

The Well-behaved Woman: Womanhood in Pakistani Nationalism and its Representation in Selected Novels

Sameer Ahmed

Assistant Professor, Department of English, GC University, Lahore, Pakistan
samsays2001@gmail.com

Salman Bhatti

Associate Professor, Department of Urdu, Division of Islamic and Oriental Learning, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan, msalman@ue.edu.pk

Fatima Faiz

Researcher, Department of English, GC University, Lahore, Pakistan
faaz7798@gmail.com

Abstract

This research project explores the normative values of womanhood in Pakistani nationalism and their representation in the novels *Aks*, *Nobody Killed Her*, and *Neeli Bar*. The study begins by discussing the influence of the Aligarh Movement in shaping a fixed identity of Muslim women in the subcontinent and its impact on Pakistani nationalism. It examines how ideals of femininity and masculinity are ingrained in Pakistani nationalism and aims to demonstrate the link between the past Aligarh Movement and present-day Pakistan through an analysis of selected primary texts. The emphasis on gender roles in Pakistani nationalism is analysed, leading to discussions on gender-based segregation, limited access to education, and male ownership of women. Lastly, the primary texts are also examined for their depiction of strong female characters

who challenge societal norms. The study concludes by reflecting on the protagonists' resilience and their limitations within societal expectations and historical ideologies surrounding womanhood.

Keywords: Womanhood, Nationalism, Aligarh Movement, Representation, Resistance

Introduction

In 1988, Pakistan's only television channel, Pakistan Television (PTV) telecast a Milli Nagma ('national song') in the voice of famous playback singer Nahid Akhtar (b. 1956). Titled *Tarana-e-Khawateen: Hum Maain, Hum Behnain, Hum Betiyan* ('Women's Anthem: We are Mothers, We are Sisters, We are Daughters/ We are the Embodiment of the Nation's Honour'), the song was a catchy composition that ostensibly celebrated womanhood, but simultaneously bracketed that same womanhood to a patriarchal framework. The original video is a collage of women from different eras and walks of life, dressed modestly from head to toe. While there are women who are working at factories and participating in public life, there are no women playing sports, addressing men (whether as managers in a workplace or as political leaders), operating industrial machinery, driving a vehicle, or flying an aircraft. The anthem has had subsequent re-mastered, HD iterations with updated videos that show women as doctors, engineers, and fighter pilots. But the lyrics still convey the same message they did in 1988: the nation celebrates women who are mothers, sisters, and daughters, but not those who are simply women irrespective of ties to the family. Neither in its original, nor in its updated iteration does the song include single mothers, women who refuse heterosexual unions, and women who do not adhere to notions of modesty in their dress and person.

It does not take much effort to discern that notions of an ideal or well-behaved woman are part of the political fabric of Pakistan. Ideals of femininity (and masculinity), while imagined to lie in the private realm, are anything but private. These notions have been ingrained in Pakistani nationalism, particularly from the time of the Aligarh Movement, even though Pakistan did not exist at the time of Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). However, the Aligarh Movement propagated a specific Muslim female identity. This was based on existing conservative notions of ideal womanhood (also shared by other South Asian communities), but the point to note is that the 'reformist' trappings of the movement, and its subsequent impact on Indian Muslims meant that the ideals of womanhood espoused by Aligarh had far-reaching implications, especially since Aligarh spawned the Two-Nations' Theory that became a bulwark of the Pakistan

Movement. This movement played a key role in shaping a fixed identity of Muslim women in the subcontinent which later tickled down into Pakistani nationalism post-1947. Such notions continue to shape the lives of women, as portrayed in the primary texts chosen for this study.

The purpose of this study is to analyze recently published works that demonstrate their relevance to contemporary experiences of women. The primary texts include *Aks* by Umera Ahmad, *Nobody Killed Her* by Sabyn Javeri, and *Neeli Bar* by Tahira Iqbal, published in 2012, 2015, and 2017, respectively. These novels were chosen because they shed light on the hidden yet obvious misogyny in Pakistani society. This research project will demonstrate that these texts highlight a link between the past Aligarh Movement and present-day Pakistan. The addition of Urdu texts enables the exploration of a diverse range of issues faced by women based on their socioeconomic status and exposure to English education. Furthermore, the addition of Urdu works also broadens the demographic scope of this study.

Research Questions

What are the normative values of womanhood that are espoused by and propagated in Pakistani nationalism, where do they come from, and how are these values represented in *Nobody Killed Her*, *Aks* and *Neeli Bar*? How do these values intersect with contemporary Pakistani women's efforts to gain agency, as depicted in *Nobody Killed Her*, *Aks* and *Neeli Bar*?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This research involves an in depth textual examination and close reading of the primary sources through the feminist lens provided by Ayesha Khan (2018), Zia (2018), Agha (2021), Nida Khan (1994), Saigol (2013), and Nighat Said Khan (1994). The novels chosen for the study will simultaneously be read as portraying (and sometimes challenging) the ideals of womanhood springing from the reformist literature of the 19th century. Deputy Nazeer Ahmed's seminal work (1869) will serve as a launching pad to study and link ideals of womanhood in 19th century India with ideas about the 'place' of women in Pakistan's brand of nationalism. These ideals will then be traced to the Aligarh Movement through Jain (1965). Though I will not construct a direct genealogy between Ahmed (1869) and the perpetrators and justifiers of heinous crimes against women like the murder of actor Qandeel in 2016, I will draw attention to the discursive kinship between norms of female dress and propriety in 19th century, and ex-prime minister Imran Khan's view that the rising sexual violence against women can be traced to how women dress in the Muslim majority country (A. Khan 2018). By doing this I will draw parallels between these historical ideals with the contemporary works *Nobody Killed Her*, *Aks* and *Neeli Bar*. In this way, I will link past with present by taking up normative values about women, such as dressing, decency, and propriety, all the while keeping in focus the evolution of Pakistani nationalism dating from the 19th century Aligarh Movement.

Nationalism

Nationalism has emerged as the most powerful ideology in recent times. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines nationalism as: Loyalty and devotion to a nation especially: a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups ('Nationalism'). This national identity in turn develops from shared ethnicity and cultural ties. Not only is nationalism a result of cultural heritage, but is also influenced by religious consciousness: 'In nationalist doctrine, language, race, culture and sometimes even religion, constitute different aspects of the same primordial entity, the nation' (Hutchinson, 49). Anderson believes that although religion is not the primary constituent of nationalism, it does serve as a cultural system for the awakening of a nation (12). Hence nationalism at times can be informed by religion in leading people towards shared destinies and moral consciousness. Nationalist sentiments are also often generated by the power groups of the emerging nation. These groups make sure to create 'responses' from people for the emergence of a nation and the state (Anderson, 109). One such method of forming national consciousness is language. For Anderson, a nation is more connected through language than blood (145). Once a nation is formed, nationalism amalgamates individual identity with national interest and identity.

Pakistani Nationalism

As argued above, nationalism can at times be influenced by religious sentiments. We might state without being too far off the mark that Pakistani nationalist sentiments emerged during the Aligarh Movement, even if Pakistan did not exist at the time of Syed Ahmad Khan's reforms. There are clear connections between the 'Two-Nation' Theory and the Muslim nationalism that Aligarh spawned. In this sense, we can trace a direct line of inheritance for Pakistani nationalism (following the creation of Pakistan) from Aligarh. Aligarh's Muslim nationalism often relied on religious exclusivism. Although Islam existed in the subcontinent before the Aligarh Movement, nationalism was however absent as a concept before the European ingress. With colonialism, multiple belief systems emerged and peoples' sense of belonging to the land was influenced by their religious identities.

Pakistani nationalism, or at least the early iteration of the Two Nations' Theory, saw its dawn with the Aligarh Movement, asserting that 'Islam and Hinduism [we]re two major religions that cannot influence or swallow each other' (Sahbaz, 213). In Khan's time, the Muslim elite demanded to be recognized as a principally separate nation and not as a part of Hindu or secular India. This act of the Muslim elites can be seen as an effort to embed national consciousness rooted in religion. Hence, Khan managed to point out the heterogeneity of cultures within India (Malik, 388) while underplaying the diversity and variance among Indian Muslims themselves.

Khan also warned Muslims associated with the Indian National Congress that the concerns of Muslims would not be highlighted in a joint Hindu-Muslim venture (Sahbaz, 215). For this purpose, Khan strove for voting rights for Muslims as a separate community (Mujahid, 94). This struggle for the Muslim community eventually sowed the 'seed of Pakistan', for, without separate electorates, there would have been no Pakistan (Mujahid, 94). The emerging state of Pakistan was strongly tied to Islamic principles and laws which paved the way for religious nationalism since 'Pakistani nationalism, was above all, a struggle for the creation of an Islamic state in the modern world and indeed a significant milestone in Islamic history' (Dhulipala, 497). However, Jinnah was not in support of a theological Pakistan. As an important historian points out, 'In April 1943, [...], a resolution which would have committed the league to basing the future constitution of Pakistan on Islamic principles was quietly withdrawn at Jinnah's insistence' (Jalal, 96). Nonetheless, the secular demands of Jinnah were snubbed by Syed Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979) who believed that Pakistan should be an Islamic state. Thus Pakistani nationalism took shape from religious sentiments despite Jinnah's efforts for secularisation of the state.

The prior discussion brings forth a pressing question. With the divergence in the ideologies of the theologians and Jinnah, what space is available to Muslim women in Pakistan today? Jinnah envisioned a state where secularism would ensure equal rights of citizens irrespective of religion, ethnicity, and, presumably, gender. He wanted to establish a pluralistic society that would be inclusive in its approach to various communities including women. Jinnah believed in women's participation in the making of the nation: 'Muslims will never get freedom unless the women practically take part in politics and play their due role in society' (in Butt, 74). However, the theological view confined women to the domestic space. The implications of this divergence in today's Pakistan have ensured a patriarchal (if not misogynistic) state that excludes women from the frontline and aims to confine them to domestic roles (G. Anjum, 37). These domestic/ family roles are identified as attributes of the feminine gender, as exemplified in the Women's Anthem of 1988.

The reformist literature of 19th and 20th century India played a pivotal role in determining the ideals of womanhood since women's propriety became a moot point. The misogynistic views of Deputy Nazeer Ahmad in his book *Mirat ul Uroos* constrict the roles of women within society. In the 1914 book *Bahishti Zewar* Ashraf Ali Thanvi went to great lengths to constrict the parameters of existence for women: 'Woman has been commanded to conceal her entire body from head to toe. The ghair mehram [outsider/stranger] should not even catch a glimpse of her body' (Saigol, 50). Thanvi believed that the status of a good woman can be achieved by 'obeying her husband, tending to her children and fulfilling her domestic tasks' (Thanvi, 731). He also thought women should only acquire a smattering of religious instruction and home economics (117). These orthodox notions of the reformist literature were reiterated by the Aligarh Movement, and later incorporated in Pakistani nationalism.

The Aligarh Movement, despite its stress on modernization, kept an orthodox view regarding the status of women. For Khan, 'Religion constituted the basic ingredient of the concept of nationality (Mujahid, 89). Women's propriety became a moot point and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan marked clear distinctions between the lives of men and women. Khan was of the idea that women must adhere to Purdah and their education must only be homebound (Bano, 609). Furthermore, he was of the view that by attaining education women would become *bud-ikhlaq* (ill-mannered') and free like men (Bano, 609). Likewise, he was also uneasy about women becoming economically independent: 'The concern was not to encourage women to become employed but to preserve the more basic societal structure of purdah, gender segregation and female seclusion' (Shaheed, 1000). He advocated domestication of women, which meant, 'To impart training to women in household subjects like Urdu, basic arithmetic, needlework and religious instruction, with an elementary knowledge of account-keeping necessary for modern wifehood and housekeeping' (Bano, 611).

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan sought for women the roles of nurturers, guardians of culture and religion and birth-givers of Muslim men. He did not support education for women and declared: 'Women's education should be directed toward creating a good moral character, virtue, domestic expertise, respect for elders, love of the husband, upbringing of children, and the knowledge of religious injunctions' (in Saigol, 53). Also, female sexuality was limited to and associated with motherhood and subservience to the male counterpart. Muslim nationalism was hostile to women if they deviated from these values. Thus the Aligarh Movement and the reformist literature of the 19th and 20th centuries were responsible for setting the patriarchal tone in the new Muslim nationalism that it propagated.

In Pakistan, these ideals of womanhood set by the Aligarh Movement continued to play a key role in determining the lives of women. Feminists such as Shahnaz Rouse argue that such national ideologies are gendered and bring specific effects on women as Pakistan is masculine and exclusivist (Saigol, 33). For instance, one can see that even today women are considered to be owned by men, their rights are ignored and they are expected to be submissive (T. Ali, 4). Women are taught that they are suited for familial life, should be obedient and act as the property of men (Saigol, 116). In addition to this, women are still intensely domesticated in Pakistan and are burdened with household chores while men hold socio-economic value (T. Ali, 14). Gender based segregation is operant in Pakistan, and many girls today have limited access to education (T. Ali, 15). Although women have explored avenues of resistance, they still face the brunt of the patriarchal ideals of the Aligarh Movement.

Ideals of womanhood in selected primary texts

The novel *Aks* unravels the story of a lower middle class girl Aks raised by her mother and grandfather. She grows up in a civil servant's house as his servant. As a young child, she is raped by the officer causing her trauma for a long time. To become powerful

and fight against social evils, Aks accomplishes her set target and becomes a CSS officer. She becomes an ace officer of the DMG group and is respected for her post and power. She works for the poor community in Pakistan and supports women's education. Now and then she is reminded that she is a woman, who has a certain role to play. However, at the end of the novel, Aks punishes her rapist and lives a happily married life. The writer ends the novel on a powerful note that women can fight for their rights without fearing for their lives.

Iqbal's *Neeli Bar* begins with the inception of Pakistan and provides an overview of the changing political eras of Pakistan, thereby underlining the key events of each epoch and pinpointing the burning issues of the respective times. The novel begins with Muhajirs migrating to Pakistan after the partition event only to be cold-shouldered by people already resident there. The story follows two major female characters namely Pakeeza and Zara. Pakeeza is the daughter of a landowner who is feared throughout the village. Pakeeza's character is depicted as a soft-hearted but sound-minded person. Representing the ideology of change for women, Pakeeza at various instances in the novel questions chauvinism. She remains in awe of the outside world and finally sees it only after the demise of her father. Zara is the other female character who, unlike Pakeeza, is loud, firm-minded and follows her dreams. Settled in Lahore during the times of dictatorial rule, she rejects the confinements of a well-behaved woman and is at times called out for it but remains adamant. The novel sheds light on the changing political arena of Pakistan by simultaneously locating women in these times. The novel ends with Pakeeza finally stepping out of her house and tasting the freedom that she wished for.

The novel *Nobody Killed Her* is centred on the characters of Rani Shah and Nazneen Khan. Rani Shah is the strong-headed daughter of a renowned Pakistani politician who wishes to emancipate the women of Pakistan from the atrocities of Jihadists. She despises the military dictator Zia-ul-Haq's Hudood ordinance. Rani Shah hires Nazeen Khan whom she calls Nazo. Nazo, though illiterate, quickly begins to grasp the knowledge of politics and Shakespeare with the help of Rani Shah. Rani is informed about her father's death and she immediately returns to Pakistan. Soon after returning she falls in love with a strong businessman named Balgodi and begins to compromise on her views. Nazo at various times in the novel shows through her character the reflection of what Rani Shah should have been. Rani is the character who feels subjugated by Pakistani nationalism while Nazo mostly resists. The novel ends with the killing of Rani Shah and Nazo narrates that it is she who has been killed.

All three novels depict strong female characters who have a mind of their own and do not compromise easily. The women in these novels are strong and resilient but are bound as 'women' in Pakistan. Even as Pakistan sees a new dawn each day, these rust-ridden historical ideologies regarding propriety haunt women.

Social othering in *Aks*

Umera Ahmad's novel highlights how women face social exclusion for seeking autonomy. Despite being a civil servant, *Aks* is constantly reminded of her gender, subjected to taunts, and her competence is questioned. Women are taunted for stepping out and doing 'men's' work: 'Unlike you, seeing him on the roof, (I) didn't let spectators gather around. You women will run the city?' (U. Ahmad, 250). The reformist literature stressed the superior status of men based on their masculine virtues (N. Ahmad, 59-60). In the novel, Sherdil questions her ability and degrades it by feminizing *Aks*. Afia Zia states that the state-sponsored masculinity exists within Pakistani nationalistic ethos that dates back to precolonial times, thereby reducing women to the status of vehicles of Islamic authenticity i.e. enforcing the idea that men are in control and thus are superior (Zia, 104). For instance, in the novel we learn what the men think about women: 'I think he could not bear this challenge from a woman. If a man had done this to him in your place, he would have never jumped but since it came from you, it became an issue of honour for him' (U. Ahmad, 254). This suggests that though *Aks* has achieved the status of a powerful woman, she is still reduced to being just a woman. She faces social othering because she was not respected enough like a man. This strengthens Zia's claim as cited above (104). Another similar instance where we find a woman being made to understand that she is a woman is when *Aks*' grandfather advises her, 'You will work with men and like them but Chirya donot become a man. Be brave like men and work with honour and dignity without losing the gentleness and femininity in your nature' (U. Ahmad, 140). This reference shows that a woman will not be respected/ accepted if she crosses the barrier of gender expectations.

Women are treated as repositories of honour in Pakistan. They are termed fallen women if they contradict social norms. Nazeer Ahmad and Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan believed that a man's pride and honour is associated with his female counterpart (N. Ahmad, 27). The status of women as repositories of male honour means that it is men's duty to guard women and women's duty to guard against dishonour by remaining secluded, chaste, modest and subservient. Since man is the protector, he has rights over the women he possesses. Saigol believes 'The Pakistani state is ... invested in gendering citizenship in terms of 'his rights' and 'her duties' (Saigol, *Symbolic Violence* 129). When reported on TV, *Aks* feels humiliated and othered since she fears being deprived of the honour that she embodies (U. Ahmad, 196).

Gender roles were greatly emphasized by Aligarh and the reformist literature (Jain, 109; N. Ahmad, 20-145). Rouse states that Pakistani nationalism idealizes gender roles, categorizing those who do not conform to normative roles as others (101). Khairdin, *Aks*' grandfather, belonged to a village where the idea of educating women was not warmly welcomed. Despite this, Khairdin educated *Aks*. Nevertheless, if the novelist shows the character as being supported in her education by male family members, she also shows the dominant ideology: No one however, had asked Khair din much about

his granddaughter who was studying medicine because no one there desired for their daughters or the next generation of girls to become doctors or receive education more than primary. They were happy with the same role and status of women that had been in their region for centuries (U. Ahmad, 121).

Thus if the author does emancipate women, she also shows women who serve as a conduit between the past and the present. Another similar incident in the novel where gender roles find strong reverberation is when Aks' grandfather forbids Aks from playing tennis calling it a game for men and foreign women (U. Ahmad, 29). Women are also not considered equal regarding the handling of business that men run (U Ahmad, 110), and women are expected to depend on men for their needs (U Ahmad, 259). Societal expectations that women face go beyond physical appearances and impact their personal lives, choices, and emotions. One character in the novel challenges traditional expectations, while the other is still constrained by them. Despite women's efforts to break free, there are still many impediments to overcome. Aks and Sheher Bano, both members of the powerful elite, still face belittlement due to their gender.

A Well-behaved woman

The reformist culture of 19th-century India aimed at producing housewives who were docile and submissive (N. Ahmad, 55). This docility and propriety in terms of behaviour are sought in a well-behaved woman. Although the female characters are shown as progressive and demanding, there still exists a link between the past and the present. Sheher Bano, despite being educated, serves as a reminder of the past concept of a concerned and well-behaved woman. She conforms to the traditional idea of a well-behaved wife who prioritizes her family's needs over her own, including not interfering with her husband's work and leaving her desire for a job. (U. Ahmad, 40). Good women are those who tend to their husbands and keep them happy as identified by Saigol within the nationalist beliefs of Pakistan (Saigol, *The Pakistan Project* 153). Similarly, Sheher Bano doesn't develop a social profile that irritates her husband because he always wants to see her at home (U. Ahmad, 33). These instances show that she caters to the notion of a well-behaved woman even if it was done unknowingly. Similarly, Sheher Bano also shows this understanding of a well-behaved woman as she tolerates her second husband's ill behaviour because she cannot risk her marriage. She tolerates the torture because she was expecting, 'He didn't raise his hand before. He becomes aggressive about everything ever since he was unemployed, [...] Mummy, I am expecting' (U. Ahmad, 264).

Propriety and decorum in *Neeli Bar*

Dressing and moral behaviour is considered the determining element of a woman's character. In the novel *Neeli Bar*, women's propriety is depicted in both city and village life. Safoorah is the sister of a landlord and has to follow the decorum of a well-behaved woman. She is reprimanded for wearing lipstick which meant that she was a licentious woman, 'How can a single woman wear lipstick. How can a single woman (wear lipstick) in a civilization where not even married women can wear lipstick but only whores' (Iqbal, 66). Saigol argues, 'It seems that Pakistan's origin within a religious

nationalism constructed in opposition to Hindu-India, has been the fountainhead for the inability of the state to emerge from that fictional paradigm' (Saigol 40). For Saigol, Pakistani nationalism strongly emphasizes religious-based segregation against women which is also asserted by the Aligarh Movement and the reformist literature in the form of Purdah (Jain, 108; N. Ahmad, 27). In a more recent event in contemporary Pakistan, the former Prime Minister Imran Khan stated that it was due to women's scant dressing that they were raped (Tariq). Thus if women fail to comply with a fixed dress code they are 'fair game' for men. Women also exercise propriety on other women. For instance, Safoorah is sent away to another city and she finally experiences life outside of her mansion but is reminded to, 'Be quiet, [...], be quiet, they hear your voice, your voice is also supposed to be veiled' (Iqbal, 69). Moreover, societal norms vehemently demand women to adorn themselves in the 'proper' way. Since the novel takes the story through different eras of Pakistani politics, it shows how in the 1970s the concept of a well-behaved woman was cemented in Pakistani norms and was officially enforced during the Zia era. Women were expected to cover up themselves and abide by moral codes set by the government (Iqbal, 211). Consequently, women who dressed according to their will were blamed for igniting similar desires in other women (Iqbal, 213).

Pakistani nationalism demands women to preserve national honour, uphold morals and be subservient to their husbands (Saigol, 48). Zara, on her wedding night, is advised by her step-daughter to remain in the same attire until her father asks her to change: '(You) are Baba Jan's property and it is only his right to take off every one of your jewels' (Iqbal, 324). A well-behaved woman is thus expected to remain obedient to her husband.

Propriety and honour

Male honour, as deposited in the body of the female, is unnegotiable in Pakistani nationalism. Women's *Izzat* ('chastity') should be guarded even at the cost of the woman's life. 19th century reformist literature invoked patriarchal sentiments in claiming the female body as a symbol of honour (N. Ahmad, 27). Zia states that even today in Pakistan, 'Women's bodies continue to act as repositories of religious and nationalist identity' (93). Qandeel Baloch's case remains a heated discussion about whether it was an honour killing or regular murder. She was killed by her brother because he was ashamed of her pictures and videos (A. R. Khan). The murderer has been set free since the murder was forgiven by the father. This example clearly reveals the loopholes in our system (A. R. Khan). Similarly, in the novel, the father on burying his daughter, Bakhtawar Bibi, expresses his gratitude: 'My daughter, I am thankful to you, you didn't make me bow down to some bastard. You did me a big favour by dying, now I can walk with my head up for the rest of my life. Thank you my daughter' (Iqbal, 101). Similarly, Sat Bharai is slandered and badmouthed for having an affair. She is viewed as characterless and people wish for her death: 'She doesn't die even after shouldering the

funeral of her honour. May Allah bring death upon her, (she is) a disgrace to the entire village' (173).

Another woman in the novel is treated similarly as her corpse is dispatched to medical colleges for study. People view it as punishment for the woman: 'To make it a lesson, the bodies of those who flaunted their honour lay naked on the experimental tables of doctors' (206-207). These examples show that if on the one side the author creates female characters who defy societal norms, they suffer death and even posthumous humiliation on the other for their defiance.

(Western) Education dangerous for women in *Nobody Killed Her*

Mirat ul Uroos/ The Bride's Mirror by Deputy Nazeer Ahmad in the 19th century claimed that women were not required to possess knowledge of the modern world (N. Ahmad, 10). Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was also in favour of this notion (Jain, 109). Men do not consider it worthy that 'their' women should step out of their houses for the pursuit of knowledge (N. Ahmad, 8). Even though education for girls is now common in Pakistan's urban centres, but women/ girls like Malala Yousafzai reveal the entrenched misogyny of patriarchal ideologies (A. Khan, 212). Rani Shah's vision to educate the girls of her country is met with strong criticism by the Jihadists who declare it 'Haram' (Javeri, 16): 'A teenage girl was shot in the head for going to school. The jihadists proudly took credit for it' (Javeri, 18). Nadia Hassan states that women's roles are determined by hierarchy in today's Pakistan where they are domesticated (Z., Nadia, 112). In the novel, Balgodi remarks: 'That girl chose to get married. Sensible thing to do. [...], And I always say, a girl's place is at home, behind the stove' (Javeri, 223).

In Pakistani nationalism, the figure of the ideal female is docile, submissive, modest and well-behaved. The subjugation of women continues, especially when the established order of the patriarchal society is threatened by demands for equality. Within the context of the novel chosen, women are raped for being 'disobedient' and for not exhibiting the accepted form of a well-behaved character. The prime example of this scenario is Nazo Khan. She is seemingly deviant from the accepted norms and roles expected of her gender and thus becomes a target of aggression by the jihadists of the country. She is raped by three men due to which she undergoes severe mental and physical trauma (Javeri, 263-265). Similarly, another case of correction of women also occurs in the novel when a girl named Mai is raped: 'Words and images came back to me of Mahi, the sixteen-year-old girl who had been raped by her male cousin to "fix" her' (Javeri, 246). Likewise, Rani Shah is also raped by her husband owing to his ego: 'When you came back [...], the man had stripped you of your dignity. [...], the man had raped you [...], The men too had an inkling that a woman had been put in her place' (Javeri, 170). This putting the woman in her place springs from nationalistic concerns of chastising women for their wrongdoings. If they do not conform, they are treated as whores. As a result, women also face injustice due to being 'women' and not being well-behaved enough.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse the normative values of womanhood in Pakistani nationalism and their representation in the novels *Aks*, *Nobody Killed Her*, and *Neeli Bar*. The research project has highlighted the influence of the Aligarh Movement in shaping a fixed identity of Muslim women in the subcontinent, which later impacted Pakistani nationalism. It also discusses how ideals of femininity and masculinity are not private but ingrained in Pakistani nationalism. The overarching objective of the research was to demonstrate the link between the past Aligarh Movement and present-day Pakistan through an analysis of selected primary texts.

The research questions revolve around the normative values of womanhood in Pakistani nationalism and how they intersect with contemporary Pakistani women's efforts to gain agency. The study asked: What are the normative values of womanhood that are espoused by and propagated in Pakistani nationalism, where do they come from, and how are these values represented in *Nobody Killed Her*, *Aks* and *Neeli Bar*? How do these values intersect with contemporary Pakistani women's efforts to gain agency, as depicted in *Nobody Killed Her*, *Aks* and *Neeli Bar*?

In responding to the above-mentioned questions, the argument in this study is that the ideals of a well-behaved woman were calcified during the Aligarh movement and the reformist literature of the era. Since the Pakistan Movement is directly inspired by Aligarh, there is a direct line of inheritance between patriarchal and misogynistic ideals of the 19th century and Pakistani nationalism. The Aligarh Movement and 19th-century reformist literature did not introduce patriarchy into Indian Muslim households, as they were already orthodox. However, British colonialism led to the creation of nationalist and reform movements that prescribed different ways for their respective communities. Aligarh, which was opposed by the ultra-orthodox ulema of Deoband, gained strength over time and propagated traditional, conservative, and uncreative ideas about women. As a result, Pakistani nationalism inherited some of these ideas from Aligarh. These ideals continue to exist in the form of patriarchy and misogyny in the 21st century. All these forms of ideals are found in the novels selected and they showcase how these ideals and beliefs continue to reverberate in the lives of women.

Nationalism subordinates women and creates the category of the other for women who defy patriarchal norms. It achieves this by utilizing the institutions of culture, tradition and often religion. The ideas of propriety, decency and decorum spring out of this nationalist concern. This study highlights that women's maltreatment is engraved within the social makeup of nations. Within the context of Pakistan, these nationalist concerns date back to the Aligarh movement. While exploring the novels, *Aks*, *Neeli Bar* and *Nobody Killed Her*, this research examines how Pakistani nationalism shapes the values of womanhood, their impact on contemporary society, and their portrayal in mentioned literary oeuvres. In doing so, this study brings forth the resistance

and limitations faced by women in the contours of the nation-state system of contemporary Pakistan.

This dissertation also finds that women are not completely subjugated. Within the novels and the contemporary setup of Pakistan, women have resisted patriarchy. These writers, Ahmad, Iqbal and Javeri, have drawn a realistic portrayal of Pakistani society where women are now not afraid to raise their voices. These selected novels bear witness to the possibilities available to women in negotiating their subjectivity within the crucible of nationalism and patriarchy. However, two of the women in the novels are raped, and one killed. This shows the cost of defiance. This study finds that women are othered and gendered within Pakistan. Within the context of the selected novels, this research finds that women are often 'corrected' by punishment. They are advised to remain silent even when heinous crimes are committed against them.

Conclusively, this dissertation states that the Aligarh Movement has significantly contributed to the cementing of the ideals of womanhood in Pakistani nationalism. These ideals are still powerful in shaping the narratives about womanhood in Pakistan in the 21st century. This study serves as a means to call for action against the numerous atrocities committed against women.

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