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Abstract: *The female body is more than often used as a site to perpetuate violence and oppress women in patriarchal societies. The current study aims to explore how patriarchal oppression targets the female body and how it enforces women to become subalterns having no voice in the selected fictional work, Half the Sky by Kristoff and WuDunn. For this purpose, Simone De Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) and Bryan Turner's The Body theory (1984) are used as theoretical frameworks to explore the selected novel. The research is descriptive qualitative, and placed within the interpretive paradigm. The data for the present study is in the form of textual paragraphs, which is taken from the selected novel and is collected through the purposive sampling technique. The study argues on women's oppression and violence. The findings of the study revealed that the dominance of male counterpart in every field of life is the basic reason for women oppression which leads to the women being subalterns.*

Key Words: Oppression, Violence, Feminism, Patriarchy, Female Body

Introduction

Oppression is considered a fundamental violation of human rights worldwide. United Nations stated oppression as, "Any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Oppression and violence towards females are due to the unbalanced power relationship between men and women. This oppression and violence against females differentiate and marginalizes women. Oppression has its different forms based not on gender, class and race separately but collectively; age, sex, disability, nationality and the status that one holds in the society also plays a significant role. It's an unfortunate reality that females are victimized for ages." Heise (1998) says that women in many places are treated so harshly that they are at the risk of their lives. In the places where men rule, female have no equal rights of their own and are also not treated equally as men. They have no freedom of their own. They have no choice of their own. They have to obey and follow males at any cost. In many areas of low resources, women are forced to fulfil all the desires of males. They are forced and are executed (p.262-90). Females are facing many types of violence, from physical harassment to psychological torture such as physical abuse, killing for dowry, rape, domestic violence, prostitution etc. Psychologically females are

disturbed in a variety of ways. They are forced to obey males even when they are at fault. Females are at the core of being victimized. Oppression is seen as a common practice in the community where males consider themselves as the dominant entity. They consider females to be creatures that have no tongue to speak, no heart to feel, and no brain to think. They are supposed to be silent even where there is a need. They should bear all the hardships with a strong and big heart. They should teach their children to be the same silent everywhere and every time.

"Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace." (Kofi Annan, 2016)

"Oppression" is not a direct term, but it possesses many judgments, always penetrating and repressive. This can be due to marginalization and domination. Violence against women has been acknowledged as a fundamental negation of women's human rights by the United Nations. However, small heed has been given to domestic violence as a broad social issue. The shame and the

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disgrace affiliated with domestic violence, the construction of it as a legal issue, and inappropriate data of abuse have obstructed grasp, and the evolution of appropriate interpose in emerging countries. Prostitution is much collaborative with other types of violence against women. Prostitution is widely socially beard, and its consumers are socially unperceivable. Even today, some prefer prostitution to sex. However, it is the devastating term that refers to the paid rape. Its consequences are made invisible by the notion that prostitution is sex rather than sexual violence. Prostitution and trafficking are incidents of being hunted down, dominated, sexually harassed and assaulted. There is a deficiency of recognition among clinicians regarding the systematic methods of brainwashing, discipline and physical control that are owned against women in prostitution. The position of women in lower social class is considered blatant, overly sexed, untamed, crude, and deserving of sexual exploitation and aggression. According to Pharr (1988) & Smith (2008), the exposure of female bodies is seen as a common standard and custom in many areas. Females are forced to expose their body in order to fulfil the demands of the males. This is a rare custom that exposure of female bodies is seen as a normal tradition. Female bodies are sold at high rates. They are used for the fulfilment of the desires and wishes of the male parts. In many of the areas, females' consent is not a part of the male fulfilment. Male carry out their desires and exercise harsh violence by firing or putting the sticks in the vaginal area of the female. Thus, they are oppressed in a number of ways.

The selected novel *Half the Sky* consists of 14 chapters, and every chapter highlights a different story of women being oppressed and victimized through their body. The authors in the novel, Kristoff and Wudunn, highlights women that are being oppressed on the basis of their low status in society as women are said to be of the inferior ranks. They argue that oppression that is prevailing in society is socially and economically, and morally the matter and affair of the centuries. Yet this oppression is life taking; it is not considered as tragic. It is considered a common practice of societies. The author starts their novel from a story of a girl that was kidnapped and then trafficked to the brothel and stays there under she undergoes a life-risking escape. The chapters afterwards include the other types of oppression over the body that includes physical, mental, psychological and verbal oppression. Not only the oppression is of significance, but the sources that were used for the cause are also of consideration.

The use of rape, the cutting of genital areas by incorporating sticks or firing them, making the girls and pregnant women naked in front of the society, were the greatest weapons to have control over the women and making them feel alienated from their bodies and themselves. There are many stories of the women in the societies that face these issues, but they feel cut off from them that becomes the root cause of their voicelessness.

Research Problem

The major argument of the study is that every human being (either male or female) has been given the equal rights of living in the society and to live according to what he desires and requires than why always female gender is subjected bearing the oppression that is prevailing in the patriarchal society? The study tends to argue how the pressure of oppression affects the lives of females and how these circumstances lead women to be subalterns bearing all the hardships in their life. The study also tries to argue why female bodies are exposed in societies that are male-centred. The study is beneficial as it provides insights into understanding the reasons for the oppression in the selected work. This study is needed as no significant work is done on this novel from the perspective of feminism. The present study also helps in understanding how females who are living in patriarchal societies face a lot of oppression towards them and how this oppression affects their lives.

Objectives

- To highlight how female oppression is closely linked with the female body resulting in alienation, voicelessness and subalternity.

Research Questions

- 1: How oppression is linked with the female body, and how it causes voicelessness of females in the patriarchal society?

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant theoretically as well as practically. It is expected to be a useful contribution to feminism as it provides insight into the deep oppression of females. The study is helpful in understanding how the oppression is linked with the female body making the body for women a site of conflict, where women experience a problematic relationship with their bodies. Their bodies become a site of pain, conflict and oppression for them. Thus, male dominance works to create a feeling of disconnection of women with their bodies, and

consequently, women experience voicelessness and feel subaltern.

Literature Review

An overview of related literature is presented chronologically to provide the research gap and establish a niche for the present study. Theoretical frameworks used for the analysis of data are Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Bryan Turner's *The Body* (1984). [Keith \[1986\]](#) asserts that over the years, gender-based violence is considered to be a well-known issue at the international level. This issue was not only referred to women but also for the achievement of equality, rights, peace and development. This issue has emerged as the need for women organizations in the state. And also have emerged as a theme for the feminist notion for women's equality rights and peace (p.95-118). According to WHO, violence is defined as the deliberate and conscious operation, and manipulation of power and force, that can be by the actual or the threatened means and can be against one individual or a group of people or a circle, that can cause physical, mental or psychological harm, resulting in the injuries or the deaths. [Lerner \[2005\]](#) noted that the phenomenon of submissiveness and differing from men had shown a standpoint and the position that permitted women's violence to be something other than the restriction. [Farley \[2003\]](#) says that Sexual violence is the term used to identify any kind of violence that is carried out through targeting sexuality. Research has shown that women enter prostitution if they had been violent and victimized in their childhood as children and afterwards experienced the same violence as being adults. Many of such women tangled in prostitution when they were in adolescence age (p.247-280). [Knight & Sims-Knight \[2003\]](#) says that male's thoughts, along with the applications, were frequently created through severe communal tales of what it is meant to be a male. The fluctuations in the attitude and thoughts that are related to the masculine gender consequently force the gender disproportions and inconsistency and ease the brutality against females (72-85). [Urry & Larsen \[2011\]](#) asserts that trading for the cause of sexual ill-treatment and misuse and for mandatory employments are the most well-known existing reasons for trafficking. Asia, and most importantly south East Asia, is said to be the sectors for the emergence and the target for people trading. Young and pubescent girls are kidnapped and then traded through the secret ports from one country to the other. They are bought by the customers, and then the customers use them according to their will and justification. If the girl resists, they are beaten

severely and are harshly damaged (p.03). [Spivak \[1988\]](#) says it is even when subalterns make an attempt to the dissolution of their words, she is not opted to be heard. Women are not able to speak; women are not allowed to speak. And when, unfortunately, they try to raise voice for themselves, they are brought to death. They are not even heard (p.292). [Gayatri Spivak \[1988\]](#) agreed to the opinion that women in the subcontinent emerged to be the silent majority which she termed as subalterns. [Fatima \[2019\]](#) conducted a study to examine women's representation in Pakistani cultural dramas. This study answers the questions of how women are portrayed and presented in society. The study shows that if the woman is modernized and educated, honor remains the dominant part of her life. The research also finds some concepts that are associated with honor, such as domestic violence, silencing the victims of rape and harassment etc. (p.3-16)

[Monto \[2000\]](#) considered more than 2300 seized clients and constructed that many of the men did not undertake rape tales as for violence against women. He winds up by saying that a very small ratio of the customers can be accountable for much of the brutality against the courtesans. He also mentioned that there is no reasoning behind accepting that many of the clients are brutal and savage (p. 67-83). [Hemmings \[2005\]](#) asserts that feminism is said to be the most current ideals or the principles to appear. Feminism strives to investigate female's status in the community. It elucidates the clear role of women in history. It put forward the foundation for rehabilitation and development and the progress of women in every aspect of society. It is believed that there exists a basic relation of power and authority spar among men and women. And this grapple is unlikely exhaustive as the grappling that surrounds the class race and creed. However, it is the early power spar, the least people interested in the development of this; the most basic is its connotation in the society while the worries about the status and situation of female were started from the early times (p.6). [Natasha \[1998\]](#) explained some of the issues elevated by women status in society and asserts that meanwhile, a vast number of gender variations have yet evolved in contemporary communities. Therefore, there are several changes that must be focused on. Finally, such replacements in feminist approaches render a new kind of feminism—one considerably in contact with the unconventional and political life in other communities. New feminism can be condemned and denounced on the same roots as its second wave precursor. It focuses on rich wealthy affluent females evolving countries females face more poor kinds of gender variations. As compared

to the West with far low resources than in developed nations. And achieve a small help in their grapple [the new feminism].

The body theory by Bryan Turner was proposed in 1984. According to this theory, the body is impressionable as it is fashioned by the social layout. [Fredrickson and Roberts \(1997\)](#), in objectification theory, says that it involves a framework for comprehending the happening of being a woman in a socio-cultural society that objectifies the body of the female. This theory has emerged to be very important in order to study female body portrayal in societies. [Bartky \(1990\)](#) explains that sexual objectification happens when female body parts are distinguished and are separated therefore presented as a physical object for the sexual desires of males. According to [Fredrickson and Roberts \(1997\)](#), sexual objectification theory postulates that sexual objectification of women bestows to the mental health issues that unreasonably attacks women in two ways. The first way is direct and includes the experiences of sexual objectification. The second way is indirect and includes female attributes of sexual objectification [as cited in the *sexual objectification of women: Advances to theory and research* p.8]. According to [Lerner \(1986\)](#), the standardization of dominance over women and the supplementation of male dominance over women in society. Lerner figures out that male dominance is structured and systemized, and standardized in important foundations of the society [vol 1]. According to the UN report 1980, it is recorded that women are all-around 50 percent of the total population of the globe. They carry two-thirds of all working and business hours. After this, they secure, they acquire one-tenth of the global income. They possess less than 1 percent of the world possessions and belongings. The society of Pakistan has always been a patriarchal society. In this society, the culture, the heritage, the standards and the social zones are established deep in the society. And these all are in charge of the violence that is prevailing against women. According to [Niaz \(2003\)](#), the general thought of domestic violence in Pakistan is by the husband on his wife. But the women [mothers-in-law] are also the executioner of domestic violence. The war on is really not among male and female. But also between the female gender due to the submissiveness inside the family [p.173-84]. [Fredrickson and Roberts \(1997\)](#) asserted that *external and internalized sexual objectification* are highly governed by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class; further explanation of these both types of internal and external objectification intersects with female's other socio-cultural identities are needed. They say that sexual

objectification can enhance female anxiousness about their appearance. Katie Conboy (1997), in their writing on "*the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*", portrays the importance of female bodies as:

"Indeed, there is a tension between women's lived bodily experiences and the cultural meaning inscribed on the female body that always mediates those experiences. Historically women have been determined by their bodies: their individual awakenings and actions, their pleasure and their pain compete with representations of the female body in larger social frameworks [p. 1, as cited in Chaudhary, 2013]." The body of the female is not guarded and defended in terms of only its traditions and attitudes but also in terms of its living purposes. Symbols describe in what ways the reproductive function of the females and their body is exploited in fulfilling the delights and the profits of the nation [Silva, 2003, p.38]. Spivak (1999), in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' claims:

"Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling that is the displaced figuration of the third-world-woman caught between tradition and modernization, culturalism and development [p.304]."

The above-presented studies represent the literature that was provided by other authors in the relevant fields. A critical review of the above-mentioned studies shows that the novel has not been explored from this perspective earlier. Moreover, this study is imperative as no significant work is done on this novel from the perspective of feminism. The present study also helps in understanding how females who are living in patriarchal societies face a lot of oppression towards them and how this oppression affects their lives and bodies.

Methodology

The study per se is descriptive qualitative research. The data for the present study is in the form of textual paragraphs analyzed qualitatively by applying the selected theoretical frameworks. The prime objective of the research is to investigate the reasons for women oppression, subalternity and the exposure of the female body in society. The textual data have been selected from the novel *Half the sky* by Kristoff and Wudunn, following non-probability sampling techniques.

Results and Discussions

A rigorous analysis of the textual data is performed

following a thematic approach within the selected frameworks. Female oppression, male dominance, subjugation, patriarchy are the main themes that have appeared after the analysis of the data.

Oppression

Oppression of women is an experience that is only experienced by females from males. This experience needs a detailed debate. This experience of oppression is permitted in some societies while it is indirectly allowed in some cultures ([Eaubonne, 1994](#), p.174-197). From the selected novel, we can observe that oppression of female is experienced as a natural and a common thing. Tools were used to experience the oppression of females. As in the novel, we can see: "And they beat me mercilessly, with a belt, with sticks, with iron rods (HTS, Ch1, p. 21)." This line is taken from the very first chapter of the novel *Half the Sky*, where we come across a girl, Meena, who was oppressed by the female tyrant in the brothel of Nepal. The life of females was never easy at any age. They were told of their non-dominance. They were told that they are of inferior ranks. They were oppressed in different ways. After all this oppression being bore by the females, they never spoke for themselves to get rid of that oppression. They did so because once they stepped into the brothel, they were never allowed to step out of the brothel with their own consent. They were locked in the brothel as prisoners. From the analysis, it is clearly observed that women are oppressed in different situations in different ways. They are considered as the silent majorities. They cannot speak for themselves because they are not allowed to do so. They are bound to obey what they are told. Oppression is said to be the denial of human existence. Oppression is the race about power relations. The higher the power relation, the higher can be the oppression. As in the words of [Prilleltensky and Gonick \(1996\)](#), oppression is defined as:

"Oppression is a series of asymmetric power relations between individuals, genders, communities, class, state, and nations such power relations lead to the conditions of misery, inequality, exploitation, marginalization and social injustices (p. 130)."

For the discussion, we can say that oppression is not a rectilinear term, but it does possess other subjectiveness as well. Experiencing oppression on the weak (females) is a very easy task, but it has major effects on the lives of the females who bear.

Female body

The body of the female is used as a target that can be employed for any purpose anytime. The female

body is used for the satisfaction of the customers or for exercising oppression over them. Female bodies were used as commodities for which a lot of money was paid by the customers to the owners of the brothel. Females were used as a commodity of their bodies that can be taken to society. As we can see from the novel, "*He pulled off my dress, and the rapes went on for a month like that (HTS, p.48)*". In the given text from the novel, Geeta's body is being witnessed as a thing that does not refer to her own. She is vigorously dragged into feeling alienated from her body. In a patriarchal society, women are being detached from their bodies due to the oppression they bear; they feel they cut off from themselves. They think they are no one to their bodies; their bodies feel like others to them. They have no control over their bodies.

The female body is always used as a tool for getting sexual pleasure. For this purpose, most people use or hire the girls who had recently got their pubescent age as they believe that such girls can be experienced well than those that already have experienced before. The girls are treated so weirdly for having the pleasure. As stated in the novel, "*He made me sleep naked beside him (HTS, p.48)*". The selected text shows that women possess no control over their bodies. They cannot express themselves. They are not able to raise voice for themselves, due to which they feel marginalized and prefer to be subaltern. In the selected novel, the females are portrayed to be the ones with closed body language. As the females do not possess a free lifestyle and are dependent on the male, they cannot enjoy a free lifestyle. "*Even when she was finally allowed to stand on the street outside the brothel to wave to customers, she was closely watched (p.49)*". From the novel, we can witness at many places that women are treated more harshly than the animals. They are oppressed psychologically, mentally, physically and vice versa. They are thought of like the ones that lack the power to be themselves. They are witnessed by everyone in society. They are to be used to be the advantage of the male-centred society. As [Gray, Knobe, Sheskin, Bloom & Barrett \(2011\)](#) assert that,

"Although sexualized women were perceived as lacking agency, their ability to experience was actually heightened, compared with non-sexualized targets."

Female is not anything that is used to be played with. Rather it is the thing to be respected. Therefore, playing with the female body is also not a thing to be done. In many cultures, this tradition is common, and in some other cultures, this tradition is made legal. But this tradition affects the lives of females for a lifelong period.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a term that is declared with the gender that is more dominant in society. In many cultures, dominance refers to male; therefore, they are declared as the patriarchs, and such a society is known as the patriarchal society. This type of society, having males in lead roles, never respect the other gender (female). Rather they try to make the other gender (female) subordinate to them. In the selected novel, we can see a world of patriarchy. Everywhere there are patriarchs. The subordinates are being oppressed by them. They are affecting their lives in a number of ways. Females are being kidnapped and forced to be prostitutes in a male-centred society. Male show their power by being the dominant ones. As shown in the novel, Akku Yadav, a strong man. He was a very cocky person. He uses to rape adolescent girls and bring them in front of society so as to maintain his power. *Akku Yadav, the other success. He was a higher-caste man.* The patriarchs are labelled as strong, powerful and higher caste man. Because they are the leaders, they are the rulers. They have the hold over everything. The oppressed are named as subordinates. [Bhasin \(2006\)](#) asserts that patriarchal culture is the one in which the dominance is of the men, hold refers to men, control goes to men, the power relationship that dominates men over women and to distinguish a structure in which women are retained to submissiveness in variety of means and techniques [p.3].

Conclusion

The novel is truly feminist, and all the events and the circumstances in the novel refers to the feministic approach. The researcher has concluded the study with the hope that it will brighten up ways for the other researchers to analyze the work by the feminist approach. This novel is totally feministic in the view that it contains feminist approaches. Women are being oppressed and suppressed in a male-centred and male-dominated society. Women do not have the right to speak for themselves. They are unable to raise voice for the justice for themselves. Women are forced to expose themselves in male-centred societies where the rule is male-only. The major findings of the study are that oppression is the fundamental thing in a society where the rule goes to the male genders. Females are subordinates, and they must be silent over their

happenings. They have no choice to speak; rather, they should make their selves ready for any happening. Furthermore, the researcher has tried to answer the questions in the light of the frameworks chosen. The conclusion of this study is providing the answer to the questions proposed in the study. The reasons for the oppression towards women that are seen in the novel is that the society in which a woman is living is a male centred and male-dominated society. The hold and the control are of the male counterpart. The orders are proposed by the male. This dominance and the centered society lead to the oppression of women. Sometimes, to dominate them and to show their power, the patriarchal society oppresses women. The reason behind the oppression of the women is also that women do not speak for them, and this silence is the best way for the patriarchal culture to observe the oppression towards the silent minority. Women prefer to be subalterns rather than speak for themselves because they consider silence as the best way to get rid of their problems. As society has not provided women with any right to speak, or the right to work, the women prefer to be silent. Women also prefer to be silent because it causes the honor of their male counterparts in front of society. Women alone are powerless creatures. They cannot do anything even they cannot survive in society without the help and without the shelter of the males. So, to be silent is provided as a tag for them. It serves as an honor for them. The reason behind the exposure of the female's body in the society is that male considers the female body as an object to have sexual pleasure. When the men need his sexual pleasure, he can expose a female body in society and can have pleasure. And to not use the same women for sexual pleasure, he uses to experience violence by inserting sticks into the sexual organs or by firing a shot into the genital portion of the female.

Future Implications

The study will help other researchers to research other types of violence against women and to know the reasons for the oppression women bear. The study will help other researchers to search about the main reasons for the exposure of the female body in society. Researchers can also explore the type of prostitution that is either chosen by choice.

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