

**Women Spaces in Patriarchal Society: A Critique on Tehmina Durrani's My
Feudal Lord**

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Abstract

The study intends to draw attention to women's proper standing in various Pakistani cultures in general and to their plight inside the Punjabi feudal system in particular. The study presents a sober debate and argument regarding the heinousness of Pakistan's patriarchal/feudal society. The patriarchal doctrine of superiority and servitude imposed on the two sexes, i.e. male and female separately, is deeply ingrained in the feudal system. Feudalism in Pakistan is a form of patriarchal social system that provides men more freedom to survive than women. This is an unjust way to live that has to be highlighted as a major issue so that it can be resolved or at the very least minimised. The study is qualitative and mostly focused on the contextual and discursive analysis of Tehmina Durrani's work *My Feudal Lord*. The topics in the chosen texts were examined by the academics using textual analysis. The researchers gathered M.M. Lazar's theoretical notions of feminism from chosen research papers/articles of the discourse analyst, i.e. Lazar, that are relevant to post-feminism in order to support and complete the needs of this study.

Keywords: Feminism, Feudalism, Patriarchal Dogma, Pakistani Women, Subjugation and Oppression

Introduction

From a feminist standpoint, gender is a social construct of an ideology that divides individuals into two categories of men and women based on dominance and subordination, which affect the entire framework of the labour market and human traits. The physiological underpinnings of gender ideology, which is a socially manufactured sexual designation, are likewise contested and rejected by feminists. It is true that the concept of gender operates through and is inscribed in sexed bodies, but the entire notion of two sexes has significance only because those meanings are principally required by the gender structure, according to Lazar, who quotes Grant (1993). (p. 146) Individual humans may stray from the sex-based view of gender that categorises human characteristics as masculine or feminine, but the converse may happen to the ideological view of gender that privileges men over women according to patriarchal standards that divide and give them. men have a right to social, political, and economic authority. When one learns about a man oppressing his wife or when some injustice is committed in the name of gender, it is not

surprising that gender looks to be dominating in the sense that it has become a socially consensual and acceptable concept. The concept of "sex disparities" (p. 147) has become too widespread in the culture for one person to diverge from it while yet acting as an oppressor. Gender ideology is a social structure when it is implemented and reinforced in social institutions. These widespread beliefs that there are "just two sexes" (p. 147) must be altered in order to create a decent social order. The gender structure is sometimes reinforced by opposition to such formalities, as in the case of the gender roles being reversed. Depending on the setting and circumstance, this reinforcement has different results. In contrast to other people's current behavioural patterns, masculinity in a woman and femininity in a man redefine the socially built gender ideology on a different level. The traditional self/other binary, where men are perceived as "me" and women as "other," and vice versa, is the assumed norm of the "other." The historically set norm is violated and not retained in modern and eternal family relationships when males take on the roles of women and vice versa. This role reversal becomes behavioural because it is the necessity of the hour.

In a patriarchal society, men undertake work outside the home while women are restricted to their homes and in charge of domestic responsibilities, including child care. Most women continue to be repressed, busy, and isolated from the outside world, therefore I neglect oppression by neglecting household chores. A lady spends her entire life trying to win her husband's love because if her husband is content, he would stop being violent toward her. Because they view household duties as an expression of their love for their families and a significant chance for constructing their identities, feminist studies have found that women do not confront or object to the unequal allocation of family chores (Erickson, 2005).

Women are viewed as the last bastion of morals and behaviour, while men are left without any explanation for their acts. If a woman is accused of immorality, even unjustly, her life is not guaranteed. When women demand justice or rights from society, they are subjected to "freedom" slurs and the "free bird" metaphor. Therefore, any cruel treatment of women qualifies as oppression of women.

Gender Identity Crisis

The foundation of a patriarchal society is gender inequality. When someone is unable to recognise the existence of another person, they experience an identity crisis. A superiority

complex develops in such a person who is socially superior to the other, leading to the development of distinct identities for the two. A person's gender identity represents a firmly held and lived perception of their own sex, which may or may not match the biological sex they are given at birth. Sexual orientation, which describes which gender a person is attracted to, is distinct from gender identity; for instance, many transgender people are heterosexual (Anonymous, 2014, p. 37).

Women's exploitation is a global issue. Women are never allowed to live independently because they are seen as inferior to males. Women and men do not differ biologically in any way. She is inferior because of her gender, which is how society defines women. The term "female subordination" refers to women's lesser status in society. They do not have the authority to rule, govern, or own in a patriarchal culture. Women are oppressed by men due to low self-confidence, discrimination, and feelings of helplessness. Thus, "the inferior status of women to men" is the definition of "the oppression of women" (Sultana, 2010-2011, p. 7).

It indicates that one's gender identification gives them a sense of self-importance and makes them aware of the significance of their gender while disregarding or rejecting the other gender. One is ignorant when they are so self-important. He views himself as the sum of all things, whereas the other sex is nothing. Gender identity uncertainty contributes to other social ills like violence, discrimination, and unfairness of the other sex. By elevating men while demeaning women and erasing their identities, patriarchal societies mirror the gender identity issue.

Every social structure has a unique historical and cultural foundation. For a very long time, members of patriarchal societies have been transforming patriarchy into a gender crisis. The beginning of the identity crisis is the biological differences between men and women, and the intensity of the crisis is focused on gender inequality, social injustice, role classification, and behavioural patterns. According to Eckes and Trautner (2000), gender is a socially constructed schema based on biological distinctions between men and women that affects a person's mental process and behaviour. These factors then influence attitudes about gender-related issues, disparities in work, gender, and the recognition of distinctions between men and women.

According to Petress (2013), "power is the ability to influence others to believe what individuals in positions of authority want them to believe, behave, or value" (Petress, 2013), power is the

ability to "reinforce, confirm, or confirm current beliefs, behaviours, or values." French and Raven categorised power into five categories to explain the fundamental forms of power. They contend that expertise and experience are the foundations of expert power. The power of reward is the incentive—emotional, financial, spiritual, etc.—you provide them to carry out your instructions. Power obtained through election, appointment, or selection into office is referred to as legitimate power.

Referent power is derived from our affiliation with and appreciation for an individual, group, association, society, or nation (Mustafa's initial impression of Durrani was a referent power that led her to adore him and subsequently fall in love with him). Coercive power, on the other hand, is the ability to compel somebody to do something. Domestic (as in Durrani's situation), social, political, emotional, or even economic factors can be involved. Coercive power causes victims and oppressors to harbour animosity, dishonesty, treachery, and negative traits. This power also had an impact on Durrani. (1959; French and Raven).

Petress added three additional significant forms of power to this. The information or knowledge that other people seek is the foundation of informational power, in Petres' opinion. We are bound to our traditions and customs by traditional power, which is socially constructed. As Durrani experienced when she broke the tradition of silence, breaking traditions makes us socially isolated. People with charismatic influence are uncommon in society. It gets one closer to the ideal representation of beauty, perfection, extreme confidence, etc. Hitler is a prime example of charismatic influence (Petress, 2013).

It is important to keep in mind that power only works when its intended recipients accept it voluntarily; otherwise, bad power use is abuse of power, and abuse of power leads to negative behaviour on the part of the intended recipients, who then become power victims.

According to Michelle M. Lazar (2005), gender is a socially constructed category that includes gender, social class, social status, culture, and geography. The concept of patriarchy also has intricate relationships with both the patriarchy's source and its beneficiaries. Using Cameron's (1992) "Feminism and Linguistic Theory" as a point of reference and explanation, Lazar (2005) contends that Cameron overcame all scholarly bias to demonstrate how linguistic customs and practises influence and represent patriarchy as an ideology and how it is oppressed through the use of language. Although an individual author may not consciously or unconsciously use the

word feminism when writing, the text as a whole reflects a feminist concern. It encourages writers to use language to solve gender identity crises and holds the belief that solving gender-related issues chooses a feminist perspective. Lazar's interpretation of critical feminism adopts a political viewpoint on gender, demystifying and illuminating the interaction between gender, power, and ideology that is still concealed through discourse.

The following research inquiries are consequently addressed in this paper: What crucial function does research serve in drawing attention to the unequal allocation of power between men and women? In what ways does the study disprove the conservative view of patriarchy? And how does masculinity affect the treatment of women? These research issues are investigated to meet the following goals: to address the conservative idea of patriarchy while diminishing it, to address the conservative concept of patriarchy while exposing the gendered distribution of power in society.

Literature Review

Lazar's Versions of Feminism

To investigate hierarchical gender power and ideology in discourse, critical feminism and discourse are combined. Asymmetric gender conceptions and the exercise of power, while they may differ from culture to culture, are linked to social identities, making critical feminism necessary today. A feminist perspective is used to investigate societal injustices and inequities through critical feminist analysis. Feminism and discourse both aim to create a just society. The primary objective of Lazar's brand of feminism is to textually demonstrate how hegemonic power relations and gender norms are generally established, upheld, and challenged in a community.

Discourse aims to examine language from all angles, including critical examination of modalities, visuals, emotions, sounds, gestures, and layouts that evoke thoughtful meaning in study (Lazar, 2007). Through discourse, it is possible to examine the ways in which gendered power is manifested and upheld. This may be done by studying how the dominant person gives interactions meaning, determines their purpose, and controls the outcomes (Holmes, 2005). Discourse and critical feminism vary in that the latter explicitly demonstrates, affirms, and

promotes the idea that gender is not just a societal construct but also an individual construct with origins in third-wave feminism and poststructuralism (including postmodern feminism).

To see gender as conversationally manufactured, critical feminism draws on Butler's performative notions. Gender is a variable that is constructed to designate femininity and masculinity in society (1990). 2007 (Lehtonen) Postmodern feminist Judith Butler agrees with Simone de Beauvoir's theory that gender is a socially constructed phenomena and that sex is gendered—marked by gender. Butler made a distinction between her conceptions of performance and performativity to make her points more clear. Speaking about something is known as performing, whereas doing action to make an utterance happen is known as performativity (Tong, 2009).

The oppressive patriarchal society prevents the woman from speaking up openly about her personal experiences and keeps her under pressure. Religion also contributes to the oppression of women through the titles of rites and traditions, in addition to male control. The intricate web of patriarchal culture serves as a constant barrier to a woman's ability to be an independent individual. Durrani is a brave woman who, in her memoirs *My Feudal Lord*, portrayed the tyranny of women. She spoke out for her own and other women's rights in Pakistan by describing her horrific marriage in detail (Sandhya, 2008). The cruel and hypocritical nature of men who repress women in their personal lives was illustrated by Durrani.

They mistreat their wives, daughters, sisters, and even mothers in their homes since they are unable to manage every woman in society. When they are out from their homes, they act in a moral and respectable manner. Gemie (2012) makes reference to *My Feudal Lord* as an example, and *My Feudal Lord* by Tehmina Durrani makes reference to Mustafa Khar's contrasted methods. the former as a prominent liberal and the latter as he conducted himself in private (Gemie, 2012).

Discussion and Analysis

My Feudal Lord

It might be challenging for women to share their private lives with the public in patriarchal societies. However, the man who has had enough of men's hypocrisy will force her to speak, and

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the world will then hear what she has to say. The only option for Durrani to exact revenge on Mustafa, a hypocrite, publish an honest book, and reveal the truth about his personal life was to break the protracted quiet. She made her literary debut in Pakistani English through this work. Durrani's autobiographical book, *My Feudal Lord*, was initially released in 1991. It upended Pakistani society from the ground up.

It was incredibly brave of them to rebel against the patriarchal system while treading the same treacherous waters of religious communalism (Tawase, 2016, p. 2).

My Feudal Lord is evaluated as a text that is an uncommon autobiography that has attracted attention since it is a very personal account of Durrani's life. With the commutation test in mind, the researcher attempted to swap Mustafa Khar for Durrani in the oppressor position since the victimised man in Pakistan's feudal society alters reality and the researcher is aware that Pakistan is a patriarchal country. Because men are people, it is unethical to oppress them, especially in situations where a woman cannot do so. While the lack of structure restricts the narrative *My Feudal Lord* by examining how common men in society treat women. It also begs the question of why Durrani stressed violence in order to win Mustafa's love. The level of abuse and torture endured by Durrani at the hands of her husband, Mr. Khar, can be used to justify the answer.

According to Durrani's official website, she has served as a symbol for all Muslim women since the 14th century. He claims

Tehmina Durrani's controversial autobiography, *My Feudal Lord*, published in 1991. It has been translated into 39 languages and is a European bestseller. The book was a pioneer in breaking the hitherto unbroken silence of Muslim women since the 14th century, reconciling the rights of women with the paramount principle laid down for them in Islam...yet it was a book ahead of its time (Durrani).

Liberation is a concept that requires bravery to apply. *My Feudal Lord*, which Durrani published in an effort to retaliate against her husband Mustafa Khar, turned out to be the decisive moment in both her emancipation and Mr. Khar's downfall. Aprajita makes the case that creating one's own story leads to authors like Durrani in *My Feudal Lord*, citing the book. With self-disclosure and accuracy, a copyright exemption is feasible. 2015 (Aprajita) The autobiography of Durrani is currently being utilised as a criterion to evaluate the position of women in Muslim society.

Women Spaces in Patriarchal Society: A Critique on Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*

According to Mubarik (2015), Durrani's life story is a prime illustration of a Muslim woman, the tale of women who, in the name of marriage, are held as slaves in matrimonial houses.

whose lives misinterpretations of Islam are controlling. She attempted to rebel against her guilty spouse, but her husband betrayed her, and this resistance ultimately led to her practising self-denial (Mubarik, 2015).

Almost every passionate girl views marriage as a means of escaping the difficulties she might encounter at her parents' place. Every girl hopes that her marriage would be a happy, romantic chapter in her life, but most of the time, these hopes are dashed. The author herself twice fell into this trap. She married Anees because she is romantic by nature, but she found him to be an unattractive, negligent husband. She starts to picture a nice life with Mustafa Khar, but as she explains, "I had no authority, no rights, no will of my own," her vision is quickly upset.

The aforementioned example illustrates how a woman lives after marriage in patriarchal societies, particularly in some sectors of Pakistani culture. Women devote themselves to their spouses when a marriage is consummated. They have to fulfil their husbands' expectations. After her husband passes away, the bride or wife is required to depart his house. She is mistreated severely, abused, and oppressed, but she must endure this suffering in quiet. The husband is regarded as the highest rank in Islam, but most husbands abuse this status by abusing their wives. In Pakistan, especially in the poorer regions where men treat their wives like animals, this is a frequent practise. Although Mustafa was a feudal lord and had roots in Kot Addu's underdeveloped region, Durrani, who belonged to the elite class, was unaware of these facts. One of Pakistan's roughest, harshest, and most primitive tribes is the feudal. There are no laws or rules other than their own.

Reading a text involves creating meanings based on the text at hand. The reader and the text are conversing in silence during this procedure. Every text, according to Catherine Belsey, has some restrictions. Despite Islam's stringent prohibition on all forms of violence against women, most men in this patriarchal society nonetheless engage in it. According to Lazar (2007), the cause of women's oppression is the misuse of authority. Violence is forbidden by law in many countries around the world, despite the fact that many of those societies nonetheless practise it. When a woman is treated in such a cruel, primitive manner, her identity is called into doubt. If so, who is it? or a creature? It is wrong to even treat an animal in this manner. In a patriarchal society, this

is how women are treated in private. Without the man's permission, she is unable to move. According to Durrani, this is the most severe kind of domestic violence, where a woman's bladder is incapable of working normally: "I felt the wetness running down my legs but I didn't have time to realize that my bladder doesn't have the strength to face this kind of fear. " The majority of men are frustrated by the fact that their wives' pregnancies go unnoticed. They are picked up and thrown around like toys, as if they had no self-respect or value: "He flung me against a wall, scooped me up and threw me against another - over and over and over." As though abuse was meant to be their fate.

Durrani's internal struggle against Mustafa's abuse of power is shown in the phrase "struggled to suppress my screams." Domestic violence is indicated by phrases like "pulled my hair," "pushed my head," "lacked the strength to face this kind of fear," and "threw me against the wall, again and again and again." Durrani's intention to use these phrases appears to highlight the inhumane tactics some cultures use to oppress women. In contrast, the phrase "I begged in a weak voice" reflects the weak position of a woman in front of a man who is adamant and in control.

Conclusion

Individualization is the term used to describe the process of personality development. Because the agent cannot identify the victim during an identity crisis, the victim is unable to grow personally. As a result, the sufferer is uncertain about his true identity and what others think of him. The victim has self-esteem loss and could live a life of repression. Another component of identity crisis is the agent, who may also be a victim of superiority complex and exploits the identity crisis as a technique of suppression (by disregarding or neglecting the victim's identity).

Durrani's psychological health suffered from living with Mustafa Khar, and she started to doubt her own existence. Identity crisis sufferers doubt their existence and look for the purpose of their lives in an effort to make sense of it all. When Durrani left Mustafa's shadow and entered the real world, she was struggling to cope and her mental fortitude was waning. The most vivid illustrations of an identity crisis can be found on pages 122–126 of chapter 4, where Mustafa directly challenges Durrani's identity and Durrani responds by realising her identity as an author.

My Feudal Lord by Durrani is a representation of patriarchal misuse of power and a thorough explanation of how women react to this abuse as helpless, helpless creatures. Because they give

the mistaken impression that they are all-powerful and the most dominant human kind on Earth, men who are dominant characters fall prey to the superiority complex. Because they believe they are invincible, they subjugate women and put them through physical and mental pain in the process.

In achieving the study's goals, it may be deduced that some social groups within Pakistani society do not respect women's legitimate rights. Women are still subjected to oppression at some social levels, regardless of class. Even the upper class, which exhibits antiques and stands for education and decency, is not immune to oppression of women.

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