

Forbidden Intimacies: Fantasy, Surveillance, and Visual Culture in Lahore

Mahnoor Imtiaz, Dr. Syed Farjood Ailya Rizvi, Prof Dr. Atifa Usmani

¹ MPhil, Postgraduate Research Centre of Creative Arts, College of Art and Design University of the Punjab, Lahore, Email: imahnoor441@gmail.com

² Assistant professor, Department of Graphic Design, College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Corresponding Author's Email: farjood.cad@pu.edu.pk,
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5468-8363>.

³ Professor, HOD, Textile Design Dept, Govt. College for Women Gulberg, Lahore.
Email: amhusmani@gmail.com, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7381-5460>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1952>

Abstract

This research investigates the conflicting concepts of fantasy and surveillance in the representation of forbidden love within Lahore's visual culture. It explores how intimacy, desire and the pursuit of relationships are constructed, controlled and, in many cases, hidden behind a socio-cultural environment shaped by moral codes, familial expectations and public scrutiny. It further focuses on the connections of love-related taboos like lesbian love, queer love, and extramarital intimacy in contemporary Pakistani Art. By concentrating on themes of queer desire, unconventional love and emotional concealment, the study examines how intimacy becomes both a place of desire and a forced control. Moreover, by adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the research analyzes Pakistan in contemporary art, literature, and media to explore the manner in which cultural norms and power structures affect emotional demonstrations rather than authentic intimacy. In this process, the works of *Bano Qudsia* and *Sadaat Manto*, and the visual practices of *Shehzil Malik* and *Salman Toor* are key case studies to be studied on the matter, as to how fictional stories of love involve a play between fantasy, repressions and social observations. These works expose mediating techniques of the romantic ideals through the mechanism of cultural surveillance, for the boundaries between private emotion and public morality are continually negotiated. The studio aspect of this research is the materialization of these ideas through an immersive installation of suspended globes of glass connected with threads, each functioning as a fragile container depicting different narratives of forbidden love, existing outside of socially accepted norms. It will serve as a metaphor for fragmented visual narratives of forbidden intimacy and love, showing its transparency and fragility with the help of layered, fractured, and fragmented heart structures combined with symbolic objects to evoke emotional tension and illusions, drawing inspiration from the visual language of Chiharu Shiota's work.

Keywords: Forbidden fruit, Taboos, Queer love, Extramarital intimacy, Romantic idealism, Culture

Introduction

Even a decade ago, scholars were still debating the fact that love has been complex yet multifaceted feeling. It is said to be as complex as a human emotion shaped by deep affection, intimacy, passion and commitment. However, in the modern era, the term forbidden love has taken over new dimension, turning it into a complex emotion and further referring to relationships that cross social boundaries, for instance, gender, sexuality, caste and religion. With changing times and technological advancements in South Asia, the widespread availability of dating apps, social media

sites and consumerist romantic love has further transformed the idea into an increasingly performative emotional expression. In such instances, love takes on the shape of a modern version of forbidden fruit, a metaphor from the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve, now reinterpreted to stand for modern yearning for the socially forbidden. A closer analysis of love and media by *Eva Illouz* and *Zygmunt Bauman* shows how the new age era is dominated by digitization – she quotes that relationships are like “*liquid*” – easily formed yet later dissolved, reflecting the culture of uncertainty and marketable love constantly displayed on social media apps, making it harder for people to define it authentically. In this book, *The Plague of Fantasies and Violence*, *Zizek* argues that desire is structured around prohibition—what we cannot have becomes more desirable because it is forbidden. The concept of cruel optimism is highlighted here remain invested in fantasies that may never materialize. Psychologically, this argument is well anchored in the psychoanalytic theory of *Sigmund Freud*. Freud always believed that romantic love was often the result of suppressed desires that began to surface during the early childhood phase. Love becomes a form of displacement - a way of satisfying unconscious needs and unfulfilled emotional desires rather than being founded on shared emotional reality. This point of view strongly supports the idea that love is more illusion than reality, particularly when it is filtered through taboo. When a certain type of love is prohibited, it intensifies rather than killing the desire since it's trapped within the sphere of fantasy and becomes an oxymoron and inaccessible. In Lahore, contemporary art has become a major platform for conveying the intricate love experiences. Artists worldwide have been able to examine the illusion, repression and longing of the modern romantic desire through the medium of visual arts, the cinematic, literature, and digital media. Research on forbidden love and sexual taboos specifically in Lahore is considered very substantial and serious since it further sheds light on social and societal structures that are controlling intimate sectors, restricting individual freedom, and generating gender inequalities. Using literature, journalism, and activism, such as the early poetry of *Fehmida Riaz*, the critical commentary of *Raza Rumi* and *Saadat Hasan Manto*, this research will demonstrate how love serves as a site of resistance and reflection of social fears. This critical observation will help aid us in comprehending how people experience romantic relationships in everyday life against the disciplining norms.

Methodology

The research study uses a qualitative practice-based methodology. It will focus more on the creation of a creative art piece that will support the representation of the topic. The creative process is adopted to enhance the understanding and greater knowledge surrounding it. The study uses visual analysis, textual analysis and artistic experimentation in order to examine the notions of forbidden love and the illusion of love in contemporary Lahore. The methods use an interdisciplinary approach drawing upon inspiration from the frameworks of gender studies, visual culture and emotional embodiment. The key aspect of this methodology is the creation of an immersive glass installation, which will be presented as a visual object and a critical analysis of the conceptual problems of the study. The artistic process consists of the experimentation of mixed media like glass and thread in order to transform the themes of concealment, fragmentation of desire and forbidden forms of love. The drawings, reports about the procedure and record photographic images are elements of the formation of the artwork and may be employed to express the emotional situation. Additional secondary analysis sources are collected with the help of literary and media text analysis (e.g., *Raja Gidh*, *Shehr-e-Zaat*, *Humsafar*, *The Great Gatsby*) and visual analysis of the work by *Shehzil Malik* and *Salman Toor* to explore the common themes of taboo and emotional concealment. The ethereal and spiritual love, particularly that which is manifested in the Pakistani literature and culture, and the forbidden love are also considered in the research. Such kinds of love are seen as abstract, idealized, transcendental experiences that tend not to be physical relationships. The spiritual and ethereal love analysis allows the study to examine the imagining of love not as a lustful desire but as a deviation and longing, emotional

transcendence, that contributes to the concept of love as an illusion or idealistic fantasy. The study is narrowed down to the selected literature, visual arts, and media representations of the Pakistani writers and artists that encompass the themes of love, desire, and the social taboo. A significant portion of the focus is placed on urban location (*Lahore*) and is not aimed at representing the experience of all nations in Pakistan. The core objective of this research is to study the connections of love related taboos in contemporary Pakistani art. And to analyze the visual representation through art mediums like installations and performing art, expressing the theme of forbidden love. Moreover, to explore how Pakistani artists have represented the themes of emotions and social taboos.

Literature Review

The Idea of forbidden love entangled with societal taboos has been the subject of discussion extensively throughout south Asia particularly in the context of Lahore. This literature review aims to help in analyzing the different frameworks of love in a socially forbidden environment that develops from suppression, fantasy and cultural representation. The metaphor of forbidden fruit is discussed in (*Freud 1905*) “*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*”, stated that romantic love is rooted in unconscious desire and usually created in early childhood. Similarly, (*Fromm 1956*) in his writing “*The art of Loving*” suggested love is a symbiotic union further describing it as a “*folie a deux*” that people often find or get attracted to partners who resemble their unmet emotional needs and repressed desires depending on mutual dependency. Love in this form is rarely free from personal traumas and projection. Mostly, relationships that are socially restrictive, the mind begins to idealize the excitement of pursuing it. Both *Freud* and *Fromm* suggest that the unconscious desires stem from unresolved traumas connected solely to the childhood. As a result, the suppression of these desires gains powerful strength when they surface into awareness as a mean of survival. Comparatively, genuine love is not emotionally charged or fueled by the thrill of restriction. Much like, the strong example of forbidden fruit, what is denied or rejected is desirable but later warped into an illusion of emotional reality. Whereas, (*Plato 2008*) defines love as divine standard for above mere physical beauty. He describes eros as a spiritual force – a standard above physical existence. He argues that humans are immortal beings and their desire for immortality manifests itself through love. He cautioned that imposing perfection on others results in illusion, not love. Idealization becomes very evident in socially restrictive relationships, where the suppression of love makes it even more desirable. Similarly, (*Foucault 1978*) in the history of Sexuality, provides a more insightful understanding of how love is controlled through societal power and discourse.

Many feminist thinkers like *Fehmida Raza* and *Ismat Chughtai* in their writings i.e.; (*Chadar and Chardiwari*) and (*Lihaaf*) highlights that the emotional condition of women have been restricted through rigid systems of order for a longer time in the context of south Asia primarily Lahore. Expanding on this debate, a renowned author *Sara Ahmed* in the cultural politics of emotion, examines how society plays a role in defining relationships. Like who to love and who not to love. Moreover, (*Illouz n.d.*) states that love in a socially restrictive environment takes the shape of non-normative structures focusing on the eternal side of love that is fully controlled through societal norms and regulation. (*Bhutto 2019*) widely known as a modern feminist voice, her novel *The Runaways* (2019) is more about radicalization and the international ramifications of alienation, but also about how crucial she is in regard to love, desire and taboo in South Asian cultures, including Pakistan. Her novel narrates stories of three characters whose lives are dictated by their classes, gender and culture.

Bhutto gives us an image of the world where love and intimacy are repressed, twisted and loaded with societal demands. In that regard, *Bhutto* suggests that in these situations the personal turns political and love, particularly the forbidden one, appears not only as a feeling, but also as a way of survival, identity and resistance to the control of society. “*Desire, in contexts of social and political restriction, can function as a form of resistance and rebellion.*” (*Bhutto 2019*)

(Saeed n.d.) in her work *Taboo: The Hidden Culture of a Red-Light District*, she highlights that love in the red-light district is commercialized instead of free choice, which is linked to survival and patriarchal control. In this continuum, (Manto n.d.) been the controversial yet thought-provoking writer; sheds light on love not as liberating as it seems, on the other hand, deeply intertwined with trauma, social hypocrisy and societal taboos. In his short stories, *Thanda Ghost*, *Bu and Khol* do he focuses on uncovering the reality of love being disturbing and in a state of distortion when suppressed desires and rigid societal taboos take control. He demonstrates how the smell alone can bring the mind to the memories of the past, how the sexual desire may be inseparably linked with violence and guilt, and how intimacy, in such circumstances, is often turned into a forced experience instead of a freely experienced one. In contrast, (Rumi n.d.) discusses that showing affection in public spaces at times results in unwanted chaos. Since people openly showing love and affection in social spaces sometimes result in a criminal act that challenges patriarchy. In these critiques, love comes out as something beyond emotion, and it is a sign of liberation. Forbidden desire, therefore, becomes two-fold as it destroys personal repression as well as defies communal cultural standards.

Conversely, South Asian writing in Lahore, in particular, is rich with narratives of obsessive, tragic, or spiritually self-destructive love in which repression is a way of fanning the flames of romantic illusion. (Qudsia n.d.) has been an exceptional vocal writer; in *Raja Gidh*, she signifies forbidden love with a vulture who consumes the haram. This metaphor of a vulture plays the role of humans who get into a forbidden relationship and later fall into the trap of emotional dysfunction and psychological distortion, pointing to inherited genetic consequences. The same theme is, however, perpetuated in TV dramas, such as *Shehr-e-Zaat*, directed by *Sarmad Khoosat* written by (Umera Ahmed n.d.). The main character, “*Falak*” an ideal woman, pines over a man who is imperfect, undeserving of her admiration, but later betrayed by it. She is devastated and experiences the stages of spiritual realization and self-realization. Here, the transition between *Ishq-e-Majazi* (Human love) to *Ishq-e-Haqeeqi* (divine love) is depicted with stages of transformation. The story of the spiritual resembles the *Greek Myth of Pygmalion* (Ovid. n.d.); a sculptor fell in love with his creation. The narratives are most similar to the metaphor of Eve swayed by temptation, punished for wanting knowledge, and finally transformed.

The love within the context of the culturally oppressive setting, which is preprogrammed with the patriarchal and moralistic standards, especially in the diverse cultures of South Asia, is no longer an area of mutual belonging, but a movement in the direction of reverse backwardness that rediscovers the lost early emotional experiences, with the following sense of nostalgia, silence and emotional fantasy. Poets, painters and storytellers have also widely used symbols and other media to express love through hidden connotation, with the help of symbols to be accepted by society, which is equally practiced in modern times. The visual and literary culture of the older and contemporary era has struggled with the realization that love is not just a deep personal sensation, but also a necessity to us, akin to the food we eat and the air we breathe. Love is commonly re-determined, idealized, and modified within social boundaries. It is this incessant war of denial and affirmation that has enabled Lahore to have a unique cultural identity where love was formerly concealed and projected, limited and exalted, private and universal.

Forbidden Love & its Impact:

In the Lahore contemporary visual world scene, Forbidden love is depicted in a way to challenge the societal taboos relating to sexuality and gender identities. Contemporary artist (*Toor n.d.*) and (*Farooq n.d.*) depict the illicit hidden romances in conservative spaces through a variety of themes of surrealist and symbolic practices. Through his work, he aims to explain the audience how marginalized people are forced to hold heterosexual marriages so that no one can question the proposition about their identities.



Figure 1: Challenging LGBTQ+ stigma and shaping feminist narratives through art.

<https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/art-and-culture/paf-challenging-lgbtq-stigma-and-shaping-feminist-narratives-through-art>

In this painting, *Safe Spaces series* (Art." n.d.) by Ahmer Farooq, the visual imagery is either abstract or distorted, deformed into dots. He employs vibrant, bold and dreamy fantastical hues to mask a certain feeling of sadness behind the cheerfulness, mirroring internal fragmentation. The characters are in part disguised or hinted at, and the bodies appear to be dysfunctional, as though they always were. Their behaviors are put behind a veil of camouflage – like visuals. The jovial ambiance is thus misleading and no less aesthetically pleasing, and both show two different faces of reality. Farooq uses the surrealist theme to show that love is a forbidden fruit for the queer community, stigmatized by society's conventional norms.

Misha Japanwala (Japanwala n.d.) is a contemporary visual artist who works with sculptural body casts created of resin, metals, and fiberglass. She directly challenges cultural taboos related to body and gender identities. Japanwala in her art series "*Beghairati ki Nishani*" and *Azaadi Freedom series*, shows the body as a liberated body, which is not the means of concealment and shame. Through casting actual bodies and highlighting body parts, she takes back that which is commonly considered to be dishonorable and makes it something worth visibility. The role of the body becomes critical in the context of forbidden love because it is the first one to be accused. The body is considered as the center of desire and pleasure, but it is also subject to examination and regulation. It is hardly ever questioned when locked up within the socially accepted concepts of dignity and honor, but once it is openly experienced or shown, it is subject to criticism and judgment. She opposes the idea of patriarchy by employing durable and strong materials that make the female body a possession or consumption item. Her writing reclaims the ownership of the body, especially when relations beyond marriage are stigmatized and concealed. Through her practice, she emphasizes that tabooed love is not merely a question of the right to lie as a desiring subject. Japanwala states: "My work is about documentation," Japanwala emphasizes. "It's not a trend. To be reduced to a trend is always difficult for me to digest because it's so much more than that."



Figure 2: *Tell your daughters how to love your body* 2025; Hannah Traore
<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-98-beloved-painter-lois-dodd-gaining-momentum>

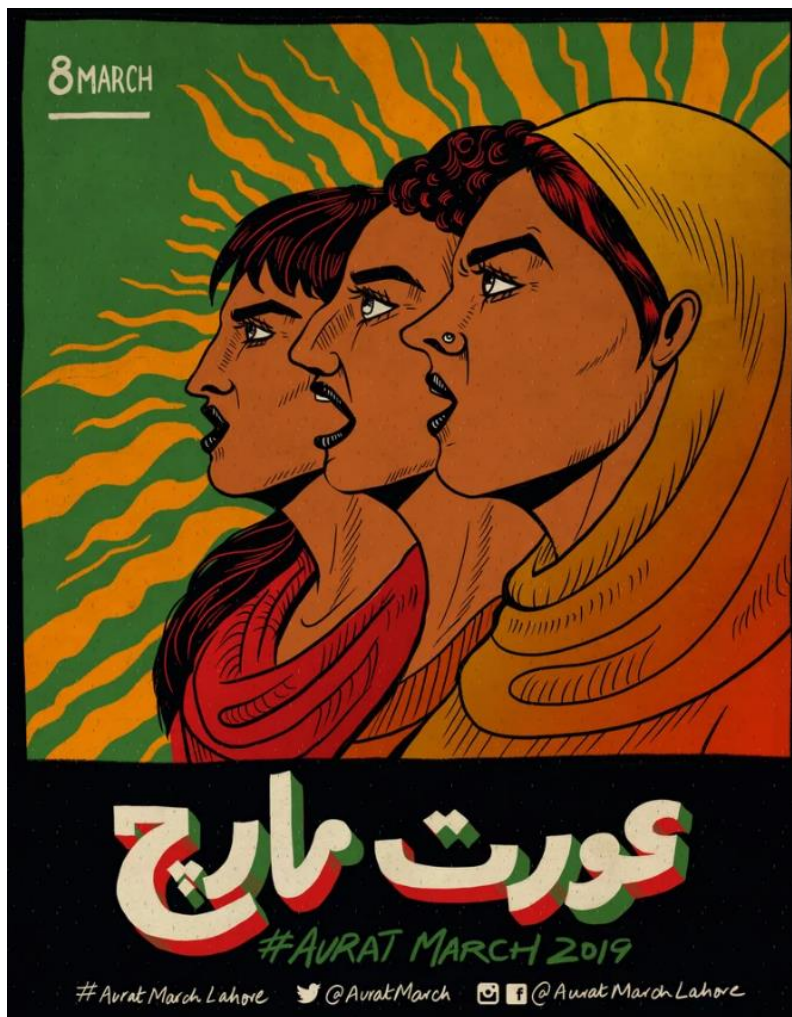


Figure 3: Shehzil Malik-Aurat March (Women's March) 2018. Retrieved July 26, 2025, from
<https://www.shehzil.com/auratmarch>

This graphical poster, *Aurat March 2019* (Malik n.d.) caught many eyeballs and raised eyebrows, created by *Shehzil Malik*, a prominent visual communication designer based in Pakistan. Her work evolves around feminism and body equality. She employs visual metaphors, like the conception of the forbidden fruit, in projects like *Ladies Only* and her *Body Politics and emotional rights series*, to show how women are denied love and freedom of expression by patriarchal systems that value family honor more than individuality. Her work is a sort of healing when she reveals and shatters the illusions of defining female desire as wrong or threatening. Moreover, her Aurat March activist posters and, in particular, the popular slogan of “*Mera Jism Meri Marzi*” have led to national and international debates on bodily autonomy, sexuality, and freedom. In this work, *Malik* changes personal expression into collective resistance and states that love and desire are a basic right and not a shameful experience.



Figure.3: *The Key in the hand 2015*, the 56th International Art exhibition – La biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy Photo by Sunhi Mang from <https://www.chiharu-shiota.com/top>

This installation, *The Key in the hand 2015* (Shiota n.d.) For the Japan Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale is a work of a Japanese artist who used 50,000 old keys and red wool. Chiharu Shiota is widely recognized for her large-scale, immersive work consisting of intricate webs of black and red thread. Her work revolves around themes of sensory memory, absence, identity and human relationships. With the help of a red thread, she represents intense emotions, connection and time phases. While the black thread shows unknown, loss and absence. She shows themes of “*Existence in absence*,” which reflects the message of forbidden love taboos, where the connection is intact, nevertheless, there is no physical presence of a being. Her art shows how people are deeply connected when they share an emotional connection, no matter what the circumstance.

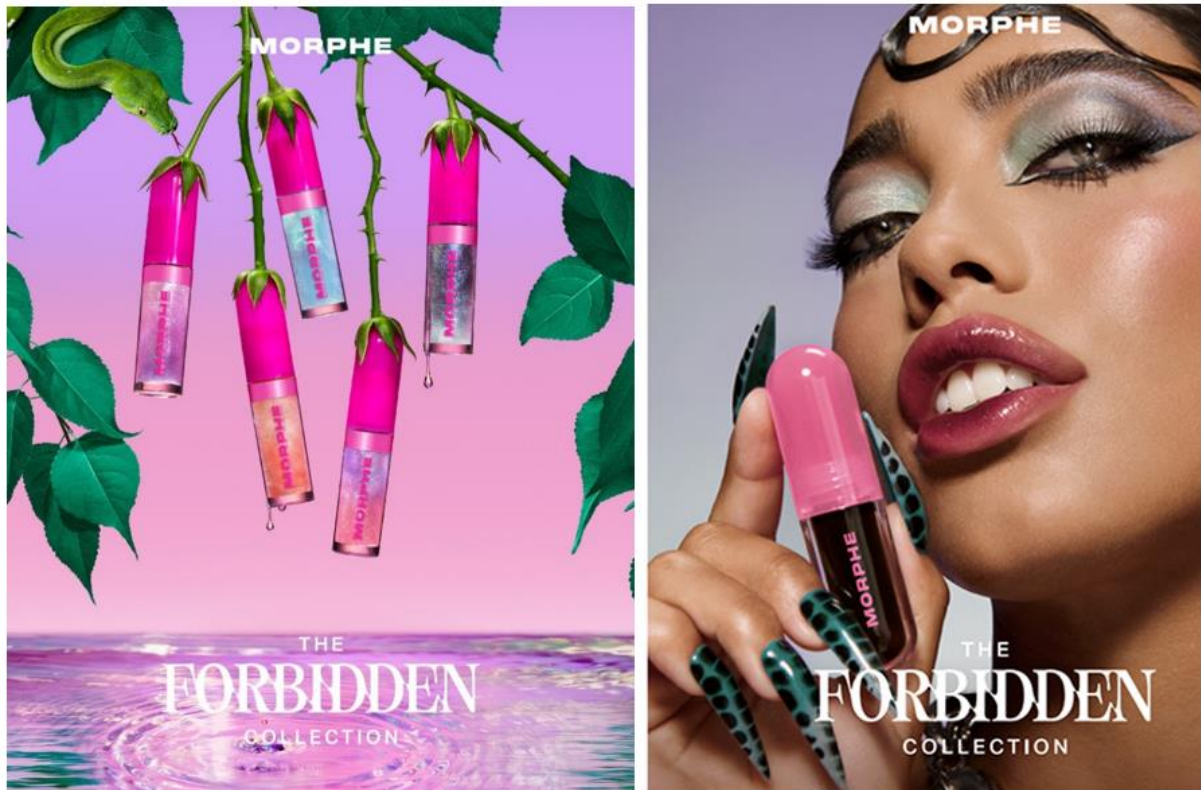


Figure 4: Case Study: *The Forbidden Collection* by Design Army (2025)
<https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/forbidden-collection>

South Asian fashion brands invest a lot of resources into campaigns to position love as a spectacle of consumption that can be marketed in the form of spectacular imagery and heartfelt emotion. It transforms intimacy into aesthetics, and intimacy can be substituted, even reproduced, by a carefully edited image and symbolism, according to this process. The example of the *Forbidden Collection* by Design Army 2025 (2025. n.d.) made by *Morphe Cosmetics* illustrates how modern beauty campaigns combine the surreal fantasy and consumer desire. A combination of AI-generated imagery and real photography, it reinvents myth in a dreamlike manner, where cosmetics are the new forbidden fruit, signs of change, enticement, and allurements. By mystifying the idealized beauty as something divine and alluring, the campaign makes the desirability directly connected to consumption, which promises an idealized, higher self. Similar to idealistic ideas of love, it creates an image of perfection – one that is aesthetically attractive but ultimately founded on fantasy instead of reality.



Figure.5: Courtesy of Schiaparelli. Retrieved July 23, 2025, from <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/fashion-week/a65318558/schiaparelli-fall-2025-couture-beating-heart/>

The *Fall/Winter 2026 beating heart dress* (Freestone n.d.) Designed by *Schiaparelli* is powerful in capturing the concept of love as a theatrical illusion. It has a gem – pulsing, mechanically beating heart, which – with its touches of Surrealist influences – makes emotion spectacle, with its desire and vulnerability staged and artificial. Similar to the forbidden fruit, it promises as a seducer of illusion: it promises emotional depth, but proves its own artifice. The apparent, mechanical heartbeat is used as a symbol of contemporary love in the era of social media, where emotions are edited, packaged, and sold. In this regard, the dress is a critique of fashion and modern culture, so that love in the modern world is not a pure experience, but a well-calculated act that is influenced by looks, materialism, and spectacle.



Figure 6. Boiler Room Jaan-e-haseena. Retrieved July 23, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh8QJomu8OM&t=28s>

Love in South Asia is frequently enacted in performance, providing visibility and freedom whilst staying culturally taboo particularly in queer settings. This conflict was manifest in the backlash to the *Boiler Room Lahore* incident, whereby queer involvement was pushing against the mainstream social conventions and revealing the extent to which cultural structures dictate identity and erotic desires. The show, especially with characters such as *Jaan-e-Haseena*, re-explained the international rave culture in a local socio-political environment. Her hyper- feminine, non-binary body, dressed in bridal red and covered in glitter, placed her in the role of a forbidden fruit: longed after, romanticized, out of social place. Her performance played with and confronted the gaze, disturbing the gender, purity, and respectability binaries. Finally, the event showed that queer expression in Lahore is not only about the visibility but also about challenging cultural repression. It showed that nonconformity is not the only issue that bothers the society, but the disintegration of strong cultural boundaries, revealing the precariousness of structures of norms of love, gender and identity.



Figure.7: Joyland Film Poster (2022). Retrieved September 1, 2025, from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/feb/22/joyland-review-subtle-family-drama-is-remarkable-debut>

Joyland film is an impactful examination of a forbidden love in the stringent social structure of Lahore (Bradshaw n.d.) . The movie traces the life of a reserved man, Haider, who is bound by patriarchal norms and whose life changes when he becomes a member of an erotic dance theatre and enters into an intricate romance with Biba, a trans woman who is a dancer. It is a tender and intimate relationship that is never stopped by the social stigma, family and ingrained gender roles. Instead of the image of love being liberating, *Joyland* unveils it as weak and confined, something that can only be in transient and secretive locations. The theatre is a temporary home, in which a feeling of desire can exist, which is in stark contrast to the suffocating domestic space of heteronormativity and presence. This tension is further highlighted in the marriage between Haider and Mumtaz, where relationships that are sanctioned socially may seem obligatory, as opposed to being real. The movie ends up revealing how love, considered forbidden, is influenced by repression and illusion. Although it has some moments of beauty and emotional truth, they are constantly broken by outside influences, a general South Asian fact that love is not an experience that is lived but one that is negotiated cautiously within the limits of culture, morality and authority.

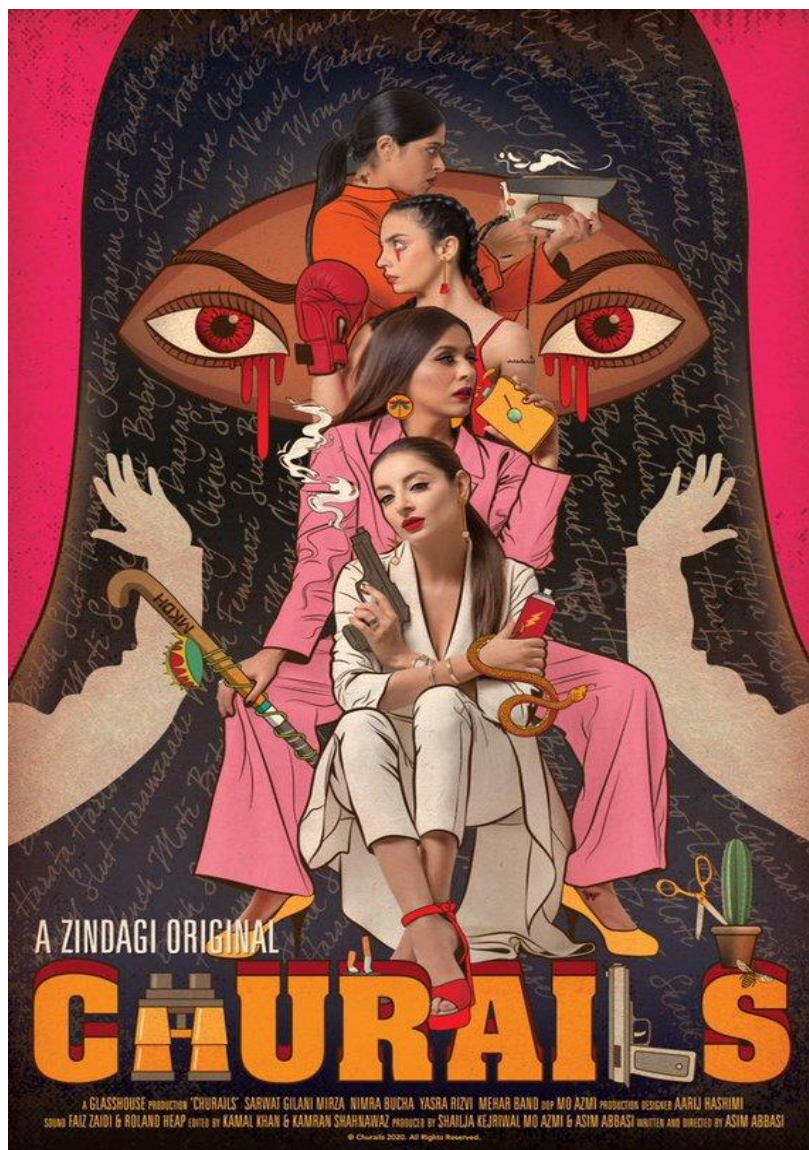


Figure.8: *Churails* Web Series (2020, Zindagi Original). Retrieved September 1, 2025, from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12803682/>

In 2020, the Pakistani web series *Churails* was released on Zee5 as a critique of patriarchal control and the policing of love in Pakistani society (Abbasi 2020). The show revolves around the four female characters, *Batool*, *Sara*, *Jugnu*, and *Zubeida*, who operate a secret detective agency that operates under the cover of a burqa store to reveal male infidelity, yet they deal with more personal problems like domestic abuse, repressed sexuality, and queer desire. The most important aspect of *Churails* is its open depiction of tabooed relationships, such as *same-sex love*, which is commonly concealed or stigmatized in the South Asian media. The show portrays love, particularly that of women and queer people, as something that must remain secret, molded by fear, shame, and social disapproval. The series shows the functioning of love within control systems through the force of visual metaphors, including the use of the burqa as both a concealment and a form of resistance. It questions the concept of respectable love, which is associated with marriage and the honor of the family, and reveals it as a performance instead of a real one. In exposing these taboo histories to the world, *Churails*, in addition to criticizing the cultural conventions, places the practice of narratives itself in a position of resistance against the policing of desire and identity. Its censorship and temporary suppression in Pakistan highlight the social stigma and institutional oppression of such stories, how radical it is to bring forbidden love into the light. Here, telling stories is a form of resistance – challenging prevailing cultural ideals and reasserting the right of women to assert sexuality, agency, and lived experience.



Figure.9: Mrs and Mr Shamim (A Zindagi original Zee5)

<https://images.dawn.com/news/1192384/pakistanis-can-finally-watch-saba-qamar-and-naumaan-ijazs-mrs-amp-mr-shameem>

By focusing on a relationship that breaks the gender norms and cultural expectations, *Mrs. and Mr. Shameem* oppose the traditional Pakistani discourses of love. It is based on the story of a woman (*Umaina as Saba Qamar*) who has been betrayed and a man (*Shameem as Naumaan Ijaz*) who has a non-traditional masculinity ridiculed in the Pakistani society as non-masculine. The series reinvents love as empathy, caring, and respect instead of dominance and passion. Their relationship brings out the rejection of forms of intimacy that do not conform to heteronormative and male ideals. Making the idea of vulnerability a strength and companionship the basis of love, *Mrs. and Mr. Shameem* criticize cultural scripts that are rather strict and provide another perspective of love based on the concepts of dignity, equality, and emotional bonding. *Mrs. and Mr. Shameem* are therefore connected to love and forbidden love through a challenging of culturally acceptable intimacy in the Pakistani society. Although the affair between *Umaina* and *Shameem* is not literally forbidden, it becomes a taboo in social terms since it goes against the expectations of the dominant gender roles, masculinity, and sexual desire. The soft non-hegemonic masculinity of *Shameem* and the rejection of conventional marriage norms by *Umaina* place their relationship in the realm that society regards as either desirable or acceptable. Their love, which consists of care, compassion, and companionship, but not passion or patriarchy, is considered to be abnormal and is frequently teased or dismissed. Through this, the show reveals the way love itself can be made taboo when it fails to conform to heteronormative beliefs and cultural narratives. (*Staff, Pakistanis can finally watch Saba Qamar and Naumaan Ijaz's Mrs & Mr Shameem n.d.*)

Conclusion

Forbidden love is especially relevant in South Asia since the concept violates well-established social conventions, religious demands, and cultural divisions. Although the name itself suggests transgression, it also represents a wish to connect that is not allowed by society. This conflict renders it a compelling topic to be critically examined. Love is, in essence, an intimate and transformative experience that is based on pure authenticity and liberty. Nevertheless, by being repressed or pushed into a secret, it will have a different meaning, which will be affected by fear, power, and social influence. In this regard, what renders love forbidden becomes not its nature but the structures which bind it. Its aspects of secrecy, opposition, and emotional conflict have always predisposed forbidden love to become an interesting theme of art and literature. Not merely a personal feeling, it functions as a cultural and political form of expression, disclosing the restrictions of identity and desire. Such expressions of love must be acknowledged and spoken about because it enables cultures to challenge established conventions and allow more encompassing conceptions of human bonding.

Bibliography

- (n.d.), Beghairat Studio. n.d. *About*. . Retrieved from <https://beghairatstudio.com/pages/about>.
 1950, "Thanda Gosht." n.d.
 2025., "Forbidden Collection." Ads of the World. n.d. *Morphe Cosmetics Forbidden Collection*.
<https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/forbidden-collection>.
 2020. *Churails [TV series]*. Zee5. Directed by A. Abbasi.
 Art., "Pakistan: Challenging LGBTQ Stigma and Shaping Feminist Narratives Through. n.d.
National Herald, 5 Sept. 2023.
 Bhutto, Fatima. 2019. *The Runaways*. New York: Viking.
 Bradshaw, P. (2023, February 22). n.d. *Joyland review – subtle trans drama from Pakistan is remarkable debut*. *The Guardian*.
 Farooq, Ahmer. n.d. *Selected artworks*.
 Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The history of sexuality, Vol. 1: An introduction*. New York: (R. Hurley, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
 Freestone, Camille. n.d. "I'm Haunted by Schiaparelli's Beating-Heart Dress." Harper's Bazaar,

July 7, 2025.

- Freud, Sigmund. 1905. *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*. Vienna: Franz Deuticke.
- Fromm, Erich. 1956. *The Art of Loving*. New York : Harper & Brothers.
- Hussain, Mazhar. n.d. *Queer Frontiers presents: Mazahir Hussain, Artiq*.
- Illouz, E. (1997). n.d. *Consuming the romantic utopia: Love and the cultural contradictions of capitalism*. University of California Press.
- Japanwala, M. (n.d.). n.d. *About Misha Japanwala*. Retrieved from <https://mishajapanwala.com/pages/about>.
- Malik, S. n.d. *Aurat March*. Retrieved from <https://www.shehzil.com/auratmarch>.
- Manto, S. H. (2013). n.d. *Selected short stories*. Penguin Classics.
- Ovid. n.d. *Metamorphoses* . Penguin Classics.
- Plato. 2008. *Symposium*. Athens: Hackett Publishing, 2008. (Original work published ca. 385 BCE).
- Qudsia, B. (1981). n.d. *Raja gidh*. Sang-e-Meel Publications.
- Riaz, Fehmida. 1984. *Chadar aur Chardiwari*. Karachi: Maktaba-e-Danyal.
- Rumi, R. (2018). n.d. *Being Pakistani: Society, culture and the arts*. HarperCollins.
- Saeed, F. (2001). n.d. *Taboo! The hidden culture of a red light area*. . Oxford University Press.
- Shiota, C. (2015). n.d. *The key in the hand [Installation]*. 56th Venice Biennale, Japan Pavilion. 56th Venice Biennale, Japan Pavilion.
- Staff, Images. (2024, April 16). "Pakistanis can finally watch Saba Qamar and Naumaan Ijaaz's Mrs & Mr Shameem." *Dawn* .
- . n.d. "Pakistanis can finally watch Saba Qamar and Naumaan Ijaaz's Mrs & Mr Shameem." *Dawn Images*. <https://images.dawn.com/news/1192384/pakistanis-can-finally-watch-saba-qamar-and-naumaan-ijaazs-mrs-amp-mr-shameem>.
- Toor, S. (n.d.). n.d. *Selected artworks*.
- Umera Ahmed, U. (Writer), & Khoosat, S. (Director). n.d. *Shehr-e-Zaat [TV series]*. HUM TV. Performed by Mohib, Samina Mahira Khan & Mikhaal. Lahore.