

**GENDER TROUBLE IN QAISRA SHAHRAZ'S *TYPHOON*: A CULTURAL FEMINIST ANALYSIS**Fariha Anjum<sup>1</sup>, Hina Yaqoob<sup>2</sup>, Asad Ullah Javed<sup>3</sup> (Corresponding author)**Original Article**

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**Abstract**

*The present study sheds light on the persisting problems of female sexuality and its consequences, particularly in rural areas of Pakistan in Shahraz's second novel Typhoon (2003). It deals with the qualitative analysis by expanding on the discussion concerning woman's body and sexuality in Pakistani society, both within and beyond the confines of marriage. Relying on the early work of Mary Wollstonecraft this article reveals the harsh realities of discriminative and biased attitude of the patriarchal society towards the women which makes them feel burdened by their own sexuality. Men, on the other hand, take pride in their masculinity, which gives more authority and power to their voice thus, turning women into the objects of oppression. The premise of feminism and gender trouble highlights the cultural domination and its effects on women's lives (as it is depicted in Shahraz's novel through the portrayal of different female characters) in terms of body shaming.*

**Keywords:** Feminism, Sexuality, Body Shaming, Gender Trouble, Masculinity

**Introduction**

Feminism is a term that refers to a cultural, social and political movement aimed at ensuring women's protection and equality of rights and growth opportunities. It examines the social and political beliefs that create the gender discrimination, and it advocates for equality in terms of gender in a patriarchal culture (Delmar, 2018). Mary Wollstonecraft writes for the equality of women's rights in *A Valediction of Women Rights* (1792). She argues for economic liberty and education in order for women to be aware of the basic human rights (Litosseliti, 2014; Lewis & Mills, 2003). The central viewpoint of all feminist initiatives is to alleviate patriarchal society's sufferings and injustice faced by females. Lewis, & Mills (2003) claim that gender politics are important in society and that they are only for the welfare of men. Without a doubt, they both teach the ways of equality and the justice for women.

Given the diversity in Pakistan in terms of culture and language, women throughout the country are exposed to various types of patriarchal conflicts which hinder and continues to hinder equal participation and involvement of female in public activities and spheres. The urban woman may find it comparatively easy to obtain the basic education or possibly enter the work field than a woman from rural areas, where schools and education are not easily available. The central concern of this study is to examine the difficulties of defining Pakistani females in their specific setting, as well as their resistance to patriarchal norms which aim at regulating their bodies and sexuality (Khawar et al.,

1987). Shazraz has contributed significantly to Pakistani English literature. Shahraz as a female, facing the patriarchal society, disregarded the conventional tasks given to the women and began writing about the status of women particularly in Pakistani community. There were very few women writers who were producing English fiction in Pakistan when Shahraz chose to become a novelist.

*Typhoon* (2003) by Qaisra Shahraz examines that how shame determines social attitudes towards female sexuality, which has a significant impact on woman's relationship with her body and how the society perceives it. Shame, such as *purdah*, is used to impose patriarchal dominance over woman's sexuality through her body in social contexts. Shame, which is associated with *pardah* in Pakistani society, is used to exert patriarchal hold over woman's sexuality through the female body in social settings. The purpose of this study is to emphasize a feminine physical connection with shame that is used by males to exert their hold over women. *Naghmana* and *Kaneez*, the two primary female characters, have contrasting bodily responses to humiliation. While *Kaneez* is able to overcome her guilt, *Naghmana's* shame is more self-destructive, leading to her death. Shame is portrayed as a strong feeling that has the potential to limit women in so many different aspects (Shah, 2012).

### Analysis

Second novel of Qaisra Shahraz, *Typhoon*, is a sequel to *The Holy Woman*. Some of the male and females are mentioned in the novel. Shahraz manages this by splitting the story into four parts. *Gulshan*, a woman who is middle-aged, moves to *Chiragpur*, a town near Karachi, in the first half of the story, which takes place in the present time. In the novel the readers are taken back to the time when she lived in *Chiragpur*, Sindh 20 years back with her little son and husband named *Haroon*. The novel's main plot consists of another two parts, which culminate in *Haroon* and *Naghmana's* assumed act of adultery. The novel's name, *Typhoon*, is derived from an Urdu term that means 'storm' or 'whirlwind' (Shah, 2012).

The entry of *Naghmana*, a young, sophisticated city woman, into the *Chiragpur* town brings this storm in the lives of the town people. *Naghmana* learns that *Haroon*, a former classmate at University whom she married secretly but shortly separated without getting divorced, resides in the same town while visiting her aunt *Fatima*. The events happened in the past devastate the lives of family when they came to know about *Haroon* surreptitiously meeting *Naghmana* from the city. *Gulshan* and afterwards her mother covertly follows *Haroon* as he leaves his bed in the middle of the night. The situation is presented to *Siraj Din*, the elder of the town, who agrees to summon a *Kacheri*. People come to know that *Naghmana* is *Haroon's* prior wife, as revealed in the *Kacheri*. *Naghmana* is pressured into seeking a divorce, which brings the story to a climax. Shortly after the *kacheri*, she departs the town (Bukhari, Ahsan & Khan, 2021).

Shame reflects the novel's major theme as the whole novel revolves around it. In Pakistani society, shame, like honor, is strongly connected to the female body and gender. The female figure is given the additional burden of defending the honour of her male family, in addition to acquiring a feeling of shame by birth. Women are thought to represent the dignity of the male members of the family such as father, brother, and husbands rather than owning it. This study will highlight that how shame is linked to female body and sexuality, and how her decisions and attitude is judged on the standard of honour set by her male family members. Women have to maintain their place in society by preserving their sexuality, getting into marriage (even if it is brutal), and bearing sons, among many other things. Males, on the other hand, appear to be unconcerned about specific 'accomplishments' when it comes to claiming honour. Furthermore, shame is associated with female sexuality thus, making it a reflection of female body.

The present study reveals how body shaming negatively influences the lives of the females particularly from the rural areas of Pakistan with reference to Shahraz's Typhoon which typically accentuates that how shame resides in the hearts of females, gradually poisoning their minds, ruling their ideas, and shows an unusual interaction of the various forms in which shame serves as the framework of their lives. In Typhoon, Shahraz has portrayed different female characters who suffer humiliation and dishonor in terms of their sexuality. Naghmana is mortified after being found with Haroon, and she is publicly stigmatized and referred to as a whore.

Naghmana comes back to the town as a liberator, freeing the inhabitants of the town from the shackles of guilt by forgiving them, when she is called back in the last part of the story. Naghmana's homecoming, however, proves tragic, as her inner anguish causes her to commit suicide. When Naghmana and Haroon's private meeting is made public, they make repeated attempts to explain what happened, but their pleadings are overlooked. Gulshan's mother, Hajra, is furious and intends to punish Haroon for deceiving her daughter.

The body of Gulshan is condemned for being weak, inferior, and incapable of satisfying her husband's sexual needs, whilst Naghmana is accused of seducing and misleading Haroon. So, despite the fact that Naghmana's body gives her embarrassment and shame, Gulshan tends to feel pity for her useless body, which also causes her embarrassment and shame. The source of her remorse and discomfort is her low self-esteem regarding her village-raised physique in contrast to Naghmana's modern city-dwelling beauty. Consequently, Gulshan torments her physically. Gulshan feels ashamed because she attributes her shame and guilt to her physique. Women are viewed as embodiments of shame in Pakistani culture due to the clear connection between shame and feminine sexuality. Consequently, their lives are mostly governed by the ideals of shame and respect.

To prove that women have a stronger desire for sexual hunger, Naghmana's aunt answers to her niece's immoral deed with a direct and forceful question: "If you were so desperate for a guy, why didn't you tell us, for God's sake?" We missed our chance to set you up with a nice husband (Typhoon, p.54). A situation like this also occurs in the novel *The Holy Woman*. Habib tries to dissuade his daughter Zari Bano from marrying Sikandar by suggesting that she has a man-crushing thirst for marriage. Because of this, Zari Bano is held back on purpose by feelings of guilt. However, Naghmana also displays sexual desperation and longing when she secretly meets Haroon, which is seen as incredibly shameful and impolite. Thus, she and her loved ones suffer the shame of having her branded a slut. Naghmana's body language during a conversation with Fatima about her meeting with Haroon reveals her feelings of shame and regret. On the other hand, Naghmana as a whole has a pervasive and permanent sense of immorality that helps to sustain the town's shame.

This shows that a woman's unethical actions have consequences for more than just herself, and especially for her loved ones. When Naghmana is being taken to the kacheri by her aunt, a neighbour hurls a shoe at her in anger. The neighbour is attempting to express her disgust and shame. They are all embarrassed by Naghmana, so they gather at the kacheri to witness and, in a sense, take part in her punishment. So, the kacheri is like a battlefield where criminals are taken to be convicted, publicly shamed, and severely punished. The town's citizens have been given permission to attend this public assembly because they feel misled and frustrated as a result of the wicked behaviour that was performed in their community. This applies to both sexes. In addition, the kacheri is a place where society's outcasts can be exposed to public scrutiny. This has resulted in everyone being able to observe Naghmana sitting with her body exposed, her head lowered, and her eyes fixed on the floor in a stoic manner. There are a hundred eyes on her, and she feels like she can't breathe under the pressure. The audience members, on the other hand, are treated with tremendous

condescension by Haroon. When put on display for an audience, Naghmana and Haroon react in quite different ways. Naghmana loses her attractiveness, confidence, and self-esteem as a result of what transpired, while Haroon shows no remorse or fear of being humiliated and displays a cold approach. She decides to dress like her aunt and wear a chador to avoid attention and feel more comfortable in the awkward circumstance. Because of this, she may resume her regular activities. Though Naghmana enters the kacheri and genuflects before Siraj Din, he does not offer a blessing in the form of a pat on the head or any other sign of kindness. It's because of this that Naghmana feels even more humiliated in front of the kacheri staff. As a result, Naghmana is subjected to public displays of contempt through the words and deeds of others; he reacts to this with a quivering of his lower body, whereas Haroon fights it with a cocky air of superiority. The fact that Naghmana, a city dweller, can drive to a small village on her own demonstrates that she is a capable and independent individual. However, her incapacity to communicate is a shocking turn of events. In spite of her polished persona, she is powerless to defend herself or assert her innocence in Kacheri. After arriving in Chiragpur, the once-confident woman suddenly becomes a docile, unkempt, and submissive person. Naghmana has traded in her polished and attractive appearance for the shy and dull existence of a village woman. To rephrase, Naghmana assumes the persona of Haroon's native Pakistani wife, Gulshan. Haroon acts as a bridge between the two women, bringing their separate identities together and integrating them. Haramzadi is a pejorative term for Naghmana used by the locals. When Haroon says he plans to use the term for both of his wives, it gives the impression that he is behaving inappropriately, even if the term is an expression of an emotional reaction and not meant to disrespect his wife.

Instead, Haroon emphasises the commonalities between his wives rather than their differences to stress their parity. While defending his honour in the Kacheri, Haroon acknowledges that he has been lying about his relationship with Naghmana. He then goes on to explain that many years ago, while they were both still in school, they secretly married and then divorced. By using this term, Shahraz is emphasising the strength of the male voice. It is said that a woman's body can be given fresh life only by hearing a man's voice. The only way for Naghmana to reclaim her dignity and rise from the depths of humiliation to the heights of fulfilment and happiness that come with ownership of her body is for Haroon to accept and claim ownership over her body as a spouse. The emphasis here is on the female character's insecurities and her inability to develop her own identity, both of which were revealed to be impossible to do without developing romantic or sexual ties to a male character. But Naghmana wants Haroon to tell everyone they're dating, and she keeps quiet the whole time. This data implies that women are especially vulnerable to the potentially crippling impacts of guilt. Naghmana feels awkward and unsure of herself whenever she tries to express or accept her feelings for Haroon.

Everyone is at a loss for words once it is disclosed that Naghmana is still considered to be Haroon's wife for legal purposes. On the other side, Naghmana is of the opinion that her intimate relationship with Haroon is detrimental to both Gulshan and their child, and as a result, she approaches Haroon with the intention of filing for divorce from him. As a result of this, Siraj Din demands that Haroon divorce Naghmana in the kacheri so that peace may be restored not only within the society as a whole but also specifically within Haroon's family. It is quite clear that Naghmana views the failure of her marriage to Haroon as both a means of atonement and of exacting her retribution for the dishonour she has brought upon her aunt and the towns people. Haroon does not want to end his marriage to Siraj Din, but when Siraj Din repeatedly abused his position and authority, he was forced to verbally divorce Siraj Din three times in front of the entire town. Haroon did not want to end his marriage to Siraj Din. After the kacheri is over, Siraj Din not only soothes Naghmana by

stroking her on the head, but he also tells her that he is happy for her that her husband has left her for another woman. He says this as he shows his happiness for her. Because they are embarrassed that they told their coworkers about Haroon and Naghmana's immoral behaviour, the kacheri helpers go home from work feeling downcast. This is especially true for Kalsoom and Naimat Bibi. The shame that Naghmana has inflicted upon the city quickly passes from one individual to the next as word gets around. Kaneez, a young widow who frequently visits kacheri to observe the conflicts, reflects on the humiliation she experienced in front of others during her own wedding day. She vividly recalls being in the same place during the wedding ceremony as a group of women, and hearing a voice inform her that her husband's first choice was someone else. At the time, she was seated among those people. The double whammy of Kaneez's private remorse and public humiliation is like a punch to the gut when it comes to her sense of self-worth. When she found out that Fatima, the woman in whom her husband had developed a love interest, was also one of the women, she experienced feelings of embarrassment as well as jealousy. Kaneez begins to experience feelings of regret after this "other" woman makes her believe that she is unattractive. When Kaneez's sister asked her how she felt when she found out that Fatima, the lady whom Kaneez's husband intended to marry, was one of the women who had been raped when Kaneez was a teenager, Kaneez told her sister that she felt offended and envious of Fatima. Kaneez's marriage ended shortly after she disclosed to her husband that she had been the victim of a sexual assault when she was a teenager. As a direct consequence of this, Kaneez experiences overwhelming feelings of shame and abandonment. Kaneez begins to experience feelings of regret after this "other" woman makes her believe that she is unattractive. Kaneez goes through a harrowing experience of rejection and shame after mustering the courage to inform her husband that she had been raped as a teenager, only to be rejected, as she tells her sister. This happens after Kaneez tells her sister that she summoned the fortitude to inform her husband that she had been raped as a teenager. Kaneez brings to light the problem of women who are unable to speak up for themselves due to the societal stigma associated with sexual assault and because they are compelled to bear the weight of sexual victimisation in silence.

There are a lot of wealthy women who have been the victims of sexual assault, and the majority of them would rather suffer in quiet than impose shame on their families by coming forward. Victims of sexual assault or rape are particularly vulnerable in Pakistan due to the fact that they are required to produce witness testimony to prove that the sexual contact they experienced was in fact a rape and not the result of a premarital or extramarital romance. This places the victims of sexual assault or rape in a particularly precarious position. When women who have been the victims of sexual assault are unable to substantiate their claims, they are frequently locked up and punished. No matter how much evidence they offer, women who are wrongfully accused of wrongdoing and then shown to be innocent will still be forced to live their entire lives in humiliation, even if they are successful in proving their innocence. As a consequence of this, Kaneez cultivates a profound hatred for her body as a result of the persistent reminders that she is ashamed of. Kaneez's body becomes a metaphor for her humiliation and the contempt she feels for herself as she continually showers every day in an effort to rid herself of the embarrassment she feels about herself. Kaneez secludes herself in her home and refuses to have any contact with other people. As a result of the traumatic experience of rape, she develops a deep-seated fear of the world and begins to dislike both herself and any potential partners. In addition, she begins to loathe any potential lovers. Younis Raees, a young landlord from a neighbouring town named Younis Raees, makes a marriage proposal to her, but she declines his offer. The outward appearance of Kaneez transforms into an internalised sense of wrongdoing. The other women's bodies in the novel *Typhoon* are enslaved to a set of restrictions that govern even the most intimate choices, such as marriage and family planning. These regulations

are imposed by a male authority figure. Their very existence transforms them from essentially private areas into "cultural places," which are sites where religious, cultural, and political fights are fought. Under these kinds of circumstances, it is not uncommon for women to have the course of their lives determined by society. A 37-year-old woman named Jamila, who already has three children, reports feeling quite self-conscious about her pregnancy. As she makes preparations for her increasing family, she takes into account the possible reactions of others to the news that she is expecting. In order to spare herself the embarrassment of having yet another kid in public, Jamila, whose children are now grownups and whose offspring also includes a daughter in her adolescent years, attempts to have an abortion by the use of natural means. The fact that Jamila is pregnant is a well guarded secret. When Naimat Bibi and Kalsoom pay her a visit, they are dubious after discovering that she has been sick and has been throwing up. Shame and guilt are emotions that Naghmana and Kaneez both experience, but it is Naghmana who is ultimately to blame for the dishonour brought upon the family. Gulshan's mother is the only one who publicly humiliates Haroon; no one else throws shoes at him, drags him around by the hair, or accuses him of bringing dishonour to his family. Strangely, while the female members of the community are willing to publicly disgrace Naghmana, none of the male villagers have stepped forward to reprimand Haroon. In a society that is patriarchal, a man is able to solve his own problems on his own, but the activities of a woman, particularly if they are considered unsuitable, require the attention of the public. It is made abundantly evident here that women's bodies, behaviours, and relationships are all subject to societal regulation. According to Borodo, the life of a Muslim woman is permanently constrained by something that cannot be seen but is always present. As was stated earlier, women suffer a stronger sense of shame than men do because of the stereotypes that portray them as more sexually promiscuous and demanding. Men, on the other hand, are seen as being less demanding and more sexually responsible. Because of this, it is absolutely necessary for them to dress in a manner that reveals as little flesh as is humanly possible.

It is not always sexist to see women as symbols of sex and guilt within patriarchal systems. Women are not only more vulnerable to sexual assault and rape, but they are also more uninformed of sexual things as a result of being much more confined within their households in order to maintain purdah and their dignity. Halfway through the story, various women either overcome their shame and humiliation and emerge victorious, as Kaneez does, or they perish in an emotional turmoil and ultimately fail to do so, as Naghmana does. Kaneez faces her fear of public humiliation and speaks her mind when she encounters Younis Raees at the town well. By disguising their faces with chadors, Kaneez and her younger sister Sabra are able to avoid suspicion as they make their way to the town's well. Kaneez now feels safe enough in the shadows to open up about her shameful behaviour against Younis Raees, the man who wants to marry her. Kaneez's reluctance to "look him in the eye in broad daylight" suggests apprehension about being exposed to both direct sunlight and direct eye contact. This double disguise, double shadow, and double hiding, Kaneez admits, comes in the form of the "black night" and the veil, and allows her to speak her humiliation. As she screams it out, she is fighting it. She exposes herself and shames herself as she tells him about the rape in the hopes of gaining freedom from her disgrace. The internal conflict Naghmana experiences due to her feelings of disgrace is detailed in the story's third and final section. Nearing death, the old man calls upon Naghmana to return and lift the shame from his spirit. As it turns out, Naghmana remarries a professor in the city and the two of them start a new family. Her return to the city is fast and frantic as the old man lies dying. But when her husband finds out about her shameful past, he leaves Chiragpur without her. Naghmana's return to the familiar people and place rips the time-healed shame scars from his body. She tries to flee in terror but finds herself trapped between the kacheri, the townspeople, and the old man who made the decision "You can't escape them, Jahangir; they're

everywhere! Redeem me! Her eyes blinked wide, revealing a mad look on her face. Her mutterings about serpents " (Typhoon, p.332). Naghmana is nervous because she knows she will soon have to face a kacheri, and this time Jahangir would be the judge. Jahangir, having forgotten that Naghmana was still Haroon's wife at the time, snaps, "What were you doing in his arms if you weren't a whore?" as Naghmana recounts their evening together. Page 333 of Typhoon. Naghmana is put in a situation where she must once again prove her innocence. Having to explain to Haroon why she insisted on meeting him at night in secret brings back all of her embarrassment. Because of Naghmana's shady past, Jahangir decides to leave town without her. Naghmana, in contrast to Haroon, cannot get over her guilt; alternatively, her supposed transgression is not easily forgiven. Naghmana goes crazy from the misery of her calls for help. She breaks down in tears and swears over the grave of Siraj Din. Naghmana's frenzied screams, her dishevelled look, and especially her disrespect for her dupatta (head scarf), all point to a condition of loss, such as the loss of a husband, a home, or a good name. She thinks about it as if she were a ghost. Having lost her second husband, Naghmana no longer feels like she belongs anywhere. Because of this, when a wife loses her husband, she loses not just her husband but also the respect and status she enjoyed as his wife. In the story, Shahraz includes a town well that has several purposes and is also a powerful symbol of shame. The well represents Naghmana's anguish and loss, much like the train did in Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man. A shadowy, deeper, and foreboding 'space' is provided within its circular bounds. The well is an important and widely recognised symbol in literature from South Asia due to the high number of women who jumped to their deaths into wells to escape sexual assault. The rural water well is frequently seen in Hindi and Punjabi films as a meeting location for doting couples. In Typhoon, the well is more than just a location to get water; it's also a place for lovers to congregate and, by the book's end, a safe haven for Naghmana, who can finally escape her humiliating existence there. As a sign of dishonour, a stigma or scar is commonly used in Indian and Pakistani culture. To the extent that water is the most efficient medium for flushing out harmful toxins, shame is linked to water. Naghmana takes her own life by jumping into the water-well that saw her illicit encounter with Haroon. As though inscribed in indelible ink, Naghmana's shame at being labelled a prostitute would never wash off, even if she and Haroon were in a legitimate relationship. Because of this, despite Kaneez's ability to shed her guilt and make a fresh start with YounisRaees, she ultimately decides to accept death.

### Conclusion

Typhoon by Shahraz, depicts how men dominate and exploit females by establishing bodily connotations of honor, shame, and decency. Furthermore, women are supposed to defend their men's false senses of honor and respect, even if it cost brining shame to their own self. Therefore, women are forced into a state of passive acceptance as males in positions of power and authority lay down the standards of good and bad for them. As shown, women are not only aware of their bodies being manipulated and subjected to injustice, but they actively make efforts to reject these confinements to the best of their abilities. Overt rebellion is not always attainable since it may have severe effects or is made impossible, but covert opposition is always possible, even if it appears to be accepted.

This study will prove to be a useful source for the future researchers dealing with the cultural feminist analysis particularly with the aspect of female body shaming at the hands of patriarchal society. It will also lead them to the understanding of the embarrassment that is being caused to the woman not only by men but by other woman as well thus, bringing more complexity to gender troubles.

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