

The Social Status of Women in Urdu Short Story (With Special Reference to Pakhtun Women as Housewife)

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ABSTRACT

The social status of women is an important and broad topic in Urdu short story. Urdu short story writers have presented women in different forms of society in different periods. Sometimes they appear oppressed, subjugated and helpless, sometimes they appear as courageous, self-reliant and resistant figures. The social status of women in Urdu fiction is actually a reflection of the social, civilized and cultural conditions of the subcontinent.

In early Urdu fiction, women are mostly seen limited to domestic life. During this period, women were presented as a symbol of Eastern values, modesty, obedience and sacrifice. Their own desires and emotions were not given much importance. In a male-dominated society, women's status was that of a subordinate and subjugated individual.

In modern Urdu fiction, the social status of women seems to be changing further. Now women are not just oppressed characters but also struggle for their rights, identity and freedom. Writers like Qurrat-ul-Ain Haider, Bano Qudsia and Zahida Hina have deeply presented women's inner feelings, social pressure and identity crisis.

A woman's role in managing a home is considered very important in every society. In Pakhtun society woman's household responsibilities include cleaning, cooking, raising children, taking care of domestic matters as well as taking care of all the members of joint family. These tasks may seem ordinary, but in reality, they form the foundation of an organized and happy life. A Pakhtun woman not only keeps the house well-maintained but also takes care of the needs of every family member. That is why it is essential for her to be physically and mentally healthy, yet this is often not given proper attention in the Pakhtun Society.

Key Words: Urdu short story, Social status of women, Domestic life, Qurrat-ul-Ain Haider, Bano Qudsia, Zahida Hina, Pakhtun society, Physically, Mentally healthy.

Literature Review

If we look at the history of Urdu literature, from the very beginning, women's problems and difficulties have been expressed in various ways. These writers, to some extent or another, presented their point of view on these problems and their solutions and brought them to the fore, thus highlighting their compulsions and helplessness from various angles. Their sufferings were described. An attempt was made to find a solution for them on the scales of justice regarding their social status. In this regard, if we talk about Urdu novels, then special arrangements were made in the case of the first recognized Urdu novelist Nazir Ahmed regarding the sufferings, helplessness, helplessness and sufferings of women. Nazir Ahmed set the tone for feminism by presenting immortal female characters. Later, his contemporaries and successors also took this series forward according to their own means. Although this was a good start, a male novelist could not completely escape these problems. Later, under the auspices of the progressive movement, special progress was made in this regard and during this time, Manto, Bedi and Ismat Chughtai introduced new horizons for feminism with great boldness and compassion. The problems and difficulties of women were openly described and stories of compassion were created among them. They could not go beyond a certain circle, but Ismat Chughtai was the first woman who played her full role in making the voice of women strong and full at all levels in these respects. Rashid Jahan also offered her services in terms of feminism. Thus, the early effects of feminism enriched the Urdu novel and highlighted the suffering of women and their mental awareness.

The relationship between the housewife and the woman is as old as human history. The history of writing and reading is a witness that considering a woman as a captivating and precious thing, every possible effort has always been made to keep her confined within the walls of the house like a prisoner from the point of view of her protection. Ayub Sabir writes in the preface to the fictional collection "Zinda Dukh" about tribal Pakhtun women:

"Taaj Saeed ne qabaili khawateen ko misaal banakar kaha ke un se ziyada haya kis mein hogi. magar woh daur daur se pani bhar kar latayen hain. khaiton mein kaam

karti hain, gheehon peesti hain. aatta nkalti hain. is ko gondh kar pakati hain, khati hain, khilaati hain aur zaroorat parre to maidan butchertown jung mein bhi kood padtee hain, golian chalati hain. marham patti karti hain. zindagi ke har maidan mein mardon ke shana bah shana kaam karti hain." (1)

She does nothing and stays at home. In today's artificial world, women are being considered as working machines, especially in developing countries, women also manage the house and are also given the burden of earning money. The housewife, who is known as idle and useless, gets up as soon as she wakes up in the morning. Cooking food for children, adults and the elderly, cleaning the house, washing clothes, ironing, taking care of relatives, and doing housekeeping are her duties. In Pakistan, to make a meal for one time, kneading dough, baking bread, cutting vegetables or meat for the saloon, grinding spices and putting them to work and then serving this meal in front of everyone and after all this, packing and washing the dishes, that is, only one meal is prepared in several hours. Still, it is thought negatively that she stays at home and does no work. On the one hand, she has to deal with a lot of household matters, but on the other hand, she has to deal with it and on the other hand, she has to do the housework. Listening to everyone and facing insults and slander - all of these are second to none in killing a woman mentally, physically and emotionally. Dr. Saba Khan, describing the condition of a woman performing household responsibilities, writes:

"Ghar samettay samete dopehar tak is ki haalat barson ke mareez jaisi hojati. bikhare baal, paseenay se sharabor jism, utreen rangat aur dukhta howa.har roz woh naye roz ki terhan naye alfaaz se zindagi ko kosti rehti thi halaank woh barray dheemay mizaaj ki aurat thi." (2)

The condition of women living in villages is even worse. Along with household chores, they also have to work in the fields and barns and also have to raise animals. Taking care of their fodder and water and milking, etc., are also the responsibility of women. These things have been highlighted by Syeda Atiya Parveen in these words:

"Gaaye bhinson ko chara aur pani rakhna, gober utha ker aik jagah akatha karna, barray se aangan mein chirkao karkay jharoo lagana, tandoor par jhulastey hathon se rotian lagana. raat tak is ka jorr jorr hil jata." (3)

Even after overcoming the mountain of domestic affairs, a woman here is not blessed with even a single word of praise. A woman compromises on this too, but not on respect. She silently endures whatever is done to her inside the house, but as soon as the matter goes beyond the walls of the house and she has to face the ridicule of outsiders, she does not hesitate to leave such a house. It is not that a Pakhtun woman runs away from domestic chores or takes the path of escape. If there is no position, status, love, or work, then she does not hesitate even a little bit to leave such a house. Naeema Shahnaz writes in the story "Nak Aur Zindagi"

"Naya pinjra aur bhi ziyada mazboot thajs mein aakar who ab kisi se mil nahi sakti thi. sonay ke pinjare mein jis mein here latak rahay thay woh khamoshi se ghis aayi jis ka darwaaza band tha war chaabi sonay ke banay hue seen ke shohar ke paas thi. is ne sonay ke buut ke sath sonay ke pinjare mein daidh saal gzara. wahan usay zindagi ke siwa har Nemat muyassar thi." (4)

In the story "Ajnbi Bin Jain", Asher takes admission in a city college to complete his education and stays in a hostel. His health deteriorates due to eating hostel food. When his brother is transferred to the same city, he shifts to his house. Eating home-cooked food makes him feel as good as before. He praises his sister-in-law in these words:

"Bhabhee bhi kamaal ki aurat hain. kasheeda kaari mein maahir honay ki wajah se woh larkiyan mein barri maqbool theen. Har jagaah woh –apne liye be shumaar saheliyan ban ker chorr aaya karti theen." (5)

Her sister-in-law not only does the entire housework with pleasure but also does embroidery in her free time and thus brings more beauty to the clothes along with the pillows, sheets and blankets of the house. In most Pashtun families, girls are encouraged to do handicrafts. This skill comes in handy when they face difficult situations in life. Sewing clothes, knitting sweaters and socks and embroidery save these girls from hunger, as well as prove to be the best use of their free time. Women who do not get time for household chores during the day sit down at night with a sewing machine and arrange their ration for the day by sewing clothes. For uneducated women, handicrafts prove to be a good source of income while sitting at home.

In the story "Aam Si Baat", the shared household system was proving to be a deadly poison for Mah Noor. She had seven brothers-in-law in the

house. She would spend the whole day in the household, but still she would get beaten for being late in some work. The men of her house considered beating a woman to straighten her out as a trivial matter. Her mother-in-law would treat her wounds and she would get back to doing household chores. One day, after being beaten, her mother-in-law went to a house in the neighborhood to buy turmeric for her because the house had run out of turmeric. When asked why, she started explaining.

"Hona kia tha beti! giili lakdiyaan theen, aag nahi pakar rahi thi, aur khana pakanay mein der hogayi. haae ray be chari mah noor" (6)

Her mother-in-law and Mah Noor were the only two women in the house, and the father and son treated both of them the same. They did not hesitate to raise their hands even on their mother. Due to their shared pain, these two mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law loved each other more than mother and daughter. Despite her countless work and services throughout the day, Mah Noor fell victim to these numerous diseases due to the relentless beatings and died an untimely death as a victim of these same atrocities.

In the story "Tamasha Tamashai" (7), Sherik Malik's son Asad Khan was dancing in the hall for the wedding of two prostitutes. Taking a break during the dance, Sherik was waving peacock feather fans at them both. Near dawn, he came home and asked his wife to make breakfast for the prostitutes. Along with tea and parathas, he also ordered to cook sweet eggs at Malik's request. When the wife mentioned that there were no eggs in the house, Sherik got very angry and picked up the fan that was kept in the stove to light the fire and started beating his wife with it. His wife became half-dead from the intense shock. She remembered her husband's gentle attitude towards prostitutes and waving fans in front of them and then seeing herself being hit by the fan was emotionally draining her.

Where arguments fail, the man tries to suppress the woman's voice by beating her, showing his strength. The more you suppress the wife, the more she will be a servant. With a little freedom or pampering, she will become corrupt and will try to impose her will on her husband. In this

way, the man will become a joke in society. He will be called a slave. In the story "Noor Jahan", Noor Jahan takes care of the entire house, is an expert in raising children and household matters. She does not even step out of the house on the request of her husband because he does not like her to go anywhere. Despite all this, Noor Khan beats his innocent wife for no reason, so the people of the neighborhood try to explain to her. Noor Khan says in response to them.

"Is par yaqeen mat karna. girgit ki terhan rang badalta he yeh aurat zaat. hamara baba bhi aisa hi karta tha. woh bola ker takey aurat zaat kohmish_h daba ker rakhna chahiye chahiye. mein bhi aysa hi krtahon." (8)

Noor Khan's extremist behavior made Noor Jahan's life hell. Her loyalty and obedience were of no use to her. She could not get the place in the home and society that she deserved.

A woman performs household responsibilities, brings up children, yet her husband's inattention makes her feel inferior. She starts considering herself alone and starts talking to herself. Whether happy or sad, her loneliness runs to bite her. On the occasion of happiness, all strangers become guests and in the hour of sorrow, her crying is ridiculed by calling her cunning. She wears a cloak of silence over such indifference to her feelings. She withdraws into her shell in these situations. She still has to fulfill her duties. The pile of household chores still piles up on her head. In the story "21 May", a Pashtun woman continues to do household chores while mourning the death of her mother and thinks.

"Baara bujey hain. .. ghar ka sara kam khatam. .. kapray phir si lon gi. .. qameez siil chuki. shlwar bhi aadhi siil chuki. Daal abli pari hai. thoam bhi tayyar hai. bachon ke anay tak saalan bana lon gi aur rotian bhi" (9)

In Syeda Atiya Parveen's short story "Band Gali", Nazia waits for her husband for years. When he returned to Pakistan after completing his PhD, Nazia got married and became a headmistress. Her husband had entrusted her with the responsibilities of job, children's education and household expenses, saying that I am responsible for his three children including his mother and widowed sister. Look after your own home. Nazia was living her life as she was, being patient and grateful. She was very sad because she had completely forgotten her wife. When Nazia

would tell her sister Shireen about her pain and suffering, Shireen would think.

"Hum log –apne paaltoo janwaron ko bhi din ke aakhir mein pyar bhari thapki zara kharab hoto foran workshop ki taraf dorrtay hain lekin biwi ko aik pyar bhari nazar kyun nahi bkhshte." (10)

This story highlights the psychological condition of a woman due to grief and sorrow. No matter how difficult a person is living, a few words of praise or consolation can soothe her sorrows, which is often not the case for a Pakhtun woman. Pakhtun storytellers have generally brought to light the domestic life of a Pakhtun woman and mentioned her difficulties and sufferings. These women, the puppets of loyalty, are struggling with the problems of life in their homes by demonstrating silence and patience and restraint and are living their lives fighting against the circumstances in the hope of better days.

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