



Comparison of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed with special reference to their selected poems “They shut me up like a prose” and “The grass is really like me” in Feminist Perspective”

Pari Abdul Aziz

pariabdulaziz@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar, Government college university Faisalabad.

Adan Jawad

adanjawad440@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar, Government college university Faisalabad.

Fatima Zia

fatimazia211@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar, Government college university Faisalabad.

Dr. Hafiz M. Qasim

muhammadqasim@gcuf.edu.pk

Assistant Professor, Dept of Applied Linguistics, GC University Faisalabad,
Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract:

In this paper, the poems of American English poet Emily Dickinson and Pakistani Urdu poet Kishwar Naheed in the context of feminism are analyzed. Emily Dickinson was considered as one of the great poet of nineteenth century who broke the traditional style and commanded a singular brilliance of style and integrity of vision while Kishwar Naheed as one of the great poet of twentieth century who wrote about woman rights by defying conventions. This study explores the cultural and social diversity as well as commonalities between two different countries in the context of feminism. This paper discusses the biography of two poets and compares them to analyze the differences and similarities between two totally opposite cultures. The poems “They shut me up like a prose” by Emily Dickinson and “The grass is really like me” that is translated from Urdu to English by Kishwar Naheed are selected. The study explores the elements of interests in the form of resemblance between the biographies of two poets and then the selected poems are discussed in feminist perspective. The study is beneficial for the students and researchers of literature and literary criticism as it provides a lot of knowledge and is advantageous for those who want to analyze the life and poetry of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed and who want to explore them in future.

Keywords: Emily Dickinson, Kishwar Naheed, American poet, Pakistani poet, Feminism, Selected poems

1-Introduction

The American English poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and Pakistani Urdu poet Kishwar Naheed (1940-) both are modern age poets. In this study, the focus for comparison lies on the themes, characteristics and poetic style with the reference of the selected poems of both the poets “They shut me up like a prose” by Emily Dickinson and “The grass is really like me” by Kishwar Naheed. Despite of the fact that both of them belong to two totally opposite countries and culture, are relative in the matter of themes like feminism, patriarchal culture, male dominance, woman rights, political restrictions and life problems and struggles.



We analyze various aspects of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed 's life and poetry from the feminist perspective. Both of them occupy a prominent and significant position in the field of literature. The work of both of the poets continues to be celebrated for their profound insights into the human experience and the lasting literary and cultural significance. Most of the critics and scholars evaluate their poetic work and abilities in the perspective of feminism. Both of them try to reveal the patriarchal culture and describe victimization in many of their poems. However both of them belong to different countries even different centuries but both of them unfold the male dominant culture and talk about feminism.

“Feminism is the conviction that females merit equivalent social, monetary, and political privileges and opportunities. Throughout the years, feminist perspective has centered around issues like the option to cast a ballot, regenerative and sexual opportunity, and equivalent compensation. Woman’s rights has likewise investigated prejudice, orientation standards, self-articulation, and considerably more.”

1.1-Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

American poetess Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1830. She maintained a solitary existence, rarely leaving her house, and devoting much of her time to poetry writing. Although she was relatively unknown when she was alive, her posthumous popularity has cemented her place as one of the most significant poets in American literary history Martin, W. (Ed.). (2002). “Poems by Emily Dickinson” – A comprehensive collection of Emily Dickinson’s poetry, published posthumously, which introduced her work to the wider literary world. And a few well-known poems are “Because I could not stop for Death” – One of Dickinson’s most famous and anthologized poems, exploring the theme of mortality and the journey of the soul, “Hope is the thing with feathers”, “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” and “I heard a Fly buzz—when I died”.

1.2-Kishwar Naheed (1940)

Kishwar Naheed, a well-known poetess, feminist, and human rights advocate from Pakistan, was born in Bulandshahr, British India (now in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh), in 1940. She moved to Pakistan after India was divided in 1947. Naheed's poetry and activism were greatly affected by her experiences as a woman in a patriarchal environment and her dedication to gender equality. Through her work, she was instrumental in advancing women's rights and tackling societal issues. Akhter, M. F. (2012). Kishwar Naheed, an esteemed progressive author widely recognized as one of the pioneers of feminism in Urdu poetry, rose to fame for her work that runs counter to tradition and is in opposition to the forms that were used in Pakistan. She is quoting Kishwar Naheed, who is regarded as a revolutionary poet of her generation, on the subject of radical feminism. Kishwar Naheed is a well-known Pakistani poet whose works analyze radical feminism in Pakistan. Kamran, R. (2019). She collaborated with Pakistani journals like "Pak Jamhuriat" and "Adab -e-Latif," and she also served as editor of the well-known Urdu magazine "Mah-e-Nau. “Lab-e-Goya" (The Speaking Lips) - This is one of Kishwar Naheed's most famous poetry collections, which reflects her strong feminist themes and advocacy for women's rights. And some notable poems are "We Sinful Women", "Main Saheba" and "Buri Aurat".



1.3-Feminist Aspect Of Both Poets

These poems are merely an excerpt of Kishwar Naheed's and Emily Dickinson's extraordinary and significant poetry. Through their writings, these poets have left a long legacy, tackling vital issues and contributing to the world of literature. When taking into account the historical setting of her time, Emily Dickinson's poetry demonstrates subtle but unmistakable feminist aspects. She lived in the 19th century when women's rights were limited, and societal expectations confined women to domestic roles. Despite these constraints, Dickinson's poetry reflects her intellectual and emotional depth, challenging prevailing notions of women's intellectual capabilities Dobson, J. (1989). Gender injustice, women's enslavement, women's resiliency and strength, identity, love, and the power of words are some common themes in Kishwar Naheed's poetry. She skillfully incorporates these ideas into her verses, arousing feelings and awareness of women's difficulties. Mahmoudibaha, Z., & Baghfalaki, M. (2014)

1.4-Major Themes In Poetry Of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed

Themes of death, nature, love, spirituality, immortality, and the self are frequently explored throughout Dickinson's poetry. Even if her writing may not openly address feminism, it does offer a female perspective that is independent and introspective, giving it a distinctive outlook on the world. Tandon, N., & Trevedi, A. (2008). Naheed's poetry is marked by its emotional intensity, powerful imagery, and the use of language as a tool for change. She employs a strong voice to speak out against injustice and discrimination faced by women, making her work a poignant reflection of the feminist struggle. Shoaib, M. (2011).

1.5-Writing Style Of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed

Emily Dickinson's poetry is characterized by its brevity, unconventional punctuation, and enigmatic language. Her verses are concise yet powerful, often conveying complex emotions and ideas in just a few lines. Habeeb, A. (2016). Naheed's writing style is both eloquent and passionate. She employs metaphors, similes, and allegories to enhance the impact of her poetry. Additionally, her use of symbolism and imagery enables her to convey complex ideas in a vivid and accessible manner Pandit, H. (2003). Dickinson has a unique and creative writing style. She used dashes and unusual capitalization to give her poems a rhythm all its own. Her use of metaphors, personification, paradoxes, and slant rhyme among other literary methods added to the complexity and ambiguity of her rhymes. Chunyan, H. U. (2015).

1.6-Research Questions

The main research question of this study is the "Comparison of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed with special Reference to their selected poems in Feminist Perspective."

1.7- Research Objectives

1. To compare the salient features of the life and artistic products such as themes, characteristics, and poetic style of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed as poets belonging to different centuries
2. Another objective is to compare them to find out the similarities and dissimilarities in their poems "They shut me up like a prose" by Emily Dickinson and "The grass is really like me" that is translated from Urdu to English by Kishwar Naheed.

1.8-Significance Of The Study

The poetry of Kishwar Naheed is extremely important in the context of feminist movements in Pakistan. Her work has influenced generations of women and continues to serve as an inspiration



for those who fight for human rights and gender equality. After the passing, Emily Dickinson's poetry received wide recognition, and today she is regarded as one of the most important poets in American literature. Her ability to explore deep emotions, write in an original way, and effectively express the core of the human experience make her a significant contributor to contemporary poetry. This study is of utmost importance for the students and researchers of literature and literary criticism as it provides a lot of knowledge about the biographies, themes, writing style and feminist view of both poets. This study is also advantageous for those who wants to analyze the life and literary works of Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed and who wants to explore them in future.

2- Literature Review

Chunyan, H. U. 2015 in his study intended to find out that how Ecofeminism impacts Emily Dickinson's works and life, as well as the perspectives of Ecofeminism in her poetry, via a study of her life and works, as well as comments on her. Emily Dickinson, one of the most important poetesses of the nineteenth century, had a significant effect on American literature, and she is considered "the most topping poetess in the west since Sapphic." She stood out among modern poets for her distinct writing style, ability to create imagery, and profound ideas. His study begins with an introduction to Emily Dickinson and Eco-feminist critique. Based on previous study on Dickinson and her poetry, this article expands on Dickinson's Eco-feminism, focusing on Dickinson's poetry. This study uses Eco-feminism as a critical framework to investigate Dickinson's ecological thinking and feminine consciousness. Eco-feminism encourages confronting patriarchal structures and beliefs in our society and environment, and it reminds people that they should have ecological consciousness in order to maintain the environment, as well as female awareness in order to safeguard women's human rights. Dickinson's Eco-feminism philosophy is exhibited throughout her life through her challenges to religion and society, as well as her literary style, among other things.

Mahavidyalaya & Newtown 2015 studied that Emily Dickinson has been considered as an unconventional poet of love and nature. In the canvas of seclusion, she paints the topic of love and nature. Dickinson, unlike most of her contemporaries, was not influenced by great Romantics such as Keats, Shelley, or Wordsworth. Her natural environment was full with small critters and items. Similarly, her world of emotion was not ignorant of the most basic sentiments of the human heart, which had hitherto gone unrecognized in the sphere of writing. Dickinson is therefore a poet of nature and love, but not in the classic sense. Another key aspect of Dickinson's poetry is her ability to easily transcend the boundaries of 'natural' and 'human' in her poems. To dive deeply into the depths, Dickinson makes use of nature to express human love. That gives her poems a distinct scent.

The aim of this study is to offer a few examples of perusing feminist agency through an analysis of the poems of Pakistan's pre-eminent women's activist writer, Kishwar Naheed. Some images of women's oppression and their acts of resistance in Naheed's poetry are highlighted and represented from feminist perspective while using Scott's theory of "Everyday Resistance." This paper also aims to inspect some practical and symbolic tactics of resistance the female elocutionists in the selected poems of Kishwar Naheed follow to conquer the male centric



authority over their subjectivity and to extend a self-appreciation identity and freedom. While speaking out against patriarchal standards, Naheed's poetry also challenge unfavorable preconceptions about women. In her poetry, female speakers become their own liberators, yearning to violate the laws and throw off the shackles that bind them while rejecting all male-chauvinistic societal structures. This article examines the evolution and transformation of the female speakers, demonstrating how they go from passive beneficiaries of exploitative patriarchal activities to active agents of resistance. The translated version of Naheed's poem by Rukhsana Ahmad and Mahwah Shoaib is utilized for this purpose. The breadth of extant studies of Naheed's poetry is confined to the investigation of women's objectification in her poems, however there is a gap in criticism addressing how the women are objectified.

.3-Methodology

3.1-Sample of the Study

Our study sample consists of two female poets Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed: belonging to two different countries and cultures, one from America and the other from Pakistan. The poem "They shut me up like a prose" and "The grass is really like me" are selected to analyze.

3.2-Nature of the Study

The research is comparative, analytical, interpretive, descriptive, deductive, and qualitative study. That's why, the data required in soft form.

3.3-Types and Sources of Data

The research is qualitative research therefore, it requires soft data. Soft data describes the quality of things and hard data describes the quantity of things. In more simple words, the information collected by words and sentences is soft data. The soft data is used instead of hard data because hard data is used in quantifiable researches. Soft data is anecdotal gathered from communicative sources.

In academic researches, usually two sources of data are required: Primary source and Secondary source. As the research is comparative and analytical therefore it requires the data collected from the secondary sources as primary source includes the original work searched out by the investigators during their investigation. In simple words, the original extracted material about both poets is the primary source and the writings about/of both poets, is the secondary source of data. The biography of both poets, selected poems make data for the study. Another source of data collecting is the themes such as feminism, male dominance, women rights, political restrictions, life problems and struggles and patriarchal culture. Poetic style consisting upon similes, metaphors, symbols, and images are also the material collected for data. The data is also gathered from poetic characteristics such as lyricism, emotionalism, subjectivity, modernity, humanitarianism, fragmentation, juxtaposition etc. These sources are secondary and make soft type of data which consists upon words and sentences. It is also called a qualitative data.

3.4-Analytical tools

In this study, Emily Dickinson poem "They shut me up like a prose" is compared to those of Kishwar Naheed "The grass is really like me" in terms of their themes, subjects, and poetic style. The text is necessary for this reason. The text of this study is comprised of the biographies and chosen poetry of both poets. Close reading of the text will be our initial step or strategy for analyzing the text and it demands the researcher's focus, examination, and perception.



Additionally, personal judgment is involved. This text provides both authors' biographies and one of their best poems for analysis and comparison. For this reason, we will have to delve deeply into their biographies, and the social and cultural environment will also be examined. In order to develop conclusions and determine the validity of them based on reasoning or arguments, interrogative tactics are employed frequently in our comparable research study together with another signal phrase like "on the other hand." Interpretive research is also done. In this research, the researcher offers a wide range of potential explanations. It is essentially a form of interpretive critical analysis that dissects a piece of art into its constituent parts in order to consider and give various interpretations in light of one's thinking and reception. Both interpretative and argumentative writing are related to each other in this study. In-depth analysis is flexible as it speculates variables without any finality or generalization. In this way, all these basic tools of research are used in this study to analyze, contrast and compare the life histories, themes and the work done by both the poets "Emily Dickinson" and "Kishwar Naheed" in this great era of modern poetry and also we can see the features of modern poetry in their great works as both of them belong to the 19th and 20th century respectively.

4- Findings

4.1-Data Analysis

4.1.1-They shut me up in a prose

(Emily Dickinson)

They shut me up in Prose –
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet –
Because they liked me "still" –

Still! Could themselves have peeped –
And seen my Brain – go round –
They might as wise have lodged a Bird
For Treason – in the Pound –

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Look down upon Captivity –
And laugh – No more have I –

Thematic Analysis

Male Dominance;

In this poem written by Emily Dickinson, the starting lines tell us about the dominant portion of the society in which the males always want to overcome the women and then they want to suppress them and made them to work according to their choices. And this can not only be seen in Pakistan but this male dominance can be seen throughout the world also in the western countries. We can observe this in the starting lines of this poem given as below;

They shut me up in Prose –
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet –



Because they liked me “still” –

These lines clearly explain how the dominance of male society can be seen in the works of Emily Dickinson.

Patriarchal Culture;

This poem also tells its readers about the patriarchal culture of the American world where the dominance is given to the males of the society. In their society, the males are given the prominence over women in each and every thing; from household to the market and jobs. Women can't even write with their own names and usually they publish their works after their death. Emily's most work is also published after her death. So this all can be seen in her writings that how males are dominant in the society and are suppressing the women in whatever way they want to do it. The following lines will tell us about this;

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Look down upon Captivity –
And laugh – No more have I –

Life Struggles and Challenges;

Emily Dickinson in her writing also tell her readers about the life struggle and challenges that women have to face in order to survive in the society well. Throughout their lives, these women have to struggle a lot whether it is their work place or the most comfortable place of a human, the home, everywhere the women need not only to struggle but also have to face a lot of challenges in order to make their struggles in a right position with a right direction. The following lines are telling its readers about the struggles and challenges that women are facing in this world of male dominance;

Still! Could themselves have peeped –
And seen my Brain – go round –
They might as well have lodged a Bird
For Treason – in the Pound –

Stylistic features

The following stylistic features can be seen in this poem written by Emily Dickinson;

- ☐ Simile
- ☐ Metaphor
- ☐ Personification
- ☐ Enjambment

4.1.2-The Grass is really like me!

(Kishwar Naheed)

The Grass Is Like Me
You know, the grass is like me
It's true nature revealed
When trodden under foot
But when drenched
Does it bear witness



To burning disgrace
Or blazing fury?
Yes, the grass is like me
It lifts its head
Only to be continually sheared
Into flat velvet by the frenzied machine
How many ways do you have to flatten a woman?
But the earth
And women continue to rise up
If you ask me, you had the right idea
A footpath was spot on
Those who can't endure
Are patched down into the scorched earth
Merely straw
A path for the oppressors
Not grass
You know, grass like me!

Thematic Analysis

This poem is beautifully written by Kishwar Naheed in which she explores the themes of the modern poetry like gender equality, male dominance, life struggles and challenges as well as the patriarchal culture which is having a dominant place in this modern era. In this poem, the researcher can see all these major themes used by the poet which are being explained further down in more detail:

Male Dominance;

In the culture of Pakistan or Pakistani's society, the males are always given dominance whether it is on the higher level like jobs, international markets or at the lower level of homes, males always occupy a higher place and women need to follow them whatever the case or situation may be. Kishwar Naheed also tell us about this Pakistani culture in her this poem like;

How many ways do you have to flatten a woman?

She is asking here the male dominant society about the way they flatten the women whenever and wherever they need to it. Not only this line but throughout the poem, the poet is showing us the oppression that females have to face throughout their lives and their struggle of doing all this.

Gender Equality;

Women are continuously struggling to make their lives better and to be able to get over this so called culture of Pakistan where males are always given the dominance despite of whatever,



whenever and wherever they do. It is Pakistan's culture where women are always been oppressed in every possible way. And despite of so much education and awareness, women still need to fight for their basic rights. They are still working on how to make the people aware of gender equality. And for this regard, the poet Kishwar Naheed had written this poem in which she tells us about the most basic equalities between males and females which women should be given importance. As it can be seen in the lines given below from the poem;

But the earth
And women continue to rise up

From these lines we can also understand that how the women continues to work for this gender equality and it can also be seen in the writings of some of the great writers of this age.

Patriarchal Culture;

Pakistani culture is always giving it's viewers a patriarchal nature where the dominance is always in the hands of the males of the society. Women have to oblige to all whatever they say at any time or any place. In some places in Pakistan, it can also be seen that it's a part of their culture that women are not even allowed to eat before the males. So these are some of the most basic things that tell us that women are always been oppressed and have to fight through these basic patriarchal modes of living in this Pakistani culture. And this poem of Kishwar Naheed is one of the best examples to show that how this patriarchal culture is dominant in Pakistan.

Yes, the grass is like me
It lifts its head
Only to be continually sheared
Into flat velvet by the frenzied machine

These lines of the poem especially tells us about the patriarchal culture of Pakistan and also about the struggles that women have to put in order in order to be equal with men in all the fields of life.

Life Struggles and Challenges;

Women in Pakistan whether belonging to lower, middle or upper class always have to do struggle in order to make their way to a better living. Women always have to face a lot of challenges throughout their lives. They have to struggle in order to gain their most basic rights in Pakistani culture. This poem is also telling it's readers about the struggles and challenges that women have to face in order to live in this society.

If you ask me, you had the right idea
A footpath was spot on
Those who can't endure
Are patched down into the scorched earth



Merely straw
A path for the oppressors

These lines tell the readers about the life struggles and challenges that women are encountering throughout their lives.

Stylistic features

The following stylistic features can be seen in this poem written by Kishwar Naheed;

- ☐ Simile
- ☐ Metaphor
- ☐ Personification
- ☐ Enjambment

5-Results

In Emily Dickinson's poem 'They shut me up in Prose', she has highlighted women subjugation by presenting the patriarchal culture, male dominance and life and struggles of women in the society. She referred prose as male, poetry as female – at least, in the rather reductive and old-fashioned binary that Emily Dickinson has known by growing up in a Calvinist household in America in the 19th century. These three lines and the opening line of the poem give a clue to the connection between poetry/prose and female/male:

As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet —
Because they liked me 'still' —

Here 'Girl' is the key word that is uneasily 'rhymed' with 'still' –

This poem is basically about the restrictions placed upon young girls growing up in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society where males are dominant and females have to follow the stern customs of society- the way in which Dickinson says one thing while using her verse to undermine it: 'They shut me up in Prose', she says in verse, with her trademark dashes suggesting quite the opposite of enclosure.

Same is the case with Kishwar Naheed's poem "The grass is really like me. She has drawn attention towards the issues that oppress woman in the society. She has referred grass as her and as all woman like her. Like Emily Dickinson's poem, She has highlighted male dominance, patriarchal society, and life and struggles of women. She attempts to highlight the dominant society that stifles all of the woman's attempts to rise in society. By telling about the chopped grass that has lost its battle on the ground and the remaining straws that are on the ground are making the way for more machines, similar is the case with women who are considered to be



weaker and they make room for the dominant civilization of males. It is highlighted in the following lines

Those who cannot bear the scorching defeat of their courage
Are grafted on to the earth.
That's how they make way for the mighty
But they are merely straw not grass
—the grass is really like me.

Even in the oppression, women are striving to bloom and raise their voice for equality and fight for it, like the grass beneath our feet. When the grass try to raise , the lawnmower mows it like the dominant civilization that is trying to mown women like the grass

The grass is also like me

As soon as it can raise its head

This is how similar both poems are from the feminist perspective highlighting the women subjugation in male dominant civilization.

6-Conclusion

We deducted many characteristics by analyzing and comparing Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed. We have excluded aspects with modern trends like the life and biography, poetic themes, style, feminist perspective and characteristics of poetry of both poets. Finding of the present paper discusses the role of woman in raising voice for their rights in poetry ; it is of utmost importance to provide more and more opportunities to female poets to produce more and more beautiful verse for providing color and beauty to poetry. As the world is dull and dry without women, same is the case with poetry. Furthermore it discusses the patriarchal society by referring the patriarchal society should develop an unbiased attitude towards women's intellectual creativity and freedom in every aspect of life. In findings , this paper discusses Emily Dickinson and Kishwar Naheed as the innovative poets with emotional depth and original virtuosity who played a prominent role in literature and literary criticism. Furthermore, the method of comparison, a wide range of themes and innovative poetic style adopted by both poets is discussed by referring to their selected poems "They shut me up in a prose" and "The grass is really like me". The analysis of both the poems is done with the help of thematic analysis and same themes are seen in both poems.

Being modern poets of 19th and 20th century with different countries and different cultures both of them proved themselves to be legendary poets by their talent of poetry and created a beautiful and innovative poetry out of sufferings, frustration, and pain by pushing male dominance back and highlighting women subjugation in society.

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