

Chameleon-Like Relationships: Psychoanalysis Of My Feudal Lord

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Abstract

The research paper explores the psychology behind impassive and traumatic relations in Tehmina Durrani's autobiography *My Feudal Lord* (1991) in the light of Freud's Psychoanalysis of conscious and unconscious mind. It also discusses the role of id, ego and super ego to shape the personality of the major characters. *My Feudal Lord* is a narration of Tehmina Durrani's distressing and ghastly experiences when she was married to Ghulam Mustafa Khar. The thrust of the paper is to eke out the stark depiction of vacillation in chameleon-like relationships and the psychology behind them. A true marriage, one of strong social bonds that cherish love and trust in the couple and subsides animal instincts but in a mismatched marriage these instincts become dominant in support of id that lead the individual as well as society towards declination.

Keywords: Gender, Marriage, Narcissism, Psychoanalysis, Vacillation

Psychoanalysis, a branch of psychology focuses to distinguish the associations between the unconscious and the conscious mind. The conscious mind consists of thoughts, available memories and perceptions. In opposition, the unconscious mind contains instincts, emotions and suppressed desires. Preconscious is the status of mind which carries the feelings which are although not repressed and currently unavailable in the conscious mind but readily available. Sigmund Freud, who introduced the theory of psychoanalysis, believes that fundamental biological instincts play a vital role to shape personalities. Freud's structural theory of personality focuses on the role of unconscious psychological conflicts in shaping behaviour and personality. He theorized that id, ego and superego are the three divisions and when they interact properly an individual acts well. If any one of them overpowers, it results in personal and societal troubles. Hans W. Loewald (1978) states, "Freud called the dynamic unconscious indestructible in comparison with the ephemeral and fragile, but infinitely precious, formations of consciousness. Where id was, there ego shall come into being. Too easily, and too often ego is equated with rigid, unmodulated and unyielding rationality" (p.15). Further he states, "Psychoanalysis is the name (i) of a procedure for the investigation of mental processes which are almost

inaccessible in any other way, (ii) of a method (based upon that investigation) for the treatment of neurotic disorders and (iii) of a collection of psychological information obtained along those lines which is gradually being accumulated into a new scientific discipline” (107).

Freud asserts that an ego is not a natural instinct rather the sense of self evolves throughout infancy and early childhood. He explains that the id, ego, and superego are in everlasting dissent and struggle throughout childhood which helps in shaping an adult’s personality which determines his behaviour and approach to the world. He supposes that a person who has a strong ego has a healthy personality. To support Freud Sudhir Kakar (1978) points out, “The ego is one of the three principal psychic substructures, its counterparts being the primitive id and the constraining superego. The individual ego is in a state of constant flux, meditation, and exchange between inner and outer, past and present, unconscious and self-conscious, self and society, between the instinctual and institutional in human life” (p. 22).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) state, “The new born initially depends on others to do its gender, and they come through in many different ways, not just individuals but as a part of socially structured communities that link individuals to social institutions and cultural ideologies. It is perhaps at this early life stage that it is clearest that gender is a collaborative affair – that one must learn to perform as a male or a female, and that these performances require support from one’s surroundings” (p. 8). Arthur Brittan (1989) asserts, “One of the difficulties in any discussion about gender and gender identity is that our terms of reference are already defined for us by the prevalent ideology of gender differences and inequalities” (p. 35). In *The Newly Born Woman* Cixous asserts, “Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity...moreover, woman is always associated with passivity in philosophy” (Cixous, 1986, p. 64). On the name of principle and civilization woman is destined to obey masculine structure and has to repress herself physically and mentally to the fulfilment of male happiness. Factually, man is bodily stronger and he has taken it as a weapon to control female as per his needs and desires by categorizing them in her duty towards the family and the society. Jehangir states “For centuries women have held their peace. Patience is apparently a virtue to be practiced exclusively by them. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by law to all – yet traditions and customs conspire to silence them” [(Foreword) My Feudal Lord].

To support women’s voice Betty Friedan (1963) asserts “The only way for a woman, as for a man to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own. There is no other way” (*The Feminine Mystique*). The execution of Friedan’s argument is Tehimna Durrani’s autobiography *My Feudal Lord* (1991) which divulges her traumatic, turbulent, harrowing and appalling experiences of her married life with Ghulam Mustafa Khar, her lover and second husband. The thrust of the paper is not to interpret *My Feudal Lord* as an autobiographical writing but to portray the stark depiction of vacillation in chameleon-like relationships and the psychology behind them. Shreerikha Subramanian (2013) states, “Durrani’s portrayal of the severity of patriarchy is written over by the assertion of the female self who emerges using wit, desire, and play so that her story wins over the villainy of time” (p.

127). Mitra & Dhawan (2009) state, “The autobiographical process is the recreation of author’s personality, which is seen in retrospect” (p. 150).

Jehangir states, “It sketches the pains and burdens of guilt shared by millions of women in feudal society. While it is true that women have a secondary role to play in most societies, it is equally true that under feudal oppression they have no honorable mention at all” [1991, (Foreword) My Feudal Lord]. Marriage is a relationship that is culturally defined and socially approved and is established through some religious and social rules. Edward Westermarck (1891) in *The History of Human Marriage* defined marriage “as a relationship of one or more men to one or more women which is recognized by custom and law and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and in the case of the children born of it” (p. 26).

“Durrani’s work illustrates that in third world countries like Pakistan, women are taken as personal properties and possessions of men since men control every sphere of lives of women” (Habib et al., 2013, p. 97). In *My Feudal Lord* Mustafa is the evocative of untamable instincts that imposed his brutal ambition on his family and society as well and successfully accomplished them throughout his lifetime. Mustafa’s parents mismatch marriage inherit him narcissism. Mustafa’s mother nurtured her eight sons without any control and perambulation. On the contrary, one girl named Rashida received brutal treatment from her mother. This atmosphere in the house developed in them disrespect for woman and an attitude that “women were treated like commodities. Their function was to work, clean, cook, bear children, to be used for pleasure and be beaten. They had no rights. Only duties” (p.249). Jones asserts, “A man who has been the indisputable favorite of his mother keeps for life the feeling of a conqueror, that confidence of success that often induces real success” (1953, p. 5). The influence of Mustafa’s mother was so strong on him that he never respected any relationship. Sudhir Kakar in *The Inner World* asserts, “It is a part of the actuality of psychology and culture, absorbed by the child in his relationship with his adult caretakers from the very beginning of life as the underlying truth of the world in which he will spend his life- a world first conveyed to him by his mother” (1978, p. 57).

Freud in his work *In Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* Focuses on the role of narcissism in self-concept, love and sexual relationships and states, “The man is convinced that the loved woman has need of him, that without him she would lose all hold on respectability and rapidly sinks to a deplorable level. Her fate is in his hands, and he saves or rescues her by ‘not letting her go.’ Men of this type know how to win his ladies by subtlety of his methods of seduction and his skill in argument, spent endless pains during the course of each of these love relationships in composing tracts to induce the loved one to keep in the path of love” (1991, p. 52). Tehmina did not receive wifely respect and love rather Mustafa Khar treated her according to his mood and needs. Mustafa Khar’s love for her is of an opportunist who wanted to accomplish his political ambitions. She said, “I had been used. I was being discarded and spat out like sugarcane chaff. He had used my strength in exile and in prison. I was his only ally then. He needed me. He took out his frustration on me so that he could face the world with his calm public image” (p. 358).

Physical relationship between couple is a way that ties them emotionally but when one of the partner is reluctant for that and is pursued then it is not love rather it is a rape. When Tehmina went to visit Mustafa in Jail he insisted her to make love which was near impossible because of her recent operation to which Mustafa did not mull over and tried to compel her. Embarrassed Tehmina denied and came out of the jail and “the pain had been replaced by humiliation” (p. 290) and she confessed that “I believe that inconsistency is a better reputation to live than a woman who has been raped by her husband” (p. 291). Ehsan et al. (2015) opine, “Patriarchic talk does not consider sex as a mode of reciprocal physical delight but somewhat as a tool of domination” (p. 57).

Meena Kandasamy in *When I Hit You* writes, “The shame of rape is the shame of the unspeakable. Women have found it easier to jump into fire, consume poison, blow themselves up as suicide bombers, than tell another soul about what happened. A rape is a fight you did not win. You could not win”(2017, p. 169).

Freud opines that an individual ruled only by id can do everything to gratify his or her own contentment, and does not hesitate to break societal norms without thinking of the consequence. In *My Feudal Lord* Mustafa and Tehmina’s sister Adila’s incestuous relationship shows their id form. When caught Adila turned chameleon and blamed Mustafa for her immoral behavior. Although Tehmina knew that she was true but said, “Never speak ill of my husband in front of me. If you have something to say about your own behavior, I shall listen and forgive. Leave him out of it” (p.101). When Tehmina complains about the affair to her mother, instead of taking any action against Adila she tells Tehmina to cope up with the situation. Tanu Kashyap states “The patriarchal system demands that the woman should take care of the husband and his family in order to uphold the honour of her father” (p.66). The reason for Tehmina’s single-sided protest was to protect her husband’s character in the house of her parents. Tehmina suppressed her honour for the respect of her family and the given promise to his father that she “would not leave Mustafa under any circumstances or for any reason” (p. 48). For Adila’s episode and the reaction of her mother Tehmina says “I would have to become a shield for the sake of a family that had abandoned me for the sake of a sister who had betrayed me.” (p. 84). To douse distrust of Tehmina both Adila and Mustafa decided to live apart and Adila decided to marry Matloob to extinguish the ashes of their dissolute relationship which after some years again ignited when they both were caught. Unashamed Adila indifferently said to Tehmina that shook the foundation of their relationship and left a huge question mark “Do you know what I have done for you? You would not call me a sister. You would call me an angel. I am responsible for saving your marriage” (p. 345) and left Tehmina in dilemma of her identity and she is struggling with the questions, “Who was he to choose? Why had I given him the privilege to choose either me or Adila? Why was he in this position? How? Why were we standing in line? Why were we sitting on a shelf in a shop window, waiting for his decision?”(p. 85)

People like Mustafa are unable to appreciate the love they obtain. Instead they estrange those who bestow selfless love and compassion. Throughout her married life she struggled for her

identity. Mustafa used Tehmina's love to get rid of from Adila to save his political image as "he knew that the fatal attraction would create a chaos. But he also knew that I was there – a stabilizing factor" (p. 358). Mustafa Khar was an expert to turn his personality and behavior as per his needs and to satisfy his narcissism He, who, once brutally beat his wife when visited a male doctor. He even objected Tehmina's telephonic chat with her brother and savagely hit her. But to get released from prison and to attain political power he himself sent Tehmina to convince many men to vote for his release. Tehmina says, "He controlled his insecurities and sent me out into the very world of men that had bred his fears. This was Mustafa's 'Doctrine of Necessity'; it was his animal instinct for survival that made him work on my mind" (p. 359). When it became intolerable to bear Mustafa's Chameleon like behavior, Tehmina left Mustafa and asked for divorce; once again he showed his chameleon reality because "This could be very damaging to his political career. A wife advertising her bruises made good copy for the media. He was not willing to take the risk. He was helpless" (p. 93) and insisted his mother-in-law and closest friend to appease her to live with him but when denied "Mustafa realized that his marriage was over. But it is not in his nature to accept defeat. He felt his male ego crumble. The feudal in him resurfaced with a diabolical plan" (p. 26) which he executed by kidnapping his own children to shatter Tahmina's self-esteem and get her back to his so called prison house.

It is true that relationships need selfless love to sustain but it is also a bare fact that certain relationships akin to marriage remain unremitting without love. It is a fact that children are the bridge to connect the two different persons into one unit- parent "although it was no longer based on trust, or love or respect" (p. 232). Tehmina wanted to save the relation for the future of her children and she said "My priorities were clear" (p. 102). In his essay "Of Marriage and Single Life" Bacon says, "Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity" (1908, p. 33) but to persons like Mustafa and Adila relations are just props to gratify their id.

Unlike other coerced relationships marriage "is a voluntary relationship. A relationship of choice" (p. 90) and as Bacon commented though taking woman in consideration, "if the bad husbands were of their own choosing, against their friends' consent; for then they will be sure to make good their own folly" (1908, p. 35). Tehmina of My Feudal Lord fits in the sort of a person discussed by Bacon because she chose Mustafa though warned by his wife Shaharзад that "He is a very difficult man. I know him inside out. You don't know him. He is not good for you. He will ruin your life" (p. 213) but Tehmina took the affair with Mustafa as the blessing of God and said, "That we were meant for each other. Fated. I was confident that only I could analyse him positively and give him the support and sympathy that he so obviously cried out for" (p.206). Tehmina's superiority complex and over confidence refute her to mull over the warning by Shaharзад. The warning turned into fact when "Mustafa Khar changed colours to suit the terrain like a chameleon" (p. 276) and her love for the man turned into fear. When situation became intolerable Tehmina collected her courage and roared like a lioness in front of the lion Mustafa, "I am not your sister or your mother. I am your wife. I am not bound to you by ties of blood. We

have a contract to live together...Learn to respect me and appreciate my living with you” (p. 90) and again Mustafa restrained his animal instinct to save his political icon.

Steve Bruce in *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* defines religion as “Religion, then, consists of beliefs, actions, and institutions which assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of action, or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose” (1996, p. 7). True religion preaches the existence of unbiased and just Almighty, and enlightens His aficionado to go after His shown path. For Mustafa religion was a prop which he moulds whenever he wanted or needed. He manipulated the meaning of words written in holy Koran that ‘A woman was like a man’s land’ (p. 60) to show his supremacy over women which Tehmina infers with a different interpretation and states, “I felt that land had to be looked after and tended and protected from the effects of weather and pest in vision. Only then could it produce anything” (p. 60). Mustafa’s chameleon-like instinct is revealed when he said, “In Islam it is not permissible to divorce a pregnant wife. It is also incestuous to marry two sisters at the same time. He said that the Koran also prohibits a relationship with two sisters at the same time” (p. 83) but he disobeyed the preaching of the Koran and “He went off his women as soon as they nurtured his seed” (p. 196). He used his expecting wife Shahrzad to convince Tehmina for marriage and divorced her during her pregnancy. He also manipulated the teachings of the Koran to control Tehmina’s rebellious attitude and used Adila as a piling to gratify his personal and political requirements. To take Tehmnia’s support in exile and to wash her brain for Adila’s episode “Mustafa put his hand on the Kaaba and swore that he would never look at another woman for the rest of his life” (p. 244) was again a play with the religion. It was just to keep hold of Tehmina because she was the person on whom he could burn up his brutal energy. It shows his chameleon and animal instinct that do not mind any system. When he was in relationship with Adila he also wanted to make love with Tehmina which was unendurable for her and she tells, “Your marriage according to the Koran, was over years ago when you slept with my sister, I have been living with you in sin. The contract stood null and void long ago” (p. 363).

This is not to say that Tehmina was innocent and just. When she got the opportunity to marry Anees she took it as an opportunity to get rid of her mother’s anarchy for whom Tehmina comments “She was very dictatorial. There was no place for other people” (p. 50) and “Anees was my door to freedom” (p.187). The freedom she got in her husband’s house made her life monotonous. Moreover it was her super ego that only she could understand Mustafa the best. Just to prove her confidence that she could change Mustafa’s narcissism she agreed to marry Mustafa though she knew that Shahrzad was pregnant. She left her loving husband Anees although she also loved by saying, “I’m your wife. I’m not bound to you by ties of blood. We have a contract to live together. I can tear that up whenever I feel like it” (p. 188). Later on regretting her erroneous choice she laments, “At first I found irony in this situation. I had escaped from the domination of my mother by climbing into the lap of a tyrant” (p. 128). In order to attain fame

and standard in society she left her daughter Tanya with uncertain future. Thus, sense of incompleteness and insecurity remained in her personality.

Questioning the marriage structure of society Tehmina says, “A society that does not frown upon polygamy and which accepts divorce as the logical end to a marriage that has gone sour helped him” (p. 206). Mustafa got married four times but his treatment with each wife shows his narcissism. When one of his wives dared to stray he could not tolerate though he had done extreme brutality with them because “The feudal law allows man all this. A woman cannot betray him. This is the supreme sin. It attacks the masculinity of the male” (p. 200). Monogamy is a better way to protect marriages because in this form of marriage the couple can have more time to understand and revere the emotions of one another. As Tehmina has said that because of polygamy practice she could not get what she deserved. She did everything to satisfy her husband and said, “Mustafa do you realize that you have taken away everything from me. Fifteen years of struggle. My family, my children, my youth, you and everything I believed in” (p. 357) but every time she got humiliation and savagery.

Marriage not only unites two bodies but also connects the chords of two souls which reach the sublimity when tinted with the hue of love and trust. Tehmina states, “A marriage in which fear rather than love predominates could not last” (p. 204). So, instead of keeping things to one end or another it is better to put them in equilibrium that will provide the life its complete meaning and entire happiness because “if love and affection grow a relationship, then sacrifices and compromises preserve it” (Mishra, 2019, p. 57). Zaidi and Qureshi (2012) opine “Society considers women great, when she endures man and practices self-negation. Men on the other hand treat woman and children as his belongings” (p. 13) but for devotion a woman longs for “the most powerful force in a woman’s life is the need to be appreciated, loved and cherished for what she is” (Tripathi, 2011, p. 153).

Vacillation in relationships causes tussle and disagreement. Mishra in *An Unmatched Couple’s Misfit Relationship* states, “When a relationship sees an apparent misery, deterred through repelling both the minds engaged through its bonding... finally adjourns the balance that reciprocates the feelings, which glues the so-called ‘relationSHIP’ ... A SHIP sailed by two cohesive minds” (2019, p. 185). Freud says that ego balances the desires of the id and superego. A true marriage is one of social bonds that controls and tames the animal instincts of human and cherishes trust, love and intimacy in the couple but in a misfit relation these animal instincts become more powerful in support of id and the society leads towards declination. An instinct is an unlearned set action pattern, an innate conduct, which acts out without deliberation. Animals react without thinking about the consequences of their actions. Every human possesses animal instincts like an infant behavior or a child’s yells or those urges that are not logically acceptable. But the society has set certain social conduct which helps to reduce this animal like behavior and teach for proper execution of ethical and social behavior but when these ethics are despoiled then the world becomes like a playground of children where they over rule just to prove themselves accurate and justified.

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