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WOMEN'S SELF-IDENTITY CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A STUDY OF  
'MY FEUDAL LORD'

*Sehrish Bano<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Mian Shah Bacha<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Rabiah Rustam<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Government College Women University Sialkot

Corresponding Author: <sup>2</sup>Head, Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University  
Sheringal, Dir Upper, KPK Email: [bachamsb@gmail.com](mailto:bachamsb@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad (Abbottabad Campus)  
Abbottabad, Kpk, Pakistan

Email: [1Sehrishdayal17@gmail.com](mailto:1Sehrishdayal17@gmail.com) [3Rabiahrustam@Cuiatd.Edu.Pk](mailto:3Rabiahrustam@Cuiatd.Edu.Pk)

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**ABSTRACT**

This research paper investigates the memoir 'My Feudal Lord' to explore identity crisis and confrontation present in the text. To highlight the identity crisis and causes of confrontation, the ideologies of feministic perspective of Simon de Beauvoir's *Second sex* (1949) has been applied upon the text of the memoir. Moreover, this study also investigates the lecherous behavior and savagery against women in a medieval society in the book "My Feudal Lord" by "Tehmina Durrani"(1995). The researcher has tried to explain the problems faced by the females in the male-dominated society. Durrani (1995) highlights her personal experiences of being subjugated and subdued in the male-dominated society where she suffered and experienced setbacks, obstructions and disrespect. This research is qualitative in nature. Simon de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1949) has been used as a theoretical framework for this research study. Beauvoir's (1949) concept of gender inequality implies on the study and her view that women have to speak for themselves is the key of self-identity. Throughout the sections of memoir, one can map the progress of Tehmina from a weak homemaker to a brave social crusader fighting politically and later, socially for her own identity from the clutches of her husband and categorically from the constraints of society, traditions and norms. These rebellious stunts can be marked as a quest for her identities as well as reconstruction of her "self", resulting in her self-actualization.

## INTRODUCTION

Tehmina Durrani's "My Feudal Lord" (1995) is the women's activist self-portraying book that had made contention during its distributions in 1995. This book was additionally censored, dismissed and restricted in Egypt and Pakistan because its composition of expressed restraints and difficulties of Muslim females' situations that were extraordinarily considered as restrictions. Nonetheless, it was such a battle for Tehmina (1995) that even her father abandoned her after the original's distribution. The feelings of Tehmina about the females' subjugation and restrictions can be understood easily thorough the words of Taslima Nasreen (2017). She contends that individuals who criticize such works "are insecure misogynists" (Nasreen, 2017). "This misogyny or male insecurity is only a symptom of the disease that is patriarchy. Until society gets rid of this malady, the symptoms will remain" (Nasreen, 2017). The reasons and the impacts of male controlled society on Muslim females beginning from their youth to adulthood are significant. In reality, Muslim young girls live in oppressed society in their parents' house and then live under dominant husbands. Rather, after a specific point, these females become insubordinate somewhat while perhaps not completely. They frequently gain their office that isn't given to them yet it arises out of conditions. They battle and continue on, really at that time, do they get their honor and acknowledgment in their general public. There are numerous productive female scholars and artists from South Asian and Middle Eastern nations who have been breaking this ruling custom since numerous many years and as of late Indian female authors, for example, Ismat Chughtai (1915), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956), Arundhati Roy (1959), and so forth. There are likewise Pakistani female creators, for example, Bapsi Sidhwa (1938), Kamila Shamsie (1973), Tehmina Durrani (1953), and so forth.

This book is also about self-discovery and, most of all, 'breaking the tradition of silence' (Durrani, 1995, p. 375). She has set the notion that "Muslim women must learn to raise their voice against injustice" (Durrani, 1995, p. 375). Her primary aims of writing are

- To break the silence and speak on behalf of women
- To cast a stone at the hypocrisy of a patriarchal lot.
- To speak the forgotten language of truth.
- To let the world, know Mustafa as Durrani's ex-husband.

### *Significance of the Study*

The current research will contribute towards the notion of feministic view which is the exercise on freedom and all its embracing consequences which help women to construct their own identity, on one hand and writing of memoir as a source of resolving their inner self-conflict among women, on the other hand. Moreover, this research article will function as a way and method of analyzing any work of fiction particularly Pakistani fiction from *Simon de Beauvoir's* Second Sex point of view.

### ***Thesis Statement***

The thesis statement of this research study is the portrayal of Women`s crisis and their self-identity, confrontation and their resolution within the text of `My Feudal Lord` (1995)

### ***Research Objectives***

1. To explore the reasons of self-identity crisis in light of the Beauvoir`s feministic perspectives in the memoir.
2. To highlight resolution of the issue of self-identity crisis and confrontation within the text of, `My Feudal Lord`.

### ***Research Questions:***

- How are the reasons of self-identity crisis revealed by Durrani?
- How are the issues of self-identity crisis are resolved in the Memoir, `My Feudal Lord`?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is qualitative research. Bryman and Burgess (1993) aver that qualitative research brings an explanation which describes different social phenomena. It deals with various social aspects of our daily life and the world around. This qualitative search inclines to put to light some specific post-modern feministic aspects of Tehmina Durrani`s "My Feudal Lord". This paper explores how the author shows Beauvoir`s (1949) concept of feminism in and through their works. So, qualitative data analysis methodology has been used in this paper by applying close reading technique, on the primary texts with textual evidences. This research has been done through textual analysis technique of the primary texts. This study focuses the way Durrani breaks the stereotypical notion of women identity and highlight the issue of marginalized and oppressed women.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The data of this primary source: Tehmina Durrani`s memoir "My Feudal Lord" (1995). This primary text has been explored under the light of Beauvoir`s (1949) concept of feminism in *Second Sex*. *Second sex* was published in 1949, when women`s liberation was not yet generally examined as a squeezing social issue. Being a developmental text of second-wave, feminism is generally thought of. This strain of women's liberation moved center from acquiring specific legitimate privileges, for example, testimonial, property freedoms, and so forth toward thinking about what sexism likewise meant for ladies across various circles of their lives. Albeit this wave is regularly ascribed to the 1960s, de Beauvoir's (1949) text ostensibly served to establish the groundworks for the mindsets that characterized second-wave woman's rights.

De Beauvoir's (1949) work is similarly progressive since it separated from existent theories for figuring out contrasts between genders. All through her text, de Beauvoir (1949) rejects schools of thinking like radicalism, Marxism, or psychoanalytic theory. Taking everything into account, she fosters her own model for how we should get politeness in a philosophical perspective.

Simultaneously, de Beauvoir's (1949) text was likewise significant in light of the fact that it attracted equals to other civil rights developments of her time. For instance, she analyzes what is happening, everything being equal, to the separate circumstances of African Americans, Jews, the colonized, and the working class.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

For this research paper, many works of literary figures and critics are discussed with special reference to the self - identity conflict and its resolution among women, especially in South Asian milieu.

*In an article, Autobiography and Woman Empowerment with Reference* stated that woman faces social, sexual and gender violence throughout her life in dominant society. According to this article, Pakistani women suffer from more harassment by the hands of Feudal. Domestic setting of feudal is fueled with violence, women are exposed to physical abuse, marital rape, burning to death, psychological torture, and threats of violence in their families.

Gender based Violence occurs due to the lower ranking of women in society. The intensity and frequency of wife beating varies from sociopolitical conditions and cultural norms. One in every three women have an abusive relation in Pakistani society, according to research. The reasons behind immense violence on women are feudalism and male dominancy. Feudal Lords after fulfilling their lust of sex, leave their partner and from the scenario. Shree says that in 'My Feudal Lord' (1995), Khar is a product of feudalism and for him women are just the tool of sex and pleasure. (Shree, 2002). Mishra (2006) argues about feminism, that status of woman should not be guided by the patriarchal norms of society.

*The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2014)* defined that to harass a person just because of his gender is illegal. *The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* states that violence between opposite gender reveals the unequal power relationship between those gender and it is used to show women in an inferior position to men (A/RES, 2014).

In an article, *Speaking From The Margins: Tehmina Durrani's 'My Feudal Lord'* by Rajpal Kaur (2016), it is stated as Durrani has been portraying herself as a marginalized woman in her novel, and therefore, this plight is unpleasant to many. According to the article, marginal state of a person, is a position where someone is kept at a distance from certain rights, margin considers themselves at a remove from the normative structure of mainstream society. Women are considered as margins in male dominant society.

Brutality and gender-based violation is a root cause of self-identity conflict among Asian women. In feudal society, women can have no individual status except to be a property of male. Tehmina Durrani has presented her personal life along with the historical life of Lion of Punjab, Mustafa Khar, in Bhutto's regime in the history of Pakistan. In this book she has questioned the role of women in patriarchal society. In feudal society, woman have no place as an individual. (Zaidi & Qureshi, 2013).

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In an article, *A Study of Female Figure in Bapsi Sidhwa's 'The Pakistani Bride' and Tehmina Durrani's 'My Feudal Lord'* by Swati Srivastava and Avneesh Kumar Singh (2015), it is described that Tehmina in 'My Feudal Lord' reflects an effort of greater good. She has enlightened the turbulent lives of many women from dark and distorted social norms along with the revelation of her own pathetic condition.

According to an article, *Marginalization of "the Other": Gender Discrimination in Dystopian Visions by Feminist Science Fiction Authors* by Anna Gilarek, it is stated that most wide cause of oppression and marginalization is due to sexual inequality or sex-based discrimination. This is the view of feminists that such bases are the pioneer of patriarchy or male-dominated system "whereby the half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male" (Millett, p.34).

### Data Analysis

"My Feudal Lord" (1995) is a controversial piece of writing, as it challenges the behavioral patterns of a male-dominated society of marginalizing women. In **My Feudal Lord**, Tehmina has shown the marginalized women not only based on gender but rather in terms of color, creed, and caste as well, in Pakistani elite and Feudal society, which is mainly the focus of Third-wave Feminists. In particular, in the Pakistani Muslim Society, she considers that women are oppressed for three reasons: feudal system, patriarchal society, and cultural norms.

In her memoir, Tehmina states that she had to face marginalization from the very start of her life because of her black skin and ugliness. "A dark child was condemned to neglect. Yet, there I was" (Durrani, 1995, p. 23). She was referred "as an ugly duckling." (Durrani, 1995, p. 30) Her parents made a very handsome couple, so her uncles and aunts said, quite often, "Samina you are so beautiful. How did you produce these measly lizards?" (Durrani, 1995). Even her grandmother inculcated the sense of being dejected in her since then, "Your mother will love you more if you are looking nice" (Durrani, 1995, p. 27), and it affected her psyche throughout her life. Tehmina's mother did not agree to Anees's proposal at first, but her grandmother suggested her mother to agree upon by saying that Tehmina would not get any other best proposal as "she's not your best-looking daughter" (Durrani, 1995, p. 34). This shows the set pattern of society in merry-making, which ultimately leads to people's cultural mindset to subjugate a woman based on her skin color.

"The same vicious circle can be found in all analogous circumstances: when an individual or a group of individuals is kept in a situation of inferiority, the fact is that he or they are inferior. But the scope of the verb to be must be understood; bad faith means giving it a substantive value, when in fact it has the sense of the Hegelian dynamic: to be is to have become, to have been made as one manifests oneself. Yes, women in general are today inferior to men; that is, their situation provides them with fewer possibilities: the question is whether this state of affairs must be perpetuated."(Second sex, 1949)

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This statement lays out de Beauvoir's viewpoint on the circumstance of ladies in the public eye, and how they initially became in the position they presently possess. That's what she trusts, by and large, keeping ladies or, as she calls attention to prior, African Americans or Jews-in circumstances of inadequacy truly does ultimately make them second rate. For instance, forestalling admittance to schooling since ladies are accepted to be second rate in any case does, over the long haul, make them obviously sub-par compared to men since they come to come up short on same scholarly abilities. She implies by "the Hegelian dynamic"- ladies were not generally mediocre, but rather on the grounds that they were thought to be and were exposed to second rate conditions, they became substandard with time this. For de Beauvoir, this implies that an adjustment of conditions could make ladies equivalent. Be that as it may, we should decide to perceive and address these conditions to push ahead.

According to Beauvoir, (1949) division of labor among genders is another way to hold power by men, and they keep women unpaid or less paid and confined to private spheres only, in feudal terminology, "Zanana". The researcher has sensed marginalization based on gender and class altogether. "A feudal lord was an absolute ruler who can justify any action" (Durrani, 1995, p. 41). One can find marginalization on the part of poor, illiterate urban women. Not only services of servants are hired in less amount but in case of women, the whole body, their wishes, and even their personal lives are hired by the feudal elites. In Mustafa Khar's family, female nannies on the birth of any feudal child could not visit their husbands without a guard so that there was no chance of their getting pregnant that could be a big hurdle or problem in feudal child's nourishment. Here, status and money aid in the suppression of lower yet poor proletariat.

The case of Ayesha (maid) is havoc to humanity. She was not allowed to marry her lover, and if she took her life's decision on her own, she would have to be Dai Ayesha (servant) for life. In return to her life, feudal lords gave only a small amount of grains per year to her family and no money. Feudal Lords or so-called Jirga men (Decision makers in grand gathering) put her lover into the asylum where he died shortly afterward after turning mad. The novel exhibits that there is no law persisting in Pakistan's villages except the laws created by feudal leaders for their gains, which shows power and money is also a way of oppressing naïve and poor females. Nevertheless, the marginalization has dug its root so deep that women do not realize that they are being regulated to lower edge.

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." (Beauvoir,) This, the initial line of Book II, is de Beauvoir's most popular assertion. It addresses the intelligent continuation of the confirmations de Beauvoir offers in Book I to help her contention that femininity doesn't emerge from contrasts in science, brain research, or astuteness. Rather, femininity is a development of human progress, a reflection not of "fundamental" contrasts in people but rather of contrasts experiencing the same thing. Circumstance decides character, not the reverse way around. Woman isn't conceived full-fledged; she is slowly formed through her childhood. Science doesn't figure out what makes a lady a lady a

lady gains her identity from man and others in the public around. Lady isn't conceived latent, optional, and insignificant, yet every one of the powers in the outside world have contrived to make her so. Each individual self, paying little mind to orientation, is qualified for subjectivity; just external powers have plotted to deny lady of this right. Predetermination is definitely not a vast power however a human decision, the consequence of culture and situation.

It is evident in the case of Dai Ayesha, along with other housemaids at Khar's place. They could not question anything or over any kind of behavior because they had not seen anyone questioning like this before. Feminine unconsciousness is also evident in elite class women, "Many a day in the lives of these women was completely devoted to what to wear that evening" (Durrani, 1995, p. 65). Men of this social class have provided their women with the lollipops of luxury, fashion, parties so to avoid any hindrance in their monopolies. Durrani, in the life as a sophisticated, hypocritical and pompous wife of a Governor, had all the luxuries in her loveless marriage. Lack of feminine consciousness is also a reason why Tehmina accepted violence and marginalization by the patriarchal social environment in which she lived. Lack of awareness of her rights made her accept her husband Mustafa's physical assaults and sexual brutality as a part of her destiny. "I stopped questioning his violent outburst" (Durrani, 1995, p. 106). Not only rural, illiterate, and poor women but also urban, literate, and rich women suffer from a specific type of subjugation.

Physical violence is also a way to discriminate against females. Tehmina has penned down many such instances where Mustafa assaulted her womanhood. He would hit her both physically and mentally, "There was not a day that Mustafa did not hit me" (Durrani, 1995, p. 106). There are many accounts of Khar's violent attitude with Dai Ayesha; even his mother was not allowed to keep a separate view. Sex is a weapon to suppress women in patriarchal setup. Feudal society considers women as a source of "man's carnal pleasure." For them marital intercourse is also a tool of dominion, instead of mutual pleasure whenever they feel a woman is also feeling pleasure they call her as "potential adulteress" and "not to be trusted" (Durrani, 1995, p. 106). Whenever Khar felt that he was losing grip over Tehmina or she was just preparing to fly off far from his reach, he impregnated her every time with a new baby. Mustafa never allowed her to leave him because he thought that she was the only skylark that could amuse him when he was tired. Mustafa behaved as a passionate ladies man, the archetypal male chauvinist who forces a woman to love him despite his treatment of her.

Feminists are against biological determination. According to them, gender difference upholds and confines women to have a particular subservient identity. They criticize these binary terms of sex and gender, and also reject the universal identity of women. The radical feminists' school of thought is anti-foundational and endorse plurality and diversity. According to feminists, Feminism is not about what is right or wrong and what is or what should be, but what is defined by a woman for herself.

"When you ring up people, you have to introduce yourself as my ex-wife. You have no identity of your own. Nobody knows you. People meet you because you have something interesting to say about me." (Durrani, 1995, p. 374)

In 'My Feudal Lord', Durrani has shown in an undaunted way that every woman has her identity and individuality; her so-called roles are nothing but cultural constructs. In the three sections of the memoir, one can find the alteration of Durrani's identity from a naïve subjugated woman to a free emancipated spirit. She has made a new identity for her own and rejects the shackles of cultural constraints, which do not allow her to be herself. In Durrani's society, female's "identity and individuality were crushed" (Durrani, 1995, p. 30), so the question of discovering oneself or personality development is out of bounds.

In Durrani's time, appearance was more important than the feeling or true identity of a person "We were being raised to be schizophrenic; an appearance of perfection was more important than genuine feelings" (Durrani, 1995, p. 29). The researcher has traced the unhappy accounts of Tehmina before and after marriage. Before marriage, she was acceptable to the society only "when I was unlike myself" (Durrani, 1995, p. 25). After marriage, Feudal Lords, in the name of religion, tradition, and power, could justify any action in the disruption of her identity. Therefore, she tended to build her identity precisely opposite to her true nature to survive in that society.

In the whole memoir, the predicament of all the wives of Khar, Khar's mother, Khar's housemaids, and especially Durrani herself shows the pitiful condition of a woman where she is not allowed to possess her own identity. According to the third wave, all women have an identity of woman with their additional roles as mothers or wives. The restricted or man-imposed allocation of women's roles in the garb of traditional values causes them to lose their own identity. My Feudal Lord is a powerful indictment of women against the manmade false beliefs that women find fulfillment only in child-rearing and homemaking. Just due to the expected pitiful circumstances after divorce, women endure almost everything to hold a marriage. The marital lives of Durrani's parents and Khar's with Sherry hold excellent examples of unwanted relationships because "in our society, marriage maybe purgatory, but divorce is hell" (Durrani, 1995).

In the postmodern existential context, loss of identity is due to the limitations in the way of exercising freedom. One must have the freedom to assert one's identity. In the memoir, the concept of freedom gets changed with the course of events. There is an alteration of identity, likewise, till the outburst of free emancipated spirit. Durrani's first marriage is considered to be a channel to get freedom from social restrictions. However, her involuntary effort to have a more powerful position as a single woman brought her no identity, particularly in her social class. Then the idea of marrying Khar was a decision to overtake her identity in society; from a lady of a comparatively less strong man, she preferred to be in a relationship with the one who was "the absolute ruler" (Durrani, 1995). After being associated with the "lion" of the Jungle (society), Tehmina faced personal attacks on her individuality and fidelity right from her own man, leading her to the outbreak's reaction.

. To prove her identity, she ended up marrying Anees and then more powerful person Khar. Loss of personhood among women is not bothered as an issue in Pakistani society. This is why she had to tolerate her marital but illicit relationship with Khar for a good 14 years before realizing her worth.

Feudal society degrades the identity of a woman from an individual to land. For them, land, which symbolizes women, is power, prestige, and property. Women herself possess nothing (right of any property or children), hold nothing (right of reasoning), and cannot claim anything (right of own body and will). The only function of women in their society is to be a skylark of male's attention. For women, even to think independently is a crime, and feudal have every right to punish. In their dictionary, the word 'woman' does not exist alone but only in relation to the male.

Writing this memoir is a momentous affair to show up the world about suppressed identities in an elite family. Moreover, it helps in bringing clarity to a confusing world. It involves simultaneous participation in observation of life with all its joy and trauma, which leads to an understanding of events, acceptance of reality, insight of circumstances, and growth of personhood. This book is multidimensional. It shows what man has made of women and what man has made of man. It also reveals Durrani's true side as a woman: she needs not assert her identity by degrading his name, but 'he has induced her to walk on him' (Durrani, 1995).

Khar always feared her vengeance; whenever he feared losing his grip over Tehmina, she became pregnant. She decided many times to leave him, but his rhetoric and charisma did the job. Her narrative explicitly portrays how difficult it is to get separated from a man with power. Nevertheless, there is an end to every beginning. Due to his lechery and unstoppable violence, she announced that every person would be political from now, 'I am not going to protect you anymore' (Durrani, 1995, p. 216). She got out of the marriage to heal her own bruised self and compose her identity even at the cost of her children; she shunned away all the restriction yoked on her, forcefully. She demanded a divorce, and she cut her hair short, which she had not been allowed to touch before, to exorcise Mustafa's evil spirit from her life.

In her last meeting with Khar, she proclaimed being empty-handed and Mustafa being a man free and powerful. For the first time, she told him of all the pains and bruises he, his misogyny, and time had left on her soul. In response to that, he said, 'Tehmina, you are nothing anymore-because you have removed your name from mine' (Durrani, 1995, p. 374). Through rhetoric, he had already taken away her identity and her life now it was his final attempt to devastate her spirits, and here she decided to pen down her pains and show her real face.

This book is also about self-discovery and, most of all, 'breaking the tradition of silence' (Durrani, 1995, p. 375). She has set the notion that "Muslim women must learn to raise their voice against injustice" (Durrani, 1995, p. 375).

Though De Beauvoir's theoretical framework, *The Second Sex* is considered as a revolutionary and incendiary in nature and it attempts to confront the human

history from the feminist perspective. So the main major thematic analysis of the Femida Durani work, 'My Feudal Lord' has been done. The primary focus of the present research article is to find out that men fundamentally oppress by characterizing them in every way and on every level as Other and thus, it is exclusively defined in opposition to the men. In the men dominated society, man has the leading role of self or subject and woman has the role of inferior nature and thus, she is the object i.e., other.

In short, the role of man is very important and he occupies role of being essential, absolute and transcendent while the role assigned to the woman is inessential, incomplete, and mutilated. He extends out into the world to impose his will on it, whereas woman is doomed to immanence, or inwardness. He creates, acts, invents; she waits for him to save her. This distinction is the basis of all de Beauvoir's later arguments.

In this article, the researcher has found in the Novel, 'My Feudal Lord' the profoundly imbalanced gender roles. The novel shows that how female roles are subordinate and there are essential differences between men and women and there is given no justification for the women's inferiority and subsidiary role and the woman's inferior "destiny" is taken for granted.

#### CONCLUSION

Durrani is quite successful in creating the representation of women, in her memoir, which has been widely acclaimed by majority of critics owing to its self-identity conflict and its resolution. The present research has unraveled the identity conflicts and confrontation, and proposed resolution of the profoundly complex female character. Thus, the study drew out the peculiarity of savagery whether orientation based brutality is available in our society or not. Savagery against ladies takes care of off separation and effectively builds up it. Ladies face physical or mental maltreatment all through their lifecycle in male ruled society. In my own perspectives, the best method for battling against this animosity is for the battered to occur and for the general public to hold up that person. As indicated by Durrani, females ought to speak more loudly against savagery and abuse by their spouses and Lords. She accepts on the idea that is to teach our general population not just in the exchanges of the mankind, in any case, that of our colossal religion Islam as well. There is a strong and essential prerequisite for assembling and adequately involving all related divisions of society for arranging strategy and plans. Changing social methodologies as to in Pakistani society requires supported lawful and social endeavors. Pakistan can't turn into an unassuming, liberal, affluent and a prosperous Muslim state without increase common society.

De Beauvoir states that while it is natural for humans to understand themselves in opposition to others, this process is flawed when applied to the genders. Moreover, the De Beauvoir's analysis in the perspective of this novel is the impossibility of comparing the character of men and women without the consideration of the immense differences in their situation. It is here through the preceding discussion of the novel events in light of the protagonist and other female characters, it seems as if the force in society conspires to deprive women of their subjectivity and merely flatten them into an object. They are also denied

the possibility of free and independent work or any creative fulfilment. Moreover, her role has been seen in the novel as most dissatisfying and she seems to accept her life of housework, childbearing and sexual slavishness. The bourgeois woman performs three major functions: wife, mother, and entertainer. No matter how illustrious the woman's household may be, these roles inevitably lead to immanence, incompleteness, and profound frustration. Even those who accept a less conventional place in society—as a prostitute or courtesan, for example—must submit to imperatives defined by the male. The same perception of women in 'My Feudal Lord' is replete.

Moreover, Simon de Beauvoir reiterates the controversial claim that woman's situation is *not* a result of her character. Rather, her character is a result of her situation. Her mediocrity, complacency, lack of accomplishment, laziness, passivity—all these qualities are the consequences of her subordination, not the cause.

The novel epitomizes that if woman can support herself, she can also achieve a form of liberation. In the concluding chapters of The Novel, hope and attempts are shown towards the logistical hurdles woman faces in pursuing her goal of separation and liberation.

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