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## Feminism in the Select Novels of Tehmina Durrani

**Kalpana M. Wankhade**

Research Scholar,  
Government Vidarbha Institute of Science and Humanities,  
Amravati.

**&**

**Anupama D. Deshraj**

Professor and Head of the Department,  
Government Vidarbha Institute of Science and Humanities,  
Amravati.

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### **Abstract:**

This paper aims to explore feminism and feminist perspectives in the novels of Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy*. Patriarchy continues to increase on the battered and strangle lives of innocent girls, fearful loveless wives. Patriarchy in the form of male domination has apparent itself even in the civilized societies and is infesting it. To view its positive aspect there are women writers like Tehmina Durrani and her writing make awareness in Muslim society. This paper tried to explore that Durrani as a feminist author. She contributes to empower women. (particular in Pakistan) She fights against gender stereotypes and routine behaviors. Tehmina Durrani's work gives a powerful analysis of patriarchal power stress to all-encompassing questions faced by women in South Asia. She expertly interlinks personal struggle with broader societal observations, offering readers a heart-rending reflection on the complex relationship between gender equality and religious misrepresentation, sexual harassment. An analysis goes beyond the absolute breakdown of oppression to explore resilience.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Patriarchy, Oppression, Gender equality, Society.

### **Introduction**

Tehmina Durrani belongs to a very rich culture and elite background. Her family have a historical and political upbringing in Pakistan. Her family is eminent in Pakistan. She is very

distinguished woman born on 18 February 1953, the daughter of former Governor of State Bank of Pakistan and Managing Director of Pakistan International Airlines, S. U. Durrani. and a granddaughter of Nawab Sir Liaqat Hayat Khan, prime minister of Patials state for eleven years. Her first book, *My Feudal Lord*, caused ripples in Pakistan's male-dominated society for describing her abusive and traumatic marriage with 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.

Samina is a mother of Tehmina, she came from the Hayat family of the Khattar tribe which had settled in Wah, on the northern edge of the Punjab near the border with the Northwest Frontier Province. As a result of loyal service to the Crown, British colonial masters had given vast tracts of lands to the family. The Hayats had fought alongside the Moors in Spain, and claimed that the family's renowned good looks were the result of intermarriages with Spanish women. Her mother's Anglicized family had been actively involved in the politics of the princely states that were scattered throughout India prior to independence. Before partition her father, Nawab Sir Liaqat Haya Khan, had been prime minister of Patiala State and her uncle, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, governor of the undivided Punjab. Both her brothers had been knighted. In her mother's childhood home, the British way of life was slavishly imitated. The Hayat men pursued the pastimes of the idle rich. They endeavored for elegance with their classic, tailored clothes, played polo, learned all the latest dances, went on *shikar* (hunting expeditions) and threw lavish parties. The beautiful women of the family, who wore glamorous Eastern dress, nevertheless spoke and behaved in an Anglicized way and were thus considered, by the 'natives', to be 'advanced' or 'fast'. Only over time would Tehmina come to understand what a surprise she was to her mother. Tehmina's mother was a light-skinned beauty - and proud of it, her family was fair-skinned and itself to be high-class. A dark child was condemned to abandon. She was arriving in the world in 1953 with a dark skin. It seemed evident by her mother's attitude that she regarded as unattractive and was self-conscious to present her to friends and relatives. Tehmina's surroundings seemed unfriendly to the way she looked, and very early, she departed into an isolated, 'condemned-by-nature' cell. She told that she never remember her mother hugging or kissing.

The growing, deep-rooted, internal complexes, her childhood must have appeared enormously happy to an outsider. Her home was perfect and always orderly. Her family was ideal family, the sort of offspring who are pointed out as examples of decorum to other, naughtier, children, were abundant with comforts and privileges and travelled the world. Her father was a pathan, descended from the family of Ahmed Shah Durrani of Afghanistan. He had met her mother after her divorce from the Nawab of Tank's eldest son. He was a captain in the army, and aide to the governor of West Pakistan at the time they came across. After he left the army, during Field Marshal Ayub's presidency, he had initiated and developed the first Investment Corporation of Pakistan (ICP). Then, in 1967, he was appointed Managing Director of PIA, national airline. Later, when General Yahya Khan declared martial law and became President her father was appointed Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan. She loved her father. Six foot tall, he had the presence of a film star. He was as handsome as her mother was beautiful. They made a very elegant couple, though her, mother was the dominant partner and seemed to have the final say in everything. He controlled his affection. Whenever he had the chance he would tell Tehmina he loved her most of his children, but chances were rare she never really understood why he could not show his love or express it. Tehmina judged now that her mother did not allow of him displaying any affection towards her, because she was his eldest child. She felt insecure about Rubina, her half-sister through her first marriage.

### **A Brief Introduction of Feminism:**

The initial thought that is likely in the way of any historical thinking on the subject of feminism is that feminism is a *social* power. The unfold of feminist idea and feminist politics based on the comprehending that, in all societies which separate the sexes into differing cultural, economic or political realm women are less worthy than men. Feminism also depends on the principle that women can intentionally and communally transforms their social place. Usually, the term feminism is a socio-political movement that aims to get hold of women in the central flow of society and want to establish the social equality. Women raised their voice against political and social discrimination hidden at the back. In society, she has been chaff off akin to sugarcane. Feminism encompasses the position that prioritizes the male point of view and that women treated unjustly in these societies. Feminist movements and ideologies have developed over the years and represent different viewpoints and aims. Usually since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first

wave liberal feminism that required political and legal equality through reforms within a liberal democratic framework was stand out against with employment based proletarian women's movement that over the time developed into socialist and Marxist feminist based on class skirmish theory. In view of the fact that the 1960s, both of these traditions are also contrasted with radical feminism and that calls for a radical restructuring of society to eliminate male supremacy wing of second wave of feminism. Seeing as the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, many newer forms of feminisms have emerged. Feminism is just feminism, there would not be a particular and exact definition or the substitute for the word feminism, and it is the isms like other isms. On the primary outlook, we can depict feminism in so many ways and perspective because there are different aspects and perspectives depending on their personal and social experiences. Feminism aims to define and establish the political, economic, personal and social equality of the sexes. Feminism is an awakening for the rights of women, which men have denied from long years ago. It was the part of their politics in order to rule over women and achieving supremacy. Feminism incorporates the positions that social settings prioritize the male points of views and women had treated with prejudices within those so-called circumstances. It make an efforts to change that fighting against gender stereotypes and establishing educational, professional and interpersonal opportunities and outcome for women that are equal to those for men. Feminism is campaign for women's right's including the right to vote, hold public office work, earn equal pay own property, receive education, enter contracts have equal rights within marriage and maternity leaves. Feminist also work to ensure access to contraception legal abortions and social integration, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Some scholars consider feminist campaigns to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights. Feminism diagnosed the problem of women's inequality in society.

### **Feminism in Tehmina Durrani's Novels:**

Internationally the question of woman and the growth of feminism is woven together with the history of nationalist movements which are demanding equality and free government. It is a historically distinct and culturally diverse international movement. Its political aims have put one's mark on worldwide. The International Woman Suffrage Alliance committed itself in 1913 to Asian women's liberation and by the second world war there were national women's councils in sixteen Third World countries. Maggie Humm in the book *Feminisms A Reader* put very clear

about Kate Millett's fundamental principle is that women's oppression originates not from biology but from the social interpretation of femininity. Sexual politics is an archetype of social power and like all social, sexual power controls individuals but through indoctrination and through violence. Zillah Eisenstein in her *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* (1981) believed that feminist politics, rooted in a firm understanding of woman's sexual-class oppression within marriage and the market. Marriage and violence are two important part of the arising the feminism and feminist movement. Tehmina Durrani in an autobiographical novel *My Feudal Lord* narrates her abusive and harrowing experiences of her second marriage with the politician Mustafa Khar. Our closed society believed it obscene for woman to reveal her intimate secrets, but silence is a great crime. Silence excuse in-justice, bring up subservience and promotes a mean hypocrisy. Mustafa Khar and other feudal lords flourish and grow on silence. She said that Muslim women must learn to raise their voices against injustice. (375) Radical feminism talks about the social dominance of men over women. They focus on eliminating patriarchy instead of adjusting the system by changing the laws. Radical feminist also protest to economic or class issues that they connect with oppression, such as socialist or Marxist feminism.

Liberal Feminism focuses on women's legal rights and equality. They believe that women have the same rights as men, and that women's integration into the public sphere is as important as men's integration into society. Women should participate in economic, educational, decision-making and legal development.

Tehmina Durrani is a postcolonial feminist author. *Blasphemy* and *My Feudal Lord* are autobiographical novels. She affirms her commitment to feminism in an interview,

“Well, I am a woman so I naturally write from a feminine perspective.”

(Durrani Interview)

Her writing based on the feminine perspectives, her novels *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy* proved the critical acclaim in the feminine approaches. She says that

“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 like. I suppose my passion for reform is overwhelming. And I think, when anything overwhelms you that much you have a natural boldness because your step out of the realm of fear".

(Durrani's Interview)

Durrani in her interview talks about what society calls her on talking the issues of not spoken openly in society. She supposed to be bold and fearless. Juliet Mitchell explains an entirely different aspect of the subject in making, through an essay, *Feminism, Narrative and Psychoanalysis* in her book *Women: The Longest Revolution. Essays on Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis* (1984). She opines that a woman writing is not just her voice but the subject narrating its own making. She clarifies "The novel is the prime example of the way women start to create themselves as social subjects under bourgeois capitalism- create themselves as a category: women." (407). It is evident that feminism in the postmodern age has deeply contributed to the shaping understanding of the concept of gender analysis. Durrani wrote about the topics which were unexplored and forbidden. She has much skillful and scholarly literary work to her credit. Her novel *My Feudal Lord* provides the description of such a society, as in the words of Srivastava: *My Feudal Lord* 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 behavior and movements. (159) Tehmina Durrani's novel *Blasphemy* is a compilation of male domination upon women and corrupt religious practices. Through *Blasphemy*, she tried to depict the picture of the suffering women at deeper level in her novels, where women in the hands of men tormented, and distortion is common picture and they never feel responsible for their wicked deed. *Blasphemy* is a serious comment on the challenges faced by the Muslim society in the general and Muslim women in particular. All the incident of the novel spoke only about the attitude of men towards women, but rare she speaks about any religion. She depicts about some people who desired to manipulate the masses and women. Conservative education conditioned by forceful and patriarchal social environment that existed forced females to surrender to social attitude, social

philosophy which indoctrinated itself into their being and way of living. Tehmina Durrani through her novel challenges religious dogmas and religious scriptures in order to subjugate women. She has quote and analyzed to show the plight of women being crushed and exploited by men at the root of patriarchal cultural concept. Women are completely excluded from the political, social grounds, only men dominate these spheres. The complex structure of patriarchal system has outlined in *Blasphemy*. The relative status of men and women can at the most be set apart as separate but equal. The most significant is that the role of women in economy, which appears to have been highly valued and enhanced by the importance attached to the reproductive role of women, as there are depictions of pregnant women, women in their nurturing roles as mothers and even in the act of childbirth.

“He was getting up, I was being released, and yet I was trapped”.

(*Blasphemy*)

The above situation illustrates the psychological and physical captivity of Heer was experiencing in her married life. Kate Millate’s *Sexual Politics* put down the base for subsequent feminist by showing how cultural discourse reflects a systematic suppression and exploitation of women. Millate also introduces some of the fundamental terms such as Patriarchy, which add great significance. In the feminist literary studies, Millets Patriarchal is the term where male dominated structure and social arrangements elaborate the operation of women by definition. It also exhibits androcentric meaning male centered sexual politics soon become a cult book among feminist critics especially with its politics of family female representation. In *My Feudal Lord*, politics used to control Tehmina Durrani when she disobeyed Mustafa Khar. He gave instructions in following words

Never ever disobey me, you have to do what I tell to do. (Durrani)

Her husband required whole surrender to keep his male ego. Each character of Tehmina Durrani’s novels face insults, humiliation, molestation and tortures. Tehmina was much impress by the courageous woman Tara when she challenged the crime and criminal in male dominated society. Durrani’s anguish is inherent in the title of the book itself. *My Feudal Lord* the words Feudal and lord adequately render her situation and circumstances obvious to us.



### **Conclusion:**

Among the several feminist, Tehmina Durrani make evident herself to be noteworthy and prolific feminist who imprinted a specific position. She uncovers sensitive, emotional insight to explore the protagonists and other characters. She powerfully dealt with the issues of suppression, oppression, molestation, male domination, socio-political chasm, pain and pathos of women and their sufferings in the patriarchal society. Novelist dealt with the challenges of establishing her identity in the domain where women are just an object of sex and an heir production machine. Prominently, the writer talks about the true nature of a particular religion and its distortion. The novelists and the protagonists from their select novels evolved as strong women from an ordinary one. Novelist fascinated and brought the change in stereotype society. The select novels have speak toon the history of the feminist literature. The select novels carried out the all the characteristics of feminist approaches. *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy* have explored feminism. Durrani shattered the tradition of silence and evolved as a strong woman where raising voice was crime. She has shuddered feudal system and flung off the veil from the distorted religious norms.

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