



Female Authenticity in the Holy Woman by Qaisra Shahraz

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to discover a new identity for women. This study aims to examine a specific text permeated by a consciousness of the general cultural suppression and exploitation in societies and cultures where patriarchy subordinates' women prescribing images and roles for them and the consequent resistance and regeneration on the part of women. The researcher selected Qaisra Shahraz's The Holy Woman, which shows the subjugation of women in twenty-first-century Pakistan. This qualitative study makes an analysis of the female protagonist in the light of existentialism's concept of authenticity and records how she resists, fights, and challenges exploitation and social prescription of her identity with the result that she re-emerges spiritually and establishes her existential rights as a free and independent human being. As exemplified through this text, the resistance and mobilization against these dominant patriarchal ideologies endow the female protagonist with regeneration and spiritual uplift. Through the discussion of the exploited but spiritually heightened character, the study concludes with a new image and identity for women, exploring possibilities to break away from social prescription.*

Key Words: Exploitation, Patriarchy, Identity, Social Prescription, Authenticity, Resistance, Existential Rights, Regeneration

Introduction

Authenticity is a level to which a character reaches according to its own potential for self-recognition and self-assertion. Every individual has a right to live his life according to his or her own preferences, away from social pressures. [Moi \[2008\]](#) believes that every individual has a right to justify his existence by transcending himself and involving in freely chosen projects. Sartre & Mairet [1960] expressed much the same view in his Existentialism Is Humanism. According to him, the most significant fact is that we possess and practice the single exalted virtue of authenticity. This is the attribute to recognize and promote what we really are, the fundamental nature of our existence. Our desires react to what is objectively good and bad, attractive and unattractive. This is so because we are already pursuing certain goals. We choose these goals of our own free will. Once we perceive this aspect of our existence, we cannot value anything without also valuing freedom as the foundation of all values. To them, our values are rooted in our freedom. This is our freedom of choice. Similarly, the ways in which we comprehend the world are also freely chosen. When we come across a situation, we decide then and there how we will construe it, feel about it, and think about it. They

believe that any attitude contrary to this is falsehood and inconsistency. The first attitude is obviously right as authenticity is, after all, the recognition of the actual nature of human existence.

[Arafath & Shahraz \[2014\]](#) believe that by believing her as naturally inferior, androcentric society justifies all privileges and even authorizes women's abuse. In woman, on the contrary, there is, from the beginning, a conflict between her autonomous existence and her objective self, her 'being-the-other', she is taught that to please, she must try to please, she must make herself an object; she should therefore renounce her autonomy. She is treated like a live doll and refused liberty. According to [Butler \[2011\]](#), gender is performance. It is never fixed per se but continuously renegotiated. Ostracism and even death cannot control and compel the shape of the production, which she calls gender performance. Female authenticity is to break away from this gender performance restriction and try to be truly oneself. In this analysis, the researcher has traced the ways as to how the female protagonist in The Holy Woman (THW) breaks away from the social prescription of gender performance,

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exercising her authenticity and builds a new heroic image for her.

Literature Review

The Holy Woman by Qaisra Shahraz presents the tradition of making a woman the holy woman in the interior of the Sind province of Pakistan. Sherwani (2011) analyzes the condition of women in Pakistani society in Qaisra Shahraz' two novels, The Holy Woman and Typhoon, and finds the modern Islamic character of Zarri Bano:

Zarri Bano is a modern woman with a university education, for whom traditions did not matter much. She is an open-minded, outward girl of modern times. She shows tolerance and forbearance towards the patriarchal command and ardently takes up the religious teachings and denounces the tradition of the shahzadi ibadat.

[Haider & Imtiaz \(2011\)](#) point out the typical society with a ghetto mentality, divided into the lines of class as portrayed in THW and how Zarri Bano evolves as a person and emerges out of the misinterpretation of the laws of Islam. She concludes that Shahraz has tried to bring out the Islamic perspective as the solution to the exploitative and oppressive social traditions which snatch the identity of an individual, and Islam restores these rights by providing a balanced approach to life.

[Zaidi \(2012\)](#) has described Zarri as a woman who is victimized by her admiring father and thinking her father to be vulnerable; she succumbs to his will and accepts his decision to make her a holy woman. But she does not let her voice be silenced and tries to find her identity. Zaidi has focused on the islamophobia of the west, criticism of the veil and resolved the issue of the traditional and the modern in a society like Pakistan. She has shown how Shahraz has come out as an unradical writer whose heroines are not rebels, but within the parameters of their society and religion, they strive for an identity that is closely rooted in their social and religious traditions.

Vogt records Zarri's reactions to such issues as the presence of a matchmaker, Muslim attitude to divorce and the denial of freedom to women in a Muslim country. Commenting on Habib's decision to make his daughter a holy woman, she observes:

In emotional turmoil, Zarri Bano resigns to her fate and abjures a life full of marital bliss, children and happiness. In the reader, this part of the plot provokes a feeling of frustration, helplessness and even mild anger because the destiny looming for Zarri Bano as a holy woman seems to be a waste of her potential and a denial of her individual freedom.

Siddiqui observes the patriarchal setup in Sindh Pakistan and the scope for women in such a society. He remarks about Shahraz' fiction:

In her two novels, The Holy Woman and The Typhoon and many short stories, Qaisra Shahraz present different aspects of the self both in its conflict with its environment and its identification of its constructed nature. She also covers a large canvas. If she talks about the experiences of Pakistani immigrants in her stories in the novels, she tries to probe the complexity of women's lives in a patriarchal setup in Sind, Pakistan.

[Siddiqui \(2014\)](#) comments on the all-powerfulness of the feudal class in Pakistan and how it resists changes in society to maintain its control and exploits religion to meet its ends. THW discusses the feudal class and the class divisions and discriminations and its exploitation of women in making them the holy women. His writing explores how Zarri finds new meanings in her holy woman's role.

[Haleem \(2014\)](#) investigates the image building of Zarri Bano as a holy woman. She finds that in the androcentric world, the self-assuming super race of man has wasted centuries of history in showing up the weakness of woman. She points out the different roles and positions woman has been given down the ages. She traces the origin of the tradition of the holy woman to using the girls for monetary and political profit or "disposing them towards religion as extra-members: as the culture of Nuns in Christianity, Devdasis in Hinduism and Geisha cult in Japanese Buddhism manifests. Besides these, it is apparent girls have always made 'convenient slaves' in every role, as the little heeded history of woman depicts". She concludes that the nexus of money and exploitation of girls goes a long way in history, where the avarice to protect property made incestuous marriages between brothers and sisters valid for ancient Egyptians. In the background of Zarri Bano's marriage to the Holy Quran, she observes: "Thus, lives of widows, aged mistresses, illegitimate children of princes, bishops and maidservants - all wined to monasteries and convents. In the Indian sub-continent, the sweetest of the daughters and politically inconvenient sisters were married to trees, old men, small boys, pets or even 'to dogs' to prevent property transfer".

[Imtiaz and Haider \(2011\)](#) analyze the complexity of the character of Zarri Bano. They assert that the image of a holy woman gives her a leadership role in the community. Contrary to popular critical opinion, they believe that Zarri Bano exercises her free will: "The examination of Qaisra Shahraz's work leads to

the realization that it is, ironically, through her seclusion and deviation that a woman exercises her free will and rejects patriarchy".

[Ishaque \(2017\)](#) reflects on the serious issue of how tradition manages to conspire with religion in order to ritualize violence against women. She notes, "Unfortunately, all this is achieved in the name of tradition which, in a most unjust manner, conspires with patriarchy under the shelter of religion. Thus, one sees Zari's wedding with the Quran as the only "culturally legitimate" way Habib could save his ancestral estate from slipping out of his hands. [Munira \(2012\)](#) views the literary effort of Shahraz in the post 9/11 perspective, which gave rise to Islamic phobia in the west. As a diasporic Muslim woman, Qaisra Shahraz tries to locate the status of women according to the teachings of Islam, which should be differentiated from the one represented by manipulating cultural practices. They observe that inherited cultural traditions on the status and duty of Muslim women in Asian Muslim societies have created a conflict of subjugation and liberation among its modern Muslim women. To them, Islamic feminism is the way to solve gender issues in today's conflicting times. Haleem analyzes the character of Zarri in the light of gender stereotyping and how these stereotypes are being undermined by the greater emancipation of women. She avers that "Finally, she becomes totally free to make her own choices and she is always busy in religious and educational activities, serving and educating the Muslim women of her society.

[Khan \(2019\)](#), in "Subaltern can speak," talks about the subaltern status of women in countries like Pakistan but educated and rich women like Zarri are an example for common women to learn from them to change their lives for the better. According to her, Zarri becomes a 'holy woman' to challenge this custom and fulfil its requirements but ultimately wins in defeating the myth of the custom.

[Kidwai \(2001\)](#) states that Qaisra Shahraz was interested in portraying a strong woman who challenges the stereotypical role. In Zarri Bano, he observes a newly emerging Muslim woman of our time, who occupies the centre stage due to her gradual yet steady empowerment. She is an assertive woman who finally chooses to marry, not on parental pressure but of her own free will. He notes empowerment not only in Zarri Bano alone, but the same note of defiance and challenge is visible in other female characters as well. What he finds most remarkable about THW is that the champions of patriarchy undergo a change, "they themselves realize the misery inflicted by them on their womenfolk - wives and daughters". He gives credit to

Shahraz for giving other viewpoints about veiling in response to the Non-Muslim's prejudiced view of the veil as the living proof of the repression and suppression of Muslim women. He traces Zarri Bano's regeneration which, despite her being forced into the role of a holy woman, has independent views and manages to make her mark as a scholar of Islam. He calls her one of "a breed of modern Muslim women, resilient, resourceful and highly educated".

All these critics have analyzed Zarri Bano from different perspectives, but none of these has viewed Zarri's strength of character as an exercise of her authenticity. So the present study is remarkable in the sense that it applies an existential feminist concept in the analysis of character.

Research Methodology

This study is an analysis of the female protagonist. It is designed on the qualitative research paradigm in which the extracts from the primary texts have been used as data. and secondary sources like critics' books, journals and web sources will consolidate my point. The term authenticity will be applied with the existential feminist insight as to the perspective. My study assumes that society is patriarchal, where superstructures are under male control. Therefore in patriarchal societies, women are marginalized.

Analysis

Zarri Bano enjoys a privileged social status. Still, she suffers from male tyranny, and her struggle for identity is also more significant as she is an educated and enlightened woman conscious of her rights as an adolescent young woman. Kidwai and Siddiqui record KhurramKhiraam's words that Qaisra Shahraz has an extraordinary talent for raising some delicate and fundamental questions related to women issues in general and in particular about "those women who are struggling to discover their individual identity in a polarized world" (1). Thus Zarri Bano stands for her existential rights and manages to assert her identity as an independent and free human being.

From the very beginning, we find Zarri Bano as an extraordinary woman of twenty-seven whom her father regards as his pride and treasure. Even in the presence of a male child, Jafar, zarri is the most loved one of her fathers. With her extraordinary talents, she has a special niche in her father's heart. That is why she has the privilege to get a university education and is planning to open a publishing company in Karachi. Her education and her prospective career are a sign of her independence. She is not a woman to be easily cowed down. That is why when Jafar objects to her bare head in public,

she retorts, "I am not going to be lectured at by my baby brother. So what if my dupatta fell down for a few seconds? Have you never seen hair before?" (Shahraz 13). Through her decision to see the village fair and her repartee to her brother's objection, she pronounces her individual right to independence and to set her own values. Imtiaz and Haider also observe this trait of her when they describe her "as a very individual woman, who is defying patriarchy by exercising her will to attend the mela and not covering herself" (8). Vogt queries, "Why shouldn't a young woman attend an event such as the mela and what is so indecent about her scarf falling off?" and identifies her non-conformity to the value of individualism [31-32]. Kidwai also notes the significance of her defiant appearance in a public place in Chiragpur. He comments, "Not only is she forthright in expressing what she feels, but she also holds very strong, independent views" (82). It is the strength of her personality and her challenge to authority that has won this praise for her from the critics. Quite true to de Beauvoir's contention, she is not ready to accept herself as the other, the submissive and insignificant type of individual. She asserts her right as an independent and free human being, and it is her right, and no one else, to decide what is right and what is wrong for her.

Zarri Bano displays enough autonomy in her decision to marry Sikander. When Ruby talks about the charisma of Sikander's personality, which may have the bait to draw her into his net, his web, Zarri immediately snubs her sister, who reduces her to total passivity and insignificance in these terms, "Don't talk to me about nets and webs....I am not a fish to be angled at, caught and trapped, Ruby" (Shahraz 16). Later, when Sikander holds her hand firmly in the belief and confidence that he had finally overpowered her and familiarized with her, she rejoins, "I wouldn't have allowed you to become so familiar if I had not wanted you to" (41). Besides, she declares that he should feel honored as it is the first time she has let a strange man touch her hand. Even when she accepts his proposal, she demands to do it on equal footing, "I am most honored by your proposal and hope you are in turn honored by my acceptance" (41). She is not ready to accept that through marriage bond, a woman gives up not only herself but also all her rights to her husband, ". . . I would cherish my freedom. Above all, I will not be moulded in any way. You must understand and remember that always, Sikander sahib" (43). Kidwai attributes the assertiveness of her character to her study for the master's degree at the University of Karachi. He comments on her claim for autonomy in these words, "That a young girl from a traditional Muslim family of a small town, Chiragpur lived on her

own for years in the metropolitan Karachi speaks volumes about the flourishing of a new breed of Muslim women . . . resilient, resourceful, and highly educated" (83).

Habib maps out the role of a holy woman for Zarri Bano after the death of his son. She strongly resists this performativity. She warns her father repeatedly that she does not want to be a holy woman as she is not suited to the role, "There is no way I will become a holy woman . . . I know what it entails, and I am not cut out for that role. As you know, I have hardly ever covered my head properly. I know very little about religion. I am very much a worldly woman. I cannot become a nun" (Shahraz 79). After her father's blackmailing attack on her sexuality that she wanted a man in her life, she accepts the role of the holy woman to prove to her father that she is an independent self and she can live on her own without the support of a male. The strength with which she takes the challenge and controls herself is indicative of the fact that she is up against the repressive dominance of patriarchy and decides to defeat it on moral grounds. So her temporary and apparent subjugation to her father's wishes is not the testimony that she gives in. She takes ideological weapons to prove that her father's act was tyrannous. She tells her mother, "Today I have grown up. I am not only your daughter or my father's daughter, I am me! . . . You have all jailed and numbed me into a commitment, which I will have to go along with - but not willingly, mother. Never willingly. At this moment in time, I feel nothing but burning hatred for my father. Only time will tell whether he will ever have his old Zarri Bano back" (Shahraz 87). Kidwai observes, "Zarri Bano's vehement protest couched in emphatic declarative and marked logic and her exposure to modernity is in sharp contrast to the stereotype of a voiceless Muslim woman who likes a dumb doll undergoes all the excesses" (83-84). She refuses to be used as a pawn in a game of male chess (85) as she discovers new avenues in an otherwise stereotypical role.

Zarri Bano does not take up the role of the holy woman as a passive victim. Her spirit of defiance and challenge is obvious when she tells sister Sakina, "I will not do all their bidding. There is a bit of Zarri Bano that I will retain for all time even though I will kill and bury the rest" (Shahraz 146). As open defiance to the dictates of patriarchy, she throws the jewellery and the red bridal outfit with which she was decked (146), takes a pair of scissors and shears her hair (147) and goes to her initiation ceremony in only her white silk slip beneath the burqa, much to the horror of Ruby that "her sister was almost naked under her burqa and her hair was shorn" (148). Imtiaz and

Haider also call the act of her throwing away of her bright colored clothes and adhering to her burqa "as a symbol of her free will, so veil becomes a strategy for her emancipation" [11]. Her refusal to submit to social convention and image construction is a proclamation of her authenticity.

She gives a new meaning and respect to the veil as she tells Professor Nighat Sultana, "Today I am just about comfortable in it. This is not an ordinary veil or burqa but a symbol of my role" (Shahraz 174). Imtiaz and Haider call the status of the holy woman as negation and rejection of the institutionalized prostitution within marriage by "assuming an alternative, leadership position within the larger community" (20). Zarri Bano becomes a spokeswoman on behalf of Muslim women. In her conversation with Jane Foster, she rectifies the widely accepted stereotyped myth that the veil is a symbol of male oppression. She tells her that women wear it of their own free will as it is a symbol of Muslim women's unity. Asserting Muslim women's identity and their authenticity, she adds, "We are not freaks . . . just women who like to dress in a modest fashion and believe in covering ourselves well. All we ask is that people respect us and our dress code" (Shahraz 285). She responds to a query from Gulshan that burqa is like a second skin to her now. It makes her life simple and carefree. It helps her maintain a respectable distance from strange men. This is how she comments on the philosophy of covering herself: "The old vain Zarri Bano drew whistles from men, this one draws distant courteous respect" [382].

Zarri Bano does not remain confined within the four walls as a typical holy woman is expected to do. Rather she avails this as a chance to acquire knowledge about Islam of which she confesses; she was earlier quite ignorant. She crosses the spatial boundary of hijab and travels abroad, a privilege enjoyed by her alone which arouses even Ruby's envy. Zarri tells Gulshan, her cousin, "Gulshan, please remember that I am not in purdah, to be hidden behind four walls. I can do whatever and go wherever I like, within the parameters of my role and the different demands it makes on me as a person and as a holy woman. I must now live up to that name and learn to adapt to a life of simplicity and humility and, wherever possible, avoid any contact with men" (Shahraz 166). To Nighat Sultana, she makes clear, "So you see, I will not live shut away. I shall be a bird with wings that let her fly into a new world" (Shahraz 175). Kidwai calls Zarri's spiritual uplift a dramatic conceit which apparently curtails her freedom but actually empowers her on another level. He remarks, "Little wonder then that Zarri Bano appears

vindicating her newly acquired rank, stressing the greater freedom enjoyed by her, thanks to her new status as the holy woman" (85). Zarri acknowledges to herself that as far as religion was concerned, she was very ignorant. So she makes the best of a bad bargain and utilizes this opportunity to acquire an Islamic scholarship. She visits Egypt, London, Indonesia and Malaysia in the capacity of a Muslim scholar who enlightens Muslim as well as non-Muslim women on many female issues. So she became a full-fledged holy woman as she never does anything half-heartedly. In her forced deprivation of the typical roles of wife and mother, she creates a particular identity for herself. She becomes a role model on gender equality and female interpreter of Islamic law. S. Hassan comments, "The veil becomes the agency through which she can function without male protection, become more mobile and aware, physically and mentally unrestricted and essentially individual" [242]. She subverts the patriarchy by converting her subjugation into a means to attain transformation and revitalize herself as a true Muslim and scholar who redefines feminism in the liberal Islamic framework.

Zarri Bano reveals her agency when she is confronted with the question of marriage. Ibrahim Musa is quite impressed by her intelligence and scholarship and regards her as an ideal life partner for him. She rejects his proposal as now she has no feelings for any man. Besides, even if she marries, she will prefer someone from her own culture and country. She tells him outrightly, "I can never marry you, and if you want me to be very plain, I will be, just to make you understand. Even if I had not renounced marriage, I would still not have married you, because, in the end, I would have chosen someone from my own country, culture, background and class" (Shahraz 270). Even when Habib absolves her from the oath of celibacy and gives her his full blessings if she decides to marry, she accepts his blessings to marry if she ever so wishes. Imtiaz and Haider also consider her freedom of choice as her agency on the basis of Foucault's theory, "In regard to the notion of power, Foucault suggests that society is governed by power relations and the oppressed also exercise agency. Zarri Bano starts exercising control over her own sexuality as an expression of her free will and conforming to her role as a learned scholar of Islam, devoted to ibadah. She refuses to marry Musa for the same reason" (15). She has discovered a new lease of life in her new identity and turned the tables on her oppressors.

Zarri Bano's freedom of will is most remarkable when after the death of Ruby, she is forced by everyone to replace Ruby. To Shahzada, Siraj Din,

Sikander and Gulshan, she answers on the plea of her free independent self. She vehemently fights against her stereotyping and establishes her individual right to decide what is best and honorable for her. She replies to her mother's exhortations as such, "Now that it suits all of you, I am asked to marry. Do you think I am a wax doll, a putley that you can mould to dance to your tune when and however it suits you? I am a human being! A woman who can never contemplate wedlock!" (Shahraz 349). The same firmness of will is evident when she responds to her grandfather's persuasions, "I will not do it this second time, grandfather, not even if you went down on your knees. I am not a wax doll that you can mould to your whim" (358). She is quite aware that if she complies with her elders' wishes again, she would lose the very essence of her autonomy and consequently act as a puppet and dummy in their hands. When Sikander tries to convince her that such an arrangement is best for Haris, she asserts her own right as an individual whose life and will is equally important. She is too busy as she has her own plans and projects that she is overseeing, "Yes, everyone is bent on thinking about Haris, but what about me? My mother, my grandfather have been at me. Don't I count? Aren't I a person who has a say in anything" (368)? All Zarri Bano demands is respect for her feelings and herself. For her, it is quite outrageous to marry her sister's husband, whom she has regarded as her brother for four years. She does not want to be a scapegoat first for her father and now for Sikander's sake. Kidwai observes:

The Muslim woman manages to get her rightful place without hysterical harangue against the clergy. She is seen in *The Holy Woman*, aspiring for and achieving economic independence and her social rank. She does climb up the socio-economic ladder without any bloodbath. Nor does she forsake her religion or wait to be liberated by a chivalrous knight or to be redeemed by Christianity, as is habitually inscribed in the literary texts representing western literary orientalism (81).

When Zarri Bano decides to marry Sikander, it is solely her own decision reached without any outside pressure. She makes it clear that this is not going to be a normal marriage as she concedes to it with certain terms and conditions. She will be free to pursue her career; she could visit abroad whenever she wished. Sikander has to admit that she is a different sort of woman from the one he first met, and he is ready to give her space. In the form of Sikander, she will have a friend and companion, not a male oppressor in the guise of a husband. Kidwai refers to her bold, courageous, and heated argument with her grandfather and putting a string

of conditions over her marriage with Sikander as reflective of her strong personality (105). The greatest dilemma comes for her when this devout woman is pressured to fulfil her wifely duties. She realizes that the essence of her whole life and her whole being is at stake, and if she cannot be true to herself and her feelings or respect herself, she is a lost woman. For five years, she has lived a life of simplicity, covering herself with a black burqa and avoided any makeover. Now she has to use makeup as is demanded of a new bride. She has to struggle with her feelings and her two identities. She opens up the locked doors for Sikander but warns him that it is impossible that other things can revert to the same again (Shahraz 482). She quite successfully maintains a balance between the two roles, i.e. a holy woman and a married woman. She unlocks her heart and lets her true love for Sikander come out. Kidwai calls her a loving, caring, sensitive, tactful, resourceful and intelligent young woman with tremendous potential who strikes a fine balance between tradition and the challenges to it (105). Sherwani comments on her as such, "Zarri Bano is characterized by her steadfast conviction and faith in her own being. She accepts the conditions in her own way but does not rebel. Her inherent conviction and determination in the right bring about the guilt feeling in her father. She withdraws from him but does not rebel" (265). Of her own free will, she decides to materialize her marriage, and her firm pronouncement in response to Sikander's decision that his son Haris will have nothing to do with her property is indicative of her own free and unshackled will, "Very well! If you don't let 'your' son inherit it, you cannot stop 'my' son from doing so! . The land is very important to my family. I have to keep it in my father's memory" (Shahraz 484). So we find that Zarri Bano has her own way and her own say in everything. Her autonomy and authenticity make her stand out strikingly.

Conclusion

Existence is an evolutionary fact which opens up new avenues of perception and awareness about ourselves and the objective world around us. If it does not involve this progression, it is not worthy of the name of human existence. The female protagonist, Zarri Bano, gradually attains authentic living, giving up bad faith in the form of social forces, pressures and influences. She establishes her existential freedom and wins our appreciation through her moral choices in the face of exploitation. The authenticity attained by her endows her with a new heroic identity. The tenacity of this work was to determine a new identity for women. This study aims to examine a specific text permeated by a

consciousness of the general cultural suppression and exploitation in societies and cultures where patriarchy subordinates women prescribing images and roles for them and the consequent resistance and regeneration on the part of women. Characters selected from Qaisra Shahraz's 'The Holy Woman' showed the subjugation of women in twenty-first-century Pakistan. This qualitative study makes an analysis of the female protagonist in the light of existentialism's concept of authenticity and records how she resists, fights, and challenges exploitation

and social prescription of her identity with the result that she re-emerges spiritually and establishes her existential rights as a free and independent human being. As exemplified through this text, the resistance and mobilization against these dominant patriarchal ideologies endows the female protagonist with regeneration and spiritual uplift. Through the discussion of the exploited but spiritually heightened character, the study concludes with a new image and identity for women, discovering prospects to break away from social prescription.

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