



Women's Suppression or Empowerment? A Critical Study of Rubies for a Dog: A Fable

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the elements of suppression and empowerment of the women in a patriarchal society under critical circumstances. French feminist Simon De Beauvoir's concept of suppression of women is used as a framework for this research for the analysis of Husain's short story Rubies For a Dog; A Fable. In *The Second Sex* (1988), she said; Women are not born they are made. In this short story, Husain raises her voice against the suppression of women in the patriarchal society. She gives voice to her female character Samira who fought for the freedom of her innocent father Wazir. She was bound to live in the palace as she is a female. She breaks the rules of patriarchal society and goes to see her father in jail after wearing the clothes of her father. She shaves her head and wears the clothes of her father so that she may look like a man. Her father wishes to have a son and she fights for her father like his son. She rebels against the patriarchal rules and does everything for her father and empowers herself. The deep study of the short story is used as a primary resource and different articles, interviews, magazines and books are also used as secondary resource. The study is significant because it explores the effect of suppression in form of empowerment. Women empower themselves when they are suppressed.

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1. Introduction

Women have been subjugated, marginalized and exploited since long in the history. Several men and women writers are trying to unveil this darkest part through their writings. They are trying to raise their voice against the patriarchal system in which women are treated like lesser humans and/or lifeless objects. Several feminist theorists are also highlighting relevant topics about feminism such as suppression of women, gender inequality, subjugation, marginality and empowerment of women. Simon de Beauvoir is one of the major theorists who addressed the gender inequality and suppression of women in her most notable work, *The Second Sex* (1949). According to (Beauvoir, 1998), "Women are not born rather they are made" (1949). Some writers try to highlight the issues of women such as suppression, gender discrimination marginalization that may resultantly lead to empowerment of women. Shahrukh Husain is one of those writers who raised voice against the dual standard of the patriarchal society in her one of the most notable work *Rubies for a Dog; a Fable*. It is a great contribution in feminist works. In the present study, Husain's *Rubies for a Dog; a Fable* is studied to highlight suppression and empowerment of women in a patriarchal society. The researcher intends to highlight the issues of women such as suppression of women and gender inequality according to the concept of Simon de Beauvoir. The objective of this study is to explore the difficulties of women in a patriarchal society and to highlight the outcomes of their suppression in the form of their empowerment. The questions for this study state "How

women are being suppressed in a patriarchal society?", and "Can they empower themselves as a result of suppression?"

2. Literature Review

Simone de Beauvoir solidly trusts the answer for ladies to live up to their actual potential is to track down freedom: "what lady needs most importantly is to embrace, in misery and pride, her apprenticeship in surrender and amazing quality: that is, in freedom" (The Second Sex, 711). Muneeza Shamsie is a Pakistani writer, essayist and supervisor who has published an anthology, *And the World Changed: Contemporary Short Stories by Pakistani Women* (Women Unlimited, 2005). Through this collection of short stories, Pakistani women writers highlighted the issues of women dwelling in a patriarchal society. They give voice to their female characters to fight for their rights. Bapsi Sidhwa is one of the well-known Pakistani women novelists and short story writers. She belongs to the Parsi community. She says that she tries to highlight the issues of women in the community of Pakistan as well as the communities in the minority (Bapsi Sidhwa, 26 April 1998, the Hindustan Sunday). Bapsi Sidhwa presents her female characters in reaction to the classical patriarchal system. Her works can be studied by means of the term gyno-critical m based by Elaine Showalter. (Singh, Sinha, & Srivastava, 2015). (Shettar, 2015) in her article named "A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India" thought that strengthening of ladies must be accomplished assuming their monetary and economic wellbeing is gotten to the next level. This could be conceivable exclusively by embracing distinct social and financial strategies with a perspective on complete advancement of ladies and to cause them to understand that they can possibly major areas of strength for be creatures. Globalization, progression and other financial powers have given a reprieve to an enormous extent of the populace. Notwithstanding, there are still a significant number regions where ladies strengthening in India is to a great extent lacking. (Khatri, 2016) in her article named "The Role of Education towards Women Empowerment in India" centers around the effect of proficiency and instruction on strengthening of ladies as well as the idea to further develop the progressions that should be considered for ladies strengthening and financial turn of events. (Suresh & Sivakumar, 2017) distributed their article named "Ladies Empowerment in India-A Evolving Scenario." They saw that strengthening of ladies is basically the course of upliftment of monetary, social and political status of ladies, the customarily oppressed ones in the general public. It is the interaction of monitoring them against all types of viciousness.

3. Research Methodology

Feminism has been used as a general framework and the study is qualitative in nature. The selected short story is studied using Beauvoir's feministic views such as women's suppression, gender inequality and women empowerment. The present study aims at exploring women's suppression resulting in their empowerment in the selected text. The extracts from texts have been used to find the suppression and empowerment in the actions of the characters and events in the short story.

4. Analysis

Shahrukh Husain's short story *Rubies For a Dog; a Fable* is a true picture of the suppression of women. The short story tells a tale of a patriarchal society in which women are trained only for domestic activities. They are not allowed to do any job outside of the house and they are forced to live a restricted life in a patriarchal society. In Muslim culture, women cannot go against men. They follow their men. They follow the commandments of Islam. According to Simon de Beauvoir, 'women are not born rather they are made' (Beauvoir, 1998). Men make women their subordinates and exploit the powerlessness of women. Husain gives voice to women of a patriarchal society in her prominent short story *Rubies For a Dog; a Fable*. She raised her voice against the patriarchal system. She gives voice to a female character Samira to take some bold steps in the presence of men in society and to rebel against the rules of a patriarchal society. The text highlights the suppression of women and the empowerment of women in a patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society, women are restricted to live under the boundary wall of the house. They cannot make any decisions about their jobs outside the house. Man is dominant and he suppresses women in a patriarchal society. Women are powerless and subordinate to their men. Shahrukh Husain's short story *Rubies for a Dog; a Fable* highlights the issues of women by her female character Samira, who is the daughter of Wazir. He was sent to jail by the king. She is bound to live in the care of a

king in a house because she is a girl and is considered weak just because of having a female body. She is not allowed to participate in the daily affairs of life. She is not allowed to go outside of the house and is asked to live her life like a doll in the house. His father is worried about her protection. He weeps because he has a daughter. He wishes to have a son who could fight for his freedom. Wazir feels helpless about having a daughter because he thinks that a girl is weak and cannot face the crucial conditions of patriarchal society but a boy can fight for him and prove his innocence as women cannot participate in any activity outside of the house. Samira requests her father to let her fight for his freedom but her father disagrees with her just because she has a female body.

"You are my kid," the old Wazir said tragically, "and I say thanks to God for you. I won't put your life in extreme danger by letting you know what occurred. In the event that I had a child, he would do what is important to demonstrate my innocence. Be that as it may, I can't send a girl." (p.96). Samira refuses to help her father because she is a girl. She crept into the castle of the king to find her identity and there she cursed the narrow-mindedness of men of patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society, women cannot go outside of the house. Samira tries to go outside and wants to fight for her father. When she comes to know that her father does not want to see her because she is a girl and he wants to have a son, she feels sad and disappointed and starts weeping. Samira feels humiliated after hearing these words. She thinks that she is useless. She feels that she could do nothing except live in the home. She tries to convince her father about herself that he has a son. When she was rejected to help by her father on the basis of her gender, Samira experienced a profound sense of humiliation and worthlessness. She retreated to her castle where she shed tears and lamented the narrow-mindedness of men who confine women to domestic spaces, while simultaneously deeming them incapable of making meaningful contributions beyond these confines. Men are always considered all in all in a patriarchal society. Women are considered as a property which is under the control of men. If any of the women decide to take a bold step toward freedom, she might be called a characterless woman. Samira decides to help her father to live a blame-free life in society but every time she is rejected by her father to do so.

She thought pitifully, "If I go to see my father, all I will do is tell him that I, his miserable daughter, who is unable to assist him, am stuck in his home, dressed in silk, adorned in money and jewelry, and always in risk of ruining his name. To the best of my ability, I can only hope that I lead a blameless life, earning him the distinction of being a man of noble birth and lacking in moral fiber. Suppression on the part of the body is also found in a patriarchal society. Men and women have different shapes of their bodies biologically. Samira cannot go outside of the house because she has a female body. When Samira stands in front of the mirror, she sees in her reflection that she has a woman's body, long hair, blushing cheeks and from head to toe she is a woman, she feels sad for having a female body. She feels helpless because men decide the lives of women in a patriarchal society. Patriarchal society has made dual standards for males and females. Every right is given to men because men are considered brave as compared to women. Samira's body becomes a cause of her suppression. "Samira longed to see her father—but how could she? Her woman's body, her long hair, her feminine attire would be anathema to him. To see in her what could have been, but was definitely not, must be unbearable for him." (P.97)

The second wave of feminism is about gender inequality. Women fought the gender equality. In a patriarchal society, women are considered inferior. They try to suppress women in every possible way. They have no right. In this short story, Shahrukh Husain raises her voice against gender inequality through Samira. Samira fought for equal rights. At first, she hated herself because she had a female body. She ripped away her clothes with a dagger. She tried to change her identity but could not change her body parts. So, Samira hated every part of her body. "Yet she hated every part of herself. In a fury, she got a little knife and started to tear away her garments. Then, at that point, she looked with delight at the velvets and chiffons and beaded silks lying in sections on the floor. But when she glanced at herself, her reflection still mocked her." (P.97)

The body plays an important role in both genders. Husain's Samira does everything to fight for gender equality. She wants to be free from the unequal rules of patriarchal society. She shares her head to look like a man. She makes her hair lifeless. She is doing this to look like a man so that she can help her father. But still, she is a woman. "I'm still here," it

taunted. "Still lovely despite everything female. Presently how will you deny me?" Samira put the sharp cutting edge to her head and long smooth strands of hair crawled dead to the floor. Briefly, she liked she saw a lady reflected in the delicate load of her braids — her mom. "You are absolutely right," she appeared to say. "I endorse your plan." (P.97)

There is a duality of rules in a patriarchal society. It has set different rules for men and different rules for women. A man does not want his woman to go outdoors because of honour. Women are viewed as a representation of chastity. They are anticipated to be devoted. They are required to abide by social norms. This is the reason; the women are not allowed by their men to go outside. Husain writes against these social customs. Samira wears the clothes that her father wears when he goes outside and interacts with the public. The clothes have been embroidered beautifully. Everything she wore was the same, with the exception of the turban. Samira felt the weight of her father's responsibilities when she put the turban on her head. Samira takes a bold step and goes outside of the house to see her father. She also keeps her identity a secret from her father. She represents herself as a son but not a daughter.

"Carefully she dressed herself in the flowing overcoat and baggy trousers her father wore to go out among the people. They were of plainer cloth and not so highly embroidered; "Apart from the turban," she thought, "it's all much the same. I fit these clothes as well as my own. But the turban feels cumbersome on my head just as a father's duties must weigh him down." Then Samira advanced toward the prison. "Your daughter has sent me," she said, deepening her voice. "I am her sworn brother and therefore your son." (P.98). Samira rebels against the set patterns of patriarchal society. She breaks the rituals of society and goes outside of the house. She breaks the laws of patriarchy. She put on the clothes of her father so that her father could not recognize her. Then she admits that she is his own daughter and she wants to make him proud of his daughter who is ready to fight for him. She requests her father to accept her as his son and let her help him.

"Father!" cried Samira, removing her turban. "Don't you recognize me? I am your daughter! Please let me help you." "Yes, but I would rather serve the living than the dead,"(P.98). Women are empowered when they are given the opportunity to fully participate in social, political, and economic spheres of life (Sushama, 1998). Shahrukh Husain gives voice to her women to raise their voices for their rights. Women try to empower themselves by taking risky actions. Samira defies patriarchal society's rules by deciding to assist her father in any situation. She is unconcerned about her own life. She is willing to die for her father in order to make him proud of her. The Wazir was proud to see his daughter's bravery, as she was determined and dedicated to fighting for her father. Samira fought for her father's innocence. She violated patriarchal society's rules. Only men are permitted to participate actively in the daily affairs of life, both inside and outside the home, in a patriarchal society. Samira works to eliminate gender discrimination in society.

"He was bursting with pride at his daughter's bravery and quite overcome by her devotion and determination." "But will my daughter be safe?"(P.98). In Islamic culture, Women are considered as a symbol of chastity. Women are directed to live in the protection of men. If women go outside of the house, men feel fearful about women if they go outside of the house. According to men, women are safe in the house while outside of the house they are not protected. The Wazir was also afraid for the safety of his daughter. Chastity and honour are considered the ornament of women. Women have to protect this ornament at any cost throughout their lives. Men are always fearful about the protection of women. They think that women are powerless. They don't have enough power to protect themselves.

"She will be under my protection and may, if she chooses, move into the royal palace for her own security. If she prefers, however, she may stay in your mansion and I will pronounce her a ward of the Emperor."(P.101). Society has set some rules which have to be followed by men and women. Society has a mindset as well. In a patriarchal society, men are dominant and powerful while women are subjugated. Men are considered superior while women are considered inferior. Men are the owners of the women. Women can do nothing without the permission of men. Their fate is in the hands of men. Shahrukh Husain gives voice to Samira. She raised her voice against gender discrimination. She faced a lot of difficulties in her way. She wanted to help her father at every cost but her father was not willing to allow

her to take any decision. At this, she stood up and got angry. Samira began to lose her nerve but recovered and spoke with greater determination than before. "I want to go to Nishapur to find the dog with the ruby collar. I want your permission and your blessings." (P.102). In *The Second Sex*, (Simons, 2001) talks about gender discrimination. She says that in society, men are superior while women are considered inferior. Women are marginalized and they are forced to obey the rules set by men. Women are not allowed to go outside of the house. Wazir was greatly worried about the protection of her daughter. He was not letting her go to Nishapur. But she wanted to go. Wazir asked a lot of questions and Samira retorted. She replied; wit can win every battle. But Wazir got fearful after listening to the remarks of Samira and lamented:

"Ah, Samira, Samira," lamented the Wazir, "the lack of a mother has done you more harm than I ever imagined. You read books on battles and look deep into the *Mirror of Princes* and you talk back to your father. Well, I brought you up so I must take the blame. It would have been wiser to hand you over to my sister, then perhaps I would not be in this dilemma today." (P.102)

In a patriarchal society, women are considered powerless and delicate. They are treated like a doll. They are limited to living under the boundary of the house. Their duty is to raise the children and obey their men. But Husain's Samira goes against the rules of patriarchal society. She challenges the rules of a patriarchal society. Samira changes her appearance to look like a man. She tries to find her identity by adopting a man's appearance. She learns the use of the sword. She told her father about her bravery and that she was best in swordsmanship among her companions. She has a healthy body. "I know that some believe a woman's body is delicate and exposed. That's the reason I had to wear this outfit. Isn't it ironic that in order to realize my potential, I have to dress like a man?" (P.102). In any society, beauty is considered as the ornament of women and the sword is related to men. When Samira saw fabulous jewels she was overwhelmed by the grace of jewels. Beauty on the part of women plays an important role.

"She came across a large shop displaying such fabulous jewels that she was quite overwhelmed by their beauty." "Shame, Father," laughed Samira. "You have very little faith in your daughter." (P.104). Samira raises her voice for the equality and empowerment of women who are suppressed due to the patriarchal society. She does everything to make her father live a blame-free life. Samira fought bravely for her father. In spite of the patriarchal rules, she struggled a lot to make her father proud. The Wazir becomes very happy to see her daughter safe. He shows affection and love towards his daughter. He tells his daughter about his fears. In a patriarchal society, women are suppressed in the name of honour. This is the reason for fear of the Wazir. But Samira laughed at her father as her father was not willing to let her daughter go alone and he has no faith in his daughter because he thinks that women are weak and men are strong. She was a daughter, not a son. She had the body of a woman. There is a dual standard of living in a patriarchal society for men and women. Men do not allow their women to do any job outside of the four walls as they are considered weak and powerless creatures. They rule over their women. Shahrukh Husain's Samira as a representative of women in patriarchal society raised her voice against the rules of patriarchal society and gender discrimination. She fought for her father's honour and proved him wrong by doing tough tasks against patriarchal rules. She became happy and felt proud to be a woman. She becomes a powerful woman after her achievement for her father. She becomes a woman who can do everything without any fear.

"A daughter," thought Samira alone in her chamber that night, smoothing her soft fabrics to her skin, inhaling the perfumed atmosphere of her room, slipping between the silk of her bedclothes, "who is very happy to be a woman now that she has shown what womankind can achieve." (P.106). Samira's efforts to change the world prove fruitful. At night, she saw everything differently. The situation was totally changed. She was proud and happy to be a woman.

5. Conclusion

Rubies for a Dog; A Fable by Shahrukh Husain, is no doubt a depiction of patriarchal society. Women face a lot of problems in a patriarchal society. Samira is the victim of the laws of patriarchal society. She faced a lot of difficulties on her way to fight for the freedom of her

father. At the very first she was suppressed and discouraged because of her female body and appearance. She had to shave her head and wear her father's clothes to go outside of the boundary wall. She cried after knowing her father's desire for a boy who could fight for his innocence. She takes bold steps and breaks the laws of a patriarchal society. She goes to the other state to find the truth. Husain actually raises her voice through her character Samira against the laws of patriarchal society. In the end, Samira empowers herself after using the sword in a patriarchal society and proves her father and his notions wrong about the security of women.

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