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A Study of *My Feudal Lord* with Special Reference of Khattar Tribe and Feudalism

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Abstract:

My Feudal Lord is an autobiographical novel written by Tehmina Durrani. She is a Pakistani activist and social worker who breaks the tradition of silence and unveils the veil from feudalism's customs, traditions, and culture. This study highlights the relationship of Tehmina Durrani with the Khattar tribe and its influence. She references the Khattar tribe in her novel *My Feudal Lord*. Khattar tribe settled in Wah, on the northern edge of the Punjab near the border with the Northwest Frontier Province of Punjab. Tehmina Durrani told the story of her abusive marriage with a feudal lord, Mustafa Khar. She was the victim of feudalism and Male domination. Tehmina Durrani of the Kharral tribe, as a result of the crown, in British Raj before the partition, her grandfather, Nawab Sir Liaqat Hayat Khan, was the prime minister of Patiala State. This research paper explores the feudal system in Pakistani male-dominated society, using the references found in the novel of Tehmina Durrani. She was the victim of the feudal system. Being of a highly aristocratic background, she cannot spared by this feudalism. This paper highlights the marginalization of women in so-called male-dominated society. The Punjab is the

The country's largest state was ruled more or less by the impulses of feudal lords who controlled vast land properties and whose vassals voted as instructed. Mustafa Khar is the central character in the novel who holds a powerful position in politics and affects the life of Tehmina Durrani. In the history of Pakistan's politics, it had always been necessary for national leaders to quash the Punjab's leader. A short visit of Tehmina and Mustafa Khar caused the ripples in Pakistani society. *My Feudal Lord* is a very pathetic and heart-rendering autobiography. She exposes all layers of her elite life in her parental family and her marriage life. She also confesses all the hidden deeds that might have damaged her image in public and private life. This paper explores the co-relation of Tehmina, the influence of the Khattar tribe, and feudalism.



Keywords: Feudalism, Khattar tribe, Domination, History, Marriage.

Introduction

My Feudal Lord is a very pathetic autobiography written by Tehmina Durrani. She interprets all layers of her influential life in her parental family and marriage life. She also confesses all the hidden deeds that might have damaged her image in public and private life. She is called bold due to her candid discussion of her abusive marriage and its violence. Most women in Asian countries generally accept their subordinate position in society. However, a few women like Tehmina have recognized their rights and dignity within society and the home. Unable to halt the violent behaviour of her husband, she lacked the courage to confront him directly. On each occasion, she endures and remains quiet. Her suffering has escalated significantly, leading to the emergence of the defiant as a result of severe torment, persecution, subjugation, and violence. Upon marrying, she was unaware of the harsh realities of life. She was indulging in romantic daydreams. However, all of her dreams were shattered when she was assaulted by her husband a few days later. Marriage is universally regarded as a sacred and revered institution in all cultures and societies. It is commemorated with fervour, elaborate ceremonies, and sacred rites, and her interest in marriage and its importance weakened. She contemplates the different women. Emulate the experience of Tehmina, who displayed a defiant demeanour when confined to her marriage with Khar without access to the outside world. Her marriage resulted in the loss of her freedom. She could not visit her mother or accomplish her basic needs without permission. This situation made her feel profoundly humiliated and disgusted. Marriage profoundly impacts a woman's entire life, although it may not have the same level of impact on a man.

A Brief Review of the Khattar Tribe:

Khattar, Kathar, and Kahtar, a tribe of the Attock district. The Khattars claim kinship with the Awans and claim to be like them, and the western Khokhars descended from one of the sons of Qutb Shah Qureshi of Ghazani. But Awans do not always admit the relationship, and Khattars are often said to claim Rajput Origin. In Historical terms, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan (1892-1942), a prominent Punjabi politician, is the best-known representative of this tribe. He belongs to the famous Hayat family of Wah. Over the last 50-60 years, the tribe, especially its main/chief



families in Pakistan, have intermarried with Kashmiri and Pashtun families. Around 68 per cent of the Khattars are found in 3 districts of Pakistan, i.e. Rawalpindi, Attock and Chakwa.

A Special Reference of Khattar Tribe in *My Feudal Lord*

In her novel, Durrani said, "Our home was impeccable and always orderly, as though waiting to be photographed." (23). She describes that her mother was very strict about the neatness and cleanliness of her home. The reference she has given to the Khattar tribe is from her mother's lineage. She mentions in her novel that her mother came from the Hayat family of the Khattar tribe, and her father was Pathan, which stemmed from the family of Ahmad Shah Durrani of Afghanistan. She explicitly said that the dominant nature of her mother was the reason for her fair-skinned beauty and considered herself superior to that fact. In her novel, she depicts the following lines.

She came from the Hayat family of the Khattar tribe, which had settled in Wah, on the northern edge of the Punjab near the border with the Northwest Frontier Province. As a result of loyal service to the Crown, British colonial masters had given vast tracts of land to the family. The Hayat had fought alongside the Moors in Spain and claimed that the family-renowned good looks resulted from intermarriages with Spanish women. (Durrani 22)

Durrani talks about the dominant influence of her mother on her life, which resulted in submissiveness. Her mother demanded total obedience; when her mother spoke, it was a command, and they were to carry it out in silence. *Untidiness was a crime*(25). According to her novel, her mother accomplished all her objectives without raising a hand to children. Tehmina had developed a dual personality due to the strict rules of her home. She said that

"I was acceptable only when I was unlike myself- whoever that was- because I wore a mask of submission. I developed a personality that was against my true nature, but compatible with mother's" (Durrani 25)

She suffered in her childhood due to her mother, and silently, she became confused and sometimes humiliated that what she must be was wrong and unacceptable. She wanted to escape from this household, but marriage was the single route for a girl.



The Relation between Feudalism and Tehmina Durrani:

After the divorce of Anees and Tehmina, she got married to a politician, Mustafa Khar. It was the second marriage of Durrani and the sixth of Mustafa Khar. The men of the Kharrel tribe are identified to be taller than average, with noticeable features and great energy and endurance. With the marriage, the feudal system entered her life. As young feudal lords, Mustafa and his brothers had little concerns concerning endorsed and social prohibitions. The feudal system is a surplus from the time when the British ruled the whole of south-central Asia. By giving land and power to certain trustworthy entities, the *white masters* could control the country's masses with relative effort. Feudalism becomes a license to rob, rape and even murder. "A feudal lord was an absolute ruler who could justify any action." (41). Feudal law accepts a man to abuse in such a manner, but for a wife to be disloyal to a husband is the supreme crime. In the feudal moral system, Islamic law permits a man to kill his disloyal wife in suitable wrath but does not allow for intentional revenge. He continuously uses her first marriage as a stick to beat and proves that she is capable of adultery. It produced complex sexual confusion in Durrani.

Gulam Mustafa Khar was born into the Kharral family in Kot Addu, a village in the Punjab region. Mohammad Yar Khar, the father of the individual in question, was bestowed the prestigious title of Khan Sahib by the British due to his status as one of the most prominent landowners in the district. Gulam Mustafa Khar received his education at Atchison College Lahore. Like his father, he held a position of high social status as a feudal lord and exercised complete authority during his rule. The inheritance of his father's property and land is the primary foundation for his political influence, authority, and notoriety. He embarked on his political career at the age of 24. In 1962, he participated in the National Assembly and later, in 1965, he represented the Muslim League. In 1967, he became captivated by the enchanting charisma of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was also pleased with his talent and developed a strong affection for him, treating him like his son. Khar significantly influenced him, prompting him to leave his home and dwell with Bhutto in Clifton, Karachi, for several years. This move was motivated by a desire to gain deeper insights into the complexities of political diplomacy. Over time, he developed a strong and trusted alliance with Bhutto and played a key role in establishing the Pakistan People's Party. Before the collapse of Dacca, he gained a significant triumph in elections. In 1971, Bhutto replaced General Yahya as the Chief Martial Law Administrator of



Punjab. After adopting the 1973 constitution and Bhutto's appointment as Prime Minister of Pakistan, Ghulam Mustafa Khar was appointed Chief Minister of the Punjab. Mustafa Khar gained renown as an administrator for his astute techniques and cunning tactics. He was a staunch and devoted supporter of Bhutto, effectively utilizing the party slogan to further their cause. "The people of Pakistan are considered the driving force behind the country's power." During a period when the police force went on strike, the state of law and order appeared to be in jeopardy. However, he skillfully and astutely managed to regain control of the situation. He has been called the chief assistant or closest aide to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The Bhutto regime was overthrown by a military coup headed by General Zia-ul-Haq during his leadership over Pakistan. Mustafa resided in England during his exile and returned when Bhutto was executed. Mustafa Khar, a prominent figure in Pakistani politics, held a significant position in the government of Benazir Bhutto. He was widely seen as the unquestioned leader of Punjab. He has been referred to as the lion of Punjab. Punjab is a significant and prominent region in Pakistan, and the leader of Punjab holds great importance. Mustafa was from a feudal lineage and held the esteemed position of a feudal lord in Punjab, augmenting his authority and influence. Mustafa Khar was formidable as a feudal lord, with a strong personality and commanding authority. Additionally, he demonstrated adeptness in the realm of politics. However, he also exhibited bad characteristics such as violence, aggression, a short temper, and a tendency to harm his children physically. Additionally, he displayed oppressive behaviour towards women and possessiveness. He desires his partner to be loyal while he wishes to have the freedom to engage in extramarital affairs as he pleases, without any restrictions on location or choice of partners. Tehmina realized that she had made an erroneous choice by marrying a man who subjugated women and displayed a complete lack of respect for them. Additionally, she became aware of this individual's unpredictable and contradictory behaviour, known as "khar". One evening, he struck Tehmina with his closed hand, resulting in her having a bruised eye. However, Khar expressed remorse the next morning and shed tears while apologizing for his errors. Surviving a marriage holds immense significance for a Pakistani Muslim woman. If she were to get divorced, she would face numerous challenges. In many cases, her parents would reject her, leaving her with no support system. It would be tough for her since she lacks education and cannot financially support herself. However, residing in such a dreadful environment is exceedingly difficult and horrifying for a woman of this nature, as she is fully aware that she is merely regarded as a sexual



commodity. Furthermore, while her husband engages in extramarital affairs, she is compelled to remain silent due to the absence of any alternative options. She endures physical abuse from her husband, as failing to do so could result in her being sent to death by stoning. Some individuals in educated circles in Pakistan may argue that such inhumane treatment of women is only prevalent in the less educated regions of the country, specifically in remote villages and towns with low literacy rates. This single book conclusively refutes all of it as untrue. Tehmina hails from an affluent and cosmopolitan segment of Muslim culture that places great importance on educating its female offspring. Mustafa Khar is from a wealthy social class and belongs to a lineage of influential feudal lords. Khar held significant power and authority in his hamlet, Kot-Addu, essentially acting as the law. In the broader context of Pakistan, he was known as Sher-I-Punjab. Despite being an educated couple who spent almost nine years in exile in England, this man physically abused his wife. He questioned her about her whereabouts and forbade her from reading magazines, going out with her friends, and going to the market without his consent. Tehmina divulged all the crucial details concerning her former spouse, Mustafa Khar.

Domination-Mother- Mustafa-Tehmina Durrani:

My Feudal Lord is an open book that allows readers to read about an author's life. Durrani clearly and explicitly depicts all the trauma of her life. Her childhood memories are not as ordinary children can face. She has suppressed her thoughts and emotions. Her mother did not appreciate her due to her dark skin. It creates a tremendous psychological impact on her mind. She mentioned that she did not like the comparisons done by relatives with her mother,

Mustafa Khar was her husband, who played a significant role in her life. Due to torture, humiliation and sexual assault in her married life, she demands a divorce from him.

"There was not a day that Mustafa did not hit me for some reason: then food was late, his clothes were creased." (Durrani 106)

Conclusion

Tehmina Durrani is the victim of society's social and psychological trends. Her mother had a dominating and prejudiced attitude towards the dark-skinned. She had the ego of her light-skinned beauty, which she possesses from her lineage of intermarriages of the Khattar tribe and



Spanish women. Her dressing sense, unveiling, and Anglicized nature made a difference to the other Muslim women. Again, feudalism is the most important and touchy subject that deals with the author. She was not blaming her ex-husband, but she pointed out the whole mentality of the feudal system of the Asian countries.

The research paper concludes that Durrani's autobiographical novel *My Feudal Lord* casts light on the oppressive feudal system in Pakistani society and the marginalization of women; the novel's particular reference to the Khattar tribe emphasizes the impact of the tribal dynamic on Tehmina Durrani's life. The paper stresses the need to address feudalism and male domination to initiate a more equitable society for all individuals, in spite of gender.

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