

**OPPRESSION OF WOMEN BY PATRIARCHAL CULTURE IN SIDDIQI'S
NOVELLA *BHAWAN DAS DURKHAN***

د صديقي په ناول بهوان داس درخان كې د
پدرانہ كلتور له خوا پر بنحو ظلم

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Abstract

Men and women are equal members of society; however, certain norms make women oppressed in a patriarchal society. It inflicts much pain and misery among women. The current study attempts to find the oppression against women in Siddiqi's novella 'Bhawan Das Durkhan'. This study has incorporated the textual analysis method and found that the patriarchal society takes women as objects and treats them the way men like. Even the social norms which males design oppress females socially, mentally, and psychologically. The suppressed females bear all inhuman behaviour without any resistance. Thus, women face many hardships and difficulties at the hands of a patriarchal society.

Keywords: Oppression, patriarchal society, misery, men, women, social norms.

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1. Introduction

Literature is “a criticism of life or, perhaps better, an expression and interpretation of life” (Ranney, 1938, p. 18). Literature and society are closely connected. Every good and evil happening in society is projected by literary men in their works (Siddiq et al., 2021). According to Dubey (2013), literature is the mirror of society, and literary work can be defined as a social institution. Peck and Coyle (1993), in *Literary Terms and Criticism*, state, “The sociology of literature emphasizes literature as an important tool to convey a message to society about the reality of those around them” (p. 178).

Men and women are equal members of society, but they are treated differently. According to Putris (2018), “How are women treated is often influenced by how the society wants them to be?” Society controls the thoughts and actions of women (Ahmed, Shafi, & Masood, 2021). In this way, women frequently become the target of oppression. In a male-dominated society, women have an inferior position and are poorly treated. The patriarchal society keeps women away even from their fundamental rights. They are tortured, harassed, and even sexually abused by society. Nyanhongo (2011) says, “this business of womanhood is a heavy burden.”

Oppression is defined as the experience of systematic, widespread, and repeated injustice (Deutsch, 2006). Harvey (1999) introduced the term civilized oppression. According to him, it consists of the unquestioned norms, habits, symbols, and the rules and their collective consequences. This term refers to the profound injustice through which many people are systematically oppressed. In the Subcontinent, female members of the society are oppressed and exploited due to the norms and rules established by the male dominant society (Fatima, Ahmed, & Shafi, 2021). They systematically oppress and humiliate the women. Sometimes, established rules do not care whether the victimized women are from the upper or lower classes.

The various authors project this condition in their literary works. Shaukat Siddiqui is a renowned Pakistani novelist and short story writer among them. The novella taken here is *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui from a collection of short stories *Modern and Urdu Short Stories from Pakistan*, translated by Amin Azfar, published by Oxford University Press Pakistan in 2017. The primary motive behind this selected translated novella is to highlight women’s status in society. It shows how society’s so-called norms and rules victimize women and how they are brutally oppressed by society.

1.1 Problem Statement

Being a member of society, men and women have equal rights to live appropriately. However, the patriarchal society marginalizes them and deprives them of their fundamental rights (Hassan, Shafi, & Masood, 2021). They consider women as ‘other’. Patriarchal society oppresses women socially and economically. They torture, harass, and even sexually abuse the women for their vested interests. Many authors highlight this issue in both Eastern and Western literary works. In this current research study, the selected English translated novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui is analyzed by keeping in sight the treatment of women in society. This novella was taken from a collection, namely, *Modern and Urdu Short Stories from Pakistan*, translated by Amin Azfar, and published by Oxford University Press Pakistan in 2017. This research study also highlights how brutally the woman is victimized in a patriarchal society.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research study will intend to have the following objective:

- i. To explore the oppression of women in *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui
- ii. To highlight the elements contributing to the oppression of women in *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui

1.3 Research Questions

The researcher will aim at answering the following questions:

- i. How does the selected translated novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui highlight the oppression of women?
- ii. What are the significant elements contributing to women's oppression in the selected translated novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui?

1.4 Significance of the Study

In this specific case, this vital perspective of oppression of women has not been explored until now. The present work can act as a catalyst for new researchers to examine this specific novella from multiple viewpoints and angles. This research has paramount importance in that it talks about the victimization of women by the male-dominated society. Oppression of women is not only limited to literature, but it is a global issue. So, this research will help the layman understand women's oppression in a patriarchal society in detail. This research work will significantly contribute to the literature, especially in understanding the translated novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui from a feminist perspective. This research will motivate young scholars to explore the same theme in the literary works of Pakistani writers.

1.5 Delimitation of Study

There are 26 short stories in *Modern and Urdu Short Stories from Pakistan*, translated by Amin Azfar. However, this study is limited to analyzing textual content through a feminist perspective: Oppression of women in the English translated novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan*. The researcher is delimited to the element of oppression of women from a feminist perspective.

2. Literature Review

This section deals with reviving the previously published articles in light of the oppression of women from a feminist perspective. Gil (2013) defined oppression as the "relations of domination and exploitation - economic, social and psychological - between individuals; between social groups and classes within and beyond societies; and, globally, between entire societies." Throughout history, there have been two types of communities in society. The powerful one is always dominant and oppresses the weaker one. This oppression is done on every level. The powerful class oppresses the weaker class (Masood & Shafi, 2020) even at the domestic level. Male dominant society oppresses the female members of the society and takes them as an alien. Kaufman (1987) gives the concept of universal female subordination as "man the hunter" and "woman the nurturer".

Therborn (2004) says that there is no exception to the view that all the significant and influential societies were patriarchal from the world's origin. Females have been treated differently throughout history from the male dominant society. While defining patriarchy, Walby (1990) says that it is a system of social structures and the norms in which the men's domination in the society exploits women. In this system, each male person is in the dominant position, and each woman is in the subordinate position. The male members of the society from every class marginalize the women. They take women just as objects and exploit them for their vested interests (Masood & Shafi, 2020).

The world is getting better, but women are still in the same state bearing all the injustice. In his book, Witz (2004) says that the gender-based concept describes the power relation between men and women. In this relation, men are always dominant, and females are subordinate (p.12). Due to this type of relation, the feminist movement has started, aiming to solve the women's burning issues. As Faris (2013) says, "Women need feminism because there are women who suffer injustice". The dehumanization of women by the male dominant society becomes a more significant cause for the origin of feminism.

The word feminism is taken from the Latin word *Femina* which was used to describe issues related to women. The term feminism came on screen in 1880 in the journal *La Citoyenne* as *La Féminité* by Hunburtine Auclert with the severe criticism of the treatment of women in a patriarchal society and with women's rights claim (Ghorfati & Medini, 2015). Feminism has given origin to the new debate and represents the voice of various suppressed and oppressed women. Under this movement, women stand against every wrongdoing and ask for justice and

equal rights from the male dominant society. Feminism demands equal political, economic, and social rights and opportunities for women. It seeks justice and the end of sexism in all forms.

Heldke and O'Connor (2004) define oppression as the extreme exercise of tyranny by a ruling group that means the dominant one, which happens under systematic injustice. Moreover, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence are the types of oppression. The dominant group applies these types of oppression. Women are considered inferior in society, and they are controlled and ruled by the tyrant patriarchal society. They are exploited socially, economically, and marginalized in the male-dominated society. They face systematic violence and bear everything (Masood, Shafi, Shah, Kamran, Yousaf, & Saleem, 2020).

In another study, Mohammed (2013) highlighted women's sufferings and oppression in ancient Chinese society through a thematic analysis of a novel by adopting a qualitative research approach. He found out that Chinese society was a masculine society in which women were considered inferior, had no status, and were considered second-class women. Chinese had a hierarchical structure of the family in which the male was dominant and the decision-maker. The male had control over his wife and had the freedom to divorce her. That society oppressed the women by not giving them property ownership rights and rights to living. That patriarchal society followed the set rules of Confucius: "Yin" and "Yang" as one described females as weak and passive, and the other described male as strong. The male members of the society disgrace, humiliate, and oppress the women.

In a study, Siddiqui, Madani, and Raza (2019) did a textual analysis of South Asian authors' novels by following the qualitative research method and highlighting women's status and oppression in the Subcontinent society. They, through their study, showed social injustice, gender oppression, patriarchal norms, and the value and status of women. While explaining social oppression, they said that women were not allowed to go outside the walls of the house. Women had no control over their bodies, and the male members of society did not allow them to beautify themselves. The women were sold to another person and compelled to marry strange persons as oppression in a male-dominated society.

From the studies mentioned earlier, it can be declared that the theme of oppression of women is applied to various Eastern and Western literary works in literature. The qualitative approach was used to highlight the brutal treatment of women by the patriarchal society. This very thing is also dominant in Pakistani literary writers' work which still needs to be discovered. Based on this proposition, the novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* by Shaukat Siddiqui needs a detailed and deep analysis to highlight the oppression of women and, as such, offers a knowledge gap that is yet to be discovered.

3. Research Methodology

The primary purpose of this section is to describe the outline of the researcher's methodology to carry out the research. The research sample, research design, research method, and theoretical framework are discussed in this part. Further, this part of the research article explains the procedure followed while conducting this research study.

The particular text that shows women's oppression will be taken from Shaukat Siddiqui's novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* for deep analysis and detailed discussion. Shaukat Siddiqui was a Pakistani Urdu writer who wrote about Pakistani society's real-life problems and sensitive issues. For that, it was obligatory to explore them further.

To explore the theme of oppression of women and the elements contributing to the oppression of women, the researcher will follow the textual data analysis method to analyze the *Bhawan Das Durkhan*. The researcher followed the qualitative research method to carry out this research study.

3.1 Framework: Theory of Oppression

The theoretical framework is based on Critical theory today by Lois Tyson, "*Women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically; patriarchal ideology is the primary means by which they are kept so. In every domain where patriarchy*

reigns, woman is other: she is objectified and marginalized, defined only by her difference from male norms and values, defined by what she (allegedly) lacks and that men (allegedly) have” (p. 92).

According to Tyson (2006), patriarchy is the root cause of the oppression of women in every domain of life. The male dominant society prevents women from even getting their fundamental rights. Patriarchal society considers women as “other” and marginalizes them, and society takes them as an object and objectifies them. The male dominant societies set some norms according to their assistance to oppress and exploit the women economically, politically, socially, domestically, and even psychologically; because they consider women inferior. The theoretical framework proposed by Tyson to explore the oppression of women in *Bhawan Das Durkhan* was used to highlight the elements that contribute to the cause of oppression and the set norms behind the oppression.

4. Data analysis and Findings

The data analysis part is concerned with gathering and analyzing data upon which the research study relies. This study examines chosen textual instances from Siddiqi’s novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* through the prism of Women’s Oppression. In the current study, specific instances of text from a short narrative reflect the subject of the Oppression of Women, demonstrating how women are treated in a male-dominated society.

4.1 Text No. 1

“As a nehej, Shireen was married off to the older brother of the murdered man. The man was old and asthmatic. His head, beard, and moustache were white, and he was already the husband of two wives, both alive. After the nikah, when Shireen went to her husband’s house, he spent just one night with her, in which he wreaked his vengeance by stripping her naked and torturing and humiliating her all night” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 139).

In the novella, *Bhawan Das Durkhan*, a jirga is held by the Baloch tribe after the murder of a family member of the renowned family. Instead of punishing the culprit through proper judicial procedure, the jirga followed its old traditional punishment rules and ordered ‘nehej’. In this sort of punishment, the daughter of the murderer is set to marry the older brother of the murdered man. Shireen becomes the victim of this tradition. She married the old asthmatic murdered man’s brother, who already has two wives. On the first night, her husband made her naked, brutally tortured, and humiliated all night to take vengeance for his dead brother.

The selected lines depict Shireen being oppressed socially and psychologically and marginalized by the patriarchy. She first became the victim of the crime, which she had not done through the old tradition of ‘nehej’, and then emotionally, mentally, and psychically tortured by her forced husband.

4.2 Text No. 2

“She was sent back to her parental home and never called back to her husband’s home or divorced. Shireen, who before marriage was a proud, beautiful, and elegant young girl, was reduced to a wreckage of her former self in just that one night” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 139).

The following day, the poor oppressed, victimized Shireen is sent back to her parent’s home just after the first horrible, brutal night spent in her husband’s home. She is just abandoned by her husband but not divorced. One elegant, beautiful young girl lost all her attributes in one night due to the oppression and brutality of the first night. The writer describes: *“Her complexion became murky, the brightness of her eyes was dulled, and a look of desolation routed her face. She endured her misery for some time, then, she lost her mental balance” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 140).*

In a patriarchal society, innocent young females have to bear all the cruelties. She gets mad and loses her mental balance, all awareness of food and attire, and she becomes naked in incredible frustration. When madness intensifies, she leaves the house with red eyes and a wild expression. So, to control her, she is chained by her family, as mentioned by the author: *“She*

was chained up at home, and kept under constant vigilance lest she broke free and ran out” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 141).

All these above-quoted lines show the oppression of women by the male-dominated society and show that women in the society allegedly lack the power even to speak. The men have all the right to do anything.

4.3 Text No. 3

“Her dress was torn to shreds and lying on the ground, while she lay naked in some wild bushes that grew at some distance from the road. It is clear that she had been raped” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 141).

One day, she escaped from her home. Her father, whose sister previously became the victim of “nehej” tradition, goes outside to search for her daughter. He finds her daughter naked with torn clothes, lying in some wild bushes far away from the village, and someone has raped her.

Some unknown person brutally rapes the madwoman. She is taken as an entity without caring about her mental and physical condition. She is oppressed by the male-centered society that only gives power and the right to do anything to men but not women.

4.4 Text No. 4

“Then, he cut his daughter’s throat with his dagger” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 142).

When Shireen’s father finds her daughter raped and lying naked on the ground, he first thinks about his demolished dignity and honor. He tries to cover his daughter’s body with his turban, but the mad daughter throws that turban away every time with a furious look. The author describes the father’s reaction to her daughter’s behavior: *“The father could not bear it any longer. He, too, was mad with rage. He struck her on her cheek, again and again, his anger only intensifying with each blow. Losing his head, he kept beating her until he lost his breath” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 141).*

He beats his daughter for the crime she has not committed. That poor innocent mad girl is raped by force, and instead of sympathy, she is bearing punishment. Her father thinks about her honor, not her daughter, and beats her badly.

As a woman who has the habit of bearing all brutality, Shireen does not resist this cruelty and bears all this silently numbly, lying on the ground. Even though she is mentally unwell, the element of bearing oppression is still there. As described by the author: *“Shireen did not try to resist him, she neither wept nor cried out. She did not plead. She endured the beating without a word. One of her eyes was swollen, and a lip bleeding, yet she lay in the ground, silent and numb” (Siddiqui, 2018, p. 141).*

Then his father wrapped her with her turban and *“threw her on his horse” (Siddiqui, 2018, p.142).* She is taken far from the village to the mountains. There, his father cut her throat with his dagger. It is how the life of an oppressed girl is ended by the one-by-one inhuman acts done by patriarchal society. The females are oppressed by the patriarch socially and psychologically without even taking them as a human

5. Conclusion Implications and Futuristic Vision

In a nutshell, there were instances of oppression of women by the patriarchal society in the novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan*. This study achieves the required research objectives because it describes the oppression of women and the elements that contribute to a male-dominated society. Women are subjugated and subordinated by the male members of society, including domestic, social, cultural, and even psychological levels.

This study proposes a textual analysis of Siddiqui’s novella *Bhawan Das Durkhan* to show the exploitation of women in the hands of a patriarchal mindset. The women get exposed to this oppression again and again without any end to it. In the future, scholars can do a study from the standpoint of discourse analysis to examine the language used by both males and females in *Bhawan Das Durkhan*.

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