

Reflection of Culture in Imtiaz Dharker's *Purdah*

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Article Received: 19/05/2023

Article Revised: 29/06/2023

Article Accepted: 30/06/2023

Published Online: 30/06/2023

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.06.190

Abstract:

Prior to the 1950s, women's concerns about Indian poetry written in English were entirely different. In general, they addressed the usual interpersonal problems. No other early Indian woman writer in English has, with the exception of Toru Dutt, praised or addressed the issues of Indian women in her poetry. Imtiaz Dharker has distinguished herself as one of the important female poets who have aggressively contested patriarchal norms as part of their attempts to seize the male arena. Imtiaz Dharker has addressed fundamental female themes like women's identity, exploitation, and harassment. Her poem, 'Purdah' offers an intriguing viewpoint on how perceptions of women relate to how they are portrayed in society. She explores the challenges of negotiating between nations, loves, and offspring while memorialising the betweenness of a traveller between cultures. Purdah is a hidden world with shuttered windows. It depicts the struggles and adventures of women. Because women are becoming more cautious and aware of their rights, old Muslim practises are no longer acceptable.

Keywords: Indian Poetry, Culture, Reflection, Tradition, Diversity, Patriarchy, Self-esteem, Gender, Rebellion, Independence.

Imtiaz Dharker is a British poet, artist, and video filmmaker who was born in Pakistan. Pakistan's Punjab province is where Dharker was born. When she was less than a year old, her family relocated to Glasgow, where she grew up. Dharker has ties to both England and the South Asian continent, particularly to Mumbai and Glasgow, and she splits her time between the two. However, it is understandable that the spatial

and cultural diversity that Dharker inherits shows up prominently in her poetry in the sense that all of them discuss challenging the conventional ways of thinking in our society. Along with her ongoing search for a new identity as a woman and as a poet, she too struggles with this feeling of rootlessness, as do all diasporic writers. The principal topics in Dharker's poetry are gender politics, home, independence, travel, and cultural and geographical displacement.

Imtiaz Dharker has six collections of poetry published. Her debut collection of poetry, *Purdah and Other Poems* was released in 1988. *Postcards from God* (1997), *I Spoke for the Devil* (2001), *The Terrorist at My Table* (2006), *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009), and *Over the Moon* (2014) are some of her other poetry works. Dharker created the illustrations for her poetry by herself. Imtiaz Dharker was self-assured enough to expressly challenge the orthodox nature of her society while being born and raised abroad.

Purdah I and *Purdah II*, two of Dharker's poems, are sometimes seen as her poetic manifestos of rebellion against traditional and patriarchal Muslim culture. The poem's title, "Purdah," has a lot of significance. Although it means to veil or cover, it has a deeper meaning. In reality, Purdah is a typical patriarchal ruse that keeps women in a false feeling of propriety and security. By using the Purdah as a metaphor, Dharker suggests how certain norms' social and cultural structures are purposefully employed as tools of regimentation to serve a particular group of people's self-interest. Dharker raises the flag of rebellion against traditional Islamic culture, which makes an effort to control and oppress women at every stage of life through its traditions and rituals.

The purdah is not just any old piece of fabric. It envelops a woman's entire being and identity and spreads slowly but strongly. In this poetry, purdah serves as a metaphor for the shroud used to envelop the corpse before laying it to rest in the tomb. As a result, when purdah begins to take hold in a woman's life, she begins to approach death—not a physical one, but one marked by the gradual loss of her sense of self. The poem "Purdah I" also discusses the spatial dynamics that a woman negotiates from the confines of purdah. I believe that a woman in this position becomes a victim of the dominant male hierarchy because she has been robbed of her autonomy and freedom. A woman must act inappropriately in her purdah's confines as she enters this outside space, which is primarily a male domain. The two distinct spaces in the poem—one inside the purdah and an earlier one outside the purdah—are initially recognised by the narrative speaker.

Dharker examines the many ramifications of the Purdah in her poems "Purdah I & II" in order to investigate the internal politics of power dynamics. The first poem, "Purdah I," focuses on an important stage in a girl's life as she develops into a young Muslim community. Her physical attractiveness attracted attention at an early age, which is inappropriate in a conservative community. When "One Day They Said/ She Was Old Enough To Learn Some Shame/ She Found It Came Very Naturally," (Purdah 14) she must preserve the dignity and decorum of a young lady. The poem's title, "Purdah," is crucial; it technically means "veil or cover," but it also has a deeper meaning. In reality, Purdah is a typical patriarchal plot that keeps women in a delusion of security and decency. By using the Purdah as a metaphor, Dharker suggests how certain norms' social and cultural structures are purposefully employed as tools of regimentation to serve a specific group of people's self-interest. No doubt, Purdah became the symbol of repression, subjugation, subordination and oppression of women. It is based on the blatant violation of women's uniqueness, independence, and basic rights. Yet, wearing a black veil from head to toe is required for women in Muslim society. Women are completely dehumanised by the purdah custom since it stifles their individuality, diminishes and dwarfs their self-esteem, and transforms them into non-entities where they are unable to express themselves as unique individuals.

Through her poems, Dharker shows herself to be a strong, unafraid individual who is honest to herself as well as to society by highlighting the authentic side of her neighbourhood. The two poems, "Purdah I and II," were written with the intention of encouraging Muslim women to reject gender-specific conventions and tear down the walls of traditions that stifle their life. She appears to be playing the part of a social reformer who, while always keeping an impartial distance from the victim like a real artist, speaks out against patriarchal oppression and dehumanisation through her poetry.

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SP Publications

International Journal Of English and Studies (IJOES)

An International Peer-Reviewed Journal; Volume-5, Issue-6(June Issue), 2023

www.ijoes.in ISSN: 2581-8333; Impact Factor: 6.817(SJIF)
