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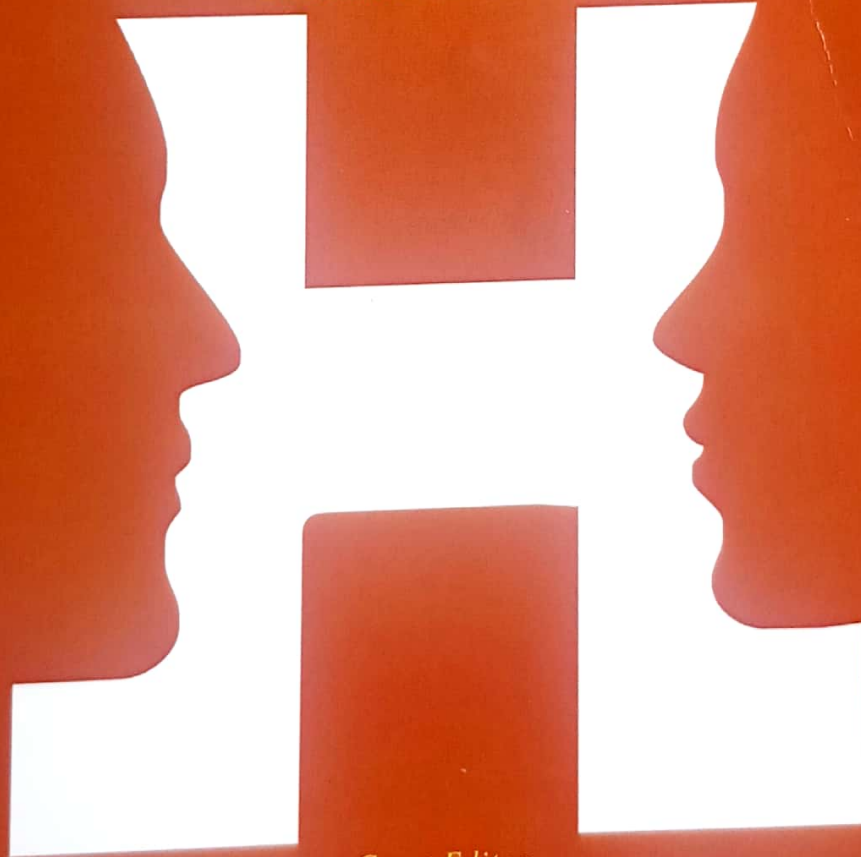
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**Domestic Injustice and Women**

*Guest Editors*

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## ***My Feudal Lord- An Authentic Instance of Domestic Violence: An Autobiography by Tehmina Durrani***

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*Women must be a bridge and a synthesizer. She shouldn't allow herself to be swept off her feet by superficial trends nor yet be chained to the familiar. She must ensure the continuity which strengthens roots and simultaneously engineer change and growth to keep society dynamic, abreast of knowledge' sensitive to fast-moving events. The solution lies neither in fighting for equal position nor denying it, neither in retreat into the home nor escape from it. --- Mrs. Indira Gandhi*

The present study discusses the derogatory state of women in a third world country where women rights are snatched away. One of the popular definitions of literature is 'Literature holds mirror unto society. It has had an impact on the development of society. It has shaped civilizations changed political systems and exposed injustice. It gives us a detailed preview of human experiences allowing us to connect on basic levels of desire and emotions. Tehmina has also chosen a way to present her bitter experiences and abuses in life by means of literature and has selected a fiction as a genre to open her heart in society. Durrani's autobiographical work illustrates that in third world countries like Pakistan, women are taken as personal properties and possessions of men since men control every sphere of lives of women even their behaviour and movements. Men have the right and full command to make decisions for women and women have to follow their decisions in family, tribe, community and society. We find that feudal lord Khar does not allow Durrani even to talk to her own brother. Once, he grew very upset when she talked to her brother Asim on the phone. He shouted "Why did you speak to him for so long" he growled, "Is he your brother or your lover?" She looked at her violent husband and replied in astonishing manner, "He is my brother, Mustafa, really". On her reply, he gets more irritated stating: "Are you answering me back?" .Mustafa Khar performs the true role of a patriarch and of a masculine oppressor as well as an unruly man. In another episode, she was not allowed to read a newspaper and she was supposed to obey without any protest. Durrani writes, "A feudal lord was an absolute ruler who could

justify any action.” Whenever she tried to come out of it she was beaten by her husband.

We live in a society where greater emphasis is given to male dominant order. Women have always been compelled to face social restrictions. Almost every woman faces harsh criticism like that of Durrani, who tries to write in a courageous manner about the male-centered society as well as by protesting against it. This memoir is distributed into three parts known as Lion of Punjab, Law of Jungle and Lioness. It is a fine instance of woman’s sufferings due to social norms and in the name of so called changed religion, changed, according to our own interest and benefits and later on a transformed woman for her own rights, self respect and betterment. Women, being at the marginal status, are deprived of the basic right of equality at economic, social, political and ideological levels. The novel analyses various incidents of ill-treatment by her husband and her efforts to break the age-long silence in the name of honour and God. She herself pictures how her social conditioning prevents herself from rebellion and she always tries to be approved by other members of the family and society. She advises her fellow women not to accept such behaviour as their destiny and should resist such tendencies. The root cause of women’s marginality – the discourse of patriarchy, feudalism etc. – should be dismantled. Women should be awakened that they would not become sinners if they get separated from their husbands, if they become divorcees.

Durrani has made her voice heard to the majority by writing this autobiography. She says, my mother demanded total obedience and, although I always obeyed, she discerned early signs of rebellion in both my expression and my body language. I obeyed, but my crime was that I did not look obedient. Tehmina is made obedient by her mother, as she is realized that if she does not obey her parents, she will not be considered a good daughter, “The lesson was clear and I learnt it well: blind agreement was necessary to gain approval; being yourself earned only displeasure. I was acceptable only when I was unlike myself – whoever that was – because I wore a mask of compliance. I developed a personality that was against my true nature, but well-matched with mother’s. But I was uncomfortable within my inner self. This resulted into losing all her confidence and thinks of an escape from such an environment of her house. She along with her siblings is taught to be perfect in looking, what they actually are, does not matter: we were being raised to be schizophrenic; an appearance of perfection was more important than genuine feelings. There was no question of discovering oneself. Identity and individuality were crushed. Personality failed to develop. My mind became a sanctuary for secret thoughts of escaping

from this household. But for that there was no other goal in life but marriage. In such families the daughters are taught to be perfect daughters, perfect wives. If any of them think of doing something different, she is considered "an extra-ordinary". She is made to learn that women are by nature quiet, humble, submissive, and passive. They are the other side of man. If man is strong, active, controller, violent, woman is the opposite. These are the binary oppositions created by the society, which do not consider man and woman equal to each other; rather they are presented opposite to each other. This confusion makes Tehmina feel like a person of low esteem and she wants approval from her mother at any cost. She marries Anees Khan and escapes from the dominance imposed by her mother, but Anees is a person of weak personality like her father, also not liked by her mother: I was haunted by feelings of being a nonperson and by extremely low self-esteem. If mother did not approve of me and love me, Anees's weak opinion – and those of his lower-positioned family – was of little consequence. That is the reason Tehmina is attracted by the personality of Mustafa Khar, who is a feudal lord who knows every tact to entrap women. , she willingly fell into his seductive trap, even as she was a witness to his former wife Sherry's traumatic and pitiable condition and father of a son, Bilal. Marriage to him made her part with the custody of Tanya, because Anees was not willing as he considered Mustafa to be a potential threat to their daughter's existence. But Tehmina after marrying Mustafa Quotes:

"There was not a day that Mustafa did not hit me .... I just tried my best not to provoke him ...I was afraid that my slightest response to his advances would reinforce his image of me as a common slut. This was a feudal hang – up: his class believed that a woman was an instrument of a man's carnal pleasure. If the woman ever indicated that she felt pleasure, she was a potential adulteress, not to be trusted. Mustafa did not even realize that he had crushed my sensuality. I was on automatic pilot... responding as much as was important for him but never feeling anything myself. If he was satisfied there was a chance that he would be in better humour. It was at these times that I realized that prostitution must be a most difficult profession."

Passing of some more time revealed all that was hidden behind his masked face she also comes to know of a secret affair between Mustafa and her very own sister Adila. The Ground beneath her feet starts to shake and suddenly is awfully unstable; on getting to know that Adila is in fact stealing the limelight by physically seducing Mustafa and putting her marriage at bet. Constantly lying and being physically involved with Adila, Mustafa is slowly loosing grip over Tehmina. By

this time Tehmina has begotten two girl children Naseeba Khar and Nisha Khar. Mustafa's infidelity leads to Tehmina demanding Divorce and going and living elsewhere. His constant urging brings her back into the pit; Mustafa provides her reasons that another child bearing may bring back peace in their lives. Ali Khar and Hamza Khar are thereafter born to Mustafa and Tehmina Khar. Even we find her intellectually distinguishing the real Islam and the pseudo practices in society under the influence of its preachers and the politicians. She protests such mentality and remarks as how feudal lords have shaped the very basic principles of Islam in their own ways for the selfish purpose in politics. Mustafa Khar became violently possessive and pathologically jealous, and succeeded in cutting his wife off from the outside world. For the course of the fourteen-year marriage, she suffered alone, in silence. When Tehmina decided to rebel, the price she paid was extremely high: as a Muslim woman seeking a divorce, she signed away all financial support, lost the custody of her four children. She found herself alienated from her friends and disowned by her parents. She was totally marginalized. After seeking divorce, she felt to tell her story to society. The Pakistan publishers refused to accept the controversial manuscript so she published it herself. The book was a blow and shook Pakistani society to its foundations. She at last was someone who had succeeded in reconciling her faith in Islam with her devoted belief in women's rights.

Revolution came after a long silence of fourteen years Tehmina emerges as a powerful woman. She finds her voice through writing. If we go through the south Asian feminist writing, we find that Tehmina is not the first woman to break the glass ceiling. Prior to her many women writers had already sown the seeds of modernism in the arena of feminist literature. Tehmina stands out to be unique because she raised her voice through non-fiction. She penned her real life experiences and very firmly cast a stone at the hypocrisy which commonly prevails in her country and broke the traditional silence. The transformed woman opines:

"Silence condones injustice, breeds subservience and fosters a malignant hypocrisy. Mustafa Khar and other feudal lords thrive and multiply on silence. Muslim women must learn to raise their voice against injustice."

In a nutshell we can say that her work stands apart, as an excellent piece of writing. The end notes of her autobiography seem to concentrate on regaining the identity rather than taking interest in revenge.

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