

## Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)

Journal Homepage: <https://pjsel.jehanf.com/index.php/journal> *ISSN*

2521-8123 (Print)  
2523-1227 (Online)

---

### Cultural Feminism in Shazaf Fatima's *How It Happened*

Arslan Ijaz<sup>1</sup>, Abdul Rafey<sup>2</sup>, Mohey Aurangzaib<sup>3</sup>

Original Article

1. Air University, Islamabad.  
Email: [arslanijaz698@gmail.com](mailto:arslanijaz698@gmail.com)
2. Air University, Islamabad.  
Email: [rafeyabdul35@gmail.com](mailto:rafeyabdul35@gmail.com)
3. Air University, Islamabad.  
Email: [m.aurangzaib@au.edu.pk](mailto:m.aurangzaib@au.edu.pk)

---

#### Keywords

#### Abstract

Cultural  
Marriage, Matriarchy

Feminism,

*This study examines the Shazaf Fatima Haider's novel. The focus is to explore How It Happened to evaluate the effect of Cultural Feminism, particularly Matriarchy. Additionally, the creation of triple repression of quiet and shadowy figures in South-Eastern nations. The research is based on Cultural feminism in Shazaf Fatima's "How It Happened", which demonstrates how the patriarchal cultural bounds of the world have harassed and haunted women. The preconceptions about marriage and women's emancipation were underlined in this study. This work is prone to qualitative research. It looked at the narrative through the lens of Feminist Theory, specifically Cultural Feminism. The research elucidates how the repressed and enigmatic personalities of matriarchs reconfigure the significance of their being throughout time. In doing so, they create the fourth degree of subjugation of their very own gender in a particular domestic setting. This study did a thorough examination of the individual character of issues like cultural feminism, forced marriages, and love marriages in Pakistani culture.*

---

#### Introduction

Shazaf Fatima, a Pakistani author, wrote *How It Happened*, which was released in 2012. The narrative depicts the turbulence that may arise in well-furnished drawing rooms of Pakistan when it comes to young people picking their ideal spouses.

The story depicts an iconic narrative of arranged and love marriages. It presents a situation in which happiness, freedom, honesty, and truth are all attainable even under the most difficult and constraining of circumstances. The theme explored the functions of an individual's identity,

the nature of foolishness, the importance of leading a genuine life, and the challenges presented by South-Eastern societies. Shazaf is a Pakistani author who attempted to encourage readers to discover love, marriage, and funny material in a combination of conformity-shadowed culture through her work. She questions the meaning of foolishness and celebrates those who defy societal rules based on events in the book. It is a powerful and inspirational depiction of a completely new culture's readjustment process, which is marked by cultural progress, economic entity, growth, and continual general pressure as the cultural shift occurs.

This is a beautiful, humorous, and totally delightful tale of how marriages are formed and destroyed not in heaven, but in the drawing-room and then over the phone, as told by Saleha, the cleverest sibling. Dadi (Grandmother), the powerful matriarch of Karachi's Bandian family, stands by the benefits of arranged marriage. Such arrangements have flawlessly suited all her predecessors, even a dentally and visually impaired aunt. Her grandkids, on the other hand, are more difficult to please. Haroon, her sweetheart, will have to put up with a half-dozen hopefuls until he finds the right Shia-Syed lady for him. But Zeba, his younger sister, has it rougher, as she is courted by a slew of suitors, including a paunchy relative and a banker who smells like sesame oil.

Feminism is a progressive agenda that advocates for women's rights. Its major goal is to make life better for women in society. There are a few types of feminism, such as social feminism, logical feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, and cultural feminism. This study focuses on "Cultural Feminism" in Shazaf Fatima's novel *How It Happened*. It characterizes and defines love stories, marriage stories, and comedic material. Zeba is the primary character who opposes marriage's constraints. *How It Happened* includes the main topic of rejecting societal norms and voicing the portrayal of women as an equally essential component of society. Shazaf argued that women should be able to take control of their own destiny, regardless of gender, economics, or politics.

### **Problem Statement**

The primary goal of this study is to relate cultural feminism to Pakistani culture. Feminism concerns women's status in a culture where they are treated unequally. This movement encompasses all efforts to shatter preconceptions about women, such as education, employment, and love marriage. Marriage and love are the two primary topics addressed in this work. Furthermore, the primary focus of this research is on women's empowerment, which allows them to live the lives of their aspirations. The study primarily focuses on cultural feminism and its many dimensions.

### **Significance of Study**

Even though the media has covered cultural feminism, forced marriages, and love marriages in Pakistani culture, a thorough examination of the individual character of these issues is absent. Feminism is a very important subject to study because it exposes the key challenges that women have been facing in society. Cultural feminism distinguishes between society and how it objectifies women. The major aim is to give women rights in society. Many results and concerns about the inappropriate practices of treating women as prisoners have been addressed and opposed by this research.

### **Research Objectives**

- i. To examine and normalize women's marriages while respecting their desires
- ii. To make women culturally strengthened and empowered respectfully.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the major hurdles to women's empowerment as portrayed by Shazaf Fatima's novel "How It Happened"?
- ii. How does cultural feminism play a role in women's oppression in the stated novel?

### **Literature Review**

This section discusses the existing literature and research conducted about Feminism and Women's Inferiority in society. Many books and essays on Feminism and Women's Empowerment highlight the intricacies and provide the foundation for this research.

*Unmarriageable* is a delightful take on Jane Austen's renowned novel. It is a thrilling examination of love, marriage, class, and sisterhood, explained with sarcastic humor and vivid writing. This book exposes several faults of society when it comes to women. She developed a Pakistani adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* to demonstrate how deeply these faults are ingrained in our culture. It is a hilarious narrative about how, like Jane Austin, every woman must be brutal and honest to build her own image and identity. Soniah Kamal is a Pakistani American author who is well-versed in Pakistani society and Western literature, as well as feminism. Pakistani feminism and culture are defined and compared to *Pride and Prejudice* in the West. The book's main subject is refuting society's prejudices and portraying women as an equally essential component of society. She argued that women should be free to control their own destiny, regardless of gender, economics, or politics. Patriarchal laws are widely discredited, and the cultural values of acceptance and sensitization are emphasized. The forms of feminism that are prevalent in Pakistani society can be predicted. (Kamal, 2021)

*Pride and Prejudice* has been one of the most popular novels in the English language since its instant popularity in 1813. This magnificent book was dubbed "her own beloved child" by Jane Austen, and its vivacious protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet. It was described as "as lovely a creature as ever appeared in the paper." The love conflict between Elizabeth and her haughty

beau, Mr Darcy, is a brilliant display of civilized sparring. The novel's renowned opening sentence declares: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." (Austen, 1813) This suggests that marriage becomes a motif and an issue in the novel. Readers may wonder whether these single men truly require a marriage, or if their desire is driven by the "neighborhood" families and their daughters, who require "good fortune." The novel *Pride and Prejudice* also gives the community insight into determining the position of women in the early nineteenth century. At that time, society was constantly seen as women as weak and lacking in their capacity as human beings. The novel's feminist concerns stemmed from gender inequality, as seen by the logical implication and limited opportunities for self-actualization. (Blom, 2015)

The detrimental effects of women's identity crises are like Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. It can also be viewed that women's delicate characteristics are ridiculous and that they are unable to stand alone with their own thoughts and views in society. *The Bell Jar* tells the story of Esther Greenwood, who is smart, beautiful, incredibly creative, and prosperous, but who is slowly sinking for the last time. Thanks to Sylvia Plath's masterful pulling of the reader into Esther's breakdown with such intensity. Esther's madness seems totally authentic and even rational, as credible and accessible as going to the movies. *The Bell Jar* has become a frightening American classic because of its profound penetration into the dark and terrifying regions of the brain. The female character Esther's struggle to align her thoughts with society's established standards and views is a representation of women's restlessness. (Budick, 1987)

(Atwood & Mirzayee, 2025) Discusses how these themes of feminist utopia are shown in the works that have been surrounding women's plight and submissiveness to males. They attempted to elaborate on the struggle for women's independence. Female characters are featured in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* to show the atrocities committed against women in Gilead. Women's rights are exploited and persecuted all around the world. They are abused and handled as if they were a work of art. She also highlighted the women's subservient attitude toward males. She believed that their submissiveness exacerbates their predicament. She argued that women are solely defined as having one purpose: to nurture their children and spouse. It describes the hardships and progress of women.

In *The Subjection of Women* (1969), John Stuart Mill examines three important first-wave feminist postulates: "society and gender formation," "education of women," and "marriage institution." Women's subjugation. According to Mills, these postulates are a significant hindrance to human progress. Stuart opposes the social institution of marriage, which gives all legal rights solely to males. He also criticizes the present law of marriage, which, in his opinion, grants legal authority to men at the expense of women's dependence on men in all aspects of life. He does not advocate for divorce, but he does advocate for women's voting rights. Mill

delivered the women's petition for the right to vote in 1866, and he pushed for female-friendly modifications to the 1867 Reform Bill. (Walters, 2005)

Brooke Williams invented the phrase "cultural feminism" to depoliticize radical feminism in the United States of America. Cultural feminism is the antithesis of radical feminism. It exists primarily to promote independence, female empowerment, and institutional development. Cultural feminism is a phenomenon that transfers the focus of life from "political issues" to "style." It is a form of feminism in which a woman of the same gender rescues you from oppression and problematic views. All other varieties of feminism, such as socialist feminists, black feminists, and radical feminists, oppose cultural feminism because it contradicts their previous beliefs. They claim that cultural feminism makes feminists pragmatic and weakens the cause. (Taylor & Rupp, 1993)

The book, "Gender Communication Theories and Analysis from Silence to Performance (2006), Kroløkke and Sorensen argue that the main push or motivating factors for the third wave, according to Charlotte and Anne Scott, are marching down the Atlantic City boardwalk and staging several types of theatrical activism, such as crowning a sheep Miss America and throwing "oppressive" gender artefacts, such as bras, girdles, false eyelashes, high heels, and other "oppressive" sexual identity artifacts. (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006)

Charles Fourier created the term feminism in 1837. Feminism is a phrase that refers to a series of social, political, and intellectual movements that share a common goal. These movements aimed to accomplish women's rights on all levels, from personal to sociopolitical. This fight involves ensuring that women have equal chances in school and jobs. The goals and intentions of these movements vary across the world. It depends on cultural and regional factors. (Hawkesworth, 2006)

In recent years, Pakistani women have made significant progress in their fight against patriarchy. Many academics have expressed their feelings and provided rational instances of what is happening to women in Asia and Pakistan. Their initiatives are critical for Pakistani women's identity and voice. Soniah Kamal, Bapsi Sidhwa, Nimra Ahmed, Umera Ahmed, and other female writers are the new sensations of this period. Their texts tend to make women more aware of their honor and individuality. They also discuss the challenges that different women from various socioeconomic classes face. All these measures are aimed at ensuring women's cultural and legal rights, as well as the standing they deserve in societal structure. (Chaudary, 2013)

Virginia Woolf is a novelist who also wrote on women's issues. In her book *A Room of One's Own* (1927), she convincingly establishes that women's position is socially produced rather than predetermined. She has eloquently demonstrated the inequity with which women are treated in the pursuit of education as well as in the social institutions of marriage and

motherhood. Men, according to Woolf, are snobs. She believes that many women are unaware of the degree of male animosity against women. (Walters, 2005)

### **Research Methodology**

This work is prone to qualitative research. In this section, the researcher has discussed the theoretical framework, research design, research method, and procedure used to carry out this research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Feminism is used as a theoretical framework for this research. It is a worldwide movement dedicated to the economic, cultural, social, liberal, and political aspirations of women. It was created to provide women in society with more authority and legal protection. Feminism challenges patriarchy, women's oppression, and their rights.

Brooke Williams created the phrase "cultural feminism" in 1975. Cultural feminism's major issue is that if the discussion is about women's rights, then women must be at the center of the movement. It is a concept that women must be liberated by another woman's culture. It rejects all forms of extreme feminism and replaces them with a more moderate version of the movement. It essentially encourages and enhances women's control over the movement and their own decisions. Radical feminism was depoliticized by Cultural Feminism. It shifted the focus of feminism from "politics" toward "lifestyle."

The research focused on a specific component of feminist theory for the analysis of *How It Happened* by Shazaf Fatima, to get a proper perspective on women's situation in society. Cultural Feminism is utilized to monitor the variables that contribute to the disparity between men and women in society.

### **Research Design**

This research is based on qualitative methodology, and the literature is collected from books and research articles. The researcher analyzes Shazaf Fatima's *How It Happened* by using the theory of "cultural feminism" as a lens to explore the research questions and research objectives.

### **Research Method**

The preferred method for this research will be the textual analysis of *How It Happened* by Shazaf Fatima. Qualitative research methods will be utilized, and it will include textual references from the memoir itself.

### **Research Approach**

This research adopts an inductive approach, focusing on close reading of selected novel *How It Happened* by Shazaf Fatima.

### **Procedure and Tools**

The study will use excerpts from Shafaz's novel, as well as cultural feminism as a theoretical framework, and its influence on women's daily life. The primary source of data is the novel; secondary sources include relevant literature from books and research articles.

### **Rationale for Data Collection:**

The primary data for this study is derived from Shazaf Fatima's novel *How It Happened*. This work was chosen for its rich exploration of cultural feminism within the context of Pakistani society. It makes it highly relevant to the research focus. The novel delves into the dynamics of arranged marriages, gender norms, and the intersection of tradition and individual agency. It provides an ideal foundation for examining the constructs of cultural feminism.

The selection of textual excerpts from the novel was guided by their thematic relevance to the research objectives. These excerpts vividly depict patriarchal and matriarchal norms, such as female resistance, and the broader societal implications of cultural feminism. This research further focuses on key scenes and dialogues, such as Dadi's reinforcement of patriarchal values and Zeba's defiance of societal expectations, which were chosen to highlight the tension between traditional roles and feminist agency.

This data allows for a nuanced analysis of how cultural norms impact women's autonomy and self-expression. It aligns with the study's aim to explore feminist dimensions within the novel. The focus on *How It Happened* offers unique insights into the specific challenges faced by women in Pakistani culture, while also contributing to the broader discourse on cultural feminism.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The researcher evaluated and analyzed the textual material to support the theory that has been used and to justify the cultural restrictions and inhibitions by citing several examples from the chosen book.

Throughout feminism's history, the narrative and primary issues have been the same: male exploitation of women or exploitation based on gender disparities. Females in post-colonial states also face a different type of oppression, one that is far more overwhelming. Women are thrown down a deep well where they lose their individuality and become a hollow reflection because of tyranny. This tyranny is carried out not by different genders, but by the same sexual identity, the

"Matriarchs of the Household."

*How It Happened* (2012) is a pleasant, amusing, and well-maintained work of fiction. Haider has created a narrative in Pakistani culture about a well-off family, like Jane Austen's. As she deals with a drawing-room issue and turns it into spicy bites of comedy, portraying religion and customs as villains in the topic of love marriages, particularly among women of the society. She conveys the complex and delicate subject of weddings using simple words. "I don't want

to get married for the sake of producing children. I want a companion. I want love. "LOVE!" gasped Dadi. "No one in our family has married for love for generations!" She love-married, shameless creature she was... Her mother tried to commit suicide, and her father couldn't show his face in public again! Such shame she brought to her family." (Haider, 2013)

These sentences demonstrate one of the novel's key themes, such as critiquing the institution of marriage, particularly about female members of society. These phrases illustrate the very dilemma of Pakistani society, in which a girl's future, character, attributes, and rank are determined by her acceptance or rejection of a proposal, an arranged marriage, and submissive behavior. The family's matriarch, Dadi, is a living representation of the ancient culture who does her best to keep the customs of the past alive. This beautiful history portrays a period when women were little more than puppets, and their whole life hinged on how great they could be in the domestic sphere and marriage market.

Women are seen as burdens in many third-world nations, not just by patriarchy but also by matriarchy, which devalues them. Their lives are assured in return for adhering to social norms and traditions. Women live in a male-dominated society, and culture regards women as second-class citizens in comparison to males. The matriarchs of the family are the ones who feed these ideas into their heads, not the patriarchs. In the novel *How It Happened*, The author Shazaf Fatima Haider portrays Dadi as a matriarch who lavishes all her love and devotion on the family's male members. There are several examples throughout the novel that highlight the matriarch's passion for guys. The place and space she devotes in her life to her grandson are one of the many indications of Dadi's loyalty and love for her male heir. The female narrator perceives the matriarch's affection for the patriarch in authority as exaggerated because of a sense of being overshadowed. She describes her father, her Dadi's only son, as being everything, including the entire planet, the entire universe, the sun, the moon, the Mashriq (East) and the Magrib (West), and much more. (Haider, 2013, p. 16) When fathers are living to hold the scepter of the patriarchy, sons are the second foundations of the patriarchy in traditional eastern civilizations of the Sub-Continent like Pakistan. Because the negotiating matriarchs are aware of this, they maintain and preserve their positions explicitly and plainly, which is obvious and detectable in comparison to the family's silent and shadowy younger girls. Sons are the most valuable possessions for them: "My brother is the second apple of my Dadi's eye" (Haider, 2013, p. 17)

Zeba is a bother to her grandmother as the overbearing matriarch, Dadi, tries to bind her grandchildren by the chains of traditional cultural norms in terms of relationships and female veils. Zeba is a nuisance to her grandma as she is the outspoken one. Dadi considers her a rebellious child who is "displaying disconcerting signs of independence". These disconcerting signs, according to Dadi, are "wearing a sleeveless kameez and then going out to a restaurant

for dinner with a group of friends.” (Haider, 2013, p. 35) The picture of a covered Muslim lady has always been quite a focal point of Western secular discourse and feminist arguments over a woman's status and place in the Islamic community. Though the conceptual construction of the veil as an inherently repressive practice is mostly unsupported by the experiences and lives of Muslim women who wear it, when forced on a woman in an Islamic community, it becomes the most blatant symbol of exploitation and tyranny. According to the feminist point of view, women must be allowed to choose their own clothing and must not be enforced on anything.

Females are fetishized for pure entertainment purposes, and beauty contests promote unrealistic beauty standards. In fact, a woman's identity is relegated to an extent that their true identities get hidden behind their external looks. Matriarchs mistreat teenage ladies by objectifying them based on their appearance. This significantly diminishes their worth outside of the realm of beauty and attractiveness. Women are instructed to form a line and are then graded on their appearance, smiles, grooming, make-up, and attire. The women in "How It Happened" are likewise compelled to promenade in front of their anticipated in-laws like livestock, and the matriarchs of the family are the most supportive of this degrading practice. Dadi becomes extremely demanding and picky in her hunt for marriage for her grandson, creating a checklist for the females to be chosen, which reflected her patriarchal worldview. “Someone as pure as snow ...is something that what will people look for in the two of you when they come to see you for their sons”, (Haider, 2013, p. 43) she says, reinforcing the image of physical attractiveness in the heads of her grandchildren. Dadi is indeed a personality that believes in patriarchal norms wholeheartedly. She should have supported women's rights because she is a woman, but her mind is too much a manifestation of patriarchy. We can see examples of her patriarchal mindset throughout the essay.

The oppression of young females is especially obvious in the phenomenon of traditional arranged marriages, in which boys have complete control and girls have no voice. When Mrs. Haque mentions a proposal for Zeba in the novel, she boasts that she does have a list of females to present her abroad-returning son. The lads, not the female, were to make the decision. The agreement between the girls was of the utmost importance. “We have also looked at about four other girls to show him. He is not too picky and should like one of them..... you know how it is with boys these days they have such high standards!” (Haider, 2013, p. 141,142) Dadi's approach for selecting a girl for Haroon demonstrates that the matriarchs were unconcerned about the girl's feelings. There were about a few sessions in this marriage plan: the potential candidate was required to exhibit herself before Dadi's unrelenting

examination, and if the first session went well, a second session was scheduled for the son to inspect and confirm the lady. Given that the female's feelings are given the least attention, if the son accepts her, the third meeting will be held to resolve further dowry, venue, and outfit issues. Thankfully, this has to be the last meeting finally. No one seems to be disturbed by the sorrow of a female being rejected. Saleha, as a youthful spectator, finds the phenomenon of arranged marriage distressing. These are the mothers that teach their boys to pick women like they would pick things from a store. In response to Zeba's mother's displeasure of Mrs. Haque's remark, Dadi defends Mrs. Haque's actions by saying, "Even when you go shopping, you see at least five or six samples of clothes before selecting one, don't you? Getting a good proposal these days, Bahu; you must not get angry about little things like this. After all, Mrs. Haque was just being honest. I think you should call her and let her come as soon as possible" (Haider, 2013, p. 143).

Matriarchy is one of the novel's major topics and is linked to several forms of feminism, including social and cultural feminism. Shazaf Fatima wishes to rouse women from their slumber, yet absurdity, hatred, rudeness, and masculinity abound. These are the actions that the Westerners mostly destroyed, and now they have taken other forms. Yet, we are still sleeping heavily owing to ignorance, lack of basic knowledge, restriction of rights, fake obedience, and so on. The only ladies eligible for Dadi's grandsons are truly gorgeous and submissive women, even if it means displaying other women's daughters as simple objects. This is the major issue with Pakistan's traditional mindset, which regards women as merely objects. To increase the worth of women in Pakistan and to defend their rights, these barriers must be removed.

In the novel *How It Happened*, the author expresses a larger disdain for matriarchal thought in matrimonial matters, because matriarchs adhere to traditional patriarchal beliefs about marriage. Dadi's character is entirely opposed to the concept of love and marriage in her household. Throughout the story, we see a clash of mindsets, with old traditions colliding with a newer, more modern way of thinking, as Dadi sees Iraj, a distant family member from Dadi's time, marrying for love as a blight on the family's name and reputation. "She love-married. Shameless creature she was. Born and bred in a respectable family....Her mother tried to commit suicide and her father couldn't show his face in public again! Such shame she brought to her family." (Haider, 2013, p. 8). They believe that women should marry for economic stability; they believe that marrying and marrying well is a woman's greatest shot at survival. All a woman's rights, freedom, and even identity should be superseded by her husband's will, who becomes her legal guardian in every sense, as soon as she marries. When it comes to choosing one's life mate, which is again a form of suppressing freedom of choice, a girl's voice is simply disregarded when it comes to choosing a life spouse for her.

The matriarch in an Eastern civilization establishes standards for females so that they do not breach customary traditions and humiliate the family. In many respects, matriarchs become patriarchal agents. In the name of tradition, they strive to enforce patriarchal values, and in the process, they devalue and degrade girls. Dadi is really pleased with the standards she has set for herself. She adds, "I shall die soon, and then you will realize what a blessing it is to have standards" (Haider, 2013, p. 66). Dadi's dealings If a male is liberal, there really is no problem; yet, if a woman is progressive, it is considered immoral in contemporary society. This conundrum gets even more complicated when such thinking styles are bolstered by females themselves, such as Dadi. This is exactly exhibited in the book when Zeba was seen by Dadi eating ice cream with Omer: "Dadi was slowly working herself up into an epileptic fit, beating her chest," mournfully says "she is going against all our ways and meeting a strange man in strange places" (Haider, 2013, p. 201)

Apart from the emotional anguish and troubles, the elderly people of society who follow cultural values also strive to deny grooming habits to the weak and mute girls. They never express any enthusiasm for the education of young females. They are always attempting to improve young girls' self-grooming skills. They desire that the young females stay at home and become experts in all aspects of household management. The matriarch's ingrained desire to exploit the silence and women around her is reflected in Dadi's behavior. Patriarchy never fosters women's independence since it may lead to women influencing their male counterparts. The matriarchs speak out against patriarchy and strengthen it. When they resist young women going out to work because it would disrupt their labour as a wife or a daughter-in-law, they affirm and verify patriarchy. This is portrayed in Dadi's Comment as she says, "Women who work have no time to be a wife and a daughter-in-law" (Haider, 2013, p. 55).

The phrase epistemic violence, coined by Philip Sipiara, refers to the cultural suppression of the weaker team and their assigned subordinate status in society. (Sipiara et al., 1990) These marginalized groups are defined and understood only in terms of their distinctions from the rest of society. The implicit message has always been one of degradation. Because they have been objectified, they are unable to think or communicate as a coherent collective subject. The topic of how it happened is crucial to the status of the quiet and shadowy women depicted in the book, as matriarchs, being the saviors of the culture, play the role of tyrants and suppressors, forcing subaltern women to hide their brains in front of their anticipated in-laws. Dadi uses conventional images of young females to subjugate them and silence them throughout their lives, "good eastern girls should never have strong opinions of their own, only of their husbands and in-laws" (Haider, 2013, p. 146)

### **Conclusion:**

In a nutshell, the story of Shazaf Fatima shows that in the hands of feminine power, the female population feels overtly oppressed and despised. An elder women who gets authority and use it prominently becomes a supporter of patriarchal mentality by oppressing junior and young women in their homes. These elderly ladies have the same authority as males over the young and feeble women under their charge. Senior women use platonic love as a tactic to control and exert power over young women to stifle them. Patriarchal love and affection for males is one of the matriarchs' techniques for securing her old age stability and authority over her progeny, particularly those of her own gender.

The theoretical framework deals with Brooke Williams' concept of cultural feminism as how females, through the strategy of patriarchy, are being bound with the cultural threads. These threads never let her do anything or take any stand of her own; instead, she is always bound to do everything according to the other people of her surroundings.

When fathers are living to hold the patriarchy's scepter, sons are the second pillars of the patriarchy in typical eastern civilizations of the Subcontinent, such as Pakistan and India. The negotiating matriarchs are aware of this and maintain and retain their positions in a way that is evident and noticeable to the family's younger females who are silent and shadowy.

Zeba's character in *How It Happened* defies her Dadi's established rules and conventions. She is adamant about rejecting any stereotypical representations of herself. She obtains an education and chooses a Sunni family as her partner, as well as daring to announce her love for Omer in front of her family, particularly in front of her grandmother. Zeba's attitude symbolizes her character's transformation, as she used to act like a puppet and obey anything her grandmother (Dadi) told her to do.

This strengthens the idea of female to give a proper place in society and culture, as well as her freedom in choosing whatever she wants to have in her life, from a daily meal to a lifetime spouse.

### **References:**

- Atwood, M., & Mirzayee, M. (2025, March). *Female Identity in the Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood*. International Journal for Scientific World.
- Austen, J. (1813). *Pride and Prejudice* (R. W. Chapman, Ed.). Project Gutenberg.
- Blom, E. (2015). *Contrasting Attitudes Toward Marriage in Pride and Prejudice: Elizabeth Bennet's Disregard for the Contemporary Marital Conventions*.
- Budick, E. M. (1987). The Feminist Discourse of Sylvia Plath's the Bell Jar. *College English*, 49(8), 872–885.
- Chaudary, F. (2013). *Huddersfield Repository—University of Huddersfield*. University of Huddersfield.
- Haider, S. F. (2013). *How It Happened*. Penguin.
- Hawkesworth, M. E. (with Internet Archive). (2006). *Globalization and feminist activism*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kamal, S. (2021, June). *Thematic Analysis of the Conflict in Unmarriageable by Soniah Kamal: A Formalistic Study*. Pakistan Journal of Social Research.
- Kroløkke, C., & Sørensen, A. S. (2006, January). *Gender communication theories & analyses: From silence to performance*. ResearchGate.
- Sipiora, P., Atwill, J., & Spivak, G. C. (1990). Rhetoric and Cultural Explanation: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 10(2), 293–304.
- Taylor, V., & Rupp, L. J. (1993). Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism. *Signs*, 19(1), 32–61.
- Walters, M. (2005). *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. OUP Oxford.

