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Degeneration of Grand Narratives into Local Narratives: A Postmodern Analysis of the Shazaf Fatima Haider’s Novel “How It Happened”

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p>History:</p> <p>Received: May 13, 2023 Accepted: June 30, 2023</p>	<p>The present study is a postmodern analysis of the Pakistani author Shazaf Fatima Haider’s novel “How It Happened” which is built on meta-narratives about marriages, religion, sects and gender in local culture. Metanarratives can be defined as interpretive frameworks or ways of understanding the world and are considered valid and true regardless of the spatial and temporal boundaries. The study explores the sociocultural metanarratives and the process of their replacement by local narratives’ by applying Jean Francis Lyotard (1979)’s theoretical framework of postmodernism. Lyotard believes that micro-narratives provide a more detailed picture of the fragmented society and comparatively grand narratives hold very little credibility regardless of what mode of unification it uses, i.e. speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation. The study answers how the novel challenges long-existing sociocultural metanarratives and which local narratives have replaced them in Pakistani society. The study concludes that Shazaf Fatima Haider, through her postmodern characters, challenges the long-standing metanarratives of Pakistani culture and replaces them with local narratives.</p> <p>© 2023 The Authors, Published by WUM. This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Common Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0.</p>
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1. Introduction

Postmodernism came in revolt to modernism and it is typified by certain features such as skepticism, desertion of metanarratives and absolutism. This terminology was first introduced in a renowned book “*A Study of History*” (1947) by Arnold Toynbee. Postmodern philosophy rejects the meta narratives of worldview, scientific reasons and rationality. Furthermore, it restates the narratives of the religion, God, family and traditional gender roles by presenting local, subjective and multiple definitions of all these phenomena. “Metanarratives are interpretive frameworks or ways of understanding the world that are claimed to have truth or validity that crosses all spatial and temporal boundaries, true for all people, at all times and in

all places” (Hermida, 2008, p. 98). Postmodernism, as a movement, is doubtful towards metanarratives as Sadalge (2013) explains it by referring to Jean Francois Lyotard (1998), “We have now lost the ability to believe in meta-narratives” (Lyotard 1998, as cited in Sadalge 2013, p. 69). Meta narratives are also called grand narratives. They are also referred as high-level story and big story. Linda Hutcheon (1983) who is known as a postmodern philosopher writes, “In Lyotard’s view, a metanarrative is meta in a very strong sense. It purports to be a privileged discourse capable of situating, characterizing, and evaluating all other discourses” (Lyotard 1998, as cited in Hutcheon 2013, p. 22).

Postmodernist philosophers are inclined to refuse grand narratives and reject any legitimate truth. Jean Francois Lyotard (1998) is one of the most prominent figures of the postmodern movement. He defines postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. For Lyotard (1993), meta narratives are in decline because no one has the authority to make universal claims. In the postmodern society, no one has the power to impose their ideas on others so legitimizing master narratives are repudiated. All the grand narratives such as Christianity, Marxism, Kantianism and Hegelianism which suggest that knowledge has the power to liberate humanity have been refused. People tend to doubt their own judgment and this has caused insecurity, frustration, doubt, anxiety and identity crisis. This loss of sense and one ultimate truth has pushed people to re-examine their old beliefs, values and traditions. There is no absolute knowledge which can truly describe the realities of humans and humanity. Postmodern theory negates the existence of objective reality and absolute truth. The proponents believe that relativism is the future as there is no universal truth in the postmodern world. In his Primer on Postmodernism, Stanley Grenz (1996) remarks about metanarratives;

“What makes our condition "postmodern" is not only that people no longer cling to the myths of modernity. The postmodern outlook entails the end of the appeal to any central legitimating myth whatsoever. Not only have all the reigning master narratives lost their credibility, but the idea of a grand narrative is itself no longer credible. Consequently, the postmodern outlook demands an attack on any claimant to universality-it demands, in fact, a "war on totality". (Grenz, 1996, p. 45)

Metanarratives are the stories about certain beliefs and practices in a particular culture. Post modernism presents multiple realities that are always situational, fragmented, provisional, paradox, contingent, and temporary. In postmodernism, the idea of disorder, disharmony, incoherence or fragmentation is not deplored but rather celebrated. This present study aims to point out the existing metanarratives in a Pakistani society and for this purpose Haider (2012)’s novel, *How it Happened* is selected. The novel is a story of a Shia, Syed family based in Karachi Pakistan. It is a snappy, comedic, humorous, and feisty look at marriages that is written in a clear, easy, and conversational style. The tale conjures up real people who may be found in practically every Pakistani and Indian family, like impervious Dadi, who places a strong emphasis on tradition. The story is narrated by Saleha, who goes against the traditions of her family. Her grandmother, Gulbahar Bibi is a domineering matriarch of her Bandian family who is in the favour of marriages within the same sect, arranged purely by the elders of the family and submissive role of women. Dadi is highly against love-shove and the dating-shating business because she wants her grandchildren to marry according to her choice. Her grandchildren Haroon and Zeba go against her wishes of sticking to long held traditions and find matches for themselves. Zeba breaks the family traditions as she falls in love with a Sunni boy. That is when Dadi’s melodrama is at its best.

In the novel, *How It Happened*, the writer breaks the metanarratives of religion, sect, culture, family, marriage, gender roles and world view. Two major sects, Shia and Suni, among Muslims do not accept each other and criticize each other's religious practices. They do not intermarry. In the novel, Zeba breaks down this metanarrative of religion and sects by marrying a Sunni boy. In Pakistani culture, family plays a central role and parents decide children's marriages. Girls are not consulted in this matter. They do not have their personal opinion rather follow the opinion and traditions of their family. Sense of individualism and personal freedom is absent. Men are always superior and women are submissive and silent followers of family traditions. But in *How It Happened*, Fati Phupho and Zeba reject socially accepted gender roles. They assert individualism, raise their voice for their freedom of choice, and try to bring gender equality. Shazaf Fatima Haider through these characters breaks the metanarratives of Pakistani society.

2. Literature Review:

Previous studies have analyzed the workings of different master narratives that build a reality in the social and cultural world. Researchers have challenged the existing patterns and perceptions that entirely depend on the narratives of objectivity and truth. In literature, different writers have presented ideological constructs of the society and tried to challenge the ordered and conventional narratives based on the claims of truth and reality. This study will be reviewing different works of researchers who questioned grand narratives and put forward reliable little narratives.

Ashraf and Farooq (2020) analyzed the novel, *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* by Mohammad Hanif (2011), by applying the theory of grand narratives to subvert the traditional ways of telling the history. They built a new narrative around the events of partition in subcontinent from the perspective of a common man. Researchers destabilized the reader's fixed historical knowledge and presented them with little narratives to question the existing versions of history. This study concludes that multiple stories about an event challenge the traditional, progressive and historical objectivity. Historical grand narrative is replaced here by personal narratives to denote postmodern multiplicity of histories. In another study, Ashraf (2017) examined *Burnt Shadows* (Kamila Shamsie 2009) to see how metanarratives are transformed in the world of multiple voices, openness, fragmentation and self-contradiction. This study points out how Kamila Shamsie (2009) shattered great narratives that are no longer needed to create meanings or absolute truths in the age of postmodern world. She questioned the prevailing stereotypes between Western and Islamic world and presented a counter narrative to negate the Western discourse about 9/11 tragedy. Her protagonist Hiroko Tanaka confronts the grand narratives of war, nationalism, fundamentalism, terrorism, imperialism and patriarchal domination. She accepts people with different nationalities, colour, language and religion with open arms and becomes an embodiment of pluralism, tolerance and hybridity. Kamila (2009) presents different versions on historical tragedies to defy the authority of master narratives. This study presents the findings that grand narratives pushed humanity to periphery.

Another research on the novel, *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga (2008), from postmodern lens gives us an insight how the subaltern, the downtrodden and the marginalized people in India have found a voice through the novel. The story revolves around the central character of Balram who challenges totalitarian structure and rebels against the prevailing ground realities of the unequal distribution of economy in India. He shares his life story from being a servant to an entrepreneur to break stereotypical narrative manipulation and presents inconsistent and contradictory views. Moreover, another study by Gunes (2018) explores the novel *The Night*

Train (Martin Amis 1997) from the perspective of grand narratives. The novel is about a mysterious case of Jennifer Faulkner's suicide that Mike tries to solve by collecting all evidences to build a narrative about the case. Metanarratives provide a reasonable explanation of the workings of the world. In traditional detective fiction, a detective follows a certain pattern in a chronological order to get a sense of understanding of all cues to reach to an end. The purpose is to remove the perplexity, confusion, mystery and suspense from the reader's mind. Amis (1997), in his novel, negates this metanarrative of detective fiction to reach to a satisfactory conclusion. The study reaches to a conclusion that in an age based on ambiguity, uncertainty, doubt and lack of absolute truth, it is hard to reach to a legitimate totality of truth about a murder. The author chooses to hide the case instead of solving it.

Postmodern researchers studied different works of literature to see how grand narratives are getting replaced by mini reliable narratives. All the above studies show that writers have questioned master narratives of historical fiction, detective fiction, imperialism, fundamentalism and nationalism. In the present study, researchers will analyze how Shazaf Fatima Haider (2012) breaks the grand narrative of patriarchal domination in her novel *How It Happened*.

3. Methodology:

Postmodernism is a movement that influenced different fields such as music, philosophy, culture, language, history and literature. It has attained immense spotlight and its effects can be seen in different other fields such as feminism, gender studies and multiculturalism. Different theorists namely Hutcheon (1983), Jameson (1991), Baudrillard (2007) and Lyotard (1998) have presented their views on postmodernism. This study focuses on to provide the viewpoints of the leading figure of postmodern age; Jean Francis Lyotard (1924-1998).

Postmodernism is the movement that shows its distrust towards rationality, objectivity, truth and reality. It shows its skepticism towards the existence of metanarratives. It allows different point of views to prosper as these different views help to understand the new realities and new philosophical thoughts. Modernism emphasized on the universal truth, reality and knowledge but postmodern is quite distinct in its approach. Postmodernism have lost faith in the absolute meaning in the world of crisis and fragmentation. Jean Francis Lyotard (1979) examined the form of knowledge in his report *The Postmodern Condition*. He argued that the world of knowledge is under a huge influence of technological advancement. This technological advancement has led to create doubt in the minds of the people. Lyotard (1979) presented his skepticism by telling the world how metanarratives work to reject openness, diverse views and plurality of opinions.

Lyotard (1979) rejected the metanarratives and described postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives" (p. xxiv). Hermida (2008) defines metanarratives as the ways of understanding the world that claimed to be true and valid for all the people of different times and places. On Lyotard (1979)'s account, a story that is universal or grand in scope is not large scale because of its scope but because of its nature of legitimization. He argued that we live in era in which metanarratives are in crisis because the narratives of Christianity, Marxism, Hegelianism and Kantianism have lost their credibility. He is of the view that universal truth or reality creates fixed system of thought in the minds of the people. He says that this fixed narration has lost its meaning because people have the ability to create their own meanings based on their own experiences. Narratives are supposed to be plural to give the diversified narratives. He calls metanarratives as ideological constructs because they control the thought and action patterns of the people. Metanarratives are hegemonic because

they lead to violence, marginalization and oppression. He challenges ideological constructs and talks about the structure of knowledge that construct instabilities. These instabilities lead to plural meaning of the same thing.

This study seeks to examine the metanarratives that are prevalent in the contemporary society. Moreover, it also attempts to find out how the writers are trying to create little narratives in their work. We live in the world that is operating on the multiplicity of views so it is hard to stick to one universal meaning, truth or reality. Postmodernists found grand narratives as oppressive and put these dominant worldviews into question. Lyotard (1979) claims that “the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation” (p. 37). He is of the view that mini narratives are necessary to understand the fragmented society.

In this research, we will see how metanarratives are into work in the novel *How It Happened* by Shazaf Fatima Haider (2012). She has shown contrast in the patterns of thoughts and actions between the old generation and the new generation. Old generation feels nostalgic about all the traditional customs and values and forces new generation to follow these grand narratives in order to avoid any cultural or moral collapse. The new generation questions the validity of these established cultural and moral values, and creates its own local narratives to survive in the contemporary society of media and technology.

4. Research Objectives

The main objectives to carry out this research are:

- Understanding the postmodernism and its role in transforming the grand narratives.
- Exposing the metanarratives of marriage, race and gender that exist in Pakistani culture.
- Defining the process of formation of metanarratives, their roots/origins and relation to the past.
- Exploring the local narratives and how they transform the long-standing socio-cultural norms.

5. Research Questions:

The current research intends to answer the following important questions through a comprehensive analysis of the text via postmodern lens;

- How postmodern approach challenges and transforms the socio-cultural metanarratives of Pakistani culture?
- How the local narratives disqualify the so-called standards of patriarchal/matriarchal system?

6. Analysis and Discussion:

Arranged marriages are considered to be the only true and respectable way of getting married in most parts of the world but especially in Pakistan. However, modern times have changed many things in typical societies including the marriage traditions. The educated and open-minded youth has been constantly challenging the unfair cultural standards and struggling to set their modified rules. These efforts have been successful as the senior members of the society have accepted many things against their set rules. Shazaf Fatima Haider is a famous Pakistani writer whose novel *How it Happened* is set in the Pakistani context. She exposes the cultural realities and unfair marriage customs along with other related themes. The novel

is written in the first person narrative and the events are narrated by the youngest family member Saleha. The following analysis reveals how postmodernism has challenged and transformed the socio-cultural metanarratives of marriage, gender, ethnicity, sect, matriarchy/patriarchy, and culture.

Basically, the novel is a story of arranged marriages and presents true cultural stories. It breaks illusionary and stereotypical narrative manipulation of arranged marriages by Dadi and creates multiple interpretations of its inconsistencies and contradictions by a strong headed female protagonist Zeba. As the author writes, "The Bandians of Bhakuraj, true to their ancestral heritage, married not for love but because it happened to be convenient" (p. 1). The narrator is setting a tone for the rest of the novel by saying that true Bandians always followed their custom of getting married. This fact is also reinforced by Dadi who says that the matter of marriages must be handled by the parents as it has been the custom of their culture since ages. Later, this marital relationship becomes a repressive force for women and they cannot stand for their rights.

I. Grand Narrative of Matriarchy and Patriarchy

Indian and Pakistani culture follow matriarchal system in domestic affairs. A dominant matriarch has all controls of the family affairs and all other women have to follow these rules. In the current novel, Dadi is the ultimate controlling authority or the matriarch of the family. She has set rules and standard for her generation. Hence, these ruled women are considered rebels if they do not follow or challenge any domestic rule. In fact, matriarchy is hierarchical. Bahu is the second authority after Dadi. Likewise, elder sister is dominant over the younger ones. The youngest has to obey all the females sitting on different positions over her. In the novel *How it Happened*, Haider (2012) breaks down the traditional norms of society through the young female characters of the novel. Dadi notices even the smallest things and rejects the girls on the basis of her set rules. For example, when the family visits Haroon's choice (Saima Apa's) home for the first time, Saima's elder sister opens the door. Dadi takes her as Saima and comments, "Good girls did not have audacity to open the doors to their prospective in-laws---they wait patiently in their rooms before being summoned by their parents." (p. 61). Likewise, Dadi did not like when Saima Apa wanted to go with her mother-in-law to choose a wedding dress for her. According to Dadi, "A good Eastern bride did not participate in the wedding with eagerness." (p. 89)

Dadi is fed up with these "mordren" times and her favorite method of countering them is to narrate the nostalgic tales from her past by modifying them in accordance with the moral she wants to convey in a particular situation. Haider's story is all set to expose contemporary Pakistani society where tradition struggles to reconcile with changing times, where marriages are not always arranged and women may not be well versed in the arts of cooking and sewing. Zeba has rebellious nature as she talks of orgasms, discusses politics, and once says out loud, "I don't cook. I don't like children. I don't want to get married." (p. 107). The author, through the character of Zeba, tries to break the stereotypical role of a young Pakistani girl. She explicitly challenges the norm of arranged marriages.

II. Grand Narrative of Islam

Haider is of the view that arranged marriages are the only options available to women to make them repressive throughout their lives. Moreover, through these words, "The Bandian line was started with an arranged marriage, which is the only Islamic way to get married" (Haider 2012, p. 4), Haider has depicted the fundamentalist view of Islam in which boys and girls are never asked about their consent. She has tried to wipe away this wrong perception of

Islam from the minds of people as they mold religion according to their wishes and propagate their own views as religious norms to attain personal benefits. Resultantly, religion that gives a singular true reality exists no more. Islam gives equal freedom to every individual to marry of his/her own choice but marrying of one's own choice is considered a taboo in Pakistani society. The character of Dadi is the true embodiment of customs and traditions. She believes in a very few basic things in life and one of them is arrange marriage.

Her words, "Sensible Bandian women know that this love-shove business is all non-sense. We must do our duty to please God and our husbands. That's it". (p. 11), exposit a metanarrative that women were made to believe that love in a true sense does not exist. Indeed, marriage means living together caring each other and showing love by both partners. But stereotypical ideology believes that for woman, marriage means to please her husband and to ignore herself. This notion of marriage was quite disturbing for Zeba because she thinks marriage should be done for love. However, in typical families, proposals are searched from the same sect, caste, and race but love sees no boundaries. Therefore, post modernism is against the idea of division through sects, castes, races and religion. This movement suggests that by raising tolerance against these divisions, society can achieve harmony.

III. Grand Narrative of Age

Haider breaks down the metanarrative of ancient times when age was considered to be very important for someone to get married. Haseena (Dadi's daughter) remained unmarried until the age of 27, which was considered the point of no return in those days and such aged girls were destined to marry old men. Nevertheless, age limit in today's world has been changed. Social grand narrative of marriage suggested that a girl should be married as soon as she enters in the age of puberty and rising age is alarming and overage girls, above 18, do not find good matches. There is a sharp contrast among grand and local narratives, as the speaker expresses her thoughts that a girl of twenty-six in the present age can get married in contrast to the girl of nineteen in her era. Time has changed the customs, typical traditions, and thoughts by challenging and breaking the grand narratives.

IV. Grand Narrative of Gender

Qurrat Dadi says to Saleha on the occasion of her grand-daughter Naureen's marriage, "Shy girls don't get married. One must be bold, like a cheetah." (Haider 2012, p. 258) Traditional feminism says that a good girl must be shy, submissive and obedient not bold or blunt. While in the postmodern era, bold and independent girls are more attractive. Dadi, a traditional woman, herself breaks the grand narrative of gender. She admits that a girl should not be shy rather bold and she uses the similie 'cheetah' -a male animal. When Fati Phuppho asked Uncle Shahid (Omer's father) that how he was feeling, he replies; "Not bad at all, not bad at all! I'm fit as a young school girl playing hopscotch." (p. 250). Here, a man compares himself with a girl not with a strong boy and breaks the grand narrative of gender. In past, there was a clear-cut distinction between male and female and sex and gender. To compare a male with a female was considered a matter of shame, a male having female like qualities or behavior was considered a half-male. However, according to postmodernism, sex and gender are not completely apart. An old lady, Qurrat who is Dadi's cousin and age fellow supports the notion of postmodernism in the following words;

Waisay Gulbahar Bibi, you must not lose hope, even though Zeba is about to turn twenty-six next month. Times have changed. Why, in our era a girl was considered a rotting banana the minute she turned nineteen! But today girls

should be educated. My Naureen spent most of her life studying medicine and is a doctor! (p. 261)

V. Grand Narrative of Gender Roles

Haroon is Dadi's only and most loved grandson for whom she wants to bring the best bride. The situation becomes very interesting when the family searches a suitable match for him but Dadi rejects every girl based on her set rules. After Haroon's return from US, list of potential candidates was made and a checklist that was consisted of a series of rules and conditions that the potential candidate had to fulfill to be considered suitable for Haroon. Dadi's one rule says, "She must not want to get a job. What are men for?" (p. 32). In her era, the role of women was restricted to household chores and they were not allowed to go outside for work or education. This condition is ironical in a sense that she wants a qualified girl but does not want her to have a desire to get a job. She has demarcated a line between the roles of men and women. However, Haroon marries a working woman going all against Dadi's instructions.

VI. Grand Narrative of Sect and Caste

When Saleha meets her sister's expected husband, Omer a Sunni, for the first time, she breaks the grand narrative of sects by the following words; "Not that I have anything against Sunnis, most of my friends are Sunnis and I love the fact that you get to open your fast ten minutes before we do...ah...I am pleased to meet you." (p. 249). Shia and Sunni, the two major sects of Islam, always criticized and hated each other's religious practices. The younger generation such as Saleha has greater flexibility as she praises the religious practices of the Sunni sect and also make Sunni friends without any hesitation. The traditional rivalry and hatred among both sects are no more present and the postmodern generation breaks this grand narrative of sects and in turn of religion.

After Zeba Baji's breach of tradition, five couples married outside the family for love. My sister is her generation's heroine and previous generation's nightmare. Several cousins called Ammi accusingly when their daughters decided to marry men of their choice, on the pretext that if a conservative Bandian girl like Zeba was allowed to marry of her own accord, then why weren't they? Thus ended with Zeba Baji that unadulterated saga of marriages arranged and pre-planned. (p. 310). These last lines of the novel reinforce the postmodern narratives. Zeba was declared her generations' heroine because she came forward to break the grand narratives of her family, as a result, the whole family was forced to adopt postmodern notions. Young generation of Bhakrajian family, standing on the shoulders of Zeba, showed rebellion from family's traditional ties and the changing worldview made it possible to break the grand narrative in order to accept postmodern narratives. Many couples married out of family and sect after Zeba's breach of tradition.

VII. Replacement of Meta Narratives by Local Narratives

As time passed, challenges from youth have conquered most of the cultural metanarratives and local narratives became popular. Many different local narratives on a single topic or issue exist now. For example, there is a change in discussion of topics and use of language in public, all taboo talks that have been put in seven screens are now discussed openly. In post modernism, there is no shssh-shssh on any topic. Shakouri, Sheikhy and Raabeigi (2015) assert, "all narratives can exist together, side by side; in a sense, no one can insert its domination into the other unilaterally" (2015, p. 72). Talking about sex in Pakistan is a taboo but Haider (2012) is breaking all stereotypes here by letting her female characters to talk on obscene things.

Post modernism presents paradoxical ideas and transforms the characters radically bypassing the suffocating social norms and so-called cultural standards. As the novel proceeds, the character of Dadi undergoes a radical transformation. In the beginning, she held tight to her true Bandian norms but later she deviated from the norms. In the start of novel, Dadi argues that in true respectable Bandian families, the couple did not talk to each other before the marriage; they spoke for the first time on their wedding night. She says, “Why, you girls these days know no shame!” (p. 10). Ironically, Dadi has no objection in presenting her granddaughter Zeba to the proposals coming to see her. At the wedding of Haroon, Dadi made sure that Zeba Baji will perform the main duties so that camera will shine brightest and everyone will see her. “Dadi wanted Zeba Baji to start as this would be one more opportunity put her on display.” (p. 116).

Throughout the selected text, we come across the characters that overtly challenge the traditional setup and ameliorate or reshape their existence. Zeba is the most prominent character to challenge the stereotypical system. She breaks the long-followed patriarchal and matriarchal norms by marrying a Sunni. This action of Zeba makes her a transformed woman who is not made to follow the trodden foot prints of her ancestors. The novel frequently challenges the matriarchal practices governed by the patriarchal thoughts.

Saleha rejects the traditional male female relation which is sharply analogous to lion versus hyenas and advises to be bold and independent. Further she rejects the idea of precautions that girls must be careful about their every movement in the society and says that they should live their life free of societal restrictions. She rejects the laws and rules set by the society, the dominance of man, and a typical religious man applying fatwa in every matter of life. In this extract, she rejects the grand narratives of sex/gender, religion, society, universal and unified truths and world realities, idea of power and suppression of individual freedom. The contradictory feelings of Zeba in this novel generally about the metanarrative of marriage and more specifically regarding the expected attitude of a girl during marriage-settling process can be observed through these words, “But it hurts, being carted out in front of men and their nauseating smug mothers.” (p. 135). Zeba’s bold way of meeting her potential in laws reinforces her rebellious nature,

Despite all instructions to wait demurely for someone to fetch her and bring her in, like a shy feather on a gentle breeze, Zeba Baji marched in wearing a black sleeveless shalwar-kameez. She was unaccompanied. Her blood-red lipstick stood out against her pale skin. (Haider 2012, p. 147-148)

Her dismissal of being aligned with the dressing norm posits her own creation of little narrative regarding such occasion. Moving onwards in the novel, when she gets the chance of making her stance clear in front of her family, she speaks out against this metanarrative as, “And do respectable grandmothers flaunt their granddaughters to be examined and inspected by men and their mothers like cattle?” (p. 211). Modernism believes in the metanarratives of growth that is based on the past knowledge. In contrast, postmodernism redefines history and regards it as the collective memory of the individuals who lived in the past. History is not to follow but to remember and admire because it is a subjective experience of particular people who lived in a specific era, different context and faced distinct events. Hence, this theory proposes local narratives by disqualifying the linear, outdated and dominant metanarratives. This aspect can be analyzed through the conversation of Dadi and Zeba Baji when Dadi was ranting about the diminishing simplicity and shyness in girls by comparing with her own life moment when she was being taught to face the suitors for marriage purposes. Based upon this

example, Dadi expresses, “The only need a woman feels is the need to hold her child in her arms and keep her husband well fed and contented!” (p. 144)

Correspondingly, Zeba exclaimed, “But Dadi, don’t you think a woman should get pleasure now and then?” (p. 144). This conversation draws light upon subjective understanding of Dadi regarding the subservient role of women in the society by showing submission towards their husbands. Whereas, the expression of Zeba encapsulates the marginalized notion in a woman desiring something intimate through the bond of marriage. Later in the novel, when she gets the chance to open up in front of her family in order to defend herself for the action of dating with Omar, she again highlights the most omitted aspect of exactly what a woman expects from a marital relationship. “I don’t want to get married for the sake of producing children. I want a companion. I want love.” (p. 212). However, not only the character of Zeba but also other characters like Saleha and Haroon Bhai portray delineation from grand metanarrative by inserting their opinions during the chaos of choosing a potential spouse for Zeba Baji. Haroon Bhai does not approve Dadi’s choice of Gullan Mian as a potential mate for Zeba by pointing the flaws in his personality and interests.

Minority voices are also addressed under the canon of postmodernism by highlighting the little narratives. The most suppressed voices of ethnicity and gender are raised from the platform of this theory at micro level. For example, the character of Zeba is an embodiment of a minority voice in the novel. Her courageous actions exemplifying breakthrough from grand narratives involves the presence of minority voice in this novel. She portrayed great resistance towards Gullan Mian’s proposal as expressed through these words, “Dadi, are you seriously telling me that you expect me to marry a memento from the past? I can’t even look at him without laughing!” (p. 158). Moreover, her attitude while exposing her affair with Omar also characterizes violation towards metanarrative of woman as submissive and dependent beings.

The implications of postmodernism have changed the production of texts. The text focuses not only upon fictionality but also engages with the technique of frame narrative, the physicality of a printed book as a characteristic of postmodern literature. This is evident from the organization of the novel as the pages are divided into columns and sentences are arranged across them. This structure negates the notion of traditional formatting. Moreover, the book does not follow the language norms strictly as code switching is frequent and characters do not hesitate to shift between Urdu and English. This represents interchangeability, “Yeh Shadi Nhi Hoge!” (p. 16). Alternate language repertoire shows the arbitrary nature of the language and offers greater flexibility in communication.

7. Conclusion

The study shows the detailed textual analysis of novel, *‘How it Happened’*, traces postmodern characteristics which pose challenge to grand narratives such as marriage, religion, sects and gender. Shazaf Fatima Haider (2012), through the postmodern characters tries to challenge the longstanding grand narratives of Pakistani culture and establishes local narratives. Haider (2012) through the character of Zeba tries to break the stereotypical role of a young Pakistani girl who explicitly challenges the norm of arranged marriages. As in Pakistani culture, family plays a central role and parents decide children’s marriages, girls are not consulted in this matter. They do not have their personal opinion rather follow the opinion and tradition of their family. Sense of individualism and personal freedom is absent. Men are always superior and women are submissive and silent followers of family traditions. The characters of Fati Phupho and Zeba rebel against the traditional gender roles by following

individualism and personal happiness. They plead freedom of choice, subjective approach and negate gender discrimination. The author, through these characters breaks the metanarratives of Pakistani society.

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