

DEPICTION OF WOMAN AS OTHER IN HIJABISTAN BY SABYN JAVERI

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the depiction of 'woman as other' in *Hijabistan* (2019), a collection of short stories by Sabyn Javeri. To dominate and subjugate women has been a serious issue in the subcontinent and Pakistani writers depict this in their writings. *Hijabistan* also portrays the problems of women, particularly concerning the treatment with them. The hijab, being a cultural code, is highlighted in most of the stories in the book. Women are considered secondary and are assigned subordinate roles. The reason behind it is to subjugate them. Otherness is being executed through hijab as *Hijabistan* portrays the stories of girls or women with hijab. Javeri portrays that the veil hinders the freedom of women and promotes a stereotypical view of them. Therefore, it depicts various women epitomising gender roles. This study explores through the lens of Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) (considered to be a Feminist Bible by Judith Thurman) to discuss how far woman is portrayed as other in the selected stories of *Hijabistan* i.e. *Radha*, *The Urge*, *The Date*, *Malady of Heart*, *The Full Stop*, *The Lovers* and *The Good Wife*. *Hijabistan* highlights male characters i.e. boss, uncle, father and husband and these male characters treat women as others. They hold a weird kind of attitude towards the girls and women. Their treatment towards them seems to be conventional and patriarchal. Even the older women i.e. mother, nurse and aunt seem to have been supporting and facilitating the patriarchal roles. Thus, *Hijabistan* depicts the issues of women, particularly the treatment with them. Woman is treated as other under male domination as highlighted by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949).

Key Words: *Hijabistan*, Otherness, Patriarchal, Gender Roles, conventional, Subordination, Stereotype.

INTRODUCTION

The depiction of women's issues through different genres of literature reflects their condition, situation, and predicament in Patriarchy. Pakistani English writers consider women's issues so important that they still highlight these in their writings. Ijaz (2017) says that the first lot of Pakistani fiction writers focused on the changing societal roles of Pakistani women. They portrayed women as the victims of patriarchal oppression while the 20th-century lot of writers questioned the nature and reasons behind this oppression. Keeping this in view, Javeri's writings reflect the problems of Pakistani women. Javeri, Sabyn is an Assistant Professor, and an acclaimed writer, emerging as an eminent novelist and short story writer. Her book of short stories, *Hijabistan*

was published in 2019. She depicts women's issues and considers the veil as an alibi of demarcation between men and women. Javeri (2019) states: "*Hijabistan* is a book on feminism that talks about the life of women with the veil." The hijab represents an identity of women but it is to separate them from men. Furthermore, it shelters their appearance and catalogues them as others. The girl in the story *The Urge* talks about restrictions on her freedom due to a veil. She complains that men do whatever they like, but women cannot even think of it. The husband beats his young wife because she has been hanging out with his niece without seeking permission. Keeping in view such a treatment, it is imperative to mention that men forcefully subjugate women and

assign them gender roles to control them. The subordination of women is a distinct feature of patriarchy. Therefore, Pakistani writers talk about it in their writings.

Seven stories from *Hijabistan* have been selected to explore how far woman is depicted as other. Here, Otherness is executed under male domination and female subjugation. Cultural codes are socially constructed to hold power over women. *Hijabistan* discusses the issues of women, particularly in the context of how a veil demarcates the world of women from men. The selected stories portray how women view their existence in a patriarchy. Women's freedom is restricted under male domination. According to Tyson (2006), "Patriarchy treats women, whatever their role, like objects: like objects, women exist, according to patriarchy, to be used without consideration of their perspectives, feelings, or opinions" (p.91). Thus, women are viewed as different, as objects, as others; the treatment with them is entirely different as compared to men. Men treat women without considering their feelings and aspirations. Men are considered subjects; whereas, women remain objects. Beauvoir (1949) states: "And you think the contrary because you are a man, for it is understood that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity. A man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong.....there is an absolute human type: that is masculine" (p.25).

As most Pakistani English writers explore the social, economic and psychological issues of women, so Javeri also holds a mirror to reflect the issues of women belonging to Pakistan, especially the women of urban setup. Ahmed (2017) said that in Pakistan, many feminist writers write for the rights of women and about the treatment of women as slaves, subjugated, inferior and snubbed beings. Most of the stories of *Hijabistan* portray the perception of men about women prevailing in an urban area. Moreover, elderly women also see the girls with suspicion like some men do when they reach puberty. They think that the girls may fall into the trap of strangers and should not be given freedom. Therefore, these elderly women become the facilitators in carrying out the patriarchal mindset. Tyson (2006) talks about it in such a way, "By patriarchal woman I mean, of course, a woman who has internalized the norms and values of patriarchy, which can be defined, in short, as any culture that

privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles" (p.85).

The stories in *Hijabistan* portray the fact that women are considered inferior to men. The boss, husband, and uncle-all these male characters dominate women. The girls are restricted; they are not treated as free but are seen as burdens and responsibilities. As they are not preferred, their routine activities are disapproved. Their behaviour and actions are observed with suspicion once they reach puberty. There are certain restrictions on them. Unlike boys, they cannot expose themselves; they do not dare to whistle; they do not write poetry to express their feelings; they cannot discuss their puberty with anyone in the family; and they cannot make decisions about their lives. They have to hush up even if some wrong is done to them. The wives do not enjoy freedom. They are restricted to roles and codes and thus, cannot decide to separate from their husbands even if they suffer. In the story *The Date*, the office working girl keeps silent before her boss. She is exposed to a compromising and embarrassing situation but dares not to protest. It is all happening in a male-dominated system. It seems women cannot say 'no' to men in a patriarchy. Keeping this in view, women are seldom considered independent and equal to men.

Thus, men oppress women by framing them as others; whereas, they consider themselves as selves and subjects. Men also define women and hold an inequitable perception of them. *Hijabistan* reflects the fact that men hold a weird perception of women. Women in the selected stories i.e. *The Urge*, *The Date*, *Radha*, *The Lovers*, *Malady of Heart*, *The Full Stop* and *The Good Wife* seem to be depicted as objects and inessentials. They do not enjoy freedom and face restrictions under male domination. It shows men surrounding their women define and determine their lives and existence. The subordination of these women occurs under the roles and rules of patriarchy.

1. Literature Review

2.1 Woman as Other

Beauvoir talks about man's existence as self, subject and an absolute but she mentions woman's identity as an incidental and inessential. It appears that the former is valued and the latter is devalued and defined with faults. Beauvoir (1949) says: "Man can think of himself without the woman. She cannot think of herself without man" (p.26). It means the woman has no separate identity and her life and

existence are only related to man. Thus, it depends upon men how they treat women because mostly, they do not enjoy equal rights. Men demarcate their world from that of women by assigning them gender roles. Due to this, women come under their subordination. According to Yasmin & Jabeen, women in Pakistan are expected to keep traditional coy and honour their patriarchal family members (Yasmin & Jabeen, 2017).

Javeri talks about women's issues concerning hijab. It is a cultural code to separate women from the world of men as well as it also hinders their freedom. Besides this, she discusses the issue of puberty in one of the stories, for disclosure of puberty by girls is not welcome. The girl who reaches it is considered a burden and will be married away as soon as possible. Therefore, the girls are discouraged from discussing the secrets with anyone in the family. Beauvoir (1949) affirms this fact, "One understands now the drama that rends the adolescent girl at puberty: she cannot become 'a grown-up' without accepting her femininity; she already knew her sex condemned her to a mutilated and frozen existence" (p.390).

2.2 Otherness as an Imposed Cultural Construct

The hijab is to hide a woman and she feels restricted and hidden in it. *Hijabistan* tells the saga of women who are with the veils. Observing hijab is a cultural code and it separates women from the world of men. Weiss (1985) testifies to this fact, "Purdah: the formalized separation of women from the world of men" (p.867). Thus, it demarcates men and women and sets them apart. Moreover, it also creates a barrier for women to move freely. Men show dominance over women. Therefore, by creating this inequity, men try to dominate and put women in subjugation. Besides this, there are certain gender roles women are expected to perform and fit into these. Observing the hijab is also one of them. Beauvoir (1949) states regarding woman as other: "It is the fundamental characteristic of woman: she is the other at the heart of a whole whose two components are necessary to each other" (p.29). Otherness assigns women inferior and subordinated positions in patriarchy. The treatment of males with females in Pakistan is not based on equality but with indifference. It is out of culture and the taboos in which women exist. They have to carry out their roles in a male-dominated system. Beauvoir states

(1949): "One is not born but rather becomes, a woman" (p.330). Laura Maguire (2016), a feminist and a supporter of women's rights talks about the roles Beauvoir mentions. According to her, this statement by Beauvoir means, "the roles we associate with women are not given to them in birth, by their biology, but rather are socially constructed. Women are taught what they're supposed to be in life, what kind of roles they can or can't perform in virtue of being of the second sex." In the same way, Naheed, a Pakistani feminist and poet translates the feelings of women in the following lines:

"I am the one you hid,
In your walls of stone,
While you roamed as a breeze,
Not knowing that my voice cannot,
Be smothered by the stone"

(Naheed, 2009, p.34).

2.3 Women as Inessential

Tyson (2006) highlights the fact that "the word woman, therefore, has the same implications as the word other. A woman is not a person in her own right. She is man's other: she is less than a man; she is a kind of alien in a man's world; she is not a fully developed human being the way a man is" (p.95). Thus, otherness is concerned with the perception of men about women for the sake of assigning them gender roles. The story, *The Urge in Hijabistan*, raises the point where baby boys are considered good but the birth of baby girls is not welcome in the family. The nurse gives a bitter remark on the birth of a baby girl. She tells the mother that she may be lucky to have a baby boy the next time. This clearly shows baby girls are considered as others and do not receive equal treatment. They are unwanted and are not considered equal to the boys. Bukky Shonibare (2018), a Nigerian feminist states that when girls are valued less than boys, women less than men, they face multiple risks throughout their lives – at home, at work, at school, from their families, and strangers. In such a situation, the women feel the imbalance and difference. It trails the fact that women are not considered equal but are treated in a different way than men.

Thus, women are assigned the roles of subordinates and are treated inferior to males. Thus, they are raised to the position of slaves. Beauvoir (2019) states, "Woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his vassal; the two sexes have never divided the world up equally; and still today, even

though her condition is changing, the woman is heavily handicapped” (p.29). The condition of women is difficult to change because of their subordinate position. They are not considered equal but inessential. They do not have the same level of freedom as compared to men.

2.4 Subordination of Women

Women do not exist for themselves but they try to act and fit into the roles laid down by men. The restrictions from men to a great extent, decide their roles. Moreover, their freedom is restricted in many ways under the patriarchal system. In the same way, hijab also restricts women's freedom. Patni Suhasani, (2019) states about Javeri's writing, Javeri is doing this by showing us the hijab as a garment that is far more than an institution of patriarchy or the supposed lack of liberation of Muslim women. Therefore, hijab is treated as a kind of code that causes women subordination. Men execute their power over women and this has become an object for the implementation of the authority of men. Beauvoir (1949) says: “By the time humankind reaches the stage of writing its mythology and laws, patriarchy is definitively established: it is males who write the codes. It is natural for them to give the woman a subordinate situation” (p.114).

Women are not responsible for their life and their actions but they are expected to carry out the roles assigned by men. Beauvoir (1949) states in this regard, “Man's economic privilege, their values, the prestige of marriage, the usefulness of masculine support- all these encourage women to ardently want to please men. They are on the whole still in a state of serfdom. It follows that woman knows and chooses herself not as she exists for herself but as man defines her”(p.189).

2.5 Woman as Slave and Vassal

Beauvoir holds the opinion that men view women quite differently from them and reduce them to the status of a second sex and this results in their subordination. In the same manner, Kate Millet's theory (1977) of subordination argues that women are a dependent sex class under patriarchal domination.

Women are defined, keeping in view, the codes and roles assigned to them by men. Their life revolves around men. They have no personal identity. They are just like slaves and are under the domination of their males. Walby (1990) terms this

situation where females are under the control of the authority of men. She further says that in this system, women's labour power, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's mobility and property and other economic resources – are under patriarchal control. Thus, men enjoy absolute authority and are responsible for deciding the fate of women. Patriarchal women have to fit into these roles and facilitate the same. Beauvoir also relates gender roles and codes to patriarchy and considers these roles important for the domination of men and the subjugation of women. It means men shape the lives of women according to these codes. Beauvoir (1949) states: “By the time humankind reaches the stage of writing its mythology and laws, patriarchy is definitively established: it is males who write the codes. It is natural for them to give the woman a subordinate situation” (p.114).

2.6 Subject (Man) Vs Other (Woman)

The treatment of men with women is the same as the relationship of a master with a slave. The restrictions on women are based on the roles, attributes, and stereotypes that prevail in the patriarchal system. It is portrayed that the boss, uncle and father in the selected stories of *Hijabistan* execute the codes by showing dominance; even the mother and aunt help facilitate the patriarchal roles that solely restrict the liberty of girls. The girls who cannot fit into the patriarchal roles are seen with suspicion. According to Beauvoir (1949), “To men, she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated concerning man and not regarding her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is Absolute – she is the other” (p.26). Thus, men are seen as dominant, autonomous and essential; whereas, women are considered objects, weak, dependent, and inessential. This is surely happening in a patriarchal social structure where men dominate and the rights of women are denied.

Walby (1990) states about patriarchy: “The system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (p.20). Women are assigned the roles of bringing up children as well as housework that convert them into slaves and their contribution has never been documented by men in a real sense. *Hijabistan* presents this picture and portrays how woman is treated as other and how their freedom is restricted while observing hijab. Thus, the treatment of women is based on the codes

and roles of patriarchy to execute the domination of men. The choice does not lie with women because men control everything. Keeping this in view, the veil becomes the cause of demarcation between the world of men and women.

2. Research Gap

A lot of research has been conducted on the short stories of *Hijabistan*. The depiction of woman as *other* in the context of Pakistani English Short Stories has not yet been explored. Therefore, the researcher explores the selected short stories of *Hijabistan* by applying the feminist theory of *The Second Sex* by Simon de Beauvoir to investigate how far woman is treated as other in *Hijabistan*.

4. Theoretical Framework

The Second Sex (1949) by Simon de Beauvoir, a famous feminist theory has been taken as a theoretical framework for this study. The researcher explores the selected short stories through the lens of this theory. Beauvoir's theory is important as she explores the secondary position of woman, relegated to the position of other. *Hijabistan* reflects the freedom of women, particularly in the context of hijab. It highlights the indifferent treatment of women intending to assign them gender roles in a patriarchal system. The treatment is based on the domination of men and the subjugation of women. Therefore, *The Second Sex* befits to be applied to investigate and explore how far woman is depicted as other in the selected stories of *Hijabistan*.

5. Research Methodology

This is qualitative research. Textual analysis of seven out of sixteen short stories from *Hijabistan* by Sabyn Javeri, i.e., *The Urge*, *The Date*, *The Full Stop*, *Radha* and *The Malady of Heart*, *The Good Wife*, and *The Lovers* have been carried out through the lens of *The Second Sex* of Simon de Beauvoir.

5.2 Research Objective

Every study has an objective in view and the objective of this study is to investigate how far woman is portrayed as other in the selected short stories of *Hijabistan*.

5.1 Research Question

How far is a woman depicted as other in the selected short stories of *Hijabistan*?

6. Hijabistan

Hijabistan (2019) is a collection of sixteen stories by Sabyn Javeri, an eminent Pakistani English short story writer and novelist. The book is a reflection of women's issues, especially in the context of hijab. The hijab is a medium of demarcation between men and women. Sabyn Javeri (2019) calls *Hijabistan*, a book of Feminism. The exploitation of a working girl in the office by the boss, the weird kind of treatment of girls, including taunting remarks by aunt and mother, and forced decisions—these and other kinds of issues are reflected in these stories. The girls are seen with suspicion and treatment with them is weird. Thus, *Hijabistan* depicts various women characters and shows how they are depicted as others under the domination of males. Javeri takes the issue of restrictions on women with a particular reference to hijab. It hinders the freedom of women as they are treated with indifference under patriarchy.

7. Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Women's Subordination

In the story, *The Urge*, the girl envies the freedom of men. She complains that they have liberty in all matters and do whatever they like. She describes her feelings in such words: "I used to envy their freedom to do what they liked when they liked, no worries as to who might be watching" (p.18). She also mentions many restrictions on women. The freedom enjoyed by men is denied to women; for example, men can pee in the street, or wherever they like and don't feel shame about it. On the other hand, women are restricted. They do not think doing such a thing and even, are not allowed to freely move as they wish to do so. The girl thinks that by observing the veil, women feel sheltered as the veil restricts their movement. Women do not enjoy their lives as compared to men. They are restricted and put under the subordination of men. She is worried about her existence; her movement is restricted.

The girl's uncle marries a younger wife. Being her aunt and of her age, she accompanies and befriends her. But her uncle disapproves of their friendship and dislikes everything they do. Her uncle looks their emotional affinity with suspicion. Thus, both are constantly under the vigilant eyes of their uncle. She talks about her uncle's behaviour in such words, "We loved make-up, but uncle called it the devil's opium, throwing away any cosmetics he found on our person" (p.19). Both the girls love

make-up and like to look presentable but all their moves and activities are utterly disapproved by their uncle. His vigilant eyes check everything they do. The girls have a desire to go outside, to go shopping, to put on nice dresses, and also want to enjoy their life to the maximum. However, they feel disappointed due to the restrictions. They are expected to observe the veil and are prohibited from exposing them before strangers. In male domination, such restrictions prevail. The restrictions are the assigned roles and the girls have to carry out these without any complaint. Fitting into these roles is compulsory, otherwise they have to bear the brunt. The girl in *The Urge* further complains that these constraints do not apply to men. They are free and do whatever they like.

7.2 Exploitation of Women

The Date is another story about an office working girl who is exploited by her boss. Once, the boss calls her out of the blue and hands over a scarf that is the first gift for her. Then, he demands her to meet him outside of the office. Being shy, she does not resist or protest against his advances. In the final course, she complies and compromises on his every move. Being the boss's subordinate, she becomes the object of exploitation. The writer depicts how the office girl is exploited in a metropolitan city, Karachi. It also shows the shy girl becomes easy prey for a male boss. He never hesitates to ask for the undue favour and Javeri narrates this situation, "Till one day, he asked her if she would like to meet him outside of work" (p.7). It is to mention that this is not the first time that this girl has been exploited but in past, the same boss had been doing the same with other girls in the office. Thus, it proves the fact that woman is taken as an object for exploitation. How weird this has become to treat the girl in a workplace like this! The girl is treated as an object and just as other. On the other hand, she is not only treated as a worker or an employee but an opportunity to be exploited.

Men expect women to compromise in every situation when they interact with them in the workplace. Such a thing happens in a patriarchal system where men rule and women have to obey. The mentality of the boss in *The Date* is reflected in such words, "how most of the receptionists who came to work for him had some sort of a sixth sense as to what was required, but there had been a few who had pretended not to understand him and left without notice" (p.8). The boss used to display a different

pattern of behaviour with girls in his office. He tried every possibility to exploit them. Those who did not cooperate with him had to quit because they, later on, were not required in the office. Such treatment of women is out of decorum and inequitable and surely, indifferent and unjust.

7.3 Woman as Inessential

Radha is the story of a call girl, Radha. One day, she was beaten by her client, Chaudry Sahib's son. In the first place, she was abused and then, beaten. The driver also used bad words about her while talking to someone on the phone. Though he had been very nice to her, he talked foul against her in her absence. The abusive language of the driver hurt her a lot because she mistakenly considered him her sympathizer. Javeri is trying to show how men hold weird attitudes toward women. The bitter remarks of Chaudry sahib's son and the driver reflect the callousness of men against women. Radha considered these remarks against her dignity. In her absence at the gate, he talked to someone on the phone and uttered, "No, no. VIP passenger, yaar. Just dropping off an old whore who got beaten up" (p.39). The remarks infuriated Radha because she was not expecting to be tagged like a whore. Here, Javeri is trying to depict the fact that women are treated indifferently and inequitably. This happens because men show their patriarchal power to dominate them. On the other hand, it is due to societal norms and cultural codes that such condition prevails. Men never try to understand the compulsions, sufferings and predicaments of women. The remarks uttered by the driver reflect that women are catalogued in an indifferent way in patriarchy.

7.4 Assigning Gender Roles to Girls

The story, *The Lovers*, portrays a Pakistani family living in London. Aliya is a girl whom her aunt often reprimands and looks at her with suspicion. On the other hand, her cousin is never noticed by anyone in the family. Being a boy, he enjoys a kind of immunity. His activities are not observed and seen with suspicion. Aunt tells Aliya, "Never trust the stranger's gaze," she warned Aliya. "Men in this country have only one thing on their minds. God forbid, even the women here you can't trust" (p.57)! These warnings by the aunt are for Aliya only but the boys and their activities are not observed. The boys are exempted from the warnings. This shows that the girls are dealt indifferently and very much according

to the codes, stereotypes and taboos in the family. Aliya composes poetry and for that, she has been appreciated and has received the prize. But her aunt discourages her moves and activities by uttering disappointingly bitter remarks before her mother, “Ishrat, you are so naive. All this poetry-shoetry is not good for our girls. Puts all kinds of ideas in their heads. Romance-shomance...” (p.57). Though the mother of Aliya trusts her daughter, the views of the aunt about her are extremely weird. This shows how the girls are treated as others and the attitude of family members is strange and weird.

The girl who reaches puberty is seen with suspicion and the family members want to get rid of her by marrying her as immediately as possible. Here are the bitter remarks of aunt in particular reference to Aliya, “It is all this London Shondon’s doing. Back home, nobody would even think such a thing. You will see, Ishrat. You will see the result of all your mod-run talk when your daughter runs off with a foreigner!” (p.58). Here, Aliya is considered as other as the treatment she receives is based on inequity. She is suspiciously observed by her aunt. Aliya’s aunt believes that adolescent girls should not compose poetry because they might fall into the trap of romance. Besides this, she is of the opinion that girls should not be allowed to go outside. To have a company of stranger boys will ruin their lives. On the contrary, the aunt does not notice the activities of the boys in the house; she only notices the girls and comments about them. The boys are allowed to do whatever they like. Their activities are not seen with suspicion. If they do weird things, their actions are condoned. It shows the boys, being males, have been exempted from restrictions in the family.

7.5 Treatment of Girls as Others

The Full Stop is a story of Aussia. She reaches puberty and wants to break this news to her parents. Aussia thinks that her parents will become happy but unfortunately, they behave weirdly. It puts her in a conundrum for she cannot expect such an uncanny behaviour from them. Javeri generalizes this situation and relates it to the ambience of Pakistan through the character of the girl in such words, “In her story, menstruation was a thing to be hushed, veiled and concealed – not celebrated. It was the moment when honour was replaced by shame, friendship with humiliation, and love by fear” (p.93). Firstly, it is Aussia’s mother who behaves as if something wrong has happened to her. Then, her

father appears saddened by this disclosure that her daughter has reached puberty. Aussia has understood the fact that puberty of girls is unwelcome in this part of the world. It seems to be surprising and even shocking for her to witness such an unexpected turn of the attitude of her parents.

She expects that her puberty will be enjoyed and celebrated by the family. She read about it once in the American novels and the stories. But her parents are shocked by this realization. She cannot comprehend the wisdom behind the strange behaviour of her parents. Javeri depicts the predicament of Aussia in such words, “For girls in her part of the world, pads were concealed in brown paper bags like counterfeits, films on the subject were banned, and the denial of a natural state was encouraged. They were called impure, napak and unclean. This was not something to be discussed ... not now, not ever” (p.93). Thus, her parents do not discuss about it. It refers to the fact that this revelation of Aussia regarding her puberty is catalogued in secret. This shows how girls are treated in a family and are discouraged from mentioning their private affairs.

After marriage, the girl gives birth to a baby girl in the story, *The Urge*. The nurse makes faces and utters an unfair remark about the birth of baby girl. She utters that the mother will be the lucky mother the next time. The remark of the nurse depicts the fact that the girls are treated as secondary, “The first one doesn’t matter, the toothless old lady mumbled, encouraging me to put her to my breast. But the second-born must be a boy. Remember, a boy is a provider. A boy will bring you status. A girl is a liability” (p.16). She further tells her that the boy must have been born because he will be the bread-earner as well as will increase the status of the family. Such remarks show how the birth of boys is preferred over the birth of girls. Thus, the girls are unwelcome; whereas, the boys are preferred. This remark shows an unfair treatment and a staunch example of the treatment of girls as others. Thus, girls are not wanted in the family and their birth is unwelcome.

7.6 Freedom of a Married Woman

The Good Wife is a story of a Pakistani couple living in London. The wife observes hijab, which her husband does not approve. He tries his level best to stop her but she persists in observing it. While disapproving of her veil, he insists on her not to put the heavy burden on her head. In London, no one has

time to look at others. He states, “You ... you don’t feel odd walking through the streets of London with people looking at you suspiciously? Like you’re carrying a ton of explosives under your clothes” (P.160)? For a man, her wife looks weird with a veil; whereas, she is a religious type and considers it compulsory. She supports her point of view by giving the reasons. She thinks that she hails from a culture where it is a normal thing to put on a veil. Therefore, she feels comfortable in it. She said, “My hijab is part of me. It’s my Muslimness. It sort of announces my arrival. Anyway, why do you people in the West always think that hijab is a symbol of submission” (p.160)? This story shows the husband unnecessarily influences and interferes with her wife’s freedom. She is unable to live according to her own aspirations.

Women should decide on their own what is good and what is bad for them. Unfortunately, in a patriarchal system, they have to follow the dictations, roles and codes assigned by men. They dare not go against these. Here, the woman likes the veil and declares it her identity but her husband disapproves the same. Like men, women must have a choice to choose things according to their priorities. They must be allowed to live according to their understanding. The freedom of wife should not be at stake and the husband should never impose his decisions. But it shows that the woman cannot live her life according to her own choices, priorities and aspirations.

Conclusion

After analysis of the selected stories, it has been found that the male characters, husband, boss and uncle dominate and subjugate their women. Women are treated as objects and they remain inessential under male superiority. This shows how gender roles are assigned to them in a patriarchal system that is mainly responsible for the secondary status of women. Thus, woman exists as other and as far as men define them through the lens of the assigned codes. *Hijabistan depicts* women's issues, especially the treatment of them by men. There are certain unnecessary restrictions on women's freedom and specifically, hijab demarcates the world of men from women. Though there is a strong need for equal treatment of women, men define women by their codes. The hijab is also a kind of code that hides the identity of women and separates them from men. The various male characters portrayed in *Hijabistan* display indifferent attitudes towards the females.

On the other hand, the exploitation of the girl in the story *The Date* by the boss shows the domination of the males in offices where such things happen. *The Good Wife* reflects the life of a married woman who does not enjoy freedom. Her husband dictates and keeps her according to his priorities. *The Lovers* and *The Melody of Hearts* depict how an aunt and a mother facilitate the patriarchal roles; they dictate their girls following the assigned roles. Assigning the gender roles is only to dominate and subjugate women in a patriarchal system. In the selected stories, it has been found out that women are treated not on equal terms with men but are seen as objects, inessentials. Woman is considered as other. On the other hand, men play the roles of being essential and absolute

The change is not far when men and women will be considered equals and will have all rights on equity and equal footing. Simon de Beauvoir (1949) thinks that women will arrive at “complete economic and social equality, which will bring about an inner metamorphosis” (p.686). It is women, either with or without hijab, will enjoy the equal share of freedom with men. Women are to be recognized and will achieve equity and equal status one day.

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