



Imprisoned Woman: Feministic Overtone in Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*

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Abstract

Feminism has earned a reputation in less time especially in the nations of the third world where women are mostly in the bondage of patriarchy and male chauvinistic attitudes. In such a scenario it gets difficult for any woman to write against men or even raise a voice against the oppression. And those who dare to go against the settled norm of society are not only appreciated but also manipulate men in their works. In this narrative fiction a woman claims herself, to be a victim and a voice of third world Muslim nation, as she feels marginalized. Also, this novel showcases a psychological struggle of a woman who is very much a liberal yet denied freedom by social ethics that induce her to endure all through her life. There are many Feministic aspects underlying the story. This autobiographical novel highlights an imperative issue where even an educated woman is deprived of her rights, as she is a product of a conservative society.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Society, and Oppression.

Today's women are not ready to embrace a mediocre position in the family and society. They are toiling hard for the eradication of all laws,

regulations, sanctions, and customs that are biased against them and decline them of their rights to the advantages and opportunities, which a society provides to any section of the population. Women have realized that they are an integral part of that society which has always been dominated by man. However, they have not been able to achieve the respectable status in the society. It has not come as a surprise that the 19th Century women writers center staged women as the subject of their fiction and express female experience of deliberate marginalization both as women and as writers. It is their fight against the dispossession of their identity, social status, and right to make choice.

The present paper is Feministic analysis of Tehmina Durrani's chronicle *My Feudal Lord*, published in 1995. Feminism, as a principle, is a campaigner of the equal social reputation of the females. Feminism as a doctrine, intended to support the rights of women. According to Barkty, "Women's oppression under male domination not only consists of solely in depriving women of political and legal rights but also extends into the structure of our society and the contents of our culture and permeates our consciousness"(63). Feminism brings out the dark

side of the society, which holds prejudices towards women, and it takes away them of various political and economic rights.

Durrani's novel, *My Feudal Lord* exposes the duplicity of ruling classes in a third world nation, Pakistan in a general manner and the cruel side of her husband in a specific manner. Durrani through this novel tries to explore women's position in a patriarchal society when she decides to leave her husband who subjected her to maltreatment and tarnished her. Tehmina Durrani like Judith Butler brings out the issue of gender trouble in her work. In *My Feudal Lord*, Mustafa Khar an, "authoritative, conservative and overpowering"(111) symbolizes the male chauvinistic figure who is not an innate autocrat, but societal pressures taught him the exercise of autocracy against women.

Durrani's text can also be analyzed from Kristeva's Feministic concept of 'Semiotic' vs 'Symbolic' distinctions. According to Kristeva, a child naturally shows inclination towards his/her mother. She calls this inclination as 'Semiotic'. But subsequently, the 'Symbolic' arrangement of society shifts his/her inclination towards father as he/she witnesses the father's power and supremacy.

It is difficult for a woman to give expression to her feelings in a language, which is mainly created by men to express their feelings. While talking about the text, Shree argues, "The book is a milestone for the cause of women in

Pakistan. It should be recognized as a stepping stone for women, who are mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters" (114).

Ghulam Mustafa Khar, a former Chief Minister of Punjab, is seen as the wife-abuser, a product of the feudal society where women are considered as mere objects. He is the epitome of absolute authority and power. Home was the innocuous place where he could exercise his authority without any challenge. He would beat up his wife if she were late after his first call; servants if they failed to serve him hot food and even children if they argued. Domestic violence is not only limited to the Asian households. In fact, it has become a universal phenomenon.

My Feudal Lord is the true archetype of women's plight and their reserved condition that shows the real picture of subjugation of women in third world nations on one hand, while on other hand it brings to light the cruel practice of patriarchy that is clearly responsible for the discriminatory state of women. This work illustrates that in third world nations like Pakistan, women are considered as personal properties of men, which should be controlled with a heavy hand. It is seen that feudal lord, Khar, did not allow Durrani even to talk to her own brother, Asim. He shouted, "Why did you speak to him for so long" he cried, "Is he your brother or your lover?"(133) Khar portrays the role of a patriarch who is not only a masculine oppressor but an unruly man also. Even his

mother was not free from his command. At dinner table, she ate only when she was allowed to. Durrani states, “A feudal lord was an absolute ruler who could justify any action” (41). She was harassed and ridiculed throughout her life and whenever she made an attempt to move away from it, her husband subjected her to beating. She recalls, “Later, in our bedroom, my insolence was punished with yet another sharp slap. He called me an exhibitionist, a woman without shame” (216).

In the male dominant culture women have always faced disappointment, frustration, and humiliation, which comes from various social restrictions. Every woman who tries to break free from the clutches of patriarchy faces stern criticism like Durrani. The paper culminates with a message that each and every woman should realize her true potential and don't give way to

subjugation and must learn to confront the wrong actions of her male counterpart. In the last Durrani states:

Silence condones injustice, breeds subservience and fosters a malignant hypocrisy. Mustafa Khar and other feudal lords thrive and multiply on silence. Muslim women must learn to raise their voices against violence. (22)

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