

A Rebel on Patriarchy: Women Subjugation in Kishwar Naheed's "I Am Not That Woman"

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Abstract

Patriarchy is an evil social construct. A woman is marginalized based on her gender as a woman who is treated inferior compared to men. Patriarchal ideologies are imposed upon women. They are discriminated, suppressed, or subjugated based on a socio-economic and political basis. Gender Inequality is evident in almost all fields, where women enjoy unequal rights as compared to men. Kishwar Naheed, in her famous poem "I am not that Woman," raises her voice against injustice towards women.

Keywords: Feminism, gender equality, Patriarchy, objectification, Marginalisation, subjugation, oppression

Introduction

B.R.Ambedkar said that "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved."

When we trace the history of the status or condition or progress of women in our society, the result is very unsatisfactory. Women are considered inferior beings when compared to men. This is the current as well as the past statuesque of women in India as well as in Pakistan.

Kishwar Naheed is a famous literary figure in Urdu Poetry. She is a feminist writer from Pakistan. She is an embodiment of optimism, where she struggled and fought herself to receive an education.

She is known for her twelve volumes of poetry published from both Pakistan and India. Her other famous poems are "We Sinful Women," "Labe Goya," "I am not that Woman," etc.

Her well-known poem "We Sinful Women" is considered a Women's Anthem among Pakistani feminists. Her poems or works express the themes of the plight of women in the male-dominated society, love towards children, empowerment of women, struggle for equality, freedom, etc.

Kishwar Naheed's most celebrated feminist poem titled "I am not that Woman" displays the menace of discrimination and inequality towards women in the present scenario. Poetry is considered as a powerful medium to express the raw emotions and truths as they are. Naheed articulates her voice for the so-called inferior women through this fire brand feminist poem, "I am not that Woman."

According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, an important figure in the history of Philosophy, "man is born free, but everywhere he is in a chain." A woman is always shattered in the chains of patriarchy.

"I am not that Woman" can be read in a feminist perspective where KishwarNaheed presents the subjugation or oppression of women in a male patriarchal society.

Gender inequality towards women is reflected throughout the poem. According to the concept of gender equality, men and women enjoy the same status or opportunity or freedom. But women are always considered as inferior when compared to that of men in this patriarchal world.

I am the one you hid
 In your walls of stone, while you roamed
 Free as the breeze, not knowing
 That my voice cannot be smothered by stones,

Kishwar Naheed questions the freedom enjoyed by men and women in the above lines. Women are always shut behind the doors or walls, which forbids them from interacting or communicating with the outside world. There is an existing common false belief that men are meant for social interaction, whereas the women for domestic work. Kishwar uses a sharp personification in the line *“free as the breeze.”* Men are as free as that of a breeze, where they enjoy the absolute freedom of going anywhere and doing what they like. But women are often restricted from roaming around the world. Women’s rights are denied by the male chauvinist, where they considered them as mere nurses or slaves. The poet here, strongly argues that her voice cannot be smothered by stones or restrictions. Her voice will be articulated for her freedom and equality.

I am the one you crushed
 With the weight of custom and tradition

The deferred dreams of a woman are always crushed with the weight of custom and tradition. The individuality of women is destroyed through the so-called inscribed customs and traditions of the patriarchal society. Marriage, fidelity, chastity, motherhood are the social attributes associated with women, where these are considered as pure. And men have no such social attributes on them.

The title of the poem is a strong, assertive sentence, *“I am not that Woman,”*; where the poet breaks away the shackles of male hypocrisy. Kishwar Naheed raises her voice against the objectification of women in this commercialized era. She flagrantly refuses to be seen as “that Woman” who sells socks and shoes in posters. Here she is referring to a model or actress where she allows herself to be objectified as a commercial product for advertisements.

A woman is always presented as a mere object for

exhibition, where they dressed up in a glamorous way for money, fame, and appreciation. Also, they are seen as mere flesh for pleasure by men.

“That chains cannot smother my fragrance.”

The word “chains” used by the poet shows how she is caged or locked in her house to take care of her husband and children. Women are also silenced through patriarchal norms, stigmas, and ideologies.

I am the one you married off
 To get rid of a burden

In the above lines, Kishwar Naheed addresses another man, that is the father. Parents often considered a female child as a burden due to the socially constructed system of dowry. The word “burden” used by the poet is associated with a woman, where she is not given any identity as a woman and treated as a mere object or thing.

Kishwar Naheed pens down this poem for universal women; for the attainment of their equality and freedom. She makes a note of empowerment for women through this poem.

Conclusion

Kishwar Naheed’s “I am not that Woman” is a feminist poem articulating the voice of resistance against the discrimination, subjugation, and inequality towards women. She wants all the women to be known for their identity as a woman. Also, She wants them to be empowered and liberated for their wellbeing as an individual.

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