

QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN TEHMINA DURANI'S BLASFEMY

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Abstract :

This paper aims to illustrate the identity crisis of female character as reflected in Tehmina Durrani's novel "Blasphemy". The research paper is to examine Heer's search for identity is deeply intertwined with her struggle against patriarchal and religious norms within a rigid, orthodox society. The work concentrates on the theme of gender discrimination and the dominance of masculine as well as silence and submission that women are forced to endure in society. Heer's journey involves a coming-of-age experience where she confronts societal expectations and seeks to forge her own path, ultimately finding ways to redefine her role and purpose.

Keywords: Quest for identity, Internal Conflict and self discovery, Dealing with Change and Transition, Patriarchal Society.

Introduction :

Tehmina Durrani is a Pakistani author known for her bestselling book: her controversial autobiography *My Feudal Lord*, an artist, and a women's and children's rights activist. "Blasphemy", her next major work, promises to generate the same degree of excitement. Set in south Pakistan, the novel inspired by a true story, is a searing study of evil; an uncompromising look at the distortion of Islam by predatory religious leaders. In essence, "Blasphemy" uses the concept of blasphemy as a lens through which to examine the complex and multifaceted quest for identity in a Muslim society grappling with internal conflicts and external influences. The novel challenges readers to question their own understanding of identity and to critically examine the beliefs and practices that shape their sense of self. Subsequent experiences within the confines of her household. She questions the prescribed roles for Heer's life is initially defined by her marriage at a young age to Pir Sain, a religious figure, and women in her society, including those related to marriage, motherhood, and subservience.

It chronicles the tale of Heer, her whole life struggle to escape from captivity the chains that had held her captive for years. The central character Heer, stands in for all Pakistani women who experience discrimination, sex assault and religious dishonesty. Heer had plans and aspirations just like any ordinary girl, but after her father passed away, she grew too much of burden for her mother, so Heer needed to be discarded as quickly as possible. She was merely

looking for a chance to get off her daughter. Soon after that, her mother learned that a very aristocratic and religiously observant family had a holy son named Pir Sain who was a person of interest in marrying her fifteen –year- old girl. Pir Sain was a person of her father’s age. It looks to be some sort of agreement to achieve respect and pride in her society. Because she believes that this marriage will restore the dignity of her family, Heers mother is quite thrilled about this union only for social states. Heer objected, but mother insisted that accepting the proposal from someone more spiritually inclined was a gift from from God and would aid Heer in becoming religious. In addition to this, they were prosperous, which could enable her siblings to participate in a variety of endeavours. Heer was powerless to discover a way out, and like all other Muslim females, she came to conclusion that this was her destiny and gave up trying to change it. She did not ask any further concerns about it.

Analysis :

Heer discovered that her husband was the Pir Sain of the village, where they lived. They lived in a huge haveli with a large number of servants who toiled nonstop daily while fearing for their safety. While Pir Sain ruled the minds and lives of the population outside the home, Pir Sain’s mother was in charge of everything inside. On their very first night of marriage, Pir Sain mistreats her body. He then takes possession of her brain and soul, forcing Heer to adapt to a lifestyle that no normal human can tolerate. She is trapped within the haveli's four walls. She is tasked with running the home at the age of fifteen, and even the slightest error could provoke Pir’s fury, who may kick, beat, or otherwise assault her. She eventually began to understand that Pir was a liar who covered up his horrific acts of terror in the name of God. Pir Sain physically abused Heer, behaved inhumanely against her, and demanded that she remove her clothing anytime he pleased in order to violate her body as if she were his personal servant. A man is able to fully realise his supremacy and his masculinity when he is in a position to subdue and exert control over females. According to what Connell writes in his book, “Power working via institutions, power in the shape of oppression. It is essential to the framework of gender that one group is defined in relation to another.” (Connell: 1993,38). This is due to a lack of courage among women, which prevents them from speaking against men and act independently. The authority structure and framework, which is called patriarchy, has firmly permeated women’s ideology and governing their thoughts. On the other hand, there are a lot of mothers who nurture their daughters with traditional patriarchal values. After becoming pregnant, Heer thought that Pir Sain would stop abusing her and his hateful behaviour toward her, nevertheless, nothing of this sort occurred. Later, Heer picked up how to coexist with them. According to Pir Sain, if something happens, it was only as a result of his prayers to God, if not, it was because of her faults and unfortunate circumstances. Pir Sain was the man of God, the most devout and god-fearing of them, and no one was allowed to criticise him. When Pir Sain returned, he drank the finest liquor the nation had to offer despite wearing a scarf with all 99 names of Allah written on it. He was engaged in the death of his son and the physical harassment of his own daughter, he had a secret room built in the haveli to indulge his filthy obsessions. It’s frightening to believe that a man of God would even think of carrying out such deeds. The “green chadder embroidered with the ninety-nine names of Allah”, (Durrani: 1998, 44) here, meaning of the chadder that Pir draped across his shoulders can be

implied. It is a reflection of the manner in which Pir concealed his wrongdoing and led others misguided in the service of the god. Tehimna exposes the shadowy and hidden lifestyles of religious authorities who use Islam as a means to acquire influence and take advantage of those who are vulnerable through the character of Pir Sain. Because of his saintly heritage, Sain believed that his ancestry made him a chosen one who possessed the ability to connect with God. These religious leaders are proved to be frauds who abuse others in the name of Allah, and their deception has been exposed. Pir Sain will not only abuse and violate Heer physically but he will do this to her psychologically. There are a lot of other female characters that end up getting hurt by him. All of them are helpless.

Internal Conflict and Self-Discovery :

Heer's journey is marked by acts of resistance against the oppressive structures that seek to control her. She challenges the expectations placed upon her and seeks to find agency in her life.

Heer's quest involves a process of self-reflection and internal conflict as she grapples with the expectations imposed upon her and her own desires for autonomy. Through her experiences, Heer learns to navigate the challenges she faces and discovers her own inner strength. She redefines her identity by forging her own path, even within the constraints of her society.

Dealing with Change and Transition :

This novel refers to how Heer's experiences and perspectives expose the hypocrisy and corruption within the religious establishment, effectively using her voice to challenge and critique the abuse of power. Through her experiences, Heer learns to navigate the challenges she faces and discovers her own inner strength. She redefines her identity by forging her own path, even within the constraints of her society.

Theme of One Woman against a Patriarchal Society :

The novel highlights the broader theme of a woman's struggle against a patriarchal society. Heer's story is a powerful example of the challenges faced by women who dare to question and resist the established norms.

Conclusion :

The author of the novel, Tehamina Durani depicts the inner conflict of Heer and her quest for identity in Blasphemy. Tehmina Durani state about the 'Blasfemy' is almost entirely a women's nevertheless, a book about the silencing of the one half of the humanity. Blasphemy plays a significant role in defining religious boundaries and identity. Heer and her husband – Pir Sain expresses the role of different categories to distinguish between those who belong to a particular faith community and those who do not. It is a Heer's journey of self-discovery, resilience, and rebellion against a restrictive social and religious order.

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