Investigating Reverse Gender Roles in Moni Mohsin's "The Diary of a Social Butterfly"

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Gender roles and gender stereotypes are those set patterns of society that are practised years after years. Men and women behave according to their fixed roles assigned to them by society. According to these roles, females are considered weaker, and submissive as compared to males. The main aim of this research is to investigate the reverse gender roles and stereotypes in The Diary of a Social Butterfly written by Moni Mohsin. Method of textual analysis is used to analyze the text, under the qualitative mode of inquiry. The text of Moni Mohsin's novel, The Diary of a Social Butterfly, is analyzed in the milieu of Geetha's theory of reverse gender roles from her book Theorizing Feminism. The research findings reveal that the writer has portrayed reverse gender roles in her novel. Moni Mohsin has depicted her main character as an emancipated woman who is not conforming to the traditional roles of females. In this novel, the female character is neither submissive nor an introvert rather, she is reversing the clichéd gender roles of being a socialite.

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1. Introduction

Gender is a social phenomenon. It is the name of certain perceptions, which are associated with males and females (Vláčil (1996), as cited in Gender roles, norms and stereotypes). Butler also talked about gender being a performative phenomenon. She is of the view that one is not born male or female rather it is the performance of a person that groups that person into the category of male or female. Oakley (2016) said that gender deals with social valuation of male and female. According to her, no two cultures could concur totally on what recognizes one sexual orientation from the other. Every society has its own definition of gender. According to Lindsey (2015), gender is the main component in ordering the social behaviors of human, "Roles are related to social norms". She not only talked about the historical perspective of gender but also about the contemporary perspective of gender. Due to the pressure of society, men and women perform particular set roles. They act according to their fixed roles prescribed by the society. This role differentiation starts with the birth of a child. Parents choose different dresses for their baby boys and girls. They associate different colors for both genders in their gender reveal ceremonies. The common view of gender involves females being caring, submissive, nurturing, and males being assertive, dominant, more intellectual and authoritative. The assigning of these gender roles and stereotypes start from the childhood when parents buy their daughters dolls houses and their sons video games and remote control cars. They tell their baby boys not to cry because they are somehow naturally supposed to be emotionally strong and stable as compared to the girls who are considered to be weak and vulnerable (Geetha, 2002). Now as the time is passing the gender roles are reversing. Women are performing different roles in every field. Women have started working, going to offices, driving car, have even become pilots, managers of international

firms, thus reversing the traditional male role. Due to this reversal of orthodox gender roles, writers of the 21st century have also started portraying reverse gender roles in their writings.

This research deals with the investigation of reverse gender roles and challenged gender stereotypes presented in Pakistani literature. "The Diary of a Social Butterfly" has been taken for this research. Mohsin (2008) wrote this novel, and it was released in 2009. Moni Mohsin is a well-known British Pakistani writer. This novel "The Diary of a Social Butterfly" is based on different columns that she wrote in a newspaper. After receiving a successful feedback of these columns, Mohsin compiled them in the form of novel. It is a story of a socialite woman named Butterfly. She lives in Lahore. She is a representative of the elite class Pakistani women. Throughout the novel she brags about literally everything she has. Butterfly is reversing the gender roles and challenging the stereotypes in so many ways. She goes to different parties and attends different festivals. She is not a traditional, submissive, naïve, caring wife who stays at home rather she is a socialite who likes gossiping, hanging out and is an extrovert; not afraid of speaking her mind out. She makes fun of her husband. She does not behave in an obedient, respective manner that Pakistani women are supposed to. She is not shy, as most of the times, women are. She shows her interest in outdoor games and talks about the players. She is not like common women. She takes interest in Basant festival and in kite flying. This character is not like some traditional female character. Mohsin has portrayed the emancipation of women through her character of Butterfly. She has challenged many norms and stereotypes related to women, which are prevalent in Pakistani society. Geetha among many feminist theorists has talked about the reverse gender roles in her book "Theorizing Feminism". She has talked about the traditional roles that women are supposed to perform and says that now as the time is passing these set roles and stereotypes are reversing.

The main objectives of this research are as follow:

- To investigate the reverse gender roles in "The Diary of a Social Butterfly".
- To find out the challenged gender stereotypes in Mohsin's novel "The Diary of a Social Butterfly".
- To analyze the representation of female character in the novel "The Diary of a Social Butterfly".

The present research deals with the following questions:

- How has Mohsin portrayed reverse gender roles in "The Diary of a Social Butterfly"?
- What are the gender stereotypes that are challenged by the character of Butterfly in the novel?
- How has Moni Mohsin represented female character, Butterfly in her novel?

This study helps the readers understand the importance of the role that society plays in shaping the stereotypical gender roles that we perform in our daily lives. But as the time is changing these set stereotypical gender roles are challenged by the men as well as women and they have started reversing their roles. This research helps in understanding how the gender roles are being challenged by Pakistani writers in their works. The current research studies the character of Butterfly, who is the main character of Mohsin (2008) novel, "The Diary of a Social Butterfly" to help the readers understand the phenomenon of reverse gender roles. The current research is holds a lot of significance in this changing modern world of 21st century where the power dynamics are being questioned and shifted. Women have, for a long time now, suffered at the hands of judgment by the society because of the set patterns in which they had to confine themselves especially when it comes to the Eastern world. As the time is passing, tables are turning and the women are seen more at the positions of power and less confined to their stereotypical roles. With the different feminist movements arriving in the Eastern side of the world, within the subcontinent and especially Pakistani society, there's a need to understand the idea of reverse gender roles and how it has been portrayed and received by the Pakistani writers and Pakistani society in general. The current research investigates the idea of reverse gender roles as portrayed by a Pakistani writer Moni Mohsin in her famous novel, *The Diary of a Social Butterfly.*

2.   Literature Review

Many people have talked about gender roles and gender stereotypes. Some people have talked about the gender roles prescribed by society, and some have talked about the reverse gender roles. Researches of some prominent researchers are as follows:

Butler (2020) argues that gender is performative. Gender is not an internal phenomenon. She has talked about gender norms and said that gender norms are related to our appearance in public. She says that theory of gender performativity deals with the fact that we have a chance to repeat the norms that are acting upon us. According to her, gender and Precarity are two different terms. Reproduction of Gender is associated with power. She has said that precarity and gender norms are inter-related.

Koenig (2018) explains that there are two kinds of stereotyping; descriptive: that relates to what males and females typically do and prescriptive: that relates to what males and females should do in a particular social context. According to her, gender stereotypes could be both positive and negative which means that there are certain traits, characteristics or behaviors which one sex is encouraged more to display as compared to the other, for example: dominance is a negative prescriptive stereotype (NPS) for females and positive prescriptive stereotype (PPS) for males. She also argued that the content and magnitude of stereotyping whether prescriptive or descriptive varies with age.

Benedik (2018) argues that men and women take their roles from society. The stereotypical roles of men allow them to be more conveniently perceived as leaders or business managers while females are not. Despite the advancement of females in business and other work places and a very few differences in their approach and behavior related to work, still there lies an imbalance between the two genders perhaps because of the assigned gender roles and stereotyping.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2018) have argued that gender is embedded not only in our actions but also in our beliefs, institutions, dressing patterns and desires. They have explored that gender is a self-evident phenomenon; it is not something that we are born with rather it is something that we do and this "doing" or "behaving" in a particular way has become a kind of natural truth. The making of a man or woman is a never-ending process and it starts before the birth of a child when we standardize, mostly in gender reveal ceremonies, "it" to "he" or "she". Moreover, society plays a very important role in assigning gender roles expecting from males and females to act in definite roles.

Copenhaver (2002) has researched on gender roles in different novels. He has said that different characters of novels are performing their respective duties. He has found that authors have portrayed traditional roles of male and females. He has said that gender is a common theme in most of novels. He has found that, suffering of female characters is more common than male characters. According to him, male and female characters behave according to their prescribed roles.

Olah, Vignoli, and Kotowska (2020) explore that the trend of new family is giving rise to phenomenon of reverse gender roles. They have explored that now days women are also earning like men. They investigated that different policies are also playing their role in reversing the gender roles. Ickes claimed that in a given society reverse gender roles are common. They have explored that day-by-day traditional gender roles are diminishing.

Brower (2017) explores that reverse gender roles appeared in literature. He says that now a day, gender is shifting, men, and women are shown in an equal manner. Rules that are related to gender roles are fluid. He has talked about traditional gender stereotypes. These are the expectations related to male and females which are now changing.

Ellemers (2018) explains that gender stereotypes are related to general outlooks, which are associated with men and women. She says that the stereotypes related to different genders emphasize on the importance of certain tasks that are gender specific. We associate different stereotypical expectations from males and females. She has explained that stereotyping can be both; harmful and helpful. It can be helpful in that we can expect general

outcomes of unknown people or a community at large but it is harmful as well in a way that we generalize our expectations, which might mask the actual potential of different people. According to her, these gender stereotypes help in the judgement of abilities of men as well as women.

Eriksson, Smith, and Smith (2017) in their research have talked about the differences in gender stereotyping attitudes in different managerial positions. They have also discussed the role of self-stereotyping and its impact on the general behavior of female managers. That is to say, that the way female managers see their abilities and potential helps them a lot in building their own stereotypical attitude in the settings of their workplaces. They talk about the exception in the attitudes of female CEO's because they do not portray traditional stereotyped attitudes rather their beliefs about themselves (self-stereotyping) are matched up with their stereotypical attitudes positively.

3. Methodology

This chapter provides the research strategy of the article. It includes the paradigm of research, its mode of inquiry commonly called as 'research design', the theoretical framework, and research method used by the researcher in order to analyze and interpret the core-text of the research. The current article lies under interpretive paradigm and uses qualitative mode of inquiry. This research uses the qualitative mode of inquiry. The novel, "The Diary of a Social Butterfly", written by Moni Mohsin is analyzed in the backdrop of the theory of reverse gender roles given by Geetha (2002) in her book "Theorizing Feminism". The method adopted for this research is textual analysis. The researcher has followed following steps for this research.

- The researcher has highlighted the different quotes related to reverse gender roles present in the novel.
- After doing this, the researcher has applied the method of textual analysis to explore the instances where Mohsin has portrayed a reversal in the orthodox gender roles through her protagonist, "Butterfly", in the novel.
- At the end, the researcher has analyzed the text according to the theoretical framework provided by Geetha.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Many writers have talked about the reversal of set gender roles and stereotypes prevalent in the society, one of them is Geetha (2002). She has talked about reverse gender roles and stereotypes in her book, "Theorizing Feminism". According to her, gender is not something which is innately present within a person rather, gender involves a "matter of habit and convention". Geetha (2002) is of the view that gender is socially constructed by the society we live in. Gender does not involve fixity of our actions as particular to male or female which we sometimes tend to stereotype. She has said that gender is a "matter of social construction". She writes that there are many factors that contribute in the way males and females perform their roles, these are religion, society, and media etc. But there are no fixed rules for males and females to act in those fixed roles, and that's why gender roles are now reversing. As the time is changing by, the position of women in the world is changing day-by-day. Women are now seen more at the position of power than just being at home doing laundry or dishes. Women are seen at working places or are seen outside their homes, while men remain at home. Geetha (2002) has said that women are taking the roles of men for their survival. Roles of men and women are interchanging. Art (Media) has an important role to play in this role reversal or negating the stereotyping of gender roles. It has explained new roles of men and women.

4. Data Analysis

The first thing that is likely to catch the attention of a researcher is the name of the protagonist. The novel is placed in Pakistani setting and "Butterfly" is not a common name of Pakistani females. The significance of using such a different name is its symbolic representation of the character of the protagonist. Butterfly is an insect which has vibrant colors and it has wings that help it fly from one place to another. Same is true for the character "Butterfly", Mohsin portrays in her novel. She is not a traditional Pakistani woman who stays at home and cooks food or does the house chores and nurtures the kids, rather she is an emancipated, liberal, and free-spirited woman who is a socialite and loves parties and

being a center of everyone's attention. The following analysis with the textual references shows how the protagonist of Mohsin's novel has reversed the traditional stereotyped gender roles associated with Pakistani females.

It is a common prescriptive stereotype that females should not talk about men openly or pass comments about them. It is considered against the traditional norms of stereotypical gender roles. On the other hand, if men talk about women, or express their opinions about them, that is considered acceptable in Pakistani society or mostly all around the world. In the novel "The Diary of a Social Butterfly", Mohsin has portrayed this phenomenon in a reverse manner. Here, Butterfly, who is the main character in the novel, is talking about men in a very bold manner. Repeatedly, in the novel, she passes her comments related to physique and economic situation of different men. She is not reluctant to hold her views about other men. Firstly, she gives her remark on Tonky by saying that "A crashing bore tau the poor thing's always been", "unshaven, food stains on his shirt, dandruff on his jacket bechara" (Mohsin, 2008). By commenting in such a way, she ridicules him. There are other instances in the novel where she comments on different men, while attending a party she comments on players of French polo team, "one of them is really cute. All curly hair and haraami smile and fat fat muscles" (Mohsin, 2008). This kind of boldness is not generally accepted in Pakistani society which is a male dominant society. By commenting in such a manner Butterfly is challenging the traditional gender roles. She is being expressive and assertive in her tone and manner. According to Geetha (2002), the traditional gender roles of women were being submissive, shy, and obedient but these roles can be reversed. Here, Butterfly is reversing the stereotypical roles by calling names to men and being expressive in her male related opinions.

It is a common traditional notion that "women are subservient". In Pakistani society, women are supposed to stay at home and do the house chores and nurture the kids. It is also assumed of them that they should show agreement with their husbands. They cannot in any case ridicule or mock their husbands and they are supposed to show compliance towards their husbands. In the novel "The Diary of a Social Butterfly", Butterfly is not being a submissive wife rather she makes fun of her husband. There are instances in the text where we see that she mocks her husband and passes comments on him "Janoo is very bore. He likes bore things like reading-sheading, watching documentaries and building schools in his stinky old village" (Mohsin, 2008). Her comments about her husband show that she is deviating from fixed norms of a submissive wife and is trying to reverse the gender roles. Staying at home is usually associated with females but Butterfly is not our ordinary, conservative female who just sits home and does house chores. She thinks of it as boring activity. For her, fun is only when you go outside, enjoy parties, and be social. At another point, she mocks her husband for being bore using an unconventional tone, "Unlike Janoo, who is a zinda laash, I am very gay" (Mohsin, 2008). Repeatedly in the novel, she passes comments on her husband. In an Eastern society, comments like these, especially towards ones husband, are considered very rude and offensive, but Butterfly has no fear talking like this about her husband. At another instance she says, "Janoo tried to comfort him in his own sarrhial way" (Mohsin, 2008). A traditional submissive wife would never talk about her husband in this manner. She is deviating from the traditional gender roles as Geetha (2002) points out in her book that gender stereotypes can be challenged and roles are now reversing. These examples from the novel give us the insight that she is not an orthodox submissive, subservient wife rather she is being assertive.

The background for the unorthodox character of Butterfly is set by Moni Mohsin in the very start of the novel where Butterfly introduces herself as, "If you don't know me then all I can say, baba, is that you must be some loser from outer space" (Mohsin, 2008). This kind of mocking tone is not a stereotypical feminist trait rather it shows her deviant nature. She likes being self-expressive, the way she gives her introduction in the novel is also not the way females usually talk about themselves. She starts her introduction as, "everyone knows me. All of Lahore, all of Karachi, all of Isloo…half of Dubai, half of London… chalo I'll ignore karo your ignorance this one time only and tell you about me" (Mohsin, 2008). Being so much famous and popular is traditionally not considered as something good or something that a female should be proud of especially in Pakistani context. The way Butterfly speaks about herself as being popular among different cities is not the traditional way a female introduces herself to anyone, here Butterfly is challenging the conventional set patterns of gender roles.

This is a very common stereotype attached to women that they have tender hearts and a caring nature. But deviating from the established notions of femininity and womanhood, Butterfly acts as a cold hearted woman who does not care about anyone other than herself. She talks about her in-laws in a very bad manner. She mocks her mother-in-law and says, "Janoo's mother is a window" (Mohsin, 2008). Here, she meant to highlight her status as a widow, but instead of calling her a widow, she made a fun of her and says that she is a window. She negates the role of a submissive daughter-in-law as what is mostly expected especially in an eastern society. She is not portrayed as a traditional caring feminine character. She even reacts towards the news of her mother-in-law's illness in a very cold manner. She prefers eating her strawberries and watching "Kaun Banay Ga Crore Patty" instead of going to see her mother-in-law, she says, "At least let me finish kaun banay ga core patty, he is just three questions short of a crore. And the servants will eat all the strawberries" (Mohsin, 2008). This shows the reversal of the set caring notions of femininity, she holds no one important other than herself. Repeatedly, she talks about her in-laws in an immoral manner. At other instances in the novel she talks about her husband's sisters in a mocking manner and says that, "Janoo has two sisters—the Gruesome Twosome. They are big cheater cocks" (Mohsin, 2008). She does not behave like a docile and caring daughter-in-law rather often in the novel she compares her own status with her sisters-in-law, as she says, "Janoo's sisters went to Home Economics, where all the middleclass or purdah types go" (Mohsin, 2008). For Butterfly, maintaining a status quo is as important as breathing. Time and again she comments on the way other people are dressed, or where they went to study, or what people wear, or what kind of social circle one has. Since she is a socialite and likes to party that is why she mocks and ridicules the sisters of her husband who are conforming to the traditional gender roles of femininity. They do not party and they are not socialites like Butterfly. Geetha (2002) in her theory talks about this difference between the traditional stereotypical gender roles which are now changing and reversing. Butterfly challenges the traditional notions of being shy, obedient, home makers, caring, and nurturing that are attached to females and reverses these roles.

Men seem to be more interested in outdoor games. They take interest in games and play outdoor games. In the novel, Butterfly reverses this role as well and takes interest in games. She likes to watch cricket and polo matches. Conventionally, men are said to be possessive about games and players but here in the novel Butterfly takes keen interest in watching matches as there is an instance in the novel where she says, "Life is over ……………… There is no more cricket and no more matches" (Mohsin, 2008). Sports was traditionally seen as something men would like but here we see that the female character Butterfly is reversing the long-established notion and she is seen as so much fond of cricket that her life seems to be over for her because there would be no more matches. This depicts her profound interest in outdoor games. For her, life is with matches, parties, festivals, going abroad, talking about branded shawls and clothes and ridiculing men for being boring. This attitude shows her reversal of the conventional feminine traits and challenging their stereotypical roles.

Conventionally, women are not supposed to manage or host the parties in Pakistani society but as we explore in the framework of Geetha that the trends are changing now. Media has set a lot of new drift in different societies and cultures. Since Butterfly is very fond of parties she reverses this long hold stereotypical role and prepares for the Basant festival. Basant is a festival associated with flying kites, and kite flying is traditionally associated with men. It is commonly observed that men and especially youngster boys wait for Basant impatiently in Pakistan, as compared to women. In the novel, *The Diary of a Social Butterfly*, the protagonist, who is a woman, more impatiently waits for the festival of Basant than her husband does. The title of a chapter in the novel is, "Butterfly Prepares for Basant Parties" (Mohsin, 2008). This title elucidates that she anxiously waits for the festival of Basant. Repeatedly, she talks about the festival and prepares for the Basant party with a keen interest which is shown through the following lines in the text, "So in keeping with Basant theme" (Mohsin, 2008). She is so much interested in the festival that she counts the days left for the event, "Now I'm all set for Basant. Let the countdown begin" (Mohsin, 2008). Her attitude towards the people who do not know about the Basant festival is also quite surprising. She could not digest the fact that someone does not know about this festival. "Haw, on which planet are you living…? Don't you know about Basant" (Mohsin, 2008). She makes fun of the people who do not know about Basant and asks them if they are living on some other planet.

"Life's so bore. Basant's also over" (Mohsin, 2008). After the festival is over she feels sad because being a socialite, celebrating events and managing and hosting parties is what she likes the most. "I told her she must be back in time for Basant" (Mohsin, 2008). She calls her mother for the Basant festival. Through all these instances from the novel we can interpret that Butterfly is reversing her roles from being a traditional female who would do house chores and nurture kids to a modern emancipated women who loves to party and manages festive events unlike her bore husband who sits in home and likes to read and watches T.V.

Conventionally, men go to parties and in male dominant Pakistani society no one minds a male attending parties and they go to parties more than women do. According to Geetha (2002), a traditional notion set about men is that they are dominant, authoritative and free in their acts. They do whatever they want to and nobody questions them but it is not the same for women because they are supposed to stay at homes and are answerable to their husbands. In the present novel, we find a contrary situation. Here, Butterfly loves to go outside. She loves to attend parties. She goes to different get-togethers. "No ball, no party, no dinner, no coffee morning, no funeral, no GT—uff, now I have to explain GT to you also? Get together, baba—is complete without me" (Mohsin, 2008). This clearly depicts the free nature of Butterfly to go to every event around the town. We also find no traces of her husband's authoritative attitude. He does not intervene or stop her from being such of a socialite, neither does Butterfly feels answerable to him. This is what Geetha has also mentioned in her book that the gender roles are now reversing and females do not confine to the stereotypical roles assigned to them by the society. "We've been invited to six parties" (Mohsin, 2008). "Can't wait for all the parties, yaar" (Mohsin, 2008). From these textual insights we can dig out that she is very much fond of parties. She is reversing the gender roles as Geetha says that these roles are not fixed. Butterfly adheres to reversing the conventional stereotypical roles.

Butterfly turns down the conventional notion of female to stay at home. Traditionally, men used to travel more for business trips and recreational purposes but in the novel, Butterfly is reversing these roles and says that she loves to travel. She is not a traditional woman who would stay at home. The main character, Butterfly herself said, "I love travelling—to Dubai, to Singapore, to Harrods" (Mohsin, 2008). She wants to go to different countries of the world. She likes to go from one city of some foreign country to another. There are other instances in the novel where we find that she not only loves travelling but also that she is popular not only in Pakistan but in other countries as well. She has travelled a lot that now people from other countries know her. As she gives her introduction in the novel as, "Everyone knows me,…half of Dubai, half of London.." (Mohsin, 2008). These lines depict that Butterfly is not a norm conforming person who stays at home and takes care of her children and does the house chores. Rather, she has quite a free spirit who loves to travel and enjoy trips. Not only is she a traveler, she quite enjoys it and is quite a socialite wherever she goes. Her social circle is not just confined to Pakistan where she resides rather it is expanded to all the places she has been to.

Mohsin has portrayed an emancipated character of women like her name "Butterfly" in the novel. She enjoys freedom in all manners; she attends parties, goes outside of her home whenever she likes, talks about other men in front of her husband in a bold manner. Her brought up from the start pours in a lot to her personality. She is not like the conventional women who stay at homes and are shy and submissive. She is very much assertive in her approach. She ridicules men, she is a socialite who prefers to stay in the public eye rather than staying at home. Geetha (2002) has talked about this reversal of gender roles in her theory. She is of the view that no one is born with any innate capability to act in a particular way rather there are factors like society and religion that make us perform in the confined circles of our gender roles. These gender roles, according to her are now reversing and women are working outside their homes thus challenging the stereotypical gender roles which Butterfly is doing in the present study.

5.   Conclusion and Recommendations
The analysis of this study reveals that the protagonist of the novel, "Butterfly" is reversing the gender roles and challenging the traditional stereotypes related to women in many ways. She is negating an overwhelming prescriptive stereotype that women should not express their views regarding men or should not pass comments about men. She is going against the general stereotype that "women are subservient", rather she does not respect her

husband the way women in Pakistani society are supposed to. She is neither docile nor shy, as most of the times women are. Just like her name Butterfly, she acts as liberal, free-spirited woman who shows lack of interest in her house hold activities and is more interested in attending parties. She shows her interest in outdoor games and activities like basant festival and polo matches. But the reverse gender role reversal done by Butterfly is limited only to cultural stereotypes. She does not break economic stereotypes as we see that she is not a career driven woman who is economically stable or independent. Whatever stereotypes she breaks are cultural and societal as she totally remains economically dependent on her husband's earnings. Moreover, this research is not a Eurocentric research rather it is based on South Asian subcontinent context. Overall, Butterfly's behavior shows that, she is going against the traditional stereotyped gender roles and fixed gender norms.

The researchers can further add into the research of this novel by tracing out the relationship thread between Butterfly and her husband to check how being a socialite affects her domestic life if it affects at all. The research can also be done on this novel from a perspective of cultural materialism and the artificiality that is being slipped into every other house through brand consciousness.

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