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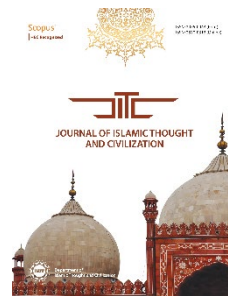
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Feminine or Patriarchal: Story of Adam and Eve in Urdu Novels by Women Writers

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Abstract

The current research attempted to analyze the novels written by eminent women writers in the Urdu language, that is, Bano Qudsia, Jamila Hashmi, and Khadija Mastoor, to understand the usage and interpretation of religious narrative of Adam and Hawwa in their writings [Eve]. The study focused on narrations, such as creating Eve from Adam's rib and expulsion of Adam and Hawwa from heaven. Jamila Hashmi, Bano Qudsia, and Khadija Mastoor's notable novels have been included in the current study. The main objective was to ascertain if the symbolic and metaphorical usage and interpretation of creation of Eve in these works, is feminine or otherwise. Moreover, the study also showed that the feminine expression which is called as '*nisaai*' in Urdu, is a myth when seen in connection with the interpretation of religious narration of Adam and Eve's tale. The theoretical lens of feminist theology was used and critique of Fatema Mernissi and Riffat Hassan was referred to for this purpose. It may be concluded that the understanding of these particular religious' narratives and their symbolic and metaphorical usage, is inspired by and received from pure patriarchal interpretation of religious texts. Moreover, it has not been challenged by, or seen in the light of any feminist critique of patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, by the woman writers included in this study. Additionally, the presence of pure patriarchal interpretation of other religious symbols was observed while exploring works included in the current study. The patriarchal narrative has not been challenged in any way by the women novelists as far as the religious texts or their usage in their works is concerned.

Keywords: Adam and Eve, feminine, feminine theology, patriarchal interpretation, religious symbols, women novelists

Introduction

1.1.Fiction in Indian Sub-Continent: Fable, Novel, and Short-Story

The current study examined the Urdu novels written by eminent writers, Bano Qudsia (1928-2017), Jamila Hashmi (1929-1988), and Khadija Mastoor (1927-1982) to explore the way religious symbols are interpreted and used in their works. The study also used examples from one selected novel of each writer, that is, *Talaash-e-Baharaan* [Search for spring] (1961) by Jamila Hashmi, and *Hasil Ghaat* (2003) by Bano Qudsia and *Aangan* [Courtyard] (1962) by Khadija Mastoor. Women writers of the Indian sub-continent have a history studded with struggle. Since, it has been witnessed that women of this region, like others from around the globe, had to break many barriers to write. Initially, women wrote with pseudonyms or with their initials. Fiction or poetry writing were also considered to be men's domains. The reason behind this was the fact that men have always been the custodians of pen and it was regarded as unwomanly for women to pick a pen, instead of needle, which is considered as their own feminine tool to work.

The history of fiction writing in Indian sub-continent is very important to understand the context of women's writings and struggles. Fiction refers to literary prose which usually comprises short stories, novels, novella, and dramas. However, the current research focused on the novels only. *Daastaan* [legend] was the first form of story-telling in this region. The time period of legend writing commenced in the Indian subcontinent from Fort William College and it is dated till the time of the

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mutiny of 1957.¹ Many legends of historical significance were written during this time period. The most famous were *Sab Ras* written by Mulla Wajhi (d. 1665-1672), *Bagh o Bahaar* [blissful] by Mir Amman (1748-1806), *Ajaab ul Qasas* [wonders of stories] by Shah Aalam Saani (1728-1806), *Tota Kahani* by Haider Bakhsh Haideri (1768/69 – 1823), *Fasana e Ajaab* [story of wonders] by Rajab Ali Baig Sarwar (1869-1786), *Talism Hushruha* [bewildering magic] by Muhammad Hussain Jaah (d. 1899) *Alif Laila Wa Laila* [a thousand and one nights] by Mirza Haider and Ratan Nath Sarshaar (1847-1903)-, *Dastan e Amir Hamza* [legend of Amir Hamza] by Khalil Ali Khan Ashk etc.”²

Novel emerged as the next form of fiction writing after fable or legend. Nazir Ahmad Dehlvi's (1830-1912) novel *Miraat ul Aroos* [the bride's mirror] that was published in 1869 is known as the first novel of Urdu in this region. Other notable novelists were Mirza Sauda (1713-1781), Sharrar (1860-1926), Sarshaar, Prem Chand (1880-1936), and Allama Rashid ul Khairi (1868-1936).³

The genre called short story, known as *afšana* in Urdu, was written later. Rashid ul Khairi's short story titled as *Naseer aur Khadija* [Naseer and Khadija] was published in *Makhzan* in 1903 and is known to be the first short story.⁴ The major earliest short story writers were Prem Chand, Sajjad Haider Yaldram (1880-1943), Kirshn Chandr (1914-1977), Ashk, Manto (1912-1955), Hijab Imtiaz Ali (1908-1999), Rajindar Singh Bedi (1915-1984), and Chughtai (1915-1991). Many other names emerged in later years which became very popular due to their unique diction and new themes of stories. These were Ghulam Abbas (1909-1982), Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi (1916-2006), Balwant Singh (1920-1986), Mumtaz Mufti (1905-1995), Khadija Mastoor, Hajra Masroor (1930-2012), Bano Qudsia, Intizar Hussain (1923-2016), Mumtaz Shirin (1924-1973), Qurratulain Haider (1927-2007), and Ashfaq Ahmed (1925-2004).⁵

1.2. Women Fiction Writers of Indian Sub-Continent

As far as literary movements are concerned, a reformative movement was introduced in the beginning which focused on the reformation of women in a strictly conservative religious sense, focusing on their roles as home-makers. Rashid ul Khairi, Waheed Jahan Begum, Nazar ul Baqir, and Muhammadi Begum (1878-1908) were notable names of this movement. While, the people who contributed towards progressive movement of Urdu literature included Prem Chand and Sajjad Haider Yaldaram and then Dr. Rasheed Jehan (1905-1952) and Chughtai later on, who were rather bold in their expression, highlighting issues that were considered as a taboo.

In fable writing, notable names of women included Nazar Sajjad Haider, Sughra Humayon Mirza (1884 – 1959), Zafar Jehan Begum, Fatima Begum, Jamila Begum, Muhammadi Begum, Anis Fatima and Tayyaba Begum.⁶ *Islaah-un-Nisa* [Reformation of a Woman] was written in the year 1881

¹Waqar Azeem, *Dastan se Afsane Tak* [From Legend to Short Story] (Lahore: Al-Waqar Publications, 2010), 9.

²Ambreen Salahuddin, “Feminist Archetype in Fiction by Pakistani Women Writers.” *Women* 13 (2021): 21-39; Nuzhat Abbasi, *Urdu Ke Afsaanvi Adab Mein Nisaai Lehja* [Feminine Diction in Urdu Fiction] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). (Karachi: Jinnah University for Women, 2010); Waqar Azeem, *Dastan se Afsane Tak*.

³Waqar Azeem, *Dastan se Afsane Tak*; Khalid Ashraf, *Barr-e-Sagheer Mein Urdu Novel* [Urdu Novel in the Subcontinent] (Delhi: Kitabi Dunya, 2003).

⁴Anwaar Ahmed, *Urdu Afsana; Aik Sadi Ka Qissa* [Urdu Short Story; A Tale of a Century] (Faisalabad: Misaal Publishers, 2010).

⁵Waqar Azeem, *Dastan se Afsane Tak* [From Legend to Short Story].

⁶Khalid Akber, “Urdu KI Afsana Nigar Khawateen,” [Women Short Story Writers of Urdu] MA Thesis. (Lahore: University of the Punjab, 1962); Ambreen Salahuddin, “Women's Lives and Images: Traditional Symbolism in Pakistani Fiction,” PhD Diss. (Lahore: University of the Punjab, 2017).

by Rasheed un Nisa Begum. It was noted as the first novel written by a woman,⁷ however, as reported, “the first novel, which according to critics, contained all the elements of novel writing, was *Aah e Mazloomaan* [sigh of the oppressed], written by Nazar Sajjad Haider in 1914.”⁸ Muhammadi Begum also wrote many novels. Akbari Begum’s (1867 – 1928) novel *Godar ka Laal* [Garnet in Rags] was published in 1907 and as reported by Qurat ul Ain Haider, it was very well-received and “became the Bible for the middle-class Muslim women.”⁹ *Aah e Mazloomaan* by Nazar Sajjad Haider was published in 1914. *Meri Natamaam Muhabbat* [My Unrequited Love], the first novel by Hijab Intiaz Ali, was published in 1932, about which Quratulain Haider said that “it was the first novel with delicate sensibility in Urdu.”¹⁰ One of the very important novel written by Chughati, *Tehri Lakeer* [Crooked line], was published in 1944. Chughati crafted a very different character of a woman who yearns to know herself, body and inner being both in this novel. Moreover, another famous novel written by Chughtai was *Ziddi* [Stubborn] which was published in 1941. Qurat ul Ain Haider’s first novel was *Mere bhi Sanam Khane* [My own places of worship] was published in 1949. Haider’s celebrated novel, *Aag ka darya* [River of fire] reached new heights of novel writing which was published in the year 1959. Khadija Mastoor’s famous novel *Aangan* [Courtyard] was published in 1962 and *Raja Gidh* [Vulture King] by Bano Qudsia was published in 1981. Jamila Hashmi’s novel *Dasht-e-Soos* [Desert of Soos] was published in 1983. These novels are considered amongst the best novels in Urdu fiction. *Dastak na do* [Do not knock!], written by Altaf Fatima (1927-2018) in 1946, is also an important novel.

Women writers were charged with many allegations including dearth of themes in their works which is indeed incorrect. Women writers and their works are not limited to these subjects only. It must also be added here that love itself is the topic of many celebrated novels of the world and men also write about love. As far as women and their exploitation is considered, men also write about that as well. The impression, however, is that women only write on these two topics, whereas men write about human predicament, realities of life, wars, metaphysics, and philosophical abstractions. Women have also written about such issues as well. They have written great novels on the grand event of Indian sub-continent, that is, partition. *Aag ka darya* and *Aangan* are two major works in this regard. Apart from these novels, innumerable short stories by Bano Qudsia, Farkhanda Lodhi (1937 – 2010), Hajira Masroor, and Khadija Mastoor have been written on the theme of partition. Intizar Hussain¹¹ wrote: “Incomplete history of women’s fiction writing has been narrated. The whole history is not complete without the mention of *Nani Amman* [grandmother] as she used to tell a story in a peculiar manner. The concern for women’s issues and romanticism wasn’t there but still it was unique feminine style.”¹²

Rashid-un-Nisa Begum, Nazar Sajjad Haider, Mrs. Abdul Qadir (1898 – 1976), Siddiqua Begum (1925-1993-94), Khadija Mastoor, Hajira Masroor, Hijab Intiaz and Qurat ul Ain Haider were

⁷Neelam Farzana, *Urdu Adab Ki Khwateen Novel Nigar* [Women Novelists of Urdu Literature] (Lahore: Fiction House 1992); M. S. Bakhsh, *Pakistani Khwateen Ka Nasri Adab Mein Kirdar* [Pakistani Women’s Role in Prose Literature] (Islamabad: Allama Iqbal Open University, 2011).

⁸Ambreen Salahuddin, “Women’s Lives and Images: Traditional Symbolism in Pakistani Fiction,” PhD Diss. (Lahore: University of the Punjab, 2017).

⁹Quratulain Haider, *Kaar-e-Jahaan Daraz Hae* [Worldly Affairs Are Longer] (Mumbai: Fann Aur Fankar, 1977).

¹⁰Quratulain Haider, *Picture Gallery* (Lahore: Qausain, 1983).

¹¹Intizar Hussain, *Khwateen ki Afsana Nigari* [Short Story Writing by Women Writers] (Lahore: Daily Jang, 2nd November 1982).

¹²Ibid.

among the notable names of women short story writers.¹³ These writings “shaped the collective consciousness of girls who grow up reading these stories.”¹⁴ Qurat ul Ain Haider wrote,¹⁵ “Those women sitting in *pardah* [behind veil], who picked up the pen and wrote on social issues thirty to thirty-five years before, Dr Rasheed Jehan and Chughtai, deserve to be honored. They didn’t know about James Joyce (1882-1941), Edith Sitwell (1887-1964), and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), but with deep indulgence they created literature of their own in their peculiar style, which surely was useful.”

2. Methodology

The current study followed a qualitative research methodology, based on the analysis of selected Urdu novels written by Pakistani women writers by using the lens of Muslim feminist theology. The critique on patriarchal interpretation of religious texts by Riffat Hassan and Fatema Mernissi (1940-2015) was used to conduct the current study. The theory of patriarchy is indeed now well-established, though the assumptions herein are questioned now and then.¹⁶ Feminist theory presents a critique on patriarchal notions,¹⁷ while Muslim feminist theology presents a critique on the patriarchal interpretations of Islamic religious texts, as these interpretations contribute towards the status of women in Muslim societies.¹⁸

The narrative of Adam and Eve is seen in innumerable works of fiction, especially short stories. However, the current study focused only on the celebrated and critically acclaimed novels written by Jamila Hashmi, Bano Qudsia, and Khadija Mastoor. All the novels written by these three authors were studied to conduct the current research. The quoted symbols and metaphors from the religious narrative of Adam and Eve are mainly from three novels by these authors; *Talaash-e-Baharaan* [Search for spring] (1961) by Jamila Hashmi, *Hasil Ghaat* (2003) by Bano Qudsia, and *Aangan* [Courtyard] (1962) by Khadija Mastoor.

3. Findings and Discussion

The current study examined the symbolic usage and interpretation of religious narratives in fiction by women writers since it is important to understand the usage of symbols or genre of symbolic literary writing. Pertaining to the usage of religious symbols, there is a diversity of symbols and metaphors used by women writers in their works. Although, there are particular names associated with the specific way of writing called ‘symbolism.’ Khalida Hussain (1937-2019), Balraj Menra (1935-2016), and Dr. Enwar Sajjad (1935-2019) are amongst the few names associated with symbolic writing. Nonetheless, symbols and their usage can be seen in the works of other writers as well. Secondly, the symbols and metaphors in the works of these writers have originated from multiple

¹³Farzana Anjum, “Pakistani Khawateen ki Afsana Nigari,” [Short story writing of Pakistani women], MA Thesis (Lahore: University of the Punjab, 1973); Syed Javaid Akhtar, *Urdu Ki Novel Nigar Khawateen* [Women novelists of Urdu]. (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997); Khalid Akber, “Urdu ki Afsana Nigar Khawateen,” [Women Short Story Writers of Urdu] MA Thesis (Lahore: University of the Punjab, 1962).

¹⁴Kishwar Naheed, *Aurat, Khwab Aur Khak Ke Darmeyaan* [Woman between Dream and Soil]. (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1993)

¹⁵Quratulain Haider, *Daastaan e Ehd e Gul* [Legend of Flower’s Era]. (Karachi: Maktaba-e-Danial, 2002), 87.

¹⁶Harris Mirkin. “The Passive Female the Theory of Patriarchy.” *American Studies* 25, no. 2 (1984): 39-57.

¹⁷Syeda Sjuguffa Naqvi, Nelofir Shaber and Iqra Khadam, “Ultimate Struggle for Liberation and Independence in the Patriarchal Norms and Values Presented in Henrik Ibsen’s Selected Fiction,” *Global Language Review*, VIII. (2023): 22-23.

¹⁸Roohi Khan Stack, “An Analysis of Muslim Women’s Rights Based on the Works of Amina Wadud, Fatema Mernissi, and Riffat Hassan”, PhD Diss. (Harvard University, 2020).

sources and are not limited to religion, mythology, culture, folk treasure, fairytales, nature, and classical texts. It is also interesting to note that since men have been the custodians of pen for a longer period of time, the question of patriarchal interpretation lies in other sources as well, however only religious symbols have been focused in the current study. Thirdly, religion, is sometimes bracketed within the mythological narratives by some scholarships. This was not the case in the current research as it focused on religions only by excluding the mythology.

The first major narrative from religious texts is that of Adam and Eve which has been alleged with two things by the Muslim feminist theological scholarship. The first is the borrowing of the details of narrative from Christian religious texts and, secondly the patriarchal interpretations of the religious texts. The story of Adam and Eve's exile from Heaven is found in nearly all religious texts. The most highlighted aspect of the narrated story is indeed Eve's role in the exile of Adam from Heaven. Women writers have used the same story symbolically in their works and have not challenged it in any way as the feminist scholarship does. Bano Qudsia writes in her novel *Hasil Ghaat*, "What could I tell anyone that when Adam accepted what Eve said; he was left with no choice other than exile."¹⁹ The protagonist of the novel was spending the later years of his life in United States of America when he met the love of his life after 45 years. He was asked to leave the country by her to save her from distress. The symbol of Eve's responsibility of Adam's exit from his safe haven is artfully used as the theme of the novel. There is a complete acceptance of the story-line in Qudsia's narration in this work and other works as well. As written earlier, the Muslim feminist theologians call this narration as a patriarchal interpretation, accepted in Muslim scholarship as inspired by the Christian religious texts. Dr. Riffat Hassan states:

The ordinary Muslim believes, as seriously as the ordinary Jew or Christian that Adam was God's primary creation and that Eve was made from Adam's rib. While, this myth is obviously rooted in the Yahwists account of creation in Genesis 2: 18-24, it has no basis whatever in the Quran which describes the creation of humanity in completely egalitarian terms. In the thirty or so passages pertaining to the subject of human creation, the Quran uses generic terms for humanity ("an-nas", "al-insān", "bashar") and there is no mention in it of Hawwa or Eve. The word "Adam" occurs twenty-five times in the Qur ān, but it is used in twenty-one cases as a symbol for self-conscious humanity. Here, it is pertinent to point out that the word "Adam" is a Hebrew word (from "adamah" meaning "the soil") and it functions generally as a collective noun referring to "the human" rather than to a male person. In the Qur ān, the word "Adam" (which Arabic borrowed from Hebrew) mostly does not refer to a particular human being. Rather, it refers to human beings in a particular way.²⁰

Thus, Dr. Riffat Hassan clearly stated that the ordinary Muslim, Christian, and Jew believe in the concept of Eve's creation out of Adam's rib due to patriarchy. Secondly, she has also clarified that Adam is not a term used for a male person specifically, however, it refers to human beings in general. Although, the believers generally take the name Adam to be one of the first male human being on earth. The use of the term Adam has also been discussed by Muslim theologians. For instance, Iqbal writes in his celebrated critical work, "Indeed, in the verses which deal with the origin of man as a living being, the Quran uses the words "Bashar" or "Insān", not "Adam" which it reserves for man in his capacity of God's vicegerent on earth. The purpose of the Qur ān is further secured by the omission of proper names mentioned in the Biblical narration -Adam and Eve. The term "Adam" is retained and used more as a concept than as a name of a concrete human individual. The word is not without authority in the Qur ān itself."²¹

¹⁹Bano Qudsia, *Hasil Ghaat* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), 336.

²⁰Riffat Hassan, *Challenging the Stereotypes of Fundamentalism: An Islamic Feminist Perspective*, *Muslim World*, 91(1/2), (2001): 60.

²¹Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1962), 83.

What Iqbal states seconds the thought of Dr. Riffat to some extent as she clearly holds that Adam is not male.²² She also indulges in the thorough analysis of Qur'anic verses, where there is no mention of Eve's sole responsibility.²³ She connects the two claims; Adam as human being and not male and Eve as not solely responsible for the exile in the following manner;

Here, it may be noted that whereas in Genesis 3:6, the dialogue preceding the eating of the forbidden fruit by the human pair in the Garden of Eden is between the serpent and Eve (though Adams presence is also indicated, as contended by feminist theologians) and this has provided the basis for the popular casting of Eve into the role of tempter, deceiver, and seducer of Adam, in the Qur'an, the Shaitan (Satan) has no exclusive dialogue with Adams *zauj*. In two of the three passages which refer to this episode, namely Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 35-39 and Surah 7: Al-Ar'af 19-25, the Shaitan is stated to have led both Adam and *zauj* astray though in the former (verse 36) no actual conversation is reported. In the remaining passage, namely, Surah 20: Ta-Ha: 115-124, it is Adam who is charged with forgetting his covenant with God (verse 115), who is tempted by the Shaitan (verse 120) and who disobeys God and allows himself to be seduced (verse 121). However, if one looks at all the three passages as well as the way in which the term "Adam" functions generally in the Qur'an, it becomes clear that the Qur'an regards the act of disobedience by the human pair in "al-jannah" (the Garden) as a collective rather than an individual act for which exclusive, or even primary, responsibility is not assigned to either man or woman.²⁴

The Qur'anic verses which narrate the story of Adam and Eve in detail include 2:30-39,²⁵ 7:11-27,²⁶ and 20:115-134.²⁷ It is categorically stated, "O Adam! Verily, this is a foe unto thee and thy wife. So, let him not drive you out of this garden and render thee unhappy."²⁸ This verse is addressed to Adam and talks about the foe who is misleading both Adam and Eve, thus not directly pointing out the responsibility of Eve in exile.²⁹ Jamila Hashmi wrote, "God could have made the world in any other way. What did He gain by taking Eve out of the rib of Adam? See, what is he doing to the one entrusted to him; taken out from his rib."³⁰ Fatema Mernissi (1940-2015) stated, "the scarcity [of interpretive] language may have caused commentators like al-Zamakhshari (1075-1143) and other Muslim scholars to rely on Biblical accounts which state that Eve was extracted from (*min*) the rib side of Adam."³¹ There are also some *ahadith* quoted in regards to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. In her novel *Aangan*, Khadija Mastoor's characters indulge in a dialogue about the same notion of creation of Eve from the crooked rib of Adam,

If I will love someone else, then you can say something."

²²Riffat Hassan, Woman-man Equality in Creation: Interpreting the Qur'an from a Nonpatriarchal Perspective. *Muslim Women and Gender Justice. Routledge*, 1 (1992).

²³Riffat Hassan, "Religious Conservatism: Feminist Theology as a Means of Combating Injustice Toward Women in Muslim Communities/Culture," *Pakistan Voice* (2006).

²⁴Riffat Hassan, "An Islamic Perspective," In *Women Religion and Sexuality, Studies in the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*, ed., Jeanne Becher (Geneva: WLC Publications, 1990), 104.

²⁵Al-Qur'an: al-Baqara 2:30-39.

²⁶al-A'raf 7:11-27.

²⁷Ta-ha 20:115-134.

²⁸Ta-ha 20: 117

²⁹Ambreen Salahuddin, "Usage of Religious Symbols in Fiction by Pakistani Women Writers," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, Vol. 8, Issue 1 (June 2018): 84-92.

³⁰Jamila Hashmi, *Talaash-e-Baharaan* [Search for Spring] (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), 118.

³¹Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (Boston MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996).

“These are all lies; a woman cannot live without loving a man. According to tradition, she is born out of man’s rib.” Jamil *bhaya* [brother] became excited.

“Okay, now I understand”, she laughed suddenly, “Man deceives woman because he was reminded of the pain of Mr. Adam’s rib!”³²

There is also the symbolic usage of rib story in Bano Qudisia’s *Hasil Ghaat* as she writes, “Buddha’s heart grew weary of self-created heaven of Śuddhodana, the story of Adam was repeated again and one day Siddhartha left Yaśodharā and his son at the age of twenty-nine and went from the happiness of heaven to find a life laden with distress.”³³

The concept of “Fall” and “Original Sin” is not there in the Qur’ānic text. The inspiration comes from the Christian theology. There are, however, some *ahādīth* which talk about the creation of Eve from Adam’s crooked rib. It is stated in one *hadīth*, “Treat women nicely, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper portion, so if you would try to straighten it, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So, treat women nicely.”³⁴ In another *hadīth*, it is written, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt (trouble) his neighbor. And, I advise you to take care of women, for they are created from a rib and the most crooked part of the rib is its upper part; if you try to straighten it, it will break, and if you leave it, it will remain crooked, so I urge you to take care of woman.”³⁵ Since the critique of feminist theologians has been focused here with regards to the patriarchal interpretations, Dr. Riffat Hassan has narrated about *ahādīth* quoted here and also some others about the crooked rib as,

As far as their content (“*matn*”) is concerned, it is obviously in opposition to the Quranic accounts about human creation. Since, all Muslim scholars agree on the principle that any hadith which is in contradiction to the Quran cannot be accepted as authentic, the above-mentioned “ahādīth” ought to be rejected on material grounds. However, they still continue to be a part of the Islamic tradition. This is due certainly, in significant measure, to the fact that they are included in the Hadith collections by Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (810-70) and Muslim bin al-Hallaj (817-75), collectively known as the *Sahīhan* (from “*sahīh*” meaning sound or authentic) which “form an almost unassailable authority, subject indeed to criticisms in details, yet deriving an indestructible influence from the “*ijma*” or general consent of the community in custom and belief, which it is their function to authenticate”. But, the continuing popularity of these “ahādīth” amongst Muslims in general also indicates that they articulate something deeply embedded in Muslim culture, namely, the belief that women are derivative and secondary in the context of human creation.³⁶

Mernissi shares the same views in this regard. Stack writes, “Mernissi states that *ahādīth* originated in an attempt to stop the *fitna*, or civil war, but it became ‘a formidable political weapon’ that led to the creation of many ‘false, fabricated ahādīths.’”³⁷

Muslim religious scholars authenticate the Christian religious narration of the story of Adam and Eve, despite the fact that this is not a part of Qur’ānic text. Influenced by the patriarchal hegemony of religious scholarship, common Muslims accept the interpretations and so do the women novelists. This clarity of thought by feminist theological scholarship as regards to the patriarchal

³²Khadija Mastoor, “Aangan,” *Majmooa Khadija Mastoor* [Collected works of Khadija Mastoor] (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publication, 2008), 690.

³³Bano Qudisia, *Hasil Ghaat* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), 143.

³⁴Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Translation of Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1971), 346.

³⁵Ibid., 81.

³⁶Riffat Hassan, “Religious Conservatism: Feminist Theology as a Means of Combating Injustice Toward Women in Muslim Communities/Culture,” *Pakistan Voice* (2006).

³⁷Roohi Khan Stack, “An Analysis of Muslim Women’s Rights Based on the Works of Amina Wadud, Fatema Mernissi, and Riffat Hassan,” PhD diss. (Harvard University, 2020), 11.

religious interpretation of religious texts is not seen in the writings of women novelists. They have written about the exploitation, harassment, abuse, and other issues of identity about women writers in their works but the representation is indeed patriarchal. Even the prevalent women archetypes are present in the same old fashion.³⁸ To understand this notion, the following quote from Bano Qudisia's novel is a good example: "When centuries passed, God created Eve from his rib... like him... from his kind... Dualism was inside Adam till that time. Now it was visible outside as well... Now, it became easier for Satan to disappoint Adam from Allah. So, he awakened the wish of creation in Adam, ignited the spark of want. He took help from the other self of Hawwa to force Adam to eat from the forbidden tree."³⁹

It must be kept in mind that characters in a work of fiction can communicate their thoughts and diversity which, indeed, is a very important notion. There is, however, no such character in these works that is not feminine or challenges these notions in any manner. There is a huge readership of fiction, especially of these writers. The negative notions about the status of women are presented and not challenged in any way. Thus, these old-aged patriarchal concepts are indeed reinforced as a collective consciousness of a whole society. A woman at times is only reduced to work as a binary to reinforce male supremacy. Hashmi wrote, "Surely the woman is dependent on the colour of the universe and for the first time in life I have come to know the truth of these stories, whose background is religious; which shows the greatness and majesty of Shiva through Parvati and Adam through Eve."⁴⁰

4. Conclusion

The current study explored the texts of Urdu novels written by selected women writers, especially "*Talaash-e-Baharaan*" by Jamila Hashmi, "*Hasil Ghaat*" by Bano Qudisia, and "*Aangan*" by Khadija Mastoor, to understand the interpretation of religious texts in these works, in context with the narration of religious story of Adam and Eve. It can be concluded that the usage of religious story of Adam and Eve in the works of selected novelists is patriarchal. There is a galaxy of Muslim feminist theologians who have attempted to challenge the patriarchal interpretations of religious texts through their works, so that the status of women in Muslim cultures and societies may be elevated. In the light of the challenge presented to patriarchal interpretations by Riffat Hassan and Fatema Mernissi, it can be seen that women novelists have relied upon patriarchal interpretations and not on the critique that Muslim feminist theologians have presented in the past decades. Usually, the works of women writers are called as representative of feminine (*nisai*) diction, expression, and thoughts. The feminine is, however, patriarchal. This reality is posed as a barrier for women to create a tradition of women writing too⁴¹. The patriarchal hegemony overshadows any such possibility.

Conflict of Interest

Author(s) declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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³⁸Ambreen Salahuddin, "Khalida Hussain ki Gung Shehzadi aur Hélèn Cixous ki Medusa Ka Qehqaha" [Khalida Hussain's Gung Shehzadi and The Laugh of Hélèn Cixous's Medusa], *Bunyad*, Volume 11 (June 2020): 103-117.

³⁹Bano Qudisia, *Hasil Ghaat* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), 297-298.

⁴⁰Jamila Hashmi, *Talash-e-Baharaan* [Search of Spring] (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), 103.

⁴¹Ambreen Salahuddin, "Pidrsari Tashreehaat mein sui aur Qalam ka Tazaad o Takhsees aur Aurton ke Likhne ki Riwayat ki Tashkeel [Dichotomy and Appropriation of Needle and Pen by Patriarchal Interpretations and the Tradition of Women Writing]," *Bunyad*, Vol.13, Issue 1. (June 2022): 251-261.

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