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Poetic Negotiations: Salad Bowl Feminism in Selected Poetry of Fehmida Riaz, Pat Mora and Joan Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu

Abstract

The research attempts to evaluate the depiction of women's oppression in specific postcolonial contexts at the hands of the interlocked power pattern formed by manifold factors like patriarchy, class conflict, religion, ethnicity and imperialism in the selected poetry of the renowned Pakistani poetess Fehmida Riaz, the Latino American Poetess Pat Mora, and the Japanese poetess Sanbonmatsu. It applies the theory of Postcolonial Feminism to bring to the fore the oppression of postcolonial women at the intersection of gender, class, race, religion and culture, hence, offering a critique of Western Feminist discourse and its slogan of sisterhood, which tends to erase heterogeneity in women's situations across the globe. The theory of Third World Feminism as well as the portrayals in these poetic compositions from a variety of postcolonial social formations, highlight the fact that postcolonial women are not a monolithic and archetypal suffering category as presented in Western discourses; instead, their resistant agency and subversive subjectivity also stands at the center of their creative writings.

Key Words: Postcolonial Feminism, Hegemonic Feminist Discourse, Intersectionality, Patriarchy, Race, Class, Nationality

Introduction

Third World Feminism/Postcolonial Feminism constitutes a branch of the Postcolonial field of studies and as such offers, a critique of the hegemonic Western feminist discourse, which tends to typecast, homogenize and marginalize all third world women as a singular monolithic category hardly able to differ or exercise their agency. Third World feminism argues that all women across the globe have different histories and have been subject to altogether dissimilar socio-economic, cultural and political contexts. Western feminist narratives are oblivious of how various groups of postcolonial women have undergone the diverse experiences of imperialism, racism, slavery and migration, and therefore fail to theorize their specific dilemmas. Third World feminists stress upon the celebration of difference in women's situations and the need to target a representation of women in their specific contextual locales bringing to the fore their oppression at the intersection of gender, class, race, religion, culture and other multiple factors. The aim is not only to highlight the repression of women but also to characterize how these women challenge, negotiate and subvert the dominant norms by proffering and employing resistant modes. The critical discourse of Third World Feminism, therefore, seeks to recover, through various strategies, the voices of the subaltern women, particularly in the neocolonial era of globalization and thus formulate approaches as to how to liberate women from these particular interlinked patterns of subjugation. The present study analyzes the selected poetry of the renowned Pakistani poetess Fehmida Riaz, the Latino American Poetess Pat Mora, and the Japanese poetess Sanbonmatsu to highlight the concept of 'intersectionality which signifies the complex, irreducible and varied experiences ensuing from multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – traversing in historically specific contexts.

Research Questions

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

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- What are the basic tenets of the critique Third World Feminism puts forward against Western feminist discourse?
- How do different modes of patriarchy, sexism, classism and imperialism intertwine to work in collaboration towards the oppression of women?
- How do postcolonial female writers respond to these oppressive intersections and portray either an internalization of the dominant modes or delineate resistance and negotiations?
- What are the subtle variations occurring in the treatment of the same subjects by postcolonial female poetesses when their geographical, cultural and political locations change in relation to the empire?

Statement of the Problem

The present study aims at analyzing how postcolonial women literature strives to depict women's oppression in specific contexts at the hands of the interlocked power pattern formed by manifold factors like patriarchy, class conflict, religion, ethnicity and imperialism. It also aims to explore the expression of female subjectivity and the employment of feminist resistant modes to confront these dominant discourses. Through scrutiny of major themes in the selected poems of Fehmida Riaz, Pat Mora and Joan Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, the research tries to assess how leading issues in these works undergo subtle variations as the national, ethnic, class and religious backdrop changes.

Significance of the Study

The study seeks to investigate how women's poetry is an aesthetic embodiment of the socio-political struggle they make against discrimination on the basis of gender, race, class, culture and socio-political position. It aims to identify the third world feminist tenets of specificity and intersectionality represented by the third world female writers, which place each woman in her special social context and experience. This discussion and portrayal are not only crucial in bringing to light the voice and agency of the multiple layers of female existence in neo-colonized societies but is also decisive in the origination of strategies about how to cut short the perpetuation of oppression through awareness. The research, by its study of third world feminism and its application to varied contexts, attempts to relate the theory to literary works produced from the same quarters. It tries to help in discovering and building commonalities for a collective feminist resistance based on a recognition of differences which is the greatest imperative in moving on.

Research Methodology

In this qualitative research, a close textual analysis of a long poem (encompassing a whole book) by Fehmida Riaz, a poem by Pat Mora, and two poems by Joan Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu will be carried out in order to figure out the nature of oppression and resistance in their work. The framework of analysis will be evolved on the basis of the theory of Third World/Postcolonial feminism and its tenets of highlighting the differences in women's situation/problems as well as its emphasis on an examination of how sexism, classism, imperialism etc. intersect to hinder women's liberty and advancement within a certain locale. It will analyze major themes in the poems and also the shift and variation in them as the socio-political scenario transforms. Through a study of the female struggle depicted in these poems, issues of subjugation and consequent feminist tactics for the assertion of the agency will be uncovered and explicated.

Theoretical Background to the Study

Second Wave feminism has been the most pregnant and vibrant period in the history of the feminist struggle taking the movement into uncharted directions and diverse debates. The most striking development in this wave has been the emergence of Third World Feminism or Postcolonial Feminism. Soon after the end of the colonial period in most of Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean islands and South-East Asia, feminists from these former colonies, whether residing in the West or in the

developing world, felt the need to express their disillusionment with the mainstream Western feminist discourse and to speak for themselves from the perspective of their specific socio-historical background. A few renowned names among these third world feminists are Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, Uma Narayan, Sara Suleri, Alice Walker, Cheryl Johnson-Odim, Rey Chow, Trinh T. Minha, Bell Hooks and Audre Lorde.

According to these third world feminists, Western feminism pertains to and caters to the demands of Western white middle-class women. Western feminist narratives focus upon women as sex/gender to the exclusion of all other interwoven forms of oppression. The western feminist treatment of the woman problem tends to talk in universal, totalizing terms homogenizing all women as beings and bodies suppressed merely by patriarchy. They do not take into consideration the fact that, apart from gender, there are other multiple factors such as class, nation, race/ethnicity, religion, culture and politics, which cause and add to women's subjugation.

Audre Lorde, in her book *Sister Outsider*, criticizes western feminism and its slogan of sisterhood as Eurocentric, imperialistic, historic and reductionist as it tends to erase differences in women's situations across the globe (1984, p.87-196). There can be no global sisterhood if Western feminists choose to ignore the unequal power relations between the First World and the Third World and the consequential impact of this division on women's condition. Mohanty, in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, reiterates the same disapproval of the standardizing rhetoric of sisterhood in terms like: "Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in concrete historical and political practice and analysis" (1999, p. 58). Both these critics argue that western feminist discourse takes white middle-class women as the rule and referent and assumes, on the basis of her particular circumstances, that women in Asia or Africa indiscriminately go through the same experiences as she does. This neglect entails a multipronged Eurocentric agenda overlooking women's suffering caused by political, economic and military exploitation of the underdeveloped world at the hands of the developed. Western women, in this scenario, act more like accomplices in crime with the white men than being sisters to the black African or brown Asian women. These feminists stipulate that Western feminist discourse should be heedful of heterogeneity in the state of women positioned in a variety of backgrounds; otherwise, the sisterhood agenda would commit gross neglect of the compound ills afflicting women and would amount to cultural and epistemic hegemony based upon political assumptions rather than grounded historical realities.

In the introductory chapter to the *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991, p.1-47), Mohanty asserts that third world women's resistance against sexism inextricably intersects with their struggle against classicism, racism, imperial capitalist exploitation of the postcolonial nation-state economy as well as the hegemonic and patriarchal inequities engendered by the state itself. She advocates that all cases of women oppression have to be placed in their specific historic-geographic, religious, cultural and politico-economic context and analyzed in the light of these interweaving patterns of power affecting their distinctly defined situation. Without such a formulation, it is not viable to discern how the various modes of cooperation among patriarchy, class and imperialism function, and it would be near impossible to bring any change in the status quo of repression. Even the comparatively minor factors of age like young or old and marital status can cause huge differences in the situation of a woman concerning power relations with these multiple oppressors. Mohanty calls it a far-fetched assumption on the part of Western feminists to conclude that all women share the same cultural or political interests only because of their similar bodies, whereas in reality, women are more likely to be deeply divided by boundaries like class, ethnicity, and nationality.

In her article "Under Western Eyes" (1991, p.51-80) in the same book, Mohanty discusses that it has become a political imperative for third world feminist writers to unearth and take to pieces Western feminist discourses founded on hypotheses of a sort of universalism in women's condition. Third World feminist discourse and struggle has to merge personal concerns with the public predicaments because of its being situated within a specific geographical and socio-political context. She emphasizes that problems multiply and differ for postcolonial women, e.g. the stance regarding rights of reproduction and abortion in various groups among third world women varies. It does not at all coincide with the white women's demand based on gender equality since the population factor has an altogether different significance for third world women, particularly in the globalized

neocolonial era where the West maneuvers to reduce them in number as Israel does through genital mutilation in the case of the Palestinians living at the Gaza Strip.

[Alice Walker \(1994\)](#), p. 402-410) takes Virginia Woolf to task for her white middle class Eurocentric feminist conception excluding all other kinds and categories of women. She terms Woolf's declaration of a woman's soul needs being money and a room of her own as a hegemonic marginalization and erasure of the black African woman's experience from western feminist discourse. To Woolf's white middle class quintessential female figure Mary Seton, Alice juxtaposes Phillis Wheatley and highlights her entirely dissimilar and diverse situation as a "black, kidnapped, enslaved" (1994, p. 405) woman who had borne the lash, had been torn apart from her homeland, had to yield to a foreign religion and who had been emaciated due to malnutrition and backbreaking labor on the road to raising a large family. Lorde insists upon the same disparity between a white colonizer woman's position and that of a black colonized woman to be taken into account: "Some problems we share as women, some we do not. You fear your children will grow up to join the patriarchy and testify against you; we fear our children will be dragged from a car and shot down in the street, and you will turn your backs upon the reasons they are dying" (p.119). Walker stresses that, in this situation, issues of racism, imperialism and displacement are as central to women's oppression as gender and class and cannot be simply overruled if feminism is to stay inclusive and attentive to heterogeneity.

Audre Lorde reviews and censures the Western practice of rendering a hierarchical pattern to any sort of difference from the average western custom (1984, p.87-196). Average white western woman's experience and claims are taken as normative while the rest of feminine states are considered as deviant. She establishes that some literary forms are discriminated against as non-serious on the basis of the class of those who produce them. The class factor decides who writes or produces what artistically and how it is to be received. Poetry has been the literary product of the poor laboring colored women not having the room, paper or time to write prose. The outright repudiation of difference or the formulation of unequal relations on the basis of difference /class is the greatest impediment to any broad-scale united feminist endeavor.

[Hussain \(2000\)](#), p.143-46), in his critical review, states that Uma Narayan finds fault with Western feminist discourse in her seminal work *Dis/locating Cultures/Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* concerning two aspects: firstly that all third world women are considered as a single uniform category, and secondly they are presented as an example of archetypal sufferer discounting their resistant agency, and subversive subjectivity asserted at various levels. According to Hussain, she locates her argument in the Indian background and argues that Western representations of Indian traditions and Indian women are colonialist in nature and stand poles apart from the reality which is actually there on the ground. The target of her appraisal is Mary Daly's work *Gyn /Ecology*, which Narayan affirms to be full of static pictures of the Indian 'Sati' as if she was someone living outside history and socio-historic milieu. The representation then turns out to be ethnocentrically universal and hegemonically labels Indian tradition to be irredeemably patriarchal and Indian woman everywhere as a single subject victimized by homogeneous circumstances. The need is to investigate the multifaceted flux of each Sati case in its own exact setting. [Hussain \(2000\)](#), p.143-46) appraises that in the third chapter of the book, she highlights the politically imperial nature of the representation of dowry murder cases in India which are blown out of proportion and stereotyped in Western feminist discourse as well as media. According to her, Third world feminists are required to elicit female voices from a range of quarters focusing on their distinctive individual and communal condition in order to be able to resist the over-generalizing nature of feminist narratives produced in the West. These analyses form below, taking into account all dimensions of subaltern female experience like the working of local patriarchy, regional and national class differences, and the impact of neocolonial economic/cultural measures is a pragmatic and comprehensive approach that will lead to the social and political exposure and resolution of these problems.

Spivak, in her much-cited work "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1998, p.297-307), discusses the triply oppressed and colonized status of the postcolonial subaltern female as both colonialist and national/local patriarchal discourses silence her voice. She takes up the incidents of widow evolution in colonized India and explicates how the colonizer on a civilizing mission bans the evolution act while local patriarchy endorses it as a courageous act. In each case, imperialist and patriarchal

discourses impose a generalized hegemonic order and interpretation on the act, and the specific circumstance and subjective voice of the subaltern woman are either suppressed or simply not heard.

Spivak also theorizes miscellaneous strategies for the representation and recovery of postcolonial subaltern female voices mired in heterogeneous situations of subjugation yet attempting at challenging the dominant modes. In her book *In Other Worlds*, she accentuates that the third world feminist is to constantly challenge hegemonic discourses and representations and thus bring them to be liable to the heterogeneity of the subaltern female (1998, p.134-201). She criticizes Kristeva for her representation of the Chinese women, which, according to Spivak, is done less in order to do good to the Chinese women and more to manipulate their condition to serve her Western feminist agenda. Spivak suggests self-reflexivity and the identification of subjective position by the intellectual who is to have an encounter with the subaltern. Such self-consciousness concerning one's interests and prejudices is crucial to avoiding a superior or imperialist stance. Avoiding the representation of the subaltern or renouncing out rightly the hegemonic institutional practices is an ill-solution to the prevalent problems.

Dienderen appraises that Trinh T.Minh-ha is also critical of the politics of Western discourse and stresses upon questioning the authority of any text as an all-encompassing truth (2010, p.90-97). She expounds that T.Minh-ha's writings and documentary films are aesthetic subversions of the Western representations, and T.Minh-ha's book *The Moon Waxes Red* is particularly about challenging the Western control of information. In her opinion T.Minh-ha, in her book *Woman, Native, Other*, argues identity to be a complex encrusted composition made of multiple subjectivities which cannot be represented as something extremely generalized and unvarying; the way the Western texts depict postcolonial colored women. Trinh's work emphasizes the depiction of the inappropriate other, i.e. those marginalized natives and women who put into effect their agency and resist as well as negotiate governing discourses. According to [Dienderen \(2010, p.94\)](#), T.Minh-ha vocalizes that third world feminism should stir up the diversity of women's experience at the crossroads of racism, classism and patriarchy instead of homogenizing their condition and dictating one-dimensionally about their situation.

Bell Hooks calls for an understanding of the complexities and contradictions in the historical placement of each woman instead of essentializing her condition in her book *Ain't I a Woman?* She argues that race and sex are indivisible issues in the life of a lower-class black American. Citing Mary Church Terrell's article, she deliberates over this striking woman difference by highlighting how the white mothers and wives closed their eyes to the plight of poor black mothers when their sons were lynched, killed or sold during the colonial period. During the first wave of feminism, black women joined in but were kept apart in the feminist organization along racial lines. They had to stay in the last rows of the movement because only white women could lead in white America (1982, p.161). According to her, it was the racism of the white American women that forced black women to bring to light their own particular situation torn with strife. Even after attaining suffrage, white women did not use their voting right to plead the case of brown or black women. Black women were actually left on their own by all: the black patriarchs, the white sisters and the white male imperialists. Hooks terms this chain and juncture of suppression for a black woman as "existing white racist, imperialist patriarchal social order (1982, p.171). Brah and Pheonix sum up Hooks' message of intersectionality, which she regards as an urgent and fundamental argument of feminism in the following words:

The concept of 'intersectionality as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands. (2004, p.76) Sara Suleri offers the example of a postcolonial lower class Pakistani girl during the 1980s to contextualize this heterogeneous woman experience (1995, p.273-280). The laws functioning under the Hudood Ordinance enforced during the process of Islamization under Zia's military regime stated that the availability of male evidence was compulsory if any alleged criminal was to be punished. The teenage girl was penalized for adultery when there was no male evidence for her rape. Suleri cites it as an instance of patriarchy, hegemonic dictator state and imperialism all joining hands to oppress women in this background. Loomba elaborates that postcolonial appraisal deconstructs globalization as the latest manifestation of the imperialist designs, which have been appearing in various

semblances since the colonial venture began around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She argues that colonialism persists in the form of current political and economic inequalities between the First World and Third world nations (1998, 3-7). Third world /postcolonial feminists narrowly inspect how this state of affairs puts Third World women in particular disadvantages. Feminist economic theorist Jaggar explicates that the feminization of labor is a phenomenon specifically relevant to third world women as the neocolonial neoliberal multinational production prefers a massive number of cheap colored female laborers. It is the women in the developing states who are directly affected when global economic networks like IMF, WTO and World Bank coerce national economies to reduce state expenditure on welfare programs in the fields of health, education and supply of basic commodities (201,p.298-314).

Tong elucidates (2009,p. 226-228) how postcolonial feminist Maria Mies theorizes that women in the third world are laborers both low-priced and employed for longer working hours than men. She also deliberates over Audre Lorde's discussion of the economic state of black women in America who, on the basis of their ethnic marginalization, are paid low salaries and drawn into prostitution. Williams also affirms that this repressive service for postcolonial women unites with a lack of support from the state in either the market or the domestic orb and further deteriorates her economic status (1996, p.11). Many postcolonial feminists are also critical and sceptical of raising the fork of gender and race to a heroic level and calling the situated local voice to be all good. Sara Suleri challenges Mohanty's claim of authenticity that only a third world woman has got the authority to speak for the women and the culture (1996, p. 273-80). The overarching mantra of reclaiming the subjectivity of local experience disregarding the theoretical milieu altogether is idealistic, egotistical and anecdotal. Such sort of identity politics dodges the more significant broader issues where feminist solidarity and synchronization are crucial. Rosemarie Tong discusses that many feminists like Susan Moller Okin, Mies and Shiva are also critical of taking the difference in women's situation too far and forgetting to build concord and cohesion on the basis of it (2009, p. 226-230). Third world feminists should give voice not only to specific woman problems but should also underscore commonalities and affinities so that the feminist movement advances in all respects.

Analysis of Selected Poems

"Will You do not See the Full Moon?" by Fehmida Riaz

Fehmida Riaz is a renowned Pakistani writer with great poetry, fiction and translation work to her credit. The keynote in her poetic work is the feminist stance challenging the patriarchal norms in poems such as "Aqleema" (2013, p.157-158) and "Aik Larki Se" (2013, p. 231-233). Female subjectivity finds an uninhibited voice in her as she treats the multi-dimensions of womanhood, be it a lover, wife, mother of citizen engaged in socio-political activism. She employs strapping terms and imagery to convey the sensual experience and speaks bluntly of subjects considered traditionally taboo for female authors.

The second spotlight of her work is the Progressive/Marxist strain exhibited through a focus on class conflicts. She has been stridently eloquent in the artistic communication of the plagues afflicting the lower class majority and the social, economic and political apathy as well as corruption of the few ruling elite politicians. She invokes a mass revolt against the hegemonic state and its repressive apparatuses, predominantly the deployment of armed forces by the military dictators in the civil arena to domesticate the public. This led to her being tried in military courts for rebellion during the regime of General Ayub Khan and particularly during the dictatorship of General Zia ul Haq who convicted her in almost ten cases. She had to spend many years in exile in neighboring India. She talks about this facet of her poetry in an interview with *Dawn News* on September 14, 2013:

That our poetry has been largely political is the result of the peculiar circumstances prevailing in Pakistan. This country has been pushed from one crisis to another. Things have been so bad that a writer could not ignore them. It even made poets and writers of beautiful fantasies like Muneer Niazi and Intizar Hussain write about political matters.

The third major element in her poetic work is the sense of a colonial past and the current neocolonial exploitation of the third world nation-states at the hands of the First World states and economies. The agenda of globalization in terms of the circulation of consumer products and the

establishment of Global monetary institutions like the World Bank and IMF serving the interest of the Western/American neo-imperialism from chief concerns in her poetry. However, her scathing critique takes to task the ruling elite who form a nexus with the global networks, not to ameliorate a lot of the common but to fill their own coffers with black money. The identity of the female self merges here with the collective identities of geography, religion, culture and above all, the postcolonial nation-state. The Third World feminist battle is fought at the crossroads of citizenship, class and nation.

The poem is, broadly speaking, divided into five chapters, i.e. five long prose poems and a last song of the same kind (p.311-388). It narrates the experience the poetess undergoes when her arrest warrant is decreed, and she is summoned to the military court in order to be tried in a case of rebellion against the state. She exercised her agency as a woman and wrote explicitly of her physical and psychological sentiments, which were officially declared as an insufferable obscenity by the patriarchal government of the time. The political content was proclaimed as inciting mutiny against the state and therefore charged as an act of rebellion. She laughs out loud at the accusation yet expresses her paranoia and nervous stress at being eternally chased and interrogated by the police and secret agents.

She describes how, inside the court, she is made to sit along with beggar women incriminated for begging illegally as if one can beg legally. Those to be sentenced to death surround her with harassed faces. She tells how her poetry which she gave birth to and refined the weaving rhythms and patterns of out of the sore turmoil of existence, was trashed and mocked as "naked poetry" by the officials within the court. She expresses that being a woman and a writer is a costly venture in a male-dominated society where the fact of a being a woman precedes all sorts of creative/professional pursuits. No matter what a woman says and how she says it, the chauvinistic males regard it as an attempt to stir them up sexually. The officials throw hints that if she accepts the invitation to join their spree of luxury and lust, then something can be done about her trial.

The poetess highlights and reiterates the theme of rebellion in her person and literary work. In childhood, her feminist rebellion against conventional patriarchal practices was embraced and encouraged by her mother, while now, in her adult life, the role of the mother is taken over by history itself. History commands her to write in the name of the creatures of God, the common lot who are the actual owners of the earth yet are the most miserable and exploited. The personal and the political merge and the saga of self join the collective one. The essentially feminine experience of motherhood is crucial at this juncture as she wants to be a witness to the suffering of the downtrodden in her nation and is eager to predict victory for their struggle. Mothers have been the creators of life and custodians of the young ones since eternity. They have been guarding the offsprings of humanity against winds, water and fire since the age of the caves. Every new day, they arise with a renewed vigor for this protection. She claims that as a mother, she cannot leave her children to vultures of the state presiding over the treasury and usurping their basic rights. If it comes to that, she is willing to explore the possibilities of resistance and turn the tears of a mother into the blood of a martyr for the goal. She has to raise her voice in opposition to inequities and is waiting for the masses to rise and step into this battle. It is also a quintessential feature of the mother figure that she does not give up hope. A birth-giving woman has no link whatsoever with despair, and that's why she is all optimistic and encouragement for her countrymen as well.

The callousness and treachery of the elite class is another theme dealt with at length in this poem. The politicians, the industrialists, the feudal lords and the army generals are the diseased few robbing and cheating the masses of what is their rightful property. When the poetess seeks help regarding her trial from those living in the posh sectors of Islamabad nearby the magnificent American embassy, she meets supreme disillusionment. They try to exploit her sexually or, ironically, elaborate upon the metaphysical forces lurking behind the inevitability of such cases. Walking back on avenues of the capital in the scorching heat, she vows that she will write an epic in defiance that will spur a revolution overthrowing the brutal edifice of the ruling.

The poetess asserts that the ruling elite is a partner in crime with the larger global imperial forces in the exploitation of the postcolonial third world masses. It has been so in the colonized past and the neocolonial capitalist conditions of the globalized era. The Western-American imperial alliance utilizes the postcolonial government officials as puppets to execute their master plans. Fehmida uses the simile of the snake for the Pakistani ruling elite. According to her, they are raised like snakes by

the imperial masters to hiss over the multitude and terrorize them in the imperial interest. The elite makes quick money through scams in government schemes, real estate, global projects and keeps on building plazas with black money in cities of slums.

Fehmida portrays that the British Empire colonized the subcontinent and the East India Company made laws for the mostly illiterate and ill-faring masses. The imperial masters, though having gone now, still support military governments on the land so that guns and bullets keep the poor rowdy masses subdued. The military dictator is worse than a beggar as he shamelessly sells the welfare of the nation to the imperial forces through shady deals. The ruling elite (military or civilian), with the aid of bureaucracy and legal system, have sold the future of the coming generations for a few pennies. With their buying capacity, they create lust for imported goodies in the market while mothers of lower classes ransack trash bins to feed their hungry children. The hegemonic military state keeps such surveillance on the poetess for her sexually explicit and politically mutinous poetry that she has become a nervous wreck. Doctors prescribe medicines for illusions and hallucinations. She is grieved at the sight of floggings, executions, humiliation, and betrayal meted out to the masses by the dictator. The front battalion of the army, i.e. the professionals and skilled, are leaving for far-off shores to make both ends meet.

The poetess, as an educated middle-class Pakistani woman, wants to stir the nation to struggle for real freedom. She considers herself as a singer to the nation's grand battles and tongue for oppressed hearts of her people. She incites them to religious zeal and calls them to wage war against the monsters of the empire and hegemonic state in order to fill the future with laughter for the future generations. Fehmida's life is a testimony to the oppression that a woman of her specified state goes through and also how she asserted her subjectivity by writing and raising her voice against all power discourses though her work was banned and she herself was exiled.

“Elena” and “Learning English: Chorus in Many Voices” by Pat Mora

Pat Mora, a Latino American Poetess, situates her Poems “Elena” and “Learning English: Chorus in Many Voices” in the linguistic predicament of a Latino mother living in America. In the poem “Elena”, she describes that in Mexico, she used to understand the jokes, songs and stories shared by her children since they were in Spanish. Now, after migration to America, her children attend American High Schools and converse with one another in English. She is unable to share or join in due to her inability to speak or understand English Language. She feels outcast, dumb and alone. She buys a book in order to learn the language, and her husband frowns at her. The husband's lack of understanding towards her need to share and communicate, which is more a necessity than desire in her situation, is highly chauvinistic and patriarchal. He seems reluctant to grant her the liberty to be adept in dealing with a foreign environment, for that would be getting equivalent to his status. That's why the daughter remarks: “Mama, he doesn't want you to be smarter than he is” (2007, p.308). So in this particular situation of a middle-class mother who is a member of the Latin American Diaspora in the USA, patriarchy and linguistic/cultural imperialism are both at work to oppress her. She does take her situation pragmatically and does not complain of English being imposed upon her imperially or about the fact that women facing the same difficulty are not provided with some sort of alternative in the land of liberty and the most advanced civilization on earth. She bravely takes it as her responsibility to adapt and adjust to the requirements of “our new dream country” since it is they who choose to migrate. She has to keep learning the language if she has to help her children in their time of need. She exercises her subjectivity/agency in favor of appropriating the English language in order to strengthen her Latino family and thus bring the master's house down with the master's tools.

In “Learning English: Chorus in Many Voices” (2007, p.309-311), the same mother character feels childlike and has a sense of some meaning being left unsaid while trying to speak simple English. Her children think that through learning and speaking English, she attempts at being smart and informed (as all the white native English speakers are supposed to be). She was a professional in Mexico, but here her linguistic inability makes her jobless. She disregards when people laugh at her going to school, or her husband scoffs at her pronunciation. It is racially prejudiced on the part of the native speakers to laugh at her incorrect faltering English even though she is trying her best. She resists by

adhering to learning and thinks only of being useful to the family in the face of both patriarchal ridicule and racist norms.

“Two Warriors” by Joan Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu

Sanbonmatsu, a Japanese poetess, talks about living as a minority in the United States of America (2007, p.221-225). Racism, not patriarchy, makes the central issue of her personal as well as familial existence. Her son Jamie was called ‘chink’ by his white American school fellows on the basis of his race, and to this day, he remembers both the word and the attitude. She describes the quandary that whenever her children were abused or beaten at school, they “taught our warriors not to fight” (222). It has never been easy for the Japanese parents rearing their children in America to teach their children how to sidetrack racism. Their family was given notes like “why don’t you go back to the grass shacks where you came from” by the white neighbors and countless other ways they were discriminated against (223). The children would apply for roles in plays and would have to go through the agony of rejection because of the whites-only rules. Racial prejudice bites Japanese –American minority like nothing else. The son has grown up now and knows with equanimity that racial discrimination is to be a part of their daily life, and the family, as well as the community, has to stay united in the face of this xenophobic threat. Teaching courage against injustice is the essential ingredient the Japanese American parent’s transfer to their children with enormous pain and effort. The poetess tries to manage the racist discourse through courage, tolerance, composure and unity with the family for higher ends.

Conclusion

The third world feminist theoretical emphasis on analyzing each woman/group of women’s situation in her specific socio-economic, political, ethnic and religious background in order to unearth the respective domineering nexus of Patriarchy, Classism and Imperialism had been the framework applied to the poetic work of three female poetesses from different backgrounds. The model of difference and intersectionality brought out the heterogeneity in women’s situation as well as highlighted the factors (out of the nexus) which oppress them most. In the case of Fehmida Riaz, a Pakistani middle-class poetess, though patriarchy looms large yet it is American Imperialism and its manipulation of the postcolonial ruling elite that robbed her and her nation of the basic rights of life. In the case of diasporic Pat Mora, of Latino origin residing in America, linguistic imperialism is the most repressive element instead of patriarchy, class or economic hegemony. The Japanese Joan Loveridge- Sanbonmatsu is living in America delineates the daily struggle of her Japanese family to cope with a white racist attitude. In her case, class and patriarchy stayed in the background while ethnicity and race became the most tyrannical factors. The research, through an analysis of the major issues in each work, highlights how different issues change their position from centre to the margin as contexts vary. The critical inquiry also enlightens how postcolonial English poetry and any mode of research applied to it has the potential to reveal different situations affecting women’s lives and thus could lead to better strategies for solutions.

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