

Establishing Women's Entangled Identity in the Social Space in Taslima Nasrin's *Sodh* and Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy*

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Abstract

In 1935, Schrödinger—another originator of quantum theory and Nobel Prize winner—used the word “entanglement” to characterize an odd link between quantum systems. When two systems temporarily connect physically because of known forces between them and then separate after some period of mutual influence, they can no longer be characterized in the same manner as previously because of the contact, which has caused the two systems to become entangled. Thus, entanglement appears as an odd association between people, places, or events who/which have previously interacted yet nevertheless keep in touch even when they are separated by great distances.

For example: A mom and a kid, or a couple who formerly experienced a powerful feeling but are now separated by a great distance. They experience each other's emotions, take in the joy or sorrow of the distant spouse, and are shaped by entanglement.

Taslima Nasrin wants to transform how people think about marriage and love entangled in the so-called privileged yet rigidly traditional nations. She does this by changing the roles that society has assigned to women, including those of lover, wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. As a result, the tale of Jhumur's union with Haroon goes beyond the analysis of a union or the fate of an individual and raises questions like: Is romance possible, where self-respect is lacking? What is the connection between love, desire, and marriage? How can traditional familial relationships be redefined?

Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy* tells the tale of Heer, who struggled her entire life to free herself from the chains that had held her captive for so long. Heer had aspirations and desires as any other young woman would. The identity of Heer, as her role in the social space, as a daughter, a wife, a daughter-in-law, a mother, and an individual puts into question.

Keywords: entanglement, social space, identity

In 1935, the concept of "entanglement" was introduced by Erwin Schrödinger, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist and one of the founders of quantum theory. Schrödinger employed this term to describe a peculiar correlation observed between quantum systems. When two such systems come into physical contact due to known forces and subsequently separate after mutual influence, they exhibit a state of entanglement. This state renders the systems incapable of being described in the same manner as before their interaction, as the contact has led to their entanglement. Consequently, entanglement manifests as a remarkable association between individuals, locations, or events that have previously interacted but remain connected even when separated by substantial distances.

The notion of entanglement in quantum physics has drawn attention due to its counterintuitive nature and implications for the understanding of physical phenomena at the subatomic level. In the framework of quantum mechanics, particles such as electrons or photons can become entangled, resulting in a peculiar correlation where the properties of one particle become intrinsically linked to the properties of the other. This correlation persists even when the particles are separated by significant spatial distances, defying classical notions of locality and suggesting an instantaneous connection between the entangled entities.

The phenomenon of entanglement has also captured the interest of researchers in other fields beyond quantum physics:

living organisms as dynamic and complex systems, located in a dimension of temporality and development, and constitutively open to their milieu – a milieu that ranges in scale from the intracellular to psychological, biographical, social and cultural. (Rose 5)

The concept of entanglement has been adopted metaphorically to describe complex associations between people, places, or events that exhibit characteristics similar to quantum entanglement. In this sense, entanglement reflects a connection that persists even when the entities in question are physically separated. It implies that past interactions have forged a bond that transcends physical distance and continues to influence the entities involved.

This metaphorical usage of "entanglement" to describe human associations acknowledges the enduring effects of past interactions and suggests that these interactions shape the subsequent behavior or outcomes of the individuals or elements involved. It conveys the idea that even when individuals or events are geographically apart, they remain intertwined, and their histories of interaction continue to impact their present state or future development.

Our thoughts are socially intertwined. What individuals know and believe is known as cognition, which is not a property of the individual. The distribution of cognition across social networks is a feature of socially networked minds. When making a choice, a person considers not just his or her own knowledge and views, but also the knowledge and beliefs held by the people he or she is connected to. As we shall demonstrate, entangled brains create social behaviour that is reasonable even when it does not always follow the basic precepts of rational decision-making in modern decision theory. We broaden the rational choice theory to address interconnected brains.

The application of the concept of entanglement beyond the realm of quantum physics and into various domains, including sociology, psychology, and even literature, illustrates the recognition of entanglement as a useful metaphor to capture the intricate and enduring nature of connections between people, places, or events; according to Des Fitzgerald and Felicity Callard entanglement in the field of sociology and humanities is "heterogeneous modes of practice" (Callard 18). By employing the language of entanglement, researchers and scholars aim to highlight

the complex interdependencies and lasting influences that persist in human relationships or systems long after direct contact or interaction has ceased.

By invoking the notion of entanglement, “we mean a study of the ways in which the collective set of dependencies between humans and things, between things and other things, and between humans and other humans” (Mol 1067), researchers and scholars seek to emphasize the profound influence of past interactions and the enduring interdependencies that shape the present state and future trajectories of individuals, places, or events.

Taslima Nasrin is a renowned Bangladeshi author and feminist who has written extensively on women's issues and challenges in her works. One of her notable books is *Sodh* (also known as "Revenge" in English), published in 1993. In *Sodh*, Nasrin explores various aspects of women's entangled identity and the struggles they face in a patriarchal society which evokes both praise and criticism, with varying interpretations and perspectives among readers and critics. Iqbal Mullick writes in support of patriarchy, in his book *Women in Islam*, “The husband assumes the role of ruler, controller, oppressor and master while the wife, on the other hand, is reduced to a slave, a captive, a low, inferior and submissive creature” (Mullick 261-264). Taslima Naseen challenged this inferior mentality – violence against women is a long-standing practice that is now a serious cause for worry in the modern world. It is also a constant process. Both peace and conflict are not immune from violence toward women. Women have consistently been the main targets of torture, abuse, and humiliation throughout wars of all stripes, including civil wars, inter-communal conflicts, and world wars. Women continue to be victims of patriarchal hierarchies in times of peace instead of being free, women have “suffered as a woman” (Nasrin, *Revenge* 186). The author has first-hand experience with how women are relegated to submissive positions where they are unable to exercise their rights to freedom, a healthy lifestyle, and equality.

Nasrin's portrayal of women's entangled identity in *Sodh* delves into the complex and multifaceted experiences of women in Bangladesh. One aspect of the critical analysis revolves around Nasrin's depiction of women's intertwined identity as a result of societal expectations and gender roles. Her female characters are entangled in a web of cultural, social, and familial pressures, often leading to a loss of personal agency and identity that society has assigned to women, including those of lover, wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. As a result, the tale of Jhumur's union with Haroon goes beyond the analysis of a union or the fate of an individual and raises questions like: Is romance possible, where self-respect is lacking? What is the connection between love, desire, and marriage? How can traditional familial relationships be redefined? *Shodh*, wherein, Jhumur, a well-educated wife with an M.Sc. in physics. She expresses her outrage at the domestic abuse her husband, Haroon, has committed against her. Without any evidence, Jhumur is accused of adultery by her husband, who cruelly forces her to get an abortion since he believes it is unattainable for a woman to get pregnant within six weeks of being married. Jhumur suffers intense psychological effects from this type of physical and mental abuse, which sows a germ of hatred in her heart.

Critics commend Nasrin for shedding light on the challenges women face in reconciling their own desires and aspirations with the expectations imposed upon them by society. The entangled identity of these women reflects the struggles and conflicts arising from the tension between individual autonomy and societal norms. Frustrated Jhumur due to her incompetence, was consumed with feeling sorry for herself and thinking about how pointless and disgusting her existence was: “my life had become meaningless, that I was disgusted with myself and lonely” (Nasrin, *Revenge* 100). This may be overly simplistic or one-dimensional. They contend that her portrayal of women as exclusively victims of male oppression fail to capture the diverse experiences and agency of women in complex social contexts; the concept of revenge as a response to the oppression faced by women. The book explores the desire for revenge that can emerge from

the experiences of injustice, abuse, and marginalization. Nasrin's female characters seek retribution, not only for personal grievances but also as a symbolic act of resistance against a society that suppresses their voices and freedoms. Nasrin's stark characterization of men as universally oppressive can be seen as reductive and hinder a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics. Sebati, a doctor friend of Jhumur, mentioned that all of her patients are victims of female biological destiny. There is no room for happiness in the Taslima brand of feminism. Even nice things begin to appear to be awful. Numerous ceremonies are conducted to celebrate various phases of pregnancy because of the unborn kid. Taslima is upset and critical of the situation since all the attention is being paid to the unborn kid instead of the pregnant mother. Jhumur admits, "I know for certain that the amulet and the darud are not to wish me well; they are for the well-being of Haroon's child" (Nasrin, *Sodh* 203).

Another point of critique focuses on Nasrin's writing style and the impact it has on the portrayal of women's entangled identities. Some critics argue that Nasrin's blunt and confrontational approach: "I had nothing to call my own" (Nasrin, *Revenge* 89), which can overshadow the subtleties of character development and the exploration of identity. They suggest that a more nuanced and layered depiction of women's identity in the imbroglio condition which could have enhanced the narrative depth.

Nasrin's exploration of women's imbroglio identity in *Sodh* is an important contribution to feminist literature. She sheds light on the struggles faced by women and encourages dialogue around gender equality and women's rights; she struggles to leave the social bonding she questions herself again: "In my position as bou (wife), I felt isolated and abandoned. Of course, I was angry ... It seemed just as mysterious that I had barely hesitated to break my marriage vows ... Why was I not taking any step to leave Haroon and go off with Afzal?" (Nasrin, *Revenge* 123-124). By giving

voice to the experiences of women in a patriarchal society, Nasrin aims to dismantle oppressive structures and create a more inclusive and equitable world for women.

In Tehmina Durrani's novel *Blasphemy*, she delves into various aspects of women's entangled identity within the context of Pakistani society. The novel explores the intersection of religion, gender, and power dynamics, shedding light on the challenges and struggles faced by women. *Blasphemy* focuses on the character of Heer, a young woman who challenges the societal expectations imposed on her. Heer's entangled identity emerges as she confronts the oppressive structures and traditions that restrict her agency and individuality. Since her early years, she has struggled to respect her own particular ideals and wishes, first being a daughter, then as a wife, and eventually as a mother. In both her personal and marital relationships, she has an identity crisis. The function of women is constructed in Pakistani culture, which is governed by Islamic law, and they are oppressed in public as well as private environments. Heer and other oppressed women are unable to live independent lives. Instead, she conforms to social norms, serves the man Pir Sain, and puts up with all the hardships.

The review suggests that *Blasphemy* portrays women's entangled identity through the lens of religion, particularly Islam, and its interpretations within the patriarchal framework. It explores how women are often marginalized and silenced, with their voices and choices overshadowed by patriarchal norms and religious dogmas. Governmental objectives to unite individuals divided by languages, cultures, nationalities, and religious sects in addition to trying to create a masculinist state identity to unify these many groups have historically carefully regulated state education in Pakistan. The purdah, or veil, is a key institution in Islamic civilizations. It refers to a barrier or screen in its literal sense, but by expansion, it limits women's duties to the home and private spheres. The purdah (or veil) is used to exclude and seclude women, and the feminist narrative

demonstrates how this is related to the power struggle between uncovered women and fundamentalist males in modern Pakistani society.

When Heer rebels against the social structure that is led by religion, the cognitive side of women is reflected. She is capable of expressing her rage and hostility in the same ways as masculine characters, particularly her husband and children. Women continue to keep quiet until such time as they can withstand their abusive behaviour and dominance over them. Her own son considers Heer just like other women “Rajaji stood over me and growled, ‘She is a curse. She gave our family nothing but shame. I pray she dies before she can sting us like a snake again’” (Durrani 222). Rajaji and Heer's connection suggests that she is in a subordinate position in the household. Pir Sain was depicted in Heer's rendition of his story as a genuine killer and child abuser. Pir Sain engaged in sexual activity with several women outside of the context of marriage and, in cases where they were pregnant, destroyed the foetus. In addition, he harassed young girls who were the same age as his daughters who were employed by him at his haveli (mansion). Despite he professes to be nearer to Allah, he engages in a number of societal wrongs. He exploits innocent individuals who honour him, exposing his religious hypocrisy.

The protagonist's journey in the novel highlights her struggle to reconcile her personal desires and aspirations with the expectations and limitations placed on her by her family and society. Through Heer's story, Durrani sheds light on the complexities of women's identities and the interplay between tradition, religion, and gender roles. A renewed push occurred to dominate every state organization, including the press and education, to further Islamization during the Zia dictatorship in the early 1980s. According to Parvez Hoodboy, “Islamization of education meant that every subject—languages, geography, history, social studies, chemistry, physics, mathematics, etc.—could only be viewed through a narrow prism. All else was to be shunned and filtered out” (Zubair 96). The ulema (religious officials) were put on task by General Zia with reviewing the

then-current laws and bringing them into compliance with Islam. There were several conservative ulemas in the Council of Islamic Ideology who made sexist remarks about women in particular. Zia also ordered afternoon prayers in government buildings, popularized the phrase "chador aur char diwari" (a veil and four walls), ordered women to cover their bodies at work, began all official correspondence with the Quranic phrase "bismillah-hir-Rahman-Nir-Raheen" (I begin this task in the holy name of Allah), and added symbolic gestures to all official ceremonies. Critics like, Rafia Hasan cojoined the oppression of Pakistani Islamic concept with colonial rules, the legal rights "met with considerable opposition due to various sociological, economic, and political reasons. The forces of custom, orthodoxy, and reaction joining hands at times with colonial rulers did much to water down the rights of equality granted by Islam" (Hasan 69).

William Connolly sees Heer's identity from an ontotheological point of view, ironically, the "ultimate answer to the question of being" (Connolly 71). Heer's motherhood and bridal identity are in peril as a result of Pir Sain's exploitation and repression of Heer. Until the moment her spouse is alive, she is unable to breathe in fresh air. Durrani attempts to establish the phenomenal nature of the era by etching her image of a crystal in the text; "Amma Sain had been mistress of the Haveli for many years until I weaned away that burden. She had known everything and yet known little, or perhaps it was a feminine intelligence: she knew more than she let on" (Durrani 13). Amma, who has feminine characteristics, is the head of the household and appears to have been content with her patriarchal existence. Heer concentrates on the helpless situation of her mother and explains a lot regarding the lives of feminine-minded women. Heer, the narrator, thinks back on her earlier days and considers the things she did.

This gender-based divide paves the way for the difference between sexes to widen. Family members are shocked and saddened by the delivery of female children because they view women as

a curse and lack regard for the mother. The Islamic culture in Pakistan at the time is not very ceremonial. There is a presentation of patriarchal contemporary culture.

Durrani's *Blasphemy* seems to offer a critique of the existing power structures and patriarchal norms that perpetuate the oppression of women in Pakistani society. By depicting women's entangled identities, she prompts readers to question and challenge the societal expectations that limit women's autonomy and hinder their personal growth. A woman is never truly free in a patriarchal society. When she is a kid, she relies on her parents to make decisions for her; when she is an adult and marries, she lives for her spouse; and eventually, she becomes accustomed to being present for her children. She performs assumed roles and responsibilities at various ages. Heer is deliberating and wonders if her mother made the right choice in selecting Heer's life mate. Heer conveys her pain as a result of experiencing patriarchy: "Ma had made a choice about the rest of my life" (Durrani 25). If a woman is thinking, she can wonder what she needs to survive. But if the culture she was born into prevents her from thinking, she views the world through a very limited lens.

To conclude, In both Nasrin's *Sodh* and Durrani's *Blasphemy*, the theme of women's identity takes centre stage, exploring the complexities and challenges faced by women in societies deeply rooted in patriarchal norms. Nasrin's *Sodh* delves into the journey of a young woman seeking justice and reclaiming her identity in the face of societal expectations. Likewise, Durrani's *Blasphemy* uncovers the harrowing experiences of a woman trapped in a conservative society, torn between religious obedience and her desire for individuality. Both works highlight the resilience and strength of women in the face of adversity, inspiring readers to question traditional gender roles and norms. They serve as powerful reminders that women's entangled identities are not to be confined or dictated by societal expectations but rather should be celebrated in their diverse forms.

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