Comparative Study of Female Characters of Heer Waris Shah and Shakespeare’s Drama Othello

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Abstract: Females face many problems and obstacles in every field of life. She is exploited. She faced male dominating society in all over world; even she cannot select her life partner with her own choice. In “Heer” Waris Shah also presented Heer as a sincere and true in her love with Ranjha. In Shakespeare’s drama Othello heroin of the play face male dominating societies. Although both female characters belong to different societies but both faced tragic end.

Keywords: Female, Exploited system, Literature, Male Dominating Society, Marriage

I. INTRODUCTION

For centuries woman have been struggling hard against the exploitation and subjugation, whether born in East or West. She is considered as an inferior being. Man tried to control her and expect that she moves according to her wishes.

Waris Shah is the great poet of seventeenth century. More than hundred versions of folk tale Heer have been composed but Waris Shah’s composition stands apart. His Heer is the historic gem which shines with full of its glory over the crown of Punjab. It has become the Encyclopedia of Punjab of seventeenth century.

When we analyses folk tale of Heer Ranjha, we can see that Heer Ranjha enjoys the classic romantic status but the character of Heer gives voice not only her protagonist but also her sister in law Sehti.

Weales said for the women characters, “Women characters are more striking as the female characters have the quality to fascinate”. (1)

She is the symbol of feudal system. But at the end of the poem she also facesharmarta. It is the tragic story of feudalism.

Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist of sixteenth century. He has full command on all aspects of life. His drama’s reflects the picture of that age. His plays have translated in many languages in all over the world. In his drama Othello we can see the tragic end of the story. Although Desdemona’s love was true but she was killed by her husband hand. It shows that the condition of woman in that age was miserable, she was exploited and men used them according to their own will. Desdemona is the symbol of British Society which takes a step against the system but destroyed.

II. FEMALE’S CHARACTERS

2.1: Heer

Heer, the heroine of the tale is very beloved daughter of his parents. She spent her childhood in enjoying and playing. She has a fairy beauty when became young.

“With her sixty friends she daily goes to river Chenab and sat in her boat. Some time she danced there with her friends.” (2)

But when she met with Ranjha she fell in love with him. She takes Ranjha with her to her father, and kept her servant to look after buffaloes herd.

Jeevan Deol writes, “Having encounter and fallen in love with Heer, Ranjha manages to become her father cowherd, an occupation which allows him ample opportunity to dally with Heer in the wastes outside the village while the cows graze contentedly. Disaster looms, though, since Heer’s malevolent uncle Kaido and later her brother Sultan spy on the couple, compelling Chuchak and Heer’s mother Malki to marry her off to Saida Khaira and dismiss their errant cowherd.” (3)

Heer’s father decided to marry her with Saida khaira. But when Heer listened that she became upset and refused to marry with Saida Khaira. But no one listened her.

Beauvoir writes, “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society” (4).

In the feudal patriarchal setup, marriage is not just a matter of union of two individuals but of two families.

Actually the love of Heer Ranjha was a kind of revolt against the established clerical and socio-cultural power structures, which were symbols of injustice and exploitation. When Ranjha became jogi he goes to Rangpur. His behavior is erratic and full of contradictions-he first refuses to elope but later abducts Heer from her in laws. But her parents killed her for the sake of his respect.

2.2: Sehti:

Sehti is the sister in law of Heer. She is the second pillar of this legend. She is also very intelligent, brave, talkative and quarrelsome. Her encounter with Ranjha shows that she gave rational arguments on all his allegations.
Surinder Kaur writes, “Hence, Waris Shah negates the position of woman. He brings the woman (Sehti) down on her knees admitting man’s (Ranjha’s) supremacy”. (5)

2.3: Desdemona:

When we study the female characters of Othello, we can see the different glimpses of Elizabethan society. We can also know the social condition of females of western society in sixteenth century. In his drama Othello we can see the male dominating society. Othello is young Moor army officer whom Desdemona loved and married with him. In this drama heroine has many expectations from the hero Othello. But here we can see the glimpses of male dominating society. At that period the agreement of woman from her marriage was not considered important and if any woman tried to do so all the society suppressed her and insulted her. After marriage it is considered that woman should take care of her family and children.

Although Desdemona submits passively to her husband, Othello, as he strangles her to death. She demonstrates her strength at the beginning of the play when her father asks the Duke of Venice to stop her marriage to the Moor, Othello. He has idea about who he wants to marry her to but she has fallen in love with a black man. Although her father opposed her marriage but she defend her husband. She was a symbol of loyalty.

I do perceive have a divided duty:
To you I am bound for life and education;
My life and education, both do learn me
How to respect you; you are the lord of duty.
I am hitherto your daughter: but here is my husband;
And so much duty as my mother show’d
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor, my lord (6).

III. CONCLUSION

After studying the female characters of both societies we can say that in both societies the condition of woman was same. In both societies women face male dominating strands, sometime at the name of religion and sometimes at culture and tradition. We can also see that they are not free to take decision of her life her marriage and other affairs. She should only obey her men. Here I want to quote some lines in which Amrita Pratam burst into tears and she wrote:

O wake, thou the savior of sufferers, see the
Condition of thy Punjab
In the forest dead bodies are lying
River Chenab is flowing full of blood (7).

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