

Gender and Power: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*

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Abstract Feminist studies serve as a source to analyze the construction of gendered identities and to investigate the socially expected gender roles in a patriarchal Turkish society as presented in the novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*, where men and women are supposed to offer and carry out the traits appreciated by the society. The current study focuses on the gender differences in acquired expectations for men and women in the society and how these expectations nurture gendered power enabling them to discriminate, to prejudice and to exploit the individuality of women. The researchers collected textual data to address the theme of women exploitation in the patriarchal society. Through the textual analysis of the data by using insight of Simon de Beauvoir's feminist stances and social role theory the researchers found the theme gendered power, passivity of women and subjectivity of men in the Turkish society. We employed Fairclough's three-dimensional model for the qualitative analysis of the text *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*. The characters in the novel, their behaviors, attitudes, words and phrases and the thematic analysis of the novel demonstrate that men hold leading positions whereas women are to nurture the children, manage the home and obey their husbands. A strong preference for beautiful, tactic, obedient, homely girls by the societal norms and males is desired was observed in the novel. While, education, women's economic rights, financial stability and individual freedom is overlooked completely. This study concludes that Elif Shafak in her writing encourage women to realize their own selves, speak for their rights, to pave their own paths and to find their individuality anyhow. The novel clearly demonstrates the society that is socio-culturally biased and inherently gendered because of its different roles and expectation for men and women.

1. INTRODUCTION

Feminism is a political, cultural and social movement that seeks to establish equal and legal rights for women. Bell Hook (2000), states that "feminism is a movement to control sexism, sexist oppression and

exploitation." Sex and gender are the recurring aspects that contribute in imbalanced statuses of men and women in the society. Generally, sex denotes the natural and biological differences between men and women whereas gender is referred

to the acquired social, cultural, traditional and psychological behavior towards men and women. In *The Subjection of women* (1869) John Stuart Mill describes that “all causes, social and natural, associate to make it improbable that women should be collectively rebellious to the power of men”. Lindsey (2016) claims that social life is ordered in a number of behaviors and gender is an important feature of that ordering. Patriarchy and masculinity are the direct targets of feminism. ‘Patriarchy’ in literal senses means the rule of a father, the father of the race, or chief of a race implementing the male superiority and prejudice against women. According to Fasold (1990) discourse is how language is being used. Discourse is the social constitution of power and CDA aims to recognize the hidden connections from the socio-cultural and political perspectives by making transparent connection between “discourse practice and social structure.” Cameron (1992) says that one of the main objectives of feminist critical discourse analysis is “to investigate the complete scholarly objective bias of linguistics are implicated in a patriarchal ideology and oppression” aiming to change the women’s exploited socioeconomic and political position. Simon de Beauvoir’s in *The Second Sex* argues that “humanity is male, and men defines women, not in herself, but in relation to himself”. She says that women are the victims of social and cultural norms that reflect their biological selves.” Social role theory by Eagly et.al (1949) propose that biology works with the psychology and reflects the gendered identities. The natural differences of bodies are used to cope with the psychology of the

mases that endeavors the passivity of women in social spheres. The researchers have selected the novel *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* which is the story of Tequila Leila, an Istanbul prostitute. The novel’s title and first half are about the moments of Leila’s consciousness from life to death. And the other half is about the preceding events after her death. Leila has a group of five friends, all females and outcasted from the society. All the female characters; her mother, her friends are forced to suffer, deprived off their rights, prejudiced, discriminated and oppressed by the male dominant norms of the society.

Research Questions

- How are women perceived and expected in Elif Shafak’s “*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*”?
- How do socio-cultural and traditional patriarchal norms encourage discrimination and prejudice against women and how has been depicted in Elif Shafak’s “*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*”?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the previous works done with reference to the feminism. The chapter provides a detailed discussion about the major terms used and the historical background and connotations of the terms. This review has also explored the previous works and researches carried on the selected novel and elaborates the contributions that study has made by filling the knowledge gap. Feminism is a complex notion having different senses and association for people crossing generations, ethical values, identities, sexual positionings, social

statuses and classes. It is not a static notion rather it involves various social and personal lenses to shape and direct our views to see the world, both at large scale and within ourselves. Laura Brunel's (2021) says that "feminism is the confidence in social, political and economic equality of both the sexes". Cathy Caprino (2017), says that feminism is, "the advocacy of women's rights on the bases of equality of the sexes, and the doctrine advocating equal social, political and all other rights for both man and women". According to Ropers-Huilman (2002), feminist theory is founded on three ideologies that, "women have something valuable to contribute in every field, being oppressed they have been incapable of achieving and recognizing their potentials." Meggie Humm and Rebecca Walker(2014) state that 'feminism is segmented into three waves; the first one that is about women's suffrage, the second wave that is related to women's liberation movement and the third wave that is the continuation and the reaction of the perceived failures of the second wave.' Feminist movements strives to get equal rights of women, reproductive rights, protection from domestic violence, sexual harassment, professional rights, discourage misogyny and gender-based discrimination of women in society. Simon de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan were the prominent feminist figures at that time. Simon de Beauvoir's well known work *The Second Sex* depicts the detailed analysis of women's oppression. Betty Friedan wrote *Feminine Mystique* (1963) based on the idea of women that they are for nurturing their children and women are the victims of false ideological system that expects women to

find their identity through their husbands and children that make them lose their own individuality. Feminism, argues that, "society has an incorrect belief that women are by nature less intellectually and physically capable than men" (Tong, 2009, p. 2). The World Health Organization regional office for Europe defines sex as "the characteristics that are biologically defined, whereas gender is founded on socially constructed features." They identify that there are differences the way people experience gender on the basis of 'self-perception, expression and their behavior towards it. Adams & Bell (2010) states that "gender identity refers to one's physiological sense of oneself as a male or a female and gender role refers to the socially constructed specific behavior and expectations for women (i.e. femininity) or men (i.e. masculinity). Diana Koester (2015) writes that gender splits power and the dissimilarities between men and women. She states that "gender relations are power relations that to be a woman means to be powerless (quiet, obedient and accommodating) and to be a real man is being powerful (outspoken, in control, able to impose his will) and that gender roles preserve power inequalities." (Diana, 2015). Lindsey (2016) describes that one of the most important social structure to organize social structure is Status. And the most ascribed statuses are gender, race and social class. A Role is the expected behavior associated with a status, shared rules that guide people's behavior in specific situation. Social norms determine the privileges and responsibilities a status possess. Sven, Melanie & Claudia (2016), says that gender

stereotyping suggests that men are considered as more masculine than women and women are considered as more feminine than men.

Language is one of the tools society uses to construct, teach, transmit and inherit gendered ideologies. Fasold (1990) states that, 'when language is made use of, it becomes discourse.' To Foucault (1972), idea of discourse involves the original process of language. Foucault proposes four important principles; the principle of reversal, the principle of discontinuity, the principle of specificity and the principle of exteriority. The principle of reversal is that realities and identities are constructed through discourses to give the understanding of what should be and how and what should not be. The principle of discontinuity rejects the idea of discourse as a whole or coherent. Here Foucault means that discourse is not unsaid or silent rather is "juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other (Foucault, 1970). The principle of specificity explores that "discourse is something that is imposed on things and not based on perceptions". And the principle of exteriority is that the point is not going to understand the reasons behind the certain discourse rather just to stay on surface not to analyze but what they do. According to Yule George discourse is concerned with the investigation of "what a language is used for and its function."

Critical discourse analysis aims to analyze how power saturates all levels of social setting and how discourse of dominance and indifference construct and establish the determining marginalization of a certain group, (Bucholtz, 2003). Fairclough (1992)

says that "its objective is to explore how these relationships are as aspect in securing power and it draws attention to power imbalances, inequalities, non-democratic practices and other injustices in hopes of spurring people to corrective actions." CDA irradiates the ways that dominate forces in a society to design the versions of reality that favor their interests. Begüm Tuğlu (2016) states with the reference of Michael Foucault's argument in the history of sexuality that since the 17th century sexuality is in the form of female suppression due to the certain ideological manipulations and this understanding directly connected to one's biological condition which determine whether the one is male or female not leaving the space in between. In *Language, gender and feminism*, Mills and Mullany gives recent perspectives regarding the view that sex and gender are socially constructed and cannot be separated as they constitute each other. Haslanger (2012) defines feminism as an intellectual and political movement, tends to ask for the equality and justice of women and restrict sexism in all forms. Weedon, (2008) says that 'patriarchy' refers to the power relations where "men's benefits dominate women's interests" that clearly base on biological differences.

Fatima Al Zahra (2020) in her work *Subversive Masculinity in Elif Shafak's "Honor"* targets in her study that men in a society are privileged in a number of ways that encourage inequality. She states that women are considered as weak, stupid, passive and manipulative counterparts of men. And Shafak's writings speak and encourage the women to understand,

recognize and raise their voices for their status in a society. Kader Guzel (2016) states Elif Shafak in *The Bastard of Istanbul* depicts a male dominant and patriarchal society where women are forced to direct their lives according to the defined norms of the society. Zeliha is the one who is rebellion, to get away from these set patriarchal norms to chase her dreams and demonstrates that a woman is capable enough to stand on her own without submitting herself to the biased patriarchal norms of the society. Alaa Walid Malak (2016) in his study on *Forty Rules of Love* describes that “how female creativity collide with marriage and motherhood”. Isam Shihada (2019) in *Elif Shafak’s Forty rules of Love; A Critique* mirrors two parallel stories depicting two different cultures. Ella Rubenstein, the central character of the novel, a wife and mother, calls off her marriage that seems stifling for her both spiritually and emotionally. Shafak here demonstrates that there is always a price to pay for living a desired happy life. Ella pays that price by abandoning her own family but she meets herself, and she is happily satisfied. Azra & Fatemeh (2019) in their study on forty rules of love describes that Shafak depicts the character of Ella Rubenstein in *Forty Rules of Love* by adapting the definition of equality of Rumi that ‘the process of female and male sexes can be expedited by opening up one’s heart to universal love.’

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is a purely qualitative research aiming to explore the concept of patriarchy and its depiction in the selected novel. The researchers have used closed reading

techniques to extract the text samples to address the theme of the research. This research uses qualitative method, through a descriptive analysis explanation to answer all the question mentioned in the statement of the problem.

3.1 Fairclough’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis has been used as a research tool i.e. description, interpretation and explanation. Description is the stage concerned with the formal properties of the text. Interpretation is to find the relationship between text and interaction; viewing the text as a resource in the process of reproduction. Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context. It takes the underlying power relations, how they facilitate the exploitation and marginalization of groups as well as possibilities of change and resistance.

3.2 Simon de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*

Simon De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) will be used that attempts to confront human history from a feminist perspective to argue that men fundamentally occupy the role of self as subjects and oppress women on every level as the Other. To better understand ‘female humans’ occupying a subordinate position in society she turns to biology, psychoanalysis and historical materialism. Biological prejudice that, the maternal element is a fundamentally passive and while the paternal element is fundamentally active that initiates, forms and achieves. Her argument of women, being treated a other is based on the Hegelian concept of ‘master and slave.’

3.3 Eagly's Social Role Theory

Eagly's (1984) *Social Role theory* offers gender development that is based on socialization. In traditional setting of the society, women are supposed to carry out domestic responsibilities and men are the bread winners for women to play domestic role and men the provider in a patriarchal society such as Pakistani society.

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This portion of the paper discussed the text samples extracted from the novel to present the theme of feminism and to address the atrocities faced by the women in the patriarchal societies. Leila's father gives her name, Leyla Afife Kamile; Leyla the honorable woman, Afife- the unattained, chaste and Kamile- perfection. He says that she'll be "modest, respectable and pure as water." Haroun, her father, keeps telling her that she must become what he wants her to become. to be appraised and honored in the society. He says her that, "you'll make me so proud, true to your religion, true to your nation, true to your father." To have children, being a good mother and an ideal wife is the expected and designed role for a woman. Leila pictures that as, "a toddler hanging on her leg, a baby in her arms, a husband to obey, a house to keep shipshape this would be her life." (p, 38) Leila's mother, Binnaz had more than six, severe miscarriages that could have costed her life. She got married at an early age, the second wife of her husband, and always felt insecure in her husband's house. The only hope for her to get an acknowledged position in the house is to have a child. "The only hope and a source for her to be secure and ease, is to have a child". (p, 13)

She has a very poor family background and she is reminded of that fact a lot of times since her marriage and she has entered in the house of her husband. She is reminded that she had nothing when she came to his home. She, herself often thought that;

"All her possessions were as ephemeral as dandelion seeds. One stiff breeze and one torrential downpour, and they would be gone, just like that. She knew that she could be thrown out of the house at any moment and that thought made her uncomfortable and weighed heavily for. It was not only the problem to be thrown away from the house. Moreover, the thing that disturbed her badly as that if she would throw out of the house, where would she go?" (p, 12)

While living in the house she has the feelings of an "uninvited guest".

"Her fear of being kicked out of this house had not abated in the slightest. She still did not feel secure". (p, 13)

On the birth of Leila her husband says to her that they will give this baby to his first wife, Suzan. Binnaz does not want to let this happen anyway, but her husband does not leave any room for her to argue and object. She breaks into tears, the tears of defeat, the tears of resignation, and the tears of greater loss. But her husband remains affirm in his decision.

"Because he said this, leaving no room for compromise". (p,87)

That decision of her husband affects her emotionally, physically and psychological adversely knowing that this wound of her

would never heal. She is encountered with the mental illness badly after that.

“How strange, she thought once again. Could no one else see that she I in dreadful pain?” (p, 26)

Girl's marriage at their early age in the novel is a common thing. Binnaz, Leila's mother gets married at her early age because her father was too poor to meet her financial needs. Leila's father pulls her out from the school and decides her to marry with her uncle's son just to fix and keep their reputation and honor in the society. Humeyra, Leila's friend gets married the year she turns fifteen just to fix the business loss of her father.

Women's education is not much appreciated in the society, presented in the novel. Leila's father is not very much interested in her education rather all he wants her to become an ideal girl, carrying out the acquired social roles and get married at a certain age. Binnaz wanted to get education but her father was not financially strong enough afford that. So, she takes care of her younger siblings as her brothers go to school. Jamelah, Leila's friend, is failed to maintain her relationship with her step mother that makes her to leave her education. She moves to Istanbul just to have a peaceful life. Zainab, physically unattractive and short does not get proper education because her physical stature restricts her position in the society.

There are two examples of polygamy found in the novel, one is Leila's father, Haroun and the other one is Humeyra's father, who got married twice and that is socially quite acceptable. Whereas, women do not have

that privilege in the same setting of society. Binnaz, Leila's mother brainstorms that what if she gets divorced as she is living in her husband's house as an “uninvited guest”? she thinks that her father would not take her back and she'll be marrying again to live in the society but nobody would want her anyway, “a divorcee, a used woman”. The hypocrisy and discriminated behavior of the society is very much apparent here. The society is male centered in all its ways. On Leila's birth, her father expresses her wishes that next time they'll have a male child.

“Haroun wanted a son more than anything in the world. Not just one. He told whoever cared to listen that he was going to have four sons, whom he was going to name Tarkan, Tolga, Tufan and Tarik.” (16, p)

Nalan, an assertive woman, Leila's bravest friend, one of the five. Once Nalan was called Osman, always wanted to be a girl, leaves her home on her wedding night forcefully fixed by her mother and moves to Istanbul where she gets her gender changed; from a boy to a girl though never been accepted by the society. she is insulted, abused and humiliated by the people so often.

Zaynab was born in an isolated village where dwarfism was so common. in that village. Zaynab's sisters and brothers were of common height that they could easily get married by the time. But Zaynab was of the height as their parents, the little people. She convinced her parents to let her go and pave her own path. It was really hard for her to find a job in Istanbul. So, Zaynab, who came from the high mountain areas ended up working in a brothel, where;

“Depression was common among the women on this street, tearing into their souls as fire tears into wood. No one used the word though. *Miserable*, was what they said. Not about themselves, but everyone and everything else. *The food is miserable. The payment is miserable. My feet hurt; these shoes are miserable.*” (p, 125)

Humeyra, Leila’s another friend, the year she turns fifteen, she is instantly pulled out of the school and married to a man, her father has been doing business with. Her husband was an unambitious man, aloof and easily scared.

“Her husband was an unambitious man, taciturn and easily frightened. Humeyra, knowing he had not wanted this marriage, ..., as though he blamed her for his own regrets.” (p, 158)

They had to move his parents’ home because he gets a deterrent in his business. Living with her in-laws proves even harder for her where she is treated like a servant. She is beaten up by her husband that makes her to step out of her husband’s house.

“Once her husband broke a wooden coat hanger on her back. Another time he hit her on the legs with a pair of iron tongs that left a claret-colored mark on the side of her left knee.” (p, 159)

Therefore, she leaves the house, buys a ticket for Istanbul where life is not so easy for her but she manages somehow.

“Awake or asleep, Humeyra was always terrified she might become a victim of honor killing...Women accused of indecency

weren’t always killed, she knew; sometimes they were just persuaded to kill themselves...In Batman, not far from where she was born, suicide was the leading cause of mortality for young women.” (p, 159)

Leila’s character is completely messed up and devastated just because of the wrong decisions her father makes and tries to impose on her. Her father wants her to become the true and fine female version that society expects one to be; modest, honest, chaste, humble, obedient and silent who does not speak rather just listen and obey whatever she is told. She is abducted by her uncle at a very early age when they all are on picnic.

“Leila was six years old; her uncle was forty-three.”. (p, 68)

He makes her so sacred that she does not tell anybody but that does not stop there and eventually gets pregnant. She tells her parents; her mother gives her medicine to abort the child. Everybody is concerned how they will silence her to keep their heads and honor high in the society. her father fixes her marriage with that uncle’s son because it seems the only way to get things fixed and secret. Nobody gets her consent for her own marriage. Leila leaves her house for not letting that unwanted and forced marriage happen and goes straight to Istanbul where she is sold in a brothel and forced to become a prostitute. To become a prostitute is not her choice at all but she is prejudiced, suffered, hated and murdered because of this reason. She is found in a bin, on the out skirts of the city, by the garbage pickers. Her old, unrecognizable photo on all the newspapers and the initials of her name to mention her murder are considered enough.

She is buried in a cemetery where the outcasted and the people of lowest ranks are buried without performing any funeral ritual. “She was not claimed by her family even. So, the police left her in the cemetery of companionless, that was reserved for the three types of dead; “the unwanted, the unworthy and the unidentified” (p, 255).

“It is one of the places better not to know, only the damned end up in the cemetery of the companion less. Only the doomed” (p, 253)

Her friends try really hard to get her body from that cemetery and throw it in the sea as per her wish.

Lady pharmacist is the only independent women in the novel. She is known and called by her profession, a stout, wide eyed woman with confidence to talk to people. The writer portrays her character as a champion of modernity, secularism and too many other things came from the west. She condemns the idea of polygamy. The people of the town do not like her and often talks about her in a ridiculous tone. She, with her son “lived on the edge of the society, tolerated, though never quite accepted”. Laila’s father says about the lady, “I never liked that sneaky, cold woman”. (p, 107).

5. FINDINGS

The analysis reveals that a huge gender gap exist in the society as reflected in the novel. The norms and behaviors are socially and culturally constructed and developed that are entirely based on the natural differences of body. For Simon de Beauvoir (1949), the word “become” comprises enriching ambiguity that gender is not only a culturally constructed meaning executed

upon identity, “to become a woman is a purposive and appropriative set of acts, the acquisition of skill, and a project.” In Elif Shafak’s novel, it is clearly shown that it is expected of the women to be gentle, tactful, quiet, religious, obedient and true to her family whose sole purpose should be nurturing of the children, managing the households, care for her children and obey her husband. And the one who deviates from this expected role is not acceptable for the society anymore and considered outcasted. Leila and her friends, who try to pave their own paths, to direct their own lives end up being suffered, outcasted, judged, oppressed, and left by the masculinity. Simon talks about the subordination of women that, “woman, the most individualized of females, is also the most fragile, the one who experiences her destiny most dramatically and who distinguishes herself the most significantly from the male.”

In the first place, it uncovers the manners in which that manly ideology misuses the sexual differences to justify the inequality.

According to Beauvoir women are treated as Others and objects in the society that is completely masculine and patriarchal. Leila’s whole life is affected by the decision of others. She is abducted by her uncle that made her mentally unstable, her father decides to marry her with that uncle’s son and for not letting that happen she leaves her house and goes up in Istanbul where a man and a woman sell her in a brothel. She is prejudiced, oppressed and discriminated for the things she has neither control over nor she has other choice. Her friends also are the ones who suffer, prejudices and outcasted because they all are females who try to make

their own lives. Leila, her mother, her friends are the representatives of the females in the society out there that reflect women are not supposed to be paving their own ways, making their own choices, having the lives they want to be and deviating from the societal norms that are completely gendered and masculine. In the whole novel, women are objectified in certain ways. Women in a brothel are prejudiced but nobody judges and asks the men who visit them, betraying their families but that's is completely out of question and unproblematic for the society.

The results of the study show the objectivity of women, projection of women by men, their passivity, lack of voice for their own rights, discrimination, oppression is very much present in the society and the society is fine with these double standards because it is the society itself that supports men more than women. There is no economic stability on the part of women in the novel, the only independent woman in the novel is the lady pharmacist, Sinan's mother and she is barely tolerated as people do not like her. The findings suggest that men are free to wish and get the things they want but women are only to do what is socially acceptable and expected.

6. CONCLUSION

Feminist critical discourse analysis has become a recurring medium to identify and target the biased cultural norms of the society which construct the gendered identities and shape people's thoughts. Similarly, feminist critical discourse analysis aims to analyze the intricate workings of power and ideology in discourse encouraging hierarchically gendered social order. It is recognized that

functioning of gendered ideology and power creates imbalances between men and women and are interactively woven with certain social identities and across cultures. This study clearly shows women's stereotypical and subordinate status in society portrayed in the novel and reflects socially expected roles and inherited gender biased behavior. The society presented in the novel has socially expected and acquired roles are completely different for men and women to be appreciated in the society. A well-settled, strong and controlling man is seen to be an ideal but a woman has to carry the burden of social and physical behaviors to satisfy the society that affects their individuality and freedom badly. That makes the men and women as the oppressor and the oppressed respectively. A woman is more than her body and physical traits but she is objectified that biased attitude affects her status in the society.

The researchers' focuses on *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* was to explore the stances and notions of female suppression, gendered power and biased social norms. The main objective of the study is to explore how Elif Shafak depicts a society that is completely biased in its modes and system that construct a set of acquired norms and expectation for women to act upon. Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is a feminist approach to study the biological, psychological and historical inferiority and suppression which claims that this inferiority is rooted in social and cultural setting. The women in the novel suffer the consequences of the decisions made by the men but these are not the men who are judged and suffered rather women

are the ones who fall victims and bear the oppression. To ask men about the decisions and choices is completely out of question Leila, her mother Binnaz, her friends; Jameelah, Zeynab, Nostalgia Nalan and Humeyra all are the sufferers and oppressed.

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