

Cultural Violence and Gender Identities: A Feminist Post-Structural Discourse Analysis of *This House of Clay and Water*

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the dialectic relation between gender, identity, violence, discourse and social practices, as portrayed in Mansab's book This House of Clay and Water. Viewing gender as a biological trait determined at birth whereas all the social roles and identities are considered fixed is a prevalent social practice in countries like Pakistan. Proving that gender is a socio-cultural construct is the first step towards awareness that gender roles are not fixed and certain violent social norms can be transformed to help the marginalized groups like intersex/transgenders, and women. This study aims to show that certain forms of abuse, repression and cultural violence are normalized through the use of language and literary discourses, and the very same tools can be used to counter these structures. The theoretical insights for this research are drawn from Feminist post-structural discourse Analysis and Butler's Queer theory. The qualitative analysis is based on the closed textual reading and discourse analysis within the parameters of the chosen framework. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it applies FPDA to study fictional characters who are a reflection of humans and social practices in general, and how they are forced to suffer and ultimately resist gender-based violence to co-construct their ever-shifting identities through discourse.

Keywords: Gender; discourse; identity; social practice; cultural violence; FPDA; transformation

INTRODUCTION

The main events presented in *This House of Clay and Water* all take place mainly in the culturally vibrant city of Lahore. The range of characters covers the wide spectrum of cultural and social class differences and demonstrate how gender identities and roles are similar and dissimilar according to socio-cultural affiliations. Bhanggi, born an *abomination* (with both male and female biological traits) is abandoned by his birth parents and adopted by a clan of *hijras* (transgender/intersex community), a fate suffered by many such children in Pakistan. As a youth he is made to sell sexual favours for small rewards and is often subjected to violence and abuse, which, he is taught to endure as a normal way of life for people like him. Bhanggi's life takes a turn for better or for worse twice. Once when he comes across a common shopkeeper who teaches him to read and to recognize human values, and the second occasion chances upon him when he meets Nida and they develop a relationship. Nida hails from an affluent political family which is utterly removed from Bhanggi's world. Being a woman, although rich, her gender roles are limited to being a pleasing wife, obedient daughter in law, diamond studded family symbol for the society

and above all a vessel to produce healthy heirs for Saqib and his family, which she fails to do. Loss of a child and ill treatment at her mansion of a home drives her to seek solace in disguise whereas she roams in Lahore's streets, clad in a *burqa*, and befriends two unlikely strangers, i.e., Bhanggi and Sasha. Sasha, a middle-class wife turned sexual *escort* with elite class clientele, judges Nida for her submission to prescribed gender roles and later after her *religious* awakening the same Sasha judges Nida for her violation of gender roles and plays a key role in getting Bhanggi caught and killed by Saqib's goons. The narrative tackles many issues surrounding gender, abuse, and violence in Pakistani society and how all this is tolerated and even defended under the garb of culture and social practices. In this paper, we aim to study the performance of gender identities, roles and the place of cultural violence as regards gender within literary text to see how discourse is the ground where these practices take place. Moreover, we analyze characters discourse to explore Butler's view on gender identity as fluid and not fixed across socio-cultural contexts.

Gender is a socio-cultural aspect which is heavily affected also by political conceptualizations and agendas, thus being a complex and ambiguous phenomenon, it needs to be studied using "combination of approaches" (Harrington et al., 2008). We have used an eclectic approach to explore the multidimensional dialectical relation between gender, language, literary studies, discourse, violence, culture, and societal norms. There exists a rich body of knowledge and literature which deals with the intricate issues of gender, identity, violence, and socio-cultural behaviour around it. Our study, by focusing on a literary work of a comparatively lesser-known author belonging to a society reputed to be extremely gender biased, opens a debate on the way gender is actually performed in the Pakistani society as reflected in the characters and their literary discourse, whilst at the same time testing the effectiveness of westernized theoretical conceptions on gender studies and violence in a different socio-cultural context, i.e., non-western Pakistani culture. It may also add to the understanding of the reasons behind social practices and violence in relation to gender and its justification or tolerance by the people which has in turn given Pakistani society a global reputation of being discriminatory to marginalized genders. This research also invites the *outside observer* to see and acknowledge the *gender sensitive* individuals/ groups and their struggle against structural and cultural gender violence to achieve transformation and emancipation.

Non-confirmative gender roles can often lead to societal violence (Butler, 2004) and even castration of certain marginalized individuals and groups from the mainstream society. Gender-based violence is not always physical, it can be emotional, symbolic, psychological and sometimes even sexual. *Structural violence* (Galtung, 1969) in its many forms continues to exist and be enacted in societies at various levels, more often than not assisted and promulgated by readily available socio-political discourses and culture. *Symbolic violence* (Galtung, 1990) when built into a culture, takes the form of indirect, legitimized, and naturalized cultural conventions by using the precepts of religion, ideology, language, and art, thus, turning it into *cultural violence* (Galtung, 1990). This study asserts that literary texts are just as much a part of our social realities that help build up cultural precepts as real-life spoken interactions, discourses and language in general.

Gender entails wider implications for individuals' and communities' social roles and status, power structures, and even prestige in a society. But not all culturally assigned gender identities are acceptable in their entirety as certain marginalized groups, intersex/transgenders and women, do suffer from power abuse, violence (Butler, 2004) and infringement of basic human rights in the name of appropriate gender behaviour or socially expected *gender performance*, and *This House of Clay and Water* (2018) reflects these social practices. It is the debut novel of Faiqa Mansab, a female Pakistani writer. Set in contemporary Lahore, it is a story of gender discrimination,

oppression, segregation, subjugation, sexual exploitation and humiliation of the downtrodden of society. But it is also a story of resistance, rejuvenation and courageous feats of the socially marginalized characters. The narrative revolves around Nida, an intelligent woman belonging to an affluent family; married into a conventionally cruel household who have strong political ambitions. She is forced to live with a negligent, authoritative and insensitive husband, which drives her out and away from home so often and that she crosses the boundaries of her social class and gender roles and happens to meet the social outcast Bhanggi. Bhanggi is a “hijra” (hermaphrodite/transgender) who frequently visits the Data Darbar where he comes across Nida and they develop a forbidden friendship doomed from the very beginning. But the main characters do struggle and resist the power structures which is reflected through their inner and social discourses surrounding the issue of gender discrimination.

Gender is not only a social construct, but also a social *practice* inasmuch as its perception depends upon *performance* (Butler, 2004). Confortini (2006) views gender as a socially constructed concept comprising power relations and hegemonic social practices which should be studied by incorporating Galtung’s theory of *cultural violence* and Feminist theory. Wooldridge (2015) also proposes to study these *social realities* and cultural practices of violence through critical aspects of feminist theory and post-structuralism to study the relation between discourses and gender. Feminist Post-structural Discourse Analysis (FPDA) as an analytical tool can be very resourceful towards understanding our everyday gender related discourses including how they are reflected in works of art and literature. *This House of Clay and Water* is a repository of written and spoken interactions among fictional characters who at large, represent our real-life social realities and function as *stock characters* representing actual real people of Pakistani society and their social attitudes towards gender roles, gender performance and social practices that engulf and inform our use of language and construction of *acceptable/unacceptable* discourses surrounding gender.

We seek to achieve three distinct aims through this study: a collaboration between feminist and post-structural theories to analyse gender discourses reflected in a society’s literature; to show that gender discrimination is a form of naturalized hegemonic cultural violence using Galtung’s theory as a point of departure; and to see how discourse and interaction between fictional characters has the power to reflect actual social practices that determine the construction and co-construction of reality and gender identities within shifting socio-cultural contexts of power. Moreover, drawing on insight from Wooldridge (2015), this paper aims to view violence, including gender based violence, not as a structured system, but as a process, continuously being evolved and devolved through social, cultural, and political practices, so that it can be better understood as a function of language and discourses which in turn may work to change the existing social realities to counter violent *hegemonic masculinities* (Wooldridge, 2015), thus, assigning discourse an important critical (Fairclough, 2015) function. Thus, ours is an FPDA (feminist post structural discourse analysis) based study of a fictional discourse substantiated by Butler’s Queer Theory, to see how gender identity and the search for it is actually a search for one’s human identity. FPDA focusses on how participants negotiate their positions within interlinked and often competing discourses (Baxter, 2015), it is concerned with the denotative as well as connotative meaning analysis of texts and discourses (Przybyla-Kuchek, 2021). Moreover, discourse analysis based on feminist post-structural critical approach is significant to unmask the power structure and its various embedded shapes and layers that mostly remain unrecognized (Wooldridge, 2015) to better understand gender, violence, and the role played by language in its promulgation and eradication. This FPDA assisted study aims to show how the main characters act differently from their

prescribed gender roles once their interactive contexts shift, leading them to deconstruction and co-construction of their sexual and gender identities, and how a patriarchal heteronormative society responds to these attempts at transformation.

The analysis aims to answer:

1. How cultural violence and gender identity is performed through discourse by the main characters of the novel within same and varying socio-cultural contexts?
2. How does Bhanggi's discourse represent the fluid gender and sexual identities as emphasized by Butler to show that gender identity is not a fixed phenomenon, if at all?

LITERATURE REVIEW

FPDA is an approach towards analysing discourse, inspired by Weedon's (1989) theories on feminism and post-structuralism, later it was developed as a research method by Baxter (2003), who views it as a "transformative" instead of an "emancipatory" approach which is still evolving as a method, and has used it to study gender inside classrooms, management teams (Baxter, 2003) and language of female leadership (Baxter, 2010) to see gender and discourse relate to form social attitudes and practices. One of the pioneering projects combining post-structuralism and feminism was the study of primary school children's talk about gender, especially about the stories they were taught in classrooms, and what were the distinct features of those stories' textual choices that led to gender stereotypes or vice versa (Davies & Banks, 1992). Bergvall (2014) used FPDA to analyse the language of female engineering students and how they accommodate "the conflicting gender roles" through language inside a male dominated field. FPDA has also been employed to explore the "hybrid identities" Kamada (2009) of Japanese mixed race adolescent girls in a qualitative longitudinal study to see how the double margins of race and gender work together to shape and reshape the collective as well as individual self-identities of young girls competing through interwoven discourses. Sauntson (2012) used FPDA to analyse classroom discourses and their approaches to dealing with (or ignoring) gender differences and how these discourses function to assign dominance to certain groups. More recently, in order to examine the racial and gender (in) equality in American high school's Mathematics classrooms, Przybyla-Kuchek (2021) argues in favour of the productivity of FPDA as an alternative approach to study gender related discourse, and drawing on insights from post-structural feminism, Jaremus (2020) has conducted a comparative analysis of a school boy and a girl from Mathematics classroom in an attempt to establish *gender heteroglossia* in a context (Mathematics) where girls are traditionally considered the *wrong gender* for it. Interviews have also been analysed using FPDA to study *male gaze* (Glapka, 2018) and how it decentralizes the women and makes them experience the social realities of beauty and body image. Zia, Jadoon and Ali (2021) have studied the strategies of resistance used by Nida using the lens of feminism. Yet another research has investigated the role played by language (Taskeen et al, 2018) in the life of Bhanggi by comparing it to Arundhati Roy's famous transgender character Anjum from Ministry of Utmost Happiness (Roy, 2017). Nadeem and Javed (2020) have adopted Butler's queer theory to examine the representation of Bhanggi within the highly heteronormative Pakistani society, and how that creates an identity crisis for the transgenders. This study adds to previous researches on the novel by introducing the text to FPDA for better understanding of the complex relationship between gender, discourse, society and violence. Baxter (2003) emphasizes the need for wider application of FPDA and endorses the fact

that researchers who try to implement it to study more than spoken interactions in social settings, for example analysing written texts or literary and cultural events, may face some challenges. The current study aspires to take this challenge on and aims to apply FPDA on a literary event, that is, a work of fiction, to find out how gender, identity, power, agency and contextual factors work together to bring about a transformative discourse about gender roles and sexual identities in the complex societal and cultural setup of Pakistan. As it can be deduced from the review of previous studies, not much work has been done, using FPDA as a method of analysis, on fictional discourses around gender, especially in collaboration with Butler's queer theory, except for children's books and classroom interactions remaining a less commonly applied paradigm of discourse analysis (Glapka, 2018), this research has the potential significance of adding yet another dimension to how we look at the relations between gender, identities, social practices, language, fiction and discourse. Moreover, *This House of Clay and Water* has not yet been subjected to this kind of eclectic approach to analysing text and discourse. This study also adds a non-western fictional discourse to the ever-growing body of knowledge in the field of language and gender studies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Gender is “doing” not only for oneself but also for, real or imaginary, “another” due to the “constraint” that we feel obliged to obey (Butler, 2004). It is not because of heteronormativity that gender is consolidated and produced, rather it is the “gender hierarchy” that presupposes the normal operative causation and “notion of gender” (Butler, 2002). In her two important books *Gender Trouble* (2002) and *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler has developed a theory for analysing gender, transgender and queer issues. She claims that gender is mainly a question of performance and the violent outrage of societies against non-heteronormative gender constructs is not perceived as violence by larger sections of societies globally. Her queer theory seeks to deconstruct the gender and sex binaries and focuses mainly on gender-performativity, and stresses the point that it is the contextual discursive structures that co-construct gender and work to reveal it within varying social settings. She also believes sex to be performative as well. The current study proposes to draw on the abovementioned elements of Butler's theoretical framework to better understand the identity crises faced by the characters of *This House of Clay and Water*.

Post-Structuralism is keenly interested in exploring the nature of “human identities” as socially and culturally constructed discursive practices (Baxter, 2003), while individuals themselves are viewed as perpetually shifting, changing, constructing, contradicting and unfixed (Belsey, 1980) and their identities are also paralleled by the very same characteristics. Agency on the other hand, is an important issue for the feminists, whereas, to post-structuralists, it is mainly a question of subject-positioning, context and human's self-awareness about how they negotiate power. This post-structural view of agency has an importance for identity and its relation with discursive and contextual practices, hence a point of interest for feminists leading on to the useful combination of Feminist Post Structural Discourse Analysis (FPDA).

Baxter (2003) refers to post-structuralism as entailing skepticism towards all absolutes and universal causes, questioning the nature of “true” knowledge, rejection of fixed meaning, acceptance of self-reflexivity and emphasis on knowledge as constructed not discovered. Post-Structuralism is not a single, “monophonic philosophy” or a theoretical framework and it has been widely acclaimed that it lacks the dedication to transformative agendas like the one championed by feminism, but it does have a practical scope for pragmatic, contextual, localized, issue-oriented

and specific “social projects” aiming at transformation (Baxter, 2003). It also views “meaning” as continuously working to construct and maintain certain power structures (Foucault, 1972). “Meaning” is always being constructed, contested and negotiated (Derrida, 1991) within language and discourse. Cultural knowledge, awareness about participants’ (researchers and research subjects) common sense and shared background assumptions are important factors to explore for understanding gender and its relation to language and feminism (Stokoe & Smithson, 2001).

Language in itself is responsible for gender representation, its revelation and even distortion (Butler, 2002). The current study is self-reflexive in achieving its research objectives by adopting Feminist Post-Structural Discourse Analysis as framework to critically analyse the relation between discourses and gender co-constructions of the main characters of *This House of Clay and Water*. It is a qualitative-analysis based research, therefore, to enrich the findings and support the conclusions of the analysis, the concepts of gender-performativity and sexual identity as described in Butler’s queer theory have also been analysed. FPDA and queer theory have been adopted and moulded to analyse the data in light of the objectives of study. The analysis mainly focuses on interactive dialogues of Nida, Bhanggi and Sasha in varying social contexts to understand and compare how gender identities and power structures are enacted, shifted and changed through discourse from one social context to another.

Galtung’s theory of violence substantiates the claims made by Butler inasmuch as violence, its symbolic nature and endurance, all in the name of culture and social practice is concerned. Socio-political discourses and culture serve and even fuel both the *structural violence* (Galtung, 1967) and violent societal outbursts towards *non-heteronormative gender performance* (Butler, 2004). So, Galtung’s theory on violence in general lays the foundation for Butler’s theory of specific gender related violence and they are similar in their aims inasmuch as both attempt to explicate the role played by social norms, cultural practices, symbolic nature of beliefs about certain identity constructs and above all the assumed burden of responsibility which social groups ascertain to maintain the *greater good* of society and ultimately use it in collaboration with other elements to enact violence, be it physical, emotional, sexual or gender based in nature. *This House of Clay and Water* presents us with a combination of structural cultural gender-based violence and it is interesting to see the patterns for cultural violence, in general, to be the same patterns used to perpetrate gender-based violence. However, the web of violent practices actually present in any society is too intricate to be simply studied and understood by studying just one work of fiction using the abovementioned two theories. As interesting as the findings of this study maybe, there is still room to integrate further dialectic and multidisciplinary theoretical foundations to study more discourse, both fictional and non-fictional, which currently exists and will come to exist in future.

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, Galtung’s theory of violence serves as the foundation on which Butler’s theoretical claims about gender performance, marginalization and societal violence against non-heteronormative gender identity/performance are tested in the close textual analysis of the selected novel. The FPDA helps as a tool for both textual and contextual analysis to find out the elements of gender identity as fluid, gender reconstruction, meta-discourses about gender and social practices, agentic stances, and gender based cultural violence.

FINDINGS

This House of Clay and Water is a postmodern book fraught with references to traditional patriarchy and how it adversely affects the marginalized gender communities, in this case most women and almost all members of intersex non-heterosexual communities. The marital lives of Nida, Seerat and eventually Sasha are all reflections of the conventionally deep-rooted gender roles propagated continuously through the ages with the help of religious, cultural and patriarchal “metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984) and prevalent discourses. The traditional patriarchy in the modern Pakistani society remains highly institutionalized (Hadi, 2017), ranging from familial restrictions to political segregation. Saqib criticizes Musharraf for giving women one third quota in parliamentary elections and he even hints at women selling their honour to win political support because women are nothing more than “commodities, conveniences or problems” (Mansab, 2017, p. 167), which does not shock Nida because it is the prevalent discourse about women, even in the seat of power, and she later realizes it to be somewhat true in a patriarchal society. As a result of their rebellious acts of trying to wrest the power to control their bodies away from the powers that be, Bhanggi loses his life, Nida has no option but to flee her home and leave the life she once knew behind, and Sasha has to embrace her conventional gender identity to deal with Zoya’s tragedy because she was being a bad mother when she refused to submit to her assigned gender roles. Seerat remains a successful good wife and mother, because she never complains about Faheem’s disloyalty and neglect, thus, staying true to her conventional gender roles, while ironically, Faheem demands loyalty and sexual exclusivity even from his escort to whom he is not even married.

“Sleeping with a hijra”, which many men do without questioning their essential heterosexuality, makes Nida feel like an un-woman, because she is “in love” with an “anomaly”, a “monster”, a “subhuman”, “diseased”, “half creature” and so she is led on to “Judgement. Sentence. Exile.” (Mansab, 2017, p. 248). If she was a woman before and is not one now so who is she? In an attempt to co-construct a new and unconventional gender identity in a society like today’s Pakistan, Nida and Bhanggi lose what they had, now they cannot live and perform according to their patriarchal prescribed gender roles so they have to disappear from their worlds and become invisible nobodies forever and ever.

DISCOURSE, CONTEXT AND GENDER RECONSTRUCTION

“A pitiful half creature” Bhanggi, whose gender identity is in such a flux that he wants to be a woman and be with a woman, does not fit any criterion of heterosexuality. Someone who is not even allowed to choose their gender and pronoun to refer to oneself, cannot be powerful enough to choose their own sexual identity and “gender performance” (Butler, 2004). Language has no space for Bhanggi, so he simply exists in the margins. Nida, who refuses to view Bhanggi as a female being, is not alone in this quest of binary gender assignment to intersex persons. Bhanggi himself is painfully aware of his neither feminine nor masculine voice, and his excuse of a beard on his unmanly skin and features. He does not see himself as a man but his yearning to be a woman cannot be gratified either, nor can his desire to have sexual relations with women be reconciled with his not so heteronormative gender identity dilemma. And so, he chooses to use male pronouns for himself and his devotees do the same, but if a customer wants him to act like a woman, then he becomes a *nightingale* just the same. He switches his discourse structures according to the context he is in, from the vocabulary and pronouns of a man to a woman, of a *qalandar* to a

prostitute, of a philosopher to a beggar, and of a criminal to a lover. And so, language is responsible for how his identity and gender (Butler, 2002) is represented and misrepresented. Moreover, the “nexus of subjectivities” (Walkerdine, 1990) shifts and co constructs itself so rapidly that the identity of the same person shifts from powerful to powerless in rapid succession within the same discursive context.

Nida’s emphasis on his masculine trait hints at gender discrimination of yet another kind. She too, like his male clients, is unable to admit to herself that her relation with Bhanggi is non-heteronormative and is prone to societal rebuke and even violence (Butler, 2004). Heteronormativity is, as she has been taught throughout her life, the only option and that too allowed within the confines of matrimony whether one likes it or not. This pressure to always choose gender specific pronouns denotes that discourse structure itself is discriminatory.

To co-construct his male identity during his interactions with Nida, to not be more of a non-man, a hijra, than he already is, Bhanggi refuses to yield to the sexual demands of the Auqaaf clerk. While she so desperately wants Bhanggi to be a man, Nida herself is weary of the word woman and the denotations around it, that is, her assigned gender identity, because it carries the weight of all those prescribed gender roles and performance expectations that she is fighting to destroy and reconstruct for herself. So together Nida and Bhanggi attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct their gender and sexual identities within limited social contexts using language they are not normally allowed to use. More than that, they are looking for their “human identities” (Baxter, 2003) without having the option to leave the society they call theirs.

Nida’s desperate desire to leave her physical existence behind to rediscover her lost soul is a covert way of her struggling with her socially prescribed gender role which is mainly based on the premises of her being a woman, commonly referred to as the *weaker* being by the dominant discourse users. She wants to reclaim her sexual and gender identity and attempts to co-construct it with Bhanggi. Unsurprisingly, born and raised in a strict patriarchal family, she herself is unable to acknowledge this fact. She blames her non-heteronormative sexual encounter with Bhanggi on something deeper and mystical than physical attraction (although she is attracted by his slightly feminine physical features) because how could she, a *good* daughter and wife be attracted to an intersex stranger to whom she is not and cannot be married. Her *performance* (Butler, 2004) of the ritualistic sex with Bhanggi changes her gender role from a meek, powerless good woman to an openly rebellious and norm challenging bad woman. She becomes what she hated in Sasha, and finally understands that Sasha too was fighting against an identity imposed upon her in the name of womanhood which she wanted to destroy by being free and promiscuous. Sasha learns to use the language of the posh and the free, she switches her discourse as she switches her gender identity. Like Nida, Bhanggi too, wants to abandon his body in a quest for his *soul* which he believes he lost once he was sold into prostitution, that indescribable soul is a symbol for a search for self-identity, a desire to be free of conventionally unjust gender roles and to construct a new identity free of gender constraints. “A hijra cannot find happiness” says Rani, not even the only supreme happiness of motherhood allowed to women.

To highlight the normalcy of a *non-binary sexual identity* (Butler, 2002) Nida muses that “Adam was the first hermaphrodite” (Mansab, 2017, p. 185), that man and woman were once one in the same body, referred to and talked about in the same language, equal and together without any gender binaries or discrimination. Nida, Bhanggi and Sasha co-construct for themselves gender free zones within which they get away from the existing realities and social practices of their sexual and familial lives to avoid the unbearable pressures of their given gender identities. They ignore the societal norms of appropriate gender performances (Butler, 2004), including

acceptable ways of interacting and available discourses, as soon as their contexts are shifted from the conventional to the non-conventional. As soon as Nida enters the dargah clad in a burqa, she stops being a *begum*, sheds the responsibility of preserving the honour of the men in her life, and feels free to interact with people, Bhanggi specifically, in such a language and manner that does not suit her gender identity as a *begum*. Her gender performance shifts as her context does (Sunderland, 2006) and she co-constructs a new identity for herself together with Bhanggi and Sasha. Bhanggi dons the green robe of Qalandar and pretends to be holy and asexual, which he is not thanks to the society's abuse and violence against his curse of a body. Sasha leaves her home in upmarket designer clothes to work as an escort and defies her gender roles as a daughter, a wife and a mother to become a free, open-minded woman who does not believe in society's moral standards and adopts the explicit and even vulgar language that men do not expect from a woman. Together they challenge the sexual identities inflicted upon them and end up paying heavy prices for doing so.

After admitting that she's attracted to a *non-male*, Nida invariably questions her own sexual and gender identity and society's norms around it. Should she even be called a woman, a *begum*, what is her place in the domain of language and interactive discourse, if she is not someone who is exclusively and wholly loyal to the man she was asked to marry? Because, a married woman, a *begum* like her is supposed to be asexual, a wife, a mother, a symbol of honour, devoid of desires, thoughts and free will.

META-DISCOURSES, NON-HETERONORMATIVITY, AGENCY AND CULTURAL VIOLENCE

Societies often react with violence to non-heteronormative behaviour (Butler, 2004). The gender identity of a *non-binary* (Butler, 2002) hermaphrodite is an enigma for a society used to viewing gender as *binary*, male and female, so he/she becomes a "communal vessel" for sexual abuse and societal violence (Butler, 2004) of all kinds, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Bhanggi tells the reader about some of his "regulars" who would prefer almost anything over a woman, but they are too socially conditioned to admit their non heterosexual urges even to themselves. Thus, people like Bhanggi, and even women like Nida, are the ultimate victims of normalized *cultural violence* (Galtung, 1990) as can be seen through these characters dialogues, stream of consciousness and overall discourse of the book. Married to *good* women, such men guard the precepts of the universal heteronormativity by paying cheap rupees to Bhanggi, because if he is not woman then he is not a man either so they cannot be homosexuals, and abuse *the non-binary gendered* (Butler, 2002) dredge of the society which amounts to violence and criminal behaviour. Men from every walk of life are involved in this malpractice and that is the kind of gender identity which the society expects Bhanggi to have and to hold, even to accept the violence directed against him as normal and legitimate, to the point that he laments ever being taught about the bookish concepts of human dignity and compassion. His biological (inter) sex determines his gender role (Sunderland, 2006) and performance for him, and that is what defines his gender and his social identity as a person devoid of basic human rights and state's protection.

He yearns to reconstruct his gender identity by finding places and contexts where he might not be judged by his body but he is not allowed to self-identify as a man even within the boundaries of Hera Mandi where the prostitutes laugh at him, refuse his money and throw him out. He refers to his body as a *curse* multiple times during his first-person narration. But it is actually the gender identity attached to it that is his real curse. The very word *hijra* invokes denotative images in the minds of people and the prevalent discourses about intersex people (e.g. cursed, unholy,

untouchable, non-human, *na pak* (filthy), sinful etc.) guide the society's practices at large. If intersex/transgender persons can be perceived as gender-fluid then they are lower than even women in terms of power, rights and privileges associated with gender identities in a conventionally patriarchal setup, their only options in life are prostitution, beggary and derogatory dancing (Abbas & Nawaz, 2014). That is one of the main reasons why Bhanggi yearns for an escape from his identity even if it comes to him in the form of a very violent death. Saqib not only has Bhanggi murdered in cold blood, to eliminate not a man's threat to his honour but just a nuisance, but also denies him a decent burial. To let Bhanggi be buried, and to convince Saqib of her defeat in her quest for power and a non-conventional identity, Nida has to submit to her those gender roles, which she had *given in alms* not so long ago. She too, fears for her life once Saqib's election campaign is over and is eventually forced to flee and become an *asexual Qalandar*, an *androgynous ghost*, the *female eunuch*, to abandon her previous gender roles and to perform differently in a different context, away from family, home, husband and society. Because the society she lives in, the gender and sexual performance of men is free from the shackles of honour, and it is only the women who are the sword and shield of men's honour.

When it comes to Bhanggi and his assigned gender roles and identity, which he does not really have, society holds him responsible for the "half-creature" like body he was born with. Since his body poses a direct challenge to the essential heteronormative discourses of the society, so, extreme inhumane violence and sexual abuse is meted out to him. He, and others like him are forced to live in ghettos like segregated "chawls of hijras" (p.6) after being abandoned and cast out by their own families, mostly at birth, forced into a life of degradation, prostitution, trauma and in some cases even forced castration. Law does not provide them any real security and even the police are accomplices of sexual crimes against them. Society shuns them, children throw stones at them, people see them as God's curse, and imam e masjid believe their bodies are too perverted to even pray inside the mosques. But once Bhanggi decides to reconstruct his identity and fights for a change in his gender roles, he also embodies acceptance. There are a few people who stand up against the imam to let Bhanggi enter the mosque, his new asexual gender identity as a qalandar wins him some devoted disciples who are afraid of his perverted body but still revere him, and Nida, observing his resistance against the Auqaaf clerk also comes to his aid to help him along his quest for a new identity and status in the extremely gender binary society. Going further than critical awareness for change and resistance (Lazar, 2007), FPDA breaks with CDA inasmuch as it does not hold that individuals lack power and awareness (Baxter, 2010) but it does have a *transformative quest* as does the story of Bhanggi and Nida. Masculinities are not objective realities, rather they too, like language, construct social realities and are constructed by the experiences of people (Wooldridge, 2015) within a culture heavily influenced by legitimized forms of discourses and interactions between and about gender. Gender appropriation and non-male positioning use culturally available discourses (Glapka, 2018) to maintain complex networks of agency, violence and submission. Bhanggi's quest to attain a gender identity for himself that he is comfortable with, in varying contexts, makes him something of a gender fluid person. He wants to be known as a *he* around Nida but he also appreciates his status as a *qalandar* and a kind of harmlessness that his being *not-male* confers upon him whereas his devotees including women are unafraid to communicate with him and even touch him, something that the women are not generally allowed or expected to do in accordance with their prescribed gender roles. His fluid concept of his self and gender is what subconsciously drives him to do reckless things because he feels differently with different contexts and so society's judgement falls upon him in the form of *symbolic violence* when Sasha betrays him and Nida to Saqib and finally as the ultimate *cultural*

and gender based violence when Saqib comes to see him not as a harmless *hijra* but as a *man* (which he is not according to fixed standards of society) and a threat to his honour resulting in Bhanggi's murder. Nida's gender reconstruction also leads her to face *symbolic and sexual violence* when Saqib refuses to let her bury Bhanggi and makes her comply at last with his sexual demands which he believes to be his right as a husband. *Cultural violence* claims Nida's way of life when it becomes known that she behaves differently than a *begum* should (her prescribed gender role) on the *darbar* with Bhanggi and so she is ultimately cast out from society for her *gender reconstruction and gender fluid performance* as a *qalandar*, it is also hinted towards the end that once Saqib wins the election he will have Nida killed as well.

CONCLUSION

The feminist post structural discourse analysis of the novel shows that Nida and Bhanggi are not trying to wrest political power or bring about a social change, they do not tend to make the "personal political" (Baxter, 2003). Their quest is postmodern, post-structural while at the same time the narration does deal with the more modernistic issues of patriarchy, body and psychology but their identities and gender performance are not fixated on just these limited dimensions of feminism. Post structuralism does have an interest in issue oriented *social projects* (Baxter, 2003) that aim to transform existing social realities, meta-discourses, discriminatory use of language, and harmful power structures, which, as the analysis shows, the writer has aimed to achieve through her counter discourse of sympathy and empathy towards the non-confirmative characters. The analysis also shows that the main characters of this novel are indeed tangled in the *net-like organization* of power structures (Foucault, 1980), and their conscious struggle against the power abuse is evidence of fact that power is also a non-fixed entity that shifts its scales from context to context (Sunderland, 2006). These attempts at transformation are a kind of hold on power, meaning that they are powerful in some contexts while utterly powerless in others, and same is the case with their freedom to deconstruct, reconstruct and co-construct their human and gender identities within every changing context and interaction based discursive events. So, the meaning of gender is always changing (Derrida, 1991) for them as they pursue to build their own images, discourses, and identities with and for one another. The analysis also proves that both, gender identities and power structures, are dynamic and deeply embedded in language and context, and should the context be unsuitable to a specific gender role performance then it may lead to reactionary cultural violence from the society against the persons who try to openly challenge the heteronormativity of a traditionally patriarchal society like Pakistan's. It also proves the practicality of FPDA towards better comprehending and explaining the complex phenomena of gender and social practices, while at the same time it proves the significance of literary discourses to explicate and transform hegemonic structures of society.

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