

A Study of Female Figure in Bapsi Sidhwa's 'The Pakistani Bride' and Tehmina Durrani's 'My Feudal Lord'

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Abstract

The Feminist Movement, of the twentieth century that metamorphosed the attitude and perception of the world. It provided a better understanding of women's issues and rights and endeavored to bring them forward because they had been marginalized for so long. While the privileged women of the continent got into limelight by means of their writings, women belonging to third world still had their voice unheard. There is also a rich tradition of Women writing in English being carried out efficiently with some remarkable writers, who have not only gained recognition at internationally acclaimed. The novels strongly comments about the influence of cultural conflicts and its impact on the social order. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* deals with the repression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. The novel is based on a true story narrated to Sidhwa when with her family; she stayed at an army camping the remotest regions of the Karakoram Mountains. *My Feudal Lord* is one of the extraordinary autobiographies that can ever be written. Durrani uses it as a means of exposing the hypocrisy of ruling elites in Pakistan generally and the cruel nature of her husband specifically. In this book she talks about social ethos of Pakistani marital life by citing her own marriage as an example.

Key words: privileged, milieu, promise, experience, autobiography, high.

Introduction

Women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically in every domain where patriarchy reigns, woman is other: she is marginalized, defined only by her difference from male norms and values. All feminist activity, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by prompting gender equality. Thus gender issues play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not.

The Feminist Movement, of the twentieth century that metamorphosed the attitude and perception of the world. It provided a better understanding of women's issues and rights and endeavored to bring them forward because they had been marginalized for so long. While the privileged women of the continent got into limelight by means of their writings, women belonging to third world still had their voice unheard. The following statement of Russian scientist Anton Nemilov reflects the status of woman everywhere:

Until now the concept of inequality between man and woman has been so deeply rooted not only in the lesser educated people but also in the high educated people as well as women themselves, that if, on occasion, women are treated as having full equality with men, this is attributed to men's weakness and impotency. If we pursue the thought of any scientist, writer, student, businessman... we shall soon realize that he does not in his heart of hearts regard woman as his equal. If we read any recent novel, however free a thinker, a writer might be, we shall certainly find something or other in it which expose as superficial his concept of women as equal to men.

Pakistan born Bapsi Sidhwa, who later moved to US, is considered as pioneer of Pakistani writing in English. Writer of many acclaimed novels including *The Pakistani Bride* and *The American Brat*, and *Cracking India* has the power of assimilating poetry into prose. Many writers are bilingual but none use the non English words with as ease as Sidhwa uses it in her novels. Besides, being born in Lahore Pakistan, she is greatly inspired by Urdu and Punjabi language and her art reveals it.

Being a feminist writer she creates her language into a feminine space where her novels flourish. Bapsi Sidhwa was born in Karachi in 1939. She was brought up and educated in Lahore. When she was still nineteen years old, she fell in love with a Bombay businessman and married him. But this marriage did not last long. After the breakup, she took to writing. Later she got married to Noshirwan, a respected businessman from Lahore. Bapsi Sidhwa graduated from Lahore's Kinnaird College for Women. She has been active in social work and shows a concern for the women around.

Her novels in English reflect her personal experience of the Partition of Indian subcontinent, abuse against women, immigration to the US, and membership in the Parsi or Zoroastrian community. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* deals with the repression of women in the patriarchal Pakistani society. The novel is based on a true story narrated to Sidhwa when with her family; she stayed at an army camp in the remotest regions of the Karakoram Mountains. A colonel in charge of the place and some engineers narrated the story of a girl from the plains. She was being taken across the Indus by an old tribal to marry his nephew. But the girl ran away after the marriage and hid herself in the cold mountains for fourteen days. The tribalmen and her husband chased her and caught her. After beating her severely, they threw her down into the turbulent waters of the Indus. Sidhwa with the help of her imagination and craftsmanship fictionalised this true story. She gives this sad tale a 'habitation and a local name'. The girl is named as Zaitoon. This novel provides a realistic picture of the treatment of women in Pakistani society. In this novel, Sidhwa also introduces a parallel story of an American girl and her flirtation with major Mushtaq of Pakistani army. In the main plot, Zaitoon is fascinated by her father's vision of the lost mountain paradise. When she is married in the mountains, she realizes that her romantic dreams of mountain life were only dreams. Reality was shocking. The novel ends with Zaitoon's epic struggle to find the bridge and cross it. In this novel, Sidhwa makes a conscious departure from the ending of the true story. In the novel, the girl is not killed; she safely crosses the bridge. *The Pakistani Bride* is about women characters who live in societies where feminism and women empowerment have not been either known or accepted by the societies.

Bapsi Sidhwa's writing is what is known as gynocritique in the terms of Elaine Showalter. Gynocriticism is concerned with woman as writer with woman as producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literatures of literature by women. Its subjects include psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and of course, studies of particular writers and work. (147)

Feminists are those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about oppression, unequal relationships between men and women and who want to change it. All feminist pursuits are aimed at social movement acquiring rights for women from society. Keeping this under consideration, one might argue that feminism in Pakistan is a complete myth. Ever since its independence, in Pakistan have been battling exploitative treatment at the hands of their male counterparts the social, economic and political environment making it difficult for them to progress and fight for their rights. 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. (1990, 63).

All through history women's voices have been suppressed, leaving them as the other. While some have accepted this dominance and taken refuge into silence, others like Tehmina Durrani, equipped themselves with art to fight against male hegemony, patriarchal dominance and Islamic fundamentalism to assert power and control over their own lives. Tehmina's *My Feudal Lord* is the reflection of such an effort. She does not limit herself to the revelation of her own traumatic life, but tries to bring to light the unknown dark lives of thousands of other women leading such turbulent lives under the distorted social norms and conditions.

Set between 1974 and 1990, the books give a glimpse of powerful Pakistani feudal system, especially in Punjab province, the affluent class of society and the ill-treatment of women by their husbands, families and society, besides offering an inside peek into the tumultuous political environment. It's interesting to note how Durrani mentions her ex-husband in the Dedication section, where she writes, I wish that this book might serve as a mirror, so that he may see in it reflections of the man, the husband, the father, the leader and the friend he is.

Tehmina Durrani was born in 1953 is the daughter of a former Governor of State Bank of Pakistan and Managing Director of Pakistan International Airlines. She was raised in the privileged milieu of Lahore high society and educated at the same school as Benazir Bhutto. Her first book, *My Feudal Lord*, caused ripples in Pakistan's male dominated society by describing her abusive and traumatic marriage to Ghulam Mustafa Khar, then Chief Minister and later Governor of Punjab and her experience of a feudal society. She is currently involved in the emancipation of women in Pakistan. Patriarchy is a social system in which society is organized around male authority figures. In this system fathers have authority over women, children, and property. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege, and is dependent on female subordination. Most forms of feminism characterizing patriarchy as an unjust social system that is oppressive to women. Carol Pateman argues that the patriarchal distinction between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection. In patriarchal power, making women into pledges haggled by families for political power. She has to sacrifice her emotions, desires, identity, and education and sometimes even parents also.

The Pakistani Bride (1987) is written in the vein of realist narrative. It revolves around the survival struggle of Zaitoon, the heroine of the novel, while struggling to escape from the cruel Pakistani tribal society where she has been married. Zaitoon, an orphan heroine of the novel, is arranged to be married into a feudal and rural Pakistani community. She manages an escape from there to find an independent life of her own.

Sidhwa counters the domineering patriarchal discourse of Pakistani literature by providing an alternative image of a strong and confident female.

Zaitoon can be considered as the heroine of the novel, and Carol as the best supporting actress. The author of the novel reflects through Carol the handling of a civilized, upper class, Western woman in the male-dominated world of the novel. The account about Carol reinforces Zaitoon's story. Both stories convey Sidhwa's concept about the treatment of women in the world of the novel. Women are expected to have silent voices overcast by the shadows of their husbands, fathers and brothers. Sidhwa presents the view that Pakistani families home deny women their identity and make them nobody.

Sidhwa presented the plight of a Pakistani woman through the eyes of an outsider. She exposed two brides, Carol and Zaitoon, but both with the same fate. Both are exploited by men. Zaitoon unlocked a mystery, affording a telepathic peephole through which Carol had a glimpse of her condition and the fateful condition of girls like her (Sidhwa, 1984). The stories of both the women expose the main issue of the novel, the position and treatment of women in Pakistani society. The stories bring into focus the violence, degradation and oppression faced by women in an episode in *The Pakistani Bride* the woman is shown as a commodity, any girl...was worth more than the loan deal (Sidhwa, 1984).

Zaitoon's escape from her brutal marriage is a victory against the male chauvinistic system. Her fleeing is a spirit of bravery and courage on the part of a woman which endorses a challenge to the structures of patriarchy (Ross, 1991). She is a survivor: She gets able to be free from the clutches of the brutal marriage, the wild hills, the honour thirsty tribe's men, and the cruel rapists. She escapes from all this hostility and survives.

The novelist delves deep into the arena of culture and power factors that control the social order. Dipika Sahai remarks:

The Pakistani Bride is a women's lyric cry in prose against the existential fate and societal abuse. Sidhwa has fashioned complex metaphors to orchestrate the multiple agonies of a woman, a successful portrayal of pain and suffering in the character of Zaitoon. She has written dramatically of a particular culture, marriage, loyalty, honor and their conflict with old ways. (85-86)

The protagonist and antagonist are victims of cultural disparity; their inability to assimilate into a new culture perturbs their subsistence. Sakhi's prejudice about the inferiority of Zaitoon's ethnicity and cultural values circuitously influences his behavior. During the initial stages he abuses her because he feels that he is expected to intimidate her and prove his dominance as her husband and provider. There occurs a conflict in his mental space when he encounters the tender phases of her emotions; it evokes the humane traits and his affection and care surfaces. Display of his sympathy evokes a sense succor in her; on the contrary Sakhi's tribe considers it to be a highly henpecked behavior. Zaitoon's relief is short-lived because her husband is forced to reclaim his masculinity by thrashing her publicly.

Sakhi vents his fury on the oxen and when its flesh ruptures his mother interferes and tries to protect the animal. He neither spares his mother, she is also thrashed badly. Finally he directs his fury towards Zaitoon who comes to aid her mother-in-law. He thrashes her badly saying —You are my woman! I teach you to obey me! (1987 172-73). He works out his authority over the objects under his control- the domesticated animal, the subservient mother, the docile consort. After trouncing them, he feels elated because he has established his masculinity and power. Beating the mother is a cardinal sin, which Sakhi fails to realize, it shocks the sensibility of Zaitoon. Surviving in Kohistan would gift her similar fate of her mother-in-law; she realizes the futility of such existence Zaitoon thinks that the tribal men are unkind and menacing; while Sakhi and Qasim think that the men from the plains are effeminate and scorn them. Having trained in the thought of might being right, they fail to recognize the need for compassion. They misinterpret chivalry as effeminacy, thus missing out on a prominent cultural value. Zaitoon is helped by a chivalrous army man and he prevents her from slipping off the bridge, but Sakhi misapprehends and pictures it in the grossest possible manner. Zaitoon's innocent actions are misread and depicted as loutish and sordid.

Zaitoon rapidly discovers that reality is harsh and her romantic dreams erroneous. She rebels at the cruel treatment, the beatings, mistrust and realizes that her imagined ideal community is no longer:

A region where men were heroic, proud and incorruptible, ruled by a code of honour that banned all injustice and evil.... Their women beautiful as houris and their bright rosy-cheeked children lived besides crystal torrents of melted snow.¹ Zaitoon's escape from this rigid, traditional tribal community is considered by Fawzia Afzal-Khan as a spirit of defiance which endorses a challenge to the structures of patriarchy (1987 9).

Bapsi Sidhwa during her stay in the Karakonam Mountain Range observed the rites, rituals and lifestyle of the Kohistani tribe. The firsthand knowledge that she obtained though cognition was utilized when she wrought her first novel *The Pakistani Bride*. Sidhwa derived the inspiration to write the novel after she listened to the tale of a purchased bride, who was brutally slaughtered by her husband because she tried to escape from the tribe. The unfortunate fate of the sixteen-year-old Punjabi girl evoked sympathy in the writer, it left a deep impact in her mind. Thus Sidhwa first novel is about the inter-action of two cultures, the mountainous tribe and the urban plain. Both display the novelist's taut and purposeful control of language. Sidhwa's is a plain, matter of fact, supple style, without ornate flourishes or unnecessary complications, yet it can rise to poetic intensity when the narrative demands it.

The novel is a moving and powerful work of art. It portrays a great idealism, a philosophical outlook which shows the primacy of human spirit over physical and material obstacles

My Feudal Lord (1995) is divided into three parts, aptly entitled, Lion of Punjab, Law of Jungle, and Lioness. Throughout these sections one can map the progress of Tehmina from a meek housewife to a fierce social crusader fighting for her husband's release from prison and later for her own freedom from the clutches of her husband.

Suddenly he threw me down on to the bed and jumped on me. Sitting astride my belly, he slapped me in the face repeatedly with his open palm, forehand and backhand. The sounds of his blows seemed too loud to remain confined to the four walls of the room. I fought to stifle my screams as he pulled at my hair, thrusting my head from side to side. Like lightning, he leaped off me. One hand clutched my long, braided hair and jerked me off the bed and on to the floor. I felt a wetness run down my legs, but had no time to realize that my bladder lacked the strength to face this kind of fear/ He threw me against a wall, picked me up and threw me against another one again, and again, and again. I no longer knew what was happening. Something burst in my ears. I felt an agonizing pain in my eyes. Something split. Something swelled. Then the pain merged into one deep, enthralling sense of agony. (102 -103)

Lion of The Punjab deals with Mustafa who roars and destroys the lives of simple and innocent women without any hesitation... the typical trait of a lion. Tehmina is also married but she leaves her husband an innocent, simple guy and marries Mustafa. But soon she realizes the hollowness and barrenness of this relationship I had no power, no rights, and no will of my own (1995).

Law of the Jungle starts with Tehmina and Mustafa's immigration to London. There his affair with her youngest sister makes her mad and panic. She endures all her husband's physical assaults and sexual brutality as a part of her destiny. But then she decides to rebel the king I am not your sister or your mother. I am your wife (1995). This is how Tehmina challenges the patriarchal structure denying all the roles of women as futile and abstract. But Mustafa can never allow her to leave him because he thinks that she is the only skylark that can amuse him while he is tired.

In Lioness, Tehmina campaigns for Mustafa and he wins the elections. But a Lion is a Lion at every cost... his violence becomes more intense. Finally, she decides to burst out all her pains in the form of book and an act of writing for woman is to break the silence that patriarchal society has culturally imposed upon her.

Tehmina likewise was infatuated towards Anees before her soul woke up to fall for Mustafa Khar. Due to her childhood suppression by her mother, Tehmina had always desired a strong and authoritative male head of the family. In Anees she couldn't find a dominant authoritative figure that she craved for and in a social gathering falls in love with Mustafa Khar. Mustafa Khar was authoritative, conservative and overpowering (1995 39), the qualities that attracted Tehmina towards him. He perfectly fitted into her concept of an authoritative head. She confesses, psychologically I had suffered from my father's weak role in our family. Now here was someone who presented a quite different personality (1995 39). When Tehmina and Mustafa fell in love, Mustafa was already married to Shahrazad (Sherry), his fifth wife. In between her narrative, the author opens an account of Mustafa's inconsistent married life with his wives, switching from one to another. Sherry warned Tehmina, He's a very difficult man. I know him. You don't know him. He's no good for you. He'll ruin your life as he's ruined mine (1995 76). Gradually she finds Sherry's warning take a real shape as soon as she marries him. He threatens her by saying —Never —ever —disobey me! You have to do what I tell you to do (1995 95). Under such threat and dominance by Mustafa, she had to leave for London with him, after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's arrest. Though in London Tehmina got united with her family but her torture under her husband's savage behaviour worsened. She was bewildered with Mustafa's split personality beating her mercilessly, tormenting her; and after the storm passing away he would even fall on her feet to plead for mercy. With his violently possessive and pathologically jealous character, Mustafa cut Tehmina off from the outside world. While she bore all the physical torments and abuses; Mustafa engaged himself to fascinate and woo Tehmina's younger sister Adila.

Crushing her spirit with his overpowering mettle, he established a sexual liaison with Adila. Mustafa even kidnaps his own children to win Tehmina back when she demands divorce. Tehmina for the sake of her children and after Mustafa's resolution to change, grants him another chance. But Mustafa doesn't keep his promise and returns to his true savage self-torturing her. This leaves Tehmina with no other option than to divorce him, signing away all financial support, losing the custody of her four children and disownment from her parents.

After her divorce Durrani is deserted by her socio/political circle she tells, I was a social and political outcast. People whom I formerly respected turned their backs on me. I shuddered at the realization of the position that a woman falls into after divorce...especially if her ex-husband is an important person. Increasingly, I experienced a humiliating lack of confidence and self-esteem. But although I cried often in bed at night I held on during the day with a determined strength (Khan 37).

Durrani 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, or Abdul Sattar Edhi's 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 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).

With regard to Feminist Postcolonialism it can be concluded that all women writers of this analysis give their female characters a voice, because they do not only write about female issues, but let their female characters speak for themselves. In this way they are able to address a wide variety of female roles and topics. Since they have chosen to write in English, they are able to reach an international audience and, thus, can spread women's issues widely. In their novels they do not only portray women as passive victims of patriarchy and violence, but in most novels, women are described as being active and accomplishing their individual self realisation. Women writers may be more proficient in presenting female experiences. As Seema Malik observes:

Women, writing of/about women are naturally better attuned to comprehend/identify or to delve deep into the subtler shades of feminine experiences because of their sensibility as women. They articulate the voice of the fragments which rarely finds space in master/male narratives. (2007 53)

Within the patriarchal system, which has prevailed over most of recorded history, there is not only rape, wife battering, incest, and other structural forms of violence designed to maintain men's domination over women; but also institutionalized violence designed to impose and maintain the domination of man over man, tribe over tribe, and nation over nation.

For Bapsi Sidhwa, her feeling of belonging to the world has been enriched by her life experiences in India, Pakistan and the United States, which coexist simultaneously within her, as she declares in an interview: a Parsi first, then a Pakistani, specifically a Punjabi. I am a woman simply by gender. I don't feel American at all. My consolidated 3 P identity has enriched my writingll (Karkaria 2005). As an eight-year old girl, she witnessed first-hand the horrific violence of the Partition, later becoming a supporter of women's rights. She married and lived in Bombay for a while and subsequently moved to Houston in 1983, where she currently resides. This overlapping of multiple territories is also visible in her chosen language: at the time when most of Pakistani writers wrote in Urdu, she wrote only in English and therein found herself at ease:

My written Urdu is not very good, though I speak it fluently. As for Gujarati, hardly anyone in Pakistan knows the language. In Britain, of all places, people say. Why don't you write in your own language? And they bring very heavy political overtones to bear on this. But I think, well, the English don't have a monopoly on the language. It is a language of the world, now. And it is a means of communicating between various nationalities and the most immediate tool at hand. So I use it without any inhibitions or problems (Montenegro 1990, 523).

Though Zaitoon has survived, she could easily become mad like this unfortunate woman. Her triumph can be appreciated properly only when she is compared with the prominent images of the other women in the novel: Afshan, married to Qasim, a boy of ten, in lieu of a loan, Miriam, matronly and domesticated, always in purdah; the grotesque, misshapen prostitute, and Shahnaz the high class courtesan, Hamida, a woman broken by the hard life in the hills, beaten by her own son; Carol, the American wife of Farukh, sexually exploited by Major Mushtaq and the Crazy beggar woman of Lawrence Gardens, a plaything of her rapists. Against these images, Zaitoon's choice of freedom over slavery, her rejection of the oppressive and brutal tribal society, her courageous and heroic struggle for survival against impossible odds – all these are a testimony to the fighting spirit of the weak and the crushed. It is Carol through whom Sidhwa speaks when she cries out against the oppression of women:

Women the world over, through the ages, asked to be murdered, raped, exploited, enslaved, to get importunately impregnated, beaten-up, bullied, disinherited. It was an immutable law of nature. What had the tribal girl done to deserve such grotesque retribution? Had she fallen in love with the wrong man?

No wonder women here formed such intense friendships to protect themselves where physical right over weighs the subtler strengths of womanhood... That girl had unlocked a mystery, affording a telepathic peephole through which Carol had a glimpse of her condition and the fateful condition of girls like her (1987, 116).

My Feudal Lord (1995) is the true archetype of women's plight and their repressed condition. It has been written unambiguously and specifically in Pakistani context referring to the plight of women in patriarchal symbolic order. 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 behaviour 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 Durrani 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 longll he growled, Is he your brother or your lover? (1995,133). She looked at her violent husband and replied in astonishing manner; He is my brother, Mustafa, really (133). On her reply, he gets more shabby and cruel stating: Are you answering me back? (133). Mustafa Khar performs the true role of a patriarch and of a masculine oppressor as well as an unjust, unruly man. In another episode, Durrani was not allowed to read a newspaper and she was supposed to obey without any protest, otherwise, His fists did the talkingll (106). Even Khar's old mother was not free of this charge against women. At the dinner table, he used to command his mother, Eat up. His mother began to eat. Whenever she muttered that she had lost her appetite. Khar turned a hate stare upon her and spouted obscenities. Quickly, she pecked at her food. Durrani writes, A feudal lord was an absolute ruler who could justify any action (41).

Durrani's work (1995) shows various examples of this type of patriarchal insolence. She is snubbed and ridiculed throughout her life not to shun and go against this social order. Whenever she tried to come out of it she was beaten by her husband. Tehmina Durrani states, Later, in our bedroom, my insolence was punished with yet another sharp slap. He called me an exhibitionist, a woman without shame (216).

In Post colonial literature, the appearance of women writers is acknowledged which was concealed in colonial societies. Many non-western women writers came forward in this period and made a place in literature. Writers like Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, and Nadine Gordimer have placed themselves at the centre of this literary period. If we study literature written by these writers we find that all over the world, particularly in Indian subcontinent the act of writing by a woman is considered as an act of breaking her silence because her repressive patriarchal society has taught south Asian women to be culturally silent. Their femininity is essentially the marginalized consciousness that works on the edge of patriarchal discourse. Such an insight into the marginal self is presented by Tehmina Durrani in *My Feudal Lord*.

While leaving Khar, Tehmina Durrani was not running away. She, in fact, chose to do the most difficult thing, to write while exposing her marriage as a way of showing feudalism in its true light. She writes in the book, that after getting her divorce, Mustafa called her and said, Tehmina, you are nothing any more once you were Begum Tehmina Khar. Now you are just Tehmina Durrani. When you ring up people, you have to introduce yourself as my ex wife (1995, 353).

This suggests that Durrani has an agency to confess and to protest. She becomes the mouth piece of the women of Pakistan. Therefore, it can be concluded that Durrani 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 (382).

The purpose of her autobiography *My Feudal Lord* (1995) becomes quite clear when she dedicates it to the people of Pakistan, to the people of Pakistan who have repeatedly trusted and supported their leaders... leaders who have, in written, used the hungry, oppressed, miserable, multitudes to further their personal interest ... to my beloved children who, in our closed society, shall have to suffer the trials of the family exposed ... may my son never oppress the weak, may my daughters learn to fight oppression (dedication).

The act of writing about her personal life is equal to breaking her silence because the society expects her to remain silent. Women autobiographies talk about patriarchy which establishes values, and gender prescriptions. Despite rejecting male hegemony these autobiographies celebrate motherhood and wifehood clearly. Women replace their individual identity with the maternal one. Pakistani English autobiographical writing is still a new body of work. More and more writers however, turn their attention to fiction side. Durrani's autobiography though not the first of its kind attracted lots of public attention.

The focus of her autobiography is the institution of marriage and family which are thoroughly embedded in cultural practices. Pakistan is one of those countries where unfortunately violence against women has traditionally dominated the cultural scene. Durrani's discourse closely follows helplessness in these circumstances and the overall patriarchal system which dominates both public and private spheres.

The characters or the individuals in both genres live in the world, where the boundaries of the public and the private are increasingly fluid. Some fictional narratives are also autobiographical in nature. The striking example of this form is Bapsi Sidhwa's novels. Sidhwa has written novels loaded with autobiographical elements. On the other hand, in Durrani's autobiography representations seems to have been negotiated. However, it is important to recognize boundaries between fact and fiction.

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