

## Patriarchal Subjugation of Women in Sabyn Javeri's *Hijabistan*: A Feminist Perspective

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### Abstract

*In patriarchal societies, men maintain control on multiple aspects of life, resulting in the marginalization, exploitation, suppression, and othering of women. This research article aims to investigate the depiction of women's subjugation within the patriarchal societal structure as depicted in the selected short stories from Sabyn Javeri's anthology Hijabistan, using feminism as theoretical lens. Hijabistan is a significant feminist work that highlights how patriarchal societal structures manipulate women as mere instruments, relegating them to the status of second-class citizens—viewed as inferior, othered, and subaltern. Javeri, the author, critically explores how patriarchal system objectifies and controls women's agency, identities, and bodies. A close reading of the selected short stories demonstrates that patriarchal societal system perpetuates exploitation, suppression, and marginalization of women. It reinforces male dominance by silencing and marginalizing women. Moreover, this research paper will contribute meaningfully to the existing body of feminist literature.*

**Key Terms:** Patriarchy, Exploitation, Females, Exploitation, Suppression, *Hijabistan*

### Introduction

Patriarchy is a social system that upholds the idea that men are superior to women. It is a term that is used to describe a system of social relationships, values, norms and behaviour patterns that are designed to encourage a privileged position for men. (Jeevan, 2024, p. 4971)

Patriarchy refers to a system of interrelated societal practices in which men maintain power, allowing them to control and exploit women. In this structure, men occupy dominant roles, while women are relegated to subordinate positions. (Walby, 1990). Patriarchy is a societal system that prioritizes male dominance over females, profoundly impacting women's lives by silencing and rendering them voiceless. This system fosters the suppression, oppression, and mistreatment of women, manifesting in their social, political, emotional, sexual, and physical exploitation. It obstructs women's liberation in social, political, and educational spheres. In a patriarchal society, women encounter subjugation and the denial of fundamental rights, often being treated as commodities or reproductive instruments. Women are viewed as second-class citizens and are controlled as objects or puppets, with their experiences consistently marginalized and classified as subaltern. This system imposes numerous restrictions and limitations on women. A pervasive consequence of patriarchy within families is the multifaceted oppression of women. In patriarchal cultures, male dominance is often defined as a fundamental aspect of manhood, and women are conditioned from a young age to accept and normalize their subordinate roles. This conditioning leads to women, experiencing violence, abuse, and inequitable treatment across domestic, professional, and societal spheres. Deep-seated cultural values and economic dependence compel women to remain in abusive situations, rendering them unable to escape such violence. Some women may even come to believe that they deserve abuse

due to perceived failures in their responsibilities. In many cases, women are controlled and devalued in ways that strip them of their autonomy. The institution of marriage, intended as a partnership, has often become a mechanism through which men exert control and dominance, using it as a means to ensure familial succession and perpetuate female subjugation.

Originally from Pakistan, Sabyn Javeri now resides in London where she serves as a university-level instructor in Creative Writing. She holds a Master of Studies from Oxford University and a doctorate from the University of Leicester. She is an accomplished essayist, translator, short story writer, and novelist, with notable works including *Nobody Killed Her* and *Hijabistan*. She has also been honored with the *Oxonian Review Short Story Award* and was shortlisted for the inaugural *Tibor Jones Award*. Her research interests are centered on feminist literature of the subcontinent and the development of decolonizing pedagogies. Javeri's *Hijabistan* is a collection of short stories centered on the experiences of women within hijabi culture, examining their lives under the constraints imposed by the abaya. Set against the backdrops of Pakistan and the United Kingdom, this anthology comprises sixteen short fictions that portray the challenges faced by women, navigating their roles and identities within these cultural contexts. It examines the lives of women who are either burdened by the restrictive nature of the veil or find a sense of protection within it.

Patriarchal system has significantly influenced the societal status of women. It is inherently male-centric, being man-made, and it relegates women to the status of the 'second sex,' subaltern, and even slaves. It subjugates women with the setoff biased rules which are the reflections of patriarchy in culture. It remains as a grey area in the unwritten pages of history. By perpetuating ideologies and cultural values that shape belief systems, patriarchy contributes to the formation of gender identities. *Hijabistan* addresses the pervasive perception of women as inferior to men. Male figures oppress women by positioning them as the "other", while perceiving themselves as the primary subjects. Female daily activities are often scrutinized and disapproved of, especially once they reach puberty. Restrictions placed on them include prohibitions against revealing their bodies, whistling, writing poetry to express their emotions, discussing puberty with family members, and making decisions about their own lives. Women are often compelled to remain silent, even in the face of injustice and wrongdoing. Wives, in particular, lack freedom, being confined by societal roles and codes that prevent them from leaving their husbands, even in cases of personal suffering. Batool (2021) claims that *Hijabistan*, one of the innovative and astonishing creations of Javeri, focuses on patriarchal subjugation of women. "The book [*Hijabistan*] is vigorously populated with women whose woman's rights stays bound and weak, and who, while they perceive the iron clench hand that controls them, can do essentially nothing to break free" (pp. 81-82).

The short story, *Radha* deals with the pervasive dehumanization and mistreatment of women under patriarchal system that perpetuates their subjugation and denies their dignity. *The Date* depicts the systemic exploitation of an office worker by her superior, who initiates a coercive dynamic through a seemingly innocuous gift and manipulates her into compromising her autonomy, thereby illustrating the broader pattern of patriarchal abuse and objectification in the workplace. *The Urge* throws light on the profound disparity in freedom and autonomy between men and women under a patriarchal system, highlighting the restrictive and oppressive nature of gendered societal norms. *The Good Wife* focuses on the conflict between personal religious identity and external pressures, illustrating how patriarchal system can restrict a woman's autonomy and ability to live according to her own values and beliefs. *The Full Stop* is

the cultural silence and stigma surrounding menstruation in Pakistani society, highlighting the stark contrast between the protagonist's expectations of celebration and the disapproval and secrecy imposed by her family, reflecting broader societal attitudes towards female experiences. *The Lovers* is also a story of gender inequality within a Pakistani family in London in which the girl, Aliya, is treated differently and more strictly than her male cousin, which reflects discrimination and prejudices that dictate that girls must be controlled and limited more than boys. The afore mentioned short stories all in one way the other tell us how different aspects of patriarchal oppression are evident in both personal and social relations. From the dehumanization of women and workplace exploitation to restrictive religious and cultural norms, the selected short stories highlight the systemic nature of gender inequities. They deal with the pervasive impact of patriarchal values on women's autonomy, dignity, and freedom across different spheres of life.

This research article seeks to analyze the depiction of the patriarchal subjugation of women in selected short stories from *Hijabistan* through a feminist theoretical framework. A detailed examination of selected short stories reveals that the selected short stories are saturated with themes of patriarchal dominance and female subjugation. The selected short stories portray women as objects and secondary figures. They reflect how men in their lives shape and control their existence. These female characters are denied autonomy and are constrained by male domination. The subordination of these women is reinforced by the roles and rules imposed by patriarchy.

#### **Research Questions:**

1. How does Sabyn Javeri's selected short stories from *Hijabistan* portray the patriarchal subjugation of women, and what narrative techniques are used to depict the impact of this subjugation on women's lives and identities?
2. In what ways do selected short stories from *Hijabistan* challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms and expectations within the context of feminist literary theory?

#### **Research Objectives:**

1. To analyze the portrayal of patriarchal subjugation in selected short stories from *Hijabistan* by examining the ways in which Javeri's narrative structure, character development, and thematic elements highlight the constraints placed on women by patriarchal norms.
2. To assess the effectiveness of Javeri's critique of gender norms and patriarchal structures in selected short stories from *Hijabistan* through a feminist lens, assessing how the selected short stories contribute to or challenge existing discourses on gender and power in contemporary literature.

#### **Literature Review**

Patriarchy is associated with the mechanisms of male superiority and female subordination. This system is sustained within familial structures, where fathers and husbands are positioned as primary authority figures, exercising ultimate control (Fauzia & Rahayu, 2019). Patriarchy stands as one of the most enduring cultural systems, maintaining its presence across centuries. Regardless of recognition or acknowledgment, this system has repeatedly emerged within different societies throughout history. It is characterized by a network of systems, social structures, and practices that institutionalize male supremacy over women (Walby, 1990). Thus, patriarchal hegemony can be conceptualized as the ideological authority that posits male superiority over females, perpetuating the notion that true equality between the sexes is

unattainable for women. “The word ‘patriarchy’ is likely to figure frequently—as a catch-all word to describe the diverse ills that women suffer from” (Geetha, 2007, p. 4). The society we inhabit is fundamentally patriarchal, where women frequently face subjugation, oppression, and the suppression of fundamental rights, often being relegated to roles as commodities or reproductive instruments. The subjugation and oppression of women have persisted throughout history, with women consistently being marginalized across various societies globally. In patriarchal systems, women’s identities were often rendered invisible prior to the establishment of male dominance. As a result, women have endured a range of challenges, including exploitation, harassment, gender-based discrimination, and body shaming, among others. When women have raised their voices to demand fundamental human rights or address critical issues, patriarchal institutions have frequently responded with hostility. “In a male-dominated and patriarchal structure, women have always been treated as secondary. There is no upliftment of women in a patriarchal and male-dominant structure, as this structure has created hurdles through the so-called social codes and customs” (Bhat, & Riyaz, 2022, p. 297).

Patriarchal dominance has emerged as a prominent theme in the history of English literature. Numerous literary works have both mirrored and critiqued the societal norms and power structures that have historically advantaged men over women. Feminist literature and criticism have played a crucial role in analyzing and contesting these patriarchal themes within English literature. The exploration of patriarchal dominance, which underscores historical and societal power imbalances in favor of men, spans various periods and cultures within English-speaking societies. From early texts to contemporary works, this theme continues to be a complex and persistent subject of literary inquiry.

Khan et al., (2024) argue that Bhutto, in her novel *The Runways*, seeks to challenge the traditional image of women by advocating for the search for self-identity and freedom across all aspects of life. During the 1970s, feminists characterized ‘gender roles’ as restrictive behaviors deemed appropriate for women. However, recent perspectives have shifted to consider gender identities through the lenses of biological sex and sexual orientation. Bhutto’s narrative underscores the necessity for women to pursue their own identities. Despite Anita’s transformation into Layla, her new identity does not improve her social standing. She continues to face mistreatment from Rahim and remains isolated, as evidenced by the observation. “Through her characters Bhutto has worked on the theme of betrayal, violence, discrimination marginalization, and subjugation of women, consequences of choices made, love, determination and search for true identity or right place” (Khan et al., 2024, p. 466).

Subramanian and Jockim (2022) point out that in, *A Respectable Woman*, Easterine Kire focus on the gender limitations within Naga culture, addressing cultural and gender issues with notable insight. As the first North East Indian author to write a novel in English, Kire portrays the lives of three educated women—Kevino, Khonuo, and Beinu—whose experiences reflect the impact of education introduced through Christianity in Nagaland. Konujo, a widow and social teacher, represents economic independence, while Beinu, despite her education and progressive views, succumbs to patriarchal oppression, ultimately leading to her tragic death. Kevino stands out as a defiant figure, challenging gender discrimination and cultural constraints. Kire’s depiction of these female characters critiques entrenched patriarchal structures and advocates for resistance against gender-based subjugation. “Women must question the injustice around them in effective means. They should not become the victim of social constructions like culture, tradition, religion and patriarchy” (Subramanian & Jockim, 2022, p. 3577).

Noreen et al. (2024) argue that Bapsi Sidhwa, recognized as one of Pakistan's leading writers in English, touches upon the persistent struggles of women within the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society in her anthology *Their Language of Love*. The themes of oppression and control are evident in the stories in this anthology through themes such as domestic violence, forced marriage, social isolation, and the enforcement of patriarchal laws. Sidhwa engages herself with issues of women sexuality, an area of concern that is excluded in most of the Pakistani writers, and portrays different female characters who struggle with the suppression that Pakistani tradition and culture impose on women. "Sidhwa's fiction serves as a poignant commentary on the harsh realities faced by women, echoing their resilience amidst adversities" (Noreen et al., 2024, p. 946).

Although Sabyn Javeri's *Hijabistan* received positive reviews, scholarship in English on the novel is still scarce, especially in the light of feminist discourse about patriarchal subjugation of women. Hence, this research article seeks to analyze the portrayal of the patriarchal subjugation of women in selected short stories from *Hijabistan* through a feminist theoretical framework.

### **Research Methodology**

This research article employs a qualitative research design to investigate the portrayal of women's subjugation within the patriarchal framework as depicted in the selected short stories from *Hijabistan*. The study is grounded in Simone de Beauvoir's feminist literary theory, focusing on fundamental concepts such as patriarchy and women's subjugation. Beauvoir (1949) elucidates that in a patriarchal society, women are viewed as the "other", a subordinate minority whose power is diminished relative to that of men. She criticizes patriarchal system's inclination to regard women as "inferior" and men as "superior". The research will involve a detailed analysis of the selected short stories (*Radha*, *The Date*, *The Urge*, *The Good Wife*, *The Full Stop* and *The Lovers*) to identify and examine instances of patriarchal control and the subjugation of women.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Patriarchy is a political and social system which endorses male domination over females in political, social and economic domains. Patriarchy is characterized by the extension of male dominance over women within broader society, as well as the reflection of this dominance in the household, where men exert control over women and children. While men hold power in societal institutions, this does not suggest that women are entirely devoid of rights, power, or resources (Lerner, 1989, p. 239). Patriarchy is a widespread and global social system. Regardless of variations in political, religious, economic, and societal frameworks, authority and leadership have consistently been associated with men across different societies. "Patriarchy is any system of organization (political, economic, religious, or social) that associates authority and leadership primarily with males and in which males fill the vast majority of authority and leadership positions" (Goldberg, 1973, p. 30).

Mahajan (2016) notes that feminism occupies a prominent role in contemporary literature, embodying a modern social, political, economic, and cultural movement that touches upon "the exploitation of women by the patriarchal system of society" (p. 738). Feminism emerged as a reaction to the widespread dominance of men, functioning as a movement dedicated to resisting the marginalization, subordination, and devaluation of women imposed by dominant cultural forces in political, economic, and social realms (Regina & Setyowati, 2020). Feminism critiques the male-dominated structures that shape women's experiences, actively



opposing their systematic exclusion from political, economic, educational, and social opportunities. It also promotes the achievement of equal rights for women in all spheres of life. As a social movement, feminism seeks to empower women by advocating for equal rights and opportunities alongside men. “Feminism tries to dismantle the long-established patriarchal system that subordinates and suppresses women” (Zubair et al., 2020, p.600). The main objective of feminist literary critics is to contest the enduring patriarchal norms that have become entrenched over time. Key themes in this approach encompass the marginalization of women, their pursuit of identity, the struggle for personal autonomy, and the affirmation of the female body (Srinivas, 2022).

Feminists confront the assumptions that relegate women to a secondary status compared to men and reject the restrictive view that limits women’s roles to homemaker, mother, and passive presence. Beauvoir (1949) elucidates how patriarchy creates a hierarchical divide between men and women, placing women at the lowest tier of society. This widespread gender inequality and discrimination have galvanized the feminist movement, which aims to rectify these imbalances and promote equal rights for women in all aspects of life. Beauvoir (1949) observes that in a patriarchal society, women are viewed as the “other”, a subordinate minority whose power is secondary to that of men. She asserts that men are perceived as “the self”, while women are relegated to the status of “the other”. This distinction highlights the patriarchal system’s inclination to categorize women as “inferior” and men as “superior”. Beauvoir (1949) contends that women are condemned “to a mutilated and frozen existence” (p. 390) under patriarchal societal system. Beauvoir (1949) is opposed to idea of inequality between man and woman and thinks that women will arrive at “complete economic and social equality, which will bring about an inner metamorphosis” (p.686).

In conclusion, Beauvoir, the key theorist of this research article, critiques the patriarchal system that divides individuals into two categories: men as sovereign subjects and women as the lowest form of life. The patriarchal system confines women to finding fulfillment solely through subservience and prevents them from recognizing themselves as autonomous subjects. Consequently, women are assigned a secondary status and they face marginalization in all aspects of their lives. An in-depth analysis of selected short stories from *Hijabistan* reveals how the patriarchal system elevates men as sovereign subjects while relegating women to the lowest tier of society, a concept elaborated by Beauvoir.

### **Textual Analysis**

In a patriarchal societal structure, women are relegated to subordinate roles, with their femininity and personal identities constrained by strict, traditional norms. Patriarchy creates gender-based social hierarchies, placing men in dominant, ‘first-class’ positions, while relegating women to a ‘second-class’ status, perpetually subordinate to men. Javeri (2019) addresses feminist concerns and critiques the dominant patriarchal systems that suppress women’s identities in her well-recognized short story collection, *Hijabistan*. In the short story *Radha*, the protagonist, Radha, a call girl, endures severe mistreatment at the hands of her client’s son, Chaudry Sahib. Initially subjected to verbal abuse, she is subsequently physically assaulted. Additionally, the driver, who had previously appeared to be courteous to the girl, disparages her using offensive language while conversing on the phone, unaware that Radha overhears his derogatory comments. This betrayal is particularly painful for Radha, as she had mistakenly viewed the driver as an ally. Through these interactions, Javeri (2019) illuminates the entrenched prejudices and harsh attitudes that men often harbor towards women under a patriarchal societal

structure. In her absence at the gate, the driver spoke on the phone, saying, “Just dropping off an old whore who got beaten up” (Javeri, p. 39). The derogatory remarks from Chaudry Sahib’s son and the driver highlight the broader societal indifference and hostility towards women, which Radha perceives as a direct assault on her dignity. The tone one gets from Radha is utterly angry when she is being derogatorily labeled because she did not expect to be demeaned that way. Javeri (2019) employs this event to show that women have no escape from ignoring and inequality due to the unchallenged male authority. These are not only discriminatory attitudes of individual, but also the result of the continued patriarchal culture of the society subjugating women. The driver’s comments are also indicative of objectification of women and the manner in which they are typecast within a male chauvinist society.

The short story, *The Date* is a story of an office worker who suffers from exploitation by her boss. It is exemplified when the boss starts the process of power harassment by giving the protagonist a scarf by force, as a start of the harassment. He then asks her that let them meet outside the office environment to which she cannot say no or even resist due to her politeness. Finally, she succumbs to his authority and thus stays as an obedient woman who has been trained to give in. It widens the desk experience of objectification of the office girl in this chosen metropolis, Karachi, because of her subjugated status. The story highlights a broader pattern of abuse, revealing that this is not an isolated incident but rather a recurrent behavior by the boss, who has similarly exploited other female employees in the past. This recurring theme serves as a stark illustration of patriarchal subjugation, where the woman is reduced to an object of exploitation rather than being regarded as a professional individual. Javeri’s (2019) story *The Date* effectively illustrates the systemic exploitation present in the workplace, highlighting how the protagonist is viewed not merely as an employee but as an object for abuse, aligning with Beauvoir’s concept of objectification.

In short story, *The Urge*, the female character expresses a profound sense of envy towards the freedoms afforded to men. She articulates her discontent with the observation that men possess unrestricted liberty across various domains and can act according to their desires without constraint. This sentiment is conveyed through her reflections on the stark contrast between her own restricted circumstances and the perceived autonomy enjoyed by men. The girl articulates: “I used to envy their freedom to do what they liked when they liked” (Javeri, 2019, p.18). She also mentions many restrictions placed on women by patriarchal societal system. The freedom enjoyed by men is denied to women; for example, men can pee in the street, or wherever they like and do not feel shame about it. On the other hand, women are restricted. They do not think doing such a thing and they are not allowed even to freely move as they wish to do so. The girl thinks that by observing the veil, women feel sheltered as the veil restricts their movement. Women do not enjoy their lives as compared to men. They are restricted and put under the subordination of men. She is worried about her existence; her movement is restricted. In the story, the girl’s uncle enters into a marriage with a significantly younger woman. As the girl’s aunt and a contemporary, she develops a friendship with the new wife. However, the uncle disapproves of their relationship and harbors a general disdain for their interactions. His suspicion towards their emotional connection results in a constant scrutiny of their behavior. The girl reflects on her uncle’s conduct, describing it as overly watchful and intrusive, which creates a pervasive atmosphere of surveillance over their friendship. She talks about her uncle’s behaviour who detests make-up cosmetics calling them “the devil’s opium” (Javeri, 2019, p.19). In the short story, both young women have a close affinity for cosmetics and a desire to present

themselves attractive. However, their uncle's stringent disapproval of their appearance and activities creates a stifling environment for them. His constant surveillance scrutinizes their every action, imposing limitations on their freedom. The girls harbor aspirations to venture outside, engage in shopping, and enjoy life to its fullest, yet these desires are thwarted by pervasive patriarchal restrictions. They are mandated to adhere to the veil and are forbidden from exposing themselves to strangers, reflecting a broader pattern of patriarchal control. Such constraints are emblematic of gendered expectations that enforce specific roles upon women, compelling them to conform without protest or face repercussions.

The short story, *The Good Wife* focuses on a Pakistani couple residing in London, where the wife chooses to observe the hijab, a decision that her husband strongly opposes. Despite his persistent efforts to dissuade her, she remains steadfast in her commitment to wearing the veil. The husband's objections are framed in terms of practicality and cultural incongruity, as he argues that the hijab is an unnecessary burden, particularly in the context of their life in London. His resistance highlights the tension between personal religious practices and the perceived norms of their new environment, illustrating the broader conflicts that can arise when cultural and religious practices intersect with differing personal beliefs and societal expectations. He states, "You ... you don't feel odd walking through the streets of London with people looking at you suspiciously? Like you're carrying a ton of explosives under your clothes" (Javeri, 2019, p.160)? The husband perceives his wife's choice to wear the veil as peculiar, while she regards it as an essential aspect of her religious identity. She defends her decision by explaining that the hijab is integral to her sense of self and cultural heritage, providing her with comfort and a sense of belonging. She articulates her perspective by asserting that the hijab is an essential aspect of her identity and cultural expression, emphasizing that it signifies her Muslim identity and marks her presence. Additionally, she questions the Western perception of the hijab as a symbol of submission. The short story, *The Good Wife* illustrates the husband's undue influence and interference in his wife's personal freedom, highlighting how his objections prevent her from living in alignment with her own values and aspirations. In a patriarchal system, women often lack the autonomy to determine what is best for themselves and are, instead, constrained by roles and expectations imposed patriarchal societal structure. They are frequently compelled to adhere to these dictates without the freedom to challenge them.

Patriarchy belittles the world of women by creating the four walls and advocates the notion that in a society there is only one entity, the male, that wields power, and it is this power which determines its relation to the "other". It is "sexual politics" that defines the women to be passive, meek and humble. (Ansari, 2018, p. 96)

*The Full Stop* centers on Aussia, who, upon reaching puberty, eagerly anticipates sharing the news with her parents, expecting them to respond with joy. However, their reaction is unexpectedly peculiar, leaving Aussia perplexed and disheartened. Her parents' response deviates sharply from her expectations, placing her in a difficult position as she struggles to reconcile their unusual behavior with her anticipation of a positive acknowledgment. Javeri (2019) extrapolates this situation to the broader Pakistani context through the character's experiences, illustrating that menstruation is depicted as an event to be suppressed and hidden rather than celebrated. According to Javeri (2019), this portrayal reflects a transition from honor to shame, from friendship to humiliation, and from love to fear. Initially, Aussia's mother reacts as though something dire has occurred, and her father appears dismayed by the news of his



daughter's puberty. This response leads Aussia to realize that, in this cultural context, the onset of puberty is often met with disapproval rather than celebration. She finds it surprising and disconcerting to witness such an unexpected shift in her parents' attitude. Having anticipated that her puberty would be met with joy and festivity, as she had read about in American literature, Aussia is unable to understand the rationale behind her parents' peculiar reaction. This stark contrast between her expectations and her parents' response underscores her confusion and the cultural disparity she faces. Javeri (2019) describes Aussia's situation by illustrating how, in her region, menstrual pads are discreetly wrapped in brown paper bags to conceal them, films addressing menstruation are prohibited, and there is a cultural tendency to deny and suppress this natural aspect of life. Girls are "called impure, *napak* and unclean" (Javeri, 2019, p. 93). Consequently, her parents choose not to discuss the matter, indicating that Aussia's revelation about her puberty is relegated to a private and unspoken realm. This silence reflects a broader cultural practice where discussions about such personal developments are avoided, illustrating how girls are often discouraged from openly addressing their private experiences within the family. This behavior underscores the way in which female matters are treated with secrecy and reticence, revealing the broader pattern of discouragement and lack of openness surrounding women's personal issues in the family context.

The short story, *The Lovers* centers on a Pakistani family residing in London, highlighting gender-based disparities within the family dynamic. Aliya, a young woman, frequently faces reprimand and suspicion from her aunt, reflecting a scrutinizing attitude toward her behavior. Conversely, her male cousin remains largely unnoticed and unexamined by family members. His status as a male affords him a level of immunity from the scrutiny and suspicion that Aliya endures, illustrating the differential treatment based on gender within the family structure. The aunt advises Aliya to be wary of unfamiliar men, cautioning her that men in their country often have ulterior motives and cannot be trusted. The aunt's warnings are directed exclusively at Aliya, with no similar scrutiny applied to the boys or their activities. This disparity highlights the differential treatment of girls, who are subjected to strict adherence to family codes, stereotypes, and taboos. The boys, conversely, are exempt from such warnings. Despite this, Aliya is recognized and rewarded for her poetic talents, receiving appreciation and a prize for her work. This recognition serves as a counterpoint to the otherwise unequal treatment she experiences within her family. But her aunt discourages her moves and activities by uttering disappointingly bitter remarks before her mother. Her aunt critiques the influence of poetry and romance on girls, expressing concern that such influences might lead to inappropriate ideas and behaviors among young women: "All this poetry-shoetry is not good for our girls" (Javeri, 2019, p. 57). Although Aliya's mother places her trust in her daughter, her aunt's views are markedly critical. This reflects the broader societal tendency to treat girls as "other" and to impose strange and unfair attitudes towards them. Aliya, having reached puberty, is viewed with suspicion, and there is a pressure for her to marry quickly to alleviate the perceived threat her presence poses. The aunt believes that adolescent girls should not engage in activities such as composing poetry, fearing that it might lead them into romantic entanglements. She also maintains that girls should not be allowed to go out to play with boys, as she believes that it would be in the worst interest of the girl child as she is likely to ruin her reputation and future. On the other hand, the activities of the boys in the household go largely unnoticed and unexamined. Their actions do not attract attention and are not limited in the same way as girls' actions are limited. This has a tendency to

show that boys are favoured and that the gender bias that is evident within families is still the order of the day.

### Conclusion

A feminist analysis of the selected short stories from *Hijabistan* reveals that *Hijabistan* is a feminist work, illustrating how patriarchal social structures exploit women, reducing them to mere instruments and relegating them to the status of second-class citizens—viewed as inferior, marginalized, and subaltern figures. It demonstrates that patriarchy serves as the fundamental source of women’s systemic exploitation and marginalization, upheld by the manipulation of religious practices to justify male dominance. The patriarchal system reinforces the subjugation, exploitation, and marginalization of women. Male characters in the selected short stories are depicted as indifferent to women and this demonstrates the oppressive patriarchy that confines women. Under patriarchal societal structure, women are relegated to subordinate roles, with their femininity and personal identities constrained by strict, traditional norms. Patriarchy creates gender-based social hierarchies, placing men in dominant, ‘first-class’ positions, while relegating women to a ‘second-class’ status, perpetually subordinate to men. Javeri (2019), the writer, paints a true picture of women and the various adversities they go through in their daily lives to highlight such factors as repression, sexuality, dominance, and inheritance, hence giving a clear picture of the worst fate that faces women.

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