

UNPACKING A PATRIARCHAL SOCIAL GOOD: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MUEENUDDIN'S "NAWABDIN ELECTRICIAN" EMPLOYING GEE'S TOOLKIT

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Abstract:

This study unpacks a patriarchal social good by applying Gee's (2011) Toolkit of Discourse Analysis to the linguistic manoeuvres in Mueenuddin's short story "Nawabdin Electrician", from his debut collection In Other Rooms, Other Wonders (2010). The analysis reveals how ideologically charged language is employed to implicitly establish the significance of sons as patriarchal social goods an idea that sustains and reinforces patriarchal structures. Literary language rarely presents meanings explicitly, so these implications are embedded within the text's linguistic strategies. A close reading of the selected passage highlights that a mother's fertility is treated as a liability when she bears more daughters than sons, and that blame for the birth of daughters is placed solely on the mother, excluding the father from any responsibility. Framing the preference for sons within the broader social fabric of Pakistan demonstrates how gender expectations transform social life. Sons are expected to uphold the family name, inherit property and business, provide financial support, protect the family in difficult times and care for aging parents. These expectations, in turn, render women weak, dependent, and marginalised.

Key words: Discourse, Patriarchal Social Goods, Patriarchy, The Figured World Tool, The Making Strange Tool, The Politics Building Tool, The Situated Meaning Tool

Introduction

A literary text is suggestive; it rarely relates things explicitly. Instead, it depends on implication, symbolism, and subtle language to convey deeper meanings. Readers are encouraged to consider the multiple layers of significance, which are often shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological contexts. This indirectness of style in language enables literature to explore complex social realities, personal emotions, and gender dynamics without making overt claims, thus turning literary works into fertile ground for critical discourse analysis. Moreover, the semantic fluidity inherent in literary language encourages readers to analyze texts by applying various linguistic and cultural theoretical frameworks. Discursive strategies, linguistic structures, lexical choices, metaphors, irony, intersexuality, and narrative gaps serve as tools through which authors hint at meanings beneath the surface. Thus, this study notes that this suggestiveness is not a weakness but a literary strength, as it resists fixed interpretation and opens space for dialogue, debate, and reinterpretation across time and cultures. Consequently, the literary text becomes not just a reflection of the world but a carefully constructed discourse that shapes, critiques, and reimagines social norms and human experiences.

The short story "Nawabdin Electrician" included in Mueenuddin's (2010) *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*, criticizes patriarchy in a subtle manner. The text of the story, at certain points, reflects patriarchal norms through linguistic maneuvers. The story revolves around Nawabdin, a clever electrician known for illegally conserving electricity. His skills earn him a job with the village landlord, K.K. Harouni, who appoints him to manage his tube wells. Though Nawabdin loves his wife and daughters, patriarchy is evident in his household. He and his wife keep hoping for a son, and she eventually gives birth to twelve daughters and one son. Nawabdin calls his daughters "princes," yet enforces patriarchal norms—he eats first, then his daughters, and lastly his wife.

One night, while traveling to a nearby village, he gives a ride to a stranger who turns out to be a thief. The man tries to snatch Nawabdin's motorcycle. He shoots Nawabdin in the leg during resistance from him. Villagers hear the commotion, come to his aid, and wound the robber. Both men are taken to a local dispenser. While Nawabdin receives treatment, the robber begs for help but is ignored. Nawabdin justifies this by saying his death would have left his family begging on the streets. The robber eventually dies without medical help.

The summary of "Nawabdin Electrician" indicates subtle shades of patriarchy. Arshad (2021) studies three short stories contained in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* through the lens of objectification and finds that female characters have been greatly objectified. He argues that these stories depict the negative impacts of objectification on women in social life. In a similar vein, Riaz et al. (2023) argue that Mueenuddin's collection is a critique of Pakistani patriarchal society. Building on these perspectives, the current study identifies certain grammatical structures in the text of the story as being replete with political statements that need to be investigated on sociolinguistic grounds. It aims to unpack patriarchal norms that involve the significance of son(s) in family dynamics by regarding sons as patriarchal social goods and thereby upholding patriarchal structures.

Guided by this aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

- (i) How do linguistic manoeuvres construct and reinforce the perception of sons as social goods within patriarchal societies.
- (ii) How does the societal preference for sons contribute to the reinforcement of patriarchal structures?

Review of the Related Literature

The term 'patriarchal social goods' applies to those privileges, values and advantages which are historically connected with male authority and have been endorsed by social institutions and cultural practices to date. These patriarchal social goods determine how power is distributed within patriarchal societies. The scholarship on patriarchy, gender roles and discourse has deeply explored how such values are produced, normalised, sustained and reproduced if need be. This literature review critically inquires into the key academic contributions in these areas and traces how theorists have defined patriarchy, explored the valuation of gendered roles, revealed the discursive mechanisms which sustain patriarchal norms and examined the representation of gender and power in literature.

Understanding Patriarchy and Social Goods

Patriarchy has been defined as a social system wherein men hold primary power and dominate women through their leading roles in politics, moral authority and control of property. Lerner (1986), in *The Creation of Patriarchy*, explains that patriarchal systems began in the earliest human civilizations. She believes patriarchy became a part of society through the controlling women's sexuality and ability to produce children. Lerner argues that male dominance was not natural but was created over time through social systems and structures.

Walby (1989) provides a foundational framework for explaining patriarchy and the comparative positions of men and women by pointing out six structures of patriarchy, namely, household production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, and cultural institutions. The interplay of these structures results in maintaining male dominance and female subordination across both public and private spheres. Walby's work is especially helpful in showing how patriarchy evolves over time, shifting from control in the home to control in public spaces, while upholding its primary power structures. This idea, on the surface, appears to suggest that patriarchy is flexible, aligned with women's progress in society. However, that is not the case. Even when women fight hard and win more rights or freedoms, patriarchy finds new ways to keep control. Resultantly, some of the advantages women gain turn into new problems. For example, if women enter the workforce in large numbers, instead of gaining full

equality, they might end up doing both paid jobs and most of the housework which is tantamount to a new kind of burden.

Sultana (2010) asserts that patriarchy is a key barrier to women's progress and development. While male control varies by society, the core idea remains: men hold power. Even when women succeed through talent and hard work, patriarchy creates obstacles that hold them back. Patriarchal systems and social structures often assign women a lower position in society. Such societies give men more importance and may even limit women's basic rights.

Patriarchy affects both public and private life by giving more power to men in all areas. Feminists use the term "patriarchy" to describe the unequal power relationship between men and women and to explore the root causes of women's lower status. Nash (2020) argues that it is a social system in which men enjoy more power and privileges, looking down upon all those attributes that are considered feminine. It results in gender inequality which benefits men by placing them on dominant positions in society. This system operates on the premise that wealth and power are typically passed down through male family members, with fathers often serving as the primary decision-makers within the family. Arrey-Ngang (2020) also points out that patriarchy puts social power mainly in the hands of men.

Taking guidelines from the previous researches, Duran (2022) also argues that patriarchy is a social system which empowers men and directs women to obey their constructed norms and values in every walk of life. It affects human interaction on two levels: macro and micro. At the macro or broader level, this social system dictates the social structure of a society. It shapes institutions, legal systems and cultural practices, whereas, on the micro level, it impacts everyday interactions in personal settings such as families, workplaces and communities. This system which consistently favours male dominance is not limited to one region. It exists in many parts of the world, though its intensity varies. In some societies such as Pakistan, it is deeply rooted and visible. In others, it appears in more subtle ways. In whatever form, its effects are far-reaching which often limits women's roles, voices and choices.

Social Goods

The concept of social goods as articulated by James Paul Gee (2011) in *How to Do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit* refers to anything that is considered to be a source of value or status in a given society. Social goods include power, recognition, education, wealth, beauty, youth, bravery and access to decision-making roles, because these things are valued in every society. When social goods and patriarchy are combined, these frameworks allow scholars to understand 'patriarchal social goods' as the mechanisms through which value and authority are gendered, privileging men's roles, traits, and contributions while devaluing those associated with women.

Discourse and the Circulation of Patriarchal Values

Discourse plays a key role in keeping and spreading the values and beliefs of a patriarchal society. Foucault (1972) argues that power does not just come from force or laws. The integration of language, knowledge and people's behaviour in an institutional setting also have the impact of power. In the presence of such ideas in the background, Fairclough (1992) developed a model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to reveal that language not only reflects but also helps shape society. In a patriarchal system, the way people speak and write often makes male authority seem normal and expected, while female subordination appears unavoidable.

Similarly, van Dijk (1985) developed an analytical framework specifically for analysing news discourses. This approach to critical discourse analysis is also effective for uncovering unequal power dynamics between men and women within family settings as represented on social media. As noted by Irwandi and Suroso (2024), such imbalances are often evident in expressions shared on these platforms. Expanding the scope of this framework, Irwandi and

Suroso (2023) applied it to a message circulated through TikTok, examining both contextual codes and the linguistic elements of texts. Their findings suggested that patriarchal discourse justifies men's authority in family dynamics, positioning them as primary breadwinners.

Gee's (2011) approach to discourse analysis is particularly useful for identifying how Social Goods are distributed through language. He argues that discourse not only describes reality, but also enacts and legitimizes it. In his framework, those who control language often control what is considered valuable. In patriarchal discourse, this means that male-associated behaviours (e.g., assertiveness, control of situations and resources) are praised, while female-associated traits (e.g., submissiveness, emotional expression) are always pathologized or infantilized. In their feminist linguistic analysis, Mills and Mullan (2011) argue that unbalanced power dynamics during social interactions between men and women are so subtle that often pass unnoticed.

Representation of Patriarchal Social Goods in Literature

Literature plays a significant role in both reflecting and shaping patriarchal social values. These patriarchal social values include the distribution of patriarchal social goods. South Asian literary texts consistently depict characters that either conform to or resist traditional gender expectations, illustrating how social values are imposed on individuals within a society.

Many Pakistani writers have highlighted the struggles of women in a male-dominated society where they are faced with hardships in their daily lives. One amongst such writers is Daniyal Mueenuddin. In his omnibus collection, *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* (2010), Mueenuddin depicts women as a means of sexual pleasure or a means to serve the male members of the family. These depictions reflect broader societal discourses that evaluate women's roles and performance in relation to male expectations. This collection presents a realistic portrayal of Pakistani society, as it seeks to explore the intricate relationships between class, gender, and power, particularly within a postcolonial feudal system. Through this collection, Mueenuddin presents the lives of people from diverse backgrounds, ranging from wealthy landlords to domestic workers, and reveals that the social roles and personal ambitions of individuals clash and evolve over time.

Ray (2010) implies that the stories *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* are about manipulation, patriarchy and social inequality in Pakistan. It portrays women using sex as a tool for pursuing their desires and gaining power. Men are being equally manipulative, reflecting a morally flawed society. These themes are presented as representative of life in Pakistan across classes. Hai (2014) argues that the short stories in Mueenuddin's *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* center on domestic servants in Pakistan, showing them as main characters with real emotions and struggles. It focuses on the impact of gender, class, and power within a feudal and patriarchal society. The servants face oppression, corruption and violence but still try to improve their lives. She suggests that Mueenuddin's work challenges readers to see these issues differently and feel empathy for the marginalised.

In light of the previous studies, Tanvir and Amir (2018) use a deconstructive approach to examine one of the stories, "Saleema." They argue that female characters, for instance, Saleema, are not simply victims but possess an invisible strength and resilience. This work challenges earlier feminist interpretations, suggesting that these women not only manage to shape their own lives in small ways but also struggle to survive in difficult social circumstances.

While Tanvir and Amir highlight subtle resilience in female characters, Riaz et al. (2023), in their Marxist feminist reading of the said collection, reveal its depiction of gendered economic subjugation. Their analysis suggests that wherever women are confined to the domestic sphere, they become financially dependent on men and consequently suffer. Using Lazar's framework

of feminist critical discourse analysis, Anwar and Javid (2025) find that women in one of the stories in the collection are marginalised while men are facilitated in subtle ways to maintain power and control over them. It suggests that men's authority is a patriarchal social good within patriarchal communities.

Taken together, these views show that Mueenuddin's stories are not just about the decline of society. They also reveal that people have the ability to face changes, resist unfair situations. They further reveal that human relationships become more complex in a society undergoing significant shifts.

Resultantly, literature becomes a site of resistance. By foregrounding the lived experiences of women, many South Asian writers challenge dominant ideologies and call for the reevaluation of what is considered valuable from androcentric perspective. This makes literature a critical tool for both critiquing and transforming patriarchal norms. The ongoing reviews point out that literature on patriarchy, discourse, and gendered valuation reveals that patriarchal norms (social goods) are neither natural nor neutral. They are ideologically constructed and discursively maintained privileges that prioritize masculine traits, roles and contributions at the cost of feminine ones. Scholars from diverse disciplines i.e., feminist theory, sociolinguistics and literary criticism have found out that these social goods are sustained through language, institutional structures and cultural representation.

Having reviewed previous studies, the current study explores the subtle nexus between linguistic strategies and patriarchy. It argues that the linguistic manoeuvres in the selected text significantly contribute to sustaining and reinforcing patriarchal structures—for example, by presenting sons as patriarchal social goods and privileging them over daughters within the family.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This analytical and qualitative study explores the role of politically employed linguistic choices, in terms of lexis and grammatical structures, in maintaining and reinforcing norms which uphold men's social position in a patriarchal society.

It is pertinent to mention that language is not merely a tool for communication but a powerful means of sustaining and legitimizing gender-based hierarchies in patriarchal societies (Lazar, 2005). Numerous studies have already examined the relationship between gender and language. However, there is still a need to examine the subtle and intentional ways in which word choices and sentence structures support male dominance and make patriarchal values seem normal. This study is significant in that it uncovers those seemingly neutral linguistic practices that are strategically employed to maintain men's privileged social position. By focusing on politically charged linguistic expressions, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the ideological role of discourse in sustaining and promoting systemic gender inequality.

This study selects a short passage from Mueenuddin's "Nawabdin Electrician," included in his collection *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. The choice is based on the presence of subtle, politically charged linguistic expressions that reflect underlying patriarchal ideologies. The passage will be analysed using Gee's (2011) Toolkit of Discourse Analysis which offers a comprehensive framework for examining language from multiple perspectives. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how linguistic choices reinforce power structures. The findings will be discussed in light of the research questions, with a focus on broader social meanings to address the identified research gap.

Theoretical Framework

Manzoor et al. (2019) argue that discourse analysis focuses on how language is used in real-life situations and how it both shapes and is shaped by social structures and power relations. Supporting this view, Aikhenvald et al. (2021) state that language and society are deeply connected. It is worthy to note that language is not merely a tool for communication—it also

reveals and shapes how people understand the world around them. Building on this idea, Mahmoud (2024) notes that the way individuals speak and write reflects their values, beliefs, and the distribution of power in society. Furthermore, language plays a key role in shaping how people think and behave in their everyday lives. Through linguistic practices, social identities (such as gender, class, and profession), interpersonal relationships (including those of authority and intimacy), and ideologies (like patriarchy or nationalism) are continually constructed and maintained. Therefore, as Kərimli (2025) implies, language not only mirrors existing social conditions but also actively contributes to their creation and reinforcement.

James Paul Gee is a leading figure in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). He is known for his influential work on the relationship between language, power, and society. Gee (2007) views language not only as a means of communication but also as a form of social action that constructs identities, establishes power dynamics, and encourages or resists social structures. Gee's approach highlights that language use is always shaped by social and cultural contexts. He offers a practical framework known as Gee's Toolkit, for analyzing how discourse reflects and shapes social realities, in his book *How to Do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit* (2011). His work is particularly valuable for exploring issues related to ideology, identity, and inequality in both spoken and written texts.

Gee's (2011) Toolkit provides a practical and flexible yet critical framework to investigate the role and functions of language in social interactions. It comprises twenty-seven tools that offer extensive social and linguistic platforms to discourse analysts for analysing a discourse. The most prominent tools are as given under:

i. The Fill in Tool

This tool uncovers the unstated information or background knowledge.

ii. The Making Strange Tool

This tool challenges the taken for granted information in order to uncover underlying assumptions and ideologies.

iii. The Connection Building Tool

This Tool examines how ideas, people, events and things are connected.

iv. The Situated Meaning Tool

This tool explores meaning of words and things in light of context.

v. The Politics Building Tool

This tool explores the invisible politics in the distribution of social goods.

vi. The Figured World Tool

This Tool explores the way language constructs stories that shape people, roles, actions and values in a culture.

Social goods as already explained in the literature review section refer to those things, ideas or acts that people in a community highly value (Gee, 2011). The distribution of social goods in a society is a fundamental source of power dynamics. It determines who holds authority, gains privilege and whose roles or contributions are valued or marginalised.

Discourse Analysis of the Selected Text on Treating Sons as a Patriarchal Social Good.

This section of the current study conducts a discourse analysis of a selected passage from Mueenuddin's "Nawabdin Electrician", employing Gee's Toolkit of Discourse Analysis to reveal how Mueenuddin uses linguistic manoeuvres to patriarchally politicise the text, by subtly criticising societal norms that prefer sons over daughters and, in turn, solidify patriarchal structures.

The text selected for analysis is Boldfaced to facilitate reference.

Unfortunately or fortunately, Nawabdin had married early in his life a sweet woman, whom he adored, but of unsurpassed fertility. And she proceeded to bear him children spaced, if not less than nine months apart, then not that much more. (Mueenuddin, 2010, p. 2)

Context

The discourse producer/narrator informs the readers that Nawabdin's wife is exceedingly fertile, having given birth to thirteen children—twelve daughters and one son. With each pregnancy, both Nawabdin and his wife hope for the birth of a son; however, each time they are met with the arrival of a daughter—until the thirteenth and final pregnancy, which finally produces the long-awaited male child. The text subtly implies that, in a patriarchal society, women are expected to bear sons rather than daughters. This expectation is accompanied by a tendency to blame wives for the birth of daughters.

Application of Gee's Tools of Discourse Analysis

The discourse analyst selects the following tools from Gee's (2011) Toolkit of Discourse Analysis to analyse the given text.

- i The Fill in Tool
- ii The Figured World Tool
- iii The Making Strange Tool
- iv The Politics Building Tool
- v The Situated Meaning Tool

To ensure clarity in analysis, the discourse is divided into the following two parts.

Part (i): **Unfortunately or fortunately, Nawabdin had married early in his life a sweet woman, whom he adored, but of unsurpassed fertility.**

Part (ii): **And she proceeded to bear him children spaced, if not less than nine months apart, then not that much more.**

First, the discourse analyst focuses on the linguistic and discursive strategies and their resultant politics in part (i) of the current discourse. The key words/expressions in this part i.e., **"marriage"** [originally **"married"**], **"a sweet woman,"** and **"unsurpassed fertility"** are required to be examined and analysed from different aspects.

Marriage can be represented within a range of Figured Worlds because it is viewed as a social good worldwide and considered a basic human need. Raychaudhuri (2000) argues that one key reason for marriage is sexual satisfaction. Similarly, Kusmardani et al. (2022) put forward the view that it helps form families, strengthens social ties, and is believed to improve both individual and community life. Supporting this idea, Goryunov (2022) suggests that love, care, and emotions are also major motivators for marriage.

One possible Figured World about marriage relevant here is the belief that marriage adds beauty and meaning to life, especially when someone marries a person they truly love. According to this view, Nawabdin must be fortunate because he loves his wife. Building on this, and considering it linguistically, the sentence structure in part (i) offers valuable insights into Nawabdin and his marriage. Specifically, it sheds light on whether he is truly fortunate.

As a matter of fact, the sentence begins with the phrase, **"unfortunately or fortunately"** (p. 2), which sets the tone and acts as a thematic guide, thereby influencing the analysis and interpretation of the entire discourse under examination. To clarify, this is to state that the adverbial expression **"unfortunately or fortunately"** (p. 23) suggests an uncertain or contradictory situation. In broader terms, this phrase in general is used to reveal the dual nature of a situation. Discourse producers often start the combined expression with 'unfortunately' to admit there is a challenge in the situation or the primary interpretation is not favourable. In contrast, placing the adverb 'fortunately' first in the combined expression suggests a positive

outcome with acknowledging that something negative or adverse may also follow. Both examples mention that events have both positive and negative aspects and the word order highlights which one they prefer to emphasize. This difference can change the way readers understand the scene, especially in discourse or literary analysis, since tone and emphasis matter a great deal in these types of analyses. Thus, such adverbial combinations linguistically reflect the inherent complexity of situations. It reinforces the idea that events often resist clear categorization as purely positive or negative.

In the current context, the combined expression begins with the adverb “unfortunately,” which makes the scene puzzling. It signals that the discourse producer/narrator seems unsure if this marriage is a stroke of good or bad luck even though he has married a woman whom he adores [originally “adored”] (Mueenuddin, 2010, p. 23). According to the Figured World applied above, a person should be considered fortunate to marry someone they love. This raises the question as to why the discourse producer/narrator appears uncertain. Why does the sentence begin with “**unfortunately**”, even though Nawabdin's wife is described as “**a sweet woman**” (p. 2) whom he loves a great deal?

To answer this, the study applies Gee’s Making Strange Tool (2011), which encourages the discourse analyst to question what is normally taken for granted. This leads the current analysis to draw on another Figured World, based on cultural expectations in Pakistani patriarchal society and powered by the application of the Fill in Tool. According to the Fill in Tool, the text of the story “Nawabdin Electrician” suggests that a desirable wife in Pakistan should:

1. Be physically attractive.
2. Bring a large dowry to her husband's home.
3. Give birth to **sons**, not just daughters.

All these are viewed as important traits, and it is usually hard for a woman to meet all three. England and McClintock (2009) observe that men usually prefer beautiful wives for marriage. Similarly, Husain and Gulzar (2015) find that men value beauty in women during the process of mate selection. The text of the discourse under analysis provides solid proof of the beauty of Nawabdin’s wife through the key word “sweet”. It demonstrates that she meets the first criterion of the said Figured World. In addition to physical beauty, dowry is also an important element because it brings status and honour to the wife in her in-laws’ home (Makino, 2019). The Fill in Tool suggests that Nawabdin’s wife may possibly have brought a dowry to Nawabdin’s home. However, the most valued trait in patriarchal societies is for a wife to give birth to male children. Ahmed et al. (2021) reveal a social preference for sons in Pakistani society. In this context, Nawabdin's wife, who failed to deliver more sons than daughters to the family, is seen as falling short of the most prized expectation. This failure does not fulfill the third point that the aforementioned figured world laid down, where a woman’s value is significantly tied to her ability to bear male children.

Thus, in view of the ongoing analysis, the use of the adverb ‘unfortunately’ at the start of the mentioned combined form of adverbial expression hints that Nawabdin is not considered truly fortunate, possibly because his wife could not deliver him many sons. This implies that, in the context of the story “Nawabdin Electrician” (p. 1), the Situated Meaning of the noun “**fertility**” (p. 23) refers not merely to bearing children, but specifically to bearing male children. It is inferred from the analysis that the birth of a greater number of daughters as compared to sons or the absence or the birth of the fewer number of sons pushes a fortunate marriage to unfortunate.

The last keyword in part (i) is “**unsurpassed fertility**” (P. 2). This noun phrase critically exposes the underlying patriarchal norms. On the surface, it appreciates Nawabdin’s wife, foregrounding her exceptional capability for bearing children. However, the coordinating conjunction “**but**” (p. 2) connects this phrase to the noun phrase “**a sweet woman**” (p. 2) in a

manner that significantly alters its implication. The use of Gee's Situated Meaning Tool to analyse the phrase **"unsurpassed fertility"** reveals that, in this context, fertility is framed as a negative trait. This is particularly noteworthy because, from a patriarchal point of view, the fertility of Nawabdin's wife is not a virtue but rather a liability. Although she has demonstrated remarkable reproductive ability, the fact that she has given birth to twelve daughters and only one son diminishes her perceived value in a patriarchal framework. Thus, the phrase **"unsurpassed fertility"** (p. 2), when viewed in its situational and cultural context, acquires an ironic tone. It ironically communicates that such fertility is undesirable, especially when it fails to produce sons. This reinforces the gender biases that are deeply embedded within patriarchal ideologies.

The Fill in Tool informs the discourse analyst that Nawabdin lives in a patriarchal society. It is pertinent to reiterate that a patriarchal society is the one where men hold most of the power and control in both public and private life (Altay, 2019). Gyan et al. (2020) find that men are typically viewed as leaders, decision-makers, and providers, while women are expected to take care of the home and family in such a society. Boys and men are usually given more importance, respect, and opportunities than girls and women. This can be observed in how people think, speak and behave, for example, when daughters are valued less than sons or when women's opinions are not taken seriously. Patriarchy sets strict roles for both men and women. It is generally observed that these roles limit women's freedom to a large extent and prevent them from obtaining their full potential. It influences laws, traditions and everyday practices in ways that support male dominance and make it harder for women to be treated equally. The on-going analysis and the description of patriarchal norms confirm the following observations:

- i The absence of son(s) or when girls outnumber boys in the family, the marriage is not fortunate.
- ii The excessive fertility of a woman becomes liability rather than a virtue if her daughters outnumber her sons.

The application of the Politics Building Tool to the above-mentioned observations reveals that the birth of girls is not celebrated. It suggests that girls are not considered social goods in the area where Nawabdin resides. In the current situation, the politics involved in a patriarchal mindset operate on the belief that twelve daughters do not bring as much value or benefit to a family as a single son.

Similarly, Part (ii) of the current discourse reveals the injustices experienced by wives in patriarchal systems, as it places the entire responsibility of bearing sons on women. This gendered expectation reflects a deeper societal injustice and bias that not only burden women biologically but also ideologically. The linguistic choices in terms of sentence structures and lexical choices in this part of the discourse, as revealed by the Fill in Tool, highlight how deeply women have internalized patriarchal norms regarding the expectation of bearing sons. These choices suggest that Nawabdin's wife assumes personal responsibility for giving birth to a son for the family. This part reads, **"and she (Nawabdin's wife) proceeded to bear him children, spaced, if not less than nine months apart, then not that much more"** (Mueenuddin, 2010, p.2). This is evident that part (ii) is an independent clause. Beginning with the coordinating conjunction **"and"** (p. 2), it establishes a semantic link with part (i) of the discourse under analysis. In this construction, the discourse producer/narrator assigns grammatical agency to Nawabdin's wife through the pronoun **"she"** (p. 2), making her the grammatical subject and topical focus of the clause. The use of the pronoun, **"she"** (p. 2), positions Nawabdin's wife as the agent subject of the clause. This implies that she is solely responsible for bearing children,

as if acting entirely under a pledge. Consequently, the discourse analyst by applying the Politics Building Tool finds that the sentence structure effectively renders her solely responsible, entirely omitting any reference to Nawabdin's role in the birth of his twelve daughters.

It is apparent that the main verb in this clause is **"proceed to"** (p. 2). In general usage, outside the context of the short story "Nawabdin Electrician" (p. 1), the verb phrase 'proceed to' implies a sequence of actions: one thing is done first, followed by another. Keeping this in view, and considering the current situation, a question arises about what Nawabdin's wife did prior to proceeding to bear children. The Fill in Tool suggests that the answer lies in an implicitly stated metaphorical pledge she made to Nawabdin at the time of their marriage. This implicit pledge reflects deeply ingrained patriarchal traditions, which instill in women the belief that a wife must produce at least one male child for her husband, regardless of her personal choice and cost. In an effort to fulfill this socially constructed obligation, she undergoes thirteen pregnancies, ultimately giving birth to twelve daughters and the only son. The politics involved in the discourse producer/narrator's choice of the verbal expression "proceed to" [originally **"proceeded to"**] in this part of the discourse suggests that the woman/wife is responsible for the birth of girls excluding the role of the man/husband.

Findings

The discourse analysis of the selected text yielded the following findings.

- (i) Even if a man's wife is beautiful and he loves her, he is not considered fortunate if his wife give birth to more daughters than sons.
- (ii) The excessive fertility of a woman becomes liability rather than a virtue if her daughters disproportionately outnumber her sons.
- (iii) Patriarchal norms hold the wife responsible for bearing all daughters and no son or when daughters outnumber sons in the family.

Discussion

Before embarking on examining the findings within a broader social context, this study restates the research questions here to facilitate the forthcoming discussion.

- (i) How do linguistic manoeuvres construct and reinforce the perception of sons as social goods within patriarchal societies
- (ii) How does the societal preference for sons contribute to the reinforcement of patriarchal structures?

The discourse analysis of linguistic engineering in part (i) of the selected text reveals that, regardless of how beautiful a man's wife is or how much he loves her, he is not considered truly fortunate unless she delivers sons to the family. The analysis further explores that excessive fertility of a woman is viewed as a liability rather than a virtue if her daughters outnumber her sons. Both these findings respond to the first research question as they establish sons as a patriarchal social good. In addition, these findings underrate women's social position in patriarchy due to a pressing demand for the birth of sons. To put it the other way, the birth of sons is directly proportional to the increase of value and respect of the mother (Nwokocha, 2007).

It is worth noting that Patriarchal discourses consider those families incomplete that are deficient in terms of sons. Hollander (2004) argues that the birth of sons is often considered inevitable for a successful and stable marriage, as their absence can place the marriage at risk. Similarly, Gyan et al. (2020) observe that sons are crucial for patriarchal families. Ubelejit-Nte

and Erundu (2022) find that women find themselves socially pressurised to deliver male children to the family. Rohmadi et al. (2022) reveal that there exists a strong connection between the absence of sons and polygamy in the rural population of Pakistan. Building on the previous researches, Azam et al. (2023) state that the husband may decide to bring a new wife home even in the presence of the first wife if the first wife fails to deliver any sons to the family in Pakistan.

The third finding of the current study is that men hold women responsible for the birth of daughters. This finding has been obtained through unraveling the linguistic tactics which the discourse producer/narrator has employed in the text selected by the study. Biologically speaking, Shetty (2018) asserts that the determination of a child's sex is a complex process that involves the chromosomes of both parents. However, patriarchy rejects this scientific fact and blames women for not delivering sons to the family (Kaur & Gaur, 2019). In their study on the significance of sons in the family, Alakshendra and Li (2020) observe that women whose sons outnumber their daughters enjoy an elevated state in the in-laws. This suggests that women's basic duty is to produce male heirs to the family. Such mindset encourages gender inequality because it implies that daughters are not as much needed as sons.

Importantly, as patriarchy glorifies men and marginalises women, the birth of daughters is constructed as a maternal failure, while the father is absolved of responsibility—since the system positions men as inherently superior and incapable of producing an undesirable outcome. This blame neutralises emotional, social, and physical abuse against women, including neglect, abandonment, and forcing them into repeated pregnancies in the hope of producing sons.

The arguments developed in the above discussion supports the previous studies on the significance of sons revealing that sons are patriarchal social goods and mothers gain respect in their in-laws and society only when they deliver sons.

In dealing with the second research question, it is noted all three findings directly address the second research question, which explores how the societal preference for sons contributes to the reinforcement of patriarchal structures. This raises a critical question as to why such importance is attached to son(s) in patriarchy. There are various sociocultural and economic reasons for celebrating the presence of sons in the family in a patriarchal society. These reasons are grounded in patriarchal norms which deeply influence the process of attaining authority, ownership and announcing succession in a patriarchal family.

For instance, sons are traditionally seen as bearers of the family name, which suggests that they are heirs to family property. Saeed (2015) argues that sons are viewed as economic assets and future caretakers of parents. In the same vein, Ullah and Shah (2016) observe that patriarchal norms in Pakistan transfer the family property in the name of the male heirs of the family. Objecting to patriarchy, Tabassum et al. (2020) complain that families in Pakistan grant access to the ownership of the family property only to men, totally excluding women of the family. Agreeing with previous research studies, Shahzad et al. (2024) state that patriarchal norms influence ownership and succession in the family businesses in Pakistan. In their study, Sadaf et al. (2025) imply that family businesses in Pakistan are primarily owned and led by men, due to systemic gender discrimination and cultural norms that prioritize male successors.

In addition, sons are viewed as the future breadwinners. Adil et al. (2017) find that patriarchy has imposed the responsibility of breadwinning on men. Criticising patriarchy, Hadi (2019) states that men's breadwinning obligation has been instrumental in keeping women economically dependent on the male members of the family. It is the root cause of gender inequality. Mueenuddin (2022) argues that breadwinning is the part of masculinity in Pakistan. This perspective is further supported by Maghfurrohman et al. (2024), who claim that it is the

prime responsibility of every man to provide financial support, food and shelter to their families.

Furthermore, the presence of son(s) in the family is celebrated because sons act as protectors of the family and its honour. They are perceived as responsible for safeguarding the women in the household. Their presence symbolises strength and stability which enhances the family's public image and social standing (Channon, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2021). Generally speaking, sons in patriarchal families are obliged to intervene in times of conflict, represent the family on different social occasions and act as a shield for parents and female members on both physical and moral grounds.

Taken together, these responsibilities illustrate the elevated position sons occupy in the family. The ongoing discussion reveals that these roles—such as bearers of the family name, breadwinners, and protectors of the family and its honour—elevate their status as indispensable members whose mere presence is considered a source of respect and reassurance, both within the household and in the wider community. This glorification, in turn, downgrades women's social position. They stay inside houses and serve as caregivers to family members. They economically depend on the male members of the family. Resultantly, they lose their authority to decide things for themselves and transform into objects. This loss of agency causes them to suffer both physically and emotionally. In fact, women are completely marginalised. This marginalised state reinforces the already established patriarchal structures.

Conclusion

By employing Gee's (2011) Toolkit of Discourse Analysis, this study unpacked the linguistic manoeuvres in Mueenuddin's "Nawabdin Electrician" that not only reveal but also reinforce patriarchal norms, particularly the preference for sons over daughters. As established earlier, the indirect and suggestive style of literary texts enables them to function as powerful discourses that shape and reproduce social realities. Integrating Gee's concept of social goods with the notion of patriarchy demonstrates that authority and value in an androcentric society are gendered, i.e., privileging men while systematically devaluing women's roles, voices, and contributions. The analysis shows that language reinforces gender hierarchies by constructing sons as the ultimate social goods, that is, bearers of the family name, breadwinners, and protectors of honour while daughters are marginalised. This discursive construction ultimately perpetuates patriarchal inequality and objectification.

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