SCIENTIFIC CULTURE
www.sci-cult.com

SCIENTIFIC CULTURE, Vol. 12, No. 4, (2026), pp. 7115-7127
Open Access. Online & Print

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20720796

INTERSECTIONAL DOMESTICITY AND GENDERED AGENCY: NEGOTIATING EVERYDAY PATRIARCHY AND FEMINIST VOICE IN BANU MUSHTAQ'S HEART LAMP

Ms Diksha Gazmer[1*], Dr. Prakash Bhadury[2], Dr. Kusum Tripathi[3], Dr. Ragamayee[4], K., Dr. Alok Kumar[5], Dr. Aditya Prakash[6], Mr. Clement Lakra[7]

[1]Assistant Professor, English, IIMT University, Meerut. E-mail: dikshu0901@gmail.com*
[2]Professor of English, IIMT University, Meerut, E-mail:prakashbhadury@gmail.com
[3]Assistant Professor, English, IIMT University, Meerut, kusummsharma24@gmail.com
[4] Associate Professor & HOD, English, SreeNidhi University, Hyderabad, E-mail: ragamayee.k@suh.edu.in
[5] Registrar, Sangam University, Bhilwara, Rajasthan, E-mail: dralokkr1@gmail.com
[6] Associate Professor, English, NIT Jalandhar. E-mail: prakasha@nitj.ac.in
[7] PhD Scholar (English), Reg. No.: 21213712, IIMT University, Meerut, E-mail: c.lakra1943@gmail.com

Received: 21/07/2025
Accepted: 27/01/2026

Corresponding Author: Ms Diksha Gazmer (dikshu0901@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

The paper summarises the issues of gender, domesticity, and patriarchy in Heart Lamp by Banu Mushtaq. It describes the work as a significant contribution to contemporary Indian literature and a prelude to the lives of Muslim women in South India. The study shifts focus to how women are often reduced to passive victims and provides a close textual analysis of selected stories. It observes how patriarchal power operates in domestic, religious, and socio-economic spheres and regulates agency, mobility, and body autonomy. The paper demonstrates that patriarchy in Heart Lamp is not abstract or monolithic but deeply embedded in everyday practices like marriage arrangements, reproductive needs, inheritance struggles, and communal policing, using an intersectional feminist approach. These frameworks normalise gendered subordination and also allow for negotiation and subtle resistance. Mushtaq's narrative strategies—irony, interior monologue, restrained dialogue, and symbolic detail—highlight the emotional and psychological experiences of women. The work redefines agency not as open rebellion, but as forms of consciousness, articulation, and survival under oppression. It argues that domestic space is not naturally nurturing but a contested site of intersectional control. The paper brings political critique to everyday life, challenging the homogenisation of Muslim women and emphasising subtle resilience and assertiveness. Finally, it places Mushtaq's work as a crucial intervention in feminist discussion, casting light on gendered experience in regional and translated literary spaces.

KEYWORDS: Everyday patriarchy; intersectional feminism; domestic space; Muslim women in South India; narrative resistance; Kannada literature in translation; gender and religion.

Copyright: © 2026. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. (https://cre-ativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction:

The critical interest and international acclaim of *Heart Lamp* by Banu Mustaq have been an original feature in the genre of Indian Writing in English, indicating the richness and naturalism of Bhasa literature and subsequently translated into an international readership. The real nature of hypocrisy against Muslim women in the Southern part of India has never been so vividly shown by any southern literary figure, even though there has been considerable Dalit literature in that part of India. The translation of regional literatures is becoming increasingly widespread in the world, reinstating the critical interest in the issues of voice, authenticity, and representational ethics. Care needs to be taken; scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have long encouraged us to be wary, but translation is not a simple linguistic act but a political one. It determines the mediation of subaltern identities in the dominating literary circuits (Spivak 1993). Heart Lamp illuminates this material, which is especially important because it concerns the conflict between the local particularity and the global legibility, and still maintains the cultural richness of Kannada Muslim life.

The writing never portrays life as direct and simple. Instead, it focuses on the grains of daily life. Heart Lamp highlights the everyday aspects of life, rejecting models that see Muslim women only as passive victims or as subjects of religious determinism. The novel emerges from a wider socio-political context shaped by the Bandaya movement. It pays close attention to everyday life and questions caste, class, religion, and gender. The research explores ordinary life by looking closely at the interior of the home, marital challenges, inheritance issues, reproductive struggles, and microaggressions.

Furthermore, the collection focused on everyday life, and it coincides with the interpretation of Henri Lefebvre in which power is not only practised by institutions but also by repetitive practices that are considered natural and unremarkable (Lefebvre 1991). This assertion places domestic life as a crucial analytic terrain, and in close reading, we examine how ideological formations are recreated in the fabric of the everyday interactions, gestures and anticipations. This work has made the narratives of Mushtaq hold people to examine by critical analysis how inequalities within the systems can be sustained by familiarity, not by coercion.

Moreover, the paper implicitly appeals to the concept of micro-power by Michel Foucault, which is the distribution of power throughout social relations instead of concentrating the power in the hands of specific individuals (Foucault 1978). Patriarchy in Heart Lamp is cleverly told by Mushtaq because it is not merely enforced by male characters, but it is transmitted by communal values, female complacency, and internalised discipline. Such a diffuse conception of power in its pervasive form requires a correspondingly subtle resistance that can be affected in the form of critical consciousness, by discursive reinterpretation and narration instead of open resistance.

Women no longer find home a safe place to live. In this perspective, the paper examines how Heart Lamp makes the house a crucial location where we observe the exercise of patriarchal power instead of making it a matter of course through everyday expectation. The paper illuminated the way the identity of women is redefined as a person who must obey, be modest, a mother and silent as a domestic role, as religious discourse, and as dependent on a man socio-economically. These areas create contemplative awareness and implicit subversion through a feminist and intersectional theoretical lens. The article demonstrates the way Mushtaq reinvents resistance not as an outright rebellion but as a process of negotiation, endurance, and narrative expression under the limited conditions. In this way, the collection adds to the current discussion on feminist and literary studies and South Asian narrative traditions, making it more difficult to draw straightforward lines of victim and victimiser.

2. Literature Review

i. Translational Writing, Regional Writing, and Literary Visibility.

The preeminence of the metropolitan English narratives in the Indian regional literature written in the vernacular is illuminated by modern research. Opponents examine that translation not just increases readership, but also re-contextualises socio-cultural settings to transnational feminist discourse. Heart Lamp has anticipated the Kannada literature in the global networks of readership, questioning the issue of translation, circulation, and representational politics. The analysis relies on textuality and internal narrative mechanics that provide insight into the production of gendered subjectivity, the shifts in attention between the questions of visibility and reception to intersectional domesticity.

Vernacular texts are introduced into the global markets through recent translation, and they find their way without any changes. Rather, they are subjected to cultural filtering where cultural uniqueness is possibly scaled down by not making

the global reader feel lost or disconcerted, which makes the global version smooth and less genuine. According to Lawrence Venuti, these processes pose a threat of domesticating the foreign text, and therefore, blurring its socio-political acuity (Venuti 1995). But Heart Lamp does not make itself completely easy or Anglophone-friendly. Rather, it maintains some elements of its original language, culture and expression. In so doing, the conflict between accessibility and authenticity becomes the core of its critical reception, and the value of analysing not just what is represented, but how it is mediated.

ii. Feminist Readings of South Asian Muslim Women's Literature.

The feminist approach to the subject of Muslim Women in South India tends to look at the influence of gender, religion, class, and culture in the daily lives of women as they are placed in a variety of social structures of religious tradition, community expectations, and wider patriarchal norms. In this way, Muslim women become victims of the religious orthodoxy or symbols of the nationalist discourses. A great deal of this scholarship is centered on canonical Anglophone authors, and regional-language writers have not been studied as well in the general feminist literary conversation and tend to revolve around the issue of seclusion, marriage, body control, and religious governance. Those who have conducted their research under the intersectional paradigm have claimed that gender oppression among minority groups cannot be isolated from the class, caste, and socio-political marginalisation.

There is also research by authors such as Leila Ahmed to prove that Muslim women tend not to be represented as individuals, but as a symbol due to politics, religion and history (Ahmed 1992). In South Asia, the experiences of Muslim women cannot be explained by means of religion only, as the situation is far more stratified and hierarchical due to caste and class. The work of Mustaq does not follow the orientalist or nationalist paradigm because she has based her work on the lived routine experience of women, but not on the abstraction of ideas. Her stories, therefore, serve as an emergent discourse of feminist writing that prioritises particularity, interiority and socio-cultural subtlety over generalised criticism.

iii. Patriarchy, Domestic Space, and Everyday Power.

The paradigm of customary practice that is established, which centres on topics such as everyday patriarchy, micro-power, and affective labour, allows the critics to look at a faint kind of power that is integrated in marriage, motherhood, inheritance processes, and moral teaching. The feminist critics have shown how domestic space is a place of ideological reproduction whereby gender roles are inculcated not by force but by repetition. Therefore, an ever-growing trend in theoretical literature on patriarchy is the move away from the focus of visible control towards the day-to-day administration. Although these structures are highly theoretical, they have not been applied to modern Kannada short stories, especially to the works of Banu Mushtaq.

The idea of domestic space as part of power is also influenced by the concept of performativity introduced by Judith Butler, who argues that gender is not an identity but a product and reproduction of repeated acts (Butler 1990). The statement implies that we can visualise that patriarchy is not a purely external structure that has been forced on women; it is supported through repetitive practices in daily life. These domestic rites are not innocent and neutral, because they are some kinds of insidious power apparatus: when people engage in them, they are actually engaged in the perpetuation of the same system that constrains them. Mustaq is keen on repetition, patterns of daily chores, and the demands of morality, demonstrating how gendered identities are fixed through practising but allow to be quietly undercut.

iv. Marginalised Voices and Bandaya Movement.

One of the most significant influences towards the marginalised voices being heard and challenging the deeply established caste, class and gender hierarchies was the Bandaya (rebellion) movement of Kannada literature. This assisted the writers in various significant ways that enabled them to write about realities that had been overlooked in the mainstream literature. It also led the authors to compose about the everyday life of ordinary men and women in a plain and direct fashion. Minority populations and the gendered truth of injustice, which is found within such a socio-literary genealogy, are perpetually occupied in the fiction of Mushtaq. Subtle narrative, however, is not being examined, and her work is categorised under general ideological labels, like resistance writing, minority expression, and feminist protest.

Opponents like U R Ananthamurthy notes that after the 1970s, Kannada literature became much more concerned with lived realities and moral introspection, less connected to aesthetic issues. In this instance, literary change is between remote

aestheticised writing and down-to-earth experience-based stories, where resistance could not be considered outside of the truthful depiction of ordinary life. This legacy is developed by Mushtaq, who incorporates a gendered critique into an *Andolan* (Agitation) movement that has hitherto concentrated on caste and class, thereby extending its ideological scope.

3. Research Gap

A conspicuous gap exists, as though the scholarly literature has covered translation politics, feminist representation, and the socio-historical meaning of regional literary movements; no sustained textual study of the functioning of patriarchy as a daily institution has been done with Heart Lamp. The collection is presented in the current discourse as an element in celebratory accounts of international acclaim or generalised as feminist protest literature, but lacks the interrogation of the narrative form and the symbolic economy, as well as the psychological realism.

Although intersectionality is often referenced within the wider context of feminism, its use to interpret the example of Mushtaq as a Muslim family living in southern India is underdeveloped because no focus is given to the fact that the text redefines resistance as not necessarily open opposition to the majority culture, but as a process of negotiating interiority, irony, and survival through multiple layers of socio-religious oppression.

This work fills such gaps by providing a close textual analysis that puts Heart Lamp in a feminist and intersectional context and anticipates the normalised processes of gendered power production, internalisation, and subtle contestation which occur in everyday life. The collection, therefore, pursues the theme of patriarchy as experience and not as a description of a structural interpretation.

Even though the current literature on the topic of Heart Lamp and related regional writing tends to be either celebratory, focused on the issue of representation and translation, or thematic, discussing the problem of gender oppression without sufficiently looking at the formal and narrative mechanisms through which said oppression is created and perpetuated. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty puts it, feminist discourse tends to homogenise Third World women, thus blotting out the particularity of their experience and the micro-locations' power functions (Mohanty 1988). In this respect, the work of Mushtaq suggests a more contextual analytical use that transcends the feminist critique in general.

More than that, researchers have discussed overlapping identities and general inequalities a lot, but they have not applied it to the regional South Asian literature, especially tales about the daily domestic lives of Muslim women in Kannada literature. In the literature, most studies fail to closely examine the role of religion, class, and gender in combination to create everyday domestic situations. Instead of everyday practices, these influences are in fact the indicators of profound social inequalities and structures that are unobtrusive yet constructed in daily practices, which are usually disregarded by scholars.

Literary scholars have not given sufficient attention to how Heart Lamp employs literary devices to demonstrate a certain kind of resistance- not by screaming rebellion, but by nuanced, multi-layered narration. Resistance is not brought out openly and in a dramatic manner in the text, but rather comes out in a subtle manner through style, tone, and the form of narration. The collection is worth a moderate reading based on the social background of the text and the literary mastery of the text. We have to consider the manner in which they are written, not merely the subject matter of what they represent as a work of art. Reading such texts simply to get acquainted with society, we can miss the fact that they are skilfully written. Rita Felski has put forth a theoretical point of view that we cannot simply look at the themes in the story, but rather we need to critically examine the way the text is presented because the meaning is made up of form, emotion, and the ways the reader engages with the text and not just content (Felski 2008). Hence, one needs to read carefully to observe how agency is manifested in complicated, delicate and at times less noticeable forms in the work by Mushtaq.

Therefore, this paper is concerned with the crucial gaps that render visible how everyday patriarchy is a banal practice that tells the story of mediated structure, which states that even in the daily practices, individuals start doubting and silently challenging that power. Meanwhile, these structures are very quietly undermined with subtle moments of consciousness and expression. By doing so, the paper transcends the single focus on representation and looks at the processes, textures and narrative strategies by which gendered experience is produced and challenged.

4. Research Questions

1. In what ways does Heart Lamp embody patriarchy in the form of an everyday, internalised

structure, as opposed to something overt or exceptional domination?
2. How do the domestic spaces of the text serve as a means of reproducing ideologies, and how do they define the role of women through everyday processes like marriage, motherhood, and moral control?
3. In what ways do the experiences of Muslim women in South India intertwine to create gender, religion, and class norms and complicate homogenised feminist representations?
4. Which narrative devices, such as irony, interior monologue, symbolic detail, and limited dialogue, does Banu Mushtaq use to express minor expressions of resistance?
5. In what ways does the collection rethink female agency as negotiation, awareness and survival in limiting socio-cultural models as opposed to explicit rebellion?

5. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse how everyday patriarchy is represented in Heart Lamp, especially how power is mobilised through the everyday domestic and social activities.
2. To examine the domestic space as a key location where gender roles are created, normalised, and sometimes disputed.
3. To use an intersectional feminist approach to comprehend how gendered experiences are determined by intersecting forms of religion, class, and community.
4. To perform a close textual analysis of chosen stories, to emphasise the literary and narrative strategies with the help of which Mushtaq creates gendered subjectivity.
5. To investigate how the text reconstructs resistance and agency as non-dramatic, non-confrontational, and inside-out and inside-process.
6. To add to modern feminist literary discourse by placing *Heart Lamp* in the context of regional, translation, and South Asian narrative.

6. Theoretical Framework

The analysis concentrates on dispersed structure working with the help of cultural norms, domestic organisation, religious discourse and internalised expectations instead of seeing it as an open expression of male domination. This framework interprets closer textual analysis of how gendered power relations are produced, naturalised, and sometimes disputed. Thus, it gives an overview of feminist and intersectional theoretical paradigms that examine the representation of gender and patriarchy in Heart Lamp by Banu Mushtaq.

This concept of distributed power as something that is disseminated in daily life is similar to Foucault's perspective on power being not only about oppression, but about how people think, behave, and live using ordinary systems and practices (Foucault 1978). Power is not being delivered by a single point of power; it flows through various forms of social channels that influence subjectivity in everyday life, their perception of self, identity and mode of thinking. In this sense, patriarchy is not externalised, but it is reproduced by participating and being habituated to it. Power and patriarchy Heart Lamp works silently in the day-to-day life. It is not that people are subjected to control without their awareness, but they also internalise and recreate it in their own activities and practices.

The experiences of women are centred on their lost identity as they are constructed by various, mutually constituting systems of power, which are reinforced by the intersectional theory, an analytical tool to place gender in the intersecting axes of classes, religion, and community identity. In Heart Lamp, the domestic world turns into a highly important battleground where marriage, motherhood, inheritance, bodily power, and financial dependency become not only a plot device but a formal process according to which power is distributed.

The paper also builds upon the work of Kimberle Crenshaw and her theory of intersectionality, which helps illuminate the idea that gender cannot be discussed independently of other identity axes, including religion, class, and community (Crenshaw 1989). In Heart Lamp, convergent inequalities make the lives of Muslim women, as their religious identity and their socio-economic status collide with the norms of gender to form specific types of constraints, as well as reconciliation and subjectivity space.

Moreover, the emphasis on the daily activity is harmonised with the theory of performativity described by Judith Butler, as the everyday practices depicted in Heart Lamp, such as the ritual of obedience or modesty, are habits, repeated acts that create and reinforce gender roles and make them seem natural and beyond challenge over time. Gender is not a predetermined entity, but rather, it is constantly being constructed in everyday practices, and such practices gain strength due to the repetitive process of making them a societal norm (Butler 1990). Caregiving, silence, modesty, and obedience that were central to the storytelling of Mushtaq are not merely cultural rules, but recurring acts that perpetuate and maintain patriarchal regimes.

Meanwhile, repetition, according to Judith Butler, is never devoid of possibilities of variation, and this is where the space of subtle forms of disruption is created, which is the clue to the meaning of the modes of resistance that are displayed in the text.

The analysis is based on close textual analysis that presents the framework according to which the feminist analyses of domestic space and affective labour suggest that everyday life is a primary space of ideological reproduction. Obedience is conceptualised as virtue, sacrifice is conceptualised as duty, and silence is conceptualised as dignity in the context of ordinary practice. The fiction of Mushtaq encourages the reader to be sensitive to the minor agency by pre-empting interior monologue, irony, and suppressed narration. In this way, such a theoretical orientation allows the study to go beyond the binary models of victims and oppressors and instead consider negotiation, consciousness and narrative articulation as one of the forms of lived resistance.

7. Methodology

The study takes a qualitative approach that is characterised by close textual analysis. The themes of marriage, religious authority, domestic labour, inheritance and reproductive expectation are illuminated in the collection of stories in Heart Lamp. By examining this text very closely, we can notice that symbolism, characterisation and dialogue can create meaning in this form of narrative as opposed to perceiving the collection as a sociological document. This method is based on the concept of close reading by Cleanth Brooks- to examine Heart Lamp through its language and structure, to produce ambiguity, tension or a variety of interpretations. Instead of regarding the text as a simple mirror of society, it demonstrates how the use of literary techniques makes meaning and refines it.

We examine the accent of the infiltration of patriarchal power in the interactions, the word-play, and the details through close reading. Some of these are domestic space, body vulnerability, clothes, ritual, and food that illuminate the interrelated tactics that define the representation of gendered experience. Simultaneously, the methodology is very sensitive to the social and cultural background of the text, using the knowledge of Feminist Literary Criticism. The analysis unites these perceptions, and the analysis is very attentive to the literary form and the social meaning of the text, focusing on them as one and not as two separate entities.

It is also hermeneutic research, where interpretation is regarded as a dynamic process which relies on the theoretical orientation of the researcher. Following Hans-Georg Gadamer, it is seen that understanding is a dialogue between the reader and the text that is historically and culturally contextualised. With the help of this framework, the analysis can place *Heart Lamp* in the wider discourse of gender, domesticity and narration and keep in mind the text itself.

The research lacks quantitative information and field-based work, but it gives precedence to qualitative information, interpretative richness and context sensitivity. The article provides a hermeneutic interpretation of a work in a feminist context by applying feminist and intersectional theory. By integrating the theoretical framing with a sustained textual response, it enables the textual moments to be placed in bigger debates about domesticity, religious discourse, and gendered agency. The methodology aims to illustrate the working of patriarchy in the collection as a daily formation, normalised, internalised, and destabilised, however, in a subtle manner by narrative consciousness. The authors used Grammarly to proofread the final draft for grammatical errors and style consistency.

8. Discussion:

The literary career of Mushtaq started in the 1970s, when there was tremendous social foment in Karnataka. Her book *Heart Lamp* (2025) became the first Kannada book to receive the International Booker Prize, and this was a landmark in Indian regional literature. The story comprises twelve short stories written between 1990 and 2023 and translated by Deepa Bhasthi. The collection provides an intriguing and often disturbing glimpse at the lives of Muslim women and girls in southern India. These twelve compelling stories cover a career of over thirty years of prolific Mushtaq writing and expose the social realities of these people, such as social and religious demands, economic instability, and struggles against the stronghold of patriarchal values. The views of Mushtaq were priceless and provided one with a critical prism that could be used to explore gender disparities in the wider context of the social justice movement. Her life, too, was a great influence in her writing; her tales, especially those in *Heart Lamp,* are sometimes based on her life as a journalist and a lawyer; her work in these stories is based on the plight of women and their strength in the traditional Muslim societies in southern India.

Heart Lamp can also be understood in terms of the concept of habitus as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, which connotes that daily social structures are internalised and practised using day-to-day habits

and dispositions. In the stories of Mushtaq, the gender norms are not imposed upon the characters; they are experienced and performed as natural behaviours, obedience, silence, and taking care, which are natural and at the same time reproduce social hierarchy without much noise. It is a complicated process of internalisation that leads to increased resistance because oppression is felt not only as a form of external constraint but also as a norm.

Her writings illuminated the issues of feminine rights, opposition to the patriarchal order and specifics of faith and identity. Focusing on the lived experience of Muslim women, Banu Mushtaq questions the marginalisation of the minority voices in Indian literature and makes a significant contribution to the modern feminist discourse (Booker Prizes 2025). The Bandaya movement that developed in the 1970s within the Kannada literature challenged the hierarchies of classes, caste and gender and gave a voice to writers such as Mustaq to develop resistance (Nagaraj, 1993). The work of Mustaq focuses on Muslim women, which has hardly been represented in the mainstream Indian literature and criticises the intersections of patriarchy, religion and class heavily embedded in the Bandaya movement that aimed to give voice to the marginalised in Kannada literature (Mustaq 2025). She focuses on such issues as the complexity of classes, patriarchy, and insufficient knowledge of religious dogmas in her stories, in particular of Muslim women in South India. She was naked, revealing the ad hoc violence and institutional injustices that destroy the human soul. Mushtaq's raw honesty is an attribute of her prose instead of sensationalism, and it helps her readers to get into the world of her characters, who in most instances are subjected to painful realities. She brings the mundane domestic spaces as the significant sites in which the gendered hierarchies are constituted, in which they are normalised, and sometimes unsettled.

Heart Lamp does not display patriarchy in the strict sense of male dominance; it is practised covertly, by infiltrating families, by social surveillance and internalised idealism that governs the bodies, speech, movement and aspirations of women. Some of the structures that construct female identity include marriage, motherhood, obedience and modesty. However, the women of Mushtaq are not made mute. The narratives are presented in an elaborate negotiation in the repressive systems using irony, interior reflection, controlled discourse, and acts of silent resistance. The emotional and ideological center of the text is a struggle between conformity and opposition.

In this paper, it is examined that *Heart Lamp* is a declaration of gendered experience within a patriarchal social structure, and the text defies dichotomous patterns of thought between victims and oppressors. Putting the work in the framework of feminist and intersectional theories, the paper argues that the narratives of Mushtaq expose the established system of patriarchy and, simultaneously, reveal the existence of the invisible female agency. This paper seeks to demonstrate through a critical analysis of the text how the collection redefines resistance as not dramatic defiance but as survival, self-understanding and daily assertion in restrictive structures. Some of the most interesting stories are discussed in this case individually.

8. (a) "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal"

In the story, Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal, marriage is shown as a place of silent anticipation and routine submissiveness as opposed to a place of active violence. The narrator notes with dimmed clarity that regardless of the religion that a person subscribes to, it is agreeable that the wife is the most obedient servant of the husband, his attached labourer (Mushtaq 8). The power of the statement is the calmness. It does not come out in outcry; it introduces subordination as normalised. Patriarchy in this case is not extraordinary- it is ordinary.

Shaista's fatigue is both physical and emotional, but she cannot voice her wish to cease giving birth, and this is reproductive labour that becomes an implicit rule and is not recognised in the marital system, and the silence of the husband works as an acceptance of the system. Moreover, Asifa is rejected in her education, saying that a high school certificate suffices, we can marry her off next year (Mushtaq 10). The informal style demonstrates the diminishing role of the female aspiration to a level of marriage preparation. The language is undermining pragmatics as though the future of a daughter was an item to be booked.

Even words are loaded with ideology. The narrator struggles to apply the word *pati* (husband) in the culturally sacred meaning, and he does not want to apply the prefix *devaru* to the word *pati:* "When applying the word *pati* (husband), one has a desire to say *devaru* before it: I am not ready to give Mujahid such divine "(Mushtaq 8). It is a minute yet an important moment. The resistance is linguistic and then social. The narrator destabilises the hierarchy

that is inherent in the language of reverence by challenging it.

The irony is increased by the metaphor of the Shaista Mahal. Following the majesty of such a monument as the Taj Mahal, the promise implies romantic permanence. But all that remains are stone slabs, hard, heavy, and bare (Mushtaq 22). The picture destroys the space between poetic ideal and home reality. Love is proclaimed; labour is suffered. By being so reserved in the narration, Mushtaq redefines patriarchy as something that seeps into daily life. Nevertheless, women are not made passive by the story. Critical consciousness comes out in the reflective consciousness of the narrator, her skill in explaining the imbalance. The opposition here is no rebellion, but recognition.

Marital subordination as portrayed in the story can be explained in better terms through the concept of patriarchy by Sylvia Walby, which makes it a system of social structures and practices that operate at both the private and the public spheres. Here, the house will be one of the central places where patriarchal relations are reproduced, not by blunt force, but by consent, which is culturally constructed. The inability of Shaista to express the refusal can be referred to as what can be referred to as structured silence, in which systemic forces force the person not to act, but not through personal indifference.

Also, there is the feminist commentary of the romantic ideal, in particular, those suggested by Simone de Beauvoir, who emphasises how marriage can mask the economic and emotional inferiority of women under the banner of idealised love. By doing so, the story of Mushtaq shows how the expectations of romance and the reality women have to deal with differ.

Therefore, in the story Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal, gender and patriarchy have an influence on narrative structure and morality. The lives of women are put into perspective as being confined by social norms that glorify obedience, motherhood and servitude. The title stone slabs create the impression of a solid, unromantic reality that is not in any way like the palace, as the poet could have thought. However, the articulate way these norms are pronounced by the narrator also demonstrates another important location of resistance, an emergent critical consciousness that Mushtaq develops as the story goes on in Heart Lamp.

8. (b) "Fire Rain"

Although in Stone Slabs to Shaista Mahal, marriage is shown as institutionalised obedience, in Fire Rain, patriarchy is even further explored by preempting its psychological and emotional aspects. In this case, domination is based not on spectacle but on tone, gesture, and normalisation of male authority by silence. The home space is presented by the image of weariness instead of peace. Arifa, who takes care of her ill son and does household chores, is characterised in a language that shows exhaustion and not nurturing fulfilment. Arifa was around the house doing her chores, attending to her ill son. Jameela and her husband. (Mushtaq 27) which is a sign of suffering, not cruelty. The metaphor displays the fact that the labour of motherhood is pushed to its extremes, but it is unrecognised. Emotional care is supposed to be natural and immeasurable.

The role of Usman Saheb as mutawalli, or a custodian of the mosque, creates a contrasting image of religiosity in the open and personal behaviour in the closed space. Even though the position he occupies is associated with spiritual responsibility, his family life is typified by impatience and resentment. This is even exacerbated by his sister Jameela, who asserts her inheritance. Islamic jurisprudence accepts that a daughter is entitled to property by law, but Usman is not just and defends himself. It is highly ironic that he mourns that Islam is being ruined (Mushtaq 32). The thing that is being threatened is not faith, but patriarchal privilege in the form of moralising.

The metaphorical title, Fire Rain, is the summary of this inversion. The rain is customarily seen as a relief and a new birth; here, it is burning. The home, which has been traditionally regarded as a refuge, proves to be a location of emotional flaring. The oppression of women in the story does not always manifest itself through physical mistreatment and blatant inhumanity, but the pain becomes normal and unnoticeable. Arifa's silence should not be mistaken for passivity. The manifestation of the conflicts between religious ideals and actual injustice is her inner consciousness, which she rarely makes vocal. The first-person narration allows the reader to observe what the characters themselves may fail to comment on clearly: that the power of patriarchy can be hidden in the guise of piety and is unwilling to accept responsibility. It is noteworthy that the ideological cycle of gender is also alluded to in the story. It is also the females in the society who preach patience and perseverance, and this further reinforces the idea of suffering being righteous. But Mushtaq upsets this cycle by prefiguring consciousness. Such prosaic emotional stress is narrated and makes it a critique. The conflict of ideals of religion and the reality of domesticity in the story can be clearly analysed in terms of the perspective of religion as a discursive tradition by Talal Asad, as

affected by the historical and social circumstances. The fact that Usman Saheb used Islam to justify why his sister did not deserve an inheritance proves that religious teachings can be used selectively to justify patriarchal powers. The dilemma, then, is not between religion and modernity but a struggle between morality and social practices in their daily lives. The emotional work of Arifa can also be interpreted in terms of the theory of Arlie Hochschild, who describes emotional work as the regulation of emotions to preserve social bonds. The labour of acts of care is not recognised in the Fire Rain and is assumed to be the natural role of women, and so their exhaustion remains hidden in the moral and social framework of the household.

In this way, patriarchy in Fire Rain is depicted as an everyday regulation and not dramatic coercion. Power is institutionalised in custom, in words, in the contests of inheritance, in the morality of obedience. But, in revealing the contrast between religious principle and household practice, Mushtaq disrupts the necessity of that authority. Resistance does not come as confrontation but as recognition, as an unobtrusive but decisive change of perception.

8. (c) The Arabic Teacher and Gobi Manchurian.

On the very first read, The Arabic Teacher and Gobi Manchurian sound almost comic. However, the gendered expectation behind the humour is echoed in the story; the premise, a religious teacher concerned with a specific snack, has a superficial absurdity associated with it. Banu Mushtaq uses irony and narrative restraint to reveal the extent to which patriarchal entitlement pervades even the most minor features of domestic life. The narrator, a lawyer and a mother, employs an Arabic teacher, the authority of whom is not only pedagogical but also moral; he has institutional legitimacy to teach her daughters religious language. Nevertheless, this power is slowly unbalanced when it is revealed that he is not only interested in teaching. His obsession with trying to have a wife who can cook him Gobi Manchuri to his liking makes marriage about cooking. What seems to be funny at first turns out to be eye-opening in the fact that domestic competence is being considered as a moral qualification to womanhood.

The climax comes at the moment when the narrator finds out that the teacher has been using her name to increase his marital potential. It is a little gesture that has an ethical connotation. It is a manifestation of how the social credibility of women can be used to bolster a male position. Worse still, it becomes known that later on the teacher physically abuses his wife when she is unable to satisfy his culinary expectations (Mushtaq 197). The lack of balance between demand and punishment reveals the vulnerability of masculine power. The food is an excuse in this situation, and the cause is patriarchal control. The contradiction of the story lies in the fact that the religiosity of the people was contrary to their actions. The teacher, who is supposed to pass on the sacred language, does not live up to his moral ideals. By this paradox, Mushtaq attacks the instrumentalisation of religion as a way of strengthening domestic order. Here, piety does not weaken entitlement; it only legitimises it.

Gobi Manchuri is symbolically more than a dish. It is simply a statement of how simple pleasures and minor preferences can be transformed into instruments of judgment. When the sufficiency of women is compared to these arbitrary standards, then the domestic space is a place of surveillance, not friendship. The comedy of the story makes the critique even more intense instead of making it soft. Mushtaq presents the absurdity of the patriarchal demands by putting them into exaggerated miniature. The fact that the narrator is a professional in the field of law also adds to the complexity of the dynamic. She is economically and intellectually independent, but still operates in a cultural space in which gendered assumptions are still present. The fact that she steps in when the abuse on the side of the teacher is revealed is an ethical opposition to the institutional apathy. However, even this intervention is not seen as heroic rebellion but as responsible action.

The domestic expectations being downplayed in the story also reflect the comment of bell hooks that in intimate relationships, patriarchal control is often normalised in a way that it does not involve coercion, but instead fulfils daily needs. The fact that the teacher is concerned with perfect cooking shows that such small expectations are actually fine regulative and judgmental tools. Further, the ironic conflict of religious authority and moral behaviour in the story can be explained in terms of the irony of Saba Mahmood about the liberal concept of agency, emphasising how power is practised in terms of embodied devotion. The story of Mushtaq also makes this dynamic more complex by demonstrating that pious deeds can be extended to justify domestic domination as opposed to ethical responsibility.

Patriarchy is affected in this story via trivialisation. The violence is not high-profile; it is rationalised by petty domestic complaints. A form of authority is maintained by repetition - by anticipation, by right, by the fusion of religious virtue and female

obedience. Nevertheless, in contrasting humour to moral exposure, Mushtaq demonstrates the instability of that authority. The utter ridiculousness of the teacher's demand of the teacher disrupts the validity of the structure that he is trying to maintain. Therefore, the Arabic Teacher and Gobi Manchuri prove that patriarchy does not stop at obvious domination and penetrates the institutional and communal levels. However, it also implies that awareness, in particular, expressed through irony, creates gaps in the system. What seems comic eventually turns out to be diagnostic, revealing the feeble structure on which domestic power is built.

8. (d) "Red Lungi"

In 'Red Lungi', Banu Mushtaq intricately weaves together themes of gender, ritual, and class within the domestic sphere. The narrative begins with Razia's maternal exhaustion as she juggles eighteen children, leading her to a drastic solution: orchestrating a mass circumcision, or khatna, as a misguided attempt to restore order through forced rehabilitation. This reflects the heavier burden placed on women by patriarchal systems that offer little support. The story symbolises male strength and dominance, asserting a claim to space and voice, yet its symbolism is complicated by Razia's role in the ritual, highlighting the role of female labour in maintaining patriarchal structures. Class disparities deepen the narrative; while Razia ensures her sons have customised lungis, poorer boys receive plain ones. A surprising twist occurs when a poorer boy recovers before Razia's son, challenging notions of security and dominance.

Razia's reflection, "Khar ku Khuda ka yaar, gareeb ku parvardigaar," (Mushtaq 87). underscores the societal favouritism towards the rich while suggesting that divine grace is more equitably distributed, thus complicating the relationship between material wealth and perseverance. The circumcision ritual, while religious, perpetuates gender and class stratification, with the logistical burden resting on women. Mushtaq's work aligns with Louis Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses, portraying cultural practices that reproduce dominant ideologies. Razia's involvement in the ritual reflects both complicity and limited agency, as she navigates a landscape where patriarchy is upheld through social rituals and class performances. Rather than presenting Razia as purely a villain or a martyr, the story reveals her internal struggle against relentless domestic pressures. In essence, 'Red Lungi' explores how patriarchal power is not just enforced through aggression but is reinforced through ritual and performance, indicating that what is performed can also be reimagined (Grammarly).

8. (e) "Be a Woman Once, Oh Lord!"

Be a Woman Once, Oh Lord! is the final story of Heart Lamp, which has transformed social realism into an unquestionable theological face-off. In this case, Banu Mushtaq does not use the traditional narrative distance but speaks in the form of a plea to the deity. The impact is impressive: the inner pain is turned into a metaphysical argument. The narrator is not quietly resigning but is speaking wearily with clarity. Her appeal— "Be a woman once, Oh Lord!" This is not blasphemous, sentimental, but epistemological (Mushtaq 208). The demand proposes that authority without embodied experience is not complete. The narrator reveals the chasm between the abstraction of doctrine and material reality by calling upon God to fill the existence of women.

The liability of reproductive labour is a key issue in the story. Motherhood, traditionally defined as holy fulfilment, is presented as a forced perseverance. Patriarchy achieves its legitimacy in theology: the narrator is so tired of it that he wanted my body, the power to. unaware of. (Mushtaq 201). This correlation of faith and gendered pain is questioned in the story. The criticism is enhanced by the metaphor of the novice potter (Mushtaq 208). Even the creation is doubted, not with unfaithfulness but with disillusionment. In case the world is constructed without the awareness of the embodied vulnerability of women, the design is ethically incorrect. The inference is bold, even in the fact that it has been framed as a prayer in which devotion is rebellion.

Contrary to other previous tales in the collection, where opposition is expressed through irony or inner cogitation, this story is a statement of protest. The tone, however, is not inflammatory, even here. The narrator does not deny faith but requires compassion in faith. The divine incarnation as a woman is the call to redefine justice as experiential justice and not hierarchical. The domestic world is still the centre. The choice of birth control, choice of the body and choice of marriage is demonstrated to be in the hands of the male; "Arey, this is all very well, he is a man, not one, he can have four wives, what can you demand? others…their moustaches (Mushtaq 207). Hurting is naturalised as a female responsibility, and suffering as virtue is praised as a heroic action. Nevertheless, through uttering what is normally enclosed in silence, the narrator restores interpretive authority in which speech is a restoration.

Notably, there is no resolution in the story. It does not involve any structural change, nor direct emancipation. Rather, the very process of articulation is resistance. Turning personal suffering into theological speech, Mushtaq shifts the gender justice battle from the periphery of family life to the core of the spiritual speech. The emphasis on theological inquiry in the story is also similar to the feminist reaction to religious interpretation, particularly the appeal by Amina Wadud to interpret Islamic texts in a gender-just way. The appeal that the narrator makes is not a challenge to faith itself, but to patriarchal interpretations of faith, the lack of alignment between divine justice and social practice. Moreover, the embodied suffering is seen as an indication of the observation of Elaine Scarry that pain is hard to articulate, yet demands articulation. In making personal suffering into an actual narration, Mushtaq enables suffering to be articulated, and silence turns into a way of criticism. Therefore, the philosophical conclusion of Heart Lamp is Be a Woman Once, Oh Lord! It takes the exploration of everyday patriarchy that the collection has been doing to the place of the sacred authority and challenges the narratives that reinforce it, as well as social practice. Whereas previous narratives show the functioning of patriarchy by habit and custom, this last work is a challenge to its metaphysical principles. The call to once be a woman finally demands that both faith and social structure should be founded on empathy, not dominance. Irrational interpretation, particularly the appeal by Amina Wadud to interpret Islamic texts in a gender-just way, does not appeal to a rational mind. The appeal that the narrator makes is not a challenge to faith itself, but to patriarchal interpretations of faith, the lack of alignment between divine justice and social practice.

8. (f) "Soft Whispers"

The novel directed light to the system, revealing how gender differences are internalised since childhood into adulthood, and how patriarchy tends to combine with religious organisations to put men into visual power and leave women as peripheral. The tone of the story is rather quiet, which is reflected in the dull situations of women. The symbolism of the so-called whisper is perceived as a manifestation of the loss of female subjectivity, which is both a repression and a silenced expression.

The novel is a reflective, nostalgic narrative by the narrator Safiya, which starts with an early-night call by her mother telling her that a religious caretaker, Abid, has arrived and that one of our family members is to attend the upcoming Urs festival: You must be there, my daughter: At least you have to be there (Mushtaq 132). This startling revelation causes her to recall her childhood in her village Malenahalli, she remembers that she saw Abid and that she remembers the incident of his meeting: let me go, let me go but he took me to the shore and as everybody watched, he kissed me on my cheek, dropped me on a rock and vanished into the water as he had come (Mushtaq 146) which is a moment of innocence It is a seemingly minor incident but it carries with it a heavy patriarchal authority that Safia is much ashamed about, and this propels her to silence, and Abid is more liberated to a bit more liberty of making advances as a male domination.

This experience recurs to her, and she recalls how, in current adult Abid approaches himself with grave religious solemnity "Mujawar Saheb the son of. Now he is mujawar to the shrine" (Mushtaq 132). This demonstrates to us that in our day-to-day life, religion has been turned into a male-dominated area, spiritual legitimacy is ascribed to the male body, and women are spectators, not rulers. Sharing this thought, she stresses the idea of whether the naughtiness of his boyhood was still inside him or not (Mushtaq 149). The image of internalised gender norms in the story can be understood by the theory of gendered socialisation developed by Nancy Chodorow, which emphasises the transmission of emotional and behavioural patterns across generations through families. The events of Safiya's childhood show that the process of patriarchal conditioning is laid down early and affects her feelings, memories, and self-perception. In addition, the metaphor of the whisper echoes the idea of the subaltern voice, as described by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, or the voice that cannot be heard or is often muted by mainstream discourses. The silence in the story by Mushtaq is not the absence of something but rather a strong space that is occupied by the repressed expression.

This paper reviews how patriarchy and gendered domesticity are represented in the story, and states that the home in the story is re-imagined as a place of protection, but as a controlled area of ideological indoctrination. The paper discusses the functioning of silence, emotional labour and affective compliance as a mechanism of internalised subordination through close textual reading. Also, the chapter shows how the authority of patriarchs is maintained by the moral surveillance and culture-approved norms of obedience. This study adds to current feminist writing on intersectional domesticity of South Asian Muslim identities and the binary

concept of victimhood and agency, and repositions the story of Mushtaq as a critical tool in the discussion of gendered subject formation and narrative resistance.

9. Conclusion

The Heart Lamp by Banu Mushtaq provides an in-depth and informative analysis of how patriarchal society works in reality. The gendered power has been exposed through the stories of Stone Slabs to Shaista Mahal, Red Lungi as normal and structured life, expressed through marital expectations, reproductive duty, and home labour, rather than being eventual acts of violence. The collection brings out the patriarchy, which is internalised and normalised in social relations. This argument can be repeated by Michel Foucault, who views power as diffused in daily life, and also draws on the notion of intersectionality introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, demonstrating how gender experiences are shaped by the intersection of several factors, such as religion and class. The domestic sphere becomes an important place in which support and opposition mutually exist subliminally. Mushtaq is more concerned with women's agency, inward voices and reflective indecisiveness of women rather than portraying them as passive, which is also reminiscent of performativity articulated by Judith Butler, where resistance is created by consciousness and moral action and not by disruption. Heart Lamp transfers feminist criticism not out of abstraction but embodiment by redirecting its focus on patriarchy to the intimate and domestic rather than the public. The collection is more specific than stereotypical and more about negotiation than victimhood, so literature is one of the areas where personal misery is transformed into reflective comment. Overall, the piece of work by Mushtaq documents the facts and prefigures the new possibilities of agency in it.

Works Cited

1. Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. Yale University Press, 1992.
2. Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, Monthly Review Press, 1971, pp. 127–186.
3. Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
4. Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated by H. M. Parshley, Vintage Books, 1949.
5. Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice, Cambridge University Press, 1977.
6. Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1947.
7. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
8. Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. University of California Press, 1978.
9. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1989, no. 1, 1989, pp. 139–167.
10. Felski, Rita. *Uses of Literature*. Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
11. Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books, 1978.
12. Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum, 1975.
13. hooks, bell. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. South End Press, 2000.
14. Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*. University of California Press, 1983.
15. Kandiyoti, Deniz. "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender & Society*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1988, pp. 274–290.
16. Kumar, Alok, et al. "Heart Lamp: An Assessment of Banu Mushtaq's Representation of the Crude Reality of the Muslim Community of Southern India." *Rock Pebbles*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2025, pp. 163–169.
17. Lefebvre, Henri. *Critique of Everyday Life*. Vol. 1, translated by John Moore, Verso, 1991.
18. Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press, 2005.
19. Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminist Review*, no. 30, 1988, pp. 61–88.
20. Mushtaq, Banu. *Heart Lamp: Selected Stories*. Translated by Deepa Bhasthi, Penguin Books, 2025.
21. Nagaraj, D. R. *The Flaming Feet and Other Essays: The Dalit Movement in India*. Permanent Black, 1993.
22. Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford University Press, 1985.

23. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.
24. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “The Politics of Translation.” *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, 1993, pp. 179–200.
25. "Text of prompt" prompt. *Grammarly*, Version, Grammarly, Date:5/4/2026, grammarly.com.
26. Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge, 1995.
27. Wadud, Amina. *Qur’an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
28. Walby, Sylvia. *Theorising Patriarchy*. Basil Blackwell, 1990.