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## Analyzing Feminine Subjectivity in Male Jingoistic Society: A Critical Study of Naheed's *A Bad Woman's Story*

### Abstract

*The present study tends to explore the feminine subjectivity as a heart-throbbing phenomenon for men that keeps on prevailing in a patriarchal society. This is an exploration into the life of Pakistan's renowned writer, poet and human activist, Kishwar Naheed. Her autobiographical writing Buri Aurat ki Katha (A Bad Woman's Story) probes into the life of a female character who is being restrained by society due to her achievements and fame but gender discrimination prevailing in society compelled her to consider herself a stigma. Naheed is taken as a representative character to project the reality of a patriarchal society that denies feminine subjectivity in society. It covers gynophobia over men's mind towards women powerful and independent existence in society. This study contextualizes within the border of feminism theory that covers threat to female identity by throwing light to the perspective taken by Kristeva's views on feminism, majorly focusing on male jingoistic society. The present inquiry spotlights the ways in which women suffer through threatened, identity crisis, abuse, and oppression that further leads woman's journey of life restrained under social commands.*

**Key Words:** Feminism, Gynophobia, Feminine Subjectivity, Patriarchal/Jingoistic Society, Woman Identity, Oppression

### Introduction

Feminism compacts with gender issues that are prevailing in our society throughout the world regardless of skin tone, culture, region and creed (Hayat, M., Maqbool, T., & Akhter, S. 2015). This study deals with female subjectivity in a male-dominated society where the character of Naheed is taken as exemplary to project a reality in a realistic way. Despite being a popular writer, critic, essay writer, human activist, prose writer and a civil servant, her early life remained under the hegemonic supremacy of man (Akhter, M. F. 2012). This role of man in her life can be seen in different forms that include her father and later her husband, who played the same role as a man does in a patriarchal society. Her journey of life remains restrained due to the presence of these men in her life who always pushed her spirits downwards. Despite going through harsh experiences in her life, she kept on moving and made her a literary icon in a male-dominated society. Social hierarchies play a vital role in destining her journey of life (Folger & Cropanzano, 2011).

Woman's status in Pakistan always remains in a state of struggle (Bhattacharya, 2014). They are striving to get recognition in society, and this goal most of the times remains unsettled. This approach of men in society towards women shows their gynophobia that they don't want to see a woman growing and flourishing in a society (Rizwan, 2017). Dependency is the only approach that a man always loves for her woman, and the same case has happened with Naheed. Every external element tried to be a reason for turmoil for her.

Naheed was born in a Sayed Family in India in 1940, and later, she moved to Pakistan in 1949. It made it possible for her family to shift to Pakistan right after two years of post-partition. She played different roles in her life, being a writer, human activist and poet, as well as a role of daughter, mother, wife and daughter in law. As a writer, she started her career in late 1960 and published many collections of poetry and essays. She has translated Simon di Beauvior "The Second Sex" that later associated a stigma of bad with her, and this was the very label in her life that she made her a bad

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woman because she has narrated all the sexual incidents in Urdu that reader found more vulgar after its translation from English to the Urdu language. Her most of the works are a critique of the relationship between women and patriarchal society ([Akhter, M. F. 2012](#)).

A *Bad Woman's Story* (2009) (*Buri Aurat ki Katha*) is an autobiography of Kishwar Naheed that deals with her personal life experiences that are influenced by masculine society. This document is a representation of feminist echoes and identity ([Yaqin, A. 2013](#)). She has spent a specific span of her life in an exploration of the second wave of feminism in her discourse from where she has developed the habit of learning, reading, absorbing knowledge and learnt translation process. Originally, the title of her book is *Buri Aurat ki Katha* which was written in 1995 but later, this was translated by Durdana Soomro, who kept the sequence of Urdu terminology and rhythm in the written manuscript. This autobiography is a personal account of Naheed's personality that follows the real experiences of her life, and it gives a steady stream of realistic events of her life. She has penned down about herself that she is the one who has struggled for life a lot in order to be someone whom we call independent and pragmatic lady ([Naheed, 2009](#)). Her feminist version of poetry gives a clear message to a patriarchal society that women are neither weak nor sympathetic creature. They have their own identity. So, this diligent work written on her life by herself is a true journey of the quest for identity and oppression that a woman faces in her life by society and men. Her other work is just a replica of the present work that is "We Sinful Women", which encounters her thought and approach towards women subjectivity ([Naheed, K., & Ahmed, R. 2018](#)).

Naheed's memoir *A Bad Woman's Story* is a feministic version that fulfills the criteria of feministic theory's potential that is purely relatable with Kristeva's views on feminism that society has made male a jingoistic icon who are against women freedom and individuality that further link with their identity ([Kristeva, J. 2008](#)). There are many realistic incidents in the memoir that portrays suppressed woman and her escape from the hell that is made by society with the assimilation of masculine dominance that remains persistent. Woman subjectivity has been explored in the form of Naheed's character, who broke all stereotypes and kept moving in her life. A genuine author is a person who never remains aloof because his/her primary concern is to awake his readers through his/her writing. Resembling Naheed, other writers are there, including Sadaat Hassan Manto, Tehmina Durrani, Fouzia Saeed are those writers who take an ethnographic look at prostitution, female gender problems, feminism and human rights.

## Literature Review

Historical trajectory and literary studies draw this narrative that a lot of work has been done in the past to make women prominent and evident ([Ehsaan et al., 2015](#)). The noticeable works are Sheila Row Botha's *Hidden from History* (1973), Ellen Moer's *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (1976), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977).

Naheed is a true spirit to many other women who are struggling for their lives. On the off chance that there is a Pakistani women's activist who represents a genuine danger to men through her work, her way of life, her way and through the interminable verbal test, it is Kishwar Naheed. She does this with an expert devotion which either charms or anger; there are no half-measures. At 47, bereft, mother of two developed children, totally autonomous monetarily, she is above numerous designs that different ladies in Pakistan would need to notice, those which remain she spurns with relish. ([Akhter, M. F. 2012](#)).

Naheed's documented depiction of self has exemplified the concept of resistance. This is a journey from acceptance to resistance that leads from violation, oppression and othering to breaking taboo's fabricated for women by society ([Shoaib, 2009](#)). Women hold an equal place in this world full of humans. Media and gender representation has gained voice right after this movement of resistance against violence ([Khan, 2017](#)). Women always face hardships, social pressure, and stigma ([Saeed & Wasti, 2011](#)).

Naheed has rejected male chauvinistic existence despite taking pressure of strong objections from people. Through her poetry and autobiography, she has empowered her existence by raising her voice against male dominance and his synthetic approach towards women. In her works, women are

crossing boundaries created by men and society that gives a clear message to patriarchal society to refrain from oppressing women (Hashmi, 2014).

If it is said that women writer cannot come into a field where they cannot compete, man, then it's the perception that to whom A Bad Woman's story has repudiated completely. Women are equally pragmatic as men are. Her style in her autobiography represents her individuality which is an asset for her. A bad woman's story is a clear document that holds a lot of power and courage in it. This specific style of herself distinguishes her from other writers (Murad, R. 2019).

A Bad Woman's Story is a land of concrete experiences of a woman. This narrative is not tied to any calendar, nor is it the charting of a journey up the ladder of life. This story, too, is not that of an individual but of our whole society where important issues are overlooked but small meannesses remembered (Naheed, 2009).

Women writer should go beyond fantasy and explore a new world of possibilities that can be acquired after going through concrete realities of life. The trend of writing autobiographies like Tehmina Durrani has written a new perspective of finding and acquiring women identity back that she has lost somewhere in patriarchal society after bearing a lot of pressure and oppression from society. It rejoices women existence and identity in a society (Zaidi & Qureshi, 2012).

Feminism, in a nutshell, advocates equal rights for women that are prejudiced by society (Weed, 2012). It actually an approach against the factors that restrict women existence, individuality and identity. In Cudden's dictionary of literary terms, feminism is being described as an attempt that deals with women experiences that are dominated by masculine hegemony (Cudden, 1998).

Simon de Beauvoir (1949) penned down that women is made-up as a creature that is considered as "The Other" by men. Women are completely different from men from every perspective. Men consider themselves pragmatic and women as submissive, and similarly, a man is born to represent virtue while the female is born to represent bad. In short, all stigmas of being bad and evil are associated with women existence (Habib, B., Alvi, S. D., & Baseer, A. 2013).

The existence of feminine must not be portrayed by the dictation of a male-dominated society (Mishra, 2006). This is the major perspective on which Naheed has to raise her voice, and her courageous steps and speeches in favour of females are highly commendable. According to her female is not an object or toy in the hands of a man. There is a meaningful existence of a female that is her "self", which should not be denied by society. Her individuality and identity must be appreciated and celebrated equally like a man. But in a patriarchal society, it is difficult for a woman to have a voice to speak for herself rather than a man's approach to defining her must be discouraged that never happens in a male-centred society (Shree, 2002).

This present research tends to explore the novel idea in the previously established critique about exploration into the feminine subjectivity and role of male jingoistic society in Naheed's A Bad Woman's Story.

## Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature and is a textual analysis of Naheed's autobiography A Bad Woman's Story (2009). It probes into real-life events and experiences of the author. This study is based on Krestiva's feminist views on a woman's life who shares her life with others in a male jingoistic society. Kresteva is a linguist, but her views as a psychoanalyst and feminist have a great significance. She narrates that "I am quite dedicated to the feminist movement" (Roudiez, 1981). Feminism points out women subjectivity in a patriarchal society and discloses the male approach towards her subjectivity (Zalewski, 2019). Male hegemonic supremacy is a root cause of oppression and identity crisis that a woman faces in her life. Gender relationships are not natural at all. Feminist are made, not born (Hooks, 2000). Naheed is taken as an exemplary character to strengthen the present concept. This study reveals that how a male-dominated society hijacks the identity and individuality of a woman. Male jingoistic society imposes itself on women (Kresteva, 1986). Several textual references have been quoted to examine women status in society and the oppression that she faces in the quest of being an independent individual to gain her identity in a male jingoistic society. Women's continuous struggle for their identity is a denial of a patriarchal society that negate men dominance over women. Women are becoming vocal about their rights (Kresteva, 1983). "We refuse to be what

you want us to be, we are what we are, and that's the way it's going to be" (Hooks, 2000). Women subjectivity remains the primary concern of present research by examining this in the light of feminist perspective to elucidate reality.

## Discussion and Analysis

The discussion and analysis of the text *A Bad Women Story* focuses on feminine subjectivity in a male jingoistic society. Naheed is a protagonist of the memoir *A Bad Woman's Story* that unravels the reality of being an independent woman. It cost a lot to be a lady of your own choice because, in a male jingoistic society, a woman cannot be pragmatic enough to make choices of her life on her own. A woman can't give voice to her thoughts and choices because society won't let her do that. This thing hits the subjectivity of a woman in so many other ways where she either becomes a sympathetic character or strong character when society snatches her independence and identity from her.

Kishwar Naheed,  
None speaks here.  
No one wants to know  
The words of speaking glances.  
The fish slipping from the hand,  
Turns fear into hate.  
(*We Sinful Women*, 1991)

These lines have been taken from Naheed's poem "We Sinful Women" to strengthen the idea that reflects a woman's subjectivity is at stake due to stigmas that are associated with her, e.g. a bad, evil or sinful. These are the parameters that patriarchal society has constructed to be hurdle into the way of women. There is a continuous tussle between a woman and society.

A woman always strives for what she wants, but the social setup has hegemonic control over her psychological life, which is under the pressure of patriarchal society. A society always gives direction to her thoughts. A woman doesn't have mental liberty yet. A woman can have everything in this world if she has mental freedom. Mental freedom means a limitless boundary where a person can think freely (Seigfried, 2014). She can do what she wants. There will be no objection to her thoughts and doings. If it happens then, a person will be a confident personality. If it doesn't happen, then she will become a complex personality with many psychological disorders. Her self must rule her mind; otherwise, everything will collapse. These circumstances directly hit the subjectivity of a female that is negated by patriarchal society. "Desire, dream, enthusiasm, and faults die turn by turn. What dies, in the end, is her/his mind" (Gaardar, 1994).

Social hierarchies lemmatize an individual's freedom (Boone, 2017). A person is dependent on society on what a society allow them to do and what is prohibited. And the most important thing is what hierarchy allows them to do, and they have to do it at any cost. If they don't follow these hierarchies, then they will be questioned and will be left alone in the social setup. The same case is with Naheed. She has to oblige social hierarchies; otherwise, she will be marginalized in society because society won't allow her to do so (Cummins, 2005).

An autobiography is a personal document that covers real-life event and experiences. This is the land of concrete practices. Naheed notes in her biography *A Bad Woman's Story* (2009) about her life and hidden perspectives. She shares her experiences of being an author, poet, feminist, wife and mother. Each role that she played in her life took a lot of effort. There is a chronological order in her personal narrative that deals with past events by giving examples regarding female violation and suppression from the time period of the sub-continent. She has criticized Zia Ul Haq's doctrine of political authority and ethical advice.

Naheed's subjectivity can be seen in her poetry, where she has used the vocabulary of resistance. Her works clearly indicate that women are not a substance or puppet in the hands of patriarchal society. They should raise their voice for their equal rights and identity. She denies patriarchal society's approach towards women. Gender discrimination is a major hallmark that she criticized in her poems. She is in favor of celebrating womanhood. Despite being an eastern woman, her voice for subaltern is highly remarkable. She says she could never understand society's ambivalence towards her subjectivity (Naheed, 2009).

A Bad Woman's Story unravels Naheed's fictional and real personality. She is actually living two lives at the same time. One is real, and the other is in her mind; that is called the psychological world of someone. Every human has two dominant worlds in his/her life that are real/personal and professional/practical life. Dealings and actions towards both lives are different from each other. In real or personal life, a person does what he wants to do, and in practical or professional life, a person does what he needs to do where he is not concerned with his most eternal desires. He hides his lacking, desires and flaws in his practical life to be more pragmatic than others. He fights a war to create a balance between his personal and practical life. The same thing is with Naheed; she has to create a balance between her both worlds. In front of her external world, where she was coined as a powerful and pragmatic lady, it differs from the lady that she is in her personal or domestic life. Most of her choices were being restrained by patriarchal society because she was not allowed to stay out of home for a couple of hours, and being a sayyed, she was not allowed to sit in those ceremony's where men were also allowed. She missed a lot of Mushaira's where she was supposed to deliver her poetic work, but her husband didn't allow her and liked her work. Despite being a famous poet and writer, she has gone through so many restrictions by her in-laws, and the same case was with her before marriage. She couldn't get enough space for the satisfaction of her inner self while her husband's betrayal was another disaster in her life. She was dealing with all miseries despite being a strong woman like a man. The patriarchal sketch that she has drawn in her memoir is a portrayal of a double standard society that has two different approaches for men and women. Kristeva's feminist views identify here that society restrains women existence and powerful identity by dominating man over them.

[Naheed \(2009\)](#) narrates that God has created women and men equally. This is the society that creates differentiation between them. Men are considered superior, while women are inferior. Who brought this demarcation between them? This is the society that is full of sharks that creates binaries between them. "Women is inferior. Otherwise, she would have been God, she would have been a prophet, and she would have been equal to man. This is why women can't be head of state. This is the judgement that patriarchal society has associated with woman existence. Patriarchal society has made a male a God to woman; that is the verdict that it has been portrayed for many years, and the practice is common in our society. While God's majesty does not allow anyone to do this to a weak one. Male jingoistic society has misunderstood the explanation linked with a man's status and woman's place in his life. Man denies equality of woman ([Naheed, 2009](#)).

Naheed talks about her desire to be a woman of her own choice that she couldn't be because her family had restrictions on females to not get enough liberty to portray themselves in front of the external world. Her desire of getting educated was also manipulated by the male family members that; how a female can get enough education? She faced much criticism, but she continued her journey. She wanted to sing and join the radio as a host, but her mother put restriction on this that how a Sayyed girl's voice can echo outside? This is what a female faces throughout her life. Her liberation and existence both become a turmoil for her while a male is allowed to do what he wants to do. This is discrimination and otherness that she faced. ([Naheed, 2009](#)).

Now it comes to a stage when Naheed started attending Mushaira's and participating as a poetess. Soon she earned a name among popular poets of Pakistan. Despite the fame, her family was still reluctant about her choices. Most of the times, she was not allowed to go in mushaira without assigning any valid reason. She says that she was always objected to by the male members of her family that have you ever seen your elder sisters muttering as you do. All the time, only one sentence was there to restrict her, "In your house, nobody has gone over the limits like this. Stop this drama" ([Naheed, 2009](#)). When she became a popular poetess, her picture was published in a national newspaper, and when she came to know about this, she bribed her sisters and brothers to not tell this to mother and father because they will scold me and won't allow me to go outside and attend Mushairas any more. She begged them to burn the newspaper and save her ([Naheed, 2009](#)). This was the mental state from which she was going through. A male is suffering from gynophobia, and his honor does not allow him to absorb and appreciate a woman's achievements. His phobia of seeing a woman as more powerful and independent has surrounded his mental world, where he is unable to admit this reality. The same thing happened with Naheed that her husband was not ready to admit her

credibility like other males of her family. This jealousy has motivated patriarchal society to oppress women and create discrimination on a gender basis.

Despite facing such harsh incidents, she kept moving and struggling for herself. She started earning, and this was her first achievement towards her feminine subjectivity, but at the same time, her husband was unemployed, and he was living on the expenses of her wife. She was feeding her kids from her earning and was bearing all the expense of her home. This became possible just because of her continuous struggle towards acceptance to resistance where she has been so reluctant about society's restrictions. She has done all in her life by staying under the limitations. Most of the time, she was charged with this crime that she has crossed limits that a Sayyed girl should not have. She says being a woman, she always has been the culprit to her family (Naheed, 2009).

She narrates that her younger son also mocked her for being a woman. He said, Mother, everyone is male in this house, including the dog. You are the only woman. How can you compete with us? (Naheed, 2009). This is actually a product of a male jingoistic society where every single newborn male child is learning this extremism and developing a sense of othering for women. For a man, all other creatures of this world are superior to a woman. This is what a patriarchal society propagates.

She has given an example of other female writers from the west, e.g. George Eliot, Jane Austin and Virginia Woolf, who are the pioneer's writers in literature has gained a lot of appreciation and fame throughout the world, but in third world countries, this thing is taken as a disgust to be a writer. If a man stops writing, the world mourns: what a mind! What went wrong? If a woman stops writing, then it heaves a sigh of relief (Naheed, 2009). This is the reality of a patriarchal society that has double standards towards gender.

This is truly a man who does not get punished for anything, while a female always gets punished. This is what society does (Naheed, 2009). It shows that a woman has no right to speak and share her mind because society does not allow a woman to be pragmatic and independent, but her perpetual struggle to fight for her identity deals with the feministic approach of fighting for equal rights, and her subjectivity remains a foremost important element in her life where she is the queen of her world. Naheed's strong character is a true example of feminine subjectivity in a male jingoistic society. If a woman does not stop struggling in her life for herself, definite is the thing that she gets desired destiny. The same can be seen in the life of Naheed that she did not pay any attention to patriarchal society and kept moving with courage that took her towards her achievement of being an independent woman. She has suffered violence, threatened, beaten, restricted, and dismay, but she did not stop. This is called feminine subjectivity in a male jingoistic society.

## Findings

The data analysis of A Bad Woman's Story indicates that a woman goes through a lot of disgust in her life that is a man gifted into the form of discrimination, hatred, oppression and identity crisis. A man wants a female to be under his commands that conscious of a woman does not allow her to do. Naheed's continuous struggle for independence and her identity unravel the reality that a woman can fight for her subjectivity in a male jingoistic society because she is the only one who has to advocate for her equal rights in a patriarchal society despite bearing criticism and violation. The journey from acceptance towards resistance must not be stopped. Feminist analysis of the text has revealed hidden realities of women life that remains under the hegemonic supremacy of men can't be denied, but women struggle for her betterment has no end if it is limitations as this reality is being projected into the form of Naheed's character.

## Conclusion

This article concludes that a woman goes through great turmoil in a male jingoistic society where only one thing that can give her a sigh of relief is her subjectivity. The sense of subjugation of a woman in a patriarchal society remains dominant. This study reveals that a woman can be pragmatic and independent in a male jingoistic society if she strongly fights with stereotypes and stigmas that are associated with her. Naheed is the finest example of this result of how strongly she stood against social hierarchies and patriarchal society to gain her identity and empowerment back despite bearing a lot of violence and victimization from male members of her family, including her husband too, she

kept moving in her life. She got recognition and fame as a woman writer once she confronted society strongly. Her perpetual desire of becoming independent and pragmatic remains settled at the end that refers to her subjective approach towards life. Finally, her own voice echoed and gave directions to her life. This is how her autobiography "A Bad Woman's Story" covers her journey of life from acceptance to resistance towards a male dominated society where commands and desires of men are the utmost responsibility of a woman.

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