

Triumph over Patriarchy: Acts of Resistance in the Poetry of Kishwar Naheed

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to offer a few examples of perusing feminist agency through an analysis of the poems of Pakistan's pre-eminent women's activist writer, Kishwar Naheed. Some images of women's oppression and their acts of resistance in Naheed's poetry are highlighted and represented from feminist perspective while using Scott's theory of "Everyday Resistance." This paper also aims to inspect some practical and symbolic tactics of resistance the female elocutionists in the selected poems of Kishwar Naheed follow to conquer the male centric authority over their subjectivity and to extend a self-appreciation identity and freedom. While speaking out against patriarchal norms, Naheed manages to challenge the negative stereotypes of women too in the poems. In her poems, female speakers become their own liberators and they crave and strive to break the rules and shed the shackles which imprison them while rejecting all male-chauvinistic social orders. This paper follows the development and change of the female speakers and shows how they move from being passive recipients of exploitive patriarchal actions to being active agents of resistance. For this purpose, the translated version of Naheed's poetry by Rukhsana Ahmad and Mahwash Shoaib is used. The scope of existing studies of Naheed's poetry is limited to the exploration of the objectification of women in her poems, but there is gap in criticism regarding how the women in Naheed's poetry struggle to liberate themselves from the shackles of patriarchal society. This paper might help the future researchers in understanding Kishwar Naheed's poetry in a better way and also help them in exploring various dimensions of feminism.

Keywords: oppression, resistance, feminist perspective, patriarchy, agency.

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1. Introduction

The open records and works provide overpowering confirmation of terrible mercilessness and mishandle being practiced against women within the Islamic Republic of Pakistan which create the thought that Pakistan isn't keeping the Islamic laws for women in adherence to the exercises of Islam. The researchers and customary activists, who keep a strong hold over society and the assembly through their conservative exacting requests for Sharia laws, display no eagerness for giving women the status given to them in the Holy Qur'an. Women are along these lines being displayed to a therapeutic male-driven thought of Islamic law, wherein they are denied of any of the rights that a man recognizes be him a father, a life partner, or a brother. This idea isn't Islamic but is, actually, simply hostile to Islamic laws and the orders of Holy Quran. Women in Pakistan's male driven culture are in this manner denied of the rights, regard, and openings that Islam has reliably given to them, these having been displaced by traditional and ordinary practices that put demanding obstacles in the progress of women in Pakistan, making their lives burdensome, oppressive, limited, and as often as possible reformatory.

Regardless of what may be normal, male chauvinists habitually confirm that Islam has given a bigger number of rights to women than has some other religion, but even then at the end of the day, women are being presented to varying kinds of abuse, mercilessness and despicableness for the sake of religion. In spite of the truth that the cautious disposition of the Qur'an toward all disheartened and abused classes of people, appears by all accounts, to be weighted from various perspectives for women, a huge number of its women related lessons have been utilized in male-centric Muslim social orders against women. The pseudo-strictness and all deliberately defined mandates don't talk just about strict mistreatments; rather there is a sure mind-set that is profoundly instilled in carefully male-centric social orders like Pakistan. Hina Jilani, attorney and Human Rights extremist expresses that the privilege of life of women in Pakistan is restrictive on their complying with accepted practices and conventions which are significantly built up and have made the life of women sad as well as hopeless. Since forever, women have experienced various types of subjugation, enslavement, and abuse, and such sufferings have for the most part been an immediate consequence of their sex. In their works, female journalists have endeavoured to uncover the negative impact of

such structures on women's essential part within the public field and on their character headway and identity course of action. Kishwar Naheed is one of those female creators who inspected women's issues in her works. Naheed is seen as one of the huge voices expounding on womanlike subjects during the period when women's activists began perceiving women's mistreatment and battling against man centric conviction that women's appropriate spot was her home and her legitimate job was to be a spouse and a mother.

Conceived in 1940 in Balandshahar, Uttar Pradesh, into a conventional family wherein the legend and custom of her way of life were lively and energetic, Kishwar is eyewitness to diverse sorts of brutality against women within the wake of allocate and amid the rough a long time in Pakistan taking after section where her family moved within the year after Jinnah's downfall. She was denied formal school instruction and had to recognize the routine way of life. She experienced a youth that brought up more issues in her youthful however tricky brain than the solidified restrain of everybody around her to answer. Each time she was drawn closer to calm down, the revolt inside her gathered a smidgen more force. In not satisfying the social speculation of a perfect Muslim woman, she felt herself pulled back from her environmental components.

Naheed is one of the non-conventionalist women's activist writer of Pakistan who "actively participated in the agitation against state-dictated atrocities targeting women" (Hashmi 6). Her poems have been generally perused and scrutinized. A few faultfinders have inspected her verse from a psychoanalytic viewpoint and diminished it to her life story as a preeminent illustration of 'confessional poetry,' since it is viewed as that a large number of the slants communicated in her poems have emerged from direct commitment with the separation forced on her because of wedded life inside a traditionalist family in Pakistan. Her work is built up within the encounter of the subcontinent feminine – its issues, inconveniences, and concerns, and in this route thinks about a more critical cognizance of the headway of the wonder of resistance against floods of bull-headed restoration that foists its concept of an 'submissive good woman' unto the sub terrain woman and even more so in the Islamic strict legislature of Pakistan. Her section is a hazardous repudiation of the constraints set by a false jolt severity set up some place down in an all-male social order and tries to design the states of the oppressed at this point resistant severity set up some place down in a patriarchal society and

attempts to format the states of the subjugated at this point disobedient female character through her 'hostile' refrain. The offense happens not precisely at semantic level (portrayal of female sexuality, female body and cancellation of compelled gathering character) however besides at the phonetic level as she parts from the standard ghazal and melodious nazm to azaad nazm or piece works in order to construct up her claim novel clarification. Other commentators have inspected it from an alternate point as a way of uncovering oppression against women in a patriarchal culture. Naheed's poetry is also considered by some as a "call to equality and undeniable rights for everyone, especially women as they become the subject of her poetry" (Shoaib 2). This paper scrutinizes four of Kishwar Naheed's poems in which a few pictures of women's mistreatment and their demonstrations of obstruction are examined from women's activist point of view while using Scott's theory of "Everyday Resistance." The poems under discussion are "I am not that woman," "Anticlockwise," "Grass is Really Like Me," and "Ants Consume the Elephant." This paper illustrates how the female speakers depicted in these poems move from being persecuted and controlled to being enabled and liberated.

Rukhsana Ahmad in her anthology mentions that "if there is Pakistani feminist who poses serious threat to men through her work, her lifestyle, her manner and through ceaseless verbal challenge, it is Kishwar Naheed" (Ahmad 21). She widely depicts the unbending limitations of a political framework pervaded with absurd strictness and deception on women. While expelling the all-male high and forceful social order, in spite of the strong feelings of her comrades, she endeavoured to reconstruct the status of women through her poetry. Rashid Masood Hashmi claims that "Kishwar Naheed's poetry has always been seen as a threat to the patriarchal order" (6). Her poetry is very powerful, not only because of its spirited resistance to hegemonic socio-political structures, but also because it grants power to women's voices within those very subjugating socio-political structures of Islam and Pakistani modernity.

1.1 Aim/s and Objective/s:

- The point of this paper is to offer a few instances of perusing women's activist organization through an investigation of the poems of Pakistan's pre-prominent women's activist artist, Kishwar Naheed.

- This too plans to examine a few reasonable and significant techniques of resistance, the female speakers within the chosen poems of Kishwar Naheed take after to overcome the patriarchal authority over their subjectivity and to extend capacity of self-awareness and self-rule.
- The objective of this paper is to trace all the elements that show the marginalisation of women in order to explore their resistance.

1.2 Research Questions:

The given research questions have been designed to get the answer of the problem:

- How Naheed presents the marginalisation of women and their journey from oppression to liberation in her poetry?
- How is the discourse of “Everyday Resistance” supported in Kishwar Naheed’s selected poems?

1.3 Research Significance:

The scope of existing studies of Naheed’s poetry is limited to the exploration of the objectification of women in her poems, but there is gap in criticism regarding how the portrayed women in Naheed’s poetry struggle to liberate themselves from the shackles of patriarchal society and orders. This paper aims to fill the aforementioned gap. This research might help the future researchers in having broader understanding of Kishwar Naheed’s poetry and this research might also help them in exploring various dimensions of feminism.

2. Literature Review

Taking James Scott’s theory of “everyday resistance” as a theoretical framework for this paper, the researcher intends to highlight the journey of suppressed women from oppression to liberation through resistance against male-dominated society. Kishwar Naheed’s poems have been analyzed earlier from various different perspectives. This research alludes to a portion of the noteworthy researches did before and an endeavour is made to investigate the special vision of ordinary obstruction extended by Naheed in her poetry.

The research “Marginalisation of Women by Kishwar Naheed” is conducted by Pakistani researcher, Hamna Khan. While bringing out the element of Naheed’s personal life, Hamna depicts that how women in this

patriarchal society are marginalized and oppressed. For this purpose, Khan has analysed Kishwar Naheed's novel *A Bad Women's Story* and a few poems. It is concluded in the paper that the story depiction of sufferings by Naheed in her poems and novel speak to the mistreated segment of society who are abused and misconceived for their capacities by men. The objective of the researcher in the paper is to project the marginalization of women in male-chauvinistic world while focusing on the personal life of Kishwar Naheed.

P. Gopika Unni's "A Rebel on Patriarchy: Women's Subjugation in Kishwar Naheed's 'I Am Not That Woman'" is similar to the research of Khan. Uni has also explored the idea of women subjugation and marginalisation in male-dominated society. The researcher has utilized B.R. Embedkar's theory of marginalisation. According to her, male centric society is a malicious social build. A woman is marginalised based on her sexual orientation as a woman who is treated as inferior creature contrasted with men. Male centric philosophies are forced upon women. They are segregated, stifled, or oppressed dependent on a financial and political premise. Sex Inequality is apparent in practically all fields, where women appreciate inconsistent rights when contrasted with men. Kishwar Naheed, in her acclaimed poem "I am not that Woman," raises her voice against treachery towards women. Gopika Unni deals with the idea that the conceded dreams of a woman are constantly "squashed with the heaviness of custom and convention. The distinction of women is wrecked through the alleged recorded traditions and conventions of the patriarchal society" (Unni, 2020). Marriage, fidelity, chastity, motherhood are the social credits related with women, where these are considered as unadulterated.

In "Impure Women: Marginality and Detachment in the poetry of Kishwar Naheed," Arshad Masood Hashmi assesses and questions the authenticity of laws, be they Sharia laws or social ones that disgrace women, and understand that the two systems of value belittle and confine women in their trap of tyranny. It appears how Kishwar Naheed, in composing poetry that dependably depicted women as existing on the edges of their common public, taken an intrigued in their social restoration. Hashmi demonstrates that "Naheed's poetry has always been seen as a threat to the patriarchal order in society" (2014). Kishwar Naheed's poems are an immediate attack on the spontaneous obstruction of religion and the strict religious bodies functioning as weight bunches for the state's arrangements

concerning women's privileges, training, homegrown and get-togethers. Naheed, without demonstrating any trace of giving up herself to the earthly divine beings, keeps breaking the shackles around women's lives, considerations and their bodies.

Huzaifa Pandit in his article "A Feminist Reading of Selected Poems of Kishwar Naheed" places the poetry of Kishwar Naheed inside the structure of current women's activist talk by analysing how it relates to different women's activist hypothetical builds and dislodges customary phallogocentric methods of composing and versification in supreme style of poetry. The paper analyzes the philosophical moorings of the feminist artist and explores whether she procures from the well-known conversation of another meddling school: The Progressive Writers Affiliation. The objective is to scrutinize the chosen poems' eagerness and by an examination of their syntactic and semantic offenses. It observes the consistent move in her verse and appears that she can get an unused point of see of the total knowledge of the women in Post-Colonial Pakistan in unequivocal and the mainland women in common. In her research article, Sonia Bhatt Acharya presents comparative study of Kishwar Naheed's "I Am Not That Women" and Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" from the feminist perspective. According to Acharya, these two poems are vocabulary of agency and spaces of disinclination to accept orders by men. Selecting the poems of two different female poets of different nationalities across the globe, the paper has attempted to establish a feminist solidarity in resistance against women's oppression using discourse analysis. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's idea of "Under Western Eyes" has been used by the author to analyse these two poems and to show the "transnational feminist practice and cross national feminist solidarity" (Acharya, 2017).

"Patriarchy and Female Objectification Depicted in The Poetry of Forough Farrokhzad and Kishwar Naheed" conducted by Mahdi Baghfalaki and Zeinab Mehmoudibaha depicts that the two scholars under examination incredibly share subjects and issues in their poetry. This paper endeavors to give an alternate point of women's liberation as it is proposed to examine and decipher male-controlled society and externalization of women showed in the selected verse. Besides, the paper is expected to dissect and decipher the selected poem of Farrokhzad and Naheed as reactions to the subtleties and impacts of patriarchal society and generalization of women and to discover various shades of male-centric culture and externalization of women shown in the chosen poem. The

specialists have put the voices and words under a magnifying lens and discovered how the functions deliver and uncover these significant issues in their different structures.

While talking about Pakistani female poets, Rukhsana Ahmed in *We Sinful Women* illustrates that Kishwar Naheed is a “feminist who poses serious threat to men through her work, her lifestyle, her manner, and through ceaseless verbal challenge. She does this with a professional dedication which either endears or enrages, there are no half measures” (1990). She is the most prolific poet of her generation. Ahmed explores the idea that Kishwar Naheed’s poetry break the typical structure of poem not only at semantic level but also at stylistic level as well.

Various researches have been conducted from different intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives on Naheed’s poetry. This research also uses the work of the same author but the main focus in this research is on exploring the significant role of women who are resisting struggling against male-dominated society. In this paper, the focus is on how Naheed presents the acts of resistance in her poems through female characters. Scott’s theory of “Everyday Resistance” is used to analyse selected poems. The theory applied on this research is different from all the other researches.

3. Research Methodology

This research entails a content-based, textual analysis of Kishwar Naheed’s selected poems as the primary text. Naheed’s poems have been analysed while utilizing the theoretical framework of James Scott’s “Everyday Resistance.” The reviews pertaining to the aforementioned author, poems, and theory form the secondary sources of this paper. Both, print and electronic media have been utilized as a secondary source. It is qualitative research and is exploratory and inductive in nature. The method employed for this research is wholly subjective and holistic. The descriptive method is used in gathering the required and needed information for this study. The technique through which this data is collected is by making a study of the four poems carefully to have comprehensive perception of the poetry. Some notes have also been taken to highlight the material related to this research. Labelling and classification of the data is also done that is relevant to this current study. In order to make the conclusion of this research, the data is carefully inspected according to the content along with theory, that is utilized in this research paper.

4. Discussion and Analysis

This section presents the textual analysis and discussion related to the depiction of women as emancipators who are liberating themselves from patriarchal oppression.

4.1 Acts of Resistance and Persuasion

“I am not that woman” is probably the best example where we can discover pictures of female misuse and opposition of woman against man centric society. In this poem, Naheed speaks to the ambivalent connection between men, who represent male-centric society, and the female speaker, who connotes the survivor of male centric culture. The female speaker communicates her contempt and disdain toward male centric figures who have persecuted her and controlled each part of her life. While talking about the oppression which women have to face in patriarchal society, Naheed, as a representative of all the oppressed women, claims:

I am the one you hid
 In your walls of stone, while you roamed free as the breeze...
 I am the one you crushed
 With the weight of custom and tradition...
 I am the one in whose lap
 You picked flowers
 And planted thorns and embers

These lines exactly exemplify the oppression women have to face in patriarchal structures, where women are oppressed and chained in domestic roles and men roamed free and do whatever they want. Women have to face a lot of restrictions in society but there are no restrictions and limitations for men. These lines are full of violent imagery and Naheed has used very strong words and phrases like “chains,” “thorns and embers,” “commodity,” and “crushed with the weight of custom and tradition” to show the strength of the oppression. She also gives us the hint that men have tried to replace her flowers of hope and aspiration with thorns and chains of contempt and oppression. This is another sign of entrapment and discrimination. This poem shows the issue of discrimination against women and how men treat them in patriarchal society but at the same time this poem is also directed towards empowerment and liberation of women. Naheed boldly asserts that women are being oppressed everywhere but they deserve to be respected and they are not “commodities.”

On one side, the female speaker proceeds to tell about her victimization under patriarchy but on the other side, she shows her potential to break the shackles of patriarchal norms. In this way, for her to accomplish help, freedom and independence, she needs to split away from male controlled society and dispose of male figures who have distorted her self-appreciation character. She finds no chance except for to perform the symbolic rejection and resistance of being a submissive and inferior woman while claiming, "I am not that woman/ selling you socks and shoes...No, no, I am not that woman." She refuses to disrespect herself while rejecting to objectify her body for others to see and receive pleasure. This is an act of resistance by a female speaker and these words are plainly observed as a danger to the man centric structures as the woman turns into her own saviour and she wants and endeavours to defy the guidelines forced upon her by men. The speaker is fighting with the thoughts of the men by asserting again and again that "I am not that woman." This sentence demonstrates that the female persona is rejecting to be the woman according to the will of men and she is going to stand up for the rights of equality. She might be the one whom patriarchy has crushed under the weight of custom, purchased and sold for the sake of purity, married off to get rid of burden; but she re-emerges and resurfaces like "light cannot be hidden in the darkness."

4.2 Challenging Negative Stereotypes of Women

Kishwar Naheed uses different metaphors and symbolism to show the acts of resistance more clearly in this poem. The female speaker uses the metaphor of "light" for herself. This metaphor of light against dark shows the potential and courage of speaker to break away patriarchal norms. This light can also be described as a light of knowledge which gives us the hint that female speaker can lighten the darkness through her knowledge and abilities. Women are usually considered ignorant and inferior in patriarchal societies and this image breaks the negative stereotype of women as ignorant, submissive, and inferior being. This metaphorical comparison of a woman with the light can be described as one of the "hidden transcripts" of what James Scott calls "weapon of the weak," who are diminished to restricted alternatives, which connotes the "vital role of power relations in constraining forms of resistance," but at the same time her symbolic and metaphoric act has "revolutionary implications" ("Everyday form of Resistance," 1989). Scott accepts that opposition exists between a wide range of subalterns, and it is a "matter of the less visible and small actions by subalterns" (Vinthagen and Johansson, 2013).

Scott refers to two types of resistance available to all subaltern subjects: the “public/ practical” and the “disguised symbolic” resistance. Scott includes the assertion of worth by gestures, dress, and speech in public declared resistance whereas he refers to the disguised resistance as “hidden transcript of anger, aggression, disguised discourses of dignity, symbolism, gossip.” (Scott, 1989).

Naheed was writing in an environment in which the prevailing view of women was of seductress or immoral, she specifically resists this negative stereotype of the woman as immoral seductress and counter this perception by presenting herself as a virtuous and moral woman who is not ready to objectify herself while “selling socks and shoes half-nakedly” to the men for the sake of their pleasure and claims, “No, no, I am not that woman.” She conducts herself with integrity attributes her capacity to oppose enticement and protect her guiltlessness.

4.3 Defiance of Submissive Roles

Through her allegorical opposing demonstration of "lighting in the darkness" and "walking on the water," the female speaker builds up an individual dream of freedom, fearlessness, and encounter to challenge the submissive roles in the general public. Therefore, she certifies her mental triumph over the men by communicating her indignation, which is another concealed record of opposition, against the entire male centric and political framework and offending its agent while proclaiming toward the end that:

I am the commodity you traded in,
My chastity, my motherhood, my loyalty.
Now it is time for me to flower free.
The woman on that poster, half-naked,
Selling socks and shoes-
No, no, I am not that woman's.

This disguised emotional act of resistance and defiance of submissive role is important for her to have the option to build up another life liberated from the pictures of her oppressors, and to be her own self with no male centric powers around her. She decides to free herself from the patriarchal structures and force that had oppressed her for so many years. The female speaker rejects to be the victim of patriarchy, denies vehemently to be commodified and declares herself free while claiming that now “it is time for me to flower free” which gives the hint of her liberation from male-

dominated society. This is also an act of resistance as she rejects the idea of remaining within the four walls of house and chooses to enjoy freedom while going against the typical norms of society.

So, from a feminist perspective, “I am not that woman” can be viewed as a poem of a female change from oppressive victim to emancipation, as the speaker who was once “hid in the walls” blatantly claims that now “my voice cannot be smothered by stones.” So, it can be said that Naheed’s “I am not that woman” is imbued with “feminist triumph, exemplifies the stereotyping of women in a typical patriarchal society with the help of chilling images and morbidity to let the world know that her identity is no more to be decided by men” (Hashmi, 2014). In this poem, the female speaker moves from the condition of material exploitation and oppression to the condition of mental liberation and strengthening.

4.4 Speaking Out Against Patriarchal Figures

Anticlockwise is the poem by Kishwar Naheed that shows the “ugliest side of dominancy and marginality” (Hashmi, 2014). In “Anticlockwise,” Naheed, who is the female speaker too, identifies herself as a victim of patriarchal society. She says, “You have tied the chains of domesticity/shame and modesty around my feet... You have paralyzed me.” These lines in the poem give us a clear-cut idea how women are treated in patriarchal societies and they are not allowed even to move freely outside of their homes. The female persona claims that the patriarchal figures have tied the chains of domesticity around her feet and she has been restricted to roam freely in this world. In this poem, Naheed has given the message in a very clear-cut way, though she uses personal pronouns in this poem, still she is the representative of all the suppressed women in male-dominated societies. Women are victimized and exploited by the patriarchal norms of society, and so is the female speaker who sees herself as a casualty of the patriarchal frameworks. But in any case of this recognition of the female, she declares her sense of self as she declares that even if men have “tied the chains of domesticity” around her feet, she can still “think” if not “walk.” This act of thinking is an act of resistance against patriarchy to recapture her sense of self-identity. The female persona asserts that patriarchal figures can control her sight, sense of smell, they can control her from going outside or from walking even but they cannot control her thoughts. The lines, “even though I cannot walk/ I can still think” raise the issue of “embodied resistance from within, both conceptually and literally” (Ananthram, 2009). While asserting her ability

to find new ways to come out of oppression and her potential to think, Naheed resists the negative stereotype of women as ignorant, submissive, and inferior being. Thus, we can say that this is a symbolic form of resistance the female speaker manages to perform her rebellion towards patriarchy as an oppressive ideology.

Kishwar Naheed draws attention to women's exploitation and abuse in patriarchal society but she also portrays that every time the female persona finds a new way to come out of her deformed sense of self as she says:

Even if my eyes become the soles of your feet
 Even so, the fear will not leave you
 That though I cannot see
 I can feel bodies and sentences
 Like a fragrance.

These lines demonstrate that the speaker is not the woman who can be restricted by men. Her sight can be controlled by men but she claims that she would smell everything and find another way to survive and come out of oppression. Through her potential to "think" freely, she shows her resistance and refusal to adapt to the restricted values of patriarchy to be a submissive and weak woman who does not think but act according to the will of men. But Naheed refuses to be that kind of submissive and inferior woman who is a play doll in the hands of men. As a bold and emancipated female figure, the poet bluntly claims: "Your fear of my being free, being alive/ And able to think might lead you/ Who knows into what travails..." (2009). Here, we notice how she moves from being the detached casualty of man controlled society to the compelling woman who issues a threat to the men of society, as she claims that this fear of her freedom might lead the men of society into different troubles and laborious efforts. She depicts how a freed woman stirs dread in man who can't rest until he can limit and control every one of her capacities. This threat or warning which she has issued can be considered as a form of 'public declared resistance.' While claiming, "though I cannot smell/ I can still feel... though I cannot speak/ I can still walk... though I cannot walk/ I can still think," the female speaker of the poem becomes the vigorous agent of resistance, who cannot be oppressed by men. Naheed composes that regardless of whether every one of her detects wither away under the pounding teachings of patriarchal society, she will in any case have the option to get to her considerations. Although, the patriarchal figures try to exploit her because

she is a woman, she becomes her own liberator and moves from being caged and confined by the chains of domesticity to being liberated and psychological emancipated. Through the symbolic acts of resistance, this poem can be described as a journey from oppression and nightmares to one of liberation and empowerment.

4.5 Resistance Through Assertion

Kishwar Naheed, an iconoclastic poet and a social activist has always been at the forefront as far as women's issues are concerned. "The Grass is Really Like Me" is a very powerful poem in which Naheed portrays the way women are treated in patriarchal societies. In this poem, she draws an intriguing and innovative analogy between grass and herself. The message of this poem is clear-cut in the very beginning when the poetess declares that "the grass is really like me/ it has to unfurl underfoot to fulfill itself." Through these two lines, it is presented that whatever may be the tactics adopted by patriarchy to uproot or suppress woman, she will rise again and again unbeaten and undaunted in her spirits like the grass. The choice to identify oneself with the grass is very significant. Naheed claims that in this patriarchal society, by "getting soaked," a woman similar to grass will prove nothing except a "scorching sense of shame," and "heart of emotion." Here, Naheed wants to give us this idea that whenever women try to rise or do something on their own, these attempts make them an outcast from society and they receive nothing except shame. Because, women are not allowed to go against the will of their men. According to the OED, the word "soaked" means "to be exposed to something" (1152). So, in this context, we can say that the word 'soaked' in the poem gives us the idea that whenever women try to have the exposure of the outer world, they are badly criticized and labelled as 'bad women.'

This poem articulates how men levels woman down like grass, restraining her rhizomatic growth to infinity. Lawnmower cutting the grass reminds the poetess of men suppressing women's desire of freedom. She claims that numerous attempts are undertaken to flatten the grass to a velvety beauty. In a similar manner, many attempts have also been made to make the female persona, who represents oppressed women, subservient. Any attempts to raise that bent head are met with violent repercussions like the flattening of the grass. Kishwar Naheed writes that "the grass is really like me/ as soon as it can raise its head/ the lawnmower/ obsessed with flattening it into velvet/ mows it down again" (2009). The

efforts of the gardener to “mow” down the raised grass is compared to the politics of male dominated society manifested in many ways to level down the women. The image of women’s oppression is being depicted in this stanza through the comparison of woman with grass. Just like the grass is razed again and again, women are also not allowed to raise their heads and if they try to raise them, women are crushed or razed down by patriarchal figures and structures. The speaker also declares her subjectivity and self-sufficiency through opposing the idea of being second rate and subjugated. The aggressive assertion and opposition to repressive customs and traditions continues in this poem too, as she asserts: “how you strive and endeavor,/ to level women down too/ but neither the earth’s nor women’s/ desire to manifest life dies” (7-10, 2009). Through these lines, the female persona issues a warning to patriarchal figures that they cannot curb her desires and emotions. Her desire to manifest life does not die like earth. While comparing herself with grass, on one side she shows us that women are crushed by men’s dominance just like grass is crushed under foot but on the other side she also shows us, even if she would be crushed by dominance, she would still grow again and again as the real grass does. This reminds me of Maya Angelou’s *Still I Rise* in which she draws an innovative analogy between air and herself. Angelou mentions that even if men would kill her, she would rise again and again like air. In this poem, Naheed compares herself with grass and boldly claims that even if men would crush her or raze her down, she would grow again and again like grass. These two poems have some sort of similarity with each other as both the poems are considered resistance poems and the acts of resistance are present in these two poems. The female speakers in these poems have achieved a sense of self-identity and they cannot be suppressed by men now. What Naheed offers in the poem is a complete subversion. She opposes the ordinary part of femininity under man controlled society through her figurative demonstration of opposition that shows her determinism to not let anything pound her or move her back to obscurity. Her intention in this poem thereby is to offer her resistance to the process of “level women down too.” The female speaker moves from oppression to emancipation as she claims that “her desire to manifest life” cannot die or be suppressed by patriarchal forces of society. Accordingly, we can say that this poem projects its female speaker’s resistance against such sort of persecution that has ghettoized her potentialities and capacities. Such activities and tactics can be considered as “acts of resistance that...exploited people use in order to both survive and undermine repressive domination” (Courpasson and Vallas, 2016, 229-230). As a

feminist writer, Naheed advises women not to bear the sufferings and grow again and again as grass keeps on growing even if it is flattened by someone.

4.6 Journey From Oppression to Liberation

In "Ants Consume the Elephant," the female speaker additionally attempts to state her subjectivity and self-rule through opposing the idea of "good and accommodating woman" as a patriarchal institution when declining to stay quiet. She opposes this traditional function of femininity under male controlled society and decides to support and chooses to proceed with her excursion toward autonomy, opportunity, and freedom. The lines of this poem that "I will speak, I will sing/ Try if you can stop/ the drops of the first rain!" show the practical act of resistance through the act of speaking and singing freely that also indicates her determinism to not let anything trap her again or drag her back to the "darkness."

In this poem, Naheed boldly claims that the limited roles have paralyzed women and denied them of selfhood and independence. The poet gripes the intense state of marriage for Pakistani women where they must choose between limited options and will to pick their own spouses. Power marriage is the severe product of Pakistani extremist male centric and male-administered society that goes astray the principal and common privileges of women. Naheed says: "on whom should I write a poem now/that girl/ who cannot marry of her own accord/and those who point fingers,/ her own blood,/ are petitioners of justice" (2009).

Naheed realizes that she herself needs to cross the fringes of male controlled society and be her genuine self while rebelling against these cliché roles allotted to women by patriarchal society. She breaks away the shackles of patriarchy as she boldly challenges men to dare to stop her from speaking and singing. She decides to break silence and speak up for herself. Thus, we can say that this poem presents female speaker's resistance to remain silent which has "ghettoized and degraded her potentialities" and undermined "women's intellectual and spiritual importance" (Shoaib, 2009). The condition of the female speaker toward the start of the poem is one of stability and anguish where she feels that women are detained by their roles in the public arena but this poem ends with a very strong and challenging voice as Naheed claims that nobody can stop her from speaking and singing as it is her innate right.

5. Conclusion

Taking everything into account, it tends to be expressed that Kishwar Naheed uses her poems such as “I am not that woman,” “Anticlockwise,” “Grass is Really Like Me” and “Ants consume the Elephant” to communicate her critique of the male centric social order which limits women and diminishes them to terms of latency, accommodation, reliance, subjection and mediocrity. In her poems, she reveals the pictures of women’s abuse and persecution within the possession of men. Female personas are depicted as the casualties of patriarchal conviction framework. In these poems, Naheed additionally draws pictures of resistance, rebellion, and revolt against the abusive patriarchal system and its agent male figures. The distinctive frame of “public,” “symbolic,” “metaphoric” and “disguised” acts performed by the female speakers in these three poems can be regarded as a “form of individual everyday activism to resist social controls that subjugate them to others’ values and expectations” (Simi, 2009).

These four poems present how the female speakers move from being exploited to being triumphant and victorious over male centric society, alongside its restricted roles and its narrow impression of women. The female speakers in the long run come to understand their genuine circumstance as being caught and furthermore understand their earnest need to liberate themselves from the harsh swathes, mentally at any rate. However, I contend that Naheed's poems uncover various sites of mistreatment for women, yet in addition open doors for change, restriction, and freedom. The writer cautiously utilizes both convincing and safe techniques to battle the generalizations and negative perspectives on Pakistani women. She opposes and battles sexual orientation, segregation, and social imbalances, rousing her crowd to join the battle against male-centric structures and social treacheries. Naheed's poetry shows that she is opposing both current negative cliché observations and century of vicious discrimination against women.

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