

Objectifying Women: A Comparative Feminist Study of *Mere Paas Tum Ho* (2019) and *A Doll's House* (1923)

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This paper explores the status of women in the patriarchal Pakistani and English societies as created by Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar and Henrik Ibsen in their respective plays *Mere Paas Tum Ho* (MPTH) and *A Doll's House* respectively.

Methodology: The research is qualitative and analytical in nature. The study analyzes discourse of the plays' main characters, Shahwar and Helmer, by selecting such dialogues and phrases which refer to physical objects instead of human being. The selected population includes the female characters in Pakistani and British literary works. Using the Judgmental Sampling the Researchers selected two dramas. The primary source of the data collected for this study is drama itself. The researchers selected two primary sources in data. The secondary data includes, journals, articles, websites and dramas. Further, the study has used Textual Analysis as a research method for the data analysis.

Findings: Male protagonists of both the plays undermine the power of women who want to grow independently and indiscriminately. By applying theory of objectification, this qualitative study finds that the objectified and commodified women face challenges in their personal, social and marital lives. The study also shows that the works share the common literary effort to highlight women's exploitation in multiple societies.

Conclusion: This study adds to the existing feministic interpretation of *A Doll's House* by comparing it with the Pakistani screen play and categorizing the selected characters as "objectifiers" and objects. Though, the paper analyses the plays from feminist perspective, it differentiates the research by taking the plays' interpretation beyond the understanding of the text as the mere feminist voice in favor of women's rights.

Keywords: Objectification, Objectifier, Object, Feminist Perspective, Commodification.

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Introduction

Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar's screen play *Mere Pass Tum Ho (MPTH)* (2019) and Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (1923), since their production, have earned the considerable reputation for their contribution in raising the issue of women's status in a patriarchal world. "Mere pass tum ho highlights women as gold diggers" and "it concerns us if it was even made for just entertainment purposes (Hussain). After its publication, "A Doll's House" too "was enthusiastically welcomed by feminist thinkers in Norway and throughout Europe (Finney, 1994, p.91). The plays are the significant examples of those literary writings which invite the readers as well as critics to carry out an in-depth analysis of how females as wives are subjugated in general in the 21st century and how they were treated more than a century ago. Written with the gap of more than a century, the selected plays reflect literary figures' ever increasing focus on feminist concerns. This impression of the selected plays stems from the perplexing characters of Nora in *A Doll's House* (1923) and Mehwish in *Mere Paas Tum Ho* (2019). For instance, Nora acts as the submissive wife who, at the same time, remains very active, caring, and intelligent and compromising throughout the story before she finally decides to part with her comparatively egotistical husband, Torvald Helmer. Despite living with her husband for eight years and producing four children, Nora ends her matrimonial contact due to her husband's patriarchal ideology. Therefore, *A Doll's House* (1923), as a play, highlights a problematic marital relationships. This feminist perspective defines Nora as the victim of social norms which give authority to men to control and drive the life of their wives. However, this present research has attempted to find out more than the apparent causes of unpleasant wife-husband relationship as portrayed in the play. Among the explored ones in the current research, the use of language is most prominent. Though, Helmer's words and phrases, which serve as the data in the study, appear to be highly pleasant in general sense while addressing a wife by a husband, theory of Objectification views such language as detrimental to a female's worth as a sane, capable, and free individual. Similarly, Danish, claiming to be the true lover of Mehwish, uses the dialogues for her which are disrespectful and humiliating for any woman of dignity. "There is a disturbing air of negotiation and transaction in their [Danish and Shahwar] conversations, almost as if Danish is handing over Mehwish (Haider 2019). Therefore, Danish appears as an 'Objectifier' instead of a loving husband. The present research explores *Mere Paas Tum Ho* and *A Doll's House* by focusing on the male protagonists' role as 'Objectifiers' and females' leading characters' status as 'Objects', as identified through theory of Objectification. In addition, the study investigates how Qamar and Ibsen (the selected writers) create a patriarchal world in the selected plays, and why such creation harms the personal identity of the female characters.

Qamar and Ibsen as Playwrights

Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar (1962-) and Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), as the playwrights, are poles apart in terms of their biography, geo-cultural backgrounds and their contribution to literature. As a playwright, Ibsen was "the foremost contemporary Norwegian writer in both poetry and drama" (Newey 37). Ibsen's status as a playwright stands very high. "Chekhov, Ibsen and Strindberg are commonly regarded as the founding fathers of twentieth-century drama" (Knowles, 2008, p. 52). At the same time, he "is an equivocal figure in the history of the English theatre of the twentieth and twenty- first centuries" (Newey, 2006, p. 35). Ibsen's works usually voice for female emancipation from male imposed ideology that views woman as a passive entity. Therefore, "Ibsenite dramatisation of a woman" asserts "her independence in a modern doll's house of female exploitation" (Milne, 2009, p. 244). As the author of about 25 plays, Ibsen was "an accepted and even canonical playwright in the English repertoire..." (Newey, 2006, p. 36). Qamar, on the other hand, is a contemporary Pakistani screen writer with the reputation of criticizing, and insulting feminists; however, he is "one of the country's [Pakistan's] most celebrated playwrights" (Khalil). Qamar has significantly and consistently contributed to the drama industry of Pakistani television, authoring the screen plays such as 'Pyarey Afzal (2013)', 'Zara Yaad Kar (2016)', 'Muhabbat Tum Se Nafrat Hai (2017)', 'Mera Naam Yousuf Hai (2015)', 'Sadqe Tumhare (2014)', and 'Laal Ishq (2017)'. However, his popularity increased through the severe criticism on his latest play *Mere Paas Tum Ho*: "Feminists argue that in appropriating women to sexist notions of femininity, Qamar's is the problematic male gaze which threatens

to strip a woman of her identity if she does not conform to his chauvinist ideals of respectability” (Mustafa,2020).

Female Objectification

Generally speaking, objectification of a human being refers to viewing a person (male or female) as an object or thing instead of a living being who has some desires, emotions and feelings. The use of title ‘Object’ for a woman is no more uncommon to be realized at higher level in Pakistani society. “The Lahore High Court (LHC)” condemns “the current treatment of women as "objects" and saleable "commodities" in society” during the hearing of “a case related to the recovery of a woman and her daughter, who were allegedly "sold" by the woman's former husband” (Bilal). Objectification of women, in the current study, refers to the degradation of someone by attributing them as non-living entity. In the present study, objectification, according to Susaana Paasonen et al., (2021) also means the treatment and dehumanization of “a person as a thing, instrument or object” (p. 4). A person here stands as female characters who play their role and build their narrative under the guidance and control of male characters: “What is mainly meant with objectification in feminist critiques is the reduction of women to their physical attributes and heterosexual attractiveness in ways that mitigate their individuality and agency” (Paasonen et al., 2021,p. 7). In the context of female objectification, Sultan et al., (2021) while analyzing Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam*, believe “use of women’s body as a sex toy is a form of their objectification at the hands of men” (p. 579). Similarly, Carol J Adams identifies women with animals because “they too are objects of use and possession” (Adams,2010, p. 171). The preceding conceptualization of women’s objectification, thus, licentiates men as the masters and owners of their related women, which leads to the creation of a patriarchal society.

Literature Review

Overview of the Selected plays

Mere Paas Tum Ho, though stirred a lot of criticism among the conservative faction of Pakistani society, attracted significant viewers during its broadcast period. “As we stepped into 2020, a television phenomenon had gripped the nation. With over 325 million views on YouTube, and the finale screened in cinemas, Mere Paas Tum Ho has set new records in Pakistani television drama” (Mustafa, 2020). Such a warm reception of this screen play, however, does not predict that the author of the story has well read the popular demands of Pakistani TV audience. Contrarily, with the comparatively less number of characters, this play offers the story of an extra marital relationship between the two opposite sexes, challenging the religious and cultural practices of a Pakistani society. In this way MPTH received the significant attention of not only common viewers but also of the critics. Consequently “People feel the emotions of the drama and that makes it on the top position of the T.R.P chart with 18.3 points. It’s one of the highest-rated dramas in 2019” (Khan,2020). At the same time, the impact of Mere Paas Tum Ho was not mere local. Instead, “Khalilur Rehman Qamar’s recent serial ‘Mere Paas Tum Ho’ created a huge sensation globally, thanks to its memorable dialogues and powerful story and script” (Desk,2020).

Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* is also one of the most popular plays in terms of the portrayal of female subjugation and discrimination in the late 19th century. Therefore, it is “still [a] prime” vehicle “for powerful female” star “in the international English-speaking theatre market...” (Newey,2006, p. 36). Known as the father of modern drama, Ibsen has attempted to impart freedom to his female characters to choose their ways of life as in *A Doll’s House*. Similarly, Qamar’s *Mere Paas Tum Ho* “In a sense... is truly modern. Breaking from the large extended family narrative, there is no saas-bahu drama, no familial politics – rather most of the characters are young, married and living independently” (Mustafa,2020).

Female Characters in MPTH and A Doll’s House

The protagonists Mehwish and Nora, in *Mere Paas Tum Ho* and *A Doll’s House* respectively, do not represent submissive, compromising, and conventional wives in a male dominating society. These unconventional female roles have been representing feminist voices in literature. Ibsen’s plays “*A Doll’s*

House 1879[Originally published] and Hedda Gabler 1889... shocked audience” by challenging “social conventions and the values of the establishment...” (Atherton et al.,2015, p. 204). It refers to the conventional roles in the late 19th century society where males had more sociopolitical influence than females. Therefore, Atherton et al., (2015) are convinced that Ibsen’s plays “questioned gender roles” and allowed “strong women characters” to speak out their “frustrations” which caused due to the 19th century women’s “lack of social freedom and political power within the confines of marriage”; therefore “Ibsen has been particularly associated with the rise of feminism in Europe;” (p. 204). Similarly, Kristin Gjesdal (2021) argues, “With Nora leaving her husband and her children in order to make sense of her life, A Doll’s house has been read as a feminist manifesto” (p. 87).

Qamar’s Mehwish in Mere Paas Tum Ho, superficially, appears as materialistic and selfish woman before she provides the room to the researchers (though very few) to view her as an iconoclast in the context of female portrayal in Pakistani drama. Traditionally, Pakistani female characters are submissive, victims of powerful males, and keepers of domestic conventional affairs. Conversely, Rasool et al., (2022) while analyzing ‘leading characters’ in three Pakistani screen dramas including “Mere Pass Tum Ho”, conclude that “the study finds some positive aspects of women’s projection as agents of change and challenging patriarchal societal structure” (p. 1224). Their study also defends Mehwish’s helplessness in turning into a materialist and a greedy woman:

This representation distorts facts because materialism and gold-digger are personality traits that are not associated with any gender, but these dramas emphasize that women are always seen as gold-diggers. Greed is part of human nature, and it can vary from person to person, not gender to gender. (Rasool et al. 1224).

Such interpretation of the MPTH’s female protagonist, however, is more a discussion on human nature in general than the play’s significance as one of the additions to the existing feminist literature. Meanwhile, Noreen et al., (2021) also view Mehwish as “a status conscious lady” who “has an extra marital affair with a rich business man Shehwaar because her own husband was a government employ and not a financially strong person” (p. 1008). This again limits Mehwish to an ordinary or at least the traditional character of an ambitious lady.

Research Gap

Despite its tremendous viewership and popularity in Pakistani society, Mere Paas Tum Ho receives limited reception from literary critics. Moreover, in the recent researches, the play has been viewed either in terms of its impact on Pakistani culture or discussed in comparison with other popular Pakistani television plays. Therefore, Zubrah Shakir (2020), in ‘Effects of Pakistani Drama ‘Mery Pass Tum Ho’ On Cultural Values of Society: A Survey of Lahore District’ “proved that drama Mery Paas Tum Ho has affected the culture values of Pakistan” (p. 36). This refers to the male protagonist’s consent to her wife to live with a stranger. Shakir’s (2020) such perception, as her article reveals, is also based on the majority participants’ adherence to conventional themes of Pakistani drama: “Many other claimed this type of controversial drama misguide our generation and they tried to emerge the western culture in Pakistani society” (p. 36). This notable statement refers to the plot of the story that revolves around a Pakistani couple who lives under the same roof without any legal marital status. The contentious nature of MPTH has involved the Pakistani courts of law when “Sindh High Court summons Humayun Saeed over Meray Paas Tum Ho’s offensive dialogues” in January 2020; a similar petition was also “filed in a Lahore civil court” in the same month (Baloch,2020). These petitions, least conceiving the contribution of MPTH to Pakistani women’s emotional sufferings as wives, blame the writer for insulting women through derogatory dialogues and allowing an unmarried couple to live together (Baloch, 2020). In another research study on Mere Paas Tum Ho, Rasool et al., (2022) have investigated the screen play by exploring the similarities between this drama and two more Pakistani screen plays named "Dil Ruba" and "Mohabbat Tujhe Alvida" (p. 1211). Their study has also placed MPTH among many such Pakistani dramas which “show women’s negative image and project them as greedy and materialistic” (Rasool & Ali, 2022, p. 1224).

Likewise, *A Doll's House* has been receiving the tremendous attention of the literary critics and researchers in the context of women's subjugation in patriarchal world. Meanwhile, its comparative study is also a fascinating topic. For instance, this play has been compared, in terms of its themes, with some Indian plays and American literary works. For example, Gupta and Srivastava's "A Comparative Study of Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala* and Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*" concludes that in these plays "the virtuous female characters here undergo unrelenting anguish. Both present a story" in which the husbands "want a wife to behave just like puppet irrespective of whether she is literate or illiterate" (2016, p. 397). Similarly, both *A Doll's House* and *Home Burial* represent two sides of one coin. Both pieces end in same nature, female characters walk out.

Thus, the present research has analyzed the very rare comparative study of a British play and a Pakistani play, highlighting the shared concerns about the status of women as mere objects in the respective societies. The study also contributes to the academic world by investigating a Pakistani screen play through the application of 'theory of objectification', assigning the theoretical terminology (words and phrases) to the situations/characters in the selected plays.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To explore status of women in the male dominating society.
2. To investigate the causes of Objectification as well as its influence on the development of women's growth as individuals.
3. To highlight the role of drama studies in depiction of social issues such as female objectification.

Methodology

Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature and it uses Qualitative Paradigm Approach which focuses on the concepts that are based on cultural orientation. The problems faced by women are culturally embedded in both the Western and Eastern Societies as these view women as mere objects. Therefore, this study presents understanding of the selected problems from the lens of qualitative research.

Population

This research work is based on analysis of female characters depicted in drama. The selected population includes the female characters in Pakistani and British literary works.

Sample

Using the Judgmental Sampling the Researchers selected two dramas *Mere Paas Tum Ho* (MPTH) and *A Doll's House*. The technique used for sampling is purposive.

Instrument of Data Collection

The primary source of the data collected for this study is drama itself. The researchers selected two primary sources in data: *Mere Paas Tum Ho* (MPTH) and *A Doll's House*. The secondary data includes, journals, articles, websites and dramas.

Technique of Data Analysis

The data have been analyzed qualitatively where theory of Objectification proposed by Robert L. Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts (1997) is followed. The researchers deliberated the findings in the light of selected theory.

Textual Analysis as a Research Method for Data Analysis

The present study aims at exploring and comparing the plays' text' created by two literary writers. Therefore, Textual Analysis as a research method has been used for this study. Since this study focuses on the characters' discourse from cultural and social point of views, Kathrine Belsey's suggested Textual Analysis is an appropriate method for carrying out in-depth analysis of the selected dialogues and content. Belsey (2013) believes "There may be dialogue within a text, but the text itself also engages in dialogue with the reader" (p. 167). The selection of this method also refers to the view that "Textual analysis as a research method involves a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions than we can help" (Belsey,2013, p. 160). The researchers, thus, have focused on the text (the data for the research) after following the method of Textual Analysis. The selected text, therefore, provides themes for the application of selected conceptual framework and "it is the textual analysis that poses the questions which research sets out to answer" (Belsey,2013, p. 172). The research work on literature investigates questions about critical inquiry related to social and cultural lives of human beings. The projection of gender in literature is also crucial to cultural criticism, therefore this study has analyzed the text from cultural orientation. "And since the project of cultural criticism is to understand the texts" (Belsey,2013, p. 172), this research project is, thus, text based with focus on analysis of text.

Comparative Analysis

Furthermore, the study uses comparative analysis approach to literature as "Comparative Literature has an ideology of inclusion of the Other, be that a marginal literature in its several meanings of marginality, a genre, various text types, etc." (Zepetnek,1998, p. 13). In the context of the current study, comparative literature incorporates the reading and understanding of literature from Pakistan and Great Britain which are two distinct regions where women live/d as marginalized group of people and suffer/d greatly on various accounts.

Theoretical Framework

The current study used Objectification Theory as proposed by Robert L. Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts (1997). According to Fredrickson and Roberts, women's treatment as mere bodies are the sources of pleasure and use for others (p. 175). The objectified women are the toys in men's understanding in a certain context. Therefore, men have the authority to play with them as children play with their toys to pass the time or seek pleasure. At the same time, the framework of this study incorporates Paasonen et al.'s concepts of objectification. In their book *Objectification: On the Difference between Sex and Sexism*, Paasonen et al. (2021) highlight the demand for understanding the significance and implications of the concept of Objectification, as they believe that this concept has generated "public debate" after passing "out of the realm academic discussion and feminist politics" (p. 2). Thus, the key concepts as the theoretical framework for the current study also include Nussbaum's concept of "Fungibility", "Denial of autonomy" and "ownership" in the context of "Objectification" as quoted in her article 'Objectification' published in 1995. According to Nussbaum (1995), "Fungibility" refers to the treatment of the object [a woman] by the objectifier [a man] "as interchangeable...with other objects of the same type" or "with objects of other types" (p. 257). The notions of 'Denial of autonomy' and 'ownership' also involve the objectifier's understanding of the object as something that lacks "self-determination" and that "can be bought or sold" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). This very idea of women as an object or commodity is the main focus of the current study.

Discussion/Results

Mere Paas Tum Ho and *A Doll's House* female protagonists, Mehwish and Nora, have explicitly been portrayed as personal belongings of their husbands by Qamar and Ibsen respectively. Qamar's Mehwish, despite a loving wife of Danish and a mother of a school going child, becomes an easy prey of Shahwar's seductive ways. In addition, Mehwish's husband, Danish, too defines her as an object. In this regard, the exchange between Shahwar and Danish overtly undermines the status of a female as an unwise living

being: “Aap Jaisa Beopari mil jay tou larki apni ziada qeemat sun ker khush ho jati ha” [a girls feels overjoyed when she is heavily priced by the trader/dealer like you] (arydigital.tv, 14:49, Epi 11). This impression of a woman, in the context of female objectification, refers to Fredrickson & Roberts’ (1995) belief that “Women’s Bodies Are Looked at, Evaluated, and Always Potentially Objectified” (p. 175). The continuation of such derogatory statements by Shahwar and Danish further authenticates the play’s focus on females’ standing as objects in Pakistani traditional society:

Shahwar: I can offer you 50 million”

Danish: Kiss baat ky? [For what?]

Shahwar: Mehwish ko divorce deny ky [For divorcing Mehwish]. 15:08, Epi 11]

This blatant and fearless exchange between the two leading male characters of the play *MPTH* indicates that the playwright is convinced that Pakistani people will not ban him to author more plays in future for national television networks (though Qamar has met with severe criticism by some pro feminist sections of the Pakistani society). While Mehwish’s future is determined by the two males, Nora’s life is also dependent on her male associates, the father and the husband, in the play *A Doll’s House*. More specifically, in Nussbaum’s (1995) terminology, the males in these plays are “the objectifier” who treat “the object [women] as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.” (p. 257). Therefore, Nora, after spending many years with her husband, Torvald, is convinced that she “was simply transferred from papa’s hands” into her husband’s hands; she also challenges Torvald’s treatment to her: “You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life” (Ibsen2005, p. 90). Such concerns and feelings of a woman like Nora are also found in the works of some other writers such as Marti Kheel (2004) who believes that “symbolically, the woman is transferred in the wedding ceremony, like a commodity, from the property of the father to that of the husband (p. 334). The helplessness of Mehwish and Nora, in the respective plays, is the result of a patriarchal mindset where women are mere passive entities. In broader terms, “when objectified, women are treated as bodies-and in particular, as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others” (Fredrickson and Roberts,1997, p. 175). However, the dialogues of the male protagonists, particularly in *MPTH* as discussed in the preceding lines, are not mere the indication of female objectification but also fall in the category of slurred speeches which badly damage women’s reputation as wise and sensitive human beings.

In the current study, the textual analysis of the selected plays has found that both Qamar and Ibsen base these plays on the theme of women objectification as well commodification though with slight different approaches. Qamar involves the male characters to objectify and commodify women whereas Ibsen portrays a comparatively stronger and outspoken female protagonist for this purpose. Thus, Danish’s direct address to Shahwar, at multiple occasions, indicates that Mehwish stands at a very low rank of a free woman: “wo jo aaj hoti ha na meri x wife tery paas...wo bik gai, tuu ney khareed lia usko...jo bik jay wo khareedar kii hui” [My ex-wife, who is with you today, is sold. You have purchased her... the sold item belongs to the purchaser] (02:16, Epi 16). At another crucial occasion, Danish teases Shahwar:

Dekhney sunnany me bary intelligent businessman lugtey hn aap. Laken yahan bhaao kerty huy ap ney mughy hairan ker dia. Iss do takey ki larki ky liy aap mughy puchaas million dy rahy thy [Apparently you seem to be an intelligent businessman. However, you have shocked me here while pricing her. You were offering 50 million (PKR) to purchase this worthless girl. (35:24, Epi 12)

These words of Danish are the most striking example of how Qamar replaces a woman with a saleable object. This very statement is the rejection of Danish’s claim of the loving husband besides Mehwish’s categorization as a mere commodity.

In *A Doll’s House*, Nora, instead of evaluated by words of male protagonists, assess herself as an object and commodity while regretting that her father “called” her his doll-child, and he played with” her “just as” she “used to play with” her “dolls”, and later her husband did the same (Ibsen,2005, p. 89). Such a reaction

of Nora to the male dominated society leads to the feeling of self-objectification. The consistent and prolonged use of manipulative language by the male partner infuses a sense of self-objectification among women. In *A Doll's House*, the phenomenon of self-objectification is also very obvious. For instance, Helmer keeps on addressing Nora as “little spendthrift” which results in Nora’s acceptance of objectified titles: “Nora (smiling quietly and happily): You haven’t any idea how many expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Torvald” (Ibsen,2005, p. 4- 5). Nora’s acceptance of her objectified titles is contrary to earlier impression in the start of the play. Ibsen’s Nora begins the play with her powerful image as a responsible, lively and civilized woman who is “in high spirits” while bringing home “a number of parcels” and “a Christmas Tress” to celebrate the Christmas” (Ibsen 2005, p. 1). Her offer of keeping “the change” to the Porter also implies that she frequently visits markets for home shopping, indicating the non-cooperation or trust on the part of her husband Torvald (Ibsen,2005, p. 1). Meanwhile, this self-objectification leads Nora to assure Torvald of her ever loyal wife:

Helmer: (wagging his fingers at her), Hasn’t Miss Sweet-Tooth been breaking rules in town today?

Nora:I should not think of going against your wishes. (Ibsen 2005, p. 6)

Nora admits that she is a victim of self-objectification while talking by accusing her husband: “You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you—or else I pretended to...” (Ibsen 2005, p. 90). This is the loss of one’s identity and individuality. In other words, as Nussbaum (1995) puts in, it refers to the “Denial of autonomy” where “[t]he objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination” (p. 257).

Qamar, in *Mere Paas Tum Ho*, also propagates and generalizes females’ Self-objectification through an economically independent Shahwar’s wife, Maham. She appears a weaker woman despite her commanding role as a wife while talking to Mehwish:

“Muft main rahi ho usky sath? Boht bewaqoof ho. Mai beevi hun uski, muft main tou mai bhi nahi rahi hun usky sath. Puchaas lakh maheeny ky deta ha wo mujhy. Panch maheeny Amreeka main rahun tub bhi” [Did you spend unpaid time with him? How stupid of you! I, though his wife, did not live with him without payment. He pays me five million per month even when I live in America] (03:54, Epi 20).

Here, the involvement of another female character in devaluing women indicates not only the patriarchal mindset but also men’s mindset of using marriage mainly for sexual pleasures. Besides, it shows the helplessness of Maham as a female who is always expected to be compromising in marital relationships. Meanwhile, Maham’s offer of payment to Mehwish for her stay with Shahwar refers to what Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) posit that “the cultural milieu of objectification encourages girls and women to treat other girls and women as objects to be looked at and evaluated” (p. 198).

The present comparative study of *A Doll's House* and *Mere Paas Tum Ho* viewed ‘Marriage’ as a game or a time bound stay between two partners of the opposite sex instead of a source of lasting and respectful relationships between two persons. Nora is particularly very vocal towards the end of the play when she defines and explains her almost eight years of marriage life:

No, only merry. And you have always been so kind to me.

But our home has been nothing but a playroom. I have been your

doll-wife, just as at home I was papa’s doll-child; and here the

Children have been my dolls. (Ibsen, 2005, p. 90)

Ibsen presents Nora here as the powerful woman and the representative of feminist group, for raises her voice against the male dominant society by including her father as well as the husband. Nora further discredits the marital relationship as an exchange of a toy between a girl’s father and her husband: I thought it great fun when you played with me, just as they thought it great fun when I played with them. That is

what our marriage has been, Torvald. (Ibsen, 2005, p. 90). This statement indicates that Nora, despite giving having four children from Torvald, is unable to promote her individual growth as a human being. Besides, these lines judge a married woman as an object which requires to please either her parents or her own family. Similarly, Shahwar, in *MPTH*, tags Mahwish with a label of a sexual toy which is available for him to fulfil his sexual desires. He compares the ‘Marriage Relation’ with an uncomfortable chain: “Apney galy mai daala hua shaadi ka patta utar ker usky monh pe maaro” [Free yourself from him by removing this marriage tag from your body] (01:01, Epi 11). Qamar also uses the technique of foreshadowing here to prepare his viewers for witnessing a highly unconventional scene of the two opposite sexes living together without a marital bond in Pakistani society.

Conclusion

The issue of female representation and freedom in male dominating societies, remains a pertinent concern of both English and Pakistani playwrights. These playwrights, as Ibsen and Qamar in the current study, tend to portray unconventional female characters who defy and challenge the patriarchal world. Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* is more self-explanatory in terms of the author’s intention to reject women’s role as mere babysitters and domestic pets. This understanding of a woman status counters the masculine belief of viewing women as objects. Qamar’s *Mere Paas Tum Ho* also refutes the possibility of lasting relationship between a male and a female who act as ‘objectifiers’ and ‘objects’. The comparative study of these two plays finds that a typical human society has long been divided into the dominant section of men and the subordinate section of women. More, alarmingly, such division is not restricted to particular part of the world and it spans over a long period.

The comparative study of the selected plays bring highlights some major differences and similarities in terms of the plays’ settings, themes, characterization and significance. Among the prominent ones are the shared feminist concerns including women’s loss of identity, individuality and representation in a male dominating society. With the difference in the time period of their production as well as in the depiction of societies, the selected works tend to identify and support the contribution of literary circles to accept women as marginalized and strong individuals simultaneously.

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