



RESEARCH PAPER

Unraveling the Eco-feministic Perspective of Pakistani Drama Sultanat: A Critical Study

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore a Pakistani drama entitled Sultanat through the lens of ecofeminism. The main objective of the study has been to explore the patriarchal mindset that does not perceive women more than a property or possession and usurp all their basic rights in the context of this particular drama. However, the secondary objective has been to reveal the way those female characters react to all these types of oppression. Warren (1987) Eco-feministic notion has been applied as the framework of this study. As for the sample is concerned, the researcher selected fifteen scenes from ten Episodes of the particular drama. The findings revealed the oppression of the female characters by the male protagonist who considered them his own property and wanted to maintain his firm control over their lives at any cost.

KEYWORDS Digital Media, Ecofeminism, Hum TV Drama, Qualitative Study

Introduction

The society in which we live is a patriarchal one that believes to empower men over women who are always considered to be an asset just like land and wealth. The more the wealth and land they have, the more control they get over the lives of their women. In this way, an unequal power relation between men and women gives birth to various oppressive structures that are not only harmful for women but to all those who are disempowered including children, elderly people and non-human animals. The supporters of such oppressive system seem to interpret the socio-cultural and even religious norms in the way patriarchy gets stronger than ever before (Chauhan, 2014). Hence, there is a silent understood agreement that man is the only superior creature who is charged with an inborn quality to perform all important outdoor affairs while the women can manage the domestic chores and dependent on their males regarding the other matters of their lives. However, as an outcome of recent advent of feminism and its limited rays that seem to penetrate through this abusive mind set of patriarchy, women in Pakistan have started to take initiative steps out of their homes to get themselves educated and to pursue respectable career.

Hence, television is being perceived not only as an important source to bring a positive social change but it is also taken as a mirror of the society. So, its programs do not only make the people aware of the latest trends across the globe rather they also have a potential to reshape the belief system of the people. So, it is very important to be particular about the content a TV channel is going to on air for its viewers (Huda and Ali, 2015). People including both genders learn and make sense of their self and surroundings through their favourite characters and the challenges they encounter in their life so, it cannot be denied at any cost that their thought pattern gets affected by the content they

watch and observe (Riaz et al, 2021). Moreover, drama can be taken as a series of action that tells its audience meaningful stories and has a greater effect on their mind. Its role becomes crucial when the audience is comprised of women who specially take a deep effect from the dramas they watch. In this way, if woman characters are being shown as submissive, emotionally frail and marginalized ones as compared to the opposite gender that most of the time has been portrayed as more confident, emotionally strong and authoritative one, this thing affects women's mental health badly and also create a sense of gender discrimination (Rehman, 2019).

However, things are getting change within the passage of time, now women have become more aware and conscious about their rights and are taking part in every sphere of life and successfully proved that they are not less than men in any case. Same thing is happening with the media industry where few years back, they were portraying only as a domestic creature and who was supposed to bear ill- treatment and humiliation from their husbands silently but now they doing leading roles as an independent girls who challenge the societal norms and all forms of discrimination being done to them and pursuing different professions without having a male protagonist to support the story. The story line of the ARY drama entitled *Sar-e-rah* is the prime example of this.

The present study is focused on the Eco-feministic analysis of Hum tv drama entitled *Sultanat*. Through this research study, the researcher has attempted to explore the way female characters of this particular drama have been taken like a possession by the male members who constantly suppressed their rights and prevented them to take the basic descions of their lives.

Synoptic overview of the data

The storyline of the particular drama delves into the complexities of power, pursuit of justice and family loyalty. The story revolves around the parents of four girls of Inayat family namely Shazia, Qudsia, Maham and Nida whose parents get manipulated by their eldest son-in-law, a man determined to maintain firm control over this family at any cost and specially on the lives of his sisters in law. The girls find themselves trapped into the web of manipulation and suppression, their lives get suffocated by the weight of his control. Specially, Maham, the protagonist of this drama had to suffer a lot due to this person, she becomes homeless and bears the hate of her own relation for a long time but eventually the girls fight back and become able to set their family free from guardianship of this man.

The study is focused to examine how female characters in this particular drama are being treated like a non-living object or possession by the male members of their family and also to reveal the way these characters do react to all this oppression being imposed on them.

Literature Review

Mir (2021) asserted that ecology is an approach that plays an important role to highlight the degradation of ecology in the name of urbanization and development. In the same way, it helps to address the gendered based discrimination by providing an in-depth understanding of the human relationship with nature and other oppressed and marginalized people in civilized societies. Most of time, this marginalization occurs as a result of an imbalance distribution of power between men and women.

Ashfaq (2018) explored the comparative role of good vs bad women in context of six particular Pakistani dramas by employing Deaux and Levis (1984) model. The findings revealed that the women who wear eastern dresses, wear duppatta and blindly obey the words of their families are considered good. While, the women with liberal thoughts, western dresses, joyful nature and not bound to household premises are perceived as negative and bad ones.

Nazir (2013) observed that male dominance is somehow increasing in the society and this thing in return give them courage to get the ownership of women like a property or any other non-living object. He further said that women unresponsive nature to all this unjust situation makes their lives more pathetic.

Ali and Shehwar (2011) figured out that digital media is responsible for stereotyping of women characters. It is portraying them as submissive, dependent and emotionally frail creature who can never imagine to get survival without the help of their male members. They further emphasized the need to stop all this by shifting their focus to introduce strong female characters on screen.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of ecofeminism evolved from a cultural research on social justice and environmental issues in the second half of 1970. At that time, different text were produced that shed light upon the commonalities the marginalized structures set on the basis of environment, culture and gender. Daly (1978) in her text entitled *Gyn/ecology*, traced a connection out between environmentalism and ideology of feminism. She draw the attention of her reading audience towards the male dominated treatment of women's bodies as she underscore to refine the concept of relationships between to environment and to women also.

In her second book, she seemed to denounce the idea that women can be assumed to be closer to nature and conditioned to be like nature itself. In short, ecumenists apply feministic approach to resolve the environmental issues arguing that environment and feminism both terms are inherently connected to each other. Hence, Eco-feministic approach revolved around the idea that women and nature both are similar in several ways because can be identified with feminity that share similar characteristics such as fertility. Further, both are equally perceived and controlled by the male dominance (Mir et al, 2021).

Initially it was taken as a good sign but later, it was felt to reconceptualize the approach in the sense that women have their own individual will and cannot always be associated with the concept of goodness and the connection between these two cannot be considered a universal truth. However, Warren (1987) established a connection between environment and feminism by asserting that how feminism is led by social and cultural change and how deforestation, farming and consumption of water and industrialization and the rise of environmental pollution are interlinked to feminism because understanding of these concepts gives a clear picture of the oppression the women gone through in different cultures. According to her, women are more dependent on nature than men because they are constantly in the need of food, medicine, fuel and many other things to run their houses, so, their lives get much affected in terms of the degradation of nature that is frequently done by men. Her view on ecofeminism can be considered more relatable one than any other moral theoretical ground. Moreover, she emphasized the idea that ecofeminist spiritualities are a only way to survive while living in a patriarchal society because these have the potential to challenge the patriarchal norms and values.

Material and Methods

The paper has been based on qualitative descriptive method within an aim to have an in-depth understanding of the data (Kumar, 2014). Meanwhile, Warren (1987) perspective of Ecofeminism has been employed as the framework of this study. As for the sample is concerned, the researcher has selected twenty scenes from all episodes through purposive sampling. In the same way, data has been analyzed under the lens of descriptive method.

Results and Discussion

The drama reveals a rigid patriarchal mindset with a constant exploitation of women not only by men but sometimes from the patriarchal women also who unconsciously become a tool for men to sustain their control over the lives of their own gender. Same happens in the episode one, when a proposal comes for Qudsia, the second daughter of Annaiyat family and her mother mentions to the guests that she cannot confirm this proposal until her son in law, the male protagonist of this dram come and meet them just because he only has the authority to take the descions of her family.

I am waiting for my son-in-law to take the descions. He is the one who takes all the decisions of our house from the smallest to the biggest one (Episode, 01)

Here, mother stands for the patriarchal women who lets her son-in-law to suppress the rights of her own daughters. As we all know that it is the basic right of a girl to decide whom she wants to marry but here, unfortunately this right has been given to a man who considers her sisters-in-law his own property and takes pride to spoil the matters of their lives just because he does not want anyone to marry those girls and become a risk for his monarch.

However, along with the submissive nature of women, few strong female characters can also be observed in this drama and Nida, the younger daughter of this family is the prime example of this. She is a strong headed girl who does not only raise her voice against the cruel behavior of her dulah Bhai but also tries to make her mother and sisters understand his dirty tactics to control their lives.

They way you all serve him made him more proud as this house is his kingdom and we all are his maids (Episode 02).

The conversation mentioned above occurred when she sees her sisters making tea for him and scolds them over their submissive behavior. Again in episode five, she utters the same words for him when her mother advocates his decision to compel Maham, the protagonist to quit her studies. She tells her that dulah Bhai is not the right person and intentionally he is making their lives pathetic so that they always remain dependent on him and never get the courage to questions his doings. She also tries to get her realize that she herself is responsible for the sufferings of her daughters because instead of giving them the confidence that they are not less than a son and can manage the affairs of their lives themselves, she gave them under the guardianship of dulah Bhai who considers them his own property and treats them in the way he wants. However, in the presence of his mother-in-law, he pretends that they are very dear to him and he does not want them to suffer in any case.

Mother please try to understand, dulah Bhai is not trust worthy he is taking the control of

our house which he considers his own kingdom and it happened just because of you who presented her own daughters to him by placing them on a plate (Episode, 05).

Within the time, Shahnawaz's interference is getting increased with their lives even the outsiders start to feel this dark side of his personality very much. It becomes evident when Shaveiz, the boy whom Maham falls in love with mentions that her dulah Bhai is becoming a great danger to her entire family and can take their lives also just to satisfy his ego.

Maham your brother-in-law is not letting you live and one day he will take your life for sure. . . . (Episode 9)

Hence, the time proves that how much he was right in his judgement about Shahnawaz, when in episode nineteenth, Shahnawaz accepts an aged man's proposal for Maham and she decided to take a strong step against this unjust act of her dulah Bhai by eloping with Shaveiz to make a secret marriage but at the moment, she is caught and gets back to home by her elder sister Shazia who is also under the influence of her husband and dulah Bhai who lie to her that mother could not bear her daughter's unethical step to elope with her boyfriend and got a heart attack. At this news, Maham gets emotional and gives her consent to go back with them but after reaching home, she finds that it all was a trap and her mother also involved with her son-in-law. In the very next moment, her dulah Bhai claims that as she brought a bad reputation to her family so, she has not the right to live anymore and tries to burn her but luckily, she gets rescued by her Qudsia Api who advises her to get away from this house but herself got hurt by her dulah Bhai and became unconscious for several days.

Aunty why are you taking your life? If someone deserves to be died she must be Maham who made us dead today (Episode 11)

Now the time begins when the protagonist, Maham decides to confront her dulah Bhai and his cruelties after realizing that they themselves have been the responsible for all their miseries because it was their submissive behavior who always gave courage to that cruel person to make their lives pathetic and now when they have realized their mistakes, they cannot let him to control their lives anymore. She makes a visit to the hospital to see her sister Qudsia who is still unconscious and utters these words.

Qudsia sister today you and I going through a very tough time and you know we ourselves are responsible for our sufferings because we never said against all the injustice dulah Bhai did to us because we were afraid of the world and dulah Bhai who held our tongues (Episode 22)

On the other hand, Shahnawaz without having an idea that his true face has been revealed to both women who were under his influence and whom he has been used for a long time against the rest of the family to fulfil his heinous interests continues his former routine to give them a constant humiliation by his saying and doings. Same happens when Shazia, his wife comes to know that Shahnawaz has been the one who didn't let her sisters marry to anyone by spreading rumors about their character. She questions him regarding the matter but instead of admitting his sin he blames her for doubting her husband and

insulting him that is not the quality of a good woman and also says that this is the result of her sisters' company.

You are not shamed at all calling your husband your virtual God a liar? I knew that you too will be rude while living with your abusive sisters (Episode 25).

Same abusive language he used for Mehru, when he comes to know that she is his sister who got departed in her childhood. He refused to own her saying that she is an actress who can never be considered a respectable woman and how a respectable person like him can even think to keep any relation with her. This is another instance that showed how much rigid mindset he has and how he considers women an inferior creature.

Who is Mehru? The actress who left you here? The girl who sometimes becomes someone's girlfriend and sometimes someone's wife on screen can be my sister? (Episode 29)

However, this ill treatment that the female characters of this drama receive throughout, provoke them to challenge these patriarchal power structures and set their own identity. As a result, Maham refuses to take favors from Waseem, the guy who secretly loves her and stood by her in her tough times saying that she got a job and now going to continue her studies also. Eventually, her attempts bring a remarkable success to her and she becomes a successful lawyer at the end of the story who gets justice for all the women who become the victim of patriarchy.

I will not stay here for long, see Waseem we both met due to an accident and at that time you were wrong but within the time, you compensated your mistakes and supported me but from now, I will take all the decisions of my life alone. I got a job where I'll teach the children and will continue my study also (Episode 30).

Findings & Discussion

The study has been focused mainly on two questions that the researcher is going to respond one by one. The first question was how the female characters of Pakistani drama *Sultanat* are being treated like non-living objects or a possession by the male members of their family? In terms of this study, the researcher found that women are being treated brutally by the male members of their family. Shahnawaz is the male protagonist of this drama and the brother-in-law of the female protagonist Maham. He has a rigid patriarchal mindset that does not allow women to claim equal rights rather considers them a creature whose principal duty is to admit all the decisions of their males without uttering a single word. He does the same thing with her sister's in laws by taking the control of their lives. He makes their lives miserable by compelling them to quit their studies and creating hurdles in their way to get marry. He does so because he wants them always to be dependent on him. Moreover, he is afraid that if the girls get married, he will not be able to overtake their property all alone.

Hence, the second question has been to explore how these female characters react to all injustice being done to them? Initially all the women of Inayat family unconsciously get exploited by his hands except the youngest daughter, Nida who always felt a negative vibe from his dulah Bhai and tried to make her mother and sisters that he is not the reliable person and wanted to keep them under his control like a possession but no one believed

her except her sister, Maham who is also the protagonist of this dream. While, their eldest sister and mother both are under his influence and support him in every matter and this happens because both are typical patriarchal women and could not understand his intentions that's why unconsciously become a helping tool for him which he used against their own family. However, as soon as his true face revealed to them, the girls threw him away from their lives.

So, it can be said that the present study has traced the exploitation of female characters out in the context of the particular drama. It revealed how women are perceived as a non- living object or possession by the male members of their family who get pride to keep those women lives under their control.

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