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Transgender Identity and Subverting Norms: Trans Lives Representation in Sufia Humayun's *It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O.K* through Butler's Lens

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Original Article

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Abstract

Based on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, this paper critically examines the representation of non-binary and transgender identities in 'It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K' from *Shattered Echoes* (2024) by Sufia Humayun and societal reactions to them. The purpose of the research is to expose through literary texts the social, cultural, and religious structures that define the traditional gender binary as a sign of "normal" and marginalize identities that deviate from it. According to Butler, gender is not a natural or biological fact, but a continuous social phenomenon that is shaped by cultural norms, language, and systems of power. The excerpts included in the paper show the phenomenon in action of how powerful narratives do not consider the identity of transgender and intersex people to be comprehensible and make their existence socially illegitimate or immoral. Through metaphors such as "X" in the research, "horse's eye guards" and "AMEEN" show the performance through which individuals attempt to gain social acceptance while concealing their identity. This paper illustrates that Butler's theory is not only a means of understanding gender identity formation but also provides an opportunity to critique the systems of power that demarcate between "normal" and "abnormal". Through this study, the resistant narratives in Pakistani fiction are also highlighted, which provide an intellectual basis for gender liberation and self-realization.

Background of the Study

Gender identity in general in South Asian societies and specifically in Pakistani society carries complexities as they adhere to the binary gender system. Hence, gender identity has its roots in the binary system, limited to male and female only; therefore, people born outside these boundaries are either ignored or ostracized. They not only face eviction and coercion on family level and educational institutes but the legal system also seems to fail in providing them protection against these societal injustices.

Societal criticism and traditions are deeply rooted in Pakistani society related to gender. The traditional binary system of people is strong enough to divide the people to be either man or woman. However, it creates a life challenging situation for those who don't conform to this traditional binary system of gender such as the transgender person or intersex.

In Pakistani society, the existence of intersex/Transgender (eunuchs) is a fundamental problem as their biological sex do not conform to the normal characteristics associated with male and female gender. They have characteristics that are unexpected and unaccepted in society. As a result, not only, their social status is affected but also, they are marginalized. According to Fausto-Sterling (2000), even physicians operate within a cultural system that promotes a binary (masculine and feminine) system calling the birth of babies with ambiguous genitalia as “medical emergency” (p.45).

The intersex faces this challenging situation; hence, they were given lawful identification in 2009 where they had the freedom to choose their gender as per the law. However, the reality is quite different as despite the law, they are treated differently in educational institutes, in acquiring jobs and other social institutes. They are rendered to dance and greetings in events, keeping them from the social and economic decisions.

These societies are in deep crisis as on religious and traditional basis they accept people only as male and female. However, in real life there are people who do not feel fit in these bounds. Intersex, transgender and third gender people have been present in these societies for centuries, yet they are often called with derogatory names such as ‘khusra’ or ‘Khawaja sara.’

In Pakistan, though the transgender act 2018 was lawfully established to protect the identity, education, and jobs for these individuals, yet the implementation of this in practice is limited. (Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018). Even in the educational institutes, hospitals, offices and in their home, they face discrimination and physical abuse in some cases.

Judith Butler’s theory of performativity states that gender is a social construct that is created through regular acts and practices. According to her, gender is not a reality of birth, but it is expressed through social, cultural, and individual acts. “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance” (Butler, 1990, p. 43). Conforming to this perspective, it becomes difficult for the intersex or transgender class to act according to these societal expectations. As a result, they are not accepted, considered as abnormal and are kept on the margins treated as marginalized groups.

Goffman, (1959) in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* states that when individuals present themselves before others, they are concerned to “incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society” (p.23). A person different from this characterization is considered abnormal such that the intersex or transgender group is treated as different and abnormal individual. Fausto-Sterling (2000) considers the binary system of division into sex and gender as only a societal division instead of natural divide that constricts the physical difference to a hard frame without flexibility.

In Pakistan, this binary system has created a problem for the intersex and transgenders who don't fit in this simple system leading to their identity crisis. Whenever the issue of rights and societal status is discussed for these people in Pakistan, it results into failure, leading to creation of problems for them. Hence, they are kept on the margins due to their physical and gender differences, especially in Pakistani society.

In literature and fiction, the group of people are underrepresented and those that are presented are often with compassion or in comedy characters. In this context, ‘It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K’ by Humayun is an important creation that highlights the lives of intersex, transgender or third genders. Not only does it highlight the internal feelings of these characters but also throws light on the institutional oppression that they must undergo.

This research work analyzes Humayun's "It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K' from her book *Shattered Echoes* in the light of Butler's (1990) theory of 'Performativity' to understand how society sees gender as a performative act and the way it treats who acts differently. The study seeks to analyze 'It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K' to understand the representation of intersex characters in fiction and examining the impact of social institutions on them in Pakistani fiction.

Theoretical Framework

Butler represented her theory of 'performativity' in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) and in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). According to her "gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self" Butler, 1990, p. 30). She states, "Gender is not something that one is, it is something one does-an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a performance." (Butler, 1990, p. 33). It is "the repeated stylization of the body, A set of actions that are repeated under a strict social and cultural code, and frozen over time to create an impression of a reality that feels natural and original (Butler, 1990, p. 43). She also states that even if we assume for the time being that the biological division of male and female (binary gender) is stable, it is not necessary that the identity of "male" is associated only with male bodies or "female" only with female bodies. It is not correct to assume a direct and necessary relationship between sex and gender. When gender is seen as a social construct, it becomes independent of physical sex. Consequently, "masculinity" can also be associated with a woman's body, and "femininity" with a man's body (Butler, 1990).

According to this theory, gender identity is not a birthright, it is a socially decided act that is performed regularly showing specific actions and behaviors. People who act differently than the already accepted actions and behaviors associated with specific genders by society are strongly opposed by society. She also states that Gender is not an internal or natural identity, but a performance based on continuous repetition. This expression comes about not by the individual's personal will, but by the pressures of social norms, power structures, and the heterosexual system. The "materiality" of gender is itself a product of the norms that make it appear natural, even though it is also a social construction. The social norms that shape identity exist before the individual, and the individual is formed by them; Therefore, the agency is also not completely independent. Bodies that do not "fit" these norms are rendered socially unrecognizable or 'abjected' (Butler, p. 15, 1993)

The story is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K' is a representation of those who face negation, exclusion, and invisibility because of them against the acceptable demonstration of gender.

This framework will analyze the marginalization of transgender people through social norms, language and institutional practices that enforce the binary gender system in Pakistani context. Through butler's performative theory, this research will examine how individuals are deprived of their identities through force and are confirmed with identities that they do not reflect.

Methodology

This study is a literary analytical study, using close reading technique. Close reading technique is an analysis of the text where the text's language, symbolism, narrative, character expressions, and specific sentences are analyzed carefully to better understand the text in relation to the author's concept, social context, and cultural background. According to Braun (2022) "close reading" is a mode of analysis that moves a reader beyond comprehension of the text to interpretation of the text". Close reading is often done to understand and discover hidden ideas or points of view in a text. These ideas are not absolute facts like scientific laws, but are socially or culturally constructed, and are not the same in every society. Through close reading we derive new meanings and knowledge from writing. This is why it is encouraged to use this method in essay writing in schools or college, for the creation of new knowledge (Braun, 2022).

This study examines the selected texts from 'It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K' in the light of Butler's theory of performativity to understand the topics of incongruence, social externality, and institutional behavior in detail.

Literature Review

Gender identity, especially the representation of intersex and non-binary binary, has become an important topic of study in modern gender studies. Butler in her famous book *Gender Trouble* (1990) presented her theory of performativity where she considered gender to be an act or continuous performance instead of fixed and static identity.

"There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990, p. 25). According to this theory, gender is a regular act which is repeated under social and cultural pressure. This theory is applied to literary works about gender incongruence, intersex and khwaja saras for their identification repeatedly.

In the Pakistani context, the discussion over gender is often limited or suppressed considering religion, cultural and traditional values. Khan's (2006) research work *Zina, Transgression, and the Reconfiguration of Honor in Pakistan* highlights how the social system considers the unconventional behavior of gender as against respect, dignity, and ethics.

Kirmani's writings, especially her work "*Mobilising Women in Pakistan: Benazir Bhutto and the Women's Movement*" (2015) highlights the struggle of female and other gender minorities for independence. It also explains how gender roles perform in society. Nida (2018) states in her research that eunuchs or third genders are limited to commercial functions or traditional demonstration. whereas their real identity and humanity are not accepted.

In the Pakistani context, gender identity could be seen in the religious, cultural, and legal angles. Hussain, (2020) in his research *Performativity in Pakistani Society* has applied butler's theory in the local context. He states that Pakistani society sees gender demonstration in limited spaces and those who don't fit into these spaces, they must face social exclusion, oppression, and psychological issues.

Similarly, researchers like Arondekar (2009) who has extensively worked on postcolonial and queer theory, enforces how power, politics and ethics have been connected to Sexuality and Gender Identity in Colonial Societies.

The literature produced by South Asian writers such as Chgtai (Lihaaf-1942) and Manto has raised questions on roles about sexual and gender identities in their stories. Though their works were not directly targeted at sex roles, yet they broke the silence that dominates these topics.

In recent years, some works by Pakistani writes narrate the experiences of the khwaja sara community. However, the identity of intersex is still an invisible topic. Based on interviews with the lives of individuals in Pakistan who do not fall into a gender binary or heterosexual identity, the researcher emphasizes how the effects of colonial rule have been challenged. The granting of legal recognition to transgender people by the state of Pakistan in 2009 has been presented as a new form of nexus of gender, modernity, and political identity (Khan, 2017). In Pakistan, the transgender community is still the most socially deprived group, who do not have equal opportunities in economic and political activities. A recent study examined their social status, identity, access to education, and employment prospects considering social prejudices. The results showed that the society is not only unable to accept them, but also the benefits of educational and institutional reforms are not reaching transgender people (Riaz, 2023). According to Khan (2014), in 2009 the Supreme Court of Pakistan granted legal recognition to transgender people, but this recognition remained subject to local cultural assumptions as per the ethnographic survey. The transgender community used ambiguity, secrecy, and cunning as a "game" for social security to avoid stigma and make themselves acceptable. This style of politics was effective in the short term, but eventually it also hindered the definition and acceptance of gender identity.

The story "It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K" by Humayun tries to fill the gap. Those characters who are non-binary and their behavior is unconventional faces ridiculed not only on individual level but also institutional exclusion. Butler calls this process a "regulatory regime of gender" (Butler, 1993) system that punishes deviation from traditional gender roles.

Analysis and Discussion

According to Butler's theory of 'performativity,' gender is not a natural or birth reality.

However, a social performance that comes into being through repetition of acts and attitudes. As Butler has stated, gender is a repetition of acts and is not a natural reality. It combines those sanctions and performances that are learned and repeated through social influence. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.

Here in these lines "Honing your skills to clap, shoulders erect mock femininity" (Humayun, 2024, p.154) the skill of clapping and struggle to erect your shoulders is an act, mocking femininity emphasizing how gender manifests as a trained and psychological process. These acts confirm the performance of a gender but also play its role in its social creation. It confirms Butler's opinion that gender is copying, repetition and way of action rather than a natural act or static identity.

The following lines describes the feminine aspects of transgender.

Back in your boyhood, you were a student and had effeminate ways about you, both in school and home. You weren't considered to be masculine enough. In no time the laughing turned into scorn and sneering, leaving the school council baffled. because you were invisible to them ... in the fringes of the spotlight. The school council being healthy kept the healthiness and rusticated you from the school. They did the same to the girls whose videos were discovered in their own phones. (Humayun, 2024, p.157)

In these lines from the story, the character is described having "effeminate" or female-like style. The character shows different behavior than the traditional masculinity both near home and at school. The character did not get acceptance from its school fellows and institutions as the character exhibited different behavior, actions and body as it was against the accepted social principles that strengthened the actions attached with being masculine.

As Butler has stated that the society continuously repeats specific attitudes (actions, dressing, conversation) to strengthen the identity of man and man. Therefore, whoever leaps these bounds becomes invisible or marginalized. The same happened to the character of the story who faced jokes, insults, and rustication from the institution. It strengthens the notion that the institution gives place to only those who act rightly according to the present gender norms.

"No harm done to the dawdling goon because that's how men are. They will not change. You must safeguard yourself. But you did not. So, it calls for 'struck off.' (Humayun, 2024, p.157). The above lines explain the situation of those who do not fit into the binary gender system. If they are miss treated by men, the oppressors are not harmed or punished, rather the oppressed are blamed and they must be careful if they want to be safe. Society does not bother to punish those offenders but those oppressed are tried to be removed from the system. This text enlightens gender identity and power exercised in the social manifestations in the light of Butler's theory of performativity. This line presents men's behavior as an inborn or unchangeable reality which as per Butler's is due to repeated performance rather than a biological truth. Here "they won't change" confirms masculinity as created by society as righteous things. On the other hand, females are told "you must safeguard yourself" means women are responsible to protect themselves and if they fail to do so "they must be removed or stuck off. This statement confirms that no matter what

transgression from norms of society are, there is only one solution: struck off, banish, ostracize. This is a living hell or worldly hell, call it what you like. It has been created for cleansing a healthy society. This is how you come to know how society treats who transgresses from the standards of society, you must be banished and removed. You have the freedom to call it whatever you like, the society that appears like hell to you, it has been created to cleanse by removing people who transgress from the norms. This passage unveils the depths of social principles and power systems under the context of Butler's theory of performance. The author emphasizes that society has only one solution, i.e., removal for those who are not standing up to the norms of society. Words like "that was a living hell... created for cleansing a healthy society" identifies the fact that this punishment is not for the individuals only but also targets their identities, to maintain what is called normativity in the society.

This hell is in fact a sign of that oppression for people who cannot confine themselves to any expected function as per the binary system. The text here affirms Butler's perspective that identity is not assigned at birth but a creation of power, option, and social force. and whoever challenges this creation then the reaction is not only strong but is also justified in the name of cleansing.

This quote powerfully illustrates the social construction of gender identity, its repression, and the consequences of its denial considering Judith Butler's theory of performativity. "Ostracizing you forever and ever because you were not girl enough or boy enough. They didn't kill you for being a girl. They have better plans for you far more sinister than the mere act of killing. For death relieves you of the pain and the atrocities. They call you a boy, drape you boy's clothes, give you boys' haircuts, and satisfy their ego with you frolicking around with tom boy games" (Humayun, 2024, p.157). This passage explains that the society accepts only two genders i.e., male and female. And whoever does not fit into these boxes, they are rejected.

As Butler stresses that gender is a reiterative performance so those who are "not girl enough or boy enough" not only are stripped of their identity but also excluded from social existence. Similarly sentences like "They didn't kill you for being a girl. They have better plans" (Humayun, 2024, p.157) unveils the psychological and existential violence which is far more severe than physical death. In the same way they "call you a boy, drape you in boys' clothes" illustrates all the enforced actions on an individual's identity so that the illustration remains against the social principles. And this is the basis for Butler's (1990) ideology that gender identities are played out under systems of power and oppression. Refusal to confirm these performances leads to an attack on their existence.

This passage clarifies that genders are not performing according to expectations or those who fail to act accordingly are punished. This punishment includes social exclusion as well as continuous, silent, and civilized violence. which invades a person's being, his identity, and his consciousness.

The passage here unveils the depths of gender identity, violence, and protest through the Lense of performativity as per Butlers such as indicated by these lines "You grow breasts... they mend their ways and now you are a girl all of sudden" (Humayun, 2024, p.158). As soon as physical appearance changes, society overwhelms the individual with new identities. The author here explains that people with unclear identities are first brought up with what their parents think suits them. However, when their physical appearance changes, they are stripped off their identities and given new ones. Even here, gender is seen as a performer or an act who serves not because of what they feel but to align with the look and expectations of others.

As Butler has mentioned, gender identity is based on persistent habits, attitudes, and social learning. Hence, people understand this performance as a reality, and it even becomes their second nature. Such as in these lines the author has emphasized how difficult it is to unlearn what

an individual has been taught their whole life and now, they must undo it. These individuals are "Wondering how to undo the skills that you ... learning since your childhood"(Humayun, 2024, p. 158).

Here the author indicates the puppet shows where the puppet master controls the puppets. "The role which you have been playing to please your puppet master, has become second nature to you. Now wherever the strings take you, you rebel until the strings are broken" (Humayun, 2024, p.158). The puppet here symbolizes the individual, and society holds the role of a puppet master. These individuals with gender identity crises reflect the use of violence and control systems. Individuals who go against these set performances are narrated as rebels, who do not conform to the instructions given by social institutions.

"They don't see you at the signal, but they see you in nightmares"(Humayun, 2024, p.158), here again these individuals are ignored at prominent places like they don't exist. However, their presence is a continuous threat and fear for society. Though they ignore them by making them invisible, society cannot get rid of them in the dream.

"You grow and grow like a balloon until you explode, and your shards cling on to society" (Humayun, 2024, p.158). This indicates the extremity of rebellion when the person under continuous stress and search for identity bursts. The shards of his identity stick to the face of society. This is a sign indicating Butler's 'performativity' ideology's symbol of rebellion when performative identity is not rejected alone but its social remains challenge the system and changes it. The passage explores not only gender oppression but also presents a reformative identity that as per Butler's theory performs according to the oppression system leading to its unveiling and lastly by demolishing it.

"Even a transgender act 2018 is passed to secure your basic rights and indirectly purify these signals. They don't see that wearing horse eye guards all they see is the center since they are notorious for being heterosexuals. They don't shut themselves. What a crazy idea. How can they shut themselves? (Humayun, 2024, p.159). Even a transgender act 2018 is passed to secure your basic rights..." The sentence here indicates that the state has accepted the rights of transgender people through a establishing a law. This act symbolizes ensuring performativity on state level means that the transgender person can perform their gender lawfully.

However, "they don't see that wearing horse eye guards all they see is the center..." criticizes the narrow mindedness of the society by calling it 'horse eye guards' which symbolizes limited ideals. Society having heteronormative centrality believes the heterosexual as the center and ignores the presence of other genders.

This passage criticizes the unjust division of power, control and social decisions that align with the physical orientation of the gender. Society is autonomous in making decisions about the lives of others by taking the power to deal in whatever ways they like, yet there is no one to object to them. They don't feel the need to shut themselves up, as they exercise free speech towards the non-normative genders. They do not hide themselves even if they are biased and unjust, their presence calls into question social "normality".

"They hold the red cards and there is no one to show them the red card. However, they show red cards to whomever they please and the audience cheers or moans. Who cares?" (Humayun, 2024, p.159) 'They hold the red cards' highlight the behavior of specific sections of society, those who are heterosexual, dominant group or the center, they have this power to accept or reject whomever they want to. According to Butler, society prepares these rules and then applies them to others. They themselves are not bound by any law or principle. They do not perform themselves, rather they judge the performance of others. "They show red cards to whomever they please and the audience cheers or moans." Here another aspect of Butler's 'performativity' theory

is clear that society's response is only like a spectator either by cheering or moaning. It means that gender identity and behavior is not only judged by the central power but also by social spectators regularly. "Who cares?" points towards societal senselessness and non-seriousness. Queer identities are not only made by others but also their injustices are made meaningless by society. This senselessness empowers the already powerful section and pushes the rest of the people towards the margins.

"You are ostracized, but that doesn't mean you can choose your gender. They have the right to peel through your holes to decide your gender. They will tell who is X and who is not.... chant wanton ways, X," (Humayun, 2024, p.159). You are ostracized... but that doesn't mean you can choose your gender" this sentence points out the contradiction of the social ostracization that excludes individuals from society. society retains the right to exclude and determine their genders. According to Butler this act denies the notion that gender selection is a personal and independent decision. One must get acknowledgement by some external and powerful system.

This line "they have the right to peel ... gender" (Humayun, 2024, p.159) uses very deep, uncomfortable, and symbolic language which indicates how society examines, judges and categorizes gender identity such as sexual or gendered anatomy. As per butler, gender is not only performed but they are also under continuous surveillance and inspection. The fact that someone else can call your identity as right or wrong based on your physical evidence, is the extreme of heteronormative power. "They will tell who X is and who is not" points out to that power where they have the freedom to tell who is right or wrong (right, acceptable, and normal) X is a symbol of gender, identity or That is not adopted by individuals themselves but is dependent on the decision of the social center.

This line directly indicates the reaction of society that enforces gender on the transgender people. They call these non-binary individuals' lives inappropriate and reject them. The dominant group not only decides the genders for others but also it problematizes everything about trans people. They are not allowed to choose an identity for themselves, no freedom of opinion, no scope for living. In such cases, the same people who perpetrate injustice pretend to be oppressed and always place the real blame on those who are already marginalized.

"When people bash on Transgender Acts 2018 and share posts saying 'O Allah, I reject transgender acts completely. o Allah keep me, my family and Ummat e Muslima safe from your anger.' These are the same people who don't know till the controversy rose regarding the existence of such a bill. They still don't know what the actual bill is" (Humayun, 2024, P.160). The quote criticizes the uninformed moral panic of people who, without knowing the details of the law, term the Transgender Act 2018 as a religious threat based on hearsay, religious sentiments, or social media. According to Butler, such reactions are the product of hegemonic ideologies, that is, powerful narratives that regard one's own identity as "natural," "right," and "pure," and view every different identity as a threat or deviance.

This attitude of "we didn't even know it, but we're against it" exemplifies Butler's argument that opposition to gender and sexuality is often based on moral panic rather than principle or reason. This ignorance, when combined with religious language ("Ya Allah! Save me from your displeasure"), takes on the form of a moral force, one that not only rejects the law but also labels its adherents as "enemies of religion" or "spoilors."

Butler says that when gender structures are challenged—such as the legal recognition of trans people—the so-called normal class (often heterosexual, religious, majority) feels insecure.

This is why such people refuse without understanding, because the real problem is not the law but the lack of power at the center.

You have learned how to live in a healthy community where 'It is not O.K, Not-To-be-O. K,' so you hit the Ameen sum Ameen every time the post is shared. ...this urge to integrate your unhealthy self into the mainstream, you write AMEEN in capital letters and grin yourself, "A job well done" (Humayun, 2024, p.160). This quote satirically criticizes attitudes where one must look "okay" simply because society considers "not being okay" to be a weakness or a sin. According to Judith Butler, identity and behavior are often performed, that is, the individual adopts behaviors that allow him to gain social acceptance, even if he is broken on the inside. "You write AMEEN in capital letters and grin..." This phrase critiques the outward endorsement of religious or social posts-a process that Butler calls "compulsive performativity," where the individual must hide their true state and repeat the central narrative in order not to be rejected. Writing this "AMEEN" is not just part of a prayer, but a quest for acceptance- an attempt to be "okay" by society.

"This urge to integrate your unhealthy self into the mainstream..." This line describes the conflict at the heart of Queer Theory where the individual seeks to suppress his truth and assimilate into a system that has already rejected him. Butler calls this internalized normativity- the process by which an individual imitates the mainstream by misrepresenting his or her own identity or feelings.

"When you encounter the clapping clowns on signals or weirdest places and weirdest times, you put on their horse eye guards screaming, wanton ways, wanton ways. There is no X. Either man or woman or wanton ways. (Humayun, 2024, P.160). "Clapping clowns on signals" is a reference to the Hijra/Trans individuals in societies like Pakistan - who are often seen on the streets, at events, or at strange times and are not only considered out of the ordinary but also seen as a spectacle or a source of fear. This quote is a satire on the social position of those individuals (Hijra/Trans individuals), who do not endorse to normativity. They are treated as nobodies as punishment as not being man or woman only means having resulted from immoral behaviors.

When the reader says that people put "spectacles like horses on their eyes"(Humayun, 2024, p.160), this is an indication that society is used to thinking only in the two boxes of male and female. According to Butler (1990), this gender binary is a social construct, which is repeatedly performed and made real. The "horse eye guards" here are the social biases that prevent us from "seeing" extraordinary identities. "There is no X. Either man or woman or wanton way"(Humayun, 2024, p.160). This line represents the oppressive framework of the binary system where X means no non-binary or self-identity is accepted. If a person is neither male nor female, they are immediately dismissed as wanton (unruly, unruly, or obscene).

This process dehumanizes queer identities, as Butler explains: "Those bodily figures who do not fit into either gender fall outside the human, indeed, constitute the domain of the dehumanized and the abject against which the human itself is constituted." (Butler, 1990, P.142)

Conclusion

This research paper, based on Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, through satirical, symbolic, and metaphorical passages of Pakistani fiction, has analyzed how society not only rejects non-traditional and non-binary gender identities, but also puts various social, religious, and cultural pressures on them considering their existence as a threat. Butler's position that gender is not a natural or biological fact but a continuous social process, shaped by specific cultural and power systems, is reflected in practice throughout the passages in this paper.

The paper explored that social institutions, including religious narratives, moral surveillance on social media, and everyday cultural phenomena, all combine to create narratives that define only the gender binary (male/female) as acceptable and "normal". In this context, when characters or individuals try to establish their identities outside of these norms such as intersex or transgender people, they are not only criticized but also labeled as socially unintelligible. This situation is

consistent with Butler's view of how powerful systems exclude language, law, and everyday practice those identities that do not fit into their defined spheres.

The paper specifically highlights the symbolic status of "X", which becomes a metaphor for all individuals who do not confine themselves to the gender binary. Individuals who are neither fully accepted nor given the right to choose their own identity live a life of constant social rejection and humiliation. Wearing "horse-eye guards" or shouting "Amen" represent behaviors by which people show outward conformity, even though their inner reality is quite different.

Consequently, it can be said that the real struggle for gender liberation is not limited to mere representation or recognition but requires challenging all powerful narratives that define the division of "normal" and "abnormal". Butler's theory teaches us not only how to understand gender, but also how to rethink and treat it so that everyone has an equal right to live with their identity.

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