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A Tale of Two Sisters: Contextual Differences in Feminists' Writings from the Global North and the Global South

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Abstract

The present study explores how women writers from the Global South depict distinct intersections of oppression, in contrast to their counterparts in the Global North, whose works primarily engage with themes of gender discrimination and emancipation. The research explores three novels, *Blasphemy* by Tehmina Durrani, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin with the perspective of women's oppression in general and sociological uniqueness of various forms of women's oppression in particular. Applying different-context theory proposed by Jhonson-Odim (1991), the study investigates the former two texts from the Global South and the latter one text from the Global North. The research reveals that *The Awakening* encompasses sexuality and gender as major themes of oppression; on the other hand, *Blasphemy* and *The God of Small Things* cover extended themes of oppression—race, religious exploitation, class, caste, sexuality and gender. It shows that women in the Global South grapple with more forms of oppression than women in the Global North. The study validates that feminists from the Global North should include more contexts from the Global South to make their movement inclusive.

Keywords: Class, Caste and Race, Feminist Inclusivity, Gender and Sexuality, Global South vs. Global North, Women's Oppression

Introduction

Women's angst against patriarchy has been recorded across the globe, yet the forms of oppression never look similar. Rather they are shaped by culture, religion, history, and the everyday realities of a particular society (Ramzan & Javaid, 2025). Jhonson-Odim (1991), in her different-context theory, alarms the Western feminists that feminism, assuming the pangs of all women of the world alike, should not ignore the forms of marginalization present elsewhere. Realizing the unique circumstances, they should include and highlight the forms of oppression present in different regions (Ramzan & Khan, 2024). Inspired by Odim's idea and to validate how women from different regions face different forms of oppression, the current study explores how women's oppression is portrayed in three powerful novels: *Blasphemy* by Tehmina Durrani from Pakistan, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy from India, and *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin from America.

Comparison of these texts highlights both the similarities and differences in women's struggles across the Global South and the Global North. *Blasphemy* depicts how the forces of religion, patriarchy, and feudal customs silence women's voices in Pakistan (Nawaz et al., 2021, 2022). Roy's *The God of Small Things* shows how caste and colonial history intersect with gender to deepen marginalization in India. Chopin's *The Awakening*, written in a very different setting, highlights how social conventions and rigid expectations of marriage limit women's freedom in America. Together, these texts illustrate how women everywhere face oppression, but also how

that oppression takes on forms specific to their cultural and historical context (Kayani et al., 2025a,b).

The starting point of this study is the basic argument that feminism cannot rely only on the broad idea of gender discrimination to explain women's subjugation. The study does not negate Western feminist traditions altogether but gives it due credit in raising awareness of gender inequality; however, it indicates how these traditions are likely to miss an important thread that connects them with other parts of the world and helps them understand the local realities of women oppression in other regions. Through the selected novels, the study emphasizes the importance of context of oppression and suggests if the feminist movement is to gain momentum or to be beneficial, it should be inclusive and voice the unique cultural challenges women face in different societies.

Literature Review

Feminism is one of the ground-shaking political movements in the world that challenge the gender biases constructed and promoted by patriarchal structures. Having exposed gender discrimination, the movement takes the responsibility of educating all women against the treacherous and alluring construction of "female".

Easton (2012) states that the term "feminism" got its nascent connotation in the late nineteenth century during the political turmoil in Paris. Defined as the struggle to attain equal rights, feminism is divided into three waves. The first wave embraced the struggle for women's suffrage and eventually caps the feather of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Demanding equality, all in-home, job and education, the second wave spread through the 1960s and 70s. The third wave

is more inclusive and along with debating identity, it focuses on the issues of race, religion, class, etc.

Despite being appreciated by both women and men, feminism could not escape criticism, especially, in identifying its lapses in addressing the issues of all women of the world. Springer (2002) and Morgan (2003) as in Harnois (2008) are of the view that the wave ‘metaphor’, confined synchronically, has overlooked the struggle of other women for their rights in history. In addition, it has marginalized poor or coloured women. Overall, it is the white woman, struggling for equal opportunity for another white woman.

Although it gained momentum and was recognized in the Western publishing houses, feminism or the women's liberation movement was labelled by the intellectuals from the Third World as a strategy using “the master’s tools” to “dismantle the master’s house” but it would not allow any real change (Lorde, 1979, p.2). Imperialism, the cultural mode of representation takes hold of feminists’ movements also. Even in largely regarded feminist texts, a Western white middle-class woman is represented as a heroine and a non-western black woman is regarded as a creature or a symbol of evil (Spivak, 1985).

The imperialistic tool leads to establishing global hegemony of Western writing on women in the Third World and consequently, woman in that part of the globe is marginalized and double colonized (Mohanty, 1991).

The First World feminist theorists represented Third World women without realizing their contextual realities. On the other hand, Third World women are fighting for their survival. Lorde (1979) links the struggle of Third World women with their survival as opposite to First World

women's efforts on academic fronts. She highlights that the Western feminist movement follows the ways of men of getting educated by black women about their differences and problems on their common goal. She finds strength in differences to tackle the problem, which is not similar among the academic feminists who believe in the 'define and empower' policy.

Spivak (1981) proposes that the works of First World feminists should include the common women representing the Third World on her concerns about class and racial discrimination. Theorizing academically does not suffice the solution to the problems faced by women in the Third World. She discourages the colonial approach of the First World feminists towards Third World women in which the former largely relies on the informant who belongs to a privileged class; hence, misrepresenting the affected women. In other words, she indicates more themes to French feminists other than gender or sex.

So, context is very important to understand various dimensions of oppression. Jhonson-Odim (1991) claims that women are oppressed in most of the world but the context of their oppression is different. She suggests that the conflicts between the First World and the Third World should be reduced to the minimum for greater gain. She says oppression should not be traced in limited fields but all contexts and forms of oppression of women should be addressed.

There is another school of thought that prefers to opt for a different path of struggle to liberate women from oppression. Amos and Parmar (2005) urge to promote the distinct theory of black feminism in which multiple facets of oppression—race, class, sexuality and gender are major themes. They highlight the lack of modern trends of Western feminism and advocate a separate domain for black women parting their ways with popular women's liberation movements.

Literature Review on the Selected Texts

Exposing the women oppression by patriachs and religious exploiters, Tehmina Durrani's novel *Blasphemy* unfolds various tales of women who are treated as objects and are vulnerable to different forms of torture – sexual, psychological, and physical. Durrani, through Heer, portrays how some unscrupulous clerics and feudals justify their crimes under the umbrella of religion. The novel becomes both a critique of patriarchy and an unmasking of religious dogma used to subjugate women. By blending fact and fiction, Durrani offers a powerful feminist critique of systemic exploitation while encouraging resistance against oppressive traditions (Dhote, 2016).

According to Khan and Ullah (2019), women in *Blasphemy* are oppressed by both males in family and elites in society. The main character, Heer, cannot voice her problems due to lack of subjectivity and is prone to sexual and emotional violence. Like Spivak's subalterns, Heer's voice is suppressed even if she attempts to resist. Although the novel highlights very touching dimensions of women oppression, but still women are weak to raise their concerns.

Using Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, Arain, Laghari, and Kousar (2025) examine Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy* to show how patriarchal structures such as religious exploitation, domestic and sexual and control of cultural institutions, abuse women in Pakistani society. Durrani exposes the double-standards of religious figures such as Pir Sain through Heer, a main character of the novel. The study highlights that despite the presence of patriarchal structures in society, there is a possibility of resistance and social reformation.

Similarly, Shaikh, Ansari, and Mughal (2023) argue that the novel highlights the religious manipulation of patriarchs to justify women oppression in terms of forced marriages and sexual exploitation. The novel, through Heer, also reveals how religious authority and cultural traditions promote systemic gender inequalities. Overall, the novel challenges the exploitative patriarchal structure and exposes the figure who misuse Islam.

Scholarly articles on TehminaDurrani's*Blasphemy* argue that the novel exposes the systemic oppression of women under patriarchy and religious exploitation, however, with slight divergence. Dhote (2016) underscores the novel's feminist critique of clerical and feudal authority by framing Heer's suffering as part of a broader unmasking of religious dogma. Khan and Ullah (2019), stress Heer's silenced subjectivity, aligning her with Spivak's notion of the subaltern who cannot fully articulate resistance. In contrast, Arain, Laghari, and Kousar (2025) apply Walby's theory of patriarchy to highlight structural mechanisms of control but also open space for potential resistance and reform. Similarly, Shaikh, Ansari, and Mughal (2023) foreground the manipulation of Islam to legitimize forced marriages and sexual exploitation, presenting the novel as a critique of systemic religiously sanctioned gender inequality. Taken together, these readings situate *Blasphemy* as a multifaceted feminist intervention that simultaneously documents women's subjugation and gestures toward possibilities of resistance. However, there is hardly any study available that treats this novel as a typical form of oppression grounded in socio-cultural context of Pakistan and neglected by the global South feminists.

Unlike *Blasphemy*, *The God of Small Things* showcases another form of gender discrimination based on caste system in India. Mardiyani and Tawami (2022) highlight how Arundhati Roy

critiques patriarchal structures and gender inequality in *The God of Small Things*. The novel exposes the repressive treatment of women and the rigid caste-based restrictions on love and sexuality. The study concludes that the novel is a feminist text that voices the concerns of women suffering from gendered violences in postcolonial India.

Comfort (2008) investigates the novel as an environmental feminist critique of capitalist imperialism. She stresses how commodification of land, labor, and women under colonial and postcolonial capitalism intertwines gender, caste, and class oppression. Using insights from theorists such as Bina Agarwal, Vandana Shiva, and Lukács, she argues that the novel exposes hidden “commodity logic” and the historical violence of imperialism. Roy’s nonlinear narrative is read as a strategy to challenge dominant ideologies and reveal repressed histories of exploitation.

The studies on Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* agree on the novel’s critique of oppression but diverge in emphasis and scope. Considering the text as a feminist narrative, exposing women’s oppression in caste-based patriarchal structure, the research brings forth gender inequality present in India. Comfort (2008), however, situates the novel within an environmental feminist framework, linking Roy’s critique to the commodity logic of imperialism and showing how gender, class, caste, and ecological exploitation are intertwined under capitalist domination. In contrast, Saha (2025) expands the lens by combining ecological, feminist, and cultural perspectives, emphasizing the destruction of environment and tradition through globalization, commercialization, and mal-development. While all three highlight patriarchy as central to oppression, the first narrows its focus to gender relations, the second embeds these relations in broader historical-materialist critiques of imperialism, and the third underscores the

convergence of cultural degradation and ecological devastation under neoliberal globalization. Together, they demonstrate the multiplicity of critical approaches to Roy's novel, reflecting its layered engagement with gender, ecology, and postcolonial society.

Representing female awareness and resistance to patriarchy, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* has long been at the center of feminist literary discourse. Critics and scholars have applied various lenses such as psychoanalytic, cultural, feminist, etc. and argued that Edna Pontellier's insubordination expects a modern feminist consciousness (Showalter, 1991). Early critics have disregarded Chopin's representation of women as disobedience but later scholars reimagined the text as a discourse of women independence (Toth, 1999). Writers such as Showalter (1991) and Gilbert and Gubar (2000) locate the novel within a broader lineage of nineteenth-century women authors negotiating between self-expression and social conformity. More recent readings highlight Chopin's subtle use of imagery and setting—particularly the motifs of the sea and solitude—as metaphors for both liberation and loss (Papke, 2013). Ultimately, *The Awakening* endures as a layered exploration of gender, identity, and the costs of personal freedom within a confining social order.

The literature on the selected texts creates a niche for a comparative analysis of the novels produced by women hailing from different regions to highlight different forms of oppression that women undergo in the Global North and the Global South, as no study has encompassed this domain.

Research Objectives

1. To explore how the selected texts portray women's oppression and marginalization within their unique cultural and historical milieu
2. To examine how local traditions, religions, and social structures shape women's experiences differently in Pakistan, India, and America.
3. To test Jhonson-Odim's "*different context*" theory by comparing both the shared struggles and the distinct cultural dimensions of women's oppression in the selected texts.

Research Questions

1. How do the selected novels represent women's oppression and marginalization within their particular societies?
2. In what ways do cultural, religious, and social factors create different forms of oppression in Pakistan, India, and America?
3. How do the findings from these texts support or challenge Jhonson-Odim's "*different context*" theory?

Theoretical Framework

The current study has focused on three texts from three different regions of the world to test the validity of the different context theory proposed by Jhonson-Odim (1991). These texts include *Blasphemy* by TehminaDurrani from Pakistan, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy from India, and *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin from America. The study has highlighted the elements of oppression and marginalization of women in specific regions in general and pointed

out the unique forms of cultural oppression in particular. By following this pattern, the study has concluded that gender discrimination or personal freedom is not the only theme which should be the point of discussion among Western feminists, but certain local contextual themes should also be taken into consideration to strengthen the emancipation movement. The first two texts represent writings from the Global South and the third text represents the writing from the Global North.

Textual Analysis

Blasphemy

The society in which the unfortunate Heer grows entangles her into the mess of life embedded with largely unwelcoming and discriminating circumstances for women in particular. Lap of Mother is her nursery, where she learns the societal norms and values and adheres to them till her death. Mother and father play a significant autonomous role in the marriage affairs of their daughter. Deprived of her father, Heer has one parent to decide her matters. Although Heer loves Ranjha and also communicates her feelings to her mother, her mother imposes her decision on her without considering much her daughter's sentiments. Family members of the suitors have barely settled when Heer realizes the intentions of her mother and says, "Ma had made a choice about the rest of my life" (Durrani, 1998, p.25). Dazzled by the social status of the suitor, her mother does not waste a single moment of taking Heer into confidence about the influencing decision of her future life. Helpless Heer has not a single word to say but, "By the time our guests left, my breathless mother had put her seal on my fate" (p.26). She has been educated in a society where her daughter is not permitted so openly to express her likes or dislikes about her

marriage and her passivity is appreciated and considered a positive trait to lead a happy married life. In addition, it is considered the duty of a father to educate her about manners she would reflect in her in-laws; otherwise, her family will be criticized. Her mother, in the absence of her father, reminds her of the honour of her father and says, "Uphold your father's honour by showing good breeding. Always remain subservient to your husband's will" (p.31). Subservience to husband's will is exploited with the honour of father to sedate female feelings to passivity.

Dejected Heer has no options left other than to wait and see the repercussions of this social bondage in which one half is not ready to play its part. She realizes that the first thing that her family has to go through is dowry which is more a status symbol than a need of the girl going to get married. Excited mother reveals the worth of Heer saying, "Heer's worth will be based on her dowry. A girl is respected for what she brings from her father's home" (Durrani,1998, p.27). A formidable snobbish attitude is so deeply rooted in Heer's society that at times it becomes difficult to survive. A woman is trapped in the web of patriarchy even to satisfy her basic needs. Heer expresses this pungent reality when she wants to go to rest room and for that she needs permission from her husband, "I needed permission to satisfy the most basic need" (p.35).

From the prison of their father's house, Heer travels from pre-marriage innocence to matrimonial understanding of a practical world at her husband's house where a new testing life awaits her. The moment she steps into her new house, she is assaulted psychologically. In her society, sons are preferred over daughters and she is expected to conceive and deliver male babies. Wishes come with threats: "May Allah bless your first steps into our home. May he give you seven sons" (Durrani,1998, p.36). Not one son but seven sons. Mental pressure is more tormenting to her than going through the pangs of labour. Girls are not considered a black mark in the honor of family

because they will bring shame to the family by being subjugated by other men: “In my husband’s family, the marriage of a daughter is not celebrated with song and dance, for it is considered shameful to rejoice at a daughter’s departure to a man’s bed” (p.129).

Ill-fated Heer gets birth at the part of the Earth where she is to serve man; if at her father’s place, she is to care for her father and brothers, if she is at her husband’s place she is to soothe him and caress his children and if she is a widow, she will be directed by her son. She says, “When a woman becomes a widow, her son inherits her husband’s position” (Durrani,1998, p.45).A woman is destined to be an object in this patriarchal society. It does not matter if she is the wife of a landlord or a layman; she is the other, always dependent on a man. She further describes, “A woman’s position always depended on a man, whether she was rich or poor did not matter. She went from father to husband to son, and I was at the second stage of journey” (p.46).

The only authority a woman is allowed is to exploit her nightly ventures with her husband. If a woman is an expert at manoeuvring her sexual power, she is guaranteed a good life. Losing attraction in the eyes of her husband, Heer takes assistance from her mother-in-law if she can help. Heer quoting her words says, “Amma Sain had told me, ‘When a wife has secured a hold over her husband’s bed, she can use it on everyone. It is an art” (Durrani,1998, p.55).

Social class determines a great deal the future of a person or a family (Ahmad et al., 2022; Amjad et al., 2021). Socially marginalized people do not have many choices but to bear the brunt of the rich or upper class (Noor et al., 2021). Heer exposes this timidity or helplessness by saying, “The most reliable relationships are unreliable, I thought. There is no unity among dogs, no spine in worms, and no integrity in insects. The weak discard their loved ones when they

become a burden.” (Durrani,1998, p.74) Heer belongs to lower class that cannot resist the wrath of Heer’s husband, an elite and a religious leader of high cadre. The marriage settlement of Heer has a class influence on her family. Her mother thinking it a blessing to transgress the boundaries of class envies and impresses Heer saying, “These people are very wealthy. They are far above our status” (p.24). Though making this impression on Heer is a weak idea, it works wonders with their relatives who have forsaken them after the death of their father. Now it is time to enjoy an air of supremacy by having relations with the elite class. She says, “Of course, Ma was correct to feel important” (p.28).

Women in this society are pushed into early marriages even if they do not know the meaning of marriage. It is because “Girls are a burden that must be shed as quickly as possible...” (Durrani,1998, p.85). Heer reveals through her lived experience how her life has been ruined and deprived of liberty. She says, “The three girls were married and I was a grandmother at thirty-three” (p.15).

Women are mere toys in the hands of these men; once played are liable to be disposed of. Kaali, a maidservant, belonging to an inferior class is raped and impregnated by several men. Seeing no escape, she commits suicide at the altar of powerful patriarchy. Tara, another lowborn, is tempted and raped and also denied acceptance. Challenging the icon of patriarchy, she is murdered. Yathimiri, an orphan child, becomes the mistress of Heer's husband. This illegitimate relation is hidden behind the strong cover of religion: “They churned with Kaali’s suicide, Tara’s foetus, Ma’s greed, my torturous punishments, incest and debauchery, abortions and pregnancies, and my head began to ache all the time” (Durrani,1998, p.83).

Education, an important factor in women's lives (Akram& Yang, 2021; Akram, 2020), is denied or directed in Heer's society. Heer tells about Guppi's education saying, "As the only education Guppi had been permitted was the Arabic recitation of the Quran, she asked me why I hid in the dressing room to read the Urdu translation" (Durrani,1998, p.104). This education was restricted from any understanding, as this knowledge may lead women to their empowerment (Jalalzai et al., 2025; Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023). Heer confident of her religion and suspicious of religious exploitation by men in her society concludes, "The translation could make a revolution" (p.105). Translation of the Holy Quran is a threat to the people who exploit women under the pretext of religion. Because religion gives equal rights in education, defines property inheritance law, and above all bestows dignity and respect to women. Heer's husband is an icon of adultery, violence and religious corruption, but he wants his women all wrapped. On the occasion of demanding Heer's hand for Pir Sain, one of his family members warns as a precondition, "She will have to observe strict purdah. Our family traditions are ancient, they cannot change. She will have to adapt to them" (p.26). At her father's house, she accepts his role as a privileged male because it was made the word of religion. Heer says defining the authority of her father, "Nobody hated Baba for it. We felt he only used the privileges given him by God for having been born a man" (p.43).

Heer is surrounded by a society in which polygamy, violence, and uncertainty are common evils prevailing and objectifying women. But Heer also exposes colonialism, the cause of this discrimination and suppression. To establish their rule in the subcontinent, the British needed locals to serve their purpose: "The British always looking for loyal allies, believed that those whom they lifted to prominence from the lower rung of the ladder would remain forever

grateful” (Durrani,1998, p.87). When the British left, these empowered groups tried their hand at ruling; hence exploiting the poor masses. Heer, mentioning the consequences of this collaboration game, says, “They exploit our ignorance, our poverty, our losses and our limitations to rule over us. The shrine is mercenary and political, it is not holy” (p.88).

Although confined and deprived, Heer has not lost her imagination to visualize the outer world as she says, “Although I had never seen the outside of my home, I had imagined the narrow, winding dirt tracks to be long and thin, like slithering snakes and here and there a dry bush” (Durrani,1998, p.17). Her meeting with liberal and free women also makes her envious of her status and she tries to gauge the foreigner’s position with a local cultural yardstick. She wonders, “If she was married, how did her husband let her go free and if not, how did her father permit it?” (Blasphemy,1998, p.150).Her envy becomes pinching resentment when the foreigner is unable to understand the dual nature of the shrine and its power. When the foreigner appreciate devotees for their loyalty, Heer says, “I thought, that she had passed a judgment and drawn a conclusion without realizing that there is always a cruel method behind undying devotion. *Could she not see the terror in our eyes?*”(Durrani,1998, p.151-152). In fact, Heer wishes to expose the evil hidden behind the shrine and religion and she sees a little hope when Gori comes but it fades away with the positive feedback of Gori about the shrine.

The wish to unveil what is behind the veil of religion gets strengthened with the demise of Pir Sain, the cause of every trouble. However, it is difficult for her to be powerful because now the reign of her destiny is in the hands of Rajaji, her son. She reveals, “Transforming myself from a slave to master of my destiny needed a miracle” (Durrani,1998, p.181). But she is resolute to use the master’s tool against the master. Her husband has made her a whore by letting many young

men and his friends on her by declaring him a whore from the city named Piyari. Nobody knows that the woman in his bed is Pir Sain's wife in reality. Now when her husband is not in this world, she decides to expose his evils to shatter the fear of shrine from the minds of people. Heer shares her strategy saying, "Exposing myself as a whore will expose him as a pimp" (p.198).

But whosoever tries to dismantle the master's house should be ready for the consequences. Patriarchs are ready with their labels for those who rebel. Tara who exposes her illegal relationship by going against the norms of the region, is labeled as a mad woman and similarly, Heer is going to be branded as mad. She unfolds, "They advised my son to lock me up and declare me mad" (Durrani,1998, p.214). Heer's fate once decided by her mother, altered by her husband is now locked by her son and she being an object of patriarchy highlights the bondage of sisterhood so vulnerable to be shattered by any man. She states the uncertain position of women in society saying, "Kaali and Tara and Toti. Yathimiri, Cheel and me. Women as sisters, daughters, wives and mothers, transformed into bubbles and burst" (p.222).

The God of Small Things

The God of Small Things is a superb portrayal of a problem that has many names, like, violence, broken marriages, sexual harassment, discrimination in class, monopoly of race, etc. in Indian society.

The major male characters such as Pappachi, Chacko, Baba, Hollicks, and Thomas Mathew are representatives of patriarchy. Their traits include authority, violence, adultery, repudiation of women's role in economy and power, jealousy, and exploitation. The story starts in 1969 and

ends in 1993, depicting the journey of Estha and Rahel from neglected childhood to realizing maturity.

Mammachi is the first in the hierarchy of three generations of women. She was married to a 17-year-old man Pappachi who subdues her using violence. Mammachi's violin is not strong enough to combat the violence of Pappachi, who spares no chance to beat his wife to keep her at her place. Mammachi's reputation as a talented violinist poses a strong threat to the authority of Pappachi and he bans her to excel more in this talent: "The beatings weren't new. What was new was only the frequency with which they took place. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi's violin and threw it in the river" (Roy, 1997, p.222).

Her son, Chacko is also a patriarch and does not entitle her mother to the business of pickles. However, she does not mind subscribing to the patriarchal standards and remains passive throughout her life. Mammachi's factory is nameless until Chacko arrives in the town. Meanwhile, people start associating the factory with Mammachi's name but "It was Chacko who christened the factory Paradise Pickles & Preserves and had labels designed and printed at Comrade K. N." (Roy, 1997, p.27).

Ammu, the daughter of Mammachi, is also victimized. She left her education on the retirement of her father because her father thought that education was "an unnecessary expense for a girl"(p.18). She was not lucky enough to sustain her marriage because her second husband, Baba wanted to trade her for a night to Mr. Hollicks to save his job. Mr Hollicks proposes Baba send Ammu to the bungalow, 'to be "looked after"' (Roy, 1997, p.20); however, she refuses to

surrender and leaves him forever. Rahel and Estha are twins who returned with her to her parents' home. These children were neglected because social customs look down upon the divorced women and their children: "Baby Kochamma disliked the twins, for she considered them doomed, fatherless wail. Worse still, they were Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry"(p.21).

Ammu dared develop feelings for Velutha, an untouchable, a low caste may be considered a subaltern who does not have a voice or recognition in society. Untouchables, "were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched" (p.34). Here the doublestandard of the patriarchal society is highlighted when Margaret and Chacko's affair is not much highlighted as compared to Ammu and Velutha's. What this society considers the need for men becomes a sin when fulfilled by women. The author comments, "Her tolerance of "Men's Needs," as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter" (p.118). She is branded veysha, a whore by Inspector Mathews who harasses her saying, " 'If I were you,' he said, 'I'd go home quietly.' Then he tapped her breasts with his baton. Gently. Tap tap. As though he was choosing mangoes from a basket... Inspector Thomas Mathew seemed to know whom he could pick on and whom he couldn't. Policemen have that instinct" (p.55).

The natural relationship that she develops with Velutha has "no future" (Roy, 1997, p.152) because he is not allowed in Touchables' society. The only thing that offers them some respite is another promise that they make to meet the next day. The unfortunate Ammu is degraded even when she is no longer part of this world and the church authorities do not allow to bury her.

Rahel is a representative of the third generation. She also shares the fate of her mother and grandmother. The society in which she breeds is contemptuous of children whose parents are

separated or divorced: “Mammachi said that what her grandchildren suffered from was far worse than Inbreeding. She meant having parents who were divorced” (Roy, 1997, p.28).

Divorce is a common word for Rahel, as she also was divorced by her husband. She shocks Comrade Pallai while mentioning openly to him that she is a divorcee: “ ‘We’re divorced’. Rahel hoped to shock him into silence. ‘Die-vorced?’ His voice rose...” (Roy, 1997, p.60).

All three women, mentioned above live in a society where class and caste have a strong hold over the social life of people. Moreover, the double standards of society towards treating men and women differently throw women into marginality and give privileges to men.

The Awakening

The Awakening is an exemplary novel on the freedom of women from gender discrimination. Mr. Pontellier, the husband of Edna, is a patriarch who spends much of his time in business and dines out in a café. Edna, Mrs. Pontellier is expected to run the business house, children and social gatherings.

Spending summer in Grand Isle, Edna meets Robert Lebrun, a young man hired by Mr. Pontellier to assist and guide Mrs. Pontellier. After a few gestures of flirt, Edna develops feelings for Herbert and longs to spend more time with him. All of sudden, to her disappointment, it reveals to Edna that Herbert is due to leave for Mexico shortly. She expresses her concerns reservedly but she does not have any option to stop him. When she returns to New Orleans, she loses taste

in her household work. It appears strange to MrPontellier because he is unable to trace the reason for her distraction.

Disturbed by the unusual behaviour, MrPontellier consults a doctor for the “abnormality” of his wife. The doctor inquires whether she has been meeting “pseudo-intellectual women-super-spiritual superior beings”(Chopin, 1899, p.14). Discarding any such association, MrPontellier wonders why her wife has left attending visits of guests on Tuesdays, leaving the household chores and returning home late at night. The doctor suggests he leaves her alone for a while to settle her herself.

However, no off-hand remedy is suitable for Edna, as she is thinking of herself only. She, unlike Madame Ratignolle, does not want to be appreciated as a good mother rather she tries her brush at painting which reflects her concentration on creative art. She abandons her husband’s house and hires a house in the same street to enjoy her leisure time partying. MrPontellier has no choice but to request her to leave under the guise of renovation of their house.

Her yearning for Herbert urges her to meet Mademoiselle Reisz who reveals to her that Herbert sends a letter to her mentioning his association with Edna. She feels happy and depressed at the same time because now his absence is very pinching to bear with. Amid her torn sentiments, the news of Robert’s arrival invigorates her thoughts about him. She celebrates her freedom by revealing Herbert in the following manner: “I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself what I choose” (Chopin, 1899, p.42).

She is no more the possession of her husband and this concept is very hard to understand because society does not allow such relations. Being a product of the same society, Robert does not understand this bond and is reluctant to proceed with this relationship.

Being misunderstood, she decides to part ways with this world because her only respite, Robert, following the conventions of society, also leaves her. She finds the answer in waves of water and swims till the shore and memories appear dim. She thinks of MrPontellier and the children but discards their thought that they “could possess her, body and soul” (Chopin, 1899, p.121).

Findings

Pakistan and India have a shared history of colonization and both have largely similar socio-economic conditions (Umar et al., 2024). *Blasphemy*, a novel by TehminaDurrani, depicts life in Pakistan. Heer, the flat character in the novel, exposes the multifaceted oppression of women in this society. Patriarchy defines and ushers the role for women in Pakistani society. When woman is at her father’s house, her mother teaches her how to behave and follow the norms of society to protect the honour of her father. This custodian role is assigned to her to exploit her freedom and repress her voice to speak for her rights. She is deprived of her right to choose a husband for her. In Heer’s case, her mother, in the absence of her father, decides her marriage contrary to Heer’s liking for Ranjha.

Heer belongs to the lower middle class and unluckily she is the daughter of a widow, who does not have enough resources to have social standing. Pir, her husband, belongs to the upper class and easily exploits her mother due to his privileged status. All women in the novel, who belong to the lower class, such as Kaali, Tara, Cheel, Yathimiri and Heer herself share a common

oppression and exploitation by a representative of elite patriarchy, Pir Sain. These women are raped, tortured and enslaved, but no one objects to this cruel treatment because these forms of oppression have become normal in the society. Heer's daughters have no other choice but to marry their cousins because they are not allowed to marry outside their family. It is because they belong to a superior religious class and are privileged. No matter how corrupt their men are, women are supposed to be pious and are confined to houses, reserving their meeting with common folk, especially men.

Heer's unique oppression, whose example is difficult to find in the West, is her status as the wife of a Pir, a religious scholar. Pirs are strong cults in this society who are considered as an embodiment of a healer or saviour, having supernatural powers to redeem afflicted people from their miseries. Their women are as sacred as are Pirs. That is why they cannot get mixed with the common public and are confined to houses as if they have no life of their own. In this situation, women become the custodians of modesty and chastity. This is another tool of patriarchy in this society to preoccupy them with a planned thought of depriving them of their identity.

The God of Small Things also offers the uniqueness of Indian society in dealing with women. Ammu is the central character, who provides an insight into race and class discrimination that oppresses women. When she is at her father's house, she is considered a burden and denied any further education after her father retires because he thinks that one should not waste money on a girl's education. Her mother is also beaten daily by his bitter father who appears to be jealous of his wife's talent.

Mr. Hollicks, an English gentleman, exploits Ammu for her vulnerable status both at home and in society. He blackmails Baba, Ammu's husband, and ensures the security of Baba's job on the condition that he would provide his beautiful wife to soothe his animalistic desires. Likewise, Inspector Mathews, labelling her a prostitute, harasses her while tapping on her breast.

Indian society expects that she leads her separation life alone with her children but she dares develop an affair with an untouchable, Velutha. She has committed a double sin in society, in which a divorced woman is considered a fallen woman; let alone thinking of a second man or having relation with an untouchable. Untouchables belong to an ethnic group in India, who are not allowed to touch what the touchable can experience. Her class or social status does not allow her to marry a low caste which is why the future of her relation is undefined. The church refuses her burial on two accounts. In the first place, she married a Hindu and in the second place she had an affair with an untouchable.

She is confined by her class and race to follow the pattern set by the society in which she is living. If she tries to break with the norms, she is called *veshya*, a prostitute.

The Awakening is a novel that portrays the Western concepts of sexuality and gender. Edna and Mrs Pontellier mind the typical behaviour of her husband. He spends most of his time in business and dines out in the café. He wants her to be a good mother of his children and a sociable wife who attends the visitors on Tuesdays. These two demands are typical of the age in which this novel is written. But Edna does not feel comfortable with it. Rather she practices painting and develops a craze for swimming.

She develops feelings for Robert Lebrun at Grand Isle when the family is spending the summer there. She wants to be free sexually and defies to be a possession of Mr. Pontellier. But Robert misunderstands her feelings because he has not seen such a relationship before. Being misunderstood, she finds a respite in the river and gets drowned while swimming.

The three novels under study articulate distinct forms of oppression shaped by their cultural and socio-political contexts. *Blasphemy* and *The God of Small Things*, both rooted in South Asian settings, represent diverse dimensions of women's subjugation reflective of their respective milieus. While *Blasphemy* foregrounds patriarchy sustained through religious manipulation and feudal hierarchies, *The God of Small Things* situates oppression within the rigid caste system of India, using it as a lens to expose social exclusion and marginalization. In contrast, *The Awakening* centers on gender inequality and women's pursuit of autonomy within domestic spaces. However, unlike the silenced female figures in *Blasphemy* and *The God of Small Things*, the women in *The Awakening* are portrayed as self-aware and vocal, asserting their individuality against societal norms.

Conclusion

Thus the study reveals that the first two novels differ in their treatment of oppression, engaging with dimensions such as caste, race, class, sexuality, and gender. In contrast, the third novel narrows its focus to the themes of sexuality, gender, and freedom. Accordingly, feminism—whether rooted in Western thought or shaped by Global South experiences—evolves as a framework that extends beyond Western contexts, developing a more inclusive discourse that reflects the varied and intersecting forms of oppression faced by women in the Global South.

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