

Panopticon and the Electra: Power and Desire in Tehmina Durrani's "My Feudal Lord"

Ali Inan^{1**}, Saadia Noor², Muhammad Aurangzeb Chaudhry³ and Muhammad Tanveer Ahmad⁴

Abstract

This paper examines Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord* through a dual lens of Freudian psychoanalysis and Foucauldian theory to illustrate how personal desire and institutional power co-construct gendered oppression. The study arrives at key findings: First, Electra complex drives the protagonist's traumatic experiences and complex relationships with her parents (esp. her mother), spouse and siblings. Second, through Foucault's concept of the panopticon, the paper establishes that the impact of mother's house and social control dictate the perceptions, emotions, sentiments and actions of the protagonist. Third, desire and discipline intersect in ways that make patriarchal power both affective and structural, complicating existing readings of control. While exploring the constant surveillance of actions and the control over the protagonist's desire by the powerful feudal society, this study sheds light upon the interplay between individual psychology and societal structure promoting gender-based oppression; hence, demanding resistance against repressive structure of feudalism and patriarchy in both politics and society.

Keywords: My Feudal Lord, Tehmina Durrani, Panoptic prison, Michel Foucault, Electra complex, Freud

Introduction

In South Asian literature, there are not many works that echo as profoundly the themes of power, desire, and suppression as Tehmina Durrani's "My Feudal Lord." This is an autobiographical chronicle which not only narrates Durrani's turbulent

¹ Department of English, Government College University, Lahore – Pakistan

² Department of English, Riphah International University, Lahore – Pakistan

³ Department of Political Science, Government College University, Lahore – Pakistan

⁴ University of the Punjab, Lahore – Pakistan

marriage to a powerful feudal lord but also functions as an expressive critique of the entrenched patriarchal and feudal systems that dominate Pakistani society. This study seeks to explore the intricate interplay of surveillance, power, and psychological desire that emphasizes Durrani's distressing experiences. By investigating how the panopticon's omnipresent surveillance shapes Tehmina's sense of agency and how her psyche steers through the Electra complex within this oppressive milieu, this research unearths the deeper layers of her struggle and resistance.

The panopticon, a concept introduced by philosopher Michel Foucault, serves as a powerful metaphor for the pervasive surveillance and control mechanisms that characterize feudal and patriarchal structures. In "My Feudal Lord," Tehmina's experiences within her marriage are emblematic of life in a panopticon. Her every move, thought, and action are dissected, not just by her husband, Mustafa Khar, but by the larger feudal society that upholds and imposes these fixed standards. This relentless surveillance strips Tehmina of her individuality and autonomy, forcing her to conform to the expectations and control of her oppressors. The thesis will explore how this panoptic scrutiny shapes Tehmina's relationship with the feudal system and wears down her sense of agency, trapping her in a cycle of submission and rebellion.

Simultaneously, the psychoanalytic framework of the Electra complex provides a compelling lens through which to examine Tehmina's psychological landscape. Rooted in Freudian theory, the Electra complex put forward that a daughter's psychosexual development is overwhelmingly influenced by her relationship with her father and her rivalry with her mother. Within the feudal context of Durrani's narrative, this dynamic is further complicated by the oppressive patriarchal arrangements that alter familial relationships. Tehmina's psyche, as revealed through her interactions with her mother and other key characters, reflects the deep-seated conflicts and repressions characteristic of the Electra complex. By digging into these psychoanalytic foundations, the research aims to explain how Tehmina's desires, fears, and repressions shape her actions and relationships within the feudal framework.

Tehmina Durrani being a Pakistani author, an artist, children and women rights activist has, through the medium of this novel, proved to the world that if a woman decides to act against the injustice and violence no one can stop her from doing so.

The main theme of the novel *My feudal Lord* is to break free from our society's double standards towards women. The novel helps women understand to raise voice against the brutalities and ill treatment and to never compromise on such things that she has faced. In her work there is an evident exploration of feudalism and its roots in the Pakistani rural society. Furthermore, how feudal lords treat their wives specifically and women in generally. Tehmina and Mustafa's first daughter Naseeba became a victim of her own fathers violent and aggressive nature.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between surveillance, power, and psychological desire in Durrani's narrative. By examining how the panopticon's mechanisms of control influence Tehmina's sense of self and agency, and how psychoanalytic theories elucidate her psychological landscape, this research seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of her experiences and the novel's critique of patriarchal structures. Through this exploration, the thesis will contribute to the broader discourse on gender, power, and resistance in South Asian literature, shedding light on the enduring relevance of Durrani's work in contemporary discussions of oppression and empowerment.

Review of the Literature

Previous studies state that, domestic violence and surveillance over women is the main concern of Durrani's works. Durrani presents the feminist themes to spread awareness and to raise her voice over the feudalistic crisis at multiple layers of the society and political spectrum. Durrani's *My Feudal Lord* is a multidimensional text therefore, there are interpretations available.

Amna Aziz, Fariha Iqbal and Suman Naeem (2023) state, "In our patriarchal society women are born to obey men". *My Feudal Lord* is a feminine journey from acceptance to resistance in the society. This novel untangles the harsh truth about the condition of women, how they survive and sacrifices but still unnoticed and spend the whole life in negligence by men. This novel tells the realities of feudal system in post-colonial Pakistan. Women have to pay a high price for everything in this society (Aziz, Iqbal and Naeem, 2023, p.8).

Sehrish Bano, Dr. Mian Shah Bacha and Dr. Rabiah Rustam (2021) in their research applied the idea of Simon de Beauvoir's book *The Second sex*. The researchers highlighted the problems a female faced in the male dominated and patriarchal

society where she faces the humiliation and disrespect. The study highlights the importance of self that she realizes eventually and had resisted in the strict feudal rules and regulations (Bano, Shah Bacha, and Rustam, 2021, p. 827).

Shazir Hassan, Rabia Rauf, Asfa Zia and Dr. Saeed Ur Rehman (2021) in their research discuss that oppression and subjugation of women in southern region of Pakistan are evident, and a part of culture. This study answers the question of Tehmina's adjustment in the complex tribal and feudal system. Being an educated and well-groomed lady, it was difficult for her to survive in such a place that leads her to liberation from this prison (Hassan, Rauf, Zia and Rehman, 109 & 110).

Humaira Riaz (2021) has mentioned in her research that colonialism and feudalism are interlinked with each other, and this is still a practicing system in south Asian countries. They observe about feudalism "generally, it aims to provide order and structure during times of crisis and is centred on the power of owning land". The relationship of male, female and imbalance generated by the system of feudalism has been explored in this research paper. (Riaz, 2021, p. 229).

Sakinama (2020) mentions that the memoir exposes how patriarchal power is maintained through economic dependency and social hierarchies. Durrani's struggle for financial independence and her eventual rebellion against Khar can be seen as a resistance against both patriarchal and class oppression (Sakinama, 2020, p. 23).

According to Hassan Bin Zubair, Fehmida Aslam and Mashooq Ali Khowaja (2019) *My Feudal Lord* deals with post-colonial feminism, Muslim and western feminism with the application of Deniz Kandiyotis theory, Practical Bargain. Conclusion of their research paper is that "there is always a patriarchal pressure on the South Asian Women, about which Tehmina Durrani has tried to present the real condition of Muslim Pakistani women" (Zubair, Aslam, and Khowaja, 2019, p.112).

Anum Shaharyar (2019) utilizes Derridean deconstruction to identify the binary oppositions in the work, such as male/female, oppressor/victim, and public/private. By highlighting the fluidity and ambiguity of these categories, Anum argues that Durrani's narrative challenges the fixed notions of identity and power. The memoir's oscillation between different voices and perspectives deconstructs the monolithic representation of feudal power and patriarchal oppression (Shaharyar, 2019, p.4).

Syed Umair Abid (2019) used the theory of deconstruction to analyse the personality loss of protagonist of the novel *My Feudal Lord*. Theory of deconstruction uncovers the veiled parts. The title is self-contradictory that represents the longing of Tehmina from childhood to have a man at her side. She, herself is a champion of feminism but *My Feudal Lord* depicts the desire of a man (Abid, 3).

Khair Muhammad Sumalani and Faria Saeed Khan (2018) observe “Durrani is the initiator and pioneer among Anglo - Pakistani narrators who raised her voice against the cruelty of feudal lords in Pakistan”. This study explores the traumatized life with domestic violence, psychological sufferings and problems of sexuality of elite class of Pakistan (Sumalani, Khan, 2018 p. 29).

Despite extensive scholarly examination of Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning the integrated analysis of power, surveillance, and psychological desire within the narrative. While previous studies have explored the autobiographical aspects, critique of feudal and patriarchal structures, and representations of gender-based violence, they have not sufficiently employed Foucault's concept of the panopticon alongside psychoanalytic theories, particularly the Electra complex, to unravel the intricate dynamics of control and repression. This research gap highlights the need for a comprehensive study that synthesizes these theoretical frameworks to provide a deeper understanding of Tehmina's experiences and the novel's critique of patriarchal oppression.

Methodology

For conducting this research, qualitative closed textual reading has been applied to the text through two intersecting theoretical frameworks: Michel Foucault's theory of the panopticon and Carl Jung's reinterpretation of Freud's Electra complex. No comparative texts have been used, and the focus remains on the primary text *My Feudal Lord* allowing for focused theoretical application and textual immersion.

The research method centers on thematic coding informed by the key motifs of surveillance, discipline, maternal rivalry, and paternal desire. Relevant passages are categorized according to how they illustrate panoptic control or the Electra complex, with attention paid to narrative voice, imagery, and language of submission or resistance.

To ensure validity, the analysis triangulates psychoanalytic and Foucauldian readings with direct quotations from the memoir and supporting scholarship from peer-reviewed sources. Reliability is supported through theoretical coherence: the frameworks of panopticons and the Electra complex are applied consistently across the narrative arc. The study refrains from generalizing findings beyond this case but does suggest their potential applicability to other South Asian autobiographical narratives involving elite women.

As a single-text analysis, this study acknowledges the limited generalizability of its findings.

Theoretical Framework

Panopticon is a philosophical theory developed by an English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. He designed this prison with a single guard watching all the prisoners present in round shape prison and without being watched. Key features of the theory include central watchtower, individual cells, visibility and anonymity. This idea was later expanded by a historian and social activist of 20th century, Micheal Foucault. According to Foucault's modern idea the theory of Panopticon comprises on a broader aspect of power and control. (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* 1975: Micheal Foucault). He had presented the idea of Panopticon to serve as a symbol in modern society for a shift of physical punishment to psychological control. He argued that Panopticon is a new form of power where discipline and control are maintained through constant surveillance and the fear of being watched.

This provides the concept of self-regulation and internalization of control and makes the guard unnecessary. His idea implies on the concept of beyond prison and influence modern thought on surveillance, control, power and discipline.

Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud was primarily utilized to treat his patients with dream work. He is regarded as the father of psychology and most influential in 20th century. Freud's theory suggests that human behaviour is influenced by unconscious thoughts, memories and unfulfilled desires. The human psyche consists of three aspects that are: the id, ego and super ego and human part is divided into two parts named conscious and unconscious mind.

Electra complex is the counter part of Oedipus complex. In Neo-Freudian psychology, the Electra complex, as proposed by Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung, in his theory of psychoanalysis, is a girl's psycho-sexual competition with her mother for possession of her father.

The combined analysis of both frameworks is divided into two aspects for proper understanding and that are patriarchal control and power of resistance. Patriarchal control means the psychological control and disturbance and Panopticon to describe the internal and external surveillance and power control. Besides this Electra complex defines the psychological dimensions/dynamics in relations.

The Panopticon in Durrani's *My Feudal Lord*

Panopticon by Micheal Foucault is a modern concept of power control and surveillance 'one guard to control all the prisoners. The control is not a physical control but a psychological one. It is obvious that one person is unable to check on everyone, but the psychological aspect proves that everyone is under command. To survive in such a situation where every single move is being observed is a difficult task. There is no freedom and no liberty. Life under domination is the worst form of life, which Durrani experienced with her mother and husband. It all started from the physical control when she was a child and then the severity of it changed from physical to psychological. The protagonist of the novel spends all her life under constant supremacy. From the beginning of the novel, it is evident from the dictatorial nature of her mother that shapes the sense, thought and viewpoints of all the persons in her surroundings. The lord's estate with its centralized structure and all-seeing gaze serves as a panopticon, Foucault exerting control over the lives of its inhabitants. Durrani's father was a patient and humble person, and all the control was in the hands of his wife Samina. She treated her daughters like maids especially Tehmina the elder one 'wardrobe mistress'. Rubina her daughter from first marriage, had to take care of younger siblings because it was a part of her training before marriage. The protagonist mother believed that a girl should be able to manage the household in an efficient way and she never compromised on her principles.

My Feudal Lord (1991) is an autobiographical novel. Tehmina lived in the world of surveillance, from the phases of upbringing in her home. Every action and movement were scanned by her mother. The person changed but not life. The feudal

lord Mustafa Khar titled as the lion of Punjab was the second husband of the protagonist. He made her life a living hell by constant supervision. The protagonist, a young woman, feels trapped and suffocated by the all-seeing gaze of her husband. She spent socially controlled life like panopticon in everyday life. The estate's Panopticon like design serves as a constant reminder of the lord's authority, eroding the protagonist's sense of agency and autonomy, and reinforcing the power dynamics that keep her subjugated.

Her mother was anxious about her rebellious nature as Tehmina says in the novel, "Whatever little personality I had developed, I now lost. Mother sent me back to Lahore to under the surveillance of my grandmother. I was not allowed to go anywhere on my own, nor was I allowed to make or receive telephone calls. I could not meet my friends. Mentally I felt at a dead end" (Durrani, 1991, p. 83). The protagonist didn't back off from her decision to marry. Resultantly, her ties broke down with family and her mother in the novel, "She is a black sheep. If she has stooped to Mustafa Khar's level, she cannot rise again to ours" (84). Mustafa provides her proper security and assured her that he would be there any time she needed. As Tehmina says in the novel, "Mustafa held my hand and spoke with great sincerity: Tehmina, you must never fear me. You must talk to me about everything, whenever you want to. I'll always love you and be kind to you" (89).

Tehmina's marriage to Mustafa Khar marked the beginning of a new chapter in her life one that would prove to be even more challenging that she had anticipated. As every coin has two sides, Mustafa also had two personalities in one person. Right after her marriage, life took a dramatic turn, plunging her into the world of turmoil and tribulation. For the feudal lords their women were like lands, and they can do whatever they want. Women must live their life in complete isolation; only her husband and in laws can visit her.

The narrator demonstrates that life with the feudal lord is same as is living in a cage. The protagonist longed for freedom and liberation. She wanted to live a life full of adventures. All her dreams shattered, and she became a timid and confused girl in front of Mustafa Khar. The protagonist says in the novel, "At first, I found irony in this situation: I had escaped from the domination of my mother by climbing into the lap of a tyrant, and it was somewhat amusing to see the dictators magnifying one another's egos. However, I began to feel isolated, gradually. Mustafa became a part of the family from which I had tried to stand apart" (128). She almost resolved

in him. His orders and commands never leave her contented but frightful and awful. At the starting days of marriage, he raged at Tehmina which testifies that, lords only know how to conquer and rule the land or on humans. Mustafa's words are mentioned in the novel, Tehmina says in the novel, "Never _ ever _ disobey me! You have to do what I tell you to do" (95) and another incident when he raged at Tehmina 'how dare you keep me waiting' (101).

Disciplinary power and environment are the aspects to explore the role of panopticon in *My Feudal Lord*. This relates with the human mind, and it is a psychological control. The awareness of being watched and the inability to escape surveillance had a profound psychological impact on Tehmina. It led to a form of self-discipline where she censored her own thoughts and actions to avoid punishment or disapproval.

Normalization of power is depicted through the mother daughter relation, side by side the relation of Mustafa Khar with Tehmina Durrani. When something becomes the part of life it seems normal, and no one wants to escape from it. Durrani eventually comprehends the situation of her life becoming devastated day by day. She felt worthless and her life was purpose less. She was not allowed to think he used to say frequently 'I know what you are thinking'. Tehmina says in the novel, "To think independently was a crime that he had the right to punish" (107) and, she says, "My brain was washed, bleached and hung out to dry" (108). She wakes up and do what other want and sleep eluded her. She was afraid to sleep and to 'dream images' that may annoy him that interprets how badly she was captured in a 'psychological prison' (Fouocult, 1957). The protagonist says in the novel, "Mustafa didn't even realize that he had crushed my sensuality" (Durrani, 1991, p. 107). There was no progress in her life just stuck with the feudal lord trying to comprehend what is happening with her.

Despite all these happenings, she tried her best to protect her marriage. There are two reasons for not separating. First, he would not spare her at any cost. Second, it was her decision to marry him so, family would not give any favour. Tehmina says in the novel, "The two fears kept me shaken and traumatized. I did not have the confidence to walk away" (109). Tehmina's marriage to Mustafa Khar was a crushing disappointment. The once vibrant Tehmina was now a shadow of her former self, her spirit crushed by the oppressive weight of her marriage. Mustafa Khar's charm and charisma had masked a darker reality, one that Tehmina discovered too late, as

she found herself trapped in a prison of her own making. Just as the panopticon all seeing eye controls, Mustafa Khar's constant scrutiny and criticism had Tehmina under his thumb, eroding her autonomy and sense of self. Trapped in the psychological prison, Tehmina felt like she was living in a constant state of surveillance, her every move watched and juggled.

Being a pregnant woman, the protagonist was in need of care, love and rest. For Tehmina it was the worst experience of her life. She spends the whole time in physical and mental turmoil. She was not allowed to eat what she liked but follow Mustafa's direction. She delivered all the children of Mustafa in the chaotic situation. Mustafa made the situation worse by interfering in the family matters of Tehmina. When she was carrying her first baby Naseeba, Mustafa raised her hand on her, "I did not know how long the beating lasted" (103). As a pregnant woman, Tehmina was particularly vulnerable to Mustafa Khar's wrath, yet she faced it alone, with no escape from his constant surveillance. Like the panopticon's design, which ensures that the prisoner is always visible, Tehmina felt like she was perpetually on display, her every move scrutinized, her every weakness exploited. The blows raining down on her pregnant body were a stark reminder of her captivity, a cruel manifestation of the panopticon's principle of "visibility equals control" The protagonist delivered all her children in agony. Tehmina's cries for help were muffled by the walls of her prison, just as the panopticon's design ensures that the prisoner's screams are silenced by the architecture of control. In this suffocating world of surveillance and violence, Tehmina's pregnancy became a cruel irony, a symbol of life and hope trapped in a prison of fear, anxiety and distress (119).

In *My Feudal Lord* (1991), the constant scrutiny and observation by the lord creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. The protagonist feels like she is always being watched, even when she is alone. This constant gaze makes her feel like she is under a microscope, and her every move is being judged and criticized. She begins to internalize this scrutiny, constantly questioning her own actions and thoughts. Tehmina says in the novel, "I began to say my prayers under my breath constantly: to keep him cool, to soften his heart towards me. I was incapable of thinking of any other issue. Nothing else was significant" (106). She started to doubt herself, feeling like she is never good enough. This constant observation, both real and imagined, instils a sense of discipline and obedience in her. She begins to conform to the lord's expectations, suppressing her own desires and dreams. She becomes hesitant to speak her mind or assert her own needs, fearing punishment or rejection. The

constant scrutiny and observation have effectively silenced her, making her an obedient prisoner in the lord's estate. The lord's all-seeing gaze has become a tool of control, crushing her spirit and individuality. With the passage of time, the protagonist faced many ups and downs. There came a time Tehmina and Mustafa Khar were banished from Pakistan. There she survived in the complete social control and observation of her husband. She was not permitted to join any party and outings with her mother and sister. The sense of panopticon is evident by the condition of the protagonist. Her husband ordered her to behave accordingly in the phase of exile. With her parents and siblings, she behaved in a conservative manner due to her husband's nature. Unlike other girls, the protagonist with her husband ever felt suffocated. With herself she was worried about her daughters well being too as she says in the novel, "My beautiful baby girl, instead of being a source of joy, became a source of new, frightful tension now I had two of us to protect" (113). He was not her support but biggest fear of punishment. Being a political leader, he used to manipulate her with his dirty politics. Physically she used to be present anywhere else, but mentally she was always bound and frightened that Mustafa would know about it.

The Panopticon-like estate in *My Feudal Lord* serves as a powerful tool of control, reinforcing the lord's dominance and the protagonist's subjugation. By constant surveillance and observing her, the lord maintains a grip on her thoughts, actions, and desires. The protagonist says in novel, "The awareness that had been growing slowly now blossomed into full and ghastly flower. I had fallen into the classic trap of the Pakistani woman. The goal is marriage and, once achieved, the future is a life of total subordination. I had no power, no rights, no will of my own" (100). This perpetual scrutiny reinforces the power dynamics, reminding her of her place within the estate's hierarchy. She is trapped in a web of oppression, with the lord's gaze constantly reminding her of her subordination. The Panopticon's design ensures that she internalizes this oppression, self-regulating her behaviour to avoid punishment or rejection. Her autonomy and agency are slowly eroded, replaced by a sense of obedience and compliance. The lord's power is reinforced, while her own identity and individuality are suppressed. The estate's Panopticon-like structure serves as a physical manifestation of the lord's control, entrapping her in a prison of surveillance and oppression. This highlights how the Panopticon perpetuates systemic power imbalances, entrapping individuals in a cycle of subjugation and control.

The sense of agency and resistance is the most important aspect in analysing the novel *My Feudal Lord*. The protagonist's sense of agency is constantly eroded by the surveillance and control of the lord and societal norms and pressures. Agency refers to one's ability to make choice and act upon them. In the upbringing phase her mother controlled everything. After marriage with Khar, she also faced the same control ever stricter than her mother. She was unable to do anything of her own. His approval was needed for everything from where to go, which thing to eat, what would she wore. Besides all these reasons there is a most significant reason, the adulterous relation of Mustafa with the baby sister of Tehmina. Adila was just thirteen years old when she started dating him. He just needs women for his pleasure regardless of who is she? Tehmina was helpless in this matter too like the other matters. Tehmina says in the novel, "To me he was now Adila's husband" (187). Therefore, she decided not to endure the pain and humiliation. The birth of her first son took him to closer to her creator there she finds solace and calmness. The only source to comfort her in the vulnerable situation. She began to analyse her life and asked herself. 'What had happened to me?', 'Why was I so afraid of everything?' and 'Why did I not react like a normal human being to insult and humiliation?' In the kitchen a small conversation converted into a war. Both attacked on each other. As Tehmina says in novel, "Mustafa threatened me, I will break every bone in your body and I resisted and yelled, the next time you raise your hand to me I will pick up a knife and kill you!" (188). At that moment she realized her strength and sense of agency. Additionally, restrictions on movement are another important aspect in the sense of agency of the protagonist. In the confined environment she needs lord's permission to leave. Besides this the physical and psychological restriction symbolizes the limitations of her choices and actions. Moreover, control over daily life, fear of punishment, internalization of oppression and loss of identity impulse her to part her way.

When Mustafa Khar was kept in imprisonment by the government of Pakistan, her wife Tehmina decided to give her marriage another chance. Previously, many times she had decided to give up on him. By using their kids, he blackmailed her to return otherwise she had to live without her children. After every injustice and violence over Tehmina, he begged for forgiveness. Being a lady she, trusted her every time in hope that this may be last time, or he is feeling guilty in real. Obviously, he had anger issues and other things that lead her to torture her ladies. Most of the feudal lord behaves like this but, Tehmina was trapped by his personality which he presented to the outside world. Eventually in the absence of Mustafa from her life

temporarily she gained confidence again. She groomed herself and learned to move alone in the society with dignity. The protagonist realized her worth again and started to live again. Painting was her passion from early age; she pursued that passion with enthusiasm and was in “her element” while painting (173). She regained her lost strength to face the odds of life all alone. She fulfilled all the duties of being a mother of four children and raised them appropriately. Besides all these struggles she also fought for her husband’s release. Tehmina learned about politics and started many campaigns for Mustafa. He also supported her and lectured her on how to communicate with people. In the crucial time sense of control did not vanish completely. Besides the instructions about politics, he also wanted to save her wife from outside world. He advised her to establish an emotional connection between her and the people of their land. The protagonist arranged many meetings with ‘generals’ and other high ranked officials. She got the fruit for all of her efforts in the form of Mustafa release. He regained power and started behaving like the same he used to do with her. To humiliate her, made her feel like an inferior specie. He used the same tactics to control her physically and psychologically. This time she resisted and thought of separation from the psychopath. Realization hits her late, but she took a step to detach her path from him. Who only knew to manipulate. In the reaction of this segregation the protagonist’s family abandoned her, but she was strong enough to survive. Another significant decision was to break the silence against violence, brutality and inhumane behaviour of her feudal lord (177-178).

My Feudal Lord (1991), from the perspective of panopticon sheds lights on the life of protagonist, Tehmina Durrani. Her dreams shattered like broken pieces of glass, and hopes were crushed like a fragile flower. Wishes and dreams turned into traumas and fears. There was mental exhaustion, disturbance and chaos. Moreover, the relationship with her husband was a relation of master and slave. In the patriarchal and conservative society, she was always under someone’s dominance until she learned how to fly.

Electra Complex in My Feudal Lord

Applying Freudian psychoanalytic theory of Electra complex, the counter part of Oedipus complex, to analyze the autobiographical text of Tehmina Durrani *My Feudal Lord* brings to fore the childhood trauma of the protagonist, rejection from loved ones, her complexes, and rebellious nature. There were many factors that made the life of Tehmina full of complexes i.e., being a dark-skinned girl, she never

got motherly affection and commanding nature of her mother left her perplexed (5). These events developed these complications in her life. The psychologically disturbed protagonist took the most significant decision to improve her life but ended miserably. The decision was her marriage with Mustafa Khar.

Initially, the lack of affection between mother and daughter was the main cause to develop the Electra complex in the main character of the novel. A child needs love, care and attachment with her mother to grow healthy from which Tehmina was being deprived. The protagonist says in the novel, "I never ever remember my mother hugging or kissing me when I was little" (23). Cherry on top she was a girl with dusky complexion and her mother was fair and 'light skinned beauty' (5). Being a dark-skinned child was becoming a crime for her not even her mother but whole family felt disgusted by the brown colour of Tehmina. Mostly she felt neglected and rejected by her mother and realized soon she was a 'shock' to her mother. As beautiful people prefer beautiful things Durrani's mother applied the very same concept for her own children. Her mother's behaviour was evident that she was an 'ugly' child and cause of embarrassment. Childhood traumas lasted an impact for lifetime if any child would be rejected just because of her skin colour. Obviously, it would leave a lasting impact on the child. According to scientific research most of the part of the human brain develop in the early age. Furthermore, thoughts and perceptions are also developed in this phase. Tehmina says in the novel, "Rubina, Zarmina and I _ the darker daughters _ never seemed able to please her" (7). Therefore, it is impossible to forget what happens during the phase of development. Secondly, the life of the protagonist was like a prisoner and her mother played the role of prison holder.

The relationship of mother and daughter was not a normal relation; for her mother it was a source of awkwardness and for Tehmina it was a burden. Tehmina says in the novel, "At the age of twelve I was given the position of wardrobe mistress" (7). She was not allowed to express her likes and, dislikes. It laid the foundation of complexes for a little girl. For outsiders the life of Durrani's children was very privileged but in reality, it was a commanding house of her mother. All the siblings got education from high standard schools and moved in the elite class of Pakistani society. The hold on their mother over home and every little decision converted that house into a psychological and physical prison of all the time. Children were not encouraged to attend any gathering but to stay with servants and house helpers. The girls of Durrani house like a Pakistani traditional family were not allowed to make

friends freely, Tehmina Durrani says in the novel, “Avoid modern girlfriends and avoid any girl who has an older brother” (8). Like a prison has some rules and regulation, the house of Durrani also managed by her mother’s rules. In this regard Tehmina says in the novel, “My childhood was encumbered by a lengthy of don’ts, all designed to maintain an inviolate distance between myself and the masculine world” (8). From make up to nail paint and from going out alone to stand in kitchen with male servants and many more in the list to make home an imprisonment.

The major concentration to analyze the Freud's psychoanalytical theory in the form of Electra complex on this work is through the portrayal of the relation of father and daughter. The protagonist’s father was a submissive person in front of their mother. The comparison between mother and daughters created differences. First, the novel opens with the Tehmina’s appearance at a party with her first husband Anes. From the beginning psychological pressure can be seen upon the protagonist where she compares herself with her mother. Tehmina described her mother by the painting hanged on wall of her home in Lahore “A breathtakingly beautiful woman draped in an emerald, green sari” (4). The protagonist’s mother was from ‘Hayat family of the Khattar tribe’ with a strong political background. This relation is not about comparison but of togetherness. The main essence of Electra complex, where a female child feels envious and jealousy and hatred for her own mother. This all happened due to the authoritative nature of her mother. She always wanted to get hold on everything related to her house. From a small decision of what to wear and where to go. Even on the dining table no one was able to make sound without her permission and dinner was a ‘muted symphony’. She can be titled lady boss of the house as, “I can find everything out, he boasted” (6). The mother used the strategy of ‘careful divide and conquer’. All the events and happenings make sense now that why she chooses a feudal lord. Tehmina says in the novel, “I loved my father” (5). The appearance of her father from ‘pathan family’ has been described as a handsome man (5). His father was an officer and a great person. The main character of the novel never mentioned that she loved her mother although the father love is apparent in every part of her life.

There came a turning point in the life of protagonist when she married Anes. Once Tehmina was in boarding where she got a chance to meet with Anees and both fell in love at first sight (15). This was their huge mistake according to her mother. Despite all the drama they got married and had a daughter named Tania. The loop of false decisions started from here. Tehmina climbed the first step of her downfall,

that was the part of destiny. In the psychological pressures and urge to take step for her life created more complexities when she realized "I probably do not love you. I was only in love with the idea of love. I wanted to escape from my family" (14). The marriage with Anees serves as a ladder of meeting with Mustafa Khar and his personality, body language, way of communication attracted her so much. At that moment she thought she can get everything she longed in her life with the companionship of Mustafa Khar. Being a mother of a girl, she never wanted to leave her daughter in the same condition as her. Her wishes, longing and desires blinded her from the fact that she is going to fall in a trap for lifetime. Her decision destroyed her own life, Tanya and Anees's life and, Sherry's life.

Mustafa Khar was a strong man from a powerful family. Khar's were lords of lands means they were feudal lords in the urban area of Pakistan. They had no vision to expand their territory until 'Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani and his illegal activities made it difficult for feudal lords to survive without political. The feudal lords took the decision to enter in politics as Tehmina says in the novel, "Only politics could bring legitimacy power and protection" (18). His masculinity and charms in the women's circle attracted her towards him. Here comes the manifestation of Electra complex because she always wanted a strong masculine figure in her life. The presence of father was very important for Tehmina but her father all the time surrendered in front of her mother "Father had to live by my mother's rules" (6). Additionally, Anees was a simple man with average looks, yet he was intelligent and hardworking man, but Tehmina never admired him. The marriage with Anees was not a successful marriage because, he was not 'professional' without Tehmina's 'interference' and he was not compatible for her in any sense. In her point of view, he has no ambition to enhance their life and career and after seeing Mustafa Khar, he didn't believe him. The character traits of Mustafa have been described by the author to create a proper difference between both men. Tehmina noticed Mustafa's every single move and effort he did to impress her. "Mustafa was an excellent chef" (34), and he was perfect entirely.

Tehmina Durrani herself and her mother was responsible for all the happenings of her life. She never accepted her daughter and expressed love but always kept a strict check on them. Pakistan is an Asian Muslim country where just name of man is enough to protect from the evils of society. The very same fear was always residing in her mother that's why she raised her daughters in a traditional manner. According to her mother it is the most difficult task to raise the daughters in this culture and

society like Pakistan. Sense of respect and dignity is attached with the girls in this traditional society that is in actual a patriarchal society. Man's actions are justified by laws, rules, culture, tradition and society. She also married twice like Tehmina and had a daughter named Rubina and stepsister of Tehmina.

After marriage, Tehmina's relationship with Mustafa Khar took a devastating turn for the worse, transforming her life into a living nightmare. The dominance she had experienced at the hands of her mother was eclipsed by Mustafa's tyrannical control, reducing her to a mere insect in his presence. While he presented himself as an angel to the outside world, he revealed his true demonic nature at home, exerting mental and physical control over Tehmina and even their own children, who were not spared from his wrath for the smallest of mistakes. Trapped in this abyss of oppression, Tehmina's life became a constant struggle for survival, her spirit crushed by the weight of Mustafa's unrelenting cruelty. This highlights the stark contrast between Mustafa's public persona and his private behaviour, emphasizing the extreme control and cruelty he exerted over Tehmina and his children.

Several factors planted the seeds of inferiority complex in the heart and mind of protagonist. A fair skin is appreciated by everyone. This turned out as a tragedy in the life of protagonist because, she was a brown complexion girl. Her own family rejected her except her father. Every talent, productivity and quality would get appreciation due to the white skin. Additionally, the overpowering nature of mother created hatred and envy in the heart of the protagonist. Her father played a significant role in her life, and she proclaimed that she loved her father.

Conclusion

This study offers an integrated analysis of Tehmina Durrani's *My Feudal Lord* through Foucault's concept of the panopticon and Freudian-Jungian interpretations of the Electra complex. The study has measured the impact of patriarchal control at psychological and structural levels in society and household. It also underscores the role external mechanisms of surveillance operating with internalized patterns of repression and desire.

My Feudal Lord reveals the deep-rooted structures of oppression persisting within elite, educated families, demanding analytical models that move beyond binaries of public and private or victim and agent. This hybrid reading has implications for

feminist pedagogy, South Asian gender policy, and memoir studies. It encourages scholars to read trauma not merely as a social event but as a psychosocial construct demanding layered analytical tools. For policymakers, it suggests to address gender violence in elite households with a focus on both visible control (spatial, economic) and invisible control (emotional, psychological).

Findings

This research has arrived at the following findings: First, the panoptic surveillance—through family, husband, and social expectations—erodes the protagonist's agency and leads to self-regulation and psychological paralysis. Second, the Electra complex illustrates her emotional entrapment, especially the longing for fatherly validation and the rivalry with maternal authority. Third, desire and discipline intersect in ways that make patriarchal power both affective and structural, complicating existing readings of control.

Recommendations

This research focuses exclusively on one memoir and is limited to textual analysis. Additionally, the dual-theory lens, while fruitful, may overlook other dimensions such as race, class, or postcolonial hybridity. Although it is a feminist work, but the aspects related to other theories and concepts also make it relevant to contemporary studies. Future scope for this work includes movie adaptation, for wider audience to bring the story to life. There is scope for translations into multiple languages to spread its impact globally. It should be utilized as a source of awareness about gender-based violence, supporting survivors and promoting gender equality. Moreover, the field of comparative studies can be used to analyze the novel alongside other works dealing with similar themes, fostering cross cultural understandings. The novel provides a significant scope to study the politico-economic realities and to devise strategies for addressing the political chaos. Furthermore, the novel also provides an opportunity to study Pakistani legislator's role in perpetuating patriarchy and the failure to devise effective policies for protection of women. A possible avenue of research could be comparative analysis with Afghan, Iranian, or Bengali memoirs that portray similar intersections of psychological trauma and patriarchal surveillance. Additionally, the research may extend into visual culture, exploring how South Asian films and web series represent women's lives under surveillance and control. Lastly, the super relative angle for this

work can be added to educational curriculum to inform and educate students about gender, power dynamics, individuality and literary analysis. These possibilities ensure that the novel's impact continues to resonate, inspiring future generations.

References

- Aziz, Amna, Iqbal, Fariha and Naeem, Suman. "Empowerment and Defiance: Unveiling Feminist Narratives in Durrani's My Feudal Lord". Journal of Social Sciences Advancements, 29 September 2023, <https://sg.docworkspace.com/d/sIFSn4u-6AdX5lLQG>. Accessed 8 July 2024.
- Akbar, Noor. "Women's Exploitation in the Feudal Society: A Case Study of "My Feudal Lord" By Tehmina Durrani." British Journal of Arts and Humanities, Vol. 5 No. 2 Pp. 43-44, 2023, <https://sg.docworkspace.com/d/sIOGn4u-6AYWZr7QG>.
- Bano, Sehrish, Shah Bacha, Dr. Mian, Rustam, Dr. Rabiah. "Women's Self-Identity Conflict Resolution: A Study of My Feudal Lord." PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology, 18(17), 827-838. ISSN 1567-214X 17 Oct. 2021, <https://sg.docworkspace.com/d/slCKn4u-6AevuiLUG>. Accessed 8 July 2024.
- Bin Zubair, Hassan, Aslam, Fehmida, Ali Khowaja, Mashooq. "Analysis of patriarchal pressure and the struggle of a Pakistan woman in My Feudal Lord." Journal Grassroots, vol. 52, No. II, 2 December 2018, [file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/34-Article%20Text-59-1-10-20191004%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/34-Article%20Text-59-1-10-20191004%20(3).pdf). Accessed 12 July 2018.
- Durrani, Tehmina. My Feudal Lord. The University of Michigan Press. 1991.
- Hassan, Shazir, Rauf, Rabia, Zia, Asfa, Ur Rehman, Dr. Saeed. "Feminism and Tribalism at Crossroads: A Critical Case Study of My Feudal Lord by Tehmina Durrani." PalArch's Journal of Archeology of Egypt/Egyptology, 17 October 2021, <https://sg.docworkspace.com/d/slLGn4u-6AbHwLQG>. Accessed 8 July 2024.
- Huda, Noor. "Feudalism, Power and Violence Against Women: A Study of Tehmina Durrani's My Feudal Lord: A Devastating indictment of women of Women's Role in Muslim Society", "Singularities a peer reviewed international trans-disciplinary biannual research journal" Pp. 22-23, 2019, <https://www.singularitiesjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Singularities-Vol-6-Issue-1.pdf#page=22>
- Kwaja, Mehak. "Book Discussion: My Feudal Lord.", "Medium.com", 7 July, 2020, Pp. 5-6, <https://medium.com/@mahekkhwaja1/book-discussion-my-feudal-lord-d1e8f9efeo>.
- Mehsud, Atiq Ur Rehman, "Tehmina Durrani's Conflict of The Self in My Feudal Lord: A Psychoanalytic Study." SSRN, PP. 10-11, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3998587or> https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3998587.
- Niaz, A., S. M. Stanikzai, and J. Sahibzada. "Review of Freud's Psychoanalysis Approach to Literary Studies". American International Journal of Social Science Research, Vol. 4, no. 2, July 2019, pp. 35-44, doi:10.46281/aijssr.v4i2.339 or <https://www.cribfb.com/journal/index.php/aijssr/article/view/339>.
- Riaz, Humaira. "Caught in a Feudal Hung up: My Feudal Lord Mirroring a Villain and the Rebellion of a Pakistani Woman." Website, SPRINGER LINK Humaira 25 July 2021, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-76055-7_13. Accessed 12 July 2024
- Syed Umair Abid. "Personality Loss: Deconstruction of My Feudal Lord by Tehmina Durrani and A Bad Woman's Story by Durdana Somroo.", "National University of Modern Languages, Faculty of English Studies." Pp. 6-7, 2019, <https://sg.docworkspace.com/d/slB6n4u-6Ae6l1bQG>.
- Sakinama. "My Feudal Lord by Tehmina Durrani." Blog post, Sakinama, 13 Feb 2021, <https://sakinama.com/literature/my-feudal-lord-by-Tehmina-Durrani/>. Accessed 15 July 2024.
- Shaharyar, Anum, "Of Memoirs and Misogyny: Tehmina Durrani's My Feudal Lord Is a Must Read." Blogger, Anum Shaharyar, 3 Mar 2019, <https://thedesiwritingguide.blogspot.com/2019/03/of-memoirs-and-misogyny-tehmina.html>. Accessed 14 July 2024.
- Sumalani, Khair Muhammad, Saeed Khan, Dr. Faria. "A Study of Ego Defense Mechanisms of the Main Character of Novel My Feudal Lord." European Academic Research, Vol. 6, 7 Oct. 2018, https://d1wqtxs1x7e.cloudfront.net/57685844/Article_on_My_Feudal_Lord_libre.pdf?1541241431=&response-content-.

Watts, Kelsey. "Is Everywhere a Panopticon?" Social Sciences Blog. Retrieved November 30 (2020): 2020. <https://sunderlandsocialsciences.wordpress.com/2018/09/21/is-everywhere-a-panopticon/>

Article Information:

<i>Received</i>	8-Apr-2025
<i>Revised</i>	28-May-2025
<i>Accepted</i>	7-Jun-2025
<i>Published</i>	15-Jun-2025

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions. Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

• **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

• **Funding Sources:** NIL

Correspondence:

Ali Inan

inan.ali.gamaryan@gmail.com
