Analysing Gendered Otherness of Women in Rural Sindh Through the Selected Fictional Stories

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Received on: 11-04-2022 Accepted on: 16-05-2022

Abstract
This study is based on the textual analysis of the short stories; The Wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006). The study applies the theory of Gendered Otherness by Simon de Beauvoir. This theory highlights women’s position as others, partial and secondary to men. There is no existence of women without the association of men, while, man is the dominant, powerful and decision maker. He takes all decisions of women’s lives. It is in fact the man who makes the life of woman meaningful and purposeful. The findings of the research correspond to the theory that in rural Sindh women are suffering from gendered otherness. They are partial and secondary to men. Women cannot take the decisions of their lives’ as that of Sundri and Pirani. The marital decision of Sundri and Pirani is decided by their fathers without their consent. Women tolerate the violence of men at their home just like Naseema. Due to gendered otherness women are suppressed and marginalized. They never develop the habit of self-expression like Sebhagi and her sister. Women never built self-recognition and identity within the society.

Keywords: Gendered otherness, marginalized, partial, secondary, decision maker.

Introduction
This world has always belonged to men; no valid reason is given for this. The world of men by definition is the world of power, while, the world of women is comprised of the four walls of the home; household chores and reproducing children. Women are given less opportunities for getting education, healthcare and to participate in the important community matters as compare to the men. Women are not permitted to vote, to express their views, ideas, opinions even their basic needs are not fulfilled. Therefore, the social status of women is lower as compare to men (Fakih, 2012, Kaufman, 1999).
The world of women is confined in and outside of the home. They are abused and maltreated at different stages of the life by the men. In their homes, they are treated as objects; in childhood by their fathers, in youth by their husbands and after the death of husband by their sons. Mostly women are forced to serve their families and are not allowed to pursue their career, outside the home. Women are trained from the very beginning that their duty is to stay at the home and hold domestic duties and job responsibilities (Istikomah, 2015). This patriarchal system has set different roles for men and women in different walks of the life. It has become common practice of the society that women are subordinate to men so that they should obey and accept men. Consequently, many girls are forcefully married, and many women have become submissive to their husbands. Many women give up their whole career and dreams just that they can become good wives and to nurture their children properly. Not only this but there are still many women who are violated and discriminated by men, yet they consider it as the part of their fate. This thing urges men to behave as the lords of the society and have power to do anything (Fakhri, 2012, Istikomah, 2015 & Williams in Abrams, 1999). Thus, both genders man and woman are assigned different roles in the society; men make the breadwinner (Shaikh, 2018), hunter (Lee and Daly, 1987), controller and power holder (Istikomah, 2015) while women are considered submissive and nurturer (Lee and Daly, 1987). The society has set different parameters for men and women (Istikomah, 2015). Consequently, women live their lives according to the choice of men, not their own. They are forced to see what their men are showing them. They do not have self-sufficiency, independency and self-rule over the personal lives.

Current study is based on two short stories The Wedding of Sundri (2008) by Bina Shah and Pirani (2006) by Jamal Abro. The study is conducted from Simon De Beauvoir’s concept of “Gendered Otherness”. Using this concept, it shows how women’s lives are devoid of meaning and how men set different parameters for the lives of women and how the autonomy of women is snatched by making them realize their lower status in the society. The study highlights how men make their women realize that their lives without men’s consent remain meaningless and absurd. They are unable to take decisions (Sultana, 2010). It is a man who can take the decisions of the lives of women as his choice and women are prone to follow and blindly accept those decisions. Women are others; they have no self-identification and recognition without men. Women are partials and secondary to men (Beauvoir, 1949).

Context of the Selected Stories: The Wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006)

Literature is an active and powerful tool for the depiction and recreation of social realities. It portrays different social perspectives and aspects of life in a realistic way and leaves its impacts on the society and people. Therefore, literature portrays the concept of gendered otherness as serious and solemn social ill. Many Pakistani erudite and scholars have penned down this matter in their writings. They show the gendered otherness of women in Pakistani context and its impacts on the lives of women.

The current study puts forward gendered otherness in rural Sindh through the selected stories as The Wedding of Sundri (2008) by Bina Shah and Pirani (2006) by Jamal Abro, translated into English by Hashoo Kewalramani. Both are short stories. The short story is a modern literary form which is a relief because of the shorter span of time. This genre reflects and draws the feelings and perspectives of modern beings appropriately and suitably as compare
to other genres like novel (Mukherjee & Ejaz, 06). *The Wedding of Sundri* (2008) is a poignant and lamentable story. It paints and mimics the life of 12 years old girl who is declared as “Kari”, a dishonoured girl on her wedding day. Sundri is called “Kari” on her wedding day just because she used to play outside with the boys before her marriage. The story sketches the miserable conditions of women in rural Sindh. Another short story *Pirani* (2006) by Jamal Abro figures out the social background of Sindh province. The Short story *Pirani* is very heart-broken; a nine years old girl is sold by her father in sixty rupees. The woeful and afflictive story brings forth the very hard conditions of family background where the girl is forcefully married in order to fulfil familial needs.

### Research Questions
The current study seeks the answers to the following questions:

1. How is the “gendered Otherness” represented in the two selected short stories *The Wedding of Sundri* (2008) and *Pirani* (2006)?
2. What are the effects of *Gendered Otherness* on the women of Rural Sindh represented through selected fictional short stories?

### Research objectives
Following are the research objectives:

1. To explore the *gendered otherness* in rural Sindh represented through the selected short stories; *The Wedding of Sundri* (2008) and *Pirani* (2006).
2. To investigate effects of *gendered otherness* on the lives of women of Rural Sindh through the selected fictional short stories.

### Theoretical Framework of the Research
Simon De Beauvoir is a French sociologist. She is well known for her theory of *otherness* in her book “*The Second Sex*” published in 1949. She has the view that people are distinguished and judged from the very beginning on the basis of region, colour, race, gender and class. Jews are the others for anti-Semites, black for racist Americans, indigenous for colonialist and proletariat for propertied classes (1949). The system is understood and comprehended in relation to oppositions; duality, alteration, opponent and symmetry. Everyone and everything is set in opposite forms, some are more essentials and others are less essentials. Similarly, the relation of men and women is in binary form. The one is oppressor (man) other is oppressed (woman) the one is master (man) and other is slave (woman). There is much gap between the status quo and position of man and woman. The world of both sexes is not equal. There is no legal status of woman as that of man; she is put at disadvantageous side (Beauvoir, 1949).

**Gendered Otherness**

*Gendered otherness* shows contradictory relation of men and women. For Beauvoir *Gendered otherness* depicts the identification and the self of the woman in relation to man. There is no
self-identity and recognition of woman in the society. She is defined in relation to man. Woman is the relative being, associated with others, she does not have autonomy. The body and the very existence of woman without regarding man is devoid of meaning (Beauvoir, 1949). Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man. She is what the man decides. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; he is absolute, she is other.

It is the man and society which construct women’s position as other, secondary and partial. She is inferior and not equal to man; created after Adam. Obviously she is a secondary being (Beauvoir,1949). Man has set up the laws to show woman as others due to which she is unable to make claim herself as subject because “she lacks the concrete means” and behaves in her secondary roles (Shinghal 2014).

Woman is always what man desires of her. She is explained and defined by man and has no self-existence. From her perfect obedience is demanded and expected if she fails in it then she is punished like Eve. Eve always wandered behind Adam and is seduced by Satan. She ate the forbidden fruit that she may acquire same knowledge and status as that of Adam. Woman keeps man at a privileged position and deems that after marriage she will attain the same social standing but in real sense she is unaware that man tame and control her nature (Dumitrescu ,2007).

**Gendered Otherness in Rural Sindh**

Sindh is the second largest province of Pakistan in terms of population and economic output. Sindh is an agricultural region where large proportion of population is living. Women in Sindh are considered as disenfranchised (Kayani, 2017). Women in rural Sindh have limited and subtle facilities for education. There is a common belief that women do not need to get education because no matter how much high education they get, their last destiny is the kitchen (Fakih,2012). Women suffer from poor access of the health care and nutrition. They have rare opportunity to take decisions of their lives. (Burki, 2017).Women in Sindh face discrimination; discrimination in the workplace, discrimination in educational, physical and psychological abuse and restriction (Kayani 2017). Moreover, early childhood marriages are common practices in rural Sindh.

**Representation of Otherness in Literature**

Literature is the best source for portraying the stories of human life and actions through the agency of some characters, who by their words, actions and deeds convey some messages for instruction, information and delight (Anjana & Bhambhra, 2016). Similarly, there has been much research conducted on the theory of otherness from various perspectives. Each research portrays certain new and innovative findings and results as the research of Dumitrescu (2007) found two criteria of otherness class and gender otherness. The writer has the view that identity is the product of others. By other he means partners or enemies, man and woman and poor and rich. The findings of the research showed that women in fiction are treated as others in the start. Later on these women challenge the stereotypical conceptions of the otherness, male, family and relations. Similarly the relation of rich and poor is like that of others. One is dominant and other is dominated; identifies with the sight of powerful group. The study of Jackson (2009) explored the cultural and racial

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otherness among the different groups of the people. The author has the view that in America people from different parts of the world are treated according to their local, regional, racial and cultural basis. For Americans, the immigrants, racial minorities, ethnic groups, homosexuals, women and disabled are others. The finding of the research concluded that in America Korean descent are facing otherness in various walks of the life; education, jobs and army. Korean are subordinated among Americans and are not considered as the part of American or powerful group.

Gap Analysis in the Research
All of the above studies examined, studied and scrutinized the concept of otherness in different background, setting and context. This study focuses on gendered otherness of women specifically in rural Sindh through two selected fictional stories; The Wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006).

Research Methodology
The study was based on the textual analysis of two short stories, The Wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006). Textual analysis provides valid inference (Krippendorff, 2003). Therefore, all of the related sayings and quotes from the selected stories are inculcated in the data analysis. It assists to make applicable, suitable and convincing suppositions and presumptions during the interpretation and evaluation of the data. The study applied “Gendered Otherness” as a lens to evaluate the stories.
For the collection and accumulation of data the researchers have used the texts of short stories “The Wedding of Sundri and Pirani” as primary sources. Other related articles, reviews and journals have been used as secondary sources. These secondary sources helped researcher to see and critically analyse the topic from multiple sides.

Data Analysis and Discussion
The basic concept of gendered otherness is that women are partial and secondary to men, do not have power to take decisions of their lives. They are born to serve the men of the house. Similarly in the short stories The Wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006) women are others for their men. The chains of women lives are in the hands of men. The characters Sundri, Sebhagi, the mother of Sundri and the sister of Sundri’s mother Naseema lead life according to the wishes and desires of men. The character of Sebhagi portrays gendered otherness of woman as the writer say “Sebhagi and Sundri wake up earlier in the morning to prepare delicious breakfast for the man of the home” (Shah, 01) Men are supposed to awake after the women. In domestic life the duty of men is just to eat proudly and show the dominancy at the home to women. They are free from any household work. They are served by women of the house. It is just the duty and responsibility of women to work at the home, not men. It depicts women are born in order to serve their men and make them happy. Likewise, the presence of Pirani and her mother also shows secondary role of women in front of men. Pirani is sold by her father, Pirani’s mother does not challenge her husband’s decision but she accepts men dominance. This denotes that women’s existence is no more meaningful for themselves and society. It can be seen from the murder of Sundri as well. She is killed and accused on her first day of marriage.
Men Autonomous, Women Related/other being in *Wedding of Sundri* (2008) and *Pirani* (2006)

The concept of autonomy of men in the rural Sindh can be analyzed, evaluated and interpreted through both of the stories *The Wedding of Sundri* (2008) and *Pirani* (2006). Sundri, the girl of eleven years does not have power to take decision of her life. Her marriage is decided by her father when she was seven years old. As in the story it is said “Sundri had been betrothed to him when she was seven years old, the fathers meeting over tea and cake to decide their children’s fate... (Shah, 01). So, the marital life of Sundri is decided by her father in the very early age of the life. In the age when the girl was not even mature. She did not know about the concept of marriage. So, the early childhood marriage is shown. Hence, women are unable to take marital decision in rural Sindh. Later on when Sundri is told about her engagement then she behaves in very immature way and goes out of the home to play. “Sundri behaved the same way delete ‘as’ she always had when told of her engagement: she sucked a strand of her hair in her mouth...and then ran off to play with the other children who were romping by the canal”(Shah, 01-02). It illustrates Sundri’s disconcert for her future. She does not understand marriage’s concept therefore, she takes her engagement lightly. The writer shows that the father is well aware of age differences of children who are supposed to marry and knows very well that his daughter is not enough mature to be married. Despite of all these realities the father agrees for the marriage of his daughter because for him women are the icon of honour and should be married at very earlier age. That’s why the fate of the girls is decided in the very early age by the men. As it is said by Shah “It was better for a girl to have her fate decided by early” (02). Hence, when girls reach at the age of five to six years their fate is decided by elders of the family in rural Sindh.

Similarly, in the story of *Pirani*, the little daughter is sold like an animal. As the father of the girl goes to nearby village and offer them the girl for marriage:

*Pirani’s father approached the neighbouring village and greeted the people with a loud salamalaikum. He asked brother does anybody needs a girl in marriage. He meant to sell his little daughter “*(Abro, 177).

The writer declares in the story married life of Sindhi girls is decided by their fathers as they are born. Sindhi people sell girls in a way as they sell their animals. The father of the groom arrives to check Pirani as if he observes animal; either she has flesh in her body or not. As the father of Pirani explains him “She has lots of flesh, she is no weakling... the bargain was struck for sixty rupees (Abro, 177). The girl is sold only for sixty rupees, the very meagre amount. It shows the sovereignty, dominancy and control of men in the lives of women. The very existence of Pirani is no more useful that’s why she is sold like an animal. Moreover, acceptance of women for otherness is very vividly depicted in the short stories. Women accept their partial and secondary positions as compare to men.

“Shehagi herself had been married when she was fourteen and had given birth to Sundri soon after. The pattern would repeat itself for her daughter, and they all derived some sort of comfort from that fact. (Shah, 02).

Women are not protesting and raising voice against the settled stereotypical notions of the society regarding their status in rural Sindh. Contrary to this women seem as satisfied, contented and relax. They have accepted their neglected position in the society. This same
psyche debases and deprives position of women who move with repeated cycle, where same notions faced by mothers are transferred to daughters. Sebhagi was married at the age of fourteen so same pattern is repeated at the time of Sundri.

**Gendered Otherness in Marital Life in Wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006)**
The criticism and satire on married life is also portrayed in the short stories in rural Sindh. The fact of post marriage life is described during the marriage ceremony of Sundri. The mother of Sundri jabbed a pin into the head of Sundri during the setting of dupatta on her wedding night and she cries there. Naseema, the sister of Sebhagi interrupts and says “That’s the only thing that’s going to hurt tonight” (Shah, 02). So, one of the facts of girls’ life after marriage is shown that piercing of pin in head was not a big matter, after the marriage there will come many such kind of piercing issues. By portraying this, the writer shows the domestic violence at the home after marital life. It is vivid from the life of Naseema, who is beaten by her husband regularly (Shah, 03). Thus, not only marriage night but the life after marriage is the second name of sacrifices of a woman. Naseema tolerated abuses, beatings and wild behaviour of her husband. She remains silent; apparently have no tongue in her mouth. Similarly, the mother of Pirani also remains silent throughout the story. She knows the real pain of her daughter in spite of this she does not dare to speak a single word in favour of her daughter. It depicts the inclusion of *gendered otherness* in women’s lives. Likewise, when Pirani is married to Lalu and she is brought to her husband’s home during that she cries continuously for her parents. Lalu becomes furious and brings a dagger and says “now, will you shut up before I carve you in pieces?”. (Abro, 178). This cruel treatment of a Sindhi rural man illustrates fallen position of women in rural Sindh.

**Rejection of Women and Her Life**
Both of the stories depict plight of Sindhi rural women. It is shown that girls are completely rejected and disregarded. They are no more important for themselves. They do not have access to exercise their freedom and expressions. Their life is associated and linked to men. They are born to obey and make men happy, to obey and serve the family and had sons. As the mother of Sundri instructs her daughter before rukhasti to obey the husband, obey in laws and family and give birth to sons (Shah, 06). Pirani also spends her painful life silently and accepts men power at the home.

**Effects of Gendered Otherness in Wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006)**
*Gendered otherness* can be observed in both of the short stories. The girls from very beginning are brought up in such a way where they do not have much freedom over their lives. Their basic rights are curbed and it is men who took all of the decisions of the lives of women and women accept all those imposed rules. In *the Wedding of Sundri (2008)* Sundri is developed in such an environment where she is supposed to live at the home, to obey parents, to accept the pre decided decisions of the father and have no freedom and control over her life. As Shah said the freedom of girls is very temporary, not long lasting and for forever in the story. Sundri can go out of the house for play in the earlier times of her life that is up to ten years. At the age of twelve years Sundri was married to someone (02). Due to *gendered otherness* in rural Sindh, girls stay at the four walls of home, do not get proper
education and even are unable to face outer world. Resultantly, the personal recognition and identification of girls is suppressed and submerged. They do not see their lives with own eyes and perception. But form the ideas and thinking whatever the men of the house show them. Girls are totally dependent upon men, do not use their self-thinking and intellect. When the marital decision of Sundri is decided and father tells to the daughter that she is engaged to someone then girlish response is seen as the writer said

“Sundri behaved the same way delete ‘as’ she always had when told of her engagement: she sucked a strand of her hair in her mouth, nodded dumbly at her father telling her she had been engaged to be married that day” (Shah, 01).

The girl does not ask even a single question from the father that why her marriage is decided in such an earlier stage of the life. The girl accepts and bows down in front of her parents. Consequently, the power of taking decisions is not developed in the girl. The recognition and identification of girl is nowhere apparent in both of Sindhi stories.

In both of the stories, The wedding of Sundri (2008) and Pirani (2006) no personal ideas of the girls are discussed that what and how they think about their lives. It gives the message that women do not possess any authentic power to speak and put their ideas in front of the elders. In the story of Pirani the father sells Pirani, daughter to neighbours. At that crucial time the girl never asks that why she is sold to strangers. It is depicted in the storyline that Sindhi girls have no more personal life. The writer says girls are sold on meagre amount by parents and relatives. Their bachelor and marital life decisions come from the side of men’ girls just exist to obey the planned decisions of the patriarchal society. This dominancy of men in the lives of girls has contrary impacts on the girls such as girls’ freedom is restricted, self-recognition and identification of the girls is threatened, girls’ accept all of the imposed decisions of the men, girls see men as decision makers who take suitable and pertinent decisions of their lives as compare to their own decisions. Self-confident of the girls is destroyed and devastated.

Conclusion

The analysis of the both stories The Wedding of Sundri and Pirani” through the framework of Gendered Otherness shows that gendered otherness is prevailing in rural Sindh among women like Sundri, Pirani and their mothers. In rural Sindh, women are violated and exploited physically and mentally by the men of the home. Men brutally treat women and beat them as the sister of Sebhagi is physically punished by her husband and Pirani’s mother suffer from mental trauma. Women are neither given freedom of self-expression nor allowed to take the decisions of their lives. Every decision of the lives of women is taken by man of the home. Men are the dominant, powerful, authentic and decision maker while women are the others, marginalized, submissive and secondary to men. The above discussion shows that the difference between men and women is not natural and inborn but is the creation of society wherein they live. It is the society that has set different standards for men and women. Due to this difference women are suppressed and depressed. They are put at the back and are not given their basic rights of the life; the right to self-express, the right to take decisions of life and the right to make personal identity and recognition in the society. It shows the contrary impact of gendered otherness on the lives of women.
Analysing Gendered Otherness of Women in Rural Sindh ...

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