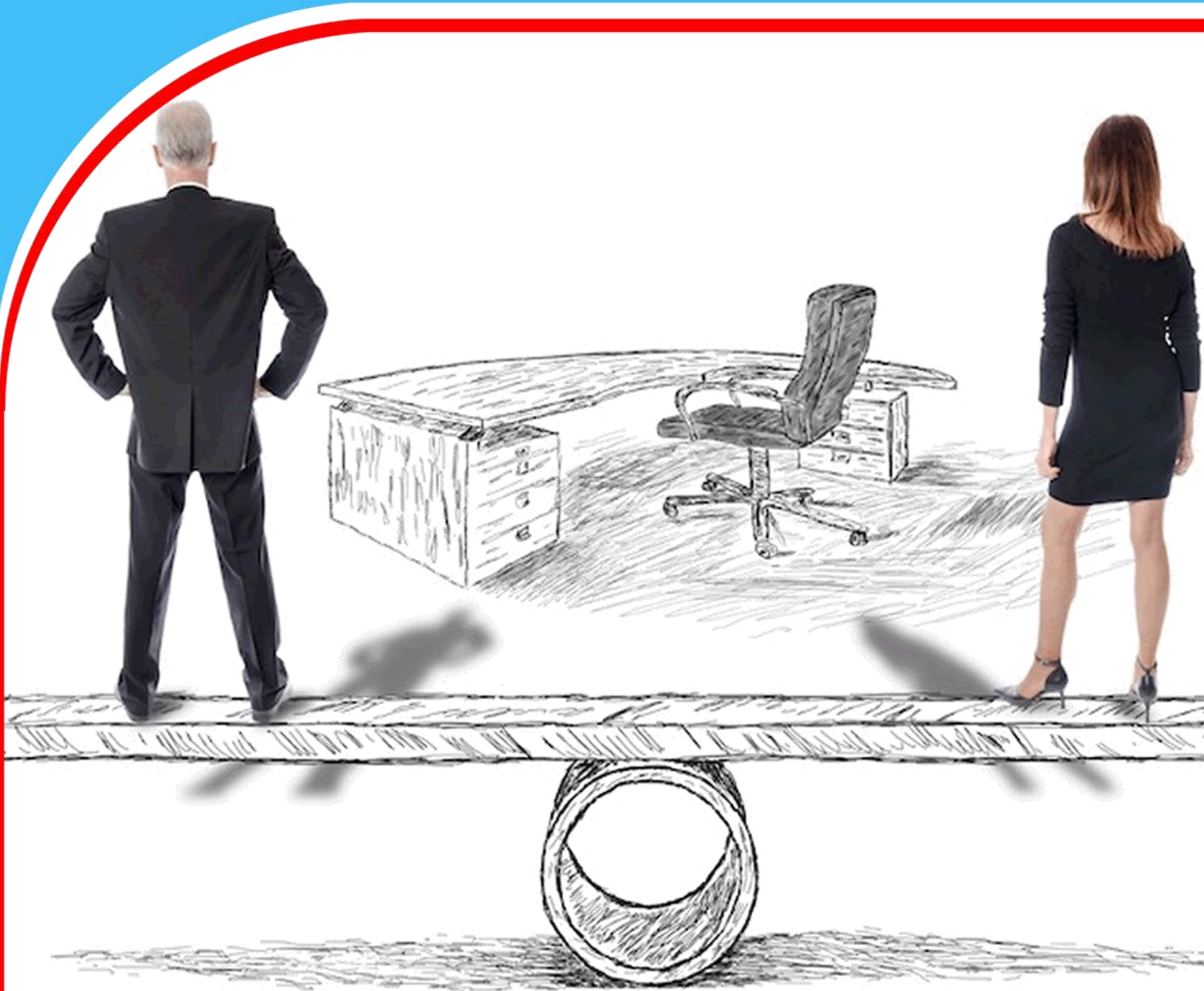


European Journal of Gender Studies (EJGS)




**Tyrannizing Diversity: Feminist Politics and Sectarian
Strife in Aslam's The Golden Legend**

Sameera Arshad & Dr. Ayesha Akram



Tyrannizing Diversity: Feminist Politics and Sectarian Strife in Aslam's *The Golden Legend*

 Sameera Arshad^{1*} & Dr. Ayesha Akram²

¹Research Scholar at Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore

*Corresponding Author's Email: sameeraacheema@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor at Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Co-Author's Email: ayeshaakram.english@pu.edu.pk



Article history

Submitted 09.07.2023 Revised Version Received 07.08.2023 Accepted 07.08.2023

Abstract

The Golden Legend (2017) by Nadeem Aslam is a fictional work that explores the intersectional issues of women's oppression and sectarian violence in Pakistani society. The present study aims to examine the depiction of women's oppression, exploitation and the marginalization in Aslam's *The Golden Legend*. It seeks to unveil the patriarchal structures that exist in Pakistani society and contribute to gender oppression faced by women on a daily basis. Sylvia Walby's work, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), serves as the primary text for this research, which outlines six interdependent patriarchal structures, including patriarchal production mode, patriarchal paid work relations, male violence, patriarchal state, patriarchal culture, and patriarchal relations in sexuality. The research employs these structures to demonstrate how they work together to promote the ideology of patriarchal tyrants in society. Additionally, the study also highlights sectarian

oppression to bring attention to the injustices faced by women from different sects. The research argues that the intersection of gender and sect is one of the major factors that exacerbate oppression in any society, which is why women from different sects are often subjected to coercion, as portrayed by Aslam in *The Golden Legend*. The research seeks to shed light on the urgent need to eradicate patriarchal and sectarian ideologies that perpetuate oppression in society. Therefore, the study first exposes the oppressive patriarchal structures in contemporary Pakistani society and then brings to light the oppression faced by women of the Christian faith due to their gender and sect.

Keywords: *Intersectional Oppression, Systematic Violence, Marginalization, Sectarianism, Oppressive Patriarchal Structures.*

List of Abbreviations

TGL *The Golden Legend*

TP *Theorizing Patriarchy*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gender-based oppression and discrimination are ubiquitous and deeply entrenched in all societies worldwide. Women are targeted, victimized, and marginalized by agents of tyranny who are imbued with a patriarchal mind set. The use of both verbal and physical violence by men with patriarchal beliefs serve to weaken women both emotionally and physically, perpetuating their subjugation. The patriarchal ideologies espoused by male-dominated societies serve to promote the superiority of men and the inferiority of women, further reinforcing oppressive patriarchal structures that are deeply ingrained in society.

This forms the crux of the research endeavour, which is primarily based on Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017). The objective of the research is to shed light on the oppression of women, which is brought about by these oppressive patriarchal structures that contribute to the construction of a patriarchal society. The research contends that Pakistani women are subjected to exploitation and marginalization by tyrannical men on a daily basis, rendering them emotionally and physically vulnerable. By exploring the patriarchal structures that are woven into the fabric of Pakistani society, the research aims to reveal the mechanisms by which these structures operate, thus exposing the ideology of patriarchal tyrants and highlighting the oppression of women.

In addition to the discussion of patriarchal oppression, the research delves into the issue of sectarian strife in Pakistani society. While Muslims comprise the majority in the Islamic state, individuals of varying races, ethnicities, religions, and social classes live as minorities in the country, with a deep-seated intolerance for those of differing sects, religions, or ethnicities. Women from minority groups are subjected to routine discrimination and exploitation. Hence, the intersection of gender and sect serves as a major factor contributing to the oppression of women, with women from different sects in Pakistani society facing an added layer of oppression.

The research, primarily based on Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017), centres around these two crucial points. Firstly, the research emphasizes the prevalence of women's exploitation in patriarchal Pakistani society. Secondly, it highlights the additional layer of oppression faced by women belonging to the Christian faith due to their gender and sect. Both points are thoroughly examined and debated in the research.

Nadeem Aslam is a British Pakistani novelist known for exploring unique themes in his works. His novels often focus on marginalized sections of society, addressing issues such as war, terrorism, multiculturalism, patriarchal social structures, religious intolerance, identity crises, powerlessness, and women's marginalization. Aslam himself acknowledges his inclination to be a voice outside the majority. He has published five novels to date, all of which have received global recognition and praise. Some of his notable awards include the Betty Trask and Author's Club First Novel Award for *Season of the Rainbirds* (1993), the Encore Award and Kiriyaama Prize for *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), and a shortlisting for the International Dublin Literary Award. His novels *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) and *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) have also garnered significant acclaim, addressing themes such as war, terrorism, women's oppression, religious intolerance, and the abuse of power.

The Golden Legend (2017) is the most recent work of Nadeem Aslam and is used as a primary text in the research. *The Golden Legend* (2017) contains eight sections, and these eight sections are further divided into forty chapters. For this work, Aslam has combined all the prominent themes of his previous novels and linked them together to write the story of this novel. For instance, the text discusses the miserable life condition of the lower and vulnerable strata of Pakistani society. It highlights the international social and political conflicts and unravels how

these conflicts influence the country's common people. Other than that, Aslam brings to light the cruel occupation of Indian forces over Kashmir and the plight of Kashmiris. This work also critiques, and around which this research is constructed, the discrimination that the vulnerable and the poor especially women face based on gender and sect. To further elaborate on this point, the novel deconstructs the patriarchal social structures of Pakistani society and critiques conservative Pakistani norms for women. All these thematic ideas combine to make Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017) a truly phenomenal novel.

The preeminent theme that forms the crux of the research centers around the wretchedness and oppression endured by women in a male-dominated Pakistani society. The female characters, namely Aysha, Seraphina, Margaret, Helen, and Nargis, are scrutinized in the research to elucidate this point. To illuminate this aspect, the research incorporates Sylvia Walby's patriarchy theory as a basis for analysis. In her work, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), Walby expounds on her ideology of patriarchy and introduces the concepts of private and public patriarchy, explaining how patriarchy operates at domestic and societal levels. These notions facilitate an interpretation of the oppression faced by women in Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017).

Additionally, Walby posits six interdependent patriarchal structures, also utilized in the research, that constitute a system of patriarchy. These include patriarchal relations within waged labor, a patriarchal mode of production where women's labor is expropriated by their husbands, the patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal culture. These structures aid in decoding the women's oppression depicted by Aslam in *The Golden Legend* (2017).

By leveraging Walby's theory of patriarchy, the researcher endeavors to bring to light the patriarchal structures ingrained in Pakistani society and expose how women are marginalized by this oppressive framework. Through the portrayal of oppressed women in a patriarchal Pakistani society, Aslam amplifies the plight of Pakistani women who are voiceless in a male-dominated society. The author employs characters like Aysha to illustrate the anguish and vulnerability of women in a conservative society. Additionally, the oppression experienced by women from minority groups is highlighted by Aslam's portrayal of Helen, Margaret, Seraphina, and Grace. To emphasize the discrimination faced by women based on gender and sect, the research cites various articles on intersectional oppression.

Hence, the objective of the research is to bring to light the subordination and exploitation faced by Pakistani women in an oppressive patriarchal society. Furthermore, the research underscores the sectarian conflict present in Pakistani society by highlighting the oppression faced by women belonging to the Christian faith.

The research aims to construct the paper around the following research questions:

1. To what extent does Nadeem Aslam's portrayal of female characters provide evidence for Walby's theory of patriarchy, and how does Aslam effectively uncover the deeply ingrained patriarchal structure prevailing in Pakistan through his depiction of women's segregation?
2. In what manner does Nadeem Aslam's narrative reveal the subjugation faced by Christian women within the context of sectarianism, thereby asserting the significance of both gender and sect as primary factors contributing to oppression?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The research paper "Violence and Hope in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*" by Vandana Sukheeja analyses the novel by examining violent events alongside episodes of hope. The paper

highlights the traumatic experiences faced by pan-national and pan-religious people and compares episodes of violence with those of hope. The paper argues that intolerance for difference has led to chaos and violence in society and gives examples of the Muslim community sidelining the Christian community. The paper concludes that the author has given a message of hope, and the world can become a better place if people develop a tolerance for each other.

Furthermore, a research paper titled, “Murderous siblings: Corrupt religion and poisonous politics in Nadeem Aslam's poignant, intelligent new novel” published in 2017 by Rupert Shortt highlights the oppression faced by Christians in the Muslim majority Pakistani society. The research refers to a true incident that happened in the country back in 2009. A rumor spread in the town of Gojra that Christians have thrown the pieces of scriptures of the Quran during a wedding instead of throwing money. As a result, forty houses of Christians were set on fire by Muslims. And eight Christians were burnt alive, a child included. By quoting this incident, the researcher highlights the oppression and marginalization of Christians in the Muslim majority Pakistani society.

A research paper titled, “Contesting the Myth of Purity: An Analysis of Nadeem Aslam’s *The Golden Legend* in the Light of Jean-Luc Nancy’s Insights” published in 2018 by Sumandeep Kaur highlights the violence faced by minorities in the Muslim majority community of Pakistan. By employing Jean Luc’s ideology, the research unravels how the concept of ‘pure’ land has affected multiculturalism in Pakistan. The idea of pure land has raised intolerance for diversity and other cultures. The researcher by critiquing the idea of pure land proposes that Pakistan is a state where minorities also reside. The researcher thus proposes that diversity and complexity should be wholeheartedly acknowledged in the country by the community.

The research paper by Ibn Mu’ad titled “Religious Discrimination against Christian Pakistani Portrayed in Nadeem Aslam’s *The Golden Legend*” discusses religious discrimination in Pakistani society. The paper explores the different kinds of religious discrimination, the causes of discrimination, and how discrimination is highlighted in the text. The research argues that Pakistan being a Muslim majority state leads to inevitable dominance and power over minorities, resulting in direct and indirect discrimination against Christians. The paper uses the concepts of individual and institutional discrimination, and direct and indirect discrimination, and highlights incidents of discrimination portrayed in the text. The causes of discrimination discussed are religious prejudice and religious hatred, and the paper reflects upon the discrimination faced by Christian Pakistanis at the hands of Muslims.

Another research paper published in 2020, “Diasporic Intertextual Musings: The Relevance of Classical Urdu Poetry to Contemporary Pakistani Situation in Nadeem Aslam’s *The Golden Legend*”, by the researchers Amra Raza and Qurratulaen Liaqat highlight Aslam’s rich use of his native language and literature in his well-acknowledged fiction *The Golden Legend*. The researchers construct the research around the point that Aslam celebrates classical Urdu literature as he incorporates classical Urdu poetry’s diction, symbols, and metaphors in his narration. Moreover, Urdu expressions like Zamana and chaaragar as well as spatial structures like ‘garden’ and ‘Cordoba Mosque’ are of great importance since these expressions connect the narration with classical Urdu literature. The research utilizes the concept of intertextuality introduced by Julia Kristeva and Gerard Genette. Furthermore, the researchers argue that Aslam uses his native language and literature in his work, not randomly but rather deliberately, to bring to light the relevance of classical Urdu fiction to the contemporary situation of Pakistan. Thus, this research paper is significant as it highlights the relevance of classical Urdu poetry to present-day Pakistan.

The research paper titled “Concept of Nationalism Employed in The Golden Legend by Nadeem Aslam” by Shaista Shehzadi et al analyzes the novel through the lens of nationalism theory proposed by Benedict Anderson. The paper discusses how the novel portrays the theme of nationalism and factors that contribute to it, using characters such as Nargis, Masud, Helen, Lily, and Imran as examples. The paper highlights the idea of a nation as a political community that is imagined as sovereignty, and how this idea unites people as a community. The paper also discusses how the novel portrays the game of religion played by political authorities and how it affects the nation. The paper concludes that the novel depicts the Pakistani nation and its communities, and what it means to act like one nation.

In a 2021 paper titled "Muslim/Christian Polarities in Pakistan: A Holistic Model Analysis of Pre-emptive Religious Conversion in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*," Qurratulaen Liaqat discusses the conversion of the protagonist Margaret to Nargis in the novel. The researcher employs the Holistic Model to analyze Margaret's conversion and argues that it is a result of the patriarchal structure of society and the tyranny of the religious majority. The paper provides references from the novel to support this argument and compares Margaret's fake conversion to the mythical character Narcissus, who also took on a fake identity to hide his real identity.

Another significant research paper titled, “Reading as Resistance Practicing Literacy and Interconnection in Nadeem Aslam’s *The Golden Legend*” published in 2022 by Beth Miller highlights multiplicity of voices that Aslam has incorporated in his novel. The researcher further discusses how Aslam’s novel is a global scale narrative since it highlights international social and political conflicts. Also, the novel moves from the life of an individual to the country level and then to the global level. The researcher also talks about *They Might Know Each Other* which is a text within a text. Through this text within the text, Aslam draws connection of history to the present day. The book also talks about East and West as well as highlights individual and global level conflicts. However, the novel does not only talk about the conflicts but also gives hope to the readers. The researcher argues that Aslam provides textual resistance by allowing its characters to find a connection with one another.

Thus, all the above-mentioned research projects have discussed significant themes of Aslam’s fiction, for instance, religious intolerance, nationalism, violence, and hope, language deconstruction, religious conversion, and identity crises. Nonetheless, the cardinal theme of the novel, namely, the subjugation of women under patriarchal hegemony, has hitherto eluded scholarly scrutiny. Consequently, the fundamental objective of this study is to illuminate the insidious influence of patriarchal and sectarian tyranny and its antecedents and consequences in modern-day Pakistani society.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative and is based upon the comprehensive textual evaluation of Nadeem Aslam’s *The Golden Legend*. Sylvia Walby’s work, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990) is also used as a primary text. Walby’s ideas are employed in the research step by step to construct the thesis in an organized manner. This qualitative research explores how patriarchal structures operate in the city of Zamana to subjugate, suppress, and sideline women. Walby's concepts of private and public patriarchy and six patriarchal structures are employed to unravel oppressive patriarchal structures. The research contends that patriarchy is not natural but rather deliberately structured to suppress women's position and strengthen men's superiority in society. The terms oppression and patriarchy are frequently utilized to argue that men misuse their power to oppress women, creating a patriarchal and oppressed society. The research also

refers to Kimberley Crenshaw's intersectionality to highlight intersectional oppression faced by women of the Christian faith.

Sylvia Walby proposes two forms of patriarchy i.e., private patriarchy and public patriarchy. These two forms of patriarchy, i.e., private patriarchy and public patriarchy are employed in the research to deconstruct the oppressive patriarchal structures which have been highlighted in the primary text. While defining private patriarchy, Walby asserts that “private patriarchy is based upon the relative exclusion of women from areas of social life apart from the household, with a patriarch appropriating women’s service individually and directly in the apparently private sphere of the home” (TP 228).

On the other hand, public patriarchy “does not exclude women from certain sites, but rather subordinates women in all of them. In this form the appropriation of women takes place more collectively than individually” (TP 228). After discussing these two forms of patriarchy, Walby goes on to introduce six partially interdependent patriarchal structures around which this research is constructed. In *Theorizing Patriarchy*, she argues, “I think that there are six main patriarchal structures which together constitute a system of patriarchy. These are a patriarchal mode of production in which women's labor is expropriated by their husbands; patriarchal relations within waged labor; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal culture” (TP 220). Walby believes that these six patriarchal structures are exercised with one another to promote women’s subordination and maintain male superiority. To relate these six patriarchal structures to the primary text, it is first imperative to comprehend these six structures.

The six patriarchal structures, as proposed by Walby, form the bedrock of a patriarchal society. The first structure focuses on the unequal treatment of women in the workplace, with women being deemed less competent and paid less than men. The second structure concerns the patriarchal mode of production in households, whereby women are burdened with chores that go unrecognized and unacknowledged by male family members. The third structure highlights the influence of culture in perpetuating male dominance, with customs, values, and norms reinforcing gender inequality. The fourth structure, sexuality, underscores the sexual double standards and marginalization women face due to their sex. The fifth structure, violence, exposes the various forms of violence that men perpetrate against women, including rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and workplace harassment. Lastly, the patriarchal state is structured in such a way as to maintain male dominance, promote women's oppression, and perpetuate the very structures that sustain a patriarchal society. This research uses Walby's framework to examine the oppressive patriarchal structures portrayed in Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017).

The aim of this research is to highlight that patriarchal society is not just a single dominant structure, but it encompasses six patriarchal structures. These structures, according to Walby, are central to creating an oppressive patriarchal society. The research applies Walby's concept to analyze the patriarchal society portrayed in Nadeem Aslam's novel *The Golden Legend* (2017). Moreover, the study discusses the suffering of Christian women living in a Muslim-majority society, using Walby's ideology of sectarian oppression to expose the intersectional oppression faced by women. Kimberley Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is also used to illustrate the oppression of Christian women and give a voice to their suffering. Gender and sect are identified as the two primary reasons for intersectional oppression experienced by Christian women, and the research highlights the multiple oppressions faced by women due to these factors.

Patriarchal Oppression

The patriarchal ideology is a set of norms and cultural practices that promote male dominance and restrict women to conservative roles in society. It is not an inherent characteristic but rather a learned behaviour that is reinforced by society and state. Men are taught to be violent and emotionally superior to women, leading to a stereotypical patriarchal mindset. The state remains indifferent to women's oppression, thus further propagating the patriarchal ideology. Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017) illustrates the oppressive patriarchal structures that operate in society and how they are strengthened by both society and state. The female characters in the novel, such as Aysha, Margaret, Seraphina, and Helen, exemplify the plight of oppressed women in patriarchal societies.

First, the term patriarchy is significant to understand the patriarchal system which runs in a society. Sylvia Walby in her book, *Theorizing Patriarchy* defines patriarchy as “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (TP 214). According to Walby, social structures in society are designed in such a way that they promote patriarchal ideology. Walby further believes that patriarchal ideology is constructed by the social structures of society. To highlight this point, Walby asserts that “social structure is important here since it implies a rejection of both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one” (TP 214).

Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017) accurately portrays the society that Walby refers to. In the text, the fictional city of Zamana is used as an example to unravel the patriarchal structures that are deeply embedded in Pakistani society. The women who reside in this city are taken as examples to bring to light the daily oppression and subordination faced by Pakistani women. The character of Aysha, for instance, is very significant as it unravels the typical Pakistani patriarchal culture very vividly. Aysha becomes a widow at a very young age and comes back to her father's house with her child Billu. Aysha's life becomes miserable in her own home. Her cousin named Shakeel when hears about her father's attempt to remarry Aysha comes into her home and starts living there to ensure that she does not get married again. Shakeel is a true demonstration of a stereotypical patriarch who thinks of himself as the protector of Ayesha. He strictly prohibits Ayesha's father to not marrying her again. Furthermore, Ayesha leads a robotic life where she must do all the household chores in time. Her life has been made miserable by her cousin who feels superior to oppress and dominate Aysha. It truly fulfills the definition of oppression stated in a book entitled *Political Sociology, Oppression, Resistance and the State* by Davita Silfen Glasberg and Deric Shannon “Oppression is not simply about one or more groups' deprivation or exploitation; it is a relationship. To speak of some people's disadvantage is to imply others' privilege” (Glasberg and Shannon 18). Aysha's victimization demonstrates Shakeel's dominance and privilege.

Before discussing the six partially interdependent patriarchal structures, it is imperative to discuss the two main types of patriarchy proposed by Walby in, *Theorizing Patriarchy*. These two main types are public and private patriarchy. Walby defines private patriarchy as “Private patriarchy is based upon the relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life apart from the household, with a patriarch appropriating women's service individually and directly in the apparently private sphere of the home” (TP 228). This type of patriarchal oppression is experienced by women in their households by their fathers, husband, or brother. In the text, the character of Ayesha is a victim of private patriarchy. Aysha faces oppression within the four walls of her own house by Shakeel. Shakeel is an accurate portrayal of a typical patriarch who subordinates Aysha and does not let her go outside the house. She is responsible for all the

house chores like cooking, cleaning, and ironing. Shakeel comes along with his companions and starts living with the cleric and her daughter to ensure that martyr's widow does not remarry. "Her perspective husbands were warned off. One man who persisted was beaten so severely he had lost an eye. Moreover, when Aysha's husband reveals his desire of remarrying, Aysha decides to go back to her husband. Her husband announces that he is willing to divorce Aysha but their son Billu will stay with him" (TGL 71). So, Ayesha being a mother could not leave her child and returns with her husband in Waziristan. This means she had to accept the second marriage of her husband.

She agrees to live with her husband's second wife only because of her son. This reveals the vulnerability and helplessness of motherhood. On the other hand, the second form of patriarchy defined by Walby is public patriarchy. The theorist defines this form as "Public patriarchy does not exclude women from certain sites, but rather subordinates women in all of them. In this form, the appropriation of women takes place more collectively than individually" (TP 228). So, in this form of patriarchy, women are exploited and subordinated collectively by society and the state. To reveal how public patriarchy functions in a society, Aslam sketches a character named Seraphina who is Margaret's sister. She works in a jewelry shop but is accused of misplacing some money therefore when arrested by the police she is harassed and beaten by them. Thus, it could be interpreted that in *The Golden Legend* (2017), oppression faced by women by both forms of patriarchy i.e., private and public patriarchy is highlighted.

Furthermore, according to Walby, private and public patriarchy can be further divided into six patriarchal structures. Walby asserts, "In each of these forms the same six structures exist but have different levels of importance in the subordination of women" (TP 229).

Therefore, Walby constructs her theory of patriarchy around these six patriarchal structures. She states, "I think that there are six main patriarchal structures which together constitute a system of patriarchy. These are a patriarchal mode of production in which women's labor is expropriated by their husbands; patriarchal relations within waged labor; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal culture" (TP 220). Walby's six partially interdependent patriarchal structures play a significant role in strengthening the roots of patriarchy. In the text, the female characters mainly Ayesha, Nargis, Seraphina, and Helen are portrayed as the victims of oppression. The research discusses these four characters by utilizing Walby's concept of patriarchy.

The first structure Walby introduces is the patriarchal mode of production. Walby describes this structure as labor without any payment or even acknowledgment. In this category, the typical Pakistani women come who are not allowed to go out. They are taught to be perfect house women and are expected to do all the house chores without any objection. In the text, the character of Aysha is truly a victim of the patriarchal mode of production. All house chores including cooking, cleaning, and taking care of everyone are her duty. She wakes up early in the morning to make breakfast for her father. As in the text, Massud notices the smell of bread coming from the mosque after the dawn prayer. Massud thinks that "this is the man's daughter rising at this hour to prepare a meal for him" (TGL 7). While describing this type of patriarchal structure, Walby asserts: "The work performed by the woman may range from cooking and cleaning for the husband to caring for their children. Women, as housewives, perform this work for husbands (and, in certain circumstances, as daughters for fathers)" (TP 221). This form of production, according to Walby, expects women to do all the house labor without any payment or even acknowledgment.

Thus, the patriarchal mode of production encourages men to oppress and exploit women as shown by Aslam's portrayal of Aysha. Aysha is responsible not just for all the house chores

but also to bring up her child. She prepares the food for his child, dresses him, and gets him ready for school. Also, she is expected to do all the house chores of Shakeel too who is her oppressor. Shakeel even does not like Aysha using mobile. He does not think that women are worthy enough to have a mobile phone. One day when she hears Aysha's phone ringing, he says "Why does a woman need a phone anyway? she heard him say. Especially a woman in your situation" (TGL 190). This unravels the misery of being a woman in a patriarchal society. Instead of being grateful to Aysha for doing all his chores, Shakeel constantly makes her realize her worthlessness and helplessness.

Furthermore, Walby asserts "There are three stages to my claim: firstly, that the domestic division of labor is a major form of differentiation of men and women; secondly, that this has significant effects on other aspects of social relations; thirdly, that this in itself is a form of significant inequality" (TP 221). Walby's claim is accurately highlighted by Aslam. Aysha is responsible for cooking on time, cleaning the house, and doing all other chores without complaining. She does not have the freedom to go outside the house. It is not wrong to say that Aysha is living in a prison where she has no freedom to go out even if "all its (room's) windows are boarded up" (TGL 191) while the men of the house lead a free and independent life.

The second structure proposed by Walby is patriarchal relation with paid work. To describe this structure of patriarchy, Walby argues that women also face oppression and discrimination in the labor market. In Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017), Seraphina is exploited and harassed outside her household by the police. Seraphina's example reveals how women become a target and victims of exploitation and harassment not only in their households but in the outer world as well.

The state is another patriarchal structure that institutionalizes oppression by not playing any significant role in stopping or minimizing the cases of women's oppression. Therefore, state oppression becomes a site of oppression in society, and such culture in society is normalized. Walby defines this patriarchal structure as: "The state is another patriarchal structure. Women are excluded from access to state resources and power as part of a patriarchal system. This is only partly due to women being relatively excluded from a direct presence in the state" (TP 224). Further, Walby believes that this exclusion results in lack of power within women (TP 224).

This implies that the state has a patriarchal nature that does not give any power to women. The state does not impose any laws against women's oppression which further strengthens the roots of women's victimization and thus society becomes a typical site of oppression. Women are excluded and marginalized from state affairs and thus their authority and significance are minimized. This form of patriarchal structure is highlighted in the text *The Golden Legend* (2017). Aslam's story highlights the oppression exercised by the state as the state strengthens the women's oppression by promoting the patriarchal ideology. In the text, the character of Seraphina becomes a target of the state's oppression. She works in a jewelry store but is arrested because some money goes missing in the finances of the store. The irregularities in the store were restored soon and the case was resolved. However, Seraphina is beaten and harassed by some police officers. The police are one of the most significant departments of the state whose duty is to implement the laws and ensure the safety of the citizens however the police themselves turns out to be the one risking the safety of the citizens. So as Aslam writes "One day she would discover the terrifying ways the world had of reminding a human being of her true insignificance" (TGL 153). Seraphina learns of her true insignificance after the brutal treatment of the police. The example of Seraphina being beaten, harassed, and raped by the police is a significant example of the state's oppression and unfair treatment. Also, it helps to

understand the patriarchal oppression exercised by the state as highlighted by Walby in *Theorizing Patriarchy*.

Another significant patriarchal structure highlighted by Walby is male violence. Walby asserts that men enforce their power over women through violence. They beat women, harass and exploit them and thus make them weak and vulnerable both emotionally and physically. While describing male violence as a patriarchal structure, Walby states:

“Men use violence as a form of power over women. Not all men actively need to use this potential power for it to have an impact on most women. It has a regular social form and, as a result of women's well-founded expectations of its routine nature, has consequences for women's actions. It is constituted as a set of various practices including rape, wife- beating, father/daughter incest, flashing, sexual harassment at work, sexual assault” (TP 224).

Walby, therefore, argues that men exercise violence to enforce their superiority and authority over women. This violence can be both emotional as well as physical. In Aslam's text, this very patriarchal structure is highlighted by the example of Seraphina. Seraphina is harassed and beaten brutally by police. Aslam highlights this harassment to bring to light the male violence which is exercised by men collectively. This incident leaves a deep mark on Seraphina and she dies soon afterward. “Seraphina was twenty-three years old when she died. She was utterly withdrawn and remote during that period, speaking only when spoken to, sometimes not even then” (TGL 293). This collective harassment first emotionally damages Seraphina and then takes her life as well. Seraphina's example reveals the effect of male violence on women. Women become weak, go into depression and most of the time commit suicide. Thus, male violence is a commonly exercised patriarchal structure which deeply embedded in Pakistani society.

Another important patriarchal structure that works in an oppressive society is sexuality. Women, according to Walby, are taught to fascinate the institution of marriage. So, they make marriage the focus of their lives and enslave themselves to become ideal wives. Walby posits, “Its major causal significance is in orienting women towards marriage as a desirable goal” (TP 225). Aslam highlights this typical patriarchal ideology by narrating the story of Margaret's classmate Nargis who stitches pillowcases and bed sheets for her dowry. Nargis's example reveals how women are conditioned to endorse patriarchal culture.

Patriarchal culture is yet another dominant patriarchal structure that plays a significant role in nourishing and reinforcing the patriarchal ideology. It involves diverse practices that individually as well as collectively normalize patriarchal ideology. Walby describes patriarchal culture as. “Patriarchal Culture is a structure which is composed of a relatively diverse set of patriarchal practices. They are important in shaping gendered subjectivity, and in the distinction of the genders at an experiential level. Patriarchal culture is best analyzed as a set of discourses which are institutionally rooted” (TP 227).

Aslam highlights patriarchal cultural oppression by highlighting the discourses which have been institutionalized and have made the culture exploitative for women. For instance, Aslam discusses that a mosque was abandoned by the people because it was built in a woman's name. “The fact that it bore a woman's name had caused it to be abandoned on several occasions over the centuries, the city's clerics casting doubts on the validity of prayers offered in such a place” (TGL 287). This unravels the patriarchal mindset of the people which has been institutionalized by the patriarchal discourse. Moreover, Margaret's classmate Nargis's example is yet another example of cultural oppression. “This other girl was a Muslim and had managed to persuade her parents to let her go to Zamana for the debate. But she was one of the handful of girls at the school who was already engaged to be married, and the day before she was to leave for

Zamana, her future in-laws heard about it” (TGL 153). They get angry and warn her that if she goes to the other city; the marriage will be called off. Nargis was her name and she used to stitch her own down dowry like bed sheets and pillowcases (TGL 153).

Nargis’s example shows how Pakistani women are conditioned to endorse patriarchal culture. Nargis would make her dowry without questioning why dowry is a norm in the first place. Her future in-laws forbade her to not go to the other city and she agreed to that. Nargis’s submissiveness is her helplessness before the oppressive patriarchal society. Moreover, Aslam highlights another example of compressional patriarchal culture by narrating the story of a girl who is murdered by her brothers as she marries her lover. “Nargis became still as she listened, the newscaster telling her that a young woman had died at the hands of her brothers during the night, an hour or so after a minaret revealed her trysts with a lover” (TGL 12).

This example of an innocent girl being murdered by her brothers truly unveils the patriarchal oppressive mindset of the patriarchs. Other than that, Aslam portrays another scene to reveal the impact of patriarchal culture upon the minds of the people. Babar, when blames Helen for persuading that person who came to look for a place to build a tower, says to her: “Well, most women don’t like to show themselves at the door or wander around the lane” (TGL 43). This helps to understand the patriarchal ideology which has been strengthened by the patriarchal culture. So, Aslam highlights the institutionalization of the patriarchal mindset through patriarch culture in *The Golden Legend* (2017).

Therefore, chapter two explicates how women are targeted and victimized by patriarchal tyrants as a matter of daily routine. This chapter brings to light the miseries of oppressed women in contemporary Pakistani society. By utilizing Sylvia Walby’s ideology of patriarchy this chapter discusses forms of patriarchy that occur in a patriarchal society. Furthermore, Walby’s six partially interdependent patriarchal structures are discussed in this chapter. These structures help unravel the oppressive structures at work in an oppressive society. By utilizing Aslam’s, *The Golden Legend* (2017) as a sample, the research successfully deconstructs oppressive patriarchal structures that exist in Pakistani society.

Sectarian Oppression

In contemporary societies, gender discrimination is a widespread phenomenon that is widely denounced. Additionally, discrimination based on sect, ethnicity, or religion is prevalent on a global scale. The resultant sectarian oppression and intolerance often precipitate violence and subjugation, yet these forms of oppression are often overlooked by society as Bell Hooks points out, “Class, race, religion or sexual preference are not given that much importance in the study of women’s oppression” (Hooks 18).

This chapter explores two main factors of women’s oppression i.e., gender and sect. The chapter proposes that intolerance for other religions especially for minorities is deeply rooted in Pakistani society. This sectarian intolerance thus gives rise to violence and oppression. Moreover, sectarian discrimination combined with gender discrimination adds a layer of oppression to the exploitation of women. In simple words, women in Pakistani society face oppression not only because of gender but also because of other factors like race, class, ethnicity, religion, etc. Thus, they face intersectional oppression and become a miserable victim of discrimination and violence. Such multi-layered oppression is termed “intersectionality” by Kimberly Crenshaw. Crenshaw contends that there are multiple factors that give advantages to one group while disadvantage to the other group. These factors, according to Crenshaw, are gender, sect, caste, religion, ethnicity, sex, race, etc.

This chapter revolves around the point that women belonging to minorities face oppression due to gender and sect. Regarding gender and sectarian discrimination, Sylvia Walby argues, “It is now generally accepted that ethnic inequality in the labor market is significantly the result of direct and indirect racial discrimination” (TP 27). Walby, therefore, believes that discrimination faced by women of a different sect outside their households is directly or indirectly due to their race. Thus, gender oppression and sectarian violence are two major forms of oppression that are exercised in a society. Aslam’s *The Golden Legend* (2017) unearths multi-layered oppression by portraying the miserable lives of women belonging to Christianity. Aslam sketches the lives of women of Christian faith like Seraphina, Helen, and Margaret who face oppression, discrimination, and marginalization due to their gender and sect.

Most prominently, Aslam portrays the discrimination faced by a woman of Christian faith Seraphina due to her gender and ethnicity. Seraphina is brutally beaten, harassed, and raped by a gang of police. Such brutal treatment by police damages Seraphina not just physically but emotionally as well. When Seraphina comes home after being ill-treated by police “Margaret observed the absence of life in her face. In the bathroom she let herself be manipulated like a doll by Margaret” (TGL 193). The incident leaves a permanent mark on Seraphina’s life, and she eventually commits suicide. “Seraphina was twenty-three years old when she died. She was utterly withdrawn and remote during that period, speaking only when spoken to, sometimes not even then” (TGL 293).

Therefore, it can be interpreted that the oppression faced by Seraphina due to her gender and ethnicity took her life. Moreover, Margaret also faces oppression as a matter of daily routine due to her gender and sect. Margaret changes her identity and starts living as a Muslim because of “The deception freeing her from daily aggressions of Muslims” (TGL 156). In addition to that, the oppression faced by Margaret due to her faith is highlighted in the following excerpt. “She became angry when for vaccination the doctor used a different syringe for her than he used for Muslims. The older Muslim boys did not make as many coarse remarks about Muslim girls as they did about her, she noticed anew” (TGL 154). Muslim boys thought that they could tease her more easily than Muslim girls because no will respond to her complaint.

Moreover, Muslim girls stayed together, holding hands, eating, and enjoying together but Margaret faced isolation because of her sect. “She had suffered from cramps throughout her life because she was forbidden from using the bathrooms at school and had to wait till she got home; now the pain was mixed with anger” (TGL 154). This accurately reveals how women belonging to minority groups are treated in society.

Additionally, in the city of Zamana, Margaret changes her identity and starts living as a Muslim which reveals to her the privileges of belonging to a majority group. Margaret’s portrayal, therefore, accurately unveils the exploitation and subordination faced by women of Christian faith in Pakistani society.

Moreover, Grace is murdered by an anonymous extremist because of her gender and sect. However, he is released soon because of memorizing Quran. “There were several witnesses to the crime, but the murderer was a Muslim, and this was Pakistan. The police were initially reluctant to even register a case. Eventually, however, the man was sentenced to life imprisonment” (TGL 5). However soon the prisoner was released because he memorized Quran and thus, he was imprisoned for even less than a year. Grace’s gender and sect take her life. This example also reveals the state’s indifference toward women’s oppression.

Therefore, Aslam's portrayal of Christian women in his work sheds light on the complexities of the multiple layers of oppression faced by women from minority groups who experience subjugation due to their gender and religious affiliation. Aslam's depiction of Christian women

highlights how the intersectionality of gender and sect creates a unique set of challenges and discrimination for these women. Through his portrayal, Aslam uncovers the ways in which women from minority groups experience different forms of oppression that are often overlooked or ignored by society. By shedding light on these issues, Aslam's work brings attention to the intersectional challenges faced by women from minority communities and contributes to a greater understanding of the systemic oppression and subordination that these women face in their daily lives.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Oppression is the exploitation of the weak and vulnerable by those in power, and it is prevalent in societies worldwide. Pakistani society, in particular, is deeply entrenched in patriarchal oppression, where women are the weakest and most vulnerable. Women are raised in a male-dominated society, where they are not respected or heard, and are confined to domestic roles. This research focuses on the gender oppression experienced by women in conservative Pakistani households, using Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017) as a primary text and employing Sylvia Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990). The research uses Walby's concept of private and public patriarchy to highlight oppression within and outside the household, and also employs her six patriarchal structures to deconstruct and bring to light oppressive social structures in Aslam's fiction. The portrayal of female characters in the book exemplifies the daily oppression faced by common Pakistani women. The researcher argues that discussing women's oppression is crucial in eradicating it from society and explores how social structures promote values that weaken women and strengthen men.

The oppressive patriarchal structures in society are identified and deconstructed through Walby's six patriarchal structures. The first structure, patriarchal mode of production, enslaves women to perform domestic labor without payment or recognition. Aysha's plight in the household exemplifies this. The second structure, patriarchal relations within paid work, exploits and harasses women in the labor market, as seen through Seraphina's story. The third structure is the patriarchal state, which institutionalizes oppression through its discourse, illustrated by the mosque that was abandoned because it was named after a woman. Male violence is the fourth structure that uses physical force to exert power over women, as shown by the beating Seraphina received from the police. Sexuality, as the fifth structure, promotes marriage as a desirable institution that ultimately exploits women, which is illustrated by Nargis stitching her dowry. Lastly, patriarchal culture, the sixth structure, perpetuates patriarchal norms, values, and customs that women are conditioned to endorse, as Nargis's example also reveals. By analyzing Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017) using Walby's theoretical framework, the researcher exposes the oppressive patriarchal structures in conservative Pakistani households and underscores the significance of discussing and addressing women's oppression.

Additionally, the research sheds light on the issue of sectarian oppression in Pakistan, where promises of equal rights and citizenship for minorities have been broken, resulting in rising intolerance and violence towards other sects and ethnicities. Christian women in particular become the victims of this oppression due to their gender and sect/ethnicity. Drawing from Walby's ideology of sectarian oppression and Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, the researcher highlights the multiple oppressions faced by Christian women in Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017). Grace's murder by an anonymous killer and Margaret's decision to change her identity to escape the oppressive life of Christians exemplify the unfair treatment and exploitation of women belonging to minority sects by the majority. Meanwhile, Seraphina's

tragic experience of being beaten, harassed, and raped by the police due to her gender and sect unveils the intersectional oppression faced by Christian women.

In essence, the primary aim of this study is to illuminate the oppressive structures that foster a patriarchal and oppressive environment for women. Through Aslam's *The Golden Legend* (2017), female characters like Aysha, Margaret, Helen, and Seraphina effectively convey the vulnerability and powerlessness experienced by women in a male-dominated Pakistani society. To deconstruct the oppressive structures highlighted in the novel, the study leverages Sylvia Walby's six patriarchal structures. Additionally, the study underscores the sectarian oppression suffered by women of the Christian faith through the lens of Walby's ideology of oppression experienced by women of different sects and Kimberley Crenshaw's concept of intersectional oppression. Ultimately, this research aims to draw attention to the pressing need to eliminate patriarchal practices in Pakistani society and engender a culture of equality.

REFERENCES

- Aslam, Nadeem. *The Golden Legend*. Faber & Faber Limited, 2017.
- Aslam, Nadeem. "I like to be on Margins: An Interview with Nadeem Aslam." Interviewed by Rafia Zakaria. Literary Hub, 23 August, 2017 <https://lithub.com/i-like-to-be-on-the-margins-an-interview-with-nadeem-aslam/>
- Kaur, Sumandeep. "Contesting the Myth of Purity: An Analysis of Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend* in the Light of Jean-Luc Nancy's Insight." *The Vedic Path*, 2018.
- Liaqat, Qurratulaen; Raza, Amra. "Diasporic Intertextual Musings: The Relevance of Classical Urdu Poetry to Contemporary Pakistani Situation in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*". *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry*, 2020.
- Liaqat, Qurratulaen. "Muslim/Christian Polarities in Pakistan: A Holistic Model Analysis of Preemptive Religious Conversion in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*". *Research Journal of Language and Literature (RJLL)*, 2021.
- Silfen Glasberg, Davita, Deric Shannom. *Political Sociology Oppression Resistance And The State*. SAGE Research Methods Online, 2010.
- Sukheeja, Vandanna. "Violence and Hope in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*". *Language in India*, 2017.
- Tionloc Biana, Hazel. "Extending bell hooks' Feminist Theory". *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 2020.
- Shehzadi, Shaista, et al. "Concept of Nationalism employed in Nadeem Aslam's *The Golden Legend*". *Giap Journals*, 2021.
- Shortt, Rupert. "Murderous siblings: Corrupt religion and poisonous politics in Nadeem Aslam's poignant, intelligent new novel". *NI Syndication Limited*, 2017.
- Miller, Beth. "Reading as Resistance: *Practicing Literacy and Interconnection in Nadeem Aslam's The Golden Legend*". *University of North Carolina Press*, 2019.
- Walby, Sylvia. *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1990.

©2023 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)