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Redefining the Gender Roles in a Post Apocalyptic Society: A Critique of Bina Shah's *The Moonsoon War*

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Abstract

The paper aims to study oppressive state apparatus in a post apocalyptic society; the patriarchal structures, subjugation on the basis of gender and women's fight to reclaim their control on the reproductive system within the oppressive system portrayed by Shah in the text *The Moonsoon War* (2023). The study is qualitative in nature while Firestone's (1970) perspective of Radical Feminism (1970) is applied as a theoretical lens to investigate the issues of polygamy and unnatural lifestyle. The objective of the study is to save natural order of the women reproductive system which is now controlled by state and it works on the purposeful mission to be fulfilled. The findings of the study highlights the intersections of power and gender together with a focus on biological subjugation of the women on the basis of state driven rules which goes beyond natural and ethical boundaries. It encompasses the prophetic narration of technological advancement to be used; which enhances the role of artificial child womb centers to fulfill the childbearing demands as per state agenda. In conclusion, women subvert the dominant gender

roles and norms in the particular text to regain their right of childbearing without any state agendas to be fulfilled.

Keywords: Resistance, radical feminism, state apparatus, subjugation, artificial womb centers

Introduction

Radical feminists argue that the oppression of women is not result of individual attitudes or actions rather it is deeply rooted in social, economic, and political systems of the society that support patriarchy. They propose powerful ideas to uproot the established societal norms that support women's subjugation believing that true gender equality can only be achieved through a radical overhauling of these systems. Firestone (1970) is one of the prominent radical feminists theorists, her work *The Dialect of Sex: the Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) draws attention on the basic societal norms that causes women's suppression like sex class, traditional family system, and reproductive ability. She argues that, in male dominant society, the oppression of women is because of their sex; being female brings all the trauma in their life. The society assign them specific works and labeled certain traits as per sex. The male dominance society keep them for reproduction, household works and to fulfill the needs of males. Shah (2023) discourse highlights the issues of gender, identity, social norms, and justice within the context of Pakistani society. In *The Monsoon War* (2023) Shah deals with women oppression, power patterns and women endurance in adversity. She offers a powerful critique of the patriarchal system in *The Monsoon War* (2023); set in a fictional post Ind-Pak atomic war society dealing with adversity that caused of war and political turmoil. The novel deals with prominent characters like Aliya, Katy and Commander Kara. Along with these three prominent characters other women joined as rebellious force named Hamiyat; the organization is made by women to fight against the

discriminatory and oppressive laws of the state and its departments. These female characters collectively initiate a movement to resist the imposed and unnatural reproductive responsibilities on them. The act of defiance is testament of their mental as well physical strength in the despair. Shah (2023) weaves the themes of gender, power, and resistance; creating a narrative that echoes the struggle of women against oppressive powers both in Pakistani society and the broader global context. This research highlights how literature calls attention to the mechanisms of oppression and can challenge societal gender norms for gender equality.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine Bina Shah's *The Monsoon War (2023)* as a challenge to traditional gender norms through the portrayal of a dystopian society.
2. To explore the strategies employed by women while resisting the mechanism introduced by state apparatus in the selected text.

Significance of the Study

The paper examines women's subjugation and defiance as depicted in Shah's writing with a specific emphasis on her work *The Monsoon War (2023)*. The study focuses on male and female complex relationship controlled by state apparatus designing unnatural life situations by utilizing already established gender patterns and sociocultural norms for their purposes. The feminine urge for resistance in a post apocalyptic society, stimulates a discussions on gender equity and the challenges faced by women in a post post- modern time period which needs gender roles to be redefined and reshaped .

Literature Review

Social institutions such as families and schools promote boys and girls to conform to, and eventually internalize, separate and complementary roles such as a career-oriented male role and a domestic feminine role. Gender as a relational concept enables sociologists to investigate beyond individualistic traits and evaluate the relationships of power between men and women (Carrigan, et.al. 1985). Based on the idea of biological essentialism, this belief system holds that there are fundamental differences between the sexes. Myrén (2020) finds *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), portraying that the position of a child-bearer isn't given a distinct identity aside from this assignment. She works for a guy, and her given name, 'Offered', alludes to him. This goes to show that in the current generation men and women are still dominated by the chauvinistic society. Due to this aspect of the attribute of traits to men, women are locked out of equal opportunities for leadership and decisions within vital domains like politics and the corporate world. As a part of biological determinism, this ideology states that men and women are intrinsically different. In *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood, Offered is transformed into a child-bearer who does not even have a specific name assigned to her. She works for a man and her given name, Offered, hints at him. It is for this reason that culture especially the patriarchal society of today continues to enslave both men and women (Myrén, 2020). Gender, dystopia, and resistance issues are discussed in Atwood's narrative are examined in the *Feminist Dystopian Consciousness in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale* (Arbaoui, 2018). It depicts a strict religious regime where a woman's value is based on her capacity to procreate. Offred, the main character, uses language and storytelling to subvert Gilead's oppressive regime, embodying feminist consciousness and resistance. This paper employs a quantitative technique and descriptive method to scrutinize the book alongside providing critical commentary on gender relations, the dystopia narrative, and the protagonist's

rebellion (Arbaoui, 2018). The narrative of Sally Rooney in *Normal People* (2018) centers on Marianne and Connell, two people who navigate a patriarchal society. The work highlights the dominant masculine characteristics of the characters like Marianne's older brother Alan, who torments her both psychologically and physically displayed in their interactions with one another. Having inherited toxic masculinity from watching his father behave in a similar way, Alan finds fulfillment in his acts (p. 229). Connell finds it difficult to keep his relationship with Marianne happy because of her better financial standing, which undermines his masculinity especially in the eyes of his peers who uphold traditional ideas of what it means to be a man. Through its plot, the book successfully illustrates how dominant masculinity is both subverted and reinforced (Ngo, 2023). A study of the representation of Indigenous women in Pakistan 'Voicing The Silences: 'Objectification of Women In Contemporary Pakistani Fiction In English (Mehmood, 2019) ' describes how these women are dominated and manipulated by males in the name of religious-cultural values, providing a historical outline of how women have continued to encounter social reality since independence; emphasizing the imperative need to awaken women's consciousness in the academic discourse to foster the principle of corporate personality. In context of such popular works as "Ice Candy Man" (1988), "My Feudal Lord" (1994), and "Trespassing" (2003), Mehmood (2019) explores how and to what extent the attitudes to native Pakistani women have evolved since the partition and highlights their struggles and subversive attitude. The study deconstructs the unspoken instances of oppression that occurred within the socio-political context of Pakistan, hence, giving voices to the extra-normative female characters (Mehmood, 2019). Hassan and Junejo (2022) examine the change in Pakistani women's literature in "*The Feminine, The Feminist and The Female: The Flora and Fauna of Pakistani Women's English Writings*". The growth and the change may be slow and

slightly behind others but it also strongly marks the women's contribution as an indispensable part of the anglophone literature. They conclude that women writers have developed a particular feminine legacy that is marked by distinctive themes, characters, and consciousness. Although feminism is a major influence on the narratives that these writers create, the portrayal of household difficulties is still a recurring topic. The study emphasizes the notable distinctions in the writings of men and women, pointing out that women authors are more sensitive to their surroundings, which frequently shows up in their dramatic and autobiographical works (Hassan & Junejo, 2022). A study "*Body on My Mind: The Lingering Effect of State Self-objectification*" (Quinn et al, 2006) aims to explore how young, White, Working-class women subvert and resist masculine paradigms. The study makes use of ethnographic sources collected over the period of three years at a Northern College of Further Education. The work is structured into three components, firstly, how the structure and experience of schooling are framed by discourses about biological reproduction, familial, and hygiene, which in turn helps to institutionalize and normalize masculinity. The second section looks at how sexuality permeates classroom interactions. Students who identify as female have the ability to use their sexuality as a strategic tool to openly question the authority of masculine norms. The final segment examines the difficulties encountered by female students and how they defy masculine hegemony by using their own sexuality as a tactical advantage. The study draws attention to the paradoxical facets of female sexuality that can be employed as a tactic for resistance and that occasionally elude control .

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design using a literary approach to examine Bina Shah's novel *The Monsoon War* (2023). The primary data source is the novel itself, analyzed through close reading based on the themes of gender, masculinity, discrimination and oppression; constructed traits of masculinity, reproductive norms, sexual revolution, and resistance to such framed concepts. Secondary sources such as academic articles and critical essays are consulted to provide a broader context.

Theoretical Framework

Radical feminists propose revolutionary ideas to re-establish a new world order and Firestone (1970), one of the major radical feminists, challenged the established societal order through her seminal literary book "*The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) which is her significant contribution to feminist thought. This concept questioned gender norms that have historically been applied to men and women, claiming that these roles limit people's potential and worsen inequity. She propagated that gender roles, expectations and conventions restrict people's freedom of choice and ability to express themselves which as a result perpetuates power disparities between the sexes. These disparities further lead to not only societal oppression but biological too which cause disorders on societal and individual level as biological distinctions between the sexes as narrated by Firestone (1970) "*Unlike economic class, sex class sprang directly from a biological reality: men and women were created different, and not equally privileged*"(p.6). She defined "*sex class*" as the system that supports women's enslavement inside the traditional nuclear family (Firestone, 1970) . She further says:

The subjugation of women has historically been closely linked to their reproductive functions, a subject extensively examined by feminist scholars. The physical, emotional,

psychological, and cultural weight of reproduction is a significant factor contributing to the subordination of women. Throughout history, the repetitive process of giving birth placed women under considerable physical stress, resulting in health problems, accelerated aging, and even untimely death, especially prior to the development of modern contraceptive methods. “Reproduction of the species cost women dearly, not only emotionally, psychologically, culturally but even in strictly material (physical) terms. (p.193)

In order to eradicate gender-based inequality, she argued for a drastic reconstruction of society; she pushed for significant changes that radically reshaped the reproductive duties that have historically been allocated to women. The introduction of artificial reproduction, she imagines, will revolutionize a society where women have historically carried the burden of biological reproduction for the benefit of both sexes. According to Firestone (1970), depending on one's viewpoint, children could be born to both sexes equally or even independently of either. This change would eliminate the established dependency between mother and child and replace it with a brief dependency. A cultural balance would also be maintained, guaranteeing that the traditional power dynamics and disparities resulting from physical strength are addressed, and any physical inferiority of children over adults would be balanced. For this, she is in favor of “*artificial reproduction*” as artificial wombs would liberate women from this laborious duty. She narrates:

The reproduction of the species by one sex for the benefit of both would be replaced by (at least the option of) artificial reproduction: children would born to both sexes equally, or independently of. either, however, one chooses to look at it; the dependence of the

child on the mother (and vice versa) would give way to a greatly shortened dependence on a small group of others in general, and any remaining inferiority to adults in physical strength would be compensated for culturally. (p.9)

The novel's depiction of polygamy, reproductive control, and systematic oppression of women echoes Firestone's (1970) critique of "*sex class*". The applied laws in the society, which deprived women of their autonomy and reduced them to mere objects of reproduction, exemplify the kind of institutionalized oppression.

Data Analysis

The female body has always been a contentious area, a conflict zone where power relations, cultural norms, and societal expectations converge. It bears the burden of sexual objectification, gender inequality, and reproductive subjugation, and acts as a vehicle for both personal and political fights (Friedan, B. 2010). The idea of the female body serving as a battlefield has persisted throughout history and culture, from mythology to modern writing (Ola, 2013). These issues are the main subjects of the novel, which fictionalizes them as a step forward to reality. The female characters' acts of defiance advocate Firestone's (1970) call for a revolutionary approach to uproot the patriarchal systems. Their struggle for autonomy, empowerment, and liberation from oppressive gender norms aligns with Firestone's vision of a society where women are no longer bound by their biological roles. According to Firestone (1970), women have always been under male authority due to biological differences, particularly connected to their ability to reproduce. Shah's dystopian society clearly illustrates this concept that women are compelled into polygamous unions and subjugated to reproductive mandates, depriving them of autonomy and converting them into instruments for increasing the population. The state's

implementation of these repressive regulations, using both intellectual and direct methods, reflects Firestone's (1970) criticism of how patriarchal regimes manipulate women's biological functions to uphold their authority.

The women are directed to forced marriages with compulsory childbearing conditions align with Firestone's (1970) claim that the subjugation of women is primarily rooted in the control over their reproductive abilities. There is a letter in *The Moonsoon War* (2023) from the authorities to pass strict laws resulting in forced polygamy as “*The Leaders have announced the relaxation of some of the rules outlined in Notification No. 305*” (p.60) to produce children. Aliya, the protagonist of the novel, a middle aged woman has three husbands and six children and “*At night, she and the Husband whose allotted night it is pull down the mattress leaning against the wall to fulfill the Bureau’s reproductive requirements in ways either mechanical or dutiful, depending on her state of exhaustion*”(p.5). The reproduction regulations of society dominate the woman’s life. Government orders her to divide her obligation to bear children with various partners. The act of taking down a mattress is routine, which suggests that it has lost its emotional significance and has become usual. The protagonist doesn't really feel like she wants to comply with the Bureau's standards; rather, it feels more like a responsibility or obligation. The fact that she mentions being exhausted highlights how taxing and exhausting this procedure is for her, suggesting that she follows the rules primarily out of tiredness rather than choice. The state has a complete plan for those who tried to defy the orders. It is mandatory for the women of Mazun to abide by state laws, otherwise “*Women who refused to sleep with their Husbands or wouldn't eat in an attempt to be too weak to fall pregnant were dealt with according to the gravity of their crime*” (prologue, p. 1). The compulsion to increase the population of women by

setting up a surveillance and control system is something horrible; the state considers women machines to produce children. The government has framed quota system for different areas to increase the number of births of baby girls. *“Devar villages are still, though, because no girls are ever born here. They meet the quota's for cultivation but have failed, year after year, to meet the quota for this crop, more precious than Saffron, roses or even gold”* (p.6). They have to meet the quota for cultivation means to produce a specific number of girls. Not only state imposed regulations in written but uses its institutions to propagate and to control the masses; using intellectual as well as repressive apparatuses to bring desired outcomes. Intellectual apparatus may be in the form of discourses and mindsets because *“even a child of six understands that every woman has Husbands, and those without are not normal, not proper. And if they're in hiding, someone is looking for them”* (p.14). The system controls people by generating propaganda discourse and these ideas further change the mindsets as *“We heard about the insurgents back in Green City”* says Rupa, *“We learned about you in school. They always told us you were traitors. Why didn't they wipe you all out in the beginning?”* (p.50). Rupa a female character of the novel is mentioning the insurgents, explaining her awareness to Hamiyat since she lived in Green City. According to instruction provided in schools in Green City, insurgents were traitors. Lines show that Green City educational system was portraying a negative image of insurgents either for their fight against status quo or state.

Besides intellectual apparatus, the state uses direct and repressive apparatus for their surveillance *“The only people who spit in their direction are the Collectors, who come to harass them and extract money in surplus of what they claim Green City's owed”* (p.4). The story presents a situation in which the Collectors are the only ones who express contempt or animosity against a

group of people. These Collectors came in mountain areas to extract the money which Green city give to the mountain area people. The phrase "spit in their direction" alludes to a symbolic act of disgust by the people toward Collectors. This shows that instead of compassion or support, the people is treated worse in spite of their challenging circumstances, which may include potential exploitation by the Collectors. The repressive state apparatus shows forced decisions of the security agencies, in Shah's fictional society, to do what they want them to do.

From the Bureau. The Agency. Forcing us to do what they wanted. They thought it was wrong, Fairuza and Najwa. They didn't want to be prisoners to four or five Husbands, to be forced to take drugs that made them have a dozen children, or more, like animals.(p.29)

These words of a female demonstrates the coercive methods used to manage the populace by the government organization known as the Bureau or the Agency. The phrase "forcing us to do what they wanted" shows that the people who are being subjected to these actions lack agency or autonomy. As the characters Fairuza and Najwa explain, the use of pharmaceuticals to increase conception rates represents a type of bio-control in which the agency modifies people's ability to procreate in order to meet its demographic objectives. The idea that people are treated like animals highlights dehumanizing actions on the part of the agency and humiliation endured by those who are subjected to forced reproductive treatments. It also hints at disrespect for people's physiological autonomy and rights, using them as tools to achieve political goals. The narrator criticizes and expresses disapproval of an organization known as the Bureau or the Agency. These characters express their desire to gain independence by rejecting the oppressive policies imposed by the Government.

Individual Resistance

The concept and act of individual gradually turning a collective resistance portrayed by Shah (2023) is strongly based on Firestone's ideology of radical feminism (1970). One of the key concepts of the ideology is to resist the patriarchal social structure and to gain independence from oppressive authorities. It is obligatory to shake the foundations of patriarchal structures to confront the underlying foundations of this society, especially those related to the reproduction domain. There are examples of rebellion in Shah's (2023) work such as hiding the gender of their newborns and escaping from forced marriages; demonstrating Firestone's (1970) claim that individual resistance is very important to shake the foundations of patriarchal structures. Firestone also argues that the individual acts of defiance against oppressive laws and regulations of the Government is a light of hope that women can get their rights by relying on their agency. Shah's (2023) portrayal of the strength and bravery of these women in the oppression scenario shows the importance of individual resistance that works as a catalyst for wider societal transformation. By using these brave strategies women demonstrate their ability to face hardship, asserting their agency and challenging the unfair burden that lay upon them.

They told her that she could protect her daughter from the Collectors and the Perpetuation Bureau through the method practiced in the village: raising her daughter as a boy from birth, never revealing the child's true sex, and keeping the secret from the Collector or any other government representatives Sheba City would send their way.

(p.18)

By doing this, these moms hope to protect their daughters' independence and autonomy from social standards and expectations by preventing government intervention or inspection in their

lives. This demonstrates that women, in order to shield their daughters from social pressures, can go beyond expectations. Alia, the Wife was unaware of this method of resistance, recollected the memories and reminded herself how years ago one of her best friends disappeared from the village and the boy came after a few days. Similarly, another example of rebellion, Fatima Kara flew from their force marriages as narrated “*But Fatima had other plans: The day before her marriage, she slipped away from her parents' house, ran to the nearest rebel base, and joined the second Dhofar insurgency*” (p.123). Fatima chooses to go against the assumption that she should marry, even though in many societies women are expected to fulfill marriages as a duty. She takes matters into her own hands by leaving her parents' home and joining the second Dhofar rebellion, refusing to give in to the pressure to get married. This act of resistance shows Fatima's will to confront oppressive structures and her reluctance to follow the path that society has prescribed for her. Fatima aims to assert her agency and autonomy by actively opposing the current order and fighting for her goals and convictions by joining the insurgency. Her choice to forgo marriage and take part in the insurgency demonstrates her will power to reject social norms and follow a road of resistance and emancipation. The characters, Laleh and Katy, are also examples of this type of defiance. When Laleh was only twelve years old she ran away from force marriage of two forty plus brothers. (p.154)

Collective Resistance

The notion of collective resistance by women also aligns with Firestone's (1970) radical feminist ideology which promotes the idea that women should work together to destroy male dominant systems. Shah's *The Monsoon War (2023)* vividly depicts women collectively opposing the repressive practices of the state, including enforced polygamous marriages and

strict reproductive regulations. The establishment of the Hamiyat, a group of women who engage in armed resistance and assert their bodies as instruments of rebellion, embodies this collective effort. These women not only challenge the physical and ideological structures of the state but also create new systems of government that prioritize women's independence and equality. Shah's (2023) portrayal of the unity and resolution, to overthrow the male-dominated government, highlights the significant impact of working together as a catalyst for transformation in the dystopian society. *"She and all the other women of the village are duping the Collectors, keeping girls out of their system through subterfuge. What these women were doing in the Panah, wasn't it the same kind of thing"* (p.21). The main character, Alia, muses over the acts of the village women and deliberately mislead the Collectors to prevent girls from entering the system under the authority of the authorities. The Panah ladies, who are renowned for their defiance and resistance against the authorities, are compared by Alia to the women in her community. By drawing comparisons between the two groups of women's behaviors, Alia denotes that they are participating in comparable acts of resistance, albeit in distinct situations. This contrast demonstrates the perseverance and companionship of women in the face of hardship by highlighting their common will to oppose and overthrow repressive laws and structures. To hide the gender of the newborn baby is not confined to a family, rather it spreads almost the whole mountain area as Alia reveals a significant secret that her child, Noor, is actually a girl, contrary to what others believe. She says: *"Yes, it's true. Noor is a girl. All my children are girls. Half of the children in the village are girls, Green City doesn't know. We never tell the Collectors when a girl is born here"* (p.53). She further discloses that all of her children are girls, highlights a deliberate attempt of hiding the gender of newborns in their village. She indicates that this practice is widespread, as half of the children in the village are

girls, yet this fact remains unknown to the authorities in Green City. It emphasizes that the secrecy maintained by the villagers, that they never inform the Collectors when a girl is born, implying a collective effort to protect their daughters from external scrutiny and potential harm. This revelation shows the defiance and solidarity within the community, as they resist the oppressive regulations imposed by external authorities and prioritize the safety and autonomy of their female children. They devised a proper plan to trick the authorities as

When a new baby is born, we report to the Collector that it's a boy. We make DNA submissions from the bodies of men who died long before Green City took Res over.

They were never registered in the official records. Each family keeps a lock of the hair of their ancestors; it's one of our traditions. (p.59)

Alia talks about a long-standing custom in the neighborhood where every family maintains a hairpiece that belonged to their ancestors. This custom highlights their enduring ties to their ancestry and serves as a source of fortitude and resiliency in the face of outside forces. The Hamiyat emerges as a powerful force in Shah's *The Monsoon War (2023)* that challenges oppressive and authoritative dictatorships' rules and laws. "*Food has its importance. But you have more talent than that. You could be an Ababeel,*" said Kara (p.35). The insurgents divided the women into different categories and groups. Ababeel is one of their group name, the work of Ababeel is to live in society and convey any information and to collect and convey the food when there is a need. Kara's use of this phrase suggests that she believes the receiver has potential that extends beyond their current responsibilities or roles involving food. Their excitement at military academy to get training for guerrilla war is worth seeing.

The girl emitted a glow of heartfelt exuberance, her joy at being at the camp, and the path that lay ahead of her. They were off to their military academy, at a base even higher and more secret than this camp. There, they would undergo eight weeks of training: weaponry, the basics of guerrilla warfare, and insurgency tactics, the girls rattling off those terms as if they knew exactly what they meant (p.37). The oppression was so great that the women had to put on weapons to resist the oppression. The speaker energizes and urges Trainers of Hamiyat fighters to teach women emancipation and dignity and to spread this message wide *“You need to get it out to all the women, so that when you march into a village or a town, you already have conspirators and allies. Sympathizers and collaborators”* (p.177). The commander of the Hamiyat emphasizes the value of the lessons taught to the combatants, emphasizing the liberation of women, science, and dignity. The intention is to foster a network of collaborators and supporters who share the goals and ideals of the Hamiyat. By enhancing the group's power and efficacy, this tactic should would help them mobilize more resources and support while interacting with communities or facing enemies. After completing the preparation for war women started ground gorilla war, making small battalions to move on and to protect mountain areas from the authorities.

The women fighters from the insurgency morphed into the Hamiyat, small battalions of fifty or so women. They patrolled the mountains and protected the women of the villages from domestic violence, resolved conflicts, provided women with safe places to stay when they needed to flee their homes. The village men were surprisingly unresisting to their activities; they were too tired, too

battered, to fight against the women who laughed at death, as they were colloquially known. (p.124)

These organizations undertook diverse tasks in the mountainous regions, including conducting patrols, safeguarding women in villages from domestic violence, resolving conflicts, and offering secure shelters to the women escaping from dangerous situations. The lack of opposition from the men in the villages to the conduct of the Hamiyat was surprising. The men's fatigue and challenges are attributed to their lack of resistance, as they were too depleted to combat the women who were renowned for their courage and audacity; often described as those who "*mocked mortality*". Freedom fighters have made allies in neighboring countries and get the freedom to an extent that no agency or collectors can intercept their activities. The direct connection between the Hamiyat and the Ababeels has been made possible by technological breakthroughs, particularly the installation of the Spectrum on the mountain.

Now the Hamiyat and the Ababeels can talk to one another, and Fatima Kara can talk directly to the Eastern Semitians, without fear of being intercepted by the Collectors, or worse, the Agency in Green City. Some years after the Spectrum is installed on the mountain, Fatima Kara's contacts reveal that a very important official of Eastern Semitia has taken a personal interest in her. Will she come to the City of Gazelles to meet with the individual? (p.125)

With this breakthrough, Hamiyat leader Fatima Kara can now speak with Eastern Semite authorities directly without worrying about being intercepted by the Agency in Green City or the Collectors. Thus, through her contacts, Fatima Kara finds out that she is the personal interest of a high-ranking official from Eastern Semitia. The representative invites Fatima Kara to come to

the City of Gazelles so they can have a meeting. This passage emphasizes Hamiyat's connectedness and importance as well as the possibility of diplomatic contacts outside of their mountainous territory. Furthermore, there are many instances of hatred and revenge; the women kill state persons and threw them in the ravine. This shows the intensity of rage that prevail in women's mind against the men who subjugate them since ages as narrated:

Kara's fighters melt away as the villagers drag the enemy's bodies in the pouring rain and throw them down into the ravine where the Panah women's car had crashed. Alia's Husband is the only civilian casualty in that skirmish, but all up and down the mountains there are more scenes like this one, more bodies to bury, more families left stunned and uncertain, awash in grief and loss. (p.145)

This statement elaborate the first prominent armed attack on the collectors, the fighters killed many collectors in a single attack and the villagers threw the bodies of their foes into the ravine close to where the Panah women's car had crashed. The only other civilian killed in this fight is Alia's first husband but similar scenes can be seen across the hilly area, with additional casualties and distraught families; presenting a somber image of the price paid for the fight for liberation and resistance against repressive regimes. Next, fighters attacked Sheba City, insurgents appear from the jungle of mountains and people get frightens after seeing the scene. The attack is so sudden and abrupt that it gave no time to Shebians to understand the exact situation.

The crowds see the women emerging from the forest like spirits. The witnesses don't notice the uniforms-they see only the black cloth hiding the faces of the attackers-but they instinctively know these are women, not men. The Hamiyat are

silent, so it's not their voices that give them away; it's the way they move, their physiques, powerful but still feminine. The men flee, screaming about female demons and jinns as they run pell-mell from the checkpoint. (p.165)

The idea that the women are seen as "*spirits*" emphasizes the eerie and enigmatic atmosphere that surrounds them. The witnesses instantly identify them as women even though they are hiding their identities with black clothing, demonstrating a unique quality to their presence that goes beyond outward appearances. Their ability to defy conventional gender stereotypes while retaining their femininity is highlighted by the contrast between their strong yet feminine physiques. The men's dread and superstition in the presence of the unexpected and unusual is reflected in their reaction as they run away and cry about "*female demons and jinns*". It is implied that the female combatants are extremely well-prepared and meticulous in their approach to combat.

Once there, they'll take up sniper posts on rooftops, at windows, bore holes in the walls to aim their guns at the Guards outside. They'll blow larger holes in the walls between houses so they can move from house to house undetected. That way, the Guard will already be under pressure by the time the troops come. (p.166)

The female fighters are no less than any man even in the field of war. They know very well how to fight a war. Sniper posts are strategically placed, demonstrating meticulous attention to concealment and line of sight. Blowing holes in walls to allow people to pass between buildings shows that the strategy included both offensive and defensive options. The plan applies pressure from numerous directions at once in an attempt to confuse and disarray the enemy

forces. Shah (2023) beautifully describes another incident of defiance in the shape of an active war. Zalims are the latest drones and cannot be destroyed even with anti-aircraft guns; a smart machine which can detect the enemy and act as per its algorithm. Sudden shifts of government in neighboring countries, their drones cannot come to help the Hamiyat in this fight. Katy Azadeh acts on the idea of Adeefa and remains successful to destroy the Zalim.

With Adeefa's help, the Hamiyat build a fire at the base of each wind tower, creating the choppy air that upends the Zaalims and sends them plummeting to the ground. Once the Hamiyat have destroyed the Zaalim's munitions in controlled explosions, the people emerge slowly from the buildings to stare and murmur at the wreckage; the deadly machines are now nothing but trails of melted debris scattered across the burnt ground. (p. 218)

This illustrates the Hamiyat's inventiveness and resourcefulness in utilising their surroundings to their advantage during battle. Furthermore, the controlled explosives that were employed to destroy the Zaalims' ammunition demonstrate the Hamiyat's tactical expertise and capacity to successfully neutralise threats. The locals are shown carefully coming out of cover to survey the damage in the aftermath of the operation; signifying the defeat of the enemy and the removal of a threat to their neighbourhood. After destroying the Zalims it becomes easy to take the control of Sheba city. This war is not about to conquer the city or overthrow the previous authority, rather it is against the powers which oppress women. So, after winning the war and taking control over the city, it is time to overthrow the very subjugating norms.

The small towns and villages in the province will soon hear of the victory of the Hamiyat. They'll be eager to establish loyalty to the women, to send negotiators

for peace talks. The Commanders have already discussed the structure of the new rule: committees in each town and village, a man and woman at the head, women's concerns and issues to have equal weight for every decision made, every coin spent. There's so much work ahead to establish the new administration. It is opportunity and loss in equal measure: People will need time to grieve their loved ones—those soldiers who died in battle; Hamiyat and enemy are all somebody's sons and daughters. (p. 220)

Hamiyat's victory and the subsequent shift to a new system spreads in the province, the people from the nearby areas come to negotiate with the women which express their loyalty to the female leaders and participation in the peace talk. The commanders of the battalions suggest making new committees in each and every village that comprise both genders. They propose this structure for the purpose that women's concerns and issues are given reasonably good attention in all decision-making processes and financial affairs. The important responsibilities involved in setting up the new administration, highlighting that it brings forth both favorable circumstances and difficulties. Furthermore, it recognizes the emotional impact of the fight, highlighting the importance of individuals grieving their losses, which includes troops who have died and were someone's children, regardless of their loyalty. This passage depicts a pivotal period in which the Hamiyat leaders were formulating their post-victory strategies and making decisions.

Step down? Now? When there's so much to be done? Stop this nonsense at once, Kara," says Leila Ortabi irritably "Tell us your plan for the villages. It's one thing to win a battle, it's another to make them like us... We'll tell them that as long as they do nothing to actively oppose our fighters, we'll spare their lives. If they

actively help to provide shelter, intelligence, medicine, they'll be allowed to retain their homes and livelihoods, although the women can choose whether or not they want their Husbands to stay with them. "And everyone's children will belong to their mothers, not the state," says Zayna Al-Maliki. Khulud nods in agreement. (p.221)

A pivotal time in which the commanders of the Hamiyat are deliberating their methods and plans subsequent to their triumph. The leaders have a strong sense of urgency and resolve, as seen by Leila Ortabi's insistence on prioritizing the current work over any potential diversions. Fatima Kara, a prominent leader, delineates the leaders' strategy for the villages, underscoring the significance of upholding tranquility and collaboration among the residents. The leaders suggest implementing a system in which the villages are provided with security and independence, on the condition that they refrain from overtly opposing the Hamiyat fighters. In addition, they promote the empowerment of women by guaranteeing their right to decide whether their spouses remain with them and emphasizing that children will be under the custody of their mothers rather than the state. The text emphasizes the Hamiyat's attempts to create a fresh system founded on collaboration, parity, and empowerment, which mirrors their aspirations for a society after the battle. The Hamiyat's victory is a monumental event for soldiers who take part or help out in this battle. The commanders decided to give important positions to key female figures as "*Fatima Kara has told Alia that there is a position for her at the head of the village committee if she wants it*" (p.223). Fatima Kara's announcement of an available leadership post for Alia at the head of the village committee emphasizes Alia's potential and her qualities as a leader. The location of the announcement, at the North Square in front of the Dawn Battalion,

where the decisive victory occurred, enhances the seriousness of the moment. The visual representation of the ladies arranged in orderly rows, adorned in their uniforms but clutching flowers in lieu of firearms, serves as a metaphor for the shift from hostility to harmony, from armed confrontation to compassionate care. The roses, presented to them by the youngsters of the Square, enhance the notion of optimism, rejuvenation, and the future. In essence, this scene brings a a turn for Alia as she is presented with a chance to assume a position of authority and actively participate in molding the society that emerges after the conflict. This signifies her transformation from a combatant to a figure of leadership.

Conclusion

Shah's *The Monsoon War* (2023) depicts a dystopian society where some of the social rules still in practice include forced marriage and regulation of women. The government passed a law making it mandatory for every woman to marry multiple husbands, thereby stripping them of their agency and turning them into property whose role is to clean, cook and produce children. This system maintains male dominance by reinforcing conventions that prop up patriarchal realities that regard women as subordinates whose responsibilities are to meet the needs of male counterparts. Ideological and repressive state apparatuses exist in society; the government operates them to retain power. The ideological state apparatus such as schools, families, and other cultural organization promotes the acceptance of polygamy hence socializing unjustified norms that discriminatory positions to exploit women on the aspects of gender. At the same time, direct power and surveillance tried to maintain obedience in society, applying sanctions to non compilers. The women from the novel are not free from these oppressive mechanisms but tried to defy them in a remarkable manner. They defy the government and its institutions that enslave

them and take daring steps to reject the unjustified and unnatural laws of polygamy and control over birth. Women also align themselves into networks, rallying for support and, more importantly, resisting with coded messages while devising strategies to counter the existing power structures. As the government continues with the suppression of women, the women take up arms and start a war. These women joined Hamiyat as soldiers to fight for their rights and freedom and proved themselves to be great warriors. In the war against the state they remain victorious by winning their rights, freedom and independence. This final scene shows the victory of the women in the battle and they are portrayed as the inspiring models for the future generations to fight for women's rights and equality. *The Monsoon War (2023)* emphasizes the fight against oppressors and the meaning of the courage and determination of people fighting for freedom and equality.

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