

From Resistance to Resilience: A Feministic Analysis of Shahraz's The Holy Woman

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Received on: 08-01-2025

Accepted on: 10-02-2025

Abstract

This study focuses on the portrayal of Pakistani women's resistance and resilience in Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* (2001). The study explores the atrocities and domestic violence faced by women in Pakistan that how they are denied freedom of expression. The novel narrates the story of a young woman Zarri Bano who becomes a holy woman to enable her father to keep control of his land. In the sub-continent, women are exploited in the name of religion. The custom of holy woman practices in rural Pakistani areas to take control of land through the woman. This study's main aim is to highlight the cruelty of the patriarchal system in which women are deprived of their rights. Women are exploited both sexually and emotionally. Using Mohanty's theory given in *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* published (2003), this paper analyzes resistance and resilience of women in the novel *The Holy Woman* published. This book is based on Mohanty's critique of western feminism. This paper has used the method of textual analysis. The events and lines that depict the enactment of resistance and resilience have been analyzed through Mohanty's feminism's prism. The novel is the prime source of interpretation of this study. The current study concludes that Zarri Bano's character has been shown in the light of resistance to resilience. She proves herself a resilient woman by overcoming the weary traditions and living a normal life again.

Keywords: Resistance, Resilience, Patriarchy, Post-colonial feminism, Subjugation.

INTRODUCTION

The paper aims at the exploration of feministic analysis in Shahraz's novel *The Holy Woman*, 2001. This study focuses on the resistance and resilience of women in patriarchal societies. In the third world societies, including Pakistan, patriarchal domination has no universal structure. In Pakistan, during the military reign of General Zia-ul-haq (1977-1988), women were suppressed in religion. He implemented anti-women policies like Hudod ordinance. Women are victims of inequality. They are considered inferior creatures that cannot get privileges, but it is the quality of women who have survived through injustices. Women even managed to earn the title of the goddess at times. (Memon, 2001). In the South Asian region, women are considered inferior to men. They have no right to take their lives decisions. They cannot choose their life partners.

The Holy Woman, 2001 portrays the condition of women and customs in Sindh (a province of Pakistan). Pakistani women are given the status of noble mothers and lovely daughters. However, in wars and crises, they fell prey to the anger and aggression of men. Pakistani

women portray the tyranny of the patriarchal society under the disguise of Holy customs. Zari Bano is a fashionable girl of a feudal family from Sindh. She is the character that most of the women wish to become; she is the epitome of society's life. The protagonist is the symbol of life's livelihood and happiness. Zarri Bano is full of positivity and beauty in a single stature, and the author has used this character for a reason that author wants to create the concept of modernism and the trend in vogue, which most people think educated women are enjoying. Post-colonial feminist writers challenge the myths which people have formed to display as the standard measure of uniformity and similarity (Mumtaz & Shaheen, 1987). Shahraz has also tried to break this myth through her writing. People think that all women suffer the same fate in a patriarchal society. The novelist has used the protagonist to challenge this myth by giving many different incidents that happen on a real basis in many different women's lives. This novel is a complete dissection of the patriarchal society and male chauvinist members of this society how they ruin innocent girls' lives to gain their interest. They make their daughter a scapegoat to be sacrificed on the altar of their interest and ego. This novel reveals the heinous faces of those monsters who oppressed their daughters. They are the monsters who do not even think a single time while ruining innocent girls and women's lives. They treat women as their slave. Furthermore, women have to suffer at the hands of these atrocious people who should not call themselves human beings.

Significance of the study

This study is significant to explore the status of women in Pakistani society. Women face many atrocities, and they are facing domestic violence. They have no freedom of expression. Women are being exploited sexually and emotionally. This study highlights the resistance and resilience of Pakistani women through *The Holy Woman*. Sindhi women have always been a victim to patriarchal atrocities. Many cases report for the Jirga's and their decisions where men use the women as commodities to settle disputes. The rural Sindh is an area where people have no access to education and necessary health facilities. The lack of educational institutes has kept the people ignorant, and they do not know their fundamental rights. When some are illiterate, they fell prey to ignorance as well. The people there have to work as laborers. These people are called Harris⁵, and they are not allowed to have fundamental human rights.

This area's inhuman tradition is forcing a woman to marry the Holy book of the Muslim Quran. However, this tradition has no reference in any religious book, not even the Quran itself. The root causes behind this tradition's invention have been the property and its inheritance to the female family members. This study explores this tradition and its impacts on the life of women. The patriarchal society has to inflict the barbaric practice on innocent lives. They have tried to mask their heinous interests under the name of religion. The feudal lords of Sindh's have tried to protect their lands with this practice. Almost all societies give the right of inheritance to women. However, most of the time, people do not want to share this vital resource with others. When they marry their daughters and sisters, they have to share their lands with other people. To save their beloved land, they had invented this practice a long time ago.

In the modern age, this practice still seems in vogue. There is not only the holy woman practice, which is an injustice and atrocity on the innocent lives. Women suffer several

different kinds of cruelties in their lives at the hands of their male members. Isn't it an irony that the family members and the people of their own home and blood cause these agonizing inflictions to women? No one is allowed to raise voice against these cruel practices. The post-colonial literature and Shahraz have raised her voice against these cruel practices, and this study explores the resistance and resilience against the subjugation of patriarchal society in the post-colonial literature.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To find the portrayal of women's resistance and resilience in *The Holy Woman* by Qaisra Shahraz?
2. To find the literary techniques used to describe women's resistance and resilience in Shahraz's *The Holy Woman*.
3. To explore how women's resistance and resilience influence Pakistani fiction.

Research Questions

The present study is based on these research questions.

1. How does Shahraz portray women's resistance and resilience in the novel *Holy Woman*?
2. What are the ways and techniques used to describe resistance and resilience in Pakistani fiction?
3. What is the impact of resilient and resistant women in fiction portrayed by Shahraz?

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Literature in Pakistan has been evolving since the creation of Pakistan soon after the partition of the sub-Continent. English is the official language of Pakistan. Hashmi introduced the term 'Pakistani Literature in English', while he was highlighting the unique and salient features of Pakistani Literature in *Pakistani Literature: The Contemporary English Writers* (1987). It is to his credit that he used this term frequently in his scholarly work, speeches and teaching since the 1970s.

Post-colonial Feminism

Focusing mainly on women's experiences in western cultures, post-colonial feminism emerged as a form of feminism that emerged as a response to feminism. The basic concern of post-colonial feminist theory is related with the representation of women in colonized and western countries. It concentrates on the gender differences and women representation in the anti-colonial and post-colonial discourses. It disapproves of the image of colonized women by the West that women in the third world countries are only suppressed by male domination. Bapsi Sidhwa is a known diasporic writer of Pakistan. She worked a lot for post-colonial feminism. She portrays the real face of Pakistani patriarchal society. She beautifully represents women's struggle for how women raise their voice against the cruelty and fake norms of society.

Women's Resistance in Pakistani society

Pakistani society is divided into two categories. One is dominant (male) who possesses power, and the other is subordinate (female), who is powerless. The resistance starts when subordinates protest against the cruelty of dominants, and they try to control them. Women are also part of society, so equal opportunities should be given to women to live on their own rules. However, women are considered a pitiful creature that can be ruled by power. Paranjape (1996) comments on Zaitoon's resistance in *The Pakistani Bride* (1983), the novel written by Bapsi Sidhwa. Zaitoon is a symbol not only of women fighting oppression in Pakistan but it is an inspiration for those who fight against the patriarchy and survive. Zaitoon represents 'khudi' or the mental and spiritual strength of humankind. Indefatigable, indomitable, and irrepressible. She represents the triumph of mind over matter, of spirit over the flesh. (Paranjape, 1996, p.105)

In *The Holy Woman* portrays the miserable condition of women and norms in rural Sindh. This novel has been the subject of literary research. Pakistani women portray the tyranny of the patriarchal society under the disguise of religious customs. A Pakistani woman belongs to whether the elite class or lower class, no matter whether she lives in the remote villages of the tribal areas through away from the changing world or in the lively environment of Karachi, she has certain rules to follow. Rather it can be said that the patriarchal rules govern the women, which may be said as the ways cutting across class and regional differences to create some measures of uniformity and similarity. (Mumtaz & Shaheen, 1987, p. 23).

Chaudhry (2013) reveals that Pakistani writers are trying hard to highlight women's struggle in the typical patriarchal Pakistani society. In *The Holy Woman*, she explores the resistance and resilience of female figures against Pakistani society's cruel traditions. Shahraz has portrayed women's exploitation by men in the disguise of cultural and religious customs. After becoming a Holy Woman, Zarri changed herself. She cut her long hair and started Purdah. She buried her inner desires in her heart and tried to become a good Holy Woman. In her article, Chaudhry analyzed the work of Shahraz that their male family members suppress women. Zarri's mother was devastated by her husband's decision to transform her modern and literate daughter into a Holy Woman, but she and her other daughter Ruby cannot raise their voices. After her father and sister's demise, Ruby Zarri decided to marry Sikandar. This shows her resistance to embrace her destiny as a Holy Woman, and she becomes resilient and makes her own choice to live life according to her will. (Chaudhry, 2013).

Ahmad, Anwar, and Shah (2018) explore Pakistani women's resistance and resilience in the work of 'Bapsi Sidhwa.' Sidhwa's heroines portrayed Pakistani patriarchal society's real face, where women are controlled bodily and emotionally by men. Sidhwa represented Pakistani women's struggle all around in the post-colonial world. "This struggle of women in Pakistani society portrayed by Sidhwa aligns her with the Feminist struggle all around the post-colonial world" (Ahmad, Anwar & Shah, 2018, p. 1). Ashcroft (2004) says, "Post-colonial theory focuses instead on an exploration of how the dominated or colonized culture can use the tools of the dominant discourse to resist its political or cultural control." (Ashcroft, 2004, p. 15).

Sidhwa not only depicts the suppression of Pakistani women in her work, but she also gives us the image of strong women who oppose the cruel system and try to change their lives. *The Pakistani Bride* published in 1983, depicts a young girl Zaitoon who was forced to get married

to a tribal man. This novel portrays the resistance of Zaitoon. Her husband was from a different culture. He abused her physically and emotionally. She refused to tolerate it anymore and decided to run out of this situation. Her character disclosed the feministic trends in the post-colonial world. She emerges as a strong woman who faced the harshness of life. She was suppressed under the social and religious norms, but she resisted and came out of that situation. In her other novel *Ice Candy Man* published in 1988, she describes women's exploitation after the partition. The protagonist Shanta was a young Hindu girl who worked as ayah. After the partition, she was unable to return home. She was sexually exploited and reached at a brothel by her lover. Sidhwa as a modern Pakistani writer, tried to change the image of Pakistani women through her work that Pakistani women are strong enough to challenge the patriarchal setup of society, and she can change her life according to her choice. (Ahmad, Anwar & Shah, 2018).

According to Ahmad (2018), Pakistani fiction is a part of post-colonial fiction. Women in Pakistani fiction have been shown as a changing character. Pakistani writers have portrayed the Pakistani women lives and how they live under the burden of social, religious burden. They have no freedom of speech. Women are also depicted as possessed by demons of social taboos, which are human-made and used to control women's lives. Pakistani writers portray the image of women in the context of post-colonial feminism. Post-colonial feminism fiction depicts the violation, suppression of women by men. Before British colonialism, Indian Muslim women were living in a small world. They spent their whole life without any purpose. Azra (as cited in Ahmad, 2018) points out; they were prohibited from taking any part in the college's activities. They sat separately in the classroom, hardly mixed with their fellow male students, and had no chance to take part in activities like the gymkhana or the debating society. In a nut shell, they created a small world of their own.

Kidwai (2011) narrates that the “newly emerging Muslim woman of our time” is what is most characteristic of Shahraz’s social narratology in *The Holy Woman* (2001, p. 85). This study helps connect the experiences of Pakistani women with the changes brought by modernity and globalization. In this novel, Zarri Bano transforms her pain into personal growth. After becoming a Holy woman she was free from traditional expectations like marriage and she goes to abroad to learn about the true teachings of Islam. While studying in Egypt she gets the true sense of Islam and the freedom it offers to woman. As Kidwai points out that Shahraz portrays her female characters strongly that they secure their rightful position in society without “hysterical criticism against the clergy” (p. 81).

This perspective aligns with and is further nuanced by Jadoon’s (2015) analysis of the veil. He analyzed The story of Zari Bano in *The Holy Woman*, offers a sharp critique to the Western ideals of autonomy, choice, gender equality and free access to public life which in certain cases and circumstances gravitates a liberal feminist in Pakistan more towards dis-empowerment than to its opposite. There exists strong links between a woman’s physical appearance and her family’s honor within the space segregated society of Pakistan. Therefore, the biggest threat to a women’s autonomy comes from her own self unprotected visibility in public space. Consequently, the veiled body of a Muslim woman offers her a personal space which protects her from the harassment of male gaze-while participating in the public space which is typically assumed to be a male space.

The image of Zari Bano as a veiled Muslim woman in *The Holy woman* portrays that she is

respected for her intelligence rather than her looks. By wearing the veil she challenges the liberal idea that a veiled Muslim woman is kept isolated. (Jadoon, 2015). Bringing both scholars together it is observed that Kidwai focuses on Zari Bano's spiritual and intellectual growth through education and her reinterpretation of religious teachings while Jadoon underscores the physical and social manifestations of this empowerment through veiling.

In *The Holy Woman* (2001), Qaisra Shahraz shows how Muslim chauvinism has a big influence on the lives of Pakistani women. As Ali (2013) describes, these women discover methods to deal with the challenges that come from religious and cultural expectations, especially when it marks their liberty and choices. Shahraz highlights how national and cultural traditions often control women's lives and bodies, especially in rural areas like Sindh. (Ali, 2013).

Kharal (2007) praises Shahraz as she brings her characters into the spotlight. She gives voice to their emotions and the awareness of their rights. This symbolizes a minor but significant variation for the oppressed women of countryside Pakistan, giving them some space to breathe in a society that often treats them unethically.

Arimbi's (2009) book *Reading Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Women Writers* looks at the works of renowned Indonesian Muslim women writers and how they represent the gender roles and identity of Muslim women in Indonesia. First, it describes how gender issues are shown in the stories written by these Muslim women writers. Second, it explains how Muslim women in Indonesia are portrayed in these stories. Third, it discovers altered writing styles and story structures, showing how ideas about beauty in writing connect closely with gender, identity, power, how women are represented, and religious beliefs. (Arimbi, 2009).

Imran and Munir (2018) highlight women's resistance in 1980 through the efforts of prominent lawyers Asma Jehangir and Hina Jilani. As advocates in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, they established the nation's first all-women law firm and founded the AGHS Legal Aid Cell for Women in Lahore, Punjab, to provide legal support and protection to marginalized women. Honored with awards such as the Millennium Peace Prize for Women, Jehangir and Jilani were celebrated as women's rights defenders and active members of the Women's Action Forum (WAF) and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). Jehangir also chaired the HRCP and served as a UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial, Arbitrary, and Summary Executions. Their relentless advocacy against the Zina Hudood laws and representation of women affected by domestic violence and human rights abuses led to their detention, death threats, defamation campaigns, and assassination attempts by fundamentalists, who accused them of promoting a "Western" agenda to erode Islamic values. The text also notes that in 1979, women in Karachi formed Tehrik-e-Niswan, a cultural collective involving artists, activists, and writers, including Sheema Kirmani, a dancer and actress who persisted in her artistic and activist work during Pakistan's Islamization era. In 1980, Tehrik-e-Niswan hosted its inaugural All Women's Conference in Karachi, engaging diverse participants, particularly working-class women from areas like Lyari and Orangi. Initially focused on seminars addressing gender violence and societal norms (e.g., *Chaddar and Chardiwari*), the group soon shifted to theater and dance to amplify awareness of women's oppression. This marked the emergence of politically charged performances in Pakistan, addressing issues faced by women and marginalized communities.

Research Methodology

The present study has used the methodology of Textual analysis. The research is qualitative in nature. The lines of the text dealing with the issues of resistance and resilience have been analyzed. Using text as the only source of interpretation, the researcher has analyzed the text in the light of Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders* published in 2003..

Feminism without Borders, 2003 is based on Mohanty's critique of Western Feminism. The book presents real transnational feminist issues. In her book, Mohanty identifies three problems with U.S.U.S. feminism. First is an emerging class-based clash between active Feminism and university-based feminists theorizing. The second is the deep corporatist values that cause the rise of neo-liberal Feminism, and Last is the narrowing the feminist politics and theory. Mohanty argues the case for a materialist analysis that addresses issues of identity, community, home, and nation with the context of the global political economy's institutions.

The book is divided into three sections; it addresses significant themes written by Mohanty. Decolonizing Feminism, Demystifying Feminism, and Reorienting Feminism. She tries to educate people that the lines which we have created on the maps are not real. These borders do not exist in reality. There is not a single division or line between race, gender, and religion. She further explains that *Feminism without borders* (2003) must create some change in the creation and alteration of these imaginary lines and cause some change in social justice throughout the globe. It gives a notion of feminist solidarity as opposed to vague assumptions of sisterhood.

Mohanty has a clear stance that women of the third world is different from the west by their culture, race, and society. Her book addresses some of the most pressing and complex issues facing contemporary Feminism. Establish vital links between daily life and collective action, and between theory and pedagogy, Mohanty has been at the vanguard of Third World and international feminist thought and activism for nearly two decades. This book begins with the influential critique *Under Western Eyes* (1988), and at the ending page, you can see some scriptures on her latest thinking as to how gender, race and class matter in the globalization perspective.

Mohanty's thoughts reflect on the novel *The Holy Woman*, 2001 in which an educated, liberal woman becomes a victim of traditions. She was coerced to marry Quran. She transforms herself into a holy woman, and her father abolished her fundamental right to marry her beloved. Mohanty tries to tell the difference between first and third world feminism in her book feminism without borders.

1. She has highlighted the issues of third world's women, like in the holy woman; the protagonist is forced to do marriage. It is shown the male supremacy in the post-colonial world. Women in third world countries under the influence of post-colonialism have no identity. Often, they are treated as toys that can be played by the will of their lords. This is not the case with first-world women. They do not face such kind of oppression.
 2. Mohanty explains in her book that their male family members oppress women in third world countries. They become victims of their patriarchal traditions. Men have the authority to take control of their women's lives. In *The Holy Woman*, 2001 Zarri Bano becomes a Shahzadi Ibadat due to her father. He sacrifices her beloved daughter to save his lands from a stranger man. She becomes a victim of a cruel patriarchal system in which women are considered a
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dummy whose only purpose is to obey their master.

DISCUSSIONS:

Shahraz's *The Holy Woman*, 2001, presents a rich narrative that how women are being subjugated in the patriarchal society. This study argues that Shahraz is not rejecting Islamic values but infact she is trying to challenge the immoral oppression of women by using the name of Islam. As her protagonist has gone through three phases. A free woman, a holy woman, and a wife of her beloved husband. In the first phase, she enjoys the privileges which most high society girls get from their family members. In the second phase, the picture starts to change its composition. As the story goes on, every male member of the family starts to change into a patriarch and starts its quest to subjugate the protagonist. She starts facing the hurtful behavior of males towards women. After the death of her brother, she now sees the real face of the patriarchal society.

In the third phase she becomes a holy woman. In Hindu culture, women are forced to become Dasi but Muslims start the tradition of Shahzadi Ibadat in which their daughters get married to the holy Quran. In Pakistan's rural areas, this tradition is still in practice. To reach that practice, the novelist makes the ground and turns the event towards that. Zari Bano has started falling prey to subjugation. The most powerful backlash of the patriarchal society, which she suffers, is the annexation of the right to choose the man

Ishaque (2017) said that Shahraz portrayed the unsafe interaction of faith and custom in *The Holy Woman*, 2001. Unlike Sidhwa, whose primary concerns are political issues, Shahraz, one of the contemporary English authors, mostly emphasizes social issues. (Siddiqui, 2011). She talks about the questions of women in the social settings in post-colonial Pakistan and its rural settings. She focuses on the female sexuality, celibacy, and hijab, and on those causes that are responsible for the hardship of women. (Ishaque, 2017, p. 1).

According to Ishaque (2017) *The Holy Woman* (2001) revolves around the traditions and customs which the women of Pakistan still suffer in this present age. Shahraz chooses rural settings where people are living under the intolerable burden of traditions. She explains the importance of tribes and the significance of tribal rules and cultures in people's lives there. The 7th century has also witnessed Arabia resist the changes put forward by Islam (Haddad & Esposito, 1997).

Ishaque (2017) analyzed that the main plot revolves around the marriage of the protagonist with the holy book. This marriage makes her the holy woman, and she is deprived of all the rights to live a happy life. Celibacy is imposed upon her in the form of this cruel tradition. The teachings of religion do not prove this tradition. However, rural societies still follow these traditions blindly without questioning. This tradition was the invention of a feudal lord, which forcefully agreed with others to follow this tradition. However, sometimes when the other feudal lords saw the benefits of this malpractice. They also joined this heinous practice, and soon they were able to depict this barbaric practice as a religious duty for women.

The resilience of women is also presented in the other novel *Jane Eyre* published in 1847. Bronte has written this novel in the Victorian era, in which women were oppressed and considered inferior to men. Jane (protagonist) is portrayed as a strong, independent, and passionate woman. Even in her childhood, she raises her voice against male dominance. She rejects two proposals because she does not like that. This shows her self-esteem. In that era,

every woman wants to get married, but she thinks differently. She thinks one should get married for respect and love. According to her, she comes first than any societal norms. Jane represents herself as a true resilient woman. Through her character, Bronte has represents herself. She raised her voice against female subjugation in the male-dominated society. By portraying Jane's character, the writer tried to make sure that women are the most beautiful living thing on Earth.

Sidhwa portrays the example of resilience in her novel *The Pakistani Bride* published in 1983 through Carol's character. She is considered a modern American feminist. Her character reveals the refined, elite class, and western woman in the novel's male-dominated world. Her husband exploits her. In this novel, Sidhwa unfolds the bitter reality that women have no identity in the unkind Pakistani patriarchal society. Carol's story brings into focus the violence, degradation, and suppression faced by women. When her husband raises a question on her character, then his negatively sharp remarks come as a shock and an eye-opener for her. She is harassed not only physically but emotionally. It is difficult for her to adjust to that conservative environment. Her husband's unbearable jealousy and insane suspicions were not making things work between them, and they were falling apart. Their marriage was struggling to survive, and she decides to leave her husband. She represents the real image of a resilient woman.

Resistance against patriarchy is portrayed in Bitek's poem *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol* (1966). This is an epic poem that deals with the domestic life of Lawino, a traditional African woman and her husband, Ocol. Lawino, a rural, uneducated African wife, is the poem's speaker laments over Ocol's attitude and behavior. He devaluates African culture and wants to westernize its culture and land. He is a born African but is fascinated by the western lifestyle and despises his land. He treats her like a thing "I am like the thing left behind" (Bitek, 1966, p. 35). Lawino is a double oppressed one for being a woman and others for being a black woman. Ocol mistreats his wife as a stereotypical, male chauvinistic, African male, but the most disgusting thing is that he rejects her for not possessing a white woman's qualities. She raises her voice against her husband's illogical demand and makes it clear that she is not a thing but a woman who is an essential part of society. Zarri Bano also proves her an honorable woman who strictly follows her rules. Both characters symbolize women empowerment that women are not meant to be suffer. Both resisted against male dominant society and reclaiming space for women within their own cultural and religious frameworks. Zaidi said that Shahraz talked about the idea of writing her novel *The Holy Woman*, 2001 in an interview that she wants to dissipate the negative image of 'Islam.' Islam is considered a rigorous religion in West. She said she wanted to change the mindset of the West about Islam and especially women, that women are suppressed and forced to do veil. However, most women in Muslim countries take the veil on their own choice. Islam gives freedom to them to make their decisions. Most writers describe Muslim women as a victim of religion, but Shahraz tried to disperse those rumors about 'Islam.' In her novel *The Holy Woman*, 2001, Zarri was raised as a strong independent woman. She became a victim by forced marriage with the Quran. Zarri was being violated by the rural norms and customs and her feudal father, not Islam.

Pakistani society is known as a post-colonial society. It is based on many tribes; their structures empower men in every way and weaken women's status. Zarri was university

educated and was allowed to move freely outside the house. Sikandar's young man from Karachi came to her home with a marriage proposal, but after her only brother's sudden demise, her father rejected his proposal. He decided to turn his daughter into 'Shahzadi Ibadat' (a holy woman). Suddenly, Zarri's freedom vanished, and she changed into a helpless woman who was suppressed by her beloved father in the influence of cruel customs. The irony in this situation is that this happens not with weak, uneducated women, but this happens with an educated, sensible woman who is aware of her position in society. She tells her father that she is not the right person to turn into a pious lady. (Shahraz, 2001). Her mother came to her help and scolded his father that,

You and your father are the puppeteers Habib; you hold my daughter's fate in your hand. What choice do I have? I can only swing and dangle along in whichever direction you pull and man oeuvre my strings. What can I do to save my daughter from the fate? (Shahraz, 2001, p. 71)

CONCLUSION:

This research paper starts from the research question that how does Shahraz portrays women's resistance and resilience in the novel *Holy Woman*? The discussions answer the question that women in a patriarchal society are still struggling for their rights. They are considered the guardians of their family's izzat. Males are considered superior, and women are inferior. It is depicted in the character of Zarri Bano how she has to become a holy woman under the pressure of her male family members. Her father exploited her in the name of religion. He sacrificed his daughter to save his lands. Zarri Bano resists in the patriarchal setup and challenges traditions. She accepts her new identity as a holy woman and starts to perform her duties.

She starts to learn Islam, visits religious places and spreads the teachings of Islam. She becomes a new woman and burqa becomes her new ornament. She does not feel secure without wearing a burqa. Then, she comes forward with her new strong personality. She becomes a resilient woman. She does not allow any man in her family to take her life's decision anymore. She is asked to get married, but she denied. Then she decides to get married to her love Sikandar with her choice. This novel is about women's struggle of how they resist in the patriarchy and stand for themselves. Zarri Bano is the only character in the novel who does not give up. She remains strong until the end. She starts taking her life's decisions. Even after the marriage, she does not leave her status as a holy woman. She performs both of her duties as a married woman and a holy woman.

Next, analysis answer the questions that what kind of techniques used to describe resistance and resilience in Pakistani fiction? And what is the impact of resilient and resistant women in fiction portrayed by Shahraz? In the novel, *The Holy Woman*, 2001 Shahraz explains how religion with the combination of the social system plays a vital role in the life of women. Zarri Bano is an educated and independent woman. She decides to get married to the man whom she loves. However, then a shocking incident happens. Her only brother dies, and her father asks her to become a Shahzadi Ibdad to save his land. This tradition aims to give protection to the brutalities of men committed against women to protect their land and to make women their slaves. She has to live a life of celibacy. In this novel, one exciting thing is highlighted that those people who wage their controlling authority against women are rapidly giving

education to their women but still force them to run their lives according to their wishes.

This novel's primary focus is on resistance and resilience of the Zari Bano . First, she tried to resist the patriarchal setup but then accepts his father's decision. Shahraz beautifully portrays the resistance and resilience of women in this novel. All the characters in the novel show resistance. First of all, Zarri's mother raises her voice against the cruelty of her husband. She wants to save her daughter's life. However, she cannot save her daughter from her father oriented fate.

Zari Bano's character in *The Holy Woman* challenges the common picture of Muslim women are quite and powerless in patriarchal, postcolonial societies. Though she is forced into the role of a *Holy Woman* to protect her family's honor, she does not remain silent or broken. Instead, she uses her position to gain education, travel, and reflect on her identity. Her strength lies in staying true to her faith while questioning the cultural practices that oppress women. She proves herself worthy of any role that society put on it, a Dasi or a holy woman. She gets the true essence of Islam that gives women equality. Islam gives freedom to women. Zarri Bano is the face of a real feminist who first resists against the patriarchs and then becomes a resilient woman. Zarri Bano shows that a woman can be religious, dignified, and empowered at the same time. In this way, her resilience breaks stereotypes and presents a new model of Muslim womanhood that resists both patriarchy and colonial influence.

Qaisra Shahraz's *The Holy Woman* holds strong relevance to contemporary feminist movements such as #MeToo and Aurat March, as it addresses the control, and resistance of women within patriarchal systems. Zari Bano's forced celibacy reflects how women bodies and choices are often measured in the name of honor, much like the issues raised in Aurat March where women demand independence, self-respect, and the right to make decisions about their lives. Her ultimate empowerment, gained through education and spiritual awareness, echoes the #MeToo movement's core message of reclaiming voice and agency in the face of systemic oppression. Just like the women in these movements, Zari Bano refuses to stay silent and proclaims her identity in a society that tries to remove it. The novel, therefore, becomes a powerful literary reflection of the struggles and resistance echoed in today's feminist activism.

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