

Envisioning the Psychologically Subjugated Women: The Feminist Study of Rupi Kaur's *Home Body*

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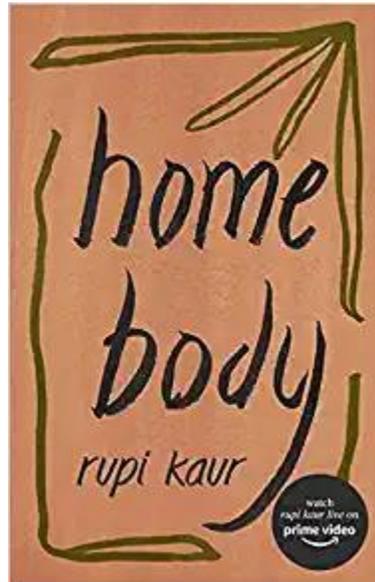
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Abstract

This study is carried out in reaction to the patriarchal mechanism of society, where women have always been subjugated, suppressed, and surpassed by men. The research is conducted on the poetic book of Rupi Kaur, *Home Body*. It is designed descriptively and qualitative in approach. The researcher has followed Textual Analysis Method for the analysis of gathered data. The textual data are collected with the sampling strategy of Simple Random Sampling. Theoretical framework of Feminism by Beauvoir is adapted as an optic to critically analyze the data. Findings of the study reveal that women in postmodern/postcolonial India are marginalized on the basis of their gender.

They suffer from psychological disorder because of their feminine race, and Kaur hailing from India has been a literary voice to advocate the suffering of women and want to preach and make realize the readers about the outcomes of patriarchal mindset which subjugates women. Also, the study is a fine contribution in the existing mansion of feminist discourse of the world.

1. Introduction

Literature has been manifesting the crucial issues of its contemporary and historical society. Writers attempt at revealing the black layers of society. Literature that is why is considered the true imitation of life. (Aristotle). Throughout the history of literature, poets have been manifesting the confined crimes, love, romance, nature and evils in the society. The exploitation of women's rights under the umbrella of social crisis, has also been portrayed by a good score of feminist poets like, Alexander Pope, Maya Angelou, Christiana Rossetti, Chetan Bhagat Parveen Shakir, Ahmed Faraz and Rupi Kaur.

In the patriarchal mechanism of society, women have always been subjugated, suppressed, and surpassed by men. They are deemed as machines and tools. The traditional mind of male-dominant societies, consider women as a machine for giving birth to their babies. They are handled as a tool for their sexual desires. Women lack in economic, social and political life of equal nature of their men. This patriarchal trend has prevailed almost in every era throughout human history. The movement of feminism has advocated the women's rights in society.

Feminism is a theoretical ideology which emerged from the western world. It stands against the patriarchal mood of society. The movement wants to revolutionize the world and wants to equalize the women of the world with respect to economy, social life, politics and religion. It stands as a movement to destroy the iron mind of men and its fist. Feminism has given birth many branches. It has evolved through its four waves dealing with different objectives.

Rupi Kaur who is contemporary Canadian-Indian poet has emerged as a marvelous advocate for the rights of women. Her poetry books have remained best-sellers in the world. Her poetry usually revolves around the themes of women's dignity, strength, satire on patriarchal mechanism and traditional codes of the traditional mode of the society. Rupi's works have been replete with the theme of empowerment of women. She preaches it through her poetry. Her books *Milk and Honey* (2015) and *The Sun and her Flowers* retain the touch of women's issues, pain, suffering and manipulation etc. She explores the dignity, status, suffering and the inner-self of women through her recent book, *Home Body* (2020). Thus, feminist theory is taken as the theoretical framework in order to pursue this research.

2. Literature Review

The researcher here brings the related literature to the topic and theory of this study. The researcher has reviewed related literature across genre, culture and location of the subject poet of the study. This literature review helps the readers to aptly understand this research's theory and its implementation on the gathered data. This review helps them to understand the whole subject of this study and makes them aware of the same issue throughout other cultures. The researcher has reviewed some researchers on Rupi Kaur's other works. It assists the study to clearly show that Rupi Kaur has remained untouched in terms of her undertaken approach on her newly book, *Home Body* (2020).

Islam (2019) conducted a research on the subject of feminist writing of Rupi Kaur: "A Gynocritic Study of Rupi Kaur's Milk and Honey". The researcher describes the term gynocriticism as a modern theoretical framework to analyze the writings of women living in the patriarchal system of the society described by Elaine Showalter. The present researchers analyze her proposition about the theory and applies it on the poetry of Rupi Kaur. This research is of qualitative method and illustrates the women's empowerment and experiences of their literary approach and power of expressing themselves in the male-dominant society. The research concludes that Rupi Kaur has nerve to completely express her feelings, emotions, and satire the traditional values of her contemporary society.

In Roy's book, *Ved* (2017) has assessed the theme of feminism. In Arundhati Roy's book, *The God of Small Things*, the researcher extensively outlined the novel. The novel is talked with Feminism's mirror. She illustrated the internal conflicts that women face and surrender their own happiness by considering the greatness of suffering. The research illustrates how the actions and lives of individuals are influenced by small things. The researcher ends the article with the true nature of tiny items. In Patriarchal society, the novelist Roy sees the caste system, political affiliation and gender bias as "small things," whereas dreams, hopes, promises, and other feelings are seen as little things. The researcher analyzes the social exploitation of women in Indian culture. The researcher finds out the Arundhati Roy's overall analysis as the women are manipulated in the Indian culture and are deemed as small things.

Umeret al. (2016) has presented an evaluation for the purpose of illumination the gender discrimination an inequality. Education is the core base of every society. Only education is the weapon which can help the mood of empowerment of women in the society. It should be the prime duty of both genders to acquire education in order to know the respective values for each other and their own empowerment in their culture. The study brings the case of Baluchistan where women have no right to get education. So, the researchers emphasize that women should be provided the educational rights. It is injustice with them to not having their fundamental rights. Balochi men are found to be powerful and famous for their physical bravery. On the other side, their women

are deemed as weak and feeble insects of the society. Thus, in order to abolish such traditional dogmas, there should be a proper channel of education so that society could work equally.

Huda & Ali (2015) carried out a research on the subject: "Portrayal of women in Pakistani media." The article is about the media's image of women. Objection of ladies is seen as a permanent weapon for women who make the most of their efforts to grow the mass media. Advertisements that use women as a seductive and appealing tool of weapon for attracting men causes their exploitation. The dress code of women, the stylish appearance of their youth and the attractiveness of bloom has the little to do with the lexical product. By explaining unwelcome tasks presented to women, the researchers ended the paper. The way of handling and representing women exposes them towards sexual abuse, and with the idea of believing every woman working in media is corrupt.

Ghorfati & Medini (2015) conducted important research on the issue of "Feminism and its impact on women in modern society". The article addresses how women have to go through many challenges, constraints and barriers in order to become an integral part of culture. Women had no rights before, and they were segregated, invalidated and violated by men. The profile and the picture lady have changed radically by the occurrence of Feminism, and she transforms into a sovereign, president, craftsman and teacher from being a poppet in the hands of man. The key conclusion drawn by scholars is that the philosophy of feminism was successful in several respects, resulting in a major shift in the status and role of women.

Siddiqui and Lodhi (2014) have come to the conclusion through their study on the aspect of Feminism in 2014. They scholarly have faith that religion of Islam and International law permit the voice of women, they both respect women rights. But the obstacles which are watered by traditional dogmas have been a barrier between the women rights and international and Islamic law. Women are only deemed for the honor of males of Pakistani society, and they are only the prestige for them. There is no value of women's emotions, feelings, and desires. Sometimes women in Pakistanis society reach their destination of death when do not share the mutual concern of their male masters. This slaughter of women is a prevailing aspect of women exploitation in Pakistan. Such slaughter is famous as karokari and known as honor killing. This is brought into action just for the restoration of fake and baseless prestige and respect of family, and it mostly takes place in the countryside of Pakistan.

Munir and Akhtar (2014) have evaluated a study in the shape of their research. This deals with the traditional tradition of Vani taking place in Pakistan especially in the tribal areas of KPK. Vani which is sometimes also called Swara, is male dominant attitude. In this concept, women are usually handed over to a party in order to create peace and resolving the issue of murder. It helps them to not flame a fight amid the tribes again. Because of the male's egoistic fights, women are

being exploited in the form of sacrifice. They are provided for marriage of their undesired wish. The study opens it as it occurs because of the lack of education which causes the men not respecting the women of their family. For such a baseless prestige, women are being used as they are their tools not humans. In the last, the study provides the solution to it. Men and women should wear the mask of education the shackle this patriarchal mechanism of the society where only women are the toys to be used, and male enjoy their freedom.

Gao (2013) conducted a critical study on the issue of "Reflection on Feminism in Jane Eyre." The article represents the Jane Eyre novel, a popular written work written on the basis of her personal experiences by Charlotte Bronte. The author shapes a particular and audacious woman in the novel who finds true love and equality. It's not the same Jane Eyre as any other women around then. In struggles and troubling situations, she takes a run at her survival and preserves her destiny. This paper shows some positive qualities that females possess. The researcher ends the article by symbolizing the tale of Jane Eyre, where she talks about how a woman can strive harder for decency and integrity in a heterosexual society. A brave woman should be courageous enough to battle against it in response to life's hardships.

Habib, et al. (2013) has conducted a praiseworthy study on the novel, My Feudal Lord. The novels shed the light on the autobiographical aspects of Tehmina Durani, and is writtern by herself. The novels aim at displaying the breathtaking issues happening with women in the contemporary arena of Pakistani society. Countries of third world like Pakistani, treats women very inhumanly, are regarded as the slaves of males who are dominant over them. Being an autobiographical text, it reflects Druani's life, and the novelist portrays the hypocrite nature of men in the society. She is ex-wife of a famous politician Ghulam Mustafa Khar who hails to a democratic house of Pakistan, but Durani explores his patriarchal mindset. He being a democratic individual does not take care of his own wife, because she is a woman. This shows that not only economically unstable people, but the rich too participate in exploiting women in Pakistani culture. She is not allowed to read even newspaper, and he over and over snubs his wife. So, Durani's novel stands as a hammer to destroy the stone of patriarchal mechanism of the society.

Bag and Roy (2012) has conducted a research on Indian culture that how women are psychically and mentally destroyed in the hands of Indian male-dominant mode of society. Women are misused and abused since their childhood. In different areas of India, girls also face early-marriage and that marriage is possibly against their will. The study displays that the early-marriage culture becomes the mental trouble those girls, especially for unwanted male partner. The study points out another significant point that, the Indian male-centered culture, sends young women to brothels, where they can be the source of their capital income. Moreover, media also pays heed in the exploitation women, through advertisement so that men can be attracted to women because of fascinating pictures and videos of women. They localize the status of women in Indian society.

The researchers concludes that study, that this psychological and physical torture with women in India, and their lack of education and domestic violence may possibly come back in the form of a great globally social threat for the country.

The aforementioned studies mainly provide a picture of a patriarchal society, where women are not treated equally, and face a discriminatory approach in terms of social, political, and economic exposure. The previous studies are reviewed on the research of different genres and areas of knowledge. Some reviews focus on Indian and Pakistani novels of the same subject. Thus, this exposure to different research of the same subject provides a justification that Rupri Kaur's book *Home Body* (2020) remains untouched in terms of feminist study, and it creates a problem to find this gap in the book *Home Body* (2020). Hence, this research aims at analyzing the selected poetry of Rupri Kaur from the book, *Home Body* (2020).

3. Method

The research follows the qualitative method of research. The researcher analyzes the data in the light of theory of feminism. The data is collected from research papers, books and internet websites. The researcher has followed qualitative design and Textual Analysis Method. For sampling, simple random sampling strategy is adapted to get possible textual references from the author's book for the analysis. The data is analyzed descriptively. The study, along with qualitative approach, is designed descriptively in nature; the collected data are analyzed descriptively.

3.1 Theoretical Framework: Feminism

Feminism falls into being through the fight against the oppression carried out in society for women's rights. Two vital elements of intellectual commitment and political movement are involved in feminism, which contributes to women's justice and ends in all types of patriarchy. This is a cultural and literary phenomenon that in all walks of life promotes absolute equality of men and women and thus empowers them to be at equal with each other, irrespective of race, class, and creed.

"Simon de Beauvoir, in his notable work, *The Second Sex* (1949), thus expresses Feminism as "Man is described as a human being and a woman as a woman whenever she acts as a human being and to mimic man" (p. 226). This shows that a woman is deemed to be undignified and pointless, despite her important interest and duty in a culture, which further invalidates her presence in culture.

However, women exploitation, her divinity, manipulation, objection, real status, and respect is discoursed in Rupri Kaur's book *Home Body* (2020). She also preaches the feminist ideas. Thus, this theoretical framework of feminism is taken in order to analyze the data.

4. Findings and Analysis

Historically, literature has talked about women-subject. They have been the prime center of many a writers throughout history. Each writer has depicted them differently through their writing style, atmosphere, culture, society and artistic approach. Rupi Kaur, hailing from India, the contemporary liberal feminist writer has a different vision, style and art for talking about women through her writings. She sometimes provides prosaic verses as well as poetic verses. Sometimes, she just writes only one line. The line then consists of the universe of a woman.

Kaur is unique in this regard. She has been Master of It. She remains careless and pointless while displaying women, their sex, gender, power, strength and social status and the subjugation they receive. She has the art to highlight the existing scenario or culture of India in which women receive biased attitude in terms of gender. She this is how explores their wounds and their reality of society and brings them up in front of the conscious of their mind. Similarly, this all is argued and discussed by feminist ideology. They advocate women, and talk about their status, strength, value and worth, and sometimes they sound autobiographical too. Here, the study provides some textual references of Kaur which display her feminist approach in the poetry related the poetic verses and theory accordingly.

“After feeling disconnected my mind and body..... Coming back to each other”
(Kaur, 2010)

The aforementioned line is taken from Rupi Kaur’s recent book *Home Body*. The line artistically talk about the spiritual journey of a woman. She might be referring to a woman of her experience, who was subjugated in Indian Culture by patriarchal mechanisms. Now she has been returned to the situation where she has got no oppression. She depicts the revolutionized display of a woman in Indian culture. She sounds more pathetic and exploring and envisioning the woman. She feels her pain. She displays the pain. She wittedly pays satire on the patriarchal mechanism of the society the woman lived in.

As feminist theory assumes that woman have been marginalized biologically and have not enjoyed the equal spheres of life. This very idea is highlighted in the poem too. Kaur depicts the idea of woman marginalization on any base. The reconnection of mind and body reflects her biological suppression that woman have been aside on the basis of her biological weakness at a time, but now she has returned back. It means now she considers herself biologically strong and finds herself in the arena of strength. Her mind and body now are equal. She has mental capability and physical strength too. In this ways, it is possible to argue that Rupi basically advocates the idea that women are not weak but strong. Only patriarchal mindset considers them inferior. She pays the criticism against the idea of weakness of women either biologically or socially. She supports women and talks about them orderly. She stands for them and want to teach the world

that women are precious creation on the planet of earth and retain a great dignity spiritually and ethically. She sees them spiritually. She rejected the biased gender based dogma in the male-dominant society of the subcontinent and reflects the idea of feminism proposed by Beauvoir.

“I’m in the darkest room of my life” (Kaur, 2010)

The line quoted above is very deep in nature and form. The line also reflects the style of Kaur. She enlists the whole universe of women in one line. This is basically poetic genius. The line says two important phrases, ‘darkest room’ and ‘my life’. Any reader of Kaur can easily examine what she basically wants to argue. The concept of marginalization of women in the postcolonial society of India reflects here. She basically draws the sketch of the wounds of a woman. As discussed by the feminist theory, women are deemed weak and have no equal rights to men. So, the above line poetically advocates the same discourse. The phrases ‘darkest room’ and ‘my life’ explain the idea of women subjugation and oppression. Kaur displays the dark image of the patriarchal society where women are deemed tools. They don’t receive respect. They even don’t enjoy the choice of their life partner. They are implemented everything. They have no alternative choice but to accept. They do not enjoy the social and political freedom. They do not enjoy the educational phase of their life, and all the things in a society they desire or deserve.

Additionally, she becomes the voice of such women, and displays their wounds by arguing that her such bound life has been actually a dark room. The dark room where there is no hope of light, haunts. This kills the person. This murders the person. This pays scars on the person’s soul. It tears it. It leaves nasty impact on the psyche of the person. The person may get depression and suffer from anxiety, and there may other psychological disorder while living the dark room. Thus, Kaur advocated the wounds of women who are also living in the darkest room of their life. She wants to realize patriarchal mindset the suffering of those women, the psychological condition of those women. She reflects the idea that how women have been the victim of male-dominant attitude which is perhaps caused by their biological differences as discussed by the theorist.

“May be it was on my father’s face no idea who he was ... rapist left it behind ... Criminal I called a boyfriend”. (Kaur, 2010)

Feminist theory has always criticized the male-dominant attitude of societies. Beauvoir also discussed this in the book *w* (1949). She presented the same idea of male subjugation of women because of biological differences. In the aforementioned lines, Kaur talks about the different roles of man who subjugate women. The woman who is sometimes sister, daughter and girlfriend or wife, face the oppression by their respective masters. They oppress them socially or sometimes morally. They think of themselves superior to their women. They remain Master of the patriarchal mode of their society.

Similarly, talks about the man's role of father. Being a father, he exploits his daughters. It can be understood in a way that in some of the male-dominant societies, women don't enjoy educational freedom and environment, and they don't have their desired life partner. And this all happens because of their father and brother. They do not permit them to get education and marry a man of their desire. So, being father women are exploited as biologically they are deemed inferior to their males. Additionally, Rupi Kaur examines the same idea in the above line. She wants to display that man sometimes being a boyfriend exploits his girlfriend. The exploitation can be sexual, moral or even social. She deems him as a rapist and call him criminal. This also shows that how Indian culture have been rich with such crimes. Boyfriends sexually exploit their girlfriends. They have sexual intercourse and leave their girlfriends with the babies in their wombs. This presents the moral corruption of those males who are indulge in this inhumane behavior, and Rupi Kaur calls such individuals rapists and criminals.

"I'll be quiet when sexual assault they stop screaming liar." (Kaur, 2010)

This again explains the sexual, moral and social exploitation of women. As it is portrayed by the feminist theory, males are biologically stronger than woman, and that causes the suppression of women in male-dominant societies. Thus, Kaur also reflects the idea of how men have been treating women in her society. She highlights that women are quite when they are sexually assaulted in their domestic lives or urban setting. Women are sexually assaulted and raped, and when they raise their voice against it they are mistreated in the society and people call them liar. They don't believe them. It is because women are deemed inferior, and male are dominant in the culture and value. But, when women stay silent and raise no compliant voice against them, they, the people who called them liar and treacherous, give up their grievances and don't call them a liar, stops their misbehavior one can call inhumane behavior. This highlights that in Indian culture of Rupi Kaur men think of themselves biologically dominant, and they deem women inferior and exploit them culturally and morally. This shows the injustice done to women. This depicts the disqualifying nature of law, justice and court. There is no equal law for men and women socially. Women are deprived. And they have to stay calm even when they are rapped. This is a disguising picture of male dominant attitude.

*"While everyone else was living their life in colour
Depression froze me..."* (Kaur, 2010)

This line again justifies the suffering of women in the culture of Rupi Kaur. She sounds very painful and screaming while depicting the woman version of victimization. As Feminist discourse talks about the male dominance over female, it is easily accessible that women are marginalized in the society of male superiority. Kaur also reflects this in the aforementioned lines. She explores the idea that all the world – the world of male dormancy live the life of luxury. They

enjoy everything in life. They have all comforts, all the physical relaxations, but women have not been familiar to them. They are deprived and has been stayed same for a long ago in human history. Rupi Kaur proposes the idea that, male have been victimizing women. They don't let them experience the life of their own desire. They remain stagnant, arrogant and patriarchal always there with their own traditional thinking of superiority. Rupi provides the reason psychological disorder of women who are subjugated by men. According to her, the solitude of unequal life becomes the reason for their life in the society. Women because of suppression suffer from depression, anxiety and restiveness. They feel inferiority complex in the society. That depression freezes women. The freeze can be interpreted as refusal and denial of women in the society. They do go across racism, discrimination, hatred, inferiority, and many more other evils in the patriarchal society.

In a nutshell, it is concluded that the whole discussion focuses on locating feminist approach in the poetic writings of Rupi Kaur from her book, *Home Body*. The study has evaluated the research questions and objectives in order to solve the research problem. The study has majorly focused on the theoretical evaluation with regard to the research questions and objectives. Five selected poems of Rupi Kaur are discussed in the above discussion and analysis with respect to Beauvoir's theory of Feminism from her book *Second Sex* (1949).

6. Conclusion

Researcher here organizes the whole discussion, its research question, objective, problem, analysis and concludes them together in one idea. The feminism is normally dealt by many authors in the world of literature. The ideas of Rupi Kaur which are somehow postmodern in nature retains a great significance within themselves. Rupi Kaur normally remains very stagnant and liberal while talking about women. She herself seems depressed and anxious about feminine. She stands as an outspoken vocal for the rights of women in the patriarchal mood of society. She declares the culture around her as rigid and biased in terms of gender. The patriarchal mechanism even does not leave the mind of women free. Males control women, they captivate their mind, their body and soul. This stands to be the social exploitation of women. Moreover, her writing covers the systematically arranged domestic violence against women. In a poem where she talks about the dark room stands as the epitome of her depiction of gender based violence and discrimination in the male dominant society of her culture – universe. She also talks about the different roles of man through which he exploits women. The role of father, brother, boyfriend, husband, etc. Kaur touches this idea very artistically and in a novel manner by providing different aspects and roles of male attitude towards women. Additionally, she has a staunch support for women equality. She stands against women discrimination and the misbehavior done to them. She is a valid advocate for women. She herself being a woman stands liberally and equally against males and challenges them through her art, literature, and literary manners. In a nutshell, it is possible to pay the argument that Rupi Kaur's *Home Body* is replete with feminist ideas and reflects the empowerment

of women in male dominant-culture. She describes rape, domestic violence, and social injustice to women.

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