

**RE CONFIGURING “GENDER COMPLEMENTARITIES”
AND THE LANGUAGE OF FEMININE DEFIANCE
IN SHAMSUR REHMAN FARUQI’S *THE
MIRROR OF BEAUTY***

Zarmeena Khan*
Dr. Salma Khatoon†

Abstract

*“Gender integration” and “feminine desire” have often been opposed by different theorists. This research employs Judith Butler’s philosophy of gender performance to analyze the novel Shamsur Rehman Farooqi’s *The Mirror of Beauty*. This paper highlights the character of Wazir Khanum who is the protagonist of the novel and contends that Wazir Khanum appears as a character who has transcended the gender bipartite through her language of defiance. In the novel, the reader’s outdated concept of gender is defied. The novel portrays that the women of India, Muslims or Hindus, were not considered as a product; rather, it is the narrative of the West which is trying to fix a wrong depiction of the Indians, envisaging them to be everything the West is not. In the novel, the heroine, Wazir Khanam who challenges all these conservative tales and does so in a grand style is presented to the reader as a figure that challenges all conventional narratives and gender discourses through her language of defiance. The article is built around the theoretical framework of Judith Butler’s representation of women in a patriarchal world as subalterns. Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (2004) significantly states that women have traditionally been treated as subalterns as far as their political representation is concerned. Therefore, the most important goal of feminist theory has been to make such language changes that symbolize women, especially as far as their prominence in a dogmatic sphere is concerned. Taking this as a challenge Butler has given a detailed account of gender bipartite and ‘gender complementarities’.*

* Lecturer in English, UCP, Lahore

† Assistant Professor of English, GC University Lahore Corresponding Author
Email: salmakhatoon@gcu.edu.pk

Keyword: *Nineteenth century Indo-Muslim culture, Gender bipartite, Gender integrities, Indian Muslim woman, Feminine Desires.*

INTRODUCTION

For epochs, broad-spectrum history has been written by the captors and for the victors. It is often interlaced with the filaments of predisposition to defend the expatriate's purposes. The unfortunate reality is that the universal historiography either de historicizes the third world historical past or depicts it with negative stereotypes. Employing these labels, the Orient was once constructed as the 'other'- that is non-western. In this self-created narrative, Eastern men are described as regressive, indolent, brutal, immoral, avaricious and uncivilized, while women are categorized as inactive, unskilled, sex-monger, mysterious, dumb, and mediocre. Nevertheless, in the postmodern period, the Orient are trying to review the power structures by re-orienting the Western anathemas about the 'Third World' countries. A new narrative of defiance is coming into existence to obliterate such falsifications and categorization. They are writing their history to restore their worth which will redefine their individuality and modernize their past. Postmodernists encounter the solitary version of history, the so-called worldwide history, as well as the 'grand narratives, which propagate the view that whatever it says is a complete truth. Being a postmodern novelist, Shamsur Rehman Faruqi (2013) denies these fabricated truths about the Eastern part of the world. His work depicts that it is "Eurocentrism"- a notion in the sovereignty of Europe and the European culture- that has created binaries or a chain of command. While making history, the novelist engages with an avant-garde approach and interrogates the notion of totalitarianism. By reconnoitering the narratives of the periphery or the voiceless, he has reckoned out some historical details and persons who were expelled from the metanarratives of Indian

history and did not have any place in the official history. In this procedure, he brings back the deserted history, also known as the history of the subaltern groups.

In the novel, *The Mirror of Beauty*, the reader's outdated concept of gender is challenged and defied. The novel portrays that the women of India, whether Muslims or Hindus, were not a product; rather, it is the narrative of the West which manipulates to fix a wrong depiction of the Indians envisaging them to be everything the West is not. In the novel, the heroine, named Wazir Khanam who challenges all these conservative tales and does so in a grand style is presented to the reader as a figure that challenges all conventional narratives and gender discourses through her language of defiance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article employs qualitative and descriptive paradigms of research. This qualitative literary study aims at producing a new meaning in a text. It offers a close textual reading of the primary texts to explore and describe the concept of gender performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research employs Judith Butler's concept of gender performance to analyze the novel *The Mirror of Beauty*. The conformist explanation given by the society of feminine desires is that the final destination of a woman is to be anticipated or chosen by a man. The women are often perceived to be entities only chosen for domestic errands. Most women are projected as living beings who lack information and are useless for any intellectual and productive work, especially for historical purposes. Butler (2004) in the introduction to her book *Gender Trouble* is of the view that women have traditionally been imperceptible as far as their political depiction is concerned. Therefore, the ultimate and the foremost challenge for feminists is to create a language that will become a medium of representation in the political domains. This destination

of feminist theory is a rational reaction to a universal cultural condition in which women's lives are for the most part misrepresented or ignored completely. According to Butler, the link between the feminist theory and politics is intricate. She states that to give women a space in the political sphere, they should be first considered as a subject. Likewise, the depiction of a subject hinges on its legitimacy as a 'subject' for depiction. Therefore, it is vital to "refigure the ontological constructions of gender identity which appears to be compulsory to provide a representational politics that might revive feminism on other grounds." (Butler, 2004, p. xiii)

Butler (2004) states at the very beginning of *Gender Trouble* that as a substitute of 'performing gender' for a specific purpose, gender is always performed and is continuously monotonous, within a strict governing context that dictates how one's gender should perform and behave. She clearly shows that gender identity is constructed by the gender standards in society. De Beauvoir (2008) supports Butler's argument when she states: "one becomes a woman, rather than being born one" (p. 12). Habitually or by force women are rendered 'invisible' as far as their depiction is concerned. The connection between politics and feminist theory is very problematic and according to Butler, it's difficult to separate these two domains.

Butler (2004) echoes Foucault's perspective that "juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent" (p. 2). This according to Butler is the ultimate problem. The juridical system restricts the choices of life and thus such positions are easy to manipulate. Such limits in the end are shown to be for the betterment of the subject. These 'power structures' become the source of subjugation. Thus, the subject is the byproduct of the same system that she is trying to move out of. So, feminism is not what defines every other woman and it also does not mean that it can liberate every other female individual. Just as an occupied subject would disguise any means of 'freedom' created by the 'colonizer' as uncertain, any definition of feminism that arises as a result of a

patriarchal discourse is doubtful. Consequently, Butler (2004) claims, "...an uncritical appeal to such a system for the emancipation of "women" will be clearly self-defeating" (p. 3).

Butler (2004), thus, is of the view that the term 'gender' is challenging. The word gender is an amalgamation of civilization, class, race, and sexual placing. It will be an injustice to put all these terms under the umbrella term 'gender'. It is stated:

One is a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pre-gendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. (p. 5)

Joseph Bristow in his book *Sexuality* (1997), states that Butler reaches some inspiring assumptions about exactly why gender has been such a foundation of rational 'trouble'. She also discovers how 'gender trouble' can be beneficial in opening up different domains for a better understanding of the term 'gender'. All such change is observed when we observe the "performative state of gender" (p. 210). Additionally, this persuasive concept should be given careful consideration. A "restrictive binary logic has trapped critical understandings of sex and gender" (p. 215).

Linda Nicholson (1995) in the article "Interpreting Gender" clarifies that gender and sex arise from opposing sources as she associates it with a coat hanger to define this process. She suggests "that it's useful to think of there being two coat hangers: while the two coat-hangers remain constantly male and female, the clothes hang on the hangers" (p. 27). Likewise, R. Stoller (1968) in *Sex and Gender: on the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* states:

Sex and gender seem to common sense to be practically synonymous and in everyday life to be inextricably bound together ... the two realms (sex and gender) are not inevitably bound in anything like a one-to-one relationship, but each may go in its quite independent way. (p. xiii)

According to the example, if a woman takes certain decisions like a man, she can still preserve her femininity. The biological sex can differ with how we perform our gender, this notion is supported by Giddens in his book *Sociology*, he states:

... (we) use the term *sex* to refer to the anatomical and physiological differences that define male and female bodies. *Gender*, by contrast, concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females. Gender is.... not necessarily a direct product of an individual's biological sex. (p. 458)

Discussion

In Shamsur Rehman Farooqi's *The Mirror of Beauty*, Wazir Khanum is introduced as a charismatic character in the third half of the book. She is well aware of her erotic desires and how these desires can control a man. On the other hand, she knows how to restrain those forces from riding roughshod over her dribbling lovers, trained as she is in the manners and customs of her culture, and polite to a fault to its requirements and limits. Dynamic, obstinate, reluctant to submit to married life, full of intelligence and subtle wit, with a desire for life and with an awareness of the burdens of her flesh, she never exceeds those bounds yet achieves, amazingly, to stand by her unconventionality. With her calm nature and being well aware of her surrounding, she created her own history. The women were considered as a commodity of a man is, she lived in a Haveli but here Wazir Khanum is a cunning pragmatic ruler even behind the shroud.

From the starting point, we witness her to be a substantial lady who is liberal in making her own decisions. As Muhammad Umer Memon, in his article "Portrait of a Vanished Time" states, "Unquestionably, Faruqi through Wazir Khanam provides a cross-section of opinions, voicing the needs and desires of every woman and supports a new understanding of the feminine psyche in the long-gone era." This idea supports the difference of Wazir Khanam from other women of her era. Khanam's performance and sexual desire show the issue of sexual ailment to present her uniqueness in the novel. For example, it is always expected that a man is more valiant, aggressive and vigorous than a woman, and is considered a more inventive genius than the other gender. It is also considered that men's behavior is more powerful and imposing than that of women. It is always thought that women are passive beings when compared with men. Shattering all these labels of gender Wazir bluntly talks about her 'feminine/sexual desires' which wholly vicissitudes the image of any female character presented in the novels of Eighteenth century.

Traditional norms or stories always support that a Nineteenth-century woman is informed a day before her marriage whom she will be getting married. This idea takes away the right of choosing a man which itself is a source of repression. The bride is just given as a commodity to a man, but when Wazir Khanam is introduced in the novel after the death of her mother, we see her in a discussion with her elder sister named Anwari. Khanum is off the view: why should he [father] guard me? Am I little baby that someone will make off with me? Please listen carefully; I fear no one and I shall be cowed by no one." (Faruqi, 2013, p.198). If we take a close look at this stance of Wazir Khanum we witness a woman who is aware of her rights presents herself as a leader, as she is determined to map out her life according to her self-made rules rather than dedicated being dictated by any man, even if he's her father. She is shown as a woman who will carve her own fate.

Furthermore, being the youngest of the three sisters, Wazir Khanam spurns the cultural standards of her society. Her sisters are the best example of how gender is forced to perform according to the norms of society. Anwari, who is the eldest sister marries at twelve years of age and lives a righteous life; and Manjhli suits, like her mother, an inactive courtesan. In such a society that considers marriage and reproduction as the only task suitable for women, the only "reality is to be a wife and a mother" (Beauvoir, 2008, p. 453). While it was believed that women have little or no sexual feelings at all, family affections and desire for motherhood were considered inherent by the chief ideology of the age. The elder sister is a staunch supporter of this view by saying that "God has created women as the very image of modesty, bashfulness, motherly love, pity, and self-sacrifice and you cannot discard the purpose for which woman was brought into this world" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 203). In a flawless imitation of the utmost model of femininity, marriage was regarded to be so substantial that the unmarried woman was generally viewed as "wastage" (Beauvoir, 2008, p. 447) and they were also labeled as "surplus women" (Roberts, p. 57). A woman in such a society only had an identity when she was married, in case she fails to find a partner or her husband died, she was outcasted and shamed, for there was no greater calamity than this for a woman. As the elder sister says: "Should girls go settle with some madams in a bordello? Ruin themselves in both this world and the hereafter? Blacken and heap obloquy on their parents' fair name?" (p. 199) According to her dialogues, it mirrors the fact that even religion doesn't support such women. Even though in Islam a lot of rights are given to widows.

Khanam's ferociously unwavering, self-determining, and proud attitude doesn't change even in a society that considers marriage a fate not a choice. Wazir while answering her sister mocks and says "[...] women should bear children, be battered by husband and mother-in-law, be ground and scorched in milestone and oven, and

grow old before their time. Is that it?" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 205). Wazir's words challenge the typical binary division and support this fact "gender is not a stable identity" (Butler, 2004, p.23). One can be feminine and still be a writer of one's own fate.

We witness her as a very strong woman who is boisterous and is conscious of her own intellect and insight as she states: "Show me a man to whom I could be inferior" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 234). The only thing that makes Wazir Khanam completely different from traditional women is that she is not ready to give up on the gender norms of her culture; she is a woman who is well aware of the influence of her sexuality. (Butler, 2004).

Similarly, on the 'bond' of womanhood, Butler says that it is apparently built upon the facts that women should behave according to their gender in a specific set of rules. 'Gender fluidity is evident in Wazir's words:

I don't want to be the image of or caricature of anything or anyone. I am good looking, I have a sharp mind, and I have no member that is broken or paralyzed. [...] would the God Who put together so much in me, suffer me to lodge my talents useless in me? Would He approve my being sacrificed on the false altar of men's carnal lust? [...] is marriage necessary too. (Faruqi, 2013, p.186)

In the same way, Wazir Khanam is against the congealed concepts of halal/haram (permissible/prohibited) regarding the idea of marriage. She utters, "[...] the illegitimate became lawful by pronouncing just a couple of words of mumbo jumbo? And your sister is she a cow whose sacrifice becomes lawful because a few words are uttered before the knife is taken to her" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 187). Anwari believed that only marriage should be the ultimate goal for women, by saying that "Man is integrally necessary for women. Women are man's dignity, honor, and esteem. The man is women's protector lord and master" ((Faruqi, 2013, p. 200). As she reinforces a

conventional view, she becomes a 'perfect lady' model, the guidelines and standards which she endorses constitute an anticipated image of femininity expected by a particular gender. Wazir, on the other hand, is not against marriage in particular but she stands against the notion of marriage, which sustains the status of a woman as merely an object in a relationship. It is also considered as one of the defining institutions, which restrains women's lived experience to their sexed body. She is of the view that "[...] I will not marry. And if I did, I am certainly not going to choose a husband from among tawdry sellers of food on portable trays or petty morsel- begging, illiterate mullahs or pauperise, pension- begging so-called high-born hypocrites" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 200). Wazir embraces Butler's version of gender as a continuum because she moves outside the limitations of the socially constructed definition of gender.

The women of her times are 'feminine creatures' expected to look their best, lure a lover or to get married, procreate and die in peace. Here Butler's assertion, 'If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is' comes to mind. Wazir Khanam is keenly aware of the fact that intelligence is a virtue that goes unrecognized in women, so she uses her intelligence and even her physical charms in as unconventional a manner as possible. This masks a desire on her part to be recognized for being much more than a merely beautiful woman. Subverting the usual historical notions of Eighteenth-century women, she wants to create opportunities for herself by becoming the master of her destiny. She says: "I will first taste the man who wants me. I will let him stay if I like him if not, I will show him the door" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 200). She is not a naive, innocent girl but stands her ground firmly. She questions God that it was He who made her a woman, it was not her choice.

It can be predicted from her adolescent days that she will not walk in any stereotypical ways. Many women in their lives are given only two options either they can be a harlot or wife. Khanum refuses to

confine herself in these two categories. She married only one man but had chosen four men in her life out of which she had a live-in relationship with three men. Wazir flees the imprisoned atmosphere of her house and meets Marston Blake who is a British Assistant Political Agent of Jaipur. Though both of them never got married she enjoys his company. In Blake's life, she got ardent love, authority, integrity, admiration, plenty of servants and a splendid home to rule. Wazir's beauty is praised by Blake in the words of Khusru's who is a very famous poet:

I have roamed the universe, have assessed the loves of all
beauties,
I have seen many lovely ones, but . . .
. . . you are something different (Faruqi, 2013, p. 231).

Even though she was living in the house of a Britisher, she did not conform to the strict rules of the house. She avoided sitting with Blake at the dining table because in "well-born or even genteel Hindu and Muslim households, women are strictly segregated from the men" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 318). Furthermore, Wazir altered a lot of rules of the house. She debarred pork's meat and warned that no one will take the name of this animal in the house. Besides fresh meat, she also arranged fresh milk. None was there to form an interruption. Even Mr. Blake has said; "Wazir you're not just vizier [English for Wazir], you are the queen of this house. Whatever you say will be done" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 207).

Though, Wazir does not fit the traditional woman when she talks about sexual contact. It totally changes the image of the female character in the classic novel. According to Kumar Das' calculation of Freud, the masculine is energetic, and the feminine is obedient. This rudimentary binary leads to the kinds of gender-based oppositions. As it is cited, "he [Blake] kissed her a number of times on the mouth." Wazir as an active woman does not want to be an object of sexual covetousness; rather she says "let go of me. No more of this. All 'discussions' have their time and place. By using the

word “conversation which means ‘sexual intercourse’ in Hindi and in women's speech, [which] also meant the same in English in the Eighteen Century,” Wazir by refusing to succumb her body according to his desire exemplifies confrontation to a culture which stresses orthodoxy. She is not satisfied with the inert role, or a woman who is at the mercy of a man. Instead, she is looking to renegotiate her performative role by shifting the sexual rubrics and settlements of her time.

As Wazir is born out of her historical period, for her clash against the conformist sexual attitudes of the era sets her above the vistas of her particular period we witness Wazir is never bargaining on her sexual necessities which arouse the readers to see her aspect of exclusivity in her gender. She does not fit into the social class her fate foreordained her to dwell.; she is the portent of the coming age. She targets men of her age by stating:

Men she knew wanted what they wanted and did what they did. They spared no thought for the woman's weariness, her not being in the mood, or not driving any pleasure from the act. They had no idea about the woman's satisfaction: in fact, they could hardly imagine such a thing (Faruqi, 2013, p. 215).

But Wazir is depicted as a woman, who is “certainly very skilled in matters of love and making love [...]” Wazir makes sure her every mood, every desire, and every need are fully satisfied according to her mood of the moment (Faruqi, 2013, p. 214). Since her governing powers “Blake has a curious capability for knowing how to behave with Wazir in bed” (Faruqi, 2013, p. 215). She actively disrupts and interjects the so-called steadiness and consistency of gender identity and tests the idea of true womankind.

In the house of Mr. Blake, Wazir is given all necessities of life and all her sexual desires are fulfilled. The women of her times considered all these provisions sufficient for living a passive life and acted as a

robot who was ready to conform according to the rules programmed in it. But we witness Khanam associating herself to her Manjli sister named Umdah Khanam, who is married to another Navab but has no liberty whatsoever, as Umdah lives under the rule of her husband. Once again, we perceive Wazir moving beyond the daunting limits, where she again compares herself to Umdah Khanam's husband "who is yet to occupy the chair" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 216). He has no control over his own wealth as Wazir mentions: "Her Sahib has no wealth of his own and is only a pensioner of the ruling Navab [...] the mansion, the appointments of the mansion, furniture, carpets he owns nothing of those (Faruqi, 2013, p. 216). If she was a typical woman, she would have got jealous of her sister's wealth but she regards herself as a more commanding woman than the Navab as "this whole crowd of domestics and flunkies are entirely under my thumb. I can fire whomever I want to and hire whomever I want (Faruqi, 2013, p. 217).

Similarly, we witness that Wazir questions the concept of the supremacy of the idyllic wife pattern, she again condemns her elder sister's notion of femininity who believes that a woman should be "like a houri from Paradise" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 218). Wazir flagrantly thinks that "bringing up the children, meeting all their needs by day and night, doing the husband's bidding and being at his beck and call all times, can this be called living? (Faruqi, 2013, p. 218). Wazir does not rebel against the concept of marriage, but she is uninterruptedly trying to refigure the notion of becoming a representation of subservience as this is the only expectation from her gender. Nevertheless, Wazir presents herself as an example, as it is her leader-like ability which does not let her "chaf under the airs and whims of Sahib; on the contrary, it is he who has been deferring to me in all things" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 217). Wazir's confrontation of duplicating a specific gender role can be observed as a mode of hostility against the vital abilities of the chronicle which take possession of and control gender categories.

In ancient times 'Begum' was a title given to women who had the high honor and was considered the trademark of honesty and source of pride. Nicole Mancusi has stated that "Kings were very choosy about giving names to suit the persons receiving them" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 315). Wazir Khanam deliberately gives a satirical image of such women as she says: "Pronounce two words from the book and make her do whatever service you want. She will laugh it off even if you demean her. She will pretend it was a joke. Of what use is one's title of Begam Sahib if that is where one ends up as a begam?" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 217). It is in this view that she seems to be a remarkably eccentric woman of her time. Additionally, Wazir's ability to contravene the normative gendered roles not only gives her the power of reconstructing her individuality but on it also tests and undermines the standards which are well-thought-out. These particular standards are used for evaluating what's right or wrong, exclusive or deviating concerning the feminine role and performances.

Even though Wazir gets accommodation and fervent love from Blake, we still observe her prioritizing her own will to get liberation and self-esteem over her sentiments as she spurns her thoughts of getting the title of a begum. She accepts that she is "better than those 'ladies'. As they say: A live cat is better than a dead tiger. To hell with it if I am not a begum. But I am certainly not a maid or a nanny" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 218).

This love resulted in having two children and even this role of being a mother didn't stop her from shattering the notions of society. She says that "[I] would become just another bonded laborer, or at best yet another maidservant" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 233). She rightly fears and declines the limitations his love would impose upon her unconventionality. Blake dies in a riot and she is left with only two children. Blake's family wanted the custody of the children, as they wanted to raise them according to Christianity. Wazir being a futuristic woman signs a contract that her offspring will be

"educated in Hindi and Persian [...], and I would have the freedom to visit them when I like" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 253). Khanam as an eccentric heroine not only rejects the dominant gender norms and settlements of her time but also works on her own terms.

The idea of motherhood is universal and it is expected that a mother will sacrifice anything for the kids. Instead of choosing her offspring, she selected the material belongings of the house. she is off the view that "In return for my sacrifice of my children, I will be the sole owner of everything in this house: furniture, carpets, glass, metal utensils, chandeliers, all should be mine" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 253). In her battle to obtain independence, Wazir Khanam conspicuously rejects any restricting role the patriarchal society forces upon her. It was Wazir's unmatched competence which forced Blake's family to accept all the conditions set by her. Wazir for the Tyndale's turns out as a woman who can make her choices, even within the limits of her sex and contracts of the time. Her negotiation skills prove that one can be a woman and yet act as a man in making her own decisions. "The Tyndales had not expected an 'Indian' woman to negotiate with so much skill and then shake hands on the deal like a man" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 255).

Being a woman, Wazir resides in a position where she knows what is expected of each gender in some conditions. Wazir after the death of Mr. Blake sets herself to another journey in which there will be no conciliation. It is exposed that, "She was prepared to deal with men, but on her own terms" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 258). Her words are visionary in a way as she goes to Dilawar-ul Mulk Navab Shams Uddin's, the ruler of Loharu, a small state near Delhi, harem by her own choice. Wazir, because of her exalted beauty did not have only one option. Willam Fraser, a Chief Resident of Delhi for the East India Company, wanted Wazir Khanam to be her Bibi.

Wazir being the master of her own fate as well as a good planner of her life's game in her own ways keeping her honor intact rejects Fraser's proposal as he had many mistresses (bibs). She says: "I am

not prepared to live where I would be under anyone's senior or superior presence. And I will never tolerate living with others in the same house or in a big mansion even" ((Faruqi, 2013, p. 266). She was the organizer and the performer herself concurrently. Rejecting Fraser's proposal, she expresses her anger as "I would put men like him at the end of the toe of my shoes [. . .] I am not going to rot in the harem of a muscle-bound, lustful Englishman" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 266).

Her independent choice for herself turns out to be flawless as she is essentially paid and given equal rights just like the wives of the Navab. There, she rules over his heart and gets admiration and love much more than she had anticipated. The real purpose of choosing Navab over Fraser was to attain full attention, which she manages to get as Navab says: "You illuminate the whole house like the moon. There is nothing like the acuity of vision needed here. It would be a blind man indeed who would fail to see your excellent charms. If I could, I would wrap you around my body like the moonlight's chador and go to sleep" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 310).

The tables once again turn for Khanam as Navab Shams Uddin is handed over the charge of Fraser's murder. This episode of her life could not even change Wazir's staunch belief that a husband, for her, is valued only as a main source of income but in her scheme of things, he is not the owner of her body and cannot put his sexual desires on her like a master. Agha Mirza Turab Ali is the third man, in her life who has sent her a proposal of marriage officially. Even after being the victim of fate, Wazir has never shunned her domineering personality. Being extremely ultra-feminine in her looks, Wazir is not less than a man in her intellectual abilities and is capable of handling her life on her own terms.

This argument of Wazir is another step which shows her gender-power by once again taking all the matters into her hands:

[...] she well knew that she possessed some power, which could win hearts for her __any heart at all__ almost without her making an effort. [...] The absence of a man left no gap in her personality: she knew that she was a complete person in herself. (Faruqi, 2013, p. 647)

She once again seeks to escape conservative gender views of her time by asking her elder sister "tell me plainly what benefits are there for me in this proposal?" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 647). She this time agrees to marry Mirza Turab as her request of keeping his son with her is acknowledged. Likewise, the previous two men in Wazir's life Turab is also killed and Wazir is again depicted as a woman left to deal with the intrigues of life.

But even after so many disastrous variations, we never observe Wazir giving up her unusual ways. She again handles this incident with great pliability and excellent elegance. In an unforgettable section, Wazir once again contests, not only the view of men about women but the very basis of a society in which almost everything is observed from a unique gender perspective, and she says that gender fluidity doesn't happen because society is very restricted. Butler has also pointed out that a confrontation from *inside* a system is compulsory, which means that an individual should question all these groups somewhat than abscond it. While talking to her son, Navab Mirza says that:

You are a piece of my heart, but you are a male, first and last. The community of men believes that all the mysteries of the world, all the secret corners of all hearts are accessible to the male. And even if some are not the male believe that he has the power to decide on behalf of everyone and everything. Men think that women are just as they believe them to be in temperament, in preferences and hates [...]. And if women are not what they believe or want them to be, the fault lies at women's doors. (Faruqi, 2013, p. 725)

FINDINGS

Wazir, in point of fact, is acting as a mirror to what Butler has pointed out: refiguring the “possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself” (Butler, 2004, p. 42). Therefore, we see that Wazir’s excellent choices have made her an unfathomable woman. Even the death of her third lover could not bind her to act or perform like a naïve woman who believes in gender binaries.

Furthermore, Wazir Khanam, even after becoming a widow thrice never settles down for anything less as once again she officially becomes the legal wife of Mughal prince and heir, Mirza Fathul Mulk Bahadur Then, Wazir “refused to accept this and insisted that Habiba, and whatever other things like dresses and jewelry that her eldest sister wished, must accompany her. If the people of the Fort did not agree, let them go to hell” (Faruqi, 2013, p. 880).

Similarly, Wazir once again with her enchanting beauty has caught Mirza “in the spell of her dark beauty” (Faruqi, 2013, p. 901), Here again even being a wife she never accepts the naïve role of a woman; she never submits to his desire but whenever Wazir desires she makes sure her sexual appetite is fulfilled. Knowing that “Mirza Fathul Mulk was a master musician”, (Faruqi, 2013, p. 902) she demands that he sing something for her and the mere idea of this gives Wazir immense pleasure. It's because of her enthralling beauty that her desire is going to be fulfilled before she could give her body as she mentions: “He should sing something for his wife? That was unheard of; it had probably never happened. ‘How lucky I am!’” (Faruqi, 2013, p. 903).

Fate was never in her favour yet she never gives up even becoming a widow the third time. Despite all these incidents in her life Wazir, never loses the courage to face her exertions. Even in the end, when Wazir Khanam is thrown out of the palace of Fathul Mulk. once again we see her and her children leaving the palace with “their heads held high and their backs erect” (Faruqi, 2013, p. 952). In

Khanam, the readers are provided with a woman who as a heroine is ahead of her times, she is a character who does not let her gender command her as "gender is certainly a performance, something one does, rather than something one is" (Butler, 2004, p. 28).

The extraordinary quality of her character is that she occupies an indecisive sphere neither royal nor common-born but as a woman who can make her own choices, even within the bounds of such a period. She is a picture-perfect case of a woman who disrupts through the barricades of conventionalism. It is through her unruling feminine desires that the proclamation of gender power is depicted in which a woman wins her way and goes on to make free selections. It is through her character that readers are shown the idea of Indian society and its fallacies concerning a woman. Butler claims that the juridical systems of control tags everyone under the same name and adjusts the subjects' lives through restraining and deploying. Similarly, a 'feminist subject' is exactly a byproduct of the same system that 'promises to release it.' Through Wazir Khanam the concept that a woman is a commodity is refigured. Their endorsements or condemnations, dislikes or likes have a meaning. By examining the theoretical, radical, communal and practical life of Wazir Khanam, Faruqi (2013) argues that she is "one of those women who had their personal history and therefore their own past. The world always looked at such women with doubt and terror" (Faruqi, 2013, p. 785).

CONCLUSION

Farooqi's protagonist Wazir Khanum, therefore, is a perfect example of gender fluidity, disabusing the gender binaries and challenging patriarchal mindset. With her defiance of patriarchal norms, she exemplifies Butler's concept of gender performance. Interestingly, Khanum exists within the bounds of a typical discourse, and a traditional societal set up, but her desire to act in the opposition of the given margins creates a new canvas through the agency of

desiring. Her longing pushes the limits not only of homogenous notions of desire but also non-normative ones, creating the possible way for an insolent notion of female desire that provokes actual classification of gender. Wazir Khanum, therefore, is a woman who has the ability to manipulate numerous things instantaneously, and it is interesting to witness that she is ultra-feminine to anyone she meets throughout the novel. She never lets her desire compromise her womanliness and never uses it as an excuse. Her tendency to be the master of her own identity and sexuality is seen in her desire to be treated equally with every man she encounters, be it her paramours or her father.

REFERENCES

- Butler, Judith. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Bristow, Joseph. (1997). *Sexuality*. London, Routledge.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. (2008). *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. (2009). *The History of Sexuality*. Crane Library at the University of British Columbia,. Canada.
- Nicholson, Linda J., and Steven Seidman. (1995). *"Social Postmodernism: beyond Identity Politics."* Cambridge University Press.
- Stoller, Robert J. (1968). *Sex and Gender; on the Development of Masculinity and Femininity*. Science House.
- Rahman Faruqi, Shamsur. (2013). *The Mirror of Beauty*. New York: Penguin.