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Analyzing Challenges and Female Subjugation in a patriarchal society in Nafisa Rizvi's The Blue Room

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ABSTRACT

The research delves into Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009) which is a poignant portrayal of a patriarchal society reflecting its impacts on identity of the characters. The research aims to understand the place of women in patriarchal society, the importance of domestic space and the opportunities they have in shaping the protagonist's character, how they acknowledge the purposelessness of their existence and how the supernatural powers given to the protagonist gives her a meaningful direction to achieve the purpose of her life and gives her an inner satisfaction by completing her through knowledge. This research employs Friedan's theory of feminine mystique and Faris's theory of magical realism to analyze its various themes of patriarchy, feminine subjectivity and the supernatural powers given to the protagonist.

Keywords: Feminine Subjectivity, Patriarchy, Magical Realism, Female Subjugation

Introduction

In the past women had no rights over their lives, they cannot take hold of their inherited properties, neither they can take decisions for themselves nor they were allowed to ask for their rights. These primitive legacies are still present in a few cultures where women have to submit to the men of their families and act as their subordinates in order to live a respectable life. This research explores Rizvi's acclaimed novel *The Blue Room* (2009) through the lens of feminism and magical realism. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to a scholarly discussion on magical feminism which refers to the fusion of feminine critique and magical realism where both of them blend to present the oppression of women and men and their refuge through magical elements. Through these intricate expressions of women's oppression, subjugation and alienation the author has portrayed the results of following up the societal norms and expectations, this research mainly focuses on how the characters have been affected by patriarchy and their attempts to overcome their traumatic experiences and getting to live a life without such societal oppression.

This research dives deeply into the lives of the characters created by Rizvi and explore their experiences to signify the impacts of socio-cultural factors on both genders and how they tackle with them. It tends to explore the ways in which such social and cultural factors exploit the perspectives of people and influence various types of oppressions on both genders. Though, Friedan's book was published in 1963 and it was for the women of after world wars who were allowed to work manly during war days but restricted and confined to their household chores again when the war ended. Still, it highlights the



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present-day women living in patriarchal society where they are oppressed and alienated by the men who are their superiors. Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009) is also set in a more recent context, in a Pakistani patriarchal society where culture plays the central role in shaping the lives and characters of the people living there to abduct people's personal inclinations and identities. Dwelling on these complexities, this research deeply focuses on both feminism and magical realism to employ their theoretical frameworks to analyse the text. This research aims to broaden the critical horizon of literature when used as a medium to express common human experiences by exploring the text through the frameworks of magical feminism and by its critical interpretation.

Based on Friedan's (1963) and Faris's (2004) framework along with the narrative techniques of Rizvi, this research intends to broaden the scope of understanding the significance of a human's self-worth, especially when you are a woman or you are working for women rights or feminism which calls for equality for both genders. Through these lenses, the researcher examines how narratives play a significant role in highlighting the sufferings of people and the impacts on their individualities and identities.

Literature Review

This research examines how the culture and patriarchy manipulates a woman's individuality by marginalizing women, dividing gender roles and by gender biasness in Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009). The research explores that when a woman is given an opportunity to acknowledge her potential and enough wisdom to speak for her and stand for her rights, it changes her entire world. As it is believed by the social feminists that the genders are constructed and maintained by the society so are the gender roles. In a patriarchal world such as represented by Rizvi, it is always the society which assigns roles and duties to men and women which restrict their lives according to their own norms and conditions while asking them to follow these norms as violating them will disturb their social status.

Buriro et al. (2025) conducted research on Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009) and stated that it is a portrayal of a culture rich Pakistani society and sheds light on the diverse facets that shape this society. The researchers explore the ways in which the text serves as a lens to understand the cultural tapestry navigating the complexities of those norms which form the basics of this society, familial dynamics which empowered the protagonist's character by overcoming the immense pressure to uphold her honor and the intersection of old traditions with modernity. The research analyses that the characters grapple with difficulties of identity and relationships being exploited by feudalism, patriarchy and domestic violence. The findings of the research demonstrate that the protagonist skillfully combats with tradition, societal and familial pressure, and societal limitations while stifling her choices, aspirations and dreams and keeps her family with her in her journey towards modernity and growth. The research also reveals the aspect of women's authority by highlighting the role of protagonist in improving male psyche which is designed by patriarchy over centuries.

Jamal et al. (2023) conducted research on Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009) and explored that women living in a patriarchal, male dominated and conservative capitalist society face a lot of hardships. The research highlights that the protagonist Zaib and her aunt Zainab are always exploited by male dominants and how the women never resist to the orders issued by the males while living in a lower-class society or in a bourgeoisie class. The research states that gender discrimination is the root cause of female subjugation which makes women dependent on males for support; their identities are exploited as a



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result of which they adopt their husbands' identities to stand in the society. The women are objectified throughout their lives from men; no matter they belong from lower-class or capitalist society. They are bound to be dutiful to their husbands and modest to the other male members of their family, they are given the least opportunities to flourish themselves such as Zaib who is deprived of education, while they have the potential to be independent and the only thing which can save them from subjugation is economic independence. The research states that women are on such low standards that they are not involved in important family discussions and decision making.

Iqbal (2022) conducted research on Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009) and explored magical feminist technique which undermines colonial and patriarchal tenets to make things spectacular, believable and conceivable. The researcher employs magical feminism to describe women's consciousness, shifting identities of different women, their challenges, patriarchal dominance, and repression and explore the enchantments while demystifying the magical elements in the text. The research illustrates that women are left alone under the reign of patriarchy where they are vulnerable and create their private worlds where they express their repressed emotions, fears, hopes and secrets in a supernatural way. The intended readers are expected to accept the text's magical elements as realistic without questioning the representation of a phenomenal world while understanding the point of view of the narrator and trusting the character's intuitions. The elements of patriarchy are also observed where Zaib's mother tries to suppress her powers in front of others fearing she will traumatize others by showing her abilities. Patriarchs implement restrictions on women regarding their choice of marriage; women are forcefully betrothed by the orders of jirgas and patriarchs while their religion allows them to choose their own spouses. Sometimes, innocent young girls have to pay their elders' debts by marrying men older than them such as Zaib was betrothed to pay the debt of her grandfather.

Devi (2023) explored the elements of feminine mystique in *Dominicana* (2019) by Cruz. The researchers tried to explore the ways in which the concept of feminine mystique is presented by the author of the selected text and how its protagonist coped in trying to overcome the issues addressed in the theory of Friedan. The protagonist as an ordinary woman spends her life doing the house chores away from her actual space where she should be acknowledged by the society and also away from considering the importance of necessary rights being given. The researchers observe that the protagonist came to a point where she understands the assignment of getting her rights from the society and to do so she goes against her husband's will and get a job and joins an English class and have audacity enough to reveal her husband's affair with another woman. The research highlights the feminine mystique that the protagonist undergoes and the way in which she resists the societal norms of gender biasness. It shows that the protagonist considers herself as a bird caged by her master as she is caged by her husband but she manages to resolve the issues of feminine mystique by fighting for her rights.

Morgan (2002) conducted research on *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Friedan and explored that the particular book highlights the issues women are facing while living in a patriarchal society and how the efforts of Friedan encompassed in this text gave rise to the second wave of feminism. To understand the basic grounds of Friedan's concept the researcher employs Webbers theory of charisma which serves as a template of political leaders who participated in this movement and understands impacts of feminine mystique on people. The researcher criticizes Webber for not emphasizing the role of penning down something for the emergence of a better cause. The researcher also examines Gramsci's concept of power of politics which is aligned with the interests of subalterns.



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The researcher argues that the power holders always deny the fact that author-leaders play a major role in emphasizing the importance of rights justifiably being provided to the desired ones by writing about it. The *Feminine Mystique* (1963) gave awareness to women of every age group as the book is full of women empowerment messages and enables women to see beyond their boundaries, act far more from what is expected from them, talk beyond their limits and do far more from their fixed roles.

Forrest (2016) conducted research on Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and explored that the particular text sheds light on the discontent of American middle-class women who are fixed into marriages as it was the only good, they can do to the society. In attempt to conform to the patriarchal framework these suburban housewives are kept away from the social life and made to think that their only goal of life is to serve their husbands, children and their houses. This idealized non-human image of housewives and their issues are referred as feminine mystique. The researchers examined the text from the perspective of its relevance to the modern times when women are competent enough to participate in social activities just as men still there are a few women who have to face the treacheries of patriarchy, who are facing the issues of gender biasness and inequality and discrimination, Friedan's (1963) feminine mystique allows women to look for the freedom they should have no matter from which era they belong. The research states that this neglected attitude of women towards their own selves cause long term effects on their families and on their emotions as well. Even decades after its publication it implies the same notion for the women of present era that if they won't grow well, they will lead the whole nation towards destruction.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this section is to explain the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data for this research. For analyzing and discussing the problem statement, the research employs a qualitative, interpretive approach using Friedan's (1963) theoretical framework of *Feminine Mystique* and Faris's (2004) magical realism. To support the problem statement the researcher has obtained data from secondary sources such as research papers, journals and thesis. The researcher has ensured that all the secondary resources which have been used are properly cited and their references are given at the end of the text.

According to Friedan, a famous American feminist and pioneer of second wave of feminism, feminine mystique is the term that describes the widely accepted idealized version of women which bounds them to domestic roles, household confinement and denial of educational and financial opportunities. Friedan highlights the problems women have been facing for so long that they have idealized them as their eternal fates including their unhappiness in households, loss of ambition, the internalized beliefs which made them obey their males, submitting themselves to their husbands and children, lack of acknowledging their potential to serve for their own betterment and ignoring their true identity. Patriarchy made the women to disregard every opportunity for education and financial independence, choosing instead to remain within the confinements of traditional expectations to be wives and mothers. Friedan (1963) challenged these notions of womanhood by exposing the reality of women sufferings, fighting for their equal rights and their quest for identity. Friedan (1963) opposed the concept of marriage to be the only source of social experience and economic support for women and made men and women both to consider marriage as a choice and not as a last option for survival.

According to Faris, a professor of English and comparative literature magical realism modifies and challenges the basis of realism. Faris defines that magical realism combines



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the realistic and fantastical narrative while blurring their boundaries. Magical realism is not just a post-colonial style as it represents the reemergence and innovation of new narrative techniques which then turns into literary globalization. It also includes different cultural traditions reflecting narrative mode and cultural environment of postcolonial society as it is multicultural in its nature. It reflects the hybrid nature of postcolonial literature through its narrative mode and representation of culture using different narrative techniques such as use of mythology and folklore relevant to a particular culture leading the literature towards literary sensibility. Faris directs its reader that to understand the term and its significance in postcolonial literature, characteristics of different traditions presented in literature should be studied.

Analysis and Discussion

This chapter undertakes a critical analysis of the theories employed to break down the significant aspects of patriarchy, matriarchy, magical realism and feminism. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of feminine mystique and ordinary enchantments, this chapter focuses on the sufferings of the characters and the impacts of patriarchy and matriarchy on their lives in Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009). By focusing on the thematic expressions, linguistic features, observing the merging of natural and supernatural elements, this research aims to explore the development of feminine subjectivity in the female characters, the process of their overcoming the patriarchal expectations and moving on in their lives while leaving behind the generational pressure on them. This research also highlights the importance of women empowerment, gender biasness common in Pakistani upper class and lower-class society. The research aims to explore the capabilities of women when given power to them and the way in which they change the directions of their lives as well as others around them.

The rules implied on women by patriarchy shows its oppression on women and how society fixes the roles for women, this research aims to explore how patriarchy raptures the concept of women's well-being by deciding their future without even concerning them. Rizvi creates a world where women are subjugated by the society and by their elders, women are brought up in such a way that they demand from their next generations of women to follow the previous generational guidelines to become good women, good daughters, sisters, mothers and above all good housewives. In the stance of education, Rizvi has presented a society whose social order is oppressive for women where women are always in a tug of war to find their position in society as without education they cannot even acknowledge the lawful rights they should get but they have been restrained off for so long. Rizvi in her text, presents a rich educated family where all the boys had their opportunities to go to schools and colleges and then to go abroad after opting for their respective career choices but unfortunately, Zaib who is the protagonist and who somehow possess more exceptional and insightful intellect than her brother and her male cousins never had the opportunity to go to school, she had her early education by a tutor who came to their home to teach her. "But Zaib was not so lucky and was not awarded an equitable education, not for any lack of love but more in keeping with the norms of the day which did not allow for the educational advancement of the girl child" (Rizvi, 2009, p. 46). It is considered as an odd decision to send daughters to schools unlike the boys. Here, Patriarchy even wins over religion; the people who are actually Muslims deny the Islamic teachings related to the significance of education for women in Islam. Rizvi constructed a brilliant narrative by portraying the protagonist's quest for education, after the ending of her improper home schooling she started her own journey of acquiring all the required knowledge by exploring her family's official library.



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“Zaib was a voracious reader; her choice of books was as eclectic as she could possibly make it” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 8-9). It was an inherent quality as almost all the family members of Shahi Manzil used to read a lot.

The elder women of Shahi Manzil never considered claiming their rights such as Quratul-Ain, Jahanara, Zainab and Samar, so as the eldest granddaughter. Zaib who had the potential and will to get education was deprived of it in order to secure the familial norms. She was given an improper education at her house by a tutor and apparently her brother and other male cousins were sent to missionary schools. But after all this biasness, Zaib did not stop her journey to acquire knowledge, her first companions were her books and then her wisdom introduced her with the blue walls which also served as a Pandora box of information for her as they informed her about various phenomena taking place in the world and about different books. But it is not always your fate which decides your future and you do not have to accept it as your end destiny like Zaib who accepted her fate in education as well as in her marriage. Though she belonged to an educated family and her family followed the patriarchal norms for a certain time, but when Mehar and Laila came of age, they were not restrained from getting education and were allowed to seek admissions in their respective courses. “By the time the youngest girl in the family, Laila expressed her desire to research, she was given an encouraging pat on the back. By that time, in the natural progression of things, it was acceptable to send girls to college” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 46). Laila has also an obsession to get education and for this purpose she chose her own path and pursued even further as her only motive to move to city was to get admission in a proper college where she can pursue her respective course. Though she belonged to the same family and society which has deprived Zaib from education but given her the right to decide her own fate, it is not a question of the society or family, it is about a person’s own will to fight the norms of their family and culture of their society which is imposed on them, Zaib was not a weaker contestant in this game but she has learned from her elders to sacrifice her dreams and her body to protect the honor and dignity of her family, her passion was to fulfill the expectations of her family and to help the needy ones as she has always considered herself as the second priority when it comes to give benefits. Though she left the improper education and then got married without her consent it was never a matter of self-privilege for her, she had to do this for her family and above all she had done this for her father as she has never wanted her father to feel pity in front of the society. So, she always accepted her father’s decisions as the final orders from the head of the family and never questioned them and later on she acknowledged that her father has unintentionally chosen the best person for her as Murtaza proved to be a loving and caring husband for her.

Though it is considered that emotional stability, emotional freedom and financial independence of an individual depends on its choices and its happiness but here women are put under pressure of fulfilling their housewife and mother duties before even developing their senses of achieving any kind of stability in their lives. They are never allowed to taste the pleasure of making decisions for them so that later on they will never question the forceful implementation of decisions made by their elders and society for them. In Rizvi’s text, women of three generations are betrothed when they have just stepped into their teens or are merely in the middle of their teens. Zaib’s grandmother, Quratul-Ain got married when she was only sixteen years old, and took the responsibility of becoming a mother at this young age, she gave birth to three sons and a daughter. To carry on with the norms of child marriage she made her son to marry a girl who was also barely in her teens and also made her undergo the same traumatizing experiences of being a child bride. When it came to her own daughter, she did the same,



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though her daughter Zainab was loved a lot by her parents and have been spoiled by them, she threw a lot of temper tantrums but all went in vain as her destiny was also written by her elders and she was betrothed at the age of sixteen to a man who married her but has never shown any interest in his wife and engaged himself in extra marital affairs. When Zainab failed to cope up with the rude behavior of her husband, she gathered the courage to question him about the rights she deserved but in return she got beaten up by him. “He hit her with his open palm on her face so hard that she fell several feet away from him” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 42). As she also had an experience of giving birth at a young age and without getting her husband’s love and affection, she went into postpartum depression. Zainab remained in a state of shock for a while after this incident but then gathered enough courage for her son; to secure his life from his father she decided to become a single mother and came back to his parents’. This painful tragedy of Zainab can be interpreted in terms of social cruelty which allows men to spend their lives according to their own choices but limit the innocent women to become housewives and single mothers and label these women as divorcees and make stories about their encounters.

Jahan Aara, who is Zaib’s mother was also in a state of emptiness and existential problem because she was never be able to identify the problem she had been indulged in, though she had a respectable position in Shahi Manzil she was never be able to question the decision of her husband about her daughter’s early marriage as she herself was a child bride and she was also brought up in such a manner that she never considered to question for such type of injustices awarded off to her and her daughter as well. Various incidents show that she was a true example of patriarchy as when she was asked by the children to at least get informed by the reckless decision of Zaib’s early marriage, she silenced them by saying that they do not need to get the answers as decisions have already been made, even it was a decision which was made about Zaib’s life she was also not allowed to question her about these decisions. Though Jahan Aara was loved by her husband still she could never have the opportunity to ask him about his illness of irresistible desires as she had always observed him spending hours in the bathroom until he himself decides to tell her.

The Blue Room (2009) very clearly depicts that somehow there is always a woman behind other woman’s tragic experiences, such as in the case of Zainab there were women behind her destruction, her mother above all, who allowed this marriage to happen, her mother-in-law who wanted a young girl who would sacrifice her own life for the betterment of someone’s spoiled son and then a prostitute named Laali, who knew that Shah Baqar Mirza is a married man now but continued to please him for her own sake of love and affection, eventually abducting someone else’s legal rights and taking away a father from a newly born baby. When Zaib’s turn came, she also got robbed off the opportunity to make her own decisions, as her destiny is also decided by her parents. She is betrothed because her family had to pay a debt taken by her elders. She did not get any opportunity to know the reason behind her marriage or to know anything about her future husband. “The only person who will have to live with him is Zaib and she’ll have a lifetime to find out” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 132). It was a mystery for her to resolve which took her a few months to unveil the true nature of her husband. When she gets to know the reality behind her wedding arrangement that she had to be betrothed to save the dignity and honor of her family she did not resist towards the decision of her parents but she was not happy either. “I am about to enter into the darkest phase of my life” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 139). The sudden plan of Zaib’s marriage created despair in the atmosphere of Shahi Manzil, flowers and bushes refused to sprout even when spring was on its peak and this refusal was not hidden by the members of the family.



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The worst of women's conditions are presented by Rizvi is in Zaib's in-laws house, where the foundations of house were established on the notion that men must keep their wives in control by means of fear and subjugation and women should submit to their husbands at any cost. Jamila was the first one to be the submissive of her husband and she always tried to make other women of this house to be submissives of their husbands and their in-laws as well. She never got the love and affection of her husband which made her consider every other woman of the house as her rival; she tried her best that not a single woman should be blessed by her husband's love. Just like Murtaza, his mother was also a subject of violence of his father. He often abuses her until one day she got hit by a paralysis stroke and the left side of her body got paralyzed. Murtaza knew very well the reason behind his mother's illness and he also knew that no one in this house will care to make her health any better. "I don't know whether to keep blaming my father for everything that he subjects my mother to and feel sorry for her or hate her for continuously provoking his wrath" (Rizvi, 2009, p. 227).

While her stay in her in-laws, Zaib examined other people also who have established a full control over their wives. Ayesha was one of them who was entrapped in an unhealthy and insincere marriage, where her husband had her control and he always had the authority to allow her how much she had to talk to somebody and when to stop. "Then suddenly Ayesha froze and her hands began to tremble" (Rizvi, 2009, p. 180). During a family gathering, when Ayesha was talking to Zaib, Babar looked at her with a piercing gaze and she was so afraid of her husband that her body began to tremble as she stopped talking to Zaib. When Ayesha got to know the truth of her marriage, she decided to leave him and went back to her parents but Babar used the threats of taking her child away which made her to stay with him for seventeen years when finally, Zaib came to her rescue. Ayesha was also not allowed to meet her parents or to leave her husband. Zaib also observed that Mustafa is also under the same influence of patriarchy as he had the same rude behavior with his wife and his only son.

Rizvi has presented all the women in a state that they accept their fates no matter what consequences they are facing; women portrayed in the text are used to accept the decisions of their elders without questioning for their rights. Women presented are brought up in such a way that they consider marriage and motherhood to be their only purpose in life and only source to identify them and fulfill their needs. They were living in false consciousness that they are happy in their married life, all of their desires are fulfilled and rights being given without realizing that they are being oppressed for ages by patriarchal values. They were raised in such a way that they link their unhappiness with themselves as they find reasons of inconvenience in their married lives within themselves.

Rizvi's *The Blue Room* (2009) is a poignant blend of magic and reality by having the uncanny experiences merged in the ordinary life. The writer blended the extra ordinary into ordinary in such an excellent way that the readers can never question its existence; she presents a house where the family has different and unique traits which is considered strange by other people. Zaib is the chosen one as when she came of the age, she was called by the walls towards them and then the walls revealed themselves to her. She was shocked by this revelation but she was amused by this interaction as the walls poured information and she wanted to gather as much knowledge as possible. The walls have absorbed emotions, traumas and secrets of the house and remained as witness to all the happenings. Zaib considers this revelation as a blessing and present she got from nature as she was in the need to discover more and in Zaib has various encounters which are doubted by the people around her, she once had defeated a black snake coiled in a room.



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She sat in front of the snake and sensing her presence the snake rose from its coil and then both have fixed their gaze on each other, after a minute the snake accepted its defeat and swept away, unfortunately this encounter was only witnessed by her brother and he remained silent as he knew that everyone would blame him for such hallucinations. Zaib has tried to stop the events of harassment in her house, once when his older cousin visited them with his wife he tried to harass her by touching her body improperly; Zaib used her abilities to stop him. “She imagined a scorpion crawling over his face. Then he met her look” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 8). The man felt like as if some venomous creature has bitten him, he turned blue and was unable to breathe and then he fainted on the floor crying of pain she had caused him. He could not complain about Zaib’s act of cruelty because he himself was ashamed of his boldness. Zaib knew his desires of fondling with little girls and his uncontrolled sexual desires which lead him towards his destruction.

Zaib knew that Molvi Jalal’s family has come here with no good, on their arrival she started sensing warning bells but could not question him as he was his father’s guest. But she clearly saw his hands full of blood and knew that it would not lead them to any goodness which was soon revealed when Jalal started planning to haunt the workers of Shahi Manzil in order to gain a respectable place in the house but all went in vain when he killed the young servant and he had to flee away to save his own life. As Zaib’s purpose of life was to save others so she always had a closer look on what is happening around her, once she noticed that Jamal and Kamal who were sons of molvi Jalal have lust filled in their eyes. Once Zaib visited Mehar and noticed that Jamal is secretly watching Mehar with his lascivious eyes as if he was trying to fondle her by looking at her, Zaib set her gaze on him. “She pierced his body with searing hot lances until he started groaning and writhing in agony. He tried to tear his eyes away from Zaib, but found it impossible” (Rizvi, 2009, p. 58). From her piercing gaze he lost his ability to stand and fell on his knees and later Jahangir escorted him to his quarters. Zaib knew that he will tell this tale to his brother and this encounter would be enough for both of them. Other than these encounters there are various other incidents which proved Zaib’s abilities to handle situations differently. The walls revealed that the powers are given to her so that she can help the people around her which she has done whenever it was needed. She helped Zainab when she was in the need of clearing the mist between her and Laali about Shah Baqar and she also helped Ayesha and Mumtaz when they wanted to run away from the miserable life they were living with Babar. She also played her part when the family was planning to move to city for their growth and betterment.

Though every young person in the family wanted growth in life but they were afraid of leaving their house and their family. They were afraid that their parents would never allow them and it will bring a disaster to the family but they managed to make their parents allow this decision on this commitment that they will take elders with them. The first one to come up with the idea of moving to the city was Murtaza, though he has enough money and resources to live a luxury life in the village it was his traumatic experiences of childhood and adulthood, it was the hate he got from his parents and siblings which initiated the idea of escaping in his mind. Though, Zaib was a little bit skeptical about Murtaza’s decision as she knew she will have to face back lash from her family as no one has ever thought about taking such big step but she stood with him with a firm belief as she also wanted to start a life where she could make her own decisions and where her children would never have to suffer in order to obey the patriarchy, it was her first step towards acknowledging her capabilities and changing the society, her act of agreeing to her husband’s decision shows that she is bringing a social change in her family and somehow she is providing ways to introduce her siblings and cousins with the



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thought of moving on and discover the world without any societal pressure.

At first, they were shocked by Zaib's offer but then they realized that Zaib has offered them an opportunity which can change their professional life, they knew that they can never achieve their goals and fulfill their dreams if they kept on living in a village, they will have to migrate to achieve something. It was not the tradition of their family to leave the Shahi Manzil and make another home of their own, as their elders like Qasim and Asadullah have also went abroad for research but they came back to their village and served their people for ages. Now they have decided to break the traditions of the family, they did not want to leave their parents and family but they wanted to be successful in their respective careers. As Jahangir and Ayaz were the elder ones, they have already completed their education and now they were working, they both knew that it will be a good opportunity for them and it will help flourish their skills. Jahangir was a doctor so he asked his uncle Asadullah to accompany him but he refused on the pretext that he wants to serve his own people who have no one else to look after them in the time of despair. Ayaz who have studied law wanted to polish his skills and knew that he will have great opportunities in the city, Majeed wanted to be an architect so he also joined the league, Laila wanted to research veterinary sciences and she knew it would not be easy for her to go and live alone in the city so she also opted for moving out, Mehdi was the youngest one and he wanted to take admission in an arts college as it was his passion to be an artist. Zaib knew that she is trying to pluck a plant from its birth place and is trying to plant it in a new place with a different soil but she wanted to put an effort in moving out and establishing their lives on their own without any fear of society. This move proved to be a best step she took in her life for the prosperity of her family.

Discussion

The Blue Room (2009) is the debut novel of Rizvi, it is widely regarded as Pakistani Contemporary novel, as it is a work of prose narrative with an unidentified narrator, it presents a blend of mystical elements with ordinary social life in an unnoticeable manner. It offers an opportunity to its readers to engage with the work of magical realism, fiction and feminist writings with its linear narrative covering aspects of patriarchy, matriarchy, feminism and magical realism. However, readers often doubt the presence of magical elements which are not natural in ordinary daily life but make the text fictional. The story unfolds in the small town of Dera Murshid, where the family of Khan Bahadur Ali lives in their inherited haveli known as Shahi Manzil with its great jaw dropping landscape and a huge army of their employs. By unfolding the story, Rizvi portrays her quest to prove a woman's role in transforming the familial hierarchies if given the power to rule and use her rights properly.

Rizvi demonstrates her mastery in creating various characters living in different situations while the protagonist proving to be a catalyst for a few of them. She created her protagonist's character in such a way that she explores her feminine subjectivity with the help of her magical powers given to her. Zaib's story is not just one of the stories of personal journey of life but it provides a medium to recover to various characters that are tangled in the chains of societal rules and patriarchy. Zaib is openly exposed as suffering under the weight of cultural restrictions and social expectations which took off her childhood from her, it was patriarchy which bound her in the cruelties of marriage where she is alone to face the consequences and if she fails in doing her duties it would bring insult and destruction to her family but Rizvi gave her protagonist enough help in the form of magical walls and then her husband to find her way out from her miseries By giving the supernatural powers to a female character and then making her capable



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enough to bring goodness in someone's life and changing their miserable conditions, Rizvi challenges the concepts of patriarchy which confines women in their houses and limits the role of women to only household chores and being mothers and wives only, she has created such splendid character of Zaib whose actual purpose is to find her freedom from the societal expectations and guide the people around her to get freedom from their cruel enslavements who are stuck in relationships which are more like slavery rather than healthy relationships. By giving the authority to a female character, Rizvi proves that a woman can change her ideology to develop herself as an independent human being.

Zaib's experiences are not only individual moves but she represents women of Pakistan who are restricted from identifying their individualities by patriarchy and social expectations. Rizvi has portrayed her character as a perfect example of gender biasness which is implied on almost every other girl in Pakistan, but her own will of exploration highlights that a woman can never be restricted from anything until she has accepted her fate as natural and rejects to fight back, though she was restricted from educating herself and then her childhood was abducted by her marriage but her quest to improve her living conditions and her behavior shows her will to achieve her freedom and her every step in this journey leaves marks on readers mind. She never considers her marriage as a hurdle in her way of creating her own identity which is a challenge to patriarchy; she created her own world where she can live peacefully without any fear of intruders disturbing her peace.

Rizvi has presented us a magical feminist writing where she has used female oppressed character and gave her magical capabilities to improve her living conditions and serve others as well. As Iqbal (2022) has mentioned, Rizvi has used magical realism with feminism to challenge the power structures created and controlled by patriarchy. She has given the abilities of mind reading, super naturalization and surrealism to her protagonist so she can challenge the societal system of power and rule, Zaib can read the minds of characters and can identify their intentions, such capabilities help her to take actions beforehand and save herself and others. She has highlighted the issues of class and identity by portraying the themes of humiliation and marginalization of characters, almost every female character including Zaib, Qurat-ul-Ain, Jahanara, Zainab and Jamila are marginalized as lesser human beings because they are women and the power holding men think they can do no good to humanity.

Conclusion

Over the centuries, so many people have tried to raise awareness about basic human rights, as in the early times the idea has been disregarded because people have created their own rules and laws of treating people according to their race or social status, and this division does not stop here but a particular social class decides their own ways of delivering rights to their people. These are our social values which shape our beliefs about something and then these beliefs shape the characters living in a particular society; a character is developed according to the expectations and beliefs of that society. In *The Blue Room* (2009), the lives of characters are shaped by society, culture, traditions, patriarchy and matriarchy. The characters' personal desires, emotions, dreams and fantasies are shaped by the society and if someone tries to go beyond the expectations or fails to fulfill the expectations of society, they will have to face the consequences in the form of hatred and disrespect from their parents and from the people around them as well. Rizvi presents that when it comes to the oppression on any gender, their class is not taken into account, no oppressor considers that from which social or financial class the



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oppressed belongs, Zaib and other women presented in the novel are a clear picture of this concept, though they all belonged to a rich class and they had enough means to educate themselves and had a better independent lives but they chose to submit to the patriarch of their families. But later in the novel, when patriarchs were in the weaker position women choose to go beyond the set limits and get enough education to earn their livings and enough awareness to get their rights. But in Zaib's situation it was not the education which earned her freedom from her in-laws, but her wisdom which she had acquired over time by her own quest of acquiring knowledge helped her in finding her way out of this patriarchal cage where everyone was bound to obey, she gave her siblings and cousins a way to migrate and find their own directions in their lives.

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