

LAND, WOMAN AND LORD: AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF TEHMINA DURRANI'S NOVELS MY FEUDAL LORD AND BLASPHEMY

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Abstract

Place and woman have always been considered the utmost important belongings of men since the beginning of life on the earth. Especially in Pakistani rural society patriarchy is more in dominance than in other parts of the country due to the illiteracy and suppression of female rights. Thus, women are treated as entities in the hands of men, just like their places and lands. Female individuality has been marginalized and subjugated ever since. South Asian female writers gave a voice to these voiceless creatures and openly presented their issues in front of the world. With the application of the theory of ecofeminism, this thesis highlights a relative study of particular works of a famous South Asian female author Tehmina Durrani. This thesis will state the ecofeminist stance that women's productive and biological features strongly associate them with land or place owned by men. The study also deals with the effects of patriarchy and the feudal system, which set limitations for women. Ecofeminism, as a tenet of anarcha-feminism, allows women to speak and struggle against the violence they face due to marginalization. Tehmina Durrani has showcased the miseries of women in her books *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy*. She has acted as an anarchist who moved a step ahead and crossed the boundaries in which the dominant patriarchy trapped her. Both works will explore the exploitation of women who, like the land, are considered productive and the assets of males. This thesis will propose that females must involve themselves in the struggle to fight for their rights. They must stop the tradition of being treated as puppets in the hands of men. This study will explore Durrani's struggle as an anarchist and conclude how successful she was in her attempts.



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Keywords: anarcha-feminism, biological features, eco-feminism, feudalism, patriarchy.

Introduction

The society all over the globe is considered as racist whether it is developed or under developing countries. They have dictators and marginalized, tyrants and subjugated ones. Suppressing the voices of the weaker, their rights and freedom is a common phenomenon in all communities. The easily dominated individuals are considered the females. They are reliable upon men for numerous needs and men become their rulers. In Pakistani feudal regions, especially of Southern Punjab, the feudal system does not allow women to take charge of their lives. They have long been striving with patriarchal norms. Women are considered as the entities of the landlords like their properties. They can sell and buy their lands at their will, similarly they can own and disown a woman by their will.

The best example of ecofeminism and implication of anarcha-feminist principles can be found in Durrani's writings *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy*. The accounts of both the writings are not only inspiring but also motivating. Durrani's first book *My Feudal Lord* is her memoir and life experiences which she has shared. She actually has described the hardships and sufferings which she has underwent during the period of fourteen years of her early marriage with Mustafa Khar. In a Personal Communication on 16 February, 2013, Tehmina Durrani said, "Well Mustafa, now the world will soon know you just as Tehmina Durrani's ex " (Hassan et al. 2021).

Both her works depict the miseries and plight of women who are trapped in tribal and feudal regions. Durrani argued that these feudal landlords derive their might through the slanted form of Islam which is also sustained by the muted identity of women and marginalized communities of a society. The story of *My Feudal Lord* describes the journey and struggle of a woman who takes her destiny in her own hands and faces all the challenges in her way to attain freedom from male-oriented society. Durrani aims to improve the social positioning of women through her writings. The memoir actually presents the author as an anarchist (freedom fighter) who is an intellectual woman with a prosperous background. But when she decided to break the shackles of feudal system, her family and even her own mother turned against her and as a result she has to endure devastating consequences. This shows that the status of a woman does not matter. Whether she is rich or poor, she is a puppet in the hands of feudal landlords.

Literature Review

Certain varieties of subjects specified certain foregrounded information in the novels of Tehmina Durrani. In order to clarify Durrani's internal tensions and to support her desire-oriented psyche, Freud's theory of structural personality has been applied to her character by Atiq ur Rehman. The study is a thorough examination of Durrani's mental state, but it is also a valuable moral lesson for those who disregard advice from loved ones and adopt a materialistic and avaricious mindset. This study's findings suggest that Durrani's psychology is mostly Id-driven, while her ego is latent. (Rehman, 2021). Sumalani and Khan (2018) analyse the protagonist of the book *My Feudal Lord* by concentrating on how she is affected by traumatic stress and how she employs her defense mechanisms to protect herself from those mental repressions. Their plan is centered on the character's natural strength, notably her intellectual ability and whether or not she is successful in defying her cultural and familial bonds (Mehsud, 2020).

The feminist perspectives of Kristeva (1980, 1983, 1986, 2008) have been used to analyze and explain the experiences of women in a patriarchal society. The real paradigm of women's suffering and their suppressed state is seen in *My Feudal Lord* (1991). Alluding to the situation of women in patriarchal representative hierarchy, the book was written in the setting of Pakistan. The selected writing of Durrani has a unique and special background that is suitable in light of Kristeva's concept of symbolic and semiotic order, which supports the idea that women are subject to what society and the males in their lives believe is best for them because of symbolic social order. Kristeva argues, "Symbolic order is man's world only. It dominates even the primary pleasures of women" (Habib, Dildaralvi, and Baseer 2013).

The study of Fasih ur Rehman examines Durrani's book *Blasphemy* in the context of Gramsci's cultural hegemony. His dissertation delves further into the subject of the colonial master's power over religion in the subcontinent, especially in Muslim populations. The topic under discussion is directly knotted to the character played by British colonizers in creating religious control, despite the fact that the story is set in Pakistan after the country's division. The research examines examples of religious hegemony through a content-based examination of the book. The novel's narrative demonstrates how the British colonial overlords created the religious hegemonic notions in the Muslim subcontinent civilization in order to control the citizens. In addition to delineating the consequences of these hegemonic notions on the social order in common and on women in specific, Durrani has skillfully exposed the hegemonic plans of the British colonial master.

Ecofeminism theory by Françoise d’Eaubonne

Francois d’Eaubonne has coined the term ecofeminism which acquainted the world with a relationship between ecology and females. The theory enforces that the suppression of females is related with the suppression of nature by masculinity. Francois d’Eaubonne has addressed the environmental and gender issues equivalently. She claims that numerous counterparts occur amid the male-controlled overpowering of womenfolk and the devastation of nature, and such destruction effects and links to the environmental demolition. Subsequently, many hypothetical and useful inclusions to d’Eaubonne’s claim have been constructed (“Françoise D’Eaubonne’s *Le Féminisme Ou La Mort*,” n.d.).

In literature, ecofeminism is marked as a new approach to study classical and contemporary works of authors and giving them a new insight. The theory is used by the authors to make an analysis of non-patriarchal genders by making a connection between women and nature in the contemporary culture, religion, literature, economy and politics. It highlights that both women and nature must be honoured. The relationship between ecology and feminism has been demonstrated in literary criticism using the discipline of feminist study and action known as ecofeminism. Ecofeminism holds that all types of oppression must disappear, including environmental injustice, in order to abolish the oppression of women (Nanjeeba, 2023).

Ecofeminism as a tenet of Anarcha-feminism

Ecofeminism is developed out of anarcha-feminism concerns which eliminates all kinds of domination and focuses on humanity’s oppressive nature with regard to the natural world around us. Anarcha-feminists believe that women must struggle for their identity. Actually, anarcha-feminism is a kind of feminism that correlates anarchist ideologies with feminist beliefs. It is a political philosophy that looks for an egalitarian community which is liberated from repressive hierarchies and structure of dominance. Anarcha-feminists believe that there is only one way of gaining freedom that is eliminating all forms of colonialism, subjugation, capitalism, racism and patriarchy. They also encourage to create a world in which everyone has access to the necessities which they require in order to live a fulfilling life.

In literature, ecofeminism is marked as a new approach to study classical and contemporary works of authors and giving them a new insight. The theory is used by the authors to make an analysis of non-patriarchal genders by making a connection between women and nature in the contemporary culture, religion, literature, economy and politics. The theory reports equivalent factors concerning the subjugation of nature and the persecution of women.

Research Objectives

- This study will present the causes which forced the author to rebel against the emancipation of feudal lords.
- The current research study aims to explore all the related issues in both the books of Tehmina Durrani *Blasphemy* and *My Feudal Lord*.
- Women must stop the tradition of being treated as puppets in the hands of men and dominate their own lives with courage and resilience.

Research Questions

- What are the reasonable ecofeminist approaches in Durrani’s works *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy*?

- Being an anarchist, how far is the author successful in forming a strong picture of male dictatorship and women’s plight against this tyranny?

Theoretical Framework

Emma Goldman is known for her contributions to anarchist and feminist theories, but she did not explicitly develop a theory of ecofeminism. However, her ideas on social and environmental justice are relevant to ecofeminist perspectives. Ecofeminism is the intersection of feminist and environmentalist thought, and it explores the connections regarding the mistreatment of nature and the subjugation of women. Ecofeminists argue that the idea to empower nature and women are rooted in patriarchal and capitalist systems that prioritize profit over people and the planet. This approach to environmentalism emphasizes the need for grassroots activism and community-based solutions to environmental problems. Her theory anarchy-feminism is chiefly founded on few elements of Durrani’s texts and critically analyzes and discusses the novels *My Feudal Lord* and *Blasphemy*.

Like Emma Goldman, Tehmina Durrani acts as an anarchist to break the shackles that bound her feet for leading a liberated life. She roars like ‘A Lioness’ against patriarchy and courageous enough to face all propaganda that lied in her way through her journey of liberation. She sets a practical instance for the South Asian women who are not brave enough to speak for themselves. As a freedom-fighter, Tehmina Durrani raised her voice for such women and enforced them to stand against the conventions of patriarchal customs in the social order which do not let women to rise. A major thesis of ecofeminist scholars is that we must rethink our understanding of what it means to be a part of a community that is based on cooperation, ecology, and protecting the planet Earth, rather than exploiting and destroying it.

Role of Women Writers in Muslim World

South Asian women authors have used their writing abilities to pen down their experiences of life as women facing distorted identity, domestic violence, marriage, family, otherness and marginalization. These women writers are changing the narratives. They have questioned those stereotypes which have long been unchallenged and remained unanswered. The books by South Asian Muslim women authors, give the sense that one is reading something that’s broadening his perspectives of the contemporary times. Most of the women authors prefer to write about their personal memoirs to give a vent to the sufferings they have been underwent for a specific time and the way they have encountered those situations. They prefer to write in sub genres of creative nonfictions rather than other forms of literature in order to define their despairs. Tehmina Durrani describes about her aim of writing her memoir in these words, “I realized that I could do no greater service for my country and our people than to expose the camouflage” (250). Thus she came to the conclusion that unmasking the prevailing hypocrisy of patriarchy and feudal norms is the greatest contribution she could provide to Pakistan and its people.

Landlords and Ladies

A woman, living in accordance to her husband’s desires, is considered prestigious in a patriarchal society. Besides that, those women who desire to follow their personal will are marked as rebellious. Pakistani Southern Punjab regions are a true evidence of such a culture where landlords are considered to be the ultimate authority and they are obeyed blindly. Their decisions and sayings are considered as final verdicts by their subjects and other marginalized genders of that society. According to the feudal lords, women are only objects to please men.

Tehmina Durrani was brought up in a conventional environment which was accustomed by male-controlled societal setting. She was bound to endure her former husband Mustafa Khar’s physical attacks and sexual violence. For almost fourteen years of her marriage, she underwent all that with silence considering it to be her destiny. In an autobiography written by Tehmina Durrani asserted that she had fallen into the traditional Pakistani woman’s deception. The end aim is marriage, and after that comes a life of complete servitude. She lacked all personal authority, rights, and free will after marriage. A woman is identified as a commodity equivalent to money and land by the landlords.

The feudal structure has also instigated unadorned hostility towards women. The source of all evils in such system is the renowned quote “Zan, Zar, Zameen” meaning ‘Woman, Money and Land’. The quote evidently

explains the disregard and indifference for women. It objectifies women for landlords just like their lands and wealth. Tehmina Durrani has offered a plausible explanation for these discrepancies and suggests modifications to these nation-narratives:

“There is a disorder, because we are so silent... We do not want to become inconvenient by putting ourselves in roles which will not be immediately accepted. That silence of ours is a very major reason for social and political malaise. I see lethargy everywhere, in everybody... (The Criterion, 2012).”

Durrani's Writings exposing Anarcha-feminism

Durrani's autobiographical writing *My Feudal Lord* deals with a diverse discourse regarding feminism. The book does not deal with anarcha-feminism theory openly rather it highlights many of the crucial issues that are central to the movement. It is also a memoir which recounts her former failed marriage with Mustafa Khar, an influential and prosperous feudal lord. Her writings expose the ways in which the norms and structures of power constructed by males to oppress women are implied. The memoir is an analysis of patriarchal power structures and brings into light the significance of women solidarity.

Durrani gives the readers an insight into how social ideals are expected from a woman living Southern regions of Pakistan. Their behaviours and acts should be according to the tribal conviction and rules. The females in these regions are trained even before marriage to remain quiet and become silent spectators towards the social injustice that would be practiced against their will. But Durrani becomes a freedom fighter and resists against these constraints. She takes a step to rebel against all those social norms which bound the women in chains.

Similarly, her work *Blasphemy* also inclines towards the issues of women oppression and the corruption in Pakistani society. The work shows dishonesty of those who are in authority and of those who are religious leaders. The book also deals with the female struggle for personal freedom and self-realization. It discovers these themes through the tale of a woman named, Heer, who is imprisoned in an unhappy marriage with a dominant and offensive religious leader. She rebels social customs and traditional outlooks to follow her own happiness and symbolizes the strength of females who stand up against inequality. The main causes of female marginal status in society, according to Durrani's opinion, are patriarchy, feudalism, women's ignorance of the nation's laws defending females' privileges, and their inclination to admit their predicament as their fortune.

In her exclusive interview to The Express Tribune in 2013, Durrani claimed that doing risky activities only occurs when one has no support network. She was "free to become the warrior" that she had become when she was allowed to fend for herself. "It has taken a long time", she continued, "Pakistan wasn't prepared for someone like me, in my opinion. But I also received a lot of support at the same time". Durrani said that she had a strong connection to the oppressed and that her heart will always be with them. She emphasized the importance of individuals realizing their own power. She said that she had the power; it was not something she inherited or that anybody had helped her to get. She claimed, "I am your best example... I am a success story" (The Express Tribune).

Findings and Discussion of the novel *My Feudal Lord*

My Feudal Lord is set in the Punjab region of Pakistan. The novel echoes a female voice and is written in first person narration. The author has clearly depicted the norms and rituals of feudal system and the hold of feudal lords over the community and especially the women. The feudal system is a hidden structure or the trap which holds every weaker gender of the society. Especially South Asian women are always under pressure and are subjugated by these feudal lords. The memoir *My Feudal Lord* sheds light on the similar matter by describing the personal experiences of Tehmina Durrani who strives for achieving a respectable place for herself and for the women in general. She exposes the brutal side of patriarchy.

My Feudal Lord is just not the story of an educated, financially strong woman facing the assaults of feudal system, rather the piece describes the daily life evils of a woman living in feudal or tribal structure. These women never make an attempt to raise their voices against that cruelty. Tehmina Durrani says in her memoir about her intention of being an anarchist who would break the chains of patriarchal traps, "I understood the zeal, for I was rebel in search of a cause. Mustafa Khar defined the cause for me. For the first time in my life, I felt a purpose beyond mere existence" (29). These lines indicate her mission that lies in her heart and which she later made the cause of her living as a woman.

The memoir *My Feudal Lord* is segregated into three units, i.e. 1) Lion of the Punjab 2) Law of the Jungle and 3) A Lioness. In all three portions, Tehmina Durrani's transformation from an ordinary and unimportant aristocrat to a housewife to an unrestrained emancipated woman striving for equal rights is skillfully shown. In her autobiography, Tehmina Durrani declares her thoughts upon the general ideology for females in Pakistani culture in these words;

“Looking back, I realize that we were being raised to be schizophrenic; an appearance of perfection was more important than genuine feelings. There was no question of discovering oneself. Identity and individuality were crushed. Personality failed to develop. My mind became a sanctuary for secret thoughts of escaping from this household. But for that, there was no other goal in life but marriage.” (9)

A number of pertinent passages from the book *My Feudal Lord* have been referenced plus scrutinized which emphasize the need to keep a society balanced and equitable. It highlights that the feudal system must be removed. The story of the novel is based on the idea that women's empowerment is the most important and fundamental need. Durrani says, “I was haunted by feelings of being a non-person and by extremely low self-esteem” (15). The influence of social, economic, political, and psychological intrusions on women is a key theme raised in the book. It exposes the unfair feudal-imperialist practices. The symptoms will always be there in our system if society does not eradicate this malady.

Postcolonial Ecofeminism

According to Youngsuk Chae (2015), "the convergence of post colonialism with ecofeminism [is] what I call postcolonial ecofeminism" (520). These postcolonial ecofeminism ideas neglect the distinctions that non-Western examples of how women and environment interact offer. In addition to identify the link between women and nature and how society views them, postcolonial ecofeminism should critically assess the particular women-nature interaction that exists in postcolonial nations as a result of the dual burdens faced by postcolonial women. This connection is influenced not just by gender roles but also by politics, religion, class, race, and location. Men who formerly faced the physical and mental assaults of post colonialism, naturally learnt to practice the same behavior with their wives. Those who took charge of the authority or any political stability, they also loved to exercise hegemony over weaker community of the society.

Tehmina Durrani writes that the feudal system in Pakistan is not new. It followed the British stream of power. She says that the feudal system was still in place when the British controlled all of South-central Asia. The "white masters" were able to easily maintain control over the vast populations of the nation by giving land and ultimate authority to a selected group of "loyal" people. Thus, the marginalized groups formed and kept on expanding with the unchanging situation as the banished were not allowed to speak for their neglected rights. Feudalism in Pakistan refers to a system where landlords have extensive landholdings, ranging from hundreds to thousands of acres. In reality, this structure prevents social integration, which is crucial to maintaining the fabric of society, and stifles progress. In our society, there are two extremes: one side lives in the depths of depravity and misery while the other is relishing luxury and extravagance. Tehmina Durrani declares, “In the feudal system wealth equates with honour and power” (16).

Factors which enforce the women to be anarchists

After reading Durrani’s memoir *My Feudal Lord* the researcher here has mentioned few factors below to illustrate the cause of Tehmina Durrani to be an anarchist:

- **Personal experiences:** A person's motivation to struggle for freedom is frequently encouraged by personal encounters with oppression or injustice. These encounters have the power to alter people and inspire people like Tehmina Durrani to defend their rights as well as the rights of others.
- **Empathy and compassion:** Many freedom fighters are motivated by a strong feeling of compassion and sympathy. When they see others suffering, they are moved to action and strive to create a society that is more equitable and just. Tehmina Durrani as a part of feudal system had faced the tyrannies of feudalism so she decided to give a voice to the miseries of South Asian Women.
- **Desire for the change:** People who fight for freedom frequently have a strong desire to see society change for the better. They could be relentless in their efforts to oppose oppressive institutions and practices

because they have a vision of a better future. Tehmina Durrani says, “I recognized that there was always an effort and a price to pay for success” (64).

- **Bravery and tenacity:** It takes a lot of bravery and tenacity to struggle for freedom. It entails taking on strong institutions and frequently encountering resistance. People like Tehmina Durrani could be prepared to make personal sacrifices for the sake of society. She writes, “My values were conventional, and yet in me was potential that instigated rebellion” (184).
- **Belief in fundamental rights:** The value of fundamental human rights, such as freedom of speech, gender equality, and social fairness, is what motivates freedom fighters. They strive to destroy the systems that deprive people of their rights. This can be very true of Tehmina Durrani as she herself worked as an activist for female rights.

Tehmina Durrani roars like a Lioness

Female revolt can occur for a variety of causes, since it is a response to the unique difficulties and repressions that women have experienced throughout history. The concluding chapter of *My Feudal Lord*, titled "Lioness", describes how the author went from being abused to being a powerful, independent woman. This was the time when the anarchist spirit developed in her. She writes about her courage, "I roared like a lioness, my voice reverberating through the empty room" (Durrani 1994). She describes her path of self-empowerment and self-discovery, emphasizing her newly discovered confidence to confront the patriarchal culture she formerly belonged to. She has started an endless struggle as she says, "The lioness in me, dormant all those years, had awakened, and she was not going to stop until she had her revenge" (Durrani 1994).

The necessity of rejecting cultural expectations and standards that oppress women is emphasized by Durrani. She argues that women should work towards their own emancipation and no longer tolerate violence, injustice, or unfairness. She narrates her strength in these words, "I fought like a lioness, defending my rights and the rights of my children" (Durrani 1994). She exhorts women to develop their inner fortitude and stand up for their rights, calling them to become bold "lionesses" who defend their families.

Durrani emphasizes the need of resilience and self-empowerment which is essential for anarcha-feminist attitude. She claims about her objective, "I, Tehmina, will achieve what no other woman has ever achieved in this land" (Durrani 1994). She was fighting not only for her life but for a collective cause which would restore the forgotten reality that females are equal to men and should be given equal gender rights. She says, “My movement spoke the forgotten language of truth” (254). The depiction of a lioness represents her ferocious tenacity and unflinching resolution in the face of difficulty and represents her as an anarchist or a freedom fighter.

Findings and Textual Analysis of the novel *Blasphemy*

An essential component of anarcha-feminism is opposition to conventional ideologies of family, education, and gender roles. There is also a strong opposition to the institution of marriage by women. As a result, the women who are fighting such power structures express their viewpoint through anarcha-feminism. It also enables individuals to work together despite their differences since, despite the fact that their experiences may vary, everyone shares a similar opponent in the form of unjust authority (Sethi, 2020).

This section of the research is based on Durrani’s novel *Blasphemy* (1998), her second book, which was fictionized from a true account. As it dealt with the very taboo subjects of the feudal system, the *Pir Sain* system of religion, incest, prostitution, and child marriage performed in the name of religion, this work proved to be a ground-breaking masterpiece. The work by Durrani is a first step in exposing the horrendous crimes being done in the name of religion in various uninformed regions of the nation. Tehmina Durrani exposes how this fictitious feudal and *pir* system oppresses people on the basis of patriarchy, particularly women. The power of the *Pir* is described in such a way that he could justify anything and anyone upon his personal perception. Heer says that over his entrapped subjects, Pir Sain reigned. Through the mouth

piece of her fictional character Heer, Tehmina Durrani spits out the truth about the guardians of law and religion in such words, “I thought of how the custodians of law, above the law themselves, had made each of us spin” (103).

The protagonist Heer always tries to fulfil every duty and task that has been assigned to her as a wife of Pir Sain without leaving any mistake but even then she receives humiliation and was beaten by her husband for inferior reasons which are constructed by the spies of Pir Sain. Heer was trapped in a cage after getting into wedlock with Pir Sain. She realizes in the haveli of Pir Sain that “Here, only small errors were big sins” (82). In a male oriented culture women are supposed to be perfect and error free while males are allowed to follow their desires. Heer feels alienated as her husband only uses her for his desires, services and household chores. She says, “life and death had long been synonyms for me” (220).

She says, “The system was too rigid to allow for that. Nor did she have the authority to interfere in what seemed like my destiny” (74). She also claims that “He owns me” (74). It shows that she was helpless and was obliged to obey only the orders of her husband. She was bound to live the kind of life her husband had chosen for her. This status of women has converted them to entities instead of a human being. Heer says, “Nor had he ever thought of me as a human being” (149). As objects have no feelings and can be moved, replaced and discarded similarly females are used, replaced and humiliated by men in feudal system.

In the haveli of Pir Sain, women are considered like animals due to their unique biological makeup. The females were suffering dying self-identities and were not having any level of individuality. The names given to the female characters once more allude to the lower position that women have. The names of the women are representations of their distinctive characteristics like Cheel(eagle), Kaali(dark complexion), Toti(talkative), Meesni(cunning), Badrung(ugly), Jamadaarni(female sweeper), Munni(small girl), Sukki(skinny), Guppi(fat) etc. These characteristics mentioned here refer to the inferior self of the women. The rebellious attitude of Heer serves as a potent indictment of Pakistan's constrictive and repressive social standards. She advocates for a more just and progressive society by speaking for change and against the status quo. Her persona reflects the fight for individual liberty and the urge to reject social convention. Heer opposes the repressive doctrines and practices perpetuated by religious authorities in the book. She wants a more open-minded and compassionate view of religion in place of foolishly accepting the dogmas.

Anarcha-feminist view of the novel *Blasphemy*

As you may know, anarcha-feminism mixes feminist ideals with anarchist ideology in an effort to confront oppressive structures. Anarcha-feminism gives women an insight to the hypocrisy of hierarchies prevailing in the capitalist and patriarchal cultures. Tehmina Durrani, being an activist for female rights, trails the anarcha-feminist outlooks and examines the fortitude and resiliency of women in her nonfiction work *Blasphemy*, despite societal pressures. The novel can be analyzed from an anarcha-feminist perspective by examining the portrayal of female characters in it. The book offers a forum for talking about how gender, religion, and tradition are connected and react against each other. The book *Blasphemy* places attention on the challenges that many women go through in patriarchal countries by studying the experiences of its female protagonists. The female characters in Durrani's *Blasphemy* play significant roles in illustrating the difficulties and problems encountered by women in Pakistani culture. The rebellious Heer, that she becomes after suffering silently for many years, personifies the spirit of resistance against tyrannical powers. In the beginning of the novel she says, “I longed to stop them but dared not” (66). She wanted to end the tyrannical system but did not have courage but later she developed that courage within herself to fight against her husband’s will, his cruelty and the hypocrite system in which she was engaged. The captivating story of the novel *Blasphemy* examines issues of female empowerment and the longing for independence via Heer's journey.

An Ecofeminist Study of the novel *Blasphemy*

The story of the novel emphasizes the role of women as environmental stewards. Heer says, “I was falling in love with nature for lack of anything else to love” (77). Women are shown as taking care of the environment. Heer's affinity for the natural world and efforts to stop environmental destruction serve as examples of how

women may influence change for the betterment and preservation of the environment. Heer loves natural environment and the seasons with which she counts her days while trapped in Pir Sain's haveli. As she is not allowed to see the outer world, she imagines all in her mind with her inner eye and her heart fills with joy and starts dancing. She says,

"What I could not see outside came within the four walls of my prison. I called it a flight into God's world; a world that existed around and above and beneath the one my husband had created. When I tried, I could clasp sunshine and moonlight in a fist... if only I could also dance with joy." (78)

According to the theory of ecofeminism, the exploitation and dominance of nature are inextricably linked to the exploitation and marginalization of women. Some literary allusions from the book can be interpreted from an ecofeminist angle. Firstly, the author examines the patriarchal power constructions that maintain the mistreatment of both women and nature. In the novel the environmental degradation and the oppression of women and the loss of their agency are comparable. Heer sees the environment as a similar force that gives pleasure to every gender equally. The nature does not make any difference in races, genders, hierarchies. It keeps everyone on the same upright and prestigious position regardless of their status. She says, "I stood under the rain that also fell far away on Ma's roof, and shared the same dawn and the same sunset, the same night and the same stars as everyone else" (78). Nature unifies the women as a whole.

Nature is often symbolized as a source of power and resilience in the novel. Women and nature are interconnected. The relationship between violence against women and aggression against the environment is examined in *Blasphemy*. Similar to how the natural world is being destroyed and exploited, women are mistreated and abused. Pir Sain forced his wife to abort her child, in such way he intermingles with the natural process of baby birth and terminates the natural process. He also beats his wife violently during her first pregnancy that it resulted in her miscarriage. The novel makes the argument that patriarchal institutions that place a high value on dominance and control are the primary drivers of both types of violence.

Need for an Egalitarian society that values the Rights of Women and the Environment

An egalitarian society is one in which all people are treated equally and have access to the same opportunities. In such a society, everyone is treated and appreciated equally and there is no inherent advantage based on characteristics like gender, colour, social standing, or income. This covers having equal access to healthcare, work, education, and political engagement as well. The female characters in *Blasphemy* undergo personal growth and transformation as they challenge their own prejudices and encounter social customs. Analyzing the development of these female characters can suggest insights into the potential for personal transformation as a substance for broader social change.

In the novel *Blasphemy* excessive subjugation evokes a sense of resistance among the characters and the readers themselves. After suffering silently for many years, Heer experiences a process of empowerment and self-realization via her path of suffering and uprising. Through her quest, Heer is able to regain her identity, establish her agency, and confront the oppressive structures that have held her captive. She says, "Transforming myself from a slave to master of my own destiny needed a miracle" (181). She turned her journey of revolt into a *jihad* as she says, "I was a soldier. This was a *jihad*" (181). In struggling for an egalitarian concept of life Heer becomes a soldier who fights in the battle against his opponent to have victory. Her life was like a battle field where she was combating all the evils spread by the ugly form of authority.

Conclusion

The present research successfully evaluates Tehmina Durrani's transition from the traditional silent wife of a feudal to an unorthodox and stimulating resilient woman using attentive reading of the text and Emma Goldman's theoretical insights of anarcha-feminism. She abandons her organized routine, which had trained her to endure all of the suffering, humiliation, and persecution in silence. Durrani breaks off all the relationships that bound her in restrictive connections by altering this socially constructed tradition. She divorces her illustrious and powerful political spouse. She shatters the quiet by penning an autobiography, *My Feudal Lord* (1991), in order to call attention to the accepted standards of masculinity. Durrani deserves praise for having the guts to share details of her private married life in order to expose feudalism. She experienced exploitation

through the agency of the most controlling power, thus she is completely conscious of the unspeakable predicament of women in the traditional Muslim community. In her second nonfiction work *Blasphemy (1998)* She criticised the maltreatment of women by Pirs. Heer, the main character, and Tehmina Durrani are metaphors for Muslim women who are subject to a rigid political and religious structure where their rights are trampled upon in the name of Islam. Their misery and presence act as a mirror for all women who lead such difficult lives and are unable to speak up against discrimination in patriarchal society.

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