

## Subversion of Traditional Feminine Stereotypes in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

Dr. TaimurKayani<sup>1</sup>Mariam Mubarik<sup>2</sup>Mohsin Hamid Butt<sup>3</sup>

1. Assistant Professor, Department of English, GIFT University, Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan
2. M. Phil Scholar, Department of English, GIFT University, Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan
3. M. .Phil Scholar, Department of English, University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

### Abstract

*The study deals with the traditional feminine stereotypes in Mohsin Hamid's fourth famous book titled as Exit West that was published in 2017. Pakistani writers have always highlighted the struggle and oppression of women in patriarchal community but now their perspective has changed. Now, they portray women as an independent and confident being. Generally, this book is known for the immigration and refugee issues but the current study examines it the light of subversion of traditional feminine stereotypes in Exit West. In this research, the researcher has tried to trace out the incompatibility causes of feminist liberal ideologies with a nonwestern society and how feminism subverts the traditional feminine stereotypes. In addition, Betty Friedan's theory of Feminine Mystique has applied to analyze the selected text. A detailed study of Mohsin Hamid's Exit west has been done in order to explore the effects of Liberal ideology on individuals especially women.*

**Key Words:** *Exit west*, Feminism, Women, Liberalism, Subversion

### Introduction

In this world of humanity, there has been a concept of duality in almost every aspect of life. Duality defines the basic structure to determine the difference between all the alike things. Likewise, there has been a concept of duality in the gender as well that make the division of being a male and female, which further introduces the gender studies(Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Therefore, with the studies of gender differences, there must be something to define each other's' roles in the society including the rights and duties of each gender.

Feminism is the movement that was initiated for the fulfillment of the equal status of men and women(Friedman, 2010). Apart from the European countries, the fiction writers in Pakistan also depict the same picture of feminism as they mostly try to give a perfect image of women enjoying equal right with the men(Yaqoob, 2015).The psychological development of female character in Pakistani fiction plays a vital role in the liberation and freedom of women community in Pakistani society. This psychological development is presented in the portrayals of women characters in Pakistani fiction (Yaqoob, 2015).

The role of women in Pakistani novels is depicted in such a way that they show the true picture of the society among which the name of BapsiSidhwa is very popular.

She was the one, writing predominantly for the violations against women rights within the subcontinent area before and after the British colonization (Arora, 2015).

Women are shown as a target of various forms of patriarchal oppression. In recent times, writers such as Mohsin Hamid, Uzma Aslam Khan, Talat Abbasi, Kamila Shamsie and Mohammed Hanif have directly as well as indirectly tackled this same concept in their fiction (Ahmed, 2015). Most of these writers portray the character of the Pakistani women who are being victimized by the circumstances of post-colonization of British in the subcontinent. Therefore, it is more like a response against what was happening during the former British colonies (Ahmed, 20092).

In Pakistani society, women are always expected to live lives for her family and children (Kesselman, 2001). The novel *Exit West* shows the breaking of all these stereotypical images of women. Nadia the woman character in the novel depicts the subversion of a traditional feminine archetype. She is portrayed as a female character who, unlike a traditional woman, breaks all prospects of a Muslim woman; her liberal attitude on religion, sex and various other topics shock Saeed, which is another character of this novel (Hamid, 2018).

Western feminists propose these theories to liberate women but these theories are not acceptable outside the west and particularly in an Islamic state. Likewise, these ideologies are very dangerous for the non-western societies like Pakistan because they shake up the very basic structure of society i.e. marriage institution, which further tears apart the family structure that is the core of any successful social structure. As per the scholars note down in their studies, marriage institution is very important for secure and morally strong society (Maclean & Eekelaar, 2004).

## **Literature Review**

In the modern era, the feminist movement has achieved the goals of freedom and equality of women, but on the other hand, it has gone beyond the boundaries of social setups. In Pakistan, early feminism grasped its ground but later on it is facing extreme criticism and opposition from intellectuals (Ahmed, 2009). Since few decades we see that old version of women, constrained in all aspects by patriarchy, is going backstage and now moving towards the new version of women in all parts of life i.e. bold, strong and confident women etc. (Rahman, 2012).

Liberal feminist theories are considered to be contrastive in nature to social moral values of other cultures (Braidotti, 2016). Pakistani feminism which separates itself from western philosophy is derived from religious, cultural and social influence on society (Mohanty, 1988). Farhat Jabeen, one of the famous Pakistani writers, once said in her writing that "It is believed that the international effort to promote women's rights in the name of human rights is considered anti-Islamic" (Ali, Jabeen & Naveed-i-Rahat, 2018). Pakistan women are developing themselves as a self-autonomous, intellectually free and independent being. In discussions about traditional family systems, the role of mother and her position is disparaged by liberal ideologies which are criticized by also western thinkers and Pakistani intellectuals (Braidotti, 2016).

Rise of new perspective and views in feminism in Islamic society is trying to empower all women within Islamic bounds of moral and social codes, which shows

that feminism is not a universal phenomenon but multifaceted notion (Bader,2009). Foreign culture imported by Pakistani upper class with Western sort of manners, dress, and fashion, challenges the social cosmos of religious impacts, raising a very heated argument about the status of women in our society (Nisar 2016).

Mohsin Hamid is an author of four novels, *Moth Smoke*, *Exit West*, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. He also wrote a book of different essays name as *Discontent and Its Civilizations*. Hamid's writings have been translated into almost thirty-five languages and also adapted for the cinema. He spent many years in London, California and New York. That's why we can see that his writing has a touch of west and liberalism in it.(Yaqoob, 2015).

*Moth smoke* is his highly praised novel it was published in 2000. It is Hamid's debut which he started as an assignment on creative writing given by Toni Morrison. It is set against the background of the 1990s when Pakistan was going through nuclear tests. It employs many important themes like historical inspiration, the conflict between India and Pakistan, cultureless, gun-running, tourism, corruption of politicians, drug trafficking, liberalism and industrialism(Gheorghiu, 2018). It is a story of an addicted man DarashikhohShezad, who falls in love with his friend's wife, Mumtaz, because of which they had to lead a duplicate life (Nisar, 2016).

When the writers write about typical Pakistani tradition, without any traits of modernity, portray women as a suppressed and oppressed woman, and paint a clear picture of Pakistani society. The works of Mohsin Hamid depicts a kind of escape from this tradition. Imparted with components of the Stark and Fitzgerald, captivating prose of American contemporaries such as Brett Easton Ellis, Hamid deserts the style in favour of discreet brevity (Ahmed, 2013).

Betty Friedan was a famous activist and feminist writer who appeared after the second wave of feminism. She is considered as a leading figure of women's liberation movement in the U.S. When she wrote: "*The Feminine Mystique*" she was a housewife and helped her husband financially by writing articles for women magazine. She conducted a survey in 1957 which results in the form of "*The Feminine Mystique*". When Betty Friedan published her book it was an era of a beginning of the second wave of feminism. The term "The Feminine Mystique" as Friedan says is an ideology of women passiveness, domesticity and motherhood.

In this book, Friedan explores the unhappiness of women who were encouraged to be only housewives, mother and wives. She explores the idea that limiting women to the roles of homemaker and housewife prevent them from their achievement and success. She further elaborates that "The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of their own femininity ..."(Friedan, 2010).Friedan says that women want fulfilment through marriage, being a mother and by doing household things but later in life, she finds herself incomplete and alienated. She wants to liberate women to achieve their goals which according to her are more important than domestic life and are beyond the four walls of a house.

Liberal Feminism is a theory which focuses on women's freedom and equality in their own actions, decisions, and choices. Its focus is on equality of legal and

political rights of women and men (Baehr, 2007). The famous activists of Liberal Feminism including Marry Wollstonecraft, Helen Tylor, Betty Friedan, Rebecca Walker etc. argue on the belief system which is based on the misconception that women are intellectually, academically and physically, less capable than men, which eventually results in gender discrimination in multiple fields of life (Baehr, 2017). Also, feminists hold the view that self-independence is an essential value, and it is only the movement who ensures the liberty for individuals.

*Exit West* is a forth novel by Hamid and it was published in 2017. Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West* shows the subversion of traditional feminine stereotypes. Nadia and Saeed are the two main characters of this novel. Nadia is a fierce sensualist and live alone. She has bucked tradition and family for an independent life, rides a motorbike and has been disowned by her parents. She is a utopian female character and wants to achieve independence, satisfaction, freedom and hates restriction (Lagji, 2019).

Hamid writes that "Nadia had long been, and would afterwards continue to be, more comfortable with all varieties of movement in her life than was Saeed, in whom the impulse of nostalgia was stronger, perhaps because his childhood has been more idyllic, or perhaps because this was simply his temperament" (Hamid, 2018). Modern women are not satisfied or happy with the roles traditionally ascribed to them; they rather feel suppressed by them. The exposure to Western culture is gradually reconfiguring women's identity in Pakistan. (Agrawal, 2019).

## **Material and Methods**

The research methodology of any research study determines the overall direction of the research and in which way it can actually be going in the near future. The researcher has also gone through various books, journals, articles and interviews. The explorative research methodology has been adopted to analyze the selected text. MLA formatting style has been used in this research.

The philosophical and theoretical approach of this research is based on the concept of liberal feministic theory. The theory that came into existence as an outcome integration of liberalism and feminism (Bracewell, 2016). The focus of feministic theory in this study is to examine and evaluate a character of Nadia as a liberal woman from the perspective of "Feminine Mystique". In this research paper, the researcher has tried to find out the incompatibility causes of postmodern Feminist liberal ideologies with non-western society and how it affects the family system. The effects of liberal ideologies on relationships and family bounding. Betty Friedan theory of "Feminine Mystique" holds the notion of women's liberation and individuality (Friedan, 2010). This theoretical framework is applied to a text of Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West* in order to explore the operations of postmodern liberal ideology in this particular text and its female character Nadia (Hamid, 2018).

The text is analyzed in light of Betty Friedan's theory to undermine the powers of liberal independence. Furthermore, the researcher has put her own argument that how liberalism has subverted the traditional feminine stereotypes. Thus researcher has justified her personal argument why liberal feminism is not compatible with Islamic culture set up, how this so-called modern woman subverts the idea, traditional women,

and how this it is negating the presence of all societal, theological and cultural institutions and is giving birth to a notion of an independent women summed up as "free from the burden of motherhood and leaving the walls of patriarchy and morality". This study includes textual interpretation of *Exit West* with the help of Friedan's theoretical point of view and side by side researcher has also inculcated her own views about liberal feminism and subversion of traditional feminine stereotypes.

This study is based on secondary data collection method as the data has been collected from Pakistani fiction novel *Exit West* and different research papers.

The reason behind choosing this text is writer's wider readership in the west and his social and cultural exposure to the west and another purpose behind choosing this content is writer's "more extensive readership in the west" and his social presentation toward the "west".

This research is based on the theory of Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan. The end of the 1960s was the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement (Friedan, 2010). It was essentially an examination of political and social roles for women in middle-class America. It holds the idea that women are not happy with the role of mother and housewife alone (Appleby, Chang, & Goodwin, 2015). The first few lines of the Betty Friedan book, *The Feminine Mystique* describes the daily life of a typical American woman in 1960s "The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night-she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question- "Is this all?" (Friedan 2010).

It was her own experience as a housewife that evoked her to write about restrictions and limitations that confined women to the home and her main purpose of writing this book is to awaken the psychology of women that there is something more than the duties and tasks of households and that's is their own social and purposes.

Betty Friedan believed that women lose their full potential and confidence when they were limited to only a number of jobs that were "acceptable" for women (Nicolson, 1993). Betty Friedan discusses that women give up their own dreams and career to become housewives and then after some time find themselves unsatisfied with their role as a housewife. She argues that this problem is "the problem that has no name". She further says that this unhappiness is inevitable when women are not concerned about their individuality and stay under the confines of the feminine mystique.

Nadia in the novel *Exit West* follows the same idea of Betty Friedan's theory that if women escape the confines of traditional views of femininity then they can truly enjoy being women. The woman character in the novel *Exit West* is a true representative of this feminist approach. She rejected the idea of "the angel in the house". Nadia chooses her own way of life regardless of all the traditions of her family, her local community and all the stereotypes prevailing in the society (Hamid, 2018).

## **Textual Analysis**

The topic of this research is “*Subversion of Traditional Feminine Stereotypes in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West*”. *Exit West* is a real, optimistic and yet vivid depiction of a modern fragmented world. The main protagonist character of the novel is Nadia.

Nadia is shown as an independent woman. She subverts the idea of a traditional woman. She rides a motorcycle which is a very unusual thing for a girl. The writer describes her character in the starting of the novel in these lines “He watched as she walked out to the student parking area and there, instead of covering her head with a black cloth, as he expected, she donned a black motorcycle helmet that had been locked to a scuffed-up 100CC trail bike, snapped down her visor, straddled her ride, and rode off, disappearing with a controlled rumble into the gathering dusk” (Hamid, 2018).

Saeed is another main character in the novel who has a love relation with Nadia regardless of her point of views. Likewise, he starts loving her and feels connected to her and keeps thinking her all the time. “The next day, at work, Saeed found himself unable to stop thinking of Nadia”. She knows very well about how to treat and control others because of which she behaves every person accordingly. Nadia uses cultural and religious touch stones for her own purpose and needs as she uses her black robe. “Saeed asked her about her conservative and virtue- ally all-concealing black robe. ‘If you don’t pray,’ he said, lowering his voice, ‘why do you wear it?’ ‘So men don’t fuck with me,’ she said” (Hamid, 2018).

Nadia also subverts religious rules and norms. She is not a religious woman and has no interest in prayers. By drawing attention towards Nadia long religious robe, Hamid prepares his readers to think about how religion affects the ways in which people view each other. Nadia's intention on wearing that robe is not at all religious but her own personal need. The robe she wears offer a kind of escape from a world. She uses these kinds of religious prospects to escape from religious constraints and restrictions. This shows the irony in her character, that she looks like a religious and chaste woman but in reality, she is opposed to it. She wants her independence and losses her connection with family. “The art in Nadia’s childhood home consisted of religious verses and photos of holy sites, framed and mounted on walls. Nadia’s mother and sister were quiet women and her father a man who tried to be quiet, thinking this a virtue, but who nonetheless came to a boil easily and often where Nadia was concerned” (Hamid, 2018).

The family structure of Nadia’s is religious but she hates when it comes to boundaries attached by the religion that stop her to live her life according to her wish. This perceived enforcement of religion on her, make her think if she better leaves her home and family instead of living like a bird in the cage. Therefore, the novel shows that Nadia breaks the stereotypes of traditional women by leaving her home and living as an independent unmarried woman in society. She surprises her whole family at once by announcing that she has planned to move out to live her on her own and not to depend on anyone else. “There was no physical violence in Nadia’s home, and much giving to charity, but when after finishing university Nadia announced, to her family’s utter horror, and to her own surprise for she had not planned to say it, that she was moving out on her own, an unmarried woman, the break involved hard words on all

sides, from her father, from her mother, even more so from her sister, and perhaps most of all from Nadia herself”(Hamid, 2018)..

The traditional feminine traits include empathy, sensitivity, and gentleness though these feminine traits depend on particular location, culture and context, and somehow influenced by social and cultural factors. The society from which Nadia belong is shown as Muslim society. Saeed and his parents have religious interests and Nadia's family is also religious. We might think that all women or especially Muslim women are traditional and conservative but Nadia rejects this idea. Hamid brings that to the surface by creating a version of the character of Nadia. She knows very well how to deal with men.

Nadia by doing all this denies the role of traditional women i.e. premarital relation, dating, chivalry and leading her own way of life. “She learned how to dress for self-protection, how best to deal with aggressive men and with the police, and with aggressive men who were the police, and always to trust her instincts about situations to avoid or to exit immediately”(Hamid, 2018).

Nadia lacks all the trait of a traditional woman. Before having a relation with Saeed, Nadia had a relationship with a musician. Nadia lacks all the trait of a traditional woman. For Nadia, it is not belongings relations or beliefs that are important, but rather her autonomy and independence. The writer describes her relationship with the musician in these words. "Nadia has been seeing a musician for some time. They had met at an underground concert, more a jam session really, and they had gone to his place that night, and she had shuffled off the weight of her virginity with some perplexity but not excessive fuss" (Hamid, 2018). When she tells the musician that she wants to end this relationship then he calls her to his apartment last time. She agrees and this was their last meeting.

For herself, the individuality and independence are more important for her than her relationships that is why first she left her mother, sister, father and then her lover too. She depicts a true epitome of liberal woman free from restraints of culture and tradition.

Nadia is always active on her phone as compared to Saeed. Nadia orders mushrooms from a drug store using her phone. She orders mushrooms for herself and also for Saeed which they will take together. The day before Nadia receives mushrooms she finds herself trapped by a man at a red light area because she refuses his greetings and that man calls her a whore. Generally in Pakistani culture, this word is very insulting and offensive for a respectful woman but Nadia bothers it very little when a man said to her that “only a whore would drive a motorcycle, didn't she know it was obscene for a woman to straddle a bike in that way...”(Hamid, 2018)..

Another important aspect of Nadia's character, which shows her subversion from traditional women, is that she is very fond of drugs and smoking. Nadia surpasses the social and moral value of a society. Saeed and Nadia not only meet each other for an emotional escape but for recreational drugs. Nadia's removing of her robe in front of Saeed shows her breaking of religious and cultural boundaries. They both have different approaches to love, intimacy and connection. She makes fun of Saeed's view about premarital relation, “I don't think we should have sex until we're married.” And

she laughed and pressed close. And he shook his head. And she stopped and stared at him and said, "Are you fucking joking?" (Hamid, 2018)..

Saeed has a true feeling for Nadia. She wants to marry her and proposes to her. He wants a legal relation with Nadia but Nadia, on the other hand, has different views. May be she considers marriage a bound of responsibilities and constraints that why she is not sure of marrying him. This is also showing her immature attitude towards her life and relationship. In these lines, Nadia character shows the subversion of traditional women stereotypes. "She stroked his hair as his head rested on her chest and asked, "Are you saying you want to get married?" "Yes." "To me?" "To anyone, really." She snorted. "Yes," he said, rising and looking at her. "To you." She didn't say anything. "What do you think?" he asked. She felt great tenderness well up in her for him at that moment, as he waited for her reply, and she felt also a galloping terror, and she felt further something altogether more complicated, something that struck her as akin to resentment. "I don't know," she said" (Hamid, 2018)..

After the death of Saeed's mother, Nadia moved to his house. Living with Saeed at his home without any relation shows Nadia's liberal mindset. At first, she wants a relationship with Saeed before marriage and then she agrees to move with Saeed to his house. Saeed and Nadia start living in the same house and strengthen their romantic relation. Their love is not a relational tie but also an escape from terror and fear of violence. His father seems preoccupied and gives the least attention to their romantic relation and a young couple proceed in secret. Nadia once again breaks the stereotype of traditional women. She not only breaks the cultural boundaries but also religious boundaries "...and the fact that unmarried lovers such as they were now being made examples of and punished by death created a semi-terrified urgency and edge to each coupling that sometimes bordered on a strange sort of ecstasy (Hamid, 2018)..

The main theme of the novel *Exit West* is migration. The writer discusses the problem of refugees in this novel. In the novel characters are transported from one place to another through different magical doors. On the surface level, it is shown a danger and difficulty in crossing different boundaries of different countries and islands. But on the other hand, the novel expresses the affective experience of globalization and culturalism. The writer creates this scenario of migration by depicting the experience of two characters Nadia and Saeed who travel from one place to another.

Saeed and Nadia dedicate themselves to find a way to go out of this city because of the prevailing war condition. Nadia, as we can see from the start of the novel, accepts changes without any hesitation. Nadia is more enthusiastic to migrate than Saeed because the prospect of revolution exciting her but on the other hand the idea of depending on Saeed also making her sad. "Nadia was possibly even more feverishly keen to depart, and her nature was such that the prospect of something new, of change, was at its most basic level exciting to her (Hamid, 2018)..

Nadia is individualistic and independent and eager to accept changes but Saeed is worried because he has an emotional attachment to his relations and home. Normally we expect these traits from women. Women are by nature more emotional and caring but in Nadia's case, it is very different. Her attitude, to the idea of leaving, is very easygoing. Hamid throughout the novel portrays Nadia as a carefree and liberal woman

"Nadia had long been, and would afterwards continue to be, more comfortable with all varieties of movement in her life than was Saeed..." (Hamid, 2018)..

Saeed father wants Nadia to marry her son and considers her as his daughter, without knowing the fact that how can she be his daughter who already left her father (Bucher, 2018). As per the authors said that "he was entrusting her with his son's life, and she, whom he called daughter, must, like a daughter, not fail him, whom she called father, and she must see Saeed through to safety, and he hoped she would one day marry his son and be called mother by his grandchildren, but this was up to them to decide, and all he asked was that she remain by Saeed's side until Saeed was out of danger".

They both set on a journey knowing that after leaving their home town they will never regain the relationships and connections. Saeed and Nadia's reach an island and start living together like a married couple. The relation of this kind be acceptable in western culture and society but the society from which Nadia and Saeed belong as showing in the novel is not western. This is not only prohibited in such kind of culture but also in the religion from which they belong(Sohail, 2015).

Nadia once again admits in front of Saeed that she wears a religious robe for a specific reason that is to send a signal to people in public. The writer wants to show his readers how people use religion for their own purpose and need. The religious robe is normally considering as stereotypical conservative and Hamid uses this icon to expose her character, Nadia who is shown as a stereotypically liberal woman.

Nadia is of the view that spiritual practices, religious and prayers are personal but when at one morning Saeed gets out of bed for prayer it bothers Nadia because she feels that Saeed's renewed interest in prayers and religion is the reason of his change attitude towards her. "In the morning they heard in the distance someone making a call to prayer, at dawn, perhaps over a commandeered karaoke machine, and Nadia was alarmed... a bit surprised, as Saeed got out of bed and prayed" (Hamid, 2018).

Nadia thinks that cross-cultural unity and plurality is very important but on the other hand according to Saeed unity is about common backgrounds, culture manifestation traditionalism and shared memories. Writer concluded the character of Nadia and shows her independent nature in these lines: "But it was inexplicable that she continued to wear her black robes, and it grated on him a bit, for she did not pray, and she avoided speaking their language, and she avoided their people, and sometimes he wanted to shout, well take it off then (Hamid, 2018).

Saeed and Nadia feel a bit uncomfortable with each other they began to spend time separately during the day and this separation give them relief. They both seem fed up from each other. This is the time of Nadia's escapism from this relation.

Saeed wants to feel for Nadia as he always feels. He wants to take care of her and protect her but when their relationship seems lacking warmth, his sadness was immense he doesn't want to lose her. As he moves apart from Nadia he gets more close to prayers. Maybe their relationship suffers due to her inability to connect with Saeed religious devotion and practice. "... and when the warmth between them seemed lacking his sorrow was immense, so immense that he was uncertain whether all his

losses had not combined into a core of loss... and the possible death of his ideal self who had loved his woman so well were like a single death that only hard work and prayer might allow him to withstand" (Hamid, 2018).

*Exit west* is a book that gives his reader the first-hand glimpses of the connection and disconnection. Nadia and Saeed never talked about the fact that they are falling apart. Their relation more of shared experiences than of emotional companionship. Writer discuss the feelings of Nadia and the losing connection of their relationship is these words. " It seemed to Nadia that something had gone quiet inside her. She spoke to him, but her words were muffled to her own ears"(Hamid, 2018).

Nadia feels alive as she moves away from Saeed. Saeed feels affection for a daughter of a preacher. As we analyze throughout the novel that Nadia always get excited by the prospect of new beginning and change. The novel is about change. The writer says that as Saeed and Nadia's relation grow apart, people from all over the world are sliding away from where they belong. This shows the growing concept of globalization throughout the world. Saeed and Nadia, once who were together, leaving each other? This is another study that culturalism and globalization have widened the exposure to new ideas and lifted cultural barriers.

Saeed and Nadia, travel as migrants from one place to another. Nadia gets enthusiastic about the different changes they both experience and she always embraces the culture of migrant communities, while Saeed on the other hand always busy in searching for different ways to reconnect with his home land. This is one of the very significant differences between both of their personalities and perspectives which comes out to be one of the basic reason for the failure of their relationship. Nadia always was drawn to others not only males but also females including a girl whom she met in Mykonos where she and Saeed once lived. "It was not that her sensuality, her sense of the erotic, had died. She found herself aroused readily, by a beautiful man she passed as she walked down to work, by memories of the musician who had been her first lover, by thoughts of the girl from Mykonos" (Hamid, 2018).

Nadia's recorder player is of great importance. It symbolizes her individuality and independence. It is also a symbol of her connection to the world. By listening to the radio she overcomes her isolation, tension and loneliness.

In the last lines of the novel, Nadia admits to Saeed that if we got married life would be very different. May be she realizes the importance of marriage or maybe she never able to forget the promise she made to Saeed's father. "Nadia said imagine how different life would be if I had agreed to marry you" (Hamid, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

The study deals with the Subversion of Traditional Feminine Stereotypes in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. Pakistani writers have always highlighted the struggle and oppression of women in the patriarchal community but now their perspective has changed. Now, they portray women as independent and confident being. The study examines the subversion of traditional feminine stereotypes in *Exit West*.

Betty Friedan challenges the feminine mystique and tries to create a society where everyone regardless of gender and identity, is free to pursue their dreams and passions. Ultimately, she believes that women must be given the liberty and freedom to develop fully as an independent being from their homes and families. Nadia holds the same view she also wants independence from her family and relationship. Nadia challenges the common stereotypes of ever-loving, and self-sacrificing, who loves her family at the expense of their individuality. Hamid in *Exit West* defines the experience of womanhood from a unique angle and challenges the stereotypes which only define women in terms of good and loving.

Culture is very important for society. We can say that culture is an invisible bond that ties society together. Literature, religion, art and language of society represents its culture. Pakistan is a country which is rich in culture and has a strongly established tradition but now western culture is prevailing over Pakistani culture. It not only influenced Pakistan economically, politically and socially but also culturally.

This research also analyzes that how, liberal feminist ideologies, mixed with the notion of modernism, has totally shattered the ideology of traditional women and this study also discusses that how liberal feminism affects the role of women in the society, especially in an Islamic society. The role of women is also a controversial topic in Pakistan as there is a conflict among the liberals and non-liberals about the state of Pakistan being an Islamic or liberal but the overall view of is definitely more towards being an Islamic state. Westernization now has a strong impact on life and mind of people and it had also faded away from our religious norms. Even our media is presenting liberalism with such glitter and attractiveness that no one can escape it. The socio-cultural change is better to some extent but now this change is crossing boundaries of moral, social and religious norms. *Exit West* also represents this modernism and culturalism. Nadia, in the novel, breaks the traditional gender and sexual norms in such a way that it lost her all relations gradually.

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