

The Holy Woman and Middlemarch: Challenging the Patriarchal Gender Stereotypes in Literature

Language and Literature

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Abstract

This research paper attempts to demonstrate in what way women authors writing in English greatly contribute to challenge the patriarchal gender stereotypes in literature as literature influences the people's frame of mind. Already prevailing preconceptions contour different gender biased practices in a culture. George Eliot and Qaisra Shahraz high-spot the imposed conventional roles of males and females in two diverse societies of the East and the West where religion and traditions are different but social power structure is same. It is analyzed that these writers instead of supporting and strengthening the set pattern of social constructs, go for condemnation, as they consider them to be man-made and generally destructive for both the genders, particularly for women. Their female protagonists prove to be halting against aggressive patriarchal postulates and suggest a process of change and possible solutions. Pakistani female-authored works in English are an indispensable part of feminist literary canvas, as examining the English and Pakistani female feminist writings in a parallel fashion provides with a broader scope for the reconsideration of woman's status and rights at a universal level.

Keywords: Feminism, Stereotyping, Patriarchy, Suppression, Exploitation, George Eliot, Qaisra Shahraz, Tradition, Sexism, Femininity, Gender, Agency, Resistance.

Introduction

The study intends to examine the theme of challenging the patriarchal gender stereotypes by female novelists writing in English. George Eliot in Victorian England and Qaisra Shahraz in contemporary Pakistani society expose the

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women's position in the patriarchal societies of the East and the West. Both the female authors have high-pitched parallels in drawing the different male and female characters to raise voice for women's plight and to improve their position in the society. Literature, in the hands of such creative women writers of male-dominating cultures, is a powerful and benign instrument to execute the responsibility of consciousness raising among the female segment of society. Their fiction seeks to contribute into a process of change that involves the reconsideration of women's status and rights and to provide readers with a world free of undue patriarchal authority and gender biasness. FionaTolan (2006) pronounces:

“Feminists have observed that literature is an instrument to keep and create belief system and that a large number of great works were male-authored, with few exceptions of Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen and George Eliot” (Tolan, p.325).

Supremacy of men in a social and cultural system is recognized as patriarchy that originates from the preconceived gender roles believed to be fit for men and women. These years after years practiced stereotypical roles are the mindsets of society. According to the set patterns of culture and societal norms, men and women are assigned their roles who consciously or unconsciously accept, practice and transmit them to upcoming generations in order to achieve the social conformity. Hence, gender is a patriarchal social construct based on people's biological sexes. Such social constructs are proliferated and strengthened to maintain a male-centered society.

“Feminist criticism is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature” (Auerbach, 1953). The theoretical framework of this investigation draws contributions from feminist cultural, social and gender stances. Feminists, gender theorists and authors emphasize upon the women's emancipation by condemning such set patterns of thought and suggest that literature must resist and challenge such biased notions that cause gender discrimination. Feminist literary theory can be seen in several variants and most of the critics opine that more authors of the “Other” to be included in the literary canon. Simone de Beauvoir termed male as the “One” and female as the “Other”, referring to the patriarchal structure of society. She recommended a dire need of drawing independent and strong female protagonists to balance out the dominance of male protagonists in literature (Brooker, Selden & Widdowson, 2005, p.120). Feminists, being highly annoyed by the Sexism which they believe has invaded every area of culture and literature, target to identify, expose and

detach the humiliating roles assigned to women in literature and real life. Cynthia Griffin Wolff (1972) in *Stereotypes of Women in Literature* put forward that the author's function is to show the possibilities to break out the stereotypical models as the dissemination of female characters in literature is deceptive and distorted:

“characterizations of women are dominated by what one might call the male voice. The definitions of woman's most serious problems and the proposed solutions to these problems are really, though often covertly, tailored to meet the needs of fundamentally male problems” (Wolff, p.207).

In a patriarchal social structure “men are generally thought to be.....competent, assertive, independent, masterful, and achievement oriented” (Eisenclas, 2013, p.2). Lois Tyson (2006) explains the same phenomenon in following words:

“Traditional gender roles are socially constructed to keep women powerless” (Tyson, p.86), and “elevate the male point of view” (Tyson, p.84).

D. Jill Savitt in an article *Female Stereotypes in Literature* high spots the “narrowness” and “confining nature” of women's roles in literature where women are mostly presented as meek, incompetent, dependent, fearful, troubled and helpless creatures whereas authoritative and powerful positions and roles are assigned to men. Females are allotted passive and subservient roles to facilitate men and to deprive of their rights (Savitt, 1982).

The patriarchal system of control halts the progress of both the genders however women comparatively cut a greater loss as it launches and imposes the inequality against them. Michael S. Kimmel in his book *The Gendered Society* (2004) articulates:

“Gendering is not simply a system to classify biological males and females and socialized into equivalent sex roles rather it also expresses the universal inequality between men and women. Speaking about gender means speaking about Hierarchy, power and inequality, not simply differences” (Kimmel, p.1).

A question tweaks the mind whether such patriarchal gender stereotypes can be challenged or not! Like Beauvoir and Savitt, Bhasin in *Understanding Gender* also supports the fact that “Sex is one thing but gender is quite another” (Bhasin, p.2), “All the social and cultural packaging that is done for

girls and boys from birth onwards is gendering” (Bhasin, p.2), and sex is biological, natural and constant but gender is man-made, variable and socio-cultural which “changes from time to time, culture to culture even family to family thus gender roles can be changed” (Bhasin, p.3).

George Eliot, a 19th century female Victorian novelist, always held “silly women novelists” in contempt who propagated false myths about women by writing stereotypical romance fiction just like male authors, as literary atmosphere was also dominated by men. “In literary works, as well as in society, there were the descriptions of Snow-White-like girls, angelic girls, monstrous women, witches, and fiends” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p.29). She challenged the restrictions imposed on the female authors that they were not supposed to write intellectually as they were incapable of doing so. “The fact that Anne, Charlotte, and Emily Bronte wrote as Acton, Currer, and Elis Bell and that Mary Ann Evans used the pseudonym George Eliot clearly pointed to the prejudice against women writers” (Altick, 1973, p.51). Carol Ohmnn (1971) also rectifies the fact of underestimating the female authors: “During nineteenth century the works of women writers were viewed at best condescendingly” (Ohmnn, p.909).

When woman in the West including England were making progress, Pakistani women still suffered from the prejudiced and deliberately launched political and religious policies against them. Pakistani feminist women writers for instance Bapsi Sidhwa, Sara Suleri, Tehmina Durrani, Qaisra Shahraz, Kamila Shamsie, Uzma Aslam, and Monica Ali etc. extensively travelled and read about the Western feminists. They cultivated a new literary tradition to describe woman contrary to the false interpretations of religious ulema:

“The fiction directed at the female readers was full of stereotypical characters reinforcing traditional roles and misconceptions about women. No bold, leading and daring characters were created, though it was possible. Consequently, the self-image of the Muslim woman could not improve” (Shaheen, 2009, p.36).

The social, political and cultural issues of women have been discussed by the female literary feminists of Pakistan and they try to present such solutions that can be acceptable for both the genders on mutual grounds. Furthermore, these authors settled down the scope of feminism within the province of Islam as earlier it used to be taken as a Western inspiration and misleading.

The intended research engages the descriptive method, analytical approach and qualitative content analysis technique to explore the under fire theme running through the text of the selected novels.

Discussion

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) centers on the residents of fictional midland town. It is a multi-plot novel majorly focusing on the character of Miss Dorothea Brooke: an intelligent, aspiring and wealthy lady, gets married to an elderly self-absorbed clergy Mr. Edward Casaubon, who remains least interested in his wife's ambitions in life to be educated and independent like her husband. Other female characters capturing the attention are Celia Brooke: Dorothea's sister and Rosamond Vincy: daughter of a mayor and middle-class manufacturer of the town. Both the ladies are placed in contrast to Dorothea. George Eliot's contrasting characters emphatically illustrate the conventional and non-stereotypical notions about man and woman in Victorian patriarchal structure. As Amy K. Levin (1992) comments:

"The best way of defining characters is by contrasting them" (Levin, p.50).

The female characters of the novel are seen to plunge into Victorian man-oriented society which never allowed women to enjoy the same privileges which men were entitled for. Patriarchy, as feminists describe is not just a social system rather it imposes specific gender roles upon men and women that hinder the way of progress for women in particular. Such a society confine women not only by denouncing the right of education and entrance into male-oriented vocational domains rather people's thinking, biases and gossips also contribute to limit women's life. One of the universal biases is to consider women's intellectual capacity as inferior to men, "They are expected to have weak opinions" (*Middlemarch*, p.6). An occurrence of such prejudices can be witnessed in the novel at the time of dinner, hosted by Dorothea's uncle Mr. Arthur Brooke, who raised Brooke sisters. Dorothea joined conversation between Sir James Chettam and her Uncle. Once she responded "with more energy than is expected of a young lady" (*Middlemarch*, p.14) and intellectually suggested about the political economy, immediately received a harsh reply from Mr. Brooke: "Young ladies don't understand political economy, you know" (*Middlemarch*, p.15). According to him "such deep studies like classics and mathematics are too taxing for a woman" (*Middlemarch*, p.70).

Male-controlled social order of *Middlemarch* never allowed any of the women to acquire same sort of education arranged for men, though Dorothea kept struggling. The Brooke sisters, Dorothea and Celia "had been both

educated on plans at once narrow and promiscuous” (*Middlemarch*, p.4). Though Dorothea was an exceptional women along with her well-to-do contextual and high plans to make advancements for herself in addition to the community of Middlemarch. She was often appreciated by male members of the society for her intelligence but when an idea to consider her as a better-half crossed the mind of men, social and cultural norms warned them about her “ardent” nature, as she was somewhat different from the prevailing notions of femininity. Dorothea’s sister Celia Brooke and Mayor’s daughter Rosamond, being not superior-minded, were more compatible to the patriarchal criterion of femininity, hence, preferable for men. Females had to come up to the males’ expectations to survive in the society. Women’s survival was habituated in their submissiveness, obedience, sophisticated manners, and subjugation. Consequently, as Joan Bennett (1954) responded: “marriage is the only conceivable career” (Bennett, p.165) for women. Celia and Rosamond, by not having high-flying plans and love for the acquisition of knowledge like Dorothea, were easier targets for men to be minored in domestic and social life. Dorothea being non-stereotypical nowhere stood within the customary framework of womanhood. Conventional Celia and Rosamond appeared to the society as “amiable” and “innocent” and unconventional Dorothea as “too unusual”. Narrator of the novel ironically declared that Rosamond remained “exceptional” to complete all the stages of her typical education to be “lady-like” that made her favorite to her elders and people of community:

“Rosamond Vincy, the prize pupil of Mrs. Lemon’s finishing school, is offered as an epitome of what nineteenth- century society seeks in its women” (Chase, 2010, p.12).

Eliot’s Dorothea desired to get rid of the “oppressive liberty”:

“She established an infant school in the village, she worked on cottage plans for the local poor; deprived people of Tipton. Still, she looked forward to the day when she would be of age to command her own money and implement her own schemes” (*Middlemarch*, p.5).

Unlike Rosamond Vincy who got married to raise her status and preferred to be well-provided instead of providing others, and Celia Brooke who compromised and contended with the traditional norms without any resistance, Dorothea remained non-stereotypical in deciding about her marriage twice. She, like typical Victorian women, never gave importance to a man with wealth and luxurious life style. First time she got married to an educated clergy Mr. Casaubon, many years older than her in his age, though

Middlemarchers were against this incompatible match. She ignored the age factor just for the sake she appreciated a conversant person as her life partner. She sought for the knowledge through her husband. Unfortunately her aspirations to gain knowledge through her husband and make her career suffer from an utter failure. After all a non-stereotypical woman married a stereotypical man, dreams were to be shattered. As a follower of the traditional norms, Casaubon expected the same as all other patriarchal authorities expect from a woman. Being a husband he wished her wife to be domestically bound to him instead of being engaged in adopting any vocation. Elaine Showalter (1977) asserted that during Victorian epoch,

“Women were not accustomed to choosing a vocation; womanhood was a vocation in itself” (Showalter, p.21).

Casaubon decided to marry Dorothea just for the companionship and never to upgrade her. He wished for a secretary and a servant to help and serve him in his official and domestic matters. Dorothea’s idea to learn Greek and Latin languages appeared to him as “wearisome”. She proved to be the best “hired secretary”, “a helpmate to him” and above all “submissive”. Even, at the stage Dorothea realized that her husband always remained absorbed in his studies and apart from all her sacrifices least interested in her education, career and desire to work for the community, she kept struggling and never deviated from enforced domestic responsibilities. To see Dorothea in his control was pretty consoling for Casaubon. As Simone de Beauvoir (1953) affirmed:

“Man is concerned with the effort to appear male, important, superior; he pretends so as to get a pretense in return; he, too is aggressive, uneasy; he feels hostility for women because he is afraid of the personage, the image with which he identifies himself” (Beauvoir, p.452).

Casaubon even, in his will, restricted Dorothea of getting married again after his death, and consequence of the violation meant dispossession from inherited property of husband. Dorothea once again demonstrated to be unconventional when she left Casaubon’s property and got married to Will Ladislaw. As opposed to Rosamond, importance of wealth and class in matrimonial relationship were rejected by her. Eliot revises the values of typical image of womanhood and marital life through Dorothea’s character.

Qaisra Shahraz in her novel *The Holy Woman* (2002), projects the analogous view of George Eliot to portray and challenge the patriarchal gender stereotypes. In Pakistani male-controlled power structure religion and

tradition flow in an indistinguishable course and often traditions replace the religion. Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* is based on a typical feudal tradition of Sindh province. It is "marrying woman to Qur'an" to make her "Shahzadi Ibadat" (Pure Woman) through a formal ceremony after which woman has to remain celibate throughout her life, though Islam discourages celibacy. Woman is to dedicate her whole life to learning about religion and preaching it. Novel's protagonist Zari Bano was trapped by the same feudal tradition. After losing her only brother she was forced by her grandfather Siraj Din and father Habib Khan to be Holy Woman, though she was already engaged to an educated and well-off businessman, Sikander. This cruel tradition, in the name of religion, serves the purpose of saving family property from getting out of clan. Zari Bano, twenty-seven years university educated woman and her mother Shahzada resisted against this tradition within their own capacities but confronted the severe reaction from men who were authorities upon them. Yasmeen Hassan pinpoints:

"...in many other parts of society in this country, this is the right of the male member of the family to control the actions of their womenfolk" (Hassan, 1995).

When Zari Bano refused to be exploited, her father tried to convince her in the name of religion. He insisted that it would be a greater privilege for her and her family to remain celibate and serve the religion:

"That life in no way can compare to the izzat, the honour and the fame that your new role will bring to you and your family" (*The Holy Woman*, p.85).

Sajad Ahmad Khan (2013) in his article "*Patriarchal Structure (Denying the Role of Women as Futile and Abstract) Violence against Women*" uncovers the fact:

"Patriarchal construction of social practices are legitimized by the religious institutions, as the most of religious practices regard male authority as superior and the laws of conduct regarding family, marriage, divorce and inheritance are linked to patriarchal control over family biased against women; a person's legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance are determined by his or her religion which laid down duties for men and women and their relationship....all major religions have been interpreted and controlled by men and upper caste and elite classes" (Khan, p.97).

Zari Bano's mother struggled for her daughter to avoid meeting such a cruel destiny. She debated with her husband Habib Khan that "It is the twentieth century" and "it cannot happen". In return she received a very scornful reply: "The scales are weighed against you, woman" and "It can and will happen! Do you think that you, a female, can prevent it?" (*The Holy Woman*, p.67). Though Shahzada spent her life as a conventional wife but for the sake of her daughter she threw out the stereotypical garb of womanhood. She tried to save her and when could not get successful and threatened to be divorced, changed her attitude towards her husband. She performed all the duties as a wife but isolated her husband emotionally and lived with her as a stranger. It was one of her ways to resist against a powerful patriarch:

"So you are going to wed your daughter to your fields and to her faith....it is zulm, cruelty of the worst kind. If you go through with it, I will never, never forgive you...there will be nothing left between us...you'll have made your daughter a Holy Woman, but you will have buried a wife too, at the same time" (*The Holy Woman*, p.68).

Zari Bano was just informed through her mother what grandfather and father decided about her:

"Your father...wants you to become his heiress, and our Shahzadi Ibadat, our 'Holy Woman', in the traditional way" (*The Holy Woman*, p.62).

Zari Bano's words, on her exploitation, exposed the reality of longstanding feudal tradition which by manipulating religion abuses women to favor men:

"Here I stand before you, Mother, my father's Shahzadi Ibadat. She spread her hands in a flourish. The Holy Woman. The woman he created by killing me. Did you not know that men are the true creators in our culture, Mother? They mould our lives and destinies according to their whims and desires" (*The Holy Woman*, p.88).

Though, Zari Bano initially could not battle with the unjustified decisions of men against her as she was not an independent woman. However, after getting religious education from Al-Azhar university of Cairo, visiting different countries and establishing a college for women, she turned out to be a self-governing woman with profound knowledge of her rights in Islam. Now she stood on the stronger ground to struggle and resist the suppression.

As soon as met with the opportunities, she performed remarkably well just like men. Tina Chanter declared:

“Women are only considered unsuited to the roles reserved for men because of lacking in education to become politically informed and responsible citizens and once they are given this opportunity, they are as good as men” (Chanter, 2006).

Qaisra Shahraz through her character Zari Bano categorically hints to bring change in women’s suppressed lives. Zari Bano’s feminist views when infused with the Islamic understanding gradually emancipated her and finally she broke away with the stereotypical role as a woman. When she inaugurated a madrassa to impart religious knowledge among woman she confidently addressed women:

“If you know your rights and are conversant with Shariah law, and consult these books, you may be able to change things. You can take the matter into our Shariah court” (*The Holy woman*, p.379).

Najia Asrar Zaidi in her article “*From Victim to survivor: A Critical Study of Qaisra Shahraz’s The Holy Woman*” suggests:

“Qaisra Shahraz can be better compared with another Pakistani writer Tehmina Durrani. Both writers consider culture and not religion as the source of women’s exploitation. Durrani’s *Blasphemy* (1998) also throws light on the misuse of Islam by feudal Muslims priests. Interestingly, then tradition at times used as a tool of oppression might also lead to the development of independent thought in an individual. Both heroines, Zari Bano in *The Holy Woman* and Heer in *Blasphemy*, react in their own way affirming that they no longer would be enslaved by customs, traditions and unfair use of Islam. Both are ready to meet the future with new vision of life” (Zaidi, p.219).

Comparing George Eliot and Qaisra Shahraz reveals that both the female writers raised voice for women’s plight by portraying two types of female characters: in first category fall such characters who represent an exact position of stereotypical characters prevailing in the society and effected by the social norms i.e. Zari Bano’s sister Ruby, Rosamond and Celia Brooke who never resisted and remained compatible to the manipulation. Second category carries the characters who are resistant to the imposition of such conventional roles that hinder their progress like Zari Bano, Dorothea

Brooke, Shahzada, Fatima and her daughter Firdous. Female characters of second category try to achieve their true identity, though often at a very heavy cost. They achieve their rights or identity not in a profound form as both the writers realistically propagate about the process of change that still demands from women the sacrifices of their emotions, aspirations and agency.

These writers do not create contrasts in drawing female characters only, rather such males along with typical ones are illustrated who suggest superlative images of men, hence they do not condemn men altogether. For instance, character of Will Ladislaw in *Middlemarch* is a representation of a man who appreciated the woman's abilities, did not suffer from insecurity or jealousy against a competent woman, and was not hesitant to marry Dorothea-like ardent lady. Therefore, he was not a conventional man thoughtlessly following the traditions. Eliot creates a sharp contrast through Will Ladislaw against the typical male characters of Casaubon, Sir James Chettam and Mr. Arthur Brooke to display man-made image versus an ultimate character of manhood. Shahraz's Sikander, was a non-stereotypical member of a patriarchal society. His criterion of being man was not to suppress woman. He happened to be a full support system for Zari Bano and constantly motivated her to rise against her suppression. When Zari Bano subjugated to be a Holy Woman he argued with her:

“Where have your feminist beliefs and idealism disappeared to? How can a woman of your caliber, with a university degree, a former editor of a magazine, at the end of the twentieth century, be so blinded?” (*The Holy Woman*, p.126).

Sikandar's liberal and space-giving attitude towards woman was quite evident when his mother complains about Zari Bano's foreign trip immediately after her marriage. At that point he replied to his mother in such a way:

“She has already been oppressed and exploited by her father and grandfather. I am not going to be another male oppressor in the guise of a husband. I will be a friend and companion to her” (*The Holy Woman*, p.388).

Ibrahim Musa, another unconventional character who was a religious man but not a fundamentalist. At Al-Azhar university he taught Zari Bano Arabic and when came to know about her tragedy, tried to convince her that if she ever married to him, would never be interrupted for her religious responsibilities. Khawer, a liberal feudal lord, also preferred to marry an educated lower-caste

lady Firdous as compared to any upper-class uneducated woman. Being a feudal lord, he respected womenfolk and has been presented as a sheer contrast to Siraj Din and Habib Khan who treated Zari Bano not more than a commodity.

Will Ladislaw, Sikander, Ibrahim Musa and Khawer are shown as liberal men, with the lapse of time even Siraj Din and Habib Khan also transformed in their mentality and action, which stamps the fact that gender stereotypes are the social constructs that can be changed. Such comparison-making technique within their single works, firstly makes these female writers unique in the treatment of their characters, secondly helps them for the profound diffusion of women's position in the society and finally creates space to suggest possible ways for the improvement.

Shahraz and Eliot never portray such female characters who are the thoroughgoing rebellions and turn the world upside down for their own sake. They struggle and resist gradually to break away with the suppression and achieve their identities but still they have respect for society and people around them. Readers remain unable to find any man like qualities in their female protagonists. *Middlemarch* and *The Holy Woman* are certainly non-sexist texts that draw a very clear line between the male and female author's writing style on women's issues and portraying female protagonists in the factual light. Male authors have usually been depicting women either stereotypically or creating them as more than women, that becomes the cause of condemnation. Shahzada, Zari Bano, Firdous, Fatima and Dorothea all resisted but still remained "women" instead of converting into the "female heroes" who are provoked to rise above being women or to assume man-like characteristics. They all tried to achieve their identities and independence within the moral boundaries, hence, cannot be condemned. They themselves changed positively, intelligently, gradually and brought change in others as well. Their basic quality of being "women" and "good" remained constant even after bringing change in their circumstances. Shahzada and Dorothea did not leave their husbands and live up to all their moral responsibilities though emotionally detached from them. Fatima throughout her life took care of her handicapped husband and never taunted him for not being able to be a bread earner of a family, as in patriarchal societies men are considered to be responsible for earning not women. Fatima rejected this biased notion about man and women. Her character emphasizes that if both the genders can equally be intelligent and energetic they can also be skillful and capable enough to earn and support the domestic unit. Zari Bano and Firdous never reaped undue advantage of their being educated. Zari Bano even herself told

the reason of her yielding to one of her teachers, Professor Nighat, who visited Zari after becoming the Holy woman:

“Yes, I could have refused my father, if I had wanted to. But I didn’t at the end, for the same reason as thousands of other young women in our patriarchal society end up saying yes. For our izzat’s sake, and our family’s honour, like other women, I became a coward and a victim rolled into one. I just couldn’t be the cause of turning my family traditions upside down”
(*The Holy Woman*, p.173).

It was not Zari Bano’s failure that she did not rise abruptly, rather her intelligent strategy and dignified manner to get out of patriarchal clutches. Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai (2010) commented about Zari Bano that she pulled herself out of stereotypical role of male-dominating society in a very unique way:

“The Muslim woman (Zari Bano) manages to attain her rightful place, without vitriolic, rebellious outburst against the clergy or the male-dominated order. She is seen aspiring for and achieving her economic independence without any blood bath. Nor does she forsake her religion, waiting to be liberated by some chivalrous knight or to be redeemed by Christianity, as is habitually inscribed in the works representatives of Western literary Orientalism. Far from being the stereotypical helpless creature suffering under the patriarchal tyranny and abused as a sexual plaything, she gains the requisite life-coping skills and displays the resolve to lead her own, woman’s life in a social order still dominated by males”
(Kidwai, p.12).

His view is applicable to Eliot’s Dorothea and Shahraz’s Fatima, Firdous and Shahzada as well.

Conclusion

George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* and Qaisra Shahraz’s *The Holy Woman* are undoubtedly feminist texts as they bring female protagonists to the center-stage. An analysis of different female characters across the novels proves that women do not typically continue to be exploited and manipulated forever, rather stand for their rights. They struggle to detach themselves from the patriarchal gender-biased preconceptions to gain their true identity, independence and dignity. Eliot and Shahraz never approve one-sided biased view totally favoring women, rather render liberal male characters as well in

attempt to reconstruct the social thought regarding women's position and rights. These earnest commentaries on the challenges faced by the women of patriarchal societies in general do not only float out a diverse portrayal of women that combine Eliot and Shahraz in unity of purpose rather impart exposure, illumination, deep insight and possible solutions as well. Though, women's oppression naively cannot be universalized but similar subtle and violent patterns of maltreatment, manipulation, exploitation, degradation, victimization bring different writers under the common-umbrella. Hence, these female authors may inspire other writers not to proliferate the unjustified patriarchal gender roles through their works.

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