

Expressing The Concept Of Peace And Protection For Pakistani Women Through Urdu Poetry

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Abstract

In view of the importance of peace and security for women, theoretical and practical initiatives have emerged in various sciences and fields of life globally. Urdu female poets also have a narrative of peace and security in Pakistani society. Peace and security are among the basic requirements of a woman's life, but it has been tragically violated. Urdu female poets have raised their voice with the help of their pen regarding this situation in Pakistani society and have very boldly raised the slogan of restoration of this fundamental right of women. This article covers these facts and is complemented by the strong arguments of important writings and works of Urdu poets who strive for the establishment, restoration and stability of peace and security in Pakistani society. Through exploring the personal lives and literary contributions of these poets, the article aims to provide a comprehensive look at their efforts in advocating for peace and security.

Keywords Theoretical, initiatives, emerged, narrative, requirements, violated, restoration, complemented, stability, contributions, advocating,

Introduction

In any society, the beginning, advancement, and survival are deemed impossible without the presence of women, this acknowledgement is supported by both scientific and non-scientific perspectives. The dullness, mediocrity, or vibrancy of society is also inextricably related to women.

Wujood-e-Zan Se Hai Tasveer-e-Kainat Mein Rang Issi Ke Saaz Se Hai Zindagi Ka Souz-e-Darun (1)

In society, peace and tranquility are as vital as other essentials of life. Their absence leaves individuals engulfed in fear and anxiety, leading to the disruption of societal harmony. Women are integral members of society and deserve a greater share of peace, because presence of peace creates a sense of safety and stability within women, leading to a development of peaceful and non-aggressive generation. Such generations are the key to the progress of nations. The necessity of peace for women is essential on both individual and societal levels. As human beings, women are shaped by a multitude of emotional, psychological, mental, physical and spiritual elements that play a role in shaping their identity.



Consider the existence of a woman; her structure is delicate and fragile, like a sensitive glass vessel. This is why she cannot tolerate any kind of physical or mental violence, abuse, or neglect. If she is subjected to negative emotions like indifference, fear, despair, or hatred, she becomes shattered and her existence is disrupted. Even if she is somehow put back together, she can never regain her lost femininity, which is her unique and defining characteristic that makes her a woman.

When it comes to discussing the woman's strength, she becomes an unyielding rock that cannot be shattered even by the most turbulent of circumstances. Take, for instance, the courageous 13-year-old Fatima Jafri, who participated in a women's procession in Lahore February 1946, where she climbed the gates of the Punjab Secretariat, chanting slogans of "Long live Pakistan" (Pakistan Zindabad) and hoisting the Muslim League flag. Similarly, 11-year-old Saeeda Banu, a courageous young girl who came from a very humble and lower class family led a procession of working-class women on June 16, 1946, traveling from Delhi to Lahore to participate in the movement. Her fervent speeches had already elevated her to the status of a heroine in women's political gatherings from Delhi to Lahore. As Quaid-e-Azam's 1944 speech excerpt aptly clear the importance of women.

"It is a crime against humanity that our women are shut up within the four walls of the houses as prisoners. There is no sanction anywhere for the deplorable condition in which our women have to live. You should take your women as comrades in every field of life." (2)

During the peak of the Pakistan Movement, it was women who established a secret radio station called 'Pakistan Broadcasting Station'. Their identity remained unknown until August 14, 1947. The period from 1st March, 1971, to 16th December, 1971, the dark days witnessed by Pakistani women living in East Pakistan are unimaginable. The atrocities they endured are almost too incredible to comprehend, and if one reads about the harsh trials they faced, it's hard to believe and one's head bow in shame. However the period from 1971 to 1977 marked a significant turning point in Pakistan's history, when women were given the opportunity to breathe, move forward, and participate more freely in public affairs. The United Nations declared 1975 as the International Year of Women. According to the report issued by Amnesty International in 2001 regarding violence against Pakistani women, killings in the name of honor often rely on trivial or baseless reasons. For example, a person claims to have seen his wife being unfaithful to him in a dream and uses this as justification for murder.



In the year 2000, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) recorded 1,000 killings in the name of 'honor'. According to the HRCP's 2000 report, at that time, there were 5,000 girls in Sindh who had been married off to the Quran (a practice known as 'Haq Bakshish' or 'giving a daughter in marriage to the Quran').

When we talk about literature, it was such a shame that women of honourable men had knowledge and skills that Mir Taqi Mir hides the fact that his daughter is a poet. However, when he sat down to write a satire against Balas Raye, he ended up targeting his wife in just a few couplets. Whether it's a woman or a fairy, they are both confined within the boundaries of lust, objectification, and physical intimacy. Even storytellers have not hesitated to make women the center of obscenity. In everyday life, nearly ninety percent of curses are associated with women, and in songs, phrases, proverbs, and so on; the honor and dignity of women are often undermined.

Women of the 18th and 19th centuries were also heavily entrenched by strict religious and cultural bindings. Muslim women in the Indian subcontinent, who constituted a significant majority, were kept illiterate, unidentifiable and sexually subjugated until the end of the 19th century. They were unfamiliar with using language as a tool. The result of crawling out of the dark tunnel of humiliation and coercion is that women are no longer mere objects of sexual desire, who's every move and gesture becomes a tale of romance and beauty. The language that was once used to demean and objectify women as "inferior human beings" has now become a weapon in their hands, empowering them to speak out and assert their identity. The exploitation of women and the fragmentation of their existence is a crucial topic in literature, particularly in Urdu poetry and literature, when discussing the relevance of women's presence within the context of one's article; poets have explored the theme of women's existence in relation to peace and the need to protect them from fear and harassment. They have articulated the triangular relationship between women, peace, and fear from various perspectives, making it a subject of discussion in Urdu poetry.

When we study classical poetry, we find that until a certain period, women were only depicted as beloveds, exploited for their beauty, and revered as goddesses. Poets of that era worshipped women as deities, describing their beauty from various angles and portraying their characters with immense love and compassion. Although the classical poetry often portrays the beloved as a heartless woman, her femininity, motherhood, and tenderness also hold significance. She is a being who enters the poet's life and stirs his emotions. She has her own individuality, which cannot be ignored or denied. Her temperament and behaviour are unparalleled. From the era of Jurat and Insha, her demeanor and mannerisms undergo a transformation. However, in Momin's poetry, a veiled woman appears. The Revolution of 1857 marks a significant turning point in the portrayal of women's roles. In Daagh's poetry, women take on the guise of a prostitute. Hasrat finds a woman who does not commercialize love but is herself trapped in love.

From the beginning of modern poetry, issues related to women's roles have become a subject of discussion. For instance, Hali writes 'Munajat-e-Bewa' and 'Chup Ki Dad', while Allama Iqbal portrays women as adorned with the ornaments of education and possessing qualities that distinguish a beautiful woman. In 20th-century literature, women emerge as a reflection of an entire civilization. This is a woman who is not mute, deaf, or blind but considers herself equal to men. Here, beauty is not bound by consent, and the lover is also seen as indifferent to beauty.

In the poetry of first half of 20th-century, women are seen facing economic, political, sexual, and cultural injustices. In the poetry of this era, especially that of female poets, women's issues becomes the subject of discussion. In the fourth decade of the 20th century, Ada Jafri's poetry becomes a prominent and trustworthy milestone in the Urdu literature, shedding light on the struggles and issues faced by women and paved the way for future's women writers.

Qazi Abdul Ghaffar writes:

"The fact that modern literature has drawn women in our country towards it is a significant event in the current era of Indian history. The path chosen by public opinion against traditionalism and stagnation is proven correct by the fact that women, who are generally the most conservative in every nation, are now being influenced by the demands of the times and their literature and poetry are reflecting the mirror of public opinion. The trend set by women like Ada Bdayuni is a milestone in literature that shows us the destination where all the forces of mental revolution in the country are converging."

(3)



Her woman is not dependent on others, but emerges as a unique individual. She deviated from tradition and attempted to create a new atmosphere. Influenced by the West, she admires the ideas of Karl Marx and Freud. Fahmida Riaz wrote about bitter matters, that women only thought about and speaking about them was considered a crime. Kishwar Naheed and

Fahmida Riaz, through their writings, boldly highlighted the individual and social exploitation and fear faced by women, taking a critical stance against the realities of prejudice ingrained in the society dominated by men. They critically examined the patriarchal society and its norms. A woman, whose existence is confined within the four walls of her home, is perceived to be shrouded in darkness. Even outside, she is pursued by the shadows of fear, as if she cannot find peace and tranquility anywhere, whether at home or outside. This is why her life is like a frozen ice, and her fate is like burning sand. Kishwar Naheed poignantly captures this struggle in her words.

Ghar ke andar kaat'ti hai teergi Ghar ke bahar reh ke bhi darna bahut Baraf ki manind jeena umar bhar Rait ki tarah magar tapna bahut (4)

Kishwar Naheed, in one of her poems, masterfully captures the dwindling fate of women; aptly highlighting the paradox of our society where the value of material possessions is escalating, while human life particularly that of women, is becoming increasingly worthless. Women's existence is being eroded, and they are being subjected to physical violence and emotional exploitation, effectively burying their identity alive. Every possible effort is made to suppress and obliterate their presence. She says:

Are kya hua munh par tamanchay ke nishaan Tanur mein rotiyaan yunhi lagti hain Are kya hua gardan pe gala dabane ka nishaan Gas bhari bottle ka chhura dabane se hi bottle ka ras tum pi sakte ho Are kya hua Fiqron se chhalni ho kar honton par pirhiyan Kaman se teer nikle to kise khabar koun nishana Banega Pairon taale jannat ki heroine loli paap ki qeemat barh rahi hai Aur taire ghat rahi hai (5)



Fahmida Riaz has given voice to the struggles of women, capturing their sense of loneliness, isolation and emptiness in her words. She has revealed that a woman has no companion, friend, benefactor, or empathizer. Happiness is not in her fate and even if she does experience fleeting joy, she shares it with others and is left with nothing but empty hands. Time is passing, but she still hasn't learned how to live.

Na koi yaar na meit na us ka sajan hai Shehron mein woh rahe magar beiragan hai Khushi ke moti paaye bhi to kab saath liye Yunhi chal di apne khaali haath liye Jeene ka kuch dhung na aaya, khaak hui Apni aag mein jal kar pagli raakh hui (6)

Discussion of women's rights in a capitalist system is merely hypocrisy and deception. When the purpose of life is to earn wealth, whether it is a man or a woman, their dignity, peace, and happiness hold no significance. In a capitalist system, women are only compared to men, and through hunger and poverty, the foundations of the family system are weakened. In the past era, women were perceived as the root of societal, social, political, and economic evils. They were blamed for defeats in wars or presented as gifts in victories. In various classes and tribes, women were married off without their consent merely for the sake of harmony among families. A woman's status was that of a property owned by men. Woman's marriage was also a puzzle; marriage's sole purpose was to increase progeny, and the life purpose of a widow or a woman was simply extinguished.

Sara Shagufta, who has also been accused of the crime of suicide, has bravely spoken out against the oppression of women. When she raises her opinions against the injustices faced by women, the harsh realities of society are exposed. Such a society, which hides its hypocrisy and devalues women's existence, does not show genuine empathy. Women are left to suffer, alive but dead. Sara Shagufta may have written little, but what she has written is a powerful expression of the issues she has faced and felt, both directly and symbolically. Her personal experiences and emotions are deeply embedded in her words.

Izzat ki bohot si qismen Ghungat thappar gandum izzat ke taboot mein qaid ki mehkhein thonki gayi hain Ghar se le kar foot paath tak hamara nahi izzat hamare guzare ki baat hai izzat ke nezay se hamein daagha jata hai izzat ki kunni hamari zubaan se shuru hoti hai Koi raat hamara namak chakh le To aik zindagi hamein be-zaiqa roti kaha jata hai (7)

Parveen Shakir holds a significant position among the poets of the 20th century. While addressing themes about society, woman, romance and love, she also delved into the economic and emotional exploitation of women. Through her nuanced and refined style, she subtly alluded to the emotional and profound realities of these issues in poetic expressions.

Parwaz ka itna dar qafas mein toota hua par jala hua tha (8)

Similarly she says in Poem "Muraad" Mere charon taraf bheriye aankhein halqon se bahar zubanein bhi nikli hui (9)

Noshi Gilani, who personifies love, conveys the agony of separation and the joy of union in her poetry. However, she also reveals the struggles of women, who are forced to breathe in the deserts of gender and oppression, highlighting the harsh realities of a society.

in awazon ke jungle mein
Mere par bandh kar urney ka kehte ho
Raha karte nahi lekin
Rahai ke liye beenai ko jurm kehte ho
Meri palkon ko si kar
Mausamon ko janane pehchanne ki shart rakhte ho
Meray paon ki zanjiron ko be-chehra sadaon se dartay ho
Meri azadi parwaz ki khwahish ko jungle ke liye azad kehte ho
Meray jazbon ki kashti ko jalaate ho
Meray afkar ke dariyaon ko sahraon ka qaidi banaate ho
Magar sun lo
Koi mausam ho
Jins jabr ka
Sahra ka jungle ka
Yeh qaidi saans leta hai (10)



Noshi Gilani presents the image of a woman, who despite being a victim of extreme oppression and helplessness, desires to live. She is accused and blamed, but she has a strong desire for light and freedom, yet she firmly intends to step out of her home in pursuit of light and is determined to achieve her goals, and despite being weak and helpless, she does not give up. Instead, she wants to overcome all kinds of fears and move forward.

Roshni ki khwahish mein
Ghar se bahar aane ki
Kuch saza to milti hai
Log log hote hain
Unko kya khabar jaana
.....
Kab yeh soch sakte hain
Aisi be-gunaah aankhein, ghar ke kone khuddron mein chhup ke kitna roti hain
.....
Tuhmatein to lagti hain
Roshni ki khwahish mein
Tuhmaton ke lagnay se
Dil se dost ko jaana
Ab nidhaal kya karna
Tuhmaton se kya darna (11)

In Noshi Gilani's poetry, there are conversations of young, lively, and carefree girls. Their emotions and feelings are like the radiant sunshine, filled with the fragrance of love. However, these girls, who are growing up, appear trapped in the shackles of societal norms, just like butterflies whose wings are clipped and confined to books. Similarly, these delicate girls, with their tender emotions, are thrown into the burning fire of societal expectations.

Band hoti kitabon mein udti hui titliyan dal dein
kis ne rasmon ki jalti hui aag mein ladkiyan dal dein (12)



Conclusion

Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz have a similar style, while Sara Shagufta has a unique approach to free verse and prose poetry. On the other hand, Parveen Shakir and Noshi Gilani adopt a traditional approach, upholding conventional norms and writing with a sense of responsibility. The poetry of these women not only reveals the status and lifestyle of women in Pakistani society but also critiques societal norms, attempting to bring about positive change and improvement in the lives of women. However, poetry hasn't eradicated these issues from society, it has undoubtedly raised awareness which makes it possible to find solutions to these problems in the future.

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