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**Unveiling Patriarchal Constructs: Exploring Saudi  
Women's Traditional Gender Roles and Gender  
Inequality Through Raja'a Alem's  
*The Dove's Necklace*(\*)**

**Rehab Moqbil**

Ph. D. Scholar, School of Literary Studies

Comparative Literature Department

The English and Foreign Languages University

Hyderabad, India

[rehabhassanphdcli22@efluniversity.ac.in](mailto:rehabhassanphdcli22@efluniversity.ac.in)

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**Abstract**

This study delves into a network of patriarchal societies within the Arab-Muslim world, particularly focusing on the construction of women's roles from a patriarchal perspective. It investigates how women's traditional gender roles are socially and culturally constructed and moulded at the hands of a male-dominated culture and societal norms through a deep exploration of Raja'a Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* novel and its connection to Saudi women. Both descriptive and analytical approaches to content analysis are employed to unravel the layers of women's traditional gender roles within a patriarchal framework through the feminism lens. The findings reveal a mould where women are directed toward fulfilling socially and culturally attributed roles, perpetuating a cycle of male dominance in shaping their societal identities. Furthermore, the study is a critique of societal norms and attitudes towards women, shedding light on the established inequalities and injustices they face. It underscores that women have long been in an inferior position that has been culturally rather than biologically constructed by a patriarchal system.

**Keywords:** Saudi Women, Feminism, Gender, Patriarchy, Gender Roles.

## Introduction:

In the realms of feminist literature, particularly within the realm of gender studies in literature, lies a profound focus on exploring how individuals define themselves and how they are perceived by those around them. According to Lomardo and Meire, (2016), gender in literature is closely intertwining with women's activism against the shackles of gender oppression; studies on equality; and reviews on how people treat women (Alghamdi 3). That in a patriarchal setting, a social and cultural border is established, prohibiting women from violating masculine domains. The masculine ego perpetually constricts the female sphere by displacing the marginalised other (woman) into a constructed male-dominated domain (Al-Shamea 12). Therefore, the masculinity and femininity are not inherent traits but rather societal constructs, moulded by cultural and societal norms (Altwaiji 2, Tyson 86).

Hence, the traditional gender roles assigned to women and their long-held inferior position in patriarchal societies stem from social and cultural-constructed systems rather than from biological determinism.

In patriarchal societies, women's roles are exclusively constructed according to patriarchal systems. The patriarchal ideology, which privileges men in all spheres of life, is deeply intertwined with this construction (Asri & Hayati 43). Within these patriarchal systems women often internalise the roles, norms and values, perpetuating the social and cultural patriarchy that privilege men through promoting traditional gender norms (Tyson 86).

Traditional gender roles perpetuate the image of men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive, while women are depicted as emotional, weak, nurturing, and submissive (Altwaiji). One of the indigenous traditions, seclusion, further reinforces these gendered stereotypes. According to Wiyatmi, seclusion is a tradition that is found in certain communities where young girls are confined to small rooms in their family homes until they are married off (Asri & Hayati 44).

## The Research Gap:

Although considerable research has been conducted on gender roles and patriarchy in Arab-Muslim communities, only a few studies have specifically analysed the formation of Saudi women's identities in

contemporary Arabic literature from a feminist perspective. Specifically, there is limited critical analysis of Raja'a Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* in the context of the construction of women's roles within Saudi culture. This study addresses the gap by providing an intensive feminist analysis of the novel to reveal how patriarchal systems shape and constrain women's roles and identities in Saudi Arabia.

### Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to delve into the construction and reinforcement of the traditional gender roles for women in patriarchal Arab-Muslim societies, utilising *The Dove's Necklace* as a case study. Further, it aims to investigate how these roles affect Saudi women's identities and experiences, and to critically analyse these patterns through a feminist lens.

### Significance of the Study:

This study is important because it offers insights into how patriarchal norms and cultural expectations impact women's positions in Arab-Muslim communities, with reference to Saudi Arabia. Examining *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem helps one to better grasp the cultural and social factors preserving gender inequality as well as the difficulties Saudi women experience. It also supports feminist debates by exposing how these roles are not inherent, but created to maintain women in an inferior position in society.

### Literature Review:

Many studies have examined the roles that are constructed for women in different patriarchal societies. Hence, the purpose of this review is to recognise areas of prior scholarship and situate the study in the context of the existing literature. Showing prior scholarship will benefit the researcher in contributing new knowledge. Here, the researcher elucidates the perspectives of academics who have engaged with and interpreted the works conducted through studying the selected novel, *The Dove's Necklace*, or applying the selected theory to a certain work within the framework of gender studies.

In her (2018) article "Counting Prevailing Discourses with Literary Creativity - Contemporary Saudi Women Novelists' Drives for Change", Roswitha Badry emphasises Alem's unique style, marked by postmodern explorations of language and structure that are influenced by many oral

traditions, mythologies, and classical Arabic literature. The researcher emphasises that, although Alem's work is esteemed for its complexity, it also encounters criticism for its inaccessibility. Badry examines the fiction of contemporary Saudi women authors from the (2000s), including *The Dove's Necklace*, highlighting how these narratives address taboo subjects and contest prevailing gender discourses perpetuated by the religious-political establishment, while also countering Western distorted and stereotypical representations of 'Arab women'.

In her 2018 article "A Gynocritic - Intersectional Reading of Raja Alem's *The Dove's Necklace*" Najla Aldeeb examines the intersection of gynocriticism and intersectionality in the analysis of modern Arabian women's narratives. In her analysis of Raja Alem's story, she explores how characters endure multifaceted discrimination rooted in gender, class, ethnicity, and religion. Aldeeb's research demonstrates that these overlapping identities significantly influence the characters' experiences of marginalisation, providing a nuanced understanding of women's difficulties in Saudi Arabian literature.

In the (2020) article "Cultural Patterns Related to Women in *The Dove's Necklace*," Abeer Alghamdi analyses Alem's novel, which questions the ingrained cultural norms that dictate women's lives in Saudi Arabia. The study uses analytical and descriptive approaches to frame the novel as a feminist discourse, examining themes of shame, patriarchal authority, and violence that influence female experiences. The author examines women's quests for identity and bodily autonomy through characters such as Aisha and Azza, challenging gender stereotypes and advocating empowerment. The study reveals the historical and cultural forces that objectify women's bodies; and concludes that Alem's work not only critiques these oppressive patterns but also celebrates the resilience of women seeking to assert their voices and redefine their societal roles.

The (2019) article "Construction of Women's Roles in Patriarchal Culture: Feminist Study towards Modern Indonesian Novels," by Yasnur Asri and Yenni Hayati, focuses on how women's roles are reflected in Indonesian literature through a feminist lens utilising Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy. By examining the novels *Sitti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli, *Azab*

*dan Senggsara* by Merari Siregar, *Kehilangan Mestika* by Hamidah, and *Manusia Bebas* by Suwarsih Djojopuspito, the study demonstrates how women are portrayed primarily as carrying out domestic responsibilities as mothers, wives, and children. Women are also portrayed as having a particular role in the public sphere, especially in the fields of social organisations and education. Yet in the end, these constructed roles support patriarchal ideologies and work to the advantage of men.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

Many communities in the Arab world have their deeply ingrained traditional gender roles that marginalise women, that one of them is Saudi Arabia. Saudi women find themselves marginalised due to several reasons. The main reason is that these societal norms stem from patriarch structures and result in the social marginalisation of women solely because of their gender (Alhazza 82). Women in such traditional settings often lack open minds and freedom to challenge societal norms and the dominance of men (Alghamdi 3). In Saudi society debates revolving around patriarchal structures and gender inequality are incessant issues, particularly regarding the status of women. In this society, women are segregated and denied even to participate in decision-making processes. Also, they suffer from the arbitrary divorce that husbands can dissolve marriages without explanation by simply registering a statement with the court (Aldeeb 137).

Accordingly, Raja'a Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* reveals a refreshing departure from the norm and the author's ability to broach taboo subjects like gender and sexuality through her unexpected language about Saudi women. Through a conducted study to this novel, intricate observations of gender dynamics and the grip of patriarchal roles come to light, providing valuable insights into the realities faced by women, gender discrimination, and the pervasive influence of traditional gender roles associated with women in their society. Hence, this paper's focal concern revolves around the socially and culturally constructed traditional gender roles of women and their subordinate status within the narratives of *The Dove's Necklace*. To illuminate these issues, the researcher draws upon various theoretical frameworks, including Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, liberal feminism, and the construction of gender roles.

In her *Theorising Patriarchy*, Walby, (1989), characterises patriarchy as "a system of social structures, and practices in which man dominate, oppress, and exploit woman.... The use of the term social structure implies the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one (Walby 214). To Walby's theory, patriarchy is composed of six key structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions, such as religion, the media, and education (ibid 214). All of these structures work in tandem to perpetuate the deep-seated subjugation and subordination of women (Pilcher & Whelehan 95).

Furthermore, the researcher draws on the principles of liberal feminism when dissecting patriarchal ideology within this study. Liberal feminists identify gender inequality as deeply entrenched in the structure of the gendered social order (Altwaiji 2011). Their aim is to achieve a state of gender equilibrium, where in women and men hold equal positions of power, prestige, and economic resources throughout society. This perception of reforming the gendered social order would thus eliminate disparities between genders (Lorber 10). Liberal feminism, which is a subset of gender reform feminism, accepts the existing gender hierarchy and strives to dismantle the gendered social order of discriminatory practices against women. Through their adopted policies aimed at empowering women in various spheres such as the workplace, positions of authority, and education, liberal feminists seek to minimise disparities and foster a more egalitarian society (Asri & Hayati 44). This argument aligns with Tong's assertion that liberal feminism's overarching aim is to create a society based on fairness and the preservation of freedom.

In the realm of constructing women's roles, liberal feminism advocates for women's thorough preparation to match men's capabilities by taking various profitable opportunities such as education, recognising women's inherent rationality and capacity for critical thinking akin to men. Liberal feminism wants women's liberation from oppression, patriarchy, and gender-based constraints, striving for equality in all spheres of life - both domestic and public. However, women are always relegated to an inferior status by the societal patriarchal constructs of society, limiting their roles primarily to the domestic sphere through fulfilling their traditional roles (Lorber 10).

**Method:**

The researcher delves into Raja'a Alem's *The Dove's Necklace*, using both descriptive and analytical approaches to content analysis along with the available secondary sources of the prior scholarship mentioned above to investigate how women's traditional gender roles are depicted. Through analyzing character dialogues, inner thoughts, and actions, the study uncovers societal and cultural frameworks shaping these roles. Drawing from theoretical perspectives like Walby's concept of patriarchy and liberal feminism, the researcher dissects these issues, offering insightful interpretations of these issues in detail.

**The Dove's Necklace:**

Raja'a Alem, a feminist writer hailing from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, holds the esteemed distinction of being the first woman to clinch the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. Raja'a Alem is renowned as one of the foremost influential figures in contemporary Arabic literature. Her novel *The Dove's Necklace*, was awarded the Arabic Booker Prize in 2011. Notable among her literary range, there are works such as *Sayyidi Wahadanâ* (My Master Wahdana), *Sitr* (Concealment), *Hubba* (Princess Hubba), and *Tarîq al Harîr* (The Silk Road). Additionally, Alem collaborated with Tom McDonough to pen two captivating English-language novels, namely *Fatima* and *My Thousand and One Nights*.

*The Dove's Necklace*, comprising (568) pages, begins with the unsettling discovery of a deceased woman in one of Mecca's alleys called Abu AL-Roos (Lane of Many-Heads). The profound silence surrounding the abandoned body hints at the collective societal feeling of shame with its exposed state. Under the shadows of the story of the dead women, Alem masterfully crafts the journey of her protagonist, Aisha. Aisha's entire family perishes in a tragic car accident, leaving her emotionally and physically shattered. Seeking medical aid, she is whisked to Germany, where she encounters a German doctor and falls in love with him, a love that defies geographical and cultural barriers.

Alem reveals a lot about the intricacies of the setting and the challenges it faces through the dual lenses of detective, Nasser's investigation and Aisha's life. Alem transcends the purely religious aspects of the setting delving into the darker realms of crime, extremism, and the exploitation of women

within this society. Through the main plot of Aisha's story and the sub plot involving the discovery of the naked body, the narrator peels away the layers of the setting, exposing its hidden faces. Some of these vivid scenes are shocking images of a world where women are exploited, marginalized and oppressed offering poignant commentary on societal dynamics and the quest for change.

### Analysis:

Throughout the novel, there is a consistent portrayal of the harsh reality of women's lack of freedom, highlighting how they are confined to predefined roles centred around chastity and adherence to traditional gender roles dictated by societal and cultural constructs. Gender norms dictate their behaviour from the inside and the outside. Adherence to these established gender norms labels women as "good girls" or "bad girls." The archetype of the isolated and marginalised woman drives women to conform unquestioningly. Even among women who embrace patriarchal societal norms, the idea of women's sexuality being valued only in marriage is becoming more popular. Marriage is sometimes the only way women can get out of the house and participate in society. Furthermore, men's violence becomes part of women's identities. The violence against women is considered as a tool of domination and control.

The opening scene depicting the discovery of a young woman's corpse in Lane of Many Heads (the street of Abu Al-Roos), underscores the society's perception of women within the patriarchal framework either as a "good girl" or as a "bad girl." Upon the discovery of this corpse, there was a collective refusal to acknowledge it due to the shame of her nakedness. This sentiment is echoed in the words of Al-Sheikh Muzahim, "May my daughter Azza never have a body like this, shameless even in death!" (Alem 13). Muzahim's words express his hope that his own daughter, Azza, would never suffer such indignity, even in death. His shameful remarks highlight the prevalent attitudes toward deceased women among the lane's inhabitants. To the lane's inhabitants, she is a "bad girl," presumed to have committed a shameful act prior to her death. The society deems her unworthy of recognition or even deserving, the dignity of being identified by a man's name. According to this society, any woman who exposes parts of her body becomes a disgrace to her family and her society:

"Everyone fell silent when it came time to record the victim's name on the official forms. "Unknown" (Alem 15).

Even women of the lane inside or outside houses show their raging and blow on the "corpse to keep disgrace from spreading to the other girls in the Lane of Many Heads"(Alem 16). All of them have kept counting "their daughters and washed their hands of the scandal of the body"(Alem 17).

The emails that Aisha has sent to her German boyfriend provide further evidence of the patriarchal hierarchy of a "good girl" in this society. women are entrapped in the situation of patriarchy and they submit unquestioningly to the norms of patriarchy. They are confined to the 'inside space' of domesticity and reproduction while men are privileged to be in the 'outside space' of production and freedom. Aisha highlights society's restrictive expectation for girls to remain confined to their homes until marriage that to those girls it is a man who deprives the girl of freedom in one hand, and a man also is her dream of freedom on the other hand. This is clear from the following quote:

"When a girl is washing, she will often pause for a moment, rooted to the spot, and stare into a golden mote, imagining a book, a man's far away hand, or that of an angel, or God even."(Alem 100).

This patriarchal order of 'inside space' imposed on young girls is harmful because it promotes submission and acceptance of domestic violence. Also, it fosters the notion that a girl should endure violence passively waiting patiently for a man to save her, and view marriage as the sole deserving reward for a good submissive girl. In this framework, the female character is portrayed as a good girl, implying that the only roles that remain for a woman who defies her patriarchal gender roles are those of a bad girl and a monstrous. For example, Umm Al-Sad embodies this dichotomy, being labeled a "bad woman" due to her unconventional success as a stockbroker. Her success surges even the anger of Lane of Many Heads, the narrator:

"This fills me ...with an overpowering desire to crush that lone female head sprouting up like a parasitic weed among my male heads"(Alem 85).

These concepts of a "good girl" and a "bad girl" highlight the pervasive influence of the patriarchal system, shaping not only the culture of Lane of Many Heads but also Saudi society at large. Numerous women's identities

have been erased as a result of society's patriarchal norms which dictate their presumed subordination. Women willingly absorb patriarchal norms to the degree that they perceive their demand for equal rights as an intolerable appropriation of masculine privileges.

In the 'outside space', women's role-playing opportunities are constrained by the patriarchal ideology that asserts such opportunities should be assigned to men. Women's participation in the public sphere is aimed at reinforcing a societal framework that has rendered the status of women as redundant. This is exemplified by Aisha's role as a teacher. In her emails to her German boyfriend, Aisha elucidates how her teaching profession is aligned with the patriarchal systems and objectives of her society, with a primary emphasis on preparing girls to become submissive housewives in the future:

"I was (as a teacher) just one of the neighborhood's many tentacles; one of a countless many who wage war against fate, stifling young girls.... But I also mastered the art of catharsis. I used to stand as still as an idol in the schoolyard in the mornings in front of the lines of students - two hundred lungs burning with life, arrayed before me like mummies - for a whole hour as the morning radio program was broadcast. They feigned interest in the antiquated parables and didactic poems in classical Arabic, and the stories that had failed to make anyone laugh since the beginning of the last century. Two hundred granite faces. Any hint of a smile, any meaningful glance, any simple string of beads, any colored hair ribbon or trace of nail polish, any attempt at self-expression at all was enough to get a girl dragged up to the stage where I stood. There I would slowly, carefully - and in front of two hundred pairs of horrified eyes - rip out and crush this self-expression before it could blossom."(Alem 156)

Here, Aisha is a teacher at a girls' school that is a single-sex school. In this society, while there may be educational provision for both boys and girls rather than being educated together in the same institutional location, they are instead deliberately segregated on the grounds of gender and are educated separately. Also, Aisha represents the stereotypical role that is structured by the patriarchal ideology in the public sphere. Aisha's job has been directed and achieved according to this patriarchal system of her society and its rules.

However, when the female character deviates from the norms and these stringent stereotypes and strives to be more individualistic, society condemns her because she takes on male characteristics as is notable from Umm Al-Sad, as explained earlier.

In this patriarchal society, women have long been confined to a subordinate position that is primarily shaped by cultural norms rather than biological factors. They are also obliged to embrace the role of marginalised and alienated women. Aisha shares many stories with her German boyfriend through emails, recounting the age-old tradition of female seclusion. She recounts how girls in the lane are forbidden from mingling with boys their age once they reach puberty. They are compelled to don the burqa early on by their society aiming at preserving their modesty and maintaining their seclusion, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

"The women were dressed in black abayas and white yashmaks, diaphanous veils that covered their mouths but left their eyes and foreheads bare for all to behold.... Women peeked enviously at the procession from behind screened windows and cracks in the wall."(Alem 261).

In her emails to her German boyfriend, Aisha provides glimpses into the life of a young girl who remains imprisoned in a basement by her father, who controls and forbids her from using any 'masculine' objects. Aisha shows how sad the girl feels and how she sees the world her father has confined her in:

"The world in which the young girl grew up wasn't merely devoid of masculine elements; they'd never existed in the first place. It was an indestructible, impenetrable world of unadulterated femininity."(Alem48)

This sentiment is echoed as she describes how being surrounded by male language despite not having a man to meet and communicate with. Additionally, her father's refusal to give her food on a masculine 'plate' and insistence on using a feminine 'plate' and his refusal to allow her to eat lamb limiting her only to female cow meat, underscore her father's authoritative patriarchy. These concepts of oppression, marginalisation, and isolation are similarly evident in the life of Aisha and the lives of the other girls residing in Lane of Many Heads. Aisha comments on this story of the imprisoned girl and her daring escape, remarking:

"An escape that we, the women of the Lane of Many Heads in the twentieth century, had failed to achieve. We were raised in similar subterranean worlds, and when the time came for us to be allowed out, our faces had to be effaced with black-an invisibility cloak that makes us non-existence-so the masculine world would not notice us. We've been trained so that we're blinded to masculinity, this castrated masculinity that's lost its ability to extend any kind of salvation to us as it did in the story of Harj ibn Marj."(Alem 48).

These narratives of seclusion are strongly echoed in the story of Umm Al-Sad, who finds herself imprisoned by her own brothers and unjustly deprived of her right in inheritance. Despite her nearly starving to death, she resourcefully conceals the family's gold jewelry within her cervical cavity. Eventually, She is thrown out into the street, almost dead "Finally, after she'd been locked up for years, they thought she'd died and tossed her out in the alley for the dogs to eat her. That's when Al-Ashi found her" (Alem132). However, she is revived at the hospital where medics are shocked at the treasures hidden in her vagina.

These mentioned stories illustrate how women are confined to traditional gender roles dictated by patriarchal order, leading to their alienation and marginalisation. Additionally, they highlight how societal neglect stems from the perception of women's sexuality, resulting in their silenced and objectified status. They are always confined and regulated by the patriarchal relations In this patriarchal framework, whatever their roles, women are treated as mere objects, to be used without consideration of their perspectives, emotions, or voices. This is evident in Aisha's account of her parents' relationship. Her parents' relationship represents the societal and cultural norms that dictate the kind of relationships and interactions between men and women. Aisha states that her father's love is embedded in how much money he gives, and her mother's love in which kinds of meals she cooks:

"Love could only be found in my father's pockets and my mother's pots and pans: if you wanted to know how much you were loved, you had to count how much money Dad spent and how many meals Mom cooked."(Alem53)

Moreover, in this society, men view women as objects whose sole value lies in their ability to marry. For example, when Khalil dismisses Ramzia by calling her nothing more than a toy to play with, it underscores the

pervasive objectification of women within this patriarchal society. Also, when Aza's father, Muzahim, marries a fifteen-year-old girl called Gamila. He takes her as a sexual device to obtain a male desire, only for satisfying his sexual needs. Furthermore, the marriage of Aisha to Ahmed demonstrates the social and cultural traditional gender role of the oppression of women in this society as it is stated in the quotation:

"..... he turned his back on me the second month after we got married, and threw those two words over his shoulder as he went: "You're divorced". (Alem236).

That Ahmed divorces her by simply registering a statement with the court after two months of marriage, offering no explanation. Then he comes after two years to reclaim her back as if she is an object.

Furthermore, the notion of marriage as the sole purpose for women is increasingly embraced, even by those women who conform to patriarchal traditional roles in this society, as it is clear through many events. For instance, Yusria, Khalil's sister, experiences sadness due to her unmarried status and getting old. Feeling isolated, she dedicates her life to caring for the aged and sick at Al-Hajj Silhidar's home. Yusria believes that marriage is the only societal role assigned to women, offering them the opportunity to venture beyond the confines of their domestic sphere, and nothing else:

"Khalil used to terrorize me by saying 'I can picture you as a silent bride in one of those cages for dead women!' and here I am a spinster. I never married and never even went out into the world, and I am waiting here in my cage for my funeral procession to set off. Death and I know each other pretty well after all this time". (Alem181).

Moreover, male-violence is reflected as a tool of domination and control. Women have come to accept it as a part of their identity and they do not resist. Detective Nasser's sister, Fatima, has been accused of having an affair with a man; and she is physically abused by her father even though without any evidence. His father only cares about his reputation as is clear from the quote below:

"Nasser had watched the astonished male eyes appearing, multiplying, and orbiting those two dark circles. His father scrambled past them, pulling off his white robe as he ran, and threw it over Fatima's naked body. As if

possessed, he wrapped her up and dragged her into the house. He shoved her through the door, and with the same movement tore his robe off of her and flung it aside in disgust. Fatima was getting to her feet when his father seized the first thing he could find, a coffee pot: whack. Nasser had never been able to shake the sight of the coffeepot spout piercing Fatima's forehead, the channel of blood that suddenly spurting out over her face and neck, his father's threatening finger: "Your sister died of an asthma attack". (Alem 20).

Nasser's father did not ask the girl's nakedness, but instead whacked her head with a coffee pot and attributed her death to asthma. Alem's novel portrays that even though Fatima's aunt decides revealing the truth to authorities, yet the family still feels disgraced after learning their neighbour undressed their daughter, not because a father murdered her (Alghamdi 12).

Consequently, the investigation of this study embodies and mirrors certain traditional gender roles imposed on women that are socially and culturally constructed within a conservative patriarchal society, particularly the society of Lane of Many Heads and extending to Saudi society in general.

### Conclusion:

In this study the researcher has delved into the portrayal of gender dynamics through investigating a contemporary Saudi novel, *The Dove's Necklace* by Raj'a Alem. In most of the Arab-Muslim societies the focus is only on considering the patriarch when constructing women's roles. In Saudi Arabia, the traditional gender roles assigned for women are constructed and shaped by social and cultural norms, as depicted in Raja'a Alem's *The Dove's Necklace*. These traditional gender roles are reflected through a feminist lens utilising Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy, drawing on her six interrelated structures of patriarchy and various theoretical frameworks to analyse them.

In this patriarchal society, women are directed to adhere to predefined traditional gender roles. They are instructed to unquestioningly embrace these gender roles in inside space and outside space. Women's worth is often measured based on their commitment to these traditional gender roles, categorising them as either a "good girl" or a "bad girl." Women are compelled to fulfill the archetype of the alienated and marginalised woman.

Furthermore, the notion of women's sexuality being perceived solely as objects and valued only within the context of marriage is becoming increasingly prevalent, even among those women who conform to their patriarchal traditional roles in this society. Also, marriage is depicted as the sole purpose to the existence of woman in this society, the only role that can enable her to go out and participate in the world beyond her domestic confines. Eventually, women are subjected to the male-violence and accepted it as part of their identity. The violence against women is considered as a tool of domination and control.

To conclude, this study has provided valuable insights that contribute to the broader discourse on gender inequality in Arab-Muslim societies, and the urgent need for cultural and societal transformation.

### Recommendations:

- Utilising feminist literary theory in Middle East literary studies, Researchers should continue applying feminist and postcolonial frameworks to interrogate gender constructions within Arabic literature, challenging Western-centric feminist narratives.
- Through examining other contemporary Saudi authors like Laila al-Juhani or Badryyia al-Bishr could provide a broader understanding of how Saudi women negotiate identities through fiction.
- Academics and activists can draw on literary insights to influence policy discussions about gender equality, education, and women's rights in the Arab world.

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