

Narrativizing Silence: Autobiographical Voices in Tehmina Durrani's my Feudal Lord

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Abstract:

Autobiographical narratives hold a unique position in human communication, serving as powerful tools for self-reflection, identity formation, and interpersonal connection. The paper aims to delve into the rich domain of the autobiographical study of *My Feudal Lord* by Tehmina Durrani to unravel the multifaceted nature of personal storytelling and its broader socio-political implications. Writing puts Durrani in command of the events, and she provides the reader with details of the starkest realities of not only her personal life but also of the then socio-political arena of Pakistan. Her narrative becomes a trope that holds a mirror to the patriarchal-feudal setup of subcontinent countries like Pakistan. Denouncing the ill effects of the patriarchal-feudal setup, she strives to amplify the voices of the marginalised and oppressed. Durrani, by recounting her personal narrative, concurrently elevates the voices of several underprivileged and persecuted women whose experiences are frequently muted. Her story turns into a potent resistance metaphor that tackles topics like social injustice, gender-based violence, and the relationship between individual trauma and broader systemic forces. *My Feudal Lord* is a powerful critique of the ingrained power structures that uphold injustice and oppression, not just a personal story.

The objective of this paper is to examine how Durrani employs autobiographical narrative as a medium for personal empowerment and socio-political critique, with a focus on its role in challenging patriarchal-feudal structures while amplifying marginalized voices in feminist discourse. A qualitative research methodology incorporating a close textual analysis of *My Feudal Lord* will be employed while undertaking the research. By writing the memoir, Durrani regains her voice to challenge and overthrow patriarchy's power, crafting a story that speaks much more than her own experiences. The act of writing serves as a means of defiance for Durrani, enabling her to transform her pain into a source of strength.

Keywords: Oppression, Patriarchy, Silence, Society, Violence, Women.

Introduction

Tehmina Durrani, a Pakistani writer, women's and children's rights activist and a social worker made her debut with her bestselling autobiography *My Feudal Lord*, with William and Martin Hoffer, first published in 1991. Her oeuvre includes: *My Feudal Lord* (1991), *A Mirror to the Blind* (1996), *Blasphemy* (1998) and *Happy Things in Sorrow Times* (2013). In *My Feudal Lord*, Durrani challenges the silences that frequently accompany women's oppressive experiences, especially in South Asia, with

her frank account. *My Feudal Lord* is a seminal work in autobiographical literature that highlights the harsh realities of spousal violence in patriarchal societies. In addition to offering a firsthand description of her own trauma, this work serves as a larger critique of the institutionalized misogyny that restricts women's autonomy. *My Feudal Lord* is significant because it breaks down the sociocultural foundations of abuse in order to explain the complexities of gender-related violence. Durrani's narrative is a crucial medium for comprehending the relationship between individual anguish and cultural conventions, highlighting the need for voice and autonomy. Durrani turns her silence into a powerful voice that defies social conventions and psychological boundaries by sharing stories of experiences influenced by personal trauma and patriarchal dominance. By demonstrating how suppressed experiences can be skilfully narrativized to assert agency, the text challenges readers to examine the widespread impact of feudal ideals on women's lives.

By sharing her hardships and victories, Durrani not only sheds light on her own path but also raises the voices of many other women who are similarly marginalized and ignored. Examining her story, then, reveals a more general reflection on identity reclamation in the face of structural oppression. In addition to exposing her husband's mistreatment, her narrative sparked discussions about gender inequality, patriarchy, and domestic violence in Pakistan. It made readers face hard realities about how privilege, abuse, and power are intertwined, especially in political and feudal settings. A crucial juncture in Durrani's journey is her choice to publicly reveal the assault she endured. The genre of autobiography is being used by women to declare their resistance and empowerment (Zaidi and Qureshi, 2012, p. 1). Writing *My Feudal Lord* is a radical statement of agency rather than just a narrative act. She challenges the patriarchal systems that allowed her oppression, shatters the public facade of her abuser's respectability, and ends the social taboo around partner violence by writing the memoir. In the autobiography, Durrani has the chance to go within, rebuild her broken self, and celebrate her womanhood and feminineness. Additionally, it depicts the spirit and tenor of the time when it was written. She presents in detail the circumstances of not only her life but of her nation as well.

James Olney (1980), in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* talking about the genre of autobiography says, "the genre emphasizes the birth of experience, singularity of experience and the reconstruction of the sense of individuality" (p. 135). Detailing every bit of the political turmoil in Pakistan, the exile of many political leaders, including her husband, political intrigues, martial law imposed by General Zia-ul-Haq and the consequent execution of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, she provides the reader with a first-hand account of the happenings in the post-partition Pakistan. Since its publication, the text has been translated into 40 languages which in itself talks about its popularity. Called as 'an extraordinary story' by the Sunday Times, the book has been divided into three parts followed by an epilogue. The first part, titled 'Lion of Punjab', details her subdued childhood, her first marriage and the eventual meeting and falling in love with her second (tormentor) husband, the Lion of Punjab, Mustafa Khar. 'Law of the Jungle', the second part, maps out the victimization of Durrani unabashedly and her silent endurance to safeguard herself and her children. 'Lioness', which comprises the third part is the title given to Durrani by her countrymen owing to the relentless efforts she made to get her husband released from prison. 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 (Srivastava and Singh, 2015, p. 60).

Writers utilise the autobiographical genre as a means to express their defiance and empowerment. J.A Cuddon (2013) calls autobiography "a person's own account of his or her life... always written for a public audience" (p. 60). He further maintains that "autobiography is ideally understood by both its authors and its readers to be exemplary, as a reliable and true portrayal of a life from which others can learn" (p. 60). The transition from silent endurance to outspoken resistance is reflected in Durrani's choice to write *My Feudal Lord*. She reclaims her story through her memoir, opposing the systems of power that allowed her to be abused and fighting for the rights of women. In a highly patriarchal society, her choice to speak out and write a memoir shows a fearless rejection of systemic, social, and personal tyranny. Through her literature, Durrani upends the social structure that tolerates and normalizes abuse and questions long-standing power relations. The deeply embedded cultural standards that require women to bear abuse in silence for the sake of their family's and society's reputation were also put to question by her. The crucial concept in woman centered writings is truthful representation of female experience and identity (Zaidi and Qureshi, 2012, p. 2). As a result, her memoir is more than just a personal story; it is a powerful critique of the structures that support women's oppression and silence. She reveals how feudal culture, in which women are viewed as property and deprived of autonomy, is based on toxic masculinity and entitlement. Her story illustrates how these structures are maintained by silence, complicity, and social pressure to put men's honour ahead of women's welfare.

Tehmina Durrani: Narrativizing the Silence

My Feudal Lord was a complete shock to the sub-continent audience in general and for Pakistanis in particular for the harsh and stark realities that it talked about are considered taboos in this part of the world. Durrani chronicles the happenings of her life "in such a captivating way that the trauma comes alive before readers" (Sandhya, 2008, p. 28). Durrani (1995), in the epilogue, commenting about its negative reception says "many said that it was scandalous, publicity-seeking rubbish. Some called it obscene and pornographic" (p. 380). She was, even, disowned by her parents on its publication. She avows "my father gave written notice to the press disowning and disinheriting me" (p. 381). Durrani, however accepted the disinheritance by her father and didn't back out, calling it "the natural outcome of unconventional behaviour". Whereas at the same time she attests to the fact that "such isolation is the cause of a woman's silence in our society". Durrani's narrative illustrates how the societal structures surrounding marital abuse and patriarchal dominance often force women into a state of silence, wherein their voices are marginalized. This silence is not merely passive; it becomes a complex form of defiance against a culture that perpetuates their suffering.

As she discusses personal experiences that are frequently hidden by social taboo, Durrani suggests that breaking this silence can be both an act of rebellion and a necessary step for empowerment. Although Durrani exposes culturally specific abuse practices that turn women's bodies into oppressive spaces, these stories also imply that resistance can result from such coerced silence. Examining these relationships leads to the idea of subalternity, in which women regain agency despite their hardships since they are aware of their predicament. "Women as subaltern are conscious of their subalternity

and they struggle to set themselves free from the chains of male-oriented societal and cultural norms” (Sumra and Taseer, 2018, p. 160). Rubina Iqbal (2020) commenting on Durrani’s unorthodox stance proposes, “Durrani feels that by her breaking silence and sharing her experiences of trauma she is on the path of Islam because to suffer injustice and humiliation silently is more sinful than the act of exploitation and violence itself. This memoir is an onslaught on Patriarchy and Feudalism besides a blow-up on the naked truth of politics in Pakistan” (p. 273-274). Consequently, writing about her private life becomes an act of defying societal expectations that demand silence of women. Durrani seeks to shed light, not merely on her own awful experiences and endeavours, but also on the hidden, difficult lives of countless women who endure similar tempestuous existence within a society plagued by bizarre social standards and situations. Dedicating her memoir to the people of Pakistan Durrani says:

I want the people of my country to know the truth behind the rhetoric, so that they might learn to look beyond the facade. To the five other ex-wives of Mustafa Khar, who have silently suffered pain and dishonour while he walked away with impunity. As his sixth wife, I am holding him accountable... To my beloved children... I want them to reject wrong and endorse right... May my sons never oppress the weak; may my daughters learn to fight oppression. (Dedication).

The uniqueness of the memoir lies in Durrani’s willingness to expose her very own private life, with the intention of shedding light on oppressive feudal customs. Phillippe Lejeune (1989) in this regard outlines autobiography as a “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (p. 4). When she dedicates her memoir to the people of her motherland, the objective of her autobiography becomes evident.

Durrani, in addition, narrates the fractured relationship that she had with her mother. By virtue of her dark skin colour, an exception in her family, she has a difficult relationship with her mother, because her mother didn’t approve of her unfairness. “Rubina, Zarmina and I- the darker daughters- never seemed to please her” (Durrani, 1995, p. 25). Forthrightly Durrani states that her mother’s words as well as actions “indicated her preference for the white-skinned children” (p. 25) which made the complex of being ugly ingrained deeply in her, affecting her life. Due to the ensuing estrangement from her family and her youthfulness, she chooses to wed Anees, a junior executive who works for the Shipping Corporation. Durrani sees marriage as a means of getting away from her current situation. However, she always felt a sense of incompleteness in their relationship because she didn’t ever love Anees. She recognizes that Anees's lack of masculinity diminishes his merits as a husband in her eyes. Durrani had always wanted an energetic and commanding male as a leader of the family by reason of the childhood subduing that she had experienced at the hands of her mother. However, she couldn’t find the powerful and commanding presence she desired in Anees and fell in love with Mustafa Khar to whom she “was drawn like a moth to a flame” (Durrani, 1995, p. 21) because his domineering, traditional, and authoritative characteristics aligned perfectly with her ideal concept of an empowering and imposing male figure. “That Mustafa was authoritarian, conservative and overpowering I knew from the start - but that was precisely what attracted me so much. Psychologically I had suffered from my father's weak role in our family. Now here was someone who presented a quite different personality” (Durrani, 1995, p. 39).

Disillusioned with Anees, she is drawn towards the flamboyant personality of the feudal lord, Mustafa Khar. They develop a scandalous affair and become the talk of every mouth. Proclaiming herself as “an unfaithful wife to a decent man” (Durrani, 1995, p. 74), her marriage with Anees is dissolved where upon Khar and Durrani enter into the matrimonial relationship through mutual consent. Following their union, however, after a short while only she realises that her fate has been sealed and life becomes an ensuing tragedy. Commenting on her choice of the man, she says “I found irony in this situation: I had escaped from the domination of my mother by climbing into the lap of a tyrant” (p. 128). Candidly she acknowledges that Mustafa’s fifth wife, Sherry, when she comes to know about their affair, pleaded as well as warned Durrani about this seemingly cultured man’s savage nature: “Get out of my life! Get out of his life! 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.' She tried to convince me that Mustafa was a violent and dangerous man. She claimed that he beat her savagely for trivial reasons” (p. 76). But blindfolded Durrani finds this conversation bizarre paying no heeds and instead finds faults with Sherry herself. Nonetheless, Sherry’s warning concretises within no time and Durrani sees herself in a perfectly victimised position. Intimidating her once, he pronounces “never- ever- disobey me! You have to do what I tell you to do” (p. 95).

She is able to express her truth and reveal the injustices she experienced by writing *My Feudal Lord*, which turns into a cathartic and rebellious act. She opposes not just her ex-husband but also larger social standards that support and encourage gender-based violence by writing her memoir. In *My Feudal Lord*, Durrani’s journey illustrates the duality of liberation: fleeing the immediate setting of abuse and going on a path of self-reclamation. The first stage is for her to physically leave Mustafa Khar's oppressive influence. Her capacity to turn her suffering into meaning and use her position to push for structural change will ultimately be her freedom. She challenges not only her oppressor but also a deeply ingrained sociopolitical system by exposing the power dynamics and hypocrisy of the feudal elite. She goes from being a survivor to a change-maker as a result of this act of empowerment, illustrating how individual freedom may advance society.

She was confused and shocked by Mustafa's inconsistent behaviour – he would harm her, relentlessly torturing her, and then, all of a sudden, would kneel at her feet, begging for forgiveness. “I realized”, claims Durrani, “how easy it had always been for him to erase the mess he had created. It was a pattern: apologize, be forgiven and begin again with a clean slate” (p. 367). Mustafa, with his extremely proprietorial and all-consuming jealous nature, isolated Durrani from the rest of the world:

Mustafa told me one day that I was not allowed to read a newspaper; I obeyed without a squeak of protest. From then on, when he found me in a room that contained newspapers, I felt caught, and prayed that he would not think that I had actually attempted to read one of them. My prayers usually went unanswered. If he walked into the room and saw a paper, he was likely to ask, 'Did you read a newspaper?' I would answer, trembling, 'No.' Invariably he raged, 'Don't lie to me!' Nothing further was said. His fists did the talking. (p. 106)

We find numerous and recurrent patterns of violence, one after another, followed by guilt and remorse on part of Khar “transformed from a wild vengeful beast into a meek and frightened little child. He fell at my feet and wept. I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! He wailed” (Durrani, 1995, p. 103); and silent

endurance and forgiveness from Durrani “the unaccountable pity that I felt for this man who had his forehead on my feet, anointing them with tears. I tried to forgive him” (p. 104) in the memoir. She wishes for release from the onerous existence thus:

I dreamed of release, but reality stood in front of me like a stone wall. Divorce was just not possible. British and Pakistani law might be on my side, but in the feudal world, a man retains control of his daughter, and I knew that Mustafa would use her as a hostage to assure my loyalty. I began to hope secretly that Mustafa would die, but I buried these thoughts quickly and deeply, terrified that he would somehow discover them. A prisoner ultimately settles into a monotonous routine. Anger recedes; senses dull. The spirit is crushed. (p. 143)

Durrani calls herself a ‘schizophrenic existence’ (p. 131) and compares herself to a ‘conditioned Zombie’ (p. 154) ready to defend the honour of her tormentor husband in front of others, like a dutiful wife, despite knowing the fact that he is in the wrong. Her life in exile with her politician husband turns out to be a nightmare, a ‘herculean task’ (Zaidi and Qureshi, 2012, p. 9) for her. The abuse and assault detailed by Durrani spans certain chapters and proves to be a horrible and bone chilling read. Like a ‘puppet master’ (Durrani, 1995, p. 153) he pulled her stings in whichever direction he wished. He doesn’t even spare his one-and-a-half-year-old daughter from his wrath. “He grabbed her and pushed her head under the water” (p. 142) which resulted in her phobia of water from that moment on. Khar’s fury knew no bounds, he didn’t even hesitate to slap his wife in the hospital room just two hours after she has delivered his child. A ‘masterful manipulator’ (p. 242), he abducts his own children and for ransom asks Durrani to give herself back to him relinquishing the idea of divorce that she has filed. Her life with Khar, thus, results in a roller coaster ride which Durrani explicating thus:

I could only develop in the direction that he chose. To think independently was a crime that he had the right to punish. Many of his beliefs ran counter to everything that I considered right, but there was no way that I could engage with him in a rational debate. His values were steeped in a medieval milieu, a mix of prejudices, superstitions and old wives’ tale. High on the list was the role of the wife. According to feudal tradition a wife was honour-bond to live her life according to her husband’s whims. A woman was a man’s land... a feudal lord loves his land only in functional terms. He encloses it and protects it. If it is barren, he neglects it. Land is power, prestige and property (p. 107).

Not only land but women too are a source of ‘power, prestige and property’ in the feudal tradition wherein they are treated no less than the slaves of their male counterparts. The memoir “is not her vengeance against her tormentors rather it recaptures her journey, her struggle before she could emerge as a wise, strong and liberated human being” (Iqbal, 2020, p. 274). Durrani, despite all odds tries to keep her marriage intact and finds solace in motherhood. She endured the physical anguish and abuse that Mustafa inflicts upon her but is crushed psychologically when he turned his attention to charming and seducing Durrani’s younger sister, Adila. Through his dominant and overpowering demeanour, he initiated a sexual relationship with her which turns to be more than Durrani’s capacity to bear. She wishes to obliterate her adult self and go back to the ‘*imaginary stage*’, to become her mother’s child again “to crawl into my mother’s womb. Contorting my body into the foetal position” (Durrani, 1995, p. 220).

Nevertheless, once she decides to write the honest and frank account of her life, she breaks and narrativizes her silence posing a significant challenge to the patriarchal system that is at the core of the gender inequality. Elaine Showalter (1981) in her essay "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" quotes Mary Jacobus having proposed that "what we need is a women's writing that works within "male" discourse but works "ceaselessly to deconstruct it: to write what cannot be written" (p. 191). The autobiographical voice becomes a potent tool in the construction of identity in *My Feudal Lord*, especially when considering the oppressive social environment that women in the Sub-Continental region must contend with. Durrani's story offers a startling analysis of her own experiences with systemic misogyny and domestic abuse, challenging the silence enforced by patriarchal conventions. Her testimony not only narrativizes her anguish but also functions as an assertion of agency, counteracting the societal scripts that demand subservience and silence for women. According to scholarly discussions on the topic, authors like as Durrani highlight the sociological aspects of wife abuse that are sometimes overlooked. By using this perspective, the autobiographical voice transforms the personal into a more comprehensive critique of cultural norms that uphold gendered oppression and serves as a vehicle for identity reconstitution.

The book stirred up a commotion within the then patriarchal-feudal society howbeit its relevance hasn't changed throughout the years. "I announced 'Jehad'- a movement to represent the silent majority to raise controversial issues that most people feel afraid to speak about" (Durrani, 1995, p. 381) purports Durrani in the epilogue of her memoir. Reena Mitra and R.K. Dhawan (2009) state:

the autobiographical process is the recreation of author's personality, which is seen in retrospect. This artistic activity helps the autobiography in determining true identity and enables her/him to bring out an accurate picture of herself/himself. The self-preferentiality of autobiography is also self-interrogative and thus a work beginning in self-depiction ends in a deeper knowledge of the self. (p. 150)

Durrani, a stunning woman with a magnetic personality, shares her life narrative in order to expose feudal hypocrisy and end the customary silence of women over their exploitation. She hopes to bring about political and social transformation by addressing various institutions of oppression. She rose to prominence as Pakistan's most vocal feminist after the publication of this memoir. Her autobiography can be said to fall in the category of Ardener's 'wild-zone' or Showalter's 'female space', the aim of which is "to bring into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, to make the invisible visible, to make the silent speak... Through voluntary entry into the wild zone, a woman can write her way out of the cramped confines of patriarchal space" (Showalter, 1981, 201). "We find Tehmina Durrani nurture her wounded emotions, humiliations and Mustafa Khar's deception in this secret 'wild zone'. The physical and mental abuse thrust upon her although silenced by Mustafa's threat, the unspoken revolt accumulated in this wild zone" (Adhikary, 2014, p. 377).

Returning from exile her politician husband is immediately put behind bars for the political intrigues alleging him to be a traitor. However, being a person of importance, he receives fairly good treatment in the prison as well. Durrani on the other hand duteously runs from pillar to post to free her husband. A sudden change occurs in her disposition from being tenuous and secluded from the outside arena to fully engrossed into the politics, her only aim being to get her husband released. "Asia in general and

the subcontinent in particular have produced valiant women who have taken up the unfinished struggle of their men folk” (Durrani, 1995, p. 258). She assumed the role of a ‘political animal’ (p. 258) and equates herself and her struggle with the leading women politicians like Indira Gandhi, Cory Aquino and Benazir Bhutto who assumed the role, either, of their fathers or husbands to fulfil their unfinished ventures. Meeting the top brass military generals, she finally gets Khar released which once again dooms her to despair. Instead of being thankful for what she did he puts the curbs back on her, enchaining her, removing her from the scenario. “In his dealing with press, Mustafa consistently ignored the role that I played in bringing him to freedom. He wanted me to fade from the nation’s memory” (p. 335). He reverts back to his cruel and savage nature subjecting her to further torment. “Mustafa growled at me, and I felt a chill run up my spine. The old days were returning. I could sense it” (p. 338).

Her feudal lord was back with all his furry but she wasn’t prepared to face him yet again. Left with no choice, she files for divorce again, adamant on her decision, relinquishing any financial assistance, forfeiting custody of her children and being disowned by her parents. Her decision left her “homeless, destitute and scared” (Durrani, 1995, p. 365), but there was no looking back for her. The circumstances like these actually become the reason for scores of “women like Tehmina to bear Mustafa’s deceptions and violence only because moving the court for divorce could separate her from her children, taking away her financial support and forcing them to face alienation from the society” (Adhikary, 2014, p. 380). Contrarily, Khar rose to more power and prominence whilst Durrani was reduced to a political and social outcaste, no longer revered by the ones she had held in great regard. Detailing her state of affairs, Durrani (1995) remarks:

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 understood why women dare not break away. 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. (p. 372)

Beyond her own experience, Durrani's book challenges the structural and cultural factors that support male dominance and partner violence. She not only regains her voice by speaking up, but she also gives other women the confidence to realize their own resistance potential. As she turns her pain into a vehicle for advocacy and change, her criticism of patriarchal systems represents a full recovery of autonomy. Durrani's decision to share her tale in public is a perfect example of accepting responsibility for her past and not allowing her abuser to determine her legacy. The journey Durrani takes in the memoir serves as an example of the wider significance of women taking back control of their lives. Durrani writes:

When a news item appeared announcing the pending international publication of *My Feudal Lord*, Mustafa called me. He (Khar) was furious but controlled when he asked, 'What is this nonsense I hear about the book?' I could not resist reminding him of our lunch conversation, when he said that I had no identity of my own and would have to introduce myself as Mustafa Khar's ex-wife. I said, 'Well, Mustafa, now the world will soon know you only as Tehmina Durrani's ex-husband. (p. 382)

Many survivors are inspired by her narrative as they work to reclaim their identities and create abuse-free lives. *My Feudal Lord* has had a considerable influence on contemporary debates about voice, gender, and power in autobiographical writing, especially in patriarchal settings. By openly sharing her stories of abuse and persecution, Durrani overcomes the taboo around women's stories and brings personal pain to the fore of the global conversation about the structural basis of gender-based violence. In addition to questioning conventional gender stereotypes, her unapologetic depiction of the power dynamics inherent in her relationships highlights the significance of taking back one's voice. She asserts' "I had been discarded and spat out like sugar-cane chaff. He had done everything he could to destroy me and he had very nearly succeeded. A few more doses of Mustafa and my spirit would have died for ever" (Durrani, 1995, p. 374). In a time when women's perspectives are often overlooked, Durrani's writings spark feminist debate and encourage many people to face their own social norms and silences.

Her story also challenges readers to think critically about how gender and power intertwine, which strengthens autobiography's position as a potent tool for progressive social change and individual strength against oppressive systems. "My Feudal Lord is the true archetype of women's plight and their reserved condition that shows the real picture of subjugation of women in third world nations on one hand, while on other hand it brings to light the cruel practice of patriarchy that is clearly responsible for the discriminatory state of women" (Sharma, 2017, p. 4034). Durrani conspicuously gives the reader insight into the private-most spheres of her life serving dual purpose. She portrays both the oppressive condition of women within Pakistan deeply intertwined with cultural traditions and also uncovers the deceitful and dishonest actions of politicians who betray both the country and its citizens for their momentary gain. Recognizing the socio-political and historical factors that contribute to women's oppression, female writers have actively sought to challenge this predicament through their voices. Consequently, the genre of autobiography, especially in the sub-continent countries like India and Pakistan, emerges as a means of questioning the cultural and historical construction of femininity, highlighting that a woman's circumstances serve as a battleground for various forms of resistance and "providing one recent challenge to the idea of autobiography as a purely western construct" (Yaqin, 2013, p. 172).

Writing gives Durrani power and aids in the development of her identity because the autobiographical genre gives her the freedom and room to speak out about the exploitation and mistreatment she experienced in her culture on both levels of her life and career. She finds her voice in her writings. In her writing she gives a voice to her endured sufferings and gathers her shattered identity. For her, having access to autobiography entails having access to the process of establishing identities (Sumra and Taseer, 2018, p. 163). Determined to hold responsible the bigotry and the hypocrisy prevailing in the society she "decided to cast a stone at hypocrisy; decided to write this book and break the traditional silence" (Durrani, 1995, p. 375); silence, which for her is the greatest crime. *My Feudal Lord's* narrative voice is heavily influenced by Tehmina Durrani's personal experiences, which both inform and mould who she is as a writer. By challenging the social and political limitations placed upon her, Durrani's intense involvement in her turbulent marriage sheds light on the frequently unsaid hardships of women in patriarchal societies. By narrating her turbulent life, she uses autobiographical storytelling to expose the hypocrisy of Pakistan's ruling class and place her story within a larger conversation about

social justice and women's rights. Her work is a crucial contribution to comprehending the complex relationship between gender and societal expectations. As a result, Durrani's voice becomes a potent critique of the systems that aim to silence women as well as a reflection of her identity. She has come to understand the significance of vocalizing her concerns and emphasizes that:

Sitting alone with my scattered thoughts, I conjectured that fate had placed me on this torturous path for a purpose. Our closed society considered it obscene for a woman to reveal her intimate secrets, but would not silence be a greater crime? Silence condones injustice, breeds subservience and fosters a malignant hypocrisy. Mustafa Khar and other feudal lords thrive and multiply on silence. Muslim women must learn to raise their voices against injustice. For me, conventional politics was no longer the answer. In Pakistan, the system is merely used to hoodwink further those who are already exploited. I realized that I could do no greater service for my country and our people than to expose the. (Durrani, 1995, p. 375)

Conclusion:

Concluding, it can be presumed that Durrani becomes the spokesperson of the innumerable women, especially the women of the subcontinent, who frankly and genuinely talks about her desires, frustrations and the most esoteric and covert aspects of her life to snap the traditional silence and injustices surrounding the lives of women in the patriarchal and feudal setup thereupon exposing the camouflage, shedding light on the significance of autobiographies as invaluable sources of personal and historical information, as well as, using it as a powerful tool for self-reflection and self-representation, enabling individuals to construct their identities, express their emotions, and make sense of their experience. As the exploration of Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord* comes to a close, it is clear that her story not only offers a deep insight into her own experiences but also speaks to more general issues impacting women in patriarchal culture. The development of women's writing is best illustrated by Durrani's work, which shows how autobiographical voices challenge patriarchal systems' methods of silencing. As mentioned, although women's writing in Pakistan has developed slowly, it now occupies a prominent position in the literary canon and is frequently distinguished by emotional depth and sensitivity to household situations. Durrani struggles with her social status before becoming a resilient voice in the midst of chaos. In addition to expressing her own trauma, Durrani's narrativization of her silence highlights the need for ongoing feminist debate by provoking critical discussion about the experiences of innumerable women.

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