

HIDDEN CROSSES VS HIDDEN SELVES: FAITH, GENDER AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN JAVED'S RUBY

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Abstract

In the later years of English Literature, identity, gender and religious marginalization are more prominent themes to gain critical understanding into the experience of minority subpopulations in contemporary South Asian set up. In this study, integrated theoretical approaches based on Hall's theory of Identity Construction, Butler's theory of Gender Performativity and Crenshaw's theory of Intersectionality have been applied to analyze Javed's Ruby from a perspective of intersectionality between faith, gender and identity construction. A qualitative interpretivist approach has been implemented and the methodology adopted is descriptive textual analysis. The analysis illustrates how identity is not static, but instead becomes subject to constant formation and change, mediated by culture, experience and power. The results show that the protagonist utilizes Christian beliefs as a code of identification of marginalization; the gender roles are also operative and the protagonist's courage is constrained by the need to preserve dignity and a sense of belonging. The study highlights that Ruby undermines the dominant discourses around the religious minorities. The study also explores the intricate issues that minority women face and which are unattainable through a single classification: gender and religion. This study drew insights from minority representation, feminist literary criticism and intersectionality, with contributions towards current studies of Pakistani English literature and to critical debates regarding how minority representations, gender and identity construction are talked about in the realm of postcolonial literary studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of literature, storytelling has remained a medium by which societies tell the stories and stories that they tell themselves in order to question and redefine the lives of people on the fringes of dominant social discourses. In addition to its functional role, the literary discourse can provide a forum for representation and the critical analysis of a silenced voice,

suppressed intellectual history and marginalized identities. For current literary scholarship, there has been a growing interest in the study of narratives that reveal the meeting point of gender, religion, ethnicity and identity, especially in a postcolonial society, where the issues of belonging and not belonging have an entrenched cultural and political presence. "Identity is formed at the unstable point where the 'unspeakable' stories of

subjectivity meet the narratives of history" (Hall, 1996).

In addition, Javed's collection of short stories not only reflect life as lived, but also reveal the intricacies of the processes by which social identities are being created, negotiated and negotiated against the odds. Identities are not always and everywhere determined, and are not simply given, but are always put in motion through the interplay of social institutions, cultural practices, religion and power. In the contemporary theories of identity, it is stressed that people develop their identity within the "institution" of their own time and culture in which various social identities overlap and act for individual identity. Among these categories, which are most influential are those related to gender and religion, as our self-perception is shaped by them as well as our perceptions and treatment by the society. When it comes to identity formation, it gets complicated for people of religious minority groups, where personal religious identity may come in conflict with social prejudice, institutional discrimination and gendered expectations. Thus, literary works depicting minority experiences can afford us some insight into the multi-layered process of identity making. Moreover, the works of Pakistani English fiction have been increasingly addressing the issue of identity, cultural belonging and social injustice. Although, some aspects of colonization, nationalism and migration themes have been explored in earlier works of literature, the contemporary Pakistani writers have interests in areas of religious pluralism, gender disparity, sectarianism and the marginalized societies within the society. This transformation is a testament to the increasing awareness of the literary works power to transcend and challenge reinforcing myths and invite critical reflection. As Butler (1990) has mentioned, "Gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be." In Pakistani literature, religious minorities hold a special place in the basket of the marginalized communities. Minor communities are frequently excluded socially and

discrimination against them is widespread and prevalent, and opportunities are unequally distributed. Literature provides a valuable record of such experiences for showing the way in which prejudice and exclusion can manifest themselves in normal social relations.

Furthermore, minority women are especially in need of scholarly consideration because of the multiple systems of power defining their identities. Besides the discrimination they might face for religious reasons, often they may face discrimination for gendered expectations also in patriarchal societies. These women might suffer from multiple forms of marginalization: as women, and as women of a religious group, as they are denied the right to belong to their religion and to femininity as well. They are part of a set of circumstances that become the negotiation of their lives between themselves, their families, their culture and social prejudice. This research reviews these interwoven factors to give researchers an idea of how identities become an easy formation and socially-constructed process instead of a single, static identity. In Javed's Ruby, the main protagonist narrates an insightful story of a Christian girl in a society that is tiered by religion and is based on male supremacy who fights for dignity, belonging and self-definition. Identities are not fixed in the novel but continually are produced and negotiated amongst family culture, community, faith and the wider social institutions. Symbolism in the title of this piece Hidden Crosses vs. Hidden Selves gives a grip of the basic set-up of the novel at the center of the novel. "A literary symbol is something that means more than what it is. It is an object, a person, a situation, an action, or some other item that has a literal meaning in the story but suggests or represents other meanings as well." Perrine, L. (1978). The "cross" operates not just as a religious symbol, but as a symbol of the specters of the burden of minority faith that are seen and unseen. It represents commitment, pain, strength and the presence of religion in a world of jeopardy. Instead, "hidden selves" are the inner dimensions of identity which are hidden beneath labels and

stereotypes imposed upon people by outside powers. All of these metaphors conjure the protagonist's experiences of coming to terms with personal faith, gendered expectations, and the need to be recognized. Ruby successfully intersects faith, gender and identity to construct specific forms and patterns of marginalization—and also specific manners of resistance.

1.1 Problem Statement

Pakistani English literature has been considering increasingly the issues of gender, religion and social inequality and the inter-section of these aspects is not considerably explored in literary arena. There has been an increase in studies about women's representation and religious minorities over the last ten years but these studies tend to focus on one without the other, and so do not investigate how these forces interact and affect the lives of minority women. The partial methodology hinders the view of the multifaceted impacts through which the marginalized identities appear to be constructed, negotiated and represented in contemporary fiction of Pakistan. Javed's Ruby is a story of a Christian woman whose identity is determined by religious marginalization, the Patriarchal norms and social exclusion. Although, the novel has been praised for its advances in showcasing the challenges faced by the Christian community in Pakistan, there has been hardly any scholarly interest produced in understanding how the protagonist's identity is also shaped by her faith's qualification and from a gendered perspective. The current criticism focuses on either religious discrimination or women's oppression; the connection of these two is not explored. This study aims to investigate the connection around Faith, Gender, and Identity Construction. This analysis seeks to gain insight into how contemporary Pakistani English fiction explores and depicts minority space for women and how it questions dominant social discourses relating to religion, gender and belonging.

1.2 Research Objectives

- To investigate ways in which the protagonist's experiences, agency and sense of self are shaped by gender.
- To understand the dynamic of faith and gender in minority identity constructing and contesting.
- To explore, how Ruby investigates the literary means and tools by which she challenges the dominant social narratives about religious minorities and women.
- To make contribution towards the existing research on Pakistani English literature by giving the integrated analysis on Faith, Gender and Identity construction.

1.3 Research questions

1. In what ways does gender influence the protagonist's experiences and identity formation in the novel?
2. How do faith and gender intersect to shape the identity of the protagonist as a member of a religious minority?
3. What literary and narrative strategies does Javed employ to represent the complexities of minority identity?
4. How does Ruby challenge or reinforce prevailing social and cultural perceptions of religious minorities and women in Pakistan?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Identity Construction: A Social and Cultural Process

As a subject identity has become one of the most important in today's literary and culture studies and become a way of bringing together the beliefs that people have about themselves and the place they occupy in the society. What now is believed is that identity is not fixed, not merely biological, or of a biological nature, but rather that identity is fluid, relational and socially constructed. It grows with constant engagement with cultural values, social institutions, historic and power structures. That literary works are crucial sites thus to look at the ways in which identities are formed, negotiated, challenged and transformed. One of

the more influential conceptualizations of identity is provided by Stuart Hall, who is one of the foremost scholars in the study of identity. Hall proposes to question the essentialist concept of an undivided self, and how identity is always being constituted, shaped through discursiveness, history and representation. He states:

In addition, identities are never unified and even more, in late modern times multiply constructed – "never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall, 1996, p.4). In the specific context of literary characters, roles which change as they are shaped by the different social factors, Hall's observation is especially appropriate. Characters are not always unified or clearly defined, and they may well negotiate to put together a set of expectations that are in conflict with one another in terms of gender, religious, ethnic, and class. The protagonist's identity is likewise determined by the interplay of her religious affiliation, patriarchal norms and social prejudice and Hall's framework is particularly applicable to her changing sense of self in Ruby. Similarly, Hall (1996) also claims that identity is "a production," 'never complete,' and 'always in process'. This way of thinking is a critique of essential understandings of identity, highlighting its fluidity and dynamism. This is especially important with minority characters whose identities are continually remade in the process of feeling out, negotiating, and resisting. Cultural theorists, supporting this view, argue that this is how identity is achieved: through a system of representation. Self-understanding and understanding by others is influenced by social institutions, language, religion, media, and culture narratives. As a result, literary narratives as they depict identities also help form and challenge social understandings of identity.

2.2 Gender as a Constructed Identity

Gender is a subject whose study has changed dramatically in the last few decades. Traditional feminist studies tended to conceptualize gender as a fairly fixed social category while recent thinking

stresses the performance and socially produced nature of gender. Today, gender is recognized as a not just a biological difference, but as a result of socially repeated practices, cultural expectations, and institutional norms. Butler's gender performative theory had a profound influence in feminist approach to literary criticism. Her position is that gender is not a naturally given, but a behavior which is continually repeated by socially regulated practices. Butler famously writes, "Gender is the reiteration of the body" (Butler, 1990, p. 43). This claim implies that femininity and masculinity are not just biologically created but are instead made up of multiple acts that take place over time. Therefore, representation of women in literature is not only viewed as representation of female identity but as construction, reinforcement and at some point, resistance of gender.

Additionally, Butler also questions some of the traditional hypotheses that have been taken for granted, contending that gender is a cultural construct, thus free from biological determinism. However, when the constructed nature of gender is theorized as remaining entirely detached from sex, gender comes to be a free-floating artifice (Butler, 1990, p. 6). This is especially relevant in the field of literary studies, where it can be used to study the way that society sets the norm for feminine and masculine existence within social institutions. Moreover, in the context of the Pakistani society, gender norms are often driven by cultural norms, religious interpretations, and patriarchy in the family structure. Thus women characters often struggle to assert identities which are often limited by political, social, and religious notions of obedience, modesty, marriage, and family honor. Such limitations become even more pronounced if combined with minority religious beliefs.

2.3 Intersectionality: Faith, Gender and Minority Identity

While gender and religion have been analyzed separately, the feminist discussion is nowadays focused on the fact that systems of oppression do

not work separately in many cases. Multiple social identities, such as gender, religion, ethnicity, class and culture, come into play in relation to the individuals and they are discriminated against. This is an important point to view in relation to intersectionality first introduced by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who states that when multiple identities overlap, there are unique privilege and marginalization experiences. Intersectionality shows that it is particularly useful in the analysis of minority women since their situation cannot be discussed solely based on their gender or religion. Rather, both dimensions work together to create opportunities, limitations and personal identities. Judith Butler makes the same point about interconnectedness of identity categories when she says: "Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical context, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities..." (Butler, 1990 p 6). This is especially true about Ruby: the sensibility of being a "heroine" and the righteousness of being a Christian believer can't account for the entire experience. Rather, these identities meet in order to create a unique form of exclusion and also concurrently determine what aspects of resilience and understanding she has. Intersection of faith, gender and minority identity cannot, therefore, be seen as independent variables and for this reason the present study takes a more integrated approach to these factors.

2.4 Faith, Religious Identity and Minority Representation

In Pakistan, religion plays a significant role in society by influencing people's values, attitude and personalities. Islam is the dominant religion but there are other community groups, such as Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis and others in Pakistan. Focusing on issues of belonging, exclusion, citizenship and human dignity, the experience of these minorities has garnered increasing interest from contemporary Pakistani English writers, who use literature as a tool to examine their experience. These kinds of literary depictions dispute their monolithic

understanding of national identity. Recognition is key in identity formation and social acknowledgement is expected to play a significant role, as Charles Taylor has stressed. He observes that, "Our identity is partly determined by the recognition or withholding of recognition, and frequently by the misrecognition of others" (Taylor, 1994:25). In this context, Taylor's argument gains much significance in the case of minority groups whose identities are often shaped by feelings of exclusion and social prejudice. The lack of equal recognition in terms of religion is the place where identity becomes a place for the negotiation. This is a helpful lens to approach the problems of Christian characters in Pakistani fiction. All these are reflected and captured in the recently emerged Pakistani English fiction, which depicts the commonplace experiences of all the marginalized religious communities. You set your foot on a different path when you write as a contemporary writer and not give minority characters merely passive roles as victims but present them as individuals who are trying to deal with dignity, with faith and with survival in situations that are not equal. Fiction has been shown to often reveal the unequal structures that affect Christian communities, and challenge the prevailing ideological stance on religion and citizenship.

2.5 Gender, Faith and the Experience of Minority Women

Minority women have unique experiences of religion and gender. Intersectional approaches to the study of gender and religion do not focus on either gender or religion in isolation but rather perception that women in minority religious groups suffer double or multiple discrimination. Ruby depicts that the triangle between religion, caste and class, gives rise to distinct patterns of vulnerability and at the same time evidences women's resilience and agency. This view is especially applicable to Ruby, in which the protagonist's plight cannot be described just as gender oppression or religious discrimination as such. But rather, her identity is formed in the

ongoing process of relation between faiths, feminine identity, family limitations, and social marginalization. Feminist literary criticism claims that women writers frequently plight an insurgence against dominant discourses in the creation of female characters who rebel against socially imposed identities. The characters are not defined in terms of the patriarchy, but instead find alternative ways of asserting themselves through their memories, their physical survival, their educational process, their beliefs and their decisions. Literary stories thus become sites of identification not simply representation.

2.6 Javed's Ruby and Contemporary Pakistani Fiction

In modern English literature of Pakistan, Kanza Javed is an important figure. Her fiction is unique because of her compassion for the underprivileged communities, portrayal of women characters and presence of socio-cultural realities in the current era of Pakistan. Javed's story is about intimate experiences, unlike many others before it that were mostly about politics or nations; it is about the emotional baggage of inequality, prejudice and social denial. Javed's Ruby is a complex picture of one Christian woman, influenced by personal choices and the social landscapes. In Ruby, faith is depicted not as only one aspect of religious devotion but as selfhood, strength and belonging. At the same time, it reflects the ways in which the protagonist's relationships, aspirations, positions in society are shaped by the patriarchal expectations. Moreover, Ruby depicts the religious minorities in a non-simplistic manner, making the characters psychologically complex rather than symbolic. In doing so, this short story questions prevailing notions about faith, gender and national identity in the South Asia.

2.7 Research Gap

As the existing literature was reviewed, it was found that extensive academic focus has been paid to constructions of identity, feminist theory, intersectionality of faith as well as representations of religious minorities in postcolonial literature.

But there are key weaknesses that are uncovered. Firstly, there is an obvious lack of study on Javed's Ruby. Second, the studies in the field usually examine one of two factors: gender or religious or minority representations and do not analyze the genre's synergic function in identity construction. Thirdly, there has been a lack of understanding of the role faith plays not simply as a religious conviction but as a key part of personal identity in the experiences of minority women. The present study is intended to fill above gaps, it offers a combined analysis of Ruby with regards to faith, gender and identity construction. Building on the theory of construction of identity, feminist literary criticism and intersectionality, the study illustrates how the protagonist's negotiation between multiple identities takes place in a socio-cultural context of religious hierarchy and patriarchy.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study draws upon an interdisciplinary theoretical approach that is centered on Stuart Hall's Theory of Identity Construction, Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity and Kimberlé Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality. Their combined view offers an analytical window through which the representation and negotiation of faith, gender and minority is identified in Javed's Ruby.

3.1 Stuart Hall's Identity Construction Theory

Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity is the main theoretical basis for this study. According to Hall (1996), identity is not natural nor permanent, nor even biologically determined. He contends however, that identity is socially and culturally constructed through experiences, representations, discourses and power relations over history. Hall views identity as a process and not a state of being. People constantly work out their identities as they perceive them in the light of new social circumstances, cultural norms and institutional frameworks. This is very important to Ruby, as the protagonist learns about herself through her social experiences with family, community and relation to God through discrimination. Ruby is a

Christian woman in a Muslim majority society, struggling with her multiple selves which constantly affect her sense of belonging. With Hall's paradigm it is therefore possible to examine how identity is being generated and settled through the process of discourse and social recognition and is not just something which one is given at birth. In addition, Hall surveys that identities are generated in systems of representation. Literary works are part of this process, whether they are making meanings about religion, about gender, about ethnicity, and about nation. *Ruby* is therefore explored as a fictional text and as one that reflects the lived experience of a religious minority, and one that can aid in wider debates regarding identity, citizenship and belonging in the present-day Pakistan.

3.2 Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity

Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity is the second theoretical pillar of this study. Butler specifically challenges the natural sex/gender binary thinking. She theorizes gender as a process of reiteration, of social enactment, of cultural performance, and institutional expectations. People become "women" and "men" by regularly enacting actions prescribed by society as "feminine" and "masculine". Not only is gender an important determinant of the protagonist's social experience in *Ruby*, it is also a core component of the narrative control. *Ruby* faced expectations in regards to subservience, family honor, modesty, and "feminine" behavior. These expectations are perpetuated by the patriarchal structures which control women's choices and opportunities. An effective lens for this analysis is Butler's theory, which not only illuminates the oscillations in *Ruby*'s identity caused by these socially dictated gender roles, but also shows times when she challenges, escapes, or resists them. Also, the way that Butler views gender as being produced is that femininity is not just a representation in literature, but it is actively produced via discourse. From this view, the study addresses the construction of the feminine self by

Javed as a result of the interplay of religion and culture and not a biological construct of gender.

3.3 Kimberlé Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality

Whereas Hall tells of the process of constructing identity and Butler deconstructs the performative nature of gender, Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality is about how multiple identities coexist to produce an individual's experiences. Crenshaw also contends that the recognition of systems of discrimination cannot happen in isolation, as individuals may experience multiple oppression based on their gender, race, class, religion, ethnicity, and other social identities. This theory is especially relevant to *Ruby* as the experiences are not just because of gender and religion. The marginalization of *Ruby* takes place within the interplay of both categories. Her discrimination is not just on the basis of her gender, but also as a member of a Christian minority. This combination of identities also gives rise to this particular kind of vulnerabilities that is not visible if the gender and religion are examined separately. Thus, intersectionality allows in the current research a multi-layered analysis of the simultaneous role of several power structures in constructing identities. Demonstrates the complexity of *Ruby*'s (lived) experiences and how faith and gender operate together in shaping opportunities, relationships and self-perception.

3.4 Application to the Study

The textual analysis of *Ruby* is informed by the theoretical discussion of the interaction between faiths, gender and minority status in constructing the protagonist's identity in the novel. Butler's theory has been used to understand gender-based expectations and patriarchal relationships, while Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is used to understand the intersections of these aspects that create multiple experiences of marginalization and resilience for individuals. Hall's theory has also been used to interpret the formation and representation of identity. The study aims to prove a theory of the multiple and non-fixated nature of

Ruby's identity, which is constantly renegotiated in overlapping cultural, religious, and gendered discourses. Hence, the analysis not only aims to add to the critical appreciation of Javed's *Ruby* but also to the general study of Pakistani English literature, minority representation and identity studies.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study is a qualitative study, which is used for the analysis of representation of "faith", "gender" and "identity construction" in *Ruby* by Kanza Javed. Qualitative research is suited especially for the field of literary studies, as it allows in-depth probing of meanings, experiences and socio-cultural contexts that are found in literary text. The study aims to interpret how the languages, narratives, symbolism and characterization create the identity of the protagonist and reveal the lived realities of religious minority women in Pakistan rather than measuring the numerical variables. The study is of an interpretivist kind since it takes a standpoint that as there is a literary text, there are several meanings that emerge from it and are redefined by culture, history, and ideology. So the emphasis in the study is on the interpretation of text-based evidence, not hypothesis testing or the formation of statistical relationships.

4.2 Research Paradigm

The study falls under the interpretive paradigm which sees reality as socially and culturally-constructed. As such, meaning is not the objective but is merely created through language, discourse and life experiences. The interpretivist paradigm is suitable to analyze how religious and gender identities are depicted and renegotiated in the storytelling of *Ruby*, as it is through the experience of the novel's protagonist that questions of identity are discussed.

4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Qualitative thematic textual analysis is followed in the process of analysis. The story is read several times, to look for themes, patterns, symbols and

strategies that relate to the research questions. Important parts of the text are highlighted and then sorted by theory of the study.

Analysis is carried out in the following steps:

1. Close reading of the text to find evidence in the text(s).
2. Coding of text passages by themes of faith, gender, identity, discrimination, resistance and belonging.
3. Using the theory of the construction of identity by Hall and theories of gender performativity by Butler and intersectionality by Crenshaw to interpret the chosen extracts.
4. Making comparisons to find out how the protagonist's experiences are influenced by more than one social identity.
5. Synthesis of findings to achieve the research objectives, answer the research questions.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

The research is exclusively published literary and scholarly sources. Ideas, quotations and interpretations are properly acknowledged using the APA 7th Edition referencing style. The study respects the intellectual property rights, using a good citation of sources primary as well as secondary ones. There is no involvement of human participants and so informed consent or participant confidentiality is not an issue.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Hidden Crosses: Faith as the Foundation of Identity

The tension between this visible religious identity and the possibly hidden emotional experiences of minority women is the first word on the tongue in the title of this study: Hidden Crosses vs. Hidden Selves. Christianity is not just a religion in *Ruby*, but an integral part of the character. Faith provides us with hope, strength and moral support, while also serving as a sign of social marginalization. Kanza Javed does not portray Christianity as a purely theological system, but as a lived-experience of discrimination, silence and perseverance. Stuart Hall's theory of how the

identity is built explains that *Ruby's* being Christian is not an inherent one, but one that “has been negotiated socially” (Hall 2003: 456). Hall believes that identities are always undergoing change as you engage with the social and cultural forces. Thermal examples can be seen in the way that *Ruby's* perception and identity about herself is built on experiences of prejudice, unequal treatment and her struggle to maintain her dignity in the face of exclusion. Her religion takes on significance by how society reacts to her religion. Faith is even more a symbolic “hidden cross” throughout the novel. The cross is also a symbol of the Christian faith, and a metaphor of the burdens borne by minority groups. Being faithful to her own religion does not make *Ruby* an outsider of the society, due to society's response to her faith, she is “the other”. As a result, it is demonstrated that identity is not ‘an individual identity’, but a relational identity. The protagonist *Ruby* is an emotionally strong character by Javed's side, which is not the stereotypical portrayal of the minority woman as a helpless infer. She doesn't give up her convictions and she doesn't let discrimination rule her whole life. Such resilience reflects how faith can be a means of holding on to selfhood in the context of exclusion.

5.2 Hidden Selves: Identity Construction through Social Exclusion

The text is a true example of how one's identity can be shaped by both one's own understanding of self and by others knowing who one is. The notion of “becoming” as Stuart Hall describes, is highly applicable because *Ruby's* identity is constantly in a state of flux as it continues to develop with experiences of family, community and society. *Ruby* is constantly engaged in negotiations of opposing identities. She is at once a woman, a Christian, a daughter and a citizen. These identities overlap to produce experiences beyond attainability by one social category alone. Her very being is often explained by her minority status and she is failing to create an identity that is rooted in pride and empowerment. Through Kanza Javed,

the artist portrays how identities are not fixed but constantly and continuously constructed, based on lived experience. Rejections make *Ruby* more aware of herself; acceptance makes her more aware of herself as part of a group. Thus, identity becomes a process of negotiation that is between one's own sense of identity and the social category one is assigned. *Ruby* frequently hides her feelings, which makes the use of the metaphor of the “hidden self” even more important to focus on. Her silence must not be seen as a weakness, rather a means of survival in a misbalanced society.

5.3 Gender and Patriarchal Expectations

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is useful in comprehending *Ruby's* gender performances as a woman. Butler instead believes that “femininity” is a result of iterative social expectations, not biological fact alone. In the course of the story *Ruby* experiences patriarchal demands for obedience, modesty, family honor and women's behavior. These expectations govern her behavior but also how she is judged by others as being worth or not worth. Kanza Javed challenges patriarchal ideology by exposing the socially constructed tendencies of judging and condemning women based on a specific set of criteria. In this sense, *Ruby's* identity negotiates and battles the pressure to act in what is socially acceptable as feminine, while simultaneously holding on to the religious identity. Text uncovers at the same time *Ruby's* resistance to these expectations and her fight or tactics for survival. She doesn't openly defy all the rules of society, but uses moral courage, self-respect and emotional strength to exert her agency. A delicate kind of rebellion that defies patriarchy but doesn't diminish the character into a mere rebel icon.

6. Conclusion

Stuart Hall's Theory of Identity Construction, Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity and Kimberlé Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality have been employed within the present study to explore the relationship of faith,

gender, and the construction of identities in Javed's Ruby. Prime character Ruby (Rubina) has been analyzed qualitatively with text in the construction of religious identity. It is constantly discussed in the constructions of patriarchy and socio-cultural norms of the heroine in this study. As per the results of the study, it was confirmed that identity in Ruby is not fixed and it is not one – off and on –, rather it is a dynamic process, which evolves through lived experiences, social relationships, institutional power, culture and narratives. The protagonist's identity is always at stake as she is discriminated, excluded and subjected to gender expectations on a constant basis.

In the present study, from the analysis, it is found that Christianity is not only a religion but also part of the protagonist's persona, which gives evidence to her emotions, mental strength and understanding of the world. Meanwhile, the very religiousness gets inscribed into the body and coded as a marker for marginalization in a society which promotes a tendency, to socially isolate minority groups. The "hidden cross" is a symbolic picture, ideally continuing the burden of being one of the minority religious groups. The study, therefore, concurs with the work of Stuart Hall that the identity is a societal-based one and only created through the means of representation and interaction and not through biological attributes or birth. Through portraying Ruby's experiences, it is evident that identity is a result of ongoing processes of negotiation amongst the social institutions, the cultural ideas and imbalanced power structures. Likewise, through the application of Judith Butler's theory it is found that the gender in Ruby is a performance based on the patriarchal definitions which are socially fabricated and away from biological nature. In this story, the main character needs to live up to the ideals of being submissive, modest, giving up and honoring one's family that have been culturally scripted. Such expectations try to control her actions and limit the possibilities for her. Javed, however, does not show Ruby to be a helpless female victim of patriarchy. What she offers is one

lady who has empowered herself with quiet strength, moral fortitude, emotional resilience and integrity. The refusal of Ruby is not a blatant challenge to society, it is her way of living her life, in order to preserve her identity in the face of the pressures of society all around. This renders the discussion of minorities as a whole and minority women in particular complex rendering and yields insights into women's agency in patriarchy.

Moreover, it is shown that Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is the most inclusive theory with regard to Ruby's experiences. Protagonist cannot be female and cannot be a Christian. Rather, both are totally cross-cut and rendering discriminatory practices. Religious margin and gender inequality – two factors – have come together and make Ruby's struggles harder. These multiple layers of power have influenced her potential, captured her interaction with others, given her a sense of self-awareness and fuel to fight an aspiration for dignity and recognition. These outcomes thus, demonstrate the usefulness of an intersectional approach to analyze the nuanced description and egregious problems of women minorities in the Pakistani society. The symbolic term Hidden Crosses against Hidden Selves, summarizes the main crux of this research. The "hidden cross" is used to symbolize the "visible" burden of minority and faith, whereas the "hidden self" is the internal struggle for identity, recognition and belonging, mostly imperceptible to the society. These symbols are a means for expressing the pressure of being consistent with the outside society and of being consistent with one's own self. Javed's success lies in her ability to explore without guilt; how dominant social discourses carve and label individuals as religious or gendered categories. This exploration successfully deals with the emotional, psychological, and cultural considerations that contribute to human identity. The foregrounding of the experiences of a Christian woman complicates the depiction of religious minorities and will help readers to re-think the mainstream notions of citizenship, belonging, gender roles and social justice in Pakistan.

Another significant contribution of the study is, it has been conducted in order to fill a gap existing in the English literature critique in Pakistan. Issues related to gender, religion, minority representation have been much discussed separately. In a combined way they are touched upon in 'Ruby', a tale which relates almost entirely to this interaction between two of the most important elements of this story. This research provides multiple-approaches of the text, through combining the theories of Hall, Butler along with Crenshaw and it also illustrates the importance of interdisciplinary literary analysis. For this, it adds its own unique contribution to the larger studies on what is involved in the formation of identity as well as the studies in feminist literary criticism, postcolonial literature and the representation of minorities in Pakistani English fiction. Furthermore, this is a research work whose importance and significance goes beyond literary criticism. The dilemmas shown in Ruby are not exclusive issues faced merely by the existence of fallible minority women, but are elements at stake faced by many minorities, that have experienced the condition of being a woman, with additional layers of inequality. Literature can be a powerful means of creating space to hear those whose voices have been lost. Rubina's story by Javed is an invitation to understand that identity is a continually negotiated process. Ruby is a reminder that 'dignity, recognition and equality' are basic values which must not be subordinated, and which must not be differentiated based on religion, sex, class and social status.

The present study, although, it was able to contribute something, had the limitation that only one literary text was used under the umbrella of qualitative interpretive methodology. Future researchers can go ahead by making comparative analysis of Ruby with other English short stories, which are written by the authors of Pakistan in any contemporary era and confronts with minority identities. Apart from this, theoretical studies such as postcolonial, feminist, trauma study and critical discourse analysis as well as narrative theory can also be incorporated with the study to display the

further understanding of identity formation in the Pakistani literature. Last but not least, the novel Ruby indeed reflects the complexities of religion, gender and identities. Through the protagonist's narrative, issues of identity and how it is constantly negotiated through inequitable power struggles, culture, religion and social events are inscribed. Ruby supplements valuable academic debates on identity, gender justice, religious diversity and social inclusion. This work is an opportune reminder that struggles for recognition and belonging are entangled with struggles for social change, human dignity and equality.

7. Discussion

This analysis is used to illustrate that *Ruby* cannot only be read as a Christian female discourse. Rather it's an intricate work of identity formation within overlapping fields of religion, gender and power. Stuart Hall's context helps the study make sense that *Ruby's* identity is socially created within interacting with dominant cultural discourses. Patriarchal notions control female identity as per Butler's theory and as per Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, *Ruby's* experiences are not unique to gender or religion. Thus, symbolic meaning is given to the title Hidden Crosses vs. Hidden Selves. The cross symbolizes one's external identity as a stigmatized one, the minority faith, while the self symbolizes one's inner identity that is constantly renegotiated under the social identities. These symbols suggest that identity is not one or constant but rather is performed and richened across lived experiences.

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