TRIMTI: SIRAIKI FEMINISM AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN WITHIN SIRAIKI LITERARY DOMAIN

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Abstract

This paper applies textual analysis and an ethnographic approach to explore the role of women within the Siraiki cultural and literary domain. The debate about Siraiki as an ethno linguistic identity is a postcolonial development in Pakistan. Siraiki language speakers identify themselves being distinct from any other ethnic group in Pakistan. Based on this claim they resist the hegemonic control of Punjabi-Mohajir over their resources, area and disregard towards their literary and cultural tradition. The demand for a new Siraiki province within the federation of Pakistan by bifurcating Punjab is an outcome of this lack of political recognition. We contend that due to social taboos and patriarchal pressures, these women are experiencing suppression that results in limited visibility within mainstream literary circles. The lack of both appreciation and mentorship for their creative outputs has resulted in the dearth of literature produced by Siraiki women writers. The objective of this study is to indicate how this oppression can result in an enactment of power through creative writing. In order to substantiate our argument, we rely on selected works by Iqbal Bano, Shabnam Awan and Mussarat Kalanchvi. In the process, we also attempt to theorize an indigenous manifestation of feminist intent of these Siraiki writers as Trimti.

Keywords
Trimti, Siraiki women’s literature, oppression, literary politics
Introduction

Unlike female Pakistani writers who produce literature in Urdu, Sindhi or regional languages, (such as writing in Urdu by Attiya Dawood, Amer Sindhu, Noorul Huda Shah, Mariam Majadi, Azra Jabeen Memon, Fehmida Riaz, Azra Abbas), the visibility of female Siraiki writers (Banuk Tue Roohi, Banuk Rasheeda Mengal, Banuk Naz Malik Mengal, Ubaida Qayum, Bushra Qayum, Zakia Sardar Khan, Shaheen Roohi Bukhari, Bibi Taj Bano) remains limited, not only within the regional literary domain, but also beyond their local boundaries. Focusing primarily on female Siraiki creative writers, this paper fills a critical gap—the neglect of creative inputs by local women.

The literature that we have reviewed to assess the focus on women’s voices includes works by South Asian women writers, especially locally produced anthologies and literary criticism by Siraiki (male) writers, translations of Siraiki fiction/poetry and works produced by state institutions that rarely give any importance to Siraiki literature. Even the scholars and critics who work on Asian women’s writing consciously or unconsciously ignore Siraiki contributors. For example, Phillipa Kafka mainly looked at the works by Indian women writers writing in English (Kafka 2003). This largely includes mainstream Indian writers like Bharati Mukherjee and Anita Desai, limiting the discussion to elitist works produced in the English language only. Amina Amin et al. (2006) have also reviewed the works of authors who receive critical attention in the academic and literary discourse. A recent publication by Maryam Mirza again focuses on fiction by mainstream writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, Arundhati Roy, and Moni Mohsin (Mirza 2016). Geetanjali S. Chanda's Indian Women in the House of Fiction concentrates on Indian women writers writing in English (Chanda 2014). Moreover, Roxana Palade has worked on gender-based violence reflected in the works of South Asian women (Palade 2012). The two Pakistani women’s works that she has reviewed include the well-acknowledged names of Tehmina Durrani and the rape victim, Mukhtaran Mai. Feroza F. Jussawalla and Deborah Fillerup Weagel have dedicated a volume voicing the lesser known and self-published and/or locally published women writers across South Asia.

The anthologies and literary criticism or translations recently produced by local writers, including literary criticism presented by Rana Mehboob (Moonjh se Mazhamat Tak), only reviews the works of male Siraiki poets (Mehboob 2018). This anthology acknowledges the works of renowned male poets. Out of fourteen poets (including Ahmed Tariq, Iqbal Sokri, Aslam Javed, Ashu Lal, Asghar Gurmani, Sufi Taj Gopang, Jehangir Mukhlis, Syed Akhtar Syal, Shakir Shujabadi, Shamim Arif Qureshi, Ashiq Buzdar, Aziz Shahid and Riffat Abbas) that he discusses in this book, only one female Siraiki folk singer, Suraiya Multaniker, whom he regards as a representative of Siraiki language and culture, is included. More examples of this neglect are reflected in the anthologies produced by
Sajjad Haider Pervez (Pervaiz 1996 & 1993). Consequently, this emphasis on works by Siraiki writers has resulted in the absence of academic discussions on literary contributions by Siraiki women writers, even in the literary compilations based on Pakistani literature. Tahir Taunsvi is the only researcher who has acknowledged works by Siraiki women writers such as Mussarat Kalanchvi, Batoool Rehmani, Binte-Ahmedani, Sheema Syal, Iqbal Bano, Bahar-un-Nisa Baharm, Shaheen Dervi, Sabiha Qureshi and Shabana Qarim (Taunsvi 2004).

Translators from Pakistan or those belonging to the Pakistani diaspora who have significantly increased the readership of regional writings by translating them into English produce another category of works. This includes works such as *Modern Poetry of Pakistan* edited by Iftikhar Arif and Waqas Khawaja (Arif and Khawaja 2011), and Moazzam Sheikh’s translations of regional short stories (Sheikh 2003). Muneeza Shamsie has largely contributed towards reviewing and anthologizing the yearly outputs of works by Pakistani writers in established academic journals like the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. Her only compilation that specifically highlights literature produced by women includes *Leaving Home: Towards a New Millennium: A Collection of English Prose by Pakistani Writers* from the peripheries (Shamsie 2001). The overall unacknowledgment of creative input by female writers indicates a bias against Siraiki women writers by male compilers/translators. It also reflects a general exclusion of Siraiki from important compilations focusing on Pakistani literature, as much of the focus is levied on literature produced by Pakistani writers writing in English.

Furthermore, works focusing on women’s voices within the context of South Asia significantly include narratives of Partition as documented by Urvashi Butalia (Butalia 2000). Butalia has discussed marginalization of women during Partition and in Kashmir and has presented an extensive discussion based on their voices as a reflection of political and gender-based marginalization (Butalia 2003). The intense narratives of Kashmiri women as widows, half-widows, or as victims of violence and rape are closely captured in this collection. Nevertheless, the issue of identity and trauma discussed in such Partition-focused works is a rare focus for contemporary Siraiki women writers because the issue related to their identity claim is a post-colonial phenomenon. In fact, this concern stems not only from the marginalization of women, but also from the lack of acknowledgement that Siraiki language, culture and identity receive in post-Partition Pakistan at large. This lack is evident through their efforts to write in the mother language.

In the above context, this paper argues that the social, cultural and political experiences of Siraiki women writers clearly vary from those of women who have experienced migration or violence during Partition or are the victim of gender violence. The demand and non-violent movement for a province within the federation of Pakistan
by proposing the bifurcation of the present Punjab is a major political context for all Siraiki writers, regardless of their gender, class or age. The concerns of Siraiki women, therefore, relate to gender and identity issues as they consciously write to empower their mother language. However, they still lack acknowledgement within both their local, as well as national literary and ‘public sphere’ (Orsini 2009). Hence, their suppression is twofold: one on a national level (meaning suppression of Siriaki language, culture and identity experienced within Pakistan at large), and secondly, as females marginalized within their own vsaib (community living within a certain geographical region and identifying with a particular language, culture and identity) (Langah 2011).

Through literary examples by Siraiki women writers, we argue that literature produced with the same level of consciousness, have different key identity markers and cultural discourse as compared to that by other Pakistani writers, due to the Siraiki struggle for identity. While they write in their mother language to voice their linguistic and political identity, receiving fewer acknowledgements within their local domain reduces their chances of being considered by mainstream literary circles. This fact necessitates the need to highlight their work within the academic discourses focusing on Pakistani literature and creates a rationale for this paper. Applying an inductive approach based on textual analysis, our primary focus is on works by two contemporary authors, Shabnam Awan and Mussarrat Kalanchvi. As a result, we aim to theorize the role of literature in connecting these Siraiki writers beyond their literary circles with the wider world. Secondly, we theorize the lack of literary outlets for Siraiki women within local (meaning Siraiki and Pakistani) literary circles.

**Trimtā Feminism within the Siraiki context**

As indicated by Sarah Gamble (2006), women's liberation has been the most persuasive development of twentieth century that influenced and affected an assortment of social, political, financial and social spaces. It stands out among the most connected, vibrant and wholesome social, political, philosophical, and activist constructs. Indigenous feminism is an intersectional premise concerning women’s liberation that spotlights decolonization and is centred upon promoting indigenous power. The real concern of this movement is engaging marginalized women without compromising indigenous values and needs, as opposed to standard, white, male-centric ones (Liddle 2014). Thus, indigenous feminism strengthens ties with the land and community that women belong to, not presenting and promoting anything that they cannot associate with. This localized version of the feminist cause in the context of Siraiki women, who we identify as Trimtā, is approached a by an uprightness towards affection for the lives of Siraiki women. For these women, it is talking about their communities, their people and personal concerns. It highlights the twofold patriarchy, one by the generic male-centeredness of Pakistani society, and second, the
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ethnic marginalization of Siraiki women. *Trimi* challenges home-grown neo-colonial structures on multiple fronts and on creative milieu specifically. This can be experienced by looking at how gender is conceptualized and actualized within indigenous thought.

Based on this theoretical premise, we now turn to Shabnam Awan and Mussarat Kalanchvi as two representatives of contemporary female Siraiki writers. While Awan is a self-made poet, as she trained herself to become a creative writer, Kalanchvi has inherited the legacy of creative writing from her father, who was also an established writer (Dilshad Kalanchvi). Although we commence this discussion by focusing on Shabnam’s struggle to become a poet, our major focus is on short stories by Mussarat Kalanchvi, who has diversified her exploration of Siraiki literary genres (produced poetry, prose and drama). For the purpose of this analysis, we have translated her selected poetry. Both writers are approached in the light of their feminist perspectives as elaborated through a Siraiki term, *trimi*.

**Shabnam Awan: Bound by taboos**

As part of our research, we met Shabnam Awan during our visit to a literary (cum political) evening (*Musharraf*) in Rahim Yar Khan a few years ago. Our curiosity buds from the fact that in decades of interaction with Siraiki writers and poets, this was the first time we were interacting with a female poet who was writing through conscious awareness about her social and political context. Her work is impacted by a gender bias within her literary and social circles. The major reason that she gave us in relation to her absence from the mainstream literary events was her social set up, taboos that bound her within the domestic borders and expectations to preserve the honour of her family. She did hope, that at some stage, she might be able to cross these borders, but for the time being, she is rarely allowed to attend such local events and she even had to struggle to self-publish the poetry collection, which she presented at this event. This conversation reflected the fact that she was a self-made poet and was ‘denied social space of articulation’ (Oliver, 2004) with no opportunity to receive mentorship from well-acknowledged male poets. This lack was not only due to the limitations of being a woman, but also because of belonging to a society where women face ‘double exclusion’, both politically and socially (Oliver, 2004). As Oliver points, "women are racialized or sexualized others, are denied full participation in mainstream cultural and social institutions; and the affects that result from the experience of that exclusion are also denied social space for articulation." She further comments that this ‘experience of their oppression’ compounds women’s experience of exclusion and prevents the politicization of their experiences of humiliation and pain that result from discrimination (Oliver 2004 87-88). We connect Oliver’s premise of inaccessibility of social space of articulation and Gamble’s notion of indigenous feminism in suggesting that Shabnam and many other female Siraiki writers experimenting with creative writing or
aiming to establish themselves as creative writers are excluded from the mainstream literary circles because they are dominated by their male counterparts. The impacts of this suppression are reflected in Shabnam’s poems, along with her response towards being Othered ‘to create (her) own meaning, especially that of (her) own body and experiences’ (Oliver 2004 88).

Her poetry collection, Ay Moonjh Shala Muq Vunjay (literally translated as May this Longing End) reflects the longing for a beloved, but also a sense of agitation in a poet’s mind that reflects her desire to be acknowledged as a writer through the use of a genre termed as dohra in Siraiki (Awan 2012). Dohra meaning ‘quatrain’, is a popular folk form of poetry with a set end-rhyme scheme first used by Sufi poet Khwaja Ghulam Farid (1845-1901). This poetic genre combines love for a worldly beloved (ishqe-mujazi), at a mature stage transforming into God as beloved (ishqe-haqiqi). If studied within the context of Farid’s Kafi tradition, this could be Shabnam’s search for God as a spiritual beloved. Her struggle reflects both the struggle of a poet and the struggle of a spiritual follower. This struggle could also mean a manifestation of Islamic feminism, where Sufi spirituality becomes a source of refuge.

Concurrently, the quatrain maybe interpreted as an expression of a Siraiki woman’s resistance against a society which fails to give her patronage as a writer. This sense can be elaborated through the following example of her Siraiki dohra (couplet):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{En mus hay jism kun lafz di tahun lafz jy turin mus rahsi} \\
\text{Inhan lafzen ty hy hiq naan likha medi ruh ty likhya bus rahsi} \\
\text{Meday lub ty aya naan unda taan zindagi taen khil hus rahsi} \\
\text{O shabnam wang samandar hy jy na milya ty maqun tus rahsi (Awan 2012, 11)}
\end{align*}
\]

These lines can be literally translated as,

This ink gave substance to a body, now the word will live till this ink lasts
A name is written in these words, it will be written on my soul
If someone’s name came to my lips, it will blissfully remain till I live
He/She is a sea like Shabnam, he is a sea, if I don’t find him, my thirst will carry on.

This dohra reflects Awan’s role as a writer through the symbol of mus, meaning ‘ink’. Writing clearly empowers her to express her emotions as a poet and share them with the wider world. For her, ink also turns into a medium of expressing her love for an anonymous beloved whose gender remains unspecified. The process of writing has made her contend because she succeeds in documenting her emotions about her beloved, who now becomes immortal through her words or this dohra (line 3). Yet, her search remains
eternal, as in reality, she has not found this person, and therefore the thirst in her life persists. The idea of a beloved reflects the personification of her poetic inspiration as a creative writer.

Most of the poems in her collection express the same feeling as also reflected through the example of this quatrains from one of her Ghazals below.

\begin{verbatim}
Judai dy dur tun fana thendi pae haan 
Mein aap apnay kitay saza thendi pae haan 
Tun bismillah kur ty mequn jaldi parh ghin 
Asr di namaz haan qaza thendi pae haan (Awan 2012, 6)
\end{verbatim}

The literal translation of this poem is:

I am being wasted due to the fear of separation
I am turning into a punishment for myself
Please read me swiftly
I am being wasted like a prayer offered at dusk.

A sense of despondency in Shabnam’s tone in these lines is reflective of feelings of being rejected as a poet who has failed to gain attention from her audience/readership. This rejection results in her plea to be valued as a creative writer. Her poetry remains a clear reflection of Siraiki women writers’ tacit presence within the literary domain due to the self-imposed domination of their male counterpart.\(^3\) Her feminist stance, therefore, primarily surfaces through foregrounding the discrimination Siraiki women have to face on the creative front.

While sharing the same cultural and linguistic context with Kalanchvi, Shabnam is entangled within her own domestic and local space and her slight connection with the outer world (read: Siraiki region) through her Siraiki language poetry, which is self-published. In the foreword to her book \textit{Ay Moonjh Shala Muq Vunjay} (literally translated as, \textit{May this Longing End}), Awan expresses how she used to fear writing just as she feared domestic tasks such as preparing \textit{chapattis} (home-made bread). Her writings, nevertheless, have now turned into a weapon for her psychological liberation from this domestic space and social taboos, despite observing familial and regional bounds and boundaries. For her, poetry is an impetus that is beyond material possessions. As a dedicated wife, she was expected to request permission from her husband to attend literary forums, and she can rarely interact with her peers.\(^4\) In the foreword of her book, she acknowledges that the truth of her life and spirit are connected with her poetry written in her mother language, Siraiki. Writing poetry has made her express what she lacks in her overall social context and everyday life, the freedom of expression. The experience of writing has helped her
achieve freedom from her fears and has liberated her spirit. She claims her poetry to be her khudkalamioor a way of talking to her inner self. She therefore regards this poetry as her autobiography; a journal based on her cherished emotions.

At a deeper level, the poetic experience has served multiple objectives in her life by empowering her as a woman struggling to share her voice with her society, resisting the traditional norms of male dominated society, while also reflecting her perseverance towards her mother language with the desire to promote it. Broadly speaking, her experience represents the seclusion of women within the Siraiki cultural space and literary circles in general. Paradoxically, her writings reflect the fact that these pressures have not hindered an educated Siraiki woman’s intellectual growth and creative potential. This development is what creates the basis of our argument that there is no reason for contemporary female Siraiki writers to be excluded from literary circles.

**Musarat Kalanchvi: Resisting the taboos**

A close comparative analysis of Mussarat Kalanchvi’s biographical background indicates that she is the daughter of an established Siraiki writer, Dilshad Kalanchvi. Dilshad’s progressive approach to the potential of Siraiki language and literature has played a pivotal role in her grooming as a scholarly woman belonging to this region. Within the context of Siraiki culture, her unconventional upbringing and experience as a Siraiki woman and her credentials as an academic specializing in the disciplines of history and gender studies distinguishes her work within the Siraiki literary domain. She has effectively established herself as an artist, an acknowledged media person, a well-established fiction writer in Siraiki and plays and TV serials in both Urdu and Siraiki. Furthermore, she had the opportunity to travel abroad in connection with her involvement with various feminist groups and to present her work and papers, which gives her more exposure and advantage over writers who remain limited within their circle of readership.

Moreover, Kalanchvi has experienced internal migration by leaving behind her ancestral village near Bahawalpur City to Lahore. She has spent thirty years of her life in the urban metropolis, Lahore, due to her own and her husband’s professional commitments. In the foreword of her book, she writes how despite this internal migration, she remains culturally and spiritually tied to her birthplace (M. Kalanchvi 2005, 11). Despite being a progressive writer who has the opportunity to interact with the broader literary circles within Lahore, she writes, ‘Since twenty years, I am based in Lahore. Even today, my spirit is tied to the breeze of Thal and Damaan like a bird (kunj) disoriented from her folks’. She self-consciously asserts her role as a Siraiki feminist writer whose objective is to voice the plight of oppressed women belonging to the Siraiki region. Our textual analysis is based on Kalanchvi’s short stories, reflecting her resistance against the
conventional norms of Siraiki society, which stereotypes women. It is important to mention that poetic genre was a preference for Shabnam, and not for Mussarat, as she found fiction to be the most appropriate genre for expression. The choice of poetic genre for Shabnam is more likely based on her convoluting expression, due to fear of the local social context. The way that poetic puns can camouflage literary expression, the fictional genre cannot. Thus, the personal experiences of both these writers reflect two comparative examples, one suppressed (Shabnam), and the other an emancipated writer (Mussarat) exposed to broader experiences.

Based on her experiences, Kalanchvi’s story ‘Unwanted’ presents the ironic lives of Siraiki women who remain redundant in their familial and social set ups. Women, depicted as wives and protagonists in her stories, generally represent women belonging to this region. Her protagonist in the story Unwanted is despised by all the male members of her family, while her brothers get the opportunity to study. After her parent’s death, her paternal uncles take the responsibility of looking after them, but she is abused and treated as a housemaid, serving their families. She ends up in an unhappy marriage with a local feudal which terminates in a divorce. Returning to her family, she continues to serve them with the only option to become her cousin’s (a widower) second wife, which she rejects because she refuses to continue in her role of an ‘unwanted’ person by nurturing his children from his first marriage.

In another story, Kalanchvi personifies the experience of her displacement by creating the character of Professor Muzafar Ali in the story titled Sunjaan (Identity). The lead character has studied in Britain but ended up working in Lahore for decades until he realized that his identity lies in identifying with his birthplace and having faith in his son, who becomes a captain of the national cricket team.

Another protagonist reflects Kalanchvi’s sensitivity towards the treatment of women in her society. She highlights the suppression of their emotions with limited options in life, such as forced marriages culminating in divorces or becoming second wives. Most of the women in these stories are despised and discouraged by their fathers, brothers and sons who impose a secondary position within the society. The women spend a life enclosed within the boundaries of their houses and associating with each other as mothers, daughters and caretakers who spend unhappy and secluded lives, as reflected in another story, Thal Maro da Painda (‘Wearying Distance of the Desert’) (M. Kalanchvi 2005, 33-38). Men normally fail to play a progressive role in their lives. Her characters ironically personify the commitment made with men which women are bound to accept as a social obligation and taboo.
The discussion based on her short stories indicates that Siraiki culture has restricted the author and Mussarat’s characters within their domestic spaces, leaving very little room for their creative selves to grow without receiving any mentorship. We find Oliver’s stance of identifying four aspects of social oppression useful for a deeper analysis of Kalanchvi’s character; these include melancholy, shame, anger and silence. Most of her characters in this collection spend life in a state of ‘social melancholy’ (Oliver 2004 89) as mothers, daughters or wives as for instance, in case of her protagonist in the story ‘Sari Umer Guzarium’ (translated as ‘I passed my entire life’) or ‘Thal Maro da Painda’. Again, a specific example of a situation in this story is needed.

With social melancholy, it is not the loss of a loved other but the loss of a loved self that causes melancholy; and it is not the incorporation of the loved other but the incorporation of the denigrated self that leads to self-abnegation. It is not only the lack of positive self-images that leads to social melancholy but also the absence of social acceptance. Social acceptance and support are necessary for psychic life, specifically sublimation, which is essential not only for creativity but also for meaning, both the meaning of language and the meaning of life (Oliver 2004, 89).

The outcome of this social melancholy is the lack of sublimation – ‘the socialization of their drives’ or their bodily needs, ‘where the body is always a biopsychic-social being’ (Oliver 2004, 89). While sublimation involves some kind of connection or communication with others, this link is what goes missing in the lives of many female protagonists in Kalanchvi’s stories. One such example is her protagonist in the story ‘Band Taki’ (‘Closed Window’). Because Ashan is a half-sister, her educated brother (a schoolteacher) rarely thinks about getting her settled after their parents’ death. The house where they reside belongs to her; so he decides to stay with her and take her as a second wife instead of arranging for Ashan’s marriage. At this point, she transforms from a timid, obedient sister to a lesbian partner of his newlywed wife. Ashan’s character is emblematic of how families that do not give women space to grow intellectually and psychologically or lead a normal life experience rebellion in women. In this case, the choice of becoming a lesbian is a bold decision and a contentious subject within the Siraiki social set up. Bodily needs transform into a kind of communication and expression. The giving up of speech/expression reflects the depression of these characters and shifts them into a ‘catatonic state’; as Ashan is often observed locked in her room detached from her half-brother until she finds a female companion (Oliver 2004, 88-89). Approaching this situation in Oliver’s terms, this ‘catatonia’ is likely to be a result of ‘social melancholy’ or depression caused due to the marginalization of women (Oliver 2004, 90). Her life reflects all the aspects of ‘social melancholy’ discussed by Oliver and result in her decision of becoming a lesbian to fulfil her bodily needs and break through the restrictions that bind her.
The nature of women rebelling against society varies in Kalanchvi’s stories. For instance, in ‘Ardas’ (‘Request’), her protagonist Rabel has tried to seek education against her familial norms. Her family’s suspicion that she has committed adultery results in her extreme decision to commit suicide at the end of the story. Kalanchvi’s short stories include many such characters who are exhausted, due to poor social treatment, and who face a constant state of melancholy because they have no role in society beyond their domestic space. This situation results in an inferiority complex and shame in their traumatized lives. Their social melancholy involves shame ‘assigned to her by (male dominated) culture’, damaging both their identities and self-esteem (Oliver 2004, 90).

One characteristic that strongly differs from Shabnam’s work in Kalnchvi’s expression is lack of fantasy and romanticism, perhaps due to her real life experiences, as fictionalized in her stories. Most of her stories are grounded in realistic events and present insight within the inner space of these women’s lives, narrating their experiences related to social exclusion or being marginalized. These are not only her observations but also her motivation to create such characters, who reflect the suppression of women in Siraiki culture. While Awan has used the poetic genre, which has made her expression convoluted, Kalanchvi has elaborately addressed issues which affect Siraiki women in general, and female writers in particular.

Conclusion

Our discussion indicates that despite actively contributing to a regional body of literature by producing fiction, prose and drama, these women writers receive minimal acknowledgement. This includes many names, which are not discussed in our paper (e.g., Iqbal Bano, Sheema Syal, Ahmdani, Bahar-un-Nisa Bahar, Sabiha Qureshi, Batool Rehmani and Imrana Baloch). Most of them remain self-taught writers who have produced these works despite remaining within the domestic space, and lacking any involvement in the broader public space due to never joining literary forums (e.g. mushairas or poetic evenings, conferences, or a local annual literary festival like Mehraywala, or upcoming modern festivals) along with their male counterparts. In this respect, in both past and present, the Siraiki literary scene remains largely dominated by men, as for instance through recent acknowledgement received by male writers like Shakir Shujabadi, Ashiq Buzdar, Riffat Abbas, Ashu Lal Faqir, and Shamim Arif Qureshi, whose words are regarded as representatives of both Siraiki literary expressions and identity.

We identified this exclusion as being problematic because womanhood (as mother, writer or national symbol), mother language and identity play a significant role in any culture. We, therefore discussed how Siraiki women writers resist neo-colonial structures of gender-based marginalization. Hence, our proposed concept of trimti is a culturally
grounded version of Siraiki feminism where absence of women on the literary front is condemned and contested. Our position is that Siraiki women, despite the profound critical analysis in their work, are rarely celebrated. Our conviction is that it is essential to re-gender our histories, societies, and cultural patterns, in order to understand and incorporate complexities of new forms of resistance, which in the examples above, reflect literary genres produced by Siraiki women writers. It is a realization of alternative models of compassionate co-existence that can bring to birth a politics of hope. Thus, trimti challenges the imposition of privileged notions of gender and feminist thought and brings forth a feminism of lived experiences of Siraiki women, which we aim to share beyond their domestic and regional domain through this academic endeavour.

End Notes

1 Conversation with Rana Mehboob in September 2018.

2 The Siraiki term for a single woman is ‘trimut’; the plural is ‘trimeteen’.

3 Nukhbah Langah, Interview with Mussarat Kulanchvi, held at her residence on 28 August 2017 in Lahore.

4 This point relates to our personal discussion with her when I had the chance to interact with her in a local poetry evening (mushaira) and political gathering which we attended in 2014 at Kot Samaba, Rahim Yar Khan.

5 Langah’s interview with Mussarat Kalanchvi indicates that while Shabnam received no from childhood, as acknowledged in her interviews.

6 Oliver (89-90).

Bibliography


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