

**NOMADIC FLOWS AND FEMINIST
BECOMING: THE INTERSECTIONS OF
DJINN AND WOMEN IN THE SELECTED
PAKISTANI ANGLOPHONE SPECULATIVE
FICTION**

BY

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**Nomadic Flows and Feminist Becoming: The Intersections of
Djinn and Women in The Selected Pakistani Anglophone
Speculative Fiction**

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ABSTRACT

Title: Nomadic Flows and Feminist Becoming: The Intersections of Djinn and Women in The Selected Pakistani Anglophone Speculative Fiction

The research explores the subversion of traditional gender norms in Pakistani society through the lens of two Pakistani Anglophone novels: *A Firefly in the Dark* by Shazaf Fatima Haider and *The Blue Room* by Nafisa Rizvi. Both novels feature strong female protagonists who engage with mythical Djinn, which serve as symbols of empowerment and resistance. Through these supernatural interactions, the protagonists challenge and transcend patriarchal constraints, gaining agency and autonomy. The analysis draws on the theoretical frameworks of Judith Butler's concept of "performativity," Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of "becoming" and "nomadic flows," and Judith Lorber's understanding of gender as a social institution. A scrutiny of the texts employing the theoretical lens helps illuminate how the Djinn facilitates the protagonists' transformation, allowing them to subvert conventional gender roles and assert their identities in a patriarchal society. The research highlights the complex interplay between myth and reality in these narratives, demonstrating how they reflect and contest the dynamics of gender and power in Pakistan. Ultimately, the study underscores the profound agency and resilience of women as they navigate and resist societal restrictions, while overlapping with Djinns, offering new insights into the struggle for identity and autonomy within a culturally rich and traditionally bound society.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all those who are working hard to work toward bettering themselves.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research delves into the portrayal of the mythical occult creature, the Djinn, within selected works of speculative fiction. The primary focus is on how this pivotal mythical trope is intricately integrated into the narrative to examine its intersection with female characters, resulting in a profound subversion of their traditional roles and identities. The study seeks to illustrate how the Djinn's presence disrupts established norms, enabling female characters to break free from their conventional, institutionalized societal positions. By weaving the occult myth into the storyline, the research reveals how these mythical elements challenge and redefine female identity, shedding light on broader issues of gender and empowerment. The rationale behind this investigation is to demonstrate how the fusion of the occult and the feminine in speculative fiction serves as a powerful tool for questioning and reshaping societal expectations of women.

This research aims to delve into the intricate representation of gender and power dynamics in Pakistani society by analyzing two significant works of Pakistani Anglophone literature: *A Firefly in the Dark* (2018) by Shazaf Fatima Haider and *The Blue Room* (2009) by Nafisa Rizvi. Both novels center on strong female protagonists who interact with mythical occult beings—specifically Djinn—thereby offering a compelling lens through which to explore how these women navigate and subvert conventional gender norms within a deeply patriarchal context.

The first text under examination, *A Firefly in the Dark*, revolves around Sharmeen, a young girl who finds herself uprooted from her familiar life and thrust into the care of her Nani (maternal grandmother) after an unexpected tragedy. The novel explores Sharmeen's complex emotions as she adjusts to her new environment, marked by familial tensions, school bullying, and a growing sense of isolation. The presence of Aziz Bhai in the household adds to Sharmeen's discomfort, as his role and intentions become increasingly unsettling.

Despite these challenges, Sharmeen discovers a refuge in her relationship with her Nani, who shares with her a rich tapestry of folk stories about Djinn, shapeshifters, and other mystical creatures. These stories, however, are met with disdain by

Sharmeen's mother, who views them as mere superstitions that should not influence Sharmeen's upbringing. The narrative takes a mystical turn when Sharmeen encounters a firefly in the yard, which she soon discovers is a Djinn. This Djinn, who befriends Sharmeen, begins revealing the hidden truths and secrets of the household to her, including the true intentions of those around her.

The Djinn's role in the story is multifaceted. Initially, it serves as a guide and protector for Sharmeen, helping her navigate the complexities of her new life and the dangers lurking within her home. As the story progresses, the Djinn's influence grows, eventually leading to a pivotal moment where it possesses Sharmeen. This possession becomes a turning point in the narrative, as Sharmeen, now empowered by the Djinn, takes on the responsibility of defending her family against the threats that have been revealed to her. In this context, the Djinn functions as both a literal and symbolic force of empowerment, enabling Sharmeen to transcend her fears and assert herself within a patriarchal society that seeks to diminish her agency.

The second text, *The Blue Room* by Nafisa Rizvi, centers on Zaibunnissa, a perceptive and unconventional young girl raised in a large, extended family within the confines of a traditional haveli. The narrative of *The Blue Room* is steeped in the cultural and historical weight of its setting, with the haveli itself acting as a repository of ancient traditions and myths. Zaibunnissa's life takes a dramatic turn when she decides to expose the malicious schemes of a fake moulvi, a decision that swiftly leads to her being married off to an older man she has never met. This forced marriage, a common practice in patriarchal societies to silence and control women, thrusts Zaibunnissa into a world where she must contend with hostile in-laws and navigate the expectations imposed upon her.

Amid these challenges, the titular Blue Room of the haveli becomes a crucial element in the story. The walls of the room could talk or at least could communicate to only the protagonist, Zaibunnissa, which she attributed as the presence of Djinn, whose presence influences the narrative and Zaibunnissa's journey of self-discovery and empowerment. The Djinn in the room become symbolic allies to Zaibunnissa, helping her harness her inner strength and resilience. Through her interactions with these mystical beings, Zaibunnissa can confront the patriarchal forces that seek to oppress her, ultimately making a life-altering decision that impacts not only her own future but also the lives of those around her. The Djinn, in this case, serve as catalysts for

Zaibunissa's transformation, guiding her toward a more empowered and autonomous self.

The selected novels are generally termed as speculative fiction. Speculative fiction is a broad and dynamic genre that emerged as poets and writers began to craft narratives exploring alternative realities and hypothetical scenarios about our world. This genre encompasses elements of science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other speculative themes, allowing for the exploration of different universes, future possibilities, or other worldly realms. Rather than being confined to a specific genre, speculative fiction serves as an expansive category that gives authors the freedom to create fictional worlds and scenarios distinct from our current reality.

Speculative fiction is a broad genre that took shape as poets and writers ventured into crafting their own narratives, exploring alternative realities and hypothetical scenarios about our world. It contains elements of science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other speculative themes that analyze different universes, future possibilities, or otherworldly locales. Speculative fiction is not a specific genre but a broad category that allows authors to create fictional worlds and scenarios that differ from our existing reality. Many factors have contributed to the emergence of speculative fiction in Pakistani society. Diverse voices from various origins contribute to the genre, providing it with various perspectives. Internationally recognized authors such as Mohsin Hamid and Nadeem Aslam have elevated Pakistani speculative fiction to global recognition. Readers seeking narratives that reflect the intricate details of their culture value the genre's ability to examine and remark on noteworthy societal issues. Online communities, investigation of cultural identities, educational activities, and the genre's role in providing escape and entertainment all contribute to its rise. Overall, speculative fiction flourishes in Pakistan due to its authors' talent, worldwide recognition, cultural relevance, and capacity to interact with important subjects in diverse ways, thus strengthening the country's literary landscape.

For readers in Pakistan, speculative fiction is particularly valued for its ability to reflect and engage with the intricate cultural nuances of their society. The genre's capacity to examine and comment on significant societal issues resonates with those seeking narratives that delve deeply into their cultural identity. The growth of online communities has also facilitated the exchange of ideas and the proliferation of speculative fiction, fostering a vibrant literary community. Additionally, educational

initiatives and the genre's inherent appeal as a source of both escape and entertainment have further propelled its popularity.

The success of these fictions partly owes to the richly rooted traditions of history, culture, geography, social and religious backdrop ranging from the ancient civilization of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, borrowed and adopted tropes from Arabia, Persia, Europe, Central Asia via conquest, taking religious myths from Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Overall, speculative fiction thrives in Pakistan due to the exceptional talent of its authors, its growing international recognition, its cultural relevance, and its ability to address important issues through diverse and imaginative lenses. This flourishing genre not only enriches the country's literary landscape but also strengthens its connection to global literary movements. The deep-rooted elements of speculative fiction have infused it with various themes, including cultural, social, political, and mythical aspects. One of the lesser-explored mythical themes is the role of occult Djinn in mythology.

Djinn are defined in Holy Quran (n.d), as creatures that are formed from smokeless fire. (Islam F) They are typically associated with desolate locations such as deserts, ruins, and abandoned buildings, where they are thought to dwell. Much like humans, Djinn are believed to have their own societies, complete with hierarchies, communities, and moral alignments, ranging from good to evil. They are often linked with magic, mystical powers, and the ability to grant wishes, a concept that has popularized the image of the "genie in a bottle" in Western culture, though this portrayal stems from the Arabian folklore tradition.

The concept of Djinn is deeply intertwined with cultural practices and local beliefs, which can influence how these beings are perceived in different regions. In Pakistan, where approximately 97% of the population is Muslim, cultural beliefs are closely linked to religious practices. As a result, the belief in Djinn and the phenomenon of "jinn possession" is both widespread and commonly accepted. According to cultural belief, Djinn possession occurs when a Djinn, often considered malevolent or immoral, takes control of a human body without the person's consent. This possession is believed to grant the Djinn control over the individual's behavior and emotions, often leading to significant changes in the possessed person.

Furthermore, Djinn are believed to possess a nomadic ability, allowing them to inhabit individuals and instigate transformations within them, a process that can lead to profound changes in a person's identity or state of being. In various narratives, Djinn have been portrayed as powerful entities, sometimes aiding protagonists in overcoming challenges or confronting significant threats.

This intricate portrayal of Djinn within Islamic tradition and cultural practices, particularly in Pakistan, illustrates their formidable presence and the deep influence they exert on the beliefs and folklore of the region.

Djinns are typically associated with desolate locations such as deserts, ruins, and abandoned buildings, where they are thought to dwell. Much like humans, Djinn are believed to have their own societies, complete with hierarchies, communities, and moral alignments, ranging from good to evil. They are often linked with magic, mystical powers, and the ability to grant wishes, a concept that has popularized the image of the "genie in a bottle" in Western culture, though this portrayal stems from the Arabian folklore tradition.

To analyze the character of the Djinn, the researcher has chosen to apply Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming," as articulated in their seminal work *A Thousand Plateaus*. In this text, they propose that "becoming" can be understood through the rhizomatic model, a concept that emphasizes multiplicity, non-hierarchy, and connectivity over linear progression. Central to the process of becoming are the notions of "intensity" and "desire," which Deleuze and Guattari argue are crucial forces driving this transformation.

Becoming, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is not about adopting or imitating fixed identities; rather, it involves engaging with the dynamic forces of desire and tapping into the intensity that leads to the formation of new connections and expressions. This process of becoming challenges and blurs the boundaries between humans and animals, or in the case of this study, between humans and supernatural beings like the Djinn. The emphasis on "intensity and desire" is fundamental, as these forces propel the individual or entity toward continuous transformation and new modes of existence.

In the context of occult works, the representation of Djinn and other supernatural entities can be seen as embodying this intense and transformative

potential. The desires, motivations, and passions of these beings often drive their interactions with human characters, pushing both the supernatural entities and the humans they engage with into new realms of experience and understanding. While Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming does not explicitly address the depiction of Djinn or other occult entities, parallels can be drawn. The Djinn's ability to shape-shift, possess, and influence humans aligns with the idea of becoming a process of continuous transformation, driven by the forces of intensity and desire.

Thus, the concept of becoming provides a theoretical framework for exploring how Djinn, with their inherent transformative abilities, interact with human characters in ways that transcend traditional boundaries and lead to new forms of existence. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the Djinn's role in speculative fiction, particularly in how their intense and desire-driven nature facilitates profound transformations within the narrative.

In patriarchal societies such as Pakistan, where women's roles are often rigidly defined and controlled, the phenomenon of Djinn possession can be interpreted as a form of symbolic resistance against systemic gender oppression. Far from being a mere supernatural occurrence or cultural superstition, Djinn possession provides women with a socially legible space through which they can express dissent, assert agency, and temporarily escape the constraints of their traditional, subjugated roles. By embodying the "possessed," women may access a form of power and attention otherwise denied to them within the dominant sociocultural framework. This disruption of normative gender expectations challenges patriarchal control and opens possibilities for alternative performances of identity, making Djinn possession a potent metaphor—and mechanism—for gender subversion and transformation. To explore this dynamic, the researcher draws on the theoretical concepts of Judith Butler and Judith Lorber.

Judith Butler's theory of "subversive identity" offers a foundational perspective on this subject. Butler defines subversive identity as a form of identification that actively challenges or undermines existing norms, expectations, or power structures within a given culture or group. It involves the adoption of identities, actions, or ideas that resist and oppose dominant cultural or social ideals. This subversion can manifest in various ways, often associated with countercultures and subcultures, where individuals reject conventional stereotypes related to lifestyle, fashion, music, or ideology.

Central to Butler's theory is the concept of "performativity," which she introduces in her seminal work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Butler argues that gender identity is not an innate characteristic but is instead performed and represented through repeated behaviors and actions. These performances are akin to following a script, where individuals enact gender roles that society has constructed. By subverting or deviating from this script, individuals can challenge traditional notions of identity. Butler further posits that gender identity is a social fabrication, fluid, and constructed through social interactions, rather than being a fixed and inherent attribute. In this sense, subverting identity becomes a way to oppose societal norms and conventions, often as a deliberate political or social act. According to Butler, women can subvert their identities by challenging established gender norms and expectations through their actions, behaviors, and expressions, including by adopting characteristics that are traditionally viewed as masculine or androgynous.

Judith Lorber, another prominent feminist theorist, offers complementary insights into the transformation and multiplicity of identities. In her work *Paradoxes of Gender*, Lorber does not explicitly address the concept of subverting identity in the same way Butler does, but she provides a crucial understanding of how gender operates as a social institution. Lorber introduces the idea that gender, much like other social institutions such as family, education, and religion, plays a significant role in organizing and shaping society. She emphasizes the concept of "doing gender," which suggests that individuals actively engage in behaviors and performances that conform to socially constructed gender roles. These performances are not innate but are learned and reinforced through social interactions.

Lorber argues that when individuals perform gender according to societal expectations, they simultaneously reinforce and legitimize existing sex-based institutional arrangements. In this way, gender is continuously reproduced and justified through daily practices and interactions. However, when individuals consciously or unconsciously deviate from these norms, they challenge the conventional structures of gender, thereby opening the possibility for new identities and social roles to emerge. (Lorber 298)

In the context of Djinn's possession in Pakistani society, these theoretical frameworks provide a lens through which to analyze how women, through this phenomenon, may experience a subversion of their traditional identities. The

possession by a Djinn can be seen as a form of "performative" disruption that challenges and redefines their roles, affording them a unique position in society that contrasts sharply with their conventional, patriarchally defined identities.

Judith Butler's concept of "performativity," as outlined in her seminal work *Gender Trouble*, is central to understanding the subversion of gender norms in these narratives. Butler argues that gender is not an innate quality but is constructed through repeated performances of socially prescribed behaviors. In both *A Firefly in the Dark* and *The Blue Room*, the female protagonists subvert traditional gender roles through their interactions with the Djinn. Sharmeen and Zaibunissa, initially constrained by societal expectations, use the power and influence of the Djinn to challenge and redefine their identities. This subversion is a performative act that disrupts the established gender hierarchy, allowing the protagonists to assume roles that would typically be denied to them within their patriarchal environments.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of "becoming," particularly their concept of "nomadic flow" from *A Thousand Plateaus*, provides another layer of analysis. According to them "The nomad distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle. It is therefore false to define the nomad by movement. The nomad may stay in the same place and nevertheless be in movement, because he occupies a deterritorialized space." (Deleuze 381). Nomadic identity is shaped by this fluidity, constantly shifting rather than conforming to fixed categories. Deleuze and Guattari explain "The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Even the elements of his dwelling are conceived in relation to the trajectory they describe: the war machine, the line of flight." (Deleuze 380) In this context, "becoming" refers to a process of transformation that is fluid and dynamic, rather than fixed. The Djinn in these novels embody this idea of becoming, as their supernatural nature allows them to transcend the boundaries of human identity and societal norms. Through their interactions with the Djinn, Sharmeen, and Zaibunissa undergo their processes of becoming, transforming from passive figures into active agents of change. The concept of "nomadic flows" further illustrates how these characters navigate their fluid identities, moving through different states of being and gradually asserting their autonomy in a society that seeks to confine them.

Judith Lorber's analysis of gender as a social institution, as discussed in *Paradoxes of Gender*, highlights how gender roles are socially constructed and

maintained. Lorber's concept of "doing gender" suggests that individuals perform gender roles in ways that reinforce societal expectations. However, when these performances deviate from the norm, they challenge and potentially transform the existing social order. In *A Firefly in the Dark* and *The Blue Room*, the female protagonists engage in acts that defy traditional gender roles, aided by their relationships with the Djinn. These acts of resistance not only empower the protagonists but also disrupt the patriarchal structures that seek to control them.

In both novels, the Djinn serve as powerful symbols of empowerment. They provide the protagonists with the means to resist and challenge the oppressive forces in their lives. Djinn's supernatural abilities, such as shape-shifting, possession, and revealing hidden truths, enable the protagonists to gain insights and powers that were previously inaccessible to them. These abilities allow Sharmeen and Zaibunissa to navigate their patriarchal environments in ways that subvert traditional gender roles and empower them to take control of their destinies.

The Djinn also represents the blurred boundary between myth and reality, a recurring theme in both novels. The interaction between the real and the supernatural allows the protagonists to explore new possibilities for their identities and roles within society. This intersection of myth and reality reflects the complex dynamics of gender and power in Pakistani society, where cultural and religious beliefs often intertwine with social norms.

This research highlights how *A Firefly in the Dark* and *The Blue Room* uses the motif of the Djinn to explore and subvert traditional gender norms within Pakistani society. By drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Butler, Lorber, Deleuze, and Guattari, this analysis reveals how the protagonists' interactions with the Djinn enable them to resist and challenge patriarchal oppression. The novels illustrate the profound agency and resilience of women in the face of societal restrictions, offering a nuanced portrayal of the struggle for identity and autonomy in a patriarchal context.

Through the lens of these theoretical perspectives, the research underscores the significance of these narratives in reflecting and contesting the complex dynamics of gender and power in Pakistan. The characters' transformative journeys, facilitated by the Djinn, provide a powerful commentary on the possibilities for subverting

established norms and asserting female agency within a society that often seeks to limit it.

1.1 Thesis Statement

The trope of Djinn, in the selected speculative fiction, serves as a transformative catalyst empowering female characters to adopt ‘nomadic’ identities and ‘become’ versatile as well as autonomous, dismantling their conventional female roles.

1.2 Research Questions

1. In what ways do Djinn intersect with women in the selected speculative fiction?
2. How do the intersections between female characters and Djinn generate nomadic identities for women characters in the selected speculative fiction?
3. How do the experiences of ‘becoming’ and ‘nomadic flows’ help female characters subvert their traditional gender roles?

1.3 Significance & Rationale of the Study

This research carries significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, it delves deeply into speculative fiction, a genre that frequently performs the role of an idealized representation of society's goals and challenges. The research investigates the evolving narratives regarding gender roles, particularly the empowerment of women, by concentrating on how Djinn, prominent entities in Holy Quran, are depicted within this genre in a Pakistani context. This analysis highlights the powerful narrative tools used by speculative fiction to challenge societal norms and reassert the agency of female characters. Understanding how literature may drive and reflect these societal changes becomes increasingly important as the world grapples with issues of gender equality and social justice.

Another significance of this research lies in its investigation of how the depiction of mythological occult creatures such as Djinn in chosen Pakistani speculative fiction serves as an extremely powerful means of subverting traditional gender roles and identities within a patriarchal culture. In Pakistan, where traditional norms and expectations frequently constrain women's agency, these fictional storylines provide a unique and imaginative space for female protagonists to defy existing standards and express their individuality. This research not only sheds light on the transformative potential of literature but also contributes to a deeper understanding of how storytelling

can be a vehicle for social change by analyzing these narratives through the theoretical lenses of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Judith Butler, and Judith Lorber.

Furthermore, this research is of utmost importance in the context of Pakistani literature and culture because it reveals how speculative fiction, a genre that has acquired acceptance in Pakistan since its inception, acts as a platform for investigating and addressing critical issues related to society. The research focuses on the innovative ways in which Pakistani authors use Djinn mythology to address complicated questions of gender, identity, and power. By examining the intersections of myth and reality in these narratives, the research provides valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics of gender in Pakistan, providing readers and scholars with a nuanced understanding of how women can assert agency and resilience within the confines of a traditional society.

1.4 Delimitation of the Study

This research study is delimited to the analysis of two specific works of Pakistani speculative fiction, "A Firefly in the Dark" by Shazaf Fatima Haider and "The Blue Room" by Nafisa Rizvi, with the primary focus on how the portrayal of Djinn in these texts intersects with and subverts traditional female gender roles. The research investigates the notion of becoming and subversive identity, mainly within the context of Pakistani society, using the theoretical frameworks of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Judith Butler, and Judith Lorber. It is confined to a chronological perspective limited to the publishing years of the selected novels and an English-language analysis focused on the portrayal of Djinn in relation to female identity, ignoring in-depth analyses of larger Djinn mythology, cultural practices, or social consequences. The research findings and conclusions pertain specifically to the themes and narratives portrayed in each of these novels and may not be generally relevant to other instances of Djinn mythology or speculative fiction.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary objective of this review is twofold: first, to contextualize the current study within the broader academic discourse, demonstrating how it can contribute to and enhance the existing body of knowledge. Second, it aims to identify gaps in the existing literature that the current research seeks to address, thereby filling these gaps with new insights and understanding.

The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section focuses on the theoretical foundations provided by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, particularly as articulated in their influential work, *A Thousand Plateaus*. This section will explore the existing scholarship that engages with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas, highlighting how these theoretical perspectives have been interpreted, applied, and critiqued in various academic contexts. The second section examines Judith Butler's concept of performativity as outlined in her groundbreaking text, *Gender Trouble* and Judith Lorber *Paradoxes of Gender*. This part of the chapter reviews the scholarly discussions and debates that have emerged around Butler's notion of performativity, and Lorber's notion of doing gender, paying particular attention to how their ideas have shaped and been shaped by subsequent research in gender studies and related fields. The final section delves into the existing research and epistemological frameworks related to the primary texts selected for the current study. This section not only situates these texts within the ongoing academic conversations but also identifies the specific contributions that this research aims to make to these discussions.

Through this comprehensive review, the chapter aims to lay a strong foundation for the research, demonstrating both its relevance and its potential to contribute original insights to the academic community.

2.1 Deleuze, Guattari, and the South Asian Literary Imagination

Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical concepts have garnered significant attention and widespread acclaim, sparking extensive debate, critique, and application across various academic fields globally. Within Western academia, Deleuzian and Guattarian theories have long been established and are far from novel; they have been thoroughly explored, scrutinized, and integrated into a multitude of scholarly

discourses. Their influence spans disciplines such as philosophy, literary theory, cultural studies, and beyond, where their ideas have been both celebrated and rigorously contested.

Due to the constraints imposed by the study's word limit, the present research does not delve into the extensive global and universal applications of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas. Instead, it narrows its focus to examine how these concepts have been specifically incorporated within the South Asian context. Much like the Global North, the Global South, particularly South Asia, has been captivated by Deleuze and Guattari's notions. Scholars and intellectuals in this region have not only engaged with these theories but have also critically examined and adapted them to suit local contexts and intellectual traditions. The theoretical frameworks proposed by Deleuze and Guattari have been utilized to explore a wide range of topics within South Asian studies, including literature, culture, and identity.

South Asian scholars, much like their counterparts in other parts of the world, have found Deleuze and Guattari's ideas to be a valuable lens through which to interrogate and reconfigure traditional narratives and power structures. Their work has inspired new ways of thinking about concepts such as identity, subjectivity, and resistance, and has provided a means to challenge existing paradigms within South Asian literary and cultural studies.

In this context, the present research seeks to explore the specific ways in which Deleuzian and Guattarian concepts have been adopted, contested, and transformed within South Asian intellectual discourses. This focus allows for a deeper understanding of how global theories are localized and how they interact with the unique cultural, historical, and social landscapes of South Asia. Through this localized examination, the research aims to contribute to the broader conversation on the global impact of Deleuze and Guattari's work, while also highlighting the distinct ways in which their ideas have been interpreted and applied in the South Asian context.

Deleuze, Guattari, and India: Exploring a Post-Postcolonial Multiplicity (2022) delves into how the philosophical frameworks of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari can be applied to reinterpret the complexities of postcolonial India. The central argument of the work is that traditional postcolonial theory often emphasizes binary oppositions—colonizer vs. colonized, oppressor vs. oppressed—while Deleuze and

Guattari's concepts of multiplicity, rhizomes, and assemblages offer a more nuanced approach to understanding the realities of postcolonial societies. The central argument is that India, with its diverse cultures, languages, religions, and histories, cannot be adequately understood through linear or singular narratives. Instead, the country represents a multiplicity network of interconnected and overlapping identities and experiences.

Ian Buchanan uses Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome, a non-hierarchical and non-linear model of growth, to describe how Indian society functions. This model allows for an exploration of India's social, cultural, and political dimensions without reducing them to simplistic dichotomies. Furthermore, the book discusses how concepts like deterritorialization and reterritorialization are relevant to understanding the ongoing processes of globalization, migration, and cultural exchange in India. It critiques the limitations of postcolonial theory in capturing the fluid and evolving nature of Indian society and advocates for a "post-postcolonial" approach that is more attuned to the dynamic and ever-changing realities of the country. By integrating Deleuze and Guattari's ideas with the Indian context, the book offers a fresh perspective on postcolonial studies, encouraging readers to think beyond established frameworks and consider the multiplicity and complexity inherent in India's identity. (Ian Buchanan). While Deleuzian concepts such as nomadic flow, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization have been widely explored in the context of minority studies, the present research shifts its focus to the mythical occult—an integral aspect of Indian culture—that remains largely unexplored within these theoretical frameworks

In the article *Fractured Territories: Deterritorializing the contemporary Pakistani novel in English* (2018). The author employs Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of deterritorialization and lines of flight, along with Aamir R. Mufti's analysis of global literature, to examine the works of three Pakistani novelists: Nadeem Aslam, Mohsin Hamid, and Kamila Shamsie. Central to contemporary Pakistani fiction in English are themes of fragmentation, disjunction, and disorientation, with the enduring metaphor of partition and a focus on borders and their transgression shaping much of the narrative.

Paul Veyret explores how contemporary Pakistani novelists, particularly Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie, and Nadeem Aslam, address the complex social and political realities of South Asia while transcending the traditional postcolonial

frameworks of Anglicization and Orientalization. These authors engage with issues such as the unresolved legacy of partition, the societal impact of the War on Terror, and the media's portrayal of Muslims in the West. Instead of simply "writing back" to a colonial past, these novelists shift their focus to the tensions between colonialism and globalization. For instance, Paul Jay's analysis of Hamid's *Moth Smoke* reveals a paradox where the novel, while critiquing the effects of globalization on Pakistan's emerging middle class, obscures the historical connections between globalization and British colonialism, suggesting that these two forces are intertwined. He further concludes that although postcolonial challenges persist, the literary landscape has evolved. These Pakistani novelists have successfully integrated the vernacular traditions of South Asia with the global novel's flexible form. Their relationship with English literature is no longer defined by subordination or conflict but has become a dynamic, rhizomatic exchange. He is of the conclusion that "The relationship with English literature is neither agonistic nor subaltern; it is instead, a Baroque, Deleuzian line of flight without origin or center, a rhizome. *Midnight's children* have thrived and multiplied, and now *Midnight's grandchildren* are the new voices from the Land of the Pure. (Veyret 15). This comprehensive article has examined the notions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization but has not addressed the Deleuzian concept of nomadic flow. The present research aims to explore this concept in the context of mythical Djinn and their intersection with humans, highlighting how these supernatural beings traverse and reshape territorial boundaries

Jürgen Schaftechner and Max Kramer have researched the social dimension in their work *Tactics for Becoming Visible: South Asian Minorities in the Times of Communicative Capitalism* (2024) have raised certain questions by focusing on the questions as what do we mean by tactics for becoming visible? They have answered it systematically when considering tactics for becoming visible, we are talking about how individuals facing precarious circumstances adapt to and navigate the uncertainties of online spaces, particularly in the context of communicative capitalism. Visibility, in this sense, plays a dual role. On one side, it reflects the intersection of political power and recognition, symbolizing the ability of individuals to assert their political significance within a community—essentially, who is allowed to be seen and heard in the public sphere. On the other side, visibility also encompasses the risks associated with being seen, such as surveillance, tracking, and the potential misuse of one's image

or voice, particularly for marginalized groups. They are of the view that “when examined through the lens of visibility, the agency of our precarious interlocutors appears as constantly being composed, decomposed and, at times, already impoverished by the medium itself” (Kramer 18). These dynamics reveal how the agency of those in precarious positions is continually shaped and reshaped, often constrained or diminished by the very platforms that offer visibility. The discussion also brings in concepts like capture, limits, thresholds, and frames, which are used to better understand the strategies these individuals employ as they attempt to navigate this complex landscape. This article mainly focuses on how minorities can become visible and thus applies Deleuze's notion of becoming. Its domain is mostly society and that too unheard voices. This research is similar to the current study as the researcher has applied Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming but has not focused on nomadic flow and its acceptance in the culture. While aiming at the culture, myths, and folktales play a very vital role. They are taken as a site where the unheard voices are heard, this very important aspect of culture has not been dealt with in the above study. Although the theoretical application of Deleuze and Guattari in the South Asian context is still developing, the existing body of work, as evidenced by the cited articles, shows that their concepts have recently begun to gain traction. This emerging literature, though in its early stages, is substantial enough to affirm that Deleuze and Guattari's notions are being actively explored within South Asian academic and intellectual circles.

The current study builds upon this foundation by engaging Deleuze's concepts, but it does so with a particular focus and nuance. Specifically, the research hones in on Deleuze's idea of the nomadic flow and its critical role in the process of becoming. This focus distinguishes the present study from other works that may employ Deleuzian concepts more broadly. By concentrating on the concept of Nomadic Flow, the study seeks to explore how this notion of fluid, non-static movement, and transformation operates within the South Asian context, particularly in identity formation, cultural shifts, and the ongoing processes of becoming.

This approach not only contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Deleuze and Guattari in South Asia but also offers a unique perspective by highlighting a specific aspect of their philosophy. Through this nuanced application, the study aims to demonstrate the relevance and adaptability of Deleuze's concepts to South Asian

cultural and intellectual discourses, thereby enriching the broader understanding of how these theoretical frameworks can be applied across diverse contexts.

2.2 Navigating Gender in South Asia: The Butlerian Framework

Judith Butler's seminal work, *Gender Trouble*, created a seismic shift in academic and intellectual landscapes across the globe. Its revolutionary theoretical foundations, particularly its focus on the concept of gender performativity, resonated deeply and widely. The work's impact was magnified by its primary emphasis on women, who make up fifty-two percent of the global population. Even after more than three decades since its publication, *Gender Trouble* remains one of the most influential works in the study of gender, especially concerning the performative aspects of female identity.

Much like the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, Butler's ideas have permeated a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, literature, and the arts. Her notions of performativity have been rigorously debated, critiqued, and applied in various contexts, solidifying her status as a central figure in contemporary gender studies.

The present study seeks to explore how Butler's theories have been engaged within the South Asian context. Global South, particularly South Asia, has shown a growing interest in Butler's work, driven in part by the region's socio-cultural dynamics. South Asia, with its complex interplay of gender roles, presents fertile ground for applying and expanding Butler's ideas. The region is marked by deeply entrenched patriarchal structures, where women often face not only marginalization but, in many cases, are subjected to multiple layers of oppression. In such contexts, Butler's notion of the subaltern—those who are marginalized to the point of being rendered voiceless—resonates profoundly.

This study specifically examines how Butler's concept of gender performativity has been interpreted, utilized, and adapted within South Asian academic and social discourses. While there may be a limited amount of scholarship directly addressing Butler's work in this context, the existing literature is sufficient to begin contextualizing and understanding her influence in South Asia. The study positions itself within this emerging field of inquiry, aiming to shed light on how Butler's theories can help unpack the complexities of gender in a region where patriarchal dominance often silences women and other marginalized groups.

By situating Butler's work within the South Asian context, this study not only contributes to the global conversation surrounding Gender Trouble but also highlights the unique challenges and opportunities presented by applying her ideas in a society where gender and power are deeply intertwined. This research seeks to demonstrate that Butler's theories, despite originating in the Global North, have significant relevance and potential for fostering critical discourse and social change in the Global South, particularly in addressing the persistent issues of gender inequality and marginalization.

In her article *Gender Trouble in South Asia* (2020), Geeta Patel is of the view Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, published thirty years ago, revolutionized the understanding of gender by introducing the concept of performativity. Butler challenged the idea of gender as a fixed, biological reality and argued that identity is shaped by social, economic, and political forces rather than an innate core. However, she concludes

It's been thirty years since Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* was published, a work that fundamentally altered how we (Patel) understand gender and its constructs. When it was released, it challenged entrenched beliefs about gender, particularly through the concept of "performativity," which disrupted the idea that gender is a fixed, biological reality. Butler questioned the rigid separations between inner and outer identities and the notion of an untouchable "inner core" (such as the psyche or soul), arguing instead that these are shaped by social, economic, and political forces" (Patel 966; Mahmood)

But she is optimistic as *Gender Trouble* found its place in South Asia by being read in fragments, where these pieces were integrated into new political and philosophical frameworks. However, these ideas resonated because similar concepts were already familiar and circulating among local scholars and activists.

She further asserts When *Gender Trouble* arrived, the groundwork was already laid for its reception within South Asian intellectual circles. Though primarily about gender and sexuality, *Gender Trouble* also offers a broader reorientation of thought, encouraging readers to re-examine taken-for-granted beliefs about identity. It invites us to reflect on how we've come to understand ourselves, functioning as a pedagogical tool that intersects with the philosophical. This dynamic is particularly evident when viewed from the Global South, where the text's methods were adapted to local contexts, merging philosophical inquiry with practical pedagogy. Thus, *Gender Trouble* can be

seen as a pedagogical practice that, in these new contexts, highlights philosophical and political routines of governance and daily life. Her article mainly focus upon the gender trouble in south Asia and is not related to the role of women and the performativity which the current research is about.

Mohammad Shakil Ur Rehman et al in their article *Eco-Feminism and Its Impact on Gender Construction in Sidhwa's The Pakistani Bride*. Their article examines the influence of eco-feminism on gender construction in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* (1990), using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity as its framework. Their study explores eco-feminism, a perspective that connects the oppression of women and nature under dominant socio-cultural powers, adding a new dimension to traditional feminist and gender analyses. Eco-feminism highlights the shared struggles of women and nature, both of which are victims of patriarchal and gender-biased systems. The novel not only addresses the exploitation of the environment but also critiques the socio-cultural taboos that enforce gender constraints on marginalized groups.

This research reveals how eco-feminism in Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* (1990) exposes the hegemonic and unequal treatment of both nature and women. By examining eco-feminism and gender construction, the study offers a fresh perspective beyond traditional feminist views that often rely on binary oppositions. Eco-feminism, as a theoretical framework, highlights the shared oppression of nature and women under dominant socio-cultural powers. This perspective emphasizes the similar nurturing, accommodating, sacrificial, and caring roles that both women and nature play in society, drawing attention to their inequitable and discriminatory status because "The focal point of the study here to mention is that both the nature (ecological system) as well as women suffer badly at the hands of conventional patriarchal system that uses coercion for the maintenance of their discourse of power and hegemony" (Muhammad Shakil Ur Rehman* 59). This comprehensive article focuses on the role of nature in the performativity of females, but it has not discussed the role of the supernatural occult in the performativity of females.

In yet another article, *Socio-Cultural and Religious Taboos Trapped the South Asian Women: Analyzing Female Struggle Against Male Chauvinist Society in Gita Mehta's Raj* by Hassan Bin Zubair et al, they are of the view that Gita Mehta holds a distinguished position in Indian Writing in English, and her work often addresses issues

related to women's identity. In her novel *Raj*, Mehta delves into the culture, traditions, and political landscape of India, portraying how women are often confined by religion, tradition, and social taboos. The novel's heroine, Jaya Singh, challenges these constraints and emerges as a new, independent individual within society. This research paper examines *Raj* as a rich text for feminist analysis, exploring how Jaya Singh and other subordinate female characters strive to carve out their own space in a male-dominated society.

Utilizing Judith Lorber's theory of the social construction of gender, Judith Halberstam's concept of female masculinity, and Judith Butler's notion of 'gender performativity,' the paper analyzes how gender roles and ideologies are socially constructed rather than innate. They concluded "It is the product of society and culture made to suit the ulterior motive of patriarchy. The main conclusion to be drawn from this work is gender is not an inborn entity which is quite a political issue; hence, the female characters deployed in the novel are claiming their 'space' in society" (Hassan Bin Zubair 19). The insight article is all about the role of women and their space in society, but it does not focus upon the female agency through which a female gains an impact which the present article is all about.

The article, *Cultural Violence, and Gender Identities: A Feminist Post-Structural Discourse Analysis of This House of Clay and Water* by Amber Raza et al examines the complex relationship between gender, identity, violence, discourse, and social practices as depicted in Mansab's *This House of Clay and Water*. They reiterated that in contexts like Pakistan, gender is often viewed as a biological trait determined at birth, with social roles and identities seen as fixed. Challenging the notion that gender is a socio-cultural construct is crucial for raising awareness that gender roles are not immutable and that harmful social norms can be changed to support marginalized groups such as intersex individuals, transgender people, and women. Their study highlights how certain forms of abuse, repression, and cultural violence are normalized through language and literary discourse, and how these same tools can be employed to challenge and dismantle these structures.

The research draws on theoretical perspectives from Feminist Post-Structural Discourse Analysis and Judith Butler's Queer Theory. The feminist post-structural discourse analysis of the novel reveals that characters Nida and Bhanggi are not focused on gaining political power or driving social change. Their journey is more aligned with

postmodern and post-structural concerns, although the narrative does address issues like patriarchy, body, and psychology. Their identities and gender performances are not confined to traditional feminist dimensions. The analysis suggests that the novel engages with broader social issues, aiming to challenge existing power structures, discriminatory language, and social realities through a counter-discourse of sympathy and empathy for non-conforming characters. The characters are shown to be entangled in complex power structures, and their conscious struggle against these forces highlights that power is fluid and context dependent. Their efforts to transform these dynamics reflect a shifting hold on power, where they experience both power and powerlessness depending on the context. This fluidity extends to their ability to deconstruct and reconstruct their identities, with the meaning of gender constantly evolving as they create and reshape their identities through interactions and discourses. they concluded “proves that both, gender identities and power structures, are dynamic and deeply embedded in language and context, and should the context be unsuitable to a specific gender role performance then it may lead to reactionary cultural violence from the society against the persons who try to openly challenge the heteronormativity of a traditionally patriarchal society like Pakistan’s” (Amber Raza 134).

Much like the scholarship surrounding Deleuze and Guattari, the body of research dedicated to Judith Butler's theories within the South Asian context remains relatively limited. However, despite the scarcity of studies that specifically address Butler's work in this region, the existing research is both impactful and insightful, offering significant contributions to the understanding of gender dynamics in South Asia. These works have successfully applied Butler's concept of "Gender Trouble" to analyze and critique the complex and often oppressive gender structures that prevail in South Asian societies.

The present study positions itself as a modest yet meaningful attempt to further the application of Butlerian theories within South Asian literature and cultural studies. While acknowledging the limited scope of existing scholarship, this research seeks to build upon and extend the foundational work that has been done. By focusing on Butler's ideas, particularly her notion of performativity and the subversion of gender norms, the study aims to contribute to the growing discourse on gender in South Asia.

In a region where patriarchal systems and traditional gender roles continue to exert a powerful influence, Butler's theories provide a critical lens through which to

examine and challenge these entrenched norms. The present research endeavors to apply Butlerian concepts to South Asian texts, exploring how her ideas can reveal new dimensions of understanding and critique within the literature of this region.

This study, while acknowledging its limitations, aspires to strengthen the presence and relevance of Butlerian thought in South Asian scholarship. By doing so, it hopes to not only enrich the academic conversation around gender in South Asia but also to inspire further research that can continue to explore and expand the application of Butler's theories in this context. Through this effort, the study aims to contribute to a broader, more nuanced understanding of gender in South Asia, highlighting the importance of Butler's work in analyzing and addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals in these societies.

2.3 Academic Debates on *A Firefly in the Dark* and *The Blue Room*

The works under consideration, *Firefly in the Dark* by Shazaf Fatima Haider and *The Blue Room* by Nafisa Ahmed, though not particularly recent—both being published in 2018—have yet to receive extensive scholarly attention. This limited discussion can largely be attributed to their classification as popular fiction. Despite their relatively recent publication, these novels have not been exhaustively explored within academic circles, possibly due to the perception that popular fiction lacks the depth or literary merit typically associated with more traditionally recognized literary works.

However, this lack of scholarly focus does not diminish the significance or potential of these novels to contribute to broader cultural and literary discourses. Popular fiction often reflects the zeitgeist of its time, offering valuable insights into societal norms, cultural tensions, and the lived experiences of individuals within specific contexts. *Firefly in the Dark* and *The Blue Room* engage with themes and narratives that resonate deeply within the South Asian cultural and social landscape.

The present study seeks to challenge the notion that these works are unworthy of serious academic inquiry by positioning them as critical texts within the discussion of South Asian literature. By analyzing these novels through theoretical frameworks, such as those proposed by Judith Butler and Deleuze and Guattari, the study aims to uncover the layers of meaning and significance embedded within their narratives. This approach not only elevates the status of these works within literary scholarship but also

demonstrates that popular fiction can serve as a rich and fertile ground for exploring complex theoretical concepts.

In doing so, the study hopes to contribute to a broader understanding of how popular fiction can reflect and shape cultural identities, challenge societal norms, and offer new perspectives on issues such as gender, identity, and power dynamics in South Asia. By bringing *Firefly in the Dark* and *The Blue Room* into the academic spotlight, this research underscores the importance of examining all forms of literature, regardless of their classification, for their potential to inform and enrich our understanding of the world.

The Blue Room by Nafisa Rizvi is incredibly contemporary, with barely a few reviews to back it up. The writer believes that the most significant influence of this novel comes from the description of the family in an essay published in *Dawn* 2009 titled *Cultural Paradigm*. Rizvi depicts a close-knit and equitable family system that gets torn in the name of growth and development. There is an intense rivalry as the younger generation yearns to leave their ancestral home and relocate to the big city, hoping for successful jobs and an urbane lifestyle, while their elders are unable to sever the roots that are so inextricably linked to *Shahi Manzil* (*Dawn*). The article's focus is the depiction of the feudal family system and what role mythical occult plays, and the protagonist's ability to take a new role or identity has been overlooked.

In the article, *A Marxist Feminist Analysis of Nafisa Rizvi's The Blue Room* (2023) by Nazish et al, the researchers have critically engaged in a debate of analyzing the novel by applying the classical Marxist feminist framework. Their major focus has been on tracing the key tenets as false consciousness, objectification, alienation, and economic oppression in Rizvi's *The Blue Room*, and have concluded that the novel primarily depicts the state of women in Pakistani society dominated by patriarchal norms. Besides, Power and capitalism plays a pivotal role in exploiting women and especially in restricting their abilities if females possess more abilities than their male counterparts. They are of the view that "women constantly suffer from their fixed role in a patriarchal society. They are bound to be modest and dutiful to their husbands or other male members of their family" (Nazash Jamal 94). This research further suggests that economic independence is the only solution to eradicate this suppression, and women can only excel if necessary opportunities are provided to them. This research undoubtedly traces one of the key issues of Pakistani society, but it has not focused on

the role of the supernatural in strengthening the abilities of women which this current research intends to explore.

Zafar Iqbal in his article *Unraveling Enchantments and Demystification of Narrative: A Magical Feminist Reading of Nafisa Rizvi's Fiction* (2023) has taken a stand rereading the text utilizing the magical feminist lens. He intends to explore that Nafisa Rizvi has seamlessly deployed the magical realistic techniques to make “strategies to make the commonplace spectacular, the unbelievable believable, and the inconceivable conceivable. (Iqbal 578)’ His primary focus has been that how women had been used and traded as any other commodity. He is of the view traced that Rizvi has excessively utilized the magical feminism and seem to well conversant like Toni Morrison, Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, Gabriel García Márquez, and Ben Okri. The text offers a social critique of oppressive and exploitative institutions, such as patriarchy, marriage, and feudalism. The analysis highlights how women from lower social classes are treated as commodities, subject to use and abuse. Utilizing a magical feminist perspective, the research critically examines the text. Rizvi argues that institutions like marriage, patriarchy, and religious organizations need radical transformation to play a positive, constructive, and healthy role in society. The article offers a comprehensive insight into the social issues prevalent in Pakistan, but it overlooks the role of the Blue Room. This is the aspect that the present research aims to highlight.

In an extensive book review in *Youlin Magazine*, Aiman Javed has stated *A Firefly in the Dark*, published by Speaking Tiger, India, tells the story of Sharmeen, a young girl living with her Nani (maternal grandmother) after her father's tragic car accident. Her mother, Aliya, is battling severe depression, leaving Sharmeen to find solace in Nani's tales of supernatural beings. These stories, which initially fascinate her, soon begin to blur the line between imagination and reality. The novel intertwines jinns (spirits) with muses and vampires, inviting readers to explore connections between local and global mythology. Given the scarcity of such narratives in contemporary Pakistani literature, I approached the book with eager anticipation. One of the most striking aspects of Haider's writing is her ability to craft distinct narrative voices. She has a particular talent for depicting children, as seen in her previous work *How It Happened*, where the protagonist, Saleha, shines. In *A Firefly in the Dark*, Sharmeen embodies both the vulnerability and quiet strength of a twelve-year-old. As she

navigates life with two ill parents and the challenges of a new school, she shows maturity beyond her years. With the help of her guardian jinn, Jugnu (Firefly), she gradually learns to cope with her world. Jugnu's character is a blend of wit and wisdom. For instance, he humorously describes how people react when they see him, saying, "Men launch their slippers at me, sometimes they fire pistols – depending on whatever is at hand." In another moment, he advises Sharmeen not to categorize people as simply good or bad, noting that "all is not as it seems." By creating quirky yet complex characters, Haider ensures that her story appeals to both children and adults. Nani, who is lovable for her care of Sharmeen, also exhibits a condescending attitude toward her adopted son/servant, Aziz. Similarly, Aziz, who initially appears to be the antagonist, ultimately proves to be a more nuanced character. His misguided efforts to protect those he loves, coupled with years of suffering, demonstrate how good intentions can be tainted by negativity. She further praises by stating the novel's primary limitation is its brevity, which restricts a deeper exploration of the relationship between Aziz and Nani. While readers may sympathize with Aziz due to Nani's harshness, the narrative stops short of fully condemning her behavior. Given the power dynamics between them, it would have been valuable to emphasize how Nani's mistreatment contributed to Aziz's struggles as an adult. The theme of treating others with dignity, though touched upon, could have been further developed. Additionally, the novel introduces various creatures, concepts, and anecdotes in a short span, which might leave some readers, particularly those unfamiliar with local folklore, feeling overwhelmed. Haider has crafted a richly detailed world that could benefit from further exploration in a series. One might anticipate that Jugnu and Sharmeen will return for more adventures, offering readers further journeys into this captivating universe. She concludes by stating, "It is high time that our children and teenagers complement their reading of Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, and J.K. Rowling, with fascinating stories about local myths. Not only will they recognize themselves in Sharmeen's story, but they will also find themselves chuckling along while rooting for Sharmeen" (Javed)

Aimen Ali et. al. has analyzed *A Firefly in the Dark* by Shazaf Fatima Haider linguistically with a focus on code-switching, code-mixing, language hybridization, and echo words to show that these have been used as literary devices in the selected text for construction and depiction of cultural, social, and religious identities and acculturation. Dadi's character has been employed to apply the sociolinguistic function through the

above-mentioned linguistic phenomena. The linguistic phenomena of code-switching, code-mixing, language hybridization, and echo words are utilized as purposeful attempts to spread deliberate ideology rather than as random and meaningless activities. Code-switching and other similar occurrences are literary strategies used by the author to emphasize cultural, social, and religious identities and acculturation. These linguistic phenomena represent the dominant sociocultural and linguistic medians, and these linguistic phenomena also convey societal norms and social trends (Aimen Ali 1613). Interestingly, the djinn, who has dominated the entire novel has been ignored altogether. The primary focus of the article is the use of code-switching, and how djinn and its interaction with the female protagonist resulting in a change in her role has not been considered.

Hafsa Yasir has endorsed Aimen Ali's notion, claiming that Shazaf Fatima Haider's work depicts stereotypical representations in Pakistani culture. The author employs a Roman English mashup, which may be investigated via language analysis. The in-depth analysis of the selected work allows us to see how relatively small groups of individuals can change the world. Words from a woman in the family may sometimes make or break another woman. The women you know are changing the world, and you do your best when you improvise while creating a meaningful life and profession and frequently by encouraging one another. A shift in our approach to empowering women around us may aid in the formation of a healthy and open social circle. (Hashmi) This article does explore the notion of women empowerment but the role of the mythical occult in the emancipation of women has not been highlighted. The chosen works are contemporary and there is very thin work available on them.

Ayesha Aslam wrote an article titled Representation of Supernatural Creature in Shazaf Fatima Haider's *A Firefly in the Dark*, which delves into a detailed account of Djinnns. People have associated themselves only with the negative image of jinns, and they do not want to look upon the other side because of the fear that is there in their minds regarding jinns. (Ayesha Aslam) Sometimes people just do not believe in the existence of djinn. The research has focused primarily on allusions to the origins of various types of Djinnns to resolve uncertainties in people's thoughts. References from Islam can assist individuals in strengthening their beliefs in the presence of djinnns who existed before humans. The article focuses mostly on the origins of djinnns, with little to no discussion of how these djinnns have played a discursive role in the lives of people.

Hajira Khalid in her article *Unveiling the Magical Realism of Pakistan: A Thematic Analysis of A Firefly in the Dark and Midnight Doorways* (2023) is of the view that academic scholarship on Magical Realism has predominantly focused on Latin America and, more recently, on other nations globally. However, Pakistani Magic Realist literature has not received substantial scholarly attention. The irreal has long been embedded in Pakistani oral and literary traditions, in recent years, Pakistani Anglophone writers have begun to experiment with Speculative fiction by incorporating local folklore and mythological elements inspired by Islamic and South Asian civilizations. Her study aims to enhance the understanding of Magical Realism in Pakistani literature by analyzing two contemporary Pakistani Magic Realist texts: Malik (2021) and Haider (2018). She has used close reading and thematic coding to categorize data into descriptive themes. She has traced the origins of the magical tropes used by both authors and explored how Pakistani customs and norms are intertwined with the marvelous in these narratives. She has concluded that both Malik and Haider have employed a diverse range of techniques to integrate magical elements into their narratives. These techniques include the use of inexplicable events, mythical beings inspired by indigenous mythologies and belief systems, characters endowed with superpowers, and instances of metamorphosis. Additionally, the authors utilize authorial reticence and plentitude simultaneously when depicting magical occurrences and the phenomenal world, effectively persuading the reader to accept these events as they are presented. She is of the view that both texts depicted a faith-based ontological “in their narratives as the pantheon of mythological beings employed by both writers originated from the indigenous belief systems prevalent amongst the Pakistani masses” (Hajira Khalid 374). She is of the view that Pakistani folklore and mystical tales may be brought to the notice of the globalized world. This detailed article provides a detailed insight into the deployment of the magical realistic element by this author but has not focused on why mythical occults such as Djinns and others have been used in this text, which the present study intends to explore.

Haider's *A Firefly in the Dark* skillfully employs elements of fantasy and the supernatural to challenge gender stereotypes, particularly through the characters of Sharmeen and her Nani (grandmother). These characters are emblematic of the strong matriarchal figures found in legendary Punjabi folktales such as Heer Ranjha, Sohni Mahiwal, and Mirza Sahiban. As Aamer Hussein notes in a blurb for the book, "With

its sensuous textures of myth, magic, and mock-saga, *A Firefly in the Dark* is, at its center, a deeply sensitive story of a young woman's coming of age with all the fears, loves, and losses that the crossing entails. Haider portrays her female protagonist, Sharmeen, as a warrior who bravely confronts and overcomes bullying, patriarchy, and sexual harassment. She does so with the assistance of her personal djinn, the mischievous Jugnu. Through Sharmeen's character, Haider does not shy away from addressing the real and challenging issues that young women face as they come of age. These issues include but are not limited to, experiences of sexual harassment, the transition to adulthood, and the often-taboo subject of menstruation. Haider's narrative not only empowers her protagonist but also opens up a space for discussing the complexities of female adolescence in a society that is often governed by patriarchal norms. For them, Haider's fiction is an "Intersection of feminism and science fiction that has indubitably created a space for critiquing the conservative and tabooed issues related to gender and sex" (Mansoor 247). Thus, this research article is similar to the present article as it focuses on the role of a strong female but what is the role of the mythical occult in building and strengthening this role is missing.

In another article by Qazi and Mahmood, Haider's work has been analyzed using the theoretical lens of magical realism and postcolonial framework. They are of the view that the unique characteristics of realism, often associated with postcolonial literature, have evolved into what is now commonly termed postmodernist postcolonialism. Although this form of realism integrates a diverse array of elements—such as religious, folkloric, and cultural narratives—it continues to be employed as a postcolonial tool to address issues of hybridity, identity rhetoric, and the blending of binaries between fact and fiction. Recently, the concept of magical realism has been reimagined, particularly in popular fiction and young adult Anglophone literature. Rather than treating magical realism as a distinct genre, contemporary writers have seamlessly woven it into their narratives as a strategy to support the central themes. For them the addition of mythical folktale "The distorted image must have the element of phantasm to make it estranged and yet to produce the concrete universalism. The addition of magic realism is simply to act as a stand-in to assert the postcolonial ideology of othering and that too by adopting the postcolonial mimicry to make it compatible in the market. The best mode is the ethnicization of nationals which is more profusely consumed in the market (Mahmood 15). Their work primarily talks about

the role of mythical tales and is to make a fiction exotic to be marketed successively and deviates from the research under discussion.

2.4 Conclusion and Research Gap

The review of existing scholarship reveals that, despite the extensive academic work on the chosen theorists—Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Judith Butler and Judith Lorber—particularly in the South Asian context, there remains a significant research gap. While a considerable amount of literature has explored Deleuze and Guattari's concepts, such as “becoming” and the processes of “territorialization” and “deterritorialization” within South Asian literature, one of their pivotal concepts, the “nomadic flow” has not yet been thoroughly examined in this context. This concept, which speaks to the fluidity and non-linear nature of identity and existence, holds great potential for deeper analysis and application in understanding South Asian narratives.

Similarly, while South Asian scholarship has engaged with Butler's concept of performativity and its transformative impact, particularly regarding the resilience and empowerment of South Asian women, there is a noticeable gap in exploring how mythical and mystical elements, such as djinns—creatures rooted in the region's folklore and occult traditions—affect female performativity. The influence of these supernatural beings on the transformation and “becoming” of female characters in South Asian literature has not yet been explored in depth. Similarly, Lorber's notion of doing gender through institutions And the reversal of this doing has not been explored thoroughly. Djinns, with their otherworldly power and symbolic significance, could provide a unique lens through which to understand how these characters evolve into stronger, more resilient individuals.

The primary aim of this study is to critically examine the nuanced intersections between Djinn and female characters in selected works of speculative fiction. The main objective of the research is to specifically explores three key areas: The nature of interaction between Djinn and women—investigating how these supernatural entities engage with female protagonists and what symbolic or transformative roles they play in shaping women's narratives. Moreover, The emergence of nomadic identities—analyzing how the encounters between female characters and Djinn give rise to fluid, shifting identities that defy fixed categorizations and reflect a constant state of ‘becoming is another objective of the current research . last but not the least the ultimate objective of the research is to explore the subversion of traditional gender roles through

nomadic flows—examining how the experiences of transformation and movement (‘nomadic flows’) empower female characters to resist and transcend conventional, patriarchal definitions of femininity.

It is within this critical gap—the underexplored relationship between gender, identity formation, and the metaphysical presence of Djinn in speculative fiction—that this study seeks to contribute, offering fresh insights into the performative and transformative potential of such intersections.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that underpins the research, outlining the key concepts, theories, and perspectives that guide the study. It also provides a comprehensive explanation of the research methodology employed, detailing the specific methods, tools, and approaches used to conduct the research and gather data. This section will clarify how these frameworks and methodologies work together to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is constructed by integrating key concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's seminal work *A Thousand Plateaus* with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. This combination is aimed at exploring how Deleuze and Guattari's notions of Nomadic flows and becoming intersect with Butler's idea that gender is not an inherent identity, but rather a series of performed acts shaped by social norms. By merging these theoretical perspectives, the research seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of identity formation and gender dynamics.

This research employs Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "Nomadic flows," which presents a profound perspective on the fluidity and dynamism inherent in various aspects of existence. They further emphasize that "Nomadism is the opposite of sedentary rule; nomads know how to disappear, they learn to wait, they know how to bring an end to the regime of signs, they know how to undermine the power of the State apparatus." (Deleuze 396) Thus, highlighting the fundamental contrast between nomadic and fixed modes of existence. Nomads, in their view, possess the ability to vanish, patiently await opportunities, and disrupt the established order of signs and power structures, illustrating their capacity for resistance and transformation. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari clarify that nomads are not devoid of territory, which is fluid, which they explain by stating that, "The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths, he goes from one point to another, he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.)." (Deleuze 351) This acknowledgment underscores the organized yet flexible nature of nomadic life, where territory is not static but adaptable, much like the shifting sands of a desert.

When examining Djinnns through the lens of nomadism, their nomadic and shape-shifting qualities become particularly relevant. Djinnns, like nomads, exist beyond conventional societal structures, challenging established identities and functioning fluidly and interconnectedly. Djinn's ability to assume different forms, traverse diverse realms, and influence human experiences aligns with the characteristics of nomadic flows. This interpretation offers a captivating perspective on how Djinnns may embody the dynamics of nomadism in various cultural and mythological contexts.

By exploring the interplay between Djinnns and the concept of nomadic flows, one can gain insight into the multifaceted nature of transformation, resistance, and adaptability in literature and philosophical thought. This intersection provides a unique vantage point for examining how the dynamics of nomadic movement manifest in different cultural and mythological narratives, shedding light on the intricate interplay between identity, fluidity, and societal structures.

Furthermore, the notion of 'becoming' is intricately woven into the construction of assemblages. The dynamic and transformational processes that entities go through within these frameworks are described as 'becoming'. Nomadic flows are important in becoming because they represent the ever-changing and evolving features within the assemblages. Entities within an assemblage are not fixed; they are always transforming into something different. Nomadic flows, with their fluid and unexpected nature, act as catalysts for these becomings, emphasizing the rhizomatic landscape's constant state of change. As a result, the connection between assemblage, nomadic flows, and becoming is significant, exposing a philosophy that stresses the fluidity, interconnection, and transformational potential inherent in the intricate networks of rhizomatic thought. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)

In the context of my study on 'Djinnns as transforming women and help in their becoming of women, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical notions give a sophisticated lens to examine the dynamic processes of identity construction and change. In this sense, 'assemblage' might be defined as an intricate combination of various factors that contribute to the construction of gender identity within a particular cultural environment. The Djinn, which contains both the material and immaterial parts of femininity, briefly unites to form a dynamic connection. This assemblage is not fixed but is constantly changing and negotiating, representing the variable nature of gender identity.

Within the assemblage of Djinns, the processes of 'deterritorialization' and reterritorialization become particularly important in the study of women's becoming. Deterritorialization refers to the breakdown of traditional gender borders and the creation of new feminine connections and manifestations. Concurrently, the Djinns assemblage's 'nomadic flows' depict the fluid and unforeseen changes in women's identities, questioning established notions of gender roles. According to Deleuze and Guattari, nomadic flows depict the assemblage's plurality, displaying the range of women's experiences and representations of identity.

Furthermore, the notion of 'becoming' is directly related to the transforming processes that women go through within the Djinns assemblage. Women are not restricted to fixed roles in this context but are constantly becoming and negotiating their identities within the dynamic interplay of cultural, societal, and personal factors. The fluidity of nomadic flows acts as a catalyst for these becoming, stressing the flux of women's identities.

The argument posits that the subversion of identity occurs with the assistance of Djinns, who, owing to their nomadic nature, have either functioned as imperceptible aides to women or have become integrated into their existence through possession, leading to a transformation of these women into entities distinctly divergent from their prior identities. Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari's seminal work, "A Thousand Plateaus" (1987), the analysis reveals that Djinns can be interpreted as embodying the rhizomatic model proposed by the philosophers. Djinns' nomadic and shape-shifting characteristics align with the rhizomatic concept of multiple entry points and connections, reflecting the interconnected existence of these beings. Furthermore, the intense desires and emotions that Djinns evoke in individuals mirror Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on intensity and desire as catalysts in the process of becoming. The transformative influence of Djinns leads to a blurring of boundaries between established norms, challenging individuals to "become woman," "become child," and "become imperceptible." This disruption of conventional categories underscores the multiplicity and complexity of becoming, mirroring the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. Djinn's involvement, causing deterritorializations, exemplifies their role in breaking away from established structures akin to the philosophy of deterritorialization in *A Thousand Plateaus*. While Gilles Deleuze's notion of becoming does not explicitly address the portrayal of Djinns and other occult creations, a compelling similarity can be drawn,

providing a novel perspective on the relationship between these mystical entities and the philosophical concepts of Deleuze and Guattari.

The subversion of identity unfolds as a complex and dynamic process in the context of 'jins' as the becoming of women. Women take an active role in the Djinn assemblage to negotiate and disrupt conventional gender norms and expectations. Women's identities become points of constant deterritorialization through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's notions, questioning existing conventions and limits. The jinn ensemble, defined by fluid nomadic flows, allows women to avoid firm categorizations, enabling a diversity of expressions and experiences. Women subvert their identities by embracing becoming, which enables the birth of varied and alternate kinds of femininity.

This research also delves into the theory of Judith Butler as its second key theorist. Judith Butler has given the concept of the subversion of identity. As explained earlier, her primary concepts of “Performativity” and “Gender Identity” would be considered. She is of the view that subversion of identity takes place through Performativity, which, according to her, is that gender identity is something that is enacted and expressed through repetitive actions and behaviors. She reiterated, “Gender proves to be performance— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be.” (Butler 52) .If these behaviors are subverted, they can challenge traditional notions of identity. Secondly, according to her, gender identity is a social fiction that is fluid and socially constructed. As she said, "Masculine and feminine roles are not biologically fixed but socially constructed." (Butler 65). The only way to counter that identity is to resist that identity. Given Butler’s theory, females can subvert their identity by intentionally performing gender in ways that defy societal norms. This may involve rejecting stereotypical feminine behaviors and adopting behaviors associated with masculinity or androgyny.

Butler’s ideas are re-introduced by Judith Lorber, who, though does not focus explicitly on the concept of “subverting identity” in the same way as Judith Butler, she does provide insights into how individuals, including females, can challenge and reshape traditional gender norms and expectations. For her, like Judith Butler, gender is a “Social Institution” that highlights how gender organizes and structures society. Like other social institutions such as family, education, and religion, gender plays a fundamental role in shaping social life. Lorber builds on the idea of “doing gender,”

which suggests that individuals actively engage in behaviors and performances that align with socially constructed gender roles, almost similar to Butler's notion of gender identity. She said, "Gender as an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself." (Lorber 1) For her, these identities can be subverted by the intersection of multiple social factors, and these intersections can lead to different and unique experiences of identity. Though this concept may differ from Butler's concept of subversion of identity, intersection can lead to multiple identities that are different from the traditional identity. Lorber's work is more grounded in sociology and empirical research. She studies how gender operates in society and influences individual behavior and social structures. Butler's work is more philosophical and theoretical.

The researcher aims to refine her theoretical framework by integrating key concepts from selected theorists, including Deleuze and Guattari's notions of 'becoming' and 'nomadic flow,' Judith Butler's notions of 'performativity,' breaking gender norms,' and resistance,' and Judith Lorber's notions of 'gender as a social institution' and 'doing gender.' Deleuze's conceptions of 'becoming' and 'nomadic flow' highlight how Djinnns play a critical role in testing and deconstructing existing societal limits and conventions, disturbing the established order. Butler's emphasis on 'performativity,' breaking gender norms,' and resistance illuminates how the existence of Djinnns may lead to the subversion of traditional feminine identities as individuals are pushed to enact and oppose normative gender expectations. Simultaneously, Lorber's concepts of 'gender as a social institution' and 'doing gender' provide analytical tools for investigating how Djinnns' influence contributes to the construction and reconstruction of gender roles and identities, highlighting the dynamic and fluid nature of gender in the context of Djinnns' nomadic presence. The researcher aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced explanation of how Djinnns challenges and transforms gender norms, identities, and societal structures by combining the ideas of different theorists.

This study seeks to address a critical gap in current scholarship by focusing on three interrelated areas within selected works of speculative fiction:

- The ways in which Djinn intersect with women characters, not merely as supernatural beings but as catalysts that influence and reshape female subjectivities.
- How these intersections give rise to nomadic identities, wherein women characters move beyond fixed, essentialist definitions of gender and identity, embracing fluidity, transformation, and multiplicity.
- How the processes of ‘becoming’ and ‘nomadic flows’ enable these female characters to subvert traditional gender roles, challenging patriarchal expectations and engaging in the ongoing performance or re-performance of gender.

To explore these dimensions, the study draws upon a triadic theoretical framework. First, Gilles Deleuze’s concepts of ‘becoming’ and ‘nomadic thought’ are employed to understand the fluid, ever-evolving identities of the female characters as they interact with Djinn. Deleuze’s philosophy offers a lens through which to view these characters not as fixed subjects but as constantly in flux, shaped by their encounters with the metaphysical.

Building on this, Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity is used to analyze how these transformations challenge the notion of gender as a stable identity. The female characters, through their dynamic experiences with Djinn, begin to “do gender” differently disrupting normative gender scripts and performing new, empowered identities.

Finally, Judith Lorber’s sociological perspective on gender as a social institution further supports the argument by contextualizing these performances within broader cultural, social, and political frameworks. Lorber’s insights help demonstrate how these speculative narratives critique and resist the institutionalization of gender norms.

Together, these three theorists provide a comprehensive foundation for examining how supernatural encounters in speculative fiction become sites of resistance, transformation, and identity reconfiguration for women characters.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research is qualitative, systematic, and textual in nature, analyzing how women in the selected novels use Djinns as powerful symbols of empowerment, utilizing their power to overcome obstacles and combat patriarchal norms, and how

they go through transformative processes, similar to nomads navigating fluid identities in the selected novels.

This study's research method is a textual analysis of the chosen novels. Textual analysis, according to Belsey, is of the utmost importance to all research that focuses primarily on 'texts' or the 'inscription of culture in its artifacts' (160). This emphasizes the importance of textual analysis in allowing for an in-depth analysis of the primary text.

The primary objective of using textual analysis is that it 'poses the questions which research sets out to answer' (Belsey 166). Textual analysis, to elaborate, allows for an in-depth analysis of ideas "made at a particular historical moment and from within a specific culture" (166). This means that a textual analysis examines just one element of the entire text at a time. Textual analysis is subjective in this sense since it does not 'embrace all the possible readings' (166). Nonetheless, textual analysis is 'indispensable' since it incorporates various secondary material to investigate its classical sources,' emphasizing the importance of supplementing primary sources with appropriate secondary readings, as is done in this research's textual analysis (160; 166). This demonstrates that a text is not a single work of literature, but rather a collection of 'multiple writings' that help in its comprehension and analysis (166).

The theoretical framework of this research integrates the concept of nomadic flows and becoming from Deleuze and Guattari with Judith Butler's notion of performativity at Gender Trouble along with the Judith Lorber's notion of doing gender from her work Paradoxes of Gender. These ideas are specifically applied to the characters, focusing on the intersection between Djinns and female characters. The study examines how Djinns, through their unique ability to traverse time and space, embody the nomadic flows described by Deleuze and Guattari, or how they engage in a process of "becoming" something other than their original nature.

Likewise, the research explores how the intersection between Djinns and female characters influences their transformation, often resulting in an enhanced ability to experience nomadic flows or facilitate their process of becoming. In this sense, the Djinns serve as catalysts for the characters' evolutions, prompting shifts in identity and self-conception.

Furthermore, the research delves into how the intersection of Djinns and female characters leads to a transformation, subversion, or reassertion of traditional female roles. By examining these transformations, the study highlights how female characters, under the influence of Djinns, either subverts conventional gender norms or reinforce them through their journeys of becoming, reflecting Butler's theory that gender identity is performative and shaped by external forces. The study reveals how the blending of human and supernatural elements reconfigures gender identities and challenges or reaffirms societal expectations of femininity.

CHAPTER 4

NOMADIC FLOWS AND FEMINIST BECOMING THE FIREFLY IN THE DARK AND THE BLUE ROOM

The current chapter focuses on the analysis of two primary texts: *The Firefly in the Dark* by Shazaf Fatima Haider and *The Blue Room* by Nafisa Rizvi. The study employs selected theoretical frameworks, specifically drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of 'Nomadic Flow' and 'Becoming', Judith Butler's theory of performativity, and Judith Lorber's notion of gender as a social institution. By applying these theoretical lenses, this chapter aims to uncover and explore the deeper messages and themes that these texts convey. Through this analysis, the chapter seeks to reveal how these works articulate complex ideas about identity, transformation, and fluidity, offering a nuanced understanding when interpreted through these philosophical perspectives.

4.1 Djinns, Women, and the Fluidity of Gender in *A Firefly in the Dark*

Shazaf Fatima is a talented author known for her insightful and engaging writing. Her debut novel, *How It Happened*, is a sharp and humorous satire that delves into the complexities of arranged marriages, capturing the nuances and challenges of this traditional practice. Her second book, *A Firefly in the Dark*, further showcased her versatility as a writer, earning critical acclaim and winning the prestigious Children's Peekaboo Prize in India. This novel's success has led to its adaptation into an upcoming television series, underscoring its wide appeal and impact. Currently, Shazaf Fatima is immersed in the creation of her third novel, which will explore the themes of marriage and divorce. This upcoming work is anticipated to offer a thoughtful examination of these significant aspects of life, likely continuing her trend of combining humor with keen social observation.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'nomadic flow' is rooted in their broader philosophical framework that challenges traditional, fixed structures of thought. A 'nomadic flow' is characterized by its ability to move freely across spaces, constantly redefining itself without being confined to a particular territory or identity. This concept is central to their idea of a rhizome, which represents a non-hierarchical, interconnected

mode of organization, as opposed to the hierarchical, tree-like structures of traditional thought. In Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, "nomadic flow" is not just about physical movement or wandering; it is about a continuous state of change and transformation, a "becoming" rather than a fixed state of being. Nomads are characterized by their ability to move through spaces without being confined by established boundaries or territories. This movement reflects a perpetual process of becoming — a dynamic engagement with the world that defies static identities or fixed categorizations. Nomadic flow is, therefore, the embodiment of becoming: a constant redefinition of oneself in relation to the surrounding environment.

In Shazaf Fatima's *A Firefly in the Dark*, the novel intricately weaves together three stories centered around mythical occult creatures, particularly Djinns, each contributing to the rich, mystical atmosphere of the narrative. It is they who exhibit the power of nomadic flow and are in a constant state becoming which they share with the females providing them the fluidity, transformation, and resistance to static identities, promoting a more dynamic and inclusive understanding of self and subjectivity. This novel explicitly portrays three narratives focusing on Djinn.

The first story introduces the legendary traveler Samarkand, who embarks on a journey that leads him into an encounter with a Janaree, a seductive and powerful female Djinn. This story sets the tone for the novel, establishing the presence of supernatural elements and the dangers that come with them. Samarkand's seduction by the Janaree highlights the alluring yet perilous nature of these mystical beings, emphasizing the thin line between fascination and peril when dealing with the occult. The second story is a poignant tale of Noyantara, a beautiful young woman who is tragically forced into marriage with an old man. Her life becomes a cycle of suffering and torment, marked by domestic violence and despair. However, hope arrives in the form of a benevolent Djinn who resides in a nearby Banyan tree. This Djinn intervenes to save Noyantara from her abusive situation, reflecting the dual nature of Djinn as both protectors and powerful forces capable of altering human fate. The story underscores themes of oppression, liberation, and the supernatural as a force for justice. The third and most elaborate story revolves around Jugnu, the guardian Djinn of Sharmeen, the novel's protagonist. Jugnu is not just a protector but also a guide, deeply intertwined with Sharmeen's life and her journey. This narrative delves into the relationship between Sharmeen and Jugnu, exploring how Djinn's presence shapes her

experiences, providing both protection and a connection to the mystical world. The bond between Sharmeen and Jugnu symbolizes the intersection of the human and the supernatural, illustrating how the unseen forces of the world can influence and safeguard those they choose. The novel culminates in a climactic final battle between the forces of good and evil, represented by a good Djinn and a bad Djinn. This battle is the ultimate confrontation between opposing supernatural forces, reflecting the eternal struggle between light and darkness, protection and destruction. The outcome of this battle has profound implications for the characters, particularly Sharmeen, as it determines the balance of power in her world and the ultimate fate of those involved.

The depiction of Djinns in these stories vividly illustrates their inherent capacity for nomadic flow, a transformative ability that allows them to change form and essence. This concept is exemplified in the portrayal of the Janaree, the female Djinn, who undergoes multiple transformations throughout the narrative. Initially, she is described as a fearsome creature with a forked tongue and “saber-like teeth unfolding from the grooves of her mouth as she neared. Below her waist, eight spidery legs, slender and bent” (Haider 2). As she approaches Samarkand, ready to devour him, she is suddenly captivated by his scent. This enchantment triggers her ability for Nomadic Flow, allowing her to transform into a seductive damsel in distress. This transformation from an amphibian-like creature to a human form demonstrates Janaree's capacity to move fluidly between different states of being. Her Nomadic Flow enables her to “become” something entirely new, embodying a non-linear and open-ended existence. This ability to shift between forms also facilitates her union with Samarkand, a human, resulting in her impregnation. Following this union, she once again utilizes her Nomadic Flow, reverting to her spider-like Janaree form to give birth to an Amluq, a superhuman entity.

In the climactic battle against Labartu, a fire demon who feeds on the first breath of newborns, the Janaree returns to her original form to combat this formidable foe. The Labartu, after being defeated, exhibits his own form of Nomadic Flow, becoming weak and fragile before ultimately disappearing. This narrative underscores the significance of Nomadic Flow as a powerful force that allows the Janaree, and other beings, to transform and “become” in response to their circumstances. This continuous process of transformation and “becoming” emphasizes the fluidity and adaptability inherent in Djinn’s nature. The short narration clearly tells the Janaree's ability of Nomadic flow,

leading to her becoming, subscribing to what Deleuze and Guattari have discussed that Nomadic flow is characterized by its fluid, unbounded movement across spaces and ideas, similar to how becoming involves a continuous process of change. The nomad, in a state of becoming, never settles into a fixed position but is always moving, always in the process of becoming something else.

In another narration, the story of Nayantara highlights Djinn's remarkable ability of nomadic flow, which plays a crucial role in the narrative and emphasizes the concept of 'becoming.' Nayantara, a young girl, is forcibly married to an elderly man named Khanjee, who subjects her to physical abuse on their wedding night. Her cries of anguish are heard by a Djinn residing in a nearby Gulmohar tree. The Djinn, compelled by her suffering, "sniffed Nayantara's feet, crept up her calves, and entered her body through her hair" (Haider 43). This act of entering her body demonstrates Djinn's ability to transcend the constraints of time and space through nomadic flow, enabling him to occupy and inhabit the human form.

The Djinn's presence within Nayantara transforms her into an entity capable of extraordinary experiences. He consoles her and, utilizing his nomadic nature, takes her high into the sky above the white clouds. This transformation, or becoming, is facilitated by the Djinn's nomadic flow, which allows Nayantara to ascend into the heavens without being choked or harmed. The Djinn's fluid movement between different states of existence, from ethereal to physical, underscores the non-linear and open-ended nature of Nomadic Flow.

Even after Nayantara's death, the Djinn's ability to traverse boundaries is evident as he continues to haunt Khanjee. He invades Khanjee's dreams, turning once-soothing visions into terrifying nightmares. The Djinn's presence is so potent that he can even shake Khanjee's bed violently and strike him with such force that Khanjee's ribs break. This capacity to cross into Khanjee's reality and inflict physical harm is made possible by the Djinn's nomadic flow, which allows him to become a force that transcends time, space, and even the boundaries of life and death.

Djinn's actions exemplify the concept of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, where he moves beyond his original state, merging with and altering other entities and environments. Through nomadic flow, the Djinn shifts from one form or state to another, reconfiguring his essence and exerting influence across different

realms. This constant process of transformation and becoming highlights the fluidity of the Djinn's existence and his ability to adapt and change in response to the needs and emotions of those he encounters.

In these narrations, the Djinn's nomadic flow is not just a mechanism for physical transformation but a profound expression of the fluid and interconnected nature of existence, where boundaries between forms, states, and realities are permeable and ever-changing.

The most significant aspect of the narrative concerning the Djinn in *A Firefly in the Dark* is centered around Jugnu, the guardian Djinn of the protagonist, Sharmeen. Jugnu, a Djinn of immense size and grandeur, forged from smokeless fire, first encounters Sharmeen through a series of transformations that vividly illustrate his nomadic flow and capacity for becoming. He appears to her in various disguises: a firefly, a dung beetle, a gecko, and eventually an enormous peacock, each form showcasing his ability to inhabit and 'become' these creatures. This fluidity of form and existence transcends conventional notions of space and time, aligning with Deleuze's concept of nomadic flow.

As Jugnu explains to Sharmeen, his powers extend beyond mere physical transformations. He describes his abilities with a nonchalance that belies their vast implications: "Oh, the standard things available to all spirits—fly, push people and things, listen in on private conversations, feel emotions, sometimes hear thoughts. And of course, I can move from one end of the world to the other in a matter of seconds" (Ibid 90). This description highlights not just his capacity to move swiftly across the world but also his existence beyond the confines of prescribed time and space. He likens himself to air—small, yet omnipresent—indicating the boundlessness of his being.

The narrative also explores Jugnu's transformation from a mischievous Djinn to a supportive one, recounting a story in which his actions inadvertently caused the death of a human. As punishment, this vast and powerful being was trapped in a vial—a scenario made plausible only when considering his ability to embody the nomadic flow, to be both immense and contained simultaneously. This transformation from a force of mischief to a figure of guidance reflects the fluidity of his existence, embodying the Deleuzian notion of 'becoming,' where Jugnu moves beyond static identity, evolving through his experiences and interactions with Sharmeen.

In *A Firefly in the Dark*, the concept of nomadic flow and becoming is not limited to the Djinn Jugnu alone; it extends to the protagonist, Sharmeen, through her deep connection with him. Jugnu's ability to transcend forms and inhabit different creatures is mirrored in his capacity to enter Sharmeen's mind and imagination. Once inside her, Sharmeen too gains this extraordinary ability of nomadic flow, allowing her to journey beyond the limits of time and space.

Through this shared power, Sharmeen is transported to ancient times, finding herself in the deserts of Arabia during the golden age of Baghdad. Here, she encounters her ancestor, Aabid, who, after losing his inner peace following the death of his wife and unborn son, sought solace in a lake inhabited by the devilish demon, Sargosh. It is through the nomadic flow that Sharmeen is drawn into the depths of the lake, enabling her to witness the vile and cruel intentions of Sargosh firsthand.

This journey is more than a mere vision; it is an act of becoming. The nomadic flow transforms Sharmeen, allowing her to become a creature capable of confronting, not just observing, the demon. This transformation signifies the profound impact of the nomadic flow in shaping Sharmeen into a strong and resolute character, embodying Deleuze's notion of becoming. Through Jugnu's influence, Sharmeen evolves beyond her initial self, embracing a fluid identity that adapts and grows in response to her experiences, ultimately empowering her to face the challenges ahead.

In the climactic moments of the novel, the protagonist Sharmeen's journey reaches its pinnacle with the final manifestation of the Djinn's nomadic flow. This instance occurs when Sharmeen is transported to eternity to seek the aid of Morpir, also known as Amluq, to combat Sargosh, the demon Djinn who has possessed her father and is slowly consuming him from within. This journey is not merely physical but represents a profound transformation within Sharmeen, made possible by the concept of nomadic flow and becoming, as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari.

Sharmeen is carried to eternity by a massive falcon, a creature twice the size of a normal human, symbolizing the extraordinary nature of her journey. The falcon, with its immense power and speed, carries her beyond the limitations of ordinary human experience. As the narrative describes, "he flew fast and strong. After what seemed like an eternity, he began to circle the sky, losing altitude with each arc" (Ibid 186). This

flight transcends the boundaries of time and space, illustrating the essence of nomadic flow—an unbounded movement that defies conventional limits.

This passage highlights Sharmeen's transformation as she ascends to a realm beyond human reach, landing on a mountain that appears to be the highest on Earth. In Deleuze and Guattari's framework, the concept of nomadic flow embodies a continuous, fluid movement that resists fixed identities and rigid structures. Sharmeen's ability to survive this journey, despite her human limitations, is a testament to her becoming—she is no longer just a human constrained by the laws of nature but a being in flux, shaped by her connection to the Djinn and the powers they embody.

Her ascent above the horizon, riding a creature that defies the constraints of human ability, represents a significant act of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming is not about achieving a final state but about the process of transformation itself—an ongoing evolution that allows for new potentials and possibilities. Sharmeen's journey with the falcon is emblematic of this process. She transcends her initial human form, undergoing a metamorphosis that enables her to access realms and powers beyond her previous comprehension.

The act of flying beyond eternity is not merely a physical achievement but a symbol of her becoming a transformed being. Through the nomadic flow, Sharmeen embodies a new identity, one that is fluid and dynamic, capable of existing in multiple states and forms. This transformation is crucial in her battle against Sargosh, as it equips her with the strength and adaptability necessary to confront and overcome the demonic forces threatening her father.

In essence, Sharmeen's journey to eternity, facilitated by the nomadic flow, illustrates her evolution from a mere human to a being of greater potential, reflecting the Deleuzian concept of becoming—a perpetual state of transformation that defies fixed categories and embraces the fluidity of existence. Through this narrative, the novel captures the power of the nomadic flow in enabling Sharmeen to transcend her limitations and emerge as a formidable force in her own right.

This transfer of power is significant because it suggests that the Djinn's abilities are not inherently solitary or exclusive. Instead, they can be extended to those who form a close bond with the Djinn, such as Sharmeen. Through this bond, Sharmeen gains

access to the nomadic flow, which in turn enables her to experience a transformation—her becoming—that allows her to interact with and influence the supernatural world.

The fact that this transference occurs between a Djinn and a female protagonist is particularly noteworthy. The novel seems to imply that women, more so than men, are receptive to the Djinn's influence and transformation. This may be interpreted as a symbolic exploration of the traditional roles and perceptions of women about mystical or supernatural forces. Historically and culturally, women have often been depicted as closer to nature, more intuitive, and more connected to the spiritual realm. The relationship between the Djinn and Sharmeen could be seen as an extension of this idea, where the Djinn's nomadic flow catalyzes the woman's latent potential, allowing her to transcend the limitations imposed by her human existence.

Moreover, the novel's focus on the relationship between the Djinn and women could be interpreted as a commentary on the transformative power of female experience and agency. In Sharmeen's case, her encounter with Jugnu and the subsequent transference of his abilities enable her to break free from her earthly constraints and engage with a broader, more expansive reality. This transformation aligns with the Deleuzian notion of becoming, where identity is not fixed but is constantly evolving in response to external influences and internal growth.

The idea that the Djinn can only influence or transform females might also suggest a particular affinity between the Djinn and feminine energy. This could be seen as a reflection of the traditional association of women with certain mystical or occult practices, where women are often depicted as mediators between the material and spiritual worlds. The Djinn, as supernatural beings, may be drawn to this feminine energy, seeing in women a kindred spirit or a vessel through which their powers can be most effectively channeled.

In conclusion, the narrative in *A Firefly in the Dark* reveals that the Djinn's ability to engage in nomadic flow and becoming is not limited to themselves but can be transferred to others, particularly women. This suggests a unique and powerful connection between the Djinn and women, where the latter are not just passive recipients of the Djinn's influence but active participants in their transformation. The relationship between the Djinn and women, as depicted in the novel, highlights the potential for female empowerment through the acceptance and integration of these

supernatural forces, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the self and the world beyond the physical realm.

In her seminal work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler's concept of performativity demonstrates that gender, including the notion of being female, is not a fixed identity but a series of performed acts shaped by societal norms. The same notion is echoed by Lorber in her seminal work *Paradoxes of Gender*. This idea is reflected in the novel, where the female characters undergo a significant transformation, moving beyond their traditional feminine roles. This shift is evident in the way they perform and embody new identities, illustrating their evolution into changed beings.

In the story of Samarkand and the Janaree from "A Firefly in the Dark," we witness a profound transformation that aligns closely with Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. Initially, the Janaree is depicted as a ferocious creature, with eight legs, a serpent-like tongue, and fangs—traits that embody her supernatural and dangerous nature. However, her transformation begins when she desires to have a child with Samarkand. To achieve this, she performs a dramatic shift in identity, taking on the appearance of a damsel in distress, a role that is markedly different from her original form.

Once she conceives and becomes a mother, the Janaree fully embraces these feminine qualities. She fiercely protects her child, even battling Labartu, a fire demon that preys on newborns. Despite the child being human, she defies her Djinn nature and safeguards him, indicating a complete shift in her identity. After giving birth, she places protective beads around the child's neck, a gesture that further symbolizes her transformation into a caring, maternal figure.

As the narrative progresses, the Janaree's performative identity continues to evolve. When Samarkand is dying, she doesn't consume his breath out of greed or lust, as her Djinn nature might suggest, but out of love—a sentiment she developed when she first transformed into a damsel. This act underscores her shift from a ferocious Djinn to a being capable of deep, human emotions.

Even after Samarkand's death, the Janaree's transformation persists. She no longer preys on men; instead, she protects them, stating that she is atoning for the destruction of a man she once caused. Her final act of sacrifice, saving Aabid from Labartu's torture, solidifies her complete transformation. This self-sacrifice ensures that

Aabid becomes the forefather of a strong clan of women destined to be the saviors of both men and Djinn.

This entire arc demonstrates that the Janaree's identity as a female is not fixed or inherent but is instead a series of performed acts and behaviors that align with the societal roles of women. In Butler's terms, the Janaree's journey illustrates how gender is constructed through repeated performances. Initially a fierce Djinn, she becomes a nurturing mother, a protective figure, and finally, a sacrificial savior—each role a different performance of femininity.

By adopting these roles, the Janaree shows that being female is not about possessing inherent qualities but about performing the behaviors and attributes that society associates with women. Her story is a vivid example of how identity, particularly gender identity, is fluid and constructed through performance, aligning with Butler's theory of performativity.

This transformation can be understood through Butler's notion of performativity, which posits that gender is not an inherent quality but a set of repeated behaviors and acts that align with societal expectations. The Janaree's change from a monstrous figure to a damsel reflects a conscious performance of femininity, adopting characteristics that society traditionally associates with women—vulnerability, nurturing, and protection.

To further understand the Janaree's transformation, we can also incorporate Judith Lorber's perspective on gender as a social institution. Lorber posits that gender is a system of social organization that creates and enforces norms, roles, and behaviors deemed appropriate for men and women. The Janaree's shift from a ferocious creature to a nurturing mother not only reflects Butler's theory of gender performativity but also aligns with Lorber's argument that society dictates the roles and attributes assigned to different genders. The Janaree, in performing femininity through nurturing and protective behaviors, highlights the way gender roles are institutionalized and reproduced in society. Her transformation illustrates that these roles are not natural but are enacted through conformity to societal expectations of what it means to be a woman. This convergence of Butler's performativity and Lorber's institutional view reveals how gender is both fluid and social.

The second narration in *A Firefly in the Dark* vividly illustrates Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, particularly in how the female characters, Nayantara and her daughter, undergo significant transformations once they are inhabited by a Djinn. Initially, Nayantara embodies the traditional role of a submissive, suffering wife typical of many South Asian women. She cries bitterly after enduring marital abuse from her husband, Khanjee, a reaction that reflects her internalization of societal expectations for women to endure pain silently.

However, once the Djinn falls in love with her and enters her, Nayantara experiences a profound transformation. She no longer cries or feels the emotional pain inflicted by her husband, as the Djinn's presence offers her comfort and strength. This change is described as, "Nothing Khanjee said or did hurt her now," (Ibid 43), marking her shift from a weak, submissive female to a strong, resilient woman. Her transformation continues until she gives birth to a baby girl, Anisa, highlighting the performative nature of her gender identity—her newfound strength is not an inherent trait but a result of the influence of the Djinn, which allows her to perform a different, more empowered version of femininity.

Anisa, Nayantara's daughter, initially mirrors her mother's earlier submissiveness. She is portrayed as a very feminine girl, who, like her mother, suffers abuse at the hands of her father. Anisa is even locked in a room and threatened with a forced marriage to one of her father's debtors. However, with the assistance of her guardian Djinn, Anisa undergoes a similar transformation. She stands up to her father, firmly telling him, "She will never marry his debtor or be hit again" (Ibid 47). This newfound firmness and resolution terrify her father, who lives the rest of his life in fear and damnation.

These transformations in Nayantara and Anisa illustrate Butler's notion that gender is not a fixed or inherent identity, but a series of performed acts shaped by societal norms. Before their encounters with the Djinn, both women performed the role of the submissive, suffering female, a performance dictated by the cultural expectations of their society. However, once the Djinn inhabits them, their performative acts shift—they begin to perform strength, resilience, and assertiveness, qualities that transform their identities and how they interact with the world.

The presence of the Djinn acts as a catalyst that disrupts their original gender performances, allowing them to adopt new behaviors and attitudes that were previously inaccessible within their societal context. This change underscores Butler's argument that gender is performative—it is not something one is, but something one does, and it can change depending on the circumstances and influences, such as the supernatural intervention in this case.

The presence of the Djinn not only serves as a catalyst that disrupts the characters' original gender performances but also highlights Judith Lorber's notion that gender is a social institution that organizes and regulates behavior. In this context, the Djinn's influence allows the characters to break free from the rigid gender norms imposed by society, facilitating the adoption of new behaviors and attitudes that were previously inaccessible to them. Lorber argues that gender roles are not just individual performances but are deeply embedded in societal structures that define and enforce the roles men and women are expected to play. The Djinn's supernatural intervention allows the characters to step outside these boundaries, reflecting Lorber's idea that gender, as a social institution, can be challenged and redefined under certain conditions.

This shift also reinforces Butler's claim that gender is not something inherent but rather something one "does" as a series of acts that can be altered or disrupted depending on external influences, like the intervention of the Djinn. Together, these theories underscore that gender identity is both a social construct and a performance that can be reshaped in response to shifting circumstances, revealing its inherent fluidity and dependence on societal structures.

The most impactful change in the performance of female characters in *A Firefly in the Dark* is evident in the transformation of the protagonist's grandmother, Nani, who serves as the dominant matriarch of the household. Nani's husband passed away long ago, and she now resides with her only daughter and son-in-law, who is in a coma. Despite these circumstances, she remains the strongest character in the house. Her authoritarian and commanding presence is attributed to her lineage from the clan of Watchers, a group historically aided by Djinns to act as guardians over both humans and Djinns. Nani's strength and authority come from the supernatural assistance provided by the Djinns, as highlighted in the text: "The women of this house have always been helped by Djinns in times of need" (Ibid 36). This supernatural alliance renders her a formidable and dominating figure within the household.

In the presence of her towering personality, the male characters, such as the servant Aziz and Sharmeen's father, Abba, seem to fade into insignificance. This dynamic is underscored by her emphatic declaration to her daughter: "Your father never understood that it was I who took care of this family. I have lived in this house all my life. I have a responsibility to protect it. I have seen my mother and my mother's mother use the same mumbo jumbo that you scoff at" (Ibid 41). Nani's assertion reveals how her performative role as the "male" of the house is constructed and maintained through her relationship with the Djinn. Here, her gender identity is not innate but performed through actions and assertions, aligning with Judith Butler's notion that gender is not a stable identity but a series of acts that conform to societal expectations and norms.

However, Nani's authoritative performance is entirely dependent on the presence of her guardian Djinn. When the Djinn leaves her due to the accidental killing of a life by a family member, she loses both her dominance and authoritative nature. This loss is dramatically captured when she becomes "disoriented—she saw the dead crow on the pile and fainted" (Ibid 53). Following this, she dies two days after losing her guardian Djinn. Her decline illustrates how her previous strength and dominance were performative acts enabled by the Djinn's presence.

Without the supernatural support, Nani reverts to what Butler describes as the "weak and typical" performance of femininity—submissive, fragile, and powerless. This shift suggests that her identity as a strong, authoritative figure was not an inherent characteristic, but a performance shaped by external influences—in this case, the Djinn. Once this influence is removed, her performance of strength and authority collapses, and she embodies a more traditional, disempowered female role. Thus, Nani's transformation serves as a powerful example of Butler's theory of gender performativity, demonstrating how external factors, such as the supernatural in this narrative, significantly affect the roles and performances of female characters, all because of her assistance of a Djinn. Thus, jinn played her role in her performativity.

Incorporating Judith Lorber's perspective adds another dimension to this analysis. Lorber views gender as a social institution that governs how individuals behave within societal structures. Nani's reliance on the Djinn to adopt a stronger role reflects Lorber's argument that societal systems—not just individual traits—dictate gender roles. The Djinn, in this sense, disrupts the social order, allowing Nani to step outside the gendered constraints placed upon her. However, once this supernatural

support is gone, she reverts to a performance that aligns with the institutionalized expectations of femininity—submissive and disempowered.

Thus, Nani's transformation demonstrates both Butler's theory of performativity, as her identity shifts with external influences and Lorber's notion that societal structures play a significant role in shaping these gendered performances. The Djinn, acting as an external force, temporarily alters the social conditions that define Nani's gender role, showing how fluid and context-dependent gender identity can be.

The novel *A Firefly in the Dark* vividly portrays the transformation of Sharmeen from a submissive female, bound by traditional norms of femininity, to a powerful, authoritative figure whose role defies conventional gender expectations. This transformation can be deeply understood through Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, which argues that gender is not an inherent or fixed trait but is continually constructed and reconstructed through repeated acts and behaviors that align with—or challenge—societal norms.

At the beginning of the novel, Sharmeen is depicted as a quintessentially submissive and fearful female character. She lives in an old mansion with her grandmother, Nani, and her mother, while her father lives in a coma. Sharmeen's fear of the dark, storms, and thunder, as well as her shivering at shadows on the wall at night, all highlight her vulnerability and dependence. When she wakes up in the middle of the night and sees shadows, she immediately rushes to the safety of her grandmother's room, reflecting on her need for protection and her internalization of traditional feminine helplessness. Her life is meticulously controlled by her servant, Aziz, who decides her daily schedule, what she eats, and how she spends her time. Even when faced with the traumatic event of seeing her grandmother, Nani, crushed by rubble, Sharmeen faints, losing consciousness and only waking up once Nani is buried. These actions collectively portray her as a "protected and guarded" female whose agency is minimal and who conforms to society's expectations of a fragile, dependent woman.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity suggests that gender is not something one is, but something one does—a series of acts and performances that conform to societal norms and expectations. In this light, Sharmeen's initial behavior is not an inherent or biological trait of femininity, but a performance shaped by her

upbringing, social environment, and expectations placed upon her as a female. She "performs" her gender role as a submissive woman who is constantly protected and managed by male figures like Aziz. Her fainting and reliance on others for safety are not innate qualities but socially conditioned behaviors that conform to a passive female role.

Sharmeen's transformation begins with the death of her grandmother, Nani, a turning point that disrupts the established power dynamics in the household. Nani was the dominant matriarch, a role supported by her supernatural alliance with the Djinn, which enabled her to maintain control over the family and household. With Nani's death, this control is lost, and the household starts descending into chaos. Sharmeen's mother begins to weaken day by day, her father's condition in the coma deteriorates, and Aziz starts assuming the role of the *de facto* head of the household, exerting authority over not just the house but the family members themselves.

Faced with this escalating situation, Sharmeen realizes that the established order is crumbling and that her family's stability and well-being are at risk. This realization becomes the catalyst for her transformation. In an act of defiance against her previously submissive role, she decides to take control of the situation herself. For the first time, she actively chooses to summon the Djinn, a decision that marks a departure from her previous performance of femininity and sets her on a path toward a more assertive and dominant identity.

Summoning the Djinn symbolizes Sharmeen's break from her previous passive role and the beginning of her assertion of authority and control. With Djinn's aid, Sharmeen's actions start reflecting a shift from traditionally feminine traits to those associated with masculinity—decisiveness, strength, and leadership. She no longer seeks protection but instead becomes the protector and decision-maker for her family. For example, when her mother feels dizzy and tired, Aziz suggests that she should rest in her room. However, Sharmeen boldly overrides his suggestion, insisting that her mother go for a walk instead. This small yet significant act symbolizes the reversal of the power dynamic in the household, with Sharmeen now taking the authoritative role that Aziz once held.

This change aligns with Butler's theory that gender identity is produced and reproduced through repeated performances. By taking on a new set of behaviors,

decisiveness, authority, and protection, Sharmeen begins to perform a "masculine" role, demonstrating that gender is not a fixed state but a fluid and negotiable construct. Her behavior challenges the traditional norms of femininity, asserting that the roles of women and men are not determined by biology but by social and personal actions and decisions.

Integrating Judith Lorber's perspective, Sharmeen's transformation can also be understood as a challenge to gender as a social institution. Lorber argues that gender is a system of social organization that prescribes specific roles and behaviors for men and women, maintaining societal order. By adopting behaviors traditionally associated with masculinity, Sharmeen disrupts this institutionalized gender order, showing that gender roles are not biologically determined but socially constructed and enforced. Her performance of authority and protection not only contests societal expectations of femininity but also highlights Lorber's argument that these roles can be renegotiated and redefined depending on social circumstances.

Thus, Sharmeen's behavior underscores both Butler's theory of gender performativity, as her actions illustrate the fluidity of gender, and Lorber's concept of gender as an institution, showing how societal structures dictate but can also be subverted by individual performances.

With the assistance of the Djinn, Sharmeen's transformation becomes more pronounced. She starts deciding not only her own actions but also those of her parents, signaling her complete assumption of control in the household. Aziz, who once dictated her daily life, begins to respect her authority, mirroring his previous deference to Nani. His submission to Sharmeen's authority represents a significant shift in power dynamics, highlighting how her newfound assertiveness is reshaping her gender identity.

Through a series of performances—making decisions, standing up to Aziz, and enforcing her will—Sharmeen embodies a new role as the dominant figure in the family. She transforms from being controlled to becoming the controller, a shift that demonstrates how gender identities are not static but are performed based on circumstances, influences, and personal agency. Her actions reveal how the "masculine" traits of authority, control, and strength can be adapted and performed by a woman, thereby challenging the rigid binaries of gender roles.

Sharmeen's journey reaches a critical point when she decides to venture into the darkness—a space she once feared—to seek help from Amluq, a supernatural entity even more powerful than her guardian Djinn. The act of confronting Amluq, even though even her Djinn is afraid, marks a significant departure from her former self, who shivered in shadows and rushed to her grandmother for protection. Sharmeen's determination and courage in facing Amluq, a being who represents the ultimate fear and power, signify her complete rejection of the submissive, timid identity she once performed.

Here, Sharmeen's journey into the dark symbolizes her journey into the unknown aspects of her own identity and potential. By negotiating with Amluq and making her request clear and firm, Sharmeen asserts her agency in a way that transcends her gendered limitations. This act of courage astonishes even Amluq, revealing the extent of her transformation and her ability to negotiate power in realms beyond humans.

Sharmeen's ultimate test of strength and determination comes in her battle with Sargosh, the devil monster feared by even the Djinn. This battle is not only a physical confrontation but also a symbolic struggle against the constraints of her gendered identity. Despite being wounded, encapsulated, and engulfed by Sargosh, Sharmeen refuses to surrender. Her relentless struggle and determination to fight until she bleeds demonstrate a shift from a performative act of helplessness to one of empowerment and resilience.

Her victory over Sargosh, a creature even the Janaree could not defeat, signifies her complete transformation. The appearance of a strand of white hair on her head, as if she has been "knighted" and declared a winner, symbolizes her transition into a new phase of identity—one that merges traditional masculine and feminine qualities, defying the binary constructs of gender. She embodies both the nurturing aspects of femininity and the warrior-like traits of masculinity, suggesting that gender can be a blend of multiple performances rather than a single, fixed identity.

Sharmeen's transformation in *A Firefly in the Dark* from a fearful, submissive girl to a commanding and courageous figure is a powerful illustration of Butler's theory of gender performativity. Her evolution is not simply a change in personality but a fundamental reconfiguration of her gender identity through the repeated performance

of new acts—acts of courage, defiance, authority, and leadership, enabled by her guardian Djinn. This journey underscores the fluidity of gender, demonstrating that identities can be reshaped and redefined based on actions, choices, and external influences.

Through Sharmeen's story, the novel challenges the fixed and essentialist notions of gender, showing that power, authority, and strength are not inherently "masculine" traits but can be performed by anyone, regardless of gender, under the right circumstances and influences. Her transformation serves as a testament to the potential for women to redefine their identities and roles, breaking free from societal expectations and embracing a more dynamic and multifaceted sense of self.

In the light of above discussion, it can be concluded, that the Djinns, despite being mythical creatures with significant importance in Holy Quran, serve a deeper, transformative purpose in the narrative. They embody the concept of "nomadic flow," as articulated by Gilles Deleuze, which allows them to "become" whatever they desire. This ability to traverse different forms and states enables them to catalyze transformation in those they possess, particularly women. By merging with these female characters, the Djinns disrupt and destabilize the fixed, socially assigned gender roles that have been imposed on them.

In line with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, the Djinns facilitate a shift in the performance of gender. They act as agents of change, reversing the traditional roles and identities assigned to women by society. Through their influence, the women in the story can embody new forms of identity, challenging the rigid binaries of gender and embracing a more fluid, dynamic existence. The Djinns' nomadic flow thus becomes a means for the women to enact new performances, transforming their roles and asserting agency in ways that defy societal norms.

As per Judith Lorber's perspective, this shift can also be seen as a disruption of gender as a social institution. Lorber argues that gender roles are deeply embedded in societal structures, maintaining social order by dictating the behaviors and identities appropriate for men and women. The Djinns' influence allows the women to break free from these institutionalized constraints, challenging the fixed and socially constructed gender roles that have long been imposed upon them. By adopting new performances and rejecting the rigid binaries of gender, these women illustrate Lorber's view that

gender is not a natural or fixed category but a socially organized system that can be redefined and transformed.

The Djinns' nomadic flow, therefore, becomes a powerful means for the women to resist the institutionalization of gender, allowing them to assert agency and embrace a more flexible and fluid identity. This fusion of Butler's performativity and Lorber's institutional theory reveals how external forces, such as the Djinns, can serve as catalysts for reimagining and renegotiating gender roles in a society that seeks to confine them.

4.2 The Blue Room and Gender Performativity

The second novel chosen for the debate is *The Blue Room* by Nafisa Rizvi. Nafisa Rizvi is a Pakistani-born writer and independent curator who was the founding editor of *Art Now*, Pakistan's first online magazine dedicated to contemporary art. In 2011, she curated an exhibition titled *Stop, Play, Pause, Repeat*, featuring 11 contemporary Pakistani artists at the Lawrie Shabibi Gallery in Dubai. Nafisa has contributed to various local and international publications, including *Imprint* in Australia and *Art Asia Pacific* in Hong Kong. She also lectured at the College of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, in 2013, where she participated in a printmaking residency.

In October 2015, Nafisa curated an exhibition at Philadelphia's Twelve Gates Gallery titled *They Really Live the Real Reality*, showcasing four talented emerging artists from Pakistan. Recently, she delivered a lecture called "Art: The Esoteric Investment" to the Pakistan Club at the University of Chicago. Currently, she is the founder and editor of the online art magazine *Artemesia Art* in Pakistan and is writing a book on the trajectories of visual art in Pakistan. Her notable works include *The Feminine Construct* appears in *The Eye Still Seeks: Pakistani Contemporary Art* by Salima Hashmi, published by Penguin India in 2015.

The Blue Room by Nafisa Rizvi tells the compelling story of Zaibunissa, a perceptive and inquisitive young girl growing up in a sprawling, extended family within the confines of a grand but aging haveli. The novel is set against a rich tapestry of feudal traditions, where the grandeur of old-world aristocracy still lingers, along with the myths, legends, and superstitions that are deeply woven into the lives of its inhabitants.

Zaibunissa is not like the other children in her family; she is curious, unusually insightful, and has a mind that questions everything around her. Her unique nature leads her to form an unexpected circle of friends, including some of the haveli's servants, outcasts, and animals, who open her eyes to the hidden truths of her world. She becomes especially attuned to the injustices and hypocrisies within the walls of her home, which sets her apart in a family and society that values obedience over inquiry.

Things take a dramatic turn when Zaibunissa accidentally uncovers the deceitful practices of a fictitious moulvi, a cleric who exploits the family's trust and spreads fear through manipulative schemes. Determined to expose his evil machinations, Zaibunissa sets out on a courageous path to bring the truth to light. However, her bold actions backfire, as her family, eager to protect their reputation and prevent further scandal, hastily marries her off to an older man she has never met.

Thrown into a new, uncertain life, Zaibunissa navigates a complex web of relationships with her hostile in-laws, who view her with suspicion and disdain. She faces the challenge of surviving in an environment that is far more oppressive than the haveli of her childhood, while also safeguarding her own dignity and protecting those she cares about. As she struggles to find her footing, she encounters numerous trials that test her strength and resilience.

Zaibunissa's journey becomes one of self-discovery and moral courage, where she must confront not only the external forces that seek to control her but also her own fears and doubts. She is eventually faced with a pivotal decision—one that has the potential to change not just her life, but the lives of many others who look to her for leadership and hope.

Unlike in *A Firefly in the Dark*, where the presence of Djinns is vividly depicted with rich detail—describing their ability to shape-shift, manipulate objects, and transcend the boundaries of time and space—this novel takes a different approach to the supernatural. There is no direct mention of Djinns, nor is there any clear reference to their specific characteristics or powers. Instead, the novel introduces an ambiguous, unseen supernatural force whose nature is never fully explained but whose presence is undeniably felt.

This force has a profound impact on the characters, particularly the protagonist, by exerting a mysterious influence that goes beyond mere possession. It can alter the

characters' personalities, emotions, and decisions, essentially reshaping their entire being and changing the course of their lives. Unlike the Djinns in "A Firefly in the Dark," who are portrayed with physical attributes and specific abilities, this force operates in the shadows, subtly manipulating events and people in ways that are both terrifying and transformative.

The novel highlights how this invisible force gradually takes hold of the protagonist, altering her thoughts, actions, and sense of self. It challenges her understanding of reality, leaving her to grapple with whether she is in control of her fate or if she is merely a vessel for a power she cannot see or understand. The presence of this force leads to a redefinition of her role and identity within the story, as she is compelled to confront her deepest fears, desires, and doubts.

Throughout the novel, the impact of this unseen power is constantly felt, creating a tense, uncertain atmosphere. The protagonist's journey is shaped by this presence, as she is forced to navigate a world where boundaries between reality and the supernatural blur, where every decision she makes can be influenced by an entity beyond her comprehension. The narrative weaves this theme of transformation and manipulation, showing how the protagonist is remolded by forces that remain just out of sight, yet powerfully present in every aspect of her life.

The novel highlights the nomadic flow of the supernatural creatures and their ability not only to become what they are but also to transform the being with whom they are associated, making them a strong force in resisting the norms.

In Pakistani cultural contexts, supernatural entities such as Djinn are often woven into the fabric of daily life, considered real and ever-present. This perspective is affirmed by Nafisa Rizvi, who, when asked if she was inspired by magic realism in her work, agreed and elaborated, stating, "Jinns, some malignant and some benign, used to cohabitate with family members, especially in large houses or havelis, and it was reported without any degree of incredulity." This suggests that Djinns are not only accepted but integrated into the social and cultural understanding of reality, especially within the confines of traditional homes or estates, like the old haveli that serves as the novel's primary setting.

The novel hints at the presence of Djinn from the beginning. The four walls of a particular room are subtly suggested to be representations of four Djinn. When Zaib

is born, her grandfather, while gazing into her eyes, slips into a dreamlike state, a vision of a young girl walking side by side with four men. "They had long white beards that hung to their waists and were wearing flowing blue robes, the color of the sky. One carried a staff" (Rizvi 2). These men, with their long white beards and flowing robes, move with an unusual swiftness, hinting at an otherworldly nature. The blue robes they wear are symbolic, as blue is often associated with Djinn in various cultural depictions, representing their mystical and elusive characteristics.

As Zaib grows older, she discovers an unused room within the haveli. The room is unusual; its walls are painted in "a strange aquamarine blue" (Ibid 12), a color that immediately evokes the image of Djinn, traditionally believed to possess blue skin. This discovery is unsettling for Zaib, as she begins to sense a strange, lived-in presence as if the room itself is inhabited by unseen forces. Over time, the four walls of the room begin to communicate with her, revealing themselves to be more than mere physical structures. They speak of having been there since the house was built and possess intimate knowledge of every family member who has lived there. They possess the ability to foretell the future, suggesting they exist beyond the normal constraints of time and space.

These elements not only confirm the existence of Djinn in the novel but also underscore their ability to shift and flow nomadically between forms and dimensions. The walls—embodied by Djinn—display a unique fluidity, transforming between states of being, both living and non-living, as they interact with Zaib. This ability to transcend the ordinary, to be omnipresent and omniscient, suggests a kind of nomadic flow characteristic of Djinns, who are neither bound by the physical limitations of time nor confined to a single place. They reveal to Zaib that they have been waiting for her, indicating a destiny intertwined with the supernatural. The novel, therefore, explores the presence of Djinn not only as mythical beings but as entities capable of moving through different realms of existence, fluidly shifting between the visible and invisible, the past and the future, and the known and the unknown.

This depiction aligns with the traditional belief that Djinn can inhabit spaces, objects, and even people, living alongside humans in parallel worlds. Their portrayal in the novel captures this duality: their tangible, everyday presence within the walls of a haveli and their intangible, mysterious nature that transcends human understanding. Thus, the four walls of the room are not just walls, they are living entities, Djinn who

have become part of the house's very essence, embodying the idea that the supernatural is woven into the fabric of reality itself.

Unlike the female protagonists in the novel, a Firefly in the Dark who were often depicted as weak, petite, and submissive to patriarchal norms, the protagonist of this novel, Zaib, defies traditional gender roles. She embodies traits that are more conventionally associated with masculinity, not only in her physical appearance but also in her actions, demeanor, and the roles she takes on. Zaib stands out as a character who challenges the norms of femininity by being authoritative, strong-willed, and independent in a patriarchal environment.

Physically, Zaib is markedly different from the other females in her family. Her most distinctive feature is her striking gray eyes, which are mesmerizing in a family where every other girl has brown eyes. This difference in appearance sets her apart from the beginning, suggesting that she does not conform to the typical feminine standards upheld by her family or society. Zaib is described as “not as pretty as her sister or cousin,” implying that her looks deviate from conventional notions of feminine beauty. Her physical distinction suggests an androgyny that is further underscored by her behavior and the roles she assumes within her family and social circle.

Zaib's masculine traits are evident in her role as the leader and protector of her group, a role traditionally reserved for men in patriarchal societies. She acts as an “arrogate mother,” a term that conveys a sense of authority and responsibility typically associated with father figures or male guardians. Unlike the passive, obedient female characters in her family, Zaib is seen as a figure of strength and leadership. Her unique qualities are recognized even by the boys in her community, who look to her for “support and patronage”—a highly unusual dynamic in a deeply patriarchal setting. This acknowledgment from the boys indicates that they instinctively perceive Zaib as different from other girls, recognizing her as a figure who embodies traits more commonly attributed to men.

Zaib's masculine identity is reinforced by several incidents in the novel that demonstrate her courage, authority, and refusal to conform to gender expectations. For instance, when a servant spots a massive snake coiled up in the house, Zaib remains calm and composed while others panic. She does not react with the fear typically expected of a girl; instead, she stands her ground and manages to drive the snake away.

This incident not only showcases her bravery but also positions her in a traditionally male role as a protector, who shields others—particularly women—from harm. Zaib takes on this protective role consistently, not only against physical threats but also against psychological trauma inflicted by male family members.

Her influence and authority extend beyond her immediate circle. Zaib's opinions are respected and taken seriously by those around her, even by men who would traditionally dismiss a woman's viewpoint. For example, during a dispute among her peers, she is always called upon to resolve it, highlighting her role as a mediator and leader. When she advises her father to restrict Jalaluddin's interactions with the servants, her father heeds her warning, saying, "I have absolutely no proof, but I have great faith in my daughter's intuition" (66). This level of trust and deference to her judgment, particularly in a patriarchal society, underscores her unique position and authority.

Zaib also demonstrates her defiance of gender norms when her father is kidnapped. She boldly suggests to her uncle that she could use her unusual abilities to locate him, an idea that is considered serious despite being dismissed by her mother as childish. Her uncle's willingness to consider her suggestion, even when it involves supernatural abilities, shows that Zaib's opinions and actions are taken seriously, defying the norm of dismissing female voices in such matters.

Throughout the novel, multiple examples reinforce the notion that Zaib does not conform to traditional female roles, either in her physique or behavior. Her courage, assertiveness, and leadership qualities are more characteristic of male figures in her society. She is neither delicate nor submissive; instead, she exhibits a strength that challenges the conventional expectations of how a woman should look, behave, or perform her gender.

Zaib's character is a radical departure from the earlier portrayals of female protagonists, who were depicted as conforming to the expectations of femininity, adhering to patriarchal dominance, and performing their gendered roles in line with societal norms. In contrast, Zaib embodies a challenge to these norms—her appearance is not feminine by conventional standards, and her actions do not align with the submissive, obedient roles typically assigned to women. Her masculine traits—authority, physical courage, leadership, and independence—mark her as "not a female"

in the traditional sense, reshaping the narrative of gender within the novel. This portrayal suggests a broader commentary on the fluidity and performative nature of gender, challenging the rigid binaries of male and female roles.

Zaib's character is shaped by her possession by an evil djinn, which disrupts and challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. This transformation begins from birth, as hinted by her grandfather's hallucination: he observed that her shadow, "dark and malignant," seemed alive and detached from her being as if a separate entity with its agency (2). This ominous vision, coupled with the unsettling sensation he felt when looking into her eyes, suggests that a djinn had possessed her from the start. The djinn's presence, marked by what Deleuze would term "nomadic flow," enabled it to inhabit her body and soul seamlessly, starting from her birth. This notion of "nomadic flow" involves a constant state of movement, transformation, and becoming, as opposed to a fixed or stable identity. Zaib, therefore, begins a journey of becoming that disrupts her given identity, reshaping her behavior, power, and essence.

Under the djinn's influence, Zaib begins to subvert the conventional roles assigned to her by her patriarchal family. Instead of fulfilling the role of a passive, obedient daughter or a nurturing surrogate mother, she takes on a more commanding and even sinister persona, using her powers to assert control over others. Her actions deviate significantly from expected norms, showcasing a new form of agency and power. For example, when her cousin Adil touches her inappropriately, Zaib does not respond with the shame or helplessness that might be expected of a young woman in her position. Instead, she reacts with an intense and calculated stare, visualizing a scorpion crawling over his face. Her gaze alone inflicts physical torment: "Adeel's hand fell away involuntarily; suddenly, he felt as if he had been bitten by a poisonous creature, and the fiery venom coursed through his veins, burning tissues, muscles, and bones in its path. He turned blue, unable to breathe, and clawed at the air..." (8). This scene captures her ability to project her inner power outward, causing pain and suffering at will. The torment stops only when she removes her gaze, revealing her capacity to manipulate and dominate others through an almost supernatural force.

Similarly, in another incident, Zaib confronts a venomous snake, an animal known for its hypnotic powers. Yet, when she locks eyes with it, the snake recoils and leaves, as if her stare is more potent than its own hypnotic abilities. This scene shows that Zaib's newfound powers, stemming from her possession, give her a level of

authority and strength that supersedes even nature's most feared creatures. Her family members begin to treat her with a mixture of respect and fear, recognizing that she has a mysterious ability to intuit their thoughts and intentions. This newfound power, however, is not rooted in affection or genuine respect but in fear of her unpredictable, almost malevolent capabilities. When Jalal, another minor character, stares at her sister, Zaib catches his gaze and holds it so intensely that he feels as if his veins are burning; he collapses to the floor, gasping. Through these incidents, Zaib's possession by the djinn allows her to wield a power that is both psychological and physical, blurring the lines between human and supernatural.

Her transformation into a figure who commands both fear and respect can be read through Deleuze's concept of "becoming" and "nomadic flow." In Deleuze's philosophy, "becoming" is a continuous process of change, a dynamic state where identity is never fixed or stable but always in flux, resisting static definitions. The djinn's possession allows Zaib to move beyond the confines of her traditional female identity, breaking free from the patriarchal expectations that would have otherwise constrained her. She is not merely possessed by the djinn but is actively "becoming" the djinn, embodying its qualities and powers in a way that enables her to challenge and redefine the gendered power structures around her.

This idea is further illustrated when Zaib's father is kidnapped. In a display of non-human abilities, she locates her father by staring at a photograph of a suspected enemy. As she stares, she experiences a sensation of her soul leaving her body and traveling beyond space and time, entering the enemy's bedroom. Though her body is not physically present, her eyes—piercing and intense—are visible, compelling the enemy to reveal her father's location. This ability to transcend physical boundaries, to move beyond the confines of her body, reflects Deleuze's notion of "nomadic flow." She moves fluidly across different realms of existence, embodying a state of constant becoming that defies categorization. Zaib is no longer confined to a single identity; she is both human and more-than-human, existing in multiple states and spaces at once.

Simultaneously, Zaib's transformation also aligns with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which posits that gender is not an inherent, fixed identity but a series of performed acts, shaped and reshaped by societal norms and expectations. Butler argues that these performances constitute one's gender identity; they are fluid, malleable, and subject to change. Zaib's behavior challenges the traditional female roles

imposed by her family and society. Instead of conforming to the submissive, nurturing qualities often associated with femininity, she becomes a figure of authority, wielding power in ways typically reserved for men or supernatural beings. Her actions—inflicting pain, reading minds, and moving through time and space—are performative acts that disrupt the conventional understanding of gender. In 'becoming' a djinn, Zaib also 'becomes' a new kind of female—one who defies the limitations placed upon her by a patriarchal society and instead embodies a powerful, fearsome presence that commands respect and authority.

Incorporating Judith Lorber's notion, this shift also reflects a breakdown of gender as a social institution. Lorber argues that gender is not just an individual performance but a deeply entrenched system that organizes society by assigning roles and expectations based on gender. The Djinnns disrupt these institutionalized gender norms, allowing the women to escape the rigid confines imposed on them and reimagine their roles. By performing new identities—roles of strength, authority, and independence—they challenge the societal structures that have historically defined what it means to be a woman.

Lorber's concept of gender as a social institution emphasizes that these roles are not biologically determined but constructed and enforced by society to maintain order. The Djinnns' influence acts as a force of liberation from this institutional framework, allowing the women to redefine their identities. By doing so, they resist the institutionalized gender binaries and demonstrate that gender is not fixed but can be fluid and adaptable, especially when external forces disrupt the existing social order.

Thus, the Djinnns' nomadic flow becomes a mechanism for the women to challenge both Butler's notion of performativity and Lorber's idea of institutionalized gender, giving them the freedom to assert agency and embrace new forms of gender expression beyond societal expectations.

Through her possession by the djinn, Zaib navigates the fluid, ever-changing process of becoming, moving beyond the fixed identities and roles traditionally assigned to her. This transformation allows her to challenge and redefine gender norms, asserting a dominant, authoritative presence in a space where her family and society would typically deny her such power. In this sense, her journey reflects both Deleuze's

concept of "nomadic flow" and Butler's theory of gender performativity, illustrating a complex interplay of identity, power, and transformation.

The Djinns play a significant discursive role in transforming Zaib from a dominant, non-conforming female figure into a more traditionally "feminine" one, both in her physical appearance and behavior. This transformation is articulated through a dreamlike hallucination seen by Zaib's grandfather, which foreshadows the control the Djinns exert over her identity. In the vision, four elderly men walk closely beside Zaib, symbolizing a protective presence. As they notice a dark, malevolent shadow following her, "the old man with the staff looked back, saw the shadow, and whispered to the other three. They quickly led the young woman to a clearing where the sun shone unrestrainedly fierce. The shadow cringed in the glare and dissipated" (2). This scene suggests that these four figures, who are actually Djinns manifesting as walls, have a protective role, waiting for her for a long time, implying their intent to mold her into a particular form of femininity.

The ability of the four walls to speak is tied to the Djinns' unique nomadic existence, which allows them to move fluidly across time and space, enabling them to "become" the walls themselves. This metaphor indicates their pervasive influence on Zaib's identity, which begins slowly and surreptitiously. The first stage of this influence is their indoctrination of Zaib to follow the faith. In a patriarchal context, religiosity is often a prescribed trait for women, aligning them with ideals of piety and submission. Initially, Zaib is not very religious, but under the influence of the Djinns, she begins adhering more strictly to religious practices, an early sign of her transformation.

The Djinns further manipulate Zaib's performative identity by arranging her marriage to a man who is, by all measures, inferior to her. This man becomes her husband not by her choice, but by the insistence of the four walls, who compel her to accept this union. Through this marriage, they slowly guide Zaib to accept patriarchal norms, marking the beginning of her transition from a short-tempered, independent woman into a more submissive figure. Upon entering her husband's household, she encounters typical familial conflicts, especially with her mother-in-law, yet Zaib, despite possessing unique powers, chooses to accept her new circumstances without resistance. Her powers are suppressed, and she cannot use them in this environment, further indicating her forced conformity.

In the next phase, the four walls instruct Zaib to love her husband and embrace the role of a "good wife"—one who is caring, affectionate, and devoted. This stage represents another layer of gender performance, where Zaib is molded to embody a traditionally feminine role. She begins to perform the expected behaviors of a loving wife, taking care of her household duties, cooking, cleaning, and nurturing her husband. She even creates a small garden to cultivate and spend her leisure time with him, a symbolic gesture of her retreat into domesticity and traditional femininity. Despite her attempts to reclaim her unique powers on two occasions, she finds herself unable to do so, further indicating her submission to the patriarchal structure imposed on her.

When Zaib visits her mother, her transformation is so profound that her family barely recognizes her. She has not only become more conventionally attractive but also has undergone a deep change in her demeanor, becoming loving, caring, and passive—traits traditionally associated with feminine behavior. This shift in Zaib's character is attributed to the four walls, or Djinns, who have actively transformed her through their influence.

Zaib's transformation can be understood through Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. Butler posits that gender is not an inherent identity but rather a series of acts, gestures, and behaviors that are performed in accordance with social norms and expectations. In this case, the Djinns—or the four walls—serve as agents of patriarchal control, compelling Zaib to perform a set of behaviors aligned with a socially constructed ideal of femininity. Initially resistant, Zaib gradually conforms to these expectations, transitioning from a rebellious and independent figure to one that embodies the patriarchal ideals of what it means to be a "woman."

Through the actions dictated by the four walls, Zaib's identity is reshaped; she learns to become submissive, loving, and dutiful—not because these traits are inherently hers, but because she is compelled to perform them in accordance with the roles prescribed to her. Her transformation reveals how her gendered identity is produced through repeated actions and behaviors enforced by societal structures, illustrating Butler's assertion that gender is not a fixed essence but rather a performance shaped by external power dynamics. The four walls—manifestations of Djinns—act as the enforcers of these norms, demonstrating that Zaib's transformation is an imposed performance rather than a reflection of any inherent truth about her nature.

Zaib's transformation from a dominant, devilish character to a docile female is influenced by the supernatural power that possesses her. Initially, she exhibits a powerful and rebellious nature due to the nomadic flow of the Djinn that possesses her. This flow embodies the concept of "becoming" in Deleuze's philosophy, where identity is fluid and constantly in flux, allowing Zaib to "become" something she was not. Her transformation extends beyond her physical appearance to her actions and behaviors, defying the conventional female order.

However, as Djinn's nomadic flow shifts, Zaib is reconfigured into a more submissive role, aligning with patriarchal norms. This change illustrates Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, where gender is not an inherent identity but rather a series of performed acts shaped by societal expectations. In Zaib's case, the supernatural influence of the Djinn communicates through boundaries, much like a flow moving through walls, reinforcing her shift to a role that conforms to traditional female obedience. The male presence, meanwhile, remains a dominant force, dictating the terms of her transformation and maintaining control over the narrative, reflecting the persistent patriarchal structure even within the seemingly fluid state of becoming.

The analysis of the novels demonstrates that mythical beings, especially Djinns, occupy a significant position in Pakistani culture, largely due to their religious importance in Islam, where they are considered powerful and mysterious entities. However, beyond their religious and cultural significance, Djinns also maintain a unique and intricate relationship with women. This connection stems from the Djinns' inherent ability to transcend the ordinary constraints of time and space, allowing them to "become" whatever they choose and adapt to different forms and roles.

This fluidity enables Djinns to influence and transform female characters in ways that challenge or reinforce traditional gender roles. They serve as agents of change, empowering women to navigate the patriarchal structures that define their existence. The Djinns' powers offer women the means to either conform to the socially prescribed norms of femininity or break away from them entirely, redefining their identities in the process.

By embodying different personas and roles, Djinns helps women explore a spectrum of identities, from the submissive and oppressed to the assertive and liberated. This dynamic allows the characters to perform gender in diverse ways, illustrating the

idea that gender is not a fixed identity, but a series of performed acts shaped by societal expectations. Thus, Djinns facilitate a transformative journey for female characters, enabling them to resist or comply with patriarchal dictates, thereby becoming agents of their own stories in a fluid cultural and spiritual context.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter serves as the culmination of the debate and discussion carried out throughout this research. Its primary purpose is to provide comprehensive answers to the questions raised in the initial chapter. By doing so, it aims to address the gaps identified at the beginning of this study, clarify ambiguities, and consolidate the arguments presented throughout the preceding chapters.

The purpose of this chapter is fourfold.

- i. The chapter revisits the key questions posed in the introduction, providing well-supported answers based on the data collected and analyzed.
- ii. It provides the significant findings of the research. These findings are based on data analysis and literature review
- iii. This chapter articulates how this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge.
- iv. The chapter also suggests recommendations for future research based on the findings and limitations encountered during the study.

The first question that was raised stated that in what ways do djinns intersect with women in the selected speculative fiction? The analysis of the novels reveals a complex dynamic between the Djinn and the female characters, illustrating how the Djinn intersects their lives in varied and meaningful ways. The Djinn's interactions with the women in the stories are not merely supernatural encounters; they symbolize deeper psychological and societal issues, such as control, autonomy, and resistance against patriarchal norms. From the analysis of the first novel *The Firefly in the Dark*, it can be clearly seen that the most direct way the djinn intersects with the female characters is through possession. This involves the Djinn entering and taking control of a woman's body or mind, effectively overpowering her will. Thus, in the novel *For Nayantara and Anisa*, djinn possesses these women, providing them with the strength and courage to stand up against patriarchal oppression. The possession is both a literal invasion of their bodies and a metaphorical reclaiming of agency. The djinn becomes a catalyst for transformation, turning their subservient and fearful states into ones of resistance and strength. This form of intersection challenges their identity by forcing them to confront

their own desires, fears, and capacities for change. But for Sharmeen: The possession is more gradual and complex. In the main plot of the novel, where Sharmeen is the protagonist, the Djinn intersects her life in more nuanced ways. Unlike the straightforward possession seen with Nayantara and Anisa, the Djinn's engagement with Sharmeen is gradual and more complex. The Djinn initially appears in different forms, such as a firefly, a dung beetle, a gecko, and even a peacock. Each of these forms serves a specific purpose in its strategy to gain Sharmeen's trust and access to her inner world. The use of different forms represents a slow and careful infiltration into the woman's life, allowing the Djinn to observe, interact, and influence without raising immediate alarm. This intersection is less about direct control and more about subtly altering the woman's perceptions, decisions, and behaviors over time by disguising itself as harmless or beautiful creatures, the djinn gains entry into the women's lives without immediately threatening them. For Sharmeen, these forms are strategic, allowing the djinn to approach her in a non-threatening manner. This initial intersection is about creating familiarity and building trust, which makes the women more receptive to the djinn's influence. The djinn ultimately enters Sharmeen's mind and body, symbolizing a more intimate and psychological form of intersection. This possession disrupts her sense of self and autonomy, showing how external forces can deeply influence one's inner world. It demonstrates how power and control can manifest not only through overt dominance but also through subtler psychological manipulation.

In *The Blue Room*, the intersection of the Djinn with the protagonist, Zaib, unfolds in two distinct phases, each characterized by a different mode of influence. The novel presents a compelling narrative of how supernatural forces intertwine with human lives, shaping their identities and destinies. The Djinn's influence over Zaib evolves from a direct form of possession to a more subtle, pervasive control, reflecting a complex interplay between external domination and internal transformation. Like Sharmeen, the protagonist of the first novel, Zaib is possessed both internally and externally. The story begins with Zaib being born under the shadow of possession by an evil djinn. This initial intersection is marked by an ominous, direct control over her life from the moment of her birth. The djinn's possession of Zaib is not just a background detail but a fundamental aspect of her identity and development throughout the story. Zaib is described as born possessed by an evil Djinn, a condition foretold in a dream seen by her grandfather. This dream serves as a prophetic warning, suggesting

that Zaib is destined to be intertwined with dark, supernatural forces from the very beginning of her life. The possession at birth signifies a complete lack of agency on Zaib's part; she is not just affected by the Djinn, but her very existence is marked by its control. This initial possession is a profound invasion of her being, suggesting that she is inherently bound to the Djinn's will.

Zaib begins to exhibit a commanding, towering personality that sets her apart from others. This transformation is gradual, but it becomes evident that the djinn's possession is turning her into something more than human, something fearsome and formidable. Her personality becomes increasingly assertive and overpowering, hinting at a darker, more monstrous evolution. As the djinn's influence grows stronger, Zaib slowly starts to develop traits that align with its malevolent nature. The possession fosters within her a sense of superiority and dominance, and she becomes a force that is both feared and revered. Her transformation into a "devilish monster" is not merely a physical or behavioral change but a deeper, more insidious alteration of her soul and psyche. She becomes a vessel for the Djinn's power, embodying its dark intentions and characteristics.

The possession of Zaib symbolizes a deeper narrative about control and manipulation. From a thematic perspective. The second intersection is through the four-guardian djinn. As the narrative progresses, a shift occurs in how the Djinn's intersect with Zaib. The initial, overt possession by the evil Djinn is followed by a more subtle and intricate form of intersection through the four guardian Djinn. This second phase of intersection is less about direct possession and more about a quiet, pervasive control that is deeply embedded in Zaib's environment and psyche.

The four guardian Djinn are introduced as protective forces that surround Zaib, but their method of intersection is markedly different from the malevolent possession of the initial Djinn. These Djinn are connected to the four blue walls of the haveli (a traditional mansion), creating an invisible boundary that surrounds and penetrates Zaib's existence. Their presence is subtle, unseen, and constant, suggesting a form of control that is less obvious but potentially more powerful.

The haveli, with its four blue walls, becomes a symbol of the guardian Djinn's intersection with Zaib. These walls are not just physical boundaries but metaphysical ones, representing the pervasive influence the guardian Djinn exerts over her life. The

blue walls signify the protective yet confining presence of these supernatural entities. They do not possess Zaib in the traditional sense but instead, envelop her within a sphere of control that is both subtle and profound.

This mode of intersection is more penetrating because it seeps into every aspect of Zaib's life. Unlike the evil Djinn's possession, which was direct and forceful, the Djinn's guardian is pervasive and enduring. The blue walls become an ever-present reminder of their influence, suggesting that the Zaib is always under their watchful eyes, always within their grasp. This method of control is less about overt domination and more about a silent, omnipresent authority that governs her actions and thoughts.

The guardian Djinn's method of intersection is subtle but has a more lasting impact on Zaib. Their influence is not immediately apparent but is slowly revealed over time as they shape her decisions, emotions, and perceptions from within. This subtlety allows them to remain in the background, exerting their control without drawing attention to themselves, which makes their intersection more deeply rooted and harder to resist.

For example, Zaib may find herself inexplicably drawn to certain behaviors or decisions, influenced by the invisible force of the guardian Djinn. This type of control is psychological and emotional, creating a sense of internal conflict and confusion. Unlike the obvious external control exerted by the initial Djinn's possession, this intersection manipulates Zaib's inner world, making it difficult for her to distinguish her own desires from those imposed upon her.

The four blue walls of the haveli create a sense of constant surveillance, a feeling that Zaib is always being watched and controlled, even when she is alone. This surveillance is not aggressive but omnipresent, creating an atmosphere of confinement and restriction. The walls act as a metaphor for the invisible but inescapable boundaries set by the guardian Djinn.

This form of intersection is more psychologically penetrating, as it slowly conditions Zaib to accept the boundaries and limitations imposed upon her. The constant presence of the guardian Djinn, symbolized by the walls, leads to a form of internalized control where Zaib begins to self-regulate her behavior, thoughts, and actions in accordance with the unseen but felt influence of these supernatural entities.

The impact of the four guardian Djinn's intersection on Zaib is more profound and long-lasting than the initial possession by the evil Djinn. While the possession had a visible and immediate effect, transforming her into a towering, monstrous figure, the guardian Djinn's subtle influence has a deeper, more enduring impact on her psyche and life.

Together, these two intersections reflect the complex dynamics of power, how it can manifest both overtly and covertly, how it can both oppress and protect and how it can shape identity and autonomy in unexpected ways.

The second question raised was that how the intersections between women and Djinns generate nomadic identities for women characters in the selected speculative fiction. As the analysis reveals the intersections between women and Djinns in *A Firefly in the Dark* vividly illustrate the creation of nomadic identities for the female characters. The intersections between women and Djinns create complex, nomadic identities for the female characters, particularly through the story of the Janaree. Her character exemplifies a nomadic existence both physically and emotionally, shaped by her unique ability to traverse multiple forms, roles, and spaces.

Initially, the Janaree is portrayed as a fierce, devilish Djinn with a carnivorous instinct, seeing men purely as prey. Her identity at this stage is marked by a fixed, predatory nature. However, this changes when she consciously transforms into a human female to conceive a child with Samarkand, a traveler. This transformation marks the beginning of her nomadic identity. As a Janaree, she is no longer bound by a single form or role; she embodies the ability to move fluidly between being a monstrous Djinn and a nurturing mother, becoming the parent of an Amluqu—a half-human, half-Djinn child.

This duality allows her to exist in multiple realms and identities simultaneously. She retains the capacity for violence, yet she chooses not to exercise it once she fulfills her desire to conceive. Instead of devouring Samarkand, she spares him out of compassion, only ending his life later to alleviate his suffering when he becomes old and frail. This decision highlights her emotional transformation from a being driven by raw instinct to one capable of complex, empathetic choices.

Her nomadic identity further deepens when she adopts the role of a protector. The Janaree, who once hunted men, now defends them from other malevolent Djinns.

She even battles Sagosh, a deadly evil Djinn, sacrificing her own life to save a man named Aabid and others. This ultimate act of self-sacrifice reveals her new, multi-layered identity: she is both a ferocious Djinn and a compassionate guardian.

Thus, the Janaree's ability to navigate between contrasting identities and roles—predator and protector, Djinn and human—embodies a nomadic existence. Her identity is not static but fluid, shaped by her movement across different states of being, both physical and emotional. Through her story, the novel portrays how women, intersecting with Djinn, develop nomadic identities that transcend conventional boundaries, embracing multiplicity, change, and transformation.

Similarly, the concept of nomadic identity is vividly illustrated through the characters of Nayantara and her daughter Anisa once they intersect with the Djinn. Initially, Nayantara is depicted as a human woman trapped in a cycle of marital abuse, her existence marked by weakness, helplessness, and silent suffering. Her identity at this point is firmly rooted in a human experience defined by fear and victimhood.

However, this changes dramatically when she intersects with a Djinn. The Djinn takes her beyond the ordinary limits of human existence, transporting her to realms of eternity, where she witnesses the beauty of the sky, heaven, and nature—experiences only possible for those with a nomadic identity and a nomadic physicality that allows them to move beyond conventional spaces and time. This journey signifies a fundamental shift not just in her physical experience but, more importantly, in her emotional identity.

As Nayantara intersects with the Djinn, she undergoes a transformation from a fearful, passive woman to someone imbued with a new, nomadic essence. This shift is also mirrored by her daughter, Anisa. Both mother and daughter, once dominated by fear of their abusive husband and father, develop a newfound strength and presence that transcends their previous human limitations. The Djinn's influence grants them an aura that is no longer purely human, instilling in them a confidence and power that is otherworldly and unsettling.

Their nomadic identity becomes a source of empowerment, allowing them to transcend the confines of their previous existence and be perceived as powerful and intimidating. The husband/father begins to fear them, sensing their ability to move beyond the limits that once constrained them. This transformation highlights the

nomadic identity they have gained—an identity characterized by fluidity, strength, and the capacity to exist and move across multiple realms, both physical and emotional.

Through their intersection with the Djinn, Nayantara, and Anisa embody a nomadic identity that challenges traditional boundaries, redefining their existence beyond human limitations and creating a space where they are to be feared and respected.

Sharmeen's character in "A Firefly in the Dark" exemplifies the clearest expression of a nomadic identity, both physically and emotionally, through her intersection with a Djinn. Before this transformation, Sharmeen is portrayed as a typical, fearful young girl, easily frightened by even minor things like shadows, lightning, and darkness. She relies heavily on the support of Aziz, her servant, and her grandmother for comfort and protection.

However, after her intersection with the Djinn, Sharmeen undergoes a profound transformation that reveals her newfound nomadic identity. She overcomes her fears and gains the extraordinary ability to communicate with the Djinn, even when he takes the tiniest forms, such as a firefly, dung beetle, or gecko—capabilities far beyond ordinary human experience. This transformation demonstrates her ability to navigate multiple realms of existence, embodying a nomadic identity that allows her to move beyond the boundaries of human perception.

Sharmeen's nomadic identity is further evidenced by her ability to transcend time and space. She is transported to ancient eras where she does not merely observe but fully experiences everything, suggesting a unique capacity to move fluidly across temporal boundaries. She also travels through eternity on the back of a giant eagle, communicating with non-human entities, demonstrating her ability to traverse multiple dimensions and exist beyond the limitations of ordinary human existence.

Moreover, Sharmeen's ability to invite and combat all the monstrous Djinn within her own body and mind further reinforces her nomadic identity. She not only sees and communicates with supernatural forces but also engages with them directly, navigating between different realms and states of being. Her newfound ability to confront and overcome these forces highlights her transformation into a figure with a fluid, dynamic identity that is not confined by conventional human limitations.

In these ways, Sharmeen's character embodies a nomadic identity that allows her to traverse physical, temporal, and spiritual boundaries, transforming her from a fearful, dependent girl into a powerful figure capable of moving beyond the limits of time, space, and reality itself.

In *The Blue Room*, Zaib's identity is deeply intertwined with the supernatural powers she gains through the intersection of the Djinn that possesses her. From her very birth, Zaib is marked as different, a figure set apart by her extraordinary abilities. She can not only communicate telepathically but also read the minds of those around her with uncanny precision. This telepathic gift allows her to perceive realities invisible to others, fostering a sense of mystique and fear in her family. Both the elders and younger members of her household recognize her as special, treating her with a mixture of reverence and caution, as they sense her abilities transcend ordinary human limitations.

Zaib's powers give her an almost nomadic identity, as she is not bound by the physical or mental limitations of normal humans. She moves seamlessly between the minds of others, influencing their thoughts, emotions, and actions. This power over the psyche allows her to exert control over her entire household, where both elders and younger members obey her blindly. She becomes a force that transcends traditional human roles, navigating not just the physical world but also the mental and spiritual realms with ease. Her identity, fluid and ever-changing, mirrors the nomadic nature of the Djinn, who themselves are known for their ability to traverse different worlds and states of being.

One of the clearest demonstrations of her power is the psychological torment she inflicts upon her cousins, Adil and Jalaluddin. By reading their minds and manipulating their deepest fears, Zaib asserts her dominance over them, showing that she operates outside normal human behavior. She is also able to rid the family home of a serpent—a creature traditionally associated with hypnotic powers—merely by staring at it, proving that her abilities can outmatch even the most dangerous forces of nature. This moment, when the serpent retreats under her gaze, reinforces the notion that Zaib's power is not limited by physicality but extends into realms that others cannot access.

Zaib's abilities also give her a unique connection to her father. Twice, she manages to locate him after he is kidnapped by a local landlord, simply by focusing on a photograph of the abductor. Through this act of mental projection, she transcends the

constraints of space and time, transporting herself mentally to the abductor's location. Although her presence is not fully visible to him, her eyes are enough to instill terror in the man, compelling him to release her father. This ability to project herself and influence events from afar demonstrates her nomadic identity—she can move between different places and realities without physically being present.

Another striking instance of Zaib's power is seen in how she handles her abusive brother-in-law. By exerting her influence over his mind, she creates such overwhelming fear that he abandons his wife and daughter, whom he has been tormenting for years. This event solidifies her status as a figure who can control not only the thoughts but also the actions of those around her, bending them to her will with ease.

In all these instances, Zaib's nomadic identity—rooted in the intersection of the Djinn—is characterized by her fluid movement between different mental, physical, and spiritual planes. She does not possess a fixed identity; rather, she shifts between various roles and realities, using her powers to navigate spaces beyond the ordinary human experience. Just as the Djinn are known for their ability to travel between worlds, Zaib embodies this same fluidity, moving from one mind to another, one space to another, and one role to another with an ease that sets her apart from those around her. This nomadic identity allows her to wield immense power, controlling and shaping the world around her according to her will, making her not just an individual but a force that transcends human limitations.

The last question that was posed was how the experiences of 'becoming' and 'nomadic flows' help female characters subvert their traditional gender roles? The analysis reveals that in both *The Firefly in the Dark* and *The Blue Room*, the nomadic flow of the djinn plays a pivotal role in transforming the characters' lives, particularly in terms of their gendered roles. The intersection with the Djinn's power brings about a profound metamorphosis, allowing the characters to transcend their initial identities and become completely different people. This transformation is especially evident in how their gendered roles evolve as they navigate these supernatural forces.

In *The Firefly in the Dark*, the Janaree, a female Djinn who is inherently a predatory, carnivorous creature, undergoes a remarkable transformation. Initially fierce by nature, she falls in love with Samarkand, a traveler, and after his death, her role shifts drastically. She becomes a protector, saving young men from falling into the trap of

Sargosh, an evil Djinn. Her transformation from a destructive force to a savior signifies a complete shift in her gendered role. Instead of embodying the fearsome qualities traditionally associated with her nature, she takes on the nurturing, protective traits typically linked to maternal figures. Ultimately, she sacrifices her life to save Aabid, a young traveler, in a battle against the deadly Sargosh, highlighting how the nomadic flow of the Djinn not only changes her identity but also her role within the narrative—from predator to protector, from destroyer to savior.

Similarly, the characters of Nayantara and her daughter Anisa in *The Firefly in the Dark* undergo significant transformations due to the influence of the Djinn. Nayantara, who was initially a victim of her abusive husband, becomes bold and fearless after being possessed by the Djinn. No longer the weeping, submissive wife, she bears her husband's abuse with a silent strength that soon turns the tables—her husband begins to fear her, and upon her death, he feels relieved. This shift in her gendered role, from a passive, suffering wife to a woman whose very presence instills fear, is directly linked to the Djinn's influence, which enables her to move beyond the societal expectations of a victimized woman.

Anisa, Nayantara's daughter, experiences a similar transformation. Initially weak and timid, she endures the hardships imposed by her father, but the possession of the Djinn allows her to break free from this cycle of oppression. She evolves into a brave and courageous young woman, refusing to comply with her father's demand to marry an old man. Her newfound strength is so powerful that even her father comes to dread her. This transformation, made possible by the nomadic flow of the Djinn's power, enables Anisa to reject the subservient, gendered role assigned to her and assert her autonomy. Her evolution from a compliant, frightened girl into a defiant, empowered woman signifies the reshaping of her identity through the intersection of the Djinn's influence.

In both cases, the nomadic flow of the Djinn creates a fluidity in identity and gender roles, allowing the characters to "become" something entirely different from their original selves. The Djinn's influence acts as a catalyst for these transformations, enabling the characters to move beyond the restrictive boundaries of their gendered roles. Whether it's the Janaree transforming from a fierce, Hannibalic creature into a self-sacrificing savior, or Nayantara and Anisa breaking free from victimhood to embrace strength and courage, the intersection of the Djinn reshapes their identities,

allowing them to perform new roles that challenge traditional gender norms. This fluidity and transformation emphasize how the nomadic nature of the Djinn not only changes the characters' personal identities but also redefines their gendered roles, allowing them to break free from societal constraints and embrace new possibilities.

The analysis of *The Firefly in the Dark* reveals a profound transformation in the characters of Sharmeen and her Nani, both shaped by the nomadic flow of the Djinn, which fundamentally alters their identities and gendered roles. Sharmeen's Nani, initially portrayed as a strong-headed, matriarchal figure, owes much of her strength and dominance to the protection of her guardian Djinn. This supernatural influence gave her an aura of authority, making her a formidable presence in the household. Despite being an elderly woman, she towered over the men in her family, assuming the role of caretaker and decision-maker for the entire household. However, once she lost the protection of her guardian Djinn, her identity and power quickly crumbled. She became frail, weak, and vulnerable, even dominated by Aziz, their servant, who once respected her authority. Her decline from a powerful matriarch to a fragile, submissive figure demonstrates how the nomadic flow of the Djinn played a crucial role in shaping her strength. Without the Djinn's influence, her gendered role shifted dramatically from that of a powerful matriarch to a powerless, weakened woman, ultimately leading to her death.

Similarly, Sharmeen, the protagonist, undergoes a transformation that mirrors her Nani's experience. At the beginning of the novel, when she is without a guardian Djinn, Sharmeen is physically and emotionally weak. She is easily frightened, clinging to her Nani or seeking the comfort of their servant, Aziz. She is timid, prone to crying, and faints at the slightest disturbance. Her fearfulness reflects her lack of agency and strength, fitting her into a traditionally passive, vulnerable gender role. However, once Sharmeen is under the protection of her guardian Djinn, she becomes a completely different person. At just 15, she takes charge of the household, effectively replacing her Nani as the head of the family. Despite the presence of Aziz, the caretaker of the house, Sharmeen begins making decisions with confidence and authority, assuming the role of leader. This transformation reflects a shift in her gendered role, from a fearful girl to a decisive matriarch, highlighting the Djinn's influence in reshaping her identity.

The impact of the Djinn on Sharmeen's transformation is further demonstrated in her newfound courage. Once she gains the Djinn's protection, she undertakes

journeys into the ancient past and even transcends into eternity—feats that would have been unimaginable for the timid girl she once was. She becomes emotionally and mentally strong, which is ultimately tested in her final battle against the evil Djinn, Sargosh. This battle is not just physical but a test of inner strength and resolve, where Sharmeen's nerves of steel allow her to emerge victoriously. Her triumph in this climactic battle symbolizes the full extent of her transformation. The frightened girl who once sought protection from others now faces her fears head-on, becoming a figure of power and resilience.

This entire transformation, from weakness to strength, from fear to confidence, is driven by the nomadic flow of the Djinn's influence. Sharmeen's changing gendered role—from a passive, dependent girl to an assertive leader—mirrors the fluid nature of identity that the Djinn brings about. The Djinn's presence enables her to break free from traditional gender constraints, evolving into a figure who not only commands respect but also embodies courage and authority.

In both Sharmeen's and Nani's cases, the nomadic flow of the Djinn is the driving force behind their shifting identities and roles. It alters the balance of power, allowing them to assume and later relinquish roles that defy conventional gender norms. For Nani, the loss of the Djinn strips her of her power, transforming her from a strong matriarch to a weak and dependent woman. For Sharmeen, the arrival of the Djinn empowers her to take on the role of leader and warrior, demonstrating how the nomadic flow of the Djinn brings about a complete redefinition of their gendered roles and identities.

In *The Blue Room*, Zaib's journey is a rich exploration of identity, power, and gendered roles, profoundly shaped by supernatural forces—particularly the nomadic flows of the Djinn that possess her. From the moment of her birth, Zaib's connection with the Djinn defines her existence, setting her apart from the traditional female roles prescribed by the patriarchal household where she is born. The Djinn's possession is made evident through the hallucinations witnessed by her grandfather, marking Zaib's life with an otherworldly power. This supernatural influence elevates her to a position of dominance, making her a figure who defies conventional expectations for women, especially within a rigidly patriarchal society.

At only seventeen, Zaib exhibits a remarkable strength and autonomy that both inspires fear and command obedience. Her authority over her family members—both male and female—defies the traditional gender hierarchy. She is feared not just because of her association with the Djinn, but because of her capacity to protect her family at any cost, punishing anyone who poses a threat. Despite the presence of male figures in her household, it is Zaib's word that carries weight. In this way, Zaib transcends the typical gender roles expected of women in her culture. Even though she is subjected to many of the same restrictions as other women—such as not being allowed to attend school and being taught at home by tutors and not being able to go to the market unaccompanied by elders—Zaib remains a powerful and dominant figure. Her authority is not merely tolerated but respected, and her fiercely protective nature allows her to serve as the family's guardian, traditionally a male role.

However, Zaib's transformation is not static. The influence of the Djinn—and the nomadic flows of its supernatural energy—further alters her sense of self and her gendered role. As these nomadic forces move through the walls of the blue room in the family's haveli, they initiate a radical shift in her personality. Zaib, who was once feared and revered, becomes a different person. Her identity, once shaped by power and dominance, begins to realign with more traditional and docile female roles. The same supernatural forces that once empowered her now seem to strip away her defiance and strength, reshaping her into a submissive woman who adheres to patriarchal norms.

This transformation is marked by several key shifts in Zaib's behavior. She begins to offer prayers, adopting the spiritual and submissive posture expected of women in her society. When her family arranges her marriage, Zaib—who once defied societal expectations—is now unable to challenge their decision, despite being married off to a widower while still a mere seventeen-year-old girl. This choice, made entirely by her parents, symbolizes the erosion of her autonomy, as she now conforms to the expectations placed upon women in a patriarchal structure: to be obedient, subservient, and accepting of their familial and societal roles.

As Zaib's life becomes more enmeshed in the traditional roles expected of a wife and daughter-in-law, her supernatural powers—once a source of strength and fear—begin to fade. No longer the fierce guardian of her family, Zaib is now consumed by the responsibilities of her new role. Her power diminishes, and with it, her authority. Her family members, who once unquestioningly obeyed her, begin to argue and

challenge her decisions. She is no longer the untouchable, formidable figure she once was instead, she becomes vulnerable, and subject to attack, both physically and emotionally.

This shift also brings about a profound change in Zaib's emotional life. Previously, her connection with the Djinn had insulated her from the softer emotions typically associated with traditional femininity, such as love, vulnerability, and sadness. But as the nomadic flows of supernatural forces reshape her, Zaib's emotional landscape changes as well. She begins to experience and express emotions she had previously suppressed or rejected. No longer the embodiment of fearlessness, she becomes a woman who feels love, faces rejection, and suffers from dejection. The loss of her once-feared power and the emergence of these emotions mark a deeper transformation: Zaib has now conformed to the emotional and gendered expectations of a typical woman within her society.

In essence, Zaib's transformation is a powerful illustration of how identity, shaped by both supernatural and societal forces, is fluid and subject to change. The nomadic flows of the Djinn not only alter her supernatural power but also realizing her gendered role within her family and society. She moves from being a fierce, empowered woman who defies patriarchal norms to a more docile, conventional female figure who embodies the expectations of a traditional wife and daughter-in-law. The intersection of supernatural influence and societal pressure reveals how gender is not a fixed identity but a performed role that can change in response to the forces that shape an individual's life. Zaib's transformation, driven by the nomadic flows of the Djinn, underscores the performative nature of gender and how supernatural forces can interact with societal norms to redefine identity and power.

5.1 Findings and Recommendations

The association between Djinns and women in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, is a complex and fascinating phenomenon. Djinns, as supernatural entities with religious significance in Holy Quran, are deeply embedded in the cultural and religious psyche of the region. Their mention in the Qur'an, the holy text of Islam, confers upon them a legitimacy and a sacred status that sets them apart from other mythical or occult creatures. Unlike fairies or spirits from folklore, Djinns are considered real within the Islamic faith, believed to be created from smokeless fire, living in a parallel world, and possessing free will like humans. They can be both

benevolent and malevolent, making their presence both revered and feared in Muslim societies.

What makes the Djinn particularly intriguing, however, is its recurring association with women rather than men. In Pakistan and other South Asian societies, it is often women who are described as being possessed or influenced by Djinn. This phenomenon can be viewed through multiple lenses—cultural, religious, psychological, and even sociopolitical—and each lens reveals insights into how Djinn acts as an important cultural tool for women to navigate the rigid patriarchal structures that dominate their lives.

In Pakistani society, as in much of South Asia, gender roles are traditionally and strictly defined. Women are often expected to adhere to patriarchal norms, which emphasize obedience, modesty, and subservience to male authority figures such as fathers, brothers, and husbands. These expectations restrict women's agencies and limit their ability to make decisions or assert autonomy in their own lives. In this context, women may seek unconventional avenues to assert themselves or resist the societal constraints imposed on them. The figure of the Djinn provides one such avenue.

The Djinn's religious significance gives it a certain inviolability. Because belief in Djinn is rooted in Islamic tradition, attributing unusual behavior or supernatural occurrences to Djinn possession does not provoke the same level of skepticism or dismissal that other forms of resistance might. This gives women a unique opportunity to subvert or challenge traditional gender roles without directly confronting or offending the men who uphold these structures. By claiming possession by or influence from a Djinn, women can navigate patriarchal restrictions and assert their agency in ways that might otherwise be impossible.

For example, a woman who is possessed by a Djinn might exhibit behavior that would ordinarily be considered unacceptable or rebellious in a conservative society. She might act with more confidence, defy orders from male authority figures, or engage in actions that are seen as transgressive for a woman, such as speaking out, dressing differently, or making decisions independently. Under normal circumstances, such behavior would likely invoke severe consequences—social ostracization, punishment, or even violence. However, when such behavior is attributed to the influence of a Djinn, it is viewed differently. It is no longer seen as the woman's direct rebellion against

patriarchal norms, but rather as the supernatural force acting through her. This provides the woman with a kind of protective cover, allowing her to express her desires, emotions, or resistance without directly challenging the power of the patriarchy.

This notion also ties into the broader cultural understanding of Djinn possession as a liminal state. A woman possessed by a Djinn occupies a space between the human and supernatural realms. She is not fully in control of her actions, but neither is she fully powerless. This ambiguity allows her to momentarily escape the constraints of her traditional gender role. In this liminal state, societal expectations about how a woman should behave can be temporarily suspended, allowing her to explore alternative identities or assert her autonomy. Importantly, this also means that once the possession is resolved—whether through exorcism, prayer, or some other ritual—the woman can return to her “normal” role within society without having permanently disrupted the social order. The Djinn, therefore, becomes an acceptable reason for her transgressive behavior, sparing her from facing the full consequences of patriarchal backlash.

This phenomenon may also be viewed as a psychological coping mechanism. Women in conservative societies often face immense pressure to conform to prescribed roles and may experience significant emotional or mental distress as a result. The belief in Djinn possession offers a culturally sanctioned way for women to express their frustrations, anxieties, or desires in a society where overt rebellion is dangerous. Through the figure of the Djinn, women can channel their inner conflicts, giving voice to their dissatisfaction or resistance without being blamed or condemned for it.

Moreover, the possession by Jinns could be seen as a symbolic representation of the internalized struggle that many women face in balancing personal desires with societal expectations. On one hand, they are expected to be dutiful daughters, wives, and mothers, subservient to the patriarchal order. On the other hand, they may harbor desires for autonomy, self-expression, or even rebellion against these very norms. The Djinn, as a supernatural force, externalizes this internal struggle, allowing the woman to enact behaviors she might otherwise suppress due to fear of retribution. In this way, the Djinn becomes a symbolic stand-in for the woman’s repressed desires and frustrations.

The fact that Jinns are often more associated with women than with men in South Asian cultures also reflects deeper cultural anxieties about female power and

autonomy. In many patriarchal societies, women are seen as both powerful and dangerous, especially when they step outside the bounds of their prescribed roles. The idea of a woman being possessed by a Djinn taps into these anxieties by suggesting that when a woman is no longer under the control of male authority, she becomes unpredictable, uncontrollable, and even dangerous. In this sense, the Djinn possession serves as a metaphor for the fear of female empowerment and autonomy. It allows society to explain away female defiance or independence as the result of external, supernatural influence rather than as a direct challenge to the patriarchal order.

In conclusion, the association of Djinn with women in Pakistan and South Asia offers a profound commentary on how women navigate and resist patriarchal structures. Djinn possession serves as both a literal and symbolic tool for women to assert their agency, allowing them to challenge traditional gender roles without directly confronting the patriarchal order. It provides a socially acceptable way for women to express their desires, frustrations, and autonomy, while also revealing the deeper cultural anxieties surrounding female power and independence. Through this lens, Djinn are not just mythical creatures, but active agents in the ongoing negotiation of gender roles in South Asian society.

For future research, several promising avenues can be explored based on the limitations and focus of the current study. The present study has primarily focused on Djinn and their interaction with females, as well as how women in South Asia, particularly Pakistan, utilize Djinn as a means of negotiating or altering traditional gender roles. However, expanding the scope to include other mythical or occult figures in South Asian mythology or examining the relationship between Djinn and males can yield additional valuable insights. While Djinn hold a significant place in South Asian folklore, there are numerous other mythical creatures and occult entities in the region's rich mythology that could be examined in a similar context. These include but are not limited to Churails (Witches), Peris (Fairies), Rakshasas (Demons), and Bhoot (Ghosts/Spirits) etc.

By broadening the focus to include these and other mythical figures, future research can examine how different supernatural entities are utilized or represented in South Asian society and how they affect both men's and women's roles in navigating patriarchal systems. Another important avenue for future research is to examine the interaction between Djinn and males, which has been less studied compared to the

association between Djinn and females. While the current study highlights how Djinn possession provides women with an agency to subvert traditional roles, the relationship between Djinn and men could offer a different set of dynamics that is equally worth exploring.

A comparative analysis could explore how Djinn's possession is experienced and interpreted differently for men and women. For women, Djinn possession might be seen as a way to justify behavior that defies societal norms, but for men, it might be interpreted as a divine punishment or a challenge to their authority. This kind of analysis would reveal the nuanced ways in which gender influences interpretations of supernatural phenomena and the different societal responses to male versus female possession.

Future research could also consider how the phenomenon of Djinn possession intersects with other social identities, such as class, caste, and religion. Djinn's possession may be experienced and interpreted differently based on a person's social standing, wealth, or religious beliefs.

While the current study has focused on the Muslim conception of Djinn, future research could examine how other religious communities in South Asia—such as Hindus, Sikhs, or Christians—view Djinn or similar supernatural entities. How does the belief in Djinn intersect with other religious cosmologies, and how do these differing beliefs shape gendered experiences of the supernatural?

Another possible recommendation for future research is to explore the representation of Djinn in South Asian popular culture, such as film, television, literature, and social media. How are Djinn depicted in these mediums, and what does this tell us about societal anxieties surrounding gender, power, and the supernatural?

In sum, while the current study provides valuable insights into the association between Djinn and women in South Asia, future research can expand this understanding by exploring a wider range of supernatural entities in South Asian mythology and by examining the interaction between Djinn and males. Additionally, intersectional analysis considering class, caste, and religion, as well as a focus on media representations, can offer a more comprehensive understanding of how supernatural phenomena influence and reflect gendered dynamics in South Asian societies.

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