

# A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MARXIST FEMINIST MULTI-VOICED EXPRESSIONS IN PAKISTANI WRITINGS

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## Abstract

Pakistani English literature is internationally recognized. It elaborates on Pakistani culture, societies, and individual and collective thought represented in its writings. Different writers have different perspectives to discuss but Marxist Feminism is an important aspect about which very few writers focused, on the point of view of the property, dominancy, wages, and shares in the economy. Men are not only denominated on women's bodies but also their economy which females deserve in the form of inheritance or wages. Karl Marx and Frederic Engels wrote a book: *The Origin of Family, Private property, and the State* (1884), and presented a theory on Marxist-feministic phenomena that men and women do the same job but women receive the reward not equally men. This can be because of males' dominant society or in other words, females are not aware of their basic rights. This study is the subjective analysis of reading the two novels of the pre-modern time: *Umrao Jaan Ada* by Hadi Ruswa and the post-modern era fiction: *The Holy Woman* by Qaisra Shahraz to analyze the custom prevalent in the society of Pakistan regarding the Marxist-feminist approach. The hypothesis is also, whether the situation varies after hundred years of awareness. However, the study has the conclusion of the same state.

**Keywords:** Marxist feminism, state of mind after hundred years, text analysis, *Umrao Jaan Ada*, and *The Holy Woman*

## Introduction

**K**arl Marx and Fredrich Angels proposed the theory of Marxist feminism, which said that workers were tired when they returned home from the industries and the farms, and they had to revive it though unproductive labor at home to supplement their low-wage packages. Women are also responsible for the majority

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of domestic tasks in a private family. Men have control over reproductive labour as well. As a result, women reproduced workers, including males, with no exchange value. However, the men hold all the means of production and reproduction and control surplus value (1845-6).

## **Marxist Feminism**

Marxist feminism has viewed non-wages, unpaid, valueless, and reproductive 'women's labour', since the 1840s, as a crucial aspect of capitalism. It advocated against the mistreatment and persecution of women who participated in capital expansion without seeing any benefits. Marxist feminism places special emphasis on the use of imperialism and primitive accumulation to represent the lives and generations of women, but it also predicted revolutionary subjectivity and anti-capitalist potential. In anti-colonial struggles, Marxist feminism focused on the culture of imperialism and the mobilization of feudal lords to seize population and gender (Armstrong 2020). Women are only the means of production in the patriarchal society of Pakistan. Unfortunately, there are not many reference books and articles in this sense; however, an attempt to check the hypothesis.

Since the 1840s, Marxism has emphasized how important women's unpaid reproductive effort is to capitalism. Marxist feminism places particular emphasis on the ideas of imperialism and primitive accumulation, or the appropriation of land, resources, and the unpaid labour of women to support people and generations. Feminism and patriarchy overlapped, but patriarchy stood apart from Marxism's emphasis on the dominance of capitalism and racial injustice. Engels argued, "Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service: the wife became head servant, excluded from all participation in social production" (Engels, 1942, 65). Marxist feminism looks into how capitalist production processes by gender stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. The dominant function of capitalism is value setting in social norms by demonstrating the use-value of reproductive work, particularly the exchange value of wages and the surplus value of profit. In modern Pakistani writing, the oppression of women supports the political and economic manifestations of structural racism and sexism (Hamid, Saima, Mavara, 2012).

## **Pakistani Feminist Fictions**

Men's irresponsible and irrational behaviour toward women in Pakistan is strongly condemned; however, in every sphere of life, women experience suffering. Men treat women like puppets and objects, and the latter are compelled to carry out all male commands (Ansari, 2019). Men have control over their desires to oppose people in all guises, even wives, sisters, and mothers. In Pakistan's male-dominated society, women are weak beings and always demanding men's attention and regard (Prevention 2018)

Fiction writers from Pakistan, like Talat Abbasi, Qaisra Shahraz, Mohsin Hamid, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Zulfikar Ghose, have worked hard to highlight the position of Pakistani women. Their depictions of women reflect the psychological and behavioural adjustments that women make to attain the status of liberation and empowerment. Though they may endure hardships, women emerge to compete with society, and the entire process makes them stronger and more successful. In Pakistani fiction, women are progressively mature by revolting against the causes of their misery. The women in Pakistani fiction continue to battle to achieve independence despite being constrained by cultural norms and linguistic limitations (Ahmad 2009).

To sell items for a high price, women have also employed an object in successful hoardings and social gatherings (Hongdao et al., 2018). However, to draw in a large number of clients, market vendors and industrialists use their goods under the guise of women's portraits. In all aspects of life, men's advantages seem exaggerated and utilized to centre on women. In patriarchal countries, men oppress and repress women, depicting them as lesser beings who are creatures to adore and assist men (Awan, 2017; Hansen, 2019). Men's status in an androcentric society shows that women are not inherently free to enjoy the wealth of natural advantages the world offers. In terms of biological equality, women are society's equal partners who can benefit from God's sweet bounties, but socially imposed taboos and dogmas restrict women's freedom. Men depress women to exercise dominance over them and make them dependent in all spheres of life.

Anton Nemilov, a Russian scientist, stated about the status of women in a patriarchal society. He remarked, "the concept of inequality between man and woman has been so deeply rooted, not only in the lesser educated people but is

also in the highly educated people as well as women themselves; that if on occasion, women are treated as having full equality with men. This attributes to men's weakness and impotency; if we pursue the thought of any scientist, writer, student, or businessperson... we shall soon realize that he does not feel in his heart of hearts regards 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" (2006).

## **Literary Analysis**

Women are financially or socially reward-less for the daily work they put into procreation and generational value. They relegate to become inconspicuous or a drain to the system as subjects in capitalism. According to Marxism, social reproduction is a type of labour that happens inside the confines of capitalism. Every capitalist social connection, including the one between the employer and the worker veil by a second relationship: between husband and wife. Gender norms mandate that in the newly privatized family, which runs by males, women do the majority of the reproductive work. To prepare for selling their labour force to the capitalist the following day, women produced labourers, including themselves. This reproductive activity's main goal is to revitalize the employees on a daily and intergenerational basis.

Men make influence women in Pakistan. In Pakistani society, men are also in charge of women's emotions. Women are treated like pets that only comply without their consent, they follow their husbands' patriarchal dictates (Rind and Sangi, 2016; Khan, 2020; Mcnojia, et al., 2020). In business, negative portrayals of women emerge, which contribute to how poorly society views them and can draw in customers. The way men portray women in advertisements gives the impression that they are a useless species with a positionless place in society (Huda and Ali, 2015; Zafar and Arafat, 2016). My Feudal Lord was the subject of research by Habib et al. in 2013. Tehmina Durrani, who experiences numerous issues at home due to her spouse, profiles in the novel for her private life. Her spouse, Ghulam Mustafa Khar, cruelly treats her like a slave.

In a similar vein, Bag and Roy (2012) explain how women are depressed and in mental anguish in India's male-dominated society and have little power to voice their desires. In the research, the researcher depicts the identity of women in

appalling circumstances. To illustrate the horrendous treatment of women by a male-oriented culture; the image of the women who are taken into brothels against their will and without their consent has been shown to the researchers.

The strict and conventional dogmas in Pakistan that place women at the mercy of men have a significant negative impact on them. In their research study, Umer et al. (2016) analyzed education, culture, and its legality. In the present period, culture and education are crucial components in creating a strong and developed country. In his study, the researcher examined how the male-dominated Baloch tribal society has gendered education, preventing women from receiving it despite it being their fundamental right. One kind of women's subjection that the researcher has explored is the gendered perception of education. They deny them the opportunity to receive the right education and dominate their daughters and women under their orders. The job that women undertake at home has little monetary value. Marxist theories of class society explain how a single class of men in capitalism controls the means of production. This group of owners has accumulated wealth with their ownership of the factors that produce profit, including labour, land, natural resources, commodities, markets, and distribution networks.

To increase profits for the capitalist owners, imperialism is capitalism's forceful response to the financial crisis. It entails the formation of new markets and labour markets. Marxist feminists argue that to combat the issue of overproduction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, imperialism relies on women and restrictive gender ideology (as workers, consumers, or both). Imperialism makes use of previously untapped resources by relying on pre-existing gender oppression ideas to compel newcomers to work for pay, to accept worse working conditions, and to capture undeveloped markets. For this purpose, Friedrich Engels explained the altering social relations of production and reproduction in his essay *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884).

According to Engels, capitalism gets benefits from the productive component of feudalism's labour. As common lands were fenced and rural livelihoods relied primarily on wages, women's handicrafts, spinning, subsistence farming, animal husbandry, and other agricultural activities decreased. According to Engels, "household management lost its public character under capitalism" (1884).

Arundhati Roy exemplified an androcentric society in her book, *The God of Small Things*. The researcher analyzed the feminist view of the novel to show how common it is for men to outnumber women in Southern India. The researcher describes how men perceive women as being different because the former can control the latter life (Tickell, 2003). Throughout the colonial era, women were 'others' because of oppression and marginalization. Similar to this, men in the southern part of India impose strict cultural rules and dogmas on their wives and daughters of dominance, depriving the women of their independence and controlling every aspect of their lives (Dingwaney Needham, 2005).

According to Engels (2008), a matriarchal civilization existed in a pronominal society, where women farmed fields to provide sustenance for the family. As the family's breeders, they enjoyed high prestige in society. However, as males learned the art of agriculture, the balance of power changed from women to men. Men start to rule inheritance, property, and even women. Eagles add that this "defeat of the female sex was the World's historic overthrow of mother right" (Eagles, 2008, p.67). However, Simon de Beavoie condemns the institution of marriage and sees it as captivity in which "women are the husband's prey, his possession" (Second Sex, p 184).

It seems fascinating but either so-called education or awareness has changed the population, or the culture of male domination is the same as in colonial times, and still, after almost a century. This is a hypothesis to put two novels of different eras to analyze the thought and prevailing culture of the patriarchal society of Pakistan with the Marxist feministic perspective.

## **Methodology**

The researcher analyses the chosen texts in the light of Marxist feminism as part of the qualitative research approach. The study's basic premise is those writers in Pakistan who portray women as an oppressed minority because they do not receive their economical rights. The current study is qualitative and uses the close reading method to analyze two specific novels: *Umrao Jaan Ada* (1899) by Hadi Ruswa, and *The Holy Woman* (2001) by Qaisra Shahraz. Close reading is the most effective method for understanding a text (Cuddon, 1999). Anyone can understand the meaning of the book in the context of this approach by focusing on the text's specific tone, words, characters, and point of view of the novelists related to the

Marxist feminist perspective. To characterize, quantify, and infer specific characteristics that are either present in the book or reflect in the written content, the book is examined (Lenz, 2010 P 279). After carefully reading, the researcher inserted the research material into the main and sub-headings to fit the topic. The researcher examined writings utilizing Engels and Marx's Marxist Feminist theoretical framework with the long distant writings of hundred years.

## **Feminist Analysis**

The social and cultural trends dominating today's society are the patriarchal attitude and masculine chauvinism. It was a good thing, whenever legislation was passed to reduce violence and prejudice against women. However, despite numerous regulations, the situation of women has barely improved, and the vast majority of people who belong to the downtrodden classes have seen very little development. These women from the working class face double or triple forms of oppression. The primary issue with the liberal mentality is their inability to do away with the idea that women are a commodity and a means of exhibitionist advertisement. Women are tools used by the privileged to advance their enterprises and reward if the religious mentality enslaves and pushes women into isolation. No one can save women by baring their bodies to make money if obscurantist oppression of women is bestial. The social relationships produced by a system of economic greed and desire are the root of discriminatory attitudes against women. The maintenance of the home, caring for and raising children, and other comparable duties imposed by a modern system are labour performed without money or without basic rights, which greatly diminishes women's status and standing in society. In other words, this is the outcome of a profit-based economy in which labour-cost reductions as the primary mechanism for raising the rate.

### **❖ Umrao Jaan Ada**

In the novel *Umrao Jaan Ada*, Hadi Ruswa portrayed the character of Abadi Jaan, an adopted daughter of Umrao, the protagonist, who gives comments to Chuttan, a man in the establishment, "You are willing to die for me but won't part with a paltry four annas... If you have a four-anna piece in your pocket, pass it on" (p.184). This statement of Abadi realizes the reader, the value of money more than a lover even though she is the source producing the money. In an article, the researcher

discussed that “Patriarchal society practices dual standard for men and women to subjugate women” (Sultana 2011). Umrao is a disturbing character ashamed of the life she is suffering. She abuses Dilawar Khan, the source to come to Umrao in the brothel; a shameful name for her family that would never be washed by any virtue. A reader can measure the magnitude of her opprobriousness and regret by the word, ‘Blacking of my face’ (p.30).

In another research article, “In Pakistan, Women’s Representation in the Workforce Remain Low”, Silvia Redaelli & Noor Rahman represented that the demonstration of female labour characters in Pakistani Urdu or English Literature must be prominent to discuss: “Women, therefore, seek work that can be done at home. Traditional honour codes also influence job selection and create barriers to jobs outside what is considered socially acceptable” (2021).

Marx debates that it is capitalism, which fixes the sovereigns and their attentions in harmony with their necessity to uphold or upsurge their conflict to persist in control. Marx admits the goal of empowering. There are some precedents in society whenever girls have to adopt the profession of prostitution forcefully to make money from the men’s side, as is said in quantitative research done by Silvia & Noor: “Most women say their husband or father is the primary decision-maker on whether they can work for pay, either from home or elsewhere”.

No matter what the reason is behind it, Umrao Jaan has exhausted her life. She wants sincere love and to be as respectful as other normal women in any society. The profession of prostitution has money without honour and in Umrao Jaan Ada, Umrao says about the normal income of a prostitute, “I was paid seventy-five rupees every month and was required to keep his company two hours every day” (p.112). Ruswa describes it all clearly and directly somewhere with the ‘I’ narrative or somewhere by the character of Umrao. Ruswa throws the dust on men and makes them responsible for women’s circumstances of this, only because of his selfishness; “Do you see how mean and selfish the man is?” (p.88). There is a place where Khanum realizes her visitor; Chaaban’s purpose is to come into a brothel, “Don’t you know that a courtesan’s only friend is money?” He further said, “Haven’t you heard it said that a whore is no one’s wife? You are always welcome in this house...But you should have your self-respect....” (p.93).



Mirza Hadi Ruswa is a very talented and bold writer of the pre-colonial era of Indo-Pakistan. He used his pen to write about the marginal women in society, who remained the prey of social animals. Particularly men are responsible to victimize some innocent women and suppress, even oppress them for earning money. Marx understood that a woman goes out of the home because of the impulse of men. However, some greedy men are not hesitant to sell even kith women or girls to the brothel and get the money in exchange. In *Umrao Jaan Ada*, Ruswa told the reader that the pimp bought them with the thought, that if they would have not bought such girls then the sellers had sold to anyone others.

Some theorists think that sex work is wicked merely when it happens within a culture conquered by an organization that coerces women, because of money or any other utility purpose, which Marx prophesied. Janet Radcliffe Richards, 'such as, claims that in a nation where females and males are equal, courtesan culture would be factual in reality. She has been nothing wrong about persons vending their amenities to crop sexual desire other than in marketing services to harvest aesthetic preference, take dispute by the opinion that there is nonentity incorrect with this culture of fallen women that eliminating sexism would not fix.

The society of Indo-Pakistan is patriarchal; a male-dominated society considers the monopoly of male members, where men may spoil the honour and esteem of female members without fear or punishment. Ruswa seems to go forth with the Marxist perspective while telling about the stories of *Umrao Jaan* and *Ram Dai* and may prove that men force and vender female bodies to earn money. In conversation with *Umrao*, Ruswa says that wise males have been alienated into two categories, those whose deeds are imperfect to them and those whose acts affect other people as well. Moreover, in his modest view, those in the first group are lower and persons in the second group are the greater sinner.

This novel *Umrao Jaan Ada* reveals the outer and hidden harsh realities regarding the personal lives and lifestyles of prostitutes, particularly the causes to join the brothel. *Umrao Jaan*, the protagonist of the novel helps the writer to expose the Marxist feminist aspect; women have become earning money machines and men are responsible for this miserable condition of them. While concerning brothels, women have money and luxurious life within foul walls but without self-consciousness, respect, and free movement in society.

Further, she reminds the last terrible night of forcefully kidnapping by Dilawar Khan and says, "I blame Dilawar Khan responsible for my tarnished life" (p.25), which was against her father for some reason. Ruswa describes every feature about her, how one day; Dilawar meets Umrao under a tree, calls her, and ties up her hands with a scarf. Then with the help of his friend, Peer Baksh, he sold Ameeran (Umrao). Umrao says that after the settlement of selling her, both of the villains have cool behaviour with her. And commented, "Let bygones be bygones" (p.29). Umrao remarked, 'I could not look at the man's blood-thirsty face; I was as terrified of him as I had been of Dilawar Khan who had kidnapped me' (p.24). This is the true perspective of Marxist feminism; prostitution, which has been agreed by Ruswa' who tells about the money evaluated from women forcefully; particularly women belonging to the institute of prostitution. Ruswa also tells about another poor girl in the story of Umrao that was Ram Dai; an innocent sold girl; the daughter of a Hindu trader in a village near Sitapur.

#### ❖ **The Holy Woman**

Shahraz's work does a fantastic job of utilizing dialogues and states, which are important components of narration. She cited the burqa for respect as an example, which is a sign of a culture (p.67). However, Shahraz perceived it as a form of confinement also for her female subject. She cannot talk confidently while hiding her face and body under a lengthy black veil, describing how her protagonist feels imprisoned (called burqa in Urdu). Shahraz also refers to the concept of 'A Holy woman', whom the patriarchy uses to dominate. When the main character (Zarri) finalizes against her better judgment to marry Sikander; her family decides to turn her into 'The Holy Woman'. She has to follow the rituals of her society after the death of her brother and get herself to marry to Quran (Haq Bakhshish). Her marriage becomes a virtual prison for her.

Any positive identity, in Shahraz's view, must adhere to the patriarchal system of feudalism. Her father was worried that feudalism would return if the girl got married because her future son-in-law would inherit his estate. Because of her understanding of women's rights and refusal to conform to social standards, Shahraz's protagonist Zarri has a strong female character. She insists, "Ruby, I am not a fish to be angled at, caught, or trapped" (p. 16). Zarri's mother resists making her daughter secure but Habib Khan threatens her divorce. Zarri accuses patriarchy of this cruel act and says, "What choice do I have" (p. 71). In an article

entitled "The Holy Woman: The Feminist Perspective," Ali Ahmad Kharal bemoans the fact that "no religion or law of the land does allow these male-made laws to sacrifice females and their basic rights in the name of so-called family honour since the time immemorial" in the current day and age (p. 53). Without hesitation, a man takes advantage of a woman to make money or, in another way, causes her difficulties to make money.

Lenin wrote in Pravda, issue 102: "Present day seals within itself numerous cases of poverty and oppression which do not immediately strike the eye. At the best of times, the scattered families of poor townspeople, artisans, workers, employees, and petty officials live in incredible difficulties, barely managing to make ends meet. Millions upon millions of women in such families live (or, rather exist) as 'domestic slaves, striving to feed and clothe their families on pennies at the cost of desperate daily effort and 'saving' on everything — except their labour. It is these women that the capitalists most willingly employ as home workers, who are prepared for a monstrously low wage to 'earn a little extra' for themselves and their family, for the sake of a crust of bread" (2012)

In this power struggle, male domination treats Zarri and Naghmana harshly. They patiently endure all of the severe hardships, display humility, and succeed in overcoming the tough destiny. When her brother Jaffer departs, Zarri feels unfortunate. It follows that only patriarchy may allow her to change with the balance of power. Her father cherishes the land he received from his family in the customary feudal manner. Her father decides to take control by transforming his only daughter into a "holy woman". This is the way to create and apply tradition, and even religion in this feudal political system.

However, there are vast differences between the wants and concerns of house cleaners and labouring women. Domestic labour can alter to domestic slavery in which women are enslaved and mentally destroyed without basic economic rights. The development of technology can completely revolutionize domestic work from a menial task.

## **Conclusion**

Every article is a scathing portrayal of the state of women in both the eastern and western nations. There are many variations among civilizations in terms of

clothing, cuisine, and religion, but cruelty to women is a trait shared by all of them. The destitutions they encounter are the same, though. The world still has many challenges that women must overcome in various ways. Both physical and spiritual wrongs are committed against them. From sunrise until dusk, they work from home and outside, and thereafter, the people in their homes beat them up and make them valueless. Along with working in the offices, they look after their houses, relatives, and kids. They lack both a place to stay and a worthwhile reward.

Neither the eastern nor the western worlds have managed to safeguard the fundamental rights of women. It is more severe in patriarchal societies where no female can raise her voice. The study and analysis of both of the novels: *Umrao Jaan Ada*, and *The Holy Woman*, demonstrate the same status even after hundred years. Men are unbounded dominant, while women need attention for their basic financial reward and regard. Today's women work in many different fields, yet they face workplace harassment everywhere they go. They are even not able to get the respect they deserve. The most vulnerable creature in the universe has no place in the realm of kindness or generosity. However, given that status of women in patriarchy is in danger of disintegrating, we must grant women the proper financial status and mental freedoms so that they can live in the world of giving with dignity.

The majority of affluent women in today's Pakistani society spend their days discussing domestic assistance, marriage plans, and fashion. Relative wealth, social standing, employment status, and business levels all play a role in all of this. These recurrent themes are also ones that serials and soap operas use to legitimize the practice of treating women like property. Domestic violence cannot be eliminated in a society where there is tremendous poverty and need because the majority of cases are brought on by financial issues. Similarly, even in advanced capitalist countries, women are less paid in workplaces like factories and other institutions, so disturbances in relationships would be created. Women are particularly exploited by the few parasites at the top of the class structure, which is a major curse for them. Prostitution and wage slavery are included in this. The morals and ethics that society is compelled to follow to uphold this system of exploiting working women are deliberate and necessary for systemic purposes. Patriarchy is another result of this exploitative system.

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