

**Textual analysis of “MY FEUDAL LORD by TEHMINA DURANI” in the
light of “FEMINIST THEORY”.**

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An assignment for M. Phil,

Abstract

This paper shows a tussle of identities and of reverence between two genders and a fringe distinction between powers and deteriorates in the novel OR actually an autobiography named MY FEUDAL LORD by TAHMINA DURRANI. This paper also shows a psychological struggle of a woman who is very much liberal and moderate yet deprived by social ethical teaching and distinctive bounding that induce her to undergo all the way through. The novel is an autobiographical and studied in the light of feminist theory, it is also noted that each event and action is fictionalized in order to resist feudal system in Pakistani society.

The main purpose studying this work is to find feminist approaches of the writer and her inner desire behind writing this tremendous and earth shaking autobiography in a country where apparently the environment seems moderate but the fact is that it is a conservative society and women are especially deprived in all perspective of social phenomena.

Key word: feminism, self-respect, feudal system, patriarchy and eastern society.

Introduction

According to the English Oxford dictionary the word feminism is a term used for the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim, feminist are the person who supports this belief and took part in this struggle, the theory of feminism it also portrays psychological fight in its initiators and anti-feminists.

Feminist struggle or feminism movement is not deliberately rooted to 19th or 20th centuries but has deep rooted going all the way back to ancient Greece. In the middle ages, “Christine de pisan” had the courage to enter into a debate with dominate male critics of her day. In 1960, the world of American women was limited in almost every respect, from family life to the workplace. A woman was expected to follow one path: to marry in her early 20s, start a family quickly, and devote her life to homemaking. As one woman at the time put it, "The female doesn't really expect a lot from life. She's here as someone's keeper — her husband's or her children's."

Feminism is basically a movement that demands equal rights for women. It aims to identify women as creative and equal contributors of values. Some radical feminists, furthermore, think that the writing of women cannot be judged rightly by male critics and hence these women believe in gynocriticism. The feminist movement came further into the limelight because of modern Western writers like Virginia Woolf and Henrik Johan Ibsen. Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879) were of the first to develop a feminist consciousness.

The phenomenon of feminist theory traces back its origin in the history in ancient times. Feminism brings many things to philosophy including not only a variety of particular moral and political claims, but ways of asking and answering questions, constructive and critical dialogue with mainstream philosophical views and methods.

Women in the present day society –wives, mothers and working women- are not ready, to accept an inferior position in the family and society . They are striving for the removal of all

laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against them and deprive them in any way of their inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opportunities that society offers to any section of the population. However, they have realized that they don't form a society separate from men. There is only one society, and it is made of both women and man. As women they want to share the problems and anxieties of men, and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress. Most of them, however, have not been able to achieve the respectable position in the society.

The feminist movement therefore can be enrolling as outcome and burst of that frustration that women marched forward in the struggle for liberation and a civilized place in the society. The awareness that they are unjustly discriminated against and their inferior status against men has been deliberately constructed can be traced much earlier.

This phenomenon of the twentieth century is a crystallization of all forms of social-political and psychological awareness that patriarchal society with its various structures and organizations is essentially hostile to women's freedom and interested in keeping them subjugated in order to perpetuate the patriarchal power and authority.

“Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women.” (Tyson 81)

. It is not surprising that most of the 19th century female writers foregrounded woman as the subject of their novels, or expressed female experience in their literary rebellion against their deliberate marginalization both as women and as writers.

In the 19th century women writers usually invoked a centralized object of power although it contradicted their aim of creating a resistance discourse. The centralized object of power was the male authorial discourse. When women did begin to comment on the social system in fiction their outlook was essentially humanist. Leaving aside isolated statements on the position of their own sex, which occurs in the writings of all women, from Jane Austen to Mary Wollstonecraft, they tended to stand aside from and indeed, distrust political systems and solutions and view the problems they described in terms of human relations.

Pakistani fiction in English provides ample opportunities for feminist explorations regarding women living under patriarchy. These literary discussions cover a wide range of issues regarding the position of women in society at large, Women in Pakistan have been struggling to prove their worth as equally intelligent members of their society, capable of delivering and contributing to the development of the country. However, there is still a long way to go as feudal, tribal and political men insist on a degrading position for women in Pakistani society.

A feminist analysis of literature allows the reader to understand the role of the female figure within the society in which she is being described, along with the social changes around her. The representation of women through literature constitutes a significant contribution towards understanding the position of women in that society. In this regard, the Pakistani writings in general, and specifically in English, carry an important position.

The diversity that contributes to the image of Pakistani women has been addressed by Khawar Mumtaz and Farida Shaheed (1987) in their book *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back*:

Depending on her geographical location, a Pakistani woman can find herself in a tribal, urban and rural environment. She can be a highly qualified and self-confident professional or a self-effacing peasant toiling alongside her men folk; she can lead a highly cloistered life...or she can be a central figure of authority in the limited circles of influential women. The Pakistani woman then is a myriad creature for whom a single image does not suffice. To talk of Pakistani women is in fact to talk of groups of women, of clusters of similarity in a disparate reality. (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987, p.21)

☒ **Study Rationale, Context and Significance**

In order to understand the issues feminism addresses the researchers focus on the issue of identity, liberation, self-stem and Suppression of Women. The research question 0r statement that led study of this literary piece is:

- ☒ How does the author portray her very domestic life? And also I kept feministic approach in my mind to understand her psychological fight against the issue of seeking identity, liberation and significant status in society.

The result of this paper is expected to see readers gust and it's indulgent as well as the context of the study this novel is to find emerged essence of feminist theory in this novel MY FEUDAL LORD by Tehmina durani.

WOMEN IN MODREN SOCIETY:

Women in the present day society –wives, mothers and working women- are not ready, to accept an inferior position in the family and society . They are striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against them and deprive them in any way of their inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opportunities that society offers to any section of the population. However, they have realized that they don't form a society separate from men. There is only one society, and it is made of both women and man. As women they want to share the problems and anxieties of men, and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress.

Most of them, however, have not been able to achieve the respectable position in the society. The reason is poverty and its evils. As wives and mothers they have to make both ends meet in whatever small amount of money they get or earn. They have to bear the cries of the children when they are hungry and sick. Also care for the homes that are too small, broken and dirty. They carry the burdens of looking after the children and land when their husbands are away in the fields, factories, and in remote towns earning their daily bread for the family.

Giving a respectable place to such women is important to keep family life going in overcrowded one-room apartments. Only they know the bitterness of children taken to lawless ways, of daughter becoming unmarried mothers whilst still at school, of boys and girls growing up without education, training or jobs at a living wage. A civilized society should not allow it. However it exists because the society we live in is divided into poor and rich, upper and lower caste. It exists because there are privileges for the few, discrimination and harsh treatment for many.

Therefore women marched forward in the struggle for liberation and a civilized place in the society. Being women also rests upon them the burden of removing from the society all the social differences developed in past times between men and women, which have the effect of keeping the fair sex in a position of inferiority and subordination

Literature review

The feminist theory has been reviewed and critically analyzed by many critics and writers. Such as: Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Michele Barrett and so on. Virginia Woolf in her two lectures published as *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* gives an important statement concerning women's alienation from the related ethics of war. She is well known modernist writer of English literature who mainly talks about feminist theory and wrote in the form or type of stream of consciousness.

Here our main focus is to have a textual analysis of *MY FEUDAL LORD* by TAHMINA DURANI in the light of feminist theory; this novel is been reviewed or critically analyzed by many literary critics. Most women in feudal Europe could expect to be married, although some women became nuns instead. Marriages between noble families were arranged for political reasons, so noble women had little chance of marrying for love. Women of common status had more freedom to choose their husbands than aristocratic women did. In theory, women were legally required to obey the orders of their husbands and could be beaten for disobedience.

In practice, the nature of the relationship between husband and wife depended more on their ability to cooperate and get along together than on laws mandating male dominance. Most women, like most men, were peasant farmers or artisans. Anthony advised women to give their husbands a full and honest account of all their business transactions -- and advises husbands to be equally honest with their wives.

. **Somali Roy** tells us that "her eyes were opened to the reality of womanhood through Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*. A woman being the citizen of a patriarchal society where the cultural norm for women is to remain silent against oppression, I sensed the stifling darkness of the corner she was pushed into, which led her to offer "spicy" details of her life for public consumption". Her father urged her not to file for divorce, "***You can only leave his home in a coffin***". And her mother's advice to deal with a 'husband who behaves in a strange or unreasonable manner' was to treat him like a sick patient who needs medical attention – "*Deal with him like a psychiatrist*".

Tehmina herself state that "More than that, I'm interested in reform. My work, whether it's *My Feudal Lord* or *Blasphemy* narrated autobiography, *Mirror to the Blind*, is about issues that concern our people, about breaking a silence for a part of society which cannot speak out".

Tehmina Durani, a Pakistani English authoress, in her autobiography *My Feudal Lord* describes her traumatic marital life with Ghulam Mustafa Khar, an important politician in the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto government, who later became the Chief Minister of Punjab. Professionally a charismatic champion of democracy, on the personal front he was an inveterate wife abuser.

My Feudal Lord is a narration of the traumatic and ghastly experiences of this lady, when she was married to her so called lover and second husband Ghulam Mustafa khar. Said **Nair Vidu** (June 26, 2007).

Paul Saurabh (20 September 2009) state that her book gives us a brief yet clear glimpse of how Pakistan is ruled by a handful of Feudal Lords who manipulates the religion and uses their power and authority according to their needs. She also addresses the plight of women in Pakistan who finds their hands tied behind their back in a conservative Pakistani society. Her book depicts her personal struggles and also the vices and bad practices that are prevalent in the Pakistani society.

Purabi Panwar writes in (Breaking the silence in Tehmina Durrani's MY FEUDAL LORDS July 28, 2009): In Pakistani society, where the Muslim patriarchs dominate, the entity of women is that of inferior beings, both intellectually and socially.

Her main raison seems to be an instrument for the satisfaction of the man's sexual desires and perpetuation of the species. Tehmina writes:

"The women in our circle did not seem to look beyond their raised noses. They chattered endlessly about disobedient servants, clothes, jewelry and interior decorations.... Many a day in the lives of these women was completely devoted to the topic of what to wear that evening."

Najia asrar zaidi state that: Autobiography has become an ideal vehicle to convey women's issues and experiences. This genre is also chosen by women to express their deference and resistance. Another writer Sib-e-Hassan cited in Babar (2000) also observes, "That the feudal system reduces a woman to be mere slave and that man and woman must first struggle to end this oppressive system perpetuated by the Feudal Lord".

According to **Khan** in his work named (Beyond Honor 200) he writes: “Feudal have high sense of masculinity and power and therefore, a women’s defiance and rebellion is considered a monstrous act that can shake the foundations of respect and esteem of the men of the family, whether man of a feudalist or peasant family living in rural settings, or upper or lower class man living in Urban centers. Men of the family from each strata of society in these regions do not hesitate to soak their hands in the blood of their own female blood relatives”.

Mona Ayesha, Bathgate state in an article (STATUS OF WOMAN IN PAKISTAN) that, Pakistan is a poor country and still fighting for economic stability, security, education and health needs for its people. There are countless issues of corruption and injustice in almost every field of life. Women are one of the most vulnerable groups that we simply cannot ignore. Here I would highlight the factors that only cause low self-esteem among women of Pakistan. Women are thought as weak and less beneficial product to parents as they are supposed to reside at home and take care of the family only. . Women of any age are not allowed to go out for the sake of enjoyment and leisure as they will have to face security and honor threats. Parents honor mostly relies on their daughters’ character (girls are not allowed to keep boyfriend in any circumstance and at any age). Boys are usually preferred to girls in deciding about family matters. Girls are not thought as productive and assertive human beings who can earn a respectable earning and can live according to their own choice.

PURABI further writes (breaking the silence in TAHMINA DURANI’S MY FEUDAL LORD July 28, 2009) For, according to Mustafa, a woman, like land, is “ power, prestige and a property” - a commodity meant for utilization and consumption in whichever way the owner / master deems fit. The basic teaching imparted to every woman in a patriarchal society is to remain a silent spectator, even as a victim to any injustice meted out by the man and to be very careful of not going public with any personal crisis which may harm the “honour” of her man.

The autobiography described that Pakistani fiction writers have been portraying the ever-changing status of women in their society. She has portrayed poor women as well as rich women, educated as well as uneducated women, old women as well as young women and their psychological conflicts as well as similar condition faced by women in all social class.

Textual Analysis

MY FEUDAL LORD is an autobiography by TAHMINA DURRANI a woman of strong courage belongs to an elite class of Pakistani society and wife of a well known politician

MUSTAFA KHAR who belongs to THE REIGN OF ZULFIQAR ALI BHUTO and a landlord of Punjab and commonly known as LION OF PUNJAB (Sher-e-Punjab).

She started writing this book just after the few months of divorce. In this book, she talks about the social ethics of Pakistani marital life by citing her own marriage as an example. In her autobiography she has just burst out her inner conflict and psychological fight and she merely talks about so called dogmatic and ethical teachings of Pakistani society and had expose hypocrisy of ruling elite class in general and cruel nature of her husband specifically.

The book or an autobiography contain a clash between two different forces, gender discriminations, ultra-mod westernized thinking of characters and conservative approach of a well recognized and well sounded educated feudal MUSTAFA KHAR.

Before marrying Mustafa, Tehmina was also married but she leaves behind her husband ‘innocent and simple guy’ and marries Mustafa. But soon she realizes the hollowness and barrenness of this relationship. She states in the novel **that “I had no power, no rights, and no will of my own”**. Throughout the novel, Tehmina has highlighted herself as an opposed woman, this is true and so she is. Durani has shown in an undaunted way that every woman has her identity and individuality. Her so-called roles are nothing but cultural constructs as being mother she supposed to be tender heart, as sister she is supposed to be caring enough, as daughter she needs to be an obedient and as wife she must be a loyal and remain sincere no matter what condition she may have to be indulged. She said, a woman has the power to challenge the whole patriarchy even at the cost of her closest relatives. The book gives good food for thought to its readers and how will they behave in similar circumstances.

The memoir is distributed into three parts known as: 1) Lion of Punjab. 2) Law of Jungle. 3) Lioness. All three parts visibly map the growth of Tehmina Durani from an Ordinary and insignificant aristocratic house wife to an emancipated, liberated woman who is fighting for equal rights.

The book also offers many strategies to build resistance and create awareness regarding women’s plight. Durrani’s work illustrates that in third world countries like Pakistan, women are taken as personal properties and possessions of men since men control every sphere of lives of women even their behavior and movements. Men have the right and full command to make decisions for women and women have to follow their decisions in family, tribe, community and

society. We find that feudal lord Khar does not allow Durani even to talk to her own brother. Once, he grew very upset when she talked to her brother Asim on the phone. He shouted “Why did you speak to him for so long” he growled, “Is he your brother or your lover?”

Durani also affirms her commitment to feminism in these words in an interview, “Well I am a woman, so I naturally write from a feminine perspective. More than that, I am interested in reform. My work whether it’s My Feudal Lord or Blasphemy narrated autobiography Mirror to the Blind is about issues that concern our people, about breaking of a silence from a part of the society that cannot speak out. I am not called bold because these are the issues one does not talk about, nor does one talk about one’s life. I suppose my passion for reform is overwhelming.

And, I think, when anything overwhelms you that much you have a natural boldness because you step out of the realm of fear” (Online Interview). This suggests that Durani has an agency to confess and to protest. She becomes the mouth piece of the women of Pakistan. Therefore, it can be concluded that Durani becomes an important agent of change who boldly declares her invulnerable identity in these words, “Well Mustafa, now the world will soon know you only as Tehmina Durrani’s ex-husband”.

Throughout the textual analysis from various aspects I came to know that she has merely talk about almost each patriarchy issue of third world country and social status of women specifically and in return she has face a strong criticism of so called fundamentalist sort of people and she is been even degraded by her own family and mother for this courageous decision of writing this book.

Conclusion

A larger part of our world gives emphasize on the dominancy of men and women are been deprived whether it’s European society or any other developing country of third world, she is always suppressed by males and their rigid mentality. Almost every woman like durani has

to face criticism if she profoundly courage to write against man dominancy or patriarchy systemization. Intention behind the analysis of this book is to highlight issue of women's relegation to an incessant scrutiny, so that the condition of women can be upgraded.

Tehmina Durrani's novel reveals a male obsession and fascination with female body and sexuality. The sexual awakening, victimization and emotional suppression of female sexuality highlight how women's bodies are effectively controlled and exploited through cultural traditions and the manipulation of religious rules regarding the position of men and women in society. The female figure is thus thrown into an emotional battle to fulfill the male-oriented culturally constructed duties, guised as modesty and obedience, and an inner urge to rebel and pursue her own desire.

Pakistani female fiction writers offer an exploration of this systematic oppression of Pakistani women that occurs regardless of their class, caste, region and language that brings them under the common sunshade of ill-treatment. One cannot plainly universalize women's oppression but have common characteristics structures of punishment, shame and honour codes regarding female.

The novel or an autobiography named MY FEUDAL LORDS doe not reveal hidden life and of a politician merely but on part of being demoralized woman she fights for the women of the same suffering class and and she has enlightened a very rustic life and issues of a common woman of Pakistan living in a feudal systemized environment. There so many areas in Pakistan where woman is think or supposed to be a maid to look after of her parents, brothers and when she got married than again she has to continue her job to husband, kids and other related people, a woman of Pakistan is being treated as a deprived creature or treated as an animal.

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