
ABSCISSION OF FAMILIAL BONDING: A MARXIST FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF *THE PATIENCE STONE*

Muhammad Umair

Ph.D Scholar, Department of English, Muslim Youth University Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: Mu79274@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Iesar Ahmad

Department of English, Muslim Youth University Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: iesar.ahmad@myu.edu.pk

Abstract

This research paper examines the gradual disintegration of familial bonds in The Patience Stone (2008) by Atiq Rahimi through the lens of abscission, employing a Marxist feminist framework. Abscission as a biological phenomenon, which refers to controlled loss of plant parts, is redefined to focus on the emotion, psychological, and relational disconnection in Afghan families. It is a qualitative, interpretive, and literary-analytical research that employs close reading and thematic analysis to examine the voice approach through confessional monologues and narrative strategies of the protagonist. The results show that authority by patriarchy, economic dependence, ideological control and social political instability all undermine emotional closeness and family unity. The domestic and emotional labor, limited agency, and imposed obedience of women represent systemic oppression and resistance in narrative confession, bodily labor, and symbolic assertion represents how women agency persists despite structural marginalization. The research finds that familial disintegration in the novel is not accidental and punctual, it is a process that is gradual, normalized, and regulated by intermittent forces of patriarchy, capitalism, and cultural norms. The study provides an innovative interdisciplinary approach to understanding the nature of relational fragmentation in literature by connecting the notion of abscission as a biological metaphor with Marxist feminist theory, thus emphasizing the degree of oppression, resilience, and agency inherent to Afghan family forms.

Keywords: Familial *abscission*, Marxist feminism, Patriarchy, Afghan Anglophone fiction, Atiq Rahimi, Emotional detachment, Gendered oppression, Structural inequality.

Introduction & Background

This paper examines the issue of familial disintegration with the theoretical lens of *abscission* by applying a Marxist feminist perspective to the novel *The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahimi. *Abscission*, initially a plant-physiological term, is the systematic and controlled process of losing plant organs like leaves, flowers, or fruits. According to Osborne (1989) *abscission* can be defined as the planned loss of parts and Taylor (2001) further elaborates on the concept by defining *abscission* as a developmentally regulated and normal process that takes place with or without a special separation zone. Significantly, *abscission* is non-random, non-pathological but an organized, conditional, and adaptive process that facilitates survival, regeneration, and structural economies in biological systems.

In scientific research (Addicott, 1982), *abscission* is a gradual, internally controlled process by hormones and externally affected by the environment. It takes place on certain areas of the cells that have structural weakening to enable detachment. *Abscission*, therefore, does not imply decomposition but a calculated and planned act of division. This concept, when applied metaphorically beyond the field of biology, offers a strong analysis tool in focusing on disintegration forms, not immediate, but gradual, normalized, and structurally made.

Abscission in philosophical and socio-cultural contexts has been employed to explain the fragmentation in human relationships and human subjectivities. An example is Meyers (2001) who uses the concept to elaborate on types of internal and external rupture that take place within social systems of today. Applied to familial structures, *abscission* helps to acquire the subtle sense that relationships are destroyed not at the very moment of breakdown but are created as the result of the long-lasting exposure to systemic pressures. It is possible to regard

familial bonds, then, as being shed out due to the effects of ideological, economic and institutional influence towards them.

In the patriarchal and stratified societies, family units are deeply rooted in the larger power structures. Family relationships are neither emotional nor personal ones; they are defined by socio-economic hierarchies, cultural standards, institutional restrictions. Women especially tend to be relationally detached using economic dependence mechanisms, limited agency, and social coercion. The effects of emotional alienation, lack of autonomy and structural inequality are all contributing factors towards the progressive rupture of familial bonds. Abascission in this regard is a useful metaphor to explain the fragmentation of families as a regulated, global system and not an accident or a phenomenon.

This paper contextualizes the term *abscission* in the context of Marxist feminism in theory. Marxist theory is based on the contributions of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and focuses on influence of material circumstances and economic organizations on development of social relationships. According to Marx and Engels (1848), the design of society is basically defined by the control and ownership of the means of production, which contributes to the arrangement of the class relations, cultural norms, and institutional practices. According to this approach, society is subdivided into hostile categories, where exploitation and inequalities are natural characteristics of the capitalist system.

Engels carries this interpretation into the sphere of gender in his masterpiece *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) as he argues that the historical subordination of women was associated with the development of personal property. As patriarchal families emerged, they became dependent economically on their male counterparts, and they were marginalized both at home and outside. This transformation contextualized gender inequality as well as reconstructed the family as a place of control, reproduction and economic dependence.

Marxist feminism develops on these observations by looking at the ways in which capitalism and patriarchy are interrelated systems of domination. According to scholars like Barrett (1980), oppression of women is facilitated by economic exploitation and ideology. Women in the family are also restricted to unpaid domesticity and reproduction, with reduced access to financial resources and opportunities at the same time. This duality creates what is widely referred to as a state of dual marginalization where women are marginalized as workers and as couples of patriarchal families.

Historical approaches also indicate that the subordination of women is not an inherent or natural social category but a social category. According to Engels, in earlier communal convictions, females enjoyed comparatively so large power under matrilineal arrangements. Yet, the shift to a system of property and patriarchy resulted in the loss of power and independence of women. Dominated by patriarchy as a system of male domination, this inequality has been strengthened by the means through which access to resources is controlled, cultural ideals are tailored, and the involvement of women in social and economic life is tightened.

In these regards the family appears as an important point of convergence of economic and ideological force. Marxist feminist theorists believe that capitalism depends on the free labor of women at home to reproduce the workforce as well as on patriarchal organization to keep them dependent. Consequently, family structures are organized on the basis of inequalities, which in most cases result to tension, alienation, and subsequent disintegration. Hence, economic autonomy lies at the core of emancipation of women because it allows them to be able to confront patriarchal leadership and renegotiate family power relations.

This theoretical framework is particularly important in the socio-cultural background of Afghanistan. The society in Afghanistan has been deeply affected by decades of war, political

turmoil, and economic struggles that have inflamed patriarchal standards and status disparities. Although the family is considered to be the basic unit of social organisation, it is also a place where these tensions are dramatised. In these circumstances, family relations usually are either discordant, restructured or disintegrated.

The current Afghan Anglophone fiction offers a powerful framework within the framework of which these processes may be analyzed. Authors like Khaled Hosseini and Atiq Rahimi narrate on how gender and power interrelate in the context of Afghanistan society in a complicated way. Rahimi offers a very personal depiction of a woman struggling against the restrictive norms of a patriarchal family in *The Patience Stone*. The monologues of the unnamed main character show the psychological, emotional, and relational costs of systemic inequality, which destroys marital and familial relationships over time.

This breakdown in terms of *abscission* can be interpreted as a systematic and controlled process as opposed to a forced break. It is the cumulative effect of the patriarchal authority and economic dependency on the main character manifested in the emotional coldness, subdued agency, and restricted life. Her connection with her comatose husband is the place of oppression and articulation and the way that family ties are held together and disrupted in the bondage system at the same time.

Using the Marxist feminist theory to merge the biological metaphor of the *abscission* with it provides a holistic platform through which this paper is able to analyze the family breakdown in *The Patience Stone*. It claims that the loss of family relations is not only a theme of the story but a product of deep structural activities in the forms of gender, stratum, and ideology. Familial *abscission*, then, becomes a systematized and normalized condition that is anchored in the convergence of patriarchy and capitalism.

Finally, the study can be applied to the general discourse in literature, gender, and social theory by showing how literary works express and criticize the ambivalence of the human relationship in unequal and oppressive circumstances. It establishes *abscission* as the decisive critical method of reading the gradual and controlled disintegration of familial ties, providing some fresh ground about the forces of power, opposition and relationships shift within modern Afghan literature.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how gendered power structures and patriarchal norms contribute to the *abscission* of familial bonding in *The Patience Stone*.
2. To analyze how ideological constructs, including honor, morality, and social norms, regulate and reinforce the breakdown of familial relationships in *The Patience Stone*.

Research Questions

1. What role do gender roles and patriarchal power dynamics play in the *abscission* of familial bonding in *The Patience Stone*?
2. How do ideological forces shape and justify the breakdown of familial relationships in *The Patience Stone*?

Significance of the Study

This research has considerable theoretical, methodological, and contextual importance, because it proposes a new interdisciplinary paradigm of interpreting family disintegration in literature. With the use of the concept of *abscission*, which initially originated within the context of plant physiology, as a key analytical paradigm, the study contributes to a distinct and novel approach to the psychological process of the deterioration of family relationships. As far as the researcher is aware, it is the first study that systematically adapts and implements the idea of *abscission* into a literary context, specifically the analysis of familial relations. The conceptual innovation has not only broadened the focus of the literary theory, but also provided

new horizons of interdisciplinary inquiry that involves the biological metaphors and the socio-cultural and textual analysis.

The theoretical value of the study is that the biological concept of regulated separation is combined with the Marxist feminist theory to form a holistic explanation of relational fragmentation. Though all the previous literature understands the issue of family breakdown as immediate, distressing, or accidental, this study re-embarks the idea of family breakdown as a process that is gradual, structured, and systematically generated. In this way, it enhances the academic knowledge of the role of gender, class, and ideology, as latent mechanisms controlling and normalizing the process of eroding family ties.

The study has a methodological contribution to the field of literary criticism by showing how scientific ideas can be successfully recontextualized in the field of humanities to come up with new interpretive meanings. *Abscission* as an analytical tool can offer a more subtle interpretation of texts, focusing on detachment processes, emotional alienation, structural fragmentation. This methodology criticises traditional interpretive approaches and pushes academic opinion to become more interdisciplinary and conceptual in nature.

Contextually the study is important as it focuses on the Anglophone fiction in Afghanistan specifically *The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahimi. Through the interplay of patriarchy, material dependency, and ideological domination within the Afghan socio-cultural construct, the study reflects the way the family relations are formed and disorganized under the circumstances of the conflicts, instability and inequality. It sheds some light on the everyday lives of women, whose victimizations and strains are frequently obscured in the mainstream discourses.

Moreover, the present study adds to the discussion of Marxist feminist research by substantiating the claim that structures of power in families are deeply rooted in larger frameworks. It shows that, the collapse of family relationships cannot be considered only a singular or personal issue, but rather is directly connected to economic factors, ideologies, and gender-identified dominances. Through this, it offers a critical perspective of how structural inequalities are expressed in intimate relationships, like family.

Lastly, the research has practical and academic implications on future literature scholars, researchers and students. Having raised the *abscission* as the key concept, it lays a ground to some more in-depth insight into relational interactions within various literary and cultural experiences. Further research can expand this paradigm to other genres, territories, and scholars to enrich the literary studies discipline with new conceptual instruments and cross-disciplinary methods.

Literature Review

This research is based on the critical approach to Marxist feminism and especially as expressed by Michele Barrett in *Women Oppression Today* (1980). Barrett explores the connectedness between capitalism and patriarchy with great focus being laid on how women have been oppressed structurally in both the economic, social and family contexts (Barrett, 1980). In this context, the family, in turn, becomes a paradigmatic space where the power of patriarchy collides with capitalist arrangements, turning the bonds of family into their presupposition and their objectification as a subject of gendered exploitation. Within the specific context of the Afghan Anglophone fiction, where the socio-economic crisis and the political unrest are rampant, this approach gains an even more accurate meaning, and the roles of war and displacement, as well as the patriarchal norms, in disrupting the familial bond may be delicately investigated.

It builds after the early work of Barrett to adopt intersectional Marxism feminist approaches to the study of literature. An example of this approach is Colleen Lye (2023), which shows how Marxist feminist critique can help explain the socio-political and racial aspects of postcolonial and diasporic literature, see how the constructions of gender and classes inform narrative

politics and characterization. The method of Lye emphasizes a strong need to place literature into the context of wider geopolitics, which would be very applicable to the surviving of the Afghan novels in their struggle with war, displacement, and socio-economic divides (Lye, 2023).

Victoria Baena (2022) goes on to add Marxist and feminist approaches to the politics of aesthetics by exploring how aesthetically mediated narrative forms contradict, challenge and reveal hegemonic socio-economic authority. Baena in his work outlines the role of literature in exposing imperial and capitalist violence and therefore the work can be used to comprehend how the disintegration of clans, families and gender roles have been present in the Afghan fiction (Baena, 2022).

In her article, Myka Tucker-Abramson (2021) places Marxist feminism in urban and cultural geographies, with a focus on how world capitalism affects families and social identities. Her readings reveal how the tearing of families is reflected in the literary texts, such as the Afghan stories, as a result of local patriarchal structures, as well as global forces of capitalism and Imperialism (Tucker-Abramson, 2021).

Sara Jane Bailes (2020) extends this framework to include Marxist feminism with the analysis of critical race and queer theory and how conflicting oppressions (economic, gendered and heteronormative) shape familial experiences. The approach, taken by Bailes, is in line with social realities of multiple layers represented in Afghan Anglophone novels, which supports the necessity to regard various dimensions of structural oppression as crucial to the study of family breakdowns (Bailes, 2020).

In this respect, familial *abscission* may be interpreted as the cross-sectional equilibrium of the forces of capitalism, patriarchy, and imperialism, which is in line with the current theoretical paradigms that consider literature as a reflection of a product and criticism of socio-economic systems (Barrett, 1980; Lye, 2023; Tucker-Abramson, 2021).

Marxism refers to a political and economic ideology that works to free people who are oppressed by the powerful possessing the means of production by way of superstructures like law, religion, and means of production (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Primarily, Marxist theory outlines two main categories, namely, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat: the former have the means of social production, whereas the latter depends on selling their labor to survive (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967). Capitalism allows the bourgeoisie to impose excess value on the labor of the proletariat, thus continuing the inequality within the system and oppressing classes (Bertens, 2008).

Economic exploitation, which is the basis of the Marxist analysis goes beyond material deprivation to the structural surveillance, control, and alienation. According to Marx and Engels, the proletariat is not only subjected to direct power, but also the machinery and organizational forms of production, and they highlight the dehumanizing nature of capitalist labor (Marx and Engels, 1848/1967).

Marxist feminism goes beyond the conventional Marxist criticism by underlining the aspect of gendered labor exploitation. According to Marxists feminists, capitalistic societies base on unpaid domestic work of women to generate work force as well as maintaining family stability (Lokaneeta, 2001). This is explained in greater detail in Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1972) that demonstrates how this patriarchal control in the nuclear family makes sure that property is passed on and the women are subordinate. Engels notes that matrilineal societies before capitalist systems enabled women to have more freedoms, but the emergence of monogamy and a private property unit led to patriarch control encompassing women to household chores and childcare (Engels, 1972).

Marxist feminism thereby establishes the family life as a place of economic nature: the nuclear family is one of the places where the labour of women occurs to exploit it to support both

patriarchal and capitalistic orders at the same time. This lens is useful in explaining the structural vulnerabilities of women and ensuing *abscission* of family relationships in the Afghan context where socio-economic crises and patriarchal norms dominate (Barrett, 1980; Lokaneeta, 2001).

Although, the philosophy of Marx elaborated on the class struggle, critics note that it had little focus on the issue of woman domestic work and economic empowerment. Subjugation of women, as seen by feminists like Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1989) and Kate Millett (1970) is not just economic but also psychological and sexual and to avert such subjugation we should be critical of the cultural aspects of patriarchy. The framework by Engels is however still very effective especially in the analysis of the economic and social set up, which has sustained the oppression of women such as deprivation, physical assaults and lack of autonomy (Brewer, 2004; Smith, 1997).

The traditional and cultural codes that family relations in Afghanistan are further complicated by, include Pashtunwali codes that regulate honour (*ghairat*) and sexual propriety (*namus*) (Ginsburg, 2011). These norms, such as *badal* (revenge), are often maintained to justify retaliatory violence and honour-based punishment, such as killings (Klein, 2011; Gibbs et al., 2019). The interaction between informal and formal legal frameworks (*jirgas*) underpins gendered oppression and leads to familial instability (EASO, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2015, 2016).

These dynamics are enhanced by social-economic instability, conflict, and displacement. Stressed families may reinforce honour policing whereas poverty may catalyze forced breakages and prostitution combinations as in *And the Mountains Echoed* by Khaled Hosseini in which children are sold to another family, disaggregating family unity (Hosseini, 2013). According to the Marxist feminist economic lens, these separations are part of systematic capitalist and patriarchal exploitation, with material scarcity defining human interactions and relationships.

The novels by Hosseini (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, 2007; *And the Mountains Echoed*, 2013) and Rahimi (*The Patience Stone*, 2008) describe the collapse of family bonds due to the confluence of the war and economic deprivation factors and the influence of the male patriarchy. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the lives of Mariam and Laila depict the instrumentalization of women reproduction and household work and in *And the Mountains Echoed*, poverty disintegrates the familial connections by revealing how economic vulnerability weakens relationship connections (Hosseini, 2007; Hosseini, 2013).

The mental and emotional implications of patriarchal domination are preempted in the text by Rahimi. The revelation of the conquests of silence and emotional labor that women are forced to bear in the name of ensuring survival are outlined by the confessions of the main character to her husband in a coma and not only does it illuminate how the problem of oppression operates systemically but it also demonstrates the means that women use to remain agency in constrictive networks (Rahimi, 2008).

The Marxist feminism approach gives a critical perspective to these narratives as they relate to structural inequalities. *Abscission* in the family is not just a consequence of individual dysfunction but of the overlapping forces of capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism in the power that define the Afghan society. Their labor, both emotional and domestically, turns into an object of exploitation, and family ties are lost in the chaos of socio-economic circumstances and war and other systems of gender authority (Barrett, 1980; Engels, 1972; Tucker-Abramson, 2021).

Throughout the Afghan Anglophone writing, the intersection of war, poverty, patriarchal regimes, and capitalism logic leads to the imperfective *abscission* of family ties. Using Marxist feminism, it is possible to explain that economic order, social relations and cultural standards

meet each other and reproduce the position of women as their subordinates, as well as the instability of the family. Rahimi overlook the strengths of Afghan women; both authors show ways of counter-reaction to patriarchal norms and insisting on freedom in threatening situations.

This paradigm helps to emphasize the relevance of the Afghan literature analysis through the prism of the economic, political, and cultural aspects integration, outlining the interdependence of gendered exploitation and family disintegration in the framework of the war, displacement, and societal disruption.

Research Gap

Despite extensive scholarship on Afghan Anglophone literature and works like Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*, there remains a significant gap in the study of familial *abscission*, understood as the systematic disintegration of family bonds under intersecting social, economic, and cultural pressures. While existing studies have explored aspects of gender oppression, domestic labor, and patriarchal control, these analyses often isolate these themes rather than examining their combined effects on the structural breakdown of families. Moreover, although Marxist feminist frameworks have been applied to understand women's subordination and the exploitation of labor, very few studies explicitly employ this lens to interrogate how capitalism, patriarchy, and socio-political instability converge to produce the gradual erosion of familial relationships. Similarly, cultural factors such as Pashtunwali codes, honour norms, and the enforcement of gendered social expectations have been studied largely in isolation from economic hardships and broader societal conflict, leaving the multi-dimensional processes driving familial fragmentation underexplored. Furthermore, the concept of *abscission* itself borrowed from plant physiology and metaphorically understood as a regulated shedding of connections has rarely been applied in literary scholarship to describe how family ties are systematically weakened or severed in response to structural forces. Consequently, there is a pressing need for research that integrates these dimensions, examining how gender discrimination, economic deprivation, cultural expectations, and conflict collectively facilitate the disintegration of family structures in Afghan fiction, thereby providing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of familial *abscission* as both a social phenomenon and a literary motif.

Methodology

Research Design

This research design is a qualitative, interpretive, and literary-analytical design, which is specifically appropriate in investigating the socio-cultural, economical and gendered aspects of familial demolition in the novel *The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahimi. The qualitative approach allows a thorough understanding of the narrative tools, character, and thematic depiction of familial *abscission* under the intersecting pressures of patriarchy, capitalism, and cultural institutions (Creswell, 2018). Literary-analytical approach provides close reading of the textual aspects, including the use of language, symbols, narrative point of view, and so on by means of which the novel expresses the psychological, emotional as well as social results of the gender discrimination, economic deprivation, and socio-political instability on a family structure (Barry, 2009).

The research is strongly based on close-reading that allows observing carefully how Rahimi develops the inner and outer world of the female protagonist, and her reactions to the oppression of patriarchy, the trauma of the war, and cultural demands. With this approach, it is possible to follow the dynamics of family disintegration and to comprehend how personal agency is interacting with societal pressures and systemic injustices (Bailes, 2020). That interpretive approach is especially suitable since there are no prescriptive resolutions in the novel; it is possible to invite a critical approach to the interrelations of gender, economy and

cultural norms with a focus on the ways in which the power structures framed intimate and family relationships (Barrett, 1980; Lye, 2023; Tucker-Abramson, 2021).

The research is framed within a Marxist feminist perspective, which allows the analysis to examine how patriarchal and capitalist structures converge to produce economic and emotional subordination, especially for women, within Afghan households. Familial *abscission* is treated as both a socio-economic and cultural phenomenon, emphasizing structural forces behind the disintegration of family bonds.

The combination of these methodological and theoretical techniques enables the study to provide an in-depth analysis of familial fragmentation in *The Patience Stone*, revealing how gender, economy, and culture interact to form the lived-in circumstances of Afghan women.

Research Methods

The research design of the proposed study is a qualitative, interpretive and literary-analytical methodology, which implies the use of close reading and thematic analysis as the two major tools. Such a design helps to take a critical look at narrative devices, plot progression, and style of the text. Using close reading, the paper examines the use of the narrative voice, point of view, and the use of characters in understanding how the novel reveals human responses, institutional reactions and the weaknesses of the area. It additionally looks at the rhetoric of language and style, such as scientific, policy-oriented, or literary language and style approaches, to inform about environmental and socio-political facts and circumstances (Barry, 2009; Creswell, 2018).

The Patience Stone by Atiq Rahimi is analyzed by thematic analysis as a recurring pattern, motifs, and conceptual links of the theme of familial disintegration, patriarchy, economic and ideological dependence. It looks at imagery, symbolism, and events in the storyline that expose feelings of emotionlessness, sexual slavery, psychological abuse, and the slow loss of family ties in the domestic context.

Ideological and socio-cultural contexts within the text, such as honor codes, religious norms, and gendered expectations, are also taken into account in the context of contextualizing the narrative in the realities of Afghan patriarchy and socio-economic factors.

In general, the methodology emphasizes the importance of literary representation as a manifestation of structural forces like patriarchy and capitalism, demonstrating the way how the processes of familial articulation are gradually abandoned in the circumstances of systemic oppression and instability.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Marxist Feminism, theoretical approach that critiques both capitalism and patriarchy, which mutually reinforce the oppression of women, and this criticism is reflected and confirmed by the economic, social and cultural relationships and structures. Based on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, especially the work of Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), Marxist feminism states that the oppression of women has historical origins in their economic reliance on their male counterparts and their uncompensated reproductive labor, which is a pillar of production in capitalism. This framework offers a perspective through which to view class and gender intersections in terms of how familial structures sustain systemic inequality, and also situates women as domestic labor as being exploited and important to the reproduction of patriarchal capitalist society.

The present study relies significantly on the work of Michele Barrett (*Women's Oppression Today*, 1980) in developing the Marxist feminist idea by providing anticipation of ideology, culture, and economic relations to be the means of women oppression. Barrett underlines the overlaps between the kinship structures, the socio-cultural expectations of being a woman, and the gendered division of labor and the process of economic production, and their participation in preserving the patriarchal power. Her proposal of double oppression of women that define

their subjugation as workers in capitalistic systems and as members of families that are put under patriarchal constraints, are especially applicable to the Afghan society, where war, economic instability, and profoundly entrenched patriarchal ideals mutually reinforce to disrupt family bonds.

This theoretical perspective is especially effective in examining the work of Rahimi because the protagonist of this novel represents the psychological and emotional implications of living under the power of a patriarch and being socially marginalized. Marxist feminist viewpoint enables a critical insight on how the breakdown of the family in the text is both the ascription of structural disparities at war, poverty, and control by the patriarchy besides an agency standing point where women might protest and reclaim their agency.

Overall, the Marxist feminist framework by Barrett enables this research to discuss *The Patience Stone* as a literary response to the disintegration of families under the influence of intersecting socio-economic, cultural, and patriarchal forces. It accentuates the processes by which the family is turned into a place of oppression besides challenging the potential of women resistance in the Anglophone literature of Afghanistan.

Data Analysis

The section explores the issue of familial *abscission* with a Marxist feminist viewpoint, uncovering how a combination of patriarchal power, socio-political instability, and economic dependence with cultural norms leads to the slow breakdown of the family. In the novel, the unnamed female protagonist narrates her unexpressed emotional, sexual, and domestic life to her comatose husband, which gives it a narrative structure to comprehend the slow, controlled relational detachment, similar to the biological idea of *abscission*. The text brings into light the psychological and emotional effects of systemic oppression-guilt, fear and alienation-as well as the interactions between patriarchal, ideological and economic forces in influencing familial fragility through her confessional monologues. Rahimi applies symbolism, stream-of-consciousness, and domestic imagery to put a stronger emphasis on the principles of depicting disintegrating familial bonds, putting the suffering of women and their resistance in the context of larger structural limits. This discussion addresses several levels of familial breakdown emotional disconnection, sexual subordination, ideological control, economic exploitation, external confrontation, and female agency to illustrate how the novel portrays the process of oppression and the nuances of surviving and asserting themselves within Afghanistan homes.

Emotional and Psychological *Abscission*

The Patience Stone by Atiq Rahimi preempts the gradual psychological disconnection of familial bonds in a reflection of the metaphorical notion of *abscission*. The unnamed female lead also refers to her comatose husband as a storehouse of her pain, releasing decades of repression, shame and grief. Her confessional monologues express how her emotional attachments are being worn off by a gradual means that is not by abrupt division but by a long-term systemic squeeze of patriarchy and social demands.

For instance, she recounts her sexual repression, forced submission, and the emotional toll of enforced motherhood, revealing how patriarchal authority systematically controls and constrains her autonomy:

“Even when I noticed you were the only one whose pleasure peaked, it didn’t bother me. On the contrary, I was pleased. I told myself it was normal... You men take your pleasure, and we women derive ours from yours.”

In this case, the story of emotional alienation is an internalized oppression that is normalized. The protagonist becomes accustomed to systemic inequality, which is a notion of dual marginalization proposed by Barrett (1980), as women are subordinated economically and emotionally. Her social defense mechanisms of self-touch, silence and internalization show

that the breaking of intense emotional and intimate bond is an orchestrated, non-rapid biological loss of plant organs.

This emotional *abscission* has psychological effects, which are repeatedly stressed in the text. The main character feels guilty, frightened, and traumatized, proving the interpersonal impact of system inequality:

“I wanted to give up. But it was too late. The following sessions got better and better. And yet I still used to cry, after each one. I felt guilty ... I hated the whole world, and I cursed you—you and your family!”

The confessional tone reveals the mutualization of individual torment with institutional oppression, demonstrating the cumulative action of the patriarchal domination and social values on the emotional closeness inside the family. This correlates with Marxist feminist views who see women domestic and emotional work as processes that perpetuate patriarchy.

Sexuality, Power, and Patriarchal Domination

In *The Patience Stone*, sexuality is a space of oppression and resistance. The narration of the sexual encounters by the protagonist illustrates patriarchal control of women desire and its association with *abscission* of the family. The sexual acts, mostly forceful or limited, can be seen as strategies of controlling the hierarchical powers within the domestic sphere.

The narrative depicts the combination of physical, psychological, and structural abuse:

“I didn’t want him to think I was a whore, so I was as stiff as a board. And the poor man was so intimidated and frightened that he couldn’t get it up! Nothing happened.”

In this case, the sexual dysfunction is not just about a personal or a relationship but about alienation of a system. Cultural codes and honor-based norms contribute to fragmentation in relationships, and the fear crippled within the protagonist regarding the judgment of the society and a patriarchal scrutiny is the focus on the issue.

Moreover, the occurrence of her confessions afterwards and her assertions of autonomy which become aggressive afterwards are evidence of resistance in the context of oppression. Her expression of the personal pain and making intimate a stage constitutes reclamation of power despite the disintegration of the family unit. These sexualized encounters are interpreted through Marxist feminist analysis as expressions of structural inequality, in which the sexuality of women is controlled by patriarchal ideals, and family relationships are conditioned by adherence to gendered power relations.

Ideological Constructs and the Regulation of Family Bonds

Rahimi contextualizes the suffering of the protagonist in a wider ideological context, in which the societal norms, religion and morality are the controlling forces. The story presents the idea of familial *abscission* as both inherent to ideology as well as material conditions:

“If all religion is to do with revelation, the revelation of a truth, then, my sang-e saboor, our story is a religion too! Our very own religion!”

The misinterpretation of personal risk with spiritual discourse points to the way that ideological constructs legitimize patriarchic power and at the same time define women self and responsibility. The emotional work, silence and hardship of the main character are ritualized types of obedience, as Engels claims that patriarchal institutions signify the submissiveness of women under the name of moral or moral religion.

Such ideological structures are strengthened in Afghanistan by honor codes and authority based on kinship, which overlap with economic and political instability to undermine familial unity. The relations of the protagonist with her comatose husband serve as a microcosm of these forces, showing how the ideology controls the right to intimacy, agency and emotional reciprocity.

Economic Dependency and Structural Subordination

The Marxist feminist analysis anticipates the economic foundations of patriarchal domination, with a focus placed on the dependence of women that determines relationships within the family. In *The Patience Stone*, the survival of the lead character her support, emotional and domestic work is conditional on the physical incapacitation of her husband, which places her in a culture of labor, dependence, and limited agency:

“Before leaving, she fills the drip bag with sugar-salt solution, covers her man, closes the doors, and disappears into her veil, into the street.”

The description of caregiving in detail highlights how household reproduction is made through unpaid domestic labor, which is also a form of establishing a patriarchal hierarchy. Her work is not only what is needed to survive but instrumentalized to keep the male power intact, which aligns with the claim by Barrett that the work of women in patriarchy and capitalism is what reinforces social and economic systems.

This dynamic is enhanced by economic deprivation, war and systemic instability. The novel echoes the role of material scarcity and structural inequality in gradual loss of family connections, which conforms to the notion of *abscission*: a controlled loss of relational investment as survival requires emotional and psychological disengagement.

This dynamic is aggravated by economic deprivation, war and structural instability. The novel echoes the role of material scarcity and structural inequality in the gradual breakdown of familial relationships, which is consistent with the idea of *abscission*: a controlled loss of relational investment as the necessity to survive requires the emotional and psychological loss of bond.

War, Conflict, and the External Pressures on Family

Rahimi contextualizes the story in the socio-political chaos of Afghanistan where war and displacement and social instability compound family fragility. Separations, forced migration or exploitation of children and extended families is common, a phenomenon that demonstrates how systemic violence and domestic breakdown intersect:

“They shoot a while. Pray a while. Are silent a while.”

The presence of conflict everywhere expels the pressure to the domestic realm making family unity fragile and dependent on structural stability. The novel, through a Marxist feminist perspective, explains familial *abscission* as both mediated internally (via patriarchal authority) and externally (via war and displacement). Emotional labor and caregiving, relational compromise becomes the means of negotiating systemic threats by women, but the family itself is slowly disintegrating.

Resistance, Agency, and Female Subjectivity

Women have their own methods of resistance, which are prefigured in the novel despite the abusive atmosphere. The monologues of the main character, her speech of confession, and her forms of rebellion, both symbolic and emotional self-expression, are efforts to establish agency within a system that attempts to deny it:

“I am your messenger! Your prophet! I am your voice! Your gaze! Your hands! I reveal you! Al-Sabur!”

Through these declarations, she transforms her suffering into **active narrative labor**, reclaiming subjectivity even as familial *abscission* progresses. Her acts are performativity, subversive, and symbolic, revealing the tension between oppression and resistance. Marxist feminism frames these interventions as critical sites of negotiation, where women navigate patriarchal structures while asserting partial autonomy within constraining systems.

The cumulative effect of these intersecting pressures sexual repression, patriarchal domination, ideological regulation, economic dependency, and the pervasive instability of war reveals how familial relationships in *The Patience Stone* are gradually weakened, eroded, and ultimately fragmented. The protagonist’s intimate experiences, including her conscious restraint during

sexual encounters and the psychological weight of societal expectations, exemplify how emotional and psychological alienation infiltrates the family unit. Her internalized fear, shame, and compliance illustrate that the detachment of affection and trust is neither sudden nor accidental; rather, it is a slow, systemic process where emotional bonds are pruned under the weight of external and internalized oppression. The domestic space becomes simultaneously a site of care and confinement, where her labor, silence, and endurance serve both as mechanisms of survival and as instruments that inadvertently perpetuate patriarchal authority. Conflict, displacement, and socio-political instability exacerbate these vulnerabilities, turning intimate relationships into arenas of negotiation, fear, and compromise. At the same time, acts of resistance through narrative confession, bodily labor, and symbolic assertion demonstrate the protagonist's negotiation of agency, illustrating that even within *abscission*; there exists the potential for self-expression and subversion. Ultimately, Rahimi's novel portrays emotional and psychological *abscission* as the central mechanism through which familial bonds are eroded: a regulated shedding of relational investment shaped by structural, cultural, and ideological forces. The gradual disintegration of intimacy, affection, and mutual understanding aligns seamlessly with the metaphor of *abscission*, framing the family not as a stable, natural entity but as a fragile construct, continuously pruned by the intersecting pressures of patriarchy, social expectation, and systemic instability.

Conclusion

This study has examined the gradual disintegration of familial bonds in Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* (2008) through the conceptual framework of *abscission* and the theoretical lens of Marxist feminism. By recontextualizing *abscission* a biological process of regulated shedding as a metaphor for relational detachment, the research has illuminated how familial breakdown is neither abrupt nor incidental but a systematic, structural process. The analysis demonstrates that patriarchal authority, ideological constructs, economic dependency, and socio-political instability collectively shape the erosion of emotional, sexual, and psychological intimacy within Afghan households.

The confessional monologues of the unnamed female protagonist contribute to showing how the work of women, both domestic and emotional, pro-patriarchal and pro-capitalist, at the same time plays a certain role in the marginalization of women themselves. Her mental alienation, internal oppression, and resistance underscore the duality of misery and action and underscore the idea of two-sided marginalization characterized by Barrett where women must operate in economic undergoing and patriarchal-dominated spaces. Moreover, the socio-cultural-historic background of Afghanistan with war, displacement, and honor socially-married codes increases the vulnerability of the family unit illustrating how structural inequalities are produced within intimate circles.

This paper combines the Marxist feminist theory with the metaphor of *abscission*, and by doing so; it presents a new interdisciplinary method that can be used to examine the literary portrayals of family rupture. It emphasizes that it is a normalized, controlled process of weakening the bond of the family, which is the result of the combined efforts of the oppression of gender roles, the economic system, and the power of ideologies. Finally, *The Patience Stone* depicts familial *abscission* as a place of systemic oppression and a locus of low scale resistance, providing important insights into the interplay of power, resilience, and agency in the Afghan society.

Works Cited

- Addicott, F. T. (1982). *Abscission*. University of California Press.
- Baena, V. (2022). *Marxism, feminism, and the politics of aesthetics in literature*. Routledge.
- Bailes, S. J. (2020). *Intersectional perspectives on family, labor, and literature*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barrett, M. (1980). *Women's oppression today: Problems in Marxist feminist analysis*. Verso.
- Barry, P. (2009). *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory* (3rd ed.). Manchester University Press.
- Bertens, H. (2008). *Literary theory: The basics* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Brewer, R. (2004). *Engels and the origins of the family*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2021). *Climate and literature: Human-environment interactions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- EASO – European Asylum Support Office. (2020). *Afghanistan: Gender-related issues*. European Union.
- Engels, F. (1972). *The origin of the family, private property, and the state*. Pathfinder Press. (Original work published 1884)
- Gibbs, T., Hargrave, K., & Lloyd, C. (2019). *Honor-based violence and Afghan society*. Routledge.
- Ginsburg, F. (2011). *Pashtunwali and gendered social codes*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hosseini, K. (2007). *A thousand splendid suns*. Riverhead Books.
- Hosseini, K. (2013). *And the mountains echoed*. Riverhead Books.
- Klein, A. (2011). *Revenge and honor killings in Afghanistan: Legal and cultural perspectives*. Oxford University Press.
- Lokaneeta, J. (2001). *Women's rights and Marxist feminism*. Sage Publications.
- Lye, C. (2023). *Intersectional Marxist feminist critique in postcolonial literature*. Routledge.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1967). *The communist manifesto*. International Publishers. (Original work published 1848)
- Meyers, D. T. (2001). *Fragmentation and social theory: Conceptual approaches*. Routledge.
- Osborne, D. (1989). *Plant physiology: Processes and mechanisms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rahimi, A. (2008). *The Patience Stone* (P. C. Fox, Trans.). Other Press.
- Scribbr. (n.d.). *How to write an abstract*. <https://www.scribbr.com>
- Smith, L. (1997). *Patriarchy, power, and domestic labor*. Routledge.
- Taylor, J. E. (2001). *Abscission in plant development*. Springer.
- Tucker-Abramson, M. (2021). *Global capitalism and household dynamics in literature*. Palgrave Macmillan.