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THE STYLISTICS STUDY OF TEHMINA DURRANI'S MY FEUDAL LORD USING LABOV'S MODEL OF NARRATION

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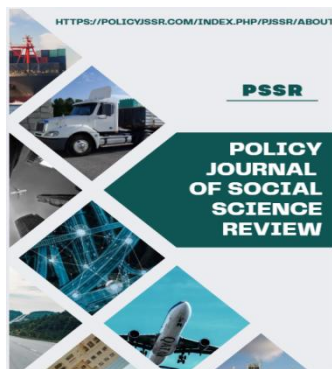
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ABSTRACT

The study analysis Tehmina Durrani's My Feudal Lord through the Labov's narrative model (1967) and its edited version (1997) as its theoretical framework. The research explores how the autobiographical narrative is structured through the six elements of Labov's model of narration: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. Particularly, emphasizing on the element of evaluation, in which she states her internal intuitions and moral judgement. Along with the six major components, the elements like reportability, causality, credibility, objectivity and assignment of praise and blame as suggested by Labov (1997) are also included in the study. The research aims to investigate how Durrani construct her experiences of feudalism, gender equality, patriarchy, domestic violence, resilience and resistance within the organized narrative structure. Through the textual analysis the study attempts to identify the presence and purpose of Labovian's components of narration. The study argues that the narrative is not only a personal recount of trauma but serves as a critique of feudalism and patriarchy. The findings suggest that My Feudal Lord shows alignment with Labov's narrative model specifically, its chronological sequence of events. The study highlights the efficacy of Labov's model to interpret the autobiographical texts and demonstrate how it assist in exposing the feudalism and patriarchy. Thus, study contributes to narrative discourse analysis and critique on patriarchal and feudal systems.

Keywords: Labov's model, Autobiographical narrative, Patriarchy, Feudalism



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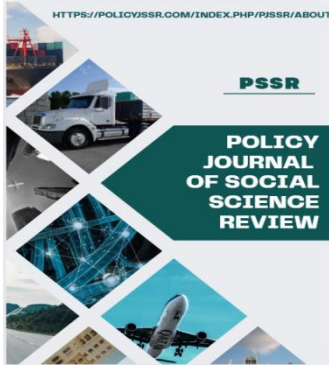
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Introduction

Feudalism is a socio-economic system in which a small percentage of landowners own large estates. In such a system the farmers get exploited economically and are able to survive merely. The landed elite have political dominance as they use their immense wealth to get seats in National and Provisional assembly. In feudal system the households are mostly male dominated and the women have no voice and limited agency. The women have limited personal choice and freedom. Therefore, the current study is an attempt to uncover the feudalistic and patriarchal elements in the autobiographical novel, *My Feudal Lord* by Tehmina Durrani. In her novel, she recounts her marriage with Mustafa Khar, a powerful politician of his time. After her marriage, she experiences emotional, physical and psychological abuse from her husband, Khar. She eventually decide to leave the abusive marriage and speak out publically against the brutal reality of feudal and patriarchal systems.

Background

The researchers have employed William Labov model of narration as the theoretical framework for the present study. Labov is an American linguist. He is a professor at university of Pennsylvania. He is a well-known sociolinguist and head of the department of linguistic laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania. Herman (2009) maintains that one year after the publication of Barthes' "Introduction" William Labov and Joshua Waletzky published an article that provides a sociolinguistic approach to analysing stories told in context of face-to-face interaction. The first step in narrative analysis taken by William Labov and Waletzky in 1967 laid out a frame work. The framework is useful for analysis of narration. His model is developed for the autobiographical narratives or the narratives based on personal experiences. William Labov's frame work is useful in evaluating oral narratives, folktales, and mainly the realistic or day to day stories/narratives. In variety of literary



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and fictional narratives, the narrative analysis has become a powerful tool to analyse the realistic/autobiographical narrations.

The model of narrative given by Labov consists of six basic elements.

- (i) Abstract
- (ii) Orientation
- (iii) Complicating action
- (iv) Evaluation
- (v) Result / resolutions
- (vi) Coda / end of story

The brief definitions of these six elements are given below

(i) Abstract

By the term 'Abstract' Labov means the brief summary or gist of the story. It is placed before the narration starts properly. Herman (2009) is of the view that one of the basic elements of narrative is situating the story and providing a mental picture to the reader or listener of the story, in other words, preparing readers or listeners for the story. The abstract gives the idea to the listener or the reader about the topic of the story.

Orientation

Orientation as the word itself indicates means an orderly arrangement. In a story in the orientation phase the main character is introduced. An identification and awareness of Age/ era, time, and place is given. situation of the story is also introduced in the orientation phase. Orientation usually consists of many past progressive verbs.

Complicating Action

The complicating action describes the real plot of the narrative. The complicating Action is the incident breaks the "stasis" or inactivity and from that point onwards the plot of the story is initiated.

Evaluation

It is the comments of the story teller. In other words, it is a justification as to why the story is tellable, readable, it is because of the evaluation the resolution is delayed. The evaluation is a mean through which the narrator indicates the point of the narrating why it was told; therefore, evaluation is the important critical component of storytelling.



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(v) Resolution

It is the result of the story or the concluding position. Flanagan defines resolution as the part of the story / narrative in which the issue or the problem of the story is resolved / solved or worked out. Resolution occurs of the falling action or denouement and indicates the end of the narrative.

(vi) Coda

It is the final statement of the story. It is a concluding segment of a piece of music, story or a dance; it is a final embellishment beyond a natural ending point. If coda is good it gives to the listener or reader happiness and a sort of completeness and satisfactory feeling. The important characteristic of the story teller is that he/she should have the ability to create something out of nothing. The story teller should be capable enough to motivate and engage the attention of the readers. Simultaneously, the narration should entertain and amuse the audiences and satisfy the emotions of readers.

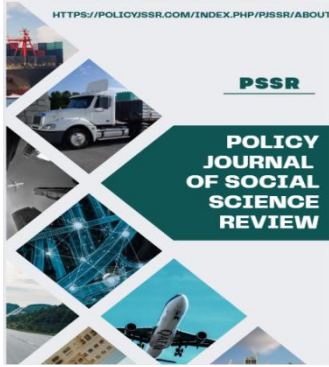
In the light of above discussion, the study analysis Tehmina Durrani's autobiographical work, *My Feudal Lord*. The researcher examines that whether in 'My feudal lord' all the elements of Labov are present or not.

Research Question

To what extent the elements of Labov's narrative model are present in *My Feudal Lord*?

Literature Review

Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*, is one of most influential autobiographical novels. It exposes the intersection of gender, patriarchy, feudalism in Pakistan. Zubair et al (2018) state that the sufferings of the protagonist represent the condition of many Pakistani women. Likewise, Ahmed (2010) maintains that the novel truly mirrors the patriarchal society and feudal system in which the identity of women is controlled by the males. Hence, it represents the subjugation of Pakistani women collectively. Khan (1998) states that Durrani reclaims the



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agency by narrating her sufferings and subjugation publically. She does not portray herself as a weak victim but she proves herself as a resilient woman. She represents the gradual awakening of women living in patriarchal societies. Saeed (2015) states that the facts that protagonist shares are accurate but her emotions and experiences are also authentic. The existing body of literature shows that Durrani's work is a critique of patriarchal and feudal systems. By exposing the violence she challenges the power structures. Hence, the novel is explored from feminist point of view mostly. The current study attempts to study it from the stylistics perspective by using the Labov's narrative model.

Application of Labov's model

Labov's model help in breaking down the structure of the plot systematically. It assist in identifying complex ideas, turning points and climax of the story. It provides a structure to analyse the literary works as it break down the story/plot into various stages (Herman, 2009).

Research Method

The present study uses textual analysis as a research method to evaluate the selected work. Mc kee (2013) defines it as the close reading of the text. The textual analysis helps to understand how meaning is constructed through words, symbols and the structure of the language.

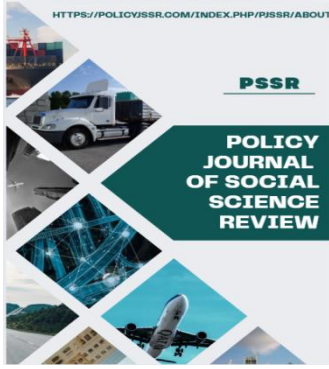
ANALYSIS

Abstract

In *My Feudal Lord*, Durrani provides an abstract at the beginning of the story in order to prepare audiences for the actual story. To quote from the book.

There is a fantasy of a feudal lord as an exotic, tall, dark and handsome man, with flashing eyes and traces of quick-tempered gypsy blood. He is seen as a passionate ladies' man and something of a rough diamond. But the fantasy is far from reality. There is a deep-rooted deficiency in the feudal value system; it must be diagnosed before it is treated (Durrani, p.1)

In abstract phase the readers are prepared that they are going to have a



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very dynamic autobiography of Ms. Durrani in which she is going to reveal her private life.

Orientation

The story begins in Lahore, in the spring of 1974. It is the hall of Punjab Club where the main characters are introduced by the narrator. The main character of the narrative including Anees, Tehmina Durrani and Mustafa Khar are introduced in part one chapter one of the book. In the orientation phase, the readers get the image of Tehmina Durrani as a twenty-one-year-old newly married woman. She is astonishingly beautiful with long auburn hair. Anees, the husband of Tehmina is junior executive and his social status is not up to the mark. Ms. Durrani says: “It was our first opportunity to meet the city’s elite. Anees felt flattered and pleased to be included” (Durrani, p.1). The situation of the story is also given in the following comment of Ms. Durrani. As for me could any sense of foreboding have told me that I was about to have the

most crucial meeting of my life” (Durrani, p.1)

Shahida said. “This Mustafa Khar was extremely popular here, having earned the nick name lion of Punjab and same said that he had been the second most powerful politician in the whole Pakistan.” She also commented about her father and family: Father had taken a banking job in New York City, my parents, younger brother and three younger sisters lived there now (Durrani, p .21)

She introduced the central figure of the narrative Mustafa Khar. She says, “Mustafa Khar chose to sit directly across me. I was the perfect victim” (Durrani, p- 21). From the above quoted text, one gets the idea about the places and the real content of important characters. The readers in this orientation phase get the idea that how these characters are going to affect each other’s life as the plot proceeds.

Complicating Action

The complicated action of the story begins when Ms. Durrani leaves her first



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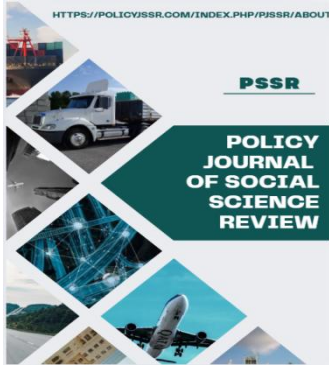
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husband and decides to marry Mustafa Khar. She says, “The misgivings I had experienced prior to my marriage had proved correct. I had no faith in his abilities and little respect for his intellect” (Durrani, p-64). The real plot begins from then onwards. She wanted to have an authoritarian, dynamic, attractive, extremely caring husband but her fantasy vanishes soon when she sees the real face of Khar. He is extremely cruel who beats her brutally and force her to do what he wants her to do. Her own self disappears. She starts to live a life that is decided by khar. Her marriage with khar was a nightmare. Durrani relates, “For the next four hours, Mustafa’s temper grew progressively worse, violence was thick in the air. He instructed me to sit on the edge of the bed. Then he began to interrogate me about my marriage to Anees. With each question his tone grew angrier. (Durrani, p.101). At the beginning she tries to hide the violent behaviour of Mustafa because there were many people outside who wanted to prove her mistake of

marrying Mustafa. She remained quiet and his violence and ill treatment grew more and more.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the main article component of the story when one evaluated the story critically, we come to know that it is a recreation of history. From 1974 onwards Ms. Durrani not only gives the details of her personal life’s account. The political Turmoil, the trial of Bhutto, the arbitrary rule of Zic-ul-Haq and the political training of Murtaza & Shahnawaz Bhutto, are all presented by the author with intimate reality. At many places in the book, we find the indication of political instability and the role of Mustafa Khan as a politician as well. As it is already indicated that evaluation is the critical comments given by author in order to delay the resolution. In the evaluation phase the readers get the idea that Ms. Durrani with her saga of life relates the socio-political situation of Pakistan. She indicates about people of Pakistan who are living in acute poverty. She relates that she raised



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funds in order to help the poor people. Especially the patients in a hospital in Lahore. It is because of the political comments incidents that are shared by her that the resolution is delayed in her narrative. In addition, the story is readable because Durrani is not sharing her life's experience put also creating history by providing the political incident and turmoil and uncertain, difficult, dangerous situations of politics.

Resolution

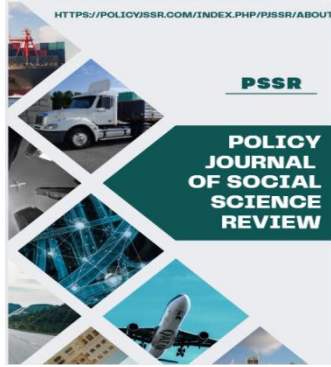
Durrani Started to realize her self-respect if she does not respect herself other people world not respect here. She showed retaliation, Now the story moves towards resolution. She leaves the house of Mustafa three times but every time he will convince her to come back. Every time he would promise to respect her and that he would be a caring husband. She says, "I had found his words chilling: please forgive me, I just can't let you leave me. This man had abducted my children. He was holding them hostage. And the ransom was me!" (Durrani, p-241). In spite of the pressures

put on Durrani by Mustafa to come back to his life. She was reluctant and she took the final decision of not returning to him at any cost. She wanted to get rid of the sick man who has violently abused her for fourteen years. She says, "Mustafa the hunter became Mustafa the hunted. I wanted Mustafa to know that he was no longer dealing with the old, passive Tehmina" (Durrani, p-241-242). She finally succeeded in getting divorce from him. She says, "The *Idat* was over. The divorce was final" (Durrani, p-370)

Coda

The final statement of the book is given by Ms. Durrani in the following words.

My oldest daughter Tanya graduated from high school in America and returned to Pakistan. She is a talented artist, she would like to pursue a career in graphic design. Naseeba is an aspiring politician. Nisha speaks of studying criminal law. Ali, 'my little feudal lord' shows a great inclination towards maths. Hamza the baby who remembers little of life with Mustafa. "All five children have become firm



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supporters of my cause (Durrani, 1990, p.380).

The coda of 'My Feudal lord' gives the readers a happy mode and satisfactory ending.

Along with the six elements of Labov's model. William Labov wrote another article under the name of "Some Further steps in Narrative Analysis" in 1997 in which he gives some further steps in narrative analysis.

These include:

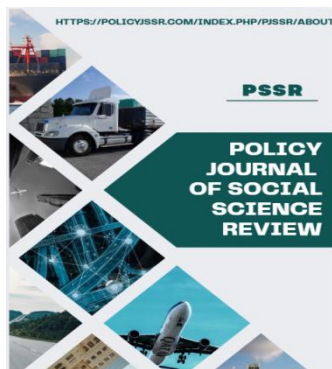
Reportability

Labov (1997) is of the view that the most essential and difficult concept in narrative analysis is reportability. By reportability he means to provide the readers or listeners some most reportable events in order to keep the interest of narration and reader. The researcher found in 'My Feudal Lord' the element of reportability visibly present. Take for instance, Ms. Durrani narrates about the love affair of her husband with her own sister. Ms. Durrani's attempt to commit suicide is also a reportable event because readers become curious to know

about the reaction of Mustafa. Furthermore, Ms. Durrani is succeeded in keeping the interest of readers with the incidents like she challenges a violent and strong person like Mustafa Khar. She leaves his home many times and gives him tough time. In the end the readers are glad to know that she finally become successful in releasing herself from the clutches of sick minded man.

Credibility

Labov (1997) maintains that credibility of story is the extent to which the readers /listeners believe the events that are described by the story teller. He says, "this approach to narrative is based upon serious and straightforward accounts of events that are asserted to have actually taken place, rather than jokes" (Labov, p-1). The story that Ms. Durrani relates is credible because from the beginning till end she remains serious and sombre. She tells the incidents of her life seriously. She opens her private life in front of public. She says, "The initial reviews were extremely negative. Many said that it was publicity seeking rubbish.



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Some called it obscene. No-one in Pakistan, however, doubted its accuracy and credibility” (Durrani, p-380)

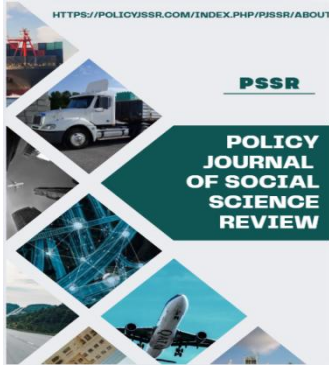
Causality

Labov (1997) explains that in a story the basic construction is the presence of series of incidents and events which links the orientation to the most reportable event of the story. Eventually the orientation becomes the important act of interpretation of the series of incidents and leads to the next important step in the story, the assignment of praise and blame. In the story *My Feudal Lord* there is also an element of cause and effect. All the incidents are connected to each other. From the orientation phase till coda. Take for instance, the introduction of Mustafa khar as an extremely powerful man who has the power to seduce any woman, Tehmina most charming newly married girl fascinated by Mustafa, comes under his spell, leaves her first husband, marries Mustafa and there begins the series of reportable events including his violent behaviour with his wife and

children, love affair with his wife’s sister. All these incidents lead the readers to the next phase of storytelling, the assignment of praise and blame.

The Assignment of Praise and Blame

Labov (1997) says that the narrative can be differentiating, in which the villain or the antagonist provide harm to others by violating norms of society and creating troubles for the main character/protagonist. The protagonist tries to confront the violence of the antagonist. Therefore, the task of who is to be blamed and who is to be praised is the main focus of the narrative analysis. In *My Feudal Lord*, the character of Mustafa khar is an example of antagonist. He is sick minded, jealous, violent, and cruel. He is such a person who does not have any moral standard. He does not feel any qualms of conscience while having physical relation with his wife’s sister. Ms. Durrani on the other hand is protagonist of the book. She is the one who faces difficulties and fight vigorously and



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ultimately get rid of a despotic natured husband.

Objectivity

Labov (1997) defines Objectivity as

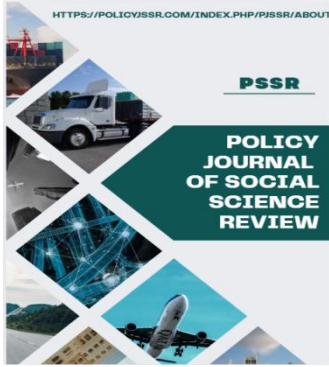
In general, we find that narratives of upper middle class, university- educated speakers tend to report on the narrator's emotions. In contrast, many working-class narrators are sparing in their reporting of subjective feelings. It was somewhat surprising to me to find that the 'subjectivity' characteristics of middle-class speakers is considered as a positive quality by therapeutically oriented writers, and people who do not report their emotions in narratives of bereavement, for example, are considered to be suffering from an impairment of normal and desirable abilities (Labov, 1997, p-14)

He also gives two more definitions of an objective event and a subjective event. An 'objective event' is the event that narrator shares through his intellect. Narrator's intellectual experience is the objective event. Labov (1997) is of the view that the events that are objective

can be more reliable. A 'subjective event' is the narrator's emotional experience which may or may not be reliable. In Durrani's *My Feudal Lord* the researcher finds the objectivity in the events that are related to the political situation of Pakistan at that point of time. The whole episode of Bhutto's arrest, the attempts of Bhutto's sons to release their father, the role of Mustafa as politician, the MRD movement, the arbitrary rule of Zia-ul-haq. All these events prove the narration of Durrani objective. Furthermore, she reveals certain elements of her personal life that are extremely personal. Like when Mustafa forces her to have sex in gaol and Durrani's sister having affair with her husband are the incidents sufficient enough to prove her narration as objective narration.

Discussion

Durrani's autobiographical narrative follows the defined structure of storytelling. It fits closely to the Labov's narrative model. The major occurrences of her story, her recount of marriage,



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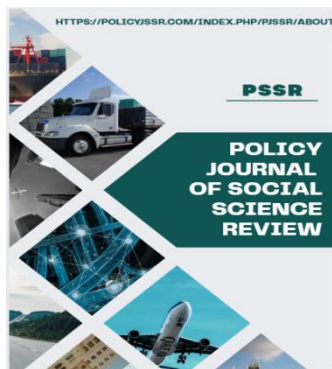
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matrimonial abuse, torture, and resistance in a feudal and patriarchal society are closely linked to the six major elements of Labov's model of narration. The analysis shows that since her childhood she has internalized the belief that she is weak and dependent. Therefore, in patriarchal societies the role of the women is limited and defined by the patriarchal ideologies. They become robots who are programmed by the male and certain times female members of the family. Consequently, the voice and agency of the females is snatched by their own family and after marriage they are exposed to subjugation and domestic violence. Durrani falls prey to the cunning Mustafa Khar, who understood her weakness and later exploited her. He had already been married four times, but because he was a feudal lord, therefore, he had the liberty to marry or divorce any one at any time. However, Durrani's view point is clear. In writing the autobiography and revealing her personal life in front of public. In a

country like Pakistan where feudal system is so strong. These feudal misuse innocent people for their selfish motives. They exploit women. Majority of them are womanizers who consider woman as an object of pleasure. In front of them women have no value and no respect. She provides the real picture of the weak position of a woman in the complex web of muslim society. The analysis further reveal that how a feudal man like Mustafa controls the life women whether they are his wives or female servants, and treats them badly. He uses all institutions to marginalize and subjugate women and to make them feel inferior. In the end, Durrani exhibits resilience and is able to leave the abusive relationship, obtain a divorce and restart her life with her kids. Thus, structurally speaking, all the components of Labov's model, including abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda, are present in Durrani's narrative.

Conclusion



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The discussion can be concluded that after evaluating Tehmina Durrani's autobiographical narrative using Willaim Labov's model of narration. The study concludes that all the elements of Labov's model including abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, coda, reportability, credibility, causality, causality, the assignment of praise and blame and objectivity are present in her narration. The Labov's model provided a strong framework that helped to expose the brutalities of feudal and patriarchal systems deeply rooted in the traditional societies of Pakistan.

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