

widows were however at the periphery of these definitions. And they were mortified and ostracized by the society. The characters of Gujri and Revathi are instances of violent patriarchal laws that hold woman guilty and blame them for not being able to elicit a marriage proposal or for untimely death of her husband. Gujri, a victim of child marriage for lower class works as a maid servant in Bachan Singh's house since his marriage. Since her childhood she was shunned out of the community because of her being a widow and bearer of bad omen. Though she herself suffers from rigid and orthodox social codes set by patriarchs, but the idea of true womanhood never leaves her and despite of her own degradation she perpetually inflicts patriarchal and cultural biases on Roop and Madani, instructing them to rigidly follow the rules apt for the girls of marriageable age. Roop's aunt Revathi is a pretty girl of good caste and suitable social standing. However, as her age advances, the clout of her family's wealth diminishes and she ends up being alone and shuffled around the homes of unwelcoming relatives. Baldwin though her work attempts to subvert the inscriptions pertaining to the status of women within the patriarchal structure by confronting gender as an internalized and naturalized 'condition'.

Through the character of Kusum (Roop's sister-in-law), the novel also illuminates the ways in which female body becomes symbolic of male honour and self-respect. Back in *Pari Darwaza* during the communal violence at time of partition Kusum is killed, her womb removed, and her body cut up in multiple acts of horrendous violation, with the dismembered fragments then reassembled. Clearly expressing the novel's title - *What the Body Remembers* - this dismembered, re-membered body compels a close reading in light of the novel's preceding exploration of gendered, embodied remembering. Jeevan's (Kusum's husband & Roop's brother) description of discovery of the mutilated body of Kusum during his rescue mission to *Pari Darwaza* to bring the family out to safety, breaks up the linear narration of the main story, and draws attention to women's suffering, "a woman's body lay beneath, each limb severed at the joint. This body was sliced into six parts, then arranged to look as if she were whole again" (510). A minute examination of Kusum's body uncovers the full extent of the barbarism of the Muslim gang that has removed her womb to symbolize their desire to eliminate all Sikhs, in present and future. Kusum's disemboweled body thus symbolizes the dominant community's power. In *Violence and the Sacred*, Rene Girard opines that "violence is a great 'leveler' of men for it transforms community members into matching image of violence." (Ernst: 1990, 101). However, Bachan Singh's testimony explains in detail the fate of Kusum, Revathi Bhua and Gujri, underpinned by the patriarchal understanding that "for good-good women, death should be preferable to dishonor": (456). Unburdening himself to Roop, Bachan Singh declares, "everyday I had been hearing that the seeds of that foreign religion were being planted in Sikh women's wombs. No, I said, I must do my duty" (520). Fulfilling his duty towards hid "quom" Bachan Singh beheaded Kusum. However, the text clarifies the fact that Kusum's execution to maintain female sexual purity and family honor

was just Bachan Singh's decision and Kusum's inability to protest stems from her inculcation with the norms of Sikh patriarchal society. Put back together, Kusum's severed head merges as one of the six dismembered parts, so that they appear as the evidence of one and the same act of violence. The novel describes this mutilated body as "a power consensus around the subject of violence against women that cuts across competing communal patriarchies" (357). Through this incident Baldwin highlights the fact that the real cause behind the subordination of women lies not in the scriptural laws, or in any flaws in women's nature, but ironically, in their innate filial and material instincts. Helen Cixous gives her views regarding such alienation and dislocation by stating, "Woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds" (Cixous, 343).

However, Jeevan unaware of Bachan Singh's version of events, pleads Roop not to disclose this to their father, as he wants him to remember *Pari Darwaza*, the way he left. But after hearing her father's account Roop realizes that she must not forget. "I must remember Kusum's body", Roop decides, and the narrative voice confirms: "Roop will remember Kusum body, re-member" (451). As Priya Kumar observe of this moment in the novel, "The incantatory effect of the repeated phrase, 'I must remember' highlights the crucial importance of a feminist mode of cultural recall in defamiliarizing and rendering uncanny our sanctioned group memories and national mythologies" (Kumar 2008, 120). The disrememberance towards Kusum's sacrifice sum up the fact that women are often pre-figured in the sinister scripts of patriarchal representation, symbolically and literally, as dead metaphor. The fate of the women in the narrative shows that patriarchy has moulded and transformed woman's body into a structure representing control and domination. Shauna Singh Baldwin's main concern is on the depiction of real lives, fears, tragedies, loves, hopes and heroisms of her heroines as individualized woman. Further, she accords agency, and above all, humanity to all her female characters by differentiating and naming each of them, including Satya and Roop, Revathi Bhua, Gujri, Madani, Toshi, Jorimon and Kusum. Giving each character focus and a voice, she individualizes them through their religious, caste, regional, linguistic, marital and family affiliations. *What the Body Remembers* foregrounds the multiple ways in which the female bodies not only served as sites for inscription for physical and psychological violence, but also as living archives that foster the memory of violence. On other side, the novel also suggests how patriarchal memories may be exposed through a feminist literary narration. Revealing how such memory enacts a kind of textual violence on women's injured bodies, the novel attempts to produce a mode of memory that remembers these embodied injuries differently. The concept of 'body memories', and the importance of learning from history, is at heart of Baldwin's novel. Her representation of the transfer of recollections between women from different generations underlines her interest in how the division of India is remembered and, in particular, how women's experiences are reimagined.

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MAMICA MIA, MOTHER BELOVED

- Albert Russo

Mamica mia, don't go away
i know this to be a vain prayer
i'm shouting in the desert
and my whole body shakes
with rage and denial
still my heart cries out:
if you go, the better of me
will go with you
and what will remain
hereunder will be torn
like a bleeding wound
that shall never close

ever since the world
was created,
that has been the rule
we all have to accept it
but inside i can never accept it
i don't want to, even if it is absurd,
does it mean that I shall feign
to be gone too, while my feet are
stuck to the ground and
my mind lingers
in the netherworld?

how can i detach myself
from my own being
without breaking up
in a thousand pieces?
my eyes will look inwards
while a whiff

of your perfume strokes me,
bringing back the clangs
of joy and laughter
but also memories
of pain and distress
my ears will also hear
the distant echo of
a piano sonata
played by you, Mamica,
- oh those fingers,
light as butterflies! -
when we were children,
so so very long ago,
when we lived
in Central Africa,
my cradle,
which is the cradle
of humanity and
which never leaves me,
wherever i have resided,
whether it was in America,
Italy, or France, and whether
I ply the oceans,
discovering new lands.
Mamica, you have the beauty
of the black continent,
the fragrance
of frangipani flowers
and the voice,
that cristalline voice
that sings Schubert's Ave Maria.



Autonomy, Rebellion and Religion in Tehmina Durrani's Narrative *My Feudal Lord*

- Arundhati Jaysingrao Pawar

Abstract: The present research paper investigates into the theme of autonomy, rebellion and religion in Tehmina Durrani's brainstorming autobiographical narrative *My Feudal Lord*. It is all about her search for autonomy, through her rebellion against the patriarchal society in Pakistan that abuses women under the guise of conformity to the conventional Islamic principle. What astounds the readers is her fearless narrative that bluntly comments on and exposes the atrocities made on women by victimizing them in all possible ways. Tehmina, being an educated woman and from a privileged class milieu dares to break the age-old silence that is expected of every woman in a patriarchal society of Pakistan. The boldness in her narrative has so far evoked miscellaneous responses from admiration and applauses to abomination and detest. The present paper focuses on the victimization of women at the hands of religion and society and their attempts to achieve autonomy through rebellion.

Keywords: Autonomy, Rebellion, Religion, Autobiographical Narrative, women

Women narratives in the eastern world have created their own niche in the feminist literary writings. In the third world countries like Pakistan, women are trying to protest against the gender biased perceptions of their conservative male-dominated society. An autobiographical narrative like *My Feudal Lord* (1994) written by Tehmina Durrani, a rebel Muslim woman, provides a role model of modern woman to the otherwise inhibitive Pakistani women who are the victims of the atrocities of their conservative society. The narrative sent ripples in Pakistan as Tehmina unhesitatingly voices her personal trauma as representative of large majority of vulnerable Pakistani women trapped in the complex web of Muslim society. The present paper traces the search for autonomy of Tehmina Durrani, through her rebellion against the patriarchal society that abuses women under the guise of conformity to the conventional Islamic principle. Tehmina Durrani hails from the elite class in Pakistan as a daughter of the Durrani, one of the most influential families in Pakistan and wife of Gulam Mustafa Khar, the Governor of Punjab and an important political figure after the then President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan. However her eliteness could never save her from sharing the destiny similar to that of the destitute women of the non-elites. Instead of choosing a secured life by marrying

into a privileged family she proves to be a rebel twice, first by marrying into a lower positioned family of Anees and then breaking her first marriage to enter into the life of the tall, dark, and handsome feudal lord Gulam Mustafa Khar. Both Anees with his docile and complacent nature and Mustafa with his violent and erratic nature prove to be a mismatch to her. Tehmina's fascination for the magnetic personality of Mustafa probably was her reaction to the subdued role of the pre-existing males in her life like her father and her husband Anees. Mustafa is not less than a womanizer and an archetypal male chauvinist. The readers are surprised to find how different beautiful young women are charmed by him and are ready to surrender him despite their derogatory status in his life. In case of Tehmina, she receives many precautionary warnings about Mustafa's erratic and abusive nature from his existing wife Sherry; however nothing could dissuade her from getting into the whirlwind of Mustafa and his tantrums. Soon she starts suffering from his irrational, immoral and inhumane behavior that continued for nearly fourteen years during which she bore him four children. It is distressing to find that during her traumatic experience her family that represented the cultured and civilized elites takes the conventional stand of disowning their daughter once she is wed. Mustafa secludes her in the four walls of his house and abuses her through physical violence and psychological oppression. He represents a typical authoritarian feudal world in which women are made to realize that their ultimate destiny is with the man they marry and rebellion against him would make them pay a very heavy price. Due to her rebellious decisions Tehmina is divorced penniless and she is even disowned by her parents and alienated by her friends.

Tehmina's autobiographical narrative commands respect as she is the first of Pakistani women to break the age-old silence to be expected of women in patriarchal and moreover feudal society. The book is more a polemic narration as Tehmina dares to unveil the underlying realities in the political and feudal system as well as the conservative Islamic belief system and victimization of women in Pakistan. It highlights her spirit of rebellion and her search for autonomy in the hypocrite and wife-baiting Pakistani elite society. Her struggle for autonomy and rebellion is found even in her childhood when she refuses to follow slavish mentality of white superiority in her society inherited from the colonial past as she is often neglected as a girl child and moreover as a 'dark girl child.' (Durrani 22). The male dominated society she is part of, offers no other roles to women than the traditional ones such as mother, daughter, wife and, mistress. They have their lives rotating around men only, yet they are trained to maintain an inviolate distance between them and the masculine world. The ultimate goal in their life is to marry and marry well as man is the only future available to a girl in her society. Women like Tehmina justify Simone De Beauvoir's criticism on marriage as a destiny or a great ambition of a girl. However marriage appears to be a different thing for man and woman i.e. for Tehmina and Mustafa, as Tehmina hesitates and demurs several times before getting into second marriage whereas Mustafa very conveniently slips into one alliance after another.