

# Blasphemy: Subverting the Colonial Legacy of Domesticated Patriarchy, Hegemonic Masculinity and Religious Politics

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** This study examines how Durrani portrays the subjugation of women and the imposition of patriarchal dictates in the name of religion.

**Methodology:** The study is qualitative in nature and based on “Tehmina Durrani’s novel Blasphemy (1991)”. The study examined the data under the light of “Hegemony Theory”. The theory of hegemony developed by Antonio Gramsci is used to study Tehmina Durrani’s novel, Blasphemy (1991). This theory explains how a dominant class can maintain its power and control over a subordinate class through the use of cultural tactics. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, is a process of domination and subordination that does not necessarily involve physical force. Rather, it involves the social and cultural domination of one group by another.

**Findings:** Tehmina Durrani’s Blasphemy is an excellent example of how Gramsci’s theory of hegemony works in practice. The novel has highlighted the religious hegemony of the colonial master in the subcontinent and its effects on the Muslim community. Durrani has not only exposed the hegemonic schemes of the British colonial masters, but she has also delineated the repercussions of such hegemonic colonial legacy on the society in general, and on women in particular. Furthermore, this paper investigates how Durrani’s critique of patriarchy and hegemonic can be used to inform contemporary feminist critiques of gender inequality and patriarchy. Durrani has used her writing to criticize the oppressive force of male domination and the use of traditional religious beliefs to justify it. She questions the inequalities and injustices that women face, and the ways in which religious teachings are manipulated to uphold this system.

**Conclusion:** Her work provides an insight into the damaging effects that this type of oppression can have on society, and encourages readers to think critically about the ways in which religion is exploited to perpetuate gender inequality.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Hegemony, Masculinity, Domestic Violence, Gender Equality.

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## **Introduction**

British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent was a period of immense importance in the history of the region. It began in the 18th century when the British East India Company first set sail to the region and ended in 1947. During this period, the British Raj, or the British rule over the Indian subcontinent, profoundly changed the political, economic, social and cultural landscape of the region.

The British Raj was characterized by a system of governance that imposed Western ideals and values upon the local population. In order to maintain their control, the British Raj implemented a series of policies that aimed to weaken the traditional power structures of the Indian subcontinent and create a new social order. At the same time, the British Raj brought about economic and administrative reforms that had lasting effects on the region.

The British Raj also had a profound effect on the religious and cultural landscape of the region. During the colonial period, the British Raj attempted to manipulate the religions of the local population by tampering the local religious traditions and practices. This had a lasting effect on the religious landscape of the region and led to the emergence of religious politics in the region.

The British Raj also had a lasting impact on the region's economy. During the colonial period, the British Raj implemented a series of policies designed to create an economy based on the export of raw materials and goods to Britain. This led to an increase in the wealth of the British, while the local population remained impoverished. The result was an increase in economic inequality between the British and the local population, effected the region's economic landscape.

In addition to the economic, social and cultural effects of the British Raj, its legacy also had a profound impact on the political landscape of the region. During the colonial period, the British Raj implemented a system of governance based on the principle of divide and rule. This system of governance sought to undermine local power structures and create a new social order in which the British had absolute control. This system of governance had a lasting effect on the region's political landscape and created a legacy of political instability and authoritarianism in the region. This new social structure bestow patriarchy and class system to the postcolonial states. The result was a decrease in the status of women in society, which in turn had a lasting effect on the power structures within the region.

The legacy of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent is still very much alive today. It has had a lasting effect on the region's economic, social, cultural and political landscapes. It has also had a profound effect on the region's religious landscape, resulting in religious politics and increased sectarianism. This legacy has also had a lasting effect on the status of women in the region, with women still facing discrimination and inequality in many aspects of their lives. Finally, it has had a strong effect on the region's political landscape, with many countries in the region still facing authoritarianism and political instability.

The legacy of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent has been an enduring one, and its effects can still be seen today. While the legacy of the British Raj has had a lasting effect on the region, it has also provided a unique opportunity for postcolonial analysis and critique. Through postcolonial analysis, we can gain a better understanding of the legacies of colonialism in the region and work towards creating a more equitable and just society in the region.

### ***Religious Politics in Social Structural Analysis***

Gramsci believed that religious beliefs and practices have a strong influence on revolutionary movements. He saw religious ideas as a powerful tool of social and political control. His concept of religious hegemony refers to the use of religion as a way to influence people and maintain the status quo. Gramsci argued that understanding and engaging with the role of religion was key to achieving revolutionary goals. He viewed religion as an integral part of any revolutionary movement and saw it as an important factor in achieving social change.

In Antonio Gramsci's "The Prison Notebooks" (1971), he wrote extensively on the connection between religion and hegemony. He was mainly interested in understanding the way power works in society throughout history and the present, with the goal of bringing about a socialist revolution. Gramsci's ideas about religion are closely tied to his main concept of hegemony. Gramsci's theory of power relations between historical religions and social structure is based on five terms: folklore, religion of the people, the common sense, religion of the intellectuals, and philosophy. Hegemony is a sixth term that relates to the last two. Folklore appears in both the religious and cultural sets of terms, which respectively consist of religion of the people and the common sense, and philosophy. Religion of the people is the starting point of Gramsci's thought, as it is the source from which the other two forms of religion derive their vitality. As Fulton (1987) puts as:

*Gramsci unravels the power relationship between historical religions and social structure with the use of five terms which directly define observable levels of religion and culture. These are folklore, religion of the people or popular religion (religione, popolar), the common sense (il senso comune), religion of the intellectuals, and philosophy. A sixth term, hegemony, relates to the last two in a specific way. The five terms can be split into two groups of three, with folklore appearing in both. The first group is a specifically religious set and consists of folklore, religion of the people, and religion of the intellectuals. The second set is a more generically cultural and secular one and consists of folklore, the common sense and philosophy. The central term of the religious set, religion of the people, is also the starting point Gramsci's mode of thought, since the origin and vitality of the other two social forms religion stem from it. Gramsci is referring to that which is most alive and close in the experience of the people (Fulton (1987, 203).*

The present study examines Tehmina Durrani's novel "Blasphemy" by looking at the relationship among the common sense, the religion of the people, philosophy, folklore and hegemony. Durrani looks at how religion and social structure are intertwined in history. This analysis suggests that Gramsci's methods and ideas can be very useful for understanding the relationship between religion and politics in social-structural analysis.

Hegemony is the process of domination through the influence of ideas, values, and beliefs in society. It is a method of ruling that does not rely on violence or coercion, but instead relies on the consent of the people to accept the values and beliefs of the dominant group. Gramsci (1971) argued that the concept of hegemony is not only a form of power, but is also a form of knowledge. He posited that the dominant group in a society, whether it is a ruling class or an imperial power, has the ability to shape the consciousness of the people through its control of the media, education, and culture. This control over the means of communication and instruction allows the dominant group to shape the beliefs and values of the people, and to influence the way they think and act. This allows the dominant group to maintain its power and to control the social and economic structures of society. Gramsci's theory of hegemony has been widely used in a range of scholarly disciplines, from political science to sociology. It has been used to understand the dynamics of power in contemporary societies, as well as to explain the historical development of colonialism and imperialism (Bates, 1975). It has also been used to analyze the internal dynamics of a range of social movements, from revolutionary movements to civil rights struggles. By understanding the concept of hegemony, scholars are able to better understand the relationship between power and knowledge in society, and the ways in which power is maintained and contested. Overall, Gramsci's theory of hegemony (2011) provides an important framework for understanding the dynamics of power and knowledge in society. It is a useful tool for analyzing the relationship between the dominant classes and the subordinate classes in a given society, and for understanding the ways in which power is maintained and challenged.

Thus, Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony is the idea of how a power structure perpetuates itself by convincing the people that the status quo is beneficial to everyone, rather than by using physical force.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is based on the idea that the powerful groups in society are able to influence the beliefs of the masses in order to maintain their power. He argued that the elite classes use a combination of coercion and consent to maintain their social, economic, and political control. Gramsci was also critical of the traditional Marxist view that power is based solely on economic factors. He argued that the ruling class uses both economic and cultural methods to maintain its power. Examples of cultural methods used to maintain power include the use of media and education to shape public opinion and the socialization of individuals into the existing power structure.

Hegemony, then, is a form of power that is exercised through a variety of channels. It is a tool used by the dominant class to establish and maintain its influence over the subservient class. For Destradi (2008), hegemony is an extension of state power, while for Brander (2014) it is a cultural issue. Hegemony can also be seen as a combination of both, as the dominant class may use the state and its various cultural instruments to establish and maintain its power. It is important to note that hegemony is not always a one-way street; in certain cases, the subordinate class may also attempt to establish its own hegemony. In any case, hegemony is a complex concept, which requires further exploration to understand its implications and implications on society.

Hegemony, as Gramsci argued, is distinguished from domination in that it is a process of consent, not just forced compliance. It requires a certain level of consent from the subjugated and colonized to the hegemonic power of the colonizers. This means that the subjugated and colonized, in some way, must accept the authority and power of the colonizers. The idea of hegemony, therefore, is the idea that the colonizers are able to gain the acceptance, or even the support, of the colonized by incorporating elements that appeal to the colonized into their rule and laws. This process of incorporation is what Gramsci referred to as the "integration of the popular masses". This process is often carried out through cultural and ideological means, such as the introduction of new ideas and values that favor the values of the colonizers. This is then used to gain the support of the colonized, leading to a situation where the power of the colonizers is accepted by the colonized. In this way, the theory of hegemony provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex relationship between the colonizers and the colonized.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is based on the idea that a colonizer has the power to exercise control over a region through not only the use of direct force, but also through the use of ideological hegemony. Hegemony is a form of power that relies on the colonizer's ability to persuade the colonized population to accept and internalize the dominant, ruling ideology of the colonizer. This is achieved by the colonizer using various strategies such as the dissemination of propaganda and the manipulation of popular culture to persuade the colonized population to accept the colonizer's ideology, values and beliefs as their own. This makes the colonized population more willing to accept and comply with the colonizer's rule, and thus the colonizer is able to achieve dominance over the region. Gramsci argued that the use of hegemony is a much more effective way of exercising control over a region than the use of direct force. This is because the use of direct force is not only costly and difficult to maintain, but it also often leads to resentment and resistance among the colonized population. Hegemony, on the other hand, is much less costly and is more likely to lead to the colonized population willingly accepting and complying with the colonizer's rule. Gramsci's theory of hegemony explains how a colonizer is able to exercise control over a region by using both direct and indirect force. By persuading the colonized population to accept and internalize the colonizer's ideology, values, and beliefs, the colonizer is able to achieve dominance over a region without having to resort to open and direct force. For Gramsci the cultural power of civil society is as important as the coercive power is for social control (for detail see. Anderson, 1977; Hall, 1977, 1978; Salamini, 1981; Simon 1982 McClellan, 1979; Mouffe, 1979). "Gramsci refers to this cultural power for social control as hegemony" (Fulton, 1987:199).

The Theory of Hegemony suggests that a dominant power, such as a colonizer, can exercise control over a subordinate population through a combination of religious and cultural influence and coercion. This influence and coercion can take the form of the propagation of the dominant power's beliefs, values, and

norms, as well as the use of force to achieve the desired outcomes. Through this combination of influence and coercion, the dominant power can achieve its goals without having to involve itself directly in the process (Mouffe, C., 2014). The hegemonic colonial legacy refers to the enduring effects of colonialism on a nation or region. It is a term used to describe the cultural, political, economic, and social structures that were imposed on a colonized country by their former colonial rulers. This legacy has long-term implications for the development of the nation, including the ways in which power is distributed and how institutions are organized. This legacy can also manifest itself in the form of language, religion, and legal systems, as well as in the way that people think about themselves and their place in the world.

In the analysis section the theory of Hegemony has been applied in a variety of contexts, including the discourse surrounding the accounts of the colonizers and local population in colonial India. For instance, Durrani argues that the colonizer's use of force through local comprador classes of local pirs allowed them to maintain control over the native population and to propagate their own religious hegemonic plans. This demonstrates how the colonizer was able to exercise power without having to directly involve itself in the process. Ultimately, the Theory of Hegemony suggests that a dominant power can maintain control over a subordinate population by combining religious and cultural influences and coercion. This allows the dominant power to achieve its goals without having to directly involve itself in the process.

In Blasphemy, Durrani refers to the colonial period, where colonizers manipulated religion to control and maintain the social structure of society. As a legacy this social structure persists in the post-colonial period with its inherited patriarchal system.

### ***Patriarchy***

Patriarchy is a complex social system that has been in place for centuries, and is still present in many cultures today. It is characterized by the dominance of men over women, through the control of power and resources. This system of oppression has had a huge impact on the lives of women and girls, and continues to shape the way in which society is structured. The term 'patriarchy' is derived from the Greek words 'patriarche' and 'archein', meaning 'rule of the father'. It refers to the traditional view that men are superior to women, and that they should be the primary decision makers in the family and in society. This attitude is based on the belief that men are naturally better suited for leadership roles, and that women should remain focused on taking care of the home and family. Patriarchy has been a major part of societies for centuries, and has had a profound effect on the way in which women and girls are viewed and treated. It has been used to justify a variety of oppressive practices, including the denial of basic rights, domestic violence, and unequal access to education and employment opportunities. Patriarchal attitudes have also been used to limit the potential of women and girls, and to deny them the right to make decisions about their own lives. At its core, patriarchy is a system of power and control, which is often rooted in gender-based ideas about the role of men and women in society. Patriarchal societies often place a great deal of emphasis on traditional gender roles, and often limit the opportunities available to women and girls in terms of education, employment, and participation in public life. This can lead to a lack of economic autonomy, and can limit women's ability to make choices about their own lives. Despite the fact that patriarchy has been a major part of many societies for centuries, it is important to recognize that it is not an inherent or universal system. In fact, in some cultures, women have been able to achieve a significant degree of autonomy and power. It is also important to recognize that patriarchy is not just an issue affecting women and girls, but is a system that affects all members of society. Therefore, it is important to understand the history and dynamics of patriarchy in order to better understand the current state of gender inequality, and to develop strategies for creating a more equitable society.

### ***Hegemonic Masculinity***

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that explains how and why men are able to maintain a dominant position in society and how they are able to subordinate women, other gender identities, and the common male population (Connell, 2005; Scott, 2015). It is based on the idea of cultural hegemony, proposed by Gramsci, which examines the power dynamics between different social classes in a society. Hegemonic

masculinity is a form of social order which has been challenged and altered over time, as it claims and reinforces a leading, dominant role in the social hierarchy.

Hegemonic masculinity is the ideal version of manhood that is seen as the most desirable within a given society. It is often exclusive, privileging certain kinds of men over others, and focuses on traditional roles and qualities such as being a breadwinner, being tough and aggressive, and being in control. However, sociologists have since argued that this definition is too simplified, and that masculinity is actually much more complex and diverse. As a result, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been broadened to encompass gender hierarchy, the various types of masculinity, the ways in which it is socially constructed and embodied, and the psychological aspects associated with different forms of masculinity.

Supporters of the idea of hegemonic masculinity think that it is useful for understanding how men and women interact and how gender roles are constructed. They say it can be used to study how men and women grow and develop, how criminal behavior is impacted by gender, how the media portrays masculine images, how health is affected by gender, and how businesses are organized. Critics of the concept argue that it only reflects a heterosexual perspective, does not accurately reflect the reality of masculinity, overlooks positive aspects of masculinity, is based on a flawed definition of masculinity, or is too complicated to have practical applications (Rothery, 2011, 2012).

Colonialism was a violent process of conquest that destroyed pre-existing regimes and established a new rule over the conquered population. It reduced the indigenous people to a form of servitude and caused massive destruction to the population. To understand how violence against women exists in postcolonial Pakistan, it is necessary to understand the violence of colonialism and the gender relations that it was based on. The Western societies that started the colonizing mission had already established patriarchal structures (for detail see. Fletcher, 2013: *Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain*), and used violence and ruthlessness to overpower the colonized societies. Men were divided into categories of "manly" and "effeminate", with those perceived as warriors (like Sikhs and Pathans) being admired, but not necessarily trusted (Sinha, 1995).

The colonial experience fundamentally changed gender roles and expectations in colonized societies. The intrusion of the colonial system in India caused the displacement of traditional values and customs, and the imposition of new rules and regulations. This created a clash between the old and new gender dynamics. Additionally, rape and other forms of violence were used to subjugate and control the indigenous population, which also had a huge impact on gender roles and expectations. Lastly, the colonization of India resulted in the suppression of gender groupings such as transgender people (see. criminal tribes act), which further disrupted gender roles and expectations in the area. The creation of colonial societies had a major impact on gender roles and norms. Colonizers sought to create a new order of gender relations and sexuality, which was often implemented through missionary religion. Colonizers also established gender-segregated schools, laws regulating marriage, women's rights, and inheritance, and recruited colonized men into imperial armed forces. Such initiatives were part of the colonial rulers' efforts to establish hegemony over their territories, and ultimately paved the way for the lasting legacy of colonialism.

Morrell (2001, 2005) talks about how the British settlers enforced a certain type of Hegemonic masculinity (in the schools, military forces, and civil society) in order to dominate the colonized population. This type of masculinity was tough, oppressive, and unyielding. There was no guarantee that this type of domination would be successful, as colonialism often caused disruption, violence, and dispossession. This had an effect on gender order, which was often inconsistent and varied.

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that has been carried over from colonial times and still persists in post-colonial Pakistan. In *Blasphemy*, Durrani depicts that the state of women in the post-colonial period is still heavily influenced by the colonial-era construction of hegemonic masculinities and religious politics. The character of *pir sain* is an example of hegemonic masculinity. To gain an understanding of

violence against women in post-colonial Pakistan, it is important to understand the violence that colonialism brought and the gender roles it imposed.

## **Literature Review**

The present study analyzes the novel *Blasphemy* to provide insight into the patriarchal structures of society. *Blasphemy* tells the real story of protagonist Heer who was forced to marry a peer sain when she was just fifteen. Peer sain calls himself a man of God apparently but he was a demon by nature inwardly. Heer discloses how patriarchy and male domination is used as a tool to subjugate women in society. She was tortured, raped, and sexually and physically abused every night. This novel deals with male domination and religious fundamentalism at their extreme level. *Blasphemy* exposes the dehumanization and self-exploitation of women in Pakistani society by the name of Allah. The novel uncovers the reality of third-world countries where women are taken as a personal property, men control every sphere of women's lives even their behavior and movements. It reveals the misrepresentation of Islam in Pakistani society.

*Blasphemy* is a highly contentious issue in religious societies, and its impact has been studied in various contexts and from different angles. Tehmina Durrani's novel '*Blasphemy*' (1992) is one of the most important works of literature to address the issue of blasphemy in a Pakistani context. This literature review aims to analyze the novel and its portrayal of the concept of blasphemy, as well as its implications for Pakistani society. Durrani's novel provides a powerful account of the consequences of blasphemy in contemporary Pakistan. The protagonist, Heer, is a woman who is forced to endure domestic violence and an array of abuse and humiliation at the hands of her husband Peer Sain. The novel emphasizes the vulnerability of women in Pakistani society and the power of the state to mete out punishment for child abusers and rapists. The novel also highlights the power of religion to shape the way people think and behave, and the difficulty of challenging traditional social norms. The novel has been praised for its ability to capture the reality of blasphemy in Pakistan. Khursheed, Ashraf, and Maqsood (2020) argue that the novel 'captures the intensity of the issue and the chaos it can create in a society' (p. 13). They further contend that it offers an instructive example of how the concept of blasphemy is used to oppress and control people in Pakistani society. The novel also serves as a reminder of the need for greater freedom of expression and the importance of protecting vulnerable individuals from the power of religious authorities. The novel has been widely praised for its unflinching portrayal of the consequences of blasphemy in Pakistan. It has been described as 'a remarkable work of literature' (Khursheed, Ashraf, & Maqsood, 2020, p. 13) and has been lauded for its ability to 'capture the human cost of blasphemy' (p. 13). The novel has also been credited with providing an insightful and nuanced perspective on the issue of blasphemy. Overall, Durrani's '*Blasphemy*' provides an important and timely reflection on the issue of blasphemy in Pakistan. The novel serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of blasphemy and the need for greater freedom of expression. It also highlights the power of religion to shape the way people think and behave, and the difficulty of challenging traditional social norms. The novel provides an important and instructive example of how the concept of blasphemy can be used to oppress and control people in Pakistani society.

In Tehmina Durrani's *Blasphemy*, women are faced with a number of predicaments due to their social and religious status in Pakistan. Durrani's protagonist Heer is a prime example of the many injustices faced by women in the novel. Heer is subject to constant exploitation from her husband, who is a powerful and influential man in their society (Mubarik, 2015). This is a reflection of the lack of agency given to women in the novel. Their rights and freedoms are subjugated by the patriarchy, leaving them powerless and vulnerable to abuse. The novel also deals with the lack of empathy for women in Pakistan. Heer is subject to horrific abuse from her husband and is completely alone in her struggle due to the lack of support from her community (Mubarik, 2015). This is a reflection of the lack of humanity towards women in the novel, which speaks to the reality of their situation. Durrani's *Blasphemy* is a powerful exploration of the predicaments faced by women in Pakistan. It brings to light the lack of rights and

freedoms given to women by the patriarchy, as well as the lack of empathy and humanity they face in their society.

In her article “From Suffering to Revolt: A Comparative Study Tehmina Duranni’s *My Feudal Lord and Blasphemy*”, Soni (2018) provides an interesting comparison between two novels by Pakistani author Tehmina Durrani that address the issues of oppression in Pakistan. She does a great job of analyzing how both novels depict oppression in different ways and how the two protagonists respond differently to their situations. Soni’s analysis is well-structured and she offers a number of insightful arguments. Her analysis of how the characters’ responses to their oppressive situations reflect the values and ideas of their respective societies is particularly compelling. Soni’s article is a valuable contribution to the literature on Pakistani society and culture. It offers an engaging and thought-provoking look at Durrani’s work and provides an important perspective on the issues of oppression in Pakistan.

Singh and Mohsin (2020) provide an in-depth comparative analysis of the literary works of Nawal El Saadawi and Tehmina Durrani. Both writers provide a unique exploration of imprisoned womanhood in their works, *Woman at Point Zero* and *Blasphemy* respectively. As such, Singh and Mohsin explore how women are presented in both of the works, how their oppression is portrayed and how their respective experiences reflect larger cultural, social and religious issues. The paper provides an interesting insight into how literature can be used to explore the experiences of women in society, and how those experiences are shaped by larger systems of oppression. In conclusion, this paper provides an interesting look at how two different literary works can be used to explore similar issues of imprisoned womanhood. In her article, “Female Body and Self-Ownership in Tehmina Durrani’s *Blasphemy*”, Nija Zaidi draws attention to the issue of female self-ownership in the face of patriarchal oppression. Zaidi examines the structure of Durrani’s novel, *Blasphemy*, to illustrate the ways that women are “denied the right over their own bodies” (2015, p. 67). Moreover, the novel explores the socio-cultural implications of religious discrimination and its effects on individuals. Through a feminist perspective, Durrani tackles the themes of justice and inequality in a male-dominated society. Dhote (2020:1) argues that Durrani’s *Blasphemy* is “a powerful story that speaks to the need for justice and equality in society.” *Blasphemy* portrays the marginalized selfhood of women in Pakistani society. Saleem (2020) argues that the novel reveals the struggles of women struggling in the patriarchal system of Pakistan. He provides a critical analysis of this novel that explores the themes of identity, gender, and faith.

The next section provides an in-depth analysis of the novel *blasphemy* which provides insights into the issues like patriarchal structures, female bodies, female identity, and autonomy and women marginalization. It delves deep into the minds of the characters and explores their internal conflicts. The plot is filled with strong characters, most of whom are women, struggling to make sense of their lives in a world dominated by men. It deals with the issues of gender and power dynamics and reflects on the relationship between gender, bodies and identity.

## **Analysis**

Gramsci's concept of hegemony is an important theoretical framework that can help us understand the role of religion in contemporary societies. Hegemony is the power of the dominant group to influence and control the beliefs and behaviors of the subordinate group. This influence can manifest itself in a variety of ways, such as through the use of language, symbols, and norms. In a religious context, hegemony is the ability of a particular religion to shape the beliefs and practices of a society. Religion can be a powerful force in the formation of a society's identity and culture. It can create a shared sense of purpose and common values among its adherents. It can also provide moral guidance, establish rules and regulations, and offer spiritual comfort. Religion can also be used to legitimize the status quo and to oppress those who do not conform to the dominant religion. This is where religious hegemony comes in. Religious hegemony is the ability of a particular religion to gain control over a society's beliefs and practices. It is achieved by convincing members of the subordinate group that the dominant religion holds the only valid truth, and that all other beliefs are false. Religious hegemony is often maintained through various forms of



social control, such as laws, customs, and propaganda. It can be used to maintain the status quo, to stifle dissent, and to oppress those who are different. Religious hegemony can be particularly effective in societies where religion is a pervasive and integral part of everyday life. In these societies, religion often serves as a source of moral guidance, a unifying force, and an anchor for identity. As such, it can be difficult to challenge or reject the dominant religion without facing social censure or even persecution. In short, Gramsci's concept of hegemony can help us understand the role of religion in contemporary societies. It can help us to recognize how religious hegemony is used to maintain the status quo and oppress those who do not conform to the dominant religion. Moreover, it can help us to identify and challenge the forms of religious hegemony that exist in our societies, in order to create a more equitable and just world.

The novel *Blasphemy* recounts the story of the British colonial masters and their oppressive religious agenda. The story follows a family of native settlers, who lived in a small area. One of the sons, a malang, renounced his material possessions and devoted himself to his faith. Despite his family's disapproval, the malang left his home and spent the following decade travelling and living in the mountains. Years later, he was found dead, surrounded by tales of his miracles that had spread across the region.

During the same period, British rule in India was still in its infancy. The foreigners encountered persistent issues with the natives, who were known for being stubborn and difficult to control. As Durrani puts it:

*The foreigners faced constant problems with the stubborn-natured natives whose simple minds dared to take on powerful foreign rulers but accepted the excesses of their local masters (86)*

Despite their attempts to take on the powerful foreign invaders, they were willing to accept the unfairness of their local rulers. The landowners took advantage of this, using the disadvantaged natives to intimidate the British. They would request large sums of money and favors in return for their promises to keep their people in check and to appease any disobedient masses. As a result, they would make pledges on behalf of their children that they had no involvement in these underhanded tactics. The British saw Babaji's grave as an opportunity to gain power over the area, believing that by "magnetic appeal" of the shrine they could control the region (Durrani 87). They looked for local allies who they could elevate from lower social classes to a more elite status, believing that those people would be forever grateful to them.

After realizing the potential of the local shrine, the British decided to consult with Babaji's brother to discuss the possibilities of expanding the area. Following successful negotiations, the initial mound of earth was replaced with an eye-catching marble shrine, surrounded by a circular room with brightly painted tiles. To further entice people from afar, two tall, ornate minarets were erected on the roof. Adjacent to the shrine, a mosque was built. To further draw in people, a large quantity of food was cooked in huge cauldrons and served outside of the shrine (Durrani, 87).

The British bestowed sainthood upon the son of Babji's late brother, who had previously taken away Babaji's share of land and cast him out of his home. To symbolically solidify the newfound status, local high society was invited to witness a lavish ceremony where a long-bearded and long-haired boy was adorned with a turban, said to have belonged to Babaji himself. This was seen as a sign that Babaji's spiritual power was being passed on to his heir. People were appointed to chant Allahu Allahu, and a carnival atmosphere was created as the crowd of spectators threw money into a moneybox. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the key to the shrine was presented to the pir, signifying that the fate of the people was now in his hands (Durrani 87).

The British colonial masters had the most advanced weapons and great administrative control over the region, but they still saw the need to maintain a cultural hegemonic stance. Hegemony is a powerful tool of imperial power, as it allows the colonizers to shape the thoughts and beliefs of the colonized. This is done through a variety of means, such as the dissemination of literature, media, and other cultural products, as well as the imposition of laws and rules that favor the colonizers over the colonized. By

controlling the discourse of the colonized, the British colonial masters could ensure that their power was maintained and their interests were always prioritized.

The British had come to the realization that they could not maintain control over the population of their occupied territories through brute force and military strength alone. In order to ensure that their control would remain in place for the long-term, they began to devise and implement other methods that would serve as a more lasting form of control. This included the use of indirect rule, through which the British would appoint local leaders to govern in their stead and the use of cultural and ideological tools to shape the attitudes and beliefs of the local population. These strategies enabled the British to maintain a firm grip on power in their colonies without having to resort to heavy-handed tactics.

The role of financial interests in imperialist endeavors has been an important factor since the beginning of colonialism. The colonizers needed money in order to maintain their military and administrative presence in the colonized area. In order to acquire this money, they resorted to a variety of tactics, such as exploiting the natural resources of the colonized area, engaging in proxy trade, and imposing harsh taxes on the native populations. However, the colonial masters also sought to gain control of the finances of the colonized people in order to maximize their financial gain. To this end, they employed various cultural hegemonic enterprises as a means of gaining control of the finances from the poor colonized masses.

Mouffe states that, in order to be successful, hegemony must go beyond just representing the economic and corporate interests of the ruling group, and must also include the interests and tendencies of the allied elements (Mouffe, 2014). In other words, the ruling group must take into account the wishes and desires of their allies if they wish to be successful in establishing and maintaining their hegemony. This means that the ruling group must be willing to make concessions and compromises in order to accommodate the needs of their allies, as this will help ensure that the hegemony is accepted and maintained over time.

Mouffe argues that in order for a ruling group to be successful in their hegemony, they must go beyond the interests of their own economic and corporate interests and take into account the interests of their allies. This is especially true in the case of the British colonizers, who formed an alliance with local pirs in order to gain both administrative and financial benefits. Mouffe further emphasizes that hegemony is not only about ethical and political issues, but it is also about economic ones. Therefore, a ruling group must be aware of the key areas of the economy in order to maintain their hegemony. In the words of Durrani, the British had a hidden agenda in the patronage of Sufi shrines in the region. During their rule, the shrines became a flourishing business, and when the second Pir Sain passed away, his successor was better prepared to take over the role due to the training he had received. This illustrates how the British used the shrines to their advantage, exploiting the local population in the process (Durrani, 88). In the novel, it is clearly shown how the British colonial masters used the local pirs for their own economic interests. The story reveals how the British were able to manipulate the people's beliefs and values to their own advantage. The British took advantage of the traditional power structure in the region and used it to their own benefit. They used the pirs to establish control over the local population, and in return, they provided them with monetary benefits. This allowed the British to maintain their hegemony and control over the local people. The novel paints a vivid picture of how the British were able to impose their will on the local population and take advantage of them to further their own interests.

The colonizers were not able to achieve financial success through engaging in battles with the people who already lived in the area they were trying to claim. Therefore, they had to find another way to gain the trust and acceptance of the people, and they did this by asserting their culture and beliefs onto them. This was done through a process called cultural hegemony, where the colonizers imposed their own beliefs and values onto the people in the area, and religious hegemony, where they used their own religion to gain the support of the people. Through this process, the colonizers were able to gain the necessary consent from the masses and maintain a power structure in the area.

The British imposed their colonial rule and direct or indirect control over the Muslim population. This resulted in the internal weaknesses of the state, making it susceptible to manipulation by the interests of

the elite state actors. The Muslim population was seen as a vulnerable group and the British used it to their advantage. This led to the weakening of the state and the loss of autonomy of the Muslim population. The state did not have the capacity to provide effective protection and justice for its citizens, resulting in the oppression of the Muslim population. The Muslim population also faced unequal access to resources and opportunities. This further weakened the state, as the Muslim population lacked the power to challenge the decisions of the elite state actors. This made the state vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by the elite state actors. The Muslim population was left with little to no recourse to defend their rights and interests against the powerful and influential state actors. This weakened state of affairs in the Muslim communities of the subcontinent, is indicative of the internal weaknesses of the state. The state has been left vulnerable to manipulation by the interests of the elite state actors, resulting in the oppression of the Muslim population and the unequal access to resources and opportunities. The British imperial masters had come to the realization that the Muslims of the subcontinent posed a greater threat to their rule than the Hindus. In order to quash any form of rebellion coming from the Muslim communities, they formulated a range of strategies, with religious hegemony being the most effective. The British colonizers were aware that the Muslims were divided into various sects, which made it easier for them to implement their own models of domination in these communities. The proliferation of different sects amongst the Muslims provided the colonizers with the confidence to enforce strict regulations on their religious practices.

The Muslim communities in the subcontinent were at a disadvantage due to their internal weaknesses and were thus vulnerable to exploitation by external forces. This resulted in the perpetuation of religious seminaries and shrines, creating religious divisions within these communities. To ensure the success of their hegemonic designs, the British colonial masters sought the assistance of local allies. In this context, the local religious leaders, referred to as pirs, became the allies of the colonial force, and served as a tool for them to increase their control and dominance. These pirs were often already in place, or had already been deeply entrenched in their religious communities, which made them a valuable asset to the colonial masters.

The British colonizers, in an effort to gain their objectives, employed a devious strategy to manipulate the Muslim communities in India. According to Durrani, the British found the key that unlocked the minds of the indigenous people. This allowed them to instill a sense of fear, as the pirs, who were people held in high regard in the Muslim community, were used to roll back any head that dared to rise up and oppose the British. Furthermore, the colonizers took advantage of the religious beliefs of the people and used Babaji, a sacred figure in the religion, as a prostitute. This wickedness demonstrates the lengths that the British were willing to go to in order to maintain their control over the people (Blasphemy, 88).

The colonizers had come to the realization that their efforts to control the Muslim communities were not sustainable in the long-term. They needed to find a more effective way to maintain their power over the locals. To that end, they turned to religion as a tool to subjugate the native population. Religion was the most accessible and effective way to keep the locals in check, as it provided a way to influence their behavior and beliefs. Religion can be used to manipulate people's attitudes and actions, making it a powerful weapon in the hands of the colonizers. It allowed them to control the population by enforcing certain rules and regulations, and by providing a set of values and beliefs that were beneficial to the colonizers. In this way, religion was used as a tool of control and domination by the colonizers, allowing them to maintain their power over the natives for a long time.

The indigenous people, due to their lack of religious knowledge and religious traditionalism, were easily lured into the oppressive religious doctrines of their colonizers. There were also some who saw their own personal advantage in these oppressive designs, and were thus willing to be complicit in them. These people, however, were unable to comprehend the seriousness of the situation from the perspective of the colonized, and were more concerned with the material gains that they could potentially obtain from their involvement. Their greed and selfishness caused them to turn a blind eye to the injustice and suffering of their people, and even go so far as to sell their own people for money - as Babaji was sold for ninety years

under a British license. This act of callousness and disregard for the well-being of their own people highlighted the destructive effects of colonialism on native culture and religion (Duranni, 88).

The story of another Pir, who received patronage from the British rulers is quite fascinating. Dai, a maidservant at Pir Sain's home narrates the story. She says that the British rulers once visited a hereditary pir who had supernatural powers and to demonstrate it, the pir looked up to a man on the ramparts, motioned with his hand, and the guard instantly obeyed him and jumped to his death. This act of power and authority made the British rulers recognize his greatness and they showered him with favors and privileges. This patronage from the British rulers made the pir's powers increase so much that even a century later people follow his descendant's orders and jump to their deaths at the mere motion of their hands (Durrni, 61). The patronage of the pirs by the British was not only to demonstrate the spiritual abilities of the pirs, but also to show the power they had over their followers. The British wanted to gauge the amount of sway the pirs had over their people, in order to keep them in line and ensure they complied with the British rule. This was a way of keeping any potential rebellions in check, and of rewarding the pirs for their loyalty to the British Raj. The British Raj had a significant impact on the social structure of India. They established an alliance with a group of people known as pirs. These pirs belonged to the elite class of society, who were willing to cooperate with the British Raj without making any major changes to the current power structure. They became known as a comprador class, as they had control over both the religious and the political systems of India. Through the patronage of the British Raj, the comprador class of pirs had control over the beliefs, customs, and fate of the people. They used their power to manipulate the population, making them dependent on the pirs and the British Raj. This created a system of inequality, as the pirs had significantly more power and privilege than the majority of the population. The pirs of Pakistan have a major influence on the country as a whole, as they have divided the nation amongst themselves and consistently collaborate to support and strengthen each other's candidates. This alliance between them is so strong, that it almost seems like they are gods with immense power, when one visits another and they are treated with the utmost respect. This connection between the pirs has created a shared interest and an identical way of dealing with their people, making them powerful influencers in the nation's policies. The members of the league formed a strong bond between each other, based on protection and support. They respected one another and lived in harmony, understanding that the strength of their union was dependent on the mutual reverence and respect shown. This mutual understanding resulted in their reign lasting for many generations, treating both men and women equally and with no regard to anyone who opposed them. If anyone dared to challenge their authority, they would be met with severe punishment, or even death. This cooperation and understanding provided a great amount of stability and ensured their dominance for many years.

The attitude of the pirs towards women in the novel was nothing short of despicable and inhumane. Women were not only subjected to physical violence, but also subjected to spiritual degradation and humiliation. It was as if they were living in a hell created by their former colonial masters, yet they still had to endure the same suffering. The characters of the novel, like Toti, have expressed their contempt for the behaviour of the pirs, and the protagonist Heer herself is a victim of the pir's cruelty. The pirs, who were domestic allies of the colonial powers, treated women as mere objects, with no regard for their dignity and worth. This caused immense damage to the self-esteem of the women and left them feeling helpless and powerless.

The attitudes of the Pirs towards women are a reflection of the colonial legacy of a patriarchal society, where men have an unequal and dominant position over women. This attitude is a product of the cultural hegemony of the British colonizers, which has been embedded in the post-colonial era. It serves as a reminder of how colonial politics have created a system of religious and political control, where women are seen as inferior and second-class citizens. This legacy of oppression and subjugation is still present today, with women being denied basic rights and freedoms, and facing discrimination and violence. The attitudes of the Pirs are a stark reminder of the injustices and inequality that women have faced since the colonial period, and continue to face today.

Tehmina Durrani's novel *Blasphemy* highlights the oppression of women, in both the private and public sphere, while also exposing the double standards that exist within the society. Through her characters and the narrative, Tehmina Durrani conveys how domesticated patriarchy is deeply entrenched in the Pakistani culture of the 1980s and how they continue to be present today.

Male dominance is portrayed in Tehmina Durrani's novel *Blasphemy* in its various forms. The novel is based on a true story of a woman who is in an abusive marriage and is struggling to get her freedom and rights. It is seen in the form of power imbalance in the marriage and the social norms that are attached to it. The main character Heer, is oppressed by her husband and is denied the rights that she is entitled to as a woman. The novel also highlights the exploitation of religion, which is often used to justify the subjugation of women. Dominance is also demonstrated in the form of the patriarchal society which refuses to accept Heer's autonomy and freedom of choice. The novel serves as an important commentary on the role of hegemonic masculinity and its effects on women and society. It is a powerful and thought-provoking read that sheds light on an often overlooked issue.

"*Blasphemy*" is an insightful exploration of the female body and self-ownership in a patriarchal society. In the book, Durrani examines the numerous ways in which women are oppressed and disregarded by their male counterparts, even in matters regarding their own bodies. Durrani powerfully captures the struggle for women to take control of their bodies and to make decisions about their lives without fear of retribution or judgement. The book is a testament to the strength of women and their capacity to challenge oppressive systems. The issues raised in "*Blasphemy*" are still relevant today, and Durrani's work provides an important perspective on the female body and self-ownership. She challenges the stereotypes and expectations of women, often inspiring self-reflection and reclaiming of the female body. Her work is a celebration of the beauty of the female form, and it is a reminder of the importance of owning one's body and identity. Durrani's pieces are a reflection of her own experiences as a woman, and her work serves as a means to make space for other women to express their stories and reclaim their bodies. Her work is a vivid expression of the beauty, strength, and power of the female body, and it provides a much-needed perspective on self-ownership. Durrani's work is an important contribution to the conversation around female identity and self-ownership. It presents the struggle of women to take control of their bodies and make decisions about their lives without fear of retribution or judgement. Through her vivid and emotionally honest writing, she captures the complex emotions of her characters and the multifaceted nature of the struggle. She presents a nuanced view of the issues and provides insight into the experiences of women in different cultures, demonstrating the need for greater understanding and respect for their choices. Durrani's writing is as inspiring as it is thought-provoking and is sure to inspire readers to take a stand and fight for the rights of women everywhere.

It is a story of beautiful young girl Heer who sacrifices everything for her family. Durrani's *blasphemy* is a fight of women against the patriarchal system which provides strength to men to do so. It also exposes the hypocritical image of religious leaders towards Islam. Heer's mother is one of the women who struggle for their survival and children under patriarchal rule. Heer's mother was extremely anxious for her daughter's future and wants a good social status in society.

After the death of Heer's father, the early marriage of her daughter is the only option for the economically weak Heer's mother. Heer's mother thinks that Heer's marriage to Peer Sain (man of God) will rebuild her social status in society. Heer wishes to pursue her education and dreams of getting higher education. On seeking permission for further studies, her mother wrathfully responds to her:

*"You must carry your share of responsibility towards your sisters and Brother. You are fifteen years old; you can't sit at home forever. . . . Besides, I don't have money to educate you"* (*blasphemy*, 25).

Heer sacrifices her love for her mother's choice. Heer like every girl of that age was taught to remain obedient towards her husband in any case in the patriarchal society. After her marriage, she becomes a prisoner in her husband Haveli. She became her husband's possession. The rules of the Haveli are stony

and need complete obedience. First, she was publically bitten when she greet a seven-year-old boy without a veil. She is repeatedly assaulted and raped for many years in the four walls of Haveli. She was not even allowed to meet her family. Peer sain take the advantage of the veil and presented his wife as a whore for his friends. Her body is distorted day by day and she feels her self inferior. Heer represents the women in Pakistani society who suffers because of hegemonic masculinity, where women are treated as inferior creature and males are considered superior and unchallengeable. Males can question everything, while women are held only answerable. Heer endures extreme torture, sexual abuse, isolation, and religious politics inside the domesticated patriarchal framework. She has been facing emotional, physical, and mental torture from so many years. Moreover, Peer sain tries to rape his daughter guppi. Heer presented an orphan girl Yathimiri to peer sain. Yathimiri successfully gets the attention of peer sain, in this way she saved her daughter from the lusty claws of peer sain. After the death of her husband situation remains the same because of her son. Her son was the mirror image of her husband. She affirms that "I was lost in a realm where space and time were not a concept. . . ." (Blasphemy, 153).

After all these sufferings she takes an initial step to disclose the reality of peer sain to people. She fights until the reality of the peer sain is revealed. It was the blasphemous step by the protagonist Heer. She decided to direct her life toward happiness and free herself from the patriarchal rules.

According to Heer:

*"to me, my husband was my son's murderer. He was also my daughter's molester. A parasite nibbling on the holy book, he was Lucifer, holding me by the throat and driving me to sin every night. He was the rapist of orphans and the fiend that fed the weak. But over and above all this, he was known to be the man closest to Allah, the one who could reach him and save us".*(Blasphemy, 171).

The novel tells about male domination over women and corrupt religious practices. It reveals the challenges faced by married women in patriarchal societies where male domination and religious fundamentalism are at their peak. The novel clarifies the dehumanization of women at the hands of men in early marriages. It particularly talks about Muslim women who suffer through different challenges by the name of Islam. They travel through pain, torture, and subjugation by hypocrites in Islam. Hypocrites attempt different non-religious practices to subjugate young girls to satisfy their lust. It is being done from the beginning that men take command and women are degraded in their homes. Women, unfortunately, get the second class-citizenship in society in third-world countries like Pakistan. They become an apparatus to produce children and satisfy their husband's lust. They remain bound to four walls of houses and should be answerable for every movement.

There are some old norms that are only for women to fulfill these at any condition. Like women should be shy, women should wear a veil, women should not cross the threshold without permission, women should cook food, women should look after the children, etc.

The novel unveils the immoralities of so-called religious peers and their evil deeds like child molestation and rape. Women are brutalized and repressed which makes them silent against their husbands' acts. It creates self-inferiority in women and they feel selflessness in them. Protagonist Heer gathers strength and raises her voice against the patriarchal practices used to control women in the name of religion. Her mother sells her daughter in the form of marriage to peer sain. Heer is one of the girls whose dreams are scattered due to early-age marriages. Her husband is the killer of his early two wives. His early wives die due to isolation, repression, oppression, and sexual exercises. Not only the Heer but the entire people in the Haveli are the victim of peer sain. Heer became stuck in a world where peer sain controls everything. Peer is the lord of his world and rules over ugly people like Heer. This Novel exposes the Pakistani Molana's torture of their wives. It also reveals the spiritual duplicity in Islam by less educated religious leaders. Women like Heer lose their identity, desire, and selfhood as helpless victims of religious hypocrites. She tolerates too much pain as a daughter, as a wife, and as a mother also. Her son doesn't respect his mother. Heer lives in a society where women are forced to remain silent even though their

basic rights are violated and they have been abused: “child rape was a lesser evil than incest” (Durrani, 2000: 112).

Heer’s daughter and young orphan girls of the same age are molested because they are weak. Heer is disturbed that how can she satisfy her husband’s lust and save her daughter until they married. She presented so many young lambs to satisfy the lust of peer sain to save her daughter. After the death of peer sain, she was guilty continuously because of her wrongdoings to save herself and her daughter from peer sain. These poor girls were brutalized and molested in the chamber of peer sain. She consoled herself with her own framed excuses. After all these sufferings she takes an initial step to disclose the reality of peer sain to people. She decided to direct her life toward happiness and free herself from the patriarchal rules and terror.

## **Conclusion**

The theory of hegemony is a concept that explains how power is maintained and perpetuated by dominant groups within a society. It is based on the idea that power is not only distributed unequally among groups, but also that dominant groups have the ability to shape the beliefs, values and norms of a society to maintain their position of power. In other words, hegemony is at form of power that operates through consent rather than coercion. Temina Durrani’s exposes the Great Britain’s religious hegemonic schemes in the Subcontinent, she examines how the British Empire used religion to control and dominate the Subcontinent. Durrani argues that the British used religious ideologies to construct a narrative of superiority, while simultaneously suppressing the native population’s religious beliefs and practices. She explains how the British Empire used religious symbolism and rhetoric to justify their rule, while at the same time criminalizing and punishing those who did not follow their religious doctrines. She also highlights how religious symbols were used to legitimize their rule, while at the same time demonizing and denigrating the native population’s culture and beliefs. Durrani’s work is a powerful example of how hegemony works, and how it can be used to maintain and perpetuate power. By using religion as a tool of control, the British were able to shape the beliefs and values of the Subcontinent, while simultaneously maintaining their own power and authority. This is a prime example of how hegemony works, and how powerful groups are able to use dominant ideologies to maintain their power.

It is a shocking story of the Heer and Heer’s mother. Both struggle for their survival and the survival of their children in the patriarchal society. A woman only expects a caring husband in her life then she can do everything to please him. While Heer struggles to get rid of the oppression, dehumanization, isolation, and selflessness. Durrani depicts the challenges faced by married women in third-world countries like Pakistan. Women are marginalized and remain bound to the four walls of their houses. The religious hypocrites distorted the social settings of Islamic culture. Women are not safe in their houses; they are suffering through pain and chaos every day and every night.

The novel begins with the main character, Heer, who is a victim of domestic abuse in the hands of her husband, Pir sain. Pir sain is a representation of the hegemonic masculine ideal, as he is powerful and domineering and expects his wife to always obey him. He is also a product of the society in which he lives, which is a society that is highly patriarchal and where men are expected to be the head of the family and the decision-makers. Heer, on the other hand, is a representation of the submissive wife, who is expected to follow the wishes and instructions of her husband without question. Durrani’s portrayal of the oppressive nature of the Pakistani culture is further highlighted in the novel, as Heer tries to save her daughter from Pir sain. The novel also sheds light on the double standards that exist in the Pakistani culture, where women are expected to be completely subservient to men, while men are allowed to have multiple partners and engage in extramarital affairs. This double standard is further highlighted in the novel, when heer discovers that her husband has been unfaithful to her and is engaged in an extra-marital affair with a much younger woman.

Durrani’s portrayal of the subjugation of women in a highly patriarchal society that is pervasive in the culture is an important contribution to the discourse on gender. It is a powerful reminder of how gender

roles are socially constructed and the consequences of enforcing unequal power dynamics between men and women. Through her characters and the narrative, Durrani conveys how patriarchy is deeply entrenched in the Pakistani culture of the 1980s and how they continue to be present today. By highlighting these issues, Durrani hopes to bring about change and to create a more equitable society where men and women are treated as equals.

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