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BLOGGING AS A HETEROTOPIAN SPACE FOR PAKISTANI FEMALE BLOGGERS

TabassumSaba¹, Dr Nadia Anwar²

¹Assistant Professor Department of English Language and Literature University of Lahore PhD Scholar Lahore.

²Assistant Professor; Chairperson Department of English and Literary Studies Institute of Liberal Arts University of Management and Technology Lahore.

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Abstract:

Weblogs offer an interconnection between virtual and personal spaces and reveal how different spaces are merged and juxtaposed to formulate a space with possibilities of inhibition free zones to empower female bloggers. This study aims to unveil the dynamics of the 'other' world, proposed by Foucault (1986) as heterotopias. The blogs by Pakistani women, gathered online, serve as the data for this research. The data were analyzed through a Foucauldian perspective regarding how blogs generate a discourse that enables the bloggers to be a part of heterotopia space.

Introduction:

Weblogs can be described as a world within the world that can fascinate or resist people by its topography and communality, which can be considered another space, such as heterotopia (Foucault, 1986). However, Foucault discussed two types of heterotopias: heterotopias of crisis, e.g., military service, boarding schools, and heterotopias of deviance, e.g., prisons, and clinics. This research takes heterotopia into a different dimension linked with the cyber world, i.e., weblogs. The purpose of this research is to unveil the dynamics of this 'other' world, which presents these virtual spaces as power blocks where females can enjoy their hyper freedom to liberate themselves from the constraints of the real world, i.e., freedom to share opinions, disclose identities and to raise voice in the real world. These weblogs, which

have been presented as counter-sites, challenge the traditional writing columns and offer a means to identity construction.

In this regard, to evaluate the change in the dynamics of 'space,' from personal to social, from real to hyper-real, the historical background of blog writing has been taken into consideration. By rejecting the traditional notions of blog writing, i.e., particular topics, specified genres, and restricted vocabulary, the study evaluates the space that empowers the female bloggers (along with their male counterparts and other socially oppressed groups) to counter and, if possible, reverse the social structure. This space provides them the opportunity to raise voice and share their views without any restraint and freely. Although the weblogs act as counter sites, the bloggers themselves do not realize this phenomenon. In this regard, the bloggers may be given due recognition by the society to express their views without any hesitation.

Not only social websites like Facebook and Twitter have gained widespread popularity among Pakistani youngsters, but blog writing is also attracting their attention. They allow individuals to communicate freely and disclose their identities, not as they are but as they want them to be. In other words, they offer them a heterotopia space, which lets them reveal their desired identities (Essani, 2017).

Wilson (2005) defines a weblog as "an online journal of opinions, thoughts, and interests," mostly having one author uploading posts/ entries chronologically where the most recent uploads can be viewed on the top of that page. Weblogs may be interlinked with other blogs, too, which may show the same or different opinions or interests. They may add a profile of the author, his/her picture, any audio or video recording, and a visitor log. Huffaker and Calvert (2005) indicate a difference between personal web pages, which were considered significant among former CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) genres and the current blogs that strictly follow a specified format. However, they insisted that these webpages can be easily handled by those who have the necessary information and knowledge of what to do to get published (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005).

In the present era, people from every sphere of life are interested in creating their blogs to make themselves a part of the virtual world and hence become a part of a new heterotopian space that is different from their actual space. Belonging to a non-dominant or marginalized group, Pakistani females face the paradox of identity, i.e., real and virtual, and some try to resolve it through blog writing. The study explores how the selection of themes, topics, vocabulary, tense, and other linguistics devices like similes and metaphors help female bloggers to produce and share their identities, which otherwise may not become possible. Internet and social media like Facebook have been explored as different heterotopias. This research includes another heterotopia, i.e., heterotopia of weblogs, which focuses on how this 'other' world plays its role in identity construction and representation.

Research Question:

The present research investigates:

- How do blogs offer a heterotopian space to Pakistani female bloggers?

Literature Review:

Babar (2017) believes that "The whole purpose of a blog is for people to read it" (p. 3). It is not the blogger only who creates a blog, but in today's world, the recipient is also equally important as he determines the success or failure of a blog by liking,

disliking, or commenting on it. Regarding blog writing, Bonus (2003) asserts that most of the blogs reflect personal diaries rather than any political filter. She further elaborates that only a small number of blogs belong to the journalism genre.

The term 'heterotopia' was first mentioned by Foucault (1966) in his preamble to *Les Mots et les choses*, which later got its English translated version in the form of *The Order of Things* in 1970. Foucault (1970) discussed that the trigger for writing the book was an excerpt by Luis Borges, which recalls the inexplicable and mysterious grouping of animals presented in "a certain Chinese Encyclopedia" (p. xv). He also quoted a particular division of animals as "(a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied (j) innumerable (k) drawn with a wonderful camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies" (Foucault, 1970, p.xv).

Foucault (1970) avowed that the "oddity of unusual juxtaposition" (p.xvi) made him burst into laughter as this classification "shattered... all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought" (p.xv). It made him aware of the disorder and inappropriateness, which he found in all the things (p. xvii). He further argued that such unusual juxtapositions were quite impossible in the real world, albeit in the world of language such juxtapositions were allowed, which he compared with 'utopias'. He further expounded, "afford consolation" in an unreal, imaginary locality which seems perfect, ordered, and coherent in its own.

On the contrary, "heterotopias are disturbing probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that because they shatter or tangle common names" (Foucault, 1970 p. xviii). This refers to the flouting of stereotypical notions about the institution of the order in our society. Weblogs also seem to offer such an alternative space to bloggers, which enables them to question the so-called coherence and order in society.

Heterotopias :

To comprehend the notion of 'heterotopias,' it is necessary to focus on the six principles propounded by Foucault for 'heterotopology' which elaborate on the nature of heterotopias and provide the basis for this research. These principles are:

- i. Heterotopias exist in every culture of the world, and they can vary from culture to culture. Blog writing is a phenomenon that is present in every culture; however, it varies from culture to culture in terms of the selection of topics and themes.
- ii. Societies determine the functions for heterotopias to work, and they can either be restricted or may function entirely depending upon the "synchrony of the culture in which it occurs" (Foucault, 1986). Blogging offers a heterotopia since it follows societal and cultural norms determined by the society.
- iii. Heterotopias can compare and contrast different spaces and sites in just one real place, which means that different spaces like personal, social, family, and cultural spaces are juxtaposed. Focusing on this point, this research has explored how blogging compares and contrasts real space with virtual space and how it merges and juxtaposes real-world identity and virtual identity.
- iv. "Heterotopias are most often linked to slice in time" (Foucault, 1986). They are called 'heterochronies' as they can accumulate time, e.g., via museums, libraries, etc. Following the same notion, the study examines blogging in terms

of how past can be taken as a present, e.g., the particular style of blogging, i.e., historical past in which history is dealt with as present.

- v. Heterotopias possess a pre-defined system for entrance and exit, which not only isolates them at times but also characterizes them as receptive and accessible. When bloggers start blogging, they are required to maintain their online profiles, which enables them to connect to the netizens. Similarly, a blog remains active unless and until the bloggers do not announce a systematic exit from the blog page.
- vi. Foucault emphasizes the 'otherness' of heterotopias, which is created between two extremes, i.e., illusion and perfection. Their function may be to generate the illusion which constructs or exposes the real space (Foucault, 1986 pp. 22-27). Blogging gives vent to the hidden feelings and emotions of bloggers. It formulates another world which accumulates different worlds in itself.

Spracklen(2015) contextualizes Net as a "leisure utopia, a space where anyone can be anything" (p.42), and this is so true of the weblogs where bloggers may demonstrate their multiple identities while blogging about different genres and themes. Weblogs as heterotopian spaces offer that space to bloggers, which Soja (1996) termed as 'third space' in which he identified the link between time and spatiality. For Soja, the space takes a shift from geographical space to extra-literary space, which emerges out of cultural practices and supports literary and artistic criticism. Inspired by French sociologist Lefebvre, who links physical and mental spaces, Soja's third space includes both real and imagined spaces. He takes physical space as first space and the second space refers to the mental space which represents only false and deceptive actions as both spaces do not complement each other. However, the third space consists of physical, mental, geographical, and cultural constructions simultaneously (Soja, 1996).

With the rapid growth of Facebook users, there is an increase in the researches analyzing formal and non-formal learning through Facebook. The study by Hope (2016) scrutinizes Facebook use in higher education, keeping in view Foucault's concept of heterotopia. It has contextualized Facebook not only as a cyberspace but also as an educational space. It perceives social networking sites, which may include weblogs too, platforms that offer potential outcomes for innovative deviations, cultivate learning groups, and help to create more extensive social skills. In this regard, educational heterotopias could give a valuable, primary device in this procedure of e-learning. The researcher suggests that Facebook offers students to interact with each other in their online spaces beyond their classrooms and lecture halls (Hope, 2016).

The significance of blogs in different spheres like social, political, and economic cannot be denied, however, it is equally important to know how these blogs work and what functions they perform and "the linguistic conventions they use for locating themselves" (Myers, 2010 p. 3). Myers(2010) claims that the location mentioned in a blog, e.g., here, refers to the location of the blogger or the text, but it is usually a reference to another place or another text. More specifically, the location mentioned in blogs "is a kind of placelessness: neutral, insignificant, an overview... both utopian and a bit scary" (p. 10). For bloggers, time and space have different connotations, and so they apply them in their writings from different perspectives and for specific purposes. So, blogs are "placeless and time-stamped" as they rarely refer to a "place of writing," which is particular to other genres of writing, e.g., articles, letters, and news reports for authentication (pp. 48-49).

Considering the past researches, this study has taken weblogs as heterotopian spaces that formulate a surrogate world for the bloggers, both attracting the bloggers towards its locality and space but also repelling the netizens by its social life since the personal life no more remains personal.

Theoretical Framework:

The notion of heterotopia, which was introduced briefly by Foucault in 1966, was further elaborated by him in 1967 and later in 1986. This serves as a theoretical background to the present research to understand why weblogs can be considered as an 'other' world. Just as Foucault (1986) discussed heterotopias in term of architecture which offer both place and space, similarly, weblogs offer architecture in terms of identity construction which generates a world which may be different from the real world.

Keeping in mind the six principles of Heterotopias suggested by Foucault; the current study has evaluated weblogs of Pakistani females to reveal how they are culture-dependent; whether the function of the blogs (which can be a juxtaposition of social, personal, family and cultural spaces) is limited, and whether the bloggers are free to perform different functions. This study has further explored how blogging helps female bloggers construct their own space, which can be more real (hyper-real) than the real world they inhabit.

Foucauldian Discourse:

Foucault's works reflect discourses as constructions of possibility as well as a restraint which, in a way, invade in a society and generate societal practices. Many linguists and theorists relate this approach to social theory. Fairclough (2009) also approaches discourse from the Foucauldian perspective to evaluate how language is used according to specific social norms and conditions and how these norms are organized systematically to form social practices. Kress (1985) considers the works of Foucault in presenting discourse as a social and cultural practice. He asserts that Foucault's writing generate such type of discourses which are historically constituted and reflect social developments in the organization and dissemination of information. He refers to Foucault, who claims that powerful members of establishment exhibit control and power through discourses by defining boundaries and categories for the common person.

Foucault's works provide the analysis of discourse and power from a historical perspective. His approach toward discourse analysis is anti-humanist. He explored how social control is exerted through discourse, through the way objects and social subjects explain themselves. Foucault's writings are mainly concerned with the discourses generated by social sciences.

Data:

The study selected only those bloggers who had been writing blogs for at least two years and must have five or more than five published blogs. Some of the bloggers had been writing for two years, but their status was either passive, or they did not have five blogs posted; hence, they could not be a part of the study. One blog from each blogger, dealing with the social issues, was selected for this research from the year 2018 to explore how different themes and topics help the bloggers not only in forming their identity but also in creating a different world.

Delimitation of the Study:

The study is delimited to Pakistani female bloggers who were not diasporic; however, a comparative analysis can be made between Pakistani male and female bloggers for their selection of genre, themes, vocabulary, and related linguistic features to represent their virtual identities which help them formulate their virtual heterotopias.

Ethical Consideration:

The participants for the research, i.e., bloggers, were adequately informed about the study through email and the blogs were included with their consent despite their free online access. It is declared by the Social Research Association that "there can be no reasonable guarantee of privacy in 'public' settings since anyone from journalists to ordinary members of the public may constitute 'observers' of such human behavior and any data collected thereby would remain, in any case, beyond the control of the subjects observed" (SRA, 2003, p. 33). While transcribing the data, only that part was revealed, which did not harm bloggers' online or offline identities. The selected data were added to the study with the consent of the bloggers. Any information which could damage the personal space of the bloggers has not been added to this study. Moreover, Spicker in 2007 asserted that "where information is public, it is available to researchers without any necessity to obtain individual consent"(as cited in Saba& Anwar, 2018, p. 253). In this regard, the anonymity of the bloggers was preserved by not disclosing their names and identity in the collected data (Arifin, 2018).

Data Analysis:

Through Discourse Analysis, the data has been analyzed linguistically to explore how the selected content from blogs, i.e., themes, topics, vocabulary, tense, voice, mode, etc. helps generate a heterotopian space for the Pakistani females.

Heterotopias as Cultural Representations:

Blogging is a worldwide phenomenon; however, it varies from culture to culture to the themes, language, vocabulary, and linguistic devices employed by the bloggers. The themes of the blogs considered for analysis include rape, fair complexion, and masturbation, which are prevalent not only in Pakistani society but in societies around the globe, albeit with variation according to culture.

The deplorable and heinous act of rape is criticized overtly in each society at every platform, including Pakistan, but the difference lies in the treatment of the rape victims. In Pakistani culture, rape victims instead of being treated through Cognitive Processing Therapy are treated like sinners, and no proper legal and health care is provided to the victims(Khan et al., 2014). In the first blog, by inserting the word "Pakistan" in the title, the blogger has included the whole Pakistani community to be a part of the repercussions of the incident. Starting with a comment, the clause ends with a question that is reflective of the need for the reader's response.

[1]

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The year of Zainab: Pakistan was jolted awake by the abuse of its children, but is that enough?

Zainab's unfortunate incident changed the narrative, but we are still unable to start a dialogue for survivors.



She stood by the footpath, her shoulders slouched because of the heavy bag she was carrying. I was waiting at the traffic signal in my car and something about her caught my attention. She was a fine kid, probably 10 or 11-years-old, and was coming from the school adjacent to where my car was stopped. She had two pigtails tied with blue ribbons, and yet her face was very tense. It had an unpleasant, don't-mess-with-me expression, while her body language could best be described as *stiff*.

Every woman reading this knows the expression, because it never goes away.

We are taught to be proper in public places and hence, having a borderline aggressive face is considered the most modest gesture for 'pious' women in public spaces, as per societal standards. As if being unpleasant or in a bad mood can somehow protect you from potential predators.

The more I thought about the girl, the more it made me feel uncomfortable. She had to face the added stress and fear of being in a [public space](#) where anything could happen to her.

The blogger then continues by sharing her personal experience with a girl whom she saw standing on the road with "an unpleasant, don't-mess-with-me expression." The purpose behind this narration is to highlight how "we," the females, are "taught to be proper in public places" to be labeled as "pious" women in a typical socio-cultural scenario. By using the inclusive "we," the blogger has included all the females, as she asserts, "every woman reading this...". Blogging appears as a heterotopian space for those who suffer from the "added stress and fear of being in a public space where anything could happen to her." The blogger herself has utilized blogging as a public space where she can share anything to provide an outlet to her feelings [1a].

The blogger has criticized her society for blaming the victim for being equally "responsible for the terrible act." This narrative is repeated so frequently and forcefully, either consciously and unconsciously, that the victim is convinced of being an equal participant in the Pakistani socio-cultural scenario. The dialogue between the blogger and her patient, who was sexually abused at the age of 7, reflects her psychomotor impairment which leads her to make an undue confession "I am responsible for this". However, the unfolding of the facts established by the blogger helped her realize that "she wasn't responsible for what happened to her" [1b]. Furthermore, the blog represents and criticizes the social construct that justifies its stance by stating: "that's our patriarchal culture and hegemonic culture for you" [2a].

b

"But I didn't stop it."

"You were seven-years-old. He was 22. How could you have stopped it?" I replied.

"I am an equal participant in that sin. It's my fault too. He asked me to come upstairs and I went with him," she explained.

"You went with him because he had your trust," I tried to reason with her.

"I don't know. I am responsible for this," she said.

"Do you think [Zainab Ansari](#) was responsible for whatever happened to her?" I asked.

"No," she said, immediately shocked.

"But as per your theory for yourself, she was. Didn't she go with the perpetrator herself? We can see her happily going along in that video. So, was she at fault? Was she responsible for the horrible act done to her?" I asked.

"No. She wasn't," she replied.

"Were you... are you responsible for what your cousin did to you?" I asked.

[2]

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She received just a couple of sessions with me and then her paternal uncle - the perpetrator's father - started intervening. She didn't share the story of her abuse with anyone else so his interference wasn't related to the abuse, but to the toxic hegemonic masculinity ingrained in our patriarchal culture.

He negated the girl's father and dictated that she shouldn't continue therapy as it is a waste of time and money. He felt that since no medications are involved, there is no sense of therapy. He did not understand how therapy could treat her body aches, and failed to accept her depression. The healing for the very abuse projected by his son on this girl was denied. The girl's dad was powerless. That's our patriarchal culture and hegemonic masculinity for you. Sexual abuse thus should be seen through this broader perspective.

b

I came across a Facebook post recently which made me question the way this society thinks and functions, and raises multiple red flags about the way we live. A man in Lahore can masturbate openly in the streets while looking at a school bus full of teenage girls, and there is no mention of it anywhere. However, when a Facebook post in response to it tries to highlight the problem at hand, the fragile male egos of Pakistani men are immediately threatened.

The second blog selected for analysis criticizes the Pakistani society, where not to have any kids may lead to the end of a seemingly successful married life and the confession like "I have always been repelled by the idea of having kids of my own" appears as something unexpected and unbelievable [3a]. This very thought of the blogger is the trigger behind writing this blog. The theme of the third blog seems to pose a challenge to our chauvinist society, where the blogger criticizes the act of masturbation in public. However, considering the socio-cultural aspect, the blogger begins with an indirect criticism and later criticizes it directly.

The vocabulary used by the bloggers reflects the freedom the blogger exercises. The phrases like "oppressive standards"[3b], "threatening event"[3b], and "patriarchal culture" [2a], brings forth the gravity of the issue of procreation. Further, the words and phrases used by the blogger, e.g., "masturbate," "fragile male egos," [2b] "inflated egos"[3b], "menstrual cycle," "bra step" etc. [4a] appear to be a challenge to the male-dominating society where a woman is subjected to "oppression" and cannot even "touch" those privileges which are generously offered to men. The choice of vocabulary not only projects patriarchy, but it also reveals the repercussions of that patriarchy, e.g., "traumatized," structural violence, "oppression," "fear," "scare," etc. [4a]

[3]

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I have always been repelled by the idea of having kids of my own. It has always felt like too much responsibility for a non-committal person like myself. However, many of my friends seem puzzled by this decision of mine.

b

Since childhood, women are programmed in a way that an inability to bear a child seems like the most threatening event for us. Psychologically, this is such a devastating and shattering experience for a woman that many seek counselling and therapy to overcome it and return to normal life.

However, the themes related to rape, procreation, and masturbation vary from culture to culture and are still considered taboo in Pakistani society to be discussed explicitly. The blogs covering up such themes may be regarded as acceptable in other cultures. Nevertheless, in Pakistani society, they generate a heterotopian space where such ideas can be shared, discussed, and criticized, which might not be possible otherwise. The colonial past of Pakistan still has its aftermaths on Pakistani society where the people are obsessed with fair complexion, and those with dark skin are considered outcaste and inferior.

[4]

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Unfortunately, this incident isn't the only one. A rickshaw driver in Lahore was filmed doing the same thing while looking at two girls at the front gate of Punjab University. Imagine, walking out of your university and experiencing this, would it not traumatise anyone? How do you think these women felt? Or how traumatised they were?

<https://www.facebook.com/penduproductions/videos/1069413673214276/>

It is hypocritical how a man can go around flashing his private parts but a woman has to be covered from head to toe. How is it that women are never to discuss their monthly menstrual cycle, never to reveal their bra strap, and are always to stay concealed to stay protected?

Such acts are also forms of structural violence, where men abuse their status and use it to oppress and scare women. It is an offence of the law, and simultaneously, is also a show of power by highlighting that the very streets women walk on are *not safe* for them. It is only safe for men, who have the ability to ride motorbikes or rickshaws and stop them mid-road to flash their private parts at a bunch of girls, without any fear of accountability. The very fear driving women to cover their head, their chest and their legs is wildly absent in men.

B

This year we saw a nationwide tragedy and barely recovered from the cruelty a little child, Zainab, was subjected to. Like most incidents of child sexual abuse, the perpetrator was familiar to her and further gained her trust while her parents were away performing religious pilgrimage.

The heartbreaking video of the perpetrator walking away with the child circulated on social media. The brutality she was subjected to resonated with every person in the nation. Some people blamed the parents and the caretaker, while others, including her own father, called it fate's will. The real issue of abuse would have been suppressed, had the media and civil society members not intervened. People could not forget her innocent face and could not make sense of the brutality she had to go through.

Ever since Zainab's unfortunate incident was highlighted by the media, *the narrative* surrounding child sexual abuse changed a little. It helped in sensitising people and created a dialogue about prevention, intervention and protection. A number of workshops were conducted on prevention and protection for parents, teachers and kids. We saw that *justice* can be served in these cases, and a lot of us got the courage to seek justice for our own children.

Heterotopias are Socially Constructed:

Blogging in Pakistan adheres to the socio-cultural norms as suggested by the society. The themes selected for blogging seem to be similar to those in all communities. Still, in the context of Pakistani, the bloggers need to explain the reason for writing on tabooed topics owing to the socio-cultural restraints. They knew that discussing such issues in public "raises eyebrows" and hence blogging provided them a relatively secure public sphere to share "stigmatized" issues [5a]. The blogs selected for analysis highlight the male-dominated societies where the issues like motherhood, menstruation etc. need to be highlighted to acknowledge a woman's identity. The reference to the "Suffrage Movement" [5a] also signifies the woman's due place in society, which is demanded through blogging.

While discussing Zainab's incident, the blogger's intentional use of inclusive "we" and the "nationwide tragedy" both strengthens the writer-reader relationship and provokes a feeling of association with the girl. The blog is multi-purpose: it not only criticizes the abnormal attitude of society but also appreciates that "a lot of us got the courage to seek justice for our children" [4b]. The concluding lines of the blog also consist of inclusive "we" where the blogger refers to those steps which can be taken with regard to the sexually abused victims, i.e., "we can stop blaming the victims. We can stop parents from treating the victims as instigators. We can correct the friends that casually make child abuse jokes" and "that is the only way to change the mindset we are stuck in" [6a]. Here, the purpose behind using "we" seems to minimize the effect of being directed or ordered by the blogger, which could be otherwise 'you can stop blaming the victims'. Hence, the lines appear as a suggestion, and the reader feels it his/her responsibility to take measures as suggested by the blogger. Being direct could be offensive, and the blogger utilizes the heterotopia of blogging acceptable to the social norms and values of the society.

[5]

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These issues are so stigmatised in the society that merely discussing it raises eyebrows. Women aren't allowed to discuss this openly, for fear of backlash. These issues need to be addressed before they make way into our daily lives. If a rickshaw driver and a man on a bike on the street can masturbate openly, who is to say one of us won't walk out of work or university and find ourselves as the next victim too?

While women cover [sanitary napkins](#) in brown paper bags even in the darkest of nights, men can carry their body around with pride and take their genitals out freely; this streak of imbalance needs to change for women to actually reclaim public spaces and basic rights.

Or who knows, we may have to rewind back to the Suffrage Movement.

B

Most of these consequences are a product of the patriarchal standards of procreation that are imposed upon women. The sole responsibility for having or not having a baby belongs to the woman. If you're married, nobody would ask your husband to go through fertility tests; he wouldn't have to doubt himself as not being normal while sitting alone amidst the cold walls of a fertility clinic. You'd be forced to think about your normal body processes as not so normal. A number of women go through the tireless process of fertility treatment without even realising that infertility is a matter concerning both spouses. If in a regressive household a man is asked for fertility testing and treatment, it becomes a battle for ego.

The blogger presents another aspect of bearing a child, i.e., "too much responsibility"[3a]. Yet, her decision brings her "shame and abomination"[6b] from society as it becomes the only criterion for a married woman in a Pakistani society. Although the issue under discussion is a very personal matter, in our community, "it is always hard not to notice the look on people's faces when you talk about not wanting the children"[6b]. The state of being childless is also associated with negative connotations in our socio-cultural perspective, e.g., "miserable and lonely old age,"[6b] and "a woman is not considered 'complete' unless she becomes a mother"[7a]. In a patriarchal society, like ours, men are never considered responsible for having no kids and are never asked for "fertility testing"[5b], and thus, it becomes appropriate for the blogger to share the issue through blogging. Raising voice against male-chauvinism, the blog appears as an effort to empower women in our society by asserting that "a woman should not need anybody's judgment or consent regarding the decisions she makes about her own body." The blogger has emphasized "a woman's identity"[7a] to be acknowledged not in terms of her relationships and societal roles but what she is. The blog is a platform to provide the females the freedom to make a choice and be respected "regardless of the choice they make"[7b].

[6]

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A lot of work undoubtedly needs to be done in this area, but there are a few steps we can take from our end, albeit small. We can stop [blaming the victims](#). We can stop the parents from treating the victims as instigators. We can correct the friends that casually make child abuse jokes. We can take a moment and think if we, intentionally or unintentionally, do the same. That is the only way to fight back taboo, and that is the only way to change the mindset we are stuck in.

b

However, it's always hard not to notice the look on people's faces when you talk about not wanting children, ever. Even if you are as privileged as I am, you'll still have to face your fair share of shame and abomination. You'll come across a few who will completely ignore what you said and will bombard you with ideas of a miserable and lonely old age. Those who'd like to think of themselves as progressive (pseudo), would suggest adoption with a diabetic quality of optimism. They will also have plethora of horrific facts to haunt you about your biological clock.

The theme and vocabulary of the third blog is suggestive of the cultural context in which it is produced. The blogger incorporates a cataphoric reference when she demands the men to keep "it in their pants." The "it" refers to the private part of the male body, which the blogger later mentions clearly but avoids using in the title of the blog, which covers the socially constituted nature of blogging [8a]. The reason behind using such a reference and avoiding antecedent in the title could be a threat to "fragile male egos of Pakistani men"[2b]; however, it also refers to the Pakistani socio-cultural context where such expressions are still considered taboos and hence are not shared overtly.

[7]

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A woman should not need anybody's judgment or consent regarding the decisions she makes about her own body. But in a patriarchal set-up like ours, a woman's identity is closely tied with her relationships and the social roles assigned to her. A woman is not considered 'complete' unless she becomes a mother. According to oppressive standards, her self-worth should solely be derived from whether or not she can bear children.

b

The choice to have or not have any children is a matter of consent. If a woman is deprived of this and is forced into getting pregnant, it is indeed an oppression of her rights. So, as friends, relatives, or spouses, can we take a moment to be more empathetic and let women decide what they want to do with their own bodies? At the end of the day, procreation and motherhood is a matter of choice, and one should be respected regardless of the choice they make.

Heterotopias can Compare and Contrast Different Spaces and Sites in Just One Real Place:

Blogging offers a heterotopian space to Pakistani females where they can share their personal, cultural, and social experiences freely and confidently. The blogs contextualizing rape, harassment, and murder accentuate the social issues and skills, whereas the blog highlighting the issue of procreation reflects personal experience. In the selected blogs, these personal and social issues are somehow interlinked since the personal experience of the bloggers seems to be a reflection of the social skills and the social experiences mirror the experiences of Pakistani females.

While discussing the issue of procreation, the blogger's explanation reveals that the blogger intends to maintain a relationship with her readers by publicly sharing her very personal feelings regarding a very particular issue. The writer does not make any effort to hide the identity of the agent; instead, she presents herself as the agent.

The blogger, here, has discussed the problems faced by a childless woman and the attitude of society toward her. The woman not only survives with a feeling of deprivation (taught by the community) but has also faced a lot of physical complications and mental stress. The blogger realizes that bearing a child is a huge responsibility, and considering herself unable to fulfill this responsibility, she decides not to give birth to any child. Albeit, it is her personal decision, and she does not have any medical issues, she still has to face criticism from society: "Even if you are as privileged as I am, you'll still have to face your fair share of shame and abomination"[6b]. She criticizes the way the females intervene in her decision "And then there are those, mostly in the family, who openly shame you for this 'ungrateful' decision,"[8b] and this is how a personal choice gets public attention. Everybody feels free to decide for the blogger.

[8]

a

Why Pakistani men need to learn the art of 'keeping it in their pants'

b

And then there are those, mostly in the family, who openly shame you for this 'ungrateful' decision. You'll be considered 'that' girl at every family occasion, and all possible unsolicited advice will be aligned in your direction.

While discussing the case of Zainab, the blogger keeps sharing and comparing her personal experiences, e.g., "I remember another incident of a boy sexually abused at school. This, too, narrates how broad the effects and phenomenon of child sexual abuse are in a culture like ours"[9] and melds her personal and social space. Similarly, while raising the issue of masturbation, the blogger begins with, "I came across a Facebook post recently which made me question the way this society thinks and functions"[2b], and then "raises multiple red flags about the way we live"[2b] Personal opinion and experience is generalized within the same context by the blogger.

Blogging offers a social platform where not only observations of social phenomena are shared, but it also includes personal experiences; hence it juxtaposes

and intermingles different spaces. The projection of virtual identity may at times exist in contrast with the real character, but it can also reflect the similarities of the two said identities.

[9]

I remember another incident of a boy [sexually abused](#) at school. This too narrates how broad the effects and phenomenon of child sexual abuse are in a culture like ours.

Heterotopias as ‘Heterochronies’

Since heterotopias deal with different times at the same time, so does blogging. The bloggers not only write about the past but may also write about the future. Hence, they accumulate different phases of time in a single writing space. Even the titles of the selected blogs suggest that the bloggers simultaneously write about past, present, and future. Historical past and anterior past are typical to journalism, and the blogs under discussion reveal how the bloggers accumulate time through blogging.

The title of the very first blog, i.e., "The year of Zainab: Pakistan was jolted awake by the abuse of its children, but is that enough?" combines present and past and the same sequence is maintained in the course of the blog where the blogger refers to current and past simultaneously, e.g., "Every woman reading this knows the expression...", "The more I thought about the girl..." [1a], "We complain," and in the end, she refers to the future as well when she asserts, "A lot of work undoubtedly needs to be done in this area" [10].

[10]

We complain to schools about the hygiene of food served there. We care about the shoes and clothes our kids wear. We care about whether or not they have eaten properly. We care about our kids' homework, themed birthday parties, spelling bee competitions and so on. Then why do we not care more about what our children are silently going through? By not caring more when they are children, we get adults who are severely disturbed psychologically. Then, while they seek therapy, they all say that the sexual abuse they faced as children had zero effect on them - something that is not true and always makes me cry.

In the second selected blog, the sentences like "The choice... is a matter of consent," [7b] "I had no other way," [11a] and "one should be respected" [7b] refers to the accumulation of present, past, and future in a single piece of writing. Similarly, the third selected blog also seems to offer an amalgamation of present, past and future within the same script, e.g. "this comment was supposed...", "fake feminists want..." and "should be allowed..." [11b].

[11]

a

b

I had no other way but to get into an argument with him when he showed up yet again with an infant baby doll and a miniature cot, as a final attempt to impress me. But have we ever seen any toy enforcing fatherhood upon young boys?

This comment was supposed to "protect" the man's "right" to his body. According to multiple people on that post, they should be allowed this right, just as "desi liberals" and "fake feminists" want bodily rights for themselves.

Heterotopias Possess a Pre-defined System for Entrance and Exit:

Blogging appears to be a heterotopian space since it follows a systematic entrance and exit. Either the bloggers join some blogging platform for which they need to provide their details to the admin, which may not be openly accessible for the public, or they maintain their blogging sites where the bloggers need to update a profile which is easily accessible to the readers. Keeping profiles online or being a part of some blogging platform offers a proper entrance into the world of blogging, which at times may isolate them from the real world and connect them with the netizens. The page remains active until the bloggers themselves do not announce any exit. The status may be active or passive, depending upon the uploaded content on the page.

It is noteworthy that at the end of each selected blog, the blogger also provides information regarding her current status, interests, and a means to communicate with her.

Heterotopias possess the 'otherness':

Heterotopias generate an otherness that emerges out of the desire for perfection leading towards illusion (Foucault, 1986). The passion for perfection not only exposes and challenges the set norms as suggested by the blogs discussed above, but also proposes suggestions that may be helpful in the reconstruction of the real space. The analysis of the blogs reveals that blogging possesses this 'otherness' of heterotopias where the female bloggers feel free to raise voice against social injustice "We are still unable to understand child sexual abuse in terms of our patriarchal culture and hegemonic masculinity"; to challenge the patriarchal society "Such acts are also forms of structural violence, where men abuse their status and use it to oppress and scare women"[4a] and to counter the restrictions imposed upon women by the society "Our sexist insistence on procreation is nothing but a form of oppression because most of the women have to fight and bear incredible frustration if they choose not to have a child"[12] without the fear of being opposed directly and harshly. The 'otherness' of blogging empowers women to take the stance which can generate awareness among other people of society, particularly among women.

[12]

Our sexist insistence on procreation is nothing but a form of oppression, because most of the women have to fight and bear incredible frustration if they choose not to have a child. Women are rejected, divorced and demeaned even when despite the desire to bear children they cannot do so due to medical reasons. Whether a woman does not want children, or when she wants them, or even the number she wants, none of it is left up to her. More often than not, women end up having more children than they'd have wanted. The oppression is so prevalent that women go through life threatening pregnancies, and despite advice from professionals, end up getting forcefully pregnant again too soon, risking their lives yet again.

Discussion:

It can be deduced that the otherness of blogging as a heterotopia, specified either by illusion or by perfection, seems to challenge the reality of the common spaces around it. Blogging offers an outlet to Pakistani female bloggers to exhibit their virtual

identities. In a social scenario where suppression and incarceration lead females to adopt negative ways, blogging appears as an avenue that offers the female to explore different horizons of freedom. It has provided an 'other' world to females where they can share their true feelings and comment on social injustice which seems to hamper their freedom. It not only enables the females to share their opinions and feelings but also provides them an opportunity to express those unsaid realities which can never be said otherwise.

The socio-technical scope of blogs not only separates them from other social sites but also attracts the computer scientists (Kim, Zheng & Gupta, 2011), journalists and media persons (Siles, 2011) and researchers (Vaast, Davidson & Mattson, 2013) to observe and peruse people's proclivity towards blogging and to examine how bloggers generate discourses and interact with their audience. The analysis reveals that blogs differ from other digital sites because they seem to deviate from the set social norms and values in their selection of topics, themes and vocabulary. The blogs selected for the analysis consist of such topics and themes, which, in a Pakistani society, are not discussed openly. Even to talk about subjects like sexual harassment, sexual abuse, male dominance, masturbation, procreation, etc. and to raise questions on societal norms and values is discouraged. Instead, it may lead to the exile of people from a social setup.

The language people use reflects who they are and how they want to project themselves (Edwards, 2009; Rampton, 2010). The blogs selected for analysis presents Pakistani female bloggers as a powerblock who challenge the Pakistani society where some of the male members are given undue importance even if they talk rudely and exhibit their superiority through their repugnant attitude. Such attitudes are not a result of psychological impairment or educational setup; instead, they are instilled in male children right from their childhood by their family and then by the society.

The choice of vocabulary by the bloggers reveals how the digital platform of blogging has been utilized to give meaning to those suppressed feelings which otherwise remain unsaid and unshared. The vocabulary used is such which goes against the social values and can be alleged for being vulgar and objectionable. Moreover, the selection of words in the titles of the blogs reveals how the bloggers feel living in a society that restricts their freedom. The titles not only expose the general attitude of male members but also reflect the bloggers' disdain toward social injustice, which takes the former as the privileged ones. The choice of words is not unintentional as the blogs are not a result of spontaneous overflow of emotions; instead, each word is written after much deliberation.

Sometimes the blogs appear to be naturalizing certain discourses that seem to violate the societal norms and values. This phenomenon reveals the change in the themes and topics of the blogs, which not only deviate from traditional blog writing but also bring innovation in terms of issues, ideas, and genre. The flexibility and expansion in the themes and topics of the blogs have made it easy for the bloggers to integrate different cultures, making them accessible for the readers.

The bloggers have tried to shatter those norms which have crippled the society like procreation as a form of oppression, considering menstruation a taboo, and masturbation. The blogs with such daring topics and content help the bloggers in identity formation. They can identify themselves in a different way, heading towards self-realisation which gives them a new reality, a new identity which is not yet fixed.

The selected blogs project a revolutionary activity since it is not easy to expose one's self while choosing and writing on those topics which appear to be

controversial and tabooed. Without restricting themselves, the bloggers have tried to create virtual identity which may be similar or different to their real world identity.

Today the blogs have evolved from what they used to be in their initial inception, and they are even expected to keep changing in the future as well (Pinjamaa, 2016).

Conclusion:

Blogging not only enables the bloggers to exert control over social interaction but also provides them opportunity to publicly express themselves by using different linguistic expressions without any social, cultural, political or religious constraint. This research work offers another heterotopia, i.e., heterotopia of weblogs which focuses on how this 'other' world plays its role in identity construction and representation of females. The textual content employed in the blogs transforms blog writing into a virtual space and hence forms a heterotopia itself. The selected blogs reflect hybridity in terms of genre, theme and topics. The vocabulary of the blogs also does not restrict itself to a particular register rather it seems to be its own register inclusive of all other registers. The linguistic features of reiteration, active voice, taboo words, substitution, formal and informal discourse markers not only distinguish blogging from traditional blogging rather present it as a heterotopian space as well. It not only helps them establish their identity but also makes them project it discursively.

Recommendations\:

- The study suggests that blogging should be considered a heterotopian space in its spatio-temporal dimension and should not be confused or mixed with heterotopias of deviation instead it should be considered as heterotopias of representation.
- Blogging appears to be a public sphere that works as an open space, helping the bloggers in (re)forming their virtual identities and self-identification. The cathartic potential of blogging should not be ignored since it helps the bloggers getting away from prevailing socio-cultural trends.

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