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GIVING VOICES TO VOICELESS PASHTUNS WOMEN IN MOUNTSTUART ELPHINSTONE'S AN ACCOUNT OF THE KINGDOM OF CAUBUL AND ALEXANDER BURNS' TRAVELS INTO BOKHARA

Corresponding Author: **Wajid Riaz**, Assistant Professor, English, The University of Lahore, Sargodha campus, Email: wijisami@gmail.com

Co-Author: **Ehsan Ullah Danish**, Assistant Professor of English, Gomal University, D I KHAN, Email: ehsaanish@gmail.com

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Abstract

The practice of representation gives rise to cultural variations and divides, which in turn give rise to the circumstance in which individuals and groups belong to more than one culture. Western literature comes with issues of representation, as they have represented the Oriental people through what is called misrepresentation. The Oriental people are more inferior because the reality is different, as explicitly orientalist give voice to women, but the strategy is beneath the surface, undertaken for some implicit purpose. The research also analyzes the same issue of representation and giving voices to Pashtun women in Mount Stuart Elphinstone's *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and Alexander Burns' "Travels into Bokhara"*. The works show that women are exclusively powerless, weak, distorted, suffering, exploited, irrational, deprived, and limited to their houses to bear only domestication. Both writers show in their works that women are illiterate and are deprived of their educational rights as they are intellectuals, telling different creative stories, but they are not allowed to think rationally and are only limited to emotional aspects to make their partners. Therefore, both works are pregnant and meet the criteria of Wollstonecraft from a male perspective, taken as a theoretical framework for the paper. The purposes of both writers were developed by giving voices to the muted women of the Pashtuns, enabling them to speak for themselves. However, it was not possible to eradicate the suppression of women in Pashtun society because the British faced very strong resistance from the Pashtun.

Keywords: Representation, Voiceless Women, Voiced Women, Pashtuns Women, Postcolonial

Introduction

The postcolonial study uses the theoretical framework and underlying notion of representation to analyze how one civilization and culture is depicted in the writings of writers from other cultures. Individuals and communities can now identify with more than one culture as a result of the proliferation of media depicting different cultures in different ways. The word representation is well-known and has a variety of meanings and applications, including symbols of action, images, bearing, appearance, presence, drawing or painting, factual figure, reproduction of some production and representation of a nation and its customs, tradition, language, and culture which is the most important.

The practices and theories of post-colonialism lead to the development of the very prominent theory that is of representation. Post-colonialism is an academic field that features techniques of scholarly discourse that explain, analyze, and responds to the cultural legacies and leftovers of colonialism and imperialism. This discipline of post-colonialism was developed in the 1960s to question the residuals of colonialism, and how colonialism affected the local culture. Colonialism and imperialism control a country and exploit the natives and their land through different policies. Representation in the discipline of post-colonialism has been seen as one of the dominant critical approaches, particularly, to show the representation of the colonized people in the colonial discourses who have always envisaged colonized as *Others*, however, the phenomenon of representation is further extended to elaborated version, whether to represent the black Americans, the wild Africans, the Arabs, the followers of Islam, or the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, such portrayal has an effect on all of these groups. In their literature, colonizers demonstrate extreme sentiments of superiority over the people they conquered. The world is literally divided into

two poles, east and West, superior and inferior, civilized and uncivilized, etc. which is the core discussion of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). The division is merely imaginative, colonizers in the West call them civilized, and half of the world East has been shown inferior and weak in the writings of the West. Said (1978) provides evidence that the West is more advanced than the other (the East) through the development of knowledge in the context of complex power dynamics arising from interactions between different cultures. Edward Said (1978) *Orientalism* shows that representation of the West is merely a style of thought and ways of investigation through which the Europeans came to know the Orient (East), and *Orientalism* is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient and (most of the time) "the Occident" (1978: 2). However, the assumption is largely based on the reality that orientalists have misrepresented the orient in their writing to show them inferior and submissive. The writings of orientalists are based on certain strategies to show them inferior, submissive, distorted, and illiterate and they have been laid down on many grounds. One of these techniques is to give voice to Oriental women in their writing to show them more inferior. Though the reality is different as explicitly orientalists give voice to women the strategy is beneath the surface, undertaken for some implicit purposes. As Spivak (1986) gives the description of Hindos' ritual "Sati", burning a widow on the death of her husband, eliminated by the British government for their own interests when "the Rani of Sirmur" was deputed at the place of Raja (noted in Spivak: 1985a). Later on, Rani of Sirmur was instructed by the British government regarding British ideologies to be imposed on the locals, whereas, a similar description can be found in larger bulk of literature, produced by Orientalists for the purpose to civilize the colonized as it has been said that "White

man's burden" to educate the Oriental's people (Kipling, 1899).

Before the 19th century, male writers from the West failed to give voice to their women in their writing as they considered women's inferior and submissive. Though, women were represented in writings to foreground men's interests. Giving voice to Oriental women was also put into question by the Western patriarchal society, whether they remained successful to give voice to their own women. If it is so, why feminism came into existence? The simple answer to the question is that Western men remained unsuccessful to give a voice to their women. However, western men have been challenged by Western women in their writing to write back and give their strong existence and make the equal position of women in society.

The current study is concerned with the issue of representation of Pashtun women in the writing of Orientalists who try to give voice to the women of the Orient who are unable to speak. According to Orientalists, women of the Orient are submissive and they are unable to speak for themselves. The study shows how and why Pashtun women have been given voices by Orientalists in their writings. The question raises as why women are oppressed by the Oriental, and put behind the curtain to keep them more marginalized, in taking a subversive position. However, the Orientalists give voices to women in their writing, whereas the current research deals with Mountstuart Elphinstone's *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul (1815)* and Alexander Burns' "*Travels into Bokhara (1835)*" from the same perspectives. The works of these two writers are based on the representation of the Pashtuns, who are called Afghans in these travelogues. The description of Pashtuns in all three works is the same with references to their culture, traditions, rituals, marriages, and many other issues while their approach towards women is largely stereotypical. Alexander Burns both travelogues provide the

same description which is opted as one for the current study.

Statement of the research:

Women in Afghanistan have largely been represented with Burqa clad entities, though, to a greater extent the representation becomes stereotypical, since, this representation is seen when the first white man 'Mountstuart Elphinstone' wrote about Afghan women in his writing. However, still, the stereotypical images of both Afghan men and women are persistent, though, the sad fact is accepted but largely women have not been given a voice. Therefore, the current research tries to pick out the discussion from two Orientalists' works; Elphinstone and Burns to show the representation of women in their works, and how women are given voices.

Research Objectives:

1. To show the representation of women in selected Orientalists' works.
2. To show the stereotypical position of women in Orientalists' works.
3. To show the stances of selected writers who give voices to Pashtuns women in their writing.

Research Questions:

1. How the representation of women is given in Orientalists' works?
2. How do the stereotypical images of women in Orientalists' works have been shown?
3. How do the selected writers give voices to Pashtuns' women in their selected works?

RELATED REVIEW:

Like another third world, Pashtuns women have been shown at the grassroots level as the region had been shrunken by poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, diseases, tribal wars, and many other problems where women became vulnerable victims and remained the poorest, illiterate, marginalized, suffered and exploited. Women of Pashtuns have largely remained muted and their construction has always been a gender-based construction likewise western women are represented with the same construction and this allegation against

men is raised that women's construction is gender's construction. As a result, women have been marginalized for a long in history to the present period, and to show they are submissive and oppressed entities. According to Ore (2006: 12), gender construction is described as gender constructions constructed and justified by a number of institutions, including the family system, the state, and the economic division, whereas, women are given submissive positions." Hence, gender roles are turned into a gender system that places males and masculinity at the pinnacle of the hierarchy, while women and femininity are relegated to the lowest rungs of the ladder. The statement clarifies that gender construction is not a spontaneous process but is caused by different strategies like the economy, politics, and different institutions.

When Habermass (2000) termed "Modernity" as an "incomplete" project as it failed to realize Hegel's ideal of "history as a march towards freedom" we envisage men like Rousseau, Voltaire, Lock, and Kant sitting together with powered wings and contemplating the enlightenment project. What we do not see is the "erasure" of half of the population who either do not appear in this project or appear as "less than man as the 'March towards freedom is a march towards reason but lacks that faculty. In this regard Lacan comes with another opinion what does he mean when he said, the woman does not exist, but what is this the woman? The woman is a male fantasy, a symptom still to be realized in the Phallogocentric order. It is the woman that exists in the fantasy space of every male- a framework- a lens through which he sees every woman. This phenomenon comes to the fore emphatically and violently in the institutionalized practice of matrimonial duties. A wife especially in the South Asian social formation is an empty signifier- or rather should be an empty signifier, to be filled by a male signified. This empty signifier cannot fill itself through any mode of signification of its own rather it should rely on patriarchal

symbolic order to give it meaning. Pashtun's woman exists in the male fantasy and she has to follow the phallogocentric order. Pashtuns, likely Western contemplate the same history of women, showing them submissive and inferior to the male fantasy. They are limited to the premises of their houses. However, the concept of women's inferiority has different from the West.

Pashtuns originate their codes of life from the principles and codes of Pusthunwali, and rigid principles set out under the obligations of Islam which is complex and contradictory in mutual relationships as Pashtuns are famous for their bravery, and fight for "zar, zan, and zamin" means "gold, woman and land". Women in this regard are given much-esteemed respect in society. Pashtuns always fight for their women like Greek as noted by Ghani Khan in his book "The Pathan" (1994). It is evident from the arguments that how a woman can be submissive and inferior when wars are being fought for women as suggested by the code of Pashtunwali but Jon Lunn and Bin Smith (2010) strongly criticize the code of Pashtunwali which, according to them, forbids women from inheriting any property, although the Quran states that women should inherit one-half of what the portion of the male heir would be. In some respects, Pashtunwali is more stringent than Islam with regard to concerns such as limits placed on women and punishments for adultery (p. 13). It means women are deprived of basic rights as the women in the West before feminism was deprived.

As discussed that Pashtun women are limited to house premises Rzehak (2011) provides a comprehensive note on the role of women in Pashtun society. According to him, women have been assigned their role by the patriarchy as they have to please their husbands and cheer their children. Further, they do not have the choice to select their partners. They are liable to follow the father's order in this regard. Furthermore, if a woman selects her life partner without the wish of her

family, her family strives to kill her along with her lover. It means that woman of Pashtun's society is submissive and inferior and the woman has no voice to speak for herself. The only choice for women is to sacrifice in both cases either to die or to live. According to Glatzer, as a result of this explicit gender-specific stereotyping, women are easy targets for any seducer coming along. (Noted in Oberson 2002).

Woman in Pashtun society is a gender attribution who is unable to speak and resist. She has to bear the superiority of males and consider herself weak and submissive in every situation. Trapper (1991: p. 52: Noted in Oberson 2002) describes the role of a Pashtun woman in a Durrani tribe of Pashtuns; "the dichotomous mental chart of gender characteristics that follows and illustrates the superiority of males over women in the following ways: in contrast to males, who are thought of as being noble, authentic, and flawless, women are thought of as being flawed, weak, polluted, and like imitations of the real thing. It shows that Pashtun woman is exclusively submissive to male fantasy and she is muted in this male fantasy. Further, Trapper (1991) comes with the same opinion as Rousseau (1762) excluded women from reason in his book "Emile or on Education". A woman has shown emotion and the role of a woman has to please a man. Similarly, Trapper (1991) says that "Women are routinely linked to emotion (*nafs*). By contrast, men have reason or responsibility (*aql*)" (pp. 209-211). Furthermore, young women are inclined to sexual activities with their partners and denied to act rationally. Moreover, the inferiority and marginal position of a woman is exclusively covered by Lutz Rzehak (2011) that a woman is presented as "swara" (compensation) when Pashtuns want to eliminate their enmity. The killer party is supposed to present a woman to marry the rival to eliminate the enmity which is an unpleasant practice.

ANALYSIS:

As I have discussed in the theoretical section Pashtuns women are submissive, muted, inferior, marginalized, distorted, and illiterate, the same description is provided in the selected works of Elphinstone (1815) and Burns (1835). They tried to give voices to Pashtun women in their works.

The first demurrer which was raised by both writers is that Pashtun women are extremely beautiful but their beauty is squandered with the passage of time, time spends in houses, depriving them of their education. They want to educate Pashtun women in their travelogues. According to them, a woman should be beautiful rather than to be rational because she has to please her husband and care for his children. Burns (1835) mentions in his work that it was said in the couplet that every woman in Cabool was in possession of a suitor (138). Here Burns refers to the husband. Burns describes the intellectual level of women who are busy with different stories telling which have a strong relation to reality. If such women are given education they would be more helpful for their societies and to serve their husbands. Further, Burns (1835) shows the elite class has the privilege to get an education as he gives the example of Dost Muhammad Khan's sister who is provided a good education. He draws the gaps between the lower and upper classes in his work. Similarly, Elphinstone (1815) tells the readers about the rough condition of the poor class. Women of the lower class are busy telling the story of "Adam and Durkhani" in their melodious voices while the upper class gets their education; "reading is something that is commonly taught to females of the higher classes, and a number of these ladies have significant abilities in the literary arts (p. 241). Yet, during this time period, women were judged to be impolite if they wrote; nonetheless, Elphinstone (1815) suggests that a lady may make use of her gift by using it to write with a boyfriend.

Both writers tell about the rough position of lower-class girls who are deprived of their education instead of good intellect while upper-class women are provided an opportunity to get an education. Further, women are shown to live for their lovers and get in touch with those activities to please and cheer their lovers. It shows that women are submissive and inferior in Pashtun society and they have to live their lives according to the wishes of their husbands and fathers. They have to live always in the male fantasy.

Next, women are shown as the poorest more than the poor when they are considered the property of men. According to Elphinstone (1815), women, despite being generally decently treated, are to some extent regarded to be property. There is no requirement for a cause to be given in a divorce between a husband and wife; nonetheless, a wife is not permitted to divorce her husband (236). Women generally are limited to the premises of their houses, they are not allowed to work and read. Therefore, they exclusively depended on their husbands. The practice eliminates women's emancipation and further makes them submissive and inferior. Further, Elphinstone (1815) expresses his feeling for the submissive position of women when he talks about the four marriages of a man and purchasing their wives. "The Afghans purchase their wives" (p. 236) and in reality, wealthy people had more than the permitted four wives, in addition to keeping large numbers of female slaves (241). Similarly, Burns provides the same description of a Pashtun woman being a submissive and inferior human being. On the death of a man, his wives all become the property of his next brother; who may marry them or sell them Burns (1842) states that Pashtuns sell their daughters and purchase their wives and marry brother's wife once he has passed away (198). Further, he gives the description of four wives as given by Elphinstone (1815). According to both writers, Pashtuns follow Islam and believe in their codes of Pashtuwali. As discussed in the

review section controversies are found when they bring Islam and Pashtuwali on the same platform.

Next, both writers talk about the domestication of Pashtun women as they are married at the age of twelve to fifteen to bear the housework. Elphinstone (1815) narrates them as very laborious and hard working as he mentions in his work that "the poor (women) do the work in the house, bringing water, and among the rudest tribes, they have shared in the work of the men out of doors" (p. 241). Further, according to him, Pashtun's men beat their women. Similarly, Burns (1842) points out that women of Pashtuns are limited to their houses to carry out their household. It is a clear crystal that Pashtun women bear the same suffering and exploitation as reported by Western feminists in their writings.

As discussed that wars have been fought by Pashtuns on women and protected them but women also became the victim of suppression as they have been killed. Elphinstone (1815) mentions that if a woman is in a love affair with a boy and reveals it, the woman is put to death. The same narration is given by Alexander Burns (1842) when a woman is found in adultery with a man. Both were put to death and no one dared to speak, even appreciated the effort.

Exceptions are always found, like the Western elite class, Pashtun elite class women entertain the same authority. Elphinstone (1815) points out that "those of the upper classes are entirely concealed, but are allowed all the comforts and luxuries" (p. 241). Similarly, Burns (1842) points out in his work that the sister of Dost Muhammad Khan entertains a considerable position in Kabul. She is shown as a powerful woman who kills her husband and gets no harm.

CONCLUSION

The works of both Alexander Burns and Elphinstone are worth important from different perspectives as their works have been analyzed in this research have been found with elaborated details about Pashtun,

though, every perspective of life has been represented but the current study only focused on women's representation from the perspective of "to give them voices". The works show that women are exclusively powerless, weak, distorted, suffered, exploited, irrational, deprived, and limited to their houses to bear only domestication. The purposes of both writers were to give voices to the muted women of Pashtuns, enabling them to speak for themselves. However, it was not possible to eradicate the suppression of women in Pashtuns society because the British had a very strong resistance from Pashtuns in both Kabul and Peshawar.

Both writers show in their works that women are illiterate and they are deprived of their educational rights as they are intellectual, telling different creative stories. Further, they are not allowed to think rationally but are only limited to being emotional to please their partners. Furthermore, they are not asked for selecting their partners, even if they are divorced without any reason. After their marriages, women are considered the property of men whether they beat them or put them to any task. Such descriptions deprive women exclusively of their rights and dependent on men. Moreover, the killings of women have not been challenged by anyone, even appreciated by others because women are either killed in the name of honor in the Pashtun community or intake for adulterous acts.

Like, other upper-class women, in Pashtuns upper-class women have the same privileges. They enjoy a good luxurious life while supported by the patriarchy. The differences have been highlighted by both writers and questioned by them that why elite classes women are facilitated and the poor are suffered. Therefore, both writers are trying in their travelogues to give voices to women and eliminate their exploitation and suppression in the Pashtun society. However, it was the start of the 19th century whereas Western society was far away from identifying women's rights in

third world countries to give them equal rights as men were enjoying but these works helped out Pashtun women to identify their rights as the work of Elphinstone (1815) is time and again quoted in Pashtuns' culture while Alexander Burns is known for conquering the Kabul which was remained under the supremacy of British government for four years. After that British government struggled to conquer again but they never remained successful.

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