) tone is kept for the reference about the protagonist of the novel too: "And once upon a time there was a retarded daughter, who for twelve years had been given to understand that she embodied her mothers' shame" (135). Such tone is maintained at other places too to give the impressions if the novel was written about some distant time and setting.

But, despite these apparent fairytale like tone, the novel completely violates the expectation that a happily ever after and utopian world would be established. In traditional fairytales, the female characters are beautiful but weak therefore in need of rescue at the hands of some valiant knight or handsome young man. But in this novel, the heroine is neither so perfect physically nor does she require freedom from some villainous or demonic power. She is actually in need of becoming free from the sense of shame for being born a daughter instead of a son. Her liberation lies not in the arrival of prince charming but in the changed, equitable mentality of the society and its members concerning the value of female life. It is not the physical force that would bring comfort and safety to her; it is the liberated, sublimated sensibility of the male members of the society who really can confer the sense of dignity and importance to the female individuals.

The next striking difference the modern fairytale as present in the novel possesses with the traditional one is the subversion of the role or agency. In the old good fairy stories of the old good days good girls remained indebted to their rescuers throughout their lives; they were passive, acted upon and guided by the norms of decorum and gentility. Their beauty was their only weapon for garnering love and protection. This is something otherwise in the case of Sufiya Zinobia. She combines in herself the beauty and the beast as the novel itself tells: "the beast inside the beauty. Opposing elements of a fairytale combined in a single character..." (139). And the

hero who happens to fall in love with this beauty and the beast is not some prince charming; he is middle-aged obese immunologist interested in her more as her doctor-rescuer as a lover-rescuer. The manner he falls in love is described not as something romantic but as stupidity, idiosyncrasy: “Omar Khayyam falls stupidly, and irretrievably, in love” (143).

The beast motive gains more coverage at the later section of the novel. Sufiya Zinobia is possessed by a beast at night and goes out for hunting human heads. Nobody except her sister’s husband, Talvar Ullaq, an important personage in the police espionage, guesses what is what. For others the acts of the beast remain unexplained until the last moment when the incumbent president Raza Hyder has to flee the capital. The first act of violence the beast causes at the dead of night with the body of Sufiya Zinobia is the ripping apart of the heads of four young men. The description is ghastly:

The four bodies were all adolescent male, pungent. The heads had been wrenched off their necks by some colossal force: literally from their shoulders. Traces of semen were detected on their tattered pants. They were found in a rubbish dump near a slum. It seemed that the four of them had died more or less simultaneously. The heads were never found. (216)

Sufiya Zinobia has been suffering from insomnia but since she seems to be sleeping nobody notices this. She starts walking in her sleep-like state. It is at such times that she finds a way of fulfilling her sexual desires by getting men to come upon her and later releases her anger by murdering them, always by beheading. The novel provides a peep into when and how this all happens:

Insomnia into somnambulism. The monster rises from the bed, shame's avatar, it leaves that ayah-empty room. The burqa comes from somewhere, anywhere, it has never been a difficult garment to find in that sad house, and then the walk. In a replay of the turkey disaster she bewitches the nocturnal guards, the eyes of the Beast blaze out of hers and turns the sentries to stone, who knows how, but later, when they awake, they are unaware of having slept. (219)

This violence is the result of the suppressive home environment. Omar Khyyam

Shakil understands this when he ponders over the newly gained freedom of his wife:

'For the first time in her life' – he shocked himself by the sympathy in the thought – 'that girl is free.' He imagined her proud; proud of her strength, proud of the violence that was making her a legend, that prohibited anyone from telling her what to do, or whom to be, or what she should have been and was not; yes, she had risen above everything she did not wish to hear. (254)

There are other important instances where women are the actors on the life and destiny of the powerful men in the country. The fleeing president Raza Hyder is led by Omar Khayyam Shakil to the old mansion of his mother in Nishapur. Their reaching there is ensured by the burka device devised by Bilquis. For the first time in their life, the two men have to consign their fate to the custody of a woman.

Moreover, their end is precipitated by the women whom they had hurt in some profound ways.

Raza Hyder had shot the younger son of the three Shakil sisters. The mothers have not forgotten this and when they find the murderer of their son at their home, they plan to avenge his death. Hyder senses this danger too late and does not even try

to escape in the real sense. He is mercilessly chopped into bits and pieces by the contraption the sisters had got installed with the help of Yakoob Balloch. The flashback brings the past to the present in a revealing way:

The image of Sindbad Mengal flashed into Raza's mind as the three sisters pulled down the lever, acting in perfect unison, so that it was impossible to say who pulled first or hardest, and the ancient spring-release of Yakoob Balloch worked like a dart, the secret panels sprang back and the eighteen-inch stiletto blades of death drove into Raza's body, cutting him to pieces, their reddened points emerging, among other places, through his eyeballs, Adam's apple, navel, groin, and mouth. His tongue, severed cleanly by a laterally spearing knife, fell out on his lap. He made strange clicking noises; shivered; froze. (282)

The hapless end of Hyder speaks much about the end of all dictators. It is going to be hard time for them to save their skin once the political and military power slips off their hands. Hyder's death at the hands of the Shakil sisters is indicative of the turn of wheel in respect to gender roles too. His deserved comeuppance is enforced by ageing women suggests that women can be equally lethal revengers; they too can act coolly and calculatively.

The united effort of the women can topple down the man-made rules and traditions in all their artificiality and injustice. The three Shakil sisters agree to blatantly violate the patriarchal norms and senses of propriety by having a child in such a way that nobody can pinpoint which of the three sisters was the actual mother of the baby born out of wed lock. The reference is about the close relation among the three mothers of Omar Khayyam Shakil. There was a story in circulation that the

three resolved to “share” the baby and that the treaty was “written down and signed in the commingled menstrual blood of the isolated trinity”:

All this happened in the fourteenth century. I’m using the Hegiran calendar, naturally: don’t imagine that stories of this type always take place longlong ago. Time cannot be homogenized as easily as milk, in those parts until quite recently, the thirteen-hundreds were still in sinful swing. (13)

The three mothers are totally against the Moslem practice of shaving, circumcision and the whispering of the name of God into the new-born babe. As his eldest mother Chhunni told him on his seventh birthday, she refused completely to “whisper the name of God” (21) into his ear. Similarly, on his eighth birthday middle-Munnee confided: “there was no question of shaving your head. Such beautiful black-black hair you came with, nobody was cutting it off under my nose, no sir!” (21). The youngest mother is more vehement than others as the writer reports: “Under no circs, (21) Bunny announced, "would I have permitted the foreskin to be removed. What is this idea? It is not like banana peel” (21). Thus, from the very beginning, the life of Omar Khayyam has been a defiance of the traditional mores and bindings. As the novel sardonically reports, “Omar Khayyam Shakil entered life without benefit of mutilation, barbering or divine approval. There are many who would consider this a handicap” (21). The many referred to in these lines are the committed and fanatic followers of Muslim tenets who adhere to foolish traditions in the name of culture and religion.

Similarly, Omar Khayyam Shakil too is fated to meet with his death at the hands of his unsatisfied wife whom he has not given the wifely recognition he should have given. Accepting the ayah’s proposition that her ward is too moronic and fragile

for the bed, Shakil went into the ayah instead of his wife. This also generated morbid sense of rage and hatred against the male kind. So, his wife whose has long been in control of the red-eyed beast visits him for the final retribution. Realizing that there is now no way of further escape for him, and that he deserves the fate, Shakil makes no attempt of escape and embraces his death by decapitation. Here is a description of his end:

His body was falling away from her, a headless drunk, and after that the Beast faded in her once again, she there blinking stupidly, unsteady on her feet, as if she didn't know that all stories had to end together, that the fire was just gathering its strength, that on the day of reckoning the judges are not exempt from judgment, and that the power of the Beast of shame cannot be held for long within any one frame of flesh and blood, because it grows, it feeds and swells, until the vessel bursts. (286)

The plight of Sufiya Zinobia can be compared with that of Jane Eyre. Patricia Waugh makes this observation in this connection:

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* provides a particularly compelling example in its recurrent images of dark corridors locked rooms, and barely contained fires, the novel betrays uneasy acceptance of the inhibitions and frigidity of Victorian womanhood. The madwoman in the attic of the respectable Victorian home represents the rage of repressed sexuality and frustrated voice hiding behind the 'Angel' in the House that every woman was supposed to be. (Fiona 330)

The incarceration of Sufiya Zinobia in the upper chamber of her parental house by her father and husband is for the purpose of suppressing her violent outbursts. But

captivity cannot hold her. Sufiya Ziniobia shares with Jane Eyre the effect of suppressed sexuality, hence her rape and murder of the young men. The only way to create a hale and hearty, sane and sound family and society is to recognize the humanity of the women kind. Only and equitable social order can guarantee a progressive country. This is the plea of the novel which is nothing less than a feminist agenda. Neglecting the welfare of half of the population can never create a successful human society, whatever the ideological and political system a country may adopt or however visionary leadership it may have. The novel vindicates the dignified existence of women, because only by liberating the half of the population can the other half live a fulfilling life. The specific treatment in the following extract is given to Pakistan but we can relate it to any society where the subjugation of women is rampant:

I hope that it goes without saying that not all women are crushed by any system, no matter how oppressive. It is commonly and, I believe, accurately said of Pakistan that her women are much more impressive than her men [. . .] their chains, nevertheless, are no fictions. They exist. And they are getting heavier. *If you hold down one thing you hold down the adjoining.* In the end, though, it all blows up in your face. (173)

What liberates all the male members of a society is the fact that the female are liberated too. With the half of the population in chains, the next half can in no wise enjoy the sweet fruits of freedom. *“If you hold down one thing you hold down the adjoining.”* One cannot miss the wisdom contained in this statement. The progress of Pakistan, or any other country for the matter of that, as a country depends upon serious it is about recognizing the rights and freedom of its female members. In

present day context what we call human development is not related merely to the economic development of a country, it related to such issues as gender equality, the fundamental human rights and literacy percentage of the female members, and the overall perspective the society maintains regarding the female part.

IV. Conclusion

A saga of the trials and tribulations and dishonor women are exposed to in a fanatically patriarchal society, *Shame* makes a scathing critique of the false notion of female inferiority and male valor. The novel, in short, is a decidedly a work of feminism in its retelling the traditional fairytale themes of the beauty and the beast so as to expose the ways the beauty is confined at the cost of the freedom of an individual.

The novel studied in this paper is worth pondering for its immediacy, relevance, and appeal, for it touches upon some of the most compelling issues such as the predicament of women in a religiously anti-female society, the (mis) representation of women as an object to be possessed and taken care of by men, as well as a broader pondering upon the political reality of countries manipulated by the flawed leaders. In fact, the true importance of *Shame* lies in its holding up to ridicule the false and inhuman restrictions that a patriarchate imposes upon women.

In the process of exposing the novelistic complicity in feminist agenda, fairytale critique has been a pivotal concern. The novel has done away with the standard mode of treating the beauty and the beast theme as was the tradition in fairytales. It has given a new and shocking treatment to the question by combining the opposing themes in the central character Sufiya Zinobia Hyder. She is the unexpected, undesired, mentally and physically retarded daughter, to the Army General and President Raza Hyder, and Bilquis, a fugitive girl from India. As such she embodies the shame to her parent, particularly to her mother who literally names her as shame. The mother is at an immense pressure from her in-laws to beget a male child as was the tradition in the family. But Bilquis fails to fulfill this expectation, and blames her daughter for being what she is— a daughter instead of a son.

In the novel, the concepts of shame and its opposite honour are irreversibly intertwined in the image of gender. The character Sufiya Zinobia consolidates the connection between shame and gender. She represents the shame she has incurred by her birth as a female child in the family which had been boasting of the tradition of begetting sons in a plenteous way. Her birth therefore brings dishonor upon her family. Shame in this case is something that springs from female sexuality and can only be eliminated by the death of the girl.

The novel is an example of the art of subversion through the fairy tale technique of framing stories with political consciousness. In conventional literature women are represented as weak, suppressed always keeping to the norms of decorum and modesty. Or conversely, women are wicked and plotting while men are active, good and heroic. The uncritical majority of the readers, the society at large, have been the consumer of such literary tradition. Hence the prevalence of the toxic patriarchal myths against and about women calculated for maintaining their domination at the hands of men.

Bulks of literature written in the fairy tale genre tend to undermine female worth and existence by portraying women as inactive, weak characters. This is challenged by the representation of the beastly and violent aspect of Sufiya Zinobia. She manages to challenge the male power such as her husband, the renowned immunologist expert at hypnotism, and her father, the incumbent president. In doing so, she has claimed the position of agency, not merely of an object; of an actor, not merely of the acted upon one. In her moronic, small-sized existence which her husband Omar Khayyam Shakil finds beautiful, she has been nurturing the murderous beast born out of her sense of shame and revenge. Frailty and strength, beauty and

beastliness thus come to dwell in her. This is the fairytale reconstruction of the beauty and the beast theme as found in the novel *Shame*.

WORKS CITED

- Adams, Hazard, Ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Forth Worth: HBJC Publishers, 1992.
- Bacchilega, Cristina. *Postmodern Fairytales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Beauvoir, Simon de. "The Second Sex." Adams 993-1000.
- Freedman, Jane. *Feminism*. New Delhi: Viva Books Private, 1999.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwomen in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Haase, Donald. "Feminist Fairytale Scholarship: A Critical Survey." *Marvels and Tales: Journal of Fairytale Studies* 14 (2000): 2-63.
- Lehmann, Christopher. "Salman Rushdie's Femal Characters." *Books of the Times*. 2.1 (1995): 2-25.
<<http://web22.epnet.com/externalframe.asp>>
- Lengermann, Patricia Madoo, and Niebrugge-Brantley. *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory, 1830 to 1930*. London: McGraw-Hill Publishing, 1998.
- Rayan, Michael. *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction*. US: Blackwell publishers, 1999.
- Rowe, Karen E. "Feminism and Fairytales." *Don't Bet on The Prince*. Ed. Jack Jipes. New York: Methuen, 1996. 209-26.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Shame*. London: Vintage, 1995.
- Ruth, Sheila. *Issues in Feminism: A First Course in Women's Studies*. Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University, 1980.

Strindberg, Lotta. "Images of Gender and the Negotiation of Agency in Salman Rushdie. *Shame*" *Nora on the web*. 12.3 (2004): 143-52.

<<http://web22.epnet.com/externalframe.asp>>

Tolan, Fiona. "Feminisms." *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. US: Oxford University Press, 2006. 319-39.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User –Friendly Guide*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. "A Vindication of the Rights of Women." Adams 394-99.