

DECONSTRUCTION OF MULTIPLE OPPRESSION IN MUEENUDDIN'S *THIS IS WHERE THE SERPENT LIVES*: A DECOLONIAL FEMINIST STUDY

1 .Aroosa Ashraf

M.Phil. Scholar in English Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, The Riphah International University of Faisalabad

Email: aroosa.ashraf20@gmail.com

2. Hina Tabassam

M.Phil. Scholar in English Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, The Riphah International University of Faisalabad

Email: hinatabassamsipra7@gmail.com

3. Sanniya Batool

Senior Lecturer in English, Department of English Language and Literature, The Riphah International University of Faisalabad

Email: sanniya.batool@riphahfsd.edu.pk

Abstract:

*This article argues that Danial Mueenuddin's 'This is Where the Serpent Lives' (2026) should not be read as a mere book with a very casual story but as a reflection of feudal governance in Pakistan. Rather than depicting it as a comparison between rural and city life, this novel gives a more comprehensive approach to more closely interrogate the caste system, gender binaries, gender violence, colonial rule, and racial discrimination. To illuminate these structures, this novel is viewed particularly from the perspective of Maria Lugones' Multiple Oppression. The argument proceeds from the perspective of Saqib's character and Hisham Attar as representatives of the Feudal System. The novel, 'This is Where the Serpent Lives' (2026), is authored by the well-known Pakistani author Danial Mueenuddin. A poor person is never allowed to have even a tenth of his Master's property, which is what the novel revolves around to expose the lingering realities of Pakistani Feudal lords having great lands in Pakistan through colonial rule. Maria Lugones' idea of Multiple Oppression has taken its responsibility in explaining how various systems, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and colonialism interlock and mutually reinforce each other. Maria Lugones, in her 2003 book, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions*, introduced Decolonial Feminism as a theoretical framework. I intend to view the novel, 'This is Where the Serpent Lives' from the Decolonial Feminist Perspective. My research aims at exposing various bitter realities of Pakistan's Feudal Systems as a tool to operate colonialism, racial discrimination, gender oppression, and class difference in Danial Mueenuddin's 'This is Where the Serpent Lives' (2026). This novel is not analyzed from this perspective earlier. This research aims to fill the gap and pave the way for further research.*

Keywords: Feudal Governance, caste, gender binaries, multiple oppression, sexuality, colonialism, decolonial feminism.

1. Introduction

Danial Mueenuddin's *This is Where the Serpent Lives* (2026) is contemporary Pakistani English Fiction in the collection *In Other Rooms Other Wonders*. Portraying hierarchy is not a natural structure of society. Mueenuddin has set the background of Pakistan's rural and urban societies. It deals with how dealings, rules, laws, and attitudes change with the change of surroundings. On one hand, rural people are being presented as having backward and conservative thinking, Mueenuddin, on the other hand, exposes the cunning attitude of the Feudals to their servants. Social power is another major factor that makes the governmental institutions corrupt, with their loyalty only towards the feudal. Wealth, ambition, struggle, and humiliation also revolve around the channels.

Mueenuddin depicts the agrarian hierarchy in the novel. Pakistan is presented as 'Feudal Pakistan,' and the language is not kept the same among villagers and feudals. Where the feudal are given an arrogant voice, servants are merely the symbol of humiliation and one-sided loyalty. It's only the land that makes the Feudals "lord" and villagers as 'servants,' but

social order is maintained through police officers, politicians, bureaucratic and accounting systems. Gender is also biased. Female characters are given no voice, and the whole novel revolves around the character of Saqib. Racial discrimination is included in this argument, as whites are more educated and intelligent than Saqib. Educational Institutions and beautiful lands are only characteristics of England, Europe, and London. Every positive tribute is adhered to Whites as civilized and Easterns as savages.

This article keeps in this view all these arguments. I argue that Danial Mueenuddin's '*This is Where the Serpent Lives*' (2026) is best understood from the perspective of Maria Lugones' Multiple Oppression. Multiple Oppression is posited not with a single perspective, but various perspectives of race, gender, and colonialism intersect with each other. All these lenses best portray how the feudal have maintained their rule in Pakistan, and servants are loyal to them even against their own blood relatives. Money is the key tool, making hierarchy bitter for some while enjoyable for others. Such an approach does enhance the worth of the novel and the efforts of Mueenuddin to portray the harsh realities present in the post-modern era.

The core argument of the research is to dismantle the multiple oppressions, and 'language' plays its role well in identifying how well the hierarchy and discrimination are posited over the indigenous people of Pakistan. Inequality is not the whole issue; dependency in a postcolonial setting is dramatized.

The research is guided by three research questions. In what ways do race, gender, sexuality, and colonialism reinforce each other? How are women more than oppressive creatures in the Victorian era? How novel depicts that being Eastern, intelligent, and hardworking is not enough to be high in the social hierarchy?

My thesis is that '*This is Where the Serpent Lives*' has not reconstructed the image of Pakistan as a marginalized and savage nation, but instead exposes how interlocking structures of feudalism, colonial legacy, and gender oppression sustain societal hierarchies. The novel demonstrates that access to technology and intelligence is depicted as exclusive to Westerners, while villagers remain depicted as backward and dependent on the feudal class. This perspective positions the novel as a critical analysis of how multiple oppressions operate within Pakistan's social order.

2. Literature Review

Danial Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* has given him an exceptional reputation as an author against an unreliable social order. Tariq's Marxist reading presents Punjab of Pakistan as a province of class domination where the lower ones are kept trapped within oppressive social arrangements (Tariq, 2018). Recently, Dhera (2026) gave his *Feudal Modernity and the Governance of Dependency* reading to *This is Where the Serpent Lives*. To Dhera (2026), social order and Governmentality are tools to maintain the rule of feudal lords in Pakistan.

Qureshi et. al. (2024) present how lower-status people fail to improve their status. Survival remains difficult in the paths of villagers, and fate is another tool to justify the colonial rule of feudalism. Cilano (2013) negotiated in *Pakistani Fiction in English* that there is no true definition of 'Muslim' and 'Islam'. He resists reducing Muslims or Islam to a limited category of terrorists and extremists. Pakistan struggles to identify an identity that is both National and Islamic (Cilano, 2013, p. 18). Alavi (1972) demonstrates that Pakistan's politics cannot be understood solely on the basis of the constitution. It (Alavi, 1972) says that colonialism and Feudal systems bring changes in lands, the superstructure of political and administrative institutions allowing the long-term lingering of social agrarian hierarchy. Exploitation of the lower classes by the upper class is a common scenario in the Pakistani context. Lieven (2012, p.13) in *Pakistan A Hard Country* depicts that Pakistan is disorganized, economically backward, corrupt, divided, and violent toward the poor and women. Pakistan's state and

government are responsible for upholding an Extremist view of Islam and making its economy and infrastructure underdeveloped.

Lyon (2004) depicts that asymmetrical power relations are found in Pakistan's Punjab societies as a manifestation of cultural continuity. Power is maintained in three social contexts: kinship, caste, and political relationships. Socialisation serves as a building block for Pakistani asymmetrical relationships. Martin (2015, p.16), in *Politics, Landlords And Islam In Pakistan*, in its introduction, discusses Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. Martin says that this collection gives a close of Feudal Punjab of Pakistan, where Feudal Lords have vast lands, plenty of servants, and village girls as mistresses. The Punjabi Feudal Lords admire the cultural achievements of Europe, where they spend their summer. Parties are organized with high-ranking politicians, police officers, bureaucrats, businessmen, and civil servants to achieve their materialistic goals with no hindrance.

Mohmand and Gazdar (2007) depict how biradri and caste systems are deeply rooted in Pakistan's Punjab in relation to political and social standing. Plateau (1995) demonstrates that the institution of patronage is found absent in agrarian societies, which balances relationships and kinship in societies. Dhera (2026) depicts that Danial Mueenuddin's *This is Where the Serpent Lives* is the best representation of postcolonial Pakistan, not just a Feudal Pakistan. Dhera (2026) states that a comparison between the traditional elite and the incomplete modern era is not a sufficient lens to analyze Danial Mueenuddin's *This is Where the Serpent Lives*. Various factors such as bureaucracy, landed authority, kinship, caste hierarchy, domestic service, and police power are reinforcing each other.

This research article aims to fill the gap in the research path. Danial Mueenuddin's *This is Where the Serpent Lives* is critically examined from the perspective of Maria Lugones' Multiple Oppression, which also adheres to the idea of Dhera, focusing on various factors such as caste, gender, sexuality, and colonialism, which are inclusive of each other.

3. Theoretical Framework

Lugones (2020) in *Gender and Universality in Colonial Methodology* depicts that universality in gender is a tool of decolonial methodology. Gender system is not universal, and not all people build their relationships on the grounds of gender. Lugones (2014, p.1) resists against multiple oppressions and treating humans as 'subhuman' by nature is unfair. Oppressions are multiple, not separable in thoughts and worlds. Oppositional dichotomies make one superior, and existence is possible for them while hiding the violence in them. Lugones (2014, p.2-3) states that a coalition is necessary against multiple oppressions as colonizers aim at fragmenting the colonized, which is a decolonial project that moves on intellectually and politically.

Belle (2020) in *Critical Philosophy of Race* shows an inspiration from Maria Lugones' concept of multiple oppression as a key part of intersectionality and interlocking oppression, and coalition against it. Lugones (2007) in *Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System* introduces a systemic understanding of gender in terms of multiple relations of power. Lugones (2007) states that gender has a very different way of abuse. Rodrigues (2022) admits that Maria Lugones is representative of subaltern feminism. Maria Lugones talks about gender discussion from a decolonial perspective, exposing the bitter realities of Pakistani societies where Feudal Lords are a source of their survival in the world.

Maria Lugones (2013, p.36) in *Coloniality of Gender* states that race, gender, and sexuality give her understanding of the indifference men relish in the face of violent abuses. This indifference hinders the path of women of color to an integrated society. This theoretical framework unveils that non-'white' women are disempowered. The invention of race as superior and inferior is established through domination (Lugones, 2013, p.38). Alcoff (2020) in *Lugones's World-Making*, points out Lugones' contributions to feminist theory. Lugones

addresses how to negotiate the conflicts as pluralist feminism, world-travelling, use of anger arise during liberation war conflicts.

Turyalay et. al. (2023) argue why women allow men to take advantage of them. Men perpetuate their patriarchy through various institutions, such as wifehood, womanhood, and sisterhood, which allows male chauvinism by marginalizing women. Turyalay et. al. (2023) take guidance from the feminist perspective of Gayatri Spivak, which exposes patriarchal tools as the use of language, lack of education, and economic dependency in women. Arshad (2021) puts a very unique perspective regarding women. Arsha (2021) states that women are more than half the population of the world, serving their families and still are treated feeble to men.

Hai (2014) situates Mueenuddin's fiction in the context of the Pakistani Postcolonial Feudal System. It highlights an interlocking system of power that dehumanizes subaltern individuals trapped in domestic servitude. It highlights the psychic complexities of individuals who struggle against disempowerment, striving to survive within systems of corruption and violence. Yousaf (2025) depicts that Mueenuddin's narratives reflect the conventional power dynamics by focusing on the experiences and responses of lower-class characters. Yousaf (2025) shows that people and organizations establish authority not to benefit humanity but to repress it by using power.

4. Analysis

4.1: Hisham Atar, Shahnaz, and Their Colonial Attitude

Hisham Atar and Shahnaz are representatives of Feudal systems in Mueenuddin's *This is Where the Serpent Lives* (2026). After spending their whole summer vacation in London, Hisham and Shahnaz come to their lands in Pakistan, which makes their servants clean and decorate the villa in a new, fresh atmosphere. As states, "Like most Lahori women of her class, Shahnaz battled constantly to find and train and keep household servants" (Mueenuddin, 2026, p.177). Shahnaz remains busy keeping the villa updated according to Western taste, each time with a new taste.

An early adaptor, he was one of those gadgetry, wealthy men in Pakistan, having a phone installed in his car way back when no one else did, and recently taking delivery of this superb jeep, ordered in London with all the trimmings, cooler-box, dual AC, and locking diffs and all that. Sitting beside him, Shahnaz read all the way across the June plains, then napped, then read again. (Mueenuddin, 2026, p.181)

In Mueenuddin's *This is Where the Serpent Lives* (2026), attention constantly drifts towards the colonial mindset of Hisham, who is interested in presenting London as a more advanced and educated country with highly admirable manners. The whole novel gives a contrast as Pakistan is backward in economy as well as in technological advancement.

Yet the mood in the car was tentative, for Hisham and Shahnaz had drawn apart in the matter of parties as in other things, husband still unreformed in his appetite for the charging night, and Shahnaz increasingly finding these excesses not so much unseemly as uninteresting. (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 182)

As soon as Hisham and Shahnaz arrive in Pakistan, the first and foremost activity is to arrange parties with high-ranking politicians, bureaucrats, police officers, and civil servants in dire need to fulfill their corrupt economic gains. As states, "Hisham had been increasingly pleased with this new recruit's manners, and it added to his satisfaction at their arrival on this scene of merriment" (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 186). Villagers at Ranmal Mohra are ill-mannered, savages with no sense to deal with the elite class, the feudals.

Hisham offered the woman a cigarette and then lit it for her. "So what brings you to Pakistan?" he asked. "Business or pleasure?"

"Well, both and neither," laughed the woman, her French accent especially piquant in Pakistan, where such things were prized, redolent of life abroad.

When the French woman drifted away briefly, looking for her bag, Hisham said to Sohail agreeably, “Nice one, Mian Sahib. She’s easy on the eye.”

“She’s a friend of your buddy Bilquis Sheikh.”

“Lucky man!” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 186).

The accent of a French woman and the habit of lighting a cigarette are indeed what distinguish a Pakistani woman from a foreign woman. Pakistani women are portrayed as uneducated, who know nothing about how to dress themselves, how to deal with elite people, and know nothing about the English language. Mueenuddin aims at sharing the colonial psyche of the Feudal Lords in Pakistan, not an attempt to degrade what Pakistan is.

There’s one hard rule: never say anything about Mian Sahib, and even more, not a word about Bibi, what they do or where they do it or why they do it. Nothing. If ever Begum Sahiba finds out you’ve been running your mouth, you’ll be back in Ranmal Mohra with a shovel in your hand.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 192).

The character of Saqib resists the unequal social hierarchy. Saqib’s behavior at the end of the short story and at the end of the story seems quite different, but it makes no difference in the consequences of his rebellious act. Saqib is so humiliated that he never questions what the Masters are doing on whose behalf. He wants to have a luxurious life like Hisham and Shahnaz, but his theft of 12 lacs, which equals a penny of their property, makes him no more than an ant, leaving him in a miserable state, suffering the beatings and interrogation of police officers.

4.2: Saqib’s, Afra’s, and Other Servants’ Loyalty

Saqib has spent more of his time with Hisham and Shahnaz, staying away from other villagers, which makes Saqib’s way of dealing and thinking different from his fellows in the village. So, “Hisham had been increasingly pleased with this new recruit’s manners, and it added to his satisfaction at their arrival on this scene of merriment” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 186). Saqib always listens to his masters, never questioning a single act of theirs as he states, “That’s none of our business, anyway. As long as the sahibs are happy.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 193).

“Now his suspicions were confirmed, that the world presented layers of experience not available to all, that there were secret rooms and coded meanings” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p.200). Saqib starts to understand the corrupt dealings of their masters; that’s where he wants the same for himself. The discussion is not limited to the loyalty of servants to their masters, but loyalty also includes the extent to which masters are loyal to their servants. It’s answered in “The father had a habit of plucking in village maidens to his bedroom, of cuffing about his servants and the villagers too” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 203).

The house servants came out and made an obeisance to Hisham, both hands clasping his hand, head lowered in a bow, bending their knees. In the village, the manners changed, the staff more submissive, Hisham’s affect feudal, and even Shahnaz kept it up, covering her head more carefully than in Lahore and distant from the servants, an acknowledgement that before her time the women in the family had strictly observed purdah at the farm (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 206).

The loyalty of servants and the feudal effect of masters is seen in their behavior, both acting in different ways. The feudality of Hisham and Shahnaz makes them more like lords, and the humiliation of servants makes them more like ants on earth. “No, Bibi Jee, this was Mian Sahib. Mian Sahib laid it out last time when he came here.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 208). Saqib never accepts his credit whenever he does something according to the taste of their masters. Saqib is always grateful for what he has due to his master's as it refers that, “I’m already learning so much here, here in Lahore and at Al Unmool, Bibi Jee. In a year or two, then I will do as you like,” he said, “but for now let this be.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 210).

To all servants and ideology of feudals, they are sent as a representatives of God as this quote shows, “Saqib would set this up, with Afra’s help, starting small – say fifteen acres – and continuing till they had more tunnels than anyone but God, or at least God’s representatives in the Punjab” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 217).

“You need not beg. I am sorry for what happened to you. I see how much they did to you. The sahibs did not wish nor order this. They don’t care that much about the money. They never did. Remember this. Whether or not you and I are for sale, what they have, it was never for sale. Let’s not speak of this again.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 389).

Afra’s character is portrayed as never rebelling against his masters, whether it’s for the sake of his own son, Saqib: “Thirty-nine years of service and what I have is this belly. That’s my fucking family. That’s my son and my daughter and my mother.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 389). Afra began to speak. “I was blinded by you. Thirty-nine years of service in this family, and now you bring this shame on me.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 389).

4.3: Shahnaz and Gazala as Superior and Inferior Beings

At the end of the novel by Danial Mueenuddin’s *‘This is Where the Serpent Lives’* (2026), Shahnaz and Gazala encounter each other. Both characters show two opposite poles and extremes of a site where Shahnaz represents the Lord in whose hands Saqib’s life is trapped, and the other, Gazala, who requests Shahnaz to forgive Saqib for stealing 1.5 million from them. Gazala enters the villa of Hisham and Shahnaz, where Shahnaz addresses Gazala as, “I know why you’ve come. Your husband’s a fool. He’s hurt, Mian Sahib. Not very badly, because it isn’t in his power to do that. But enough so that everything from the past is wiped away. You’ve wasted your effort.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 378). Gazala’s response to Shahnaz defines her character very clearly as if thanking the colonials for colonizing them:

Saqib is sincere with you. He speaks of his gratitude to Mian Sahib and to you when we are alone, when he speaks his mind truly. You raised him from nothing, you taught him, you made him different, and he is different – that is why you chose him. (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 380).

The colonized mindset of Gazala reflects how much America is praised for its perfection. Even those who belong to America are perfect in the eyes of the colonized ones. As:

“You are so far above us that I dare to say this, Bibi Jee. I am jealous of your perfections in my husband’s eyes, because I can never have what you have. You gave him too much. You said he could go to the big university in Lahore. I am educated too, Bibi Jee; I know what the Government College in Lahore is. You said he might even go to America.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 381).

Gazala’s materialistic approach is evident here as she values money over anything. The same money that compelled Saqib to act rebelliously against their masters, “Without money, what is a man with a piece of paper from Government College or even another piece of paper with different words from some other country?” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 381).

“You married me to Saqib, Bibi Jee. You were at my mehndi. I could not have married Saqib but for you, and this child would not have been born but for you. If you destroy my husband, you punish us cruelly.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 382).

Gazala, falling to her knees, holding her child in her arms, weeping, lying at Shahnaz’s feet. “Alright,” Shahnaz said, finally. “For your child, then. Saqib will not be harmed. He will be released.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 383). Talking about Shahnaz, her character is portrayed by Mueenuddin as she has the power to do anything to control the servants belonging from the village. “Bless my child, then, Bibi Jee. Give your blessing to my Shah Jehan.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 383). Only words differ in their nature and emotions, yet the dialogues carry the same effect, reflecting the colonial nature of both Shahnaz and Gazala.

4.4: Corruption; Tool to have Social Power (Inspector Sahib)

Various institutions are shown in Danial Mueenuddin's *'This is Where the Serpent Lives'* (2026) that inhibit the habit of corruption to fulfil their greed for money. The confrontation between Saqib, when he is caught stealing 12 lacs of Ranmal Mohra, and Inspector Sahib, who is also interested in material gains, portrays how and to what extent corruption is inclusive in Maria Lugones' Multiple Oppression.

"What have you savages been doing to Chaudrey Saqib sahib? Don't you know he's your guest? Don't you know he is a munshi of the Atars from Ranmal Mohra? Untie him immediately. Hurry, you idiots!" (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 355). The dialogue is the very first spoken emotion from the mouth of Inspector Sahib. Out of humor and mockery, the inspector calls Saqib 'Chaudrey Saqib'. The theft is nothing compared to Hisham's corrupted property. The poor can never have the same luxurious life as od them. Unequal social hierarchy is the main cause that creates a huge difference between the rich and the poor.

"Take off those handcuffs immediately. Chaudrey Sahib must have been extremely uncomfortable, lying like that. But what do you buffalo care about that? And why is there blood on his kurta?" (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 355). Inspector acting very innocently to make fun of Saqib's condition. Servants and, indeed, the poor should be to their limits, whether it's food or lifestyle as portrayed in Danial Mueenuddin's *'This is Where the Serpent Lives'* (2026).

"Inspector Sahib. Are you stupid? Or do you think it's funny to disrespect the Punjab Police. You don't salute the man, you salute the rank" (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 358), so it's not the person themselves but the rank that encourages a man to do corrupt, whether it is the poor or rich. Rank gives power to a powerless person committing murder, corruption, rapes, and much more beyond the human imagination.

"I'd love that. But the Inspector Sahib warned us not to fuck around. It's worth my job. And Inspector Sahib knows everything and finds out everything. I wouldn't even try to hide it from him." (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 362), when Saqib bribes the hawaldar to set him free to go to his child and wife. Every government institutional servant, from high-ranked politicians to bureaucrats, police officers, and low-ranked servants, is presented as a corrupt one in Danial Mueenuddin's *'This is Where the Serpent Lives'* (2026).

4.5: The Caste System (Biradri)

The caste system is very strong in Danial Mueenuddin's *'This is Where the Serpent Lives'* (2026), as this quote says, "...road from Ranmal Mohra, the texture of life changed, of manners even. Many of the people there were macchi, a fishing caste, and lived by the rhythms of the river" (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 226).

"It's Sheikh Abbas that they called him, not Seth Abbas." His mother used the Seth appellation to emphasize the family's Hindu antecedents, the Seth caste being the Hindu moneylenders of this area before partition. "They weren't banyas when they came to Ranmal Mohra, whatever they were back before Col. Sahib sent them here from the north." (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 268).

When Saqib shows his interest in marrying Gazala, the daughter of Sheikh Abbas, the justification given by Saqib's mother to reject the proposal is their caste difference. Firstly, their antecedents were Hindu's, secondly, their tag of Banyas is granted by Col. Sahib. Rejecting the other residents of the same village in favor of a colonial feudal lord is a representation of their colonized mindset. Even marriages out of Biradri are prohibited in Pakistan, as Danial Mueenuddin's *'This is Where the Serpent Lives'* (2026) as the quote guides, "Both. They're proud because of the position the grandfather held, and my family can't imagine that I would marry anyone outside my family or my caste." (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 286). The condition of the poor in front of their masters is shown in this quote:

“Salaam,” he said, as if they were meeting anyplace, in the tea stall or along the road. Embracing Saqib, he then sat down cross-legged on the floor in an inferior position near the wall, accepting whatever should befall him. He knew there would be trouble but awaited it as if it didn’t concern him. What could he know of his son’s predicaments, who had grown so high and far from his own purview? (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 340).

“His father held his hands in front of his chest, like a squirrel holding up its paws, an attitude of submission, his head bowed, and Saqib too bowed his head, then stood straight” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 341). The person of low cast is compared to a squirrel with feet like paws to the lowly caste and rank of them.

“And you, old man, how did this happen? Your people have lived on our land for generations. I give you shelter, grain, protection. You serve this house; your family has eaten our salt for generations. Is that how you brought up this boy of yours, to steal from my hand?”

“Sahib,” he whispered, face to the ground. “I am your servant. I know nothing of any such things.” (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 343).

Sahib’s father gets humiliated in front of his masters for the deeds of his son. In Pakistan, some of the Biradris are considered powerful while others as low caste with no power, as depicted through the words of Inspector Sahib in Danial Mueenuddin’s *‘This is Where the Serpent Lives’* (2026):

“I have question for you, Chaudrey Saqib. Where the fuck is your biradri? You’re an Arain. You belong to the most successful and the most prosperous and in a sense the most powerful caste in this district and probably in all of Punjab. The proud Arain biradri! (Mueenuddin, 2026, p. 359).

5. Conclusion

This is Where the Serpent Lives (2026) should be read as a major Pakistani novel reflecting multiple oppressions. Its importance lies not in the fact that it represents the unequal colonized Pakistani society, but in the ways in which these oppressions are reproduced. The integrated framework of Maria Lugones’ Multiple Oppression makes it more legible. The novel’s transmission from affairs and dealings in Ranmal Mohra to the oppression and investigation of the police station confirms that oppression never comes from a single system. The novel is more than a story between the poor and the rich. The elite survive through sustaining various forms of oppression. That is the novel’s most argumentative claim, and therefore, Danial Mueenuddin’s *‘This is Where the Serpent Lives’* (2026) has an attentive position in Pakistani Literary Studies and wider study of Literature and Power.

References

- Alavi, H. (1972). The state in post-colonial societies. *New left review*, 74(July/August), 59-81.
- Alcoff, L. M. (2020). Lugones's world-making. *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 8(1-2), 199-211.
- Arshad, F. (2021). An analytical study of women objectification in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 5(II), 49-62.
- Belle, K. S. (2020). Interlocking, intersecting, and intermeshing: critical engagements with Black and Latina feminist paradigms of identity and oppression. *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 8(1-2), 165-198.
- Cilano, C. (2013). *Contemporary Pakistani fiction in English: Idea, nation, state*. Routledge.
- Dhera, S. A., & Baryar, M. J. (2026). Feudal Modernity And The Governance Of Dependency: Governmentality, Political Society, and Patronal Rule In Danial Mueenuddin's *This Is Where The Serpent Lives*.
- Hai, A. (2014). Postcolonial Servitude: Interiority and System in Danial Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. *ariel: a review of international english literature*, 45(3), 33-73.
- Lieven, A. (2012). *Pakistan: A hard country*. Penguin UK.

- Lugones, M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system. *Hypatia*, 22(1), 186-219.
- Lugones, M. (2013). The coloniality of gender. In *Globalization and the decolonial option* (pp. 369-390). Routledge.
- Lugones, M. (2014). Indigenous Movements and decolonial feminism. *Seminario de grado y posgrado, Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, The Ohio State University (21 de marzo de 2014)(en línea) <https://wgss.osu.edu/sites/wgss.osu.edu/files/LugonesSeminarReadings.pdf>*.
- Lugones, M. (2020). Gender and universality in colonial methodology. *Critical philosophy of Race*, 8(1-2), 25-47.
- Lyon, S. (2004). An anthropological analysis of local politics and patronage in a Pakistani village.
- Mohmand, S., & Gazdar, H. (2007). Social structures in rural Pakistan. *Thematic paper prepared under TA4319, Determinants and Drivers of Poverty Reduction and ADB's Contribution in Rural Pakistan. ADB, Islamabad*.
- Platteau, J. P. (1995). A framework for the analysis of evolving patron-client ties in agrarian economies. *World Development*, 23(5), 767-786.
- Qureshi, M. F., Shah, Z., & Zakir, M. M. (2024). Naturalistic Approach in Daniyal Mueenuddin's 'Saleema' and 'In Other Rooms, Other Wonders'. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 212-218.
- Rodrigues, L. (2022). Decolonial feminism: María Lugones' influences and contributions. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, 30(1).
- Tariq, H. (2018). Feudal system of Pakistan in Daniyal Mueenuddin's short stories: A Marxist critique. *Linguistics and Literature Review*.
- Turyalay, G. A., Zia, A., & Ullah, Z. (2023). Analysis of Daniyal Mueenuddin's in Other Rooms, Other Wonders: A Feministic View. *Pakistan JL Analysis & Wisdom*, 2, 732.
- Yousaf, W. (2025). Hegemony and Resistance: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Daniyal Mueenuddin's Selected Short Stories In Other Rooms, Other Wonders.