



Introduction

RESEARCH PAPER

Honor, Resistance, and Female Agency: A Critical Examination of *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically analyzes the impact of the main character in *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, focusing on her resistance against entrenched patriarchal practices and the issue of honor killings in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab's urban areas. Through Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, the study examines how the protagonist's defiance challenges repressive social norms by demonstrating that power can flow through multiple channels, disrupting dominant narratives. Additionally, the research borrows insights from Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy to explore how acts of resistance can promote individual autonomy and oppose institutional oppression, emphasizing the capacity for independent decision-making even in oppressive environments. The findings reveal that the protagonist's actions represent a significant act of subversion, highlighting the complex dynamics of gender politics in Pakistani society. Her resistance not only symbolizes a struggle for autonomy but also sheds light on the broader fight against patriarchal systems. The study recommends further research on similar cases of resistance in other contexts, policy advocacy to strengthen legal protections against honor killings, and the integration of such narratives into educational curricula to foster critical discussions on gender, power, and resistance.

KEYWORDS Female Agency, Honor Killing, Pakistani Society, Patriarchy, Power Relations, Resistance

Introduction

A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy has received much acclaim for its powerful depiction of social and legal changes, specifically with honor killings in the urban regions of Pakistan. The documentary highlights the complex dynamics of power, resistance, and autonomy for women in a society dominated by males. Although highly praised, current scholarship has not thoroughly analyzed how this film illustrates the functioning of power networks in Pakistan's traditional social structure. To fill this void, it is essential to thoroughly analyze Obaid-Chinoy's work using critical theoretical frameworks, such as those proposed by Michel Foucault and Jean-Paul Sartre.

This research sheds light on the transforming function of Saba in the film "A Girl in the River" by using critical views. It highlights how Saba defies deeply ingrained patriarchal conventions, especially in the urban areas of Punjab. Viewed via Foucault's theory of power relations, which suggests that power flows through many routes and may challenge prevailing narratives, Saba's resistance is a significant act of subversion. The film showcases a female protagonist who tries to surpass the limitations imposed by patriarchal norms and reinvent her own fate via acts of reversal and disobedience. This analysis is also

influenced by Sartre's existential philosophy, which emphasizes the ability of people to make independent decisions even under oppressive situations. This research enhances our comprehension of gender politics in Pakistani culture by emphasizing these issues. It highlights the daring endeavors of women to challenge and destroy patriarchal systems as they strive for independence and personal development.

Thus, using the theoretical perspectives of Foucault and Sartre to analyze Obaid-Chinoy's film critically tackles an important gap in the current body of academic research. It enhances comprehension of the power structures involved in Pakistan's fight for women's rights. Examining the film from a critical viewpoint is significant for understanding the intricate ways in which documentary filmmaking mirrors and impacts the struggle for women's rights and social transformation in Pakistan. This research emphasizes the significance of documentary production as a means to bring about social change. It underscores the need for ongoing academic focus on the complex dynamics of power, rebellion, and liberation within the structure of gender discrimination.

The Persistence of Honor Killings in Pakistan: Cultural, Legal, and Social Dynamics

Women in Pakistani society often adopt subordinate positions, with their futures mostly shaped by males. Men possess considerable authority in both rural and urban locations, and the customs and standards that regulate women's lives range dramatically across different areas. These long-standing traditions have endured for many centuries, with males exclusively making all important choices about women's livelihoods. An especially flagrant example of this phenomenon is honor killing, which is often advocated by males as a matter of pride and justified without any sense of sorrow.

Honor killings in Punjab persist as a deeply ingrained and terrifying prevalent custom. The acts of violence, primarily targeting women, are motivated by a perceived obligation to regain family honor that has been compromised due to the victim's conduct, such as marrying against the family's desires, having relationships considered inappropriate, or even experiencing sexual assault. Although legal measures have been implemented to reduce honor killings, such as the enactment of the Anti-Honor Killing Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act in 2016, this abhorrent tradition continues to be disturbingly widespread. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP) documents a significant number of honor killings each year. However, the actual number is probably greater owing to underreporting and the cultural constraints that deter families from pursuing legal action.

The deeply embedded patriarchal traditions that prevail in Pakistani culture play a significant role in the perpetuation of honor killings. These conventions maintain the assumption that the honor of a family is inherently connected to the actions of its female members. The reinforcement of this cultural attitude is attributed to the absence of knowledge and awareness, especially in rural regions where traditional values are adhered to more strictly. Furthermore, the cultural perspectives about honor killings exhibit a sluggish rate of change. Victims are often held responsible for bringing shame upon their families, while the offenders are sometimes seen as defending conventional norms. This societal acceptance further complicates efforts to eradicate the practice, as it fosters an environment where honor killings are seen as justified or even necessary.

Another element contributing to the prevalence of honor killings in Pakistan is the presence of legal loopholes that enable perpetrators to evade substantial punishment. Members of the community often pardon individuals who commit these acts, exploiting the laws of Qisas and Diyat, which allow for familial forgiveness of crimes. Consequently,

killers are released from jail relatively quickly and may even gain prestige within their social circles (ACHR, 2004; Zia, 2010). According to the ordinance, a son can forgive his father for murdering his mother, a mother can forgive her husband for killing their daughter, and a father can forgive his brother, among other scenarios (Hussain, 2006, p.232; Zia, 2010, p. 31). However, recent legislation aims to mitigate this issue by increasing the severity of punishments. The length of imprisonment has been extended, with life imprisonment now potentially lasting up to 25 years under Pakistan's criminal law. Section 311 mandates that honor crimes are subject to a mandatory life imprisonment sentence (Bibi, 2018, p. 173). This legal reform represents an effort to address the systemic failures that have previously allowed honor killings to persist with minimal consequences.

The legal system in Pakistan, while having made strides, still faces significant challenges in effectively prosecuting honor killings. The principle of Qisas and Diyat (retribution and compensation) in Islamic law, which allows victims' families to forgive the perpetrators, often leads to the release of offenders, as families are pressured into granting forgiveness. This loophole has been exploited to ensure that many honor killers escape punishment, perpetuating a cycle of violence and impunity.

The practice of honor killing should not be attributed to Islam, as it predates the religion and is not inherent to its teachings. Historical evidence suggests that, prior to the advent of Islam, individuals would deliberately take the lives of their infant daughters to preserve what they perceived as their societal reputation. The Qur'an addresses this pre-Islamic practice in Sura Al-Nahl (16:58-59), describing how individuals would become distressed and hide themselves upon hearing news of the birth of a female child, contemplating whether to keep her with disdain or consign her to oblivion. This decision is described in the Qur'an as malevolent. Thus, it can be confidently asserted that the occurrence of honor killing is neither historically nor religiously linked to Islam. Scholars like Zia emphasize that these practices are cultural rather than religious, highlighting the distinction between pre-Islamic customs and Islamic teachings (Zia, 2010, p. 37). Honor killing is a global phenomenon observed in numerous countries, including Turkey, Algeria, the UK, Brazil, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Bangladesh, India, Yemen, Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, Germany, the U.S., and across Europe (Bibi, 2018, p. 169; Vitoshka, 2010; Zia, 2010, p. 1).

In Pakistan, the statistics and data on honor killings are rapidly escalating, necessitating the implementation of urgent measures. In 2004, a total of 1,000 women were victims of honor killings (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018; Knudsen, 2004; Zia, 2010,). This trend showed a progressive increase: according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Report 2008, the number of women killed in the name of honor rose from approximately 2,000 between 2005 and 2008 to over 647 in just one year in 2009 (HRCReport, 2008, p. 1). By 2017, the number of cases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had reached 94 (Bibi, 2018, p. 170). The majority of provinces in Pakistan are impacted by this violence, which is known by various names such as "Kala Kali" in Southern Punjab, "Kara kari" and "Siya Kari" in Sindh, and "Taurtoora" in NWFP (Bibi, 2018, p. 172; Warraich, n.d., p. 1; Zia, 2010, p. 12). According to the United Nations Population Fund, over 5,000 women are annually subjected to fatal acts for the sake of honor worldwide (Zia, 2010, p. 2).

Efforts by activists, both within Pakistan and internationally, have brought increased attention to the issue of honor killing. Documentaries like Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* have highlighted the brutal realities of honor killings and the systemic barriers to justice faced by survivors. Such works play a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for change. However, they also face

backlash from conservative elements within society who view these portrayals as damaging to Pakistan's image.

Literature Review

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, born on November 12, 1978, in Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan, stands as a prominent figure in the realm of documentary filmmaking, renowned for her impactful works such as *Saving Face*, *A Journey of a Thousand Miles: Peacekeepers*, and *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* (Chinoy-Biography, 2015, p. 1). Obaid-Chinoy's distinctive approach to filmmaking is driven by her perception of "anger" as a constructive and motivating force. She articulates that anger catalyzes her creativity and propels her to tackle new projects, aiming to evoke the same sentiment in her audience to inspire societal change. She stated, "Anger is essential for individuals to surpass mere disapproval of what they witness. I require a sufficient number of people who view my work to be moved, to feel anger, and to take action" (Okeweo, 2018, p. 1). Despite her status as Pakistan's most prominent documentary filmmaker, Obaid-Chinoy's work delves into contentious and urgent social issues such as xenophobia in South Africa and honor killings in Pakistan. These subjects, while critical, are frequently underexplored and underreported in mainstream media.

A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness effectively demonstrates how Saba's horrific encounter with honor killing, as shown in the film, revealed major shortcomings in Pakistan's judicial system and prompted substantial changes in legislation. The documentary chronicles the survival of Saba, who was shot and left for dead by her father and uncle. It exposes a serious flaw in Pakistani legislation, whereby those responsible for honor killings may escape punishment provided the victim's family forgives them. This legal gap enabled perpetrators to evade responsibility, highlighting the pressing need for legislative change to tackle these crucial matters. The film provided further support to Saba's testimony, which in turn caused the Pakistani Prime Minister to commit to enact legislative changes. Consequently, the legislation was modified to categorize honor killings as acts of murder, guaranteeing that those responsible could no longer evade legal repercussions by means of pardons granted by family members. Obaid-Chinoy claims that the documentary's substantial influence on social and legal changes in Pakistan illustrates the impact of the film (Khalil, 2016, p. 2).

Honor killings, which are often seen to be personal family affairs in Pakistani culture, serve as an outstanding instance of the widespread prevalence of gender-based violence in Pakistani society at large. Instances of these offences are seldom recorded, and wrongdoers often escape consequences as a result of family silence and lack of action from law enforcement. Obaid-Chinoy's work disrupts the existing state of affairs by bringing attention to these despicable deeds and promoting the principles of fairness and responsibility. Her unwavering commitment to uncovering and confronting the subjugation of women in Eastern civilizations, particularly in Pakistan, emphasizes the urgent need for ongoing investigation and promotion in this domain. Although she has received significant criticism from those who accuse her of focusing only on the country's bad attributes, Obaid-Chinoy remains unwavering in her purpose. She emphasizes the need to tackle women's rights problems, asserting that they are crucial social matters that require prompt response. Being both a filmmaker and a part of society, she believes it is her inherent duty to address and highlight these concerns (Khalil, 2016, p. 6).

A Harrowing Journey of Survival and Justice: The Critical Reception of the Documentary

A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness recounts the compelling narrative of Saba Qaiser, a resilient young Pakistani female who manages to escape an attempted honor killing. Under the direction of Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, this documentary chronicles Saba's transformation from being a victim to being a survivor, shedding attention on the harsh truths of honor-based violence and the underlying institutional problems that enable these practices to endure.

The film starts with Saba's resolve to wed Qaiser, the guy she loves, in defiance of her family's objections. This resistance against patriarchal and cultural norms results in significant repercussions. Saba's father, Maqsood, and her uncle lure her back under the pretense of reconciliation, only to shoot her in the head and throw her into a river, believing they have killed her to restore the family's honor.

Remarkably, Saba manages to survive the onslaught. The film chronicles her rescue and the ensuing legal and emotional struggles she faced. While Saba recuperates from her medical ailments, she must also negotiate the intricate and sometimes antagonistic judicial system in Pakistan. The documentary explores the pressures that Saba encounters from her family and society to pardon her assailants, highlighting the deep-seated cultural and social standards that impede women from pursuing justice. The film effectively portrays Saba's unwavering drive and grit in her quest for her rights. Despite being under tremendous pressure, she adamantly refuses to grant forgiveness to her father and uncle, firmly insisting on the pursuit of justice. Her position draws considerable attention to the problem of honor killings in urban and rural areas of Pakistan and the judicial loopholes that often enable offenders to escape prosecution if pardoned by their victims (Chinoy, 2015).

The film reaches its climax with a focus on the court processes and the immense pressure exerted on Saba to give in. Ultimately, succumbing to immense cultural and family pressure, Saba consents to pardoning her father and uncle, therefore granting them freedom from incarceration. Her choice, albeit very saddening, highlights the significant power imbalances at play and the difficulties victims have in a culture that often values family reputation more than individual liberties. The film not only recounts Saba's narrative but also functions as a more comprehensive analysis of the widespread problem of honor killings and the structural reforms required to safeguard women's rights in Pakistan. The documentary emphasizes the bravery needed to challenge deeply ingrained cultural practices and the pressing need for legislative changes to assist and protect victims of honor-based violence, as seen via Saba's account (Chinoy, 2015).

A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness has had a significant impact on both viewers and reviewers since it was released. The documentary's compelling and unwavering depiction of honor-based violence has garnered extensive praise, particularly by winning the Academy Award for Best Documentary (Short Subject) in 2016 (Phelan, n.d.). This prestigious award highlighted the film's captivating storyline and its significance in bringing attention to a deeply rooted social problem. The documentary's capacity to evoke empathy and provoke thought has been highlighted by reviewers from major publications. For example, *The New York Times* commended the film for its emotional depth and ability to connect viewers deeply with Saba's experiences (Holden, 2016). Similarly, *The Guardian* lauded Obaid-Chinoy's directorial prowess, noting how the film successfully balances personal tragedy with broader social critique (Macnab, 2016, p. 1).

Despite its accolades, the documentary has not been without controversy. Some critics, particularly from conservative quarters in Pakistan, have argued that it paints an unfavorable picture of Pakistani society and oversimplifies complex cultural dynamics.

These critics suggest that the film perpetuates negative stereotypes and damages the country's global image (Mir, n.d.). Such reactions underscore the tension between the film's powerful message and the cultural sensitivities it touches upon. Nonetheless, *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* has significantly impacted beyond its critical reception. Its ability to spark crucial conversations about gender violence and inspire advocacy has been widely acknowledged (Stern, n.d.).

Material and Methods

In this research, we critically examine honor killings within the context of prevailing patriarchy, utilizing conceptual frameworks such as Michel Foucault's power model and Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of freedom. Central to our analysis is the documentary, a primary text to explore how female characters in Pakistani society confront and challenge the dominant narrative, amplifying their voices. The documentary exposes the entrenched patriarchal mindset, particularly in Gujranwala, highlighting the oppression and subjugation experienced by women in this region.

Employing Foucault's power model and Sartre's concept of freedom as our conceptual framework, our objective is to depict the subversion of patriarchy in the context of honor killings through the deliberate use of certain words, phrases, lines, and paragraphs in the documentary. Our study draws on secondary sources such as scholarly articles, academic journals, and statistical information, with a special emphasis on Pakistani literature and research papers. We conduct a comprehensive analysis of the selected documentary using a qualitative research approach. Through the use of interpretative analysis, our goal is to reveal the hidden importance of the documentary, thus showing significant meanings and insights.

Conceptual Frameworks

Our research utilizes Michel Foucault's framework of power dynamics and Jean-Paul Sartre's social philosophy to question and oppose patriarchal systems that limit the expression of suppressed voices, particularly female voices, in Pakistani society. By directing our attention to district Gujranwala, a place infamous for honor killings, we may explore how various theoretical approaches might reveal and analyze the widespread impact of patriarchy. We use these theories to uncover subtle readings and concealed significances in the film *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* and associated tales.

Foucault's Theory of Power: Fluid Dynamics and Resistance

Michel Foucault, a highly regarded historian, psychologist, and philosopher, has made substantial contributions to our comprehension of power dynamics via his enormous body of work. His theory of power is fundamental for studying the complex interconnections that influence society, including interactions between people, organizations, and institutions. In influential works like "Naissance de la Clinique" and "Une archéologie du regard médical," Foucault examines the manifestation and functioning of power using institutional practices and cultural norms, specifically within the medical domain (Foucault, 1963).

Conventionally, power is often seen as an intangible possession held by those in positions of authority, giving them the ability to impose their desires on others or compel obedience. This traditional perspective regards power as a fixed resource possessed by people or organizations in influential positions. Nevertheless, Foucault presents a paradigm-shifting viewpoint, contending that power should not be seen as a static entity but rather as a fluid, interdependent force. He suggests that power functions primarily as

a set of strategies rather than a tangible possession circulating across many networks and organizations (Foucault, 1980).

In our research, we use Foucault's idea of power as a dynamic and all-encompassing network that influences social relationships. According to Foucault, power is not only a possession of people in control but rather a force that flows through and exerts effect on many aspects of society. This perspective questions the conventional, one-dimensional understanding of power. Instead, it portrays a perpetual, complex world that constantly shapes social interactions and structures (Foucault, 1980). Our objective is to reveal the functioning of power in the context of honor killings and the social processes that sustain these frameworks and practices using Foucault's theory. The study revolves around the exertion of power via cultural norms, legal frameworks, and institutional practices, as well as the contestation and negotiation of these systems within the documentary. Our focus will be on analyzing how the film exposes the dynamics of power and the significance of resistance in confronting deeply rooted patriarchal regimes.

We analyze the documentary's depiction of resistance and change through the lens of Foucault's concept that people simultaneously act as both subjects and conduits of power. We analyze how Saba's refusal to comply and her pursuit of fairness exemplifies the wider patterns of authority and opposition, emphasizing how people negotiate and counteract repressive structures. This methodology enables us to uncover the intricacies of power dynamics and the capacity for transformation within deeply rooted societal frameworks.

Sartrean Existentialism: Dynamics of Agency and Constraint

The philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, known as existentialism, offers a structured approach to comprehending the capacity of individuals to act independently and the limitations imposed by society. Sartre's claim that "existence precedes essence" places individual acts and choices at the center of determining human nature. This stance opposes other philosophical systems that value predetermined goals or inherent natures. Sartre's book *Being and Nothingness* provides a thorough examination of the notions of "being-for-itself" and "being-in-itself," which serve as frameworks for analyzing individual freedom and social constraints (J. Sartre, 1993).

We will employ Sartre's philosophy, specifically his notions of "being-for-itself" and "being-in-itself," to examine the dynamic and uncertain essence of human consciousness, which is distinguished by its capacity to define itself through choices, in contrast to the fixed and comprehensive nature of the lifeless world. Sartre's examination of freedom emphasizes that genuine freedom cannot be conditioned or restricted; it is an inherent characteristic of human life. This inherent liberty is not only psychological but is essential to human identity and behavior (J.P. Sartre, 2007, p. 34).

Sartre's notion of "shame" provides more insight into how social dynamics influence an individual's sense of self. Shame occurs when people become aware that their behaviors may be seen or evaluated by others, which might impact how they see themselves. The play "The Flies" by Sartre clearly depicts the protagonist's interactions that expose the societal and emotional problems arising from feelings of guilt and the pursuit of authenticity (Panichella, 2008, p. 3). Sartre's play *No Exit* delves into the constraints on individual liberty that arise from the judgments of others. The play's protagonists are confined inside a chamber, where their freedom is limited by constant observation, symbolizing how societal norms constrain personal independence. This portrayal highlights the profound challenge

of asserting one's own identity and ideals regardless of how others see them (Senejani, 2013, pp. 22-23).

Our objective is to analyze the intricate relationship between individual agency and society's restrictions in influencing human behavior and self-worth through the application of Sartre's existentialist principles. This theoretical framework will serve as a guiding principle for our examination of the documentary, enabling us to explore how female characters negotiate and challenge the oppressive systems imposed by patriarchal standards in Pakistani culture.

Results and Discussion

Power Structures and Resistance: A Foucauldian Analysis of Authority and Agency in *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*

The theory of power relations developed by Michel Foucault offers a framework for comprehending the intricate dynamics shown in the documentary film *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*. Foucault's conceptualization of power posits it as a network-like structure that permeates society via many channels rather than being a static possession of certain persons or organizations. This theoretical framework enables us to examine the circulation and exertion of power in the documentary, specifically in relation to the activities of the characters and their subsequent outcomes.

The film observes the dynamic exercise and competition of power. Saba, the protagonist, first subverts conventional power hierarchies by eloping with her betrothed, Qaiser. This act of disobedience represents her endeavor to establish independence and challenge the expectations imposed by her family and society. According to Foucault's theory, this action signifies a transient alteration in power dynamics, whereby Saba's autonomy undermines the prevailing equilibrium of power within her family and society.

Nevertheless, this transition is brief. Due to Saba's acts being seen as a danger to her family's dignity and social status, her father, Maqsood, and her uncle come up with a plan to regain their reputation. They arrange a deceptive reunion with Qaiser's family, putting on a fake front of acceptance for Saba's decisions while covertly scheming to regain control over her. The manifestation of Foucault's notion of power as a strategic maneuver rather than a static possession becomes apparent in this context. The family's manipulation serves as a perfect example of how power is not just owned but rather used via calculated behaviors and deceptions in order to reaffirm supremacy (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*).

The film effectively portrays this change in power relations. The sequence in which Saba is shot and disposed of in a small river serves as a vivid portrayal of the ruthless exertion of authority within a male-dominated societal structure. The act of "honor killing" highlights both the family's merciless use of power to uphold societal standards and exemplifies Foucault's concept that power functions via interconnected connections rather than individual actions (Chinoy, 2015). The superficial river, characterized by its lack of depth, represents the heartlessness of the action and the magnitude of the societal forces that compel such drastic actions.

Throughout the film, the portrayal of power evolves from Saba's first act of disobedience to her father and uncle's subsequent imposition of authority. This shift signifies a significant and sudden change in the distribution of power. The family's forceful measures to ensure compliance and maintain their honor overwhelm Saba's early individuality. Foucault's argument on power as a network-like structure, operating via

many channels and relationships, graphically demonstrates how power dynamics fluctuate between Saba and her family. The family's authority is exerted via both physical force and manipulation, illustrating the many and diverse aspects of power as elucidated by Foucault.

The documentary undergoes a huge shift when Saba's father and uncle are ultimately incarcerated. This time represents a shift in the balance of power, emphasizing the influence of legal and cultural responses to their behavior. Although they were previously dominant, the imprisonment of Saba's father and uncle redirects the narrative's attention to Saba. The declaration she made, "Even if someone powerful asks me, I will not forgive them" (Chinoy, 2015), represents her assertion of control and defiance against the repressive societal standards that justified her victimization.

Furthermore, Saba's statement, "They should be shot in public in an open market so that such a thing never happens again" (Chinoy), emphasizes her wish for societal change and justice. This assertion emphasizes Foucault's concept that power is dynamic and dispersed, with its expressions changing and developing in various circumstances. Saba's insistence on public vengeance demonstrates the dynamic interaction between authority and resistance, which poses a challenge to the current power structures and advocates for change.

Choice and Freedom in *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*

Jean-Paul Sartre's social philosophy offers a significant perspective on the interplay of choice and freedom in the context of patriarchal tyranny. Sartre's claim that "existence precedes essence" suggests that an individual's fundamental character is shaped by their choices and actions rather than preset (J. Sartre, 1993). This is apparent throughout the documentary, as the narrative decisions made by Saba and other characters directly influence their identities and situations.

Sartre underscores the notion that persons are basically characterized by the decisions they make. Saba's intentional acts shown in the documentary exemplify her resistance against patriarchal conventions. Her choice to elope with Qaiser is a significant demonstration of individual autonomy, defying conventional power dynamics and declaring her need for independence. Saba's defiance of social and family expectations exemplifies Sartre's notion of freedom as the ability to act in opposition to established standards. Her declaration, "I will never forgive them no matter what happens or who comes in the middle. Even if someone powerful asks me, I will not forgive them" (Chinoy, 2015), illustrates her commitment to personal choice despite immense pressure.

Sartre's theory asserts that freedom is intrinsically connected to the decisions that an individual makes. The documentary depicts this interplay by showcasing Saba's encounters with her family, namely her father's and uncle's reactions to her rebelliousness. The concept of freedom, as defined by Sartre, is clearly shown in the behaviors of both Saba and her father. The father's unwillingness to forgive and his extreme choice to murder Saba demonstrate his assertion of authority and dominance, in accordance with Sartre's belief that persons are characterized by their acts. His statement, "She took our honor. Why did she leave home? So, I said no, I will kill you myself. You are my daughter; I will kill you myself. If I had seen Qaiser, I would have killed him too. I have gone and killed my daughter as per my desire. I am ready to spend my whole life in jail" (Chinoy, 2015) exemplifies his endeavor to enforce his own code of honor by the use of force, illustrating how freedom and autonomy may materialize in harmful ways.

Similarly, the uncle's declaration, "Everything is about respect. Whatever he did was absolutely right" (Chinoy, 2015), serves as more evidence of Sartre's thoughts. The individual's failure to recognize Saba's autonomy and his justification of the honor killing underscores the fundamental clash between personal independence and societal norms. Saba's encounter with her uncle, during which she firmly refuses his request for forgiveness by explicitly expressing, "My uncle begged me to forgive in the court, and I said, I will not forgive you" (Chinoy, 2015), highlights the conflict between individual autonomy and societal pressure.

Throughout the film, Saba's final choice to forgive becomes more intricate due to the influence of cultural forces and family obligations, which challenge Sartre's concept of unrestricted freedom. Her statement, "Everyone knows that I forgave them for society's sake. But in my heart, they are unforgiven" (Chinoy, 2015), exposes the intricate interaction between individual liberty and society's expectations. While humans endeavor to attain freedom by making choices, they are often restricted by external influences.

On the other hand, her father asserts, "I have forgiven them, and she has forgiven me. We have started a new life again. After this incident, everyone says that I am more respected. They say I am an honorable man" (Chinoy, 2015), illustrates how social approval may impact and change personal choices. Acceptance in the aftermath of an occurrence exemplifies Sartre's contention that individual decisions are often affected by public opinion and the pursuit of social legitimacy. By looking at *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* through the lens of Sartre's social theory, we can make sense of how the characters' decisions shape and limit their identities. The video provides a clear picture of how family and societal factors influence individual choices.

Conclusion

The documentary *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* effectively demonstrates the intricate dynamics of authority and resistance in Pakistani culture by using the philosophies of Michel Foucault and Jean-Paul Sartre. The video explores Saba's resistance against patriarchal tyranny and her pursuit of autonomy by including Foucault's analysis of power dynamics and Sartre's theory of freedom and choice.

People and social systems are always changing, as Foucault's concept of power as ubiquitous and fluid highlights. The documentary uncovers the complex dynamics of power, including its negotiation, contestation, exertion, and resistance. The complexity of social dominance and the ongoing fight for an agency are brought to light by Saba's defiance of patriarchal expectations and her subsequent resistance. Power is not a fixed factor but rather a complex web that is both affected by and shaped by human behavior and cultural standards; this is made clear by Foucault's theoretical framework.

At the same time, Sartre's views on free will and individual agency shed light on Saba's inner journey. Saba's brave acts of rebellion powerfully demonstrate Sartre's claim that people are defined by their choices. Her fight for independence in the face of tremendous social pressure echoes Sartre's belief that achieving one's own freedom is an arduous and complex process. The documentary focuses on Saba's choices to highlight the significance of individual agency in defining one's identity and confronting repressive systems.

This analysis has larger ramifications outside of the documentary's immediate setting. In addition to shedding light on the tragic truth of honour murders, the documentary is an impassioned plea for change. It forces us to reevaluate and tackle the

long-standing societal structures that sustain violence against women. To promote a more fair and caring society, Chinoy's documentary highlights Saba's narrative and encourages audiences to think deeply about power, freedom, and justice.

Additionally, Chinoy's efforts have helped bring attention to women's rights on a worldwide scale. Honor killings are a serious and regular occurrence in Pakistan, and this video sheds attention on the systemic inequality that contributes to this problem. The film's powerful depiction of survivors' stories sparks a social movement, drawing in viewers from all around the world and inspiring them to take action. Storytelling has the power to change lives, and Chinoy demonstrates this by giving a platform to the oppressed and the repressed. Together, the themes of personal bravery and resistance and the systemic institutionalization of oppression and violence are explored in the documentary. Inspiring introspection into the foundations of freedom, justice, and power, it calls on us to face and remove the structural obstacles to genuine equality and human dignity.

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