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A Bad Woman's Poetry and Her Reclamation for an Authentic Self in Gendered Spaces: The Poetics of Pain, Identity and Resistance in Kishwar Naheed's Poems

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Abstract

This article carries out a (con) textual analysis of Naheed's selected poems from a postcolonial feminist lens, with a particular focus on the notions of identity and resistance in indigenous patriarchal spaces. To reinforce rigid patriarchal gender binaries, Zia's military regime has promoted the stereotype of a good and a bad woman, and Naheed's selected feminist poems seem to question the state-promoted concept of a good woman, and her women also cherish being known as bad ones. By situating Naheed's selected poems within the socio-political context of the Zia regime, when the country witnessed the emergence of misogyny in the form of anti-women laws and experienced the clash between regressive religious policies and progressive feminist thoughts promoted by the feminist segment of Pakistani society, I will respond to two important questions: 1) How do Naheed's bad women as doubly marginalized others renegotiate their identities and mobility within patriarchal urban spaces? 2) How is re-articulating the notion of a bad woman, promoting an alternative female agency in Urdu feminist poetry? To this end, Spivak's politics of "Vetretung" and "Darstellung" are deployed to examine the relationship between the formulated feminist identities and the dominant patriarchal praxis of everyday life. Sara Ahmed's concept of embodiment is employed to analyze the way Naheed's women constantly mediate their relationship with their bodies, both inside and outside their homes. Thus, I conclude that her poetry explores the concept of 'othernesses' from a different dimension and creates counter-discourses that unearth the silenced female experiences.

Keywords: Counter-Discourse, Embodiment, Agency, Zia Regime.Kishwar Naheed.

تلخیص

یہ آرٹیکل کشور ناہید کی منتخب نظموں کا متنی (Textual) تجزیاتی مطالعہ پیش کرتا ہے۔ خاص طور پر پوسٹ کلونیل فیمینسٹ نقطۂ نگاہ کے حوالے سے صنفی امتیازات رکھنے والی جگہوں پر دھتکارے اور نکالے ہوئے وجود کی شناخت اور مزاحمت کو اجاگر کرتا ہے، مزید ضیا حکومت میں کٹر صنفی امتیاز کے تحت تشکیل دی گئی بری عورت اور اچھی عورت کی حدود اور اسی طرح ان کے

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اسٹریو ٹائپ کرداروں جو اسٹیٹ کے تشہیری ہیں پر ناہید اپنی منتخب فیمینسٹ نظموں میں سوال اٹھاتی ہے۔اس کی (شاعری کی عورت) کو بھی بری عورت کے طور پر ہی دیکھا جاتا ہے۔ میں نے ناہید کی منتخب نظموں کو Socio.Political حوالے سے پرکھا ہے۔ضیا کے دور حکومت کو عورتوں کے حوالے سے شدید مردانہ تنگ نظری سے قانون سازی کرتے ہوئے دیکھا گیا۔ناہید کے ہاں (ضیا دور میں) عورت دشمنی پر مبنی مذہبی پالیسیوں پر تنقید اور ترقی پسند فیمنسٹ خیالات کا اظہار ملتا ہے۔اس طرح وہ پاکستانی معاشرے میں عورت کے segment کر پرموٹ کرتی ہے۔ میں مندرجہ ذیل دو اہم سوالات کو زیر بحث لاؤں گی۔ (ا)۔ناہید کی بری عورت کس طرح سے دوہرے ظلم کا شکار دھتکارا ہوا marginalized وجود اپنی آزادانہ نقل و حرکت کو صنفی امتیاز برتنے والی شہری جگہوں (Urban Spaces) پر شناخت کروا رہا ہے ۔؟(2)۔ناہید کی شاعری کس طرح بری عورت کی بیان کردہ تعریف کو نئے معنی دیتی ہے اور اردو فیمنسٹ شاعری میں عورت کے کرب کو متعارف کرواتی ہے، پرموٹ کرتی ہے۔ آخر میں سپوک (Spivak) کی پالیسی vertretung اور Darstellung کو مد نظر رکھتے ہوئے اختراع شدہ شناختوں اور روز مرہ زندگی میں جاری و ساری حقیقی فیمنسٹ شناختوں کے باہمی قرب کا مشاہدہ کر کے ان کا اتقابلی جائزہ پیش کیا ہے۔ سارہ احمد (Sarah Ahemd) کے نظریہ مجسم (embodiment) کا استعمال کیا ہے کہ کس طرح ناہید کی عورت اپنے وجود کے اثبات کے لیے گھر کے اندر اور باہر مسلسل گردش میں رہتی ہے۔ پس میں اس نتیجے پر پہنچتی ہوں کہ ناہید کی شاعری غیر (Other) اور دھتکارے ہوؤں کے نظریات کو مختلف حوالوں سے دکھاتی ہے اور ایک متبادل بیانیے (ڈسکورس) کی جگہ بناتی ہے جو عورت کے خاموش تجربات کو سطح پر لاتے ہیں۔

کلیدی الفاظ: متبادل بیانیہ، مجسم، ایجنسی، ضیا دور حکومت، کشور ناہید۔

Introduction

This article carries out a (con) textual analysis of Kishwar Naheed's selected poems with a particular focus on the notions of identity and resistance in panoptic patriarchal spaces. To reinforce rigid patriarchal gender binaries, Zia's military regime has promoted the stereotype of a good and a bad woman, and Naheed's selected feminist poems seem to question the state-promoted misogynist concept of a good woman. In this research, I intend to argue that cherishing the concept of a bad woman appears to be a powerful strategic move in Naheed's poetry, as it allows her to dismantle the commonly cherished

stereotypes of Pakistani women. Her poetry explores a different dimension of ‘otherness’ and can be interpreted as a counter-discourse that records unheard feminine voices. Thus, her poetry can be called a bad woman's poetry' because it gloriously expands the definition of a bad woman and gives a counter-discourse that records all the unheard feminine voices. Women are the 'others' of any society, but bad women are ‘others among others, thus they are doubly excluded from the power structures and often being punished by the dominant patriarchal laws for transgressing the conventional limits. This research pursues two important questions: 1) How do Naheed’s bad women as doubly marginalized others renegotiate their identities and mobility within patriarchal urban spaces? 2) How is re-articulating the notion of a bad woman, promoting an alternative female agency in Urdu feminist poetry?

During Zia-ul-Haq's military regime, on one hand, the Pakistani nation witnessed the emergence of the regressive orthodox version of Islam while on the other experienced the state's sponsored misogynist policies (Hadood Ordinance) towards Pakistani women. Cilano (2013) points out this phenomenon in her book ‘*Idea, Nation and State*’ that Zia’s policy of Islamization has changed the socio-political landscape of Pakistan by fixating on the role of religion in Pakistan’s “national self-conception” (p.104). As Qasim and Yaqoob (2022) argue General Zia has promoted the concept of "militant Islam" and changed the entire nation into “a group of fanatics” (p.72). By introducing Hadood Ordinances as a set of few legal codes that legitimized inhuman punishment for theft, rape, adultery, and fornication, the General had officially declared Pakistani women as second-class citizens within the nation-state.

The Hadood Ordinance proposed by Zia took away the limited constitutional and human rights that women in Pakistan had recently gained. Situating Naheed's selected feminist poems within the socio-political context of the Zia regime, I intend to argue that her poems are not based on subjective experiences but have become the strongest testimony against the state's misogynist policies towards Pakistani women. Even Naheed refuses to accept a demarcation "between the personal and the collective as mutually exclusive categories of experience” (p.xii).By endorsing Naheed’s feminist stance, Farrukhi (2001) states in the introduction of *The Distance of a Shout* that her poetry does not remain an expression of an individual experience but “assumes collective voice” (p.xii). Anatharam(2012) stresses the point that Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz investigate the idea of a new woman who can transcend socio-political boundaries (p.214). Thus, through their poetic vision, they re-conceptualize the concept of nation and nationalism.

Kishwar's women are considered bad because they dare to leave their secure domestic spaces and enter an unknown world to explore their true selves. These women are bad because they cherish their liberties and are also fully aware of the political disadvantages of being a woman in Pakistan. They are living within a hierarchical world where the

image of a bad woman gives them more liberty to show disrespect to the established norms of dominant behavior. Imam (1994) in her article 'Women as Objects and Women Subjects within Fundamental Discourse' highlights the status of women in Pakistani society, as she says that the image of woman is;

> Integral to popular parlance. Stripped of economic autonomy, housebound or hell-bound, she emerges as the eternal supplicant. A grudging salvation is offered to her through unremitting, unthinking obedience and self-denial. The woman who fails to conform to this schema has her …deficiencies and the outer darkness to deal with (p.120).

Patriarchy often manifests itself through the help of language, religion, and traditions. Imam (1994) points out the same fact that patriarchal and fundamentalist religious discourse regarding women draw heavily upon those stereotypical images, in its articulation of extreme misogyny which is rooted in a violent bid to control women's sexuality to keep secure the basic structure on which …the patriarchal symbolic order is found (p.121).

Theoretical Framework & Review of Literature

Postcolonial Feminism and the Question of Representation

Postcolonial Feminist Theory has rejected simplifications and sweeping generalizations of third-world women. As a theoretical approach, feminism has given birth to new versions of itself which endorse different theoretical perspectives that all share a common feminist background. Third World Feminism has rejected homogenization and oversimplification, it has refused to embrace the holistic and encompassing definition of feminism. Collins (2000) in her book *Black Feminist Thought* traces a strong link between black women and third world women. She argues that imperialism and its racial, sexist, and class biases have created a system of "global gendered apartheid" (p.232). This parasitic global economic system is thriving on the labour of both black and third-world women. The fourth phase of feminism has cherished the difference between women and refuses to see the difference in oppositional terms. Many Black writers define racism and sexism as distortions that are erected around human differences (Lorde et al. 2009). Differences should not be dehumanized and should be used to create bridges, not barriers. Third-world feminists protest against the norm of reducing all women to one generalized group.

The most cited essay in postcolonial studies can Subaltern Speak?' criticizes the tradition of false behalfism and stresses the point of responsible representation. According to her, a subaltern is a peripheral figure and a member of a marginalized group whose voice is absent in history and is always represented through certain stereotypes by a member of an elitist group (Spivak, 1988). By quoting Roy, Yonus and Qasim (2015) explain that subalterns are those unfortunate masses "who have been deliberately silenced most of the time" and they are also "preferably unheard" by those who have power (p.945). Qasim

(2012) opines that in history "certain, people, concepts and ideas have been defined as other, and these others pose "a threat to the social norms of a civilized country" (*Quest for Subjectivity,* p.85). Mohanty (2010) in her essay 'Under the Western Eye: Feminist Scholarship and Western Discoursers' discusses the idea of negative representation of coloured women by Western feminists. She says that third-world women hold the opposite views and do not consider third-world women as a marginalized group based on "shared dependencies" (p.49-70). In this research paper, Spivak's question of representation (Vetretung and Darstelung) is employed to investigate the poetics of identity within gendered urban spaces. I will draw on Ahmed's (2000) concept of embodiment to analyze identity formation as an embodied experience that emerges out of an encounter between different bodies upon which different social and political forces play. By highlighting the postcolonial feminist critique of forms of representation that restrict both female voices and visibilities, I seek to explore the ways through which embodied ethics of others can be explored. By exploring feminist sensibility in Naheed's poems, I will seek to analyze bodily encounters as a way of defining and writing the other differently.

According to postcolonial feminist theory, practices of representation often erase differences. Ahmed (2000) also emphasizes this point that instead of concealing or overcoming epistemic differences, there is a dire need to acknowledge them. Therefore, both Spivak (1988) and Ahmed (2000) acknowledge the power differences between women and emphasize the difference and proximity between the one who writes and the one who is represented.

According to Spivak et al.(1990), representation can function in a double form: as a vetretung, meaning " stepping into someone's place" (p.108), which is also known as political representation and as Darstellung, means placing there, presenting through "proxy and portrait" (p.108), and both representations cannot be separated. The real danger lies in collapsing these two, therefore, the key to remember is, "that in the act of representing politically, you represent yourself and your constituency in the portrait sense, as well" (Spivak et al., 1990, p.108). Thus, the complicity between "speaking for" and "portraying" must be kept in mind (Spivak et al., 1990, p.108). Spivak et al. (1990) also address the problem of representation. Spivak et al. (1990) recommend "persistent critique" to guard against "constructing the other simply as an object of knowledge, leaving out the real Others because of the ones who are getting access into public places due to these waves of benevolence and so on" (p.63). Shohat (1995) also points out that we must constantly question representation, as there is a need to critically evaluate every film. As we must learn to pay attention towards this thing that who is analyzed and by whom (p.173).

Silva(2003) argues in her article that Urdu feminist poets like Fahmida Riaz and Kishwar Naheed mostly grapple with " the politics of the 1980s" in their poetry (p.29). They draw our attention to the state's policies towards women and their poems discuss the ways the state controls women's lives. They can be viewed as narratives of protest and anger that criticize the Hadood Ordinance that disastrously affected the lives of women of all social classes in Pakistan. Thus, their poems are "a part of a multi-pronged attack against the socio-religious and political hegemony of the state" (Silva, 2003, p.29).

Imam (1994) discusses that women poets usually explore different social and political issues in their poetry,

> Their poetry collects images of patient suffering, social injustices, the indifference of men towards the pain of childbearing or sudden death ... exhausting depression of being the storehouse emotional and psychological strength that is always used to reaffirm the confidence of men"(p.177).

According to Imam (1994), Urdu women poets through their personal experiences give an alternative representation that sabotages romantic myths surrounding the representation of women in patriarchal Pakistani society (p.177). Kishwar Naheed's poetry creates a more liberating space for women. She does not restrict herself to personal issues and also explores the experience of oppression from both personal and political angles. As Silva (2003) argues, Riaz and Naheed write about the female body, menstruation, childbirth, and veiling (p.29).

Feminist poetry of that era documents " totalizing control" upon the female body, and how it is exploited in both private and public spheres" (Silva, 2003, p.28). Anatharam (2012) writes that Fahmida and Kishwar, have used their poetry to explore the intimate issues of Pakistani women (p.209). Their poetry addresses the emotions of all social classes and "articulate an explicitly feminist politics in Pakistan" (Anatharam, 2012, p.209). Both poets articulate in their poetry critiques of the state regulation of women's bodies and sexualities under Zia's application of the Hadood Ordinance beginning in 1979, when such "bold-faced resistance to the state was deemed illegal, and carried the punishment of imprisonment and death by hanging" (Anatharam, 2012, p.211). Thus, Martial law saw the birth of an "anti-state feminist movement" (Anatharam, p.212). Military regimes justified themselves through a doctrine of necessity. Zia's retrogressive policies mostly target women, "because women were the easiest and most visible means of providing these Muslim credentials without changing the daily lives of men" (Shaheed and Mumtaz, 1990, p.14). Pakistani Urdu Feminist poetry has also emerged as a unique medium that helps to trace both the political and social limitations imposed upon women's bodies during the Zia regime. It has engaged itself with different social issues, like rape, dowry, and the misrepresentation of women in the media.

Naheed's poems criticize the misogynist policies of Zia's regime and raise their voice against the law of evidence, as Farrukhi quotes the words that reflect her experience of living under the Zia regime in the introduction of *The Distance of a Shout,*

> life has given me pain and sorrow on two different levels, one personal and the other collective, on both the fronts I had to face drawn swords and matters were beyond my control. It was a situation of extremes (2001, p.xi).

She also criticizes the way during the Zia regime, a woman's evidence was considered only half as worthy as that of a Muslim man. Most of her poems reflect that nightmarish social situation, like *Charge Sheet 1990, Who Am I,* and *We Sinful Women*. Naheed also in her book *A Bad Woman's Tale* records her aggression at being reduced to nothing. Her personal experiences also give a glimpse into the lives of other Pakistani women whose lives have been controlled by family laws being implemented by the Zia Regime. According to Pandit (2003), both Ghazal and Nazam are masculine in nature, therefore, Naheed chooses "Azad Nazam" (p.109), as a medium of expression.

The Question of Representation and the Poetics of Embracing Otherness

Being a third-world woman and a third-world writer, Naheed's poetry is rooted in her personal experiences and positively expands the boundary of indigenous feminism. Her poetry is born out of her personal experiences and reveals moments of inner truths. Her only asset is her knowledge and experiences, which are the result of her bitter encounter with the realities of life. She seems to cherish those moments of wisdom which are open to her new pathways of knowledge. She re-defines the conventional definition of femininity and she believes that personal is political. Her poems cast light upon the previously ignored realm of Pakistani feminine experiences. Thus, her poems can be called unique in that they record the unheard, unknown, and eclipsed dimensions of women's lives which are mostly undervalued in mainstream Pakistani Literature. Keeping in mind Spivak's question of representation, she cannot be called a false behalfist.

Being a feminist poet, Naheed destabilizes and dismantles those commonly acclaimed centers that are worshiped by both male and female poets in Pakistani Urdu Literature. In the history of Urdu Literature, women are usually presented as either good or bad. These are the two common dichotomies through which the politics of presentation is being played out by the ones in power. Naheed points out the limitations of patriarchal paradigms that are used to define a good woman. Her strong female characters fall into the category of bad women; they are strong fearless women who refuse to be pinned down to traditional and the narrow definition of femininity which is commonly used to define a good woman. As Naheed (2009) points out Pakistani women are socially conditioned to act and behave like good women and she is the one who "all her life… cooks the man's choice of food. She wears clothes which please the man…she gets dolled up, meets people__ all within the moorings of her husband's will and permission" (A *Bad woman's Story,* p.175). In a

patriarchal society, women are forced to embrace a stereotypical concept of love and are conditioned to ignore its "political dimensions" (Qasim &Asmat, 2012, p.189).In this whole process, she eventually loses everything and one day even becomes a stranger to herself. According to Qasim et al. (2012), internalizing oppression destroys one's ability to "respond, to feel and to claim a positive identity" (*Racial Stereotypes*, p.219). Thus, authentic existence often surfaces from embracing one's identity (Qasim, *Slave Women*, 2013). Referring to the feminist consciousness within Naheed's poetry, Riaz (2012) postulates that her poetry deals with the theme of "physical violence, oppression under the guise of protecting women and female circumcision" (*Friday Times*).

Her poetry is a living symbol of resistance and reminds us of an outspoken voice that gives a new expression to feminine experiences and offers a new definition of womanhood. According to Qasim et al. (2014), for Naheed, writing becomes "a symbol of self-expression" in a suffocating patriarchal set-up(*Bad Mother*, p.88). Naheed exposes the reality of the commonly cherished cultural myths that play a key role in women's subjugation. Naheed unmasks the reality of the stereotypical narratives regarding women and the dominant socio-political motives behind their promotion. Her poems expose the fragile nature of that so-called code of conduct and those unverifiable truths that the Zia regime promoted to label women as bad.

In Naheed's poetry, embracing the concept of a bad woman is a political strategy to combat the prevailing patriarchal politics. As Spivak et al.(1990) argue, if representation must be taken as something material, carrying the power to create alternative normalities, capable of affecting our daily life and social relations, then its re-conceptualization in itself carries the potential for transformational change. Thus, Naheed consciously calls into question the stereotypical representation of Pakistani women in the state-promoted narratives. Her poetry explores a different dimension of their 'otherness' and can be best interpreted as a counter-discourse that records unheard feminine voices. For instance, in one of her poems "A Distance of Two Mile" the poetic voice is fully aware of the painful consequence of breaking the silence, as she confesses:

The destination of speech is the gallow (Naheed, 2001, p.8).

She also knows that remaining silent is far more painful than breaking a voice. Because

Unsaid letter of the alphabet
But an affliction of the mind
Became a wall around the heart
Became an arduous path (Naheed, 2001, p.9)

Her poem documents the cruelties inflicted upon women's bodies during the Zia regime and documents the dire consequence of the Hadood Ordinance upon women's lives. Her poem "Resistance" depicts a nightmarish world. It depicts a nightmarish world where survival in itself becomes a painful journey

Ahmed (2000) argues that embodied encounters play a significant role in one's identity formation, as "it is only through meeting with another that the identity of a given person comes to be inhabited as living" (p.8). Naheed's women's embodied encounters with society make them realize their inferior status within it. According to Ahmed (2000), these embodied encounters often "re-open the prior histories of encounters that violate and fix others in the regime of differences" (p.8). From this angle, the notion of embodiment can also be theorized in terms of inter-embodiment, as the lived experience of embodiment is always the social experience of dwellings with other bodies (Ahmed, 2000, p.47). These embodied encounters play a significant role in the identity formation of third-world women. Ahmed's 'economies of effect' is useful in understanding the role of affect in facilitating bodily encounters. It is important to remember that difference is not found in or on the bodies they are established as the relation between bodies.
Ahmed's theoretical work (2000) on embodiment deals with the materiality of colonial discourse and its gendered subjects. By exploring her ethics of difference (otherness) and strangeness, I aim to analyze how both the absence and presence of alien in the stranger forces us to recognize the very limits of representations. I draw on Ahmed's notion of otherness to analyze the processes through which the bodies marked by race and gender come to matter. Her theory on strange encounters creates an epistemological space that is useful in investigating both the politics and ethics of representation. According to her, the creation of a stranger or the other is more of an effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion that simultaneously threaten and form the boundaries of bodies. Naheed's self-proclaimed bad women were treated as aliens or strangers according to the established norms of the Zia regime. This oppression, mainly promoted by the state, forced them to share a very uncomfortable relationship with their bodies. Naheed observes how the Zia regime's regressive policies had made women ashamed of their bodies, as she postulates: "Even the most educated women in Pakistan feel hesitant to express their sexual desires, as Naheed (2009) says, "a majority of women have expressed that they may or may not enjoy sex, but they have no courage to express this(p.175). Both these concepts are amalgamated in my poetry" (Naheed, 2009, p.175). Naheed's women develop a highly complex and ambivalent attitude towards their bodies. In Naheed's poetry, the female body becomes a living symbol of patriarchal oppression. In her poem, 'Anti Clockwise the male gaze is viewed as "a yardstick of objectification as well as intimidation " (Pandit, 2003, p.113).

Besides the body, skin also serves as an important boundary line of difference, as it enables us to think about how the materialization of the body involves an affective opening out of bodies to other bodies_ as skin registers how certain bodies are treated or touched by the others (Ahmed, 2000, p.45). The same idea is discussed in one of Naheed's poems titled: 'The End of Exploitation', where the hand narrates the story of violence, how the skin covered with veins documents an alternative story,

These hands
Now covered with veins that tell of autumn's approach,
Once throbbed with warmth,
…….
Their every knuckles been crushed
By work,
And every nail
Mirrors ugliness" (Naheed, 2001, p.2).

In 'Recompense' she considers her "desolate foreheads", "autumn smitten eyes" and her "consumed desires" as her treasures (Naheed, 2001, p.10).

In "Agreement" she celebrates a sense of resistance that her body shows. Here, the body successfully hides its vulnerability and never allows the frame of hatred to burn her eyes or lips (Naheed, 2001, p.16).

In "Listen to Me" narrates the experience of surviving in a female body and captures the restraints imposed upon its movement. In such a society, the only mode of resistance is "becoming a cobweb on the cave of your dreams" (Naheed, 2001, p.18). Thus, Naheed, like Ahmed (2000) seems to emphasize upon the role of the body as a site of difference, as it is where representations and their effects came to be lived.

Representation of Gendered Female Body as a Poetic Metaphor

Helen Cixous argues, "woman's writing is accompanied by "a world of searching, the elaboration of knowledge, based on a systematic experimentation with the bodily functions'" (2003, qtd in. Pandit p.113). Thus, this explicit discussion of female sexuality is an act of defiance on Naheed's part, her bold expression of female sexuality often comes in conflict with "the logocentric division of visibility set out by historical and cultural dialogues." (Pandit, 2003, p.113). Due to prevailing patriarchal norms in Urdu Literature, female sexuality has become a taboo subject, as Naheed is criticized for depicting explicit sexual images. Mathewset al. (1985) rightly point out in his book *Urdu Literature*,

> Kishwar Naheed has been charged with various offenses, including obscenity on thirty different occasions. Her verse deals with several women's issues, including rape, abortion, the role of religion, and the effect of family laws that were introduced by the military regime in Pakistan (p.180).

In this milieu, the female body emerges as a strong poetic symbol in Naheed's poetry. The images of the female body implicitly comment upon the twisting cultural,

domestic, and traditional discourses that confine women within national boundaries. Thus, sexual politics is a recurring theme in her poetry. Similarly, the very act of articulating a voice against the commodification of the female body is a political act carrying liberating potential.

Kishwar consciously uses the metaphor of body and it further enables her to question the stereotypical representation of the female body in Urdu Literature. Saeed (2012) in her book, *Working with Sharks*, describes Pakistani society as the one where the concept of "privacy is only linked to the body" (p.36). She also argues that the female body and sex are always mentioned through "indirect phrases". Therefore,

> Talk of body and sex remained a very private matter, even among those who are intimate…(and) This attitude also makes it difficult for women, in particular, to complain if their intimate space has been violated(Saeed, 2012,p.36).

The exploration of this uncomfortable zone becomes the central preoccupation of her poetry. In 'Speaking Lips' the narrative voice sheds light on the painful relationship between the female body and the soul, and how the soul is disgraced in the prison of the body. Thus, the body stands for prison in which she buries her intimate and painful emotions. This metaphor is also used to allude to the gendered relationship shared by men and women in Pakistan. These poetic metaphors help her to translate her poetic vision. Naheed addresses the ongoing conflict between traditional and individual values. As Anatharam (2012) argues with reference to Naheed and Fahmida Riaz's poetry, that their individual poetic voices reflect their distinct political visions… (their) solidarity with women's empowerment in both the household and workplace was manifest through the kinds of theme that they were exploring in their writings" (p.214).

She uses the female body as a recurring symbol in her poetry, as Silva (2003) postulates:

> The body is simultaneously a surface on which social laws, morality, values, and lived experiences are inscribed. (p.34)

According to Silva (2003), her poetry gives new meaning to the female body, as "previously it is perceived to be a site of sexual passion, of conceit and incarceration, and often a symbol of sexual passion." (p. 34)

In 'Farewell to Uterus' she explores very bold themes. Her feminist consciousness transcends the "tradition and ritual of social reality" (qtd .in Zafar, 1991, p.177).
In her poem, 'A Farewell to Uterus' she documents the experience of the surgical removal of the uterus, where the flood of emotions and duality converges into,

Rivers of myself
....that commands myself
And knows
All arguments about rights
Are useless,
The rail explodes inside
To decorate a fragmented exterior
Both cannot hear
And the one
Cannot protest for being unclaimed baggage
On the undirected train (qtd. in Zafar, 1991, p.177).

Naheed also criticizes the commodification of the female body in her poem "I am not That Woman". She has a fiercely individualistic voice that fearlessly records the lost stories of torture and abuse. She criticizes the artificial and commercialized image of women that is commonly cherished in advertisements. Through her poetry, she sabotages all the gendered definitions of femininity. In her poem "I am Not That Woman" she claims that she is not interested in selling socks and shoes. She wants to be remembered as the one whose "voice cannot be smothered by stones" (Farrukhi, 2001, p.34).

Claiming Liberation through Documenting Embodied Encounters

Naheed's poetry played a key role in developing feminist consciousness in Urdu poetry. She is recognized as a unique feminist voice among her contemporaries and her poetry is deeply rooted in feminine experiences. As Naheed (2009) confesses, "My only companion has been a woman, a woman's consciousness and voice" (*A Bad Woman's Poetry*, p.111) Unlike Parveen Shakir, a conventional romantic poet, her poetry is unconventional, unsentimental, and anti-romantic. Her poems break away from the conventional mode of poetry which presents Pakistani women just as 'an angel in the house'. Her poems deal with the female quest for a meaningful identity in a hostile world. Her women are striving for self-actualization. Her female characters are terribly lonely and caught up in painful situations. They are self-consciously aware of their limitation as women in a suffocating patriarchal world and strive to free themselves from the shackles of the dominant culture. Faryal Gohar a well-known Pakistani writer defines writing the finest medium of self-expression for Pakistani women. She defines it

> as, the only avenue of expression for many women. You cannot sing and dance without being noticed, but you can write quietly (qtd. in Khan, 1994, p. 53-54).

For Naheed, poetry is not merely an intellectual pursuit of knowledge, but a medium of self-expression. She defines it as a liberating experience, the best thing that can ever happen to anyone. In her poetry, Naheed challenges this assumption that women are incapable of expressing their creative potential, as Farrukhi (2001) narrates the story of a girl whose brother had broken her hands so that she could not read and write and Naheed went to see that girl as she writes, “I went to see that girl. Her hand was in plaster. I told her brother that she will read and write. The girl’s fractured arm holds the pen in Kishwar Naheed’s poetry” (p.xiv). As Farrukhi (2001) points out her poetry "became the language of an inner freedom, a means to define her own space” (p.xiv). As Naheed narrates in her poem 'Recompense ', "I write poetry/ I haven't committed suicide" (Farrukhi, 2002, p.11). She asserts herself by saying "I, well, I speak the unspeakable/ because I haven't learned to say/ what must be said” (Farrukhi, 2001, p.11). Like Fahmida Riaz, she is also an iconoclast “a poet who was a woman and not just another woman poet” (Farrukhi, 2001, p. viii).

Conclusions

In Naheed’s poetry, the reader also observes the way it records the evolution of the phenomena of resistance against the surges of controlled state violence against women. As Hanifa Pandit (2003) pinpoints the elements of transgression in her poetry, and how it occurs at both semantic and syntactical levels (p.107). It highlights some uncomfortable truths, particularly how sub-continental history is obsessed with masculine anxieties and just interested in documenting phallocentric versions of truths inscribed on female bodies. Naheed(2003) in her autobiography *A Bad Woman’s Story* documents the fact that her poetry does not only mirror her inner conflicts and emotional anxieties but gives a generous insight into the psychic tension of the marginalized group, whose history has been lost under the complex layers of social amnesia regulated by the totalitarian state. As Pandit (2003) argues, “Her poetry is replete with symbols of regeneration after repression and breaking the patriarchal interpretations of religion and morality.” (pg.108) Naheed has consciously chosen nazam as a medium of choice because “the ghazal carries it is a clear break from the sensual erotic figure” (Pandit, 2003, p.108).

Her poetry captures the long prevailing silences existing in the dominant literature. Thus, breaking the silence and raising a voice becomes a mode of resistance. For Naheed, self-expression becomes both an act of transgression and a survival strategy. Poetry offers new possibilities for subverting oppression in Naheed's context, as she describes herself as a woman who is not allowed to write poetry, but she refuses to stop doing it because, for her, it signifies inner freedom (Farrukhi. 2001, p.viii).

Pakistani feminist literary establishment always implies this thing that women writers/poets often get recognition based on their gender(Ahmed1990). They are treated as celebrities, not based on their talent but because of the reason that they are women poets, and Naheed's poetry challenges this assumption. Through her poetic expression, she introduces new forms of poetic metaphors that facilitate both linguistic and cultural empowerment. She uses various linguistic strategies to register the emotional and intellectual preoccupation of women. Her poetry is self-reflexive in that it reflects an acute awareness of what it meant to write in a language shaped by patriarchal experiences and the linguistic tensions in her poetry eventually give birth to a liberating feminine discourse.

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