

Feminist Dimensions And Pakistani Women's Narratives: A Stylistic Study Of *And The World Changed*

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Abstract: *This study explores how language usage shapes feminist discourse and challenges established gender norms by focusing on stylistic elements at the word, phrase, and discourse levels as conceptualized by Sara Mills in her seminal book Feminist Stylistics. It also examines how the anthology And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women authentically reflects women's challenges, autonomy, and quest for existence through analysis of language, narrative tone, and subject matter. This research identifies feminist stylistic features in the works of Pakistani women through a feminist stylistics analysis of the anthology. It aims to deepen understanding of Pakistani fiction to promote women's empowerment in a patriarchal society. The study is significant as it contributes to the existing ways and methods to read and interpret Pakistani women's short narratives in English.*

Keywords: Gender roles, Women empowerment, Patriarchy, Social standards

Introduction

Feminism has been a significant force in challenging gender inequalities and advocating for women's rights worldwide. In the context of Pakistani literature, feminist themes have gained prominence as women writers use their creative voices to depict the struggles and aspirations of women within the complex socio-cultural fabric of the country. This thesis undertakes a stylistic study of the anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, written by a prominent Pakistani writer, to explore the feministic dimensions embedded within the narrative. By analyzing the stylistic choices made by the author, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature serves as a platform for representing and advocating feminist ideals in the context of Pakistani women's writings.

Literature has long served as a powerful tool for expressing societal concerns, challenging prevailing norms, and advocating for change. Within the rich tapestry of literature, women's writings have played a pivotal role in highlighting the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of women, particularly in patriarchal societies. Pakistani women's writings, in particular, have emerged as an essential medium for voicing the multifaceted realities of women living in a complex and diverse cultural milieu.

This study explores the feministic dimensions inherent in Pakistani women's writings, focusing on a stylistic study of the anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*. Within the context of this literary analysis, the study seeks to shed light on the feminist themes

articulated by the author, unravel the stylistic devices employed to convey these ideas, and assess the anthology's broader impact on the discourse surrounding women's issues in Pakistan.

Women's writings have long been instrumental in challenging societal norms and advocating for gender equality. In the context of Pakistan, a society deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions, the voices of women writers have become increasingly important in highlighting the struggles, resilience, and agency of women. This literature review explores the feminist dimensions within Pakistani women's writings, primarily focusing on the stylistic analysis of the anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*. By delving into the literary works of Pakistani women authors and examining the thematic and stylistic elements present in *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, this review sheds light on the contributions of Pakistani women writers to the feminist discourse in the country.

Sociocultural landscape of Pakistan has long been shaped by patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and inequalities. Traditional gender roles often restrict women to the private sphere, limiting their access to education, economic opportunities, and political participation. In response to these challenges, the feminist movement in Pakistan has been active for several decades, advocating for rights of women and their empowerment. Literature in Pakistan authored by Pakistani women has been a potent tool for voicing feminist perspectives, challenging societal constraints, and reflecting on the experiences of women. Throughout history, pioneering women writers such as Ismat Chughtai, Quratulain Haider, and Fahmida Riaz have used their literary prowess to advocate for gender equality and critique oppressive social norms.

Muneeza Shamsi was born in Lahore on 29 September 1940. She was extremely concerned with the rights of women. She uses the elements of feminism in her writing. She uses phrases and words that show women are considered as a weak generation. Women are not allowed to do anything that they desire to do. They are considered to be a marginalized generation.

The anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women* can be seen as an important contribution to raising the voice of women for their rights and challenging gender norms and stereotypes prevalent in Pakistani society. It presents a diverse collection of narratives reflecting women's experiences, challenges, and aspirations in Pakistani society. From a feminist perspective, this anthology will likely explore themes of gender equality, identity, empowerment, and resistance against patriarchal norms. It provides a platform for women to express their voices, challenge stereotypes, and address social issues women face in Pakistan. The researcher will analyze only selected stories from *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, stylistically using the feminist stylistic model proposed by Sara Mills.

Literature Review

Feminist themes in Pakistani literature have evolved over the years, reflecting the shifting socio-political landscape of the country. The emergence of women writers like Ismat Chughtai, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Kamila Shamsie brought women's issues to the forefront of literary discourse. These writers have addressed gender disparities, patriarchy, and women's agency through their narratives, inspiring a new generation of Pakistani women writers to follow suit (Bashir, 2018).

Prominent Pakistani women writers have made substantial contributions to feminist literature. Ismat Chughtai's "The Quilt" challenged conventional norms surrounding women's sexuality, while Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Crow Eaters" explored issues of identity and autonomy for women in patriarchal societies. Kamila Shamsie's "Burnt Shadows" delved into the global impact of conflict on women's lives (Ahmad, 2019).

The anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, written by a renowned Pakistani author, delves into themes central to feminist discourse. It explores the complexities

of women's experiences in a society marked by patriarchy, cultural traditions, and social expectations. The anthology portrays the transformation of female characters, showcasing their resilience and empowerment amidst challenging circumstances (Fakhar, 2017).

Stylistic analysis is a powerful method to explore the nuanced expression of feminist themes in literature. By examining linguistic choices, narrative techniques, and symbolism, this approach unveils the author's intentions and underlying messages (Montgomery, 2017). Such analysis facilitates a deeper appreciation of the literary work's feminist dimensions and the author's unique voice.

Literature has historically been a medium for societal change, influencing public opinion and challenging social norms. Pakistani women writers have harnessed the power of storytelling to amplify women's voices, foster empathy, and advocate for gender equality. Their works contribute to the evolving feminist movement in Pakistan, influencing readers and shaping the national discourse on women's rights (Majeed, 2020).

Language choices used to portray female characters greatly affect readers' perception of them and their agency. Linguistic choices like metaphors, adjectives and dialogue might reveal hidden social views regarding women; therefore, this study investigates character representation by closely inspecting language components that shape these portrayals.

The narrative approach to the anthology affects readers' interaction with female characters. First-person Bakhtin (1981) narratives may provide readers access to characters' inner thoughts and emotions, while third-person ones provide a more structured framework. This section evaluates whether female characters have enough freedom of expression by analyzing narrative strategies used against them.

Butler, J. (1990). To reflect gender identity, social expectations, personal growth, or defy gender standards in any text can use symbolic components and images that speak volumes about its characters' journey of self-discovery while subverting established norms relating to female representation in fiction. This section discusses the symbolic factors that give meaning to complex female characters in literature.

Research Framework and Methodology

The study utilizes a general feminist framework, whereas Sara Mills' feminist stylistic model has been used to study the selected text critically. This text revolves around female protagonists' experiences; their struggles, aspirations and empowerment; self-discovery journeys that challenge conventional norms while seeking autonomy; its feminist undertones become evident through the examination of relationships among female characters as well as the negotiation of identity within patriarchal structures - aligning perfectly with our study which seeks to reveal these themes and uncover feminist dimensions and strategies that contribute. *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women* provides valuable ground for stylistic analysis due to its striking language, dialogues, narrative techniques and use of metaphors, imagery and syntax, which add depth and aesthetic appeal. By dissecting these stylistic features, the study exposes how they contribute to portraying feminist dimensions while deepening reader engagement with themes depicted within. The study adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach to analyse the selected text. The study enables us to explore qualitative elements such as language nuances and stylistic features of texts (qualitative analysis) using Sara Mills' Feminist Stylistic model.

Analysis and Discussion

This chapter deals with the data analysis process in our study on Feminist Dimensions and Pakistani Women's Narratives: A Stylistic Study of *And the World Changed*: The selected text, exploring the main linguistic and stylistic features at the word level, phrase level and discourse level from a feminist stylistics lens. The main aim of this study is to explore the surface level of a language to reveal its hidden meanings, unconscious biases, and social structures that may carry on or challenge

discrimination based on gender. This analysis is created on selected stories from the anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, edited by a well-recognized Pakistani writer Muneeza Shamsie.

Defend Yourself Against Me by Bapsi Sidhwa tells the story of expatriates from South Asia who share a common language and culture but belong to different religions. The narrator, Joy, a Pakistani Christian, explores themes like minority identity, multiculturalism, compassion, survival, and forgiveness. Introducing Suzanne, Kishen's American wife, symbolizes adaptation and change for South Asians in the diaspora. This story highlights the complexity of identities and the impact of migrations on people's lives."

i. Word Level Analysis

In feminist stylistics, word analysis refers to investigating and understanding words within a work from a feminist perspective. It includes looking at writers' language choices, vocabulary, and linguistic patterns to comprehend how gender roles, power dynamics, and societal views towards gender are represented and propagated in a literary work. This study explores the surface of language to reveal hidden meanings, unconscious biases, and social structures that may carry on or challenge discrimination based on gender.

Table No. 1: Word level Analysis of *Defend Yourself Against Me*

Word	Feminist Analysis and Explanation
<i>bride</i>	The image of the bride as a young and nervous woman being married off to an older man perpetuates the patriarchal practice of arranged marriages. The description of her as looking like a lamb to the slaughter further objectifies and disempowers her.
<i>height</i>	The mention of the grandfather's height as being exceptionally tall suggests that height is associated with masculinity and power. This reinforces gender stereotypes and the societal expectation that men should be taller and more dominant than women.
<i>bridegroom</i>	The term "bridegroom" reinforces the gender roles in a wedding, where the groom is seen as the dominant figure. It also highlights the historical and cultural practice of men being the ones to propose and initiate marriage.
<i>hesitantly</i>	Depicts hesitation and lack of confidence, possibly due to societal expectations and gender roles for women. This reflects the protagonist's internal struggles and self-doubt. Reflects the protagonist's internal struggles and self-doubt.
<i>Suited</i>	Describes Mr. Sikander Khan's attire, possibly reflecting his authority and status. It reinforces gender roles by portraying men as powerful and commanding.
<i>booted</i>	Describes Mr. Sikander Khan's footwear, possibly signifying his strength and assertiveness. This conveys the idea of men being strong and dominant figures.
<i>sisters</i>	Depicts the female characters as part of a larger family unit, possibly impacting their autonomy. It reflects the collective identity and shared experiences of the women.
<i>satin</i>	Describes the material of the shalwar kameezes, possibly symbolizing modesty and femininity. This reinforces traditional clothing associated with women's appearance.
<i>jewelry</i>	Highlights the adornments worn by the female characters, potentially emphasizing their appearance. This suggests the societal focus on women's

	aesthetics and beauty.
<i>knee-high</i>	Describes the height of the children, possibly indicating their age and vulnerability. It portrays children as innocent and in need of protection.
<i>bedspreads</i>	Describes the covering of the furniture, possibly signifying the need to hide imperfections. This reflects the societal pressure for women to maintain appearances.
<i>cotton</i>	Describes the fabric of the mother's sari, possibly symbolizing simplicity and traditional values. It represents the connection to cultural heritage and traditions.

Table No.1 *Defend Yourself Against Me* employs a paradoxical statement, urging women to confront the text's speaker, possibly an embodiment of the status quo or male-dominated society. This subverts the conventional notion of women being the ones who need protection, shifting the power dynamic to place women as assertive defenders of their rights.

The final plea, "please, woman, defend yourself!" calls for women to rise above victimization and actively engage in self-defense. The use of "please" underscores the urgency and earnestness of the appeal, suggesting that women should not wait for permission but assert their agency. The address as "woman" emphasizes solidarity among women, reinforcing the importance of collective action.

Overall, the analyzed text masterfully employs language to challenge societal norms, encourage female agency, and emphasize the significance of women's resistance. The choice of words serves to depict a forceful call for change, rejecting traditional power structures, and demanding equality and empowerment. Through its powerful and evocative language, the text exemplifies feminist stylistics by highlighting the multifaceted nature of the struggle and urging women to reclaim their narrative and assert their rightful place in society.

ii. Phrase/Sentence Analysis

From the perspective of feminist stylistics, phrase analysis examines individual phrases, expressions, or language choices in a work to uncover gender-related subjects, power relations, and portrayals of women. This approach concentrates on how language functions to express and keep up with gendered social standards, stereotypes, and discrimination. This chart shows how language plays roles in a patriarchal context. This table analysis is based on *Defend Yourself Against Me* by Bapsi Sidhwa, selected stories from the edited anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, edited by notable Pakistani writer Muneeza Shamsie.

Table No. 2: Phrase/ Sentence level Analysis of *Defend Yourself Against Me*

Phrase/Sentences	Analysis
<i>The tiny sari-clad bride</i>	Using the word "tiny" to describe the bride highlights the societal expectation for women to be small and delicate. The mention of the sari-clad bride also reinforces traditional gender roles and the emphasis on women's appearance to their clothing. This phrase objectifies the bride by reducing her identity to her clothing and appearance, emphasizing her traditional role as a wife.
<i>uniformly bewildered countenances</i>	This phrase portrays the brides as passive and submissive, reinforcing the stereotype of women as helpless and lacking agency.
<i>wore the uniformly bewildered countenances</i>	Using "uniformly" suggests that women's experiences were homogenous and limited, ignoring the diversity of their thoughts and emotions.

<i>Aiiay! Aiiay! Arrey bhai, we've been waiting for you! Kitni der laga di</i>	Using Urdu phrases to express excitement and impatience reinforces cultural and gender norms, where men are expected to be assertive and dominant.
<i>her nervous eyes wide</i>	The bride's "nervous eyes" description focuses on her emotions, reflecting the stereotype of women being emotional and sensitive. This reinforces that women's feelings and reactions are more important than their thoughts or actions.
<i>Defend yourself against me</i>	The phrase suggests that women should stand up for themselves, encouraging a feminist self-empowering ethos and asserting their rights and autonomy.
<i>Defend yourself against me, please, woman,</i>	This sentence encourages women to assert their agency and challenge societal constraints, emphasizing the importance of self-defense and self-advocacy in a patriarchal world

This table No.2 analysis effectively employs various literary devices and linguistic techniques to convey a strong message regarding the struggle for women's empowerment and the need for resistance against oppressive forces. The dominant theme in the story revolves around the empowerment and resistance of women against societal norms and structures that seek to silence and control them. The text emphasizes the importance of defending oneself against various forms of oppression, including physical force, media manipulation, and artistic representation. This theme aligns with feminist discourse that highlights the need for women to assert their agency and challenge systems that perpetuate gender inequality. The story engages in a robust feminist stylistic analysis through its skillful use of stylistic elements. It tackles the complex issue of gender inequality and oppression by urging women to defend themselves against various forms of suppression. The text highlights the urgency of women's empowerment and resistance through its imperative tone, vivid imagery, and strategic deployment of rhetorical devices. It serves as a rallying cry for women to challenge societal norms and reclaim their agency. This stylistic analysis underscores how the text not only conveys its feminist themes effectively but also resonates deeply with readers, inspiring them to take action and contribute to the ongoing struggle for gender equality.

iii. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis explores the surface-level content of a language used and the underlying structures, patterns, and influences that define how meaning is created and perceived in a specific situation. This discourse analysis is of *Defend Yourself Against Me* selected stories from the edited anthology *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women*, edited by famous Pakistani writer Muneeza Shamsie. This table looks at how language plays roles in a patriarchal framework.

Table No. 3: Discourse Level Analysis of *Defend Yourself Against Me*

Discourse	Feminist Stylistics Analysis
<i>The tiny sari-clad bride, her nervous eyes wide, her lips slightly ajar, barely clears the middle-aged bridegroom's ribs.</i>	The description of the bride focuses on her physical appearance and her apparent vulnerability. The mention of her being "tiny" and "sari-clad" emphasizes her traditional gender role as a bride, while her "nervous eyes" and "slightly ajar" lips suggest her unease and lack of agency. The comparison to the "middle-aged bridegroom's ribs" highlights the power dynamic and age difference in the relationship. This analysis highlights how the author's description of the bride reinforces traditional gender norms and emphasizes the power

	dynamics between the bride and groom.
<i>Aiiay! Aiiay! Arrey bhai, we've been waiting for you! Kitni der laga di,</i>	The use of exclamatory phrases and interjections like "Aiiay!" and "Arrey bhai" suggest excitement and a sense of urgency. The use of Urdu words and phrases in the English conversation reflects cultural hybridity and the blending of languages. This analysis highlights how the author's use of language reflects cultural influences and a sense of enthusiasm in the dialogue. Interjections and hybrid language also show communication complexity between different cultural groups.
<i>Tens of thousands of women have been kidnapped...</i>	The reference to "Tens of thousands of women" being kidnapped and the establishment of "Recovered Women's Camps" highlights the systemic gender-based violence that has occurred. This reflects a feminist perspective by shedding light on the vulnerability of women and the need to address such issues.
<i>tiny body, scabs, wounds</i>	The emphasis on the boy's "tiny body," along with descriptions of "scabs" and "wounds," evokes empathy and a sense of vulnerability. This kind of language is reminiscent of the way vulnerability and fragility have often been associated with femininity. In a feminist analysis, this could highlight the shared human experience of vulnerability and pain, challenging the notion that only women are vulnerable.
<i>Suzanne is in the kitchen...</i>	The text begins with the introduction of Suzanne, indicating her presence in the kitchen. This sets the scene and context for the upcoming interactions. The kitchen is often associated with traditional gender roles and domestic tasks typically assigned to women. The opening sentence subtly places Suzanne in a domestic role, which can reflect societal norms and expectations related to gender.
<i>The smell of mango pickle is strong in the room...</i>	The description of the smell of mango pickle and the mention of Kishen's mother's statement create an atmosphere of home-cooked food and hospitality. The pungent smell of pickle and the focus on food evoke a sense of comfort and nurturing, which are often associated with feminine qualities related to caregiving and homemaking.
<i>Allah have mercy on us,</i>	This plea for mercy reflects the sense of helplessness and desperation that women often feel in the face of overwhelming violence and oppression. It underscores the need for compassion and intervention in the context of women's suffering.
<i>Defend yourself against me, please, woman, defend yourself!</i>	This statement carries a mix of irony and urgency. The speaker is asking a woman to "defend herself" against them, suggesting a challenge or confrontation. The repetition of "defend yourself" emphasizes the need for women to assert themselves, stand up against oppression, and speak out. The use of "please" adds a layer of complexity, as it could be interpreted as a sarcastic response to the traditional notion of women needing permission or approval to defend themselves. This line underscores the importance of women's autonomy and agency.

In this table No. 3 text analysis explores the urgency of resistance against oppressive forces. The forceful language and imagery highlight the multifaceted challenges women face across different aspects of their lives, such as education, media, and religion. The call to "Defend yourself against me" acknowledges the need for women to take action for their empowerment, even as it recognizes the complexities of the situation. The symbolism of schools and cathedrals further emphasizes the institutional nature of oppression. In contrast, the mention of various mediums of oppression highlights the role of media and representation in perpetuating harmful stereotypes. The passage effectively conveys the message of feminist resistance and the imperative for women to assert themselves against oppressive structures.

Conclusion

Feministic Dimensions in Pakistani Women's Writings: A Stylistic Study of "And the World Changed" serves as an excellent examination of how feminist themes are conveyed stylistically, offering a comprehensive understanding of the textual techniques employed by Pakistani female writers to express their feminist perspectives. This analysis aims to provide readers with a thorough comprehension of all employed textual techniques to convey this viewpoint. By analysing *And the World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani Women* through a stylistic lens, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on feminist thought in Pakistani literature and society, considering cultural, sociological, and historical factors that influence women's literary expressions. The findings will not only deepen understanding of feminist dimensions within Pakistani women's writing but also enhance broader scholarship on feminism and literature. Exploring stylistic elements within the text improves understanding of how feminist ideas are woven into narratives, shaping discussions around gender, identity, and social equality within Pakistan's cultural context. Overall, Feminist Dimensions and Pakistani Women's Narratives: A Stylistic Study of *And the World Changed* provides an in-depth examination of how feminism is expressed through stylistic choices in Pakistani literature, highlighting the contribution of Pakistani female authors to global feminist literary canons and emphasizing literature as a tool for advocating social change and gender equality.

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