



ALIENATION OF WOMEN IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY: A CRITIQUE ON TEHMINA'S "MY FEUDAL LORD" FROM FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE

HIRA ARAIN

Institute of English Language and Literature, The University of Sindh , Jamshoro
Pakistan



ABSTRACT

Female oppression, exploitation, gender discrimination is based on individual ignorance, economic power, the concept of SELF and OTHERS by males. It is an attempt to explore not only above mentioned causes of women repression, other reasons for its promotion in society but it is an Endeavor to answer two following provoking questions as well. Why and how does woman (Tehmina) feel alien in the capitalist Society? And why do women use as a commodity in the capitalist society? This study has analyzed the book in question through the lens of Feminism, particularly through Radical Feminism, Marxist Feminism, and Socialistic Feminism. In the end, it has given few suggestions and recommendations by throwing light on those remedies which can be used to eradicate this women subjugation, gender-based inequalities, discrimination, domestic labor, exploitative relation, women shift from normal beings to be psychotic patients, are just because males in our society, especially in South Asian countries... think they are superior beings over other creatures including women too. Proper education and economic freedom to women, and proper motivation for males to understand these gender inequalities are only tools to eradicate this individual ignorance, and woman subjugation which enhances gender discrimination in the societies. It seeks to make strict legislative changes which ensure the gender equality on every ground.

Key Words: Feminism, Social-Critical Approach, Marxist's, Radical and Socialistic Feminism.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Tehmina Durani is a Pakistani woman activist and writer, born on 18 February 1953. She is reporting her marriage life with Ghulam Mustafa Khar. This book describes why and how does woman (Tehmina) feel alien in the capitalist society? And why do women use as a commodity in it? Women are being ignored physically, emotionally and sexually. Different reasons, causes, and impulses behind women subjugation, which are the major hurdles in the way of any country's

progress working on the back of this ignorance, and how can a woman defeat these causes in order to stand as an individual being in this patriarchal Society? The answer to these questions is only economic power can save women from the feelings of being alien in their respective societies. **2.**

Literature Review

2.1 Feminism in Literature: Feminism is literary, socio-political movement, demand equal rights of women in all spheres of life. According to some radical feminists that writing of women cannot be

judged rightly by male critics and hence they believed in "Gynocriticism". Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) was the stepping stone in developing feminist consciousness in Literature. Simon De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* further enhanced this feminist consciousness. Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous are other significant writers who discovered new dimensions in the field of feminism. These new dimensions in the field of feminism were considered confined to women representation in western culture. But feminism spread all over the world under the influence of English colonialism.

2.1 Depiction of Women in Pakistani Fiction:

Pakistani fiction, whether written in English, Urdu, or Sindhi has always been progressive and feministic in many respects. In Urdu Fiction and poetry, Asmat Chughtai, Quratulain Haider, Fehmida Riaz and Parveen Shakir are leading feminist writers. In Sindhi Fiction names of Noor ul Huda Shah, Khair-un-Nisa Jaffery are notable in feminist perspective. While in English Fiction, Bapsi Sidhwa, Binna Shah, Moshisn Hamid, Zulfiqar Ghose and Talat Abbasi are of significant importance. Their writings are the echo of women's issues, sufferings and emotions.

Sidhwa's *The Bride* (2006) is a story of a female child named Zaitoon. Like *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) this novel is also written in the background of partition of India. The little girl named Munni.

3 Research Methodology

Qualitative research method and Social Critic Approach suit for the purpose of this study. Therefore, it subjectively viewed and socially analyzed Tehmina Duranni's autobiography "My Feudal Lord". Most of the data which is being utilized in this study are from the book in question and Tahira S Khan's book "Beyond Honor". The supporting data that has taken for assistance is from the different books and websites.

4. Analysis of My Feudal Lord through Social and Marxist's Feministic Perspective

The main focus of this section is to interpret the text of the book *My Feudal Lord* from social feministic perspective. It is not only the life journey of Tehmina Durrani. But it is life journey of every woman living in feudal and capitalist society. The status of women in backward societies like

Pakistan is quite pathetic. No matter to which social class she belongs; a woman is always treated as subordinate. Despite belonging to an elite class, Tehmina Durrani suffered from the worst possible tyrannies. *My Feudal Lord* is a story of conventional women who has complex relations with her mother. Owing to this in young age and alienation from his own home Tehmina decides to marry Anees who belonged to an upper middle-class family. Durrani acknowledges this as "I wanted to escape from my family". She never built an affectionate relation with Anees. Thus, sense of incompleteness and insecurity remained in her personality. Hence when she met with Khar first time she was mesmerized by his personality. In class-divided society people always live under a state of either superiority complex or inferiority complex. Tehmina was not satisfied with Anees. At the same time, Anees used to take Tehmina with her in every party in order to get career benefits. At this stage also Tehmina's existence is nothing but of a show piece. Tehmina was brought up in a cosmopolitan city and was ignorant of feudal culture. Marx in this regard says "In the feudal system there is extreme oppression of women", while the capital system gives some artificial concession to women in order to get the maximum production and benefits from them" (Brown 2012). A Woman in a feudal society has no existence of its own. She can survive only as daughter, sister, mother and wife. In a feudal and capital society, relations are made on the basis of either master or slave. Women are considered slave in both societies. They are grown up by teaching submissiveness and obedience. The task is achieved by different tactics. Religion, culture and education all play their part to make women submissive. We can see Tehmina in her house which symbolized bourgeoisie morality and then Khar's house which was a symbol of Feudal Pride. At both places, she lived miserably. The only reason why the male is dominant in a feudal society is that he controls the economy. On other women, no matter how much domestic labor she does, is deprived of economic importance. In words of Marx, "she does wasted labor" (Brown, 2012). As women do not have charge of income in the family she is remains degraded. She has to bear whatever treatment is given to her. Life

with Khar was a herculean task for Tehmina. She writes: I could only develop in the direction that he chose. To think independently was a crime that he had the right to punish. Many of his beliefs ran counter to everything that I considered right, but there was no way that I could engage with him in a rational debate. His values were steeped in a medieval milieu, a mix of prejudices, superstitions and old wives tale. High on the list was the role of the wife. According to feudal tradition, a wife was honor-bond to live her life according to her husband's whims. A woman was a man's land a feudal lord loves his land only in functional terms. He encloses it and protects it. If it is barren, he neglects it. The Land is power, prestige and property (Durani 1994).

4.1 Man is the self and the woman is other: Society's division into class women are treated as a commodity and personal property. She has no existence of her own. Men define her as identity and status. Women alienated in the society based on the class system. She starts believing myths regarding her low status and biological incompetence. Simon De Beauvoir (1949) claims that man has fabricated and constructed women as other. Man is the self and the woman is other. Whatever characterizes the men, in their own view indeed, women must be defined contrary. As men are represented biologically strong, women are represented biologically incomplete. As men represent good, women are defined as evil.

The theme of otherness is important in this autobiography. Women in class-divided societies are always attached to the male members of the family. In the culture of South Asia for an upper class man both conditions need to be present, for example a Feudal Lord, tribal leader or big industrialist is considered honorable because he possesses material riches and exercises substantial control over the women and children in his family Tahira S Khan beautifully explains in her book *Beyond Honor* (2006).

Khan writes, "Male bondage outlaws blood bondage. This practice is not a cultural or traditional phenomenon it has very much an economic basis and material motives (khan, 2006)." This bondage is strengthened in many ways Khan remarks, "The

system of patriarchy can function only with the cooperation of women. This cooperation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination, educational deprivation, the denial of knowledge to women of their history, the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining 'respectability' and 'deviance' according to women's sexual activities, by restraint and outright coercion, by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power, and by awarding class privilege to conforming women (khan 2006).

4.2 Alienation and Identity Crisis of Tehmina: In feudalism and capitalist society, women have to be attached to men at any cost. Firstly; with the family of her father, then after marriage with her husband. And, if she leaves her husband, she stands at in between situation, belonging to neither family. These are crises Tehmina in her house, with Anees and then with Khar experiences. She says, "I asked Mustafa, do you realize you have taken everything away from me. Thirteen years of my life, my family, my children, my youth and everything I believed in? I have to start a new. He stretched, took a deep breath and addressed me coolly: you have no identity of your own. Nobody knows you. Because you have removed your name from mine"(My Feudal lord 1994) . These lines give weight to the Marxist idea of alienation and identity crises in class-divided societies.

4.3 Only Economic Power can give Woman Her Status in the Society: According to Mustafa, a woman is like land, power, prestige and a property. The commodity meant for utilization and consumptions in whichever way the owner or master deems fit. The commodity is an external object, a thing with all its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind. (Marx Capital 125). If we analyze above lines of Khar with reference to Marx's definition of a commodity we come know that he did not consider Tehmina human. Actually, Khar symbolizes the entire bourgeoisie class for whom women is the mere object which they can use the way they wish. For them, the value of women is momentary while using it. Commoditization is the subordination of both public and private realm to the logic of capitalism. In this logic, such things as friendship, knowledge, women, etc. are understood

only in terms of their monetary value. In this way, they are no longer treated as things with intrinsic worth but as commodities. They are valued, that is, only extrinsically in terms of money. By this logic, a factory worker can be re-conceptualized not as a human being with specific needs that, as humans, we are obliged to provide but as a mere wage debt in a businessman's ledger.

Capitalist and Feudalist psyche has limited all human senses and feelings to mere possession. Everything including the woman is a commodity to be owned and utilized. Mustafa Khar's lust to own a lot of lands and many women are similar in this regard.

Women empowerment is central issue of Marxism. But it's not pseudo-empowerment like in capitalist society. Women empowerment in the classless society can only ensure women's equal status in the society.

Conclusion

This women subjugation, gender-based inequalities, discrimination, domestic labor, exploitative relation, are just because of males superior thinking perspectives over women. Proper education and economic freedom to women, and proper motivation for males to understand these gender inequalities are only tools to eradicate this individual ignorance, and woman subjugation which enhances gender discrimination in the societies. It seeks to make strict legislative changes which ensure the gender equality on every ground.

References

- Durrani, Tehmina, William Hoffer, and Marilyn Hoffer. *My feudal lord*. Random House, 1996.
- Khan, Tahira S. *Beyond honour: a historical materialist explanation of honour related violence*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2006.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide*. Routledge, 2014.