

A Study of and Violence against Women in Feudal Society with Special Reference to “My Feudal Lord” by “Tehmina Durrani”

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the sexual harassment and violence against women in a feudal society in the novel “My Feudal Lord” by “Tehmina Durrani”. It spotlights how women live under social restrained destiny; where they suffer letdown, thwarting, dismay and mocking. Physical violence is usually accompanied by psychological abuse and in many cases by sexual assault. Wife beating is a century old phenomenon; which transcends all natural, ethnic and class boundaries. We can see the same condition in Durrani’s “My Feudal Lord”, where women are not only ill-treated by their husbands but also by the feudals of their areas. All these problems and incidents are dangerous for women’s identity. The paper deals with major aspects of hegemonic masculinity, sexual harassment and violence against women. This report will study the threats to female identity in the light of Kristeva’s feministic views (1980, 1983, 1986, 2008).

Keywords: Sexual harassment, Feudal lord, Violence against women, Women identity

1. INTRODUCTION

This research is the study of sexual harassment and violence against women of Tehmina Durrani’s memoir My Feudal Lord (1995) in the light of French feminist Julia Kristeva’s feministic views. In our feudal society, women are considered inferior to men because the feudal society doesn’t accept their right (Habib et al., 2013). Sexual harassment is intimidating of a sexual nature, or the undesirable or improper promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors. According to the most modern legal contexts, sexual harassment is illicit. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2014) defined: "It is illegal to harass a person because of that person's sex." Harassment can include "sexual harassment" or unwanted sexual advances, desires for sexual favors, and other physical or verbal harassment of a sexual nature. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that: “Violence against women is a symptom of historically unequal power relations between male female” and that "violence against women is one of the vital social mechanisms by which women are forced into an inferior position compared with men” (A/RES, 2014).

Historically, in most cultures the institution of family has been patriarchal and male dominated. Male control and husband’s power of chastisement of their wives is usually sanctioned by religious and cultural norms (Batoool ,2002). Violence is the main problem in tribal-cum-feudal society, where women are considered as property. Men firmly believe that women are made for them. That they wish to keep women under their thumb all the time. Now a day, with the increasing feminist consciousness, women started breaking the silence by bringing in to the public their experience of violence with in the family unit (Shree, 2002). Violence is an act carried out with the intention of physically hurting another person. It is expanding the term violence by including sexual, psychological, emotional and verbal violence and also the threats of violence and all those traditions and customs which deprive women from liberty. Familial violence or beating of wives is the most endangering event to the women’s physical safety, and emotional mistreatment by their male partners. A National study carried out in the United States estimated that about 21-30 percent of women were beaten at least once in their lives by male partners and the feudal of their areas (Mishra, 2006). It was observed that despite tremendous changes in the 20th century, discrimination and violence against women and girls remained firmly rooted in cultures around the world. Every other day papers report rape cases, by influential Zimindars. The status of women remains low in our society due to a number of factors: Women were kept subjugated under the male dominant feudal system (Human Security Report, 2012). Sexual harassment in the workplace typically ranges from mildly distasteful sexist comments and joke, pornographic pin-up posters, provocative electronic male and X-rated computer software all the way to our right assault and rape in extreme cases. For example in England sexual harassment affects one in seven women and one in five professional women, according to a recent survey by the London School of Economics (UN, 1993).

The present study is an attempt to look into various economic, social and cultural factors which have

become the basic cause of violence in our society and to assess the impact of this violence on women and their family structure. Violence against women and girls has been described as the most pervasive violation of human rights (Saddique 2004). My Feudal Lord has caused many debates among the male-dominant societies of Pakistan. This work shows the real picture of women in third world countries on one hand while on the other hand, it depicts ruling of patriarchy. This novel is giving various dimensions to see the things and to highlight the required aspects. Novel "My Feudal Lord" by "Tehmina Durrani" deals with major aspects of hegemonic masculinity, sexual harassment and violence against women (Durrani, 1995). This report is based on Kristeva's feminist views (1980,1983,1986,2008) have been employed to examine and construe the life of a woman in a male jingoistic society. In Durrani's memoir (1995) it is the male social order which created a chauvinistic figure, Mustafa Khar. Khar, the male character of memoir was not a born autocrat, but society taught him the art of autocracy against women (Habib et al., 2013).

1.1. Review of Literature

Historical and literary studies reveal that much has been done to make women noticeable and visible. The prominent works are Sheila Rowbotham's *Hidden from History* (1973); Ellen Moer's *Literary Women; The Great Writers* (1976); Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977). Feminist approach accentuated not only the differences but with also the hierarchy. Men, the more dominant than women, impose their own concepts and definitions on the masculine / feminine identities. Violence is not an easy act to define. Khizra in her study entitled majority of the female's point of view women's position was considered inferior to man (Khizra 1998). According to Shaheen's findings, physical violence exist in all strata of society and main targets are wives (Shaheen, 1991). It is stated that gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation including those resulting from cultural prejudice are incompatible with the dignity and worth of human person and must be eliminated. Violence against woman starts from the day when the birth of female child is mourned by the family. For the past decade, rape and sexual assault have been increased in our society Gender-based violence generally encompass physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women including threats and coercion. Gender-based violence endives from women subordinate status in society and is often referred to as wife beating, battering and domestic violence. Pakistani women suffer from high rates of rape, sexual harassment and sexual assault by the feudal. Women are treated as property of men (Bari, 1996). Domestic setting is fraught with violence which exposes women to physical abuse, marital rape, burning to death, psychological torture, and deprivation of basic needs and threats of violence in their families. (News Letter, 1996). Gender based domestic violence against women is mostly committed due to social values that attribute low status of women and devalue their lives and activities. Wife beating is common but its frequency and intensity vary across different groups and communities (Hafeez, 1998). Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. It is said sexual harassment, physical violence, female infanticide or seriously injuring female family and community members with impunity (Carol Bellamy, 2000). The reasons for more violence are feudalism and male dominance. It includes physical violence such as hits, kicks, slap, beating, burning and sexual violence, psychological violence and discrimination at any stage of life in community and society, dowry related violence, sexual harassment at work place etc. "Domestic violence which includes physical abuse, rape, acid throwing, burning and killing is wide spread by feudal lords in Pakistan". (HRCP, 2000) reported the worst victims were the poor or middle class women. Feudal Lords after fulfilling their lust of sex disappear from the scene, leaving their partners behind to bear the worth of cruelties of others. Shree while speaking about My Feudal Lord (1995), she argues, Khar is in fact the product of the feudal society where women are no more than just material articles and objects. (Shree, 2002). Sunday Times wrote about My Feudal Lord: Durrani's story provides extra ordinary intuitions into the susceptible position of women caught in the intricate web of society. In Pakistan, women are victims of inhuman customs and discriminatory laws. The experience or threat of violence affects the lives of women everywhere, cutting across boundaries of wealth, race, and culture (Madadgaar Research, 2004). Mishra (2006) says about feminism, "The notion of being a woman should not be guided by the dictates of the patriarchal society". Elisha's thesis (2011) a hypothetical description of female moral liability: Emmanuel Levinas with Lucy Irigaray and Kristeva. The paper terminates that patriarchy launches the ideas of man's superiority and woman's demotion on the basis of gender (Baseer, Alvi & Zafraan, 2013).

1.1.1 Methodology

This research is qualitative research, it is a collection of inductive-subjective experiences based purely upon my perception. This report is based on Kristeva's feminist views (1980,1983,1986,2008) which have been employed to examine and construe the life of a woman in male jingoistic society, applying on the novel "My Feudal Lord" by Tehmina Durrani. Kristeva's feminist views are applicable to dissect the text Durrani's memoir. Though Kristeva is a linguist yet her concepts and ideas are of great implication for feminist theories.

She says, “I am quite dedicated to the feminist movement” (cited in Roudiez, 1981). Since the outer social world is masculine and patriarchal, it is necessary to learn the language of the father to learn the language of the world (Robbins, 2000). Kristeva points out that patriarchy creates the designs of Men’s superiority and Women’s otherliness on the basis of emblematic or civilize perception and not the natural ones. While both are inseparable, attached and independent. Oppression or overthrow of one and supremacy and control of other causes threat to the soft and even operation of social order. Several relevant extracts from the text of *My Feudal Lord* (1995) by Tehmina Durrani have been cited and analyzed to show the plight of women being browbeaten and exploited by men on the basis of patriarchal cultural concepts constructed around the power of men-folk. Even though Kristeva does not refer to her own writing as feminist, many feminists revolve to her work in order to expand and develop various discussions and disputes in feminist theory and criticism. Three fundamentals of Kristeva’s thought have been particularly important for feminist theory in Anglo-American contexts:

- i. Her attempt to bring the body back into discourses in the human sciences;
- ii. Her focus on the significance of the maternal and preoedipal in the constitution of subjectivity; and
- iii. Her notion of abjection as an explanation for oppression and bias.

1.1.2. Discussion

Durrani’s autobiography *My Feudal Lord* (1995) obviously gives an idea about her worrying marital life with an imperialist feudal lord named Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Khar. Khar, a prominent politician in the history of Pakistani politics, is a previous chief minister of Punjab. Actually, he is a prophetic sponsor of democracy while in the private affairs of his life he is no more than an inoperable wife-abuser. The memoir is divided into three parts identified as (I) Lion of Punjab (II) Law of Jungle (III) Lioness. All three parts clearly plot the growth of Tehmina Durrani from a normal and unimportant aristocratic house wife to an unbound and liberated woman who is struggling for equal rights. She is distressed and is ridiculed in her entire life not to rebuff and go against this societal formation, the illustrative order in Kristeva’s terminologies.

My Feudal Lord (1995) is the factual prime example of women’s predicament and their introverted condition. It has been written unequivocally and specially in Pakistani context referring to the difficulty of women in pertaining to male leadership abstract order. The chosen text has a weird and detailed backdrop which is appropriate keeping in Kristeva’s feministic views, perpetuation that descriptive social order makes women remain at the sympathy of what the men in their lives and society regard as best for them. It dictates even the most important pleasures of women. Although Durrani’s work (1995) was marked as offensive on certain justifications yet the reality remained firm at its position that her memoir symbolizes and explains the actual picture of suppression of women in developing countries on one hand, while on other it conveys to panorama the unfair ruling of patriarchal which is honestly responsible for the present prejudiced status of women. Mustafa Khar acts upon the accurate role of a patriarch and of a mannish tormenter in addition to an undue and boisterous man. Durrani’s work (1995) shows various examples of this type of patriarchal rudeness, violence against women and sexual harassment by the feudal lord.

Khar represents a wild animal that spoils the life of many innocent women with his power and extraordinary rights. As Durrani affirmed: “women entered Mustafa’s life swiftly and left just as rapidly” (Durrani, 1995, p 44). This analytical outline informs the present study in the following ways. Durrani was victim of sexual harassment by feudal lord Khar. Durrani was sixth woman, who came in Mustafa’s life. He used to get the women as a simulated doll, he ought to exploit them and fling them away. These evidences leads to Aristotle’s views about women, he stated, “Woman as a sexual doll” (Aristotle, 2012). He called himself a Shikari. “I am a Shikari” (Durrani, 1995, p. 41). “He plucked Safia from the heavens and locked her in a cage” (Durrani, 1995, p. 45). Khar was not an ordinary Pakistani man. He was presented as a respectable elected official and harsh feudal who hardened to pluck women on every occasion and from everywhere he wanted and put them into the cage of restrictions and conventions. He was the real hunter of innocent women who used them for sexual desire. In the whole novel Durrani stayed behind an exploit women. In fact Mustafa was no more than a feral animal, incapable to identify with women’s feelings. Durrani’s novel points out that Khar didn’t sway to smash any commandment of Islam if his sexual coercion so provoked him.

Durrani acknowledged it in the text by saying “Feudal law permit a man to perform in such mode, but for a wife to give up a spouse is the supreme sin” (Durrani, 1995, p. 51). He took benefit of his masculine gender to take advantage of feminine gender through violence, sexual harassment and clout. It also depicts the brutality against women in such setups. These words facilitate the non native readers to know about the socio-cultural, racial and emotional structure of feudal landlords. It also elucidates the status and place of women in the male dominated feudal societies of Pakistan. The chosen wording gives a comprehensible difference between males and females in Pakistani patriarchal society. Novel shows the actual depiction of women in third world countries on one hand while on other hand it portrays the order and power of patriarchy. Mustafa Khar presented the accurate role of a patriarchal feudal lord and mannish power in treating his wife.

He did, whatsoever he learnt from his environment, from his ethnicity, he himself said: “I am the result of dominant, privileged class” (Durani, 1995, p. 58). My Feudal Lord formed an exact depiction of gender abuse, male supremacy and women’s withdrawn status in a patriarchal society of Pakistan. Feudal Lord’s laws were only for lower middle class people but all was right for him. He never showed his attachment with his children. Durrani was trodden, assumed and disgraced by her feudal lord husband Mr. Khar.

Mr. Khar’s affair with Tehmina’s sibling (Adila) drove Tehmina nearly barmy out of terror in the part second of the novel *Law of the Jungle*. Second part of the novel is set in London where Mustafa and Tehmina start a chic life as banishes. Durrani’s memoir presents different paradigm of male dominated society. It spotlights the manly supremacy and domination with the help of Mustafa’s character. It is surveyed that Mustafa used language in his expressions represents his dominancy, violence against women and vindictive nature. It additional explores in the background of Pakistani feudal society. Durrani proves valor by writing about the male chauvinism of feudal society and therefore effort to remonstrance against it. The researchers plan to convey the problem of women’s tyranny and male power into the glare of publicity in the traditionally conventional patricentric societies of Pakistan. Aristotle says “woman is a deformed Male” (Aristotle, 2012), if we look at our feudal society we can see Aristotle’s views about women that woman is inferior to man who has no identity in patriarchal society. On the other hand, he was a chronic wife abuser and violator of women. Mr. Mustafa’s sexual violence and physical beating, continuing these assaults as a part of her fortune. Durrani says, “There was not a day that Mustafa did not hit me” (Durrani, 1995, p. 106). According to Mustafa, a woman like land is “power, status, prestige and a assets”. Astoundingly, when Tehmina conceived as an effect of Mustafa’s fierce rapist anguishes, he acquires a lot of personal heed of her. This bestow to sexual ascendancy of the wife by the husband patriarchic talk does not consider sex as a mode of reciprocal physical delight but somewhat as a tool of domination.

When Mustafa was governor he violated many women in Heera Mandi on the bases of his status and feudality. He was the lady killer; no one can escape from his sexual thirst. Mustafa depicted a true picture of feudal and male dominant society where women have no personal will; rather they are puppets in the hands of males and feudal lords. Not only Khar was cruel but also his nephew and relatives were most brutal. Most of the novel is about wife beating. Khar used to bang Durrani almost every day. Although Khar was performing callous tyranny of his wife, he introduced himself to the populace of Punjab, as their rescuer who wanted to alteration society and grant the poor and the underprivileged their prerogatives. She is upset and mockery in her whole life not to reject and go against this social structure, the representational order in Kristeva’s expressions. Whenever she struggled to come out of it, her husband had beaten her. Kristeva disputes, this world is man’s world only. Tehmina says, “I had no power, no rights, and no will of my own” (Durrani, 1995, p 107). This state shows lower status of women and violence against women in patriarchal feudal society. The writer of “My Feudal Lord” beautifully and boldly wrote about Feudal Lord’s violence, cruelty, brutality thirst for sex with women.

It has been written explicitly and particularly in Pakistani milieu referring to the dilemma of women in patriarchal symbolic order. First, the author used multi coated scrutiny integrates textual language. Second, text is at the central part of the study. The selected text explains the women’s location in our Pakistani society, mainly in isolated cultures and in feudal system.

1.1.3. Conclusion

Thus the study brought out the phenomenon of violence whether gender based violence is present in our society or not. Violence against women feeds off discrimination and serves to reinforce it. Women face physical or mental abuse throughout their lifecycle in male dominated society. In my personal views, the best way to fight against this aggression is for the battered to take place and for the society to hold up him or her. According to Durrani, women should raise voice against violence and mistreat by their husbands and Lords. She believes on the suggestion that is to instruct our populace not only in the transactions of the humanity, but that of our enormous religion Islam too. There is a powerful and vital requirement for mobilizing and sufficiently using all associated divisions of society for planning policy and plans. Varying social approaches regarding women in Pakistani society necessitates sustained legal and social efforts. Pakistan cannot become a modest, liberal, wealthy and a prosperous Muslim state without intensification civil society.

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