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**Gendered Narratives: A Comparative Study of Patriarchy and Matriarchy in the Dramas of
Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar and Humaira Ahmad**

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Abstract

This study's main goal is to critically examine how patriarchy and matriarchy are portrayed in a few Pakistani television dramas by Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar and Humaira Ahmad. It also investigates how these gendered representations affect audience perceptions and either support or contradict social norms. In order to analyze language, character development, and theme components in the dramas, this qualitative study uses feminist literary theory and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its theoretical framework. Transcripts, episodes, and other relevant media content are gathered as a sample from published interviews and streaming services. Six well-known dramas, three by each author, were chosen via the technique of purposive sampling to best represent the opposing gender views. The findings show that Qamar's stories reinforce patriarchal power systems by emphasizing matriarchy honour, emotional pain, and traditional gender binary thinking. Ahmad's works, on the other hand, focus on women's ethical complexity and spiritual development while quietly questioning patriarchal conventions through symbolic matriarchy. These depictions are supported by audience response, which reflects cultural differences in gender ideology. The study suggests that screenwriters and media producers create more multifaceted, balanced gender depictions. In order to encourage critical engagement with gender narratives and advance progressive cultural change in Pakistani culture, more interdisciplinary research and media literacy programs are recommended.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Matriarchy, Critical Discourse Analysis, Pakistani Television Dramas, Feminist Literary Theory, binary thinking, Gender Representation, Gender Ideologies, Pakistani culture*

Introduction

Background of the Study

In South Asian media the portrayal of gender roles is highlighted by Pakistani dramas, which play a pivotal role in influencing social mindset towards masculinity, femininity and power dynamics. In Pakistan the dramas are not only for entertainment but they also highlight social taboos, the portrayal, the construction and transmission of gender narratives provide a compelling lens through which the social heritage is explored.

Many writers are showcasing these narratives but the most famous and prominent writers are Khalil-Ur-Rehman Qamar and Humaira Ahmed, their way of writing is opposite from each other as Khalil-Ur-Rehman is known for his controversial dialogues, he is a person whose writing is bold and he mainly emphasizes the male patriarchy where men are portrayed as a necessity, he thinks that without men women cannot go through thick and thin. His dramas like Mere Pas Tum Ho, Pyaray Afzal, and Sadqay Tumhare were record breaking, in these dramas the main highlights are the men of the house, they are portrayed as ideal men, he targets the modernist women. Qamar's male leads are authoritative and are having some emotional complex, which is mainly because of the women they love, are morally flawed.

On the other hand, Humaira Ahmad's description of the gender is more subtle and understanding. Her dramas like Shehr-e-Zaat, Man-o-Salwa, and Maat, explores the theme of spiritual awakening, self-development and independency of female characters. Humaira's female leads are often those who challenge the male dominancy, and face the hardships of the society on their own. Her female leads are showcased as a symbol of change.

The contrast between these two writers transcends mere stylistic differences, and highlights an insight into sociocultural discourse on patriarchy and matriarchy in Contemporary Pakistan. Patriarchy denotes a society where political, social, economic, moral authorities are wielded by men, whereas matriarchy a term rarely recognized in South Asia symbolizes female power and influence mostly manifested through symbolic or moral authority rather than formal institutional control.

This study revolves within a society where a society is experiencing swift cultural changes, which are shaped by globalization, increasing literacy rates and the proliferation of digital media. This shifting of landscapes, the know-how of gender roles are being actively scrutinized, and sometimes these roles also face criticism, in contrary to which media represents or challenges these ideologies. Mostly the Pakistani television use old themes like love, betrayal but as the new era is taking place some writings are writing more societal themes. Writers like Qamar are still oozing around the patriarchal themes but Ahmad's work is full of matriarchy in a reasonable manner her way of writing give an eagle eye view of the gender roles.

This study reveals that literature and media play an important role in shaping a society. The analyzation of two most famous dramatist showcases that how patriarchy and matriarchy shape a society. Both these writers have an age gap of 14 years which also can be the reason, that their perspectives are different, this study also implies gender roles and showcases cultural dynamics and how media plays a crucial role in shaping the society.

Research Questions

1. How do Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar and Humaira Ahmad portray patriarchal and matriarchal ideologies through their characters and narratives?
2. In what ways do the thematic concerns and moral frameworks of both writers reflect or challenge traditional gender roles in Pakistani society?
3. How do the audiences interpret and respond to the gendered narratives presented by these dramatists, and what implications do these interpretations have for cultural discourse?

Research Objective

1. To critically analyze the representation of patriarchy and matriarchy in the selected dramas of Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar and Humaira Ahmad.
2. To explore the socio-cultural impact of these gendered portrayals on audience perceptions and societal norms.
3. To evaluate how drama as a medium reinforces or resists dominant gender ideologies within the context of Pakistani media and society.

Significance of the Study

This study holds meaningful academic and societal importance as it explains the importance of the writers like Humaira Ahmed and Khalil-Ur-Rehman, which from their writings are helping the society in shaping gender identities, and are configuring power relations within the context of Pakistani Dramas. Mainly this research is for making the audience understand the difference between patriarchy and matriarchy in a South Asian country. This research also persuades the content creators that in future the content should be balanced and more gender sensitive.

Literature Review**1. Gender and Narrative Construction in South Asian Media**

Gender representation in the media and especially in the societies of south Asia like Pakistan has been a subject of academic research that has been debated continuously. Media does not only reflect existing norms and values in the society but it can also become a very powerful tool in shaping and propagating ideologies regarding gender roles (Khan & Bokhari, 2018). The prime importance of television dramas in Pakistan are the defining characteristics of television dramas are that they are one of the most prevalent entertainment forms being consumed in the country and thereby having a strong impact on the overall conception surrounding masculinity and femininity. These on-air stories are cultural writings that assert, contradict, or broach the scope set by the patriarchal and matriarchal orders.

The concept of Patriarchy by Walby (1990) is described as a form of social structures and practices in a society where the men of the house power over the women. On the other hand, matriarchy -although relatively less institutional in the Pakistani society, is frequently done symbolically by making vehement female figures with emotional, moral or intellectual dominance (Rehman & Baig, 2020). This figurative matriarchy contravenes the male-dominated discourse by being the focal point about the nature of power, either within the institutional framework itself, or within the moral or emotional faculties it possesses.

Ali and Batool (2021) highlight that gender in South Asian plays goes beyond the simple portrayal of the male/female bracket enjoys, but it entails social scripts and ideological constructs that these characters carry. This perspective helps in putting a lot of emphasis on the manner in which dramatists like Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar and Humaira Ahmad insert their story lines in a larger and wider context of power, morality, and identity and in turn create a form of the public consciousness regarding gender.

2. Patriarchy in Pakistani Drama and the Role of Male-Centric Narratives

The works of Kalil-Ur-Rehman are based on the patriarchal ideology in the mainstream of Pakistani Media. His descriptions are close to the standard requirements of masculinity which includes honor, authority, whereas female characters are often evaluated according to their adherence to loyalty, modesty and subservience (Zia,2019), As in his famous drama Mere Pas Tum Ho has the male protagonist has a very delicate sense of humor, that is constantly put under the threat of whispers by female disobedience, a cultural fear of looting male honor that is enshrined at both the societal and cultural levels.

The hegemonic masculinity concept developed by Conell (2005), is applicable to this interaction where the ideal masculinity in cultural sense is endorsed. The character if Qamar strengths the ideal hegemony because it sets up the male characters as the ideal characters who are morally obviously proper but tormented emotionally and they usually are the victims of the female betrayal.

Critics have criticized that dramas of Qamar, stating that even in the modern world he has the tendency of portraying the female characters as being binary in their morality, either that of a perfect women, or someone immoral, which leaves little room for more realistic female characters (Tariq & Iqbal,2022). For instance, in Sadqay Tumhare, the female character is portrayed as an independent person but eventually loses her freedom because of society's rule. These stories are used to reaffirm patriarchal values since they dramatize the outcomes of female disobedience.

Furthermore, similar sentiments have been identified despite Qamar not only supporting but also promoting patriarchal beliefs on the public stage, subjecting his personal beliefs about such things to his writing profession (Sadaf, 2020). Such a combination makes him a cultural architect as he is playing an active role in the creation of a unified perception of gender in the conservative social environment. Thus, it is quite important not only to analyze his texts but to observe the socio-political situations that surrounded his works in order to grasp all his impact.

3. Humaira Ahmad and the Portrayal of Matriarchal Symbolism

With her opposite and pure patriarchal overtones, Humaira Ahmad brings into perspective something more in-depth and spiritually inclined treatment of female lead characters. Her plays deal with the limitations of the patriarchal world, but the emphasis is on the strength of individual moral development and silent determination of women in the face of unfairness. Stories written by Ahmad instead, they represent symbolic zones that bring women to the forefront as moral and emotional leaders (Khan & Sarwar, 2021).

Shehr-e-Zaat and Maat are works about the female characters that experience serious internal development under the influence of the experience of suffering as they find their spiritual fulfillment and realization. It reveals the idea of the so-called moral matriarchy, where the influence of women lies in moral and expressive strength, not an explicit display of physical power (Bano, 2017). Female characters have not been represented as villains or helpless victims in dramas. Rather, they are complex subjects moving with much depth and agency in their environments.

Often, the vision presented by Ahmad can be characterized as Islamic feminist in the sense of having the spiritual agency with which women in it do not necessarily have to renounce their religious or cultural ideals but overcome their crushing pressures. Such subtle resistance differs with Western feminist models, and her stories are more acceptable in the conservative cultures (Yousaf & Shaukat, 2020). In this way, in portraying female characters, Ahmad helps to redefine gender expectations, providing Pakistani media with alternative discourses on female empowerment.

4. Media as a Gendered Ideological Apparatus

Based on the notion of ideological state apparatuses coined by Althusser (1971), media as the means of broadcasting ideologies (such as television drama series) acts as a tool of broadening and normalizing the versions of ideology imposed by the normative forces. Television has become an important means of cultural transmission besides being a means of passing entertainment in Pakistan. Authors such as Qamar, Ahmad by their varying narrative techniques, engage in an ideological construction process when they assume and select certain gender stories.

CDA highlights inclusion and exclusion patterns in their plays that show which stories take centre stage and which are not. Fairclough (1995) believes that the language and narrative structures are ideological, determining and supporting the relations of power. Its prevalence of monologues during which male roles describe the suffering or ideational dispositions of the world makes the male gender the natural objects of sympathy and the source of moral authority (Ahmed & Rasheed, 2018). On the other hand, stories of Ahmad decentralize the male vision around the internal emotional world of women and, thus, the ideological center is changed.

These dynamics are enhanced by audit studies of reception. Hashmi (2021) discovered that male consumers tend to project their own perceptions onto the male heroes of Qamar, but female ones can lean on the spiritually strong women of Ahmad to find their motivation and comfort. Such division can expectedly be related to the greater society as gender discourse is divided, and media texts involving critical consumption are essential.

Such analytical skills can be instrumental in breaking down how gender is depicted in Pakistani dramas and this is done with the help of feminist criticism. Such scholars as Spivak (1988), Mohanty (2003) pay much attention to the necessity of the contextualization of Gender into a postcolonial context and warn against the uncritical appropriation of Western feminist theories. Both Qamar and Ahmad cope with these issues in their unique ways Qamar tries to reestablish conservative ideology, whereas Ahmad provides subtle variations on what constitutes female

agency without rejecting ancient cultural contexts. The Pakistani feminist researchers would like to see more multidimensional and diverse image of women in the media. Shaikh and Niazi (2021) praise the fact that the dominant binary of an ideal caregiver and the fallen woman has been challenged and that this restrictive construct has officially ceased to be a concern of feminist discourse.

Also, Pakistani drama is subjected to the ideas of the male gaze (Mulvey 1975), which sheds light on the way in which a female character often is organized to be the object in the male gaze and to be judged.

To comprehend patriarchy and matriarchy in media in Pakistan, one has to pay the cultural specificity. Mahmood (2005) claims that alternative models of resistance and agency exist in Islamic context and these are not identical to the models of secular western feminism. Ahmad's writing is an illustration of the matriarchal power.

Patriarchy in Pakistan is rigidly connected with religion, honor, and the family set-up. Such intersections can be seen in Qamar as he focuses on male dignity, betrayal, and control. His plays over-dramatize female rebellion as an individual failure, as a national disaster, which affirms the precariousness of male honor (Asif & Saleem, 2021).

The tales by Humaira Ahmad instead create symbolic matriarchal worlds on the same cultural platform. The characters in her protagonist are guided by religion and self-examination as an antidote to patriarchy since they reshape their heroine, as well as the idea of feminine heroism and justice.

5. Comparative Framework: Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar vs. Humaira Ahmad

The comparative analysis between Qamar and Ahmad brings out two mutually contradicting but powerful gender story telling paradigms. The dramas written by Qamar are a reminder of patriarchal conceptions in terms of which male agency prevails whereas female behavior is firmly monitored through dramatic resolutions. Submissiveness is followed by rewards and transgression is followed by punishment; this is his moral universe (Tariq & Qureshi, 2022). Narratives provided by Ahmad make this universe more complicated as they exploit character ambiguity, growth, and emotional depth and tend to avoid a clear antagonist, focusing on inner struggles. This is a feminizer or matriarchal view.

This opposition is not absolute, sometimes Qamar depicts emotionally vulnerable men, and Ahmad has supportive male characters who help women develop. They have, nevertheless, prevailing thematic and structural tendencies expressive of more general ideological standpoints. A close analysis of their conversations, plots and character development depicts how the two create gender ideologies in narrative format. Their different styles also affect reception by the audience. They are both very popular though engagement varies. The creative work of Qamar is very controversial, from being praised as an act of daring sharply to being accused of misogyny, whereas the dramas of Ahmad do not evoke such an explosive reaction, but rather a quiet emotional response, in particular, on the part of female audience (Hassan & Iqbal, 2020).

Methodology

With an emphasis on the concepts of patriarchy and matriarchy, this study attempts to critically examine the gendered tales written by two of Pakistan's most prominent dramatists, Humaira Ahmad and Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar. This study uses a qualitative research approach based on feminist literary theory and critical discourse analysis because of the cultural relevance of television drama in influencing and reflecting public discourse in Pakistan. The study's demographic, sampling strategy, research methodology, and theoretical framework are described in this section. Feminist theory looks at how narratives can create, support, or challenge gender beliefs, especially in the setting of literature and the media. According to pioneers like Gayatri Spivak (1988), Judith Butler (1990), and Simone de Beauvoir (1949), gender is socially created and frequently portrayed in literature and the media as binary oppositions. This research use feminist theory to assess the ways in which Humaira Ahmad's narrative quietly incorporates matriarchal symbolism and female autonomy, as well as the ways in which Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar's works support patriarchal standards.

Norman Fairclough's model of CDA provides the second lens for this study. CDA focuses on the relationship between language, ideology, and power in discourse. It aims to uncover how discursive practices reproduce or resist social structures (Fairclough, 1995). By analyzing dialogues, character structures, and thematic elements in the selected dramas, the study investigates how gender ideologies are constructed and disseminated through language. CDA is particularly suitable here because it bridges the gap between text and context, considering the social and cultural factors that influence meaning-making.

The study uses a qualitative textual analysis approach, which is ideal for delving deeply into discursive and thematic patterns in media material. A qualitative method offers interpretative depth, contextual sensitivity, and flexibility that a quantitative approach would not.

The story structures, character arcs, language use, and symbolic aspects that denote patriarchal or matriarchal ideology are all broken down through textual analysis. This entails closely examining and categorising certain drama scripts and episodes based on themes. The analysis focuses on:

1. Character construction (e.g., dominant vs. submissive roles, moral binaries)
2. Language and dialogue (e.g., tone, metaphors, power assertions)
3. Plot progression and resolution
4. Gendered conflicts and resolutions
5. Narrative voice and perspective (male/female-centered)

Each of these elements is evaluated using the dual lens of feminist theory and CDA to uncover both explicit and implicit ideological messages.

The whole corpus of TV dramas produced by Humaira Ahmad and Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar between the early 2000s and 2024 makes up the study's population. However, it is not possible nor required to examine every play by both authors owing to time and scope constraints. Rather, a deliberate sample of dramas chosen to best represent each author's ideology is examined.

Both Qamar and Ahmad have authored several pieces for Pakistani major television networks, and cable television and streaming services have seen and shared their work extensively. Their dramas are regarded as cultural works that have influenced the national conversation on gender roles and are widely viewed. Consequently, a sizable and pertinent portion of the general population is represented by the selected plays.

To choose a representative sample of plays from each author, the research uses purposive sampling, sometimes referred to as judgemental sampling. When the researcher wants to investigate particular traits or occurrences, this non-probability sampling technique is suitable (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The chosen dramas in this instance were picked because they most clearly illustrate the opposing ideological constructs of matriarchy and patriarchy.

Selected dramas are following:

1. *Mere Paas Tum Ho* (2019)
2. *Sadqay Tumhare* (2014)
3. *Pyaray Afzal* (2013)
4. *Shehr-e-Zaat* (2012)
5. *Maat* (2011)
6. *Man-o-Salwa* (2007)

Data Analysis

With an emphasis on how each creates gender ideas through narrative devices, character arcs, language, and audience interaction, this section offers a thorough qualitative study of a few television plays by Khalil ur Rehman Qamar (Qamar) and Humaira Ahmad (Ahmad). This research highlights the varied portrayals of patriarchy and matriarchy in the six chosen dramas using the previously mentioned methodology—feminist literary theory and critical discourse analysis.

1. Character Building and Moral Authority

1.1 Qamar's Male Heroes: Emblems of Patriarchal Power

Danish, the main male character in *Mere Paas Tum Ho*, is painstakingly designed to depict the weakness of masculine pride and honour. He is positioned as both mistreated and righteous in his speech, which is full of rhetorical devices. "Mard jaayein to haq ke liye maro, izzat ke liye nahi" (Danish, ep. 6) is a crucial illustration.

This artistic decision sets Khirad, the female character, at fault for deviating from traditional wifely responsibilities and firmly establishes moral authority in the masculine realm. By reiterating the idea that male honour is culturally inviolable and essential to family dignity, CDA reveals how this discourse reifies hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), recharging the ideological backbone through repetition.

Similar to this, Khalil, the male lead in *Sadqay Tumhare*, functions as an emotional martyr whose story is characterised by agony he endures due to his love for the female lead and the covert guilt she causes him to feel after she leaves. Self-pitying monologues normalise masculine stoicism and passive suffering as the emotional cornerstone of manhood in addition to eliciting compassion. The drama's finale solidifies his ideological significance by reinforcing his suffering as a moral lesson.

1.2 Women as Moral Gatekeepers in Ahmad's Plots

Ahmad's female heroines, on the other hand, don't need approval from men. Falak's metamorphosis in *Shehr e Zaat* is brought about by her spiritual enlightenment rather than a masculine hero. Through her self-awareness journey, "Main khud ko dhund rahi hoon," which indicates an internal centre of control, she confronts patriarchal norms (Ahmad, ep. 4). A change from masculine gazing to a female interiority that prioritises women's moral growth is revealed by CDA.

Saman's final moral salvation is highlighted by her ethical clarity in Maat's depiction of her and Sammar going through similar soul searching. Storylines that frequently reallocate narrative importance towards female subjectivity, defying popular preconceptions, are the source of their moral power rather than their relationship position.

2. Language and Power Structures

2.1 Patriarchal Linguistic Tropes in Qamar's Scripts

Metaphorical and rhetorical language that reasserts masculine power are abundant in Qamar's scripts. Consider the following passage from Pyaray Afzal: "Mard banta hai izzat dilaane ke liye, aurat badi teri khyal rakhe."

This phrase supports masculine duty as the ultimate custodian of feminine identity in addition to framing gender roles as complimentary. By equating power with linguistic skill that promotes patriarchal normativity, CDA identifies this as ideological framing.

By emphasising "izzat" (honour), "dard" (struggle), and "maqdoomiyat" (submissiveness), repetitive structure colonises the emotional vocabulary around gender and makes deviation a moral failing.

2.2 Dialogic Space in Ahmad's Rendition of Female Voice

Dialogic direction is frequently reversed in Ahmad's writings.

Khadija muses, "Larki sirf yahi samjhti hai zindagi: shadi ho jaye, sab theek," in *Man o Salwa*.

Rather than promoting patriarchal norms, this discussion exposes them via introspection rather than contempt. A change in discursive authority from prescribing to criticizing is captured by CDA. In order to decentralize masculine moral authority, the language enables female voices to challenge internalized patriarchy, frequently in spiritual or emotional registers.

3. Plot, Conflict, and Resolution

3.1 Punishment and Patriarchal Reinforcement in Qamar's Narratives

Story closure frequently penalizes female transgressions in Qamar's plays. Khirad's decision to file for divorce in *Mere Paas Tum Ho* is greeted with moral victimization and public humiliation, which serves to further the idea that disobedience to masculine honour carries harsh consequences. Khirad's acts were publicly crucified, which dramatizes a community reinforcement of patriarchal power.

On the other hand, masculine imperfections are frequently made palatable or excused. Instead of being shown as moral failure, Danish's emotional outbursts are presented as justified suffering, exposing a gendered moral disparity in the story structure.

3.2 Ethical Realignment in Ahmad's Dramatic Closures

The plotlines of Ahmad's stories shift away from harsh resolution. In contrast to Qamar's narrative logic, Falak's character development in *Shehr e Zaat* ends in spiritual freedom rather than punishment. Instead of using retaliatory drama to resolve conflict, discussion and contemplation are used.

4. Plot Voices and Moral Perspectives

4.1 Male-Centered Story Worlds in Qamar's Dramas

By default, Qamar centralises masculine subjectivity. The male protagonist's perspective is used to depict even female characters, who develop their identities in relation to masculine moral stance. A pattern of monologic story creation is identified by CDA, in which masculine protagonists enforce moral definition and serve as ideological discourse anchors. Through omniscient narration as well as speech, language turns becomes a vehicle of authority.

4.2 Polyphonic Female-Centered Narratives in Ahmad's Work

Ahmad pluralizes moral subjectivity in his stories. It presents female viewpoints as independent sources of meaning rather than only as objects of masculine activity. Even when love subplots in *Maat* include males, narrative space shifts between Saman and Sammar, none of which is given priority over the other. Their voices convey interiority, contemplation, and moral depth beyond romantic entanglements rather than being proof of emotional simplicity.

5. Gender Representations

5.1 Symbolic Gender Role Reinforcements in Qamar's Scripts

The imagery of Qamar's works is rife with gendered symbolism: shattered mirrors to signify rebellious femininity, doors closed to suggest female isolation, and public humiliation to reaffirm masculine power. Black clothing is linked to transgression, whereas white clothing is shorthand for virtue. By painting morality onto aesthetic signals, these strategies linguistically inscribe patriarchy into visual storytelling.

5.2 Symbolic Matriarchy in Ahmad's Dramas

Ahmad emphasizes female moral power by using situational and spiritual symbolism. The trip serves as a metaphor for Falak's inward journey in *Shehr e Zaat*. In *Man o Salwa*, water imagery suggests spiritual purification and submission rather than feminine frailty. These symbols transcend traditionally enforced home constraints and unite female subjectivity with moral and environmental forces.

6. Audience Attachment and Ideological Response

6.1 Social Media Echoes of Qamar's Work

Following Mere Paas Tum Ho, hashtag movements such as #TeamDanish shows a strong public affinity with male victimisation. Tweets protecting Danish's honor abound:

"Sach bola ne sirf danish." Aukaat yaad dila di khirad ki. - @pakistanifan

These digital affirmations support men's emotional entitlement and patriarchal approval. There is little criticism of male privilege in audience forums, according to observational content analysis, which emphasizes the relevance of Qamar's ideological grammar.

6.2 Feminine Solidarity and Relational Responses to Ahmad

Different audience dynamics are evoked by Ahmad's plays. Testimonials abound on Facebook fan sites devoted to Shehr e Zaat: "Mujhe apne aap se mohabbat karna seekhai."

These answers demonstrate how the audience may identify with the moral development of women, indicating that symbolic matriarchal narratives can speak to women who are looking for moral affirmation outside of reliance. Qualitative comments emphasize that Ahmad's characters are neither sexualized or romanticized objects of gaze, but rather emotional role models.

7. Cross-Case Comparative Analysis

7.1 Thematic Continuities and Divergences

| Dimension | Qamar's Dramas | Ahmad's Dramas |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Moral Centrality | Male pain, authority, honor | Female growth, spiritual resilience |
| Gender Representation | Binaries: virtuous vs. deviant women | Complexity: morally ambivalent women |
| Language Use | Patriarchal tropes in rhetorical discourse | Reflective, introspective female voice |
| Narrative Closure | Punishment or vindication | Redemption through moral/spiritual insight |
| Symbolic Imagery | Honor, shame, control | Purity, spiritual growth, emotional healing |

7.2 Ideological Outcomes

By giving male subjectivity, moral authority, and control mechanisms more weight, Qamar's stories reinforce patriarchal notions. Male honour or disgrace is reflected in female characteristics. Despite having its roots in cultural resonance, Ahmad's method challenges this convention by allowing for symbolic matriarchy, in which women are empowered by their moral and spiritual awareness rather than by following male-imposed rules.

8. Implications for Gender Discourse in Pakistani Media

8.1 Strength versus Resistance

Through its story structure, Qamar's dramas primarily uphold long-standing gender stereotypes, reviving the public conversation on female responsibility and male victimization. Ahmad's work presents feminist perspectives in a culturally acceptable form by providing resistance narratives that normalize female moral autonomy without directly challenging patriarchal structures.

8.2 Public and Institutional Echoes

By using Qamar's hypermasculine positions to draw viewers, network marketing and promotional trailers create a feedback loop between ideology and business. Indicating a market desire for complex representations of gender that mirror inward moral journeys, Ahmad's screenplays provide witness to growing audience groups looking for spiritual feminine storylines.

Discussion

The comparison of Ahmad's and Qamar's work sheds light on the ways in which media narratives serve as ideological tools. Qamar's plays frequently conform to hegemonic masculinity and reflect patriarchal norms (Connell, 2005). His male leads, like Khalil in *Sadqay Tumhare* and Danish in *Mere Paas Tum Ho*, are shown as morally upright, emotionally troubled, and ethically

central. On the other hand, female characters must pass moral tests that frequently lead to censure if they stray from expected roles.

This supports the idea that patriarchy is a multifaceted system that includes family, media, and ideology, as proposed by Sylvia Walby in 1990. The recurrence of stories, the exaltation of masculine honour, and the symbolic penalty of feminine deviance all serve to strengthen this framework in Qamar's plays. The salvation of female characters is typically linked to their conformity to patriarchal standards, even in cases where they are shown with empathy.

However, Humaira Ahmad's strategy is consistent with a type of spiritual and cultural feminism in which women are neither idolized as abstract symbols nor restricted to submissive duties. Characters that handle moral quandaries with emotional nuance and moral independence may be found in dramas such as *Shehr-e-Zaat* and *Maat*. Because these characters' inner lives, rather than their relationships with men, define them, Ahmad's plays subtly challenge patriarchal ideas. Ahmad subverts male-dominated discourses without coming out as combative by using internal monologues, religious symbols, and moral reflection. This supports Saba Mahmood's (2005) contention that Islamic communities frequently exhibit resistance in culturally specific ways that differ from those of Western feminist paradigms.

From a discursive standpoint, masculine emotionality and moral anguish are given priority in Qamar's stories. A hierarchical structure of empathy is created when female characters are evaluated via the prism of male heroes. This is in line with Laura Mulvey's (1975) theory of the "male gaze," which views women as objects of criticism rather than active participants.

In contrast, Ahmad gives expression to the psychological and spiritual realms of her female characters by turning the narrative's attention inward. By decentralizing masculine power, this polyphonic narrative framework makes room for female self-representation. Therefore, by portraying women as nuanced moral individuals rather than straightforward moral objects, her plays subvert the masculine.

Conclusion

By comparing two of the most significant modern dramatists, Humaira Ahmad and Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar, this study has investigated the gendered production of narratives in Pakistani television dramas. The research investigated how patriarchy and matriarchy are portrayed, upheld, or challenged in Pakistani popular culture by using feminist literary theory and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to a few dramas by each author.

The results show that patriarchal views are largely reinforced in Qamar's writings. His plays create a moral world in which women are frequently cast in a binary role—either as transgressors or as models of virtue—and masculine honour, authority, and suffering are prioritized. His narratives and characters portray female autonomy as either a test of allegiance or a danger to communal order, while highlighting male emotional fragility as heroic suffering. His stories make extensive use of rhetorical language, symbolic analogies, and dramatic motifs to ingrain patriarchy in interpersonal and familial interactions.

Ahmad's works, on the other hand, show a more reflective and spiritually orientated portrayal of women. Her stories provide the female voice a platform to shine with moral clarity and

independence while decentralising masculine power. Her characters establish themselves by moral fortitude, spiritual enlightenment, and emotional fortitude rather than outright revolt, resulting in a subtly potent kind of symbolic matriarchy. Through change rather than conflict, she enables her female characters to grow, examine themselves, and question conventions, making her approach both theoretically progressive and culturally relevant.

The dramatists together illustrate two poles of gender representation in Pakistani media: one carefully pushing their bounds, while the other affirms conventional gender conventions. In Pakistan, where modernisation, religio-cultural norms, and feminist discourses regularly clash and coexist, this dualism is a reflection of larger societal issues.

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