

Domestic Violence in Imtiaz Dharker's "*Another Woman*": A Critical Study

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Abstract: The present research paper while analyzing Imtiaz Dharker's poem, "Another Woman", highlights domestic violence at home. It discusses how woman is subjugated in the male-dominated system. It reveals how mother-in-law becomes an agent of patriarchy and inflicts psychological torture to her daughter-in-law. In this paper an attempt has been made to expose the inhuman and hypocritical marital relationships. It points out how in this sense, Dharker's poetry has a significant contribution towards the field of feminism.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Secondary Position and Patriarchal role.

In the patriarchal society, man is the controller of the power- social, political, economic and sexual. As man is supreme so woman is placed at the secondary position, consequently not getting the equal treatment. She is expected to perform the patriarchal roles properly neglecting her feelings and emotions. She is subjected to domestic violence whenever she fails to fulfill the expectations of the patriarchal society.

When violence against woman is committed by the members of the house, it becomes domestic violence. When any action by her husbands, her parents, siblings or any other resident of the same house cause mental or physical agony to her, it becomes domestic violence. Indira Jaising defines the phrase 'violence against woman' as "any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to woman including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether recurring in public or private life" (1).

Over the past few decades, gender based violence has become a concern for the social reformers, writers and the government. Various forms of gender based violence are regarded as criminal acts which include domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment on the workplace etc. Cases of domestic violence are increasing day by day creating disharmony in the society. To save woman from domestic violence, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 has come into existence, and it defines domestic violence as an act, omission or commission or any conduct of the respondent which harms or injures or endangers the health, safety limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the

aggrieved person, or tends to do so and includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse.

As some of the writers all over the globe want to bring a change in the plight of woman who is wrapped in the web of misfortunes, so through their writings they raise a feministic voice against domestic violence. These writers explore domestic violence against woman in the male dominated society. Imtiaz Dharker portrays the suffering of female lives in her poetry. She presents how injustice and mistreatment take place with woman on the pretext of culture and custom, established by the patriarchal society.

Imtiaz Dharker explicitly exposes domestic abuse in her poem, "Another Woman". The central character of the poem who is a woman is subjected to variety of exploitation at home. She is supposed to serve the family silently ignoring her feelings and choices. She remains busy in the household chores from morning till evening, but gets no appreciation. Dharker evidently brings into light how torture is inflicted on woman by another member of her own sex promoting male hegemony. In this poem a mother-in-law torments her daughter-in-law to the extent to which the latter always remains in fear. She understands the intention of her mother-in-law very well as the poetess uses the phrase, "dark looks" which connotes anger and fury. The poetess clearly depicts the misery of the daughter-in-law when she says:

This morning she bought green "methi"

.....

Came home, faced her mother-in-law's

Dark looks (Dharker 95).

How explicitly the writer presents that in the patriarchal society, the institution of marriage proffers woman a life full of afflictions. It provides her such a domineering set-up where she is only and only exploited and maltreated. She is subjected to untold miseries. She sacrifices and serves silently, ultimately becoming a prey to psychic torment. Dharker opines that a mother-in-law also acts as an agent of patriarchy who helps man in the exploitation of the member of her own sex.

The daughter-in-law is always cursed without any reason. Instead of showering the feelings of love and cooperation to her, the mother-in-law always remains engaged in abusing her, subsequently hurting the latter psychologically. She always puts an evil eye on her parents and abuses them, finally subjecting the daughter-in-law to psychological violence. Dharker vividly depicts:

The usual words came and beat

Their wings against her: the money spent,

Curses heaped upon her parents,

Who had sent her out

To darken other people's doors.

How explicit it is that the abusive words used by the mother-in-law pinch the daughter-in-law. The phrase "usual words" connotes that the infliction of violence through words is a routine matter.

The poetess views that in the male-controlled culture woman doesn't get the right of 'ardhangini'. She is considered a subservient partner whose happiness is subject to the wish and desire of her husband. She cannot feel the togetherness and warmth of the relationship. Ramanaiah and Usha Kiran, the leading sociologists aptly observe:

Women who at one hand are given an adorable status by worshipping them as Goddesses of different names and are also subjected to atrocities of various forms on the other hand. This ironically represents a good example of ambiguity in human nature(21).

Dharker gives a realistic presentation to the pain and suffering of woman in marital relations. She opines that these relations are inhuman and hypocritical where there is no sharing. The poetess depicts realistically:

When the man came home
She did not look into his face
Nor raise her head; but bent,
Her back a little more.

Nothing gave her the right to speak (Dharker 96).

Man adopts the stereotyped gender roles of domination and authority, where woman takes up that of dependence, submission and respect for authority. That is why he considers himself the controller of his life, and woman accepts his domination as it is the cultural conditioning that is imposed upon her through a gradual process that is full of domestic violence. Simone de Beauvoir, a leading feminist asserts:

Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man. And she is simply what man decrees.... She appears essentially to the male as a sexual being . For him she is sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential (qtd. in Sheeba Azhar and Syed Abid Ali 8).

Thus Imtiaz Dharker brings into light the domestic violence that has become the part and parcel of the life of woman in the patriarchal society. The poetess also explores the fact that in the patriarchal society one woman commits violence against another woman promoting male domination.

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