

Islamic Values and Education in Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of the Henna Girl*

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Abstract

This research examines how Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of Henna Girl* challenges patriarchal practices by depicting the female character as struggling to fight for their rights through Islamic values and education. By using qualitative method and close textual analysis, this research examines how the novel opposes to patriarchal culture and the misconception of Islam as religion that supports discrimination against women. Indeed, the novel uses literary devices to portray patriarchal culture with the following aspects: the female characters experience patriarchal abuse by depicting men as Tiger King represents powerful men. Secondly, the female characters deal with patriarchal system by depicting women as witches represents powerful women. Thirdly, women experienced patriarchal abuse are depicted through the metaphor of glass vases and sacrificed lambs. Fourthly, the characters are depicted as a drama queen if they pursue their educations and careers. Although this novel is seemingly depicted women as the victims of patriarchal system, they are able to resist this system by using Islamic tenets and values, especially the Quran and hadiths. Furthermore, it is found that even though the female characters receive so many patriarchal practices, the novel can depict them as resisting patriarchy through education and Islamic values. Thus, the novel uses Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic teachings as a way to resist the misconception of Islam as a religion that supports discrimination against women.

Keywords: *Islamic Values, Patriarchal Culture, Patriarchal Practices, Patriarchal Resistance*

Introduction

Patriarchy is defined as a crude, mysterious, and powerful force that can construct women into something that is seen as improper and shameful in the eyes of the world (Gilligan and Snider 5). Moreover, Hadi stated that this system is practiced to control women through various restrictive gender segregation and behaviour codes. It also reinforces the ideology that women are responsible for family honour (289). It can be seen that while women are seen to be shameful, they can be considered as being responsibility in promoting their family's moral status. Patriarchal system also constructs women stereotypically. They are expected to stay at home, to take care of their children and to do households. They are considered as being unable to work equally to men's capabilities. These women's stereotypes lead society to undermine women's competence and intelligence. Women are also stereotyped as the objects of sexual desires. This view causes women to be victims of gender discrimination, including sexual assault and sexual harassment. (Rosida and Rejeki 132).

The domination of men happens not only in real life but also in literature. According to Neroni, feminism is used to confront the contradiction that surrounds women, which stems from the structure of patriarchal society (2). Furthermore, a feminist perspective understands that the key to maintaining society is the world's hierarchy regarding gender. It means that to be marked as 'male' and 'female' is to be in different realities. Here men have many options to work and are more acceptable in a public area, whereas women do not have the same options. In addition, being a feminist can help many people imagine how to live in marginal and powerless positions. In addition, being a feminist can help many people in imagining how to live in marginal and powerless positions (Menon 8). In this case, many patriarchal cultures are written in the novel. After all, feminist theory can help broader viewers to understand women's struggles through the image of women in the novel.

The issues of patriarchal society are expressed through a novel titled *Secrets of the Henna Girl*, written by Sufiya Ahmed in 2012. The novel follows a sixteen-year-old Muslim girl from Yorkshire who recently graduated high school and excelled in writing and all of her other subjects. Zeba plans to attend college to finish her A-levels before enrolling in university. However, Zeba's life changes while on vacation with her family in Pakistan, and she is forced to marry her cousin Asif, a Pakistani army man, at sixteen years old.

Pakistan's society develops patriarchal norms where the women are given domestic duties to perform. It is also explained by the UN Committee about Pakistan as "pervasive patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted traditional and cultural stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family, in the workplace and in society, which constitute serious obstacles to women's enjoyment of their human rights" (Naveed and Butt 168). An example of patriarchal practices in Pakistan is forced marriages. Many cases of forced marriages are being practiced. Moreover, according to the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), Pakistan is one of the top five countries in the world that practice forced marriages. Forced marriages have become a tool to control women in a patriarchal society. In Pakistan, forced marriages are practiced due to family customs and traditions. Most parents in Pakistan forced their daughter or sister with the other family members to strengthen family ties. Forcing their daughters or sisters is also considered an honour (Ahmad, Bakhsh and Habib 1121).

Since Pakistan is the second largest Muslim country, the patriarchal practices are often linked to Islamic teachings even though the consent to marriage has been protected by the international human rights law and the law of most religions. Furthermore, forced marriages in Pakistan are practiced through their own interpretations of the rules from the Holy Quran and Sunnah, while in Islam, women are protected from the forced marriage and they have the right to consent in a marriage (Ahmad, Bakhsh and Habib 1122). Islamic law protects marriage in Islam due to its sacred contract since several injunctions establish women's rights in the Qur'an and Sunnah. It grants women the right to consent to the marriage (Ahmad, Ghazali and Othman 2729).

Sufiya Ahmed's *the Secrets of Henna Girl* novel is very important to discuss. Not only that the novel has the portrayal of patriarchal culture in Pakistan, but it also allows the reader to view the portrayal of patriarchal resistance. In the novel, there are many quotations about Quran, Hadith, and Islamic teaching which consist of the understanding that women should be protected. The female characters in the novel are depicted as resisting to the patriarchal practices through the knowledge of Islamic teachings regarding the issue. By depicting the patriarchal resistance through Islamic perspective, it shows how Islam never supports patriarchy, and how patriarchal practices are the product of culture.

Patriarchal practices that are experienced by women are practiced in various ways by society, and it allows people to put women in a subordinate position, especially when the society considers women as valuable only when they behave as obedient women by willing to marry. Furthermore, in experiencing this struggle, not all women can respond to resist discrimination. Seeing that patriarchal practice against women is still happening today in real life makes this research more important to be conducted for society to know its effect on women. Moreover, discussing patriarchy is vital in helping society in achieving gender equality. This research would like to analyze the patriarchal practice experienced by women in the *Secrets of the Henna Girl* novel through the literary devices or aesthetic strategies. To reveal the patriarchal resistance portrayed in the novel, the research question is formulated as follows: 1. How does Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of the Henna Girl* novel use literary devices to portray patriarchal practices experienced by the female characters? 2. How does Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of the Henna Girl* novel challenge the patriarchal practices?

Method

This research uses qualitative method which aims at examining social settings from the insider perspective, generating description and context analysis rather than applying numbers to obtain meaning (Lapan, Quartarolli, and Riemer 2012). This research also uses close textual analysis in examining the literary text to understand the novel's meaning, context, and purpose through its language tools. The primary text used in this research is Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of the Henna Girl* written in 2012. The data used is the words, sentences, and dialogues that contain the aspect of patriarchy in the novel *Secrets of the Henna Girl*. In using patriarchy theory by Sylvia Walby, the writer will choose which dialogues or text contains literary devices that contain the aspect of patriarchal practices experienced by the female characters. Furthermore, the data that shows patriarchal practices that the women experienced in the novel will be collected. After processing the data in the category of patriarchal practices, the data will be analysed on how the novel challenges the patriarchal practices. Finally, after analysing them, the findings will be made to a conclusion.

Results and Discussion

The writer analyses and discusses the issue of patriarchal society in the novel *Secrets of the Henna Girl* by Sufiya Ahmed. This analysis mainly focuses on patriarchal practices experienced by the female characters in the novel. The discussion is divided into two parts. The first part analyses and identifies the patriarchal practices experienced by the female characters. The second part discusses how the novel challenges patriarchal practices. This study uses the patriarchy theory by Sylvia Walby and other additional theories to support the research.

Patriarchal Practices Experienced by the Female Characters

In this part of the discussion, the writer explores on the aesthetic strategies used to portray patriarchal practices in Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of the Henna Girl*.

Men as Tiger King

In the novel, there are several quotations that portray how men are stronger than women. This portrayal of men as the strongest also results in male characters often practicing patriarchal values to the female character. In the novel, men often practice violence against

the female characters since they are portrayed as strong. The portrayal of men as the strongest ones can be seen in the following quotation,

' . . . The man was Taya'ji's best friend and his name was Sher Shah – 'Sher' meaning tiger in Urdu and 'Shah' the Persian for king. I found it ridiculous that a man would allow himself to be called 'Tiger King' (Ahmed 17).

It can be seen from the quotation above that there is a man called Sher Shah, whose name means the Tiger King. A tiger represents physical strength and power (Zainsjah 404). Therefore, in the novel, men are portrayed as strong and powerful. These criteria are some masculine traits that men are told to have. Furthermore, quoting from the main character's opinion, a tiger king is known as "a selfish killer that inspired fear" (Ahmed 17). It can be seen how men, in a patriarchal society, become the dominant people who are described as selfish. The male characters are not only described as selfish men but also as scary. The male characters in the novel always need the wives, daughters, and slaves to fear them by saying that they are better than women. Since their positions are not on the same level as women, the male characters always need the women to fear them by obeying everything that they ask the female characters to do. This need for acknowledgment that they are dominant proves that they are insecure and feel threatened about their masculinity. Since men are considered strong and dominant, men are expected to fulfil the stereotype, which leads to toxic masculinity.

Women as Witches

While men are portrayed as strong and powerful by being represented as Tiger King, women are portrayed as witches. Husna becomes the victim of patriarchal culture by being called out as a green-eyed witch. Husna is a beautiful widow whose husband dies in an accident at work. The husband's family calls Husna a witch to drive her out of the village. The representation of a woman as a witch is not a new thing to be found in literature,

Wanting an excuse for their heartlessness, her in-laws began to spread rumours that Husna-bhaji was a green-eyed witch who lured men. In a feudal village where women has no status without their husbands, the women began to believe the rumours and feared that this beautiful woman would steal their men away . . . (Ahmed 78).

According to Baruah and Thakur, the witch symbol on women is used due to the image of reinforcing gender inequality and marginalizing women in a patriarchal society (209). It can be seen that it indeed is true that this symbolism of women as a witch is to reinforce gender inequality and women's marginalization. It can be seen that since Husna is a woman, her husband's family thinks she will not be able to work and support herself. This results in them accusing Husna of being a witch as an excuse for their heartlessness in kicking out Husna. It can be seen that blaming Husna as a witch is a result of patriarchal cultural structures.

Not only does her husband's family practices patriarchal culture, but the whole village who hears of the rumor also begin to avoid Husna as they are afraid that Husna is indeed a witch,

'Zeba-ji,' a woman at the front said in patronizing voice, 'you and Memsahib are foreign. You do not know what these village witches are. They put spells on you to make them take you in. Your poor grandmother has been manipulated. You all have. You must follow our advice and throw her out before she eats your liver.' (Ahmed 157).

From the quotation above, it can be seen that the neighbors always avoid Husna. When Husna is seen often with Zeba and Sehar, the neighbors try to warn them that Husna is a witch who can manipulate people,

They were staring the side profile of Husna-bhaji. Having recognized the widow, they raised the fingers of each hand to clutch each earlobe and then crossed the fingers from side to side (Ahmed 134).

Quoting from the novel, this practice is called *tauba*, which means 'pardon.' Tauba is practiced to show disapproval of something (Ahmed 134). It can be seen that Husna receives this patriarchal practice because of the rumor of her being a witch. Because of the rumor, many people treat her poorly, that they must practice the *tauba* gesture to show their disapproval of Husna's presence. From the explanation above, it can be seen that the female characters' portrayal as a witch resulted from the culture patriarchy structures depicted in the novel. It has led to Husna being discriminated against by many people because she is a woman.

Women as Glass Vases

Not only are women portrayed as witches, but the female characters are also considered fragile through Zeba's story. Zeba is the main character in the novel who is forced to get married to her cousin. She often receives patriarchal practices from her family, mainly from her dad. In forcing Zeba to marry her own cousin, her father keeps telling Zeba that it is a way to keep the family's honour. This is due to the household production and culture structure of patriarchy, where women's behavior should follow gender norms, and they are also forced to get married. The requirement of a woman to keep the family's honour is kept being told by Zeba's father as he compares women with glass vases,

. . . My dad had always talked about it. When I was a child he would sit me on his knee and tell me that wives, sisters and daughters were like precious glass vases within which a man's honour was contained. These glass vases must never be broken. If the female did not behave accordingly then a man's honour was compromised. His friends would laugh at him, his brothers would jeer at him and – even more shamefully – other women would ridicule him (Ahmed 51).

The sentence *wives, sisters and daughters were like precious glass vases* refers to the same characteristics between women and glass vases. The female characters in the novel are considered the family's honor, so they should behave themselves, not be a broken woman—this metaphor subordinates and stereotypes women. The female character should not have been considered broken only because they cannot satisfy their family's demands. Furthermore, women should not be compared to an object like glass vases. Women should not even be compared to any object since women are human. It can be seen how women are only considered as an object to which, according to Nussbaum in Rosida and Rejeki, when people see women, they not only think of them as a person with a personality. However, they think of their roles which link to considering them as objects. It happens when people see and treat women as objects (132).

Women as Sacrificed Lamb

Not only portrayed as witches and fragile, but the female characters in the novel are also portrayed as sacrificial lambs,

'So are you the new bakri?' (Ahmed 57).

Bakri means a female lamb in the Urdu language. Bakri can also mean a sacrificial lamb, a reference to animals being sacrificed for the common good. In Islam tradition, a lamb or a goat is usually used to be a sacrificed animal at Eid Adha. Bakri represents all the female characters in the novel who are forced into arranged marriages. It is portrayed how women are sacrificed by their fathers by forcing them to marry for their importance without ensuring their daughters are willing to do so. Similarly, Zeba and Sehar are the ones who are forced to get married to their cousins even though they have numerously rejected the requests.

Women as Drama Queen

In the novel, many patriarchal practices are done by the family and the neighbours of the female characters. However, if the female characters try to resist the patriarchal practices, they will be considered drama queens. A drama queen is defined as a person who reacts to situations dramatically or is regarded as overreacting,

' . . . She is married and she needs to accept it. Her sulking and moods put pressure on everybody in the haveli. She is such a drama queen. If you were a true friend you would help her accept it. . . ' (Ahmed 114).

The quotation above tells about how even though Sehar married her cousin, she still cannot accept it since she wants to pursue her dream. Being married to her cousin means she needs to be a stay-at-home wife who shouldn't get a job. This is due to the patriarchal mindset which rules women to have roles and contributions only at home (qtd. In Apriatin and Djohar 72). Voicing her concern, Sehar is considered a drama queen, which means she is considered overreacting. According to Woodzicka and Good, individuals wanted to confront any practices of sexism to change their beliefs even though they knew that confronting it would come at a cost. It is often said that when women confront sexist practices, they tend to be considered overreacting (2). That is what happens to Sehar as she tries to confront any patriarchal practices she receives throughout her life in Pakistan. Many people who know Sehar is resisting the patriarchy mocked her as a drama queen or overreacting.

Women's Body as Their Only Quality

Another patriarchal practice Zeba experienced is the women stereotype. Gender stereotypes explain that femininity determines women through personality traits, occupation, physical appearance, and domestic behavior. Women are expected to have personality traits that are passive, shy, and submissive. Women in their domestic behaviour should only do household chores such as cooking and taking care of the children. Women's occupations are also only expected to be simple jobs. Furthermore, the physical appearance of women is also expected to be small and feminine (Zuhro 132),

Many aunts had already commented on my lack of fragile beauty, instead placing me in the 'will do' category: good strong bones, child-bearing hips, and sparkling skin. It has been made clear to me a very long time ago that my outer dermis was my saving grace, and so like every insecure girl possessive of her one good quality . . . (Ahmed 3).

From the quotation above, she recalls an event where her aunts commented on the beauty stereotyped of a woman. It portrays how the stereotype has made the main character, Zeba, receive such oppression regarding her body. The stereotype of women having *good strong bones, child-bearing hips, and sparkling skin* is created to support their

ability as a mother to bear children. To have healthy children, even a boy one, Zeba is expected to have those features to be qualified as a true woman.

How the Novel Challenges Patriarchal Practices

In this part of the discussion, the writer explores on the aesthetic strategies used to portray patriarchal practices in Sufiya Ahmed's *Secrets of the Henna Girl*.

Qur'an and Hadith

Many quotations indicate the novel challenging the patriarchal practices within the society, one of which is using the Qur'an and hadith to represent women's resistance. Using Qur'an and hadith indicates that the novel implicitly demonstrates how Qur'an and hadith teach about gender equality and provides understanding related to protecting women.

This novel uses hadith to emphasize the importance of a woman's consent regarding a marriage. Therefore, the novel depicts one of the characters named Sehar as someone who understands an Islamic marriage contract,

For an Islamic marriage contract, a *nikaah*, to be valid, the bride has to give her consent freely (Ahmed 60).

The Islamic marriage contract depicted in the quotation above points out that Islam does not support forced marriages. The novel emphasizes how Islam teaches not only a man who is important to decide for women in a marriage, but women also have rights in the decision-making. Furthermore, the depiction of Sehar talking about the Islamic marriage contract is a way to show how the novel tries to resist the patriarchal culture of forced marriage through the Islamic understanding of the female characters. The Prophetic text affirms the saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "A widow may not be married until she has been consulted, and a virgin may not be married until her consent has been sought." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, how does she give consent?" He said, "By remaining silent." (Chaq 239). From the Prophetic texts explained, the novel emphasizes that women need to approve of marrying for the marriage to be valid.

Furthermore, according to Ghazaly in Herdines and Muhsin, the pillars of marriage in Islam consists of four aspects. These pillars should be done by the future bride and groom so that the marriage can be considered valid. One of the pillars is that the man and woman should agree to the marriage (Hernides and Muhsin 20). Therefore, Islam does not justify any forced marriage since an agreement between the man and woman is important to validate the marriage. The novel also emphasizes how Islam protects women by inserting the patriarchal resistance through hadith relating to the marriage contract. Since there is a misunderstanding about how Islam is often associated with forced marriage, the novel becomes a tool for the readers to understand that forced marriage is not a product of Islam through the depiction of an Islamic marriage contract.

Similarly, the novel also depicts the understanding of hadith to emphasize the patriarchal resistance toward forced marriages. The novel portrays one of the characters, Fatima, as someone who understands hadith about marriage,

I have been reading the sayings of our Prophet – peace upon him – and he has said clearly that a girl's consent is required for a marriage to be valid (Ahmed 137).

From the quotation above, the novel indicates that, in Islam, there is a hadith or a Prophet's saying on how a woman's consent is an important aspect of validating a marriage. As explained above, a Prophet's saying about it is mentioned in the novel. At the novel's beginning, the author mentions the hadith, "'Obtain the virgin's consent before you marry her' Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)." Depicting one of the characters, Fatima, Zeba's grandmother, as someone who understands the Prophet's saying about a girl's consent in marriage shows the significance of hadith in developing Fatima's principle in resisting Zeba's forced marriage. In doing so, the novel disapproves of forced marriages by celebrating the idea of hadith as Islamic teaching that protects women through the usage of the Qur'an and hadith to represent women's resistance.

Since people often misunderstand Islam as a religion that supports forced marriage, this novel tries to explain that the religion is not endorsing any patriarchal practices toward women, especially the action of forced marriages,

She has a mind of her own that cannot fathom the traditions of this village. And that is what the practices are tradition, not religion.

The tradition of a father choosing his daughter's husband.

The tradition of marrying cousins to keep land and wealth within the family.

Tradition of women never voicing her own likes or dislikes – her own desires (Ahmed 197).

The quotation "and that is what the practices are tradition, not religion" indicates that Islam never approves of any mistreatment of women since forced marriages are a product of tradition. Forced marriages are often associated with Muslim practices because, in Muslim countries, there are many forced marriage cases (Ahmad, Ghazali and Othman 2729). Islamic law protects marriage in Islam due to its sacred contract since several injunctions establish women's rights in the Qur'an and Sunnah. It grants women the right to consent to the marriage (Ahmad, Ghazali and Othman 2729).

In the novel, the female characters experience not only forced marriage but also the novel depicts one of the female characters named Husna, who also receives discrimination because she is a widow accused of practicing adultery. The novel uses Qur'an to represent patriarchal resistance,

'Zeba,' she said quietly. 'I want you to remember these words. In our holy book, the Qur'an, it states clearly that you need four witnesses before you can accuse a woman of adultery, except when a woman has been raped. There does not need to be witnesses for such a crime. (Ahmed 79).

The quotation above is one of the examples of how the novel uses the Qur'an to represent women's resistance. Furthermore, Quran teaches how we cannot judge a woman doing adultery without any witnesses. This reference is written in Surat an-Nuur verse 4, which says, "To accuse someone of adultery requires at least four witnesses who saw the act." (Syarifah 71).

Furthermore, according to Salma and Jarudin, accusing someone of adultery is considered a crime by Allah S.W.T, written in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The accusation of adultery is also known as hadd al-qadzf, which means an accusation of a person committing adultery (Salma and Jarudin 41). Accusing someone of adultery is one of the criminal acts prohibited in the Qur'an and Sunnah since it can result in legal consequences on several

aspects, one of them is people's good image. Therefore, the person who accuses another person of committing adultery without any evidence can be punished (Salma and Jarudin 42). From the explanation above, the novel emphasizes that Islam protect women from adultery accusation. Women accused of adultery would be protected when there is no concrete evidence.

There is also a depiction where the novel explains that a rumor about Husna practicing adultery results from women's jealousy towards Husna's beauty which results in them spreading a false accusation to downgrade Husna. Therefore, the novel uses Qur'an to represent patriarchal resistance through Islamic values. Furthermore, based on the Qur'an reference above, the novel emphasizes that people should not discriminate against women when there is no proof. Moreover, the novel mentions, "The Quran protects women. I suggest you read properly." (Ahmed 79). By celebrating the idea of how the Qur'an consists of knowledge about protecting women by emphasizing the need for witnesses in adultery accusations, the novel critiques how society is downgrading Husna only because she is a widow.

Furthermore, when there is one of the female characters named Husna who receives patriarchal practices because she is a widow, the novel uses Qur'an to represent the resistance to the patriarchal practices she receives,

'Husna-bhaji is a poor widow and not a witch.' Farhat exclaimed hotly. 'We are supposed to be Muslims and you should treat her with kindness and mercy so that on the Day of Judgement God will treat you with mercy and kindness.' (Ahmed 158).

From the explanation above, the novel explains how Islam does not justify the mistreatment of a widow like Husna. The novel shows that being a Muslim, people should follow the primary teaching of Islam. Showing mercy and kindness to others would be considered following Islamic teachings. In Islam, treating a widow with kindness is believed to be a "high form of charity.". According to book 73, number 36, of the Sahih Bukhari collection of Muhammad's sayings, or hadith, the Prophet (SAW) once said: "The one who looks after and works for a widow and a poor person is like a warrior fighting for Allah's cause." (Naeem 25).

The depiction of "treat her with kindness and mercy so that on the Day of Judgement God will treat you with mercy and kindness" shows how important it is to behave based on Islamic teaching and how the Day of Judgement is significant in Islamic teachings. In Islam, there are six pillars of faith, which are (1) Belief in Allah, (2) Belief in His Angels, (3) Belief in His Books, (4) Belief in His Messengers, (5) Belief in the Last Day, and (6) Belief in Destiny (Nur et al., 2020). Mentioning the Day of Judgement in the quotation above indicates that the novel tries to emphasize the importance of the fifth pillar of faith in Islam, Belief in the Last Day.

Believing in the Last Day means Muslims believe that life on earth will end and Allah will destroy everything. The Day of Judgement is also known as Yaumul Jaza. On this day, all people who ever lived will be raised and face judgment from Allah. People who do good deeds will be placed in heaven, whereas people who sin will be placed in hell (Saputro 11). From the explanation above, the depiction of the importance of treating widows well is a way for the novel to reveal that, as Muslims, people should realize that there is a consequence for every action they make, which will be judged on the Day of Judgement. Therefore, the novel not only highlights the Day of Judgement but also participates in

challenging patriarchal practices towards widows by explaining the importance of knowing primary Islamic teaching to critique any discrimination acts toward women. By depicting many texts to contain Qur'an and hadith, according to Djohar, it can be concluded as a way of a novel to use aesthetic devices in order to highlights certain perspectives by using sacred texts (80).

From the explanation, Islam does not support any mistreatment of women. Islam encourages people to take good care and protect women since it is considered a good cause. Therefore, society should not oppress women and widows since women should be protected. Furthermore, the novel tries to resist the female characters' patriarchal practices by explaining Islamic teaching, which is Qur'an and hadith, relating to treating women well. Using Qur'an and hadith becomes a way for the novel to undermine the Islam stereotype, which tends to represent the religion as oppressing women.

Misbaha

In the previous chapter, *Secret of the Henna Girl* novel challenges patriarchal practices through the use of the Qur'an and hadith since several Islamic values are used to convey the story. Not only does the novel mention Prophet Muhammad's saying, Islamic teaching, and Qur'anic reference, but there is also *misbaha* or prayer beads mentioned to represent how the novel challenges the patriarchal culture,

Nusrat-kala sometimes stood silently beside me while Nannyma sat on her swing, her fingers flicking through Misbaha, praying for my freedom (Ahmed 197).

The quotation above is a form of *tawakkul*. It is a form of worship that means relying upon Allah and surrendering fully to Allah for a situation. It is done after trying their best so that they can leave the rest believing in Allah's plan. In performing the *tawakkul*, Fatima uses a misbaha or prayer beads to pray for Zeba's freedom from forced marriage. In this way, this text illustrates how the characters surrender fully to Allah by depicting "her fingers flicking through *Misbaha*, praying for my freedom." From the quotation above, the novel also emphasizes how *tawakkul* represents patriarchal resistance since the characters believe Allah will protect women and let Zeba out of forced marriage, which is against Islamic teachings. Another depiction of *tawakkul* can also be seen in another quotation,

Nannyma squeezed my arm. 'Our God is full of justice, Zeba,' she said quietly. 'He will help you escape. You have taken the necessary action and now all you can do is wait and pray to him.' (Ahmed 196).

In the previous sub-chapter, Islam never approves of any mistreatment of women. From the quotation above, the novel challenges patriarchal practices through Islamic values, such as practicing *tawakkul*. The sentence "You have taken the necessary action and now all you can do is wait and pray to him" indicates that the novel depicts the female characters as brave to fight for women's freedom. The novel also shows that the form of *tawakkul* done by the female characters is a way of resisting the patriarchy and trusting Allah for the consequences. From the explanation in this subchapter, the female characters often receive patriarchal practices caused by the patriarchal society in the village. The novel highlights how the action of resisting patriarchal traditions can also be done by doing *tawakkul* or praying by using a *misbaha* or Muslim prayer beads to show their faith in Allah in protecting women. In conclusion, the significance of faith depicted in the novel thus insists on the

importance of Islam in developing the female characters' action in resisting patriarchal practices.

Education

In the novel, there is the depiction of education as a way to resist patriarchal practices experienced by the female characters. In the novel, Zeba's desire for education can be seen since she is a child,

From the age of five till eleven I'd spent every weekday between the hours of five and seven in Imam Zahid's madrassa. In a class of about thirty children, we'd sat in a row on the floor and rested our Qur'ans on the low wooden bench in front of us while we learned to recite the words in Arabic. The last half hour was spent perfecting over and over again the prayer for everyday activities like eating, going to sleep and leaving the house (Ahmed 120).

The quotation above indicates that the novel tries to describe Zeba as a child who cares for education, especially in Islamic education. From the sentence 'From the age of five till eleven I'd spent every weekday between the hours of five and seven in Imam Zahid's madrassa', the novel depicts Zeba as a girl willing to spend her time learning her religion through entering Madrassa or a Muslim school. Children at her age tend to only care about playing, however, the novel describes Zeba from her childhood that she already has a curiosity of knowledge which results in her entering a madrassa. The novel describes her as someone who is keen to learn Qur'an, and many kinds of prayers in Islam. From the quotation above, the novel indicates Zeba's interest in Islamic education. As Zeba grows older, the novel keeps describing her as a young woman who cares for her education; this time, she is very keen to pursue her education in college and university. Furthermore, the novel depicts Zeba rejecting the marriage she is forced into due to her interest in education.

I looked up and in surprise at the question. The only interest my other relatives had shown in me so far was centered on my physical appearance, and the fact that I had grown so much since my last visit.

'I've sat my exams and I'm waiting for the results,' I said clearly in Urdu (Ahmed 19).

From the quotation above, the novel's depiction of Zeba distracting her family's curiosity about her appearance into talking about her exams becomes a tool for the novel to disrupt the women stereotypes, which tend to only value women based on their appearances. By depicting Zeba as a young woman who cares for her education, it indicates that the novel emphasizes how women should not only take care of their appearances; instead, women should be able to consider their future in the educational field. The sentence "I've sat my exams and I'm waiting for the result" is a way for the novel to depict Zeba as someone who does not take her education lightly as she waits for her exams' results, indicating that she cares for education. Thus, the reflection of patriarchal resistance can be seen in how the novel depicts Zeba as a young woman who always voices her desire for education.

Furthermore, the act of patriarchal resistance illustrated in the novel can be seen in the depiction of Zeba rejecting the forced marriage through education,

'But I'm too young to get married.' I insisted. 'I'm sixteen. I want to go to college and university, not get married and have babies.' (Ahmed 27).

'Because I don't want to marry you,' I cried, then added feebly: 'I want education first.' (Ahmed 221).

In the quotation above, the use of education indicates how the novel demonstrates women's resistance. The novel illustrates Zeba as brave to reject the marriage she is forced into by saying that she wanted to pursue her education first. The sentence "I'm sixteen. I want to go to college and university, not get married and have babies" critiques how women in a patriarchal culture tend to be valued more as a wife and a mother. This way, the novel demonstrates how women should not be forced to marry; instead, women should have the same opportunity as men in the educational field. Furthermore, from the sentence "I don't want to marry you,' I cried, then added feebly. 'I want education first.', the novel critiques the patriarchal culture of forced marriages by portraying Zeba as someone who prioritizes her education, "My breath caught in my throat. It was my GCSE result. My eyes scanned the grades. I could not believe it: eight A-stars. Overwhelmed, I burst into tears" (Ahmed 239).

By depicting Zeba as a young girl who receives good grades, the novel undermines the stereotype of women, which tends to represent women as unintelligent compared to men and places women only in domestic areas. Instead, the novel illustrates how Zeba develops an excellent writing habit which her teacher acknowledges, and she also received good results on her GCSE test. In doing so, the novel emphasizes that women are also intelligent and also demonstrates how women should be able to pursue education as patriarchal resistance to forced marriages.

Conclusion

The novel *Secrets of the Henna Girl* by Sufiya Ahmed portrays patriarchal practices toward the female characters. The patriarchal practices experienced by the female characters are resulted from the perception of hierarchal position between men and women in which women are positioned lower than men. First, the female characters experience patriarchal abuse by depicting men as Tiger King represents powerful men. Secondly, the female characters deal with patriarchal system by depicting women as witches represents powerful women. Thirdly, women experienced patriarchal abuse are depicted through the metaphor of glass vases and sacrificed lambs. Fourthly, the characters are depicted as a drama queen if they pursue their educations and careers. Furthermore, the novel demonstrates several aspects to resist the patriarchal practice that the female characters receive. The novel's way to resist to the patriarchal practices is through the use of Quran, hadith, and Misbaha as the references. Therefore, the novel is also able to show how Islam never supports any mistreating towards women. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the female characters in the novel receives patriarchal practices from the society since women's position is lower than men. However, even though the novel depicts the female characters as women who are struggling with the discrimination, the novel challenges patriarchal practices by voicing the desire for education and Islamic teachings through Qur'an, hadith, and *misbaha*.

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