

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>

**COSMOPOLITANISM AND TRANSGENDER RESISTANCE TO
GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ASKARI'S QUEEN ZARQA**



**Rimsha Qamar^{*1}, Dr. Irfan Ali Shah²,
Dr. Maryam Munir³**

*^{*1}M.Phil Scholar at Qurtuba University of Sciences and
information technology Peshawar Campus*

*²Associate Professor of English at Qurtuba University of
Sciences and information technology Peshawar Campus*

*³PhD Scholar Qurtuba University of Science and
Information Technology*

*^{*1}rimshaqamar030@gmail.com,*

²irfanuop1@qurtuba.edu.pk,

³mmaryammunir@gmail.com

Abstract

This thesis examines the portrayal of transgender survival in Shama Askari's Queen Zarqa, focusing on themes of vulnerability and resistance of transgender individuals in Pakistan, especially in Pukhtoon society and Karachi. The study explores through Catherine Belsey's textual analysis that transgender characters such as Queen Zarqa, Madhubala, Guru, Rani, and Samita in the text reveals how they resist the stereotypical concepts regarding them and portrays the reality of cisgenders of Karachi and Pukhtoon society in Pakistan. By applying cosmopolitanism of Appiah asserts the acts of defense of transgender people from the victimization by family (Mohabatai, Mirgati, other village boys in Pukhtoon society) and by Saith Pasjeer Shah and others in Karachi and securing Queen Zarqa and other transgender people from the predation of cisgender people. By bringing attention to resistance, the text offers a powerful reflection on identity, difference, and the human desire to live with dignity.

Key Words: Cisgender, Transgender, Cosmopolitanism, Pukhtoon Society, Defense.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Ritter (2023), Cosmopolitanism theory is not a fictional concept; rather, it is based on the thought that began in the 4th century BC in Greece, when great philosophers such as Socrates, Diogenes, and others considered how they felt related to the people and places around them. They considered themselves 'kosmopolis', or global citizens. Similarly, as observed by Yates (2009), Cosmopolitanism means "citizen of this world." When the Cynics and Socrates learned about the cosmopolitan world, they defined citizenship in the same manner that people did in the ancient world, but not in the present.

In the book, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), cosmopolitanism describes the idea of welcoming everyone who belongs to different geographies and locations in different places and cultures of the world. Besides, they should portray humanity to one another, live together with the idea that they have rights over one another, and share and respect their identities. Additionally, it is the advocacy of the acceptance of different cultures acceptance not the rejection. Appiah further argues that knowing about those people who are outsiders of those places where they begin to live; to know about their native languages, lifestyle, traditions, and culture, not for manipulating them but for properly understanding them and to correctly understand them so that they feel safe.

In existing studies, classic defines, 'Kosmopolite' as a citizen of the world. But recently, scholars have defined global versus national duties, that every person is living a different part of the universe, and it is the global national duty of an individual to take care and respect every individual, whether he belongs to one area or another (Nielsen, 2005). Furthermore, cosmopolitanism asks that all humans are equal and should equally pay attention to their matters instead of looking at who they are or where they belong (Scheffler, 1999).

Additionally, Perry (2016) observes that the term “gender” stands for the assumptions, beliefs, and norms of society that are expected of a specific sex, for example, men or women to make the base for their masculinity and femininity. While, The word " transgender " come from Western terminology, it consists of two words ; one is trans and the other is gender. Trans means to deviate or to change, and gender means sex or sexual identity. In simple words, transgender people are men or women who have transformed themselves from their sexual birth identity and deviate from their assigned gender identity. For example, a man deviates from manhood to womanhood or deviates from womanhood to manhood. With some of them, transformation happened naturally while some of them go for a medical procedure which is called Transgender surgery or therapy, and they fully change from their birth gender to their own choice of gender. Additionally, the doctor transforms their cells into the desired gender, they change their dress up, the way of talking, the way they want and for all these variations this person is known as a cross-dresser (Khan, 2024). And “Cisgender” term for the first time had circulating in online interviews and discussions of transgender in 1994. Dana Leland Defosse (one of the scholars who use the term for those who are not transgender in (a Usenet newsgroup about transgender topics) and John Hollister and in 1995 by Carl Buji's (Cava,2016). Moreover, Language-is never neutral, it plays a significant role in the formation of any discourse regarding anything. The study focuses on the use of language which has a great influence-on affecting the identity and recognition-of transgender communities in Pakistan. In the past people were calling them by the names of Hijra or Khwaja Sara, but this word is supposed to be outdated-because it provides them a separate identity but indirectly indicates sexuality. The Pakistani government should provide a word for transgender people to accept them and recognize them as a separate gender and allow them to make their identity cards for their recognition. Many of the critics have the opinion that this world is also not doing justification with them in providing them rights and inclusion as humans (Filimonova, 2023). Additionally, Transgender are also fighting for their defence as well. *The article, Trans rights are not just human rights: legal strategies for transgender*, explains that the defense of transgender rights should not legally rely on the law created for human rights because human rights are important but the process for the rights of transgender individuals is quite slow, and daily they face several critical problems. Instead of practicing the advocacy for family law, court rules, and social benefits the lawyer should create particular ways for the protection of transgender individuals as well. First of all, transgender individuals should be called by their original name not by a nickname or abusive names, and additionally to inform their parents that they should take them into their own custody and the government should allow financial support to them (Samuel Singer,2020). This study fills the gap by analyzing *Queen Zarqa* by Shama Askari (2025) through Cosmopolitanism by Appiah (1997, 2005 & 2006). The novel offers examples of the trials and tribulations that the transgender characters endure, as well as some of the methods they use to get by and fight back. It also reveals moments of care, connection, solidarity that transcend gender, of cosmopolitan ethics, one that values all people alike, regardless of their gender or background (Appiah, 2006).

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To explore transgender struggles and defensive actions as reflection of universal moral responsibility and human solidarity in Shama Askari's *Queen Zarqa* (2025).

2. To investigate the ways in which *Queen Zarqa (2025)* challenges traditional gender binaries and promotes a revised moral vision of justice and shared humanity across cisgender and transgender identities.

2.0 Literature Review

The discussion of Islam and otherness in gender terms usually starts with a scholarly text by Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle (2018) which argues that, with regard to the ethical and the spiritual dimension of Islam, there is room for considering the diversity of humanity, including the differences in sex and gender. Kugle exposes the rigidity of the Islamic thought, suggesting instead the idea of diversity as a part of God's creation. This view forms a crucial foundation for a reconsideration of the Islamic response to identities which cannot be confined in rigid binary terms.

From this ethical base, the Qur'anic teaching of equality bolsters the concept of human dignity for all. The verse, "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" (Qur'an 49:13) takes away the gender, lineage, and class-based understanding of worth and replaces it with moral awareness. In the teaching presented here, Zahra (2025) emphasized that this teaching provides a philosophical framework for inclusive based on piety instead of biological differences. This view raises the question of what appears to be an inconsistent approach toward marginalization based on gender identity with the Qur'anic focus on justice and equality.

Cosmopolitanism is generally about the transnational and trans-cultural circulation of texts, identities and meanings. In today's scholarship, the notion of literature as a whole field of knowledge entangled within one culture is increasingly called into question. On the contrary, it foregrounds the multiplicities, hybridity, and transnational interpretation as core of meaning-making. Didier Coste (2022) provides one of the most significant contemporary re-definitions of this approach through his concept of *experimental cosmopolitanism*. He believes that literary works should not be limited to the culture and world of the author, to the surroundings and tradition of his time, or to his country. Rather, literature should be viewed as a field of interpretation that is never closed and whose meaning is always produced through a variety of points of view. This moves literary criticism from an author-based interpretation to a more pluralistic, dynamic approach to reading. However, while Coste's model expands interpretive freedom, it also introduces a philosophical tension: if meaning is entirely open to infinite perspectives, there is a risk of dissolving textual coherence. That is, too much interpretive openness can undermine the stability of meaning and it raises the question of whether cosmopolitan reading is possible without losing its analytical edge and yet being culturally plural.

Inspired by this, Evangelists (2021) approaches cosmopolitanism as much as a theory as a cultural practice, present in literature, translation and world identity construction. Cosmopolitan sensibilities arise in the literary scene in late nineteenth-century England, at a time when its borders were being expanded and its attitude towards the outside world simultaneously affected by this expansion. Cosmopolitan sensibilities are found in nineteenth century English literature, and at a time when its boundaries have been extended and its attitude towards the outside world is affected by those extensions. Some characters, like those in Wilde's and George Egerton's works, are defined by their shifting and unfix-able subjectivity, a challenge to fixed notions of national identity. But this cosmopolitanism of the literature is by no means without its disjunctive elements.

3.0 Data Collection Method

The data collection method in this research is library-based, meaning that information is gathered from both primary literary texts and secondary academic sources. The primary data of this study is the novel *Queen Zarqa* (2025) by Askari. The central object of analysis in this text is the narrative, characters, dialogue and descriptions that embody transgender identity and interactions in Pakistani society. The secondary sources consist of academic texts on cosmopolitanism, post-colonial theory and gender studies. Such works provide an understanding of the theorizing of identity, difference and globalization so far as can be gleaned from the academic literature. They also give comparative views that enhance the novel's interpretation.

3.1 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis in this study is carried out by using a textual analysis approach used by Catherine Belsey and Cosmopolitanism. As Belsey (2002) argues, meaning in literary text is not constant, but is created by language, ideology and culture. This requires a critical analysis of texts to reveal how power and social relations influence text meanings. The analysis starts with the close reading of *Queen Zarqa* (2025) to find the passages that are relevant to the research objectives.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Cosmopolitanism is a concept, as coined by Kwame Anthony Appiah, that has a philosophical meaning, which is that there is a common humanity across cultural, national and social barriers, and an ethical meaning. Cosmopolitanism is based on the premise that every human being is a part of a single moral community, irrespective of identity differences, including race, gender, religion, and nationality. But Appiah does not say that cultural differences should be removed. Rather he suggests a balance between universal moral responsibility and respect for cultural diversity (Appiah, 1997; 2005; 2006)..

Hannerz's (1996) concept of cosmopolitanism expands this notion of a cultural engagement that is actively performed. He said that cosmopolitan people are not only passive recipients of culture, but active learners and agents of interaction with other cultural systems. Likewise, Igarashi (2014) defines cosmopolitanism as a cultural capital that is typically associated with schooling, mobility, and worldliness. To the same time, he does point out a significant limitation: that, because of economic and social inequalities, not everyone has equal opportunities of cosmopolitan experiences.

Ossewaarde (2007) states that cosmopolitanism is in line with the facts of globalization, a context where people are more and more border-crossing. This interaction around the world transforms identities through encountering multiple cultural practices. But cosmopolitanism is not a rejection of local identities, rather it is an adjunct to local identities, developing hybrid forms of identity.

This study employs cosmopolitanism as the lens through which to look at how the transgender (or transsexual) person is defined as a member of a human community in the novel "*Queen Zarqa*" (2025). It supports critical reflection on the novel's approach to equality, dignity and inclusion or social exclusion and hierarchy. It also identifies parts of the text where there are statements that emphasize universal human values rather than cultural or gender-based differences.

4.0 Data Analysis

Appiah (2006) defines cosmopolitanism as the assumption that everyone is a part of a common

moral community irrespective of their differences along gender, racial, ethnic, religious, national or socioeconomic lines. Cosmopolitanism is about giving dignity to every individual, recognizing and morally considering all human beings as equal citizens of a common world. Appiah also claims that human obligations are not restricted to local identities and argue that people must respect and care for one another, regardless of social and cultural differences. In *Queen Zarqa* (2025), Shama Askari explores these cosmopolitan ideals through the lives of transgender people who fight against social exclusion, and yet claim their humanity, dignity, and right to belong. Throughout the novel, the reader is repeatedly confronted with the othering of transgender people that exists as a part of the social order and is instead presented as equal members of the universal human community.

This cosmopolitan vision is clearly reflected in Zarqa's declaration:

“Fear has entered my home and wants to snatch all the joy from my life. It wants to liberate all my hopes; It wants me to become a slave to my fears. But I am not afraid because I find love greater than hate! I believe that hope is more powerful than fear!” (*Queen Zarqa*, 2025, p.135).

The passage transforms fear into an active social force through the use of personification. The phrase “fear has entered my home” represents oppression as an intruder that invades personal space and attempts to dominate everyday life. The novel does not merely represent fear as an emotional state but as a way of managing and excluding the transgender people. This image is further reinforced by the verb’s “snatch” and “become a slave” which indicate deprivation, domination and loss of agency. This language is used to open up the text and reveal the psychological effects of social discrimination, as well as how social prejudice silences marginalised voices.

But the passage also opposes this oppression by the use of the repeated opposition of “love” and “hate” and of “hope” and “fear.” These binary oppositions create an ethical code that promotes compassion and resiliency over exclusion and hostility. From a cosmopolitan point of view, the statement represents the view of Appiah that all persons have equal moral value, irrespective of their social identity. Zarqa chooses to define herself, not by society's prejudice, but by hope and dignity. The passage is therefore not just a statement of the individuals' courage but one of the value and resistance to social exclusion of all people.

The cosmopolitan emphasis on dignity and equality is further developed in the following passage:

“I will die with honor! There will be a huge crowd at my funeral. My loved ones will lament and beat their chests, the innocent angels will bear me away in my dolly and my parents will greet me at the gates of heaven. The Hooris and Ghilmans will be a part of the bridal procession. I will never curse the Lord nor call him bad. I am not afraid. I am not afraid.” (*Queen Zarqa*, 2025, p.135).

“Not afraid” is repeated multiple times and is an effective affirmation of agency. It is the repetition, a linguistic strategy, which allows the speaker to reject the victim and to take back control of her identity. This saying – die with honor – is especially important because the concept of honor is missing from the dominant social discourse for transgender people. The speaker's act of taking ownership of her own accomplishment is a way of asserting herself as a person not considered to be respectable enough to be part of society.

Additionally, the use of images of angels, heaven, and divine acceptance creates an alternative moral system where transgender people are recognized and given dignity. In the spiritual imagery they are accepted in spite of the fact that society may not accept them, their humanity is intact, and it is worthy of respect. Appiah's cosmopolitan view of this suggests that all humans share the same value; no one is superior or inferior based on social prejudices. The passage thus redefines death as a symbol of loss and replaces it with a symbol of dignity, recognition and belonging.

4.1 Islam and Cosmopolitanism

Appiah (2006) defines cosmopolitanism as the notion that people everywhere are members of a single moral community, and equal in worth as persons. Likewise, Islamic principles have placed much emphasis on the concepts of justice, compassion, equality and accountability in front of God. Both frameworks are therefore anti-discrimination and promote respect for human dignity. In *Queen Zarqa* (2025), Shama Askari establishes a significant relationship between Islam and cosmopolitanism by demonstrating how religious principles and universal human values can work together to challenge social exclusion. The novel through Zarqa's words and her own personal journey has shown that belief is a means of inclusion, not of exclusion, and that transgender people are just as deserving of spiritual and social recognition. This perspective is clearly reflected in Zarqa's statement:

“Don’t say such things; All the names of God, every feature every aspect is precious and worthy of veneration. We should look within ourselves. We consider ourselves helpless things. Helpless beings are not worthy of respect, we can’t really blame anyone.... We are all transgender. I speak for men, women, and hijras. Every man, every woman has Hijra hiding inside them.” (*Queen Zarqa*, 2025, p.133).

The passage begins by emphasizing the sacredness of God and the importance of self-reflection. The instruction “look within ourselves” redirects attention away from social judgment and toward personal accountability. Zarqa did not say that it was someone else's fault, instead, he said to think about what is going on, and be aware of right and wrong. This focus on introspection is partly because of Islamic values on moral accountability, but also because Appiah thinks that ethical connections start with understanding the humanity of others, as he is cosmopolitan.

Particularly important is the expression ‘We are all transgender’ which represents the symbolic breaking down of rigid social boundaries. The use of the word “we” establishes a collective identity that encompasses all humans and not just transgender people as outsiders. Likewise, the statement “Every man, every woman has Hijra in them” speaks to essentialist notions of gender identity in that it implies that the human experience is not monolithic and more complicated than it is made out to be in set social classifications. The metaphor is used to make the reader aware of common vulnerability and interrelatedness.

The passage from a cosmopolitan point of view encourages empathy, it highlights the common humanity, not difference. Appiah (2006) states that people should not treat others as social labels, but as fellow human beings. The example of Zarqa's speech exemplifies this in that it does not leave room for simply dividing up identities and coveting the understanding and recognition of the other. The passage thus moves the discussion from transsexuality as an indicator of difference to universal human beingness. Appiah's (2006) focus on shared humanity and Delanty's (2009) claim that contact with difference can produce new ways of social understanding and inclusion are illustrated by this idea.

By extending spiritual recognition to even the most marginalized figures, the passage reinforces cosmopolitan values of equality and dignity (Nussbaum, 1996; Appiah, 2006). The relationship between spirituality and cosmopolitan inclusion becomes even more apparent in Zarqa's response regarding the call to prayer:

“The azaan is also for the pebble lying in the street.” (*Queen Zarqa*, 2025, p.130).

The image of the “pebble” functions as a powerful symbol of marginalization. A pebble is small,

ordinary, and often ignored, much like the social position occupied by transgender individuals within the novel. However, Zarqa's statement transforms this symbol of insignificance into a symbol of inclusion. She also argues that the azaan extends beyond the boundaries of institutions and society, establishing an additional boundary of spiritual belonging.

The passage implies that the gift of God is universal and not limited by the prejudice of man. This concept is very apparent in both Islamic ideology and cosmopolitanism as described by Appiah. Like Islamic teaching which says that everyone is accountable to God, Cosmopolitanism claims that everyone is entitled to moral consideration. As a result, the azaan becomes a universal call, breaking down social barriers and discriminatory practices.

4.2 As a Defensive Action

Appiah (2006) defines cosmopolitanism as the idea of shared humanity, moral responsibility, and respect for human dignity. All individuals, irrespective of their gender, race, religion, social status, etc. must be treated with moral equality. While cosmopolitanism is primarily about dialogue, understanding and peaceful co-existence, it also acknowledges the need to safeguard vulnerable people when the dignity and safety of these people is at risk. Thus, when social institutions do not ensure justice, the protection of human dignity is an ethical concern. The violence, exploitation, and social rejection faced by transgender people occurs with their repeated involvement in *Queen Zarqa* (2025). This means the resistance manifests as not being the expression of cruelty but rather attempts to defend the humanity of the people whose humanity has been denied. This reality becomes evident in the following passage:

"I have never seen this kind of strength before; We are not forcing you to do anything. You are only putting in an effort to control the poisonous snake so that it becomes incapable of biting our daughters and sons. Meherban paused and landed a few punches on his stomach beneath his navel and ordered, 'Increase the volume of music. When I raise my hand pull his legs apart with all you might to tear his scrotum.'" (*Queen Zarqa*, 2025, p.116).

The scene is quite violent at first glance. But a careful analysis of the plot shows that it is about protecting rather than attacking the action. The phrase "poisonous snake" is an important metaphor as it suggests that the man poses a threat and a predator. Snakes are a symbol of threat, deception and harm. The author uses the metaphor of a "poisonous snake" to characterize the aggressor, thereby placing him in a position to pose a danger to the protagonist instead of an innocent victim. The phrase "incapable of biting our daughters and sons" extends this metaphor and shifts attention toward prevention. The concern is not merely punishment but protection of vulnerable individuals. Importantly, the phrase "our daughters and sons" extends the ethical reach from the transgender community to all the daughters and sons of humanity. The use of the possessive pronoun "our" conveys a collective moral responsibility and illustrates Appiah's view that moral responsibility is shared by all human beings irrespective of their identity.

The symbolism of sound also deserves attention. Meherban orders others to "increase the volume of music." On one level, the music conceals the man's cries. But symbolically, it reminds us of the silence that can envelop violence towards a trans person. Transgender suffering is ignored, hidden or normalized in the novel throughout. The music consequently represents the social silence that envelops oppressors and obscures injustice.

This scene is different from the previous scenes where transgender people are powerless, but it temporarily changes the power dynamic. Meherban and her associates take ownership and don't sit

by and accept what is happening. The scene is about violence no longer and more about reclaiming dignity in a system that is constantly failing to protect marginalized people.

Besides, the line "I've never seen this kind of strength before" sets the tone for the scene while implying that he's looking at something to be admired instead of feared. Strength is related to resilience and courage not to domination. The novel follows multiple transgender/transsexual characters who endure rejection, exploitation and violence, and yet do take care of each other. Thus, the strength comes to represent endurance and resistance.

The passage reveals the conflict between ideals and realities from a cosmopolitan viewpoint. While Appiah's cosmopolitanism is grounded in respect for human dignity, it is clear from the novel that dignity can be maintained only where violence is curbed. Transgender people are not protected by institutions, so the transgender community takes care of itself. Thus, the scene represents the need for active resistance to oppression in the absence of dialogue and institutional protection (Appiah, 2006; Delanty, 2009).

It is likely that the passage indicates cosmopolitanism is not only an abstract belief in equality, but also a practice of ensuring the safety of vulnerable people. Queen Zarqa shows through the character of Meherban that sometimes one has to fight against those who would be responsible for human violation. The novel, in this manner, further develops Appiah's cosmopolitan paradigm by focusing on the value of human beings from a universal perspective when social structures neglect to support it.

4.3 Love and Sacrifices

Appiah (2006) claims that people have obligations towards each other just because they are human. So, cosmopolitanism, particularly, is sometimes expressed in the forms of kindness, sacrifice, protection and responsibility. These values are continuously reinforced within the relationships between transgender characters in Queen Zarqa (2025) who offer emotional support, shelter, care and protection to each other. The novel tells the story of love as a moral act that confronts marginalization and gives dignity to marginalised people through the character of Madhosh, Guru, Meherban and others in the transgender community.

This cosmopolitan ethic becomes visible in the following statement that "A Khwaja Sara is greater than a woman, or twice as great as a man. When a woman gives birth she is one grade lower than a man, "A woman is only one grade below because she gave birth" (Queen Zarqa, 2025, p.97).

On the surface, it seems as if it is making a distinction between genders. But upon closer inspection, its main purpose appears to be to attempt to put a face on transgender people in a society that is constantly demeaning them. The term "greater than" is rhetorical to correct for discrimination. Transgender people are treated as less than, different or unwanted by society throughout the novel. Madhosh's assertion, then, is an attempt to disrupt these stereotypes and to reconfirm transgender identity.

The language does not simply assert the social hierarchy, but rather intentionally gives voice to the challenge of it. In this reading, the passage makes a different argument to those of the dominant discourse, offering a celebration of transgender existence. A cosmopolitan view of the statement is not based on superiority, but on recognition. Appiah (2006) doesn't agree to systems that allocate value to humans based on social categories. This bid to restore dignity is an appreciation of Appiah's (2006) assumption that everyone should be recognized irrespective of their class or status. It also reinforces Nussbaum's (1996) consideration of the need to reject socially constructed

hierarchies as a basis for moral worth.

Care and responsibility come more into the foreground in Guru's declaration:

"I announced that Zarqa is under my care. I will take an oath that it will be my duty and responsibility to protect her and look out for her interests. I will do my utmost to honor this pledge. I want to make it clear that from today onwards Zarqa is a member of this family" (*Queen Zarqa*, 2025, p.100).

The passage is dominated by terms such as "care," "duty," "responsibility," "protect," and "safeguard." These words establish an ethical framework centered upon commitment and accountability. The phrase "under my care" is particularly significant because it defines the relationship through protection rather than authority. Guru does not seek to control Zarqa but instead accepts responsibility for her well-being.

The term "duty" and "responsibility" are used repeatedly, and they are very similar to Appiah's cosmopolitan ethics. Appiah (2006) suggests that people have duties towards other people because they are all human. Guru's dedication to Zarqa is not for blood or self-interest. Instead, it emerges from recognition of Zarqa's vulnerability and dignity. The passage therefore demonstrates that ethical responsibility can transcend traditional social boundaries.

The statement "Zarqa is a member of this family" further develops this idea. Family traditionally signifies belonging, protection, and emotional security. However, for many transgender individuals in the novel, biological families become sites of rejection and exclusion. Guru's declaration therefore reconstructs the concept of family itself. The reconstruction of family is an attempt at using Appiah's (2006) cosmopolitan structure that calls for human relationships based on responsibility and care, not exclusionary borders.

4.4 Cosmopolitanism is not a Smooth Activity

Cosmopolitanism is thus an ever-present ethical dilemma or challenge, and an active process whereby individuals confront injustice and challenge discriminatory systems in society. In *Queen Zarqa* (2025), this is further seen in the lives of transgender people whose humanity is constantly denied even though the universal values that ought to apply to all citizens are made available. Throughout the novel it is shown that dignity and recognition are constantly being denied and fought back against systems of marginalisation.

This reality is vividly illustrated in the following passage:

"Roshni crouched on the floor with her arms covering her naked breast, terrified that he might abuse her more... No one intervened" (*Queen Zarqa*, 2025, p.102).

The word "crouched" immediately suggests fear, vulnerability and helplessness. Rather than standing upright, Roshni occupies a defensive posture associated with self-protection. Her attempt to cover her body symbolizes a desperate effort to preserve dignity in circumstances designed to strip it away.

The gesture of covering her bare breast means more than just physical exposure as it is a gesture of social vulnerability. Transgender people are denied privacy, respect and protection on numerous occasions throughout the novel. Thus, Roshni's naked body becomes a symbol of the marginalisation that is the condition of transgender people.

The most important sentence in the passage is the simple sentence "No one intervened".

The sentence has deep ethical content which is not so apparent as to be obvious because it is so short. Lack of intervention does not only point to the meanness of the individual but also to the

collective failure. It's less shocking than the quiet of those who saw it but didn't say a word. This is the silence of society with regards to transgender suffering.

A cosmopolitan point of view is one that views people as responsible moral beings rather than indifferent. Appiah (2006) believes that people have duties to others just because they have a common humanity. This attitude is directly opposed to Appiah's (2006) doctrine that all humans deserve to be treated equally in a moral sense. Furthermore, it demonstrates how, in the society, there is a gap between ethics and social practice, as noted by Delanty (2009).

When set in contrast to characters who decide to take action, the scene is even more poignant. Members of the transgender community keep intervening over and over to save each other from harm, whereas the passive audience doesn't. This contrast shows two conflicting moral perspectives, indifference and responsibility.

While society chooses silence, marginalized individuals practice care and solidarity.

The passage also exposes the limitations of institutional protection. Ideally, legal and social institutions should protect vulnerable individuals from violence. However, their absence forces transgender communities to assume responsibility for their own survival. Thus, cosmopolitan ethics are most clearly expressed by those who have personally suffered exclusion.

Another feature of the scene is its treatment of visibility and invisibility. The suffering of Roshni is public yet not socially visible because it is not recognized by anyone. Appiah insists that seeing others as human beings cannot simply be done through the process of being observed, but must be done ethically, through engagement. Roshni is visible to the people, but not human. In cosmopolitan terms, moral blindness is the awareness of suffering but the denial of responsibility towards the sufferers (Appiah, 2006; Beck, 2006).

The novel, in this regard, uncovers the fact that cosmopolitanism is not granted through being oriented towards abstract principles. Instead, it demands people's conscious choice of compassion, solidarity, and responsibility. By the juxtaposition of fragility and action. This concept is similar to Appiah's (2006) emphasis on cosmopolitanism as an ethical stance based on responsibility and caring for others.

5.0 Conclusion

The results show that the novel repeatedly challenges social systems which label people in an absolute manner and are based on the categories of gender, identity and social status. Instead, these are cosmopolitan discourses that give rise to a notion of human value based on common humanity not social labels. The analysis also shows that love, sacrifice, spiritual inclusion, communal responsibility and opposition to injustice are important ways of articulating cosmopolitan ethics in the story.

Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates that the novel's Islam and cosmopolitanism uphold the values of equality, dignity, and moral responsibility. The text critiques exclusionary readings of religion and calls for a more expansive reading of religion that includes transgender people as equals in the religious and social communities. These portrayals help to reinforce Appiah's (2006) claim that cultural and religious differences should be seen as 'a strength not a weakness'.

The analysis also reveals that cosmopolitanism in *Queen Zarqa* is not presented as an idealized or effortless reality. Rather, the novel reveals the struggles of finding recognition and justice in societies of prejudice and discrimination. The text emphasises the conflict between the universal moral aspirations and the real social situation through violence, exclusion and resistance. Despite

these challenges, the characters reiterate some values of empathy, responsibility and shared humanity.

The chapter concludes that overall, *Queen Zarga* is a strong literary analysis of cosmopolitan ethics. The novel speaks to recognition, dignity and inclusion for transgender persons as reflecting Appiah's vision of a world where all persons are equally valued as members of a common humanness. As a result, the text aims to address negative social norms and attitudes that might discriminate against people and cultures and encourages a wider view of humanity based on respect, compassion, and moral responsibility (Appiah, 2006; Delanty, 2009; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002).

References

- Appiah, K. A. (1996). Cosmopolitan Patriots. In M. C. Nussbaum & J. Cohen (Eds.), *For love of country: Debating the limits of patriotism* (pp. 21-29). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Appiah, K. A. (1997). Cosmopolitan Patriots. *Critical Inquiry*, 23(3), 617-639.
- Appiah, K. A. (1998). Cosmopolitan Patriots. In P. Cheah & B. Robbins (Eds.), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and feeling beyond the nation* (pp. 91-114). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Appiah, K. A. (2005). *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Appiah, K. A. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Audi, R. (2009). Nationalism, patriotism, and cosmopolitanism in an age of globalization. *The Journal of Ethics*, 13(4), 365-381. doi:10.1007/s10892-009-9068-9
- Aultman, B. (2014). Cisgender. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1(1-2), 61-62.
- Azhar, S., Ahmad, I., Gaudio, L., & others. (2025). "We are raising our voices": Coping strategies used by Khwaja Sira in Swat, Pakistan. *International Journal of Transgender Health*.
- Azzahra, N., Ilmi, N., & Alhadi, M. W. (2024). Orientalism from a postcolonial perspective in the novel *Saffron Dreams* by Shaila Abdullah. *Litteratura: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 23(1), 45-55.
- Beck, U. (2006). *Cosmopolitan Vision*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (2006). The cosmopolitan vision. Polity Press.
- Belsey, C. (2013). Textual analysis as a research method. In G. Griffin (Ed.), *Research methods for English Studies*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Berning, N. (2015). Narrative ethics and alterity in Adichie's novel *Americanah*. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 17(5). <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2685>
- Bibi, H. (2020). A critique of the unrelenting curse of gender discrimination in Pashtoon society and the way out. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 4(3), 130-142.
- Breckenridge, C. A., Pollock, S., Bhabha, H. K., & Chakrabarty, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Cosmopolitanism*. Duke University Press.
- Brock, G. (2015, July 8). Cosmopolitanism. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from www.britannica.com
- Cheah, P. (2006). Cosmopolitanism. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(2-3), 486-496.
- Cheah, P. (2012). What is a world? On world literature as world-making activity. In G. Delanty (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of cosmopolitanism studies* (pp. 305-319). Routledge.

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

- Cheng, C. (2010). Cosmopolitan alterity: America as the mutual alien of Britain and Japan in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 45(2), 203–221.
- Chrisler, J. C., & Lamer, S. A. (2016). Gender. In *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies*. Wiley.
- Conversi, D. (2017). Cosmopolitanism and nationalism. In A. S. Leoussi (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of nationalism* (pp. 34-39). New York: Routledge.
- Coste, D. (2022). *A cosmopolitan approach to literature: Against origins and destinations*. Routledge.
- Delanty, G. (2009). *The cosmopolitan imagination: The renewal of critical social theory*. Cambridge University Press.
- S.
- Evangelista, S. (2021). *Literary cosmopolitanism in the English fin de siècle: Citizens of nowhere*. Oxford University Press.
- Faheem, A., Jehan, A. S., & Raza, S. (2024). Transgender voices: Analyzing discourse and representation in media in Pakistani society. *International Journal of Social Sciences*.
- Fatima, M., & Asghar, N. (2023). The relationship between violence and transgender bodies in urban Pakistan: Tracing gender transformation experiences. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. (Retracted article).
- Fiamengo, J. (2004). Regionalism and urbanism. In E. Kröller (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Canadian literature* (pp. 241-262). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fine, R. (2007). *Cosmopolitanism*. Routledge.
- Fine, R., & Cohen, R. (2002). Four cosmopolitan moments. In S. Vertovec & R. Cohen (Eds.), *Conceiving cosmopolitanism: Theory, context and practice* (pp. 137-162). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fludernik, M. (2007). Identity/alterity. In D. Herman (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to narrative*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoyer, P., & Ybema, S. (2025). Cosmopolitanism as an aspirational identity: When normative ideals give rise to identity struggles. *Journal of Business Ethics*.
- Hussain, A., Rahim, A., & Rajput, F. (2023). The quality of life of HIV positive transgender and homosexual population in Karachi, Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 39(4), 1100–1105.
- Igarashi, H., & Saito, H. (2014). Cosmopolitanism as cultural capital: Exploring the intersection of globalization, education and stratification. *Cultural Sociology*, 8(3), 222–239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975514523935>
- Innes, C. L. (2007). *Postcolonial literatures in English*. Cambridge University Press.
- Iyer, P. (1993, February 8). Review of *The English Patient*. *Time International Magazine*, 141(6), 48-50.
- Iyer, P. (2000). *The Global Soul: Jet lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*. New York: Vintage.
- Jong, A. (2024). Social theory and navigating indeterminacy: A configurational analysis of Iranian youth's identity construction in contemporary Iran. *Societies*, 14(3), 45.
- Kanwal, A. (2020). Transphobia to transrespect: Undoing Hijraism through rehumanization of Khwaja Siras in Pakistani TV dramas. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29(7), 785–797.

Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

Print ISSN: 3006-5887

Online ISSN: 3006-5895

- Khan, M. Y., Dilawer, F., & Dilawar, S. (2025). A comparative study of transgender representation in Pakistani and international print media. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences*.
- Kugle, S. A. (2014). *Living out Islam: Voices of gay, lesbian, and transgender Muslims*. nyu Press.
- Kwame Anthony Appiah. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Liu, T. (2021). Ambivalence of cosmopolitanism: A study of Kazuo Ishiguro's writing. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 12(2), 271–277.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1996). *For love of country?* Beacon Press.
- Ossewaarde, M. (2007). Cosmopolitanism and the society of strangers. *Current Sociology*, 55(3), 367–388. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392107076080>
- Ritter, C. (2025). Understanding cosmopolitanism: A morphological approach. *Journal of Political Ideologies*.
- Scheffler, S. (1999). Conceptions of cosmopolitanism. *Utilitas*, 11(3), 255–276.
- Ullah, I., & Din, S. (2018). Doing Pukhto: Pukhtunwali as an ideal code of life among Daudzai Pukhtuns of Peshawar, Pakistan. *Pashto*, 47(658), 45–60.
- Vertovec, S., & Cohen, R. (Eds.). (2002). *Conceiving cosmopolitanism: Theory, context and practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Yates, J. J. (2009). Making sense of cosmopolitanism: A conversation with Kwame Anthony Appiah. *The Hedgehog Review*.
- Zahra, S. A., Karima, S., Rohfitta, N., Gani, A., Kesuma, G. C., & Fatoni, A. (2025). The Social Education Values in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat, Verses 11-13. *Action Research Journal Indonesia (ARJI)*, 7(4), 2792-2803.