The key purpose of this paper is to investigate the gender roles in Naguib Mahfouz’s novel “Zuqaq al Midaq” - Midaq Alley which was written in the 1940s. Egypt has witnessed fatal change in the structure of the society. Males adopted new roles. Likewise, females adopted new roles too. This change in the gender roles is because of the British colonization and both males as well as females are looking for new identities. This paper is discussing the changing roles of the male characters like Abbas, Kirsha, Salim Alwan and Ibrahim Faraj who plays a significant role in the changes of both males and females. It discusses the females role in an oriental society governed by men. Hamida is the central figure who is influenced and influences other characters. Zuqaq al Midaq gives us a good picture of the gender changing roles in Egypt.

Introduction:
Traditional gender roles were certainly starting to change, and women were starting to accomplish a certain agency, when Egypt was re-asserting its identity as a country after the independence from British rule. Naguib Mahfouz, a Noble prize winner of literature, portrays this drift of gender roles in Egypt in one of his most famous novels, Zuqaq al Midq (Medaq Alley). He is the father of Arab novel. The story of the novel certainly resonates with that of Egypt, which had to revolt twice against Britain. Midaq Alley is a microcosm of Egypt during World War II. While the war is wreaking chaos on most of the world, it offers new opportunities for the inhabitants of Midaq Alley. As a result of such turmoil the gender roles start to change in the Egyptian society. As one historian has mentioned that the 1940s were “a decade of sharp contradiction” (Baraka) in Egypt, and the war served to increase many of the disparities already evident in Egyptian society.

Naguib Mahfouz presents dynamic female characters in the roles of mothers, wives, prostitutes, daughters, sisters, and lovers. They are obedient, subservient, powerful, strong, independent, and religious. Mahfouz’s female characters are unique to his understanding of the feminine and the internal and external contradictions within Egyptian culture.

In Egypt, women were traditionally allotted the role of a mother, caretaker, or domestic help within the familial structure. However, this too changed, especially in Egyptian literature. The status of women remains a deeply problematic matter within many Muslim countries today; however, the different characterizations of women presented by Mahfouz reveals the diversity of women in Egypt. Mahfouz writes across generations and his female characters evolve with his stories. The unstable status and roles of Egyptian men and women is characterized through the progression from the old to the new generations. Mahfouz’s male characters express their own existential and spiritual quests through women, whether it is their quest for identity, stability, lust, love, or harmony. The male characters become vehicles through which women are depicted as the central models and bearers of meaningful and social responsibility. Miriam Cooke (1990) and Mona M. Mikhail (2013) have argued about the future. Therefore, male roles are changed. They, accordingly, changed the world of the Midaq Alley. Marriage is changed into prostitution. Love is changed into love of money. The stability of the Midaq Alley has vanished. This is because most men derive from their normal roles in society. They make Midaq Alley only a graveyard. Now, there is no happiness and life as well. It becomes a symbol of death.

Now we find the role of Ibrahim Faraj has lost the positive side of a man. He is one who misleads Hamida to the path of prostitution. Faraj makes soft words to captivate Hamida, saying: “this is not your quarter, nor are these people your relatives. You are completely different. You don’t belong here at all. You are a princess in shabby cloak”.

These words make Hamida to turn her back on the past and thinks only about the future. Therefore, male roles are changed. They, accordingly, changed the world of the Midaq Alley. Marriage is changed into prostitution. Love is changed into love of money. The stability of the Mi-
daq Alley has vanished. This is because most men derive from their normal roles in society. They make Midaq Alley only a graveyard. Now, there is no happiness and life as well. It becomes a symbol of death.

The role of females in Midaq Alley:
Medaq Alley portrays the shift in thinking of females of the Egyptian society. The novel foreshadows the roles of Hamida, Saniyya Affif, Husniya and Sayyida. In Midaq Alley Mahfouz’s protagonist Hamida reflects his obscure belief in the failure of a system governed by a power game and a sterile struggle for patriarchy and domination males and females. When we make a comparison between old females and modern ones of Midaq Alley, we find a great difference. Omm Hamida is content, satisfied with what she has, while Hamida, the young daughter of the Alley, hates the miserable life of the Alley. She calls it “Nothing Alley”. Because of the changing roles of females, there is a total sense of

KEYWORDS : Gender roles , patriarchy , freedom , Zuqaq al Midaq
Hamida grows up in a lower middle class. She feels humiliated in a society governed by men. She lacks power as a woman in an oriented society. However, she is aware of another kind of power to control men. This power is her beauty and charm of attractiveness. She utilizes it as a weapon to captivate the right kind of men who are rich and powerful to fulfill her dreams of wealth and to consolidate her power over men. She says: “I am not the one who is chasing marriage, but marriage is chasing me”. At first, she attaches herself to Abbas, the barber. However, she is aware that his poverty will not satisfy her dreams to wear like the Jewish girls. The role of modern females is not to have love, but to have money instead. Modern females of Egyptian society have adopted materialistic roles in the society. Hamida decides to look for someone who is well-to-do. Salim Alwan, a rich of high middle class, fits her in a society where love is measured by money. Salim Alwan, through the power of his wealth, wins over Hamida’s love.

The weapon of money to control the opposite sex is not only in the hands of men. Mrs. Saniyya Affi, a widow who belongs to class of bourgeoisie, utilizes her money to buy a man who is twenty years younger than her as her second husband. Mahfouz portrays the change in the gender roles in Egypt. Females are not totally controlled by males. Sanyiya Affi utilizes her power over men by the use of money. Salim Alwan, through the power of his wealth, wins over Hamida’s love.

Since things do not work out as it is planned by Hamida and Slim Alwan, her rebellious nature against tradition and poverty finds a good match in Faraj who manipulates the young Hamida. Through Faraj, she apprehends that her attainment lies in the world outside the Alley. Hamida’s conquest of money motivates her to strive for freedom outside the Midaq Alley. She conceives, as Rasheed El-Enany says of her journey as one towards light, wealth, and power. However, she becomes the tragic loser not only because of her master Faraj as a wealthy man, but he is a man in a male society that has crushed women for several centuries. Faraj asks Hamida to turn her back on the past and no longer think of anything except the future. She is misled by him. The conflict between the past and the future means the conflict between the old tradition of Egypt where women were given much care and protection than they are given in the present time. In the past, Hamida was given care and love from Omm Hamida, Abbas and other people in Midaq Alley. In the present time, she is changed into Titi instead of Hamida. Titi is the source of fulfilling sexual desires of the British and the Americans. Now, she has been given a new role in the society. She is now no more than a prostitute. She is given new life, new name and new identity. This is the recurrent image of clash between Hamida and Titi, Midaq Alley and Sharif Pasha Street, Abbas and Faraj, tradition and modernity, East and West, poverty and wealth, and between virtue and vice. In between this kind of clash, there lies the role of men and women in Midaq Alley.

**Conclusion:**

Midaq Alley or Zuqaq al Midaq portrays a significant change in the roles of both sexes, male or female in Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century. The male is no longer a protector of his family. Males adopt new roles in the society. Money and pleasure are the ruling factors of both men and women. The Egyptian woman gets more freedom and liberation. However, she is still exploited by man to satisfy his sexual desire and only to quench his thirst for lust. Hamida looks for a new identity but she has lost the identity of the old generation. She is helpless to get a good role in the Midaq Alley. This is the oriental society which is governed by the male dominance. Naguib Mahfouz was a skilful artist picturing the real picture of the Egyptian society. Zuqaq al Midaq was a microcosm of Egypt and Hamida was its symbol.