

A Postcolonial Feminist Reading of Love's Fury

Kulthum Rafiq

Ex-student Department of English, Central University of Kashmir (India)

Silence gives grace to women – (Sophocles, Ajax)

ABSTRACT

The Postcolonial Feminist study focuses on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized/women. In many different societies women like colonized subjects have been relegated to the position of 'other'/'colonized' by various forms of patriarchal domination. Qasira Shahraz in her novel Love's Fury explores the women characters. They are more or less colonized by the existing stereotyped social apparatus prevailing in Chiraghpur district in Pakistan and they are bound to mold themselves within that system, else their existence is at threat. Her women characters are the representation of the inherited roles that patriarchy has given to them and it seems 'natural' to their being. The lives of women in the novel, their existence, their choices, their voice and the setup of their lives is given by the patriarchal setup of the society.

Keywords: *Feminism, Language, Patriarchy/Being/Men, Postcolonial Feminism, Sub-altern/ Other/ Women*

I. INTRODUCTION

Love's Fury is a tragic tale of three young women, each demonized by her past. The novel tells the story of Naghmana, Chaudharani Kaniz and Gulshan, the glamorous business executive from the city, the village land baron, and the innocent wife. One caught in the arms of another women's husband, the other raped in her youth, and the third lost her husband to a total stranger. Qaisra Shahraz's novel *Love's Fury* is set in the rural Pakistan which gives an insight of the life of women in Pakistan. She beautifully draws the women's world well-knit within the social apparatus of society. Women, who are always taken as 'body' and not soul thereby, body symbolizes conquered land by colonizer/men. The social setup of the given patriarchal system always imposes things on women and it seems 'natural'. Women, therefore, are always at receiving end. Language is central to the human condition as it provides the term by which reality or world around is constructed. According to Joseph, "Language and identity are 'ultimately inseparable' [1]." In hegemonic discourses control over language by the center remains potent tool of control, it is structured by colonizer/patriarchy and women are bound to follow it. Therefore, their identity is also structured. Women, more precisely in Spivak's terminology are relegated to the 'subaltern subjects'. The subaltern always stand in an ambiguous relation who power-subordinate to it and never adopt the dominant point of view or vocabulary as expressive of its own identity. The question of 'unspeakability' of the subaltern is extended to gender. Spivak in her earlier edition of her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1985) categorically remarked that the subaltern cannot speak and there is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'women' as a pious item which though she refuted in revised edition. In the revised

edition she changed this stance as she confessed that she was angry with the condition of subaltern. Robert Young has put it rightly in his reading of essay:

The problem which Spivak identifies is not that the subaltern cannot speak as such, that no records of the subject- consciousness of women exist, but that she is assigned no position of enunciation [and therefore] everyone else speaks for her, so that she is written continuously as the object of patriarchy or of imperialism [2].

II OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

1. To present the ideology deep inherited in the social system of our lives where women are always subjugated by patriarchal institutions one way or the other.
2. To draw a parallel how women in the novel are colonized by patriarchy and how they are made 'other' or 'sub-altern'.
3. To provide an insight into the colonial discourse of patriarchy.

III POSTCOLONIAL STUDY OF NOVEL

The women characters of the novel *Love's Fury* Naghmana, Gulshan and Chaudharani Kani are victims to stereotyped patriarchal structure of society. Their voice or per sake their speech, the language as a discourse which constructs their identity, does not hold any existence in the dichotomy or binary of men/dominant and women/repressed. Women as subaltern subject in the novel are confined in the shadows of colonial history and represented by male hegemony which is institutionalized through consent.

Naghmana's fate turns against her in the novel at the time Hajra, Gulshan's mother, sees her in the arms of Haroon. Unpleasant by this scene she takes up the matter to the local court, kacheri headed by Baba Siraj-ud-din. A woman, as an entity, a belonging to man is always picturesque as humble, soft, obedient, tolerant. Naghmana, a city girl appeared as a threat to the functionalized patriarchal institute of the village. Though, she was Haroon's first wife and she had as much right as that of Gulshan yet her being was doomed as 'non-existent'. She was marginalized and she couldn't escape from the viscous circle of patriarchy and couldn't revolt against the functionaries. Being a woman, subaltern subject her words fell down and they lacked authenticity to get themselves represented. The words could not take charge of the play of language which could safeguard her identity. Since, they are borrowed from male discourse or contaminated patriarchal discourse they could not signify the inherent emotional value along them. Her voice fades out on the walls of silence. As Spivak states in an interview, "Subaltern cannot speak' means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to speak, she is not able to be heard [3]." Therefore, Naghmana is unheard, her effort to give justification to prove herself innocent is unheard by her aunt. She is caricatured already as an anti-element in the functioning of society. Being aware of her position Naghmana unconsciously takes up the role asserted to her by the institutionalized society. This is evident in the kacheri episode where she is lured to place herself in the position already designated by society. She is unable to express her thought in the kacheri headed by Baba Siraj-ud-din. When enquired by Baba Siraj-ud-din her status in Haroon's life, her answer at first is positive that she is his wife. However, unfortunately she alienates herself from the role of wife and she utters the words, "What I mean to say was that I was his wife, but we are now divorced [4, p. 111]." This decision comes into play by Naghmana through the fact that she

unconsciously perceives herself as 'other' (subaltern) and the audience in the kacheri as 'being'. Though she doesn't comprehend her identity, the forces of patriarchy through consent work at her subconscious level and words go all against herself. The negative impulses and thoughts that make her suspect of her existence among others make her to take course of divorce. Nonetheless she is doomed into an oblivion where from she never comes out throughout her life. Baba Siraj-ud-din appears as the functionary of the institutionalized patriarchy. Naghmana, appears threat to his being, a challenge, an uprising which he wanted to overcome. Naghmana's words that darted in her mind, "This old man hates me! He feels happier regarding me as a whore than a wife [4, p. 108]" befit the fact that for Siraj-ud-din she was not a subject of existence but an object of challenge. This altogether comes into play and Naghmana falls into the domain of 'made-woman'. Naghmana is assigned no position of enunciation in kacheri, she is made to write as an object of patriarchy.

Naghmana, moreover, is not perceived as 'being' even after twenty years of marriage with Professor Jahangir. Though she lives happily with him yet when Jahangir comes to know about the past of Naghmana he also alienates her. Naghmana skeptical about Jahangir's behavior towards her past is again doomed into oblivion when her husband gets to know about it. Though she tries to explain Jahangir but her words again lack authenticity and prove her subaltern position vis-à-vis men. Jahangir woes at her and leaves her alone as he misinterprets her:

They thought that I . . . I . . .

That I was a bad woman.

A bad woman? Why Naghmana? Jahangir's voice was icy.

Because. . . Because. . . His (Haroon's) second wife found me in his arms during the night.

Total silence. Naghmana looked up at her husband. He was no longer her beloved professor. Bitterly it dawned on her, that it was now her husband's kacheri she was attending. Not the old man's. Now Jahangir was judge.

What were you doing in his arms if you were not whore? . . .

He was my husband Jahangir!

And he is still your husband you wretched woman! [4, p. 219].

Naghmana's course of words again disdains her. As Romaine puts, "language both reflects and constructs woman's status; it often casts her in an inferior or unfavourable light [5]". Naghmana's fate turns against her only because she tries to unlearn institutionalized language. Minha observes:

You who understand the dehumanization a forced removal- relocation- reeducation- redefinition, the humiliation of having to falsify your own reality, your voice – you know. And often cannot say it. You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don't, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said [6].

Therefore, Naghmana throughout her life becomes an object who is never represented rather always 'said' by others. Language baffles around her and there is no escape from it. The question, therefore, is does her words have any significance or they are drifted to the institutionalized already existing meaning?

Chaudhrani Kaniz becomes recluse in her own sense, she develops the complex nervousness and takes bath several times a day to overcome the shame inflicted that happened when she was a teenager. She feels she is in a state of impurity and nothing can eradicate the scar of the gruesome incident. She secludes herself from the social networks and her hate for men as depicted in the novel explores the psychological trauma through which women go. Her silence is another representation of her being subaltern. She is aware of that fact she would be unheard or misinterpreted in already existing patriarchal discourse. This is presented through her conversation with her sister Sabira, "I want no male- in fact not even a male shadow to cross my life! Ever. . . [4, p. 58]." When Sabira enquires from her reason to her complex and negative approach towards marriage it is only then she reveals her agony and pain that she was raped when she was teenager. Nonetheless, Kaniz was also victim of patriarchy. She also suffered from the psychological complexity where she could not challenge patriarchal institution as it was threat to her existence. Her positioning is again aligned towards a weak ordination, subaltern. Words empty out for her pain as her husband Sarwar also misinterpreted him. Words always die out at the hands of colonizer and they are invested or charged with new meanings or with their own interpretations and hence a woman is always told. Her words to her sister:

When I told him (Sarwar) I had been raped, a look of revulsion crossed his face. I will never forget that look. It was almost as if he believed it was my fault. . . My marriage was doomed, even before it began. . . So you know Sabira that Khawar is the product of just one physical encounter with my husband? Sarwar left me well alone after my wedding night [4, p. 139].

She is made conscious of being guilty by her husband as she as a women has no position of enunciation within the already existing society. In the dichotomy of men and women she is always accounted to be guilty. Therefore, in the discourse she becomes as an object of patriarchy. Her world is not structured by words/ language which build up reality rather they are inflicted with hegemony.

Gulshan is a kind of passive woman in the novel. Her role in the novel is the manifestation of her being 'made-woman' (subaltern) by colonizer. She as woman subjugates to the colonizer/patriarchy. Even if the result in kacheri would have gone against her she wouldn't let the words come out of her to take into play the action to defend her. She as a character is a product upon which hegemony has already worked and is placed 'other', 'repressed' and 'inferior' that only could place patriarchal institute as 'being', 'dominant' and 'superior'. She confesses in the end to Naghmana, ". . . We let each other be- wrapped and cocooned in our world of misery, world of our own making. . . [4 p. 193]." This shows implicitly she realizes that she has alienated herself from her existence and has never been able to represent herself through any means of discourse which makes her nothing more than a subaltern subject.

IV CONCLUSION

Women, therefore, are almost always identical to colonized subjects, subaltern, though not homogenous in nature yet perceived as common group. Naghmana, Gulshan and Chaudhrani Kaniz are colonized women yet each in different way. Women's identity is always questioned by the authority and she is always seen in relation to men. Colonized aspect of studying women in the novel *Love's Fury* be it Naghmana, Chaudhrani Kaniz or Gulshan brings insight the atrocities done to women at the hands of colonizer. She is no position to authenticate her life, it is always other institutions at work that designate their roles. It was Baba Siraj-ud din who had to authenticate Naghmana as Haroon's wife while both could not authenticate their relation to each other in the society. Women's language, a way to incarnate their identity is also taught to them and given to them via this institute within which they have to represent themselves. The question is whether this language is their own or it is colonizers, contaminated with discursive tool? This implicit theory is practiced in almost every society, culture, religion and through the lives of three women it is foregrounded in the novel.

REFERENCES

- [1.] J. Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 13).
- [2.] J. McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (New Delhi: Viva, 2011, qtd. p. 19).
- [3.] S. Morton, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (London: Routledge, 2003, qtd. p. 66).
- [4.] Q. Shahraz, *Love's Fury* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2009).
- [5.] J. Edwards, *Language and Identity: Key topics in Sociolinguistics* (New York: Cambridge, 2009, qtd. p. 141).
- [6.] T. T. Minh-Ha, "Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Eds. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995. pp. 246-249)