



## Intertextual, literary and intercultural influences in the poetry of Perveen Shakir

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UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

INTERTEXTUAL, LITERARY &  
INTERCULTURAL INFLUENCES  
IN THE POETRY OF PERVEEN SHAKIR

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the Urdu poetry of Perveen Shakir, a Pakistani, third-world, Muslim, female poet, in her socio-cultural, religious and political context. The entire four collections written between 1977 and 1990 are analysed in order to depict the stages of her life: girl, woman, mother and poet. The collections were written during extreme political pressure of martial law, dictatorship and the Islamisation of General Zia's regime (1977-1988). The thesis argues that Shakir, an educated self-aware Pakistani Muslim woman, is formulating new feminist ideas and concepts of individual freedom through her unconventional love poetry; in that way crossing the limits of her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* demands, whilst she is also struggling under the extreme cultural, political and religious pressure of a Muslim society which conflicts with her liberal 'feminist' thinking. Shakir is constantly shifting between two positions: a traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and a 'feminist' position. Influenced by her Eastern culture she clings to the traditional identity, sometimes due to her own personal choice, and sometimes under her cultural pressure, unwilling to alienate her traditional self which understands that a husband is a symbol of respect and security for a Pakistani woman. Influenced by western culture she reveals her liberal feminist voice openly writing about her sexual needs and also writing about her marginalised position from which she criticises the politics of patriarchy. This intercultural influence in the Urdu poetry of Shakir is reflected through these overlapping and co-existing positions, where she is neither a true feminist poet by western standards (anti-sexist and anti-patriarchal) nor a clear traditional 'feminine' *nisvani*. In the end, she compromises in order to survive in her Islamic culture, re-adjusting and rethinking her liberal feminist ideas.

The main concern of the thesis is to explain the complex and multi-layered meanings of the term 'woman' in the Pakistani cultural context. The analysis has shown that in Pakistani culture the concept of self or individual freedom for a Pakistani Muslim woman is not a simple question. This study focuses on various stages of Shakir's biographical journey employing the theoretical framework of dialogism which reveals the development of feminisms, and how they balance in the end.

No critical study on Shakir from a third-world postcolonial Pakistani perspective, analysing her poetry within a theoretical framework, has been written so far, and therefore this study is an invaluable contribution to current scholarly knowledge of the discipline. This study also contributes in another way, as it is the first work in English at this level.

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Katherine Peters

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### **NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS**

Dr Baidar Bakht (the translator of Shakir's work) helped to translate certain Urdu words, poems and phrases. I used the translation in very specific ways. I chose the poems which were vital to my thesis and my argument, dealing with the issues and themes I wanted to highlight. Some poems were available in English translation but most of the poems were not. Therefore Dr Bakht helped in correcting and checking the English translations and the accuracy of interpretation. However, it was a dialogic process between the translator and me which went back and forth a few times with specific queries until we reached an agreement on the translation. Also, coming from a Christian background I took help from Dr Bakht in the translation of some Quranic and Arabic phrases. Wherever he has helped me in translations of poems, passages or phrases from Urdu I have indicated this.

## Introduction

This project looks at the poetry of Perveen Shakir, a twentieth-century Muslim female poet from Pakistan who brought a new dimension to the traditional use of love in Urdu poetry. She is a poet of significance because in studying her work we not only study her autobiographical journey as a love poet, but also her political journey and beyond. Her poetry is the poetry of love and romance but it contributes to a greater knowledge of the struggles of the third-world Pakistani woman whose voice demands to be heard. Situated in the socio-cultural and political setting of martial law, Islamisation and dictatorship of the Zia-ul-Haq era, her poetry is a constant dialogue with herself and her culture; a culture which includes her religion and social laws because culture and religion are inseparable in her society. Her poetry is a barometer of change and conflict, contradictions and tensions, doubts and frustrations, fears and turmoil, turmoil that reflects the internal and external dialogue experienced by an educated, sensitive Pakistani woman. The research is aimed at looking into her life and her struggles to adapt to survive in a Muslim patriarchal society despite her, at times, outspoken unconventional poetry.

Shakir's critics acknowledge that very few poets have enjoyed as much popularity so early in their lives as Shakir (Agha 1995; Majeed 1996; Haider 1997; Baksh 2007; Zaidi 2001; Arif 2011; Moin-ud-din 2011; Ali 2011, 2012), but it is surprising that very little research has so far been done on this significant poet. The only accounts of Shakir's life and poetry are available in some Urdu books by Shakir's research scholar Sultana Baksh (1996; 2000; 2002; 2006; 2007) which are more basic than analytical. Another two books in English are solely dedicated to Shakir and her work: one a biography in English (Agha 1995) and the other a selected translation of Shakir's poetry (Bakht and Lavigne in collaboration with Shakir 1995; reprinted 2004). The biography in English may attract wider readership, but also might disappoint because of the simplistic style and lack of criticism. The biographical information is translated into Urdu by Sultana Baksh who admits that the credit goes to Parveen Qadir Agha (2007). The positive point about these publications (biographies in English and Urdu) is that there is at least detailed information about Shakir's life and poetry, but disappointing though, as it is just the repetition of basic information without challenging it. Six years on, a reprint of the translation was published from India, in 2010. A reprint, of course, reinforces that there is nothing either new or critical.

The other existing information about Shakir deals with random isolated issues, based on her poetry and her biography and scattered through a number of English magazines and newspapers as well as academic journals, especially in several volumes of the academic journal *The Annual of Urdu Studies* (1993; 2003). There are also some newspaper articles which are published every year to mark the anniversary of her death on 26<sup>th</sup> December. They illuminate points or moments in her life but the problem remains that they do not give a sense of the broader pattern of her poetry, a critical analysis, or even question her poetic style. For example, the basic issue remains to be investigated, and that is to explore whether her poetry is feminist writing, romantic love poetry, or a mixture of both, because her critics both male and female have different opinions on this.

For example, C.M. Naim finds Shakir an outspoken feminist poet alongside her contemporary feminist poets like Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz (Naim 1993, p. 181), an observation that contradicts Rukhsana Ahmad's view on Shakir which excludes Shakir from the feminist category as she finds her poetry 'conformist' because it brings in 'sexist values' and therefore is 'un-feminist' (Ahmad 1990, p. 6-7). This view is endorsed by Baidar Bakht, who feels that although exploring such themes as physical love gives distinction to Shakir's poetry it does not make her a 'true feminist' (Bakht 1995, p. 5). Bakht's opinion is outlined by Amina Yaqin who says that Shakir holds a 'shadowy' position 'between patriarchy and feminism', but does not explain why (Yaqin 2001, p. 8). None of these critics give any completely researched opinion on Shakir's poetic works and her position as a poet to answer the issue and satisfy the reader, though it does help to be informed through these bits of information about Shakir's fluctuating position. This then helps me to take this issue ahead in a more academic way. Some have attempted it; for example, Rubina Shabnam made an effort but this was unfruitful, because her sole research (2002) on Shakir's poetry is very subjective, with no central argument and no theoretical approach. The first half of the thesis is based on love poems and their explanation, the second half the prose poems and explanation. The most recent research on Shakir by Imran Hameed Khan (2009) is a significant contribution as there is an argument, but the absence of a theoretical framework to analyse Shakir's text makes it rudimentary. His project provides biographical data on Shakir in order to discuss the various influences in her life and poetry, particularly based on the historical and political setting in the country and looking at the impact of Islamisation on Pakistani women. His argument is that Shakir is much more than a mere romantic poet, devoting only a small number of pages (104) to prove this, and he looks at Shakir's biography alone, with no philosophical approach. My study, 'Intercultural Influences in the Poetry of Perveen Shakir', moves one step ahead of

Khan's work (and in fact all existing work), as I use theory to analyse her text, an approach which is new and different for analysing Shakir's biographical and philosophical journey. The aim is to look at Shakir's work more critically, giving the study a theoretical framework and thus making it original and unique. As far as I am aware, this is the first critical work in English so far, with a theoretical approach that advocates a two way dialogue to show why Shakir has to be translated for an English readership: not only to show how cleverly Shakir incorporates English culture into her own work but also to give a voice to Pakistani Muslim women in the English-speaking world. Just recently there has been an upsurge and sudden critical interest in her work. In talking about the significance of Shakir's poetry I will mention here that researchers from different parts of the world are translating her poetry,<sup>1</sup> there is a Perveen Shakir website<sup>2</sup>; and a recently started TV serial.<sup>3</sup>

This new TV serial is based on the 'inspirational' poetry of the 'legendary Perveen Shakir' (Ali, 'The Synopsis' in *A Plus* 2011, p. 1). One episode is based on one couplet and is turned into a thirty minute drama. Ali Hassan, the director, uses romantic themes he calls 'woman oriented poetry' (email by Hassan 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2012), to project the 'woman-related issues in the Muslim male-dominated society' like domestic violence, love marriage, radical women, etc (Ibid., 2012). He also brings in eastern cultural values positively to project that a woman should not cross her cultural boundaries through her radical moves, as it is not considered modest in her Pakistani culture. This, of course, gives a political edge to this series, though the director expressed otherwise. This issue of crossing cultural norms, suppressing the self or otherwise, is the major socio-political and religious issue explored with a theoretical approach in my thesis on Shakir, which is a new angle on her work. However, the fact that the play is inspired by the poetry of Shakir itself speaks of the significance of her work. The aim of these serials is to 'rekindle': revive the 'heart-touching stories' of Shakir, which means that whatever happened in Shakir's life and poetry needs to be refreshed, needs to be told: be it physical love or a poetry of protest, it needs revisiting,

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<sup>1</sup> MA thesis in French (translation) by Sana Ahmad from the University of the Punjab, 2005; unpublished Anthology of Urdu and Sindhi poetry translated in French by Hidyat Hussain. The title of the anthology is '*Ye sham-e-sitam khatam hoti hi nahin*, (this sad night is non-ending). It contains twenty poems by twenty different poets including Shakir. The publication is delayed due to funding. MA thesis in Turkish by Asuman Belen Özcan 2011; MA thesis in German and Japanese: see website of Perveen Shakir. Translation of 'Khud-Kalami' in Italian: 'Soliloquio: Perveen Shakir' by Sabrina Lei (2012). MA Urdu *Perveen Shakir ki shairi main Pakistani Muashrai kee akasi* (Reflection of Pakistani Culture in the Poetry of Perveen Shakir) by Razia Batool Jaffrey, Bahuddin Zakaria University Multan (1998-2000); MA Urdu Fareha Ghazal, Bahuddin Zakaria University, Multan (1987-89); MA Urdu by Munawar from Punjab University Lahore (1993-1995).

<sup>2</sup> 'Welcome to Website of Perveen Shakir' (accessed 16 Nov 11).

<sup>3</sup> TV Serial *Kamal-e-zabth ko khud bhi tou azmaon gi*: Remembering Perveen Shakir (I will test my own patience: Remembering Perveen Shakir (started 2011)): Based on the poetry of Shakir: issues faced by women in a male-dominated society.

and demands to be translated to a larger audience who might have viewed a Muslim woman only vaguely from afar (Ali, 'The Synopsis' in *A Plus* 2011, p.1). The point I am stressing here is that Shakir has great significance as a poet and deserves more than just a few translations, re-prints of her already existing work, a drama serial, a couple of Masters, and a sole PhD thesis. There is a need for more in terms of an in-depth study to prove Shakir above the ordinary.

The thesis topic of Shakir was partly chosen out of sheer disappointment that scholars and academics had never thought of writing in English - an international language - about a poet of such significance. She had never been brought beyond the small Urdu readership; the full significance of her work had never been examined. The thesis claims that there is enough significance in her work as a writer and that through her work we can look at Pakistani culture from the perspective of a post-colonial writer. Here it is important to define the notion of culture in general and my approach to examining Pakistani culture in particular.

Culture is a very complicated word. According to Raymond Williams, there are three broad definitions of culture. Firstly, it can be used as a 'general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development' (Williams in Storey 2001, p. 2). In Victorian writing the idea of culture is about all the good things in life; knowledge, high culture, and the things that improve us as individuals. Secondly, culture can also be 'the work and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (Ibid.). This is one way of looking at culture which has changed over the years and has become much broader and more diverse. The third use of culture might be in a broader context; 'culture' as a 'particular way of life whether of people, a period or a group' (Ibid.). In the thesis the idea of culture means exploring the way of living of 'people' or 'a group', and here I talk with particular reference to Pakistani. Although the 'Pakistani establishment' always had a 'tendency' to 'turn to Islam' when 'progressive politics' came to the fore, this 'tendency culminated' in Zia's 'Islamization project' in which he promulgated laws which controlled every aspect of behaviour (Toor 2011, p. 2-3). Culture is also about value structures, moral codes, religious codes, historical practices; all these elements give substance to defining culture and sustaining it (Storey 2001). In Pakistani culture some of these diverse elements are more prominent than others. For instance, religious codes and values within Pakistani culture are much more significant than they might be in western culture or a secular British context. Culture and religion are inseparable in Pakistan, therefore within a Pakistani Muslim context, where woman is a symbol of modesty and shame, it is not easy for her to be sexually free because, within her culture, religious laws

are prominent, for example Hudood Ordinance and *Zina* (adultery) Ordinance introduced by Zia in 1979 (This will be discussed later in the section ‘A brief overview of Pakistan’s political context’). These cultural beliefs and codes on the one hand sustain the culture, while on the other hand, by running parallel, they also may be seen as limiting a woman’s voice. This is the socio-cultural and religious background out of which Shakir comes. She grew up in this world, in which her culture is a culture defined primarily through Islamic laws and values and attitudes towards women, but she also feels trapped in such a culture.

Furthermore, the dialogic framework, giving the study originality, signifies the philosophical approach in which her work dialogues with her culture through political change and through the growth of the nation itself. The rise of feminist groups in Pakistan was a direct result of Zia’s promulgation of laws which repressed women. The most prominent women in these groups were writers, artists and poets who expressed their feminist views in their work. Although Shakir’s work is not radical<sup>4</sup> compared to other Pakistani poets and writers she does deal with feminist issues. However, it is not revolutionary poetry but evolutionary poetry, taking small steps, keeping in mind the conservative Muslim male-dominated culture, where the life of women is very restricted and it is difficult for them to challenge male authority openly.

Talking about western influences finding its way into Pakistani poets’ awareness then brings me to the final point in connection with the aims of my thesis topic. At this critical juncture, it is important to include Razia Batool Jaffrey’s (2000) view of Shakir only as an upholder of eastern culture. Jaffrey does not see the western influence in Shakir’s poetry positively. Jaffrey argues, in her discussion of Pakistani literature and society, that instead of borrowing from western culture it is better to raise standards in Pakistani society. Change, she believes, is good in order to progress as it widens our mental horizons. However, she argues that, if on the one hand borrowings from the west can strengthen mental horizons, on the other hand it could, potentially, lead to a loss of individuality and identity (Ibid.).

Jaffrey fears that the Pakistani nation is moving away from religion by *nakal* (copying) of the western style. The Pakistani nation, she believes, is suffering from an inferiority complex and is lacking self-confidence, while simultaneously having fallen victim to hopelessness, sectarianism and tyranny (Jaffrey 2000, p. 15). This thesis contradicts part of Jaffrey’s argument by assessing Shakir’s poetry in the light of the influences of English

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this thesis I use ‘radical’ to define those who seek complete political or social reforms. While ‘radical’ is used in this thesis to describe Shakir’s position, it is evolutionary, not revolutionary radicalism. This is expanded upon in chapters one, two, and three.

literature along with other influences on the one hand, as well as her experience of and relationship to her own culture on the other. Shakir is examined as a writer caught between different cultural, literary and religious influences, navigating an often uncertain path through them. The study will thus broadly explore Shakir's poetic growth in the light of her academic career, from being a student of English literature to becoming a celebrated Urdu poet influenced by both her own culture and western culture and by working as a civil servant. A key objective of the thesis is to see how far she clings to her traditional and patriotic spirit, and to examine to what extent she benefits from the exchange of intercultural dialogue by sometimes acknowledging, sometimes reacting, sometimes responding and sometimes celebrating the other cultures.

However, in order to study the multi-layered poetry of Shakir, and to assess whether or not Shakir can be labelled a 'feminist'<sup>5</sup> poet, it is important to give an account of the role of Pakistani women in their literary, socio-cultural and political context. This consequently necessitates focusing on 'feminine' and 'feminist' (the difference between these two terms will be discussed later in this chapter) poetry and poets in particular. The study looks at Shakir's borrowings from English literature and her own culture with reference to Bakhtin's concept of dialogism as illustrated in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). Initially the study traces the poetic voices of Pakistani women poets with reference to Shakir which contribute towards a dialogic understanding of the significance of women in general and the poet under discussion in particular. Subsequently, the study provides a socio-political background for an understanding of the system which places 'woman' as a gendered subject that positions her as subordinate to 'man'. In this thesis, dialogism acts as the methodological framework as it facilitates a broader approach to the study: a dialogue with Shakir herself, with other writers, with her own culture, society and religion and above all a dialogue between different cultures. The aim of the study is to investigate in Shakir's poetry the shifting identities of young girl, mature woman, wife, mother and poet.

This introduction will provide the overall framework and rationale for this thesis. There are five parts to the introduction. The first part focuses on the approaches from colonial and postcolonial theories, as well as the critical approaches to feminist theories that will be used in the later chapters. The second part, which formulates the central argument running through the body of the thesis, gives a brief summary of the Pakistani women poets and the varying literary movements in which they were involved, locating Shakir's poetry in that

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<sup>5</sup> I place the word feminist in inverted commas to draw the reader's attention to Shakir's own torn position in relation to this word.

context. This section is important as it informs the reader about different rising trends among Pakistani women poets: one immersed in the classical tradition and rooted in the eastern, ‘feminine’ value system called *nisvani* style; the other heralding the wind of change manifested in the feminist activism which sprang up from the west. The study will explore the traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* and feminist positions of Shakir. I will briefly explain here the important term *nisvani* meaning ‘feminine’ with reference to Islamic culture and tradition.

In the traditional Pakistani context, ‘feminine’ values are defined as images of ‘shame and modesty’ in a woman; in Urdu it is known as ‘*sharm-o haya ka mujasma*’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 48). This ‘modesty’, particularly with reference to classical literary tradition, is reflective of an ‘ideal femininity *nisvaniyat*’ or feminine *nisvani* style which ‘makes women attractive to men’ (Ibid., p. 49). *Nisvani* is recognised as the norm in Pakistani Muslim culture, but from the western perspective, of course, it is underwritten with a patriarchal sensibility towards women. It is a product of a patriarchal culture which specifies a woman’s domestic space as separate from a man’s according to Islamic laws. This practice of ‘feminine’ *nisvani* style or language can be linked directly with the Quran, particularly the way the Prophet’s wives are directed on their dress and behaviour. The ‘wives’, ‘daughters’ and the wives of all ‘Believers’ are directed to wrap their veils tightly about them, lower their eyes and be modest; be chaste, and draw their veils over their bosoms (Quran 33 verse 59; 24 verse 30; 24 verse 31, quoted in Djebbar 1961, p. 31-32). The book *Bihishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments) written by the Muslim cleric and leader of the nineteenth century Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi (1864-1943), is a conservative<sup>6</sup> ‘missionary text which functions to this day as a religious handbook for women’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 54). It is a guide, in 10 parts, to how women should conduct themselves in private and public, ‘according to the Quran and the Hadith’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 54; Metcalf 1990, 1989, p. 93-99). The book provides Muslim women with an example of how the ‘feminine’ *nisvani* voice was employed by a missionary, in popularising scripture for women (Metcalf 1989, p. 93-99; 1990). Maulana Thanavi’s handling of the feminine voice is intended to ease the difficult path of ‘religious duty’ and gives ‘a spiritual sensibility to the role of the mother and the daughter’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 56). This kind of feminine construct where a woman is directed to be modest succeeded in setting up the stereotype of dutiful daughter, obedient wife, and sacrificing mother. This ‘feminine’ *nisvani* voice, as constructed by this particular strand of Islam (a silent subject who had to be spoken to and identified) does not challenge the patriarchal gendering of women, which was

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<sup>6</sup> This term ‘conservative’ is used in the thesis to define traditional views within a cultural and/or religious system.

ultimately suited to men. In short, *nisvani* in the Pakistani cultural context is the term used for women who are ideal daughters, wives, and mothers who do not challenge patriarchy.

However, this vision of an ideal woman is disrupted by Shakir's unconventional love poetry, for example, the poems 'Ecstasy' and 'Wasteland' where she explored passion and sexuality, inspired by western poets such as John Donne and T.S. Eliot. Therefore she moves slightly towards more sexually aware and gradually more politically aware poetry. The stereotypical role of women in patriarchal societies as either 'modest', or 'high and pure' best preserved in 'silence' is not a dictum consistently followed by Shakir. It is, however, important to note here that this unconventionality is in contrast to *nisvani*, but unremarkable in western culture. From the western feminist perspective, to talk or write about a basic need like sex; for example, the need of a teenage girl to have a physical relationship, would not be unconventional (not for women of the 70s and beyond; it might be for the women of older generations), rather, it would be considered natural. In Pakistani culture this sexual awareness and assertiveness is considered to be morally harmful and distorts the image of female modesty and men maintaining control, as projected in religious ideology. Bearing in mind that Shakir is from a conservative, Muslim background, where something as insignificant as dressing differently can be seen as a radical move, talking and writing about a desire to have a physical relationship prior to marriage is considered un-Islamic and therefore unacceptable in a young girl. In that sense her love poetry was like little steps (evolutionary) rather than great leaps and bounds (revolutionary: feminist activism). This is illustrated by 'Only a Girl' where she uses the metaphor of a caged bird and by both 'Ecstasy' and 'Wasteland' where she is more open about female sexuality. In these poems it can be seen that her writing evolves but she is reacting in a small way compared to women in the western world who were protesting on the streets against the power structure of patriarchy. So this unconventionality from a Pakistani perspective is a development of Shakir's poetry, which is in contrast to *nisvani*. Her shift from *nisvani* to unconventionality is therefore gradual: flirting with new ideas; testing the traditional way of thinking, which is defined by men; and in the end conforming and compromising. Given the culture and society she lived in, she could not be a fully-fledged feminist. In Shakir's own words she had to bring 'poise' into her poetry (Shakir quoted in Ali 1994, p. 1). In that sense her unconventional move sits somewhere between the Pakistani traditional eastern value system *nisvani* and western feminism, an idea first presented by Yaqin (2001, p. 19). There is a sense of conflicting tension in her shifting role as a 'feminist' who is not a feminist by western standards; her unconventional love poetry is evolving and in that sense she is developing but is also

traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* not wanting to alienate herself from a traditional home life, desiring love, a home and children.

However, when her poetic development and liberal<sup>7</sup> voice begin to be controlled by patriarchy through political, socio-cultural and religious pressures, she disrupts the order of gender-related politics by openly criticising the silenced and marginalised position accorded to women in Pakistani society. This shows her political awareness and in that sense positions her as a feminist cultural critic. In order to demonstrate the shifts in Shakir’s thinking I will employ the term ‘feminine’ and ‘feminist’ to analyse the intercultural influences reflected through these overlapping and co-existing positions because Shakir’s positions changed throughout her life. There is thus a fluctuating movement in these positions in Shakir herself: on the one hand she is criticising her silenced position through her poetry as a poet with feminist awareness, and on the other hand she does not fully separate herself from the traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* position either. The thesis is about a woman who is continually torn between these two identities – a kind of intercultural schizophrenic (it is used as a metaphor rather than a hardnosed diagnosis of her mental state). She is caught between a *nisvani* position and moves beyond that, and then potentially moves back to some middle ground due to cultural pressure. This in-between, feminine/feminist state represents a unique and distinct position with, as she herself said, not only ‘a room of my own’ but also ‘a room with a view’: her unique view (Shakir quoted in Ali 1994, p. 2; Woolf 1929). These rising trends, one reflecting the traditional eastern feminine value system and the other representing western activism, therefore played a significant role in influencing Shakir’s poetry and other Pakistani women poets. The third part gives a sketch of Shakir’s biographical influences, because her personal experience as a young girl, a woman and a mother made its mark on her poetry as well.

The fourth part of the introduction gives a brief overview of Pakistan's political context, a necessary beginning for an understanding of the role of women in Pakistan. Moreover, it helps to locate the socio-political context of Pakistani women poets in general, and provides an understanding of the political influences on Shakir’s poetry in particular. The fifth part maps out briefly how the chapters will be structured and how the theories will be applied in each chapter. These sections and different categories in the introduction outline

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this thesis I use ‘liberal’ for those who respect or accept opinion or behaviour different to their own. An example of Shakir’s liberal views is her wish as a single divorced woman to conduct an intimate relationship despite living in a conservative society. This is expanded upon in chapter three.

the research framework that shapes and informs the analytical methodologies in the presentation of the thesis.

### **The theoretical framework**

Bakhtin's concept of dialogue and dialogism set out in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) will be applied to this study as it illustrates Bakhtin's idea that the dialogic work carries on a continual dialogue with other works of literature and other authors and with the author himself (Bakhtin 1981). Bakhtin has argued that dialogism is 'two actual people talking to each other in a specific dialogue at a particular time and in a particular place' (Ibid., p. xx). The term he uses is 'heteroglossia' (meaning interaction) (Ibid., p. xxi). This interaction which he specifically calls '*utterances*' between 'two persons', he states, 'would be a consciousness at a specific point in the history of defining itself through the choice it has made of a discourse to transcribe its intentions in this specific exchange' (Ibid., p. xx). These utterances, he continues, can either be 'somebody talking to someone else' or 'even that somebody is one's own addressee' (Ibid., p. xx-xxi). This can be seen in Shakir's work when she is talking to someone else; it means she addresses the socio-cultural and religious issues with reference to the male-dominated society and will be expanded in chapters one, two and four, and then a dialogue with her own self in chapter three: 'Talking to Oneself'. This study, with its feminine/feminist engagement, amplifies the dialogic engagement of Shakir with canonical poets such as Shakespeare (chapter two), John Donne, John Keats, and T.S. Eliot (chapter one), alongside various female writers such as Amy Lowell and Sylvia Plath (chapter four) to illustrate how Shakir is informed by the liberal feminism of the Euro-American discourses alongside a dialogue with her own culture as both addresser and addressee of the feminine/feminist 'discourses surrounding women' (Bakhtin 1981; Yaqin 2001, p. 8). In Michel de Certeau's terms, she is 'poaching' or borrowing from 'others' in order to 'invent' (de Certeau 1984, p xii). 'Borrowed' is a flexible term used in different ways in the study. Sometimes Shakir borrows to show similarity and sometimes she borrows to disagree and therefore show dissimilarity, thus constantly re-thinking and re-adjusting her own position. Moreover, the canonical poems are borrowed and re-written not only to celebrate them but to criticise them from a female and post-colonial perspective, which dares Shakir to initiate a dialogue with colonial and patriarchal culture. The difference is that she is often adapting their ideas to her political agenda, in her Muslim setting, to give a voice to her feminist position and blend her romantic voice as a female love poet with her, at times, proto-

feminist voice. For example, in the romantic love poem ‘Wasteland’ her desire for a relationship with a lost lover is expressed by using strong sexual metaphors: ‘oyster’, ‘pearl’ ‘tilling’, rather than the direct sexual language used by Cixous.

What Shakir ‘transcribes’ or writes in this ‘exchange’ or dialogue, is her ‘consciousness’ and awareness as a postcolonial writer addressing colonial discourses in Urdu. This study brings the exchange to a dialogic frame by attempting to translate it for English-speaking audiences. This whole process of a dialogue in the study is analysed by the process of ‘*canonization*’ (re-writing the canon) and the process of ‘*re-accentuation*’ which means using and re-emphasising differently the canonical authors and the themes presented in their works (Bakhtin 1981, p. 417). It is relevant because Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is reworked to mirror Pakistan’s political context at a particularly dark time (1977-1988) during Zia’s tyrannical rule. A further example is Donne’s ‘Ecstasy’ which Shakir reworks from a female perspective incorporating her feminist stance. Both cases demonstrate how ‘dialogue’ and ‘re-accentuation’ work together in Shakir’s use of original texts in a new context and for new purposes relevant to her own views. So Shakir developed herself through these co-relationships, these dialogues and these encounters. Therefore it is not only a dialogue with them but a continuous dialogue with herself as the author (Ibid.) of her work (even I am in continuous dialogue with my work as the author of this thesis as well). Throughout her poetic career, dialogue with herself, her poetry, and all these poets and voices both colonial and post-colonial, first-world and third-world, male and female, emphasise Shakir’s perpetual variations as a writer, engaging with intercultural, political, and personal influences but often inconsistently. Her work therefore develops and evolves over time. It evolves in relationship to or in a dialogue with those writers, critics and poets, through her response in different ways.

There is a sense of what Mary Louise Pratt calls a ‘contact’ with other cultures, and therefore, both Shakir’s work and this study are in Pratt’s terms a ‘contact zone’, where different cultures can meet through these processes of dialogue and re-accentuation (Pratt 1992, p. 4). Pratt, in ‘Arts of the Contact Zone’ (1999) states, borrowing ‘does not simply mean to imitate or reproduce it, but select and adapt it along [your] lines, to express [your] interests and aspirations’ (p. 9). Pratt further states, ‘ethnographers have used this term [transculturation] to describe such processes whereby members of subordinate or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant’ ‘culture’ (Pratt 1992, p. 6). Transculturation, she says, is a term to describe the phenomenon of merging and converging culture (1999, p. 6). Like ethnographers, it is a phenomenon of the contact zone,

she adds. A contact zone, Pratt states, 'is a term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in the context of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermath as they lived out in many parts of the world today' (1999, p. 9). By 'marginal groups' Pratt means, 'those who were once under colonial rule and now have lost this connection due to historical or geographical reasons' (1992, p. 6). Shakir, representing a postcolonial age, is representative of marginal groups, and as such has benefited from and actively engaged with material transmitted from the west. Shakir found a linkage; in Pratt's terms a 'connection' (Pratt 1992, p. 4), across what Said called binary oppositions (Said 1978, 1993) and Bhabha called 'that cultural divide' (Bhabha 1994, p. 28). Dialogism has helped Shakir to deconstruct the binaries of the colonial discourses, an idea formulated by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). This transcultural merging of western thought into eastern thought, Bhabha terms 'hybridity' and argues, subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant culture (Bhabha 1994). The post-colonial theories of 'hybridity' and 'transculturation' break the certainties of colonial and imperial logic of dominance (Bhabha 1994; Pratt 1992). This study is structured around two diverse cultures, therefore Bhabha's theory of hybridity enables an understanding of how Shakir borrows ideas and themes from the west and merges them into her own culture, thus signifying and stressing the 'interdependence' of 'colonized and the colonizer' (Bhabha 1994). In that sense this study engages with the differences of eastern culture as it interacts with western culture, and builds, in Pratt's terms, a 'transcultural' relationship which reinforces Bhabha's concept of cultural interdependence (Ibid.). These concepts will be taken up in chapter one, two and four, while discussing the influence of English literature in Shakir's poetry. This dialogic frame is appropriated because it is evidence of Shakir's developing ideas and dialogues, which are influencing her.

According to Bakhtin, dialogue is not merely a matter of influence, but also a matter of individual talent (Bakhtin 1981). This echoes T.S. Eliot's ideas in the essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1992). Eliot compares the relationship of the poet and poetry to that of a catalyst, where the poet is a medium in which varied feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations (Ibid., p. 3). Eliot states that the talent lies in the poet, who 'must be very conscious of the main current', 'conscious' of the 'past', and bring this consciousness into 'his' career and poetry, without 'himself' being affected or '(un)change[d]' (Ibid.). It is the 'material' that should be 'transmute[d]' and used without the interference of the personality of the poet or writer, Eliot explains (Ibid.). Shakir has been conscious and aware of the poetic trends through her education and her personal interest in English literature, and therefore has

successfully applied and used the poets according to her understanding and need to serve the purpose, without changing her own identity as a Pakistani Urdu writer. Although western ideas have influenced her thinking, we see her blending them with ideas from her own culture.

This consciousness is also the key point of Mary Louise Pratt's theory of 'The Arts of the Contact Zone' (1992, 1999). What Pratt terms as literal ability, which both Bakhtin and Eliot call consciousness, helps Shakir to contact, in Pratt's terms, different zones or spaces (of the west) in order to initiate a dialogue. This approach will be relevant for all the chapters. Alongside dialogism, Bakhtin's concept of *re-accentuation* will also be used to signify how Shakir re-accentuates, re-writes and re-emphasises different borrowed ideas in her poetry due to her conscious awareness and ability to understand the canon, her culture and beyond. It identifies that Shakir was constantly responding and was conscious of the world around her. She was aware of the poetry, the poetics and the other literatures.

The concept of binary oppositions of colonial discourse, illustrated by Edward Said, will be applied alongside the theory of dialogism to illustrate how dialogism has helped Shakir to deconstruct the binaries of the colonial discourses (Said 1978, 1993; Bakhtin 1981, Bhabha 1994). The postcolonial theories of hybridity (Bhabha) and transculturation (Pratt) will be applied to the study in an attempt to break the certainties of the colonial and imperial logic of dominance (Bhabha 1994, p. 29; Pratt 1992, 1999, p. 4). Bhabha's concept of 'cultural difference', which addresses the problem of the 'ambivalence of cultural authority', will also be applied as it reinforces the concept of uncertainty of the colonial supremacy (Bhabha 1994, p. 26). Since the study is structured around two diverse cultures emphasised by Shakir's poetry: eastern and western, the theory of 'hybridity' will be used to signify the interdependence and mutual construction of the two (Ibid., p. 29).

Alongside hybridity, the concepts of 'transculturation' and 'contact zone', as illustrated by Mary Louise Pratt, will be applied. The purpose is to show how English literature helped Shakir to 'contact' western culture, and 'interlock' two diverse cultures through her poetry (Pratt 1992, p. 6-7). Pratt uses the terms to explain how 'marginal groups' 'select' and 'invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant culture' (Pratt 1992, p. 6). Shakir has combined influences from the dominant western culture with her own Pakistani culture to create a unique and multi-layered writing style. The study, in that sense, advocates the need for translation of Shakir's work for an English-speaking readership and shows how cleverly she incorporates English culture into her own in order to educate her readership about the role of women in Pakistan.

### **The feminist framework for reading Shakir**

The idea of a ‘feminist framework’ is adapted from Amina Yaqin’s work, ‘The Intertextuality of Women in Urdu Literature’ (2001). Yaqin’s research is a case study of two contemporary Pakistani Muslim feminist poets, Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz, who are social activists; hence the feminist framework Yaqin deploys is based on a reading of their work. When she uses the term feminist, it completely frames western standards (anti-sexist and anti-patriarchal). However, in this thesis ‘feminist’ is used differently; while my research is also a case study of a contemporary Muslim female poet, Shakir, this term draws the reader’s attention to her own torn position in relation to it. Shakir’s constant shifting positions, conflicting with traditional and feminist ideas and compromising in the end, informs the way I use the terms feminine/feminist in my work. In this structure the difference will be indicated.

Since the study focuses on ‘feminine’ and ‘feminist’ poets and poetry, the feminist framework is therefore taken from different ideologies, sources and theories, both first world and third world.

The use of the term ‘feminine’ relates to the traditional *nisvani* in the Pakistani cultural context, and has already been briefly explained in the introductory paragraph. Here I will add a more elaborate critical feminist approach that will be used in the study. In Toril Moi’s terms these are the three categories which critics analyse in feminist literary criticisms: ‘feminist, female, and feminine’ (Moi 1986, p. 204). She says that when we talk of female writing, we are talking of writing by women, which has nothing to do with the nature of that writing; as feminist writing, she states, is ‘clearly anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist’; and ‘feminine writing seems to be marginalised (repressed, silenced) by the ruling/linguistic force’ (Ibid., p. 220). Moi explains that a feminist’s position is roughly similar to that of a radical critic: both speaking from their marginalised positions to expose the politics of power, and at the same time acting as cultural critics. So, any approach appropriated to this end must be welcomed, she explains (Ibid., p. 205). The fact that a woman writes about her desire for love and a sexual relationship does not make her a feminist, according to Moi. Poetry describing female experience gives her visibility since ‘patriarchy has always tried to silence and repress women and their experience’; in that sense, such writing is an anti-patriarchal strategy, but is ‘not emancipatory reading for women’ Moi observes (Ibid., p. 207). For Moi,

writing about love and sexuality is a signifying practice of ‘consciousness-raising’; the basis of a new (sexually and politically aware) women’s movement (Ibid.). This consciousness takes a political form ‘only when it becomes a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply concern for gender in literature’, Moi adds (Ibid., p. 204). In other words, what Moi is stressing is that female writing becomes feminist writing when it is based on ‘the powerful expression of personal experience’, ‘a female experience’, ‘in the social framework’; a woman’s experience not only of sexual desires but also of ‘conflicting’ ‘social, political and ideological factors’ (Moi 1985, p. 4, 10). Such a ‘textual’ ‘practice’ in writing on her ‘sexual identity’ in a ‘social’ context then becomes ‘political’ according to Moi, or what she calls sexual/textual politics (Ibid., p. 16, 13, 10, 4.). Because then as a practice, the writer in her text writes against the politics of power from her oppressed position as a woman. These ideas will be analysed in chapter one which is focused on Shakir’s female experience of writing in a patriarchal culture which gives her visibility in her repressed and silenced position, whereas later on in chapter two she is more critical as she writes openly against patriarchal oppression with reference to Islamisation and then in chapter three and four she is writing about her struggles and conflicts as a single mother and a poet in a male-dominated society.

As explained earlier, the key terms in the study are ‘feminine’ and ‘feminist’. In this thesis ‘feminine’ means the traditional Pakistani perspective through the word *nisvani* which upholds patriarchy; and ‘feminist’ a cultural critic, as defined by Moi, anti-sexist and anti-patriarchal (Moi 1986).

In order ‘to understand the sensibility of the urban Pakistani’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 16; Todd 1986) female poets such as Ada Jafri (b. 1924), Zehra Nigah (b. 1936), Fahmida Riaz (b. 1945), Kishwar Naheed (b. 1940), and Sara Shagufta (1954-1984), and also Shakir (1952-1994) it is important to study ‘two’ prominent ‘pioneers of feminism in the western world who have’ influenced them considerably: Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan (Yaqin 2001, p. 16). The work of these two feminists was first used by Yaqin to construct the feminist framework adapted by this thesis (Ibid.). De Beauvoir was one of the most influential and remains so. She wrote in the 1940s with a French existentialist’s perspective for all women, while Friedan wrote for suburban American women in the 1950s from a journalist’s viewpoint. Both feminists have had a considerable influence in the rising development of feminist awareness amongst Pakistani female poets as will be discussed later. De Beauvoir's definitive text, *The Second Sex*, laid the foundation for analysing women as secondary to man. De Beauvoir’s argument in *The Second Sex* is that society set up the ‘male

as a positive norm and woman as the negative' second sex or 'Other' (de Beauvoir 1988, p. 16; Humm 1992, p. 44). This insight works through biological, Marxist, and psychological theories to prove that all aspects of society, literature, and thought dominate this assumption that woman is a second sex, and is subordinate to man, which, de Beauvoir argues, is accepted by women themselves (de Beauvoir 1988, p. 19). She argues that 'most women mistakenly find salvation in love and cling to the comforts of femininity which gives all the more reason for men to treat her like an object and never a subject' (quoted in Walters 2005, p. 98; de Beauvoir 1988). She strongly argues that 'woman is not born woman, but becomes a woman' and 'insists that she can change her condition' (quoted in Walters 2005, p. 98; de Beauvoir 1988). After analysing women from biological, psychological, historical and literary perspectives de Beauvoir comes to the conclusion that woman is a construction of patriarchy (de Beauvoir 1988). Her work includes four volumes of autobiography and several novels which are a remarkable exploration of one woman's experience. 'Women from many countries responded' expressing 'they believed that her work *The Second Sex* was very helpful as they could see their personal frustrations in terms of the general condition of women' (Walters 2005, p. 98). When Shakir was treated as a second sex (de Beauvoir 1988), after her marriage, she opted for a divorce, preferring her role as a single mother, but was also looked down upon from her cultural perspective, as will be discussed in chapter three. Shakir's contemporary, Kishwar Naheed, when being treated like an object, translated the *Second Sex* into Urdu, a book which was considered obscene and was banned but still women read it avidly.

Friedan has, in Humm's terms, "'Americanised'" (Humm 1994, p. 36) *The Second Sex* in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan, Humm states, has 'adopted' (1992, p. 44) the idea that woman is the "'Other'" of man (1992, p. 44), and advocates that this 'Other' should enjoy her individual self, not be subordinate but equal to man. Friedan bitterly attacks traditional voice and Freudian theory of biological determination: a woman's destiny lies in glorifying her own 'femininity'; a woman's only concern should be her husband, her children; this is 'true feminine fulfilment' she is told (Friedan 1963, p. 93, 109). This theory of 'Anatomy is destiny' by Freud (Ibid., p. 21), Friedan argues, is the 'Victorian' image of femininity which is forcefully being tried but cannot be applied to modern 'women of today' (Ibid., p. 93). Friedan advocates that women should come out of this conventional image, an image women themselves could not understand, explain or even share for the fear of disrupting true femininity. 'Feminine', in relation to 'Mystique', is the term Friedan uses for 'the problem that has no name – the psychic distress experienced by women with no public

careers and who were deeply engaged in domestic concerns' (Friedan 1963, p. 13; Humm 1992, p. 182). Friedan criticises this feminine fulfilment image constructed by men (Friedan 1963, p. 15) and calls for pursuits of identity, 'being myself', not as a wife or a mother, but 'being thyself'. She should give birth to herself: 'ourselves', 'personhood' (1963; 1985 p. 7); she must think of herself as a human being first, not as a wife or a mother (1963 p. 299). Friedan argues that such a radical move questioned the normal feminine behaviour, but insists woman should give importance to herself (Ibid., p. 25).

She is 'fragmented' in different roles, Friedan argues (1963, p. 27). She is adjusting herself to different roles in order to fit into the normal standard of femininity. Friedan argues that there is a 'strange discrepancy' (Humm 1992, p. 183; Friedan 1985; 1963, p. 93) between the reality of the lives of the modern American woman and the image she is trying to conform to, the image which Friedan came to call the feminine mystique; the conventional image. This, in Friedan's interpretation, is the 'schizophrenic split' (Humm 1992, p. 183; Friedan 1985) which the modern woman is faced with. *The Feminine Mystique* is an important study as it helps frame Pakistani women in a similar traditional 'feminine' construct (or *nisvani*): always torn, adjusting themselves in their different roles and in search of their identity. This image of Shakir being torn between liberal personal views and conservative cultural pressures is the central argument of this thesis.

Friedan's term 'feminine fulfilment' (Friedan 1963, p. 93), is rephrased by Adrienne Rich in her essay 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', as 'love': 'womanly', 'maternal', unselfish, sacrificing love, which was 'create[d]' and 'ruled' by patriarchal culture (1986, p. 63). In the essay she criticises her fragmented role as a traditional mother and wife, a role in conflict with her own self, a self of a poet, a writer, who felt guilty for stealing time from her female functions to write poetry. She talks of the haunting voices which told her to resist and rebel, but then in the fifties she could not obey. Years later she understood the falsities of the ambitions achieved by men at the expense of woman. This essay is about a conscious awakening of the dead self (Ibid.) (which Friedan and de Beauvoir also talk about), which speaks out loud about the false concept of love and emphasises that the word 'love is itself in need of Re-Vision' (Ibid.). Rich argues that sex, work and parenthood can coexist; if 'selfless love' is a woman's destiny that can apply to men as well (Ibid.). A very clear outright feminist question is put forth: why do only women have to sacrifice? We see such feminist questions in chapter four, when Shakir's writings as a third world poet are analysed.

Friedan reworks de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* to insist on women's equal entry into jobs and professional fields and into higher education. Though she talks about and questions a particular group of suburban American housewives in the 1950s, who are restricting their lives for the sake of their family and children (Humm 1986, p. 28), in the study of Pakistani women poets Friedan's analysis can be an important tool, as the American social group she pinpoints can be compared to the narrow South Asian group in a Pakistani literary circle (Friedan 1963, 1985). It remains to be said though, that Shakir could not consistently follow through these western feminist approaches due to her own personal views on traditional 'feminine' *nisvani*: feminine fulfilment and the pressure of the cultural demand of sacrificing the self in her Pakistani cultural context, as will be discussed in chapter three. Both Friedan and de Beauvoir are used in part in my feminist framework to frame Shakir's discontent over the restrictive Islamic environment, the social construct in which she lives. At the same time this thesis is different from Yaqin's work as it also shows how Shakir struggles under that social construct when she gives in to her desire for a male to protect her thus suggesting her continued struggle between feminine and feminist stances (chapter two). Under extreme cultural pressure she sacrifices her love affair for her son and becomes a traditional symbol of sacrificing motherhood in chapter three, 'Mother, Motherhood and Motherland'. This chapter is the crux of the thesis. On the contrary, Yaqin consistently draws upon the work of Friedan and de Beauvoir and acknowledges this fully (Yaqin 2006). My work, in that sense, has been developed further and in a different direction as my research is a case study of a poet who is shifting between two positions and is not consistent in her ideas.

It is interesting to note a similarity between Shakir and the French feminists. The French feminists, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray, who use psychoanalysis as a strategy of female emancipation from patriarchy, are significantly linked with Shakir's love poetry. The French feminists aim at creating a positive representation of the feminine, built on de Beauvoir's image of 'woman as Other to man', and Friedan's psychically distressed woman, in a new language which is generally referred to as *écriture féminine*, or women's writing. Cixous's approach is different from that of Friedan and de Beauvoir. While they use the female body as a tool to analyse the feminine construct, Cixous uses the female body to free woman from the gender construct. In the article 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1981) Cixous urges women to locate their identity by using their feminine pleasure, *jouissance*. She urges a woman to put her 'female body' in the text and use a separate language, her own language (Cixous 1999, p. 79). She believes 'female desire, and what she wants' is 'misrepresented by the phallogentric [male-dominated] society' (Humm 1992, p.

205). She argues that the use of 'phallic symbols' and 'masculine language' is the major obstacle and the root cause of patriarchal dominance (Cixous 1996; Eagleton 1986, p. 205; Humm 1986, p. 53). In many ways her theory of the feminine practice of writing, putting the female body and desire in her text, '*écriture féminine*, or women's writing' (Eagleton 1986) resembles psychotherapy (Humm 1992), and also connects with Shakir's love poetry.

Shakir's poetry on sexuality and pleasure (*jouissance*) for example 'Only a Girl', 'Wasteland' and 'Ecstasy' is important because sexuality and pleasure are seen as feminist ideas for Shakir. Such writing, Shakir believes, is an outpouring of expression where women can write themselves into history by bringing pleasure and sexuality into their writing. Expressing desire in their own voices, voices which men have always wanted to suppress, liberates women from male-domination. Shakir's idea and her willingness to write the 'body' into the 'text' (Cixous 1999, p. 79) and the desire for sexuality in an expressive form that a woman should be entitled to use and not be repressed connects her with the French feminist writers. Muslim feminists, as argued later in this section, are similar in seeing pleasure in sexual activity and having control over their own bodies. In her culture such expressiveness of sexual desire is called 'active energy', which causes '*fitna*' (chaos) and which needs to be 'controlled' according to Muslim theologians (Mernissi 1985, p. 30, 44). This power of sexual attraction Muslim feminists argue, has always been a threat to the patriarchal construct. Cixous and other French feminists like Kristeva and Irigaray also use psychoanalysis as a strategy to liberate women from male-domination. Maggie Humm summarises these three French feminists' theory by stating:

What Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray do in common is to oppose the phallic symbols which have structured Western thought and writing with women's body experiences as decoded by psychoanalysis. They read the psychoanalysis in order to answer the basic question: Can a woman's body be a source of her language? (Humm 1986, p. 53).

The work of French feminists on the theory of the female body is significant here as it facilitates the study of Pakistani Muslim women poets who have used their feminine voice to write about their feminine feelings, such as desire for sex (chapter one), but may not be going as far as Cixous who advocated bisexuality and even the exclusion of men from the physical act. However, Shakir's love poetry can be seen in relation to the French feminists, and in relation to the idea of pleasure and sexuality, because she is trying to explore pleasure in some of her work and because to her this is a natural out flowing of her language, her voice,

and she does not want to be denied this. In chapter one in the poems of passion and sexuality 'Ecstasy' and 'Wasteland' she expresses her desire to have personal freedom and control over her own body. Feminists have traditionally sought to explore this, as a way to voice their identity.

Finally, there appears to be an issue with the use of a separate women's language as advocated by the French feminist Cixous, because when this woman is located in a different cultural construct the meaning of Cixous's methodology does not work. As evidence of the impracticability of Cixous's theory for Muslim feminists, we may take into consideration the discussion in chapter four, 'Women without a voice: third-world feminism', and the existence of woman's language controlled by the patriarchal construct. While for Yaqin the French feminists including Cixous are less significant, 'but still noticable' (2001, p. 17), for my research Cixous is necessary to understand the argument I am presenting: the issue of adapting western feminists' ideas to a Muslim culture. It is necessary because Shakir's quarrel with her society is that female sexuality is controlled by Islamic laws and social constructs based on laws like Hudood Ordinance (chapters one, three and four). So while Yaqin's feminist framework demonstrates an understanding of her women poets who openly declare that they do not 'sell' their 'bodies' and 'bow' their 'heads' (Ibid., p.188) to male subjugation, or as objects of pleasure, my feminist framework is structured differently as my case study is of a poet who as a young girl, a married woman, and a divorced woman feels who as a young girl wants a romantic relationship with a lover, as a divorced woman feels unfulfilled, lacking a husband or a lover, and as a married woman lives within a traditional family structure. Therefore Shakir fluctuates and struggles with establishing clear position as a 'feminist' hence at times embracing to the traditional image of the feminine. *Jouissance*, sexuality and the body are central to an understanding of both Shakir and her work.

Cixous's message for 'a universal woman' questions the rhetoric of Euro-American feminism before applying it to another culture (Cixous 1981, p. 245). Third-world feminist critics, like Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty, and Sara Suleri, suggest that the French feminist theorists only considered '... merely who am I?' and have not considered 'who is the other woman? How am I naming her? [and], How does she name me?' (Spivak 1986, p. 39). The problem is that the 'west', in order to 'know' the 'east', reverses and displaces the 'ironclad opposition east and west' by the startling juxtaposition of 'westernized easterners' or 'some French text and a certain Calcutta [Indian]' (Spivak 1986, p. 39). These 'western feminists', Mohanty argues, 'who identify themselves as culturally or geographically from the

west' (Mohanty 1994, p. 199) fail to see that 'the average [I would say majority] third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimised, etc.)' (Mohanty 1994, p. 199). Mohanty's concern is that the western feminist scholarship is in control of the third world woman when it represents her without analysing her strategic location, without being critical of its methodologies to prove it, and assuming a homogeneous notion of the oppression of women as a group, which incorrectly produces the image of 'average third world woman'. This strategy, in turn, implies the imperialistic feminist approach towards third-world women, politically implying the hegemony of western scholarship. What Mohanty is hinting at is 'the urgent need to examine the *political* implications of *analytical* strategies' (Mohanty 1994, p. 199) and a 'colonialist move' (Suleri 1992, p. 760) from the first world feminist to the third-world woman. The political implication Mohanty is indicating is the politics of colonial domination. Suleri identifies this problem based on the 'claims to authenticity – only a black can speak for a black; only a postcolonial sub-continental feminist can adequately represent the lived experience of that culture – [...]' (Ibid.). If we put the theory into practice, Suleri looks at Pakistani women under Islamisation and patriarchy and their practical experience of their struggle against it. Marilyn French sees women in 'patriarchal cultures' treated as second-class citizens (French 1985, p. 72). In a 'patriarchal environment' 'men's position is elevated by an exaggerated' self-imposed power over women, and women's role is limited to 'production and procreation' (Ibid.). Men set up 'independent hierarchical structures' to control a certain 'field or' an 'area' (Ibid.). Men's elevated position is reflected in the way the classes are divided:

an elite rules over people perceived as 'closer to nature,' savage, bestial, animalistic; it legitimises its rule by claiming to be more in control than others and closer to 'God,' which essentially means less connected to nature and flesh – which is why it is a contradiction for women to be numbered among the elite, and one reason why they have been so severely controlled within that class (Ibid.).

French's framework of patriarchy is an important tool as it is pertinent to the state of Pakistan, where elite rulers have controlled women in the name of Islam. My argument is structured around theories of third world woman feminists like Spivak, Mohanty and Suleri (who talk of India and Pakistan). As Yaqin points out, all three feminists argue that women in the third world must use their voice; thus a sense of cultural similarity helps. My argument is

different, as I am case studying a poet who is conflicted and shifting between feminine and feminist views and my thesis will trace and examine the different lines of conflict in Shakir's collections of poetry. Shakir gives in to religious and cultural pressure in the poems 'What Will Happen to the Flowers' and 'What Should I Do?' While in Yaqin's work the two poets Naheed and Riaz were sacked from their government posts because of political activities against the then Islamic regime, Shakir, their contemporary, compromised and saved her government job by adopting a more subtle poetic style; as such Shakir was not an outright and bold feminist.

Islamic feminist scholars like Fatima Mernissi, Fatna A. Sabbah, Leila Ahmed and Haideh Moghissi write about Muslim women from Islamic Africa and the Middle East, contextualising 'their feminist methodologies' for 'effective counter-hegemony for women in the Islamic world' (Yaqin 2001, p. 24; Ahmed 1992; Mernissi 1985, 1991, 1994; Moghissi 1999; Sabbah 1984). These Muslim feminist writers unleash their bitter criticism towards the message imprinted on the Muslim female body. The threat of active female sexuality as understood by male Muslim theologians is conceptualised in Mernissi's terms as *fitna*, chaos or disorder (Mernissi 1985, p. 31) which she believes also indicated that a woman is beautiful and a seductress (Ibid., 1985). This relates back to the ideas reflected by Cixous; that women pick up through their body, if they are proud of who they are, the awareness of their beauty and power of sexual attraction, a power which men want to control. Mernissi's research based on the life and teaching of the Holy Prophet (1991) claims woman has always been active in gender relations (1985; 1991; 1993). It is these disrupting forces which, according to Muslim male scholars and theologians, make woman prescribe to the sexual code (Sabbah 1984). The logic behind this is because the female body has the power to tempt men, so the only way to bring social order and avoid adultery is to control female sexuality (Mernissi 1985). Therefore, a Muslim woman should be covered (veiled), silent, immobile, and obedient; this is the key criteria of the beauty of a Muslim woman projected in Muslim literature and legal laws (Sabbah 1984). Sifting through the legal and orthodox discourses, Sabbah (1984) unveils the politics of gender discrimination (Ahmed 1992; Moghissi 1999) by manipulation of Islam (Ahmed 1992). True Islam, Mernissi proves, has always given equal rights to women: they have participated in wars, have commanded armies and taken part in politics (1991). It is the politics of the domestication of women and control over female sexuality in today's Islam: political Islam (Mernissi 1993; Moghissi and Ghorashi 2010), which wants to see woman behind the veil. This institutionalisation, Moghissi believes, is counter-productive

for social order and is a stumbling block on the road to true democracy (1999). It helps in the study of the Pakistani women poets in general and Shakir in particular as we are analysing a Muslim woman who is caught in the politics of Islamic fundamentalists over the control of the female body, such as in the matters of social and personal freedom; by misrepresentation of the true Islam. Therefore, within the western tradition in the feminist framework there are certain strands such as the idea of joy, pleasure and sexuality which can be applied to Shakir's poetry. This will be discussed in depth in chapter one *Khushboo*. Muslim feminist critics are used by Yaqin to frame the feminist activism of the two poets she is case studying. Where her poets are presented as non-compromising and non-conflicting to political Islam, my research, on the contrary, is engaged in a dialogue on how far a Muslim woman living in a Muslim patriarchal society can be influenced by western culture. Therefore the Muslim feminist critics are used in part to help explain an understanding of political Islam, where Muslim laws like Hudood Ordinance control female sexuality in the name of Islam. My work develops further from Yaqin's in that it argues that when a Pakistani Muslim woman is influenced by western culture and feminism, she struggles and is torn between these two identities and in the end she may be in a position of compromise.

The feminist framework I have used is therefore adapted from Yaqin, but explored in a way which befits my argument, where I am looking at how different intercultural influences on the one hand helped Shakir to move forward but on the other hand conflicted with cultural values and norms.

The main focus of this dissertation, Perveen Shakir, falls into the category of traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and feminist women writers, alongside Ada Jafri, Zehra Nigah and Sara Shagufta. Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz, on the other hand, are the leading voices of Pakistani feminist writings. In order to study Shakir in the context of the Pakistani women poets, I would briefly discuss here Pakistani women poets with reference to Shakir. This following section focuses on the literary influences on Shakir's poetry.

### **Shakir in the context of Pakistani women poets**

This brief literary history will inform the reader about 'feminist' and 'feminine' traditional *nisvani* poetry written under the restrictions, checks and curbs of the eleven years of Zia's martial law government. This era is significant to record as it highlights the outright

feminist (anti-sexist and anti-patriarchal) voices that did not bend to the socio-cultural, religious and political pressures, and the other female poets who succumbed to these pressures and swayed between traditional feminine/feminist positions. Actually, only a few women poets continued to write with a political awareness and a fiercely heightened sense of the oppression of women. Amongst them were the prominent feminist writers Naheed and Riaz. The others, such as Jafri, Nigah, Shagufta and Shakir, also wrote with conscious awareness, but were not clear-cut feminists like Naheed and Riaz. Naheed spoke loudly in her poems and prose about the prevailing oppression of women in society. Rukhsana Ahmad, in her book *We Sinful Women*, states:

If there is a Pakistani feminist who poses a serious threat to men through her work, her lifestyle, her manner and through ceaseless verbal challenge, it is Kishwar Naheed. She does this with a professional dedication which either endears or enrages, there are no half-measures. At forty-seven [*sic*], widowed, mother of two grown sons, completely independent financially, she is above many strictures that other women in Pakistan would have to observe, those which remain she flouts with relish (1990, pp. 20-21).

Naheed wrote poems on such topics as ‘hysterectomy, male chauvinism, censorship, crimes against women, rape, abortion, the controversial Family Law of Pakistan’ and a host of other feminist issues (Ahmad 1990, p. 22). As a journalist, she was the editor of the political weekly *Pak Jamhuriat* and the monthly *Mah-e-nau* from 1977 to 1980, and from 1984 to 1988 (Ahmad 1990; Naheed 1996). While she was the editor of the monthly *Mah-e-nau* she was charged with offences on thirty different occasions. One of these was a charge of ‘obscenity’, brought against her when she published an abridged version of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in Urdu (Ahmad 1990, p. 21). According to Rukhsana Ahmad:

Kishwar [Naheed] is perhaps the most prolific poet of her generation. As her writing became more political, developing rapidly partly because of her determination to expand her work and partly in response to the political climate in Pakistan which became increasingly repressive towards women after Bhutto's deposition, Kishwar's reputation grew. Her poetry thrived on the persecution she was subjected to as a civil servant (1990, p. 22).

Naheed particularly remembers the cruel and intolerant atmosphere that prevailed in the prisons during Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Zia's martial law regimes. Her husband and her husband’s father were both jailed in 1970 for speaking out against martial law and ridiculing army officers (Naheed 1993, p. 23; 2009, p. 20). In the 1990s, alongside her official duties, she also ran her NGO (non-governmental organisation) Hawwa Associates, an

organisation to help women peace workers from rural areas in Pakistan, making frequent trips to Lahore (Hawwa Associates 1996). However, after her constant fight for the survival of democracy, she resigned from her government post as Director General of the National Council of Arts, Islamabad, in 1999, and worked solely for her NGO (Yaqin 2001). Moreover, due to the political change in Pakistan, her resignation from her official post assisted her even more in her feminist activities (Yaqin 2001; Farrukhi 2004).

Naheed started her career in a traditional manner. Her first collection of *ghazals* (traditional love poems) (I will explain this term in detail in chapter one) entitled *Lab-e-goya* (Speaking Lips), were written between 1958 and 1969 (Naheed 1991). The standard *ghazal* themes of 'unrequited love, the lover's madness, the unattainable beloved, are presented in the traditional framework of the moth, the candle, the mirror, the moon and the moonlight' (Naim 1974, p. 181-197; Yaqin 2001 p. 164; Russell 1969 p 107-124). However, in her later collections, she moved away from writing about traditional standard love themes and wrote poetry as a feminist poet.

In her first collection of *ghazals* she presents themes reflecting restrictions imposed on women when it comes to meeting with a lover, being married, widowed, or separated. Apart from the traditional themes, she observes the traditional form with the first couplet *matla*, in which she introduces the subject of her theme (Farid 1994), and the last couplet *maqta* (Farid 1994), specific to her experience as a woman: 'Naheed the chores around the house never get done / Even if I want to go out in the evening' (*Lab-e-goya*) (Speaking Lips) (Naheed 1991a, p. 74; tr. Yaqin 2001, p. 164). The *maqta* brings another change altogether whereby the female poet, using her pen name, *takhallus*, according to convention, changes the masculine voice of the lover and brings a lament of the weary female complaining about the domestic chore which hinders her desire to meet her lover (Yaqin 2001, p. 164). Her complaint refers to women's housework, where she is not given writing space due to domestic yet important tasks (Friedan 1963; Rowbotham 1973). The most important thing to note is that Naheed began her literary career writing in traditional forms, although confessing that she finds them restrictive for expressing radical thoughts (Ahmad 1990, p. 4; Farrukhi 2004, p. viii). In fact, her first collection of *ghazals*, her first publication, with its 'subtle awareness of gender issues', Amina Yaqin observes, did not create unrest amongst her male contemporaries as her later collections did. Instead, conformity to the traditional style gave her, in Yaqin's terms, 'the status of a peer-reviewed poet and the strategic classic metaphor of veiling ironically veiled her *ghazals* from censure' (Yaqin 2001, p. 167).

If we review her collections chronologically then there is an overall decrease in the number of *ghazals* in her later works, and a greater output of modern prose poems. Her silent and lonely position as a woman could best be expressed in 'overt modern form' without the crippling weight of tradition (Yaqin 2001, p. 170; Baksh 2006, p. 111-116). The traditional form, therefore, hampers the writing of feminist, radical ideas. This stylistic shift from the conventional *ghazal* style to free verse is a significant point in a new poetic career. There is an attempt in the later collections to recover the self which was taken over by classical traditions, expectations, her writing and her family life (Rich 1986).<sup>8</sup> The themes in her later collections question accepted notions of women's behaviour within the patriarchal society and present a poetic presentation of her feminist consciousness (Baksh 2006).

Fahmida Riaz was younger than Kishwar Naheed. During the martial law regime, she was editor and publisher of the magazine, *Awaz* (Voice) (Ahmad 1990). In 1977, the political climate changed in Pakistan from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's people's democracy to General Zia's rule of martial law. Zia's regime brought into effect a strict censorship policy in the national press (Haqanni 2005; Ahmad 1990). Riaz, as editor of *Awaz*, continued to publish criticism against the current regime. This resulted in continued surveillance on her activities, and regular notices were served which finally ended in the charge of sedition (Ahmad 1990). In all, 'fourteen court cases of sedition were filed against the magazine, one of which carried the death penalty' (Ahmad 1990, p. 23). Riaz escaped to India with her family whilst on bail, where she lived for seven years. She returned to live in Pakistan when Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party was in power and democracy was restored (Ahmad 1990). Riaz's poem 'Stoning' (written before the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinance) shows how women were constantly fighting against these laws, which were affecting them adversely. While in exile she wrote a letter to the President of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq, about the 'unabashed victimisation and vindictiveness' of his rule (Riaz 1987, p. 131-132). Her poetry is a strong voice against the mistreatment of women under Islamic laws in Pakistan.

In her first collection of poetry, *Pathar kee zaban* (A Stony Language), Riaz's style is not very different from that of Naheed, keeping as she does within the conventional *ghazal* imagery. While keeping 'within the traditional imagery of the beloved abandoned by the lover', this first poem reflects the 'central themes of language, body, and the location in the development' of Riaz's poetic thought (Yaqin 2001, p. 122). Her other poem *Jhijhak* (Reserve), represents a picture of herself and hints at the social construction of gender. The

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<sup>8</sup> Rich also criticises the image of woman who is burdened by family responsibilities in her essay 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', Eagleton 1986, pp. 57-63.

impression we get of her suppression as a girl, trapped in the 'foggy narrative of her veil' in *Jhijhak* (tr. Yaqin 2001, p. 122), conveys a patriarchal societal code for girls that position them in a feminine discourse of silence (Mohsin 1995). Riaz's individual style of defying the conventional image of women is seen in her second collection entitled *Badan darida* (The Body Lacerated / Torn) (1967-1972), which was extremely controversial because of its open exploration of female sexuality (Ahmad 1990; Hussein 2004). In this volume Riaz presents a strong woman who refuses to accept those who try to control her sexuality for the sake of religion. Her sensibility as a feminist poet is at its height when she unveils the discrimination against women under Shariah Law. Her poem entitled *Chadar aur divari* (The Veil and the Seclusion) reveals the suffocation of the Islamisation campaign, underlining women as the living dead. She uses the image of women using a 'black *chadar*' (shawl/veil) to reflect that on the one hand a *chadar* is a woman's honour and shame, her modesty, while on the other it chokes her to death. Her poetry analyses both the symbolic and literal image of a 'body' being 'torn' as a 'feminist poet' who is writing against the injustices between the 'hegemonic nation-state' and its women (Yaqin 2006, p. 52)

Like Naheed, Riaz also started her poetic career as a traditional writer but changed from traditional to radical in style. Rukhsana Ahmad in *We Sinful Women* states:

A woman in traditional Urdu poetry is a concept, not a person ... an ideal with rosy cheek, shining black eyes concealed shyly under long, dark eyelashes and a shapely swaying body. Fahmida [Riaz] rejects that passive virginal model in favour of a living, throbbing, vocal and passionate reality (Ahmad 1990, p. 23).

Apart from the unconventional love poetry, both Naheed and Riaz were political poets. Neither of them agrees to these forces to which a woman should submit. There have been two distinct trends among women poets in Pakistan: one manifested in the feminist works of Naheed and Riaz, as mentioned above, and the other trend covering poets such as Jafri, Nigah, Shagufta and Shakir, a group of women poets who, according to Yaqin, occupy the 'shadowy space between patriarchy and feminism' (Yaqin 2001, p. 8).

Ada Jafri's poetry is immersed in the classical tradition and rooted in the eastern value system (Arif 1995, p. 200; Baksh 2003, p. 84-86). She started writing poetry in the 1940s as a Progressive writer (Hasan 1995, p. 12). Her first collection of poems entitled *Main saz dhundti rahi* (I Kept Searching for Harmony) was published in 1950. Her second collection came seventeen years later in 1967, under the name of *Shahr-e-dard* (City of Pain), followed by *Ghazalan tum tou waqif ho* (Gazelle You Know) in 1972, and then *Saz-e sukhan bahana*

*hai* (The Instrument of Poetry is an Excuse) in 1982 (Ibid.). Her second book she called ‘a second life for the poetess’; a ‘book’ which was very ‘dear to [her]’ (Jafri 1995, p. 26). Her autobiography entitled *Jo rahi so bekhbar rahi* (A Negligence that Lingered), published in 1995, justifies the long gaps and silence in her poetic career. Her autobiography underlines the definition of her commitment within a patriarchal framework. Apart from some personal dissatisfaction in giving up poetry after marriage, she sees it as a natural phase in a female poet's life, since she regards writing as a luxury as compared to the necessities of family life (Jafri 1995, p. 320-321), a concept quite contrary to a feminist approach like that of Audre Lorde (1934-1992) who believed poetry gives space to women writers to survive in a patriarchal culture (Lorde 1984). Talking about Jafri's autobiography, Yaqin states that it ‘does not project a modern individual self’. ‘Gender’ ‘instead’, Yaqin argues, ‘is mainly communicated through’ a woman's ‘sensibility as a wife and mother while references to sexuality remain absent’ (2007, p. 391).

Ada Jafri, as a poet, is very conventional. Her poetry reveals both the ‘rich use of old metaphors in new forms’ and ‘her existence within the traditional framework for women’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 98; Baksh 2003, p. 84-87; 2006, p. 96-102). In the poem *Milad-e-bahar* (Spring's Birthday) Jafri talks about her commitment and devotion to the tiny shrub she planted in her new marital home in Islamabad. She has ‘witnessed’, ‘supervised’ and ‘nurtured the growth’ of the other branches as well which have withered in that house over the years (Yaqin 2001, p. 98). What Jafri is reinforcing through these verses is the stereotype of woman as mother, carer and a homemaker, which is emphasised in the last line: ‘Because I am a mother by nature’ (Jafri 1995, p. 213-214). Shakir observes that Jafri's poetic voice set a particular standard for the critics of women's poetry; her style, Shakir states, emphasised the stereotype of a woman's voice as genteel, and her devotion to her husband and children reflects the picture of the ideal educated woman (Shakir 1995, p. 23).

Ada Jafri's poem *Us ko nazdik ane na do* (Do Not Let Him/Her Come Near) is focused on her children and those of the future generation who leave their homeland and go abroad to earn a living. She is presented as a symbol of motherland in the poem, a mother who makes sacrifices by staying behind, rooted in her soil and preserving the sanctity of their home (Jafri 1995, p. 231). In her poem *Barhte hue sae* (Lengthening Shadows) she shows her concern as a mother for her children living abroad. In order to keep the cultural identity that they grew up with they must not stay away too long. She represents the inner anxiety that does not accept change in the cultural environment. The poem reflects a sense of guilt on the mother's part for neglecting her duties towards her children. In her role as a traditional

mother, she frames Susheila Nasta's concept of a mother who acts as a spiritual guide to her children, a 'traditional' *nisvani* 'mother' in the Pakistani cultural context (Nasta 1991; Yaqin 2001, p. 100).

Chronologically, Zehra Nigah is representative of the next generation of Pakistani women poets after Jafri (Shakir 1995, p. 23-26; Baksh 2003, p. 87-89; 2006, p. 102-104). Her rise on the literary horizon, Shakir states, was 'simply meteoric' (Shakir 1995, p. 23). She started writing poetry in 1952, gave up after she got married, and returned to it after her husband's death. She was 'popular among *mushaira* [poetry recital sessions] audiences, with youthful vigor and poetic talent as a teenager' (Yaqin 2001, p. 100). Her *mushaira* lifestyle was at its 'zenith' in 1953 (Ibid.). Her first collection is mainly focused on *ghazals* with some forceful poems on women, war, and the wisdom of elders. Her poetry is strongly influenced by the Urdu national poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz. In the foreword to her poem *Sham ka pehla tara* (The First Star of the Evening) Faiz gives the description of Nigah's writing as poetry from the gentle sex - *sinf-e nazuk ki shairi* - indicating her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* sensibility (Nigah 1998, p. 18, reprinted 2012, p. 10).

Her poem *Samjhota* (Compromise) is an example of what has been called a *nisvani* feminine style. The metaphor of *chadar*, veil, shawl, signifies the femininity of the poem and the ideal woman who follows the example of the *chadar* 'draping, covering, protecting or hiding as circumstances demand' (Yaqin 2001, p. 102). The poem reinforces the traditional image of woman as saviour, illustrating also the pathos of her resignation. The last line, 'If we remove it the curtain will fall' (Nigah 1998a, p. 68; Ahmad 1990, p. 7-8), is an expression of dissatisfaction because of its suggestion that she can create chaos by letting go of her compromise. In other words, a woman's role, according to Nigah, is to observe 'conventional boundaries' instead of creating conflict and 'dissension' (Ahmad 1990, p. 7-8). Both Nigah and Jafri are influenced by western poets and writers but they do not borrow their themes or ideas in their writing as it does not allow them to fit into their Islamic culture.

Finally, Sara Shagufta's poems were written under extreme personal pressure (Baksh 2003, p. 128-129). She 'committed suicide' at the age of thirty, 'after tremendous personal suffering, rejecting the role model and literary images of women more completely than any' of her contemporaries; her poem 'Moon is Quite Alone' reflects her loneliness and is noteworthy in that respect (Ahmad 1990, p. 24, p. 109). Her poetry was extremely unconventional as she had 'the guts to say frankly' about herself and her male-dominated society, 'whom do I pine for' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 6). She wrote boldly about her personal life and sexuality, connecting what the French feminist Cixous calls the 'female

body' with her feminine voice and bringing her sexual desires 'into her text' (Cixous 1981; Humm 1992, p. 205). For example, in her poem *Meena bazar* (Fun Fair), she writes against the abusive treatment she received at the hands of her male colleagues. She writes 'Each user and abuser barks into my body / And then cuts out a shroud for me / the size of his breath / My greatest fault - I am a woman / When I don't giggle with them / they turn against me / Those in the queue ask me / how intense is my thirst'. A few lines later, talking about her society, she writes 'If someone tastes our salt at night / we are condemned as insipid food / for whole of life' (tr. Pritam 1994, p. 2, 6). Shagufta uses her feminist sensibilities to record the unequal treatment she received in her male-dominated society. She writes openly in her poetry and autobiographical letters about how she has been mistreated by men and society. She writes against the society she lives in, which wants to treat her like a commodity and not a human being (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 10).

Shagufta's only book was published in 1982, under the title *Balde Akhar* (The Last Word /The Burning Words), and later in 1985 (reprinted 2006) as *Ankhen* (Eyes) (Baksh 2003, p. 128). Rukhsana Ahmad states that, 'The Last Words' is the title of her biographical letters appended to her only collection of poems, *Eyes (Ankhen)* (2006)' (Ahmad 1990, p. 24) released under the auspices of the Arts Council of Karachi (Pritam 1994).

Another book, *Life and Poetry of Sara Shagufta*, was published in India in 1995 by Amrita Pritam. This will be discussed in chapter four. In the book Amrita Pritam (1919-2005) restructures Shagufta's life history out of her many personal letters written to Pritam and the memories and day-to-day autobiographical writings which she collected over the years. She translated them from Punjabi and Urdu into English. This is the sole biography of Shagufta written in English so far and only published in India. It was not published in Pakistan due to General Zia's martial law and Islamic laws like the Hudood Ordinance, her personal life and her viewpoint on sexual matters, and because she knew that she was writing against the patriarchy. She was aware that the 'type of book she wanted cannot be published in Pakistan' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 38). Many of her letters were censored; she knew that if she published her book 'the punishment would not be anything short of gallows' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 38). Her attitude however, was, 'I don't care' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 38). In the light of Shagufta's letters and poems and her personal life, Pritam states:

Ill treated by her [four] husbands ... [her family], and the unmindful society, she was driven to madness and was constantly in and out of mental asylums. She continued to write with rare

verve. She tried to commit suicide by taking poison several times but was saved by timely medical help. Towards the end of her life, love developed between her and Syed Ahmad but it was too late. For Sara [*sic*] words were power in her hand. Despite her untimely death [she committed suicide at thirty], she has left behind a rich poetic treasure. [...] sandwiched between brilliant prose pieces, her terse and earthy poetry is surprisingly close to the style of Sylvia Plath (Pritam Preface 1994).

The madness in the above quotation was a sign of Shagufta's psychological stress, her ego, which she was not ready to compromise at any cost. Shagufta preferred the 'gallows' rather than sacrificing the 'ropes of her egotism' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 53). She did not surrender to the dictates of laws which confine women to a life behind the veil and four walls (Poem: *Meena bazaar* (Fun Fair), quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 4). She had the 'courage to throw away' the 'veil' which the other women had 'purchased' from the Meena Bazaar (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 4). In that sense she was overtly political, unconventional and uncompromising in her feminist struggle.

Poets like Jafri and Nigah acknowledged the power of the force to which women must submit as reflected in their poetry, in sharp contrast with the energy and anger apparent in the work of Shagufta, and the more political poets and activists like Naheed and Riaz.

When Shakir is placed in the above context, it can be seen that when she published *Khushboo* (1977) the ground for this kind of poetry had already been prepared: as Naim states, there was 'a more intimately feminine voice and a range of themes that contained what had not been expressed before of a woman's experience within the Urdu-speaking urban milieu' (Naim 1995, p. 7) as well as other outrageous radical feminist poetry like that of Riaz and Naheed.

The 'range of themes' is very significant as Shakir's love themes come from a wide range of influences, as she borrows not only from English literature but also from the classical history of Persian literature rooted back in the sixteenth century poetry of the Indian sub-continent. Here I will explain briefly how Shakir's *ghazal* poetry has developed under the influence of Persian literature. It is important to note that 'idioms of love have a long history' in South Asian culture; they 'interlock[ed]' and 'have grown into repertoire, providing templates for ordinary people, when thinking and speaking about their own loves' (Orsini 2006, p. 1). This thesis is an unveiling of different influences, one of them being love poetry in *ghazal* form in the South Asian context and its interconnecting strands from which Shakir's poetry has grown and developed adding her own literary skills to *ghazal* from her 'own' personal experience as a love poet.

As a *ghazal* poet her love poetry develops from the ‘long history’ of the ‘idioms of love’ (Ibid.). The term *ghazal* is originally a Persian word, which means talking to women, and has been a popular form of love poetry in the Indian sub-continent since the sixteenth century. Traditionally, themes of *ghazal* are focused on love and sexuality, and the poetic style is that of a sonnet with rhyming couplets. Shakir is basically a *ghazal* poet, and in that context Shakir’s work maintains the historical tradition in themes, such as writing about female sexuality, but she also adds, develops and reforms these themes and in that context interlocks sixteenth century classic ideas on love by using them in the twentieth century poetry of Pakistan with her modern sensibility and literary skills. In so doing, she is adding prose poetry style to protest against the prevailing scheme of things within Pakistani culture, thus mixing traditional and modern themes and, thereby, creating something new. As a Pakistani Muslim woman her themes became more political in talking about restrictions imposed on female sexuality in her society and in the promulgation of Muslim laws.

This comparative framework helps to show Shakir in the context of Persian-Indian literature, and also to show how Shakir is interlocking traditional themes with modern ideas and giving her poetry a political edge which is different and unique. My argument here is that in her writings she is taking from a ‘range of themes’, multiple influences and dialogues, and one of the key dialogues is with the traditions of *ghazal* poetry itself.

The ‘range of themes’ is also a reference to the reforms in the traditional *ghazal* by the late nineteenth-century poets, that is, a shift from love themes where woman was the focus to more social concerns. As K.C. Kanda puts it: ‘to come out of the stranglehold of the *ghazal*, stop harping on the outworn themes of love and romance, and harness their poetic energies in the service of society’: to talk about reality (Kanda 1998, p. 1). What Kanda is referring to is that writers should talk about the day to day problems and realities of life rather than hackneyed romantic subjects. It was a call to follow the ‘edict’: law of ‘art for life’s sake’, rather than ‘art for art[’s] [*sic*] sake’ (Ibid.), which in a sense expanded the range of themes but in turn had the theme of progressive mothers and daughters. This refers to the reformist movement where women were allowed education but which reformed them (women) from active woman of the classical love themes to a passive woman suitably educated as a wife and a mother. This also meant that the purpose of her role, as defined by the reformists, was to bring harmony within the four walls of her home. This hidden agenda of the reformists in the name of social reforms placed woman in a more spiritual *nisvani* role as a traditional mother and a daughter; a spiritual guide. Being educated means a conscious awareness of a

developing sense of self. This dilemma of the new modern woman as a dutiful daughter and a mother confined inside her domestic role means that she is pressurised by these conflicting roles (Chatterjee 1993, p. 120; Robinson 1997, p. 7). Another idea behind writing about the social and political problems in the *ghazal* was to annihilate the self which was the focal theme in love poetry (Schimmel 1979, p. 75). Enraged by this reformist agenda of presenting woman as high and pure, the Progressive writers brought a new literature of rebellion, a literature that ‘must deal with the basic problems of our existence today, [the reality] – the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and the political subjugation [the then colonial rule]’ (Coppola 1974, p. 8; Ali 1988). The objective was to ‘rescue’ literature from the reformist’s concept of the false religious control of conservative Muslim clerics and ‘priests’, exposing its ‘obsession’ with family life and its ‘sentimental attitude towards sex’ in order ‘to bring art into the closest touch with the people; and to make them the vital organs which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead [them] to the future’, as Progressive liberal writers (Coppola 1974, p. 7). ‘The Progressive writers created a’ new ‘literature of rebellion, anti-colonialism, and social revolution’ influenced by psychoanalysis, Marxism, socialism and feminism (Yaqin 2001, p. 79; Coppola 1974; Ali 1988). A feminine voice was the reformist’s literary achievement, where women were the passive subject of male writings. The Progressive Writers’ Association's achievement in the early twentieth century had freed women prose writers to achieve a 'separate existence in the *zenana*, feminine poetry, and placed them on an equal footing with their male contemporaries' (Yaqin 2001, p. 83); liberal thinking and open-minded, redefining the traditional sensibility of woman through reactionary writing (Coppola 1974, p. 6-9; Ali 1988). This was a political achievement for women as liberal Progressives. Shakir has achieved that intimate feminine voice which Naim refers to in the above quotation, a voice which was the reformist’s period achievement and in that sense her poetry is feminine (and not in the masculine gender as in classical writing). However, what she does not take from the reformists is the image of woman in her spiritual role, because she is also a liberal Progressive poet who believes in liberal views about female sexuality. In that sense her poetry is very intimate as Shakir openly explores her views about love and female sexuality. The problem she was faced with writing about her liberal ideas after the creation of Pakistan (1947) was that, on the one hand, she is a woman situated in an Islamic culture, but, on the other hand, being educated and influenced by western literature, she is consciously aware of her growing self-identity. She finds her modern liberal ideas conflicting with her socio-political and religious environment. The contemporary Pakistani women poets, including Shakir, were influenced by these literary movements and wrote about

political themes; the difference was, while the early twentieth century writers talked about colonial subjugation, late twentieth century Pakistani women poets like Shakir and her contemporary female poets talked about female subjugation in their Muslim society and the promulgation of Islamic laws.

When Shakir is seen in this context, we find that she both connects with her contemporary trends and poets and also moves away from reformist poetry which presents woman in her spiritual role (Quershi 2000, p. 123-126). Shakir was inspired by senior contemporary female poets. Jafri 'maintained decency and a sort of restraint in expressing her feminine feelings', while Naheed gave a 'different outlook of expression to Urdu and even ventured to cross the limits of forbidden areas', under the influence of western feminism (Ahmer *Daily News* 1999, p. 1). In this context Riaz stands nearer to Naheed and Shakir to Jafri, but Shakir did not restrict herself to that restrained level of expression like Jafri, nor did she adopt a too-liberal style like Shagufta. Shakir decided not to be won over by 'extremism' (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994; Shabnam 2005, p. 6) in content and form like Riaz and Naheed. She decided to remain very much herself, but she was conscious that she would not reconcile herself to the separation of body and mind, as was the case with most of the women writers. Shakir is unique as she keeps her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and 'feminist' positions in parallel. She had her own mental training and upbringing, which influenced her poetry. Shakir's driving force is the feminine sensibility and her female existence. As an individual female she believes in love and physical relationships, family life and children, but she writes against the system which crushes her female identity and wants to usurp it. She gives a new dimension to her love poetry by keeping her link with the traditional form of *ghazal*, which strongly supports 'sexuality' and 'sentimentality' (Alam 1983, p. 78). At the same time she moves ahead with modern sensibilities of protest against the prevailing scheme of things (Zeno 1995).

In all her four poetic collections *Khushboo* (1977), *Sadburg* (1980), *Khud-Kalami* (1985) and *Inkaar* (1990), she presents the difficulties a woman had to face in her society as a girl, a wife, a mother, 'and finally a "woman" who is a wife/mother/poet/wage earner and much more' (Naim 1993, p. 181-192; Shakir quoted in Salim 1994). She wrote two hundred or more poems in *Khushboo* and a hundred or more in subsequent collections. Shakir states that she shares her feelings and emotions with her readers. It is the 'I' which makes her poetry 'autobiographical' in style (Naim 1993, p. 184). It is this personal pronoun which makes her different from her feminist contemporary writers, Riaz and Naheed, and which irritates them. They criticise her subjective mode of expression. Although Naim argues that

her poetry is not ‘confessional’ (Naim 1995, p. 11),<sup>9</sup> in one of her interviews in *The News*, Shakir confesses that she confides in her readers (Majeed 1996). What defines the poetry as confessional is not the theme or subject matter, but how she explores the issue. Poets whose writing is classified as confessional present personal difficulties in a socio-political context and use writing as an outlet for their demons, what Shakir calls ‘divine madness’ (Shakir *Sukhanwar*, 1994). Moreover, such poetry she says is ‘self-revelatory’ (Ibid.), giving a very intimate (Naim 1993), ‘feminine touch to Urdu poetry in a distinct voice of her own’ (Zaidi 2008; Bakht 2003, p. 478); as such the information created through the poem passes on to the reader, and a connection is made (Shakir *Sukhanwar*, 1994; Zaidi 2008); the personal becomes political. Four years after these four very popular poetic collections Shakir thought that it was time a compilation of these collections should be published. A few months before her death in 1994, she compiled this set of four collections and called it *Mah-e tamaam* (Full Moon). Parveen Qadir Agha states that when Shakir told her the title of her collected works, Agha’s instant reaction to this ‘sad prophetic title’ (Shakir quoted in Ali 1994, p. 1) was, ‘Is it the end of something?’ Shakir explained ‘that it meant just the opposite. It was full bloom, the moon in full bloom with a positive connotation’ (Agha 1995, p. 58). There is a sense of happiness in fulfillment. However, a full moon in the splendour of its fullness can then only start to wane. In the end the meaning turned to reflect what Agha suggested, ‘the end of something’ as Shakir died in December that year metaphorically bringing her work to completion. In fact Shakir had stopped writing due to her disenchantment over the existing political order. She thought that in de Beauvoir’s terms, enough ink had been wasted on quarrelling over feminism and perhaps she should say no more (1988). This is a bitter realisation of the inevitability of the pattern of her life, in her own words, the realisation that ‘extremes come to terms rather late in life’; that there is a need for a ‘poise’ in her life and poetry (Shakir quoted in Ali 1994, p. 1).

There is yet another story with reference to the last<sup>10</sup> collected edition *Mah-e tamaam* related by Baidar Bakht. He says that Ahmad Faraz, Shakir’s contemporary and a great modern Urdu poet of Pakistan (1931-2008) liked the idea of the title so much that he wanted

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<sup>9</sup> Confessional poets write on prohibited topics like female sexuality, Islam and politics and confess their personal experiences in their writing; therefore it is through autobiography that they confess their experience in their poetry, so personal is political.

<sup>10</sup> There are two books of Shakir which are omitted in this study: *Kaf-e aaina* (1996) and *Gosha-e chashm* (2000). *Kaf-e aaina* (The Face of the Mirror) was a posthumous poetry collection, and some of the poems which Shakir edited for *Kaf-e aaina* had already been published in her four major collections. *Gosha-e chashm* (The Corner of an Eye), is a compilation of somewhat light-hearted columns about social, political and cultural problems that Shakir used to write for a newspaper, and the subject matter is included in the four collections.

to use it for his forthcoming poetry collection. He asked for Shakir's permission in the magazine *Jareeda* Islamabad, 1994 through this *ghazal* couplet: *us ne sakoot-e shab mein bhi apna payam rakh diya / hijr ki raat baam par mah-e tamaam rakh diya* (Even in the silence of the night, she conveyed her message / on the night of parting she put the full moon on the rooftop). Shakir phoned him one day to let him have the title for his collected works. Faraz agreed readily (Bakht, email 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012).

This is one of the contexts in which Shakir's work should be read. It should also be read in the context of her biographical influences, because her personal experience as a young girl, a woman, and a mother made its mark on her work as well.

### **Biographical influences in Shakir's poetry**

Perveen Shakir was born to a Shia Muslim family on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1952, in Karachi, Pakistan. Her father, who had migrated from the Bihar province of India - 'a place known for its literary and poetic background' - to Karachi in 1945, was a great lover of Urdu poetry and even wrote poetry himself (Ahmer 1999, p. 3). Her father migrated before the formation of Pakistan in 1947, when the talk of a new nation started (Agha 1995). As a child, Shakir lived in a 'happy household with [a] great emphasis on learning' (Agha 1995, p. 12; Mohsin 1995; Moin-ud-din 2011). Her education started long before going to school. In Shakir's own words, 'I was exposed to conflicting concepts right from the beginning. The environment of my home was exceedingly religious. The school I was sent to was outrageously liberal. I was constantly nagging between these two diametrically opposed views of life, the world and God, what benefited most was my creative self' (Shakir interviewed by Ali 1994, p. 1). As a child she preferred outdoor activities when not reading, and was not fond of toys or dolls (Agha 1995). Her father was a poet himself, but after migrating from India he became depressed and stopped writing poetry altogether. Shakir Hussain may have attempted to execute his own unfulfilled ambitions through his daughter, one of the more common forms of psychological projection (Cameron 1950). Seeing her love for reading, her father always gave her books containing short stories of prophets or on religious topics (Shakir 1994). Shakir's parental 'bibliophile' grandfather Mr Askari, whom she called 'nanna', was a great lover of Shakespeare (Mohsin 1995, p. 170; Agha 1995, p. 12;

Shakir 1994). He taught her and Nasreen (her only sister) a love of books, of poetry and knowledge. Nasreen was the focus of attention because of her ill health, while Shakir received attention for her genius. Nanna could see a creative skill in her from the very beginning (Agha 1995, p. 12-13). One can say that when she entered the field of poetry, it was probably due to the influence of her father and grandfather, themselves interested in writing and no doubt sympathetically encouraging her creative efforts. This early moulding of her mind helped the later influences to take effect. From her father and grandfather too, Shakir got her never-failing drive and persistence (Mohsin 1995).

Apart from the conducive environment at home, Shakir's mental training at school was in English, as English has been a compulsory subject since the formation of Pakistan in 1947. This provided her with an opportunity to study English language and literature as a compulsory part of the curriculum. In an interview on television in 1994, shortly before her death, Shakir said,

Urdu is the language I dream in, and one should write in the language one dreams in. But my regular mental training is in English to understand literature. It has helped me a lot in expressing myself. It has broadened my mental horizon (*Sukhanwar* 1994).

This dependency on English, in whatever way, echoes Chinua Achebe's irritation in his desire 'to see the word universal [used for English] banned altogether from the discussions of African literature', but 'strangely' he cannot deny that 'some of its ideas and precepts do exert an influence on our writers' (Achebe 1995, p. 60). He agrees that the mother tongue should not be abandoned, but he also admits that there is no other choice than to 'use' the 'language' he 'has been given' in order to be able to carry 'the weight of his African experience' (Achebe quoted in Thiong'o 1995, p. 285-286). In that sense it becomes, as Gramsci says 'domination by consent' (Gramsci quoted in Ashcroft et al 1995, p. 425; Gramsci 1971). Here the phrase demonstrates that colonial domination and control continues; domination which is acknowledged by the people of Pakistan and other third-world countries who give their permission for this control, terming it as 'compulsory'.

Shakir's initial schooling was in a small academy run by Irish nuns (Shakir interviewed by Ali 1994, p. 1). As her 'medium' of instruction at school was 'English' (up to 'class' 'five'), English had also been a major source of inspiration in choosing her subjects at college level (Shakir interviewed by Ali 1994; Agha 1995, p. 12). Her teacher Irfana Aziz at college, another source of inspiration, had advised her to take English Literature as her main subject as it 'would widen her span of knowledge' (Agha 1995, p. 19). As such, from the

very onset of her academic career as a student she was trained to read and understand English literature.

A research report published by the *English Language Teaching Profile: Pakistan Literature Annex* in November 1976 states that in the schools where the medium of instruction is Urdu, English is taught as a compulsory subject from classes six to eight in the middle schools (age 11-14), and as an elective subject in the secondary schools (age 14-16). In schools where English is the medium of instruction, the report says, it is taught from class one (age 6). The report further says that English is compulsory in all higher secondary schools, intermediate colleges, and degree-granting colleges and universities. One cannot deny that the credit goes to the British rule, which made English Literature compulsory before the partition of India and Pakistan. As a legacy of colonial rule, officially all instruction is in English, but a great deal is carried on in Urdu or provincial languages. In *Education in Perspective* Rubina Saigol states, ‘the colonial administrative machinery, produced by means of English education and civil service remained intact at the time of independence of Pakistan’ (1993, p. 12). It also brings to mind Lord Macaulay’s famous minutes of 1835, in which he strongly advocates the importance of teaching English Literature and bringing it into the education system of the Indian subcontinent (Macaulay in Ashcroft et al 1995, p 428-430; Ali 1993, p. 9-10). The English language also remains the most powerful instrument of cultural control. Tariq Rahman in *Language and Politics in Pakistan* states:

The English-vernacular controversy in pre-partition India took the form of the Urdu-English or medium of instruction controversy in Pakistan. Essentially, the position in support of English is that it is used in the domains of power and is an international language. Thus, its use facilitates access to positions of power in Pakistan and abroad. This is why it is thriving in Pakistan and efforts are being made to improve its teaching. Even in post-colonial countries where indigenous languages are used in the domains of power, the ex-colonial one, mostly English, is the language of wider communication. In this capacity, it facilitates access to science and technology and brings about modernisation (1996, p. 228).

As English is also the ‘vehicle’ of western culture (Ibid., p. 230), this dominance of English is seen as linguistic and cultural imperialism (Ashcroft et al, 1995; Rahman 1996). Both at national and international level, English is the source of social mobility (Rahman 1996). It gives access to power and knowledge: ‘It opens doors’ (Ibid., p. 230).

Looking from this perspective Shakir has benefited tremendously from this colonial legacy: it expanded her mental horizon. The influence of English literature remains the cornerstone of Shakir’s poetry. In *Khushboo* and the other three collections, Shakir became

fascinated with English writers to the extent that they were to become part of her poetic trademark (Arif 1995). It helped her to further her creative abilities. The main objective of the study of English Literature, as quoted in the National Curriculum Document for Compulsory English and in the English Literature syllabus of the Board of Secondary Education, Karachi, Pakistan (1998-2010), is to develop the student's intellectual and emotional maturity through engagement with, and response to, literature (Pakistan Examination Board, 2005 revised 2006, p. 9). The National Curriculum Document further says that its objective is to increase students' personal cultural awareness through the study of texts drawn from different literary traditions and periods (Ibid.). The specific rationale of the University Education Board English Literature Examination Syllabus says, 'Pakistan has some indigenous experience of English, but reading should not be confined to either Pakistani authors writing in English, or Literature of England' (Ibid.). 'Wide intercultural reading of this kind', it states, 'will discourage parochial, racial, tribal sectarian and provincial prejudices among the future citizens of Pakistan' (Ibid.). The guiding principle is that literature in English should be a major source of pleasure and enjoyment.

Shakir had a rich and fertile foundation after reading a wide range of material covering English prose, poetry - both romantic and classic, novels, plays and essays during her school, college and university career. Therefore, apart from influences such as her father, grandfather, and her teacher, she had turned to the world of her imagination and personal talent. Shakir, who had studied English Literature as a compulsory subject in school, developed an interest in English Literature, which later on led her to the completion of two MA degrees in English: one in English Literature (1972) and the other in English Linguistics (1980) (Agha 1995; Arif 2011; Moin-ud-din 2011). She later gained a third Masters' in public administration (MPA), from Harvard University, USA, in 1992 (which, of course, added to her qualifications). She also passed her CSS (Civil Superior Services) competitive exam in 1981. In her television interview, however, she said 'Literature is an all-time passion' (Shakir, *Sukhanwar*, 1994).

Nonetheless, Shakir did not get carried away with her passion for English literature. She continued writing poetry in Urdu, her mother tongue, rather than in English. This brings to mind Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 'radical decolonisation' programme to restore ethnic or national identity rooted in the mother tongue which involves a 'rejection of English, a refusal to use it for his writing', and 'a refusal to submit to the political dominance its use implies'. He also indicates that English can be appropriated as a strategy to subvert colonial dominance, thus dismantling its authority. Thiong'o writes from an African perspective,

aiming to 'regain' Gikuyu identity, an identity which he thinks the imperial language seems to have 'displaced or dispersed' (Thiong'o 1995, p. 283-290). Writing in her own language reveals Shakir's resistance to the colonial language, and also her strong inclination towards her identity as an Urdu Pakistani poet.

Shakir continued writing Urdu poems and articles under the 'pen-name Beena', and these were published in the college magazines during her four years at college (Agha 1995, p. 17). She was, first and foremost, a patriot. She would learn patriotic verses by heart: '*Baatil sey dabney waley ay asmaan nahin ham / Sao bar ley chuka hai tu imtihan hamara*' (Forces cannot bow us (Muslims) down / we have been tested several times) (Agha 1995, p. 12; Shakir interviewed by Abbas, 1994). This forms the basis for her outlook on life and this streak of patriotism became strength in her poetry later on. When she was sixteen, she wrote a poem for a function to commemorate the Defence Day of Pakistan on 6<sup>th</sup> September (*Dawn* 1994). It was entitled *Subah-e-watan* (The Dawn of a Nation). The theme was that independence had brought hope and kindled a desire for a new morning. The first romantic poem she offered for publication in her first year at college was *Barsaat* (Monsoon) and the first line read: '*Dekho wo koi jogan jungle mein gaa rahi hai*' (Hark! there is a girl singing in the forest) (Agha 1995, p. 16). The poem talks about a female hermit or devotee, singing in a jungle. The theme is of a young girl in love. At the same time it brings in images of nature, reflecting the romantic aspect of her poetry in its very early stages showing that from very early in her life she had a streak of both the romantic and the political in her poetry.

Between 1968 and 1977, Shakir talks about the political scenario. Ten years of dictatorship under General Ayub Khan ended in 1968. Then came the rule of General Yahya Khan. With the end of this dictatorship, East Pakistan was lost during the 1971 war with India. The tragedy left a deep mark on Shakir. The unpatriotic leadership of Yahya Khan was bad enough, but to surrender was a bigger tragedy. Shakir was a sensitive, dignified believer in high moral values, who believed in struggle till the last breath: to surrender and accept defeat was a great tragedy for her. This tragic national event shattered the roots of her soft romantic poetry. She saw her parents grieve for relatives in East Pakistan. Shakir states in an interview:

[W]hen we lost a part of our country I was only 19 and the feeling that Pakistan was cut into half was very torturous. I also thought that this wound would heal with the passage of time because time itself is a great healer, but it did not happen. Instead this wound turned into a sore, and with it increased my pain (Shakir interviewed by Salim 1994, p. 87).

This tragedy did not only upset Shakir as a patriot but also affected drastically the tone and manner of *Khushboo*. Now when she talks of love, and when she addresses a lover, she uses political metaphor. In the attitude of love she suspects the attitude of politics: hypocrisy, insincerity, betrayal and unfaithfulness (Zaidi 2008; Moin-ud-din 2011; Shabnam 2005, 2006). Not only that, this tragedy had such a strong impact upon her that she decided in 1994 to write her doctoral dissertation on the 1971 war with India: 'The coverage of 1971 war in [the] US press and its impact on United States foreign policy vis-à-vis Pakistan' (Abbas 1994, p. 7; Agha 1995, p. 52). This topic was 'not approved' at Harvard so 'she decided to change it altogether to English Literature' and was accepted by the University of Cambridge, but unfortunately, before she could commence her PhD, she died in a road accident on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1994 (Agha 1995, p. 58). When she died she was working as a senior civil servant in Islamabad.

Shakir achieved fame on both television and radio for her literary works (Majeed 1996; Ali 2011). After completing her MA in English Literature in 1972, she was a lecturer in English at Abdullah College for women in Karachi for nine years (Zaman 1994). During this time she was invited to the *mushairas* (usually mixed poetry recital sessions). However, with fame and glory came jealousies and scandals and she became the subject of gossip. Rumours started appearing in the scandal magazines and newspapers, which disturbed her. Parveen Qadir Agha states, 'The joy of being beautiful and talented was soon eclipsed by the cruelties of this world which had started showing their might' (1995, p. 22). This was the reason her father, Agha notes, 'had warned his daughter to stay away from poetry' even though he was a strong influence (Ibid., p. 34). When she wrote her first romantic poem many people were pleased for her as she seemed to have fulfilled her father's desire, but her father was 'apprehensive about his daughter's talent and wanted to stop her' as he knew that women in Pakistani society become victims of scandal (Ibid., p. 16). Her father had to be 'strict as was expected of a father of two daughters' in a Pakistani culture (Ibid., p. 20), but Shakir was young, and full of youthful emotions: a 'passing phase' in Shakir's own words (Shakir interviewed by Ali 1994, p. 1).

During this time Shakir was said to have 'set her heart on a man working in a government office'; 'she shared her thoughts and dreams with him and also derived inspiration from his company' (Agha 1995, p. 23). He is the subject of most of her romantic poetry in her first collection *Khushboo* (1977). When they decided to get married, she was not allowed to. Her father could not accept the idea that his daughter should select her own

life partner and one from a different sect (She was Shia Muslim and he was Sunni Muslim). Agha writes that ‘Shakir belonged to a religious and conservative family whose norms she always respected’, hence, though shocked at her father’s refusal, she nevertheless ‘had to bow down’ to the ‘convention[s]’ of her society and the ‘wishes of her father’ (Ibid., p. 24). All these ‘traumatic events affected her mentally’ and she suffered from a ‘nervous breakdown’ that year, 1975 (Ibid., p. 25). In 1976 she married (an arranged marriage) Naseer Ali, her cousin, a doctor by profession, who had treated her during her illness; she had a son three years later, and divorced after 11 years due to incompatibility and her unhappy married life (Moin-ud-din 2011). She paid a heavy price for her divorce because her father ‘stopped’ talking to her and her mother grieved, as divorce in Muslim society is not considered respectable (Agha 1995, p. 44). She strongly criticised in her poetry these obstacles of life: religious differences, social status, and family bonds because they all started to suffocate her (Agha 1995; Shakir interviewed by Ali 1994), and she felt that all her talent was crippled because of social taboos, and the compromises she had to make. The influences on Shakir contributed greatly to her development. That Shakir became a poet may have been due to her father’s and grandfather's influence. That she became a great poet was due to her own interest and talent. One does not proceed very far with the study of Shakir without realising that we are dealing with a highly sensitive soul. If, in one respect, she was traumatised and frustrated because of her social environment and conventions, in another, this sharpened her poetic and mental growth (Shakir interviewed by Ali 1994). Her frustrations made her realise the oppression faced by women in her society (Agha 1995). Parveen Qadir Agha states, ‘[I]f she had married the person she loved it would have been inspirational’ (Ibid., p. 24), but the society she lived in was against it. There now developed in her a ‘defiant streak’, which later pervaded her life-style and poetry (Ibid., p. 27). *Khushboo* became popular because of its unconventional love poetry and it won the Adamjee award in 1978. The reason, in Shakir’s own words, was because it was ‘love poetry’ which clicked with everyone (Shakir quoted in Ali 1994, p. 1). The other three collections, she says, shifted to serious themes and ‘were not an instant hit like *Khushboo* (Ibid.). ‘My country’ Shakir states in her interview with Syed Abid Ali, ‘was in the clutches of martial law, and I couldn’t sing love songs any more’ (Shakir interviewed by Ali 1994, p. 1). Additionally, Shakir was forced to change her poetic style due to Islamisation and military censorship. Through a dialogue, she brings all these conflicts and tensions, cultural limitations, political pressures and sufferings as a woman into her poetry.

In order to show other influences on Shakir's poetry I would briefly familiarise readers with the political context. Shakir's work is influenced by state politics, as her personal life and her poetry are uniquely intertwined with the politics of Islamisation during the martial law of the Zia regime (1977-1988).

### **A brief overview of Pakistan's political context**

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, ideological and economic battles have resulted in four martial law regimes, some of which were 'sympathetic to the modern thoughts' while others, such as General Zia-ul-Haq's government (1977-88) 'were clearly aligned with traditional thought' (Saigol 1995, p. 167). In 1958 after a military coup, General Ayub Khan became the president of Pakistan. During his eleven-year regime (1958-69) the atmosphere was reasonably 'liberal, democratic, open and scientific as it was inherited from the days of British colonialism' (Saigol 1993, p. 3).

His regime was an era marked for introducing positive laws for women. Women saw the liberation of family laws in 1961 that led to progressive legislation for the rights of married women (Haroon 1995, p. 180). After General Ayub Khan's 'forced resignation', martial law was taken over by General Yahya Khan from 1969-71 (Talbot 1999, p. 375). During his leadership Pakistan lost East Pakistan in the 1971 war with India. Ironically Yahya Khan was removed in a coup planned by the civilian Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who replaced him as the chief martial law administrator and president. Immediately after the trauma of the loss of East Pakistan, the people witnessed the arrival of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on the political stage and 'with him democracy and some more relief' (Salim 1994, p. 86). Bhutto's government in the 1970s is also marked for the improvement in women's rights.<sup>11</sup> It should be kept in mind that Shakir's love poetry of *Khushboo*, based on passion and sexuality, was only possible due to this liberal political climate, though cultural construct was still an issue as Pakistan was an Islamic state.

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<sup>11</sup> In 1972 women were given equal rights in civil services. There was a woman governor in Sindh province, Begum Rana Liaqat Ali Khan, a woman Vice-Chancellor of Quaid-e-Azam University, Begum Kaneez Yousaf. Not only that, 'Foreign and District Management posts were open to women through civil services' (Haroon 1995, p. 181). The Constitution of 1973 pronounced the end of discrimination on the basis of sex (Haroon 1995, p. 181); in January 1976 a Women's Rights Committee was appointed to improve women's social, legal and economic conditions and the same year the government launched a Declaration on the Rights of Women in Pakistan (Shaheed & Warraich 1998, p. 278).

Bhutto's government was overthrown in July 1977 by General Zia-ul-Haq. Zia's military rule, in Amina Yaqin's words, is observed as the 'lowest period in the history of women's rights in Pakistan' (Yaqin 2001, p. 26). His regime was characterised by the military attempt to 'rid Pakistan' of the 'populist influences' of the Bhutto era (Haqqani 2005, p. 147-148). The social welfare programmes which started in Ayub Khan's regime were protected under Bhutto's rule, but when General Zia seized power all such activities were banned (Ahmad 1990).

The following paragraphs will give a detailed picture of the Zia government, as sweeping changes came during General Zia-ul-Haq's eleven-year rule of martial law (1977-1988). A detailed reference is also important as a major section of Shakir's poetry was written during those eleven years and both she and her poetic work along with her contemporary women poets (as detailed in the section on Pakistani women poets above) were strongly influenced by the promulgation of the Islamic Laws, military dictatorship and censorship restrictions on writers, especially women.

During this time General Zia made a conscious effort to Islamise the system. Not only that, '[h]is regime clearly decided to use the women's issue to control society in a much more repressive grip' (Ahmad 1990, p. 12). It is noted that while Ayub Khan's military government of the late 1950s was not politicised, the military government of the 1970s and 1980s clearly was and additionally openly aligned with the traditionalistic *Jamat-e-Islami* (an Islamic fundamentalist party) (Haqqani 2005).

In Saigol's terms it was clearly aimed at restoring Islamic fundamentalism and attempted to eradicate the liberal and secular notions popularised by Bhutto's socialist regime (Saigol 1995, p. 169-170). An Arab feminist, Nawal El Saadawi's definition of fundamentalism with reference to Pakistan is certainly true. She states that it is a world phenomenon which 'operates under different slogans, but is a political movement using God to justify injustices and discriminate between people, nations, classes, races, sexes, colours and creeds' (Saadawi 1989, p. 202). Zia's regime is a reflection of Saadawi's observation because of the way in which women are controlled in the name of Islam. In July 1977 General Zia-ul-Haq had promised elections within ninety days. Within less than two years, Bhutto had been executed, all political activities were banned and even elections were cancelled (Ahmad 1990, p. 9; Haqqani 2005; Saigol 1993, 1995). Within days of assuming office Zia initiated a process of Islamisation of laws and society. By the end of 1978, Islamic rules were implemented at the official level (Haqqani 2005). In order to gain support from the people General Zia carefully formulated his programme of Islamisation by telling the people

that 'the street protests against Bhutto reflected the people's desire for Islamic laws, just as the campaign for the creation of Pakistan in 1946-1947 reflected a wish to return to Islamic values' (Haqqani 2005, p. 136). Zia argued, 'that he was just giving the people what they want' (Haqqani 2005, p. 136).

The motive behind Islamisation was to control democracy and establish a theocratic state (Ahmad 1990) which would be extremely difficult to disband. Zia 'assumed' that Islamisation had the potential for cementing a crumbling national identity (Ahmad 1990, p. 9). He believed the Muslim nation was losing its identity due to democracy and lack of an Islamic environment. The main reason why Zia became unpopular was the implementation of Islamic Shariat Law through the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinance on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1979.

The Hudood Ordinance deals with the offences of prohibitions (consumption of drugs and alcohol) *zina* (rape, adultery, fornication), theft *qazf* (perjury). [...] *Zina* is defined as wilful sex between two adults who are not validly married to each other. Where sex takes place against the will or consent of a person (either man or woman) or by use of force, or where one person is falsely led to believe that his / her partner is validly married to him / her, it is defined as *zina-bil-jabr*. Both types of *zina* are liable to *hadd* punishment (stoning to death in public) if either confession is obtained, or if the actual act of penetration is witnessed by four adult, pious, and forthright males. Failing this the lighter punishment of *tazir* (rigorous imprisonment and whipping) applied. *Tazir* is given when, despite there being no witnesses or confession, the court is convinced the *zina* or *zina-bil-jabr* took place (Gardezi 1994, p. 52).

When these laws came into force, 'crimes like adultery and fornication became state crimes subject to capital punishment' (Yaqin 2001, p. 27). Later in 1984, 'the Islamic laws of evidence, *qisas* and *diyat*, were also' enforced 'as part of the' Islamisation process (Ibid.). They adversely affected the rights of women. Fouzia Gardezi in her article 'Islam, Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: 1981-91', states:

These laws made it difficult to prove the crime of rape, put rape victims at risk of being charged with adultery, and reduced the worth of a woman, and her testimony in some cases, to half that of a man. Islam was also used to justify various government directives on women's dress, a plan to create a separate women's university, and an unwritten ban on women's participation in spectator sports (Gardezi 1994, p. 52).

The rights of women were severely affected by the implementation of the Hudood Ordinance (1979) and the Islamic Laws of Evidence (1984). These two laws were the hallmark of Zia's Islamisation programme. Hussain Haqqani in his book *Pakistan between Mosque and*

*Military*, states that Pakistani feminists noted a ‘particularly anti-female bias in the Islamization program’ (Haqqani 2005, p. 144). Women were ordered to cover their heads in public and the order was implemented in public schools and colleges as well as on state television (Haqqani 2005; Ahmad 1990). Women’s participation in sports was ‘severely restricted’, as was their role in the performing arts (Haqqani 2005, p. 144). Participation in international events was banned (Alavi 2009). They could take part in sporting events but only before ‘an exclusively female audience, or one in which only *mehram* (males who were blood relatives) and no other males were present’ (Ibid., p. 8). This was going back to the reformist’s patriarchal product of the *zenana* (a woman’s section), a kinship system where only men who are kin have a right to enter without permission (Yaqin 2001, p. 52-53). The attempt was to link this practice of segregation to Islamic law. Furthermore, ‘women could engage in sports only in ‘purdah [cover]!’ which made their position quite ridiculous (Alavi 2009, p. 8). A nationwide media campaign entitled *Chadur aur Chardiwari* (the veil and four walls) was mounted to enforce the seclusion of women, with *Nawaa-i-waqat*, a leading Urdu daily, at its head. Once again a matter of serious concern was that religion was used against women and poor minorities (Jahangir & Jilani 1990). This was followed by an ‘anti-pornography’ campaign which reduced the participation of women in television and entertainment (Ahmad 1990, p. 10; Alavi 2009, p. 9; Haroon 1995, p. 185; Haqqani 2005). Rukhsana Ahmad, in her book *We Sinful Women*, states that a serious attempt was made to deny education to girls and young women. ‘The minimum age for marriage’, she continues, ‘raised by the Family Laws Ordinance to eighteen years was debated in an attempt to bring it, supposedly, into accord with Islamic Law’. Ahmad points out that Islamic law ‘defines the onset of puberty as a sign of maturity and permits consummation of marriage at that age’. She continues, ‘fortunately, pressure from the World Bank, which saw the implications for such a law for population increase, prevented this from being instituted’ (Ahmad 1990, p. 9-11; Gardezi 1994, p. 52).

A campaign for separate universities for women also failed for financial reasons, because women outnumbered male students, especially at Karachi University, and because of the pressure from women’s groups, who anticipated this as a denial of opportunities for them (Ahmad 1990, p. 9-10; Alavi 2009, p. 9; Gardezi 1994; Haroon 1995, p. 185). This was just the beginning of a series of discriminations against the female community.

Jahangir and Jilani, in their book *The Hudood Ordinances: a divine sanction?* state that women were finally jolted into action when a couple was sentenced to death by stoning in 1982 (Jahangir & Jilani 1990). This was the case of a near-blind working-class woman,

who was raped by a landlord and his son in whose house she was employed as a domestic servant. She was punished under the *zina* (adultery) Ordinance: ‘fifteen lashes, three years imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1000’, while ‘her rapist’ was found ‘not guilty owing to lack of evidence under the same law’ (Ahmad 1990, p. 13-14; Jahangir & Jilani 1990). Women were shocked and horrified. The case was promptly dismissed by the Federal Shariat High Court due to the media campaign conducted by Women’s Action Forum (WAF) activists which caused the government embarrassment at international level (Jahangir & Jilani 1990; Ahmad 1990, p. 13-14; Haroon 1995).

The government used Islam as a powerful political weapon to create an atmosphere of fear and to control radicalism (Ahmad 1990; Haroon 1995), although no limbs had been severed and no one had been stoned to death (Haqqani 2005). The laws remained on the statute books and could be used to harass ordinary people by the then Zia government (Mughal 2006; Usmani 2006; Ahmad 1996; Haqqani 2005). Even today the impact remains on Muslim women. Wherever they are in the world, men and women are flogged in public for committing adultery; Islamic laws cannot be changed (Felix, *Dawn* 2 March 2005 accessed 26 Feb, 2012). ‘Honour killings are on the rise in Canada’ announces the reporter Brian Daly, in the *Toronto Sun*: three daughters in Toronto, Canada, were killed by their father in the name of honour killing, due to their adultery spoiling the reputation of their Muslim Afghani family (Daly, *Toronto Sun*, 26 Jan 2012, accessed 27 Jan 2012, p. 1). Eighty per cent of women in Pakistan, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, in her documentary on Pakistani women ‘Saving Face’, states, are either burned, killed or beaten to death for having a voice and saying no to patriarchy, and asserting their will (Chinoy 16 Jan 2013; 28 October 2015). Such incidents might have more to do as Hayden Smith says, with ‘culture and tradition’ (*Metro*, 30 July 2010, p. 5) and nothing to do as Yaqin puts it, with ‘faith’ (2011, p. 73) or Islam, but Islam is, in both Moghissi’s and Ghorashi’s terms politicised and (mis)used to control woman and her freedom (Moghissi and Ghorashi 2010, p. 1-8). Shakir’s poetry, all four collections written between 1977 and 1990, has been influenced by and has responded to both the cultural and traditional restrictions on a woman and then on top of that the state politics of Zia’s Islamisation (1977-1989) which placed woman subordinate to man. The martial law administration of President Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008) has amended these ‘draconian laws’ (Haroon 1995, p. 183; Ahsan 1999, p.1). In a Geo TV interview on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2008, Musharraf stated that he has rescinded all the laws in the Hudood Ordinance which affected women, though the Hudood Ordinance cannot be repealed due to other Islamic Laws (Musharraf 16 March 2008; Haroon 1995).

Though amendments were made to the Hudood Ordinance (Usmani 2006; Mughal 2007), the laws against women had begun to have a subtle but clearly visible effect on society (Alavi 2009; Haqqani 2005; Ahmad 1990). The freedom of press, poets and writers was affected significantly as ‘only books approved by military men in charge of the press and information department could be published’ (Salim 1994, p. 87). Furthermore, text books were rewritten with an Islamist ideological agenda (Haqqani 2005). After the anti-pornography campaign, women were ordered to cover their heads in public (Haqqani 2005; Gardezi 1994, p. 51-58). Young couples were ‘stopped and harassed if the police thought that they might be courting; bigamy came back in through the back door’ (Ahmad 1990, p. 17; Alavi 2009, p. 9-10). As time went on, the Islamisation campaign had the effect of escalating violence against women. The overall matter of grave concern was that *divine sanction* was being used for the purpose of discrimination against women and minorities (Jahangir & Jilani 1990). The activism of the Women’s Action Forum (WAF) prevented the Law of Evidence from being instituted. The most noticeable difference in WAF and other women's groups at that time was that the WAF crusade was born out of a conscious need to ‘counter the hegemony of Zia's Islamic state’ (Shaheed & Warraich 1998, p. 297; Haroon 1995; Toor 2011). Before the women’s movement gained momentum, the damage had been done. Cultural events became ‘men-only affairs with music, singing and dancing virtually disappearing from the stages’ (Ahmad 1990, p. 17; Haqqani 2005; Alavi 2009; Toor 2011). Television became a powerful weapon of ‘religious propaganda’ (Ahmad 1990, p. 17). Hamza Alavi, in his article ‘Pakistani Women in a Changing Society’ summarises the whole decade in a few lines. He states:

The decade of the 1980s was [...] a decade of degradation of Pakistani women. The Zia regime, in its search for legitimacy, in the name of Islam, embarked upon a series of measures that were designed to undermine what little existed by way of women’s legal rights, educational facilities and career opportunities – as well as the simple right for freedom of movement and protection from molestation from males. This galvanised women of the country into militant action in defence of their rights. The military regime’s actions, rhetoric and propaganda created an atmosphere which encouraged bigoted and mischievous individuals to take the ‘law’ into their own hands and harass women under the pretext of enforcing ‘Islamic’ norms of dress or, indeed, for simply appearing in public. Such lawlessness was allowed to go on with impunity. Women had to defend themselves not only vis-a-vis the state but also against hostile mischief makers in the society at large. Such attacks still continue. The women have fought back (2009, p. 1).

The effects on women poets of Zia's Islamisation policies during his eleven-year regime were referred to earlier on in the section on 'Shakir in the context of Pakistani women poets'.

Pakistan returned to democracy after the death of General Zia-ul-Haq and with the election of Benazir Bhutto in 1988 (Rushdie 1991, p. 53-58; Haqanni 2005). Even then, sixty nine years after Pakistan's creation, the instability of Pakistan continues due to corruption and the tug between dictatorship and democracy. Benazir Bhutto remained in office for two years until 1990, when she was removed on charges of corruption by the then President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan. After her dismissal, an interim government was formed for three months and elections were held. This time people elected the opposition leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. His stay in office ended after three years in 1993, when he, too, was dismissed on charges of corruption by President Farooq Leghari. Benazir Bhutto returned to power for another three years from 1993 to 1996, when she was removed again for corruption. In 1997 Nawaz Sharif returned as Prime Minister for the second time, staying in power until 1999, when his government was overthrown by the military dictatorship of General Pervez Musharraf. He ruled Pakistan for eight years until 6<sup>th</sup> September 2008. In December 2007, Benazir Bhutto was killed in a terrorist attack in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, whilst on her election campaign rally. After her death her party, the Pakistan People's Party, won the elections in 2008, and remained in power until 2013. In 2013 elections, Nawaz Sharif became the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and remains so until the next general elections take place in 2018.

### Chapter Structure

The following four chapters are structured around all four collections of Shakir's poetry: *Khushboo* (Fragrance) (1977), *Sadburg* (Marigold) (1980), *Khud-Kalami* (Talking to Oneself) (1985), and *Inkaar* (Refusal / Denial) (1990). This structure facilitates the analysis of both the biographical and autobiographical accounts and the poetic journey of Shakir's life, giving a wider scope to the study.

Chapter one provides an introduction to *ghazal* (love poetry) through Shakir's first stage of life as a young *larki* (girl), a teenage lover, signified through fragrance. The purpose is to focus on Shakir's unconventional love poetry. It is based on her first collection, *Khushboo* (Fragrance), which can be read as a dialogic engagement with English poets such as John Donne, John Keats and T.S. Eliot. Shakir uses different images and themes from

their poetical works to represent the patriarchal oppression of women in her society. The first stage (the unconventional female romantic) is, in Moi's terms, the conscious awareness of the modern or new woman (Moi 1986). In her poetic role as a teenage girl and a lover, Shakir also initiates a dialogue with her own culture, a culture which is hostile to women. This intercultural dialogue bridges the cultural divide between east and west. It also interlocks and connects the diversity when eastern thought merges with western thought, making it transcultural and breaking western cultural dominance. The poems selected are written by an 'unconventional' woman – Shakir. When I use 'unconventional' I am suggesting that her poetry is based on her sexual awareness. This awareness is the extension of her *nisvani* identity which is unconventional because it goes beyond the traditional *nisvani* image constructed by the patriarchy or beyond; in Friedan's terms, *The Feminine Mystique*, as she is more open and not silent about her girlish desires. The chapter frames Cixous's idea of stealing language back from men and bringing the female body and its desires into her text, but does not go as far, and to as full an extent, as Cixous. Cixous is cited to help the reader understand that there are some small changes that come in Shakir's work, which might be unnoticeable from a western feminist perspective. The chapter is a reflection of that early stage in her poetry where she is a girl in the dream world of love and romance, thus projecting her first layer as a female romantic poet who transgresses her boundaries, but also as a love poet projecting her relationship with men and patriarchy. She is not a clear feminist as she is neither fully anti-sexist nor fully anti-patriarchal. Elsewhere in the chapter we also hear her, in Moi's terms, 'marginalised' (1986, p. 205) voice framing Spivak's concept of subaltern (1988) complaining about the restrictions imposed upon young girls in her culture and society. The chapter is brought to an end by a brief critical view on open sexuality in *Khushboo*. It also highlights the tension between Shakir's conscious awareness and the restrictions imposed on her freedom of thought, which in turn tie into a key issue of female identity and individual freedom.

Chapter two shifts from love themes to more political themes; it plots the radical voice of Shakir engaged politically in a dialogue with her patriarchal construct, where Islamic laws and culture controls her identity and makes woman subordinate to man. Informed by her own personal life, the chapter analyses the contradictions and tensions she faces as a married woman and then as a female poet. It voices Partha Chatterjee's concept of unequal status given to the woman as defined in the essay 'The Nation and its Women' (1993). The chapter, which is based on her second collection, *Sadburg* (Marigold), slightly deviates from focusing on her western influences and focuses on Shakir's poetic role as a social radical, a step

forward from sexual awareness to a more political awareness, where she responds to the unjust laws against women brought into force by the martial law regime in order to suppress women. Her poetic image as a teenage girl and a lover in the first chapter changes to that of a rebel who openly writes against such laws that reduce her identity to a mere object. It is metaphorically symbolised through the flower motif, *Sadburg* (Marigold), which literally means one hundred petals but, ambivalently, can also imply being torn apart. Shakir uses a metaphorical image because of the political pressure due to martial law and military censorship policies. The image is significant, as it evaluates her role as a woman during the implementation of Islamic laws, and in particular the martial law introduced by the Zia-ul-Haq regime, which affected women adversely. This is framed by Sara Suleri's insight into the image of a Pakistani woman reflected in her chapter, 'Women Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition' in which she uses the term double colonisation: colonisation firstly under the patriarchal society and secondly under Muslim law (Suleri 1992, p. 756-769). We could add a third colonisation under the then martial law regime. The chapter will analyse the poems based on their social, religious and political backgrounds, alongside Shakir's poem 'Macbeth', which Shakir borrows from the Shakespearean tragedy *Macbeth* to re-accentuate that there is something rotten (Hamlet 2010) in the state of Pakistan. The chapter also reflects on how Shakir clings to her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* sensibility in her desire for a home and a husband along with the rebellious anger of a feminist, thus reflecting traditional feminine/feminist aspects simultaneously. The chapter represents the persisting conflict and tension in Shakir's life: the tension in maintaining a balance; poise between her eastern 'feminine' *nisvani* identity and her western feminist radical approach.

Chapter three is self-revelatory; it examines Shakir's self-reflection and realisation when she 'talks to herself' both as addresser and addressee (Bakhtin 1981). Informed by Shakir's own position as a real mother, it frames Ranjana Ash's (1991), Partha Chatterjee's (1993) (eastern) and Jane Bryce-Okunlola's (1991) (African) perspective of a woman's struggle as an eastern mother in her motherland, as well as motherhood as a metaphor for creativity. The chapter is structured around the third book, *Khud-Kalami* (Talking to Oneself), which explores Shakir's disillusionment and the continued torn-apart image due to the hostility of her society towards women, which gives a feeling that a dialogue is not possible (Shakir 1994, p. 89). When dialogue with the outer world is not possible she talks to herself, as the title suggests. This dialogue with herself as addresser and addressee both as a subject and as an object, is a method she uses to evaluate her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* position as an eastern mother, which is structured around the ideals of womanhood in a

patriarchal society. Furthermore, failing to see any change in the social and political environment, she takes refuge in her real role as a mother. Her dialogue with Farogh Furrukhzad, a Muslim feminist from Iran, which highlights a similarity and dissimilarity in their personal lives, as single parents, will be analysed. The chapter highlights Shakir's traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* sensibility as a dutiful and sacrificing mother in her mother–son relationship. 'Feminine' is used here both as *nisvani*, a traditional mother and a metaphorical mother, who is a creator - in that sense a writer, a critic. So as a writer she expresses her feminist anger by criticising the social and cultural construct which has silenced the women of her society, in this sense Moi's 'marginalised' and 'suppressed' voice. The chapter further explores the tension between Shakir's tendencies towards the patriarchal system she rebelled against and her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* position. The chapter concludes by looking at Shakir's realisation that she cannot be a fully-fledged feminist in her Muslim culture, at her emphasis on maintaining poise; a balance between these two positions, and the importance of family unity to survive in the Pakistani cultural context. The chapter aims to establish the key point that female identity in a Muslim cultural construct is not a simple issue.

Chapter four provides a study of a Pakistani woman in a third-world context, emphasising the difficulty of applying western feminist liberal ideas to the international (third-world, Muslim) scenario. It is based on her fourth collection, *Inkaar* (Denial / Refusal), which symbolically reflects her refusal to accept the present Islamic and patriarchal construct. Due to the political change in the country from military dictatorship to democracy after eleven years, there is freedom of expression in Shakir's poetry. Therefore, influenced by the new political climate, there is a shift to a more direct style of criticism. Maintaining the concept of dialogism, the chapter will further focus on the more open and challenging approach of Shakir's dialogue with the political, cultural and religious order of her society. For this she self-consciously makes a stylistic shift from the love themes of *ghazal* to the common day-to-day problems of third-world women and her nation by writing in a new poetic form, *nasri nazm* or prose poetry. Shakir talked about social and political problems earlier on as well, but now they are generally more mundane and therefore prosaic. Themes such as domestic violence, where the majority of poor housewives are illiterate and are treated no better than animals; subjugation and mistreatment of women, sexual abuse and suicide are the focus. It also focuses on themes like hypocrisy and the dishonesty of her male-dominated nation. It contributes to our understanding of the way modern women writers are changing the concept of the passivity and invisibility of women by shaping a new woman. Once again the chapter focuses on how Shakir presents her sexual desires in a more

restrained and mature way, unlike the passionate depiction we looked at in the first chapter. The crucial tension between the traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* and ‘feminist’ (radical, cultural critic) poetry that prevailed throughout her previous collections eases in her last collection. Informed by the third-world feminist theories of Spivak, Mohanty and Suleri, we see a real problem with Euro-American feminism and its approaches when trying to work within a third-world Islamic framework. The focus of the chapter is to analyse Shakir’s development through her poetry. We see her slow incremental move between the two positions, traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* and ‘feminist’, and then to some extent reaching a compromise stage where in the end she is not a feminist activist by western standards (anti-patriarchal, anti-sexist) (Moi 1986) due to her social, cultural and religious background. She might be a radical from the Pakistani perspective, but from a western perspective this may be nothing. The chapter ends on a note of recognition for the importance of creating new discourses for the study of other cultures and religions.

The purpose of this introduction has been to establish the key themes that will shape the argument in the thesis as a whole – the influences of English literature and her own culture on Shakir’s poetry. The objective of the thesis is thus to unveil the complex and diverse layers of the poetic voices of Shakir as a girl, a woman, a mother, and finally a self-reflective writer/critic, which contributes to our understanding of Shakir’s poetry in light of her socio-cultural, political and religious context. Though the thesis is based on a balanced approach from colonial and postcolonial theories, different feminist approaches are applied to the study in order to analyse the stages of Shakir’s poetic development in an Islamic and patriarchal environment.

## Chapter 1

*Khushboo* (Fragrance): A portrait of the poet as a young girl

### Introduction

This chapter provides a study of Shakir's unconventional love poetry in her first collection, *Khushboo* (Fragrance) (1977). The word 'unconventional' indicates that her poetry is based on her sexual awareness, which goes beyond the traditional *nisvani* image constructed by patriarchy. The emphasis is on the first phase of the poet as a young girl symbolised through a flower motif. While looking briefly at the forms and themes of *ghazal* (love poetry), to help contextualise Shakir as a *ghazal* love poet, the chapter will primarily focus on the influences of English literature in Shakir's poetry on the one hand and the influences of her own culture on the other. The object of the chapter is to unveil Shakir's feminine sensibility in the persona of a teenage lover. I shall explore, through the selected texts, the constant tension in Shakir's early poetry, where there is an emerging feminist consciousness revealed through Shakir's desire for love and sexuality, and also an awareness of the cultural pressure and restrictions imposed on such liberal ideas.<sup>12</sup> Thus, my argument is that Shakir is in a constant dialogue with her torn and split image, caught between her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* side controlled by the politics of patriarchy which demands submission, and her growing 'feminist' sensibility which reveals her developing radical voice. To analyse these opposing voices I have used Bakhtin's concept of dialogism (Bakhtin 1981) to show how, through borrowing from western culture, Shakir initiates a dialogue between two diverse cultures - east and west on the one hand, and with her own culture and herself on the other (Ibid.). This will be followed by other critical theoretical approaches, such as that of 'hybridity' and 'transculturation' (Bhabha 1994; Pratt 1992, 1999). The term 'borrow' will be used flexibly in the chapter, as sometimes Shakir borrows ideas from the western canonical male writers to criticise the patriarchal dominance of her culture and sometimes to support her own embryonic liberal feminist ideas as a teenage girl in love. The critical feminist approaches drawn from de Beauvoir's definition of the woman as a construct

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<sup>12</sup> While liberal societies are also patriarchal, women are not generally governed by laws which limit their freedom.

of patriarchy will initially define Shakir's selected texts (de Beauvoir 1963, 1988). Shakir's unconventional love poetry brings sexual desire into her writing; this reveals the new dimension of emphasising the significance of female sexuality. It will be analysed through Cixous's feminist approach (Cixous 1981, 1996) and Shakir's marginalised position will be informed by Spivak's theoretical framework (1988). The chapter ends with a brief critical commentary on the theme of open sexuality in the selected love poetry of *Khushboo*.

### The poems

The concept of re-writing the canon,<sup>13</sup> a popular device in post-colonial literature, frames the three poems selected in the chapter to show how, through the dialogic engagement with English canonical poets, the politics of male-domination and the question of a woman's identity in her Pakistani cultural context are analysed. The poems are: 'Ecstasy', 'Wasteland' and 'Nun' (Shakir 1977, p. 37, p. 87, p. 53). They are also a significant reflection of the playfulness and budding sexuality in a young girl.

Another three short poems, *Departmental store mein* (In a Departmental Store), *Aaina* (Mirror), and *Sirf aik larki* (Only a Girl), reveal a dialogue with her own culture. All the six poems have been selected for multiple reasons, primarily to enhance the argument on many layers and the complexities in the understanding of the word 'woman' in the Pakistani context projected through her first phase as a young girl writing unconventional love poetry. Furthermore, they have been chosen to contextualise Shakir's cultural restrictions and setting and to familiarise the international English-language reader with the context of the text, and to reveal a Pakistani girl in a male-dominated society. These poems aim to expose how, in Pakistani society, a young girl is a victim of strict norms if she falls in love. They inform the reader that she lives in a society where she should not take the liberty of falling in love, and if, unfortunately, she does, she keeps hiding it from her father and brother lest she brings a bad name to her family and becomes a victim of honour killing. A young girl in love is depicted as a criminal, and the crime is so big and unforgivable that she has to be thrown behind the iron bars of the restrictive customs and traditions of her society. Moreover, they

<sup>13</sup> Warner, Marina. *Indigo*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1993 ('Inspired by *The Tempest*, Indigo traces the scars of colonialism across continents': back cover).

Plasa, Carl. Ed. *Icon Readers' Guide: Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea*. Cambridge: Icon Books, 2001 (This is an intertextual dialogue between *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* looking at the exploitation of woman by men; feminist and postcolonial approaches giving rise to theoretical debate on the politics of narrative, and the writer's own position as a Creole; woman analysing the question of identity (Contents, 2001, p. 4).

also emphasise the significance of the flower symbol projecting the feminine romantic self of Shakir: the idealised version of love that every teenage girl gets to at some point. The girl experiences a typical outpouring of teenage love symbolised through fragrance; the language speaks forcefully about the blossoming of a flower, the significance of the needs of the body, about dreams and fantasies, the age of desires, sleepless moonlit nights, and a young girl's sexual awareness and unawareness of the world around, as well as a vision for the future, a future of a free independent world of her own, and then she becomes aware of her marginalised position where her freedom is controlled. This style of unawareness, in Moi's terms, is writing by women who are unaware of their own oppression in that writing, until feminism makes them aware of it. Finally, the flower motif is important as it structures the whole thesis: it symbolises Shakir's growth where she blossoms, then wilts and withers, and we see this in her poetry where women are controlled in her society.

A handful of poems from each of her four collections (spread over four chapters) are selected as a sampling of Shakir's work at large with the intention to summarise major themes in her work (in this chapter, six from *Khushboo*). Each collection contains 'ghazals (love poems) and nazms all free or blank-verse poems', and Naim states that 'Shakir is good at both' (Naim 1995, p. 7). Before I analyse the selected texts, I will briefly explain the term *ghazal*, love poetry, as Shakir is predominantly a *ghazal* poet.

### **Defining ghazal**

The word *ghazal* is an Arabic word which means 'talking to women' and has been a popular form of poetry since the sixteenth century (Farooqi et al 1984, p. 1; Naim 1974 p. 189; Farid 1994; Russell 1969). Originally the *ghazal* was addressed to the beloved of Persian poets (Farid 1994). Similar to a Shakespearean sonnet, the traditional form of *ghazal* has a structured rhyme scheme, with individual couplets, each couplet different in meaning and interpretation (Ahmad 1990, p. 3). The conventional rhyme scheme of a *ghazal* is AA, BA, CA, DA and so on, in which the double rhyming first couplet is known as *matla* (introduction), the middle is *hasil-e ghazal* where the poet explains the experience of his love, and the last couplet is called *maqta* (conclusion) which usually includes *takhallus*: mention of the poet's name (Russell 1969, Farid 1994, p. 51-52; Faruqi and Pritchett 1984, p. 117). The main characters of the *ghazal* are the beloved, *mashuq*, and lover, *ashiq*. In traditional *ghazal* the poet always uses the male gender of his beloved even though the beloved is often undoubtedly a female (Russell 1969, p. 108, 1992; Farid 1994). The themes of the traditional

*ghazal* are generally love themes, which revolve around amorous love, ‘*ishq-e majazi*’ - always unrequited, and divine love ‘*ishq-e haqiqi*’ (Farid 1994; Naim 1974; Russell 1969, p. 114). The amorous love is always focused around the cruel beloved and the crazed lover who never achieves the beloved. The main aim of the *ghazal* poets was not to depict the joy of union, but the difficulties the lover goes through, annihilating the self, which characterises his success (Russell 1969; 1992). Annemarie Schimmel summed up the classical theme of love, both amorous and divine, as ‘annihilation of self’ (Schimmel 1979, p. 75). This annihilation of self is what Shakir is conflicting with throughout her personal life and poetic career: the individual inside her who wants freedom from social, cultural and religious pressures. Moreover, Shakir does not only use ‘a grammatical feminine gender, ... but something more, a feminine sensibility anchored in a woman’s experience in Urdu society’ (Naim 1995, p. 7-8). This is reference to an active, not passive, role of woman’s experience as a female lover (as will be discussed in the selected texts). Furthermore, not annihilating the self, in another direction, is an appropriation of her feminist awareness as a poet. Shakir strongly believes that the two experiences, the physical and the spiritual, in Naim’s words, ‘must be equally honestly felt and given a voice’ and not annihilated (Naim 1995, p. 8); *Khushboo* begins on a similar note.

To annihilate the self of woman in *ghazal*, the early twentieth century reformists attempted to change the themes of classical *ghazal* by bringing them down from the sublime themes of love and mysticism to ordinary themes easily understood by the common man. The aim on the one hand was to bring reforms so as to get rid of the obsession of love in *ghazal* and to bring poetry in tune with the present time as part of social reforms (Kanda 1998, p. 1-2; Ali 1988, p. 49-50); on the other hand the reformists accorded women with a new sense of responsibility, where from her position of open sexuality and sentimentality in *ghazal* she was given a purely religious role. They were to be, in Francis Robinson’s terms, ‘the mistresses of private Islamic space, the central transmitters of Islamic values, the symbols of Islamic identity, the guardians of millions of domestic Islamic shrines’ (Robinson 1997, p. 7; Mernissi 1991). The Progressive writers in the 1930s did support social reforms but could not break from the fascination of *ghazal* and responded to both romantic and political stances which are a special aspect of modern romantics (Zaheer 2006; Kanda 1998, p. 7-14; Coppola 1974, Ali 1988; Zeno 1995). Shakir is a Progressive and a modern romantic<sup>14</sup> in that sense. Even though Shakir’s *ghazal* does not follow the conventional rhyming style consistently

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<sup>14</sup> The term ‘modern romantic’ refers to the twentieth century writers and poets who bring a sexual element into their poetry.

(Zeno 1995), its themes and form manage to use classical representation of sexuality successfully to absorb the traditional *ghazal* in a modern setting (Zeno 1995). Another aspect Shakir does not follow (apart from conventional rhyme scheme and masculine gender) is the traditional role of male as lover and female as beloved. Shakir is therefore not traditional as there is role reversal (Russell 1992, p. 43-44) in her *ghazal* poetry, in that the female (Shakir) is the lover who is always sacrificing and the beloved is male who holds the power and who is cruel, unfaithful and hypocritical. This is the basic framework in all her collections, where she metaphorically addresses the different issues in different stages of her life and poetry, framing her position as a Pakistani woman situated in the Islamic construct.

### ***Khushboo*: an introduction**

*Khushboo* begins with an interesting foreword focusing on the major theme and tensions of Shakir's poetry: the journey of a young girl in love ready to spread love around and the difficulties she encounters in her male-dominated society. In her long foreword Shakir introduces herself as a young girl, who wants to love and be loved which is the focal theme of *Khushboo* (Shakir interviewed by Abbas 1994, p. 8). In Luce Irigaray's terms, she started 'her voyage ... in search of her identity in love' (1992, p. 4). This, according to Irigaray is the critical step. Here is a brief extract from the foreword entitled *Dareecha-e gul se*, 'From the Flower's Casement':

A *larki* (girl) standing on the crumbling threshold of fleeting moments is wondering what to say to you at this time. Many years ago, in the stillness of one night, she prayed to her Lord to reveal to her all secrets of the girl inside her. I am sure that her Lord must have smiled at her simplicity (Adolescent girls do not know that the calamity of awareness has not befallen on the people of this earth). But the Lord agreed, and at an age when girls wish for the moon, she was given the magical keys of the thousand-door city of the self. [...] *Khushboo* is the story of this journey... the journey of picking the petals of [these] flowers and searching herself in mirror through mirror. In this process, either the image became cloudy or her fingers get wounded severely, but she continues her journey of introducing the fragrance with full confidence in the jungle of savages (tr. with the help of Bakht) (Shakir, Foreword *Khushboo* 1977, p. 17-18).

This dialogue with herself projects three major points in *Khushboo*: a) the journey of a young *larki* (girl) in love, b) her search for self and c) her struggle in the male-dominated society she calls a 'jungle of savages'. In this journey sometimes she is hurt, she bleeds, but she continues to gather flowers and petals. Shakir, Rubina Shabnam (2005; 2006) states, looks at man (beloved/husband) as cruel, unfaithful, hypocritical and disloyal, yet she never

gives up her desire to love. All her consequent collections are an extension of this young girl, whose journey then moves to a woman in *Sadburg* (chapter two), a single mother in *Khud-Kalami* (chapter three), and then a poet and critic in *Inkaar* (chapter four), who is also a poet and a writer all in one: girl/wife/mother/poet/writer (Naim 1995, p. 10-11). It is her evolving and developing process as a poet and a woman.

The most interesting term in the foreword is the poet's description of herself. She calls herself a *larki* (girl) not an *aurat* (woman). It is important in multiple ways. First it refers to her Pakistani culture where the term 'girl' is related to social status, as generally, a girl becomes a woman when she is attached to a man, that is, when she gets married. Then, keeping in mind that the young author herself is not married and in that sense a *larki*, in her cultural context, any feeling of physical desire must be suppressed.

At this age, in a girl, there is a certain immaturity, or limited understanding, and her interests are confined to a small circle; she has a limited world, which rotates around just one concept, and that is a man. He can be a father or a brother who gives her protection, or even *mehboob* (lover), who gives love and confidence to her. The very first experience in life of this Pakistani girl is of *muhabbat* (love). Poetically she thinks in colours and feels in fragrance, which reflects her dream world. So when the Pakistani girl is surrounded by the image of the lover, *Khushboo* (fragrance), in the loneliness of the night, she keeps hiding this secret so as not to lose the respect of her father and brother even though this secrecy is not in her favour.

### Poems of hidden love

The poems *Departmental store mein* (In a Departmental Store) and *Aaina* (Mirror) are true representations of the tension in a young girl who is in love but hides her feelings.

#### *Departmental store mein* (In a Departmental Store)

The natural pink of pearl (lipstick);  
 Hand-lotion of Revlon;  
 Blush-on of Elizabeth Arden.  
 Has a new shade of nail-polish arrived in the Medora?  
 Do you have a lipstick  
 In the shade of my scarf?  
 Yes, please give me the Tulip shampoo as well.

I just remembered:  
 The tweezers that I got a few days ago are useless.  
 Please give me another  
 And just make the bill.

There, the bottle of scent, lying in the corner:  
 Please show it to me.  
 Let me test it.  
 (O, my God,  
 This is his favourite fragrance,  
 Wafting from his clothes always)  
 Now what's its price?  
 So much!  
 Why don't you do this?  
 The other things I'll take some other time.  
 Today, you just pack this scent.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khushboo* 1977, p. 176).

The subject of the poem is buying makeup in a culture where wearing makeup is considered immodest. This is similar to the theme of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (Satrapi 2008), where Satrapi, growing up in Iran, desperately wants to wear make-up, but she is not supposed to. In the first place she is in Iran, and she has to be covered. Based on the graphic novel of Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* is the biographical story of Satrapi, a story of a rebellion, of a fun-loving tomboyish experience of the adolescence of a teenager exiled in Vienna, Austria, during the tyrannical Islamic revolution in Iran. In Vienna the benefits of freedom turned out to be even worse than the repressive rule she left behind. She finally returns to Iran as an adult, alien to her own culture, as she is now influenced by western culture as well (Ibid.). As a child growing up in Iran, she was told that the women who are virtuous will reign, and those who are not will burn in hell. The concept of virtue meant that she should cover her head and be submissive, gentle and quiet; she was not allowed to wear sneakers as running is unfeminine, immodest; listening to Michael Jackson was not allowed as it is not their culture; she should wear long pants, and not put on make-up, as simplicity is virtue. As a teenage radical she kept arguing against her religion's attitude to fashion (Ibid.). She wanted to live a normal teenage life, which she could not because of religious and cultural oppression. As an adult, a divorce in her religion means a woman losing her integrity; every man wants to sleep with her because a divorced woman receives no respect in Muslim society. She was told that even if she does not love her husband, she should stay with him, and not to get divorced. At least she would be respected, she was told. However, she could not as she did not love him, and chose to be divorced from him (Ibid.).

When we look at Shakir, as a young writer of the poems of *Khushboo*, situated in her cultural context, it is similar to Satrapi, especially the first phase as a young teenage girl. If we follow through, even Shakir chose divorce and then lived a shattered life, in a culture where divorce is considered a curse for a woman; she preferred solitude by choice rather than living with a second sex status. The majority of the poems selected are a reflection of that suppression and tension where Shakir could not live a normal teenage life.

In the poem, buying cosmetics might not look like a restriction, but of course wearing it is in her cultural context, and in doing so she is crossing beyond that context, as her budding desires are ruling her. The poem makes the presence of the writer known by the use of the pronouns 'I' and 'me'. The poem links with a young girl's desire for perfumes, lipsticks, rouge and nail polish. These desires are very natural. They might not be innocent from Islamic cultural perspectives, but very normal for a young girl. When in love, a girl wants to look beautiful, a natural desire that unconsciously clashes with her cultural restrictions. It also reflects the culture which is controlling, a culture where woman is struggling to get independence and have a voice of her own. The freedom to buy cosmetics demonstrates her economic independence especially imported goods. Although wearing cosmetics is considered immodest, there is no restriction on buying it.

The overriding use of the colour pink does not only reflect her age, but is also gender specific.<sup>15</sup> There is a mention of pink lipstick and of course, the blusher is probably pink, and if the scarf is the same colour as the lipstick then again the scarf is also pink. The tulips could be pink too. So this whole list of pink-coloured items overwhelmingly emphasises the age of the person who is buying them. Pink is firstly associated with youth and blooming desires, and then with freshness and beauty.

The only thing that has disappointed her is the tweezers. Across cultures tweezers are used to remove unwanted hair and to promote beauty. The irony is that the tweezers she bought are useless. As salespeople in Pakistan unlike in the West, are usually men, the giving of useless tweezers can be read metaphorically as signifying a woman's inability to change the established structure of patriarchy, because the power given to her by patriarchy is not enough, not even equal, thus signifying the hypocrisy of her male-dominated society.

It is also important to note the use of the word 'scent'. We are not given a clear indication as to who the scent is for, except for the use of the pronoun 'his' in parenthesis. Usually men use colognes and not perfumes – scent. However, the perfume that always

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<sup>15</sup> See Jo B. Paoletti's book *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America*. USA: Indiana University Press, 2012.

emanates from ‘his’ clothes may be some other woman’s. This can be read on one level as the disloyalty of her beloved. In that sense it underlines the naivety, innocence and certain amount of unawareness in the girl. The remarks in parenthesis can also be read as someone talking to herself; a silent voice within. She cannot say out loud that her lover smells of that perfume, because the salesman will hear her, and also she fears losing her reputation, as in her culture a young teenage girl is strictly under the control of her cultural restrictions and is not supposed to talk of love or to fall in love. The poem ends on a note of sacrifice, where she postpones buying all the things she loves, for a perfume for her hypocritical, unfaithful beloved. The issue of sacrificing or suppressing her identity, for one reason or another, starts picking up its origin in this chapter, and builds and develops with a more feminist awareness by the time we reach chapter four. This search for female identity in Pakistani culture is also the thread which keeps the four chapters bound together.

Fahmida Riaz, Shakir’s contemporary feminist poet finds these love themes and searching for one’s identity in love very limited because she argues that in such poems as these, their fragrance temporarily touches the soul, passes through the heart, but does not touch the mind. Shakir’s poem entitled ‘*Mas’ala*’ (Problem/Question) describes an encounter with Riaz, who tells Shakir:

Perveen! [Shakir] as I watched you read  
 I remembered my old self  
 The days when I’d write like you.  
 But now those poems are faint dreams;  
 I’ve disowned all of them  
 (tr. Naim 1995, p. 10).

The problem with Riaz is that she has disowned her feminine sensibility: she does not sexually submit or commit to men, her poetry is not emotional or sentimental, and there are very few love themes in her feminist political agenda. Her agenda as a feminist is to write poetry focused on the quest for female emancipation and to seek results as a national spokesperson (Yaqin 2001; Hussein 2004). For Riaz, poetry is a means to liberate the stereotype of a traditional Muslim woman and to transform her into, in Yaqin’s words, a ‘sexually liberated individual woman poet’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 123; 2007). She does not sing songs of lost love and crazed lovers. As, in Baidar Bakht’s words, a ‘clear[ly]’ ‘hard core feminist[s]’ (1995, p. 6) she has no sympathy for the suffering women of love themes, breaking of hearts, and sighs of pain because of a departed lover, because she argues the woman is not ‘liberated’ from men but always linked with men to fulfil her/his sexual drive.

In doing so women speak the language of patriarchy, a language of dominance, rather than challenging it. In comparison Shakir is unique as she celebrates femininity and articulates her desire for love and physical relationship, and in doing so she also criticises her culture which suffocates her by putting restrictions on such a freedom. It is ironic though that Riaz's most ground-breaking poems like 'The Laughter of a Woman' and 'She is a Woman Impure' are based on the themes of female sexuality; she is 'singing' in 'ecstasy' asking 'winds to kiss her face', 'in her body lies hidden her freedom' she writes; and that 'patriarchy cannot buy her' 'ecstasy' is reflected in the poem ('The Laughter of a Woman') (Hussein 2004, p. 48). Aamir Hussein observes that Riaz brings the pleasures of love into her poetry and 'celebrate[s] femininity in ways that French feminist theorists Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray were to do' (Ibid., p. xii). These French feminists use psychoanalysis as a strategy of woman's liberation from patriarchal control. They oppose male language and symbols and instead insist that a woman should write about her experience and joy of sexual pleasures in her own language. What Shakir is doing here is similar; she is bringing her desires, the desires of the girl inside her, into her poetry, and giving it a feminist reading in *Khushboo*. What Riaz is suggesting through 'disowned' '[her] old self' is that Shakir should operate independently and not in relation to men.

Shakir's dialogic response to this criticism is that her aim as a poet is to see her art growing step-by-step, where youth is the first step. Shakir is about to take a journey as a poet to explore the different truths about the life of a girl, a girl who moves on to be a woman, a mother and a poet. In that sense her poetry is in its infancy, as it has just started its journey as a young girl, more importantly a young girl in love. She is not married, so has no utterances of that feeling as a wife, nor anything to reveal about motherly emotions. In the poem *Tanquid aur takhliq* (Criticism and Creativity) she quotes Riaz's lines first and then her own answer:

"Your poetry is only *khushbu*  
Pleasing to the heart  
Touching the spirit with a moisture laden hand  
But this – will only clothe it in colour...  
Try and present it in unfathomable words  
There should be some depth to your thought- !"

You are telling the truth  
But – see my craft is in infancy  
(Please allow it to dream)  
(Please do not confuse it in complex intelligence)  
I do not desire – that my craft

Should grow old before it's young  
 And lean on the staff of philosophy!  
 (tr. Bakht 2003, p. 485).

Topics like the oppression of young girls are not a temporary but a permanent issue in Pakistani society. Shakir is talking about a social and cultural issue of female subjugation and control. Theoretically, this dialogue helps us to see different, complex and multiple layers of this teenage girl in love. The tension prevails in her poetry where she is happy and excited about being in love, but she also keeps hiding her feelings because of the fear that she will give her family a bad name and that she may become a victim of honour killing; there is a sadness underlined there. In fact the poem 'In a Departmental Store' can be read as a Pakistani cultural store where women are marginalised, confined and controlled. Such a female text, Moi believes, is intended 'to open up [topic such as the oppression of young girls] for debate, not to put an end to it', where politics of female control and marginality are the key issues (Moi 1986, p. 220).

Even though Shakir has talked with reference to her personal life in *Khushboo*, it contextualised her society by bringing in, as Moi says, the 'repressed' and marginal[ised]' (Ibid., p. 220) topic of sex and sexuality, which has, as Farida Shaheed writes, 'conflicted' with the socio-political and religious order of her patriarchal culture (Shaheed 1991, p. 140). So she brings in a political issue through a personal female voice (Rich 1986).

Moreover, my study is not just limited to biographical writing, but goes beyond and outlines political implications as well. Since the text is analysed theoretically, every reading, in Nasta's terms, gives a new layer (2000) to her poetry. Her contemporary female poets see her work at just surface level. To say that there is no depth, because it is simple love poetry is to underrate Shakir's poetry. Even Shakir herself is a little naïve in her own comments on *Khushboo* that it is 'simple love poetry' with 'no philosophy' (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 87). The poem may appear simple, but at a philosophical level it refers to Bakhtin's concept of a dialogue which Shakir has within herself and her culture, a culture which is a source of constant fear and pressure for young girls. Moreover, since we are looking at different layers of Shakir's poetry, it can give a choice to her reader of enjoying it at surface level as love poetry or probing deeper.

Her dialogue with western culture in the poem makes it even more significant theoretically as we see a number of western names in the poem merging into Shakir's eastern culture. In Pratt's terms, it is an interlocking of two diverse cultures through the merging of

east and west (1992), while in Bhabha's theory it is hybridity which reflects the interdependence of the east and the west. The names like Revlon, Elizabeth Arden, Medora, and Tulip shampoo are not just simple names but entail the whole philosophical framework of Homi Bhabha and Mary Louise Pratt. Bhabha refers to this as intercultural interaction where eastern culture interacts with western culture and this builds an intercultural relationship and reinforces Bhabha's concept of cultural interdependence (Bhabha 1994, p. 28). This poem, through these names, illustrates what Bhabha calls cultural interdependence. Pratt uses the term 'transculturation', which she describes as a term to explain how marginalised groups, once under colonial rule, take ideas from dominant cultures (western) and use them in their own (eastern) postcolonial context (1992 p. 6, 1999). This, on the one hand, helps the marginalised groups to develop, and on the other hand, historically connect to their colonial past through terms like 'transculturation' and 'contact zone'. Hence, this cross-cultural analysis that is western ideas in an eastern context brings in an interconnection between colonialism and postcolonialism. The name of the scent, though, remains anonymous, reinforcing the fear which is linked to its exposure. It is a very famous proverbial saying in Urdu culture that *ishq* (love), and *mushq* (fragrance), can never hide. Then, even though the name is not given, it reflects the speaker's romantic sensibility. Shakir takes this theme a step further in the poem *Aaina* (Mirror) by telling more about her culture.

*Aaina* (Mirror)

Head-bowed.  
 The girl stirs her coffee with a spoon.  
 The boy overcome with love and wonder  
 Kisses the shadows of her long eyelashes  
 With his eyes.  
 They both avoid my eyes  
 Look at each other and giggle.

Far from both of them  
 I am sitting by the window  
 With my head resting on my palms,  
 And watching the outside scene.  
 I recall  
 That we used to laugh like that  
 In days gone by.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khushboo* 1977, p. 216).

In this poem, we have a lover, the beloved, and the intruder who is the speaker of the poem. 'My' is important as it maintains the personal touch. The title of the poem is

significant as the poetry of Shakir is a 'mirror' which reflects the image of her culture; and her poem a dialogue with that culture. The poem opens as a mini one-act play, with two lovers sitting together. The bowed heads can initially be read as being in deep thought; the thought in the next line refers to the boy's desire to kiss the girl, reflecting in Fatima Mernissi's terms, the irresistible attraction of woman, 'a *femme fatale*, who makes men lose their self-control' (1985, p. 31). Mernissi argues that this irresistible attraction is the power of the female body. This image she sees as a seductive image which is a threat to Muslim culture; according to male Muslim theologians it causes *fitna* (chaos) and such power should be controlled through the veil or purda (Mernissi 1985). Similarly Irigaray's theory of the feminine looks at female sexuality positively; the female body as an object of sex and desire; of pleasure (*jouissance*). Irigaray advocates that women should use this power of sexual identity to counter male-domination (1992; 1980). In reality the lover can only kiss 'the shadow of her long lashes', rather than physically touch her, although overcome by love. In analysing the previous poem we talked about makeup; here we come across 'long eyelashes', also indicating youth and beauty. The word 'giggle' is significant as it is a true representation of youth to which giggles are very much linked, justifying why Shakir used this age and not an 'adult's voice of high seriousness' (Naim 1993, p. 183). At the same time it also represents a very feminine but immature act. Considering that 'giggle' is neither loud laughter nor a smile, it is in that sense something inbetween. This inbetween state is significant as it refers to the suppressed state, especially when we look at the lover who cannot kiss his beloved, and then the intruder, who is watching sitting in the window, which is also in a way a suppressed state. It is a 'strange' juxtaposition of giggles and sad eyes (Zaidi 2008, p.1).

Overall, the poem reflects two significant images; on the one hand we are looking at two young lovers who are in a state of confusion about whether to kiss each other or not, and on the other hand we have the poet, also a young girl, who in the poem is deprived of even coming out of her confinement as she watches these two lovers from her window. The poet remembers the days when she too used to laugh and giggle like them, but those days are gone, and are no more. The point is if the two lovers can sit outside and enjoy a cup of coffee, the girl watching from the window can too. The poet leaves the reader guessing and coming to their own conclusion. Keeping in mind her culture it can be an indication of two things: a) her beloved's unavailability which again can indicate his unfaithfulness or b) her fear to meet him due to cultural pressures thus suppressing her feelings which resulted in the end of their relationship. This is further enhanced by the image of the window as it can be identified with oppression and the restrictions of her culture, something she cannot go beyond. Therefore,

she may not be going out for the fear of continuing to do what she was doing in hiding: loving someone, and suppressing her feelings. This, of course, is very common for young girls in the Pakistani Muslim culture. What is uncommon and unconventional is when they break the suppression. So another reading can reveal a significant point that she has gone beyond giggles and laughter, shyness and quietness and crossed the construct built to confine her to the image of a silent and modest girl. Those days are gone when she was the unaware innocent girl she 'used' to be. The word 'shadow' is important as it replaces her 'blurred' image of a girl in the foreword, to that of one who is starting to locate her identity, and is in a state of 'trial' (Irigaray 1992, p. 4; Hohne and Wussow 1994) as she is young, still under the influence of her culture and not very strong in her radical perceptions. Therefore, the words 'recalled', 'used to be' and 'days gone' can identify her act of resistance; breaking the silence and crossing the boundaries. Shakir uses windows, doors and keys very frequently and significantly. Looking back at the foreword to *Khushboo* we are reminded that Shakir has used the breeze (lover) and flower (Shakir) symbols to emphasise sexual desire. So the window which is meant to bring fresh air or a breeze can be read as Shakir's desire for fresh knowledge, as knowledge of, in Mernissi's terms 'sexual satisfaction is necessary for intellectual effort' (Mernissi 2003, p. 498); and this is what Shakir is hinting at. My argument here is that there is a desire to kiss, being in love, but she is restricted culturally. This can be a personal reference to Shakir's first love whom she could not marry due to family pressure and cultural restrictions (Agha 1995, p. 22-24)

The poems of *Khushboo* and the selected texts are based on that experience of a woman in love: sacrificing ideal love; lost and cheated love; pains of unrequited love. Her poetry is 'authentic' according to Amarjit Singh, because it is mostly the expression of felt emotions and personal experience (n.d. p. 3). The poem reinforces the theme of sacrificing in love. Earlier on she sacrificed all the material things she loved, to buy the perfume for her beloved. In this poem as well, she might be moving one step forward by sacrificing her dreams and desires for the sake of her family reputation by not going out. What I am establishing is, one way or the other, in patriarchy it is always women who are sacrificing and are under constant tension and pressure, especially those who are radical. In Moin-ud-din's words, *Khushboo* is the smile of a young girl and the lament of a withered bud who sacrifices her life as well. He further says by taking refuge in romantic colour there is deep satire on the nature of men. Shakir, he states, brings this out through her own personal '*nisvani jazbaat*' (feminine emotions), which brings all other Pakistani women under one umbrella (Moin-ud-din 2011, p. 32-34). Overall, there is a reflection of restriction of cultural pressure and

patriarchal control which conflicts with the idea of freedom. In *Sirf aik larki* Shakir adopts a more direct and radical approach in defining her marginalised position.

*Sirf aik larki* (Only a Girl)

I sit saddened  
 In my cold room.  
 Moist breeze comes  
 Through half-opened windows  
 To touch my body  
 And set me on fire;  
 To tickle me  
 In your name.  
 I wish I had wings  
 To fly to you.  
 I wish I were a breeze  
 To have touched you and returned.  
 But I am nothing.  
 I'm only a girl  
 Captive for life  
 In the iron chains  
 Of stone-hearted traditions.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khushboo* 1977, p. 92).

The direct use of the word *larki* (girl) in the poem is important as it reinforces the theme of *Khushboo*, and the focus on the writer. 'I' is important, re-emphasising subjective and confessional mode. We have two images juxtaposed: cold and fire. Literally she is talking about the 'cold room', and the 'fire' which is a reference to the fire of passion inside her. 'Room' can be linked with the image of a window in the previous poem, there the window let a breeze in, and here the room is cold. On the one hand it can refer to the cold insensitive society while on the other hand the poem talks about the fire of youth, the fire for physical union: a desire of budding youth. The soft images like 'wings' and 'breeze' are linked with youth, while the images like 'stone' and 'iron' are linked with a cultural construct symbolising the strict rules and laws. The poem can be read as a typical romantic poem where a lover is speaking of having 'wings to fly' and meet the beloved, a desire to touch him and come back, a dream-world scenario. Further analysis helps to explore the sexual undertones reflected through such images as 'moist breeze' coming 'through half-opened windows' and her body set 'on fire'. As already said this fire is an implication of a desired sexual union, but it can also indicate a fire to create, which is not possible at the moment. Her fire for love and sexuality clashes with the cold image of her society signified through a 'cold

room'. In her feminine desire for love and sexuality she is linked with the classical tradition of the hysterical beloved, where the female body is constructed as a sexual object. So on the one hand we have the sexual language like 'moist breeze', 'touch my body', 'set me on fire', which present Shakir as a sexually charged woman (Farid 1994, p 51-52), while on the other hand there is also a self-conscious awareness of her social construct which obliterates her sexual energy. Such an active energy, Mernissi argues, is a negative energy according to Muslim theologians. These Islamic fundamentalists, she argues, call such sexuality destructive to the Muslim order; as such it should be 'harnessed' and controlled through veil *pardah* and four walls (Mernissi 1985, p. 30, 44). Such energy produces the language of independence from patriarchy which Cixous advocates and which Moi calls a strategy which is directed towards feminist awareness (Moi 1986, Cixous 1981).

The 'half open window' is suggestive of half attained creative self, because the physical union is not possible. And if 'window' is a symbol of knowledge, and her journey a search of that knowledge based on the physical experience, then the search is incomplete as the window is 'half open'. This then, links with a deeper argument in the poem where Shakir as a radical writes about her marginalised position as a cultural critic.

She brings in the image of a prisoner behind the iron bars of the customs and blind traditions of her society. The poem is about her irritation with society, which does not allow a young teenage girl to do what she wants. The woman of the 1970s is seen through the image of a prisoner, and this image helps to show how she is a victim of cruelty under strict laws. Shakir is extremely sensitive and conscious of her deprivations. De Beauvoir's work laid the foundation for a sociological feminist approach whereby women are presented as secondary to men. De Beauvoir's philosophical question is 'What is a woman?' (1988, p. 15). She unfolds the reality of a woman from a biological, psychological, historical, and literary point of view and concludes that women are the construct of patriarchy (de Beauvoir 1963, 1988). Thus, the poem reflects, that under strict customs 'only a girl is a victim' and is suffering, because she is living in an 'Islam[ic]' 'patriarchal culture', where women are 'strictly confined', made 'invisible' and treated as second-class citizens (French 1985, p. 72).

According to Marilyn French, in 'patriarchal cultures' women are given a purely functional role of reproduction and procreation. 'Men's position', French argues, 'is elevated by an exaggerated empowerment over women'. 'They do this', she states, 'through *the word*: that is, by decree and institutionalization – the setting up of independent hierarchical structures devoted to control in a particular field or area' (French 1985, p. 70-74). These short poems not only show Shakir's poetic consciousness, but give Shakir a chance to have a

dialogue (Bakhtin 1981) with her own culture, her religion and herself. It links with the idea of Spivak's concept of a subaltern where culture and religion give her the position of a subaltern – a woman with no voice. Using the concept of the subaltern Spivak depicts the women as marginalised 'silent and 'non-existent' (1988, p. 306). Being built within the hierarchical structures of patriarchy, Spivak states that woman can neither break the structure nor subvert it, but she must write against such a construct and must not remain silent (Spivak 1988; 1995). As Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* states, dialogic work carries on a continual dialogue with other works of literature and other authors; even all language and all thought appeared dialogic to Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1981). In fact, Shakir's dialogue is also directed towards her own thoughts, her own deprivations and restrictions, forced on her by her culture. She responds to the prison-like culture of her society through her radical poetry where a young girl in love is deprived of individual freedom. In *Sirf aik larki* (Only a Girl) the *larki* is imprisoned not only because she is a girl, but more so because she is a Muslim girl. In an Islamic culture where women's bodies are perceived to be '*fitna*': meaning source of disorder or chaos (Mernissi 1985, p. 31), veiling and clothing women's bodies is coded as a sacred act (Sabbah 1984; Zia 1994). By keeping women behind the four walls and in *pardah* (veil) Shakir informs the reader of the social construction determined by biology and controlled by patriarchal ideology (Shaheed 1991). According to Fatima Mernissi, Muslim clerics maintain patriarchal control by combining politics with Islam and want to place God-fearing, pure women in the modern world (Mernissi 1991, p. 6-7; Hussein 1996, 75-76). Mernissi argues that because of the patriarchal controls of religious imams and politicians, women find it difficult to experience freedom of expression and even self-development (Mernissi 1991, p. 6-7; Sabbah 1984; Robinson 1997; Metcalf 1990). Thus, the image of the imprisoned girl can be used as a metaphor to reference the religio-cultural position of women in Pakistani Muslim society. In this sense, the boldness and openness about female sexuality has changed in Mohsin's words the 'perception' of a woman, and as such gives the selected texts an un-Islamic touch (Mohsin 1995, p. 172). Mohsin sees it from his male perspective; he sees her liberal poetry disrupting the image of the Islamic culture.

### **Poems of passion and sexuality**

Direct, bold and open in writing about passion, Shakir's love poetry in *Khushboo* culminates in expressing a desire for sex and sexual values through the borrowed voices of John Donne, T.S. Eliot and John Keats. This intertextuality (Allen 2000) of transforming classical texts into something new (Nasta 2000) is not uncommon with postcolonial writers. They take from classical texts and give them a twist, and this is what Shakir is doing, which will be analysed in this section. She is using the canonical text and themes by Donne, Eliot and Keats (Shakespeare chapter two; Lowell and Plath chapter four), and is giving them her own contemporary perspective to bring across her personal political agenda to depict male-domination and the question of female suppression. Therefore, as her journey moves on, this intercultural dialogue broadens giving a wider scope to the study.

It frames Bakhtin's concept that dialogue is not only a matter of influence but a matter of individual talent as well (1981; Eliot 1992). Informed by Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zone and transcultural phenomena this section will look into how Shakir initiates a dialogue, in de Certeau's terms by 'poaching' (borrowing) on 'others' (western) ideas in order to invent and create, alongside framing Bhabha's concept of hybridity, a term which identifies the interdependence of two diverse cultures. It not only softens the cultural difference but it also gives the 'cross-cultural space for survival' (Nasta) which Bhabha calls 'Third Space' giving diverse and exotic international cultures a place to survive (Pratt 1999, 1992; de Certeau 1984, p. xii; Nasta 2000, p. 10; Bhabha 1994, p. 29).

Moving from a mere romantic girl who is lost in the world of dreams and 'giggles', 'perfume[s]' and 'nail-polish', 'blush-on' and 'hand-lotion', shy and full of fears, she progresses to a more, sexually aware writing, and speaks openly about her sexual desires. The next three poems 'Ecstasy', 'Wasteland' and 'Nun', focus on the theme of pleasures of love and a sexual relationship.

### Ecstasy

A deep-purple scarf  
 Shimmering in the light;  
 Melting in strong arms, a delicate one;  
 The skirt ruffled, the veil in disarray;  
 The fire in the cheek, mellowing the cool of the air;  
 Soft hands, playing with silky hair;  
 The shadow of a playful moment on red lips;  
 Whispers of love in shy tones;  
 One shared sound, beating of two hearts.  
 Trembling lips had only one prayer to God:

Let these moments stay for a while!  
(tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 22).

The poem begins with a visual image of the act of physical union. From the fire of the previous poem, we quickly reach to the melting of the two bodies, suggesting urgency of the desire and a desirability of its permanence as well. The ‘delicate one’ refers to the girl and the strong arms to the masculinity of the male. The words like ‘delicate one’, ‘soft hand’, ‘silky hair’, ‘red lips’, are important as it refers to her beauty as a young girl and also as an object of pleasure. She pre-empts this theme of sexual desire and the feeling of being oppressed and controlled in her poem ‘Only a Girl’; here it can be read as if she has broken the chains and has gone beyond dreams to realities, flowers and petals to body and spirit, and has freed herself (temporarily) from conventional bonds. The comparison between a ‘shimmering scarf’ and ‘veil in disarray’ is a very significant point in the poem, which is the crux of crossing the traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* boundaries. ‘Scarf’ can be taken as a piece of cloth used as a fashionable item of dress, which is not meant to cover you fully; something secular.<sup>16</sup> A veil, on the contrary, if taken as a reflection of religious and cultural dress code (Yaqin 2011; Mernissi 1991, 2003; Sabbah 1984), is a symbol of modesty and shame in Islam. Her veil is in disarray, an indication that she is flouting her religious and cultural norms. There is already a suggestion that the two bodies are joined together in the sexual act. Bearing in mind the writer’s position as a young unmarried Muslim girl, even writing about such subjects would be considered sinful (Farid 1994, p. 51-52). Peter Murdock writes that women in western society are given ‘maximum personal freedom’ ‘to prevent abuse of their liberty’. However, he states that other ‘societies’ ‘attempt to preserve premarital chastity by secluding their unmarried girls by such external devices as veiling’ (Murdock 1965, p. 273 quoted in Mernissi 1985, p. 30). In Donne’s poem, the soul becomes ‘purer’ (line 27) after the physical union, whereas in Shakir’s religious perspective the body becomes sinful if it is in a relationship other than a legal marriage (Mernissi 1985). Mernissi argues that it is ironic that both Muslim and European theories have a similar conclusion: for Muslim theologians, ‘women are destructive to the social order because they are active, for Freud because they are not’ (Ibid., p. 40).<sup>17</sup> For Freud, Mernissi writes, a woman’s sexual aggressiveness is

<sup>16</sup> For further reading on ‘Secularism Versus Religion’ with reference to scarf see Dominic McGoldrick’s book *Human Rights and Religion: The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe*. Hart Publications, 2006, p. 301.

<sup>17</sup> In Muslim culture if a woman has control over her body for sexual purposes it is seen as active energy (Mernissi 1985); similarly, Freud’s theory denied sexual freedom to women. Freud’s definition of the sexual nature of woman gave them a conventional image of femininity (Friedan 1963, p. 92). In this sense Muslim and European theories are similar.

suppressed and diverted inwardly towards her truly feminine role before it turns destructive (Mernissi 2003, p. 496-497; 1985, p. 27-45; Friedan 1963, p. 105-106). Uncontrolled sexuality is condemned in both Christianity and Islam, but Islam is different, she argues, as 'what is attacked as debased is not sexuality but woman' (Mernissi 2003, p. 498). She states that Islam allows 'contended and harmoniously lived sexuality' as it reduces tension and relaxes and pacifies hearts. However, she strongly attacks the concept that Muslim women should be treated as an object of emotional investment, or devoted to the spiritual aspect of prayers and meditations 'alone' (Ibid., p. 499). Therefore, I am establishing through this poem and the chapter that Shakir's desire for sex is expressed in her voice as a radical poet and as a woman who wants to have personal freedom and who wants to have control over her own body, but she cannot; as Irigaray put it, because her 'pleasures are trapped', 'cut into pieces', 'split' and 'torn' between herself [unmarried girl] and the system [Islam]' (Irigaray 1980, p. 74).

There is a sense of fulfilment when the body is sexually satiated which in Donne's terms advances and sharpens the mind and spirit. Cixous in the 'Laugh of the Medusa' says that the way to have freedom from patriarchy is that a woman should write in her own voice and of her own pleasurable experiences. 'Ecstasy' is Shakir speaking as a woman, about a woman, but of course not going as far as Cixous, who speaks of bisexuality in 'Laugh of the Medusa'; as she states it is a strategy to eradicate phallus governance in language. What Shakir, however, is projecting is a natural desire for sex, which, of course, disrupts the ideal image of a Muslim woman and would bring drastic penalties (Russell 1969), which she does get as she is 'forced to write poetry quite different from that of *Khushboo*' (Shakir interviewed by Salim 1994, p. 87). 'Sexuality per se' Mernissi states, is not dangerous; on the contrary, she writes, there are three positive and vital functions. It gives a feeling to the believer that he/she exists as part of the earth; it serves as a 'foretaste' of Paradise so encourages them to obey Allah's laws to strive for Paradise; and finally she states it is necessary for intellectual creativity (2003, p. 498). What Shakir has 'invent[ed]' (Pratt 1992, p. 6) anew by re-writing the poem 'Ecstasy' is the importance of her physical existence; that she is not an object silent and non-existent but has her own sexual needs. She wants control over her body and also to engage in physical union in order to 'advance' or sharpen her spirit or the creative abilities which reflect her individual talent. This, in her Islamic cultural context, goes against the ideal concept of the female body, a symbol of religious purity which she 'decode[s]' by criticising it through her poetry (Sabbah 1984, p. 3). Her radical love poetry then is a voice which in Moghissi's words 'crosses all confinement of shame,

compulsion and anxiety' (Moghissi 1999, p. 20). This shows that in her Muslim culture she is a subaltern – a woman without a voice, which brings in the concept of the subaltern (Spivak 1988) and also shows the difficulty of using western influences such as applying Cixous's theory of the feminine as a celebration of feminine *jouissance* (writing of sexual pleasures) when she is placed in a conservative third-world Muslim country like Pakistan.

Shakir was influenced by Donne's direct and open poetry. In a letter of 6<sup>th</sup> July 1978 to her fellow poet Nazir Sidiqqi, she writes that Donne hated 'clichés'; he was open and direct (Shakir's letter (1978) quoted in Sidiqqi 1997, p. 34). She states that Donne has always been her favourite poet and quotes her favourite line from Donne's poetry, 'For God's sake hold thy tongue and let me love' (Shakir's letter (1978) quoted in Sidiqqi 1997, p. 34). We see a similar expression in Naim's words, of 'openness' and 'playfulness' (1995, p. 9) in Shakir's poem 'Ecstasy'. In Donne's poem, 'The Exstasie' there is the image of the souls leaving the bodies of the two lovers, which literally means ecstasy: 'Our souls – which to advance their state, / Were gone out – / ... And we said nothing all day long' ('The Exstasie' lines 15, 16, 20). In Shakir's poem the souls do not leave the bodies, but there is a desire to stay: 'Let these moments stay for a while' after the 'playful moments' (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 22). Then the device of a conversation is used in different ways. In Donne's poem we have an imaginary listener who is there while the couple are making love:

If any, so by love refin'd  
That he soul's language understood,  
And by good love were grown all mind,  
Within convenient distance stood,  
He (though he knew not which soul spake,  
Because both meant, both spake the same)  
Might thence a new concoction take  
And part far purer than he came.  
(Donne, 'The Exstasie', lines 21-28).

Arthur L. Clement states that for Donne, soul has a language, a language which can be understood by only those who have reached a refined state after making love (1990). Shakir does not employ this device of an imaginary listener and observer, but she does summarise the conversation between the two souls: 'Whispers of love in shy tones; / One shared sound, beating of two hearts' (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 22). We do get the two-in-one image in Shakir's poem as well through number: where 'one' implies the spiritual union and 'two' refers to the two bodies. Clement terms this, with reference to Donne's poem, a celebration of true love's paradoxical union of two souls into one (1990, p. 27). The concluding part of

Shakir's poem does not put forward reasons for the souls to return to their bodies as in Donne's poem 'The Exstasie': 'To'our bodies turn we then, that so / Weak men on love reveal'd may look' (lines, 69-70); but reflects the desirability of sexual love: 'Let these moments stay for a while'. Donne's poem ends with a message: the duty to 'reveal' love to those who would be too 'weak' to believe in love without such a sign (Donne, 'The Exstasie', line 57). The logical development of Donne's poem can only be understood, Clement states, through a sense of the ecstatic union of souls, which is achieved through the union of their bodies. This three phase journey is the symbol of 'that abler soul' that 'lovers through love become' he states (Clement 1990, p. 32). Thus, we can look back at the lover in *Aaina* (Mirror) as a weak man who is overwhelmed by the love of the beloved but does not kiss her. He only kisses the 'shadow' which can also be in Zaidi's words 'betray[al] of men' in Shakir's poetry (Zaidi 2008, p. 1). One of the readings of Shakir's 'Ecstasy': is that physical love is what Shakir yearns for and voices through this borrowed voice. It is interesting to note here that, in Janel M. Mueller's terms, Donne's poem is a dialogue which intends to remove male dominance, and settle sexual differences reflected by dominant words like 'we' and 'both spake same' (line 26). Her reading of Donne's 'The Exstasie', from a 'post-Freudian feminist critical perspective'<sup>18</sup> can be theoretically applied to Shakir's poem as well as the overall political message of equality (Mueller 1985, p. 40). What I have established through this analysis of two poems is firstly, the need for a three phase body-spirit-body experience which refers to the equal status of woman; secondly, a phase which is incomplete because the emphasis on the body is restricted in Shakir's cultural construct, and which then, thirdly, does not help Shakir to sharpen her creative self. This last point she takes up as a major theme in the poem 'Wasteland'.

The poem 'Wasteland' (1977), Shakir claims, 'is written under the influence of T.S. Eliot's poem 'The Waste Land' (1922).

### Wasteland

(Inspired by Eliot's famous poem of the same title)

The pleasant days of the cold season  
are sad without you.  
The air is rife with sadness.

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<sup>18</sup> Because for Freud woman was 'never' an 'equal', but was always 'biologically inferior' to man (Friedan 1963, p. 101-102)

The breeze is humming a melancholy tune.  
 The flowers' lips are thirsty.  
 It seems  
 That the eyes of the wind have become dry  
 After crying a lot.  
 Both hands of the morning breeze  
 Are empty;  
 There is no trace of you in the city.  
 It is so difficult even to breathe.  
 Sadness, sadness everywhere.  
 Without you, all green shady trees  
 Have torn their robes to bits.  
 All trees are without robes.  
 Dry poles, dry leaves  
 Are wandering from street to street  
 In search of you.  
 Sadness, sadness everywhere.  
 Pink moonlight peeps into my windows every day.  
 But its eyes are devoid of the shine  
 That used to brighten the brow of the earth  
 When you were here.  
 The earth is like me:  
 Without you, its womb  
 Will never give birth  
 To another rose.  
 The earth has become infertile,  
 Just like the womb of spring-giving soul.  
 The oyster of my thought  
 Will no longer breed the pearl of my art,  
 Because I am all thirst,  
 And the cloud of union is nowhere in sight.  
 Between you and I lie  
 Lands of five oceans  
 (Even pots of raw clay are beyond my reach)  
 I can write poetry  
 Only if given growth to the body of my thought.  
 Without you I am just a wasteland.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khushboo* 1977, p. 87).

The poem underlines the theme of desperation for physical love, as is revealed in the language through imagery, metaphor, simile and hyperbole. Talking about the anti-feminist (because of sexist themes) standpoint of *ghazal* (love poetry), Arifa Farid states that in *ghazal* poetry there is always extraordinary language describing the lover's longing for the beloved, his lamentation at her unfaithfulness and betrayal, and her refusal to acknowledge even the existence of the lover, portrayed through powerful metaphors, similes and hyperbole (1994, p. 53). The poem is analysed in this frame alongside Cixous's theory of the feminine language, a strategy to subvert patriarchal dominance. Once again Shakir 'select[s]' and 'absorb[s]' the idea of the wasteland and re-writes with her 'own' political slant to criticise

cultural and religious suppression (Pratt 1992, p. 6). Language for Cixous presents a major obstacle to her as a feminist because she perceives it as the root cause of patriarchal dominance. Cixous urges women to locate their identity using their feminine *jouissance*, (enjoyment, sexual pleasure) a strategy opposed to the philosophical method of inquiry appropriated by de Beauvoir (Cixous 1981, 1996; Kristeva 1980, 1986). Talking about women's writing, Cixous says a woman must write herself: writing about herself as a woman and bringing women to writing, from which she has been driven away so violently, as from her body (1981). Cixous states that when a woman writes herself, she 'must' make sure that her body is heard in her 'text' (1996, p. 79; Kristeva 1980, 1986), because, she argues, 'female desire, what women want, is so repressed or so misinterpreted in a phallogentric [male-dominated] society, its expression becomes a key location for deconstructing that control' (Cixous 1981, p. 246; Eagleton 1986, p. 205). Shakir has written about herself as a female, bringing her 'most intimate feminine touch' and 'experience' (Naim 1995, p. 7) very openly, and there may be very few (Baksh) in her culture who can write so boldly (Naim) about such a prohibited topic as female sexuality (Baksh 2007; Naim 1993).

The poem is direct in the usage of 'I' and 'you' pronouns: she and her beloved, re-emphasising both confessional and subjective elements which is the hallmark of Shakir's poetry. It begins with an image of sadness reflected through words like 'melancholy', 'sad', 'crying'. The image of thirst is shown by the depiction of 'dry lips', and without mincing words the poem directly states that since 'you', the beloved, is not there the world of the lover (Shakir) is empty.

The poem maintains the colour imagery: the 'pink moonlight' peeping through the window, and the rose, both of which emphasise the romantic aspect of Shakir's poetry, but at the same time, moves ahead to sexual implications, indicating, as Iftikhar Arif notes, that Shakir goes 'beyond romance' (1995, p. 201). The sexual thirst of this young speaker is reflected in the words 'flower's thirsty lips', and her difficulty in breathing without her love. This is further enhanced by the depiction of nature personified as one who is naked [trees]; the tearing of robes to bits, the need to quench the thirst and the unavailability of the stimulus symbolised through the green leaves turned dry and fallen. There is a sense of contradiction in the image of spring in autumn. Although her condition symbolically depicts the autumn season it underlines her thirst caused due to the absence of her beloved who is signified by spring: her beloved is 'nowhere' to be seen. The juxtaposition of 'spring' and 'autumn' represents the complexities and the diverging and converging points in her life, but also reveals the natural order where there is spring, followed by summer, then autumn, and then

winter. It can also be a reference to Shakir's physical and poetic growth from youth to maturity.

The crazed 'dry leaves' 'wandering from street to street' are a symbolic projection of her desperation for the beloved; a picture of her madness, of unrequited love depicted through nature. Moving from nature she comes to her physical description, her eyes losing shine, shine which reflected when he was around. The narrator is very outspoken and is saying without shame that without physical union there can be no birth from her womb. The image of fertility is very significant in the poem. The female body and nature keep intermingling as both are symbols of productivity. Shakir's productivity is on two levels, one as a poet who produces literature and the other as a woman who produces children. It is important to note here that symbolically she is talking about her poetic creativity as she says, towards the end, that her art will be barren without him. It frames the two-in-one formula of Donne, rephrased by Mernissi in the Muslim context that if the body is 'not' fully 'sexual[ly]' 'contented' there will be no advancement, refinement, no creation or reproduction (Mernissi 2003, p. 498-499).

This desperation for the physical in *ghazal* love themes is seen by Ralph Russell as a prelude to marriage. Of course Russell speaks with reference to Pakistani and Indian Muslim women, where he states 'with me [western] courtship precedes marriage; with you [India and Pakistan], courtship follows marriage' (1969, p. 117). It is either, he states, because it is a romantic love which is generally assumed to be before marriage and it is revealing a state of desperation because of the 'purdah [veil] society' or the beloved is either married or betrothed to another man or woman who can never be his/hers. The desperation of the lover portrayed in the conventional *ghazal* is therefore desperation founded upon all the real life experiences of love in modern poetry (Ibid.). In the poem 'Wasteland', we see Shakir's desperation because of the restrictions of 'purdah society'; keeping in mind Shakir's position as a young unmarried girl there is a sense of desperation, and also the desperation of lost love. She cannot marry the man she loves and she knows he can never be hers. This is signified through the unavailability of the pitcher ('pots of raw clay') later on in the poem and the projection of inclement weather. In that sense, in Russell's words *ghazal* poetry is a 'licensed form of protest' against the world in which the poet and reader alike are confined (Ibid., p. 120). Shakir's radical love themes therefore touched the hearts of all her young male and female readers as they shared her protest against cultural oppression. *Khushboo* is something 'new' (Naim), a 'changed perception' of woman (Naim 1995, p. 11; Mohsin 1995, p. 172; Malik 27 Dec 2015, p. 7) in Urdu literature and was in Shakir's own words greatly loved by all, especially 'my' younger readers, she said, who identified with her. 'Either they

find themselves like that girl in *Khushboo* or they want to be like her' Shakir stated (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 87). She intentionally chose this age *larki* (girl) because she knew there was a need among the new generation to receive her poetry, as no other female poet had written about female desire from such a personal perspective. It was her ground breaking collection, attracting large audiences (Farrukhi 2004), winning many awards (Agha 1995), and going for second prints within six months, 'a rare honour' for any book in Urdu literature (Naim 1993, p. 182) which gave her status as one of the poets of the post Faiz era (Hameed 1995; Naim 1993, p. 185). To speak of sexual pleasure from a personal confessional feminine perspective was not only new but totally absent in the older generation of poets (Baksh 1996, 2007; Mohsin 1995; Naim 1993, 1995) though she was ruthlessly and bitterly criticised by her 'senior poets (male and female), predatory critics and intellectuals' for openly exposing female sexuality (Naim 1995, p. 12-13). Such poetry, Russell says, disrupts the social order and brings drastic penalties (1969). Shakir received her penalty as she was criticised for being openly sexual in her *ghazal* poetry in *Khushboo* and compelled to change her poetic style.

Female sexuality in the poem is further emphasised through the image of tilling the land. The image reflects both the sexual act and growth as a result of tilling the land. The image of fertility and tilling in the poem is also in keeping with the nationalistic struggles which sanctify the conventional engendered image of motherhood suggested through the symbols of birth, land, creativity; 'women as custodians of cultural values' (Moghadam 1994, p. 9; Boehmer 1991; 2005). Her desire for the physical positions her in a typically assigned nationalistic role, where she fits into that ideal construct (Irigaray 1992; Rich 1986). Tilling, however, is meant to reflect the outspoken radical confession of this young poet in love, who admits that her body needs tilling, both physically and spiritually, in order to be a balanced person. The womb, a place of creativity, is linked with tilling, and is biologically the place where a child is before it is born. The fertility of the womb is metaphorically used for the fertility of the soul, and also used literally for the quenching of her sexual thirst. This mixing, in Rich's terms, traps her in the traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* image, while the outspoken unconventional feminist ideas liberate her as well (Rich 1986, p. 57).

The use of the metaphor of 'oyster' and 'pearl' is significant. Thought is personified as a thinking and feeling person, one who can breed and create; in that sense, a female. This is what Shakir is doing as a female poet; in her female voice she is talking about her female needs and desires. Linked with that is the metaphor of 'oyster' and 'pearl'. A 'pearl', being an object of beauty, is a precious gem, and remains hidden as long as it is inside the oyster (Yaqin 2001, p. 174). This metaphorically projects the object status of woman in her cultural

male-dominated construct as long as she is used only as an object of beauty and sexual pleasure, silent and confined to this role only (Ibid.). However, another reading underlines the radical feminist voice re-emphasising that she can only create or write as a result of a sexual relationship.

It is important to note here that Shakir's contemporary Kishwar Naheed also uses the metaphor of 'a pearl-oyster with sealed lips', in her poem *Kishwar Naheed* (Bakht et al 1991, p. 30). The traditional woman in the poem is a 'woman of the past', whereas the 'woman of today' has the power of speech which can 'move the feet of the mountains' (Yaqin 2006, p. 59). Another poem by Naheed is '*Ghas to mujh jaisi hai*' (The Grass is Like Me) (tr. Bakht et al 1991, p. 34). The poem has tradition and modernity mixed. However, the traditional is used to tell her rulers that she is not traditional anymore. Naheed metaphorically talks of herself as grass which is moist and comforting, but the more it is cut the more it will grow: symbolising that the more she is controlled the more she will fight back. Towards the end of the poem she is transformed from the ordinary metaphor of grass as a woman who is a symbol of sexual pleasure to an extraordinary resilient woman overtly projecting her clear feminist sensibility (Yaqin 2001; 2006, p. 61-62).

C.M. Naim states that, 'admission without shame', of the desire for sexual relationships and the emphasis on this in Shakir's love poetry of *Khushboo*, makes her contemporary feminist poets '[un]sympathetic' towards Shakir (Naim 1995, p. 14). Shakir has been ruthlessly targeted by both feminist and male critics for bringing themes of open sexuality into her love poetry of *Khushboo*, not that the feminists find that the open sexuality disrupts the image of pure and submissive Muslim woman, but because sexist values make her un-feminist; male critics, on the contrary, feel inhibited by her openly sexual poems as they think it taints the Islamic image of woman as pure and modest and also disturbs the male order of power. Amina Yaqin in her comment on the poem 'Wasteland' says that Shakir has used a 'new way of writing' having been influenced by western poets (Yaqin 2001, p. 113). Elsewhere Yaqin states that Shakir is a representative of a 'new' generation of female poets who have brought a modern approach to classical love poetry with 'ease' (Yaqin 2001, p. 65).

What irritates her contemporary feminist poets is that Shakir is always seen in relation to man; this, however, is critical and an important point for Shakir's poetry: the beloved is always unfaithful, and cruel, and Shakir, the poet-lover, is always subject to that cruelty, but still keeps sacrificing everything for him. This, of course, is a classic theme of *ghazal* which Shakir brings in her modern poetry; one of the reasons is to satirise the nature of men. Rubina Shabnam states that Shakir looks at man (beloved/husband) as cruel, unfaithful, hypocritical

and disloyal, and her work should also be seen in this context (Shabnam 2004; 2005, p. 47; 2006). The poem slowly moves towards the unfaithfulness and the hypocrisy of the beloved in particular and society in general. Words like ‘search [ed]’, ‘everywhere’, but ‘no traces’, ‘nowhere in sight’ as if ‘beyond my [her] reach’ are significant. They suggest her desperation as well as the absence of her lover. Keeping in mind that Shakir had already experienced love, which did not lead to marriage, that love, that she had once cherished, was always a source of inspiration of the love poetry in *Khushboo* (Agha 1995).

The one common symbol taken from folklore is the *Kachcha gharah* (a ‘gharah’ or a ‘pot[s] of raw clay’ is a pitcher; ‘kachcha’ means made of unbaked earth, raw clay – signifying brittle; not permanent). This allusion helps in two ways: it reveals the innocence and the quality of the girl who is sacrificing everything for love. According to folklore the beloved was drowned as the pitcher dissolved.<sup>19</sup> In her poem ‘Wasteland’, Shakir speaks of her feelings of sacrificing her life to see her beloved swimming across on the ‘kachcha gharah’. ‘But even pots – ‘Kachcha gharah’ are beyond [her] reach now’ she says in the poem. This phrase ‘even [that]’ as the last hope is significant; it encompasses the entire list of things which indicate that every direction is closed for her to meet him: nature is cold, empty, dry and windy, spreading leaves everywhere, earth infertile; there is not one but ‘five oceans’ to cross to meet her beloved, but the means, the pitcher, is not available. She might have accepted a raw pitcher knowing a lover’s sacrificing nature and desperate need, but even that is not available. Shakir intentionally uses ‘five’ as hyperbole to exaggerate and give intensity to her agony and show the impossibility of meeting the beloved. What I am establishing is, that on the one hand, we have Shakir’s emerging feminist sensibility, but, on the other, the cultural and social controls and restrictions and difficulties she has to face as a young unconventional girl. Her last hope was to swim across on the pitcher and that too is not in her possession. Thus, the unavailability of the pitcher emphasises the hypocrisy and control of her society.

Re-writing T.S. Eliot, then, is not meant to acknowledge Eliot’s theme: the modern world is a wasteland due to depleted sex, but re-writing western canonical poets from her eastern perspective as a suppressed Muslim girl, to emphasise the importance of sex and that all roads in her search for her identity in love are controlled by patriarchy. This theoretically helps her to make contact (Pratt 1999; Bhabha 1994) with her historical past, and it also gives her a chance to deconstruct Edward Said’s concept of binaries formulated in his work,

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<sup>19</sup> For further reading see *Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-Century Muslim India* by Annemarie Schimmel. Lahore: Sang-e meel publications, 2003.

*Orientalism* (1978) which established a relation of dominance. This intertextuality subverts the dominance of western thought by bringing in the theory of hybridity (Bhabha 1994) through this poem. The theme of the poem has undertones of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. The poet (Eliot), being a sensitive soul, finds himself thrown into a modern world which he calls a wasteland, while Shakir's life without her love was a wasteland.

Eliot's poem 'The Waste Land' seems fragmented, contradictory and confused, signifying discord in the modern world (Emig 1995, p. 73-87). Eliot talks of death and decay and the futility of life with reference to the 'hypocrit[ical]' 'crowd' over the '[u]nreal City' of 'London Bridge' (line 60-76); while Shakir's reference to the non-permanent aspect of the pot brings in the hypocrisy of her society, which stands in contrast to the innocence of a girl in love, where all the roads of rebellion lead to death, signified by the pot which dissolved and drowned the beloved, according to folklore. We also have in Eliot's poem 'fire' and 'water' which are both symbols of destruction and life. Shakir too, has, in her poem, both brightness (fire) and water (oceans). Eliot typically examines the prevailing sterility and the nature of the wasteland within individual modern lives and shows how these lives are barely lived at all (Kearns 1987). It is important to point out that, for Eliot, sexuality distracts modern man from spirituality, and is an important cause of dismay (Kearns 1987; Gibson 1988, p. 107-108).

This is reflected in the very first lines of 'The Burial of the Dead'; we see the futility of any 'stirring' of 'dull roots', of 'breeding', 'of the continual returns of spring and its vital renewals' (lines 1-4) (Gibson 1988, p. 111). In 'A Game of Chess', Eliot tells his readers that people still 'pursue(s)' their sexual pleasures, even though they are disillusioned (lines 1-102) (Ibid.). It is in the third part, 'The Fire Sermon', through the classical figure Tiresias, that Eliot universalises sexual disillusionment. He brings in the image of 'empty, futile sex, at the very heart of *The Waste Land*'. The fourth section, though very brief, then tells the reader not to bank on worldly things (lines 312-321). The last part, 'What the Thunder Said', is a reflection of Eliot's final exploration of the spiritual aspects of life (lines 322-430; Kearns 1987). There are two conflicting suggestions in *The Waste Land*. On the one hand Eliot suggests that the present world is waste land because sex has become a 'depleted vitality' (Gibson 1988, p. 110) while on the other hand, contradicting it, the poem suggests that the modern world lacks vitality, the sense of 'sexuality' as an elemental force which was evident in the ancient world (Ibid., p. 114). In that sense *The Waste Land* is more about a society or a culture than Eliot's other poems (Ibid.). Especially by contrasting the present with the past through references from history and mythology, literature and culture in *The Waste Land*,

Eliot is critical about his own hollowness and the shallowness of modern sexuality, because in the classical sense nature is used as a sign of procreation, but modern man has exploited sexuality. Consequently, in his poem, all the five parts: ‘The Burial of the Dead’, ‘A Game of Chess’, ‘The Fire Sermon’, ‘Death by Water’ and ‘What the Thunder Said’ (Eliot 1963), Eliot tries to convince the reader that having sex in any form whether ‘violation, cold seduction and callous exploitation are all aspects of ‘waste land sexuality’ (Gibson 1988, p. 111).

This brief commentary on Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is to show what Shakir has taken from this poem. It is significant to note that while Eliot finds sexuality in the modern (Emig 1995) scenario as a depleted (Gibson 1988) force, Shakir on the contrary, finds sexuality to be a driving force (Shakir, Foreword *Khushboo* 1977) in her poem ‘Wasteland’. Moreover, Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land* was meant to reflect how worldly claims clash with his religious aspect (Gibson 1988), whereas Shakir wrote the poem ‘Wasteland’, because the religious and cultural claims clashed with her natural desire for sex; the desire of a young ‘girl inside her’ (tr. Bakht, Foreword *Khushboo* 1977, p. 1). Shakir projects her unbelief in the false religiosity that controls a natural desire in the name of religion. This Shakir picks up as the central argument in the poem *Nun*.

The poem ‘Nun’ transforms the theme of ruination in love into a sense of achievement which can be read in Alfred Tennyson’s language as, ‘Tis better to have loved and lost, / Than never to have loved at all’ (In Memoriam) (Tennyson 1850, p. 250).

### Nun

My classmate  
 Is on a heavenly journey on this earth.  
 White robe, a silver cross hanging from the neck,  
 And a perpetual prayer on her lips.  
 I looked at her like a particle  
 Raising its eyes towards the sun.  
 Yesterday, when I was sitting with my head  
 On my arms –  
 Very sad because of you –  
 She came to me  
 Asking me to explain a poem of Keats.  
 So I gave her the clue of Fanny,  
 The fellow dreamer of the poet of beauty.  
 Hearing me, she asked in surprise:  
 What is love?  
 I was stunned for a moment,  
 And began to wonder:

How unfortunate is she?  
 She is unaware of the pleasures of love.  
 I looked at her again  
 And in that moment  
 All my loves came before me  
 With their pains.  
 Pains of love, great pains.  
 I felt as if  
 The particle has become bigger than the sun.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khushboo* 1977, p. 53).

Interestingly, the poem can be compared to Farogh Furrughzad's autobiographical poem 'Earthling'.

I've never hoped to shimmer  
 there in that heavenly mirage  
 or keep company with angels  
 like a sainted spirit  
 Of stars I know nothing  
 here I am, on earth  
 my body stands its ground  
 like plants  
 sucking wind sun water  
 That is my life  
 [...]  
 Every lip that touched my lips  
 engendered a new star  
 in the night  
 that was settling down  
 over the river of my memories  
 What star could I need now?

This song I sing –  
 gratifying hearts, satisfying hearts  
 never less, and never any more.  
 (tr. Kessler and Banani 1982, p. 20-21).

Farogh Furrughzad, an Iranian feminist poet was the boldest of eastern women, who wrote openly about her sexuality. She had a huge influence on the poetry of Naheed, Riaz and Shakir. Riaz, is the Furrughzad of Urdu poetry, says Badaiyuni (2009, p. 2). Shakir has also written a poem on Furrughzad which will be analysed in chapter three. In the above poem Furrughzad speaks without shame about the pleasures of heart and body and feels no remorse for not being part of the saintly order. Shakir too reflects similar ideas, mocking in Yaqin's words, 'this purist morality' of looking at Pakistani women as 'exemplary pure woman' 'carriers of the Islamic nation' (Yaqin 2006, p. 54; Tharu 1999, p. 263). What is significantly

illustrated through this poem *Nun* is that it is a contrast to the typical stereotypical image of virtuous woman, as it gives voice to female desire and sexuality; in Yaqin's terms, 'unbound from the fetters of duty and morality' (Yaqin 2007, p. 384). Dialogically, Keats as a poet from the west has a commonality here as he too does not write about ideal, but real and true, and that seems to be the reason Shakir picked him to support her voice: a combination of western influence and a local theme. But the local, in Pratt's terms 'invent[ion]' (1992, p. 6), is politically charged, criticising her socio-cultural and religious boundaries which confine woman to a silent and pure role. This individual talent of merging western thought into eastern culture, which Pratt calls transculturation, also reconnects her with the historical past when Pakistan was under colonial rule. In that sense she has used the material transmitted from the 'dominant cultures' (Pratt 1992, p. 6; 3-4) (western) for her own contemporary reasons. This intertextuality also implies the interlocking (Bhabha 1994) of the two diverse cultures that were once connected (under colonial rule) but separated due to historical and geographical reasons: Pakistan's creation (Talbot and Singh 1999; Harrison et al, 1999). Ironically, this also implies that Pakistan is still, in Bhabha's terms, not independent from the colonial influence (Bhabha 1994).

In this poem Shakir refers to the eighteenth century romantic poet Keats and his unrequited love for Fanny Brawne (Gittings 2002; Stillinger 1982; Motion 1997). Keats himself was deeply in love with Fanny Brawne, but was a poet who came to love the realities of life. In the poem 'Nun' the poet cannot be interpreted within that frame, because in Shakir's *ghazal* themes it is the opposite: Shakir is the crazed lover and the cruel beloved is male (Rahman 1990). So if it is read in a positive sense, then Keats, who died of consumption at a very young age, at least had a beloved although his love was never returned. Such is the position of Shakir throughout the poem. The poem, in the style of a dialogue between the nun and the poet and the absent lover, should be read in a positive sense that at least Shakir has had a taste of what love is, even if it was not returned. In the poem Shakir takes pride in realising that she at least had tasted love and experienced a relationship even though she could not sustain it (Bazdaar 2000, p. 95). She cherishes the pangs of love and calls them sweet 'pains'. It has undertones of Tennyson's poem 'In Memoriam' (1850), written for his friend who died suddenly. His poem is read by many, projecting solace and inspiring hope after great loss.

The poem 'Nun' is an inspirational poem informed by Shakir's personal experience of studying in schools taught by nuns (Ali 1994), where she saw them in their white 'robe(s)', 'cross hanging from the neck' and always praying. Keeping that image in mind then, Shakir

considers herself as a classmate, signifying that both Shakir and the nun are symbols of purity as taught in both Islam and Christianity. At that time she may have been thinking of herself as a small particle compared to the nun's purity, not considering herself as great as the nun. However, later on, as she grew up, her physical needs grew, her personal views developed and she realised that this spiritual purity alone could not complete her existence. When she realises that she cannot live without a physical relationship their ways part.

The nun is a symbol of subdued flesh, whereas Shakir believes in not suppressing the desires of the flesh. Therefore the 'pleasures of love' which the nun does not understand because physical love does not exist for her, reverses the positions of Shakir and the nun. It is important to note here Shakir's sense of openness and directness in the words 'pleasures of love'. The reader cannot rule out the fact that it is a direct indication of the pleasurable experience of a sexual relationship. In that there is a sense of fulfilment and achievement. The nun was unaware of these physical pleasures. Shakir, on the contrary, reflects that she has experienced what it means to be in love. However, the image of a confined state continues as she is sitting with her head on her arms; there is no mention of a window, but there is a sense of loneliness. This emphasises the tension between her sense of joy and freedom and the restriction and control of patriarchal society. However, what is significant in the poem is a sense of spiritual fulfilment which Shakir has achieved through her confessions of the pleasures of love. In that sense she feels that she (the particle) has eclipsed the nun (the sun) towards the end of the poem.

Keats is a poet of love and beauty, beauty that must die; not mythical, ideal or immortal, but real (Roe 1997). He broods on the idea that anything that is based on reality is the most beautiful thing in the world. Applying this Keatsian doctrine to Shakir's concept of a desire for the physical, and looking at the claim that she is part of 'this earth' and not 'heaven' is justified, as also established in her earlier poem 'Ecstasy'. Without this physical love her creative self is dampened, as analysed in 'Wasteland', but later puts Shakir the narrator on a higher pedestal, even higher than the sun. The religious and cultural restrictions then become less painful and are sweet pain, as compared to the nun's complete ignorance about the sexual 'pleasures of love'. The juxtaposition of sweet pains is hyperbolic and speaks the sexual language of pain-imbued pleasure. For Shakir there is no greatness in such religiosity where physical desires are sacrificed. She does not believe in mincing words, and in living like, in Yaqin's words, an 'Islamic Barbie' (Yaqin 2011, p. 182). In her book *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* Yaqin depicts the 'Islamic

Barbie' as one who wears a different dress outside to perform as a modest Muslim girl, and is a more liberal one inside the house (Ibid.).

This new and unconventional love poetry disrupted the accepted notion of woman in Shakir's patriarchal construct. Where Shakir was accorded recognition as a poet for giving a 'new dimension' to love poetry, she also received all the disapprobation and hostility directed at an outspoken, intelligent woman (Mohsin 1995, p. 172). Mohsin argues that '[Parveen] Shakir upset all the norms which dictate that women should be submissive and silent. She destroyed the perception of women as passive subservient creatures, and for that crime, she paid a heavy price. For her life she was the target of enormous hostility from the intolerant who felt that she had upset the cart' (Mohsin 1995, p.172). Of course, that coming from a male critic is important as her liberal ideas question the patriarchal construct and the concept of male domination.

The important thing to note is that, though while talking about sex and the need for sexual desires in the selected text, Shakir's depiction of sexuality is unlike the poet-courtesan *tawaiif* (prostitute) of the classic tradition of *ghazal* who presented 'the verse self-consciously to' exploit 'women's bodies for the purpose of male entertainment' (Yaqin 2001, p. 52). Such poetry, Ali Jawad Zaidi states 'never attained respectability and often sunk into vulgarity, catering for those who sought decadent pleasure' (1993, p. 137). Shakir's text, on the contrary, does not step out from the limits of decency. When I use the word 'decency', it is to emphasise that sexuality is not used to exploit the female body, but it is used to create a new form which gives significance to female gender and celebrates it. In fact, *Khushboo* has given dignity and trust to the feeling of love by means of significant emphasis on both physical and spiritual love. Unlike Naheed and Riaz who melted their feminine existence and moulded it into anti-sexist and anti-patriarchal poetry, Shakir did not kill her '*waujud*' feminine desires; she used them for her sexual poetry (Paracha 2003, p. 179; tr. Chohan, n.d.). She made sure in Cixous's terms that in her poetry '[her] body was heard' (Cixous 1981, p. 365).

The selected text, as a whole, in this sense is lacking an Islamic environment, even though the reader can see that the speaker's repeated sense of captivity and imprisonment reflects a climate of Islamic traditions. It was not surprising that after the publication of *Khushboo*, the outspoken frankness of her poetic style was controlled by the censorship of the martial law regime, while before she benefited from the liberal democratic political environment, though cultural restrictions still remained. Of course, these cultural restrictions did not matter as long as there was no official censorship imposed and as long as Shakir got an identity from her individual talent; recognition in Rifat Haider's words as a *Princess of*

*Love: Perveen Shakir* (1997). In 1977 martial law trampled her individuality under the heavy weight of military censorship and crushed her journey of fragrance, of *Khushboo*, shattering her being into many fragments. She was already colonised, a) under Islamic law and b) under patriarchy, but now triply colonised as martial law was added to that, enforcing Islamic laws and controlling women in the name of Islam. This chapter was the first step, just the beginning to explore Cixous's concepts, and implying the difficulty of its application in Muslim culture. However, we still need to do some more exploring to be able to see the possibility of liberal concepts, like that of Cixous; to see how much Shakir benefits from western culture and how much from her own eastern culture, as that is what the thesis aims to investigate. Of course, all the other women and poets came under the influence of the political change as well. When Shariah (Islamic) laws were promulgated, every crime became a crime against the state and talk about Islam, female sexuality and politics was banned (Jalal 1991; Ahmad 1990; Gardezi 1994). With this brief background in mind, we are then prepared to move to our second chapter, the next phase of Shakir as a shattered woman where her poetry focuses on political issues more than romantic, her identity as a poet and a woman is controlled by Islamic laws, and she writes against such laws as a radical, but not in a direct style like in *Khushboo*, instead using metaphors to convey her message.

This chapter has projected Shakir in her role as a young girl in love, who challenges her patriarchal construct with her unconventional love poetry. As a young lover she celebrates her gender role by writing poetry emphasising the themes of sexuality and the pleasures of love, but at the same time she also feels the pressure of her cultural environment where such unconventionality can lead her to the gallows: prison. Overall, *Khushboo* gave her a chance to initiate a dialogue with her own culture as well as with western culture. The purpose of this chapter has been to establish a primary feature of Shakir's radical poetry, highlighting her feminist awareness and also looking at the prevailing tensions. The objective was to reveal different layers which contribute to our understanding of the term 'woman' in Pakistani society by looking into Shakir's poetry. Chapter one is the first phase of her journey as a young girl where she adopted the persona of a teenage lover.

## Chapter 2

### *Sadburg* (Marigold): Shakir and the genesis of a radical

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents Shakir in her role as a social radical. It is based on her second collection *Sadburg* (1980). It links with the image of *Khushboo* (Fragrance) but with subtle differences as here we are analysing the shattered image of a woman who becomes a radical because her identity is taken over by the national Islamic ideology breaking her dreams and desires as will be discussed through the selected texts. While the previous chapter focused on the theme of love, sensuality and adolescence as the central idea, this chapter focuses on the lived experience of a modern woman writing openly against such laws which control her identity in the name of religion. Primarily the chapter aims at framing the role of women in the Hindi and Urdu public sphere, as projected by Francesca Orsini: 'what happened when a subject other than the [...] educated male acquired a public voice, and moved from being an object of public discourse to being the subject of reflection, introspection and interaction in the public sphere' (Orsini 2002, p. 304). The chapter also looks at Sara Suleri's concept of double colonisation in order to analyse the lived experience of Shakir, colonised under 'Muslim law' and patriarchy (1992, p. 756-769); alongside Partha Chatterjee's definition of the unequal relationship existing between the 'nation and its women' (Chatterjee 1993, p. 135). Shakir's traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* self will also be focused on, reflecting different shattered layers of her personality: as one who does not want to alienate herself from a stereotypical role as a married woman; a woman looking at patriarchy for protection, respect and physical need. Here it is also important to look at the nation as a patriarchal construct as expanded on in the Introduction. Finally, to explore the term 'social construction' with regard to the gender issue in connection with Shakir's verse, the chapter will look into Margaret Ferguson's definition:

The phrase 'social construction' refers to a complex of social processes - some discursive, some not - which work to transform anatomical sex differences into concepts of gender that have distinct effect on one's economic status, one's status in the system of law, and one's general range of behavioral options. Such processes of social construction, and the relation of mutual determination among them, are very difficult to reconstruct analytically; not only do they vary over time and according to geographical region, but the evidence we have for them

is inherently problematic [...] (Ferguson 1988, p. 96).

In the light of the above, the reconstruction of social processes with particular reference to gender is a path full of complexities in relation to time and location. Ferguson explores fifteenth to eighteenth century European literature to analyse the complexity of the social construct and to explain the ideology that links the logic of a woman's physical purity with her speech, thus defining the difficulties in reconstructing such equations as 'chaste women are silent and obedient', and showing how the effect of such a social construct produced female radical writers. Shakir in *Sadburg* during the period of military dictatorship between 1977 and 1988 explores how Islamic laws like the Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence were enforced to control female identity. Her poetry in that sense is radical poetry, as will be analysed through the selected texts, as she openly criticises the social gendering of woman by Islamic law in Pakistan which shatters her image. Shakir deliberately uses the name of a flower, *Sadburg* (Marigold), to signify the shattered and torn image of a woman in her society. In the Foreword to *Sadburg* Shakir states, when the 'conversation is couched in symbols' 'once again [Shakir] and *Sadburg* are getting together' (Foreword 1980, p. 1). Shakir is directly presenting herself as a broken woman. C.M. Naim states that the name 'marigold' is 'not' a 'common Urdu name for the flower and thus its use here is ambivalent'. The word, he states, 'literally means hundred petals', and as such 'it may imply an experience of being torn apart' (1995, p. 10). Chapter one has already suggested that Shakir sees women as metaphorical flowers. Chapter two indicates an acknowledgement of the falling apart of the petals of the flower. The image illustrates and analyses how women in Pakistan are colonised. Suleri says that women in Pakistan are doubly colonised: firstly by their patriarchal society and secondly by 'Muslim Law' (Suleri 1992, p. 756-769). I would add a third colonisation between 1977 and 1988 by the then martial law. For Shakir, the image of the flower being torn apart is a symbol of women's object status in a patriarchal society. In the previous chapter, *Khushboo*, we looked into how a young girl is treated as a criminal in a male-dominated society if she falls in love. In this collection, *Sadburg*, the focus of her poetry progresses from personal relationships to the quest for female emancipation, and reaches maturity with her charged role as a national spokesperson and a social radical. 'Therefore', the idea of 'social construction when used in conjunction with readings' of Shakir's poetry 'remains a subjective but informative device' to analyse her poetry in reconstructing and redefining her image. The 'subjective element' is important 'because it reveals her own' experience and 'understanding' as a woman living in such a 'social

construction', 'thus revealing her' personal experience both as a traditional 'feminine' woman and a 'feminist' radical writer criticising her social construct (Yaqin 2001, p. 118).

In her foreword to *Sadburg* entitled *Rizq-e hawa* (literally meaning 'fodder of the wind') Shakir shares with her readers an understanding of her poetic persona:

My fault is that I was born in a society where thinking is counted as a sin. But the folks of my tribe<sup>20</sup> made the mistake of not burying me right after my birth, and now it is morally impractical to bury me alive in a wall. [...] There is no other way to survive in the city of hypocrites. There cannot be a bigger hypocrite than the wind, who wakes flowers by kissing them in the morning, and by the evening fall, it plucks with its greedy nails all petals of the flower. It is not a big price for blossoming even once, but being scattered into petals is painful. The wind has no home of its own; that's why it does not want to see a roof over anyone's head (tr. with the help of Bakht, p. 1) (Shakir, Foreword *Sadburg* 1980, p. 13-14).

The theory of complex social construct is reflected in Shakir's use of being 'scattered like petals' with reference to her birth as a woman. The price she has paid for being a thinking feeling female is painful; this refers to her radical and unconventional love poetry in *Khushboo*. The word 'thinking' is a crucial term here as it refers to her radical thoughts which cannot be controlled 'now'. The only choice now left in order to survive in the city of the 'hypocrites' is to write against the injustices. Shakir as an author is having a dialogue with her work, her readers and her own self. The outer hypocritical world has given birth to the radical inside her. She shares her personal feelings by bringing in the image of 'wind' and 'flower'. This is important as it helps us to see the link between the previous collection and this one, which prepares the reader to enter into the next phase of Shakir's life and poetry. In *Khushboo* the 'breeze' symbolised the softness of her love theme; in *Sadburg* Shakir states 'that sweetness and softness is gone' (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 87). Shakir links her existence with 'that of the land whose existence defines my own existence', thus when martial law was imposed everything was 'changed', both in her personal life and poetry and in her country (Shakir, Foreword *Sadburg* 1980, p. 1). By the time *Sadburg* was published she had been married, had a son and her marriage was now on the rocks, and she could not write direct poetry like *Khushboo* because of martial law.<sup>21</sup> So the 'wind' implies rough and harsh weather; the wind which has eaten up her freedom as the title of the foreword shows: she has become the food of the wind. The 'wind' is a reference to the military regime and the tyranny of the dictator, and the Islamic laws giving women a subordinate status. In *Khushboo*

<sup>20</sup> The Mahajar tribe migrated to Karachi, Pakistan, from Bihar, India in 1945 before the creation of Pakistan in 1947 (Agha 1994, p. 11).

<sup>21</sup> This was due to military censorship and a ban on the topics of female sexuality, Islam and politics.

the hypocrisy was seen through love themes, here it is seen through political themes; therefore a shift from a more sexually aware to a more politically aware Shakir. Shakir uses metaphors from literature and religion, as will be analysed in the chapter to put her views across to the reader about the oppression of women. Once again she speaks directly of her subjective experience of paying a heavy price for blossoming. The use of first person pronouns 'I' and 'My' refers to both her personal sufferings and her outspokenness in *Khushboo* where she also feels pleasure in thinking that at least she 'blossomed' but for blossoming just 'once', the result was very 'painful'. This also references the bitter criticism she received (Naim 1995, p. 12-13), and now she is 'forced' to change the poetic style which shattered her dreams (Shakir in Salim 1994, p. 87). She compares herself to *Anarkali* (blossoming pomegranate), the beloved of Prince Saleem, and the son of the great Mughal Emperor Akbar (1526-1765), who was buried alive in a wall in the story, for loving Prince Saleem (Smith 1919). The irony is, that here, we are talking about Shakir, an educated self-aware woman living in a modern world, so it would be '[im]practical' to bury her alive like *Anarkali*, though *Anarkali* is a good example of the restrictions put on falling in love in Muslim culture. There is also a hidden hurt that she cannot write love poems, but she also reflects that she has to move ahead now and write against the suppression of women and of poets and speak about the restrictions imposed on freedom of expression, employing more 'practical' and mature themes. Such are the complexities and conflicts in the mind of the poet we are analysing in the social construct to which she belongs. The 'roof' is significant as Shakir is also referring to the traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* self of a woman who cannot separate herself from a life where the husband is a roof, a symbol of protection, and also a source of feminine fulfilment. This sets the themes of this chapter: a radical voice, and also a traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* voice. In a dialogue with her own work Shakir commented on *Khushboo*, in an interview and explained:

In *Khushboo* I was still engrossed with myself. It was more or less introspective. But later I realised that I was not alone in the world, there were other people and I couldn't overlook their sorrows. Then there were some disillusionments some idols got broken and when this happens, you no longer remain the centre of your own dream world. These things I tried to depict in *Sadburg* (Shakir interviewed by Zaman 1994, p. 1).

This deliberate and self-conscious social awareness that she 'is not alone' and that there is the troubled 'world' she needs to write about, demonstrates the process towards maturity. When there is despair and chaos in the outer world that is the point of reference, according to Faiz

Ahmad Faiz (1911-1984), for poets to move on. The element of broken dreams and hope are interlocked for Faiz (Hasan 2006). Shakir moves on in a similar manner as ‘the collection(s)’, in Bakht’s words, ‘emerge from the debris of her shattered dreams’ (Bakht 2003, p. 478). She is very clear about the creative process being both an inner and an outer search for the individual self. The inner self is never at rest when there is chaos in the outer world. The poets have to incorporate their ego to respond to the broken idols and broken dreams: the material social world. There is also the influence of Iqbal (1877-1938) and Faiz in this idea of poetic persona, with reproducing not only poetry but the mixing of poetry and philosophy (Mir 2006; Hasan 2006 p. 41-50). Apart from her increased maturity, there is another reason for the change in Shakir's poetic style. In order to write about the broken dreams there is a stylistic shift from the conventional *ghazal* format to modern free verse in *Sadburg*. Sharing the reason for this change, Shakir stated in an interview:

*Sadburg* was published in 1980 – a period of military dictatorship. The sweetness and softness of life was gone. Naturally the harshness and the suffocation that one felt during that period was bound to be reflected in one's poetry as well. Since there were checks and curbs on freedom of expression then, I consciously tried to convey my feelings and thoughts symbolically. That is why *Sadburg*, unlike *Khushboo*, is not a direct form of poetry. [...] This difference is a result mainly of Zia-ul-Haq's martial law. It simply broke us. Unfortunately, I started my career as a lecturer in a government college and joined the civil service at a later stage. You can very well imagine the restrictions imposed on us from above at that time. Only books okayed [*sic*] by military men in charge of the press and information department could be published. [...] I wanted to write about the execution and hanging of Bhutto and I did write. But when there are restrictions on freedom of expression, you take the help of symbolism because you cannot express yourself in direct terms. It was this situation that *forced* me to write poetry quite different from that of *Khushboo*. However, it is true that many people expected me to continue with the type of poetry I had written in *Khushboo*. Since my second book (*Sadburg*) came on the heels of the first one, people viewed my style as a ‘sudden change’ (Shakir interviewed by Salim, *Newsline* October, 1994, p. 87).

The difference between Shakir and her ‘many readers’ is that she is a poet, and has a vision of a better world, so her poetry is ‘bound’ to ‘reflect’ the ‘suffocation’ and suppression her nation was going through. She started poetry with a new ‘conscious[ness]’ and a vision, and for that she shifts to free verse to express her radical thoughts, hence the ‘sudden change’ in her style. Shakir introduces the shattered image through the phrase like ‘simply broke us’. One broken dream was the end of democracy and the other imposition of martial law which resulted in censorship. The ousting of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from his position as Prime Minister by Zia caused this sudden change (Jalal 1999, p. 319-320; Talbot 1999, p. 155-156; Harrison et al 1999, p. 48-49). Bhutto was jailed and executed by Zia in 1977. With the removal and

execution of Bhutto Islamic Socialism ended, and the country was ruled under martial law dictatorship and an Islamic fundamentalist construct for ‘eleven years’ from 1977 until 1988 (Jalal 1999, p. 326). Zia’s Islamisation policies adversely affected women; the implementation of Islamic law through the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinance in 1979, the Islamic laws of evidence, *qisas* and *diyat*, implemented in the 1980s, and the Islamisation campaign ‘through media and government directives’ (Gardezi 1997, p. 79). All these had severe effects on the rights of women (Gardezi 1994, p. 52; Alavi 2009). The nationwide Islamic revival took place in the form of the campaign of *Chadur and Chardivari* (the veil and the four walls), targeting the identity of women who were placed as guardians of the Islamic nation. The military censorship was also in full swing. Nothing could be published without the prior approval of the military censor board (Haqqani 2005; Ahmad 1990). Anything dealing with ‘taboo themes’ like ‘female sexuality, sexual politics and religion drew harsh criticism’ from conservative Islamic society (Hisam 1995, p. 47). That is the reason the themes of female sexuality, love and desire for a physical relationship which appeared very openly in *Khushboo*, disappeared in *Sadburg* because of the way women were controlled and presented in the agenda of Shakir’s Islamic nation: she should be veiled and inside four walls, ‘constructed as the guardians’ of traditional Islamic national culture (Kandiyoti 1994, p. 374). Shakir did not conform to the dictates of the rulers in her verse nor did she stop her ‘movement’ of writing against such laws which legitimised her subordination and controlled her emancipation (Rowbotham 1973; 1992, p. 3). Instead of a direct style she uses free verse employing symbols and metaphors to get her message across to her readers.

### **Political poems**

The theme of some of the poems in this collection questions the accepted notion of women's behaviour within patriarchal society and presents a formulation of Shakir's feminist and traditional feminine consciousness. She introduces the reader to the social and political construction of her nation through her verse. In *Sadburg* Shakir raises a strong voice against dictatorship. The democracy achieved after the long period of martial law (1958-69; 1969-71) (Talbot 1999; Harrison et al 1999) and a lot of struggle by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977) in the 1970s, (Talbot 1999; Harrison et al 1999), was once again strangled by Zia in 1977 (Talbot 1999; Burki 1999). The first poem to be discussed, *Zill-e ellahi ki problems* (His Majesty's Problems) deals with the security problems faced by the dictator Zia. Although Shakir joined the civil service of Pakistan a few years after writing the poem, she, and many

of the other poets, knew the dangers involved in criticising the establishment directly. The aim of *Sadburg* is to show how the social and political change affects her personal life. Shakir uses 'His Majesty' as a symbol of the dictator-masses relationship to satirise the socio-political situation. The poem reveals the flatterers who surround His Majesty:

*Zill-e ellihi ki problems* (His Majesty's Problems)

Those who sit on the throne,  
 Sit on a razor's edge.  
 Poor souls, they have strange problems!  
 Sometimes, insurrection in this principality,  
 Sometimes, insurgence in that state.  
 At times, inappropriate awareness  
 Right in the capital!  
 The sudden impulse to show muscle  
 By the army chief  
 Or growing interest in the royal appetite  
 By the chef-in-chief,  
 Mutiny at home  
 (impatient princes),  
 Or restlessness on the borders,  
 Politics in the harem,  
 Under-plots  
 Or coup d'etat.  
 Enemies betray themselves easily,  
 Not so difficult to deal with.  
 The trouble lies with those  
 Who kiss your feet.  
 They are two types:  
 The dogs known for their fidelity,  
 Keep licking your feet  
 to their pleasure,  
 And then  
 Branch off with their respective bones.  
 The other kind is more fatal:  
 In appearance, human beings;  
 In essence, bears.  
 They lick the heel of their dear masters  
 With such vigour  
 That one fine morning,  
 When His Majesty opens his eyes  
 To the tune of Bhairvin by his favourite singer,  
 He finds his feet missing altogether.  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 50-51).

On the one hand the poem refers to the dictatorship of Zia's government; on the other it also addresses the helplessness of the general masses oppressed by tyranny. The use of 'impatient princes' has cultural implications. We have the sleeping princess, who is waiting for the

'impatient' prince, but she is in the cruel hands of the dictators. Shakir explains the use of the Cinderella motif in the foreword to *Sadburg*:

However, when in the fair of life, the time came for dance; Cinderella's slippers were nowhere to be found. The dream was gone along with the garden and the prince. All fair-coloured fairies had flown to their magical lands, and the princess rubbing her eyes with her wounded palm was left all alone in the jungle. The princess has only one course for survival: she has to tell the tale for a thousand nights. But only 27 nights have passed so far (tr. with the help of Bakht, p. 1) (Shakir, Foreword *Sadburg*, 1980, p. 13).

What Shakir is focussing on through the Cinderella motif is the importance of the time for dance. The image of dance for Shakir is associated with dreams and desires and the time for fulfilment and enjoyment. It refers to the democratic government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto when she had freedom of expression as revealed in her writing of *Khushboo*, though she was aware of cultural restrictions. So Shakir states that when her time for dance and enjoyment came there was no garden and no dreams, neither was there the prince. This refers to the political process of Islamisation laws where the women were forced to be segregated from men and go behind the veil and behind the four walls (Alavi 2009). In Cinderella's fairy tale, the fairy god mother helped Cinderella, and later on the prince, after finding the shoe, married her, which changed 'Cinderella's fate' (Bettelheim 1978, p. 236). In Shakir's story there is no prince to change her fate, nor any 'fair-coloured fairies' to help her. They have all flown away from the world of fancy. The absence of the fairies has turned fairy-land into a 'jungle'. Linked with Cinderella's story is the image of 'bears' in the poem. His Majesty's biggest enemies are the flatterers who are like the bears, who look human but inside they are wild beasts. Shakir has already talked about her own journey in the jungle of savages in the foreword to *Khushboo*, where she talks of herself as Alice; she re-emphasises the fairy-tale motif in *Sadburg* where we have Cinderella in the jungle amongst savages. Shakir herself can be the princess who is left 'alone' in this jungle full of 'dogs' and 'bears' as the poem reflects. It is important to note that being 'left alone' can also refer to, in Ferguson's words, a 'rare nerve' to write radical poetry; 'very few' have that nerve, she states (1988, p. 98). Shakir is amongst the very few who have the courage to write against the establishment; the 'wounded palm' re-emphasises the painful experience of being controlled. It metaphorically links with the socio-political and religious environment she is writing against, as there was a check and censorship on literary activities and also on liberal thoughts, such as greater openness of their lives, interaction with men and free expression of love and physical relationships. All this had to be kept away from the public gaze (Orsini 2002; Freitag 1991, p. 1-14). Thus, anything crossing the boundaries

of the Islamic construct, where woman is a model of silence and submissiveness, was censored in the public sphere. The symbol of a prince in Cinderella's dream is a way of appropriating her feminine romantic sensibilities, and also revealing the harshness and the pain seen through the tyranny of 'His Majesty'. This symbol is not only representative of cultural separation where man and woman had to be engendered according to the roles allotted to them, but it also indicates a personal aspect where Shakir could not write what she wanted to. In that sense Shakir uses this symbol both for personal and political reasons. Moreover, the image of jungle in *Sadburg* is a symbolic representation of the draconian military laws as well (Ahsan 1999; Haroon 1995), where the woman alone is wounded, targeted. Therefore, the whole scenario reflects how the young Shakir, who is full of zest and enthusiasm, dreams and desires, could not write love poetry as she did in *Khushboo*, because of the political control and strict Islamic laws against women. It also projects the difficulty of surviving, as the jungle is never free of dangers. In that sense 'she has [must] to tell the tale' of her 'wounded palm' and loneliness. Shakir is formulating a feminist approach where a woman must tell her story and not remain silent. There are a thousand days of difficulty, but only twenty seven days have passed. Literally, it is a reference to an Arabic fairy tale *Alif Laila*, known of course as 'The Thousand and One Nights' (Metcalf 1989, p. 98), but strategically and metaphorically it refers to the long duration of hardship and struggle during the political change from democracy to dictatorship in Pakistan.

Although the poem begins on a general note, it ends on a personal note, writing about the tyranny of martial law and her strong voice against it. Her references in the poem to 'the sudden impulse to show muscle / by the Army Chief,' 'mutiny at home,' 'under-plots,' 'coup d'etat,' 'in essence, bears' evoke memories of the poetic style of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, a poet of the *Third World* (Menai 1995), who inspired poets to protest against the 'cold-blooded tyranny'; the 'blood-stained world' in their poetry (Kamal and Hasan 2006, p. 134, 142). He believed that poets have a social goal; they were 'the warriors -/ the riders of dawn' (Kamal and Hasan 2006, p. 142) who wrote against the national oppressive regimes not only in Pakistan, but in other countries as well, and gave hope to people in despair (Hasan 2006; Menai 1995). Shakir has been marked as 'one of the important poets of the post Faiz era' (Hameed 25<sup>th</sup> Dec 1995, p. 1). In many ways Shakir is continuing Faiz's battle in verse against oppression, which he commenced in 1940 against British rule in the subcontinent. However, with the passage of time the direction has changed but not the objective and Shakir's use of symbolism (His Majesty as a symbol of tyranny) ironically echoes the importance of speech against tyranny advocated in *Bol* (Speak) (Kamal and Hasan 2006, p.

152) by Faiz. Faiz in this poem tells his listeners and readers to speak out whenever there is a break from tyranny, otherwise it will completely crush them. On the other hand, Naheed in her poem *Kare kos* (A Difficult Journey/A Distance of Two Miles) fears that the spoken words will take the speaker to the gallows: 'The destination of speech is the gallows' (*Kare kos*: Naheed 1991, p. 60; tr. Yaqin in Farrukhi 2004, p. 8). Naheed, however, is writing from a different historical background. Her reference is to General Ayub Khan's unfair treatment of Faiz (Hasan 2006), and the return of the dictatorship under General Yahya Khan commencing a time of extreme depression and hopelessness. Thus, *Kare kos* can be read as a protest against the lack of freedom of speech in Pakistan. Faiz writes with reference to the colonial subjugation and Naheed against the two dictators: Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan. Shakir picks the same theme of national oppression and despair under Zia's dictatorship.

It is significant to note that Naheed travels two miles away from traditional *ghazal* to express the themes of tyranny and oppression. Her loneliness and depression as a woman could only be expressed in an overtly modern free verse style, where she can build her own meaning without the burden of tradition; as tradition has given her the status of the second sex. Shakir also uses the modern form by writing in the *nazm* format and free verse and not traditional *ghazal* which is her hall-mark. However, Shakir's intention here is a means towards an end. She uses it to record her discontent and scepticism over the changing political climate in Pakistan. She has not always seemed such a politically engaged person (Agha 1995; Shakir in Javaid 2002, p. 470); formerly she had little interest in anything but love in her poems (Hussain 2000, p. 105-117; Baksh 2002, p. 288; Farrukhi 2004, p. xiv). However, she temporarily gives up writing her poetry based on love themes to move ahead with her political identity in a different persona; a radical writer who wants to defend her nation against tyranny. She is not openly radical, a feminist activist, but through these symbolic poems she expressed her disenchantment and dissatisfaction over the prevailing political order. In that sense Shakir has strongly focused on both traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and feminist attributes according to the identities she wants to project - a very *protean* attribute (Broe 1980) - hybridising therefore both modern and traditional combinations. It also functions, according to Sheila Rowbotham, as a mirroring device reflecting different images of women and the gendering of women in a patriarchal society (Rowbotham 1973, p. 26-46; Humm 1992, p. 93-97). It reflects the refracted selves of women inside and outside the *ghazal* universe (Naim 1974). One sees in chapter one the untraditional Shakir, reflected in her feminine desire for love and sexual union, the standard themes of *ghazal*; here, in chapter two we see the radical voice of Shakir, with Shirley Chew's term 'anti-ghazal' themes,

writing against patriarchy and suppression in the garb of a national spokesperson (Chew 1996, p. 138). This mingling of the personal with social, religious and political themes gives density to her poetry. Through such examples, we study different attributes and characteristics of Shakir herself and also explore all the diversities and complexities which help readers to understand this woman poet.

In *Sadburg*, Shakir also uses the historical incident of Karbala as a metaphor to depict oppression and suppression between 1977 and 1980 and the tyranny during the eleven-year military dictatorship of Zia. She states that it is difficult to paint a ‘hapless traveller’ when the city of *Kufa* (a city in Iraq) is not green; *Kufa* is also referred to as the city of love (Shakir, Foreword *Sadburg* 1980, p. 1). This is a reference to the freedom of expression in the state of helplessness. Due to censorship she relied on symbolic and metaphorical language and images to convey her message to the reader. On the one hand she paints a general picture of the suffering of humanity by using this metaphor of Karbala; while on the other hand, she brings in the link between the historical past and the tyrannical present. The poems like *Shaam-e-ghareeban* (The Evening of 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram/A Hapless Traveller), *Adrikni* (Help Me/Rescue Me), *Ali mushkil kasha sai* (To Ali, Remover of All Obstacles), *Taqaiya* (Pious Subterfuge), *Waoof labaik, kase ke kushta na shud* (Whoever is Not Killed is Not from My Tribe/Whoever Breaks Rank with Us is Not an Upstanding Man), are all linked with the main idea of the tragedy of Karbala. The story of Karbala is a story of good against evil.

The battle was fought 1400 years ago on October 1, on the plain of Karbala, which is on the western bank of the Euphrates about twenty-five miles from *al-Kufah* (a city in Iraq), at the edge of the desert (Anis 2001). In this historical incident at Karbala, Husain, the son of Fatima and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad was martyred (Payne 1992, p. 117-123; Mernissi 1994, p. 125-126). The battle recalls the image of intense heat of the desert, Husain covered with wounds, suffering from thirst, and his women ‘slaughtered’ (Payne 1992, p. 124). It ‘resembled the torn bosom of the woman’ (Payne 1992, p. 126), and through this metaphor Shakir focuses on the oppression in her society. She does not use this metaphor as a classical reference nor with any religious or spiritual connotation, but the reader can note a similarity to the mood of martyrdom associated with the battle of Karbala. In that sense the poems have a ‘grief-inducing’ element of *marsyia* (Naim 1983, p. 102). *Marsyia* is usually a mourning poem, a poem which describes events related to the martyrdom of the Prophet’s grandson at Karbala. While the majority of the *marsyia* consists of mourning material, the rest celebrates the bravery and resoluteness of the heroes of Karbala. Since the *marsyia* ends with a prayer for the immortality of the human soul it reflects that their death is their victory

(Naim 1983 p. 101-116; Payne 1992; Anis 2001). Shakir being a Shia Muslim herself recited *marsiya* in Muharram. Muharram is one of the greatest annual events of the Shia calendar in the subcontinent. Shia Muslims on 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram recount the story of Karbala and mourn the martyrdom and valour of Husain (Anis 2001, p. 7-8; Naim 1983, p. 102). The intensity and force with which Shakir utilises this metaphor is neither seen in *Khushboo*, nor in her later collections, *Khud-Kalami* and *Inkaar*. However, because of martial law, military censorship and discriminatory laws against women the creation of *Sadburg* (1977-1980) became the reason to speak, though metaphorically, in order to express a sense of liberation from oppression. In Mussarat Mirza's words 'she does not use explosive material' but 'her protest is enveloped in symbols which martial law censorship could not grasp' (1995, p. 3). In all the selected poems Shakir has focused on oppression through the metaphor of the tragedy of Karbala, which on the one hand projects an allegory of the helplessness of the women of her nation, which kept censoring the freedom of thought amongst both poets and writers and ordinary man, and on the other hand projects the need to chant the slogan in the hope of achieving mercy and freedom from these tyrants. Moreover, what is stressed is the fact that in order to fight against tyranny and oppression, there is a need to write, just as Shakir herself is writing, in symbolic language, since the truth cannot be spoken if hands are tied and eyes blindfolded.

Kishwar Naheed utilises the Karbala battle symbol in her poem 'Punish Me'. 'Punish me / For I have written the significance of the dream / in my own blood / written a book ridden with an obsession / Punish me' (tr. Ahmad 1990, p. 55-57). Hope is personified as feminine gender in the poem that continues to live despite censure by national forces. Later in her poem the swords and 'the severed heads from the Karbala battle scene' bring in the grief of the '*marsiya* motif[s]' which reminds the reader of the religious tragedy of Karbala (Yaqin 2001, p. 181). It brings back the horrific memory 'of the historical moment' and brings hope and a desire for 'survival' (Ibid.). She uses 'me' first as the poet, but as the poem progresses, 'I' as a personification of hope. In this poem 'hope is' 'personified as the mother', reflected through 'Fatima, the mother of Husain' and 'the standard' upholder 'of Islam after her son's martyrdom at Karbala' (Anis 2001; Mernissi 1991, p. 108). Fatima, mother of Imam Husain, is without question the 'most edifying model of womanhood', and a strong inspiration for Shi'ite Muslim women as reflected in *marsiyas* (Mernissi 1991, p. 108; Yaqin 2001, p. 181). Fahmida Riaz has also used the Karbala incident in her poem *Bakira* (Virgin) (Yaqin 2001, p. 126-127). The poem is a critical analysis of women's social construction which sees her as a sexual object – quiet, submissive, burdened with

responsibilities towards men (Ibid.). Shakir also uses the Karbala symbol in the feminine gender. The bowed head and folded hands of Zaynab (the Prophet's wife) convey the message of the poem in *Adrikni* (Help Me/Rescue Me):

*Adrikni* (Help Me/Rescue Me)

[...]

In the *Kufa* of love,  
 My helplessness,  
 Hiding its face under my hair,  
 Head bowed  
 And with folded hands,  
 Chants under its breath:  
 O Merciful and Forgiving God,  
 O Merciful and Forgiving God!  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Sadburg* 1980, p. 131).

What Shakir is mourning is not a historical incident that took place 1400 years ago, but the attitudes of the contemporary rulers. The image of love personified as a woman with bowed head, hidden face, tied hands, helpless, refers to her 'forced' and 'sudden change' from 'love' poetry under military censorship (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 87). In that sense she is asking for mercy from such a regime. Moreover, by bringing in the reference to *Kufa* Shakir transports her reader to the land of the faithful, Arabia. It also reminds the reader of the dangerous journey of Husain to 'al-Kufah'. We cannot, of course, forget the women wandering in the deserts of Karbala. At another level this personified picture of silences and helplessness is allegorical as it represents the Pakistani nation suppressed under censorship, framing what Suleri says, that when 'listening' becomes a 'crime', then speech becomes a 'necessary act of liberation from suppression' (Suleri 1991; 1992, p. 756-769; Yaqin 2001, p. 175). Shakir, in the foreword to *Sadburg*, talking about her society which considers thinking as a sin states:

So there I am and this blind well of helplessness. Walking around this well has turned my feet into stone and my eyes into water: all this because I had refused to be blindfolded like other girls; the fate of those who refuse is never very good (tr. with the help of Bakht, p. 1) (Shakir, Foreword *Sadburg* 1980, p. 13).

The image of the 'blind well' and the 'helplessness' brings to mind the image of a beast that has been castrated. Castration causes an animal to become docile and it also eliminates any sexual activity. Shakir uses this metaphor to illustrate her refusal 'to be blindfolded', to be

disciplined, and also her acceptance of the consequences. Germaine Greer, in her book *The Female Eunuch*, bitterly criticises such an approach which separated women from their sexual desires and made them machines for producing children only (Greer 1971). So it is an indication of Shakir's refusal of a passive role, cut off from her physical desires. Earlier on Shakir uses a cultural reference, *Anarkali*, stating that she cannot be buried alive like her; here she uses the image of being blindfolded, and refuses to be like the blinkered beast that goes round and round the well. She also acknowledges that those who refuse to be blindfolded face dire consequences. It is important to note Shakir's language becomes strong to reflect resistance in words like 'refuse', 'refused', 'never'. Her feminist voice speaks strongly when her liberty is questioned under the national ideological role constructed for her. She 'refuse[s]' to live a marginalised and silenced life. The poem thus hints at the force and enthusiasm of a crusader to forge ahead and fight. It is a battle between good and evil. Husain, who fought for good and truth through his martyrdom, makes the historical incident a living incident. Shakir, though, sees it as an example of what French would call women's helplessness, 'degradat[ion]', 'disempower[ment]' and 'subjugate[ion]' (French 2008, p. 8). However, the element of hope, mercy and resistance also persists.

The poem *Shaam-e-ghareeban* is a metaphor for a nation of suffering people meaning the evening of a hapless traveller, a victim of suffering (Payne 1992). Literally, it refers to the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram (Payne 1992). In Islam it refers to the last day of mourning in Muharram, when the martyrdom of Husain and his followers are mourned by Shia Muslims:

*Shaam-e-ghareeban* (The Evening of 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram/A Hapless Traveller)

Within the boundaries of the enemy,  
 On the unkind land, near the forest,  
 The evening has come.  
 The air is rife with the smell of the burning 'raw' roses,  
 And with the green fragrance of those buds,  
 Who in their adolescence  
 Graced the crosses of the autumn,  
 And became forever the waking symbol of the spring.  
 Some uncovered heads peek from burnt tents,  
 Looking for severed arms,  
 Once carrying the veil of modesty for them:  
 The severed arms, whose (water-bearing) goatskin  
 Never reached the young throats,  
 Now spills with the water of love and fidelity.  
 Womenfolk with bare heads  
 Startled by the rustle of dry leaves,  
 Kiss flowers spared by the scorching wind,

[*Baad-e sarsar is really the arctic wind, but many Urdu speakers use it as hot wind*]  
 Hide them inside their own selves.  
 The cleverness of cruel changing seasons  
 Has filled the wonder-stricken eyes  
 With the permanent colour of fear.  
 The heads of all dear ones  
 Adorn shining spears.  
 What promises are made by severed heads  
 With broken dreams  
 That the vacant eyes are being filled with light?  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Sadburg* 1980, p. 129).

Earlier on we had bowed heads, but here we have severed heads and broken dreams, emphasising the theme of the chapter: shattered woman. The poem is full of subtle messages of pain especially coming from the bareheaded women that continue to live in despair. The poem also symbolises the bitter experience of a creative writer with 'wonder-stricken eyes', 'with a permanent colour of fear,' 'broken dreams,' and 'vacant eyes', and with a question, 'will these eyes ever be filled with light?' The image of 'forest', 'unkind land', and 'evening' links allegorically with the difficult time of strife and struggle of the nation. The image of the 'burning of raw rose' and the 'fragrance of buds', which in 'their adolescence' have become the 'crosses of autumn' symbolically bring in the whole political history of suppression and control over the young budding poetry of Shakir. She is mourning the sacrifices she had to make as a young poet by giving up her dream of writing love poetry. Shakir's poem presents a picture caught in a dark and gloomy period of Pakistan's history, the time of Zia's authoritarian regime, when the only means of survival and resistance was hope.

The reference to the uncovered heads of women symbolically recalls the strong-willed Fatima (Mernissi 1994, p. 125-126), daughter of Mohammad and mother of her martyred son Husain. In the poem it can be read as the women, the water bearers, who could not reach the young throats of the dying sons on the battlefield. This is the religious and historical replay, alongside the allegorical national tragedy expressed from a woman's perspective based on her lived experience. This reinforces the focus of the chapter where the shattered dreams give all the more strength to fight and move on. It also links with the empowering women within the disempowering strategies of the patriarchal nationalistic framework (Chatterjee 1993; Moghadam 1994).

The last three lines can also be read as a symbol of hope that continues to live despite censure by outside forces. At the same time the projection of the poem symbolises imagery from *marsiya* of particular significance to the marginal Shi'ite community in Pakistan. The 'shining spears', 'severed arms', 'scorching wind', thirsty 'young throats' from the Karbala

scene are recurring *marsiya* motifs commemorated as part of a religious memory. The reader can visualise the horrors of the historical moment of Karbala, which also brings a message of the hope for recognition and survival. Shakir's contemporary, Riaz in her poem '*Chadar and divari*' (The Veil and Seclusion) reveals the 'strangulation of a state-led Islamisation campaign marking women as living dead' (Yaqin 2001, p. 157). Yaqin observes that Riaz's 'sensitivity as a feminist is the strongest when she has to unveil discrimination against women under the Shariat laws, exposing the dispossession of women in the discourse of Pakistani nationalism' (Yaqin, 2001, p. 157; 2006). Naheed's poem 'We Sinful Women' is a social commentary on women's identity in Pakistan as a construct of patriarchy. The theme of this poem is 'rejection of a nationalistic male-defined tradition' (Yaqin 2001, p. 189). All such women are sinful women, as they are 'self-aware women who won't prostitute their lives, plead, or be intimidated by those in power' (Yaqin 2001, p. 189). Through the poems like '*Zill-e ellahi ki problems*' (His Majesty's Problems), '*Adrikni*' (Help Me/Rescue Me), '*Shaam-e-ghareeban*' (The Evening of 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram/A Hapless Traveller), 'We Sinful Women', and '*Chadar and devari*' (Veil and Seclusion), we are looking at the theme of women and the nation (Chatterjee 1999, 1993; Orsini 2002). Here I am establishing that Shakir and her contemporaries have used their radical voice against the implementation of Shariat Law. They have provided a critical representation of women's individual existence being taken over by the propaganda of Islamic nationalism and their representation as symbols of honour and shame (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 135-157; 1999, p. 233-252; Chhachhi 1989, p. 567-576; Shaheed 1991, p. 135-158; Moghadam 1994, p. 127). However, Shakir is different as she, later in her poetic works, uses metaphors and does not address the issues directly; she compromises. Therefore she is 'not a firebrand feminist' (Zaman); aggressive (Naheed) and non-compromising (Riaz) like Naheed and Riaz (Zaman 1994, p. 1; Yaqin 2001).

In her poem 'Macbeth' Shakir borrows from the Shakespearean tragedy *Macbeth* (1603-1607) to expose corruption in the state of Pakistan. The inclusion of 'Macbeth' is important in two ways. Firstly, the poem is translated from Urdu into English in this study to help an English readership contextualise Pakistani politics. Secondly, it maintains the element of the influences of English literature on Shakir's poetry as discussed in this chapter which keeps the 'dialogic' element alive (Bakhtin 1981). This influence of the literary text also brings in the concept of 'intertextuality' (Allen 2000) first used by Kristeva in the 1960s, then in Bakhtin's theory of 'carnivalization' and other concepts of dialogism (Bakhtin 1981, p. xix). Graham Allen contends that every text has a fibre or a connection with other cultures,

therefore is never original (Allen 2000). The study of her poem 'Macbeth' is thus important in multiple ways.

The year 1977 is important because Bhutto's term as Prime Minister was brought to an end by Zia's military coup in 1977. Moreover, Shakir's borrowing from the West not only registers her hybridity but also the mixing of the classical and the modern (Bhabha 1994). While Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* tells the story of 'unquenchable desire', lust for power and betrayal in the early seventeenth century through the character of Macbeth (Bradley accessed 20 June 2008, p. 3), Shakir's poem, in Bakhtin's terms 're-accentu[ates]' (1981, p. 419) and re-emphasises the same themes by re-writing them in the twentieth century in the context of her political scenario projected symbolically through the character of General Zia as a tyrant.

By assuming the role of a poet and a philosopher, Shakir reveals the political intrigues of the Zia administration. In an interview before her death, Shakir said, with reference to her poem 'Macbeth', that her later collections are demanding. For instance, 'If someone has not read Shakespeare, he will not enjoy the poem 'Macbeth' in my collection *Sadburg* at all' (Shakir interviewed by Salim 1994, p. 87). It can also be argued though, that a reader needs to be familiar with the work of Donne, Eliot and Keats to enjoy *Khushboo*. We can, of course, excuse Shakir for the naïve response to her own work and move on to Macbeth. Michael Long observes that: 'at about 2,100 lines, *Macbeth* is one of the shortest plays in the Shakespearean canon and by far the shortest of the greatest tragedies' (1989, p. 3). Shakir has condensed the main theme of the original play by Shakespeare into her poem in just 31 lines:

#### Macbeth

Again, there is a rendezvous of three similar witches  
 On a mound in the night-coloured desert.  
 With the eyes of a snake,  
 Insatiable greed and hunger of a vulture,  
 They chant a name  
 And lick their red lips.  
 They are waiting to give glad tidings,  
 Soaked in the lethal poison of temptation,  
 To the same empty soul  
 Whose pocket carries no ruby of gratitude.

The candidate for the high office  
 Is now aware of its pomp and pride.  
 Just as well that the price for life-long friendship  
 Is finally paid.  
 But what will happen to the rose-coloured dagger

That is still held in trembling hands?  
 Its fragrance has strung highly  
 The nerves of every nook and corner.

Because of the self-haunted trembling heart,  
 There's no sleep in my eyes.  
 The destiny of startled eyes  
 Is only wakefulness.  
 The sleeps slips away from my hands like a wriggling fish,  
 As if it is aware of a forthcoming bad dream.  
 This sleepless moment, like the eye,  
 Has also visited the trembling hands.  
 The old hag also desires the musk and ambergris  
 From the shores of the Arabian Sea.  
 The hands are in water,  
 And the search for the oceans of the world  
 Has descended into her eyes.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Sadburg* 1980, p. 167).

The poem begins in a similar fashion as the play *Macbeth* and we get into the heart of the dramatic situation with the Three Witches deciding about their next meeting with Macbeth:

FIRST WITCH. When shall we three meet again  
                   In thunder, lightning, or in rain?  
 SECOND WITCH. When the hurlyburly's done  
                   When the battle's lost and won.  
 THIRD WITCH. That will be ere the set of sun.  
 FIRST WITCH. Where the place?  
 SECOND WITCH. Upon the heath.  
 THIRD WITCH. There to meet with Macbeth (Act 1. i. 1-8).

After this scene, in Act 1. iii the first Witch prophesies that Macbeth will be the 'Thane of Glamis', the second Witch hails him 'Thane of Cawdor', while the third proclaims that he shall 'be King hereafter!' (Act 1. iii. 48-50). After the fulfilment of the first prophecy Macbeth's ambitious dream of becoming a king begins. Also in the poem we meet the 'three similar witches', on a 'mound', which can be assumed to be the heath, and 'in the night-coloured desert'. Commenting on the atmosphere of the play *Macbeth*, A. C. Bradley says:

A Shakespearean tragedy, as a rule, has a special tone or atmosphere of its own, quite perceptible, however difficult to describe. The effect of this atmosphere is marked with unusual strength in *Macbeth*. It is due to a variety of influences which combine with those just noticed, so that, acting and reaching, they form a whole; and the desolation of the blasted heath, the design of the Witches, the guilt in the hero's soul, the darkness in the night, seem to emanate from one and the same source. [...] Darkness, we may even say blackness, broods over this tragedy. [...] The atmosphere of *Macbeth*, however, is not that of unrelieved blackness. On the contrary, as compared with *King Lear* and its cold dim gloom, *Macbeth* leaves a decided impression of colour; it is really the impression of a black night broken by flashes of light and colour, sometimes vivid and even glaring. They are the lights and colours

of the thunder-storm; ... the glittering dagger; ...the torch; ... flames; ...taper. And, above all, the colour is the colour of the blood. [...] The vividness, magnitude, and violence of the imagery in some of the passages are characteristic of *Macbeth* almost throughout. [...] To these are added other, constant, allusions to sleep

([www.thelandofmacbeth.com/lectures.htm](http://www.thelandofmacbeth.com/lectures.htm)) (Bradley accessed 20 June 2008, p. 3).

Bradley states that the atmosphere of darkness in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* symbolically plays a vital role in his tragedy; in Shakir's poem 'Macbeth' too, the atmosphere of darkness has a similar symbolic meaning. If we read Shakir's 'Macbeth' in Pakistan's political context it can be seen in Jameson's terms, as a 'national allegory' (Jameson 1986, p. 69). It describes the sacrifice of Pakistan by its evil tyrant. If Pak-istan (read as Pakistan) (Pak meaning pure, and istan meaning the land: The Land of The Pure) is a symbol of purity then its rulers are the ones who sacrifice the nation to satisfy their insatiable greed and hunger (Rushdie 1983, p. 112-120). As mentioned earlier *Sadburg* was published in 1980 and the poems were written over a period of three years between 1977 and 1980. This was the time of the military coup by Zia (1977), Bhutto's execution by Zia (1978), the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinance (1979) and the Law of Evidence, the campaign for Islamisation introduced by Zia, and all the draconian military laws (Ahsan 1999; Haroon 1995) which were the product of the Hudood Ordinance. So the poem 'Macbeth' relates to the major political changes and aspects during this period. This has already been discussed in detail in the section 'A brief overview of Pakistan's political context' in the Introduction.

The first painful experience for Shakir was the loss of East Pakistan in 1971, during the leadership of General Ayub Khan. Shakir states that, after this national tragedy, democracy was some source of relief which was heralded by the arrival of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Shakir interviewed by Salim 1994) in 1971 when power was handed over to him after the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war (Harrison et al 1999). Thus, when Bhutto was hanged, Shakir's hopes and dreams were 'shattered' once again (Bakht 2003, p. 478). The poem 'Macbeth', therefore, is a strong reaction against Zia who executed Bhutto. Under the garb of the Shakespearean play, Shakir therefore reveals her anger in symbolic and metaphorical terms. Looking from this perspective then, the image of 'darkness' which Shakir borrows from Shakespeare, and re-emphasises through the image of 'night-coloured desert' in her poem, is symbolically in keeping with the darkness prevailing over the land of Pakistan after Bhutto's death.

The first two lines talk of the Three Witches who meet on a mound in the 'night-coloured desert'. Bradley sees the 'effect' of 'darkness' as a mark of the 'unusual strength of

Macbeth', while Moschovakis sees the 'weird sisters' 'as manifold horrors [...] of tyranny' (Bradley 2008, p. 3; Moschovakis 2008, p. 1). In order to reveal the image of strength and power of the dictator, Shakir uses words like 'high office', 'pomp' and 'pride'. The Witches, who themselves are 'a supernatural dread' (Bradley 2008, p. 4) have the 'eyes of a snake,' and the '[i]nsatiable greed and hunger of a vulture' which sets them apart. These vivid images are used here to evoke a very strong image of greed for power. Both snakes and vultures are wild and brutal creatures. Snakes are thought to be cunning, and vultures feed off the dead. Moreover, the readers' visual and aural senses are at work as they can literally see the witches 'lick[ing]' their 'red lips' and 'chant [ing]' a name. Allegorically it can be the name of the person who is to be hanged: Bhutto. Thus, the 'red' colour brings to mind the deed of killing and the bloody act, linked with the hanging, but 'tiding[s]' 'soaked in the lethal poison' cannot be 'glad' tidings. Yes, it can be happy tidings if we see it from the tyrant's perspective. Rebecca Lemon, regarding Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, states that there are two types of treason, one committed for 'state and the common good, and the other out of personal interest'. It splits, she continues, tyranny from killing because it is done for the good of the state (Lemon 2008, p. 73-88). This can be applied to Zia's attitude towards his nation where he turns his personal interest (lust for power) into a national interest. According to Zia, Bhutto was a socialist, who he thought brought evil to society through his liberal views, such as giving permission for night clubs and for drinking (Haqqani 2005; Ahmad 1990). So Zia 'justif[ies]' (Gardezi 1997, p. 79) the claims that he had a 'mission to purify and cleanse Pakistan' and that he 'had already decided to portray the man he had overthrown as an evil genius' (Haqqani 2005, p. 133, 137, 147). Zia thus 'proclaimed himself divinely ordained' (Jalal 1991, p. 101), to have changed Pakistan from an undefined Islamic Republic (named by Bhutto) to an authoritarian Islamic State (Haqqani 2005). Shakir uses strong and violent images of 'lethal' and 'poison' which are in keeping with the image of death. The news of the death thus had no effect on the 'empty souls', as the laws were so cruel and their souls so dead that one more death or killing did not matter. In the line 'to the same empty soul', the word 'same' can be read as a generalised word, as pointing towards all dictators and their regimes since 1947. Whether these dictators are ruling in 1968 or 1988, Shakir has a firm belief that they are 'empty souls'. It is important to note that when Shakir portrays 'temptation' she uses deadly images like 'lethal' and 'poison', but when she talks of gratitude, she uses images of gems like 'ruby'. Thus, indicating that in their 'pockets' or in martial law there is no softness or kindness to the people. Another reading of this line is in the context of the word 'temptation'. A.C. Bradley with reference to Macbeth's temptation states:

[...] We are admitting ... too much when we use the word 'temptation' in reference to the first prophecies of the Witches. Speaking strictly we must affirm that he was tempted only by himself. He speaks indeed of their "supernatural soliciting"; but in fact they did not solicit. They merely announced events: they hailed him as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and King hereafter. No connection of these announcements with any action of his was even hinted by them. For all that appears, the natural death of an old man might have fulfilled the prophecy any day. In any case, the idea of fulfilling it by murder was entirely his own ([www.thelandofmacbeth.com/lectures.htm](http://www.thelandofmacbeth.com/lectures.htm)) (Bradley accessed 20 June 2008, p. 10).

What Shakir is referring to is that temptation is your 'own' fault and weakness, and what she is addressing through the issue of temptation is that the feeling of temptation, in whatever sense, is in itself very evil and vicious, especially when associated with power. While Shakespeare talks of 'curdling the Elizabethan blood with accounts of wickedness and treachery' (Long 1989, p. xi); Shakir borrows the same ideas and writes of them in Urdu. This study translates into English those ideas to give an account of the same to an English readership. Furthermore it makes the visible divide of east and west invisible by projecting that, whether it is east or west, human nature is the same. Moreover, by associating deadly images with power and temptation, Shakir is warning of the dire consequences for those who might get trapped in this net. Overall, Shakir is deliberately working against the dictatorial construct.

The second stanza can be read almost like the next act. The difference is that, in the play, the murder of Duncan takes place in Act 11, whereas in the poem the execution of Bhutto has taken place in the first stanza, and in the second stanza the usurper is sitting in his 'high office' with all 'its pomp and pride'. The lines, 'the price for life-long friendship / Is finally paid', refer to the theme of the play *Macbeth* which talks of the evil of the greed for power and the deceit and betrayal of friends. This line therefore is also in keeping with the theme of the poem. In a way it is looking back at when Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1973 and General Zia was the Chief of the Army staff and, in that sense, a friend in a professional capacity. So, a friend (Zia) stabbed him (Bhutto) in the back, first by overthrowing his government and arresting him, then by promising that elections will take place within three months, which did not happen. He hanged Bhutto within two years (Burki 1999; Harrison et al 1999; Ahmad 1990; Haqqani 2005; Rushdie 1991).

The use of 'the rose-coloured dagger' is significant as once again Shakir reiterates through the colour imagery the act of killing. However, at another level we can read the poem

inferring a deeper meaning. It is important to note that in the play the 'dagger' is 'glittering', similarly in the poem it is a 'rose-coloured dagger.' With the image of 'dagger' what automatically comes to mind are blood, killing and fear. However, linked with the 'rose' we have a positive image of the 'fragrance' which has negatively 'strung' the 'nerves of every nook and corner'. The dagger, which is 'still' in the trembling hand of the tyrant, can refer to the laws under the Islamisation of Zia. In that sense if Shakir is a symbol of fragrance, *Khushboo*, and is a many petalled flower, marigold, *Sadburg*, then the 'dagger' (Shariat laws) in conflict with the rose (metaphorically women) has caused the 'nerve' of the populace to be 'strung highly'. The word 'nerves' is significant as the laws under the Hudood Ordinance and the Law of Evidence, laws like 'stoning' 'public flogging' 'amputation of the right hand for a first offence [...] had shocked most Pakistanis' (Ahmad 1990, p. 12, 15, 16). It also reflects the control of creativity and freedom of expression being in the grip of a dictator. In addition, during Zia's martial law there was so much restriction on writers that poets like Riaz had to leave the country and live in exile (Ahmad 1990; Riaz 1987). Thus the intentional use of 'rose' and 'fragrance' and the fear of those laws in 'every nook and corner' of Pakistan is a political implication of the status of women in their patriarchal society on the one hand, and the picture of the nation ruled by a cruel tyrant on the other. Furthermore, the intentional link between the 'rose' and the 'fragrance' keeps the link between the two chapters, and if the same colours are linked with the colour of blood then it represents 'evil', in both *Macbeth* and Zia.

The third stanza can be read as a continuation of the previous stanza as 'trembling heart' echoes the 'trembling hands.' Abraham Stoll, with reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, notes that the conscience of a sinful mind is always 'pricking, gnawing' and 'biting' which shows that the tortured soul is never at peace (Stoll 2008, p. 132-134). In Shakir's poem as well we see that restlessness through the selection of words. The images of dread and darkness are reiterated in words like 'haunt', 'trembling' 'sleepless moment'. It also keeps the link with the Witches of the first stanza. In this stanza there is a shift from 'they' to 'my', making it more personal. Moreover, in the style of a soliloquy, it pictures both *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* and their troubled states of mind. By personifying destiny as a person with 'startled eyes', Shakir is depicting the awe and fear prevalent in the state of Pakistan not only because of the gruesome act of the execution of Bhutto, but of the laws as well which were used 'as powerful political weapons to create an atmosphere of fear and to silence dissent' (Ahmad 1990, p. 12). The whole concept of 'forthcoming bad dreams' which cause 'sleepless moments' portrays the political future of the nation in general and the future of Pakistani women in particular in the hands of a dictator.

The last part of the poem refers to the sleepwalking scene of Lady Macbeth in the play. The 'old hag' can literally refer to Lady Macbeth, who says 'here's the smell of the blood still', and her most poetic words, 'all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand' (Act V. i). Shakir's use of 'musk' and 'ambergris' to wash the hands of the guilty are not enough since the deed done is so great. The images of 'sea', 'ocean', and 'water' are the images of salvation and purification on the one hand; they can also be symbols of destruction on the other. So the desire for 'musk' and 'ambergris' can be an indication for the 'desire' of salvation from the cruel regime. Macbeth's character is evil, but it is pursued by 'melancholy' 'regret' and 'remorse' (Stoll 2008, p. 139; McLuskie 2009, p. 124; Bradley 2008, p. 2). However, General Zia, the cruel leader of the nation Shakir belongs to is neither guilty nor upset about his deeds. He justifies them by saying that he has purified Pakistan from evil in the name of Islam. Therefore, he had to be broken because he could not bend, so the only way to get rid of such a tyrant was to kill him. Zia's death took place in a 'mysterious plane crash on August 17, 1988' (Haqqani 2005, p. 131; Burki 1999; Toor 2011), but it is still unknown whether it was 'accidental death' or an 'assassination'. If the 'truth' ever emerges, Rushdie writes, it will no doubt be 'surpris[ing]' (1991, p. 54-55). In Ferguson's words, there is a 'wishful reformation of the tyrannical power' (1988, p. 110). From the national issues we move to personal in order to further analyse Shakir's fragmented image framing Chatterjee's analysis of the 'nation and its women' (Chatterjee 1993, p. 116).

### **Poems mixing feminine/feminist stances**

One of Shakir's goals has always been to preserve a balance between the hybrid voices of modern and traditional poetry, and she has successfully maintained it. This section provides an appraisal of her two autobiographical poems 'Working Woman' and 'Stenographer' (typist). When I say autobiographical, I am saying that Shakir sees herself both as a traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* voice and also has a feminist outlook. Overall, the poems in *Sadburg* in general and these two in particular are autobiographical. In her collections she sifts through significant moments of her life, stating her life in her own words, constantly and cautiously shifting her angles, offering traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and feminist approaches in the process (Shakir interviewed by Salim 1994); redefining the woman who is classified as 'scattered into petals' by the Pakistani society she lives in (Shakir, Foreword *Sadburg* 1980, p. 14).

Shakir's 'Working Woman' presents the conscious portrayal of herself in yet a

different guise and hints at the social construction of gender. The poem depicts her individual style in defying the conventional woman, but also places her in a feminine discourse of silence and accepting the patriarchal societal code constructed for her. More than half the poem situates Shakir as a feminist poet, and the last part brings in her traditional feminine sensibility.

#### Working Woman

Everyone says  
 It's a matter of pride:  
 I'm tending my garden  
 With my own blood!  
 The freshness of my leaves,  
 Is the fruit of my labour.  
 Not a single bud is obliged to any rain.  
 I can bloom whenever I wish.  
 My beauty is my own discovery.  
 Now, I can talk to any season  
 Holding my head high.  
 I'm a strong tree now,  
 Alive to my full potential.  
 Still, sometimes  
 When the wind is fierce,  
 The fragile creeper inside me  
 Wants to cling  
 To the trunk of a very strong tree.  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 44).

In the poem we see two different layers of Shakir's personality: one that fights the wind, that is, the patriarchal society and the other which considers herself as a flower, which is safe and secure in that same patriarchal construct. Every fallen petal of the marigold, therefore, tells a different story of the writer.

Shakir uses the metaphor of a 'gardener' to manifest her first layer as she performs her duties as a mother. The first reading of the poem thus informs the reader about Shakir, who loves looking after her son Murad, and takes pride in 'tending' her 'garden with her own blood'. 'Rain' is a symbol of blessing for the gardener but it can also signify misery. Generally, it depicts the hardships a woman goes through in the caring for and rearing of a child. It should also be noted here, that when *Sadburg* was about to be published in 1980, apart from political upheavals, Shakir was having problems in her married and social life as well. Her marriage was failing because of a lack of mental compatibility, problems in the

joint family system, a husband (an only son) more inclined towards his widowed mother and unmarried sisters than his wife, a conflicting tension between the conventional lifestyle which was expected of her in her cultural and social context and the newly achieved fame in literary circles after the phenomenal success of *Khushboo*. For three years she had a very stressful and depressing married life. Despite the problems in her married life Shakir, like a stereotypical traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* woman, 'wanted to continue with her marriage and was determined to make it permanent' (Agha 1995, p. 29). In such an environment, where political, social and cultural despair and unhappiness prevailed, she could write more; as Audre Lorde says, it becomes necessary to write, to bring your feelings and desires into your text (Lorde 1988; Cixous 1981; Kristeva 1980). Therefore, the personal becomes the content of her poetry. Agha says, 'she called' her second collection '*Sadburg, Marigold,*' [and] 'dedicated it to her loving mother, under whose shadow she could hide herself and her sorrows' (Agha 1995, p. 30). Written for her mother, the collection is the story of her own 'fragmented' (Friedan 1963, p. 27) image, as a mother and as a poet.

In 1979, after three years of troubled married life Shakir was to give birth to a son. She 'felt elated that she was to create something' (Agha 1995, p. 29). It is this pride of motherhood, mingled with the confidence of her successful literary career that we see in the poem through the image of one who tends the 'garden' with her 'own blood'. As a feminist, therefore, Shakir has freed herself from binary divisions. On a personal level the poem shows the confidence and stability of Shakir as a strong woman in caring for and raising her son. She has full confidence in her 'potential' and can walk 'holding' her 'head high' with 'pride'.

Being a romantic poet also means that Shakir makes an effective use of the traditional symbols of romantic poetry, such as 'leaves', 'freshness', 'garden', 'fruit', 'buds', 'rain', 'blooms', and 'seasons'. The poem can, however, be read on another level, where Shakir, as a poet, looks at her 'own' work which she 'tend[ed]' with her 'own blood'. 'The freshness of leaves' can refer to her modern approach in her poetry, which was due to a conscious effort made by her to see beyond her personal existence. The mention of 'beauty' can be read as a reference to her verse, which she has command over, and she can talk or write on any subject – or 'season'. She is proud of her achievements, and can walk with her 'head high'. She is fully conscious of her talents.

Towards the end of the poem we see a tension between her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and feminist sensibilities (traditional here refers to a woman in the Pakistani context

who does not challenge the patriarchal construct).<sup>22</sup> On the one hand she contradicts herself, but then she reveals another layer of her identity. She cannot deny that even though she herself is a strong woman, a 'strong tree', and she is confident of her abilities, 'full potential', 'still' when the wind is rough, she needs the trunk of a 'very strong tree' to cling to. This desire can be interpreted in two ways. In one way she desires a male to cling to and it can also imply a need for protection as she is a woman. 'Cling' however, can have multiple implications. Metaphorically, it points towards both biological and sociological needs; and strongly suggests that 'man can think of himself without woman, [but] she cannot think of herself without man' (de Beauvoir 1988, p. 16). She is acknowledging that woman, being the 'weaker sex', needs 'protection' and in the process strengthens patriarchy itself (Arif and Ali 1998, p. 173). Moreover, being a mother cannot rule out the fact that her desire for the physical is not subdued. She is not a 'castrat[ed] mother'; in fact her implied desire for the physical breaks taboos surrounding female sexuality (Cixous & Clement 1996, p. xiii). From the sociological viewpoint Shakir's desire for 'a strong tree' is justified, keeping in mind her social needs. Parveen Qadir Agha, in her biography on Shakir, states:

On the exterior Perveen appeared to be [*sic*] confident, serene and proud lady, sure of herself and not afraid of this world. But on the inside she was an insecure lonely woman, hungry for affection and for protection. She was afraid of what the world had to offer and did not want to face it alone (p. 36). [...] Scandals began to brew once again. In her world of poetry there was trouble also. Her continued demand for participation in *mushairas*, her growing popularity, and her awards, all brought with them her share of jealousies. The cruel newspapers wanted material for the stories of celebrities and wrote freely. Shakir Hussain [her father] felt ashamed of all this. [...] Her mother was sad as the marriage was breaking up and that it would be bad for the child. From all sides her world was crumbling and any support from any quarter would be welcome for her (Agha 1995, p. 36, 34).

The question of 'inside' and outside: 'exterior', as reflected in the above quotation reflects the irony in solving the 'new woman question' in accordance with the discourses of national ideology (Chatterjee 1999; 1993). According to Chatterjee the self-identity of nationalistic ideology answers this question by assigning roles according to gender. He further argues that women are given a domestic role inside *ghar* (home) where their true identity lies, and men deal with the practicalities of *bahir* (outside world). This ideological framework within nationalism, he argues, answered the 'woman question', and is no different from gender roles

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<sup>22</sup> See page 16 for further explanation.

in any traditional patriarchy. This dichotomy, he continues, shows woman as ‘ideologically far more powerful’, where woman is the essence of eastern values and man, symbol of material world and power (Chatterjee 1999; 1993). Shakir gets trapped in the ideological inner/outer dichotomy by confessing that she is a weak person ‘inside’ without a ‘strong[er]’ man in her life. While the chapter focuses Shakir’s radical voice against such an object status given to woman in the national Islamic ideology very openly (Orsini 2002), in the poem her desire for ‘support’ from a stronger body, a male, to cling to indicates Shakir’s search for identity in her *ghar* (home) as well. There are thus two conflicting selves, one as a radical poet and one as a traditional woman. In chapter one, *Khushboo*, we analysed her identity as a lover, which helps to see different layers of woman inside Shakir, fragmented into different roles; one conflicting with the other; this in Orsini’s terms demonstrates ‘wide range of identities and aspirations’ (Orsini 2002, p. 303). Thus, in Shakir’s troubled ‘world’ as a woman she is justified in her ‘want’ for ‘the trunk of a very strong tree’. It is important to note here that she calls herself a ‘strong tree’, but needs a ‘very’ strong tree to cling to; indicating that ‘Man-the-sovereign’ ‘will provide woman-the-liege with protection’ (de Beauvoir 1988, p. 21). This merging of the traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* in the feminist, Bakht states, questions her ‘feminist’ position, while at the same time it makes her contemporary feminist poets unkind towards her (Bakht 1995, p. 5). Naim, on the contrary, comments that Naheed and Riaz, Shakir’s contemporary feminist poets, created a space within which Shakir’s poetry successfully found her own voice (Naim 1990, p. 181). This voice of her own makes her unique and different from her contemporaries as it is Shakir’s individual style of overlapping of feminine/feminist which she states avoids ‘extremes’ and a ‘militant approach’ (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 87). This directs our attention towards Yaqin’s comment that Shakir moves between patriarchy and feminism (Yaqin 2001, p.116). The above analysis demonstrates why Yaqin sees these two positions fluctuating in Shakir’s poetry.

At one level her acknowledgement without fear or shame that sometimes the ‘fragile creature inside her wants to cling to the trunk of a very strong tree’ in Mernissi’s terms, gives presence to a very sexually vibrant and active visible woman (Mernissi 1985); one who is defiant of those who try to restrain her sexuality for the sake of religion, and which frames the poem as an ‘antithesis of the ‘*sharif*’ [modest; good character] woman’ (Yaqin 2001, p. 123). On another level it is ‘an easy road’ which she wants to undertake; a road which Shakir’s contemporaries have long bid farewell to. It is interesting to note that while Shakir gives away her body for her feminine needs in this poem, Riaz in her collection *Badan Darida* (Body Torn/Lacerated) returns to the body as a location of female identity and

feminist activism (Yaqin 2001, p. 141; 2006). Naheed, like Riaz, talks about women's subjugation by the state in her poem 'We Sinful Women': such 'obscene' poetry Suleri says 'could easily earn the poet a prison sentence in the contemporary Pakistan' (Suleri 1992, p. 768). Here is an extract from the poem:

[...]  
 It is we sinful women.  
 We are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns  
 who don't sell our bodies  
 who don't bow our heads  
 who don't fold our hands together.  
 (tr. Ahmad 1990, p. 33).

While Shakir, in 'Working Woman', talks with reference to her biological and sociological needs, Naheed challenges the nationalist discourse that persecutes women in the name of preserving the spiritual purity of the nation (Yaqin 2001, p. 188; 2006). Basically what is projected here, through the analysis of these poems, is women's identity in Pakistan as a construct of patriarchy. While, on the one hand, Shakir celebrates the progressive liberalism and women writers freed from their traditional feminine bondage by placing them on an equal footing with their male contemporaries, on the other hand she also demonstrates her existence within the traditional framework for women. This is both the traditional and the modern aspect of her poetry, which makes her work different from her contemporaries.

To conclude then, it is worth referring to Gulnar's poem '*Burhi ma*' (Old Mother) (Yaqin 2001, p. 131), and Riaz's poem '*Sura-i-yasin*' (thirty-sixth Sura of the Quran) (Yaqin 2001, p. 133) which admit that when you break from the tradition of servitude (Gulnar), and when you do not conform to the demands of conventional society then you have that sense of homelessness (Yaqin 2001, p. 131; Gulnar 1995, p. 106-108; Riaz 1988, p. 116-117; Shakir in Javaid 2002, p. 469-472). Thus, what Shakir has achieved through this hybridity of writing as a modern and a traditional poet is both a sense of belonging and a sense of progress (Shakir quoted in Javaid 2002, p. 469-472). The theme of homelessness without convention is the focus of the next poem.

The two poems 'Working Woman' and 'Stenographer' were written in succession and work well as a complementary afterword:

A Stenographer

Before the crack of dawn,  
 When sleep still sticks to the body

Like honey  
 And the morning breeze  
 Undoes the knots of pain:  
 At that time of dispensation,  
 Regarding all the tender wounds on her body  
 As worthless,  
 She gets up, as if in defeat,  
 And submits  
 To the vagaries of the weather.  
 All day long, she types meaningless numbers,  
 And senseless names  
 With lifeless fingers  
 And juiceless mind.  
 With the acquiescence of a statue  
 She puts up with compliments and insults alike  
 from the bald boss.  
 Then, in the evening  
 When even the birds are safely tucked in their nests,  
 She emerges  
 From the cool hell of her office  
 With a charred face and stooping shoulders,  
 Encountering hungry eyes and lewd comments  
 And ready-to-drop-at-home car!  
 The stenographer, taking small frightened steps  
 Returns to her home  
 Holding the crumbling wall  
 Praying everyday:  
 Lord, let there be a day  
 When, I too, have a roof over my head!  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 43).

The poem 'Stenographer' is similar to the poem 'Working Woman' in many ways. There is an overlapping of themes of a feminist and a traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* self, presented in a similar pattern: a stenographer is working as an independent woman, but deep down in her heart she desires a home: 'a roof over her head'. Whereas in the previous poem Shakir represented the whole community of working women, in this poem she focuses on a specific field and that is the job of a stenographer. At a first reading Shakir is once again projecting her equal status with men, but unlike the previous poem where she was prouder and more confident of her achievements, here she spells out the very strong word 'defeat' reflecting the burden a woman has to bear if she is a lone breadwinner. This brings in the autobiographical aspect of her own life as a hardworking woman: her job as a teacher, her literary activities, her second master's degree, and looking after her family and son (Shakir in Javaid 2002, p. 469-472). She was defeated as a daughter, as she had to leave her home city of Karachi, settle in Islamabad, and also face defeat as a wife, as her marriage was not working. She tried to combine both career and education with mundane domestic life as a

‘new woman’ but failed (Chatterjee 1993, p. 135). The ‘woman’s question’ remains a dilemma<sup>23</sup> and unresolved in her life (Orsini 2002, p. 244; Chatterjee 1999, p. 233), because in her complex social construct there is no space for a woman who wants to separate the two overlapping positions; she keeps adjusting (Friedan 1963) and negotiating (Orsini 2002) in her national role as a mother, a wife, a daughter, a breadwinner, and in her own individual identity, thus in Ferguson’s terms, a woman has ‘no[t]’ room of her own (Ferguson 1988). This will be further taken up in the next chapter in greater detail.

The word 'defeat' is further amplified by her submission to the cruelty and unpredictability of the weather: 'vagaries', as she writes in the poem. As mentioned earlier in the foreword to *Sadburg*, Shakir refers to this weather as the 'wind' which is both kind and unkind. Wind is used as a metaphor, as it keeps changing and is unpredictable. In another sense, by personifying the wind as a 'hypocrite', Shakir is symbolically referring to the political and societal hypocrisies. This is with particular reference to General Zia's Islamisation where divine sanctions were used for the purpose of discrimination against women (Jahangir & Jilani 1990). Shakir uses the persona of the stenographer who becomes the spokesperson of her dissatisfactions. 'Submit'[ting] herself to the 'compliments' and 'insults' of her society, the stenographer 'puts up with' life as it comes. 'Numbers', which she 'types', therefore, are 'meaningless' ; 'names' are 'senseless'; 'fingers' are 'lifeless', and the 'mind' is 'juiceless'. She just becomes a 'statue' in her role as a 'stenographer'. What are missing in the persona of the stenographer are the 'pride' and 'freshness' and the 'fruit of [the] hard labour' of the 'Working Woman'. All the negative words such as 'meaningless', 'senseless', 'lifeless', 'juiceless' give the effect of drudgery; as if she is there just for the sake of a livelihood, but without any interest in her work and in life. Her drudgery is huge when compared to the comfort of 'the birds [who] are safely tucked in their nests'. On the contrary her 'face' is 'charred' from the 'hell of the office'. By using the oxymoron 'cool hell', Shakir is showing two aspects of life: comfort and pain. Life can be comfortable and 'cool'; in a metaphorical sense like weather, but it can be as scorching as 'hell'.

The crux of the poem though, is the emphasis through the comparison between the 'safely tucked' in 'birds' and the insecure woman who 'encounters hungry eyes and lewd comments', 'and ready-to-drop-at-home cars!' It takes us back to the nationalistic resolution of the ‘woman question’. A resolution which places this ‘new’ woman, with all her education,

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<sup>23</sup> This dilemma of new woman (educated woman) as a dutiful daughter and a mother restricted to her domestic role means that she is pressurised by these conflicting roles. Feminist critics have critiqued this fragmented role of a woman who is struggling to adjust in different identities and where she has no individual identity of her own.

inside the four walls where ‘the home represents her true spiritual identity’ (Chatterjee 1999, p. 238-239); and when a woman leaves the ‘protected’ and ‘secure’ domain of her home to work, and comes out of her gendered role, she is ‘harassed’ (Moghissi 1999, p. 28), because she threatens the patriarchal construct and hegemonic national culture (Chatterjee 1999, 234-252). Through this poem Shakir is projecting the bigger question of woman’s identity and freedom as an individual. The ‘hungry eyes’ links back to the ‘bears’ and ‘dogs’ in ‘His Majesty’s Problems’ with reference to hypocritical flatterers who metaphorically eat ‘His Majesty’s’ feet, and the ‘hungry’ ‘vultures’ in the poem ‘Macbeth’. The terms ‘hungry’ and ‘eating’ are important gastronomic terms binding the selected texts, and also re-emphasise the image of the ‘jungle’, where wild animals devour their prey. Here, symbolically, we are talking of a woman who is not secure, and the reason for this is expressed through the use of the word ‘lewd’ which indicates lustful remarks; it explains that this hunger is sexual lust. This keeps woman under ‘permanent’ ‘fear’ as analysed in the poem *Shaam-e-ghareeban* (The Evening of 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram/A Hapless Traveller) especially a radical woman who has a vision to reconstruct her position as an equal to man, and not be his subordinate. So the hungry eyes, which look at the stenographer, and the lustful comments she hears, and the offer to sit in their cars is because, as Mernissi argues, the female body is taken as a symbol of disorder and chaos (1991; 1985), once again reminding us of the Islamic construct which frames ‘perfect woman’ (Metcalf 1989; 1990) in *purdah* (veil) and four walls (Sabbah 1984). In French’s terms these are ‘ways to defeat feminism, [...] aimed at returning them [women] to fully subordinate status (‘fundamentalism’)’ (French 2008, p. 12). The word ‘defeat’ in the poem is ambivalent, as Shakir feels defeated because of the social construct in which she is so inextricably intertwined. She also defeats this culture by redefining and reconstructing her object status and her submissive (traditional) self to that of a modern new woman by representing herself as a subject in the public sphere with a radical voice and writing against such discourses which place her in the national ideological frame. To deconstruct or reconstruct such a construct is therefore a complex task (Ferguson 1988).

Another interpretation can be that Shakir, who is a firm believer in love, is trying to share with her reader that when love turns into lust, ‘the world becomes a jungle. The jungle evening never came alone. It came with its special friends: wolves’ (tr. with the help of Bakht) (Shakir, Foreword *Sadburg* 1980, p. 14). It is this man turned animal from which a woman in her society is not safe. It is ironic that the patriarchy which she wants freedom from and to deconstruct, takes her back to the four walls because she feels secure under the ‘roof’ and four walls. Such is the ‘paradox’ of her ‘liberty’, which Chatterjee argues is

‘propaganda’ of the ‘nationalistic emancipation which is necessarily a story of betrayal’ (1993, p. 154-155). This also links with Spivak’s concept of women as subalterns: as marginalised and subordinate, where Spivak states that the strategic construct and laws are so complex and intertwined that it is difficult to deconstruct. So the question remains, can a woman speak? Even if she does she ends up speaking patriarchal language, as analysed above. ‘A Stenographer’ can be the story of every Pakistani woman. It is important as it helps the reader to understand why Shakir does not or perhaps cannot alienate herself from the traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* role even though she writes against such a construct as a radical. In her Pakistani tradition, home is a sign of security for her. Spivak’s theory of the subaltern is rephrased by Ferguson, who states that neither can a woman escape nor find refuge outside the ‘prison-like space’, but to write against such a construct demands a ‘rarest’ ‘nerve’, which Shakir has (Ferguson 1988, p. 95-96). The ‘home’ the stenographer returns to has ‘crumbling walls’. Walls are a symbol of security and safety. If the ‘walls’ she is ‘holding’ onto are ‘crumbling’ then her prayer for a ‘roof over [her] head’ is justified. The desire, for a ‘roof over my head’ once again takes us back to the previous poem where the ‘Working Woman’ ‘sometimes / When the wind is fierce / The fragile creeper inside me / Wants to cling / To the trunk of a very strong tree’. The image of ‘roof’ once again refers to the social needs of a woman. Ironically, the roof of ‘her home’ is not strong enough to protect her. This refers to the same idea in the poem ‘Working Woman’ where, although being a ‘strong tree’, she ‘still’ ‘sometimes’ ‘want[ed]’ ‘a very strong tree’ to protect her from the ‘fierce’ ‘wind’. Both the poems thus end on a similar note. In ‘Working Woman’ it was more of a biological need; in ‘A Stenographer’ the sociological need is added to it. This is a shattering of her identity, split in multiple directions: her inner desire for a position as an independent free woman who enjoys her identity outside the four walls, a position that conflicts with the pressure from outside because of the ‘lewd’ remarks and men like wild beasts which pose a constant threat to her. Shakir in the collection has justifiably projected the metaphor of marigold (*Sadburg*), where she feels that every fallen petal tells a story of her shattered existence. In the concluding part of the foreword Shakir states:

The hard work might not be associated with hurricane, but in the presence of the wind it is difficult for the fruit to keep its bond with the tree. But no matter how desolate a tree is, it still holds the hope for spring. No matter how trodden the flower is, it is still a harbinger for good times to come. The *Sadburg* [marigold], despite its fragility, provides the seal of approval for such a belief. Even if a tiny ray of this belief touches your heart, then I would think that another petal of my existence has succeeded in not becoming the fodder for the wind (tr. with the help of Bakht) (Shakir, Foreword

*Sadburg* 1980, p. 14).

Talking to her readers and herself she concludes by giving a message of hope. The term 'trodden' is important as Shakir concludes with the image of a woman beaten by the harshness of the weather, reflecting despair; but it also projects hope, as she brings in the image of 'tree' and 'spring', which signify hope. By the time *Sadburg* was published, Shakir was still hopeful of better days and times to come. Hope is essential to keep the dreams alive. If her reader understands this message of hope, Shakir feels that she has achieved her goal. Reemphasising what Faiz states, that shattered dreams are pivotal, they are the point of reference from which the poets can move on (Faiz quoted in Hasan 2006, p. 43). Having a similar pattern Shakir moves on to the next phase of her life as a single mother in her third collection *Khud-Kalami*, chapter three, enjoying both her real mother-son relationship, and using motherhood as a metaphor for creativity to tell more stories of herself as a struggling woman: a single mother. Rethinking her radical views, the next collection is therefore more personal; a self-realisation and a self-reflection of her life and poetry. This can either be an indication that she cannot do anything about the existing social, political, and religious order, or, she might turn her back on the topic and move ahead to project another layer of her personality.

By dissecting Shakir's poetry layer by layer we find Shakir caught between two worlds: her inner 'feminine' *nisvani* voice as a traditional Pakistani woman, and her broader outlook as a feminist poet which challenged the nationalistic discourses that persecuted women in the name of Islam. This chapter has registered Shakir's voice as a radical feminist poet writing against the political oppression of Zia's regime. It also emphasised through the last two poems that the social issues did not detract Shakir from her role as a lover. Being a love poet, Shakir maintains the general theme of her romantic poetry and returns to the body as a location of female identity. The disenchantment of this chapter gives reason to Shakir's desire to take refuge in her inner world, thus preparing the reader for the next chapter, *Khud-Kalami* (Talking to Oneself).

## Chapter 3

### Mother, Motherhood and Motherland in *Khud-Kalami* (Talking to Oneself/Soliloquy)

#### Introduction

The focus of this chapter is Shakir's motherhood as a site of struggle. It analyses how Shakir is struggling in different conflicting roles and how she conforms in the end in order to survive in her conservative Muslim society. Based on the third collection *Khud-Kalami* (1985) the chapter aims to explore the concept of freedom for a modern Pakistani Muslim woman, looking at how it conflicts with the influence on her of western feminist ideas, and her own Islamic nationalistic role as a traditional mother. I shall establish that in Pakistani Muslim culture the concept of self or individual identity for a mother is not a simple issue. I will therefore argue through the selected texts that Shakir is just not one self, but has different elements which are fighting within her and responding in different ways, even though in the end she seeks to embrace a sort of a compromise and a balance. The underlying significance is to emphasise the traditional emotional self of the Pakistani mother which is always part of who she is. However, she also develops and discovers her other identities or other selves at different stages in her life. Since the third collection is the voice of Shakir as a real mother (divorced and single), motherhood is used both literally and as a metaphor for creativity, engaged in not only formulating a new concept of motherhood from a feminist's perspective, but also recording the struggle of a traditional mother writing about the difficult experienced facts of her motherhood. While the previous chapter was more political, this chapter is more personal and confessional as the selected texts are self-analytical and self-revelatory; a realisation of the outcome of radicalism, and therefore multi-layered and multi-dimensional revealing different voices of the term 'mother'.

Jane Bryce-Okunlola's framework of looking at 'Motherhood as a metaphor for creativity and examin[ing] women's source of creativity in the communal story-telling tradition of their foremothers' will be the primary framework for the analysis of the selected texts (1991, p. 201). She states:

For a writer, who by the very act of writing challenges the patriarchal appropriation of power over the Word, motherhood becomes a site of struggle. Its literary representation is, explicitly or implicitly, an exploration by women of the last uncolonised territory, an integral part of a woman's identity as a writer. The longing for a child on the part of fictional women ... is a

paradigm for feminine desire itself, the longing for what is *absent* from their lives. The writing of that desire by the author is a demonstration that, childless or husbandless, a woman *can* fulfil herself: through writing, the re-creation of her story in her own image, rather than that projected for her society (1991, p. 201).

African women, through their writing, Bryce-Okunlola states, do not only present the African mother as a sacrificing Mother Africa, but also challenge the idealised role of woman by showing how the mothers of Africa are struggling. Bryce-Okunlola states further that these African women writers are busy, not only finding alternatives but in presenting the reality of their lives (Ibid., p. 203). Similarly, Shakir, in Susheila Nasta's terms 're-creates' her identity by giving a voice, to 'herstory' redefining her own image as a self-aware mother and a poet. She is a poet who is not marginalised and is the subject of her own story, rather than how others represent her, but she also recognises that ultimately she is powerless, because as a mother she is performing her role as defined by the traditions of her motherland (Nasta 1991, p. xx). Bryce-Okunlola talks with reference to the African women writers, where, metaphorically, motherhood signifies an act of freedom where woman writes her own identity, the story of her struggle. Shakir's story is comparable as the historical background of colonisation is similar. Again both South Asian and African women are struggling against 'double colonisation' (Nasta 1991, p. xviii): patriarchal society and the politics of national ideologies. I am using the term 'double colonisation' to make the link between those who have suffered the effects of being doubly colonised although they have different religious and cultural backgrounds. Both were colonised and are now 'uncolonised', but 'uncolonised' here will be used in the metaphorical sense of freedom as a writer: in 'Word', but not as a woman, thus writing of motherhood is about writing of her struggles.

'Mother and motherland', from the South Asian, African and Caribbean perspectives, is a very powerful symbol. In the chapter, the term 'motherland' is used as a metaphor for a traditional expression of Asian motherhood. This emphasises the importance of the relationship of Asian mothers with cultural values which are the foundation of a sense of freedom for them. The chapter also looks at the term 'motherland' from a feminist perspective, in order to underline how individual freedom is also marred under such a traditional role. Shakir, being conscious of her roots and cultural identity, and also being educated and knowledgeable about current feminist ideas, perceives the changes taking place in her life and sees it from her own 'motherland' perspective. Shakir's perspective lies in deconstructing the traditional motherhood and motherland image. However, she also recognises that 'motherhood' and 'motherland' are inseparable because her identity as a

Pakistani mother is linked with the problems of her culture and society, so ‘motherland’ is also used as a metaphor for cultural problems.

Chatterjee’s framework presents the role of a woman ‘as highly nationalist[ic] spiritualism’, demonstrated by the ‘adulation of woman as goddess or as mother’ ‘represent[ing]’ the internal ‘essence’ of eastern ‘culture’ (Chatterjee is critical of this national ideology) (1999, p. 238, 248; 1993). In this chapter, Shakir’s traditional eastern perspective is examined with reference to Chatterjee’s framework. The feminist concept of motherhood is a ‘new creative vision’ (Ash 1991, p. 153). Ranjana Ash’s modern Asian (Indian, Muslim) feminist perspective on woman frames ‘the development of women’s self-awareness and identity; women’s search for freedom in the family; [the] question of women’s relationship to their “motherlands” and the resolution of problems and conflicts which this relationship generates [and resolves]’ (Ash 1991, p. 158). The ‘new creative’ vision is the unconventional vision of Shakir as an educated self-aware Pakistani Muslim woman who develops and progresses; this development conflicts and clashes with her ‘highly’ spiritual ‘role’, because of her unconventionality (Ash 1991, p. xxiv; Chatterjee 1999, p. 248). So when these radical tendencies counter the prevailing conservative Islamic system, she struggles and she also conforms and compromises under cultural pressure in order to adjust. The word ‘radical’ is seen within the context of her conservative Muslim culture where something as unimportant as dressing differently can be considered as a radical move; talking and writing with sexual and political awareness for a woman distorts the image of female modesty and the image of men maintaining power, as structured in an Islamic society. Therefore, I want to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that radicalism is not a term used in a revolutionary sense as it was used for the women in the west who protested publicly on the streets against the power structure. Shakir displays a kind of contained radicalism, where she is relatively radical because of her patriarchal culture and especially because she is under the Muslim laws which control women. It was difficult for her or for that matter any Pakistani woman to challenge male authority openly. Her poetry therefore is evolutionary, taking one step at a time, keeping in mind her conservative society where the life of women is very contained and controlled.

Ash’s framework in the chapter as a resolution is projected thus:

In the Indian [Asian] context where the idea of family responsibility is ingrained from childhood and forms an integral part of the ethical precepts of all Indian religions, there can

be no freedom for an individual [woman] outside of the larger unit that help one to define oneself (1991, p. 162).

Ash explores the conflicting issues of self-awareness in an educated woman from an Indian perspective caught between Gandhian nationalism and the liberal language of feminist ideas, while the selected texts will look into them from a Pakistani perspective: Shakir's self-awareness as an educated mother caught between the demands of Islamic nationalism, a demand of being in an ideal traditional role in the family as a mother, daughter and daughter-in-law and also retaining her own identity and freedom of thought. My intention in the selected texts is to illuminate issues related to women's struggles, conflicts, tensions, contradictions and the question of lost/found identities, and then the resolution of the issues, which is achieved by compromise. The chapter is structured in the above quoted direction of Ash, exploring multiple identities of the word 'woman'. These multiple identities are looked at positively by the French feminist Kristeva as from a 'schizophrenic' 'split' she says, emerges a 'new', 'refashioned' 'infinite' 'body'. Kristeva writes that the split multiplies and does not only carry the 'trauma' but also 'triumph' (Kristeva 1980, p. 187, 193). In that sense Shakir's struggles in her different roles are traumatic but she also triumphs as she breaks the traditional image of a woman who is expected to silently and submissively suffer at the hands of patriarchy (a typical traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* image, a 'high spirituality' in Chatterjee's terms). Such writing, where a woman does not remain silent and speaks about herself through autobiographical and biographical poems reflects, in Kristeva's words, 'her war' 'against' her traditional 'mirror image' (Ibid., p. 193). Chatterjee says that when a woman writes her autobiography it is not to tell of an exemplary life, or even a life of any importance, but it is useful as it requires the writer only to tell the reader how 'the everyday lives of women had changed'. Autobiography, he further writes, is a source of 'reconstructing' the 'social history', and what makes it 'authentic', is the 'feminine literary voice': she is writing in as a woman (1993, p. 139-140). In other words, it is similar to what Cixous had advocated: that a woman should write to bring her body into her text; writing only as a woman and about a woman is an important strategy in deconstructing phallic symbols (1981). When women write their story they write from their own perspective about the problems they face under patriarchy. I am also highlighting Shakir's increasing awareness of the problems of women.

### Poems of tension and conflict: womanhood vs. motherhood

The first two poems, are autobiographical writings, written in a new idiom Shakir uses as a mother to describe herself: *Khud-Kalami* (Talking to Oneself/Soliloquy), which is also the title of the first poem. Loneliness and isolation are the price Shakir pays for self-awareness. 'Misfit' pursues further the theme of conflict and tension with a more personal reflection on Shakir's own life, focusing on multiple selves of motherhood: mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law and working woman, and questions that concern women as individuals in their own right. In a state of extreme indecisiveness her cry in the poem 'What Should I Do?' explores her state, where, on the one hand, it is her personal individual life, her love affair and freedom to live the way she wants to overcome her loneliness, and, on the other, all the other responsibilities and cultural pressures. She has to choose one, and she gives up personal freedom thus conforming and compromising under extreme personal and cultural pressure. The theme of individual freedom is taken up more elaborately in 'A Poem for Farogh Furrukhzad', which looks at an Iranian Muslim feminist mother and poet who enjoys her individual identity outside married life, and who breaks all loyalties with tradition and Islamic culture, admitting boldly that anything outside marriage is considered sinful in Islamic culture. 'What Will Happen to the Flowers?' talks with reference to how Pakistani female identity is controlled by Islamic laws like the Hudood ordinance and *zina* ordinance promulgated in Pakistan where even that personal freedom such as enjoyed by Farogh Furrukhzad over her own female body is controlled in the name of Islam. The poem 'What Should I Do?' mentioned above is the cry of the conflicting voices of a mother who is under such legislated and forced control. These laws leave no option for a mother other than to return to her own family unit. The last section, based on poems about mother-son relationships, reflects how Shakir as a single mother seeks her peace as a traditional mother, and also looks at the fact that trapped in yet another way she is deprived of her individual freedom. It is a reflection of, on the one hand, a mother's (Shakir's) realisation that her true identity lies in her motherhood, (role as a Pakistani mother), and, on the other hand, a reflection that in her Pakistani culture the concept of individual freedom is a very complex, interlinked and multi-layered issue.

The question of identity is never simple in the Pakistani cultural context. The first selected poem *Khud-Kalami*, meaning 'Talking to Oneself/Soliloquy' is a self-reflection by Shakir on her own life: a dialogue with herself both as an addressee and an addresser. It is a dialogue between her newly achieved mature, independent self and also the marginalised self.

Based on Shakir's own loneliness, the price she paid for self-awareness, the theme of the poem is a reflection of how, when a Pakistani woman breaks the silence by her radical inclinations and disconnects herself from a traditional ideal image constructed for her she is left alone: silent, isolated, lonely and talking to herself. The result of self-awareness is pain and a cry of agony as the poem reflects.

*Khud-Kalami* (Talking to Oneself/Soliloquy)

It seems  
 As if people around me,  
 Have started speaking a different language!  
 The wave-length  
 On which we could communicate,  
 Has shifted to some other cosmos.  
 My dictionary has become obsolete!  
 Or their idiom has been changed!  
 Wherever I want to go,  
 I need a different password,  
 To enter their realm of semantics!  
 I am silent  
 For the sanctity of words!  
 Now the dialogue is possible  
 With the wall,  
 With loneliness,  
 Or with my shadow only!  
 I'm scared of the moment  
 When shrinking to myself  
 I forget even that frequency  
 Which enables me  
 To talk to myself.  
 I'm scared of the day  
 When I'm left screaming:  
 May Day, May Day!  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 79).

The title of the poem underlines mental conflict reflected through the act of talking to oneself. Soliloquies, or talking to oneself, are an extreme state of mental conflict. As Hamlet's famous soliloquy goes: 'To be, or not to be -- that is the question: / Whether 'tis nobler in mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune / Or take arms against a sea of troubles / And by opposing end them? To die ...' (Shakespeare *Hamlet* accessed 2010, Act 111, Sc i). There is a conflict in Hamlet whether to suffer mentally or take his life and die and finish all conflict. Shakir is also suffering both in mind and body as there are political restrictions on her unconventional poetry and there are also the Islamic laws against

female sexuality, both of which conflict with her freedom of thought. The first part establishes the two-dimensional aim of the dialogue: dialogue with the inner self which Shakir is conducting through this poem and this collection, and then a dialogue with her own social construct which has disillusioned her, broken her dreams. According to Rainer Emig (1995), in modernist poetry the ‘interchange’, the ‘tension’ between the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ aspects is what constitutes the subject of modernist poems, which, he states, are analysed through the theories of psychoanalysis. This ‘inner restlessness’, Hameed Zaman says, is also ‘the hallmark’ of a modernist poet (Emig 1995, p. 1-10, Zaman *The News*, Dec 28, 1994; Zeno *Dawn* Jan 26, 1995; 1996, p. 251-256).

In the poem the conflict is between imposed ‘silence’ and a desire to scream: to speak. Silence is a mode of resistance, one way of disagreeing, but the irony is that there is no silence as Shakir is writing; so it is a very complex and multi-layered silence. Shakir is not silent as she is telling the story of the lived reality of her struggling motherhood. She is the subject of her tale, disclosing openly the ‘his-[s]tory’ of ‘the people around [her]’, the history of the Islamic nationalism of her motherland imposed on her and how she is turning it to ‘her-story’ of an entrapped struggling motherhood. The liberal mother (Shakir) of Pakistan, I am arguing, has a voice, anger, aspirations, and her own life on the one hand and her cultural restrictions on the other. Above all, her identity as a writer shows that in the ‘communal history’ of storytelling where the ‘foremothers’ (Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 201) tell the story of the great achievement of male heroes (sons), Shakir is equal to these nationalist sons, because she is not only the writer but also the subject of her writings (Boehmer 1991, p. 19). Through writing a woman subverts the fixed nationalist narratives where men dominate (Kristeva 1980, p. 160; Nasta 1991; Spivak 1987). It voices Spivak’s ideas presented in *The Other Worlds* (1987) where she says that ‘when’ third-world women speak for themselves [through autobiographical writing] they urge with conviction that the ‘personal is also political’ (Ibid., p. 179); it starts to ‘efface’ and ‘change[s]’ her fixed image represented by first-world theories (Ibid., p. 180). So, Shakir’s autobiographical poem *Khud-Kalami* and others in this chapter in that sense start effacing that rigid image of the third-world woman, who is represented by the west as being without a voice. Spivak in *Imaginary Maps* (1995) writes that ‘When the subaltern “speaks”, in order to be heard, and gets into the structure of responsible (responding and being responded to) resistance [he or] she is or is on the way to becoming, an organic intellectual’ (Spivak 1995, p. xxvi). Shakir’s poems focus on the women issues that tell of a different female experience from that represented or documented in male discourses. Biographical and autobiographical writings by women, Spivak states,

help to show how women are imagined and how they came to imagine themselves (Spivak 1995). In the book *A Dialogue of Voices: Feminist Literary Theory and Bakhtin*, Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow state that feminine literature produces feminist dialogics, just as black can talk of blackness, they write, so ‘woman’s writings feminine *être*’, can be placed where women talk about what it is to be a woman in a masculine world’ (1994, p. xv). Thus, a feminist, they note, tends to find dialogue within and without. Hohne and Wussow note that dialogue is a release (in the form of psychoanalysis), but it also entails a struggle (1994, p. xiii). At this stage of Shakir’s life there is a dialogue within her own self, questioning the existence of her being and desiring solitude and peace, a time to bring this mental tension to a compromising and adjusting stage. Though ‘late’, in her own words, it is ‘a time to come to terms with conflicting ideas’ and bring ‘poise’ to her thoughts (Shakir quoted in Ali 1994, p. 1). This is very important; a turning point for Shakir. As mentioned at the beginning that this chapter and this collection is more personal as Shakir reveals her tensions and conflicts, irritations and helplessness, therefore it is confessional and self-revelatory. Her life has changed from bad to worse; from the metaphor of the shattered flower, *Sadburg* (1980), of chapter two, to an idiom; the ‘talking to oneself’ of chapter three. In that sense, she names this third collection *Khud-Kalami* (1985).

The poem ‘*Khud-Kalami*’, though the last poem in the collection, is selected as the first in the chapter as it sets the mood of the entire chapter and also structures the argument which explores the concept of individual freedom of a mother from a Pakistani cultural perspective. The hostilities of the world around her, causing conflict and tension, makes Shakir question the existence of her life and produce a desire for solitude and a ‘silent’ peaceful life. Though ‘silent’ is a complex word in the poem, and will be analysed in greater depth later, here it helps the reader to follow, step-by-step, her slowly evolving journey; her movement, both biographical and philosophical, towards a silent state: re-thinking and readjusting her self-hood.

Unlike the simplicity and innocence of the *Khushboo* (1977) days, when she was in love and experienced both smiles and tears, her situation is now different. The identity now in question in *Khud-Kalami* is the voice of a mature mother: Shakir, with a newly found mature self; a self which is coming to a realisation of multiple things. Shakir might not be as great as Hamlet in status: she is not a princess, but in her suffering she is no less. The only difference is that she is a woman; and what adds to her misery is that she is a Pakistani Muslim woman, whose identity and self has been questioned and controlled ever since she became self-aware; ever since she started her journey as a young girl in *Khushboo* (1977); fighting as a radical in

*Sadburg* (1980); criticising the image of Pakistani woman, shattered by her existence due to socio-cultural and Islamic laws and the tyranny of dictatorship, and now after eight years of her poetic career she finds herself lonely and isolated, the price she has paid for rebellion. Looking at the poem in this context then makes it easy for the reader to understand why the people around her are ‘different’, and why she is having a dialogue with her ‘loneliness’; is talking to the ‘walls’ and her ‘shadow’ and is ‘screaming’ for help. In Islamic culture where a woman is expected to be silent and obedient, speaking then makes her different from other women; because she is not submissive, and this leads to hopelessness because her unconventionality is not accepted.

In an interview for *Newsline* before her death in 1994, Shakir reflects a feeling of extreme hopelessness and admits that:

[t]here was a feeling of hope and the urge to struggle in *Sadburg*, but in *Khud-Kalami* not only are these missing, but there are added feelings of loneliness and depression coupled with the bewilderment at the happenings of the period. When you are left alone, you can only talk to yourself, because it is you alone who can understand your own thought. There was an intense feeling that dialogue with others was not possible. [...] There was a dominant feeling in it that now nothing can be done (Shakir interviewed by Salim October 1994, p. 87).

This ‘understand[ing]’ of your ‘own thought’, in the above quotation, is the crux of this collection, and a very mature revelation through Shakir’s own dialogue within herself: the real and not idealistic, a real self which after practical experience, her difficulties and struggles as a single mother, she realises that being a woman means being linked with her other selves as well. This also theorises the feminist idea presented by Kristeva, of being ‘torn’, ‘split’ (1980, p. 198) into multiple roles and writing about it, which gives a woman ‘knowledge’ (Ibid., p. 193) as she discovers something ‘new’(Ibid.); that a woman is not just one, but has multiple selves: a mother, a wife, a daughter, a lover, a writer (Ibid.). The feeling of being left alone and talking to oneself in the poem can be a development from that chaotic state of mind; the conflicting state of indecisiveness and a beginning of changes in thought, building some tolerance, and seeing life with a new vision. That is what the chapter is trying to establish: a vision that helps Shakir accommodate and survive in a culture which is hostile towards women.

The conflicting discrepancies between her feminist ideas, where she ‘needs’ a ‘different password’ fitting her independent way of thought and the demands of her culture where she is expected to be a ‘silent’ object under male control, reflects her as being in a sort of intercultural schizophrenic state, talking to ‘shadow’ and ‘walls’ as shown through the

idiom of the poem, and in Bryce-Okunlola's terms is 'paranoid schizophrenia', the pain of being in a 'psychic disintegration' (p. 212). In Shakir's case it is a sort of instability and shakiness, in a shadowy position in either role, neither accepted as unconventional nor wanting to live as a typical traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* woman, silent and subordinated living within four walls and in subjugation. Such a dialogue with yourself, in Bakhtin's (1981) words, both as an addressee (the subject), and addresser (the object), in Bryce-Okunlola's terms 'redeems' the writer from the mental anguish it seeks to explore; in that sense the dialogue is seen as a psychoanalysis when she brings the body into her text (Cixous 1981; Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p 213-314; Kristeva 1980; 1986; Hohne and Wussow 1994). Bryce-Okunlola further states that, in the act of writing, the woman writer recreates herself; her text then becomes the site of her resistance from within her captivity to the patriarchal symbolic order (Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 214). Shakir can also be seen psychoanalytically as she puts both her political and personal conflicts and tensions in her text.

In the poem she says, that in order to get into 'their realm of semantics' she 'need[s] a different password'. It is important to note here that Shakir reveals a good sense of modern technology, benefiting from her studies abroad. The word 'semantic[s]' pertains to meaning in language, and, in that sense, keeping in mind that we are looking at the language of the dictator who has completely changed the language of the country from democracy; liberal socialism of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to dictatorship; Islamic fundamentalism when there was military censorship and little freedom of expression. Shakir as a social radical refuses to accept that dictatorial political control and therefore needs a different language to talk to people who have democratic and liberal thoughts like hers. The word 'password' is significant in that sense as a password is a secret word or phrase known only by a restricted group or an individual. So if the password is changed, or is 'different', then neither can she have access to other people nor can they have access to her. Dialogue, therefore, is not possible. The change brought through Islamisation has snuffed out her liberal and rebellious voice and caused her knowledge and vocabulary based on her experience to become 'obsolete'. If we play with the word 'semantic', and read as Symantec, which is anti-virus software to protect personal computers, it can be read that Shakir can be looking at an anti-virus programme which could cleanse her country from tyranny, but she does not have access to it, as it has a different password. So either you 'compromise' and accept the system and speak the language of patriarchy so you do not face loneliness and be left talking to yourself, or you speak a language different from the patriarchy and face in Virginia L. Purvis-Smith's words, 'dire consequences' (1994, p. 57). Talking in an interview about the hardships faced

during this period by both male and female contemporary poets she states:

In fact, our depression bears testimony to our non-acceptance of dictatorial rule. I did not express this feeling loudly as a slogan but one can feel 'non-conformism' and 'struggle' even in that state of hopelessness. This was another way of not giving in and throwing up a challenge. Following Bhutto's tragic elimination, there was popular agitation. Poetry also witnessed hectic activity. Sometimes things were said openly, at other times in metaphors. Those who had means left this country. Ahmad Faraz [1931-2008] was one of them, but his poetry reached the people back home. Sometimes back when Faiz Sahib [1911-1984] was put behind bars, his poetry also found its way to the masses. There was one slight hitch: the works of these exiled poets could not be openly published here. Faiz Sahib had already been through the worst forms of torture and was in no condition to take more. When conditions in Pakistan became completely unbearable for him, he left the country at the invitation of some admirers in Beirut. As for Faraz Sahib, when I asked him why he had left the country, he told me that he was ordered to leave Sindh after he read his poem 'Muhasra' (The Siege) in Karachi press club. He felt then that if he could be ordered to leave a province, he could be asked to leave the country as well. [...] Fahmida Riaz chose India during exile (Shakir interviewed by Salim Oct 1994, p. 87-88).

This quotation is significant in multiple ways. It is important because Shakir does conform to political pressure earlier by changing the direct poetic style of her first collection *Khushboo* due to censorship. It also reflects that those who did not accept the dictates of martial law paid a heavy price: poets like Ahmad Faraz, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and Fahmida Riaz. This then further helps to reveal a sense of the middle path Shakir seeks to reflect when linked with the poem *Khud-Kalami* where she says 'I am silent'. Shakir's silence resulted from the fact that she had not taken a path which her contemporary radical poets (mentioned in the above quote) had taken. She had not risked her life, but had compromised, adopted a middle course. In that sense her 'silence' in the poem is justified here as she maintained a fine balance, and in her own words did 'not' want to be 'an extremist' (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 86).

Unlike her contemporaries, Shakir stopped criticising openly. If she had not she might have met the same fate: exile or imprisonment. Her silent voice of hopelessness is a voice of acceptance and conformity, which is read by her feminist contemporary poets as giving in and resigning herself rather than fighting as a feminist poet (Ahmad 1990; Yaqin 2001). However, Shakir also admits in the above quotation that this silence, she believes, is 'another way of not giving in and throwing up a challenge' (Shakir, quoted in Salim 1994, p. 87), and which speaks all the more powerfully. So in one sense she is acknowledging that she is powerless, 'nothing can be done' (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 86; Baksh 1996, p. 523), before a dictator and his policies and patriarchy, but also reflecting that her battle with the tyrannical forces was not over as her silence is a challenge in itself. Such is the multiplicity of the conflict and tension; although not open and direct, Shakir is still using metaphors and

idioms to write against cultural and military oppression. In the poem the dialogue between ‘I’ and ‘their’ [them] is significant. The pronoun ‘I’ is important, as firstly it gives a very personal touch, as the whole collection is a story of motherhood as a site of struggle, and then secondly giving a confessional touch to the poem, projecting Shakir’s ability to express her personal feelings against ‘[them]’, who have tried to control and silence her. ‘Silent’ in another sense can also refer to being silenced as a minority, marginalised. There are a very few feminists who are bold and courageous enough to raise a voice against political oppression in Pakistan.

It can be Shakir’s confession in the poem that ‘I am silent / For the sanctity of words!’ The use of the word ‘sanctity’ can be read as a reference to the poet as prophet, thus the words are pure and sacred. Words are precious for her, and ‘words’ are also a reference to her poetry as well. It does give the impression that she will write no more on what she has already written. However, Shakir does not literally remain silent, as she wrote yet another collection *Inkaar* (Refusal/Denial) in 1990 (as will be discussed in chapter four) which reiterated the same themes of the struggles of a Pakistani woman, but with more force as by then there is democracy once again in Pakistan, Zia having died in a plane crash. However, because this (*Inkaar*) is her last collection, she may be preparing the reader for some sort of conclusion to her poetic career so ‘silent’ can also be interpreted in that sense.

In this poem, ‘walls’ reappear within a different context. It is important to note that the poem ends on the image of ‘walls’: not of protection but seclusion, reflecting her isolation. In the previous chapter (*Sadburg*, chapter two), we heard Shakir advocating her traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* belief in a roof over her head and secure walls around her, indicating her faith in a home and a husband thus security and protection, believing these to be a strong fence for women in a male-dominated society. There the walls were crumbling signifying the crumbling condition of women and her own difficulties in adjusting to her married life. Here the wall has a different connotation; it is a wall of seclusion, separation, rebellion and loneliness. It indicates the condition of a woman who has rebelled, and her condition as a single struggling mother. To depict her deterioration, in the poem Shakir very skilfully starts by talking to ‘walls’, ‘loneliness’, ‘shadows’, and then ‘shrinking’ to the level where she would be talking to herself, and fears that there might come a time when she is ‘screaming’ for help and there is no one there to help. She dreads that moment when she might lose the ability to talk, even talk to herself, and become insane and scream ‘May Day! May Day!’: an implication of a strong need for improving the prevailing conditions. In French *venir m’aider* means ‘come and help’ which has been anglicised to ‘May Day’.

Sultana Baksh in her book *Perveen Shakir: Personality and Art* states that 'May Day' is linked with the working classes, but in the poem Shakir has used this idea to represent her fate, her helplessness and her need to be rescued (Baksh 2007, p. 70). In that way Shakir's rebellious agenda will continue if the conditions do not change. As a metaphorical mother she might be free and 'uncolonised' as a writer but as a real mother 'struggl[ing]' (Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 201). In the poem 'Misfit' we get a chance to have a closer look at Shakir's personal life to explore how issues of motherhood generate and are interlinked with the traditions of motherland.

### Misfit

Sometimes, I wonder:  
 Why don't I have the knack  
 Of keeping people happy?  
 Some are unhappy with my words,  
 Some with their tone.  
 Earlier, my mother was fed up  
 With my busy life.  
 And now, my son  
 Has the same complaint.  
 In the rat race for bread  
 Dear ones are left behind.  
 Although the entire household  
 Enjoys my womanhood,  
 The burden of responsibility on my shoulders  
 Becomes heavier every morning,  
 And yet  
 The hunchback of good-for-nothingness  
 Becomes more and more visible everyday!

And then, there is my office,  
 Where the very first condition of my appointment was  
 To resign from self-respect.  
 There, I try to grow flowers  
 In barren minds.  
 Once in a blue moon,  
 Some patches of green  
 Can be seen;  
 Otherwise,  
 The stones usually stay displeased  
 With the rain.  
 My tribe  
 Does discover light in my words,  
 But I know full well  
 whose eyes are set on my poems  
 And whose on the poet.

All circles are smaller than my feet,  
 But the wild dance of time

Stops nowhere.  
 The beat is speeding up.  
 Either I'm something else  
 Or this planet is not mine.  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 64-65).

The important pronouns 'I' and 'my' are very dominant and give the poem a personal and autobiographical touch. It voices Ash's concept of 're-creating' 'her story' of a 'struggl[ing]' mother who is performing her duties as a daughter, a mother, and a working woman, but empty as an individual soul (1991, p. 201). Autobiographical details, according to Chatterjee, reveal the 'personal' and tell the 'truth' (1993, p. 153), a truth which gives her text in Yaqin's words, 'reality' (Yaqin 2007, p. 384). In the poem Shakir explains how the entire environment is so different from her views that it makes her think of herself as a 'misfit'.

The main focus of the poem is a Pakistani woman's realisation that her life is centred on her family responsibilities, echoing Adrienne Rich's critical view about the universal idea that 'woman has no name, she is recognised through her relationships as one's mother, daughter and wife' and the question Rich puts is, 'Does a woman have a self of her own?' (2003, p. 29-42; Yaqin 2007, p. 397). Talking from her western feminist perspective she argues that this is a universally approved fact about women. The conflict throughout the poem is between 'I' and them: 'the people'; which includes her mother, her son, her office where she loved someone but could not marry because of cultural pressure, and the circle of poets she calls 'my tribe'. These aspects of her different selves are focussed on in this poem which analyses and explores why Shakir calls herself 'misfit'.

The poem begins by questioning why 'some people' are not happy with her poetry and its 'tone'. She wonders why she does not 'have the knack of keeping people happy'. She uses the word 'people' in a nonspecific way, but when using 'words' and 'tone' she implies that these 'people' are her critics; as Naim writes, 'her patronizing senior poets both male and female and predatory critics and intellectuals' (Naim 1995, p. 13). This can therefore be a reference to her contemporary poet Fahmida Riaz and others who have criticised her love poetry as being shallow and without depth. However, it is ironic that in one of her essays on Shakir, Riaz praises Shakir's poetry, writing that 'this type of poetry is essential for us in our society', calling Shakir, 'queen of *ghazals*' (love poetry), and admitting that 'her poetry refreshes us' (Riaz 1991, p. 73-74). Rukhsana Ahmad, another critic in the diaspora, in her pioneering book about Pakistani feminist poets *We Sinful Women* (1990) looks very critically at Shakir's work but excludes her from the category of feminist poets (p. 6-7). However,

Ahmad provides no theoretical framework in her book. The accusation is that Shakir writes openly about female sexuality without any social reference. It is interesting to note that Ahmad is reflecting her own scanty knowledge of feminism because the basic canonical theory of feminism is that personal and political is indivisible (Cixous 1981; Kristeva 1980; Moi 1986). In that sense Shakir's work is feminist writing as she is presenting her personal problem of female suppression which is also political. So when the personal becomes political it also makes the patriarchy 'unhappy' because Shakir's unconventional love poetry endangers the Islamic culture which structures woman as silent, submissive, an object of male pleasure, veiled and within four walls. Shakir, of course, was conscious about all these critical attacks on her work. Ironically the reference to 'some people' turns out to be a major reference, as along with poets and critics it also refers to the patriarchy and Islamic rulers who are unhappy with her poetry. She uses a satirical 'tone' because her poetry is criticising her patriarchal culture.

The word 'knack', is a crucial word in the poem as it helps us analyse Shakir's shifting position between feminism and patriarchy. She asks herself this question: 'Why don't I have the knack / Of keeping people happy?' and in her own self-analysis, we discover a conflict, a fluctuation. She is writing poetry with a challenging 'tone', in that sense a feminist poet, but she is also burdened under patriarchy in her conventional roles, where everybody is 'enjoying' her 'womanhood' except she herself. This state between the traditional 'feminine' and 'feminist' positions can be one reason for the self-analytical misfit status she appropriates for herself, because the patriarchal society expects her to be an ideal perfect mother. Making everyone happy means to fit in their frame: to compromise, to give up her radicalism, (self-identity) and to speak their language. There is a sense of victory there but it is very short lived; in Bryce-Okunlola's terms it is a 'temporary mechanism' (1991, p. 210), because Shakir ultimately falls into the patriarchal trap. Therefore, in the poem, when male critics 'discover' no 'light' in her work, Shakir is fully aware of why it is, because the 'light' Shakir has, which she refers to towards the end of the poem is a voice which is outspoken, and it disrupts their 'light', their patriarchal order.

With reference to 'light' in her work, the female critical perspective is different from that of male critics. The contemporary female writers and poets already mentioned are very critical about lack of depth in her poetry ('Unfathomable words'), and lack of depth in 'thought' because of the love themes, which they think do not generate light and wisdom (*Khushboo* 1977, p. 121). There are other female critics like Baksh, who finds 'light' in Shakir's work, a light which can guide a whole new generation of women poets. Baksh finds

a new woman in Shakir's poetry, with a new identity and a new literature. The projection of a confessional feminine self in Shakir's poetry, Baksh states, was not seen in the works of the older generation of women poets (Baksh 1996; 2000; 2007). There are others who 'gather pearls of wisdom from her poems' (Bano 1995; *Dawn* 1994). The confessional feminine self is the unconventional love poetry, the overt depiction of female sexuality. Thus Shakir is aware that there are 'some' who are critical of her, Shakir 'the poet', and some who are critical of her work 'the poem[s]'.

This reinforces the ruthless criticism of her work. One can refer to the absence of Shakir's work in Ahmad's book *We Sinful Women*, as an example of the prejudice that many poets both male and female, held against her (Khan 2009, p. 26). Reference to 'more eyes on her than her work' in the poem is also significant as it draws the reader's attention to Shakir's physical beauty, and the major reason for the male community of poets to admire her. Imran Hameed Khan explains 'that many poets were patronising towards her because of her good looks and chose to disregard her as a serious poet due to the fact that men were especially drawn to her performances' (Ibid., p. 26-27). Naheed in her autobiography, *A Bad Woman's Story* (2009), is critical about such men and their petty minds who look at a woman's body as her only text, an object of physical pleasure. She observes that even when women mix with men on such occasions as *mushairas* (mixed poetry recital sessions) it is taken as flirtatious and provocative, reflecting questionable morality (Naheed 1993; 2009). In her society such women are taken as objects of physical pleasure only and their poetry is not taken seriously, or alternatively, all eyes are on her critically because she is a woman poet in a male dominated society and has to prove herself equal to men. However, seen from a creative aspect, and thinking of Shakir as a romantic poet, it can be taken as a romantic quality, as physical beauty has always been a source of inspiration. Therefore, the eyes 'on the poet' can be a reference to beautiful young Shakir herself. Thus, there are multiple ways of looking at the 'light' in her work by her 'tribe': the poets she refers to towards the end of the poem.

From poets and critics she moves to 'my' 'mother', 'my son', and their 'complaint[s]' in the poem. These mother-daughter and mother-son relationships help to explore Shakir's story. It is important to note that in the poem she uses the words 'earlier on' for her mother, and 'now' for her son. The 'same complaint' gives us a chance as readers to look at Shakir's 'earlier', younger days as a daughter in order to explore how Shakir reveals herself and how she has 'now' reached this stage of being a 'misfit'. It also reveals the conflicts and tensions she experienced then; how her identity was crushed and she was forced to compromise where social and cultural norms were concerned and how her defiant streak developed over the

years.

Parveen Qadir Agha in her biography of Shakir talks about the defiant streak Shakir had from early childhood. Her father though was a source of inspiration for her but stopped her from attending *mushairas*. He also did not want her to write love poetry, as in her Muslim culture it was not acceptable. However, as Agha writes, she ‘refused’; because of her defiant nature there was no stopping her (Agha 1995, p. 57). She also had a love affair when she was a young girl but could not marry the person due to family and cultural pressure (Agha 1995). This story of ‘constant nagging’, (*Dawn*) in Shakir’s own words, between her inner urge for freedom and the outer pressures of ‘religion’, ‘social status’ ‘family bonds’ and ‘everything’ that controls her had a ‘traumatic affect’ on Shakir (Shakir *Dawn* Dec 1994, p. 1; Agha 1995, p. 24-25). It made her question her own existence, and as she says in the poem ‘I wonder’ ‘why [?]’. Agha also writes, ‘Why was she a woman not free to make her own decisions, to lead her own life?’ (Agha 1995, p. 24). Shakir has remained the ‘same’: on the one hand a defiant, strong-headed girl and on the other giving in to cultural pressures and speaking in the voice of patriarchy. Shakir’s mother is a traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* woman and wants Shakir to be the same, therefore her daughter’s liberal ideas are not acceptable to her.

Her mother’s ‘complaint’ continues because Shakir’s radical streak also continues. Later on, as a married woman she struggled for eleven years with her unhappy married life trying to fit into the traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* role, what Friedan calls ‘feminine’ ‘adjustment’, until she finally decided to divorce her husband (Friedan 1963, p. 18; 1985). This struggle to adjust within the traditional role is an indication of her ‘feminine’ *nisvani* side where she is accepting, in Chatterjee’s frame, the nationalist construct of the ‘new woman’ (Chatterjee 1993, p. 151). Shakir was asked to give up her roles as a writer ‘her identity’ (Paracha 1991; Khan 2009, p. 29), and as a working woman, and to stay inside four walls, using her education only to look after her son and her family (Agha 1995, p. 27). This, in Chatterjee’s terms, is a story of ‘betrayal’ of the ‘new woman’, where a woman, he states, is ‘made to believe about the emancipatory claims’ on behalf of her education as a ‘new woman’, but she is ‘marginalized and alienated’ and never ‘given a place of respectability’; for patriarchy this is ‘nationalist emancipation’, reflecting that a woman is free to get education. The betrayal lies in the fact that she is not allowed to leave the four walls and must use her education inside the house only for the betterment of her husband and children as an ideal woman (Chatterjee 1993, p. 151-154). It is this, as Chatterjee puts it, ‘liberal paradox’, which traps women in nationalistic ideologies, and in which Shakir is also trapped. ‘The nationalist’, Chatterjee states, ‘reads it as a movement from bondage to emancipation; the

feminist critic of nationalism will read it as a movement from one kind of bondage to another' (1993, p. 151). What I am establishing here, framing Chatterjee's theory of the 'betrayal' and 'liberal paradox', is that when Shakir feels that she can enjoy her personal freedom influenced by western culture she only then realises that such influences stigmatise her as a 'misfit'; such is the paradox of her cultural ideology. Amrita Pritam in her autobiography writes that in her own case 'freedom from an unhappy marriage encompassed getting a divorce and living with those she chose to love' (Pritam quoted in Nasta 1991, p. 165). However, her freedom speaks from a different location; as an Indian poet she lives in a secular culture whereas Shakir is placed in an Islamic culture. In the poem the circle of Shakir's responsibilities becomes bigger; intertwined and complex, one layer after another of identity. This illustrates that Shakir is not an easily defined person. Marriage links her with another set of people, the in-laws. There is Shakir's own mother, Shakir as a daughter-in-law, a mother, and a wife and now we have a mother-in-law as well whose complaints are not recorded in the poem; however, her presence is felt through the biographical information elsewhere. Knowing the fact that we are looking at Shakir through her cultural norms, it is assumed that her mother-in-law is not happy as Shakir has, by getting a separation, not proved to be an ideal daughter-in-law.

Divorce in her society is not a respectable act. Shakir, by opting for a divorce, gave a bad name to the family, which resulted in disconnection with her father who 'stopped communicating altogether', and her 'mother [was] very sad', 'as divorce was looked upon as shame in her [Muslim] society' (Agha 1995, p. 44). However, from Shakir's perspective she was empowered, it gave her a sense of freedom, she was victorious; in that sense 'misfit' could be a term of celebration as this fits in with her re-created individual new vision of a woman, her new vision to see herself the way she wants to be, not the way the traditional ideal picture is presented in national discourses. It voices what Kristeva says, that a woman has a fluid self, and moves in different identities, and should not be taken in just one stereotypical traditional role (1980). However these are 'fragmented and episodic victories' according to Spivak; because she says, when women 'rebel and rise-up', it is not 'permanent' as they are disrupted by patriarchy, the 'ruling group' and 'social prejudices' (Spivak 1995, p. xxvii). Hence, Shakir paid a heavy price for her rebellious ideas, in the form of complaints which make her feel guilty and which lead to her compromise in the end. Theoretically, as Irigaray says, 'complaints' are a way of making women feel 'guilty' about 'ignoring their traditional task'. Irigaray writes that 'when a woman wants to come out of male possession, and therefore transgresses their laws, she feels guilty, because male strategy - deliberate or

not - is meant to make [women] feel guilty' (1980, p. 74). This whole argument of the poem 'Misfit', is about making women feel guilty and pressurising them through complaints and it also helps to establish how men in 'patriarchy', in Chatterjee's words, 'have always laid down the ways in which woman should behave': they should be obedient and submissive, which Shakir is not (1993, p. 135); she has her unconventional and liberal views.

In the poem 'Misfit' her 'mother's' 'complaint' illustrates how Shakir lived her life. This not only helps to explore autobiographical elements but also helps to highlight the multiple problems and issues related to the word 'woman'. Such personal poems also emphasise that women, through their feminist writing, are illustrating the problems they face in their society. The poem reveals that Shakir was struggling to adjust in her own maternal home, the control and suppression affecting her 'mentally and physically' (Agha 1995, p. 25). Later there were personality clashes between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law because of Shakir's unconventionality which could not be suppressed. However, she knew that she 'could never' be the 'simple housewife' she was expected to be (Ibid., p. 35). There was also fear of the social pressure which does not accept a divorced woman as respectable in Pakistani society.

A constant dialogue within her and with all the social, cultural, and religious pressures outside her make her a so-called radical Pakistani poet, neither a feminist nor a traditional 'feminine' *nisvani*. Instead she is caught between two cultures, a split, torn personality who has crossed social barriers and won the political battle through 'word', her poetry, and has also won her personal liberty through a divorce. Ironically, she could still not win the personal battle of her emotions, because family responsibility is an essential part of her Pakistani culture. Shakir's complaint, to use Kanitkar's words, is 'of her non-functioning as an individual in her own right' (1991, p. 183). She struggles to offload that burden of responsibilities through expressing her own complaints, when her individual freedom is under pressure.

The poem helps to show the English speaking readership a cultural construct where a woman is struggling to reclaim her individual freedom, as Shakir in the poem complains that 'her' 'womanhood' is 'burdened' with 'responsibilities', which are 'increasing every day', and she gets no reward for all her hard work; her womanhood is for all the family members to make use of except herself. Shakir very skilfully uses the word 'hunchback' in the poem, so the reader can literally visualise the bundle of responsibilities on her shoulder. It shows how a Pakistani woman is fragmented and split in different directions. As an unmarried daughter she has to compromise on the cultural restrictions imposed on her by her family. When she is

married, the cultural norms, in Nasta's terms, are 'imposed' on her and it is her responsibility to look after her in-laws (1991, p. xx). In Shakir's case she has to look after her widowed mother-in-law, her husband's three unmarried sisters, her husband and their son. She is living in a society which expects a mother to use her education and skills inside the house and for her children; that is, in Nasta's words, 'her proper identity' (Ibid.).

Through the mother-daughter and then mother-son theme we see multi-layered issues linked with the question of female identity. This becomes more evident in the poem when we explore the 'son'[s]' 'complaint'. There are two sons; one is Shakir's son and other is Naseer, Shakir's husband. While Shakir, as a daughter with liberal views, upsets her mother and also her own son who feels that he is ignored due to her busy life, the 'rat race', we have Naseer's mother, a reflection of contentment because of her son's obedience. Shakir, however, as a mother is a cause of pain and embarrassment for her own mother. Due to her busy life and her neglect of her 'dear ones', her imperfection and in Irigaray's terms 'guilt' (1980, p. 74) is revealed in her 'son's complaint'. I am establishing here that female identity is crushed under the name of culture, tradition and religion. Here we see both genders: Shakir, being a woman, is struggling more as she demands to live her own personal life, but also has multiple responsibilities which are imposed on a mother by her culture. Naseer, her husband, also has responsibilities but is struggling less under patriarchal culture, reiterating Chatterjee's quotation here that 'men are only mindful of their own interest' (Chatterjee 1993, p. 135). Their interest lies in controlling women; even if she is educated, it should be used 'as a result of social policy pursued by men' (Ibid.). These 'self-interested men' Chatterjee explains, 'are mindful of the improvement of woman only to the extent that it furthers their self-interest; not for any other reason' (1993, p. 135). Hence, he writes, there is 'no confusion' in their minds about their responsibilities as lawmakers of society (Ibid., p. 135-136). Naseer therefore does not have to fight for either his identity or his freedom. However, when a woman pursues her goals personal or otherwise, for example, to earn 'bread' or to enjoy her womanhood or self-hood she is made to feel guilty by her mother's or son's complaints. Shakir and Naseer as children were different: their gender controlled them and continued to do so. As a modern woman, when Shakir clashes with her cultural norms to reclaim her self-hood, 'nobody is happy' with her, and in that sense she is 'a good for nothing'. A modern woman, who enjoys her personal life, Chatterjee argues, is seen by nationalistic ideology as 'a very incomplete picture of woman who was after all also a mother, daughter, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, and mistress of the household, and had to earn credit in all these roles before she would be praised by society' (1993, p. 143). Zehra Nigah, Shakir's contemporary female poet, in her

poem *Jurm vada* (Criminal Promise) feels guilty as she does not keep the promise she made to her children. The poem is based on the three-pronged theme of her work, her responsibilities as a parent and her motherhood. Such social norms are oppressive, and are as Chatterjee argues, the ‘undesirable aspects of traditions which had to be reformed’ (Ibid., p. 143). The helplessness of a woman caught between multiple roles is further expanded in Shakir’s next role as a working woman in an office. The personal feminine ‘I’ therefore, according to Kristeva, moves in ‘different directions’ (Kristeva 1980, p. 186).

In Shakir’s poem ‘Misfit’ she moves to ‘office’ to show how her responsibilities become bigger, her circle becomes larger, and her identities multiplied. Shakir intentionally includes the word ‘office’ to tell another story of victory and losses as a working woman, especially when working with men (as the term ‘office’ generally gives an impression of working with men). She could have told the story of her experience as an English teacher where she taught in a girls’ college for nine years before she was married. However, when you are living in a male-dominated society and you pass a competitive exam - CSS (Civil Superior Services) and win a ‘high merit position’ in ‘Foreign Services’<sup>24</sup> beating your male counterparts, it is a great victory for a Pakistani woman (Agha 1995, p. 31). In medicine or education there is some acceptability of a female presence, but to be selected against men for a post in the topmost services like Foreign Services, Customs and DNG (District Management Group) was a great shock to the male ego. In one way Shakir’s success in this field won her victory as she struggled to reclaim her self-respect; in Moghissi’s words ‘win back, inch by inch’ what [she] lost through the “re-Islamization” [of Zia’s] polic[ies]’ ‘in’ ‘Pakistan’, where woman is placed subordinate to man (Moghissi 1999, p. 11). The images of ‘stones’ in the poem then signifies such people as the tyrannical General Zia, who discredited and disrespected the identity of women. A stone’s major characteristic is that it has no life, and in that sense it does not grow or change and is linked to ‘barren’.

At another level the metaphor of land can be used for both genders, ‘stones’ and ‘barren[ness]’ for men, and ‘green’, ‘rain’, and ‘flowers’ for women. This links with the concept of ‘engendered nation’ depicted by Elleke Boehmer in ‘Theorising the engendered nation’. She explains that men are conventionally presented as strong and powerful and

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<sup>24</sup> Shakir could have been in Foreign Services, as she won that position, her first choice, but the then military dictator General Zia had put a restriction on women working in the Foreign Service (Agha 1995; Khan 2009). When asked the reason why he did not put women in this field, his reply was ‘if I put you (women) on the palm of my hand and blow you, you will fly away like a feather’ (as related by the late Viqar-un- Zeb 29 Dec 2009: personal interview). The automatic second choice was Customs where Shakir worked as a senior beaurocrat from 1984, posted as AC Customs (Assistant Commissioner Customs) in the Karachi office, and then promoted to Deputy Director, Inspection and Training, Customs and Central Excise, at the Islamabad office in 1993.

women associated with birth, roots, nature, beloved earth and motherland, thus giving them engendered roles (Boehmer 2005, p. 27). However, she states further that these are the 'remnants of the past' (Ibid., p. 27). Chatterjee argues that while women have tried to come out of these gendered roles through feminist writing, men on the other hand have not progressed or cultivated themselves out of it, rather they have made it much stronger by propagating it through, in Chatterjee's terms, 'nationalistic ideologies' (Chatterjee 1999, p. 252). 'Barren[ness]' in the poem then depicts that mentality which is linked with 'past' 'values', and looks at a woman as one whose place is in the home, and whose job it is to give birth just like the earth (Boehmer 2005, p. 27). In that sense the 'barren[ness]' is also a metaphor for a barren motherland; a conventional society with bounds and restrictions on freedom outside of that construct. When she does not fit into that construct, she becomes a 'misfit'.

Antithetically, 'flowers' placed against the 'stones' in the poem is an image of beauty, life, growth and, of course, woman. 'Rain' too is linked with life. '[P]atches of green' in the poem refers generally to those people who have respect for women. It also gives a deeper insight into Shakir's struggle in her love affair which is suggested by the 'flowers' which Shakir is 'try[ing]' to 'grow in the office'. This is another untold story of love, sacrifice and conflict that needs to be told. The image of 'green patches' is a personal story of Shakir's love affair, told by Agha in Shakir's biography, a time when Shakir, a divorced mother, 'set her heart on a [junior] person [officer] working [with her] in a government office', an affair which never materialised, due to extreme social, personal and cultural pressures (Agha 1995, p. 23; Zeb 2009; Khan 2009).

This freedom for self 'may not be' a cry for 'sexual' freedom, as Friedan puts it, but it cannot be denied that it is 'related' to 'sexual' 'fulfilment' (Friedan 1963, p. 26). Keeping in mind that the time lapse in the poem between 'earlier on' and 'now' is about eleven years, during which Shakir got married. Now, when she writes this poem, she is a single divorced woman, but the female inside her is still alive to her urges and desires. Shakir is basically a love poet with a feminine romantic side and that strain is very prominent in her though controlled due to the political and military censorship and the Islamic environment. We cannot deny that there is hidden somewhere a cry for 'sexual' fulfilment (Friedan 1963, p. 26). This is not for, as Spivak says, reproductive purposes, but a desire for sexual pleasure (Morton 2003). 'Green' is a symbol of hope and life; as after divorce Shakir is in need of hope, love and a relationship, but her 'self-respect' is at stake if she crosses the cultural and religious norms. From a Pakistani cultural perspective she lost self-respect by having an affair

while already being stigmatised as a divorced woman. It reiterates Chatterjee's argument, that when the modern educated woman believes that she is free, and thinks and models her life on 'European lines', she faces the difficulty of fulfilling the norms of respectability laid down for her; it excludes her from respectable society because of the stigma of 'immoral living'; such are the contradictions of the new world, he states (1993, p. 151-152). These contradictions also construct an identity through Shakir's biographical and autobiographical poems.

I have already talked in chapter one, *Khushboo*, about her earlier affair (1974-1975) when she could not marry because of social and family pressures; eleven years later (1985) nothing had changed, neither her conservative Islamic culture nor patriarchal control, or Shakir herself. Theoretically, it is in Kristeva's terms a significant 'revelation' of that 'split' in different directions as it projects that the inner desire for love and a relationship has not escaped her nature (Kristeva 1980, p. 193). Being a mother or a divorced mother could not suppress it, even though she knew she could not marry her lover due to cultural pressure. The focus here is on her natural desire for sexual freedom, the female inside her, who is struggling with outer forces and her other selves.

The conservative culture in which she lived did not accept a woman having an affair; she could not invite her boyfriend to her home, so she met him outside in restaurants, parks and sometimes in the company of other poet friends (Zeb 2009). She could neither leave him as she was in love with him, nor could she move ahead. Another fear of Shakir's was that if she neglected her son he may have become closer to his father. She also knew where she was in her life: youth gone, son growing older, social and cultural pressures not in her favour, wanting to remarry but not being able to, and a relationship without getting married was adultery in her religious circle. Another conflict was that if she did not marry then, she might miss this opportunity too. Secondly, when her son got older, he might control his mother as in traditional Pakistani culture. Living in a male dominated society in Ash's terms means women traditionally cannot do anything 'independently even in their own house'. She states that 'in childhood' a woman is 'subject to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her husband is dead to her sons' (Ash 1991, p. 158). A man can marry even in his 80s, but women getting married late in life are a source of amusement in Pakistani society. As Shakir says towards the end of the poem, 'I am something else', a 'misfit'. The term 'misfit' describes her relationship to all these situations. The 'circle' in the poem refers to cultural conservativeness and narrow-mindedness. The feet being too big can symbolise her liberal modern outlook, where she does not see anything bad in having a love affair, because there is

a woman inside her with a physical urge, but the culture does not permit its fulfilment. The ‘feet’ in the poem can also be a symbol of constant struggle. The conflict on the one hand is her love, and also her womanhood which demands freedom, and on the other her motherhood, her responsibilities centred on her son; her conservative society is too small to fit everything in. If she goes for her love, she loses her son, if she goes for her son, she loses her love, and the cultural pressure is that she cannot have both; a difficult path. In the poem *Che-kunam* (What Should I Do?) Shakir was in real life standing helplessly on the crossroads of these two options. The only way out was to sacrifice her womanhood; and she did - she sacrificed her love affair and compromised on her motherhood when she made her son (Murad) the centre of attention, but it was a difficult point in her life as the poem reflects:

*Che-kunam* (What Should I Do?)

A difficult fork  
 Has come on the pathway of helplessness.  
 On one road there are:  
 Absence of direction,  
 A lampless darkness,  
 A naked desolation,  
 Disgrace without concern,  
 Sacrifice without appreciation,  
 Eight-sided loneliness,  
 Recognition like a serpent,  
 Cunning and false sharing of grief,  
 Boundless subterfuge.

And on the other road:  
 The disgrace of the heart  
 In the love, held captive in a fort.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khud-Kalami* 1985, p. 31).

The poem is another personal reflection of Shakir looking into a conflicting stage in life, and is an important poem in the collection and the chapter. It guides the reader to look at Shakir’s self-analysis through all her different options, and how she comes to a point of helplessness and decides where her status lies in her cultural context as a Pakistani woman. It is a story of a real mother, her struggle and helplessness. It reiterates Chatterjee’s ideas that the biographical details reveal the personal, and tell the truth (1993, p. 153), truth which makes Shakir’s text real and not ideal.

Shakir uses the analogy of a divided road in the poem. She talks directly of two pathways, resurrecting the image of a journey, because she has come to a difficult point in her

life. There are only two choices for Shakir: one is to ‘sacrifice’ her self-hood and freedom and embrace a life of loneliness and desolation, and the other is the path of ‘love’. Shakir intentionally uses hyperbole, ‘eight-sided loneliness’, to stress that in either side there is suffering. She acknowledges that the path of a divorce is already a ‘disgraceful’ path full of shame, embarrassment and loneliness. She is already a black sheep in her society. If she chooses the other direction, the path of love, even then there is ‘disgrace’, because she will be further disgraced. She could not continue her love affair due to social and cultural pressure; as she says in the poem ‘love is held’ ‘captive in a fort’. ‘Fort’ brings in the image of a battlefield, indicating that it is not only a fight, it is a battle.

We do not see this sort of entrapping circle of helplessness of the trio of self-culture-motherhood in *Khushboo* and *Sadburg*. *Khushboo* is innocent as we do not see this personal stress as a divorced mother. One can argue that, if she had been a true rebel or revolutionary she would have been victorious; a model, a living example who could fight and win. It reinforces that she was not a true feminist poet in the real sense as she could not cross the social barriers; and she faced a constant tension between womanhood and motherhood.

However, she could have stayed abroad, lived there with her son, and enjoyed her freedom, but she loved her country and her culture and went back to live and die there (Agha 1995). She is a ‘female goddess[es]’ who has suffered and sacrificed and is a trophy for the motherland (Nasta 1991, p. xiv). One of the aims of this thesis is to reveal the untold stories of women’s struggle and conflict and sacrifice to a larger audience.

From a Pakistani perspective it can be an emotional strength, the strength to sacrifice herself; when a Pakistani mother makes her personal interests secondary, then motherhood becomes a symbol of sacrifice. This is what makes an eastern woman in Chatterjee’s terms a ‘Goddess’; this spirit of sacrifice in Chatterjee’s words is the ‘essence of the eastern values’, but he also sees it as propaganda to control women (1993, p. 248) and he argues that it blurs the feminist struggle.

The freedom Shakir achieved from family responsibilities by getting a divorce trapped her further because a) she cannot re-marry<sup>25</sup>, b) she cannot subdue her physical desires; and c), if she cannot subdue them, then she needs to have a relationship outside marriage, but such a relationship in her religious and cultural context is *zina*, adultery. Linked with mother-son relationships, therefore, are the bigger issues involved with a woman’s self-identity. Being the person she is, a love poet, and having full faith in love and physical

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<sup>25</sup> She could legally re-marry but it would mean giving away the right to her son and she was not prepared to do that.

relationships, her inner voice is ‘held captive’ where she is struggling to be emancipated from the propaganda of nationalism and spirituality by getting a divorce, but she is also trapped by cultural pressures when she sacrifices her personal ambition and self-hood in her role as a traditional mother (Kanitkar 1991, p. 176). Getting a divorce meant that she did not want to be restricted to a culture where a wife and a mother is presented as a ‘Great Goddess’ and suffers in Kanitkar’s words ‘with an overambitious perfection’ ‘representing an ideal of service of suffering and silence’, sacrificing her will and selfhood, and also suppressing her selfhood under cultural perfection and pressure (Ibid., p. 179-181). However, by sacrificing her freedom for her son she lets herself be restricted after all; she is split in multiple directions and is divided and conflicted: a ‘misfit’ in her patriarchal motherland.

Even though, at times, she is running away from her cultural restrictions, she still realises that these fragmented pieces of jigsaw puzzle when put together make her motherhood an inseparable part of her cultural motherland. They are co-joined and interdependent (Morris and Dun 1991), a recognition that as a Pakistani woman her individual existence is interlinked with her role as an eastern mother, even though she objects, questions, screams, complains, rebels, but accepts that there is no escape. To further examine this conflict I will look at two poems ‘A Poem for Farogh Furrukhzad’ and ‘What Will Happen to the Flowers?’ as twin poems to explore identical issues, the issue of freedom outside married life. In order to explore other options left for Shakir, before she finally realises that for a Pakistani Muslim woman her identity merges into her family unit and that is her self-identity.

#### A Poem for Farogh Furrukhzad

Tell the courtier of the king,  
 That even the chief religious leader has confirmed:  
 The crop of sinners is ripe once again.  
 All executioners await  
 Await the nod of his exalted highness.  
 What new restrictions are to be issued,  
 So the slaves could enforce your orders?  
 Where is it appropriate to take off either the head or the turban  
 At what step should hands or tongues be severed?  
 When should the doorway to sustenance be closed?  
 When should the hunger for luxuries be killed?  
 Where should the curses be distributed?  
 Where would the sentence for stoning to death be pronounced?  
 When would the order be given for the nine-year old girl  
 To be pinned to a forty year old man?  
 When would the self-confessed accused

Be given the benefit of doubt?  
 When should the innocent be taken to the gallows?  
 Your majesty can give any order.  
 All we request is that  
 The royal edicts  
 Be given only verbally.  
 Otherwise.  
 There are legal difficulties.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khud-Kalami* 1985, p. 111).

The poem is about an Iranian Shi'ite Muslim feminist poet, and is selected for multiple reasons. First, a general comparison as both Shakir and Furrukhzad died young in a road accident; second, both had written four collections; both had one son and were single mothers (divorced by choice). The main difference was that Furrukhzad achieved her personal freedom and sacrificed her son. Shakir sacrificed her individual freedom and gained her son, and that is the point of difference and basis of the argument. The poem also explores the view that western ideas cannot be separated from the concept of women's freedom and also to what extent western feminist liberal ideas can be followed while still keeping in mind Muslim cultural and religious restrictions. It also looks at Shakir's personal strengths and weaknesses. Furrukhzad is used as a yardstick to explore Shakir's changing and shifting outlook and personal beliefs.

Shakir is fighting within herself and realising how to come to terms with these clashing forces within and without. In this chapter, Shakir's sense of freedom as a Muslim woman and how it clashes with the traditional norms is explored. Her understanding and development with every passing phase of her life is also recorded. What has been analysed so far is that within the family unit a woman is fragmented and split into different roles: as a daughter, a wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law, and in all this her own personal identity and freedom is lost. It will now be taken a step further with an investigation into whether or not there were any other options for Shakir.

In this poem I explore the issue of freedom or the lack of it outside married life for a Muslim woman. Does she have freedom outside family life? If she has, how does Islamic culture see that freedom or that woman? The aim is to analyse how the enforcement of new Islamic laws in Pakistan control the individual freedom of a Muslim woman. Two main points in the poem are examined: firstly, the word 'sinner' and what the 'chief religious leader[s]' consider as sin, and secondly, what the 'new restrictions' for the 'punishment' of that sin (*zina*) are in a Muslim society. Since the poem is written by a Pakistani Muslim poet

addressing another Muslim feminist poet: written 'for' Furrukhzad, the argument therefore pertains to Islamic moral and ethical principles.

Farogh Furrukhzad, the rebel female poet of Iran (1935-1967), was known for her open expressions of sex. Pakistani feminist poets Kishwar Naheed, Fahmida Riaz and Shakir were immensely influenced by her poetry (Bano *News*, January 15, 1995). In 'Formation, confrontation and emancipation in the poetry of Farogh Farrokhzad' (1985) Milani states that her poetry 'enraged' the Iranian establishment with its 'unorthodox convictions', in addition to the censure regarding her personal lifestyle (Milani 1985, p. 124). As a rebel feminist she kept searching for freedom in different aspects of society (1992, p. 129). Shakir retained her cultural dignity by talking in symbols and metaphors to expose female sexuality; but, Milani states that in Furrukhzad's autobiographical poetry 'sexuality is not camouflaged by formulas, allusions, metaphors, symbols,' and that, 'it thrills in her directness and intensity' (1992, p. 144). For instance, in her poem 'I Sinned', Milani states that Furrukhzad does not bow to fear or shame: 'When mingling of breaths and bodies came, it came without love with the / Molla [religious cleric] and Arabic marriage vows' (Ibid., p. 145). From the Islamic perspective the poem, in Milani's terms, is an act of misconduct, as she writes:

Sexual misconduct for a woman has been traditionally synonymous with total ethical lapse. [...] In this poem a woman publicly announces her sexual misconduct and, worse yet, her enjoyment of it. Freed from false pretenses or strategic maneuvering, she allows her feelings to express themselves freely. [...] She may talk freely about her unconventional sexual experiences, but she considers them 'sins' and herself a 'sinner'. The dominant standards and values of her society, although somehow disregarded, are absorbed by her in a subtle and inescapable way (Ibid.).

From a Muslim perspective then the sexual freedom in the above quotation is misconduct and completely unacceptable in the culture Furrukhzad lives in. Milani is expressing Furrukhzad's 'individual' sense of freedom to enjoy 'her' life the way 'she wants', a self that has achieved a freedom outside her divorced life from her husband. It is important to note that she is conscious she has sinned but she has freedom and has not suppressed her freedom. This conflict between a sense of freedom and liberation from moral and ethical values and a feeling of guilt and sin is a problem in South Asian culture as well. Amrita Pritam, one of India's leading feminist writers in Punjabi, expresses the conflicting sense in her autobiographical poem 'Heat of Fire':

If I warm my hands at the fire of lust

I know I will blacken them  
 But I know I shall be warm.  
 And perhaps a day will come  
 When someone with blackened hands  
 Will be able to shake conventions  
 (Ash 1991, p. 165).

Pritam, like Furrukhzad in her poetry (and real life) seeks freedom to love as she chooses even though she is aware that it is unacceptable in Indian Asian culture, but she expresses that it gives her freedom from being trapped by customs and traditions. This is reflected as a sense of inner radical strength of not bowing down to the customs and traditions of your religion or culture. This inner radical voice and strength is seen in Shakir as well, when she reflects her unbelief in subduing physical pleasures, and in false religiosity. Her desire to ‘melt in the strong arms’ and ‘enjoy the pleasure of love’ and her confession that without a sexual relationship her life is a ‘wasteland’, are all analysed in chapter one. By the time we reach *Khud-Kalami* Shakir has experienced the complexity and the difficulty in following such a belief. Living in her conservative Muslim culture, such freedom of thought, such a radical idea, left her isolated, lonely and talking to herself, a ‘misfit’ in her own motherland. Not only that, the Islamic laws enforced in the country also controlled such liberal freedom especially for women. In that sense the word ‘sin[ner]’ in the poem is important, because it helps to show the shift in Shakir’s thought. Linked with the term ‘sinner’ is the context of the ‘new restrictions’ which underline the Islamic laws in 1980s Pakistan with reference to control on sexual behaviour, rape and adultery. As already explained in the Introduction, in the section ‘A brief overview of Pakistan’s political context’, these Islamic laws like the Hudood Ordinance on *zina* and Laws of Evidence, *qisas* and *diyat*, were enforced under Zia’s Islamisation policies which controlled individual freedom; most affected were women. Here, in order to understand the context of the poem it is important to revisit the political context, looking at the law in the Hudood Ordinance on *zina* which literally means ‘illegitimate sex’ (Gardezi 1994, p. 51) and was a way of controlling sexual behaviour and individual freedom. *Zina* was taken as adultery and fornication, as well as rape. Anybody found guilty of committing *zina* was severely punished. The punishment was public flogging and, in severe cases stoning to death. Women were even more vulnerable because if they were raped, in order to prove they were not guilty they had to provide four pious adult males as witnesses (Ibid., p. 51-58). The evidence given by a woman was half of that of a man’s testimony. Since adultery and fornication were crimes against the state, their punishment was also a state punishment (Ibid.). The poem is a counter-discourse against state hegemony, an accusation

directly against the laws promulgated by the dictator Zia, who Shakir refers to as ‘chief religious leader’ in the poem.

Since the poem talks of the ‘chief religious leader’ the whole atmosphere of the poem is reflective of new Islamic laws, orders, issues, restrictions and punishments from an Islamic perspective. It can be seen from multiple angles; first, from an Iranian angle as we are talking of an Iranian feminist Muslim poet, Furukhzhad, who has broken all boundaries, and linked are Pakistani Muslim laws which are no different from Iranian laws.

A Muslim feminist, Haideh Moghissi, in her book *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism* (1999) criticises how the Muslim fundamentalists use religion to control women by imposing such laws as the Hudood Ordinance and *zina* ordinance. While discussing the role of a woman in Islamic law with reference to Quranic teachings she states:

While approving of sexual pleasures, the Islamic orthodox view develops, at the same time, a justification for sexual hierarchy, with women as sexual objects at the service of men. The Qur'an makes men ‘the manager of the affairs of women’, requiring righteous women to be ‘obedient, guarding the secret for God's guarding’, advising women to ‘cast down their eyes, guard their private parts and reveal not their adornments ... save to their husbands’. The sure outcome of this palpable sexual hierarchy, incorporated into family laws in Islamic societies, is that woman's very existence is serving men, sexually and emotionally. Women are ‘tillage’ for the male believer, to go to when he wishes. If a wife refuses her husband's demand, she is to be punished (Translation Sura 11: 223 from Qur'an by Arberry 1964 quoted in Moghissi 1999, p. 22).

Moghissi is looking at the object status of women, as subjective sexual slaves of men; she also states that freedom from such a status is punishable. It can be argued that we are in a modern world and not living in that ‘Orthodox’ ‘Islamic’ era, as in above quotation, where women have to be ideal like the mother, wives and daughters of the Prophet Mohammad, symbols of purity, and it is this ‘moral misconduct’ which Furrukhzhad refers to in her verse which Milani quotes. This ‘Islamic orthodox’ view is not followed by Furrukhzhad. The above quotation helps in looking at Furrukhzhad’s role as a Muslim woman; it also helps the reader to see the Islamic construct, a picture of an ideal Muslim woman: obedient, restricting her movements and also her duty to family, children and husband only. Significantly, in the poem all the ‘new’ laws in Pakistan like ‘stoning to death’ for committing adultery make it difficult for woman to practice individual freedom, such as sex outside married or unmarried life. Incidents have been reported on Pakistan Television News of flogging women, not men, for adultery (PTV News, Dec 14, 2010, accessed March 2013). What Moghissi is objecting to here is the unequal treatment of men and women in Islamic society, with which neither

Furrukhzad nor Shakir comply (Ibid.). This is the conflict in Shakir's poetry; Furrukhzad is used as a means to help analyse Shakir's position.

Criticising Islamic morality, Moghissi further argues that the fear of the intensity of female sexual desire and her seductive power which no man can resist is the source of man's anxiety for two reasons. Firstly, it makes men preoccupied with sexual performance and diverts his attention from God (Sabbah 1984), and secondly, a woman's 'seductive power' is a 'threat' to the Islamic social order (Sabbah 1984; Moghissi 1999 p. 240). It is tragic, in Fatima Mernissi's terms, that it is women and not men who need to be controlled (Mernissi 1985, p. 30-31). What I am emphasising through the poem is that because Muslim men do not seem to have control over their sexual urges a Muslim woman's freedom is in Moghissi's words 'forcefully' 'control[led]' through such new laws as *zina* ordinance (Moghissi 1999, p. 24). In that sense 'new restrictions' and 'laws' in the poem are made to control and restrain women from individual sexual freedom. It is also important to note here that under Islamic law, a man is allowed to have four wives while a woman can have only one husband. In addition a Muslim Shia male is legally allowed to have an unlimited number of 'temporary wives' (Haeri 2008, p. 378). This is known as *Mut'a*, meaning 'marriage of pleasure' (Ibid.). Shakir's dialogue with her Islamic construct gives the reader a chance to see the hypocrisy in the construction of laws where there are different standards for men and women, but it shows in Moghissi's terms, how the 'clutches of the guardians of Islamic *Shari'a* [laws] are felt in every aspect of women's (and men's) lives' but women are most affected by such laws (Moghissi 1999, p. 27-28).

We see that hypocrisy towards the end of the poem where the religious leader is requested to give a verbal order 'only' because written orders are 'legal' and are 'difficult' to change. So the bigger issue here is that the written laws like *zina*, once made legal, are difficult to change or repeal. To date, laws like the Hudood Ordinance on *zina* cannot be removed from the statute books. Benazir Bhutto, being a female Prime Minister, could not rescue her sisters in distress as she with all her power could not 'repeal' 'reverse' or even 'change' the 'Hudood Ordinance (including *zina* ordinance)' (Alavi 2009, p. 12), even though she made a 'public pledge' to help the powerless (Bhutto 1988, p. 365). General Pervez Musharraf, a military dictator, and ex-President of Pakistan, admitted that the Hudood Ordinance could not be repealed due to other Islamic laws and legal difficulties though the laws against women, he said, have been addressed (Musharraf 2008). However, even today honour killing is linked with *zina* ordinance, though it can be seen more as, as Yaqin puts it, 'rooted in culture and tradition' rather than religion or 'faith' (Yaqin 2011, p. 73). Shakir

intentionally used the term 'legal difficulties' to indicate the problems linked with such 'religious instructions once [they are] enforced as laws' (Moghissi 1999, p. 22). It can also be seen as condemning the hypocrisy of the law makers, who are equal partakers of the sin in their illicit sexual pleasures through rape, adultery and fornication, but by making such policies they are targeting only women.

Since Furrukhzad belonged to the Shia community the laws pertaining were even stricter. Moghissi writes: 'The *Shi'ite* community in Iran, for example, lays down the rights and obligations of women based on the view that it is the woman's religious duty to submit to all sexual demands of her husband' (Moghissi 1999, p. 22-23). The first supreme religious leader of Iran, Rouhola Ayatollah Khomeini (1979-1989) in *Classifications of Questions* endorses this point without any doubt. He says:

A woman, who has been contracted permanently, must not leave the house without the husband's permission and must surrender herself for any pleasure that he wants and must not prevent him from having intercourse with her without a religious excuse (quoted in Moghissi 1999, p. 24).

The word 'contracted' is important as it reflects the status of a woman as a commodity limiting her activity to the passive role of a wife. Therefore a woman in a Muslim community is restricted for sexual satisfaction to her husband only, and sex outside marriage is a sin for a woman. Furrukhzad might see this type of love (outside married life) as enjoyable, though sinful, as she admits herself through her poetry, but Shakir is trapped between her personal freedom and the pressure controlling it, thus has a complex, conflicting story to tell of her strengths and weaknesses.

Shakir's weak point was that she did not have the courage to take a stand, which is not unusual among women in Pakistani culture. There are feminist poets like her contemporaries Riaz and Naheed who are open, without conflict, and who are blunt and fearless like Furrukhzad, but Shakir is hesitant and not open. She has tried to depict herself as a revolutionary by raising her voice against political oppression, but had she been a true revolutionary and a rebel she could have won the battle for her emotional self. Though both are Muslim feminist poets, there is a streak of weakness in Shakir; she does not possess the strength of Furrukhzad. She loved someone and wanted to marry him but could not due to cultural pressure. Given a chance she could have even continued a hidden affair but due to the pressure of 'new restrictions' she became helpless. She still had one option open to her; to leave the country and enjoy her freedom abroad.

Like Furrukhzad she could even have crossed all barriers by staying abroad. She was in the USA two years with her son while she was teaching at the University of Hartford in 1990, and then she went for her MPA (Master's in Public Administration) at Harvard University in 1992. The emotional attachment to her motherland brought her back; after finishing her studies she 'wanted' 'to go home' '[go] back' to 'Pakistan where she belonged' (Agha 1995, p. 52). Love of her country was always a source of inspiration for Shakir and was her personal weakness/cultural strength (Ibid., p. 57). This makes her different from Furrukhzad, as Furrukhzad left Iran and enjoyed her freedom in Europe while Shakir's emotional attachment both to her son and her motherland meant that she sacrificed her personal freedom, which might be counted from a feminist perspective as a weakness, but from an Asian viewpoint, it was, in Bryce-Okunlola's words, a 'woman's' 'power'; her strength (1991, p. 208). This sacrifice also helped Shakir to see that her identity and freedom as a Pakistani Muslim woman lay in her remaining joined with her motherland. Such a struggling mother in Boehmer's words is a 'Great Mother', in Indian culture she is a 'Durga; [the warrior aspect of the Great Goddess which may pre-date Hinduism] (Kanitkar 1991, p.180), [and] Mama Afrika in the African culture, embracing each and every one of her peoples in her generous arms' (Boehmer 2005, p. 29). It is the story of an eastern, traditional, emotional, sentimental and sacrificing mother but also the voice of a metaphorical mother with a new language, a language which speaks loudly about her being a marginalised voice which could not be silenced either by the patriarchy or by the 'draconian' Islamic 'laws' of her motherland (Toor 2011, p. 131). This 'marginality', in Chatterjee's words, 'enabled her to assert this autonomy over her own word': to write about her struggles with authenticity (1993, p. 151, 154). The poem *Phulon ka kya hoga?* (What Will Happen to the Flowers?) is another poem with similar concerns, questioning the marginalised status of women and focusing particularly on *zina* ordinance. The poem reinforces the existence of the 'new restrictions' and can be seen as a retaliation against them. In a light-hearted tone it is reflecting the realisation of helplessness in Shakir's own personal life and of women in general before the tyranny of the military dictatorship.

The poem is selected to carry forward a more detailed investigation of *zina* ordinance and its effect on women and to frame the concept of international feminism and the difficulty of its practical implications in a third-world Muslim country like Pakistan.

*Phulon ka kya hoga?* (What Will Happen to the Flowers?)

It's heard  
 That new restrictions are placed yet again on butterflies.  
 If the flower-nectar itself goes to the home of the bees,  
 Then they don't have to wander from flower to flower.  
 The ways of the breeze were becoming somewhat questionable.  
 That's why the bee, fly and breeze  
 Are being kept away from "*na-mehrams*"  
 But one should wonder:  
 What will happen to flowers?  
 How many flowers are there in the garden,  
 Who can bear fruits by themselves?  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khud-Kalami* 1985, p. 88).

The poem can be read, in Naim's words, as a 'politically' and more 'organically conceived' poem and is 'delightfully sardonic' (Naim 1995, p. 12). What Naim is reflecting through the word 'sardonic' is an indication of the lack of any feeling of trust left in the nation. The delightfulness is in its casual tone through the words like 'It's heard', an indirect way of saying something important yet in a casual way. It can also be seen how Shakir presents it in a light hearted tone, accepting that 'nothing' can be changed; all she can do is accept it (Shakir interviewed by Salim 1994, p. 87). The poem presents a political issue about the enforcement of the law against women and also men *na-mehram* (one who is not allowed to be in contact with a woman as he is not a brother, father or a son). Therefore, if men who are 'the breeze', a 'bee' or a 'butterfly', are not allowed 'to wander from flower to flower', that is, meet a woman to have a relationship other than through marriage, and are kept away from them, then, 'What will happen to the flowers?' Naim's creative translation is more forceful and direct:

I hear the butterflies will again be banished and the bees  
 will get pollen mailed to them - "They mustn't flit from  
 rose to rose!" - that the breeze will have to watch its  
 step. The bees, the butterflies, even the breeze shall see  
 only whom the law approves.  
 Did anyone think of the flowers' fate?  
 How many, after all, can self-pollinate?  
 (tr. Naim 1993, p. 175).

The pun on the word 'mailed' is significant. On one level it can be read as male, meaning 'men', and on another it means 'posted'. If men are not allowed to suck pollen directly from the flowers, it will have to be posted to them. This in itself is sarcastic and makes fun of the real issue, as it reflects the impossibility of such a delivery. The breeze has to 'watch its step' and it will be allowed to meet only those whom the 'law' allows; this can be an indication

that marriage is the only lawful way of meeting women ('flower', 'rose'). On the one hand this is an interesting blow to the law as there is no control on the natural movement of bees, butterflies and the breeze, but on the other hand it is the laws which are made to control such natural desires of both men and women. Bees and butterflies are naturally attracted to flowers and no one can control this, but the real issue is 'How many, after all, can self-pollinate?'; if the woman is the flower carrying the pollen, how will that pollen be transferred to other flowers for reproduction if the bees and butterflies are restricted? Shakir's underlying concern is about the control on the female body and a woman being reduced to merely a passive role. If only marriage is the answer, a 'lawful' meeting, then the woman is reduced to only a passive role as a wife and a mother; a women's active participation based on her role as a lover, means that her sexual identity is controlled. The meeting of unmarried men *na mehram* with unmarried women was restricted, through the enforcement of *zina* law.

Once the Hudood Ordinance on *zina* was enforced during Zia's military dictatorship, young couples were stopped if they were seen at odd hours and were asked to prove their identity as married couples. It takes us back to the poem *Sirf aik larki* (Only a Girl) of chapter one to emphasise that a woman's fate remains the same, and nobody is concerned about it. When *Khushboo* was written in 1977, at least Shakir had the liberty to write openly about her liberal ideas, but under the new laws of Zia's Islamisation and military censorship even that freedom was gone. This is one of the reasons for acceptance and resignation, as women are seen as helpless, especially Shakir herself. The reason for choosing this poem is to reemphasise how Shakir criticises, through this poem, the oppressive, political environment in the country especially how it affects women. The poem also shows the difficulty of applying international theories on feminism to an Islamic culture.

I have intentionally selected this poem and placed it before the last section which is based on Shakir's poems written for her son, to question if liberal ideas can be applied in such a conservative Muslim culture and politically controlled climate. More importantly, it is to show how feminists have failed to give full critical attention to the problems of third-world Muslim women. The problem is that a Pakistani woman writer is not only struggling to make herself heard through her writing, she is also caught between her culturally restrictive role outlined through such a national religious agenda, and her own sense of liberation, individual identity and fulfilment. Adopting the former means being inactive in progress and change, and following the latter is to make her alien to her own culture. I have to remind the reader that this is the third collection (out of four) of her work and central to my argument, wherein Shakir is struggling to reach a compromising stage. Looking at her work western influences

are an undeniable fact. The question is how much influence from the west should be associated with the development of Islamic society.

Moghissi looks at this tension in feminism from the Islamic fundamentalist perspective. Her concern is that feminism has different forms which are put forth according to the different demands of social, economic and cultural context. There are different priorities, but the aspirations are the same, she states. She argues that in order to get the same basic rights, which Muslim women 'are [as much] entitle[d] to' as women in the west, Muslim women throughout the Middle East and North Africa (and Pakistan) are 'challenging Islamisation' 'policies' and 'struggling against the fundamentalists' 'culturally specific' roles and moral conduct, as depicted through this poem. To advise Middle Eastern women, she continues, to pursue women's rights according to her 'culturally authentic home-grown ideologies' that is, 'the Islamic framework', would mean that 'feminism is and must remain the privileged domain of the west'. Such arguments, she believes, would also 'validate the fundamentalist teaching' which sees feminism and its western values as a 'main enemy of the women in Islamic society' (Moghissi 1999, p. 8-9). What Moghissi is advocating is taken up by Mohanty in her argument based on the politics of dominance of first-world feminists who do not see the problems with their theories when they are applied to women from historically different cultural backgrounds, such as Muslim women in India and Pakistan (Mohanty 1994, p. 207-208; 1991; Alexander and Mohanty 1997). Spivak highlights the same issue from her personal experience in her essay 'French feminism in an international frame' (Spivak 1986).

The poem illuminates the philosophical development of this study (the difficulty of applying western ideas to eastern concepts, which is the main issue explored in this thesis), and also looks at Shakir's own poetic development through the self-analysis of her writings. In her cultural setting she is not only combating tradition but also national Islamic ideologies. These two poems 'What Will Happen to the Flowers?' and 'A Poem for Farogh Furrukhzad' help the reader to see how through such writings Shakir tries to make her own position known. She makes herself clear by writing the story of Furrukhzad, which I used as a barometer to gauge Shakir and her religious and cultural restrictions, and her own story as a Pakistani woman who is oppressed by such political pressures.

Shakir takes, in Bryce-Okunlola's words, a 'pragmatic' approach; she keeps herself rooted in the traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* role associated with her motherhood, combining a recognition of her emotional side; she also moves beyond that with feminist views criticising the socio-political and religious order through such poems, stressing a need for social change (Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 206-209). Thus, she re-writes her story as a metaphorical mother

based on her experience as a third-world Muslim Pakistani mother, projecting what it means to be a woman, from a different location, religion and culture. This is not what people want to hear but it is what she has gone through in her real life. Therefore, it is unrealistic on the part of western feminists to bring all women under one umbrella of ‘universal feminism’ (Nasta 1991, p. xv; Spivak 1987).

Shakir realises that it is difficult to step too much outside of her boundaries. As she said in an interview before her death, ‘the extremes came to terms with each other rather late in life’ (Shakir quoted in Ali 1994, p. 2). She comes to know that extremes are not possible in her complex social construct; she lives in both traditional and modern ways which are interlinked, but with a balance; in her own words a ‘poise’ (Ibid., p.1) and that is the concept of freedom in her Muslim culture.

### **Return to *nisvani*: poems of motherhood**

This last section voices Ranjana Ash’s concept on how in eastern cultures ‘child-bearing is not seen as a impediment to freedom’ (1991, p. 167), and it also looks at western ideas as presented through Adrienne Rich’s critical approach to how this ‘freedom’ still keeps women constantly under male-domination. Whilst looking at Shakir’s poems in the context of her stereotypical role as a Pakistani mother, it also highlights her radical views on how the issues of motherhood are related and generate from her motherland. The aim of the section is to emphasise that when there is no room for maintaining any sanity in the outer world the Pakistani mother, finds her, in Bryce-Okunlola’s words, ‘identity, continuity, and creativity in the image of motherhood’ (Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 201). As Shakir herself says, the son is her solace and reason to live; he gives her the inner peace which helps her to survive (Agha 1995, p. 44). Here, her dialogue with herself is a method she uses to evaluate the mother-son relationship which is structured around those ideals of womanhood in a patriarchal society, and also to formulate her own radical views about single motherhood. While commenting on Shakir's role as a poet depicting motherhood, C.M. Naim states:

The new women poets, including Shakir, have written on a range of experiences within marital love which no male poet ever wrote about in Urdu. Sexual intimacy, pregnancy, childbirth, infidelity, separation and divorce – these are the topics that one would look for in vain in the books of contemporary male poets, not to mention their predecessors. To give one example, only due to these women poets do we now have some fine poems on the experience of being a mother; sad to say, no male poet has yet written in Urdu a poem about being a father. (There are, of course, any number of hortatory poems by male poets addressed to

“sons”) (Naim 1993, p. 185).

Naim’s comment from a male perspective that there is no doubt that ‘the experience of being a mother’ is beautiful, and that a male cannot understand it, helps to explore it further. As Afro-American feminist writer Barbara Christian argues in *Black Feminist Criticism*, ‘Since a woman, never a man, can be a mother, or a daughter, that experience should be hers to tell; since we all come from mothers, it is striking such a story remains secondary in world literature’ (1997, p. 212). Christian is critical of the struggle a woman has to go through in her complex role as a mother, which is imposed universally as her only identity. This identity suppresses a woman, and it is never written about. In that sense, when a woman writes her stories, she breaks that barrier of silence, and secondly, she writes from her own experience as a struggling mother, which a man can never understand, nor has written about. As stated in the above quotation, men can only underline the joys of reading such poetry on mothers, as motherhood is in their interest (women being subordinate, and in a traditional role), and such poems are called ‘fine [poetry]’, but they cannot, as Christian argues, understand the struggles a mother goes through, because they are not mothers. Rich takes this further by stating that being a mother conditions her whole life; her freedom is controlled and she loses her individual self, as she is so much burdened with responsibilities imposed by patriarchy (Rich 1986).

This section celebrates the pleasures of motherhood but also underlines the problems it generates. In *Navishta* (Ordained/It Has Been Written...) the poem underlines Shakir’s pride that as a single mother, her son will be known by his mother’s identity; this in the cultural context is considered a curse. However, she also states towards the end of the poem that the name plate will still be his father’s though the name attached to her son is his mother’s, Shakir’s. She celebrates the identity a son achieves through her as a poet mother, while she also brings in the social problems that come with such identification. The poem is about all the complexities and layering of mother-son relationships, the position of a single mother in a male-dominated society, and also her status as a female poet in that environment.

*Navishta* (Ordained/It Has Been Written...)

... then Zaid cursed Bakar, 'Your mother  
is more well known than your father!'

My son,  
this curse is your fate too.  
In a father's world you too, one day,

must pay a heavy price  
 for being known by your mother,  
 though your eyes' color, your brow's  
 expanse,  
 and all the curves your lips create  
 come from the man  
 who shared with me in your birth,  
 yet alone gives you significance  
 in the eyes of the law-givers.

But the tree that nurtured you three  
 seasons  
 must claim one season of its own,  
 to comb the stars, turn thoughts into  
 perfumes  
 make poems leapfrog your ancestors walls...  
 a season that Mira couldn't send away,  
 nor could Sappho.

Now it must be this family's fate  
 that you should frequently feel abashed  
 before your playmates, and that your  
 father  
 must grin and bear it among his friends.  
 The name on the doorbell means  
 Nothing;  
 the world knows you by one name  
 alone.  
 (tr. Naim 1993, p. 169-179).

With its citation from a famous Arabic quotation this poem raises many questions and carries many affirmations. Shakir's third book, *Khud-Kalami*, is dedicated to her son Murad: *Murad tera naam*. According to Naim, in the poem Shakir tries to explain to her young son why he should not feel embarrassed if most people seem to know him as a poet's son; Shakir's, rather than his father's. By putting a quotation from the Arabic at the beginning, Shakir has made, according to Naim, her 'particular experience timeless within the Urdu/Islamic milieu' (Naim 1993, p. 185). Even though it is taken from Arabic poetry this does not mean that it is linked with Islam. What is significant here is that it is not a religious boundary but a division made by society. According to Islamic teachings the children are known by the mother's name (Klein & Nestvogel 1992; Hasan 1993). Islam gives a very high position to a mother and gives both man and woman equal status (Hasan 1993). Society however, has given males control over females and in their engendered roles placed men as high and women as low (Boehmer 2005).

In Pakistani society the male financially supports the family, sets the rules, and institutes them, so ideally the child should bear his name. Therefore, in Pakistani society if

the child is known by his mother's name it is a curse, a stigma for the father, because it suggests that the wife is superior and more powerful, and women's superiority and power according to Mernissi, cannot be accepted in a male-dominated society (Mernissi 1985, p. 170-171). This is the poem that may have caused unrest amongst contemporary male writers, male critics and the male community as the first two lines refer to a well-known Arabic insult. Shakir creates a space for herself and for her contemporaries to be unafraid of expressing their personal experiences as single mothers in their poetry, though she is also disturbed that her son, being brought up by a single parent, his mother, will have to encounter the label - 'curse' for being known by [his] mother's name in 'father's world' - the patriarchal world. This will be a heavy price for him, but an achievement for Shakir, she believes.

It is a very personal poem and deals with Shakir's own life as a single, divorced mother looking after her son. Drawn from her personal experience the poem explores the contradictory pleasures and pains of motherhood. The poem layers both negative and positive aspects. She cannot rule out the fact that the son physically has all the attributes of his father: the colour of his eyes, a broad brow, the curve of his lips, all reflect that his father 'shared' his birth with Shakir, but when the question of identity comes up it is important to note here that the child's identity lies with the father and not the mother, because that is the law set by society, though not by religion. As Shakir states in the poem, he 'alone gives [him] significance [identity] in the eyes of the law-makers'. In a patriarchal society men make the laws, so they are the 'law-makers', in Kristeva's terms all the laws are 'the Law-of-the-Father' which need to be 'unbonded'(1980, p. 191). Therefore, when she subverts the engendered roles set by national ideologies where man is a symbol of power and control, change and progress and woman is a passive and static 'mother earth' (Boehmer), powerful in appearance only but in reality silenced and symbolised by 'Mother India', 'Goddess Mother' (Nasta), 'Mother Africa' (Bryce-Okunlola), she becomes a radical mother, one who fights and then achieves victory when her son is known by his mother's name and not his father's (Boehmer 2005, p. 27, 1991; Nasta 1991, p. xiv; Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 202; Chatterjee 1999, 1993). In Bryce-Okunlola's words, such 'individual solutions' are 'temporary mechanisms', which she states 'instill[s]' 'self-worth' and put 'emphasis on [the] self-determination and motherhood'; a changed perception of the trapped, chained mother (Boehmer 2005, p. 27; Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 210), but the contradictory situation is, as Rich points out, the power still remains with patriarchy (Rich 1976, p. 186-218), which is true as the poem, in the end, states that the name 'on the [metaphorical] doorbell' will still be his father's. To achieve such an identity through motherhood, both in writing and in life, is a

story re-written from Shakir's own subjective experience as an individual, and needs to be told. To speak and write about such achievements is confronting the objective realities of a strict male-dominated society and is a big achievement, where Shakir triumphs over the social order.

Shirley Chew in 'Searching Voices' writes about Asian women's writing and forcefully demonstrates the extent to which the women in India and Pakistan have been trapped in silence between colonial and historical discourses, but says that writing creates a new 'textual space', a space which helps to retrieve for women a voice and presence within their homeland (Chew 1991, p. 43-63). The homeland which Chew references is the motherland in the chapter, the untraditional motherland here signified through the new creative vision both of the real mother and the metaphorical mother, who has freed herself from her silence through her poetry, but who is also slave to her feminine roots as a mother and cherishes her traditional role looking after her son. Not, however, like a traditional mother, silent and submissive, but as an identity achieved through her liberal feminist ideas. Such are the multiple layers and dimensions of the Pakistani woman I am analysing, who responds to the conflicts by sometimes taking the initiative and sometimes being passive, a fragmented motherhood in her motherland, a mixture of experiments and setbacks.

Motherhood is a continued struggle. While Shakir has achieved some liberty as an independent single mother, here in the poem we have a woman who still wants to reclaim her freedom because she has 'nurtured' [her son] 'three seasons' in her womb; she should have the right to give a name to her son. The word 'but' is significant, as it reflects another problem. It seems as if Shakir is in a dialogue, questioning the society which deprived her of her identity. She says that she has kept him for nine months in her womb, 'but' why is it that she cannot 'claim' 'even' 'one season' of her 'own'. We see constant struggle in the reflection of that 'retrieved' (Chew 1991, p. 43) voice Chew talks about in Shakir's desire to 'claim one season of its own'. Here it can be the desire for acknowledgement as a poet. The reference to keeping her son nine months in her womb reflects a natural biological fact, but her desire to 'claim one season' is the desire to have respect and a rightful place as a woman and a poet in her society. This individual voice can be the collective voice of women in Pakistan: why can't they have 'one season' of their own? We hear the echoes of the poem 'Misfit'; of all the responsibilities dumped on a woman where her own voice, her identity, and freedom are lost. Here she reinforces the idea that a woman should be allowed to have her own independent textual space as well. She calls her poetry 'a season of [her] own'. The image of a tree she uses for herself in the poem is important, 'but the tree that nurtured' signifies the body, which

then symbolises the process of sex, birth and creativity; both literal and metaphorical. This mixes the traditional and the unconventional poetry of Shakir, and resurrects the persistent reminder of Shakir's conflict between her two positions: conventional and unconventional on the one hand, and on the other the jump she makes by writing radical and unconventional poetry. She uses the word 'leapfrog' in the poem, for a writing which crosses the boundaries of convention both in style and themes especially the theme of open sexuality in chapter one *Khushboo*. The ancestors she talks about in the poem are the Indian and Greek love poets Mira (c.1498-c.1547) and Sappho. Mira was a Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna (Lord Vishnu in Hinduism) and Sappho was the greatest lyric poet of antiquity, and was considered as the Tenth Muse by Plato (Barnstone 2006).

Shakir considers herself exceeding them in her poetry, which is also acknowledged by Sultana Baksh who claims that 'leap' by stating what Shakir has achieved through her unconventional poetry by talking boldly about 'female' desire from her 'personal perspective', which was 'lacking in Urdu poetry' (Baksh 2007; Bano *The News* Jan 15, 1995; Bakht 2003, p. 478). Furthermore, being a romantic poet she takes an opportunity to bring in nature by talking about herself as a tree, and her poetry as 'stars', 'season[s]', 'perfumes'. This also reminds the reader that Shakir is basically a poet of love and romance but such themes disappear because they are subdued in other complexities of motherhood so her real self, her identity as a love poet remains buried. She keeps telling her reader through such images of nature that she has not forgotten her true self. In still another direction, it can also be a voice, a reminder of how her unconventional love poetry was ruthlessly criticised (Shahzad *The News International* 1995; Naim 1995, p. 12-13).

Deep down, there is that hurt, and a desire for acknowledgement and acceptance as a peer poet, which is reflected in her claim for 'one season' of [her] own' as a poet. This also links with the bigger issue of female poets in her society who are not given accredited status (a theme to be taken up in chapter four) in her society's patriarchal culture. They are considered in Shakir's own words as 'curious objects' (Shakir in Baksh 1996, p. 473; *Inkaar* 1990, p.101). Amy Lowell (1874-1952), an American poet, calls women a 'queer lot', and female poets 'queerer still' in a male-dominated society (quoted in Shakir 1995, p. 23-36). Lowell talks about those poets who have refused to be silenced (Ibid., 1995). So when to be a poet is already a very shameful status in patriarchy, and on top of that Shakir is not even acknowledged as an equal to other contemporary poets (Shahzad 1995; Bakht 2003), being a poet mother with liberal, unconventional views, will also be an added insult for the son. Shakir in her self-worth, and self-determination, feels happy that she has surpassed her

ancestors in poetry, and her poetry has given her fame among those who find it different and new (Baksh 2007). For her son her identity as a poet and the rebellious poetry she has written will be a frequent embarrassment 'before [his] playmates'. Not only will the son feel embarrassed but also the father.

The poem ends on a note of painful eastern cultural ideology: the 'door-bell' will still bear the father's name, though Shakir flouts that ideology, by stating 'it means nothing' because her son has her name. Such issues also help to show how motherhood and motherland related issues and conflicts are 'generated' (Ash 1991, p. 158), reminding the reader that even though Shakir is telling her stories with pride and freedom as a writer, her struggles and battles as a mother are continuous and unending. Her son was the solution to her problems in bringing her conflict to a point of resolution (as analysed in the poem 'What Should I Do?'), but the son is also a source of new problems. As Rich argues, such traditions condition a mother's life which puts the female inside her in servitude to motherhood, and crushes all her individual potential (1976). The next two poems can be read in this frame. In *Mera laal* (My Ruby, My Darling Child), we see Shakir in her position as a stereotypical Pakistani eastern mother looking at her future in her son as her only means of survival.

In this short poem Shakir's sensibility as a woman poet is governed by eastern values and conventions. While in the previous poem she states that she has surpassed all the limitations of her ancestors, here she speaks in a voice of a typical Asian Pakistani mother who remains in the confines of eastern values and is proud to think that she has a son who will be her staff in her old age. This convention of love and care for elderly parents is the crux and the cementing force in eastern culture, and in Chatterjee's terms the 'essence' and 'spirit' of the east (1999, p. 248). However, too much love, resulting in sacrifice, Helen Kanitkar argues, can also be destructive, as will be critically analysed through the poem:

*Mera laal* (My Ruby, My Darling Child)

In my pale backyard,  
The fragrance of red flowers  
Becomes a silver ray of light  
To make green  
The memories of lilac days.  
(tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khud-Kalami* 1985, p. 20).

Shakir, in order to visualise old age, uses colour imagery which significantly symbolises different ideas and thoughts. As informed through the biographical information, after divorce her life was 'pale' and lonely. Parveen Qadir Agha notes:

As for her family in Karachi, she had gradually drifted away from them especially after divorce [moved to Islamabad]. [Her mother] advised [Shakir] to send [her son] Geetu [Murad's nick-name] to them [in Karachi] as they could bring him up with full devotion. She did not like the idea as her son was the only solace in life, her flesh and blood, her reason for living. She dreamed of a house of her own one day with her son looking after her. It is ironic that after her death it is her mother and sister who are now bringing up her son (Agha 1995, p. 44).

The quotation focuses on the son as the 'only' hope for Shakir's future, her 'reason to live[ing]'; already Shakir's life according to Rich (1976) is conditioned by the presence of her son. Looking at the use of colours in the poem then, the 'pale backyard' is her sad life which results from her depression and loneliness as a divorced woman, though it can be argued that she wanted the separation from her husband in order to be free and happy. In a male-dominated society, living as a single, divorced young woman, she could not avoid scandals and gossip which made her life miserable. In that sense the 'flower' motif in the poem continues with all its connotations of hope and good days to come. The 'pale' 'memories' will turn into a silver 'ray of light' and make her 'lilac days', 'green' and 'happy'. Lilac is a shrub with 'pale' purple or white flowers. The 'pale' 'memories' can refer to all the social, cultural and political struggles and difficulties she has faced in her life. It can also refer to her personal problems in her married life, and then the difficulties and struggles as a single parent. Thus, when she grows old her son will look after her. This is the concept of 'filial duty' and it is one of the values of the east that sons should take care of their parents, when they are old (Boehmer 2005, p. 27; Christian 1997; Klein and Nestvoege 1992). So in the mother-son relationship we find the resurrection of stereotypes; women as mothers, carers, and home-makers in these poems, and children as symbols of salvation in our society. Shakir is seen as a '[traditional]' woman of South Asia which Ash talks about in 'The Search for Freedom in Indian Women's Writing' (Ash 1991, p. 152-175). Here, children are not taken as a hindrance to freedom or as a danger to women's individual rights, but reflect how through motherhood an eastern woman finds her comfort in family values, where her existence is only in, and for, her family (Ash 1991, p. 167; Kanitkar 1991, p. 196).

From a western cultural perspective, according to Rich, motherhood is seen as restricted, painful fragmentation of a female under patriarchy. In her book *Of Woman Born* (1976) she states that man is dependent on woman for life, but he cannot accept the power and the fact that he is 'of woman born' (Ibid., p. 11). Woman is also born of woman, she states, but they have not been lawmakers of patriarchal culture. All we know about woman is

that she is a child bearer, and that is her ‘major status’, she adds. What Rich is critical about is that woman is powerful because of her power to give birth and have children and be a mother, but the hurt is that that power is controlled by patriarchy. It has imprisoned woman in her own power, her own body as a mother, and Rich argues, motherhood has ‘degraded female potentiality’ (Ibid., p. 13). It conditions her life to the extent that there is a ‘continuing presence’ of the child in her life, which kills the individual inside her. Mothering, she states, starts when a child is in the womb for nine months, and goes on for years as a mother learns to nurture, which she states, does not come by instinct. She further continues that a man might ‘beget’ a child by passion or by rape and then disappear, but a mother, under such circumstances, has a range of painful choices: have an abortion, commit suicide, abandon the child, infanticide, or rear the child which is stigmatised as an ‘illegitimate’. In some cultures, Rich states, women are even ‘killed’ by their relatives. Whatever the choice or situation, once she gives birth to a child, her life is ‘shaped’ according to the ‘events’ in a mother’s life (Ibid., p. 12).

The point she is stressing is that once she becomes a mother, her sacrifice, her struggle in life might make her a goddess, and men might worship her, but for their own objectives (to control her). Also explored in the poem is Shakir’s traditional motherhood, and how, in Rich’s words, it is conditioned; by seeing ‘light’ in her son it shapes her entire future. I have already analysed that in the poem ‘What Should I Do?’ where a goddess from a Pakistani eastern perspective, self-sacrificed motherhood is looking at how her life is controlled, seeing her future in her son, as the ‘only’ ‘reason to live’ (Agha 1995, p. 44). In Rich’s words, the continued presence of the child and his emotional attachment make her motherhood ‘penal servitude’: a punishment (Rich 1976, p. 14). In her essay ‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’, Rich talks of revisiting a woman’s position as a traditional mother who is also searching for an individual self (Rich 1986, p. 57). Shakir has achieved that freedom through divorce, but is imprisoned again by the emotional sentimental love for her son. The traditional is still controlling; if not by husband, then by son, an ever-present power that continues through motherhood (Christian 1997).

On the contrary, Buchi Emecheta, a London based Nigerian novelist, sees this sentimental, emotional attachment of a mother with children, as reflected in the poem, and quoted in the passage from Shakir’s biography, as a joyous feeling, because she sees it as one who has been deprived of her own mother and her motherland as she lives in exile. In her most celebrated work *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), she feels that it is her African culture, which in Bryce-Okunlola’s terms is the ‘powerful’ archetype (1991, p. 208). Emecheta in her

role as a traditional mother not only writes about the absent mother, but also revels in her achievement of the well-being of her five young children. This has conditioned her life, and is a joy not a punishment, because as a traditional mother she wanted to give her children what was absent in her life. Emecheta's life as an exile from her motherland, and mother tongue, makes her writing, in Kristeva's terms, her territory, her motherland (Kristeva 1980, p. 1-12). As a result of her marriage, Emecheta left Nigeria, which distanced her from her mother. It is important to note that Emecheta's own mother's exile from traditional culture in eastern Nigeria to colonial culture in Lagos preceded Emecheta's own kind of exile (Fido 1991, p. 333). In that way she is doubly hurt, by being away from her own mother, and from her motherland. Her writing sees motherhood and motherland from a new perspective, as she creates both a metaphorical adopted motherland and her own experience as a real mother and of motherhood. However, she also stresses woman's self-awareness and her sense of her right to life.

Coming to the same point of argument of this chapter with reference to Shakir's poem *Mera laal*, women as mothers should have freedom to live their own lives. This in an eastern culture is conflicting as she is so burdened by her different roles, as analysed in 'Misfit'. Her own emotional attachment makes her life dependent on her children, and she cannot separate herself either from this emotional attachment, or her responsibilities. The conflict is that these emotional and traditional roles are also part of who Shakir is: an eastern Pakistani mother. Emecheta states that her western counterpart can never understand what the meaning of struggle is for an African mother: 'the white female intellectual may still have to come to the womb of Mother Africa to re-learn how to be a woman' (1984, p. 249). Emecheta is critical about the domination of western feminist theories and ideologies which do not address the 'problems' of the third-world woman who is struggling under multiple pressures: culture, tradition, religious laws, and the different roles imposed on her. In that sense the western feminist has just considered herself, 'ignoring what is specific about the African woman's experience' (McLuskie and Innes, 1988, p. 5). She needs to 'investigate the interaction between African text and the cultural assumptions which informs her own reading' (Ibid.). She needs to 're-learn': study and understand the 'woman' of Africa, and the third-world, before formulating any theories (Emecheta 1984, p. 249). The reference to 'white female intellectuals' is a reference to western feminists, who have not considered the women of other cultures in their scholarships (Ibid.). This is also one way of looking at the structure of this thesis, and the question which it explores: to what extent should western ideas be used in Muslim culture. The answer is that it is not easy to import a foreign theory and apply it

wholesale in a different religion and culture. The word, 'womb' in the above quotation, is both a symbol of her creativity as writer and her real struggle as an African mother. In Emecheta's case she craves for her motherland in exile; in African culture motherhood and motherland are inseparable. Even if the history of her exile is forgotten momentarily, a western woman still does not have a colonised history like African and South Asian women (McLuskie and Innes 1988, p. 3-7).

Looking from the Indian perspective, Helen Kanitkar in '*Heaven Lies beneath her Feet*'? (1991) has similar views where she upholds cultural values as the strength of an eastern woman, but what she also points out is that too much 'self-sacrifice' and 'self-effacement' of a mother who only exists for cultural values and family life leaves her as a 'skeleton' (1991, p. 196-197). As Kanitkar argues, a woman as goddess can be beneficial but destructive as well. Shakir in her traditional role in the poem as an eastern mother, her dependency on her son and love for him, is seen in Kanitkar's terms as 'self-effacement' (Ibid., 196). This demands so much commitment, which in turn can be destructive, as Shakir has given up the choice to remarry for the fear of losing her son. In the Asian cultural context, heaven lies under a mother's feet, but, Kanitkar argues, that whatever the cultural writing suggests may lie under 'so deified a mother's feet', the word to describe it is not 'heaven', because, ironically, the mother is struggling and not at peace (Ibid., p. 197). When men call her goddess, and worship her, it is then that they control her power, and then motherhood becomes, in Rich's words, a site of 'female massacre' (1976, p. 13).

The point established here is that for western feminists 'mother[s]' become 'a repressed subject in patriarchy' and feminist writers 'challenge' the traditional role of mothers (Humm 1994, p. 240). Shakir, in her stereotypical role as a traditional eastern single mother, can be seen as justified in finding what Ash calls 'freedom', Bryce-Okunlola, 'culturally induced' '[in]security', and Shakir, 'only peace' and comfort in the feeling that in her old age her son will look after her (Ash 1991, p. 162; Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 201; Agha, 1995, p. 44). I am also establishing that one should not cling to one's culture to an extent that there is no possibility of change left; there should be a balanced approach.

The poem *Teri mohni surat* (Your Charming Face), also focuses on how sons in eastern culture brighten a mother's life. While in the previous poem she used colour imagery to express her sadness and happiness, in this poem she uses a style which is more direct. The darkness was reflected through the 'pale backyard' while here she talks of darkness directly. All the shades of black and grey reinforce hopelessness in life. The life of Shakir brightens up after the birth of her son, as is reflected in the following poem:

*Tiri mohni surat* (Your Charming Face)

Yes, I am no longer afraid  
 Of any darkness.  
 All the sad pathways  
 Of my nights to come  
 Are lit by a moon:  
 Your face.  
 (tr. with the help of Bakht) (*Khud-Kalami* 1985, p. 21).

These short epigrammatic poems speak volumes. If we look at the expression in this poem, it sounds bright and affirmative; 'Yes' is a very strong expression, and it carries her strong faith in her motherhood and mother-son relationship. She is so positive that there will 'no longer' be anything to fear in life. The dependency for the son on the mother forms the main thrust of all the poems on the subject of the joys of motherhood. In just six lines we come across four strong negative words expressing a mother's fears; 'afraid' 'darkness', 'sad' and 'nights', reflecting how dreadful her life would be without a son, but also revealing how she needs security, and the irony is that that too is from a son. 'Darkness' is both synonymous with old age and her 'darkness' in life. I have already analysed in detail the 'darkness' in her personal and political life. In that extreme sense of listlessness, desolation and loneliness, the one path towards peace and solace was to cherish her role as a mother in her mother-son relationship. The image of a journey reappears in the word 'pathways' in the poem and also brings to mind the danger hidden in that journey especially where a woman needs security and protection. Shakir has travelled a long rough road and has now reached this stage where she can see light, the 'lit' 'face' of her son like 'a moon'. Light is also important as now her path is clear, and her future is bright because of the presence of her son. 'Moon' is a symbol of beauty also, so it is in keeping with the title of the poem. She is not afraid of the nights, or the difficulties to come; it is the language of a typical traditional mother who feels safe with traditional values. The word 'all' is significant as it encompasses her social, personal, political and professional worries.

Another poem, *Jawaz* (Reason), has a similar theme, depicting the son as 'light', the poet's reason to live in this sad world. She states that if her son had not been in her lonely life, it would have been finished long since. In one sense this is extreme clinging to tradition, in Kanitkar's words, but it is also a realistic picture of eastern motherly emotions. Barbara Christian, with reference to Buchi Emecheta's novel, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), argues that tragedy occurs when a woman is 'too busy building up her joys as a mother' and her

sacrifice becomes less painful when seen by her culture, and points out that ‘the joy of being a mother was the joy of giving all to her children [even her life]’ (Christian 1997, p. 242). Christian is protesting here about the lack of importance given to a woman’s life as an individual. She argues that motherhood is the sole function a woman is reduced to by her culture, ignoring the complex human being inside her, which reemphasises the argument of this chapter. She talks from an African perspective, which is similar to the Asian perspective in Shakir’s analysis. ‘Tragically, though realistically’, in another poem ‘Mama, It’s Freezing’, Shakir ‘realises the universal fact that the son of her being will move away, fading her out, heralding the arrival of a new person in his life’ (Durrani 1995, p. 4). However she, with loving sacrifice ‘without a word’, movingly, achingly, makes her commitment to her child: ‘Quietly will I lose you to her / I will just wait! / I’m a mother / Destined to be a loser!’ (Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 85-86; Durrani 1995, p. 4).

This image of Shakir as a ‘loser’ in Christian’s terms, is a ‘victimisation’; a woman sacrificing herself because that is expected of her; as in the above poem Shakir states that, she is ‘destined’ to be a ‘loser’ because she is a mother, she is bound to ‘sacrifice’; and Christian also argues that the joy of motherhood ‘was’ in giving all other things, showing the ‘impact’ of culture, religion and politics in its formulation (Christian 1997, p. 244). The saying on which Emecheta’s book is centred, Christian argues, ‘The joy of being a mother is the joy of giving all to your children’ is set in such ‘relief’ in the novel that one can feel underlying pressure. Ironically, Christian states, the novel is questioning traditional African culture and values. Just like in the poem under discussion, *Tiri mohni surat* (Your Charming Face), all the sadness, the ‘darkness’ of a mother turns into brightness, and a mother is also aware, as seen in *Jawaz* (Reason), that when the son grows up he will also have his own path to follow, but she still keeps looking towards her son selflessly.

Adrienne Rich, in her essay ‘Mother and Son, Woman and Man’, argues that a mother’s unselfish love is the single quality universally supported and approved, and there is so much weight given to such a ‘pressure’ on all women, not only mothers, that if she separates herself from the image even casually, or refuses to perform her role she is ‘labelled’ as ‘hostile’, ‘ball-breaker’, a ‘castrating bitch’. Rich further argues, that these cries, ‘Mother! Don’t leave me!’, and as Shakir’s poem says ‘Mama, It’s Freezing’ [don’t leave me], represent an expression of man’s fears. The absence of the woman they are accustomed to in their life is feared because as a ‘new woman’, she is finding her ‘new creative vision of new ways’, of a new society (Rich 1986, p. 213). What man fears, in Rich’s view, is that when a

woman leaves him she is plotting some new feminist ideas against him. In Shakir's case this traditional loving sacrifice, this surrendering, is seen by her feminist contemporary poets as self-ruination (Yaqin 2001). By calling herself a 'loser', in Christian's terms, she is exposing her own tragedy. This, on the one hand, breaks through the many complex layers of her own personality in her motherhood, but on the other, it also emphasises a need for social change in the concept of the ideology of motherhood, which keeps a mother under so much forced cultural pressure that she is constantly struggling.

Shakir believed that poetry is a means of communication with yourself and the outer world, allowing women poets creative space of their own to express their survival in a male-dominated society (Shakir quoted in Salim 1994, p. 86-91). Moreover, Shakir through poetry has complained that sometimes she felt trapped in her ideal role of motherhood to the extent that she had to suppress her desire for a relationship. In her poem 'A Buried Voice' she admits that despite 'a house' full of 'flowers and books', 'a child', 'comfort', 'all riches' there is a '[hu]man' 'inside this fairy-tale palace' who is 'alive to the needs of the flesh'. 'Wherever [she] go[es]', 'deep down in the foundations', '[she] hears a voice wailing: Let me out! Let me out!' (Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 83). In her self-effacing role, in a buried voice, motherhood then becomes a massacre of the individual inside her; in Rich's terms, 'imprisoned' in her own body (1986, p. 13). This suppressed voice of a 'female' inside her is killed by her motherhood, and Shakir admits it (Rich 1986, p. 13). Writing poetry has been an important aspect of her life, an outlet for these multiple and complex layers of her different individual demands as a woman. One layer surrenders, the other cries to be freed; one is willing to sacrifice, the other struggles to be out of the pit. In Bryce-Okunlola's terms this is 'paranoid schizophrenia': a split identity (Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 213). In this divided identity, one identity is reflecting that she is secure without a man (a husband), and the other is showing her insecurity without a man (a son). Such is the fragmented woman caught between her cultural pressures and self-awareness. When she sacrifices it is taken for granted (Christian 1997), when she does not she is castigated (Rich 1986). Poetry thus helps Shakir to break the silence, to give an outlet to these pent up feelings, and tell her story, re-creating the truth and reality from her perspective (Chatterjee 1993; Kristeva 1980; Spivak 1995; Yaqin 2007). Audre Lorde says every woman has a dark place within her, but it is hidden; poetry then becomes a necessity not a luxury as it is vital to a woman's existence (Lorde 1988, p. 96). This third poetic collection *Khud-Kalami* also helps to reflect that poetry alone is not the reason for her survival, but poetry based on her motherhood is and the site of a struggle as well. Lorde (1934-1992) states:

It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into ideas, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought (Lorde 1988, p. 96).

Lorde posits that poetry is a means of dialogue and communication with the inner and the outer self. This is quite opposite to Shakir's contemporary Ada Jafri, as when Jafri published her autobiography in 1995, after a long silence since her first collection which was published in 1950, she justified it as a natural progression in a woman poet's life, because she regarded her poetry as a luxury in comparison to the necessity of raising a family (Jafri 1995, p. 320-321; Yaqin 2007). It is not the same for Shakir. Through poetry she gives a voice to her feeling that, on the one hand, she is trapped within all her emotional roles in life - daughter, lover, mother, wife, working woman - and her selfhood is buried deep. On the other hand, she also reflects that, in Bryce-Okunlola's words, 'motherhood is the site where the conflicting emotions of anger, frustration, caring, responsibilities and ultimately joyful release coalesce': grow together (Bryce-Okunlola 1991, p. 214). The next poem *Kaenaat ke khaliq* (O, Creator of the World) is the final poem to be analysed.

*Kaenaat ke khaliq* (O, Creator of the World)

O, Creator of the Universe,  
 Look at my face!  
 See the smile on my lips,  
 And the twinkle in my eyes!  
 Does the smile remind you of something?  
 Spark a thought in you?  
 I'm sure  
 You must have recognised this moment  
 And believed in the grandeur of it!

Yes, your guess is right.  
 Today, I too,  
 Have given birth to life!  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 63).

In the poem, the poet and the Creator of this universe are standing on the same pedestal, but the poem specifically talks about a woman's joy in giving birth which has made her equal in status to the creator of the universe.

This poem can be read as the most jubilant of the poems included in the chapter. The words enact meaning and make the reader visualise the 'smile on [her] lips / [A]nd twinkle in

[her] eyes'. This is the joy of motherhood shown on Shakir's face; a person who has suffered so much on a personal and social level. The aim behind the inclusion of this poem is to underline the joy in being a mother and also to use the metaphor of creativity as an outlet for all the women poets who in Ash's terms, 'can still be mothers without giving birth to a child' (1991, p. 201). The act of writing is metaphorically an act of creation, but more so; by using this metaphor, the underlying plea is that a woman too must be treated with respect in her male dominated society as she is not only the creator of a child but the whole world, as only a woman can give birth. This concept of both childbirth and a poetic creation involve labour and both are a testimony to the creator's identity. This is also important as it shows another idea of motherhood, where a mother's existence is joined with the land; as both can reproduce, mothers and lands are co-joined (Morris and Dun 1991). As such, Shakir's identity as an eastern mother merges with the identity of her land. This can be explained by revisiting Emecheta's yearning for both her mother and her motherland in her exile from Nigeria. Her identity in exile is that of an adopted motherland, where she achieves that through textual space. Shakir, on the contrary, is an embodiment of her land as she has never been exiled or separated from her motherland (even when she had a choice to stay abroad) and her culture, and in that sense can claim her connection with her country, Pakistan. As Susheila Nasta states, 'unlike male identity, which develops through early separation from the mother, female identity develops through continued connection with the mother' (Nasta 1991, p. xxv). Shakir's cultural and historical connection with Pakistan as a metaphorical mother not only gives her the status of being the mother of the land, but because of her ability to create and give birth it makes her both literally and metaphorically mother as creator as well.

In the poem, when she addresses the Creator of the Universe she asks Him to look at her face and recognise the simultaneity of feeling, of joy in 'this moment', between Him and her and His creation. It also underlines the joy which comes from being part of the motherland, and at the same time being a mother as she has given birth to her son. The created is always loved by the Creator, creation is an act of love, and mother is always a symbol of love.

The poem adopts the style of a dialogue not only with the self here, but with the Creator as well. Shakir belongs to a society where, in Ash's words, there is 'a traditional attitude of pity for a barren woman'. Ash states, whether 'a peasant woman' or 'an educated modern', 'both kill themselves by immolation because they are barren' (Ash 1991, p. 167). Although she talks with reference to Indian women of medieval times, it cannot exclude Pakistani women who share the same culture and psyche. It is commonly thought in Asian

culture, that if a married woman cannot give birth to a child after marriage, or is infertile, she is a curse for both the family and society. Both in Pakistan and India the pre-Islamic practice of female infanticide was still in practice until very recently (Hasan 1993, p. 198). Gunther Heinz Klein and Renate Nestvogel in the book *Women in Pakistan* state: 'The centuries old habit of killing new-born girls by burying them alive is prohibited in the Qur'an ... and there is no evidence that this is still practiced' (1992, p. 34). Girls are still considered as a burden, due to the question of dowry and safeguarding their honour. Since 'sons' on the contrary, the book states: 'considerably enhance the status of women', 'support [their] parents in old age' and are 'the survival of the family', 'no efforts are spared to produce male progeny and it is customary even today to make the birth of a son an occasion of great festivity' (Klein & Nestvogel 1992, p. 33-34).

In African traditional societies there is also no worse misfortune for a woman than being childless; a barren woman is considered incomplete. Special importance is given to sons, Christian states, who could grow up and be warriors and heads of households, and in a mother's old age they would take care of her and respect her (1997, p. 214). She argues that the importance given to sons reflects the subordinate status given to women (Ibid.). In African culture, she states, woman means a mother, who must be subordinate to male relatives; in that way as Bryce-Okunlola says, motherhood becomes an important metaphor of creativity to tell the story of her struggles (Christian 1997, p. 214; Bryce-Okunlola 1991). This extreme regard for a mother plays both a negative and a positive role, controlling them while respecting them (Christian 1997, p. 213-214). In Asian culture to have a child is one thing, but to have a son is the greatest joy for any woman in Pakistan. So when she gives birth to a son, she gives birth 'to life'. 'Life' can also mean that she too can live happily, as culturally she is protected; she will be respected and looked after in future as reflected in the poem; the happiness that comes from the birth of a son has no bounds. The act of creation or giving birth becomes a holy act, which is reflected in the word 'grandeur', because it has that spirituality which is seen through a mother's future which will be secure and protected. A mother's desire for a son from Freud's psychoanalytical perspective is a bit different.

Freud's concept of the castrated girl, who has to marry in order to supply the missing male sex organ in her body, is challenged by women analysts. Freud in his rigid and limited approach, feminist critics feel, has seen woman with a 'blind spot' (Rich 1986, p. 201). Freud states that a desire for a son does not remain a desire for a baby, but the missing male sex organ mothers have craved for. This view on the 'impulses for motherhood' is seen by feminist writers from a different perspective (Ibid., p. 199). They interpret it in their belief

that the desire for a male sex organ in a girl is only because she sees it as a 'privileged' and favoured feature which makes it distinct from her (Ibid., p. 203). Feminists see the male organ as a metaphor of power, whereas the castrated girl is a metaphor of deprived status in her society, which Freud was well aware of as he knew that women were thwarted and deprived as social beings, but he never chose to explore this. Rich states that feminists believe Freud did not explore the psychic meaning of the social 'mutilation' of women in his work, so his work lacks the truth 'which has been called political' (Ibid., p. 202; 201-203); political because Freud hides the reality, which is that women are marginalised.

On a different note, to conclude, what Rich is underlining is that women are not 'man hater[s]', (Rich 1986, p. 207), but the less a mother makes her son an instrument of her dependency, the more mothers can live their own lives. The passion of the mother bond demands a balance, a wholeness; a balance between her own life and her role as a mother, and the importance that her individuality comes first (Ibid., p. 207). Shakir achieves that wholeness, that balance from a different perspective, bringing a balanced outlook between her liberal and traditional thinking. Seen from this perspective as an eastern mother, Shakir cherishes her motherhood in this poem, which counter-balances her disenchantment seen in most of the chapter. The chapter also underlines that, on the one hand, seeing no escape from her motherland and its traditions and pressure, her individual identity through her motherhood merges in her motherland, and, on the other hand, reflects that since every problem is generated from the motherland, it is also solved in it. Being an eastern mother these two elements: motherhood and motherland, are always interlinked and both interdependent.

The significant observation to be made about this chapter is that through her stories we see a multi-layered articulation of herself. In her role as a woman we see a daughter, a wife, a mother and a writer, all different identities of 'woman'. The chapter makes a pointed reference that the self is not a simple construct which can achieve freedom from all the restraints of family duties and other obligations in a Pakistani culture. Moreover, the traditional and modern ways of life are separate and yet are shown to be interlinked which qualifies the concept of freedom that no one can be completely free. Most evidently it looks into how a traditional Pakistani woman should live and fight for her rights, but not at the cost of giving up her 'feminine' *nisvani* self. Overall, we have observed that while Shakir challenges the patriarchal order through motherhood as a metaphor of creativity, and projects an awareness of the conflicts and tensions that generate from the relationship between the mother and her land, in her stereotypical role as an eastern mother she submits to patriarchy

under political pressure and embraces tolerance in order to survive.

## Chapter 4

### Women without a voice: third-world feminism in *Inkaar* (Refusal/Denial)

#### Introduction

Chapter four, the final chapter of this thesis, is based on Shakir's last collection *Inkaar* (Refusal/Denial) (1990). Shakir, in a different persona, enumerates the reasons for the silence of the third-world woman who, despite all her struggles and efforts to revolutionise and change her society and free herself from the captivity of the age-old traditions, is unable to do so. This frames what Chandra Mohanty has theorised, that the 'average [majority] third-world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being third world (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimised, etc.)'. She, however, is critical of western feminists for generalising the term 'woman' without a 'context of analysis'. She gives a particular analysis of 'women in India' who are exploited by patriarchal culture, and where these exploited women are also reacting to the politics of the patriarchal norms (Mohanty 1994, p. 207-208; 1991; Alexander and Mohanty 1997). The chapter also revisits Sara Suleri's idea that a third-world woman is doubly colonised: under patriarchy and Islamic laws (Suleri 1992, p. 756-769). Additionally, the chapter endorses Gayatri Spivak's concept of the 'subaltern', a 'similar notion of the feminine', who has been raised in 'phallogocentric tradition and cannot speak'; as well as looking at the difficulty of applying liberal feminist ideas in other cultures (Spivak 1988, p. 287; 1986).

Shakir uses a prose poetry style, rather than conventional *ghazal* style in order to cover a wider arena of her society; from rich to poor, from powerful to powerless. It revisits Lorde's definition of the role 'poetry' plays as 'a necessary means of communication for women', allowing them creative space of their own to express their lives in a patriarchal society (Lorde 1988, p. 96). Shakir's prose poetry style re-appropriates K.C. Kanda's definition of Urdu poetry, which states, '[T]he emphasis in new poetry shifts from the *ghazal* to the *nazm* which is handier of the two as an instrument of social and political communication' (Kanda 1998, p. 2). The basic aim of the new poetry, he states, is 'to exorcise through their poems the ghost of the past, rid poetry of its obsessions with the *ghazal*, and bring it in tune with the spirit of the times' (Ibid.). As explained in chapter one, *Khushboo*, the themes of *ghazal* are generally love themes, which revolve around amorous love and

divine love. Shakir is basically a *ghazal* love poet (Badaiyuni 2009), but she self-consciously makes this stylistic shift to prose poetry in the last collection in order to, in Bhabha's terms, narrate, and in Lorde's words, communicate, about the common day-to-day problems of her third-world nation through the new poetic form (Bhabha 1990; Lorde 1988). Shakir talked about social and political issues in her *ghazals* as well, but the themes now are generally more mundane and therefore prosaic. In fact, the second chapter, based on the second collection, '*Sadburg: The genesis of a radical*', pre-empted the first step towards this development. However, in 1980, the poetic voice of Shakir was suppressed and muffled in metaphors due to the censorship of Zia's martial law. In this last collection, *Inkaar*, Shakir shifts to an overtly modern form in which she can use her own metaphors and drive her own meanings in order to record, with freedom, her disappointments with the society around her. This freedom is not only freedom from the burden of form and content in traditional *ghazal*, but also political freedom. The latter was due to the significant change in the political atmosphere of Pakistan with the arrival of a female Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, and with her arrival, death of dictatorship and the birth of democracy. This collection is therefore more open and challenging in approach.

### **The poems**

Before talking about the structure of the chapter, it is important to point out that this collection, *Inkaar*, is divided into two parts: the *ghazal* poems and the *nasri nazmain* prose poems. The first two poems included for discussion, 'The Challenge' and 'The Tragedy of a Princess', are from the first section, while all the other poems are from the second. All the poems, however, narrate the story of a woman's experience in her various roles, and of discrimination and mundane existence in a third-world society.

In order to contextualise the feminist theories cited in the chapter, the selected poems will be used to examine the role of a Pakistani woman from three different perspectives: political, social and literary - the political figure of a female prime minister, a housewife and a woman poet. The chapter discusses how different elements of 'strength' and 'struggle' are played out in a patriarchal Islamic culture (Moghissi 1999, p. 38). The short poem, 'The Challenge', is selected at the very beginning to project in a few lines the heroic figure of Shakir, who challenges national oppression which is echoed in the title of this collection, *Inkaar* (Refusal/Denial). The political figure of the Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, is presented in the poem '*Shahzadi ka almia*' (The Tragedy of a Princess). The poem is

reflective of the national theme and is selected to narrate the stance of a female Prime Minister in a male-dominated nation. She symbolises a woman who displays a combination of education, elitism and leadership qualities, but her tragedy is that her Islamic construct does not support her liberal, progressive and democratic voice; the dishonesty and hypocrisy of her nation becomes the source of her tragedy. The poem ‘*Nadaamt*’ (A Regret), reflects Shakir’s regret for not addressing the common problems of suffering humanity, and focusing all her poems on herself as a love poet. Therefore, writing in prose poetry marks Shakir’s point of departure from the personal to concern for her society as a whole. Hence, on a very different note, the poem entitled ‘*Bashira kee ghar wali*’ (The Wife of Bashira) is selected to depict that category of Pakistani society where domestic violence plays a major role in the life of an ordinary, poor housewife, who is treated no better than an animal. She is victimised because she happens to be a woman who is not equal to the male gender; on top of that she is uneducated and financially poor (Bhattacharjee 1997, p. 308-329). The last category is depicted in the poem ‘Tomato Ketchup’. The poem is used to reference the theme of sexual abuse and, on a very tragic note, narrates the story of a mistreated third-world female poet who, out of bare necessity, has to sell her body instead of her poetry; her customers are none other than her male fellow-poets who would rather deliciously read and enjoy the text of her body than her poetry because her poetry is worth nothing since it is the product of a female mind. Being a victim of patriarchy, she commits suicide due to the ill treatment from her fellow-poets and extreme personal and social pressure (Jayawardena 1986, p. 1-24). These three poems form the basis of the chapter with reference to the third-world woman whose subalternity, as Spivak puts it, is due to male subjugation; where oppression, as Mohanty believes, is directly linked with her third-world status and gender differences; and these differences, Suleri affirms, are due to her colonisation under patriarchal culture and religious laws.

When *Inkaar* was written in 1990, Pakistan was a democratic state. There was no martial law, the dictator General Zia had died in a plane crash in August 1988 and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had been ruling as a democratic party since December 1988 with Benazir Bhutto as its first female Prime Minister. Since Shakir was a strong supporter of democracy and the PPP, there is a noticeable development in the style of *Inkaar* reflected in the confidence, openness, and a sense of freedom to voice criticism. This collection is therefore more bold and challenging in its approach. The short poem, ‘The Challenge’, pre-empted her personal and poetic freedom in this collection: ‘I do not care / If my loyalty is suspected. Let the ... current ruler / Accuse me formally’ (*Inkaar* 1990, p. 62). The poem is

about restrictions imposed on Shakir to prevent her from leaving the country because she has written ‘wrong’ (Shabnam 2005, p. 97) poems against Islamic laws and Islamisation in the country; poems like ‘His Majesty’s Problems’, ‘Macbeth’, ‘Poem for Farogh Furrukhzad’, ‘What Will Happen to the Flowers?’ and *Shaam-e-ghareeban* (The Evening of 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram/A Hapless Traveller) to name a few, criticising the oppressive Islamic environment in Pakistan. Shakir’s answer to such a restriction is to tell the authorities who have put this ban on her travel abroad that for her there is nothing better than her motherland, therefore such restrictions mean nothing. Then, in the 1980s, she could write only in metaphors, but now, in the 1990s, she is free to express her pent-up anger. The poem translates Shakir’s firm determination to speak out loud her discontent and scepticism about the atrocities committed against women in her male-dominated society. The title of the collection *Inkaar* (Refusal/Denial) spells out what Shakir herself had said: ‘it meant refusal to accept one’s circumstances and to be ruled by the whims of others’ (Agha 1995, p. 45). Hence with the freedom in thought and style here, we observe a multiplicity of themes and personae; primarily political themes addressing national concerns in relation to woman and her status: the theme of national oppression, subjugation and mistreatment of women, poverty, hypocrisy, corruption and the dishonesty of her nation.

### **Nation and the woman**

The lengthiest and most celebrated poem in this collection and this chapter is ‘The Tragedy of a Princess’. The poem is significant as it primarily deals with the theme of the nation and the woman. It is also important because it echoes the contemporary political situation in Pakistan at the time of publication: Benazir Bhutto’s first term in office as the first female Prime Minister and the return of democracy after a prolonged military dictatorship. Overall, the poem is overtly political as it narrates the story of the dishonesty of her supporters as the reason for her fall as the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan.

#### *Shahzadi ka almia* (The Tragedy of a Princess)

Thronging the palace  
 Below her window,  
 Her well-wishers are waiting,  
 For the window to open,  
 So that they can wave their ID cards  
 And yell:

Have a look at us!  
 During the black autumn  
 On that long, dark, orphaned evening,  
 We offered you the mourning veil,  
 Embroidered with our blood.  
 Our initials can still be seen on it!  
 Those bare-footed, scarf-less women  
 Who smuggled bread and water to your cells,  
 Were our lady wives!  
 We were the ones who braved  
 The tyranny of the martial regime  
 To ensure the return of spring.  
 We burned in the snows of Western Europe,  
 Amidst the warmth and light and music,  
 All centrally controlled.

We left behind our hearth and homes,  
 Managing to live  
 Through newly acquired skills,  
 Thinking of the aroma of home-baked bread,  
 Suffering the sandwiches  
 (The trading in Oriental rugs and precious stones,  
 Was only a pastime).  
 The fools  
 Who didn't choose to become turn-coats,  
 Stayed behind;  
 Passed their days in torture-cells,  
 And took the flogging meant for us!  
 (After all,  
 There is something called division of labour).

It will only be fair  
 If they, too, are compensated.  
 A pouch of silver,  
 An Arabian stallion,  
 A patch of green land,  
 A golden turban,  
 A Kashmiri shawl!

Your majesty,  
 Just see  
 What we have given up for you!  
 A step on the ladder of promotion,  
 A favour from a uniform,  
 A silver cap,  
 A purple ribbon,  
 And above all,  
 The fragrance,  
 The warmth of the Motherland.  
 It's time we were rewarded  
 In proportion to our sacrifices.  
 An ambassadorial assignment  
 In some country  
 With loose morals and tight outfits,  
 The charge of some profitable Ministry,

The job of an adviser,  
 The governorship of a province,  
 The treasury of a state,  
 And if nothing else,  
 At least make us officers on special duty.  
 Make up for our loss!

We must be close to the flag and staff!  
 If we wish to pay our compliments  
 To your Bountiful,  
 Let no doorman stop us!  
 In the corridors of power  
 We should be allowed to enter,

Like the wind  
 Blowing to our pleasure!

It's not fair  
 That those who jumped on the bandwagon  
 Much later than us,  
 Are cruising on the high seas  
 And we are only collecting dust!

Recompense us!

Hounded by the fat cats and toadies,  
 The princess must have wondered sometimes  
 How to save her little kingdom,  
 Already an eyesore to her foes,  
 from her own guards!  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 90-92).

It is as lengthy as it is multi-layered, but not multi-vocal; the persona of the poet is dominant as she moves between pronouns in order to retell the bleak past, celebrate the bright present and predict the endangered future. As mentioned above it is the only poem selected from the *ghazal* poems section. The actual contents of the poem indicate that the poem is not an address or an ode to the princess, but is a poetic monologue where the poet dons the poetic persona to talk about nationalistic concerns. About the poem Agha says:

In the winter of 1988, Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. It was a very happy occasion for Perveen [Shakir]. The daughter of her leader had come to her rightful place and she had all the good wishes for her. However she feared for her also lest she be surrounded by sycophants [*sic*] and by the people expecting favours in lieu of their past services to the lady. She wrote a beautiful poem with these thoughts called '*Shahzadi ka almia*' (The Tragedy of a Princess) meaning the dilemma of a princess. It was well appreciated and she was called to the Prime Minister's house by her press and publicity department on several occasions (Agha 1995, p. 43).

Shakir's concern for Bhutto indicated in this quotation is the focus of the poem. The poem in a free verse style begins as a reported speech alluding to the national history of Pakistan. We can strongly visualise the thronged palace of the princess. The initial picture presents the time when Benazir Bhutto, her mother and her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were jailed by Zia, in 1977. Within two years Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged and all political activities were banned (Ahmad 1990, p. 8-9). The Bhuttos were jailed on the pretext that their party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), was bringing obscenity and nudity into the country with their liberal and democratic ideas (Haqqani 2005, p. 131-159). This was considered as a black mark on the name of Islam (Ibid.). As established previously, since Shakir had lived through those 'eleven damaging years of tyrann[y]' (Ibid.), which she terms as 'black autumn', under a lot of suppression and oppression, her poetry in this section is an apt presentation of experience and close study of hypocrisy and dishonesty.

Thematically, Shakir's poem narrates concerns that were once voiced by Allama Iqbal (1879-1938) regarding freedom of the Indian nation before partition in his poem, *Tasweer-e-dard* (A Picture of Pain) (tr. Kanda 2005, p. 130-141). Shakir's contemporary, Kishwar Naheed, raises similar concerns in her poem *Apahaj ma mitti ki golden jubilee* (The Golden Jubilee of a Crippled Mother-Earth) (Yaqin 2001, p. 193). While Naheed writes with reference to the multiple issues related to women and her nation, Iqbal, as 'a visionary poet' and a 'thinker', warns the nation of the 'forthcoming disasters that await' pre-partitioned 'India' (Mir 1990; Yaqin 2001, p. 195). Iqbal's poem aims especially to raise consciousness in Indians, whereas Naheed's plea is for the recovery of 'those honest people / who bartered their lives' for the post-partition nation and who are now dead (Naheed 1992, p. 84-87; tr. Yaqin 2001, p. 193-4). Shakir, on a similar note, is showing her concern on how to 'save [the] little kingdom' [Pakistan] of the princess from her own 'guards', because they are not honest but are flatterers: 'sycophant' (Agha 1995, p. 43). While Naheed's concern is underlined by personifying her nation as 'crippled' due to the absence of the honest, Shakir re-phrased it to 'tragedy' to reflect the same concern. The main difference between Iqbal's and both Naheed's and Shakir's concern for the nation is that the feminist poets do not use the voice of a saviour to convey the message; on the contrary, Naheed personifies the nation as a lamenting mother appealing to her children, while Shakir is more direct and open in her portrayal of the hypocritical nation. Shakir has underlined the hypocrisy of the people by depicting their demands to Bhutto for a reward for their sacrifices. Shakir ironically names that sacrifice by stating that they 'burned' in the 'snow' of Europe; through this juxtaposition Shakir is exposing their hypocrisy. The 'suffering', which they call 'sacrifice[s]', is ironic

because leaving their poor third-world country and living in first-world ‘centrally controlled’ houses in ‘Europe’ being fed on sandwiches, which they call ‘suffering the sandwiches’, was a punishment for them. Shakir calls them ‘turn-coats’, because they deserted their leader when she most needed them and they returned to Pakistan after Bhutto’s success as a Prime Minister, and then demanded rewards in the form of a ‘profitable Ministry’ for the ‘sacrifice[s]’ of leaving their beloved country for her. Shakir intentionally uses the term ‘profitable’, to unveil their hidden corrupt agenda, as through such selection of words it can reflect not only greed for position but also the corruption of taking bribes at their ministerial levels. Furthermore, they demand to have positions near the Prime Minister, as officers on special duties, close to the flag, so they can meet the PM as and when they want and not be stopped at the gates; in that way the Prime Minister can pay for their losses. These are demands which they, as hypocrites, do not deserve. This poem, Mussarat Mirza states, was banned by the then electronic media manager Aslam Azhar. Mirza also remarks that after reading the poem it is not difficult to see the reason behind such a move (Mirza 1995, p. 1-2).

Another poem by Naheed on Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto deals with the similar theme of women and nation. The poem entitled *Apni jaisi aurat vazir-e azam se mukalima* (Dialogue with a Woman Prime Minister like Myself) (Naheed 1992, p. 99-102; tr. Yaqin 2001, p. 197) was published during Bhutto’s second term (1993-1996) in office. In her poem, Naheed is critical about Bhutto’s performance as a female Prime Minister. She looks at Bhutto as the mother of the nation who has not restored the rights of women and minorities that have been affected under Shariat law (Islamisation) enforced by the previous (Zia) government. Naheed opines that she must restore those rights since the female community has voted for her in that faith. On a similar note, Naheed’s poem underlines issues that were not addressed by Benazir Bhutto’s government. Surprisingly, on her wedding day, Bhutto did address the call in a public speech:

I will not hesitate to make any sacrifice, be it large or small, as in the past. I will work shoulder to shoulder with my brothers and sisters – the people of Pakistan – to create an egalitarian society that is free from corruption and from violent tensions. This was my goal yesterday, this is the dream I share with you, and this will remain our unwavering commitment (Bhutto 1988, p. 365).

Hamza Alavi, in his article ‘Pakistani women in a changing society’, has talked about the ‘persecution of women in Zia’s regime’ (2009; Yaqin 2001, p. 198), and stressed the lack of action taken by Bhutto and her government regarding the status of women in Pakistan:

Sadly, the eleven years of the so-called policy of 'Islamisation' under General Zia, have produced in Pakistan a culture of intolerance. This culture, above all, has persecuted women and subjected them to all kinds of humiliation and ill treatment, not to speak of inhuman punishment under the Hudood Ordinances. [...] It was hoped that the democratic government of Benazir Bhutto would reverse this and, in particular, repeal the Hudood Ordinance (including *Zina* [adultery] Ordinance). But it has shown no inclination to change the laws (Alavi 2009, p. 12).

Naheed and Shakir were both supporters of democracy and of Bhutto as the Prime Minister. However, Naheed writes in a tone of accountability about Bhutto and her unaccomplished duty, while Shakir's tone is more apprehensive about the calculated fall which she anticipates. At the end of this poetic monologue Shakir addresses these people indirectly impersonating the voice of Bhutto, in her concern for her kingdom. 'Hounded' brings in the image of hunting dogs, which can be linked with the wild beastly attributes associated with hunting in order to devour or eat. This is in keeping with the image used in the foreword to the second collection, *Sadburg*, where Shakir talks about the 'princess left alone in the jungle' (*Sadburg* 1980, p. 14). The jungle image is reiterated to translate the greed and ambition of Shakir's male-dominated nation. Earlier on in the poem Shakir narrates the sinister nature of the people, communicated through their undeserving demand for rewards for all the favours they bestowed upon the princess in her difficult times, such as when she was in jail. Moreover, the villainous nature of the dishonest supporters is also reflected in their happiness at being saved from the flogging which was meant for them but which was directed at some innocent instead, who either did not have the means to flee the country to save themselves or, on a positive note, being a true supporter of their Prime Minister, did not abandon her when she most needed them. Such innocent and honest supporters of the Princess are 'fools' in the eyes of the dishonest, and they deserved it because they did not escape the country and save themselves from flogging. The irony is that, according to them, living in 'Western Europe' with all the comfort, warmth and music after fleeing Pakistan, is a huge sacrifice for which they should be rewarded. Through these ironic juxtapositions in the narration, Shakir exposes the villainous nature of the disloyal and maps out a picture of the people around Bhutto.

Though Shakir does not literally bring in the wolf, a discerning reader can connect the jungle and hounds with the villainous character of the evil wolf. I have already established this in *Sadburg*, chapter two, reflecting on the nature of male usurper in General Zia's role in 'Macbeth', his greed for power, and the ability to kill and usurp the power, with reference to

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's killing by him as a dictator. The actions which are villainous therefore confirm the evil power.

Feminist poet Fahmida Riaz has also appropriated the vicious character of the wolf in her prose poem, *Lori* (Lullaby). It is a mother's concern for her girl child. The narrative is about the mother's past and the change that comes in her life after her daughter's birth. In her lullaby she warns the daughter of the wolf in her past life which is also present in the fairytale she is narrating to her daughter:

Do you know a wolf stood on my doorway  
 Drinking my blood, consuming my youth  
 Wolf who was nourished by money  
 Who can rule the world  
 We with a curse from age to age

In this world for whom  
 Thinking is considered a crime  
 To love – a major sin

He has tasted the blood of a human soul  
 [...]  
 (Riaz 1988, p. 264-265; tr. Yaqin 2001, p 148-9).

The wolf's greed for power and ambition along with its preying nature is, in the context of feminist analysis, suggestive of the stereotypical hostile male behaviour in patriarchy. 'Although the wolf is never described explicitly as' a 'male character, his actions confirm his' position in 'a patriarchal discourse of power' (Yaqin 2001, p. 149). Riaz's use of such descriptive nouns for the wolf as a lord and a 'rule[r]', and Shakir's usage of the plural noun 'guards' project the masculinity of the wolf. What both Shakir and Naheed underline here is the fear that is represented through the presence of the wolf and the hound in the poems to introduce the evil in society.

It is also significant to note the tone of both the poems on the Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto by Naheed and Shakir. Naheed addresses Bhutto as *apni jaisi* (like myself), and confers upon her the title of mother, and therefore links it with the theme of the role of a woman and her nation. As stated earlier about the Pakistani feminist poets in the Introduction to the study, Naheed's poetry echoes a political agenda to free women from the collective agenda of Islamic nationalism which, in the guise of religion, exercised control over its women, and as such her verse provides a critique of the national policy on women that is reaffirmed in scholarly studies of women's rights in Pakistan (Yaqin 2001; Klein & Nestvogel 1992). Her tone is harsh in that context, because as a national spokesperson and a critic she is

reminding the mother of her duty to her motherland. ‘Do not forget that this is a loan to you / Do not forget that this is your obligation’ (tr. Yaqin 2001, p. 197). She believes that a powerful mother should address the problems of powerless women. Now that women are empowered by the coming of a female prime minister (a strong woman like Naheed), and with her the birth of democracy, and since she is the mother of the nation, Naheed believes that the mother should maximise her daughter’s chances of survival.

Shakir’s poem too celebrates female empowerment in the depiction of ‘bare-footed, scarf-less women’ who have come out of the *chadar* and *devari* (veil and four walls). Naheed’s depiction of the Prime Minister is seen on the basis of her political power, where she avoids idealising Bhutto on the basis of her gender because she is a woman like herself. It is important to note that her poem was written in 1996 when Benazir Bhutto was in office for the second time. She is therefore more adamant in asserting that the Prime Minister should achieve those goals which she did not in her previous regime. Shakir, on the contrary, does not write with the intention to present Bhutto as an ideal leader, though it gives that impression; Shakir’s approach as a national spokesperson is more of a warning to Bhutto of the forthcoming dangers, which turned out to be true in the end. It is important to note that since the dates of publication and Bhutto’s first dismissal in 1990 coincide, the poem becomes all the more significant because Shakir has already shared her apprehension of this tragedy with her nation through this poem. In that sense, the theory turned into reality when Bhutto was dismissed on charges of corruption in 1990; and it was obvious she was among dishonest, hypocritical and corrupt people. Riaz is a feminist poet who also strongly sees the woman of today as a free, liberated, individual woman and who believes that struggle against all odds is unavoidable, but one should struggle until one gets victory (Yaqin 2001, p. 151, p. 123; 2006). She portrays her as one such woman, who should fight her system and one day be victorious. The message in Riaz’s poem *Lori* is thus similar to that of her contemporary, Naheed, who believes that resistance is the best way to fight back. Therefore Riaz says, ‘Do not fear the wolf’ but ‘fight’ [!]’ (tr. Yaqin 2001, p. 150). The question is, in a country where the majority of women are uneducated, how many can understand the resistance poetry that Riaz is advocating? To be more precise, how many can even read?

Shakir, on the contrary, admits that she is not a militant type of feminist poet and depicts her Prime Minister with a realistic rather than a militant approach (Shakir interviewed by Salim 1994). Shakir herself had been the victim of gender exploitation in her patriarchal society. As already established in *Khud-Kalami*, chapter three, that in the *mushairas*, in social gatherings, because of her beauty, fame and position both as a poet and as a bureaucrat, and

as a single divorced mother, ‘her enemies hounded her’; ‘they wanted to damage her personality and ruin her forever by pinning scandals’ on her, and made ‘baseless allegations’. So much so that at one stage she wanted to commit suicide; then she decided to ‘change her house’, and later on ‘went away to America’ (Agha 1995, p. 40). Shakir’s tone is therefore more concerned with the woman in her poem, based on her own experience, and criticises the national structure and culture where only the woman suffers. Riaz too faced hardships because of her position as a poet, more so because of her political activities. She believed in taking action rather than just voicing opinions. She was more victimised because as the editor of *Awaz* (Voice) magazine she wrote directly against the establishment, and the injustices against women, and had to live in exile for ten years (Ahmad 1990). The point established here is that women have struggled and suffered at the hands of patriarchy in different ways. In this brief comparative commentary, I am saying that Shakir’s understanding of her nation and its women is justified as Bhutto twice lost her Prime Ministership on charges of corruption. At another level her role as a ruler was a threat to masculinity where Islamic tradition decried ‘the Muslim state governed by a woman’ as ‘blasphemy’ and ‘against nature’ (Mernissi 1994, p. 1). Seventeen years later, in October 2007, she survived one terrorist attack on her by Islamic militants in Karachi, and then tragedy occurred when she was killed in a second terrorist attack also by Islamic militants in December of the same year. The militants claimed her life on the pretext that a liberal democratic female is a challenge to the Islamic patriarchal culture and must be silenced.

The silencing of women referred to in this poem by Shakir is spelt out with greater depth in her later poems in this chapter. Shakir shifts to a prosaic style in order to introduce common day-to-day subjects. This she does by expanding her field of view to a broader arena which originates from the basic problem of gender differences leading to mistreatment of women and poverty-related issues. Shakir moves away from *ghazal* poems to *nasri nazam* (prose poems) in order to narrate the greater truth of her society. This shift in communication between the poet and her work is necessary in order to understand the modernistic prose poetry form used in this collection. The stylistic breakdown of form, however, manifests the narrative of truth (Faulkner 1986). It also allows the reader to understand the disillusionments and disappointments of the poet that arise from the society she sees around her. Modernistic experimentations in Urdu poetry meant the introduction and development of the following forms: *azad nazm* (free verse), *nazm-e muarra* (blank verse), *nasri nazm* (prose poetry) and later the *haiku* (a poem of 17 syllables) (Farooqi et al 1984, p. 1-25; Faruqi & Pritchett 1984, p. 111-128). N.M. Rashed states:

The 'new' poetry [is] a step towards the liberation of Urdu poetry from the tyranny of form; and, secondly, it aimed at bringing poetry closer to the realities of modern life. The *ghazal*, the most traditional verse form, had served a very good purpose over the centuries but had largely become inert both in form and content. [...] The problem of the 'new' poet was, firstly to write as himself, or as an individual rather than a type; and, secondly, to talk about the suffering soul of mankind as a whole, rather than of a chronically unhappy lover (Rashed 1971, p. 1-2).

In the first poem of the prose poetry section, *Nadaamt* (A Regret), Shakir admits that so far her poetry has been centred on herself: her role as a teenage lover, a woman, and a mother, but her wisdom will now be inspired by the suffering humanity around her.

*Nadaamt* (A Regret)

Until now,  
I dedicated all my poems to myself.  
I was pleased  
To call myself the poet of love.  
I didn't see a child  
Balancing on a heap of garbage, like a cat.  
I didn't see a prince sleeping  
With a brick as a pillow.  
The word prince  
Always reminded me  
Of the majestic goose;  
And children reminded me  
Of roses.  
I always regarded cake  
As a substitute for bread.  
My son,  
My prince,  
Forgive me  
If you can.  
(tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 96).

It is significant to note that both Naheed and Riaz moved away from traditional poetic style to free verse poems and prose poems in order to provide the truth to their readers (Baksh 2003; 2006). Amina Yaqin states that 'there was a noticeable shift towards prose in the latter half of Riaz's career, a shift she admits as being deliberate' (2001, p. 121). She further says, 'Feeling the pressure of time she favoured prose over poetry as a quicker means of production and communication' (Yaqin 2001, p. 121; Hussein 2004).

### **Prose poem dealing with social issues**

Shakir's conscious avoidance of a stylised form and adoption of a new poetic agenda helps to communicate her poetic agenda: the depiction of the powerlessness of common woman. The theme of women's protest against gender discrimination based on sexual difference rendered in verse is best defined in her prose poem '*Bashira kee ghar wali*' (The Wife of Bashira). The poem solely addresses the topic of women's unequal representation in her society: poverty and self-sacrifice in the guise of a mistreated wife.

*Bashira kee ghar wali* (The Wife of Bashira)

Oh, you pitiable thing!  
 The lowliest  
 Of mammals!  
 You rib-born, worn as a shoe!  
 When your brother  
 Would butterfly in the garden,  
 Your flower-like hands  
 Would carry a broomstick  
 Taller than you.  
 Holding the corner of your mother's gown,  
 You learnt so many household chores:  
 Making cow-dung cakes,  
 Cutting firewood,  
 Mixing foddors for the cattle.  
 But your brother's bread.  
 For you,  
 There was only stale bread  
 And curry from last night.  
 Eating left-overs  
 And wearing rags.  
 When you came to puberty,  
 Your father hated you even more.  
 He kept a close watch  
 On all your movements,  
 As if your first opportunity.  
 The day you turned sixteen,  
 One man unburdened his soul  
 To the body of another.  
 The sty and master changed,  
 Your job remained the same,  
 In fact, increased.  
 Now, your duties included  
 Humouring the bread-winner  
 At night, as well;  
 And becoming pregnant every year,  
 And looking after the house  
 Until just before giving birth.  
 The husband's job was up to bed,  
 The rest assigned to you.  
 What a job!

No wages, no days off,  
 No ritual of resignation.  
 Even beasts of burden are permitted to rest  
 On a burning afternoon  
 In the shade of a tree.  
 No such moment is there for you.  
 The bypath of your life has no such tree.  
 Alas! It seems your life  
 Is the punishment for sins  
 Committed in past lives.  
 If you sell your body,  
 You're a prostitute.  
 You trade your soul  
 And are called a wife.  
 For how long  
 Will these insults be heaped upon you  
 At the hands of time?  
 For the sake of a morsel of bread,  
 And a cup full of water,  
 How long will you go on  
 Sacrificing yourself?  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 97).

The focus is the silent, poor, (virtually) illiterate housewife (representing the rural majority) whose life is confined within the four walls and whose activities involve long hours of tedious domestic chores, and producing children. It echoes Fareeda Shaheed who states that because she is a woman 'she is first to rise and last to bed, last to eat, with less to eat and the reward is endless [physical, mental, and emotional] abuse' (1992, p. viii). The poem explores and analyses the fact that she is voiceless, both under patriarchy and the Islamic fundamentalist laws which are used as a weapon to control her. Ideologically, as Neelam Hussain states, they establish that a 'righteous woman' is one who guards her virtues by praying and staying inside the four walls [*purdah*] of her home, serving her husband obediently [without questioning] with 'single-minded devotion' (1994, p. 111). Such an ideology, Hussain argues, deprives her of all other aspects of identity and reduces her body to the status of an object to be used for 'sexual pleasure and reproduction only' (Ibid.). The objective of the poem is achieved by analysing this unequal dichotomy from religious, cultural and social perspectives.

The poem frames Spivak's depiction, in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', of the third world woman as a 'subaltern': oppressed, because she is under 'phallogocentric tradition and cannot speak' (1988, p. 287). Spivak talks with reference to '*Sati*' (widow burning); the feminine of this word simply means 'good wife' (Ibid., p. 305). She states that in the Indian

language it means, ‘the burning of *Sati* or a good wife, who escapes the regressive stasis of the widow in *brahmacrya* [celibacy]’ (Ibid., p. 305). Spivak discusses this with reference to what she calls the British trick, during British imperialism, of establishing ‘*Sati*’ by law rather than by choice. She argues that by explaining ‘*Sati*’, as ‘white man seeking to save brown woman from brown man’, on one side they ‘impos[ed] upon the woman the law to burn themselves on the husband’s pyre as good wives, on the other this constituted the object, the abolition established the good wife as the Hindu manipulation of female constitution’ (Ibid., p. 305). Spivak states, ‘between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappeared, into the third world woman’, into ‘established self-debased woman’, ‘silent and non-existent’, ‘caught between tradition[al] and modernisation’ (Ibid., p. 305-307). This reinforces the ideas discussed in chapter three, where the female identity is lost between laws and policies reducing her to a subaltern. However, the third-world woman’s significance is just ‘skin deep’ for the western feminist who represents the ‘Other’ without looking into her lived experience as a third world woman and generalises her representation (Suleri 1992). Alongside laws of Hindu origin, like *Sati*, the poem frames Suleri’s insight in her analysis of the Pakistani woman as doubly colonised, firstly under patriarchal culture and, secondly, under Islamic laws. I reiterate here that there is a third colonisation under the impact of the martial law of General Zia, which made the Pakistani woman voiceless. Spivak talks with reference to Hindu fundamentalism whereas Suleri makes a direct reference to Islamic fundamentalism, where laws like the Family Ordinance Law and the Hudood Ordinance, especially customs like *purdah* (veil), deprive women of basic human rights such as education. Due to their ignorance and poverty they then become victims of such laws (Ibid., p. 768). Additionally, the poem agrees with Mohanty’s point, written of elsewhere, about ‘illiterate’ women of the third world who are ‘illiterate’ because they are ‘ignorant’ of their own rights and because they follow ‘religion’ with a lack of understanding, which makes them non-progressive and backward (Mohanty 1994, p. 214). These three definitions are used to examine and analyse the poem in the social, cultural and religious context.

The poem opens in a very dramatic way and the reader gets to the heart of the situation: a woman, abused, degraded and mistreated. The juxtaposition of two antithetical words, ‘pitiable thing’, set the theme and the mood of the poem. It shows that, on the one level, by using the adjective ‘pitiable’ she is referred to as having all the human attributes deserving of pity but, on the other, she is just a thing, an object which has no life. As the title of the poem suggests, the addressee is the wife, therefore she is the most ‘pitiable’, and not

only low, but the 'lowliest of mammals'. The direct use of the word 'mammal' in the poem brings clearly to mind the group of animals who feed their offspring with their own milk, but by calling her a mammal the narrator is insulting her in comparing her with an animal; however he is also referencing her reproductive and mother-like qualities such as breast feeding. This comparison briefly explains at the very beginning of the poem the cause of her unequal treatment.

The exclamation marks emphasise the intensity of the insult. Looking from a psychological perspective, insult and abuse hinder personal growth and cause the development of an inferiority complex in the individual, which leads to maladjustment. In just the first four lines we come across four derogatory words: she is 'pitiable', a 'thing', 'lowliest', and a 'mammal', and the worst is that she is fit to be 'worn as a shoe'. It is significant to note that 'a shoe' is used both as a simile and as a metaphor; as it is both a symbol of protection - it protects feet from being injured or hurt - and, in a cultural context an insult; 'worn as a shoe' indicates filth that must be crushed and also kept low and under the foot. We can feel the pressure of the weight on the object under it. Thus, 'shoe' is used here to imply multiple meanings: first it indicates filth, and then is an indication of keeping something under control; furthermore, it is also linked with the pressure it exerts on the object under the shoe. The most important aspect is that the synaesthetic image which involves both sight and touch, helps the reader to visualise the object under the shoes, and to feel the pressure. The metaphor of 'shoe' therefore links with the image of pressure and helps the reader to connect with the subject status of the woman.

The inequality is directly and very emphatically stressed by referring to the woman as rib-born but used as a shoe. Keeping in mind that the poem is written in an Islamic setting, it is necessary therefore to analyse it in the religious context. It is important to see what the teachings of Islam state regarding the equal status of men and women before Allah [God]. Rifat Hasan in her article 'Are Women and Men Equal before Allah?' explains in detail with reference to Quranic teachings how man and woman were created equal. She states:

In the creation of human beings the male and the female make up the pair. Since everything created must be in pairs, the male and the female must both be necessary, must exist by the definition of createdness. Neither one comes before other. This means that in Allah's creation of human beings no priority or superiority is accorded to either man or woman (1993, p. 189).

However, it can be argued that a number of other factors such as the pre-Islamic influence of the Jewish and Christian interpretations of creation have influenced Muslim

belief such as: Eve as a woman was created from man's rib and Eve, the woman who is a 'scape-goat[ed]' for the sin of the first disobedience which deprived man, Adam, of the bliss of the Garden of Eden. Hence all daughters of Eve have earned the 'misogynistic bias', hatred and contempt; and the existence of Eve, the woman who was created for man, is made 'instrumental' rather than 'fundamental' in its importance (Hussain 1994, p. 111; Hasan 1993, p. 190).

Furthermore, since Pakistan was part of the Indian sub-continent, we come across strong Hindu influence on Muslim belief (Metcalf 1989, p. 94-95). There was the influence of Hindu culture, strongly rooted in patriarchal culture and making 'no distinction between the feminine, the woman and maternity, nor does it grant her the space to give visibility to her economic potential' (Hussain 1994, p. 120). Thus, the practice of *Sati* (widow burning) and 'valorisation' [maintaining by law] of married women over widows and single women 'interacted' with the Islamic idea of the feminine (Ibid.). This emphasised women's unequal and subordinate status, reinforcing the image of maternity as 'good', and 'non-productivity' as bad, and developed this 'binary opposition[s]' within the Islamic discourses (Ibid., p. 118-125). Hasan contends that this 'anti-women interpretation', which meshed with the Muslim psyche, has done enormous damage to Muslim women throughout the centuries (Hasan 1993, p. 190). Suleri in her essay 'Women Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition', criticising such laws, states that the customs like *purdah* (veiling), Family Laws Ordinance and Hudood: *Hadd* (limit) Ordinances reflect inequality. Suleri, with direct reference to the Pakistani woman and Islamic Law, argues that the western feminist does not understand the problems of the woman in the third world. Suleri's argument is that women in Pakistan are still colonised because they are living under patriarchy and Islamic law. The first directive, she argues, which reflects inequality is the *purdah* veil ordinance (Suleri 1992, p. 273-280; Ahmad 1990).

The point made in the poem is that although veiling or *purdah* is 'not religious in origin, its ordinances are vehemently defended by religious groups and observed by many women' (Klein & Nestvogel 1992, p. 37; Brydon and Chant 2008, p. 67-90). Neelam Hussain argues that the word *aurat* 'woman' in the pre-historic context means nakedness; and within Arabic usage Fatma Sabbah explains that the word 'veil' refers to concealing the woman symbolically in femininity; it refers to, she states, the 'pudenda' [external organs] of man or woman; that which is concealed with modesty' (Hussain 1994 p. 10; Sabbah 1984). In conservative societies, Hussain states, it is considered indecent even illicit if the sensitive zones are left uncovered (1994). In Pakistan the adherence 'to the rule' of '*purdah*' means

physical isolation and seclusion of women behind four walls, controlling and confining their activities, segregation of the sexes and gender inequality (Klein & Nestvogel 1992, p. 37; Brydon and Chant 2008, p. 82-84).

Early Islamic history, on the contrary, is full of strong, independent and intelligent images of women. In her essay, 'Women as Objects and Women as Subjects within Fundamentalist Discourses', Neelam Hussain states that Hazrat [Prophet] Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet Mohammad, 'was an economically independent woman who initiated and maintained a monogamous marriage with a much younger man without recourse to any male intermediary' (Hussain 1994, p. 118). Hussain writes that Hazrat Aisha, third wife of the Prophet Mohammad, 'compiled the authentic Ahadith' [report of the sayings of Prophet Mohammad] (Hussain 1994 p. 118); and despite the conflicting question of female seclusion and veil, women, she writes, were never restricted to the reproductive role alone; not only that, the Prophet Mohammad, she further states, himself appointed a woman as imam (a leader of the Islamic community), and appointed a woman as a leader of the battle of Ohad, AD 625 (Hussain 1994, p. 118). Therefore, it can be said that, from the Islamic perspective, a woman is free to participate in public and private life as equally as a man. Neither veil nor domestic seclusion is imperative, but what is expected is modesty in her behaviour and her dress which metaphorically suggests *pardah* (veil).

Hussain concludes by saying that the imams, maulvis and Islamic fundamentalists and theologians, by minimising women to the role of a transmitter of the father's name, define sexual desire solely as a means to entice men to deliver seed 'and to put the woman in a situation where she can cultivate it... .' 'They define ideal woman as the "one who remain(s) in her private quarters [four walls], and never neglects her spindle..."' (Hussain 1994, p. 111). Mohanty also argues that this definition of the third world 'as religious' leads to 'no[n-] progressive[ness]' (Mohanty 1994, p. 214). This argument attempts to explain the rapid multiplication of fundamentalism in Islamic and Hindu religions which were and are rooted in patriarchy where the third-world woman is controlled by the third-world man. Under the pretext of the 'veil' ordinance in Pakistan, and other Islamic countries like 'Egypt, Turkey and Iran', women are protected by men, but ironically, behind closed doors they may be 'violent[ly]' beaten, burned, and abused (Jayawardena 1986, p. 10). This argument also deconstructs 'pristine Islamic values' in a bid for power by a particular group or class (Hussain 1994, p. 129). Spivak calls this modern day fundamentalism (Spivak 1988; Klein and Nestvogal 1992, p. 38; Hasan 1993). *Purdah* gives men even more dominance and control over a woman's environment when the majority of women are illiterate and unaware

of their rights, which leads to following blindly the dictates of the Islamic fundamentalists. In addition, the argument frames Spivak's subaltern, who cannot speak because she is under Islamic Law (Spivak 1988). Though Spivak talks with reference to Hindu laws, where self-immolation is the law rather than the exception, the poem shows a Muslim woman who cannot speak because the nation wants to see her as an obedient and righteous wife (Jayawardena 1986).

Regarding gender inequality in the poem, it is significant to note that it is not only within the Pakistani national context, but it is maintained at international level as well. I will conclude this point on gender inequality with reference to Annanya Bhattacharjee's essay 'The Public/Private Mirage: Mapping Homes and Undomesticating Violence Work in the South Asian Immigrant Community' (1997), which makes a similar argument regarding the laws controlling women. It is especially selected to show how first-world laws support and maintain the third-world power politics in Asian culture. It reflects how third-world men are controlling third-world women through laws made by white men (Spivak 1988). Although the essay talks about US immigration laws for the South Asian community, it supports my argument that women are voiceless because their status is knitted [as Spivak would phrase it, as a 'trick', *Ibid.*, p. 306] so craftily into the law that they cannot speak out in their own defence.

Bhattacharjee makes a similar argument, framing Catherine A. MacKinnon's concept of privacy doctrine by showing how the 'private' home, which MacKinnon defines as the basis of 'individual' (synonymous with 'male') freedom can be the place where women are under the most control. A woman's private life is intruded upon by the 'public', which she describes as 'public, government' and 'state' and argues that the power of the state which is "embodied in law, exist[ing] throughout society as male power at the same time as the power of men over women is organized as the power of the state" (1997, p. 312-313). Bhattacharjee frames MacKinnon's theory with reference to US immigration laws about spouse visas for the South Asian immigrant community and argues that South Asian women of the third world are assessed with reference to their 'nations of origin', which are often shaped by their nationalist movements and histories of colonialism (*Ibid.*, p. 314). Calling it the 'history of Third-World Immigration', she explains how a woman in the third world can be [is] deprived of food, money, adequate clothing, shelter, the right to a doctor, and all that is needed for basic living. The worst, she states, can be battering and keeping the woman in 'isolation' so that she does not have any communication with the outer community (*Ibid.*, p. 314). This, she says, is the primary way in which a man can control the woman's voice and ensure that she

remains dependent on him in every way. ‘Immigration Laws’, she argues, are another way by which a man can control his wife. US policy she states, initially ‘allowed only men’ to petition for their wives to live with them; women could not do the same. Even though, she continues, it is “‘gender neutral’” “‘now’”, “‘it is the women who experience continued subjugation and vulnerability under their husbands’” (Family Violence Prevention Fund, et al. 1V-2 quoted in Bhattacharjee 1997, p. 314). Most applicants for the spouse visa are women. The visa is granted for two years on the condition that the woman only comes to have ‘familial commitment to the man she marries’, ‘not legal status for herself’. What is worse, she laments, is that the man’s intentions are never questioned, but the woman ‘has to prove the *nonexistence* of immigration reasons’ (Bhattacharjee 1997, p. 315).

The point established through analysis of the socio-cultural and religious context in the poem is that man and woman are born equal before God. Whether it is *Sati* in India (Spivak 1988, p. 303); or laws like *pardah* Veiling Ordinance in Pakistan (Suleri 1992, p. 766-768); or for that matter US immigration law, which is in an international (yet in a religious) context but which supports my argument (Bhattacharjee 1997), all the laws related to women are ‘in-built’ laws (Jayawardena 1986, p. 10), which establish the politics of oppression (Spivak 1988; 1986; 1987) in the patriarchal society and ‘strengthen the basic [patriarchal] structure rather than changing [it]’ (Jayawardena 1986, p. 10).

As the poem moves on we shift from the religious to the socio-cultural context. Shakir explains that Islamic teaching is not entirely put into practice; on the contrary it is taken over by cultural, social and traditional norms. Again, by the selection of words and language and with the help of different images, Shakir depicts the inequality of the social status of women.

The stylistic technique to project inequality by way of comparing the treatment the boy and the girl receive is noteworthy. It is important to see here that the girl with her ‘flower-like hands’ is holding a ‘broomstick’ that is longer than herself. The flower image associated with the girl, on the one hand, keeps the flower motif of *Khushboo*, chapter one, present and keeps the thesis consolidated; on the other hand it depicts her as a metaphor of beauty and youth and associates her youth with carefree days. Thus by placing the work of the boy and the girl parallel, in fact what Shakir is trying to project is that what is seen is not what should be. In a way it reflects that the young girl should be playing with butterflies which her brother has the freedom and advantages to do, but, on the contrary, she is burdened with domestic work and responsibilities. This is reflected through the visual image of a tall ‘broomstick’, which is not only tall, but by using the comparative ‘taller’, the poet wants to draw the attention of the reader towards the discrepancy between her age and the tasks

assigned to the girl. The food given to the girl is also a way of reflecting inequality. The four lines which describe the tedious work undertaken by the girl can be understood to mean that all the tedious work she (the sister) is doing is ‘for brother’s bread’. She is once again suggesting that while the sister is made to work, the brother is just fed and made healthy and strong. What the girl gets is just the ‘left-overs’ and stale food. Fahmida Riaz, Shakir’s contemporary feminist poet, also addresses the theme of gender discrimination and inequality of women in her poem ‘Aqilima’:

Aqilima  
Who is the sister of Cain and Abel  
Their sister  
But different

Different in the middle of her thighs  
And in the swell of her breasts  
And inside her stomach  
In her womb  
Why is the fate of all these  
The sacrifice of one stout lamb

She is the prisoner of her body

[...]

Aqilima has a head as well  
Sometimes Aqilima too should be spoken to by Allah  
And asked something!  
(tr. Ahmad in Hussein 2004, p. 42).

While Shakir shows the difference between the brother and the sister through their tasks and food, Riaz presents Aqilima’s sexuality as distinct from her brother’s by describing round breasts, her womb, and other physical differences, which are the visible and invisible signs of her female body. It is important to note that these parts of her body take over all other aspects of her identity, and she therefore becomes a victim of the sexual difference which is constructed around her body.

Traditionally and culturally the unequal treatment of a girl and a boy, as reflected in the poem, starts at the time of their birth. Klein and Nestvogel in the book *Women of Pakistan* state that, since the son elevates the status of women, ‘effort is made to produce male progeny and it is customary even today to make of the birth of a son an occasion of great festivity, whereas a daughter is more a source of disappointment’ (1992, p. 34). Centuries ago, they continue, the killing of new born girls by burying them alive was prohibited both by the

Quran and the British colonial 'Female Infanticide Act' of 1870 (Hussain 1994, p. 108-134; Klein & Nestvogel, 1992, p. 43). They further state that since man has the 'responsibility' to 'support' his parents in their old age, and to 'ensure the survival of the family', for that reason he needs to be stronger and intellectually superior, 'a view that many women themselves hold' (Klein & Nestvogel 1992, p. 34). The sons are therefore better fed and nursed, and their tasks and roles are distributed according to their sex.

Girls, on the contrary, as the poem also reflects, are always considered as a burden, because, in order to maintain the honour of the family, her virginity has to be safeguarded, and for that reason from the moment she reaches puberty she is not allowed to interact with 'non-family males' (Shaheed 1992, p. v). Men (male relatives) are bound to 'constantly safeguard' their honour as they are their protectors (Ibid., p. v). Men therefore severely control and watch their movements and forcefully impose gender segregation; all the more so with young women who are to get married as early as possible (Ibid., p. v). She is also considered a burden because in order to marry, her dowry (money or goods the bride's family has to give her at marriage) must be provided; without it her marriage cannot take place.

Moreover, traditionally, parents do not expect any financial support from daughters; the girl is therefore deprived of education on the pretext that her 'formal education ends with marriage, which is, according to tradition, as early as possible so to minimise the burden associated with daughters' (Klein & Nestvogel 1992, p. 36). According to the 1972 census, '70.08% of married women are between age 10-14,' although according to the 'statutory provisions since 1929, when the Child Marriage Act was passed, girls are not officially permitted to marry until the age of 16' (Ibid., p. 36). From 1961 the legal age for marriage was 18. An unsuccessful attempt was made under the Family Ordinance Law of the Zia government to lower the legal age for marriage from 18 to 16. This was intended to deny education to young girls and force them into early marriage (Ahmad 1990, p. 10-11). The reference to Islamic law is not quoted here to support how emerging sexuality is controlled, but more to reflect why a phase like 'puberty' needs to be controlled (Ahmad 1990, p. 11). The fact that such laws are made is a proof of the passion in adolescence which is both delicate and strong, and which needs controlling.

Shakir herself felt the social and cultural pressure which attempted to control her teenage feelings. In Shakir's biography, Agha states that when Shakir wrote her first love poem *Barsaat* (Monsoon), in her first year in college, her father became apprehensive and asked her to stop writing altogether, as writing love poetry might put her reputation and her family's reputation at stake (Agha 1995, p. 10). Even 'her father' Agha states, 'had to remain

strict as was expected of a father of two girls' (Agha 1995, p. 20). Riaz, Shakir's contemporary admits, at reaching adolescence, 'due to weight of restraints by [her] society', she too did not show her first poem to her family; instead she read it for people outside her home (Hisam 1995, p. 44).

Therefore, when the poem reaches the stage where her puberty is expressed, Shakir uses the image of weight to associate it with the burden of that age. Puberty has always been a very sensitive age for a woman in any culture, but since Pakistan is an Islamic state this age and its actions are controlled even more strictly. This issue once again reiterates the theme of the poem 'Ecstasy' in *Khushboo*, chapter one, where Shakir, under the influence of English literature, has a dialogue with her own culture and spells out her strong resentment through her poetry about suppressing such a natural desire as sex whereas now she questions this inequality under the influence of her own culture and lived experience (Suleri 1992).

The poem therefore translates this worry of the father, who hates to keep the daughter in his house because it entails the responsibility of safeguarding her virginity. The word 'hate' is stylistically used as onomatopoeia to literally give a feel of hate when it is pronounced. Therefore the poem quickly moves from puberty to married life, culturally signifying the brevity of the girl's time in her parental home and the speed with which the weight of her puberty is 'unburdened' onto the next person, who is her husband. Thus, the venom in the word 'hate' is emphasised. From puberty the poem moves towards her married life.

The theme remains the same: the life of a Pakistani woman is ruled by religious and socio-cultural factors. Fareeda Shaheed, in the preface to the book *Women in Pakistan*, explains briefly the life of the majority of poor, illiterate women in Pakistan. A woman's life, she states, is structured around two spheres: the inner and the outer. The inner sphere is the 'household', the outer is the world of 'finances, markets, politics and power' (Shaheed 1992, p iv). While the inner is looked after by the women, the outer is dominated by men, from where the majority of women are excluded, she adds. In this sense, she states that women have no reach and power over matters outside the house; even inside the house men hold a prominent position. This division, she continues, is strongly supported by 'rigid gender-based role ascriptions' (Ibid., p. iv). Because of their reproductive powers and nurturing factor, a woman's role, she says, is linked only with motherhood. Men on the contrary, she continues, are the 'provider[s]' of all the financial needs of the family and 'protect' its name and members (Ibid., p. iv). In Pakistani society, she writes, these two divisions are strictly adhered to: the idea of a man's honour linked with his duty and ability to provide and protect; failing in his duty and relying on women's earnings would blemish his honour and ability. Shaheed

quotes the saying: ‘men who live “off the earnings of women”’ are stigmatised (originally this popular saying implied that their women fold [*sic*] were engaged in prostitution)’ (Ibid., p iv, v). Consequently, Shaheed continues, women not dealing in any matters involving money; not doing any jobs outside the house; not interacting with any male/female other than their own family inside the house, encouraged *pardah*: seclusion. Inside the home they have no value, as their ‘home-based activities’ [such as domestic chores] do not generate any income (Ibid., p. v).

In the poem, to project the silent, battered, unequal and poor housewife, Shakir uses the word ‘trade’ to give a commercial image and show her readers that a woman is not only unequal, but she is also a commodity. Culturally, a married woman in the illiterate class is only used for two jobs: domestic chores and as an object of sexual pleasure. The selection of words to describe her duties as a married woman circumscribes her limited role. Words like ‘humouring’, ‘night’, ‘pregnant’, ‘birth’, ‘bed’, and finally ending the word ‘job’ with an exclamation mark indicate that on the one hand her body is used for just one purpose: for sex and as a reproductive agent only: to give birth, but on the other it delineates the unrewarding aspect of the job as well. In order to show that a woman is used as a commodity, Shakir makes use of such commercial words like ‘job’, ‘wages’, ‘day-off’, ‘resignation’, ‘trade’, ‘sell’, thus reiterating her inequality and making it worse by depicting that a woman who is used as a commodity can be bought, used and disposed of by the buyer; here the buyer is her own husband. The treatment of the woman is further objectified by comparing her to ‘beasts of burden’. Shakir uses the image of a beast and the treatment it receives, firstly to amplify the master-slave relationship between the man and his wife, reemphasising the cultural implication earlier on of a woman fit to be ‘worn as a shoe’, though born equal before God; and secondly to show the cruelty of the master who thinks ‘even’ the beasts are ‘permitted to rest’ but not his wife. This strips the wife of all the human sympathy which the poem bestowed upon her in the comparison with a pitiable creature at the beginning. Stylistically, the visual image associated with rest in hot summer projected through words like ‘shade’ and ‘trees’, does not only project a feeling of respite, but literally transports us to see a donkey (usually known as a beast of burden) under the shade of a tree in a hot summer (50 degrees or more) in Pakistan. Metaphorically though what Shakir is pointing at is the desire to build monuments for such women and bring them into the mainstream. Shaheed, in the preface to the book *Women in Pakistan* states:

In 1985, the Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women reported that Pakistani women are

treated as possessions rather than self-reliant self-regulating humans. They are bought, sold, beaten, and mutilated, even killed with impunity and social approval. They are dispossessed and disinherited in spite of legal safeguards (and) the vast majority are made to work for long hours a day, without any payment (1992, p. iv).

It is important to state that obviously not all women are beaten; even less are sold or killed, but the fact that these incidents do happen and women are outraged about such incidents, indicates Pakistan's patriarchal society, where a woman is controlled by her husband or a male relative in the family along with the rules of *purdah*: 'gender segregation and female seclusion' (Ibid., p. iv).

The poem under discussion is functional in two ways: firstly, it is selected to highlight Pakistan's emphatically male governed and male dominated society, and secondly it articulates the growth and maturing of Shakir and her spiritual development from teenage lover of *Khushboo* (1977) to a mature woman in *Inkaar* (1990). While it gives an opportunity to the reader who is unaware of Pakistani culture to expand their knowledge regarding the women of Pakistan in their socio-cultural and religious sphere, it also gives an opportunity to show Shakir's development which frames Suleri's concept of the lived experience of third-world women.

It is important to stress here that this last collection, *Inkaar*, and particularly the poem under discussion 'The Wife of Bashira' coincides with the publication of the above report by Shaheed. Shakir wrote this collection between 1985 and 1990, and wrote with great concern for the women of her nation: 'I feel pangs about the general condition of a woman because I myself am a woman. I have written about myself, and my pains and the woes because I know that women in general share them' (Shakir quoted in Salim, 1994, p. 88). Once again it is to remind the reader, as briefly reiterated in the introduction to this chapter, that this was a period when there was no political pressure of any military dictator like that which the Pakistani nation went through during the period 1977 to 1988 - a time when there was no freedom of speech and the writers and poets who wrote against the system were put behind bars.

In another direction, despair, the unhappiness inside and around Shakir, the suppressions and oppressions, and restrictions of culture, society and religion was a period of information and learning for her. This was a period of looking into a world of complexities, full of divisions and power play at every level. Thus, the period was important in giving her a breadth of vision for her self-discovery, experience in shaping political consciousness and the influence it had on her work.

When she writes ‘The Wife of Bashira’ it comes from her deep insight, personal experience and understanding of her Pakistani culture. It is important to note though, that while Shakir herself was one of the few women who were educated, and who struggled for her rights and successfully attained a high position in the bureaucratic system, her personal sufferings sharpened her inner soul, while the suffering of the women around her inspired her poetic talent.

Therefore, when the poem ends with the outrageous questions on such incidents, questions like ‘How long’ the women will keep suffering and ‘sacrificing’ for a piece of bread and a glass of water, they challenge the patriarchy in Pakistan, where women are controlled by men and their laws. Time is personified as a powerful ruler, who has all the control. This can be a reference to the religious laws, and cultural and traditional norms analysed in the poem. Time, in another direction, can also mean that there is increasing change in mental and social behaviour with the passage of time. Therefore, this social and cultural legacy in no way should be regarded as fixed and unchangeable. Thus, the poem ends with a feminist awakening for Shakir. The question at the end of the poem frames Mohanty’s call to the third-world woman who is ‘ignorant’ of her right to ‘fight’ and ‘revolutionise’ and ‘combat the oppression’, she is doubly colonised, first by the patriarchy, and second by the Islamic laws (Suleri), and she is also under the impact of martial law, and therefore ‘can[not] speak’ (Mohanty 1994, p. 207, 214; 1997; Suleri 1992, p. 766; Spivak 1988, p. 287).

### **Female poets of Pakistan: female sexuality vs. Muslim Society**

I will now cite another example of a female poet of Pakistan, Sara Shagufta (1954-1984), to tell the story of how women are struggling in the patriarchal culture. So from the majority (poor illiterate women) we move to Shagufta; her tragedy was that she was both a woman and a poet, caught between her extreme liberal views and the limitations of society, culture and religion, which resulted in her suicide. The poem is ‘Tomato Ketchup’, written about Shagufta and is used as a means to understand Shakir’s own evolving views.

Tomato Ketchup

In our land,  
 Women poets are regarded as curious objects.  
 Every man thinks she is talking to him;  
 Since this does not happen in reality,

He becomes her enemy.

In this respect,  
 Sara did not make many enemies,  
 Because she did not believe  
 In giving explanations.  
 Before becoming the wife  
 Of a writer,  
 She had become the *Bhabi* of everyone.  
 Every third-rate writer claimed  
 To have slept with her.  
 All day long,  
 The unemployed writers of the city  
 Used to buzz around her.  
 And even the employed ones,  
 Fed up with worn files and decaying wives,  
 Came towards her.  
 (Ignoring the electricity bills, school fees for the children,  
 Medicine for the wife,  
 For these matters are for people with little minds.)  
 All day long,  
 All evening  
 And even late at night,  
 There were debates and discussions  
 On literature and philosophy.  
 When they were hungry,  
 They'd pool their money  
 To order food from the local greasy-spoon.  
 Requesting for tea,  
 The great thinkers used to call her the Amrita Pritam of Pakistan.  
 The foolish girl  
 Believed them,  
 Perhaps because the providers of her sustenance  
 Fed her the coffee of Kafka,  
 And biscuits of Neruda.  
 Because of such compliments,  
 Soaked in the saliva of lust,  
 She got her bread,  
 But for how long?  
 One day or another,  
 She had to escape the lair of wolves.  
 Sara decided to leave the jungle.  
 While she was alive,  
 The admirers of literature  
 Kept devouring her.  
 In their discussions,  
 She is still remembered as being delicious.  
 The only difference is  
 That they can no longer sink their teeth in her flesh.  
 After her death,  
 They have given her  
 The status of tomato ketchup.  
 (tr. Bakht and Lavigne 1995, p. 101-102).

It is a free verse prose poem narrated in the third person to record, on the one hand, the injustices accorded to Shagufta in a hostile environment where her suicide is the only escape from it, and on the other hand, it reflects her own personal liberal beliefs which lead her to her death. The poem also underlines the difficulty of applying liberal western feminism in a conservative third-world Muslim culture like Pakistan (Spivak 1987).

The first four lines refer to the history of Pakistani women poets who have always been looked at as objects of physical pleasure and nothing beyond that. Such poets, who will not be silent on being given this status, have made many enemies. The rest of the poem refers to Shakir's contemporary feminist poet, Shagufta, but through Shagufta we explore Shakir's changing views as well.

Beginning on a general note, Shakir speculates on the status of female poets in Pakistan. I will explore the first four lines, to show why women poets are considered as 'curious objects', and why their poetry is seen by men as 'talking to him'. That is not the 'reality'; there are female poets who have criticised this attitude where men have these pre-supposed ideas that they are the sole subject of her attention. Female poets who criticise men, make 'many enemies', but Shakir states in the poem that 'Sara' [Shagufta] had 'no[t'] enemies because she was 'different'. To analyse this difference we need to study Shakir's own views on Pakistani poets and their feminist poetic style.

Shakir, in her article 'Women Poets of Pakistan' (1995), gives an overview of her contemporary Pakistani feminist poets: Ada Jafri, Zehra Nigah, Fahmida Riaz and Kishwar Naheed. Shakir begins the article with Amy Lowell's lines:

Taking us by and large, we are a queer lot  
 We women who write poetry.  
 And when you think  
 how few of us there've been, its  
 queerer still I  
 wonder what is that made us do it.  
 Singles us out to scribble down,  
 man-wise  
 The fragments of ourselves.  
 (Shakir 1995, p. 23-26; Baksh 1996, p. 473- 477).

As Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* states, dialogue is a continual process. Other works of literature, other authors, and even all language and all thought appeared dialogic to Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1981). The poem, therefore, frames the theory of dialogic engagement, as Shakir initiates a dialogue with different voices both from the east and the west in order to portray the position of women of the third world, that is, of Pakistan.

Shakir's dialogue with Lowell shows a commonality in the theme of what Shakir (1952-1994), an Urdu poet from the east, takes on board about Pakistani poets, and what Lowell (1874-1952), an American poet from the west, talked about over ninety years. What Lowell, calls 'queer' with reference to the female poets of American society, Shakir, nine decades later responds to it by re-phrasing it as 'curious', with reference to her Pakistani society. Through this dialogue Shakir is making a contact through one common zone (Pratt 1992) and that is with reference to 'women writers' (Lowell) and 'women poets' (Shakir). This inter-cultural commonality brings different women under one roof, and voices the transcultural (Pratt 1992; 1999) concept that bridges the gap and hybridises (Bhabha 1990; 1994) these two diverse cultures, east and west. Shakir states:

Amy Lowell wondered about the exiguity of this queer lot. That it exists at all in our orthodox, male-dominated society, is itself a matter of sheer surprise. [They are] strong female voices who have refused to be silenced. They are not necessarily militant feminist outcries, a fashionable thing to be these days, but voices which no literary critic with a sound auditory system can afford to ignore (Shakir, 'Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies', 2 (1), 1995, pp. 23-36).

What Shakir is projecting in the above quotation is that there are two categories of poets in Pakistan, feminist poets, particularly the militant type, anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist, who refused to be silenced, as reflected in the poem, not willing to accept their status as 'curious object[s]', and there are also those who by their poetry have highlighted the feminist concerns but have not followed through with an activist's intention; as discussed in detail in the Introduction. Here I will briefly revisit the section to bring the first four lines of this poem into context.

Shakir, in her article, states that Jafri in the 1940s was the first feminist poet to 'break this sound barrier', because when she started writing poetry 'even the voice of woman was supposed to observe *pardah*, let alone her thoughts reaching men: *na-mehrams* (all males with whom matrimony is lawful) (1995, p. 23). However, Shakir states, when she looks at the literary and social values of fifty years ago, Jafri writing in her own voice can be considered as a 'miracle' and especially that she was 'able to write even what she did' (Ibid., p. 23). Following her came Nigah whose literary career, Shakir observes, was 'meteoric'; her 'mellifluous voice took the literary world by storm' (Ibid., p. 23). Both Jafri and Nigah, Shakir writes, were overtaken by domestic and married life, which is not unusual in the history of women writers. Even though, Shakir continues, they were not necessarily militant voices, they were distinctly visible for some time, and their appearance shows that it is better

to have a ‘muffled’ voice than no voice at all (Ibid., p. 23).

Shakir is referring in the poem to Riaz (1945) as a poet who had many enemies because of her feminist poetry. Her poetry was considered as rash and heedless, ‘imprudent’ as Shakir puts it, when it came to criticising gender discrimination (Shakir 1995, p. 24). Shakir states that Riaz wrote on the core feminist themes such as Islamic politics, female sexuality, and Islam vis-a-vis women’s position in Pakistani society, which were prohibited topics (Ibid.) In her poems like *Chadar aur devari* (Veil and Seclusion) she unveils the discrimination against women under Islamic laws. In ‘Aqilima’ and ‘She is a Woman Impure’, Riaz writes with a feminist agenda to reclaim the female body back from a social construct which is governed by patriarchal ideology. She broke the taboo and gave voice ‘to her innermost feelings, her questions and her mockery of social hypocrisy vis-a-vis women’s social status’ (Hizam 1995, p. 43, 47). Shakir states that Riaz was the first in the history of the Urdu language to ‘register[ed] the experience of a woman by a woman’ with absolute ‘candour’ and ‘bluntness’ (Shakir 1995, p. 24).

Shakir sees Naheed (1940) as a significant feminist poet as referred to in the poem, who would address women’s issues without fear or shame. Her political agenda, Shakir states, is similar to Riaz, to liberate women from discriminatory laws, placing emphasis on gender equality, social justice and freedom from tyranny. Her poems like ‘Kishwar Naheed’, ‘The Grass is Like Me’ and ‘Censorship’, to name only a few, are based on the theme of reclaiming individual freedom, writing back to those who try and control her independence. According to Rukhsana Ahmad she is a constant threat to men, through her poetry, her lifestyle, and through her endless verbal challenges (Ahmad 1990, p. 20-21).

Both Naheed and Riaz wrote, in Yaqin’s words, with ‘a Marxist-feminist approach’ to struggle and fight back (Yaqin 2001, p. 142; 2006) (Marxist-Feminist Literature Collective 1986, p. 194-197). Both write poetry based on their political beliefs, to replace (Riaz) or represent (Naheed) the stereotype of a Muslim woman as a strong independent individual woman. So when they wrote critical, more independent statements, or vocalised their feelings through the women’s movement against the government’s discriminatory laws and biased rules during the military dictatorship of General Yahya Khan (1969-1971), and then the Islamisation policies under the military dictatorship of General Zia (1977-1988) they faced serious charges, and ‘made enemies’ at government level. Threatened with imprisonment on charges of treason Riaz fled to India in 1975, and returned in 1988 when Benazir Bhutto’s government came to power (Imam 1991, p. 180-181). There were thirty different charges against her; one was of obscenity, for publishing an abridged version of Simone de

Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* (Ahmad 1990, p. 21). Naheed felt she might have made fewer enemies if she had written with dishonesty (Naheed 2009).

In the poem 'Tomato Ketchup', when Shakir talks with reference to the women poets in Pakistan – 'our land', she is referring to these strong contemporary feminist voices, who want to see women as individuals, free from the bonds of gender inequality. Not only that, they are 'militant' as referred to by Shakir in her article on Lowell, because their poetry is 'anti-romantic' (Farrukhi 2004, p. xiv), strictly political with very few love themes. It is important to note here, that in their personal lives, Riaz, for example, 'opted' for a divorce, because she wanted to 'be truthful to [herself]' and faced 'condemnation' from both her family and friends for giving a divorce to her husband (Hisam 1995, p. 47). Naheed was widowed when she was forty seven (Ahmad 1990). Both started writing poetry in traditional *ghazal* form: love themes, projecting their young girlish romantic experiences in their earlier poems: *Jhijhak* (Reserve) (Riaz 1988, p. 15) and the collection *Lab-e goya* (Speaking Lips) (Naheed 1991, p. 111). Later they turned to *nasri nazm* (prose poetry) and abandoned *ghazal* love themes for political poetics, dealing with a wide range of areas, predominantly female issues and their own status as independent women; expecting no crutch in the form of a male figure in their lives or even a yearning for sexual relationships. In that sense they are considered, in Yaqin's words, as 'angry feminist poets' with one political aim: to liberate women from male domination and change their position in society (Yaqin 2001, p. 116). Love themes meant another trap for a woman to be enslaved by men, which was not part of their political agenda.

Therefore, their poetry aimed at erasing that image of woman which classified an independent woman as *huri aurat* 'bad woman' in her Pakistani society (Naheed 2009). They made sure, through their poetic voice, that woman is not degraded in literary circles, like *mushairas*, and that she is respected and treated as equal. They attacked male chauvinism, the conservative mentality of men and their gender biased poetry which belittles women as poets and reduces the female body to an object of desire only. That is another reason (the first being writing against government policies) why they had more male 'enemies' because they did not give men the liberty to think that by being women poets they should be regarded as the weaker sex, or unequal in their abilities to men, nor are they simply an object of sexual pleasure. Neither should their act of writing and participation in literary activities be considered as frivolous or flirtatious or reflect a sense of immorality (Naheed 2009). In the poem, when Shakir writes 'that every man thinks' a female poet in her poem is talking to him, poets like Riaz and Naheed are such voices which should not be taken for granted in any

way, for their verses are not addressing an individual man – ‘every man’ as a romantic figure. In fact, by using the military image in the passage from the article on women poets quoted earlier on, Shakir, through the militant voices of Riaz and Naheed refers to a kind of literary war with their male counterparts. These two women poets had more enemies than their contemporaries as they spoke directly against men, and the mechanisms men use to sustain their supremacy in patriarchal society.

What I am establishing by explaining the first four lines is that when we go to the second stanza in the poem we can compare these two feminist poets with Shagufta. They had more enemies than she did because of their radical, anti-sexist and anti-patriarchal voices. Shakir then moves from her dialogue with ‘woman poets’ in general to her contemporary feminist poet ‘Sara [Shagufta]’ who is the subject of the poem. This, on the one hand, gives us a chance to find out about Shagufta, while on the other hand it gives a chance to know Shakir’s own view-point and her understanding regarding the status of women and her struggle with reference to her male-dominated society.

It is important at this point to look at what Shagufta says about her personal life and her beliefs in her poems, letters and autobiographical writings. In the book *Life and Poetry of Sara Shagufta* (1994) Pritam restructures Shagufta’s life history out of her many personal letters written to Pritam, and memories and day-to-day autobiographical writings which Pritam collected over the years. She translated them from Punjabi and Urdu into English. This is the sole biography of Shagufta written in English so far and only published in India (It was not published in Pakistan due to her personal life and her views on sexual matters). Talking about her beliefs in one of her letters written on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1981, Shagufta writes, ‘... I have nursed the city like a mother. If anyone, even at midnight has knocked at my door. [*sic*] Sara Shagufta has opened the doors to receive the caller. People usually plant wrong motives to my love and affection. But I have kept on weaving the yarn of my life with the rolls of my smiles’ (Shagufta, ‘The Flowers of Her Hair’ quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 19). In another autobiographical letter she confesses that ‘it is true, that due to frankness, my brothers, sisters, poets, writers, and society looks at me with scorn’ (Shagufta quoted in Pritam, 1994, p. 57). Not only that, she clearly states in her poem ‘*Meena Bazaar*’ (Fun Fair), that she did not believe in ‘head covering’ and had the ‘courage to throw away’ the ‘veil’, which the other women had ‘purchased’ from the ‘*Meena Bazaar*’ (Fun Fair) (Poem; ‘*Meena Bazaar*’ quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 4). The ‘veiled’ or ‘*pardah*’ concept in whatever context, Mohanty asserts, indicates ‘sexual control of woman’ (Mohanty 1994, p. 209). In the Islamic discourses, veil or *pardah*, is reference to the inner modesty of both men and woman, as discussed in detail in

the previous poem 'The Wife of Bashira'. Therefore, by throwing away the veil, she showed her belief in sexual freedom which a male critic, Kamran Asdar Ali, terms as 'sexual promiscuity' which he says was 'part of her being'. Her tragic suicide, he says, was also linked with her multiple and abusive partners. In his paper 'Courtesan in the living room: Fantasy and the Lived Experience', his argument is that the struggle for freedom that women are faced with in everyday life in Pakistan needs addressing. Shagufta's life he sees is an example of 'the [l]ived [e]xperience', where attention must be given to new policies of change and hope (Asdar Ali accessed 2009, p. 1). It is an important critical view as the poem is meant to underline the lived experience of struggling women in Pakistan.

It is interesting to note here that Shakir wrote the poem 'Tomato Ketchup' in 1990, after Shagufta's suicide on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1984. Moreover, being her contemporary, Shakir was well aware of Shagufta's lifestyle, her beliefs and sufferings. Furthermore, both lived in the same society, culture, literary circle, city (Karachi) and were in the same age group. Shakir was just two years older than Shagufta. Not only that, it was a well-known aspect of Shagufta and part of her liberal self, that she never hid her relationships and publicly talked about her affairs, and also wrote about them in her confessional poetry and autobiographical letters. Shakir, and many in the social, literary and family circle were aware that Shagufta had been married four times and was four times divorced. She had attempted suicide after every divorce due to cultural and personal pressure: some of this was pressure from her family, because her brother did not want her to live in their house after their mother's death (who died of grief for Shagufta) and he asked her to leave. After her fourth divorce, it was in the 'newspaper', that 'Sara divorced her fourth husband'. Her brother said that her 'liberties' could not be 'tolerated' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam, 1994, p 56). Pressure also came from society; at the intellectual level her poetry was not acknowledged. At one literary meeting a statement said, 'Sara, try to put sense in your poetry as well as your body' (Ibid., p. 33). Sometimes people would say to her, 'Sara writes porn that rolls quickly and brings her cheap popularity that is why readers applaud her' (Ibid., p. 33). After her fourth divorce she had a relationship with the poet Ahmad Salim, and after his death, with Syed Ahmad, with whom she was living before she finally committed suicide due to social and cultural pressures. Her reputation was such that people told her 'don't come to our house', especially people with young daughters in their house (Ibid., p. 33). At this point, looking back at what Riaz and Naheed were aiming at in their poetry, it was that they were trying to erase this negative image of woman where a radical poet was considered as frivolous and flirtatious; being a female poet was already being taken negatively and regarded as 'curious' in Pakistani society.

On top of that Shagufta's personal beliefs, her carefree, frank behaviour, and the 'badge of liberation' (Ibid., p. 53), (in the form of four marriages and four divorces, and later two relationships) she was wearing affected others and her own life as well (Ibid., 1994, p. 13).

What I am criticising here are the problems a woman faces when her too-liberal ideas clash with her socio-cultural and religious restrictions. Although Shakir was aware of all of these aspects, she does not say anything directly; she uses metaphors in the poem, to put her criticisms across to the readers. *Bhabi* literally means a sister-in-law, a brother's wife. The term is used as a metaphor here, a derogatory term to indicate that every 'third rate writer' came to Shagufta and took liberties with her in inappropriate ways. So, when she becomes everybody's *bhabi* it becomes a negative and disrespectful title. Most importantly, saying that she becomes a *bhabi* before even becoming a wife is even more suggestive and disrespectful. The metaphor reflects the liberty she gave to men to call her *bhabi* because of her frankness, her liberal ideas, and the throwing away of the veil. By using such a metaphor as *bhabi*, Shakir is presenting a judgemental and a critical view of her fellow poet. The image of buzzing is usually associated with flies, and they buzz around filth and sweets alike. Therefore, by using the image of the buzzing of flies, which is in keeping with the image of men hanging around her, Shakir portrays more clearly both Shagufta's own frankness and smiles indicating her sweetness on the one hand, and the negative indication of her lust for men, and also the lust of men around her on the other. It links with the metaphor of *bhabi* which gives a negative connotation. The overall metaphor of 'Tomato Ketchup' is used to reflect the food image which depicts hunger and lust and the deliciousness associated metaphorically with woman as an object of pleasure. The poem, therefore, indicates why Shagufta had 'no enemies'; for men she was an object of pleasure. Her enemies became friends as they were given all they wanted. We cannot ignore the ironic tone of the poem which is also addressed to men; men who 'ignore' their children, house, wife, and jobs and hunt for ways to get her through flattery, attracting and using Shagufta, taking advantage of her naivety. Sara Daud, in her essay 'Sara my friend' argues that these lustful men, her poet colleagues, whom Daud sarcastically call 'great intellectual thinkers', but whom Shagufta called friends, were aware that Shagufta was psychologically a disturbed woman and needed help, needed medical treatment, but instead of helping her with medical care, took advantage of Shagufta's illness and innocence and used her to quench their lust (1995, p. 82). Asif Farrukhi states that Shagufta's poetry draws our attention to the 'difficult position of women writers once they entered the bohème, as well as to the intrigues and jealousies, the hypocrisy and malice that can be found among ostensibly sophisticated men ... revealing their [men's]

shallowness and pseudo-intellectual prattle' (Farrukhi 1999, p. 325). Farrukhi's concerns are similar to that of Asdar Ali with regard to the shallowness of male intellectuals, and they highlight the hypocrisies and jealousies in the literary circle and also reflect the difficulties faced by women poets in particular and women in general in such a society.

Therefore, Shakir's tone is not encouraging in the poem, because of the metaphor and images she has used, as she explains how being everybody's *bhabhi*, and like tomato ketchup, she has been used by all the men who hover around her. Her dialogue with this dead writer is used to voice Shakir's own belief as a third-world writer. She is critical of both men and women; men for using women as a commodity, and the behaviour of women which encourages them in this. Although a liberal, Shakir was not as extreme as Shagufta, and did not advocate a too liberal lifestyle.

An important point to make here is that Shakir's image totally changed once she was divorced and had to live as a single parent. She was 'young and pretty'; at the office some senior officers 'took advantage of her' which 'she did not like' (Agha 1995, p. 34). When she became single 'scandals began to brew once again' (Ibid.). Her father felt 'ashamed', and never talked to her after she was divorced, her mother was 'sad', and it was having a 'bad' effect on her son (Ibid.). She felt as if 'her world was crumbling from all sides' (Ibid.). She wanted to run away from her home in Karachi, 'which was not easy' but she did it (Ibid.). She 'changed herself' to 'prepare for another future' (Ibid.). Not only did 'she change[d] outwardly [*sic*] appearance', cut her beautiful hair to shoulder length, and 'stopp[ed] wearing sarees' (to look simple) (Ibid.), she also 'managed' to get herself transferred from Karachi, her home, to Islamabad, where nobody knew her except a few friends (Ibid., p. 34, 56). 'She did not socialise much' (Ibid., p. 55), and her 'eyes [were] mostly lowered', so that she did not give an incorrect impression (Ibid., p. 56). Chatterjee argues that 'women are traditionally restricted to a hard life, devoid of luxury, in order to make them unattractive to men, so that they do not become objects of their lust' (1993, p. 146). On the one hand Shakir was avoiding becoming an object of lust, but she was also conforming to the demands of patriarchy by changing; she did not socialise and led a simpler life. It was only after her divorce that she realised that all the apprehension about her 'poetry, *mushairas*, and travel abroad' 'proved correct as it resulted in divorce' (Agha 1995, p. 44). She 'maintained' 'poise' both in her poetry and herself after her divorce (Ibid., p. 56).

This poise was missing in Shagufta, in both her life and her beliefs, because she was different in her feminist approach. Shagufta 'knew that a woman has to be married in her society to be *halal* (lawful or permissible) (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 51), and that

bangles are a symbol of a woman's lawful life, and ankle-bells (symbol of adultery, prostitution) are *haraam* (forbidden; in Islam it is used as prohibited by faith) (Ibid.). She was also aware that in order to wear bangles and be lawfully permitted to live in her society she had to get married. She admitted that 'for centuries, the fate of the woman is one with bangles. They can break but she cannot take them off' (Ibid.). This was the rule of her land (read: culture, religion, society); 'but she wanted to change this rule'. She 'wanted the woman to have a right to wear them off at will and on her own terms' (Ibid.).

The terms and conditions Shagufta wanted to live on in her society ran counter to 'phallogocentric traditions' (Spivak 1988, p. 28). She wanted to show her society that she was a feminist poet who did not want to be sexually controlled either in her writing or in her life. There is no denying that she 'challenged all the rules, rejected the role models and literary images of women more completely than any of her' contemporary feminist poets (Ahmad 1990, p. 24); Pritam admired her for her radicalism (Naheed 2010, p. 182-184). For that freedom Shagufta confessed that 'at least [she] is honest', 'that whenever [I] see someone really worth his salt I bow my head to him' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 85). In Cixous's terms she made sure in her poems that her body was heard; she wrote about herself as a woman and for herself without repressing her sexual desire and took pleasure in confessing (Cixous 1981). Shagufta considered 'all her sins as sacred verse' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 8), and did not find any shame or guilt in saying that the 'people call [my] poem a prostitute' (Ibid., p. 8). Moreover, 'morally' she knew '[her] lips have always been stained' (Ibid., p. 98), but she had the 'guts to say frankly whom do [I] pine for' (Ibid., p. 89, 98). She 'knew that her body is rotten', but she 'had the courage to say the truth' (Ibid., p.105), but for Shakir this was foolishness. Shakir intentionally uses the words 'foolish girl' not to depict Shagufta's naivety, but to reveal the imbalance in her and in a personality in general which does not maintain checks and balances. By calling her 'foolish', Shakir endorses that Shagufta's 'liberal' ideas are not acceptable to her conservative Muslim society.

It does not mean that Shakir was against physical desire in a woman. The significant point to make here is that both Shagufta and Shakir, unlike their contemporary feminist poets Naheed and Riaz, believed in both love and physical relationships. Even then, Shagufta and Shakir were different in their beliefs and approach to life. What Shakir is projecting through her response to Shagufta's beliefs and actions is her own strong belief based on her experience about how a woman should behave, conform and adapt according to the requirements of her society if she wants to live in peace. Shakir, by this stage in her life, is

becoming increasingly aware of a feminist ideology at odds with the overt sexuality displayed by Shagufta.

Shakir's desire for a physical relationship is still there. Her desire to marry someone, 'if she ever found the right person' or 'if the right person proposed to her' after her divorce was always there, as she believed that to live lawfully, marriage is the only permissible way (Agha 1995, p. 44). She did not marry (although she was in love, as analysed in the previous chapter) because the terms of the divorce were such that if she married she would lose the custody of her son; the desire was there, it was just that she could not act on it. However, her husband could marry, and he did marry after one year; such are the 'phallogocentric tradition[s]' (Spivak) and Islamic laws (Suleri) under which the third-world woman suffers because she is of the 'feminine gender' (Mohanty) (Spivak 1988, p. 287; Suleri, 1992; Mohanty 1994, p. 199). Shakir does not hide that individual female inside her and still wants to believe in the words of her beloved who finds a 'resemblance / between [her] face and a flower'; even though she is aware of the fact that '[she] is in that twilight zone / Of [her] life' where such words carry 'little' truth, but 'Still [she] want[s] to / Believe in his words / Even if it is only for a moment' (Shakir: Poem, 'Vanity thy name is ...', *Inkaar* 1990, p. 59). Passion is not lost altogether by the time she writes *Inkaar* (1990); it has taken a more dignified shape unlike the uncontrolled passion of 'Ecstasy' (1977) in chapter one.

In chapter one, *Khushboo*, in her role as a teenage lover, she initiates a dialogue with her own culture under the influence of the seventeenth century English love poet John Donne. She emphasises the need for sexual relationships and complains about the restrictions imposed on her by her society, her culture and her religion because '[she] is a 'girl' (*Khushboo*: 'Only a Girl': line 14). Her desire for sexual freedom as a teenage lover, prior to marriage, was her demand as a radical. But now, in 'Tomato Ketchup' (*Inkaar* 1990), we hear Shakir saying that such sexual freedom, outside marriage, is immorality and adultery and probably, in a softer tone, foolishness. It took her thirteen years to mature and evolve and 'experience' (Suleri 1992), and understand that when a woman, who is a symbol of honour for the family in her culture, and especially a third-world woman runs against the tide and tradition, the chances of her survival are minimal. Shakir's 'feminism' evolved in tandem with many traditional, cultural beliefs, which some more radical feminist poets disagreed with. This compromising stage is a reflection of Shakir's weakness from a feminist perspective, but this is her unique vision of how the ideal woman is to survive in a conservative Muslim culture. The change Shagufta was trying to achieve as an emancipated woman was to wear the bangles (marriage) and take them off (divorce) at will and on her own

terms (having intimate relationships and throwing away the veil). This change was not acceptable to society, her religion, or her culture, all of which impeded her liberty. Shakir's personal experience taught her that women can still enjoy their liberty, and that restrictions can still be met by conforming and bringing a balance, because conforming, or being silent is another way of accepting the challenge (Shakir quoted in Salim, 1994). This balance is both literally and theoretically important.

Shakir did not write any other collections after *Inkaar*. To make all her four books available to her readers, she published them in one volume. The compilation of all her four collections she named as *Mah-e-tamaam* (Full Moon) which was her fifth and last publication. She explained that the meaning 'full moon', is not an end but a beginning (Agha 1995). It is ironic as she died a few months later in a road accident, on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1994, but theoretically it was the end and a compromise with her situation; in Spivak's terms, she became a subaltern (1988). She has conformed so much to the demands and pressures of society around her that she can no longer think creatively - that, in fact, she has returned to being a subaltern who cannot speak. Shakir feared that her work might not be published, like that of Shagufta. Shagufta's radical and extremely unconventional poetry based on her personal views on sexuality was published from India and not Pakistan (Pritam 1994, p. 38). It is also important to note here that Riaz's poem 'She is a Woman Impure', depicting female sexuality (Hussein 2004), was composed, as Yaqin points out, while she was in England (Yaqin 2001, 2006). It is also significant to highlight that Naheed, according to Asif Farrukhi, was 'relieved' from her government job because of her political activities and radical poetry (Farrukhi 2004, p. x). We cannot deny the fact that Shakir has achieved that balance, self-consciously keeping all her own fears and apprehensions in mind. Therefore, when we study Shagufta we see her as a yardstick for Shakir's own development but from different angles of maturity and Shakir's balanced personality; a balance which in Bakht's words 'mitigated Shakir's own suffering when', he says, 'she moves from personal to general and universal concerns and empathises with others' (Bakht 2003, p. 478). The main purpose of writing the poem was to criticise such radical and liberal behaviour, and not Shagufta herself; she was a means to an end.

Despite Shakir's quarrel with Shagufta's morality, she does not compromise on the point that Shagufta, or for that matter any woman, should be treated as a commodity. She totally agrees with Shagufta, in her call for a woman to be treated as a 'human being' and 'not as a commodity' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 59). So when she compares Shagufta with Amrita Pritam, the tone reflected through the words 'foolish girl' is not intensely harsh

but is patronising compared to the earlier tone, when Shakir talks with reference to men hovering around her because of her own liberty and frankness, underlined through usage of the metaphor *bhabi* which indicated her loose behaviour. By comparing her to Pritam, Franz Kafka (1883-1927) and Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), Shakir is exposing Shagufta's naivety in thinking that she is as famous and great as them.

Shakir's reference to Kafka and Neruda in the poem suggests that men flattered Shagufta by comparing her to these writers – but it was male lust that drove them to her. Shakir reveals her sadness for Shagufta in the poem; naïve and 'foolish', seen as a victim of flattery, connivance and male lust. Kafka was German Jewish, and Czech born and was the greatest twentieth century modernist prose writer in both German and Austrian literature (Preece 2002, p. 1), and Neruda, a Chilean, a poet, a politician and a writer most famous for his love poetry and politics (Martin 1977), might be used here to alert the reader that Shakir is acquainted with a vast canvas of external influences. However, the reference to Pritam is intentionally used here to highlight the popularity of Pritam, who was a renowned Indian novelist and poet with over thirty novels and as many books of poetry to her credit, recipient of the most prestigious Bharatiya Jnanpith Award (1982) for poetry, and Sahitya Akademi Award (1956) for the book '*Sunehere*' (golden) (Pritam 1994). Her work has been translated from Punjabi into various Indian and foreign languages (Ibid.). Shagufta, on the contrary, was not highly educated; in the intellectual circle she was 'seldom' 'considered as worth discussing' (Asdar Ali, 2009, p. 1). She had just two books in Urdu to her credit *Ankhen* (Eyes) (1982, 2006) and *Balde Akhar* (The Last Words) (1985) (Baksh 2003, p. 128). Shagufta was highly impressed by the lifestyle of Pritam, and presumably thought herself like her. In that sense Shakir calls her 'foolish girl', because she was neither as prominent as Pritam, nor as accomplished and acknowledged like her (Asdar Ali 2009; Farrukhi 1999; Baksh 2003, 2006). Another reason for dialogue with Pritam can be that Shakir was aware that Pritam in her book on Shagufta recognises a similarity in the suffering of Shagufta and the American poet Sylvia Plath.

Shakir's dialogue with Pritam, and through her with Plath, frames Bakhtin's concept that dialogue is continual, as here it is going from one author to another, from one culture to another culture, and from one literature to another literature and even one thought to another, but the contact point is the same, that is, woman (Bakhtin 1981). In that continual process of dialogue, from one influence to another, both negative and positive, we see Shakir influenced by Pritam and Pritam's dialogue with Plath and Shagufta.

Both Shagufta and Pritam had divorced their husbands and lived with their partners.

Pritam divorced once and then lived with Amroze for forty years till she died. Shagufta divorced all her husbands and then after the fourth divorce, lived with the poet Ahmad Salim and after his death, towards the end of Shagufta's life love developed between her and Syed Ahmad and they lived together (Pritam 1994). In that sense both Pritam and Shagufta believed in sexual freedom. Plath's complaint about the cultural 'constrictive notion of proper feminine behaviour' which thwarts her 'desire for adventure and passionate sexual experience (Bronfen 1998, p. 39), is similar to Shagufta's concept of sexual freedom.

Plath's unwillingness to be an 'object' of 'predominant patriarchal symbolic laws', where she refuses to be treated like a 'sex machine', 'a painted doll', 'with no thought in her pretty head other than cooking steak dinners and comforting in bed after a [husband's] hard 9-5 day, a routine business job' (Bronfen 1998, p. 38) corresponds to what Shagufta after her fourth divorce insisted on; to be treated like a human being and not a commodity. They are similar to Pritam where she, in her poetry, novels, stories and essays, brings to the forefront her own unhappy marriage, women's anguish, violence against women and her pitiable condition in a male-dominated society (Pritam 1994). Why Shakir responds to them is because it strengthens her own outlook on the equal treatment of women in her eastern society. It is not difficult then, to correlate why Shakir got a divorce as 'her marriage was breaking up,' because 'she could not give up her fame, her career for a mundane domestic life as was being expected of her' (Agha 1995, p. 33).

Shakir is not against married family life. In fact we hear her feminine sensibility admitting in *Sadburg*, chapter two, (1980) that the fragile self inside her 'wants' to cling to the trunk of a very strong tree [man]' ('Working Woman', *Sadburg*, 1980, p. 44) and 'prays for' a roof over 'her head' ('Stenographer' *Sadburg* 1980, p. 43), even though as a working woman we see her feminist success in her independence, when she says that 'I can [do] whatever I wish' being an independent working woman ('Working Woman', *Sadburg*, 1980, p. 44). She even enjoyed her motherhood, despite all the complaints of her struggles shown in *Khud-Kalami*, chapter three. However, what she cannot accept is that she should be treated only as a stereotypical mother or a wife, giving up all her other identities for 'domesticate[ion]' (Mohanty 1994, p. 199). Therefore the moment she was expected to be only a housewife, to do domestic chores, stay within the four walls, and to give up her identity, Shakir decides to divorce her husband. Shakir's poetic development can almost be measured through her dialogic response to the different voices, of Pritam, Shagufta and Plath. So both political and domestic ideas have evolved and changed by the time we reach *Inkaar* (1990).

Dialogue therefore strengthens the voice of Shakir's own belief in sexual freedom outside marriage as unlawful and also strengthens her insistence on an equal treatment of women in her society. Dialogue with these three feminists, in the poem 'Tomato Ketchup', reflects a sense of cultural hybridity since Shakir's dialogue ranges from the east to the west. This dialogic trio is also important as it helps to find a link in that cultural divide where too-liberal ideas become a social pressure and result in unnatural acts such as suicide as in the case of Shagufta and Plath; even Shakir herself contemplated suicide at one point due to cultural pressures. Furthermore, it helps to see that a woman, even from a different historical background can represent a 'group on the basis of a shared oppression', and that 'they all stand' as 'sisters in struggle' (Bhabha 1994; Mohanty 1994, p. 200; 1991), whether from India, or Pakistan, or America. It also helps Shakir to embrace not only personal themes, but also national and then international issues in which women share their feelings of oppression.

Oppression is what Shakir will not accept. In the poem Shakir cannot tolerate that men should 'use' Shagufta 'because' they thought by giving her compliments like calling her 'the Amrita Pritam of Pakistan', they can take advantage of her innocence. Therefore, when Shakir wants to depict the savage and barbaric side of man, she uses the metaphor of wolves, and an image of 'devouring': Shagufta objectified as eaten by them 'their teeth sink[ing] in her flesh', which is in keeping with how men have treated Shagufta as a prey, which led her to death – to commit suicide. Shakir becomes a sister in Shagufta's grief because Shakir too believes that a woman should be treated as a human being and not a commodity. Thus, the remark, 'foolish girl', can also refer to the naivety of Shagufta in believing men's insincere compliments and where men succeeded in trapping her in that 'whirlwind', which 'blew about her' like buzzing flies, in which she got trapped and from 'which it was not easy to wriggle out [of]' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 27). These whirlwinds are her four husbands, who used her and treated her as an object. Therefore, the metaphor of the whirlwind used by Pritam depicts a link with Shagufta's life and supports Shakir's views about how men have used Shagufta in particular and women in general.

Shagufta in 1982, two years before her death, writes in a letter to Pritam, that her first husband would 'beat me at small matters. The beating was sometimes so severe that my whole body would turn blue. When he desired he entered me like a wolf as if I was just a rubber-doll' (Shagufta quoted in Pritam 1994, p. 8). In another letter she writes about her second husband, also a poet, who married her because he said he loved her very much and would 'commit suicide' (Ibid., p. 24) if she did not marry him. A month after the marriage, she writes to Pritam, 'My poet husband was now a completely changed man. He behaved as

if he had bought and not married me' (Ibid., p. 25). He would beat her and lock her up, she states. She further writes, that, 'whenever he liked, he barked into my body' (Ibid., p. 90). The fourth she called a 'bull-dog' a 'beast' who would 'bash[ed]' her so much because she refused to be a 'commodity' in his 'harem' (Ibid., p. 60-61). Therefore, when Shakir uses the animal image at the end of the poem it entwines both lust and furiousness linking with the image of the jungle and wolves. The tone changes because now Shakir uses images of wild animals, images like 'lair of wolves' 'jungle' 'devouring', to describe and condemn men. Shagufta 'had' to save herself from such wild animals by committing suicide in order to 'escape' 'the jungle'. In the poem Shakir is not only dealing with sexual pleasure but also the brutality and cruelty of men in mistreating women. By presenting the compliments as 'soaked' in 'saliva' Shakir keeps the food image prevalent in order to stress the 'delicious[ness]' of the 'tomato ketchup'; on another level it projects its easy availability as a food item. Metaphorically it is linked with sexual pleasure, associated with Shagufta due to her liberal beliefs and also with the status of women who are seen by men as objects of physical pleasure only.

The wolf image keeps appearing and re-appearing throughout the four collections. In the foreword to *Sadburg*, chapter two, Shakir talks about herself as 'Cinderella', left alone in the jungle' (*Sadburg* 1980, p. 14). She uses the Cinderella motif and jungle image to show the cruel and savage environment. It links with the images used by Shagufta to depict her life with cruel and brutal husbands who are devoid of any sense of humanity and which forces her either to suffer and sell her ego if she wants to survive, or escape the jungle - by committing suicide. They used her like 'tomato ketchup', and enjoyed her body, while victimising and treating her as a lifeless thing, with no respect. Shakir presents the images associated with men as wolves who devour women once they come under their control, and so the image of the jungle is significant. The 'jungle' image refers to Shakir's nation, her land, which is a den of wolves – 'lair of wolves' a lustful and furious third-world nation, where 'every man' in the poem is referred to as a wolf, ready to devour all those who want to change the traditions set by men. It invites the question of whether or not a woman can have a voice within 'phallogocentric tradition[s]?' (Spivak 1988, p. 28). Not only that, Spivak goes further to note that 'lived experiences' of such women could be 'seen to present a crisis in the knowledge and an understanding of western critical theory' when seen from other worlds and other cultures (Spivak in Morton 2003, p. 7; Spivak 1986, 1987; Mohanty 1991, 1994).

Once again the poem ends with a question 'But for how long?' will women keep on suffering. A similar question appeared in the previous poem 'The Wife of Bashira'. There we

saw a wife subjected to domestic violence in the context of an illiterate, poor, victimised third-world woman. The price she had to pay for a morsel of bread and a glass of water was that she had to ‘trade [her] soul’ [read: kill her ego] and ‘sell’ [her] ‘body’ [read: become a sex machine for bearing children and satisfying husbands in bed, and a beast of burden]. In this poem ‘Tomato Ketchup’ we have Shagufta who lives with liberal beliefs and thinks that she can change the rule of the land, but fails and ultimately commits suicide. In that sense it frames Mohanty’s concept that Muslim ‘women in India’ and those of ‘women in the third world’ are victims of their traditions, religion, culture and domestication. She therefore suggests ‘corresponding effective strategies for organising against the exploitation faced by women’ (Mohanty 1994, p. 207-208; 1991; 1997). In her attempt to be treated like a human being and not a commodity, Shagufta, a Pakistani Muslim woman, divorced four husbands, and ultimately wanted to live as a free spirit, free from all cultural restrictions. She finds a loving companion in her poet friend Ahmad Salim, who loved her and respected her; she lived with him as a friend, but that, according to her cultural and religious restrictions, is ‘*haraam*’ (unlawful; not allowed in Islam) adulterous. I have analysed liberal western ideas (feminist theory) in the context of the conservative Islamic culture. In other words, the study illuminates the problems which arise in western feminist theories when applied in a third-world Muslim context.

In a way this questioning process helps us understand how Shakir is projecting the solution. The collection *Inkaar* (1990) is the last phase of her work. Unfortunately, she died in a road accident in December 1994. However, during those four years, she did not write anything. Shakir very clearly suggests and challenges her readers to think, about how long women will have to suffer at the hands of a savage and cruel male-dominated society. Shakir’s ‘lived experience’ (Suleri 1992, p. 280) helped her to rethink and suggest that the chances of the survival of a third-world woman can be minimally possible, if she watches her boundaries and adopts a modest path. Shakir was a little diplomatic in that sense, and believed in hybridity in her thoughts, conforming and balancing, just like the fine balance in her modern and traditional poetry, and the poise in her own personality. She believed in conforming in order to survive, but never stopped writing against the injustices perpetrated against women. Shakir’s dialogue keeps the feminist critical poetic voice at the forefront constantly, consciously shifting her point of view, and offering various feminisms, but also clinging to her traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* sensibilities.

This thesis has documented that a woman in a Pakistani Muslim culture is constantly struggling in her different roles. It has explored in detail the poetry of Shakir in order to

investigate different stages of her life: girl, wife, mother, and a poet, all in one. Her poetry has helped us to see her own vision of an ideal woman. Shakir's concept of the ideal woman is a mixture of traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and feminist thinking. She rejects the tradition which places woman as subordinate to man, thus advocating equal status of women in her society, but also accommodates the tradition of family life which cover her physical needs, and gives her security and a respected position in her patriarchal culture. However, what she does not give up on as a writer is her feminist criticism of a culture and religion which places woman as a silent object with no voice.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, the poet under discussion has been examined through her socio-cultural, religious, and political experience as well as her identity as a third-world, postcolonial, Pakistani woman. This required a theoretical approach that focused on dialogism, taking into account the multiple meanings within the selected texts. However, I recognised that text alone does not help us to know the author under discussion, particularly given the shifting positions within her own career. Breaking away from the traditional way of reading text, which would limit and close down other meanings and interpretations, this alternative approach employing dialogism used in this study was necessary in order to reflect multiple meanings and interpretations and to encourage a variety of readings of her texts. The theoretical frame-work applied, therefore, juxtaposed both colonial and postcolonial theories alongside different feminist theories to tease out the multiple meanings of the term ‘woman’ in Pakistani culture and its relevance to Shakir’s poetic output.

Dialogue was framed in this thesis as a two-way education: one where Shakir learns from other western influences and re-accentuates and re-employs their ideas to educate herself, her readers, and anyone else who will eventually come across her work about what it is like to be a woman in Pakistan. It is a dialogue to demonstrate tensions, points of contact, and divergences between two different approaches: one very traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* approach and a more, potentially radical feminist approach.

The study mainly arose out of an interest in Shakir’s Urdu love poetry which, so far, has never been critically analysed in English at this level, and a desire to bring her poetry to an international audience. Shakir has a small readership within her own country, Pakistan, and probably an even smaller one outside of Pakistan and the rest of the sub-continent. The purpose of this thesis has been, firstly, to establish through translation the value and significance of Shakir’s poetry as a useful vehicle through which to view Pakistani culture. Secondly, the aim was to use a philosophical argumentative approach to analyse how her work dialogues with that culture through political poetry and talks of change and growth of the nation itself. It looks at Pakistan as defined through religious laws, martial law, and their impact: examining how the influence of feminism finds its way into Pakistani women’s awareness and how women deal with this. Shakir deals with this through her poetry, which is

not revolutionary poetry, but evolutionary poetry, bringing small changes, keeping in mind her conservative patriarchal Islamic background.

This led me to explore both her personal and political journey through the different stages of her life. The four chapters were structured around her four major poetic collections. These collections, *Khushboo*, *Sadburg*, *Khud-Kalami*, and *Inkaar*, were analysed both as an autobiographical and a philosophical journey, where I presented the image of Pakistani culture, women in Pakistan and the politics of Pakistan. In addition I recognised that I am by no means looking at a love poet who is only of interest to Pakistani women. This thesis has discovered that the life and journey of this poet has significance beyond Pakistan, and that her readers can learn from her, and perhaps, in turn enter into conversation or dialogue with her own struggles and shifting positions. Her life and poetry can be celebrated better in the west; influenced by the western feminists she was struggling between her liberal views on control over her own body and her conservative culture which imposes restrictions on such liberal thinking. Through this research her voice as a struggling radical woman poet can reach an international audience, because her life and poetry were more of a political struggle; whereas from a Pakistani perspective her poetry is only viewed as a female romantic voice. The dialogue within her work and outside of it thus reflects an exchange of two cultures. Shakir is a poet whose poetry contributes to a greater knowledge of third-world woman, a Pakistani Muslim woman whose voice needs to be heard. She might not be a political activist or a feminist by western standards (anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist) (Moi 1986), but the fact that she writes down her experiences and the difficulties of living in patriarchal Islamic society underlines her rebellious attitude towards the male-constructed boundaries. She challenges male-dominated society by presenting an image of women's struggles and demands to be heard. She flouts tradition and convention, crossing male-defined boundaries as she voices her opinion.

At first glance, the writer under analysis appears to adopt a feminist approach. However, research revealed that this is not the full story. Shakir is neither a clear feminist (anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist) (Moi 1986) nor a clear traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* (submissive and silent). The space she occupies is different because of the impact of her socio-political and religious contexts and her own personal experience. Influenced by her own culture and her own personal beliefs, she is a traditional woman who does not fit the true 'feminine' *nisvani* image. Influenced by western culture, she is a feminist of sorts but not a feminist by western standards. For example, influenced by western feminists she achieves her

independence by divorcing her husband and living a life of freedom. However, at the same time she also sacrifices that freedom when she chooses motherhood over womanhood (in *What Should I Do?*) and becomes a stereotypical sacrificing feminine (*nisvani*) mother as discussed in chapter four. The analysis therefore reveals that she keeps shifting between these two positions: traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* and 'feminist'.

Traditionally the ideal 'feminine' *nisvani* image represents the female body as a symbol of religious purity, displayed in submission and silence only. It emerged after analysis that Shakir disrupts the ideal image at the very onset of her poetic career, in *Khushboo*, chapter one, by writing unconventional love poetry. In 'Ecstasy', 'Wasteland' and 'Nun', she initiates a dialogue with her feminine romantic self, as influenced by western culture. She brings into her poetry new, innovative and liberal feminist ideas such as a teenage girl's desire for sex and sexual freedom. She then talks of her deprivations. Her dialogic engagement with feminist awareness criticising her marginalised position in the poem, 'Only a Girl', is important as she uses the metaphor of a caged bird, a prisoner, to represent the patriarchal oppression of woman.

The analysis of the unconventional love poetry is important, because it establishes her position as a *ghazal* love poet, and also reveals her radical role in which she is sexually aware of her feminine romantic self, a self she did not want to annihilate or suppress. The analysis found that the awareness, coupled with fear, is an important discovery in Shakir's early poetry as it reflects the tension and conflict, turmoil and stress, and the pressure of restrictions in Shakir's mind. Her later collections, in Shakir's own words, 'benefited' (Ali 1994) from these conflicts and tensions. The poems like 'Misfit', 'What Should I Do?' and 'What Will Happen to the Flowers?' are examples of conflict and tension in Shakir's life. Finally in chapter four she becomes increasingly aware of a feminist ideology at odds when it is placed in a conservative Muslim culture, and she comes to a realisation that a poise, a balance is important in order to live in a culture which would not change. She therefore has to re-think and re-adjust to survive in that culture. The research also discovered that Shakir was 'forced' to change love themes due to Islamisation and military censorship restrictions during martial law (Shakir 1994, p. 87). Chapter two is more political in that sense. The transition from love themes to political ones is important, as her dialogue with the religious sensibilities towards woman in 'Macbeth', 'His Majesty' and *Kufa* (Land of Love), revealed her move towards a growing feminist awareness.

In the poems ‘A Stenographer’ and ‘Working Woman’, for example, Shakir is engaged in a dialogue with her traditional self, and brings forth another layer to her outlook, a traditional ‘feminine’ *nisvani* perspective: a married woman with a house, children, a husband to cling to; a stereotypical woman but with views of her own, not a silent subjective woman; an object of male pleasure but a woman equal in stature and ability, with a room of her own, who does not permit domination of any kind (a mingling of the feminine/feminist stance). The analysis of the poems in this section helped me to discover Shakir’s essentially eastern ‘feminine’ *nisvani* identity. She clings to this identity, sometimes by choice, as her husband is her source of sexual fulfilment, and she wants to cling to a male body after a hard day’s work; and sometimes due to cultural pressure as she refuses to alienate her traditional self, which understands that a husband is a symbol of respect and security for a woman. Thus, we hear her accepting patriarchy rather than challenging it.

She challenges patriarchy when she is expected to give up her own identity as a writer and live a typical traditional *nisvani* life looking after kitchen, children, and husband as a daughter-in-law, a wife, and a mother. She could not accept her independence being quashed and initiated a divorce. As an eastern mother in *Khud-Kalami*, chapter three, she becomes a goddess as she sacrifices her selfhood for her motherhood. This is a very contradictory position because, by Pakistani cultural standards, it is ideal for a woman to sacrifice self to perform other culturally assigned roles - mother/wife/daughter. However, I discovered that due to her shifting positions Shakir was unable to become an ideal traditional *nisvani* mother because she valued her independence too much. She was not an ideal mother by Pakistani cultural standards as she was not an obedient, submissive wife and because, as a woman drawn to feminist principles (anti-patriarchal), she chose to get a divorce to attain her identity and did not want to be ruled by the laws of the land.

Shakir does not follow those laws that position women as silent and submissive objects. As a poet with feminist awareness her dialogue comes to light in her ruthless criticism of those who want to see women in this way in ‘The Wife of Bashira’, ‘Tomato Ketchup’ and ‘The Tragedy of a Princess’. She refuses to live like a wife who is beaten and maltreated because she is not treated as an equal in her male-dominated society; treated as a shoe, fit to be trampled underfoot; treated like an animal: a beast of burden working day in and day out. This role as an ideal traditional woman insisted on certain stark roles: to satisfy her husband sexually, bear children and look after the family and to be a silent object of male pleasure who conforms to the standards of the patriarchal construct. Shakir has no tolerance

for those who treat woman as a lifeless object, and brutally criticises her male-dominated society. In these poems she calls this society ‘a lair of wolves’ and ‘hounds’ (ready to sink their teeth in ‘her’ female flesh), a ‘jungle’ where this animal called man is at large, free to kill, to beat and force a woman to commit suicide. The analysis of the poems in chapter four reveals a bigger question put forth in Shakir’s own strong feminist voice: ‘[B]ut for how long?’, and ‘How long will you [women] go / Sacrificing yoursel[ves]?’

These dialogues of Shakir with the contesting voices within and without culminate in her own re-adjustment and re-thinking of her feminist ideas, alongside her personal development and understanding of her male-dominated culture. This male-domination has a strong impact on Shakir’s poetry and thinking as she starts to realise towards the end of her poetic career that overly liberal feminist ideas are ‘foolishness’ and make her a ‘misfit’ within Pakistani culture. The cultural pressure and fear of Islamic laws, the cause of her tension and turmoil, finally force her to re-think her liberal feminist ideas, which contradict her earlier radical protests in *Khushboo* against restrictions on sexual freedom. However, she was not married then, was an inexperienced *larki* (girl), unaware of practical life, only thinking of herself and her romantic world. During the course of her poetic career she got married and experienced conflict, she divorced and suffered the pain and difficulties of living as a single woman in a male-dominated society, and through her own practical experience realised that in her conservative Muslim Pakistani culture a woman has no self of her own as it is always divided into different roles: mother/daughter/wife. What her work reveals was that the position she finally advocates does not require total annihilation of the self but accommodation of that self in different roles, incorporating her life as an eastern mother/woman. The analysis of the poems in chapter four revealed a new and changed Shakir, who re-adjusts and re-considers her own liberal feminist beliefs, thinking that the patriarchal Islamic culture cannot change, but she must in order to survive in it. It is very contradictory but self-revelatory and shows a bitter realisation, incorporating on the one hand a need for, in Shakir’s own terms, a ‘poise’ in a woman’s thoughts if she wants to survive in a male-dominated Muslim society: a restricted marginalised voiceless image; and on the other hand a powerful poetry voicing feminist concerns. The thesis is not a remedy or a solution to these concerns, but it records the struggles and dialogues of one woman within the turmoil of changing political, personal and religious culture. One might say, as this thesis argues, that Perveen Shakir has been in dialogue throughout her writing life, with other writers, cultures, as well as with the changing natures of Pakistani cultural politics, and it is this that accounts,

in part, for her apparent movements between positions, somehow never able to be fixed or final.

The thesis aimed to explore the multiple layers which contribute to our understanding of the word 'woman' in the third-world, Pakistani context: her traditional 'feminine' *nisvani* role, her female romantic role, her restricted marginalised role and her open and liberal feminist role. In Shakir's poetry, woman is a loved-one, a lover, a mother, a wife, a goddess, a poet, a writer. She is able to occupy these positions sometimes challenging patriarchy and sometimes upholding it. Shakir's blending of both feminine and feminist positions is by no means an indication that she is giving up the struggle, but an encouragement that experiences must be recorded and stories told for the genesis of new theories and discourses accommodating other cultures and religions. What I have discovered through my research is new and different because I used a method of inquiry where dialogue played a vital role in the analysis, helping me to trace Shakir's development in the context of her culture, religion and society. Likewise, although this study has by no means exhausted the dialogic engagements of women in Shakir's Urdu poetry, it has opened a new method of inquiry for future study of Pakistani female poetry and its representation of women.

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