

Empowerment and Defiance: Unveiling Feminist Narratives in Durrani's "My Feudal Lord"

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ARTICLE INFO

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: August 15, 2023

Accepted: September 16, 2023

Published: September 29, 2023

KEYWORDS

Acceptance;

Resistance;

Violence;

Domestic Abuse;

Jingoism;

Patriarchy and Feminism;

Feudalism

ABSTRACT

"My Feudal Lord" traces a poignant feminine journey from acceptance to resistance, laying bare the profound suffering women endure within a male-dominated society that vehemently enforces rigid norms. The novel poetically unravels the harsh reality that women, bereft of freedom, become mere puppets in the hands of a jingoistic society. In the realm of arranged marriages, obedience to a husband's rule is paramount, reducing women to the status of property owned by their spouses. The narrative spotlights Durrani's, a sympathetic and exemplary character who, due to her darker skin tone, is systematically ignored by society. As she endeavors to assert her basic rights, her struggles are dismissed as abnormal due to her husband Mustafa Khar's diplomatic façade. The societal perception of Khar as a loving and caring husband sharply contrasts with the harsh reality of his multiple faces. The novel vividly portrays the feudal system in post-colonial Pakistan, where women are expected to epitomize perfection in beauty and intelligence. Durrani's gradual loss of identity in the pursuit of marital harmony underscores the futility of her sacrifices. In order to shield her parents' honor and secure her children's future, Durrani feigns perfection in her marriage, concealing the painful truth beneath a veneer of normalcy. "My Feudal Lord" emerges as a stark portrayal of the price women pay within a complex socio-cultural web, where their struggles for autonomy often go unnoticed, and their sacrifices are overshadowed by societal expectations.

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INTRODUCTION

An autobiographical novel, "My Feudal Lord" by Tehmina Durrani, published in 19th century, created a dispute among society, so it was banned in Pakistan and Egypt. She wrote in detail about her painful journey, depicting the story of other women in Pakistan under the Feudal Lord. Her father supports her in every sphere of life, but after the publication of this novel, he says there is no relationship between him and her anymore. In our patriarchal society, women are born to obey men. They are always considered inferior to men. Feminism compacts with gender issues prevailing in our society worldwide regardless of skin tone, culture, region and creed (Hayat et al., 2015). But according to our religion, no one is inferior or superior. Everyone has equal rights. But we are Muslims by name, not by performance (Aziz et al., 2020). There is a contradiction between Muslim women and feminists because both concepts are opposite to each other. For example, Muslim women must wear hijabs and cover their bodies properly, but Western women think it is a conservative concept. Women's status in Pakistan always remains in a state of struggle (Bhattacharya, 2014). Sexual harassment is also discussed in this novel. The concept of inferiority and superior makes women weaker; men treat women just like animals, and their feelings are considered worthless things. Beating a wife is an old concept that has transferred from generation to generation and still exists in tribal. You don't even think about the things I have forbidden you to do. A woman like Tehmina who is educated one tries to make her place in tribal society (Hassan et al., 2021)

"I did not know how long the beating lasted. It could have been ten minutes; it could have been two hours. The intensity made it an eternity. Then, quite suddenly, it was over. His fury was sated. I begged in a weak voice, 'Please, God! I need to go -to the bathroom.' He allowed me to stagger off" (Durrani et al., 1994).

Hurting someone else without any reason also creates violence in society, and women are specifically suffering from societal discrimination and hegemony (Aziz et al., 2021). The status of women is still considered low in society. Tehmina did not receive love from anyone, not even from her parents, as she was not beautiful "I never remember my mother hugging and kissing me when I was little." you can rule over men when you are beautiful and belong to an upper-class family. Tehmina, the writer of this novel, has married twice in life but does not get to understand her husband both times. Her second husband, Mustafa Khar, loves the young lady. "Women entered Mustafa's life speedily and left as quickly."

His one wife, whose name is Safia, belongs to a middle-class family and has liberal thoughts, and she is beautiful too. Mustafa plucked her from the sky and locked her in the cage. In our society, marriage may be purgatory, but divorce is hell. He destroys her life just for the sake of lust. He even did not allow their wife to meet their parents, who belong to a low-income family, because this is against his reputation. He married seven times in his life. But he does not become anyone's perfect husband. Feudal law allows a man to act in such a manner. She left her younger daughter Tanya (from his first husband Anne) to save her second marriage with Mustafa Khar. She got married to Mustafa on July 25, 1976. Mustafa's marriage with a lady who was a dancer by profession, he did not want to disclose this marriage because this may destroy his political career forever. That's why he divorced Naubahra secretly; at that time, she uttered a curse (Durrani, 1994).

"Mustafa Khar, may you suffer like you have made me suffer. May you know the pain of being scorned? I pray that your children roam in every street of this country. Every stone you pick up will reveal a child of yours. You shall never be at peace.' Her final words burned into memory: 'A woman will destroy you like you have destroyed me.' Although Naubahra was gone, the curse lingered" (Durrani, 1994).

Durrani's memoir *My Feudal Lord* is a feministic version that fulfills the criteria of feministic theory's potential that is purely relatable with Kristeva's views on feminism that society has made males a jingoistic icon who are against women's freedom and individuality that further link with their identity (Kristeva, J. 2008).

One of the biggest reasons for women's depravedness of their rights in any society is that women are enemies of women. Women destroy the life of another woman happily. The same thing happens in this novel with Tehmina, who already knows about the marital status of Mustafa but marries him despite the strong opposition of society, her children, and her parents. On the contrary, she did not live happily despite a love marriage. After that, her husband is excited to marry her sister but wants to keep it secret because this affair is good for his political career. He was always impressed by her appearance, not the character. Feudal system has knowingly encouraged colonization (Riaz, H. 2021).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature study tells us that much work has been written on women's rights. The most important works are Sheila Rowbotham's *Hidden* (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) Ehsaan et al., (2015). Men are considered more dominant in our society. Mishra's (2006) point of view about feminism is that if you belong to the women's community, then you lose the right to any support from men. Shree (2002) says men make it too difficult for women to express their feelings in front of them. The main purpose of my research paper is to analyze feminism theory in light of the novel *My Feudal Lord* by Tahmina Durani. Most of the Feudal and political marriages are committed just for benefit. She argues About feudal lords in the dedicator system of Pakistan; women are not treated well as mothers, sisters and daughters. They are treated just like a poppet of men who give them direction. What you drink, what you wear, and where you go. Khar needs perfection in everything if their servants do not make food on time, they beat them.

We can say that he wants to control the lives of everyone in his home. It was not a house where everyone lived a happy and peaceful life. It was just like a cage where you must obey the order of your owner; if you deny it, you will suffer. This kind of behavior not only exists in our society, but it is a universal issue and domestic violence against women. We were just writing a paper on violence no one took steps to remove this sin from society. Somali Roy's points of view about the novel. Women were always criticized, and this criticism start from their birth and ends with their death. And this process passes on from generation to generation. It is a kind violate against women. I felt sadness for Tehmina when her father said, "You can leave his home in a coffin" (Durrani, 1994).

On the other side, her mother advised her "husband who behaves strangely or unreasonably' was to treat him like a sick patient who needs medical attention with him like a psychiatrist."

Panwar (2009) points of view about the novel: in the Muslim community, especially in Pakistan society, males are dominated over women, both cerebral and socially. 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 these women's lives was devoted to what to evening" (Durrani, 1994).

Habib et al., (2013) pointed out that Tehmina Durani's *My Feudal Lord* is a story about a lady who left a drastically life; this period of her life starts when she got marriage to her second beloved husband whose name is Mustafa Khar. She wants to change her life; she thinks her second husband is a well-mannered man who knows the difference between good and bad. Who is not a narrow-minded person; his vision is broad, just like his status. But Mustafa proved all his thoughts wrong by domestic violence.

Ehsaan et al., (2015) state that the Feudal lord rules Pakistan, everything under their control, and they have the authority to run the country and use religion according to their own needs. Her book depicts her life experience in Pakistan's conservative society, which is also related to other women in the same society. They do not follow court and law rules; they have their Jirga system where love marriage and wishing for something from the woman's side is considered a sin. Zaidi & Qureshi (2012) point of view about this novel, the book is considered a vehicle to convey our ideas and thoughts to society and the problems the women are facing. Everyone needs words to convey a message and create awareness among people about violence, domestic disputes and sexual harassment.

According to Panwar (2009) point of view, in Mustafa's perception, women are just like property and land owned by men, who can cultivate on this land what he want too. In a patriarchal society, women are taught to keep silent in every situation, even she beaten by men. To save the dignity of the men, she faces many things.

Aziz & Khadam (2021) state that Pakistan is a developing country and still fighting for the needs and rights of the people such as economic, corruption, injustice, education and health. Many other issues in Pakistan society are the root cause of poverty. One prominent cause is that women are prohibited from participating in any activity. They are just considering the source of fertility and taking care of the family. Women of any age cannot go outside to spend their leisure time. Women are treated like pet animals in Pakistan society.

Khan (2013) penned that it is understood in the feudal lord system that women's defense and rebellions can hollow the roots of the honor of the man's family. The men of feudal families, whether they belong to the upper, middle, or lower classes. The hands of these people do not tremble whenever they kill women or torture them.

METHODOLOGY

The present research is qualitative, and all the inductive-subjective data collection is based on perception. It is also based on such a system where men are considered superior to anything else. It focuses on various types of feminism, such as post-colonial feminism, Muslim feminism, and Western feminism. This research also discussed the back door reason, which acts like a chain hanging on women's feet. That's why they cannot move anywhere without the owner's permission. Kristeva's views on feminism are the basic premise of the present research. She narrates that Male jingoistic society imposes itself on women (Kristeva, 1986).

To explain how women's life is ruled by men in the novel. The Feudal lord by Tehmina Durrani. Kristeva's view about women's rights and Tehmina's view about Pakistani women struggling in society after independence are interrelated. Women are becoming vocal about their rights (Kristeva, 1983). "She says I favor the feminist movement, which started in the eighteenth century and flourished at the end of 19 century. There is no doubt there is a lot of responsibility for men. They earn money to give their family shelter, food, clothes and protection.

Conversely, most women stay home to care for their children and cook food for the family. The matter is these both are performing their own. In this way, both have equal rights; neither is superior or inferior. But in a patriarchal society, only men have the right to make any decision. This discrimination creates complexity in women's personalities. In other words, we can say that discrimination is the root cause of women's violence. My feudal lord discusses all these problems of women.

Three fundamentals of Kristeva's thought have been particularly important for feminist theory in Anglo-American contexts:

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

ANALYSIS

The autobiographical novel "My Feudal Lord" by Tehmina Durrani, written in the post-colonial period, depicts a helpless woman and the trauma she faced throughout her life. The novel and story are divided into Lion of Punjab, 2 Law of Jungle, and 3 Lioness (Ehsaan et al., 2015).

Now we discuss these three parts in detail one by one; the first part of the novel starts with the description of dressing of Tehmina Durrani, who was going to attend Spain's National Day party at Punjab Club of Lahore (the cultural Capital of Pakistan) with her first husband, Anee. At that party, she meets a lady named Dr. Shahida Amjad, a physician by profession and knowledgeable in the game of who's who. At this party, she meets with another person named Mustafa, who is going to be her future husband. When she was born into the Pathan family in 1953 with a dark skin color, her phase of struggle and facing dislike started from that day. Even the mother feels embarrassed to present her in front of relatives. People make fun of her skin color that's why she feels uncomfortable when she goes outside. Appearance perfection was more important than intelligence. Her mother was the dominant partner, and her decision was

considered final. She was very strict regarding rules and the house's cleanliness; if someone was ugly, she was like a criminal. Her maternal grandmother, Shamshad, supports her in every ups and downs of life. She had to follow many rules to become her mother's favorite child (Durrani, 1994).

Never visit a friend without special permission and your nanny. Never pick up the telephone. Never go outside alone with the driver. Never stand around in the kitchen with the male servants. A man was the only future available to the Pakistani girls. My parents were very worried about my marriage because they thought no one would agree to marry me because of my skin color. Due to some political issue, my parents were going to leave Pakistan. So, in a hurry, they arranged a small ceremony for my marriage to Anee. But when I was young, I think I fell in love with Anee, but that was just affection, not love. But now all is vine. I was not mentally prepared to become a mother when God blessed me with a daughter, Tanya. I tried my best to adjust with Anee.

Despite my all effort I still did not love Anee. I do not want to live with him anymore. Pakistan is a country that we acquired in the name of Islam, and here, we will establish a pure democratic system in it, but a feudal system will rule it. Due to the unequal distribution of wealth, the rich got richer; the poor became desperate. When Mustafa was very young, he married his illiterate cousin, Wazir. He does not want to marry her. He runs away from his fate and starts to live in Lahore. There, he was fascinated by a beautiful lady. Mustafa married a woman named Firdaus, who needed financial and social support. After one year, he realized he could not carry on this marriage anymore, so he divorced her when she was giving birth to a second child in the hospital.

Women came and went in Mustafa's life-like things. He married for the third time to Safia, who belonged to a middle-class family. But her way of thinking and dressing sense resemble with elite class. Mustafa, who does not care about anyone's feelings, picked her up from the sky and threw her on the ground. Now, she lives just like a pet animal in a cage. No one was allowed to enter without Mustafa's permission except Mustafa's father and brothers. In some areas of Pakistan, the law of court is not followed; they have their jirga system. Jirga acts as a judge to solve the issue of the area.

In the political world, Mustafa's thoughts resemble Bhutto's. Bhutto advised Mustafa Khar that you needed a wife who would support you and benefit him in his political career. Bhutto was a liberal kind of man in Asia. He married for the fourth time a dancer, Naubahra, who was very beautiful, just for the sake of sexual pleasure. He does not want to disclose this marriage in front of the public because this marriage may destroy his political career forever. Whenever the people of the world come to know about the marriage, he divorces her secretly. This meant that he had got used to playing with the lives of others. It means he has no idea what kind of trouble a woman faces after divorce. For the sake of a political career, he needs another wife who helped him in politics. With the help of the Bhutto, he married Sherry very quickly. When a clash was created between Mustafa and Bhutto, they learned that two swords could not live in the same sheath. Everyone was using each other for benefit, whether politics or domestic life. Marriage was a game for him, and I learned about this after marrying him.

The country that should be acquired in the name of Islam where the dance of women like "mujra" was preferred. I feel very sorry to hear about that. In front of the public, Mustafa pretended he was the world's best husband, but in reality, he was a very harsh husband. He did not allow their wives to meet and contact anyone without Mustafa's permission. He may have some psychological issues, which is why he thinks if any of his wives meet with their parents who belong to the poor middle class, this will become a source of humiliation for him. Marrying him was the worst decision of my life. Before marriage, I knew him as a good man and saw his terrible face after marriage. Only his wives know about his placid's face. Before marriage with Mustafa, one night, I was sleeping in my bedroom with Tanya, my daughter's husband. It was about 3 am on the clock when the phone bell rang. Mustafa was on the phone when I picked up the call.

Tina, I am dying to see you,' Mustafa pleaded. But you can't,' I whispered. 'I can't see you know.' I can't live without you. I want to give up everything and be with you' (Durrani, 1994).

Mustafa's fifth wife, Sherry, was very disturbed because of me. Now, his importance was decreasing in Mustafa's life. She was afraid that Mustafa would throw her out of his life. She wanted to save her marriage, so she begged me to leave Mustafa's life forever and ever. Sherry also warned me that he is not a good person you will regret after marriage like me. Then I told her why you don't leave him if he is such a bad person. Where will I go with my children? My parents are poor. I cannot leave my kids. A woman must always make sacrifices, sometimes for her parents' honor and sometimes for her children's welfare. In our society, marriage may be purgatory, but divorce is hell. As a woman, I could understand her problem. I also sacrificed my love for my daughter's sake at that time. Now, there was a war going on in my mind and heart. My heart used to say that I should marry Mustafa because I, too, have the right to live a happy and good life.

On the other hand, my mind was thinking about my daughter, husband, parents and society because we cannot live our lives by going against the principles of society. When my parents learned about my scandal with Mustafa, they were very upset. My parent tried their best to stop me from getting married.

Finally, I went against all odds and married Mustafa on July 25, 1976. The rumor mill reached my parents in London. They were very upset. Once more, their rebel daughter had brought disgrace to their household. They announced that I was dead for them. For some reason, Mustafa did not want to tell people about our marriage. That's why I used to go to Surrey wherever I wanted to go. I had to face his anger for the first time when I did not obey his orders. "Never – ever – disobey me! It would help if you did what I told you to do (Durrani, 1994).

After that day, Mustafa's anger became an everyday routine. He did not like people who did not obey his orders. He beat me the first time when I was pregnant; I did not know how long the beating lasted. It could have been ten minutes; it could have been two hours. The intensity made it an eternity. Then, quite suddenly, it was over. His fury was sated. My love for the man turned into fear. "Tehmina, believe me. You dare not to think of anything that I have forbidden you to think about" (Durrani, 1995).

He liked appearance more than character. Even appearance changes with time, but the character does not. But men do not understand this. He liked me because of my dressing sense and beauty. He made me promise that I would never cut my hair or even trim the split ends. He liked that I should always be dressed like a showpiece to enhance the house's beauty. He liked those things which are perfect whether it was human or animal. He did not like stubborn and disobedient children. Every man loves his children, but Mustafa's personality is very strange. Every child expects love from their parents. But here, a strange thing, children are not afraid of their father, talk to him or express any desire. He used to beat his children like animals, too. I had no other way but to bear all this torture for the sake of my children. Due to some political situation, Mustafa and I suddenly had to leave our children and homeland and go to London. With time, my parents forgave me for my mistake and allowed me to come to their house. Because no parents can remain angry with their children for the rest of their lives, no matter how big mistakes they have made. As Mustafa loved the beautiful face, his next victim became my sister. But he wanted to keep it secret from my parents and me. When I asked him about this, he would oppress me. After knowing all this, I was once again broken inside.

Every man protects the honor of his house, but Mustafa proved me wrong here, too. On one side was the question of respect and love for my parents; on the other, my children and my married life. My parents did not want my second marriage to fail. My mother advised me, 'If a husband behaves strangely or unreasonably, you should treat him like a sick human being, like someone who needs medical care and treatment. Deal with him like a psychiatrist.' But they didn't know what the real matter was. He abuses me whenever we talk. He was a very narrow-minded person. My brother and I used to talk on the phone for hours. Why did you speak to him for so long?' he growled. 'Is he your brother or your lover?' I replied oh really, Mustafa, are you mad? After a long time, it was confirmed that something was happening between Mustafa and my sister Adila. Now, it was unbearable for me to live with Mustafa. I finally decided to leave Mustafa forever. After all, how could I forgive her so many mistakes? He did not prove himself right in any one matter of life.

We can relate Freud's concept about human personality development with Tehmina and Mustafa. According to Freud, developed during your childhood period. We learn what we see, not what we hear. Tehmina did not get love from her parents as a child. Because of lack of love and care her personality doesn't grow. And superego means when you think about the norms of society and don't dare to do things considered wrong. When you think society's rules and regulations are more important than your desire. Ego means yourself respect. She bears a lot of things in her whole life. She destroys her ego to save the superego. But now she has no more courage to bear all this anymore. And at the end, she prefers her ego and leaves the Mustafa because, as a human being it is your first right to live a happy life. The patriarchal norm is seen as being vulnerable by influential women (Aziz, A., Naeem, S., & Nisa, Z. U. 2023).

CONCLUSION

This analysis concludes that male dominance has become a pervasive norm across the globe, manifesting in women's roles both within and outside the home. In either scenario, women find themselves obligated to obey men, facing widespread criticism for any perceived wrongdoing. Conversely, men often escape scrutiny for immoral actions, as societal norms grant them a perceived right to behave without consequence. The root cause of violence against women is identified in the paper as the discrimination between genders. This discrimination, ingrained in societal beliefs, leads men to believe in their entitlement to mistreat women without repercussions. The escalating divorce rate is attributed to a lack of understanding between couples, with women consistently compromising to salvage relationships. The paper acknowledges the prevalent exploitation of women by men, be it for physical or political gain, highlighting the enduring reality within society. Women are subjected to judgment based on superficial criteria such as skin color, height, class status, and education. Despite making sacrifices for family honor and children's well-being, women often receive only humiliation and abuse in return. The narrative underscores the prevailing societal mindset that treats women as inferior beings, akin to animals subject to the whims of their owners. The reluctance of men to accord respect to women stems from the misguided fear of losing societal respect themselves. The enduring oppression faced by women, as depicted in "My Feudal Lord," serves as a poignant illustration of the broader issues embedded in patriarchal societies, particularly in Pakistan. The novel acts as a catalyst, urging women to break their

silence, resist oppression, and advocate for their rights. The analysis asserts that progress can only be achieved if society grants women equal rights, emphasizing the need for women to vocalize their demands for change. It concludes with a reflection on the broader societal attitude, urging a shift from teaching women to endure life's challenges to teaching men not to oppress women.

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