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## The Reflection of the Turn of the Century in the Writings of the Leading Post Modern Poet Imtiaz Dharker

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### ABSTRACT:

The writings of Imtiaz Dharker portray an intense quest for identity, quest for unknown and the quest for ideal and true love while simultaneously display a rebellious approach against classical social norms and uphold consciously the value system and protest against social, religious, cultural and domestic injustice against the underprivileged classes. Imtiaz Dharker is a poet, artist and documentary film maker who divides her time between London and India. She was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1954 and brought up in Scotland. The mixed heritage and itinerant lifestyle is at the heart of her writing: questioning, imagistic and richly textured poems that span geographical and cultural displacement, conflict and gender politics, while also interrogating received ideas about home, freedom and faith. Yet for all the seriousness of her themes, Dharker is a truly the global poet, whose works speak plainly and with great emotional intelligence to anyone who has ever felt a drift in the increasingly complex, multicultural and shrinking world we inhabit in. For a number of years now, her poems have been taught through 'Speech Balloon' in the UK national curriculum. The classical contributions made by the Indian poets even before the Independence are well - acclaimed by the western world. They include the poets like Aurobindo Ghosh, Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and the likes whereas the contributions that have been made after Independence include Nissim Ezekiel, R. Parthasarathi, A. K. Ramanujan, Keki Daruwala, Kamala Das, Jayant Mahapatra, Arvind Mehrotra, Mamata Kalia, Imtiaz Dharker to name a few. These are the handful of poets who in fact pushed forward the Indian contributions to the English poetry beyond the country's literary borders. The poetry of these Indian poets in English therefore can generally be known through their contributions and long lasting recognitions by the world. During the periods of the 1980s and 1990s there was an upsurge of poetic talent in the country which, however, unfortunately remained less discussed and even lesser evaluated and appreciated. This was sometimes due to an academic apathy, lack of availability of publishers and the absence of desire to venture the established masters. Looking from the critical perspective of Indian poetic development, over a period of the decades of the 1980s and the 1990s one needs to promote the greater self awareness, high degree of accuracy of knowledge of the national traditions and even the greater insight into their modern transformation. The present paper is an attempt to study an oeuvre of Indian poetry with special reference to Imtiaz Dharker and elaborate an intense quest for love in Dharker's poetry.

### INTRODUCTION:

Indian English poetry is an attempt to give a generic cover to the Indian imagination seeking creative outlet in and through English. Many Indian poets write in English because they think their creative urge can be fulfilled in a better way in English than in the vernacular. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly pointed out that the Indian writing in English is a novel experiment in creative mutation

when he said that to be Indian in thought, feeling and emotion, to experience yet also to court the graces and submit to the discipline of English for expression is something that the present writers aim at. The post- Independence Indian English verse has gained an appreciable position in both the strength and variety. It has been said that it is Indian in sensibility and context and it is written in 'Indian English' if we choose to call it so. It is rooted in and stems out from the Indian environment and reflects its mores. There are many noteworthy differences in the poetic sensibility shaped by the Indianness in the poets of pre-independence era such as Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu and others and the poets in the post – independence period with special reference to Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Jayant Mahapatra, Shiv K. Kumar and Imtiaz Dharker.

Many contemporary poets write in English about their experience of today's Indian milieu without losing their Indianness found in their regional identity. Gouri Deshpande, Meera Pillai and other poets from Writers' Workshop rightly speak of the Indian background and they are not ignorant of the shaping of national consciousness by the environment of the country, the climate and the background of tradition. But some of the new poets deny any umbilical connection with their historical past. However a tradition cannot be wholly disowned. Amalendu Bose says that this denial is a boisterous proclamation that these writers are upstarts and rootless.

In a work of art that is in a well-realized creative effort, presence of Indianness is invariably expressed. It must be noted that within the literary text, a good writer does not give direct indications of such a presence, but that the operational response of the Indian writer could be deduced by the sensibility working in it. The aspects that define the Indianness in the Indian writing in English are namely the mind behind the organization of the context, the life and attitudes of the writer and the modes of his perception of reality. C. N. Srinath aptly says that the Indian poet while using English as his medium should have his roots in his own soil and yet be the part of the common culture of the English speaking peoples indeed of all mankind to the extent that it gives an edge to his native vigor and sensibilities. Despite the difference between one medium of expression and the other, there is a unity of supreme significance among Indian writers writing in regional languages like Oriya, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu or Marathi. It is the unity of Indianness, meaning all that transcends the response to the physical, idealistic and intellectual personality of India and brings these poets together.

The Indian English poets, who give expression to the Indian experience in thought and imagery, are in the main stream of tradition. It is well known that a cultural activity like creative writing does not grow all of a sudden. It has its own origin and a process of development. It is pertinent to consider the tradition that has been built up by this output and the impact of this tradition on the writers of today. These poets are instrumental in their attempt to rediscover the values and techniques within one's own tradition which is a body of concepts and usages, ideas and feelings to be felt or thought to win acceptance and currency or to provoke dissent or modification.

The angle of the poet's vision has been conditioned by his own experience and temperament by the primary attitudes or modes of his perception. In V. K.

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Gokak's perception, the way in which we get to know each stage of poetic creation goes through language, music, form, meaning, style, imagery, inner meaning, mood, attitude and vision. Our understanding of the poet and the poem depends on this way, whatever the process of integration that goes to make up the poem as a whole. When we think of Indian English poetry, we find ourselves in world in which the response to Indian reality, the underlying sensibility, the use of imagery, diction are strikingly different, particularly in the contemporary leading poets.

Creative writing is an achievement of harmony between concept and medium, between what is to be said and how it is to be said. As for concept, the Indian poet(s) is quite capable in that area, like any poet handling from another language group. It is in respect of the handling of the medium that the non-native poet's ability has to pass through the acid test. Several poets have the ability to control their medium and thus achieve aesthetic success. The alien language does not necessarily diminish or reduce the writer's sense of heritage. Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Imtiaz Dharker and few others have been competent in retaining their ethos of Indianness in full measure. The principal question to discuss and evaluate the poets will be the degree of their Indianness, culture and medium of their expression. When Sarojini Naidu addresses a sonnet to India, her patriotic zeal is beyond all doubts and yet the actual product is too heavily cultured, it has stock ideas, responses and stale expressions:

"Thy Future calls thee with a manifold sound.  
To crescent honors, splendors, victories vast".

The Indian poet's experience has to be authentic and his own and not derivative and imitative of conventional modes of the way. The mere choice of specifically Indian themes and settings would not make for authenticity. For M. K. Naik, to be a truly Indian poet in modern times is to constitute a synthesis of the age-old ethos of India and the culture of the west which English literature and ideas brought to India, it is to live and breathe the culture of India as it exists today, a complex product which has changed, matured over millennia, losing and gaining much in the process, it is to write with a feeling of being an Indian in one's bones. This synthesis is clear in the works of modern Indian poets like Ezekiel, Ramanujan, Mahapatra, Kamala Das and Imtiaz Dharker. There is a conspicuous craftsmanship, introspection, quest for the desired and self analysis in Kamala Das and Imtiaz Dharker as the poets of modern India. We must detect in their poetry the dust, the heat, the crowds, the poverty of India combined with misery and endurance of women. They try to strike a sort of synthesis between the changing reality of a private passion and the apparently unchanging reality of the so called shining sun on Indian horizon. Both these poets are bold and daring in their poetic expression.

The poetry of modern Indian English poets suggests a case for exploring Indianness in terms of not only the authenticity of their locale and culture but the medium of their expression. They regard English language as one of the many Indian languages and their exploration of it to its fullest possibilities both in range and depth produces some of the best poetry. Their poetry is unique and lyrical. The uniqueness lies in the fact that the weight of intellect never surpasses their authentic feelings. They express their restlessness, distortedness

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very honestly. Therefore the poems of the poet Imtiaz Dharker we have chosen for the analysis that the present paper carries is a significant women poets known for their range and depth.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The entire analysis that the present paper carries is based on a set of 10 poems selected by a revolutionary Diasporic Indian English poet of post-Independence, modern era. The basic thrust of the paper being on the analysis of love and protest, the attempt was made to choose a set of such poems of the poet that was expected to help in developing the analysis from the context of love and protest. Imtiaz Dharker being a contemporary Diasporic poet, hence to trace the poems of the poet relatively easier because the anthologies of Dharker containing poems in serial manner could be availed from various libraries. But her recent collections were not available in libraries as well as on internet. Therefore It was a Herculean task. While selecting the poems for analysis, the poems related to love and protest, betrayal, lust, spiritual love, love-lust tangle and the love-hate tangle were given primary focus. The list of the selected poems for the analysis of the present paper along with their sources of extraction is as following.

'Purdah I', 'Pudah II', 'Prayer', 'Zarina's Mother', 'Choice', 'The Mask' and 'Rope' (*Purdah*). 'Postcards from God I', 'Postcards from God II', 'Taking the count', 'After Creations', and 'Adam's Daughter' (*Postcards from God*). 'My Breath', 'The Terrorist at My Table', 'Who made Me', 'Open', 'The password', 'Jaan', 'Never Trust the Daffodils', 'Walk', 'Opaque' 'In Camera' and 'Anarkali Lahore' (*terrorist at my table*). 'Stitched', 'Slit', 'Undressing' and 'Exorcism' (*I Speak for the Devil*). 'A Place Called Battle', 'Walling Her In', 'I m Sorry to Say', 'What the palm Reader Said' and 'The Room With Two Doors' (*Leaving Finger prints*).

#### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONCEPT OF LOVE AND PROTEST:**

The word 'Love' creates host of issues in the minds of readers. It is an abstract noun which for some people is a meaningless and unattached to anything real or sensible and for others it is a meaningful emotion, and those who are drenched in it, their life, personality, self and their whole world is affected and changed with it . Love plays a very crucial and major role in all the cultures. Its reflected in literature, films, music and on a large context in lives of people also. 'Love' has been theorized by different perspectives in a different areas of study like history, ethics, religion, philosophy, literature and the like. But it was mainly an area of study in philosophy. It has been treated in a variety of ways ranging from physical aspect (animalistic love) to the spiritual love (platonic love which is elevation of love from physical to intellectual and moral upliftment) or Bhakti Sankalpana or the Aristotalian concept of two bodies and one soul. The philosophical treatment of love transcends the treatment given to love by rest of all disciplines.

The idea of protest originates in religion. It was the protest against upper class. The contribution of Martin Luther King, Emerson, and Thoreau is very significant. In this context their protest is the means to communicate to God. They were inspired by the idea of 'Brahma' in oriental philosophy. It was the protest against conservative religion. It led to Protestantism. The protest of Imtiaz Dharker is the rebel against the patriarchal society, ours is a male chauvinistic society. Women were denied their rights of equal treatment in all

spheres of life, for years together and even today when they have got the right to vote, education and other such means for their progress, there is still the domination left in the society, family and profession. They still have to suppress their utter emotions, problems, feeling and ambitions. The striking protest of the poets like Dharker may optimistically bring the change in society; the society may give some importance to women in future. It may be from male dominated to female oriented society. Freudian concept of protest includes the structure of id- ego-superego. It includes conflicts in egos. The root of all protest is actually violence. All these centuries, women have been subjugated by men at every level. Therefore this is nothing but an attempt made to be more civilized. The protest of Imtiaz Dharker is the expression of violence against women and their expression of protest against religion. And this protest of Imtiaz Dharker is not a meek, subjugating but strong, powerful, vociferous, outspoken, blunt and blatant reaction. The poet reaches any level of language usage which may not be politically correct but they assert their language forcefully. And readers allow her that because the poet protests against millions of years' injustice against women in society and therefore violence, the language of this poet is strong and not decent. An idea of civilization, politeness is possible only when survival is based on equality. Rights are not violated when rights are not infringed that is why 'you are bound to be violent and straightforward.' This is what is reflected in the concept of protest by this Diasporic post modern Indian Imtiaz Dharker.

#### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:**

Women, all over the world, in general and Asian women in particular are forced to undergo acute physical, mental and emotional upheavals on account of the cultural and social inhibitions resulting from religious restrictions, which in turn result in the suppression of their potential as an individual. The social conditions are such that they are restricted within the four walls of the traditional homes despite being educated and financially independent. It is quite natural that women writers find the creative outlet to the painful conditions and suffocation of their intellectual self and suppressed desires. This happens with great strength in the literary form of poetry than in other literary forms. Indian women poets have long since expressed their suppressed desires in their poetry. However they observed a certain constraint in their expression until the women poets like Imtiaz Dharker appeared on the scene of Indian women poetry. The uninhibited and strong sense of rebellion in Imtiaz Dharker's poetry against all sorts of social restrictions, portrayed in her poems brought a sea wave of cruel and crude opposition from the self-proclaimed custodians of culture, the so called guardians of orthodox religion and mean minded politicians who connive with both of the sections in society mentioned earlier. The cultural, social and religious restrictions on women suppress their potentialities and force them through physical, mental and psychological trauma. Women give outlet to these suppressed desires, pain and suffocation through their poetry. Dharker's rebellion caused a lot of flutter in the petticoats of the guardians of orthodox religion, custodians of culture and mean politicians. It produced stirred reactions in the society. ([www.festivaldepoesiademedellin.org](http://www.festivaldepoesiademedellin.org))

"Imtiaz Dharker belongs to that generation of post independence women poets who have given a convincing assurance that Indian English Poetry matches the best anywhere. Among these poets, we may include Kamla Das (sic),

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Melanie Silgrdo, Sujata Bhatt, Eunice de Souza, Mamata Kalia, Tara Patel, etc. They have not only broadened the thematic concerns of Indian poetry but also shown how words and images - simple, suggestive and highly evocative – can recite the music of their anguish and agony, their irritations and humor, their observations and reflections with no sign of pretension" (Bushan).

These poets poeticize the drama of life in a very significant way. The female voice is divinely gifted with harmony and musicality if sung in creativity. Dharker aptly calls herself Scottish Muslim Calvinist and her poetry deals with the three different cultures. One finds social religious and different cultural issues in her poetry. She speaks about how women are subjugated at every point of time in this patriarchal society. Dharker creates the stunning impact on the minds of the readers.

For Dharker identity depends on her beliefs and state of mind and not on her nationality. She herself says at one place that she believes that writers do not have homes; they belong in the cracks between countries.

Almost the same feelings are expressed by another contemporary Indian woman writer Meena Alexander. It is the incessant search for a consistent and integrated personality or identity that Meena Alexander is in search of. In her work *Fault Lines* (1993) what Imtiaz Dharker calls as the existence between the cracks of nations, is the fractured identity in Alexander's poetry. What comes to our mind as an extension of this type of intense emotional and intellectual disintegration of self is that pinning down to a particular nation is like restricting a woman to particular social norms. Therefore it would be wrong to consider the fractured identity as something that is undesirable for these women. The obvious trait in Imtiaz Dharker's poetic self is the preference given to disintegration in various identities rather than the so called positive choice of the integrated biological existence in a particular society or a nation.

Dharker is a poet, film-maker and visual artiste. She makes use of all her mediums swiftly and makes one medium more effective (poetry) with the help of other medium (drawings with them). The critic Ranjit Hoskote says that her poems are amplified by drawings accompanying poems and drawings interact not directly but very often as counterpoint e. g. Her poetry collection, *I speak for the Devil* – is thematically concerned with gender issues, the spaces women are allowed to inhabit in different societies and their struggle to break free from restrictive gender roles.

The poet and critic Arundhati Subramanyam calls *I speak for the Devil* as unabashed embrace of unsettlement as settlement. It is a deep brooding over the identity and its growth. She is considered most distinguished. Having written five volumes of poetry, she's known throughout the world in poetry circles. The main themes of Dharker's poetry include home, love, freedom, journeys, geographical and cultural displacement, communal conflict and gender politics, suppression of women by social forces- cultural, religious and political, and protest against it. There is the strong vein of transmediality, in her poems as she draws drawings accompanying her poems. These drawings and her poems are strongly connected with each other. She rebels against the principles of Islam which rigidly trap women. She is strongly feministic poet.

Feministic values are strikingly expressed in Imtiaz Dharker's poetry. She exposes the problems of women through her poetry. By using effective imagery,

metaphors she has given outlet to her rage and broodings on problems of women like their social status, religious obligations, health issues, cultural problems and educational and professional problems. She accepts that there has been a positive change in the state of women but her concern is for those who still suffer and those who have been uplifted from their sufferings.

She has so far published five collections of poetry. *Purdah* (1989), *Postcards from God* (1997), *I speak for the Devil* (2001), *the terrorist at my table* (2006) and *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009). Her first collection of poetry *Purdah and other poems* was ushered in with a big furor, and enthusiasm. She has established a place amongst feminist, with *Purdah* itself. She is the staunch supporter of fighting for the cause of women. The researcher has selected thirty two strikingly representative poems by Dharker from all five collections of poetry. Her debut anthology reflected the spark in her personality and in her writing. The only poems which reflect the selected themes i.e. love and protest have been selected for the study. The poems in *Purdah* deal with the various implications of purdah (veil) which is an obligatory tradition in Islam. It delves deep into the problems faced by young girls and women. She explores the internal politics of religious authorities as well as elders in the family and society. The work of art *Purdah* becomes rich with its imagery and content.

The meaning associated with purdah has been changing in the changing times. The purdah which was a security once now is viewed as violating the dignity and feelings. It is considered as the symbol of suppression of women and also felt that it veils the personality (individuality) of the women. Dharker exposes the purdah system.

It is a rebel and protest against patriarchal society. This protest is international and intentional. It is against religion. Purdah is a symbol of restrictions on women. Her writings are the combination of Calvinist, Islamic and Christian traditions. Women are given the secondary treatment. Men do not own the sin, though they commit it. Men hold the whole religious system of Islam to ransom by creating façade of protecting women by the so called system of purdah. However the most fundamental and dubious aspect of the purdah system is that they have developed this system in their own interest with a vested purpose in it to consider women responsible for all sorts of sins. The fact is that men are the originators of those sins.

In the poem 'Purdah I', Dharker has created a picture of a young girl who has just entered into her adolescence. At the threshold of youth, she attracts the attention of people around her. In a Muslim society, as it is conservative it is very important for a girl to preserve her modesty and honour and so she must be taught decorum, shyness and caution. In Islam unlike in any other religion, the purdah is a device to protect the purity of the girl, checking the arousing of desire in the minds of men who see the young women.

In this poem, the focus is on a significant turning point in the life of a girl in Muslim society. As the girl is young, people around her started discussing among themselves about her physical features. They started saying that she should learn shame. 'She was old enough to learn some shame' (line. 3). She realized the significance of the remark. She is mature enough to wear purdah. The poet says that it is a kind of safety where the body finds place to hide. This means that Muslim girls are not allowed to wander in society without wearing purdah. Even

in this century the situation is somewhat similar. The poet utterly protests against these prevalent Conditions. The poet uses a wonderful image while expressing this rebel of her; She says:

"Purdah is a kind of safety  
The body finds a place to hide  
The cloth fans out against the skin  
much like the earth that falls  
on coffins after they put the dead men in".

(Purdah I: Line. 4-8, p.14)

She compares the cloth fanned out against the skin with the earth falling on coffins. This also depicts that purdah is black so it deprives women of light and brightness (literally as well as figuratively i.e. light of happiness and knowledge in life). They are denied education, opportunities. It is expected that they should stay at home. The image of earth covering coffin is like (purdah) cutting them off from the world and the person covered is made mute, deaf like a dead body in the coffin. Purdah is a kind of safety or protection from the 'sly, stares', 'a slanting eyes': different remarks and lascivious looks. Actually this image of earth falling on the coffin with dead body is very striking and it is connected till the end of the poem. Veils lead to limitising opportunities of learning and enlightenment leading to the death of intellect just as earth covers the dead. It projects the total ostracization of women in the society. For the poet, Purdah is nothing but the burial of the living dead. A murder is committed deliberately of the self within the dead body and it is made sure that a comeback is out of question. The last line 'inward and again inward' reiterates this.

The irony in the poem reveals the protest of Dharker and her disapproval and castigation of the male imposition and obligation of purdah on women to instill in her the sense of shame and inferiority about her body. Dharker is rebellious about the dehumanization of women in the orthodox society. It is that Purdah or veil which is torn down by her. The protest tries to establish the identity of Muslim women especially in her hemisphere.

The poet further says that she half-remembers things from other people's life. It is the society that decides her identity, her roots. It makes her feel ashamed of being a woman. If a girl transformed into a woman tries to find out her own identity, she is shunned down in society. Still a light of optimism filters inward through the wall like bodies. Now the speaker speaks for 'us' and says that even after all this 'Voices speak inside us'.

She also speaks about the replication and interconnectedness of various female lives and their pasts. (by the same token, the speaking 'I' becomes 'she' and 'you' the subject of the narrative, 'she' becomes 'me' and 'you'). Remembering things from someone else's life and again calling it yours or mine, gives it a firm universality of expression, and experience. She says:

"...Carefully carrying what we do not own:  
between the thighs a sense of sin,"

(Purdah. I: pp. 15)

She is very straight forward here in using such an expression of carrying the sin. This shows that how men disown and escape their responsibility letting women suffer in the feeling of guilt.



The speaker in the next stanza becomes unequivocal and comes out of suffering soul and stands outside herself in all four corners of a room. She says:

"Wherever she goes, she is always  
inching past herself..."

(Purdah. I: pp. 15)

Another wonderful image is used by the poet here. She calls herself as clod of earth or root which firmly roots inside the soil. 'The first and the second rib' has religious significance. It is the reference to Christianity- woman is considered to be created out of man's rib and thus is given secondary treatment ('Havva' is Eve in Islam). The alienated subject experiences herself as the creation of another's gaze. This recognition and the concomitant experience of 'doors... opening inward' constitute not only a resistance but also self-possession in spite of 'possession' by others, by the 'they' which means society, tradition and patriarchy. Though these things take possession of her body, she has an inner self which is extremely rebellious and it creates its own space.

Thus the poem 'Purdah I' speaks about the fate of the growing female child. The onset of puberty signifies the culmination of the sex role socialization. Her 'coming of age' and learning about 'shame' is powerfully expressed in this poem. The significance of the protest in this poem is the inversion of the idea of the young girl being vulnerable and susceptible to the discreet advances of the archetypal males around her. The vulnerability and susceptibility are inverted as the strong individualistic self of the young girl. Purdah I is a remarkable poem dealing with the theme of protest like Purdah I. The speaker in this poem is a specifically gender-conscious woman, an actor and also a spectator within a very specific socio-cultural and historical context who is an Asian Muslim woman migrant in Britain from the Indian-subcontinent. The harsh practices of Islamic culture against women are highlighted and exposed through the story of two women Saleema and Naseem.

The poem Purdah II begins with a series of powerful images of pain and physical torture. The poem is divided into 12 different parts. In the first part, she speaks about dogmatic rituals and says that every morning, the different tenements wake to the call of Ajan and the routine rituals begin, the pages of the Koran are compared to the old bones. She says

"The pages of the Koran  
turn, smooth as old bones  
in your prodigal hands.  
In the tin box of your memory  
A coin of comfort rattles  
against the strangeness of a foreign land."

(Purdah II, part I. pp. 18)

Again in this poem too she uses 'you' which is used as 'one'. This 'you' / 'I' simultaneously experiences invitation into religion and into sexual feeling and secrecy (clandestine). The second part describes how the Maulavi has fat, dark figures moving through the pages of the holy book. He is trying to nudge (push) the meaning of sermons he is reading. But his words are completely unsoiled by sense. This is the deliberate use of the word 'unsoiled'. There is pure rhythm on the tongue but there is no sign of 'sense' / 'meaning' in his words. This strikes the meaninglessness and snobbery of the Maulavi and his bad and evil stare in

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'unsoiled'. This is the reference to the virginity. There is another concept of the body which is rocked in time, '...was lulled into thinking it had found a home'. The third part with two small stanzas voices the protest against the lustful behavior of the new Hajji, who has pink cheeks.

The poet uses the expression 'pink cheeks with knowledge in a derisive manner to poignantly point out the shallow and hypocritical as well as false religiosity of the said maulavi. This lustful Hajji has slyly thrown flower on this young girl, who is addressed as 'you', suggesting that she has been chosen by him. The poet says:

"There was nothing holy in his look"

(Purdah II, Part. III. pp. 18)

Those hands which are supposed to be pious are involved in such a heinous act of his tantalizing and inviting looks at a young girl. She further narrates the evil untoward experience. Her innocence is attacked. She was used by Hajji to fulfill his carnal desires. The poet in a very powerful language satirizes the so called holy man's behavior. She says:

"You had been chosen.

Your dreams were full of him for days.

Making pilgrimages to his cheeks,

you were scorched,

long before the judgment,

by the blaze

Your breasts, still tiny, grew an inch."

(Purdah II, Part. III. pp. 18)

The poet suggestively describes how the Hajji's advances create romantic feelings in her mind, but she was scorched by the blaze of his use of her as a commodity. She was used by him. The young girl withers like a flower in the hands of evil minded maulavi.

The next part IV, of the poem Purdah II, describes that what poet deals with in this poem, is completely universal. She says:

"The cracked voice calls again.

A change of place and time."

(Purdah II, Part. IV. pp. 18)

Such kind of experiences are with the change of time and place, similar everywhere. There is 'evelyn the medium' who lives in Brighton reminds us of Madame Sosostris, the famous clairvoyante in *The Waste Land*. There is a fragmented consciousness highlighted by specifying the social traditions like wearing particular colours i.e. red or blue. She further asserts how the mother prepares her daughter to be a bride of the poem Purdah II.

In the next two parts part V and VI her satire becomes more powerful and striking. She speaks of the girls which are sold and molested clandestinely. They have internalized the purdah of the mind. She speaks of female sexuality, and independence of spirit, which is a part of it. The customs, traditions, religious and ethnic history reinforce such mental purdah on them and such a tradition and sense of history is used by Diasporas to keep control of their women by telling them that their customs are superior to those of the foreigners. The poet says:

"They have all been sold and bought,

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the girls I knew,  
 unwilling virgins who had been taught,  
 especially in this strangers' land, to bind  
 their brightness tightly round,  
 whatever they might wear,  
 in the purdah of the mind".

(Purdah II, Part. V. pp. 18)

The next two parts i.e. VI and VII the protest intensifies. She speaks of the conventional roles of women. There is a reference to the 'sacrifice' in terms of Abraham's slaughtering of the lamb (the slaughtering of the woman/lamb by a patriarchal order at the altar of a patriarch – God). She says:

"... to save the man,  
 the scourge and stones, God was justice  
 Justice could be dread.  
 But woman  
 You have learnt  
 that when God comes  
 you hide your head"

(Purdah II, Part. VII, pp.19)

In these lines, it is clearly suggested that no sacrifice was needed to save woman, or that woman is not worth saving, not worth making sacrifices for. Woman has learnt "that when God comes you hide your head". This marks nothing but the utter protest against the subjugation of women.

In the next part, Part VIII, the narrative turns to 'Me' / 'I'. The poet says that these women, who are well educated, suffer silently and she says that she knows their minds. The poet says:

"I can see behind their veils,  
 and before they speak  
 I know their tongues...."

(Purdah II, Part. VIII, pp.20)

The tongues of these women have become thick after so much of suffering. The next part is extraordinarily rich in imagery. It has multiple and contradictory overtones.

In the next part she speaks about breaking cover and says that the new moon has sliced these young girls out of purdah, and the bodies of these innocent girls shimmered in terror. She tells us about one such girl which can be any one from victims. She says:

"Saleema of the swan neck  
 and tragic eyes, knew from films  
 that the heroine was always pure,  
 untouched ; nevertheless  
 Poured out her breasts to fill the cup  
 of his while hands .."

(Purdah II. Part. IX. pp. 20)

The wickedness of men and how the innocent girls fall prey to the false praise of these men and sacrifice their treasure of love and like for them. Further she speaks about how these girls are sold and they have to suffer a lot. They have gone through 'the annual babies'. But there comes a stage, where rebel is

quite natural. She says- 'then rebelled at last' (20). Then comes similar experience of Naseem who ran away and suffered a lot. She had a hope that she will be freed from these shackles but the situation is not much different. When she goes, there is lot of discussion, gossip on that. The poet says:

"Naseem, you ran away  
and your mother burned with shame.  
Whatever we did,  
the trail was the same  
the tear –stained mother, the gossip aunts  
looking for shoots to smother  
inside all our cracks".

(Purdah. Part. X. pp. 20)

The family members consider her amongst dead. They have disowned her. They even offer prayer for her as if she is dead and she has lost the large hopes, she had from them. The poet says:

"And there you are with your English boy  
who was goin to set you free  
trying to smile and be accepted  
always on your knees"

(Purdah. Part. XI. pp. 21)

But the situation has not changed. Its more or less the same. She is in a tenement in the north, somewhere but still tied or bound. At the end of the poem, the poet depicts the striking stark reality. The poet says:

"Shaking your box to hear  
how freedom rattles ...  
one coin, one sound"

(Purdah. Part. XII. pp. 21)

Dharker shows the reader the mirror. Actually speaking, love can give you freedom only if you wish to break the shackles of religion and also up to certain extent the shackles of societal suppression.

Thus the poems Purdah I and Purdah II are the comment of the poet on the sufferings and problems faced by women in general and Islamic women in particular.

The girls who broke cover like Saleema and Naseem sank into their mother's flesh and mind. Mary Daly in her *Beyond God the Father*, describes this as the ironic outcome of the attempt by women to overcome their threat of nonbeing (*Beyond God the Father*. pp. 23).

Dharker's poems are an utter protest but discreet rebellion' which aims at hopeful liberalization of women in future. The word 'At last a sign', behind the veil/of life' (Purdah. pp.9) is expressive of that optimistic dawn. Thus there is an optimistic note in these poems that one day there will be this dawn. There is a protest against the problems of women.

The poem 'Prayer' is different from most of her poems because of the strongly surrealistic overtone and a close resemblance with painting. It starts with the strokes of the brush and we get a feeling that we are watching the painting being made by the painter with each stroke. There is a prominent sense of a spectacle in this poem. The brands of the markers of the sandals and other footwear are worn out and multiple footwear are fused into one bulk of the

leather, rubber and plastic together. The merging of these things is extended further from the footwear to the faces of the people who have gathered there for the sake of progress. The poet says:

"... a picture clearer than their faces  
put together, with some originality,  
brows and eyes, the slant  
of cheek to chin."

(Prayer, Stanza. I, pp. 23, Purdah)

The decadence in religion and the degeneration of faith into whispers denoting nothing sacred is equated with the worn out and mended heels of the footwear. Just like multiple footwear are pressed against the walls and against the gold lettering of the pages of the holy book, the prayers are 'washing against the walls of God'.

'Zarina's Mother' is one more feministic poem expressing the deep concern of Imtiaz Dharker for the unending suffering of women in all walks of life. Women are subjected to the inhuman level of torture and slavery on account of the evils in the social system. Women are not only considered as commodities in the hands of man but even financial independence does not give them freedom from the lowest level of slavery, that they live through many ages. Society calls Zarina's mother as a stigma on their so called pure and civilized life nobody realizes that the helplessness of Zarina and her siblings is not because of the deliberate callousness of her mother, she has four children and her drunken husband to look after. She has taken to prostitution for the bare survival of her family. Nobody is able to understand her sorrow and suffering. A radio that plays the songs of love is in ironical contrast to the suffering of Zarina. There is so much loud voice-around her that the poet is unable to understand what she says. We can hear the sound of the children bathing on the municipal water at some distance. The poet has projected the deep and mournful condition of Zarina and her siblings after ten years when Zarina's mother would have passed away because of her venereal disease. Very few poets have written a poem on the most neglected women in society, prostitutes. Imtiaz Dharker has written the heart rending poem with striking simplicity of language on the suffering of the woman who is the victim of the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of social neglect, the first being the neglect of women in general. The strength of any good poet is to delve into that aspect of human life which is normally hidden from even the most thoughtful people in society. Zarina's mother is one such woman who cannot be the topic of a poem in the established trends in poetry. Imtiaz Dharker gets due credit for touching this untouched area. The use of the third person seems to be an acknowledgement of socio-cultural structures and contexts in which the speaker does not find herself submerged: structures which have not touched her own subjectivity in spite of the fact she is a woman who is victimized. There is a striking simplicity in this poem which appeals to our mind.

The poet Imtiaz Dharker moves from religion and society to her closed self in a few of her poems. The poem 'Choice' is one such poem. There are three levels of relationship in this poem. The first level is her many loves, many layers of love, with many different men. The second level is her relationship with her child and the third level of relationship is the longest relationship with her mother. These relationships are sometimes intermingled, at other times replaced with

each other and at times juxtaposed with each other. Along with these three levels of relationships, there is the significance of physical proximity in these various layers of relationships which count strongly during and after life also. The physical proximity is expressed through 'Touch' and 'feel' and it culminates 'the urge to crush' she herself and her child will survive the men to whom they were related. Both of them will share their 'selves' as women but will stay away safe from each other with their grown up selves (personalities). Dharker says that her mother was the symbol of virtue and obedience but as she grew up she parted away from her mother. To commit sins was like acquiring the level of maturity according to her. She calls it 'freedom'. Her strong sense of independence results from this freedom. This sense of independence finds expression in her creative works. After having lived in this independence and creation for a long period in her life she finds herself to be in the position of a mother. This is the juxtaposition of the roles of mother and daughter in this poem. The two persons cease to be different from one another because role that they have to perform continue from one generation to the other. This ability to swindle between roles of women is remarkably portrayed in this poem. The poet says:

"I spent years hiding from your face,  
the weight of your arms, warmth of your  
breath ...  
When did my body agree  
to wear your face?"

(Choice, part III, pp. 50, Purdah)

The title of the poem 'Choice' is very significant as far as the choice between individuals, their feel and touch, their bones beside each other and the bones of even the kitten who might have been the victim of narrator's explosive anger against the cruelty of man are concerned.

The reason behind the title of the poem 'Choice' being significant is that the choice is discreetly mentioned in the conclusion of the poem. It is the rhetorical question that reiterates her resolution in the discreet answer that she has neither agreed with her mother nor with her any of lovers to wear their faces. One's ability to make choice is very crucial.

'The Mask' poses many fundamental questions related to the contemporary significance of religion. Despite the mass based presence of two major religious faiths man lives with 'a passion to destroy'. And not to love the innocence because 'almost' innocence is all too rare.' All of us are the victims of the hidden beast in us. The beast always tries to break the human boundaries of 'reason and pure sense'. It is difficult to find an escape from the inert sense of power that governs us. The common belief is that power is visible and felt like the killing of the lamb or the poisonous fangs. The poet argues that unlike this common belief, the power hides behind the mask which most of us unswervingly wear, we can see this power if we 'look at us', in that dark mirror. Slowly and gradually we can see our face 'beginning to take shape' when we look at ourselves and remove the mask.

The poet has effectively used the image 'mask' which is the omnipresent paradox in literature and which is called as the dichotomy between the appearance and the reality. The glaring example that comes to our mind is that

of William Blake's 'Tyger' in which he has asked the similar question that whether it is the same God, that has created a tiger and a lamb. We can relate Blake's poem to 'The Mask', if we look at the questions raised by the poet, why do we kill the innocent? And is our civilization 'a mask' that hides the fang and knife is smeared with the blood of the lamb.

In the last poem in the collection *Purdah*, 'The Rope' the poet speaks about the oppressive social norms which are troublesome, and that is nothing but the rope here. From birth to death, one meets different types of ropes i. e. rope of cradle, rope of noose around neck, rope of marriage (Indian context 'Gaath' knot) and the like. The customs are intolerable and unavoidable.

The poet protests against these all. Not the love but hatred ends in death. There is a clinical description of the process of laying the dead underground and also the embellishment that man offers to the dead in the form of the tombstone. There is life in the stones and they heave and speak for the ages that the dead have been laid underground. Still there is life in the bones because they get polished by the friction between one another. There is a suggestion in the poem that people those who move around us are none else but the ghosts in different forms. There is little difference between your friends and your enemies because after death you are going to be the part of them also. They are waiting for the right moment to tie the knot around your neck. Death will arrive at opportune time. At that time, even your enemies will offer prayers for your happy passage to the underground land of the dead. The poet voices the great universal oft repeated truth that death is the great equalizer. It brings us all on one level. Friends and enemies, exploiter and exploited and man and woman all of them become alike.

Thus the poems in her first collection of poems *Purdah* deal with the problems faced by women in this patriarchal society. *Purdah* is designed by the male-dominated society. It suppresses the independence of women and holds the male chauvinism. The poet is aware about all these problems and protests against the religious hypocrisy and also political hypocrisy and fake ideals by values in the society. She voices her utter contempt against this sham in the society. Dharker's woman exhibits a *purdah* which is between her inner-self and her outer-world. For her womanhood is like a veiled existence (entity) under *purdah*.

She has created the world of women, especially in *Purdah*, where women have become the victims of patriarchal society. Her feminine sensibility again related to marriage, sex, childhood, motherhood, her feelings of exile are portrayed by her. Her sensibility is concerned with relationship between mother-daughter, men-woman and the like. Dharker explores evil side in Islamic culture, where it is important for women to wear *purdha*. It becomes symbol of their culture, having no freedom at all. In this collection 'gender' becomes of vital significance Dharker articulates women's helplessness, their pains and problems, their victimization through her poetry. She does not see herself as spokesperson of her community but the staunch supporter of woman individual. Dharker hopes that one day those who think in communal terms will 'look into its outcast eyes and recognize it as your own'. Thus from Kamala Das to the recent poets like Imtiaz Dharker have the major concern of modern English

poetry that is the quest for identity by revolting against the social structure of the male-dominated world. Vrinda Nabar remarks that:

"Purdah means the end of existence, it deadens the women's capacity to interrelate with the world by inhibiting her sensory perception of it ... besides rendering a woman's sensory existence dead or at least confining /denying it, purdah also makes the woman a non-being, a person who is without an identity or individuality in the eyes of the external world. Women in Purdah thus become 'depersonalized', 'non persons'.

(*Cast As Women*. Nabar, pp. 134)

Dharker thus speaks about confinement and depersonalization of women. Imtiaz Dharker's second collection *Postcards from God* (1994) is richly illustrated with drawings by the poet. Dharker is one of the young members of the group of poet painters like Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, Gieve Pate and G. R. Santosh. The poems in this anthology are written on the background of 1993 Bombay blasts. She has used two powerful mediums of painting and poetry and tries to comment on the aggressive communalism, bred in contemporary situation. She has an utter sympathy for the people who were disturbed and devastated in the blasts. There is a remarkable compassion for the deprived and for those who suffered. These are the poems full of intense despair, protest and love.

The title of this collection is very peculiar and apt. It suggests that God is a visitor looking at all world which he does not recognize or approve. He distrusts his 'interpreters'. He is nothing but a space that someone has to fill'. People all over the world fill the empty space with the images they create. A postcard from God is a kind of cry for peace by Dharker. It has three major sections Postcards from God, Naming the Angels' and 'Bombay: the Name of God' Imtiaz Dharker looks at the world from different angle. She is unique in her treatment of socio-political issues. Marginalization of women is the major concern; however the contemporary socio-political issues which brought endless suffering to women and society are also taken into consideration. In the poem 'postcards from God I', the poet speaks through the voice of every human alienated from God who becomes a perfect vehicle for her exploration of the human condition. In 'Postcards from God I', God is introduced as an entity, a tourist, a visitor who is wandering through battered streets, and he is looking for the promised past. God says that he has lost trust in his 'interpreters' who can be none other than Sadhus, priests or Maulavis. She says that what these so called interpreters speak is nothing but the meaningless babble. The poet is in a dialogue with God and herself. There is life's passage to death and death accompanies you in the form of bloodless cruelty. The poet says that in the postcard from God, that there is the need to write to you. She is asking God to be in witness box, writing him and his answers to her. Actually speaking, she herself feels like a visitor and tourist in this world and tries to establish a dialogue between God as a supreme entity and herself.

There is a strong link between the poems 'Postcards from God I' and 'Postcards from God II'. The poem 'Postcards from God II' has a strong optimistic note of her hope about 'getting through the channels' successfully. The poet mentions the network jamming of cable TV channels. She is trying to establish a dialogue with God, Almighty. The mode of communication is changed from Maulavis to audio, video signals, eye of the projector but the condition is not

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changed. Hajjis and Maulavis always obstructed things happening from good and for good. There is this invisible obstruction between God and worshipers one was never able to be one with God because of these obstructions. She uses the metaphors of audio, video signals. One cannot communicate with God, however the person having integrity stop short of attempt to communicate. She says that attempts to communicate must never cease that is why channels should be always open. There is a continuation of suppression of female self by other individuals around her. She uses the wonderful image of 'postcards from God' and tries to answer them. She says:

"Between video walls and my face  
is the eye,  
made in the inverted image  
of the unfinished sky  
a slit where all the unexplained  
looks through,  
rippled with power, pricked with light.  
These are the image I will send to you"

(Postcards from God. pp. 76)

The eye here is the poet's watchfulness. It is one of the disturbing pictures. The poet comments on the modern world of human suffering. Dharker expresses her anger against the ruthless world which lacks humanity. She cannot tolerate the suffering of people who have become the victims of selfish society. The god is also contemplating with dismay in such a world. His creation of mankind now appears to him as a whim, and indeed as we hear, his postcard size impressions as he journeys through his creation, it is impossible not to identify with his sense of failure and disappointment and above all, frustration. As Dharker, God is also frustrated with the existing situation of human beings, who have lost all the values in doing material progress. She cannot remain silent on all this and expresses her anger against all this in an unconventional way. God did not think that the world he created can be in such a chaos and disorder. Darker courageously protest against the social, religious chaos which she feels around her.

The poem, 'Taking the Count' is in the link of Postcards from God. In this poem there is the connection to the poem 'prayer' also. In prayer we see the row of footwear, shoes and chapples, all becoming bulk. She is using the metaphor of chapples. She talks about how the prayers wash against the sea. Here in 'Taking the count' she is using the similar material image of 'dhobi' to comment on religious and spiritual existence. Taking the count is what a life is going to be. She is in the habit of looking at things in a different perspective. All activities in daily life which we consider to be mechanical activities, these all activities have some connotations which we normally do not understand. We are bound by certain domestic duties, but if we look at them in a different angle, we come to know that there is a message in all these things from our life. Washed clothes are considered to be the souls washed clean. She is in the habit of getting rid of certain malice, when you wash the clothes they look as if they are new. She tries to take off that burden.

The poem 'After Creations' is a wonderful poem connecting on religious context and at the same time to throw light on contemporary religion, losing

faith, loss of innocence. While saying all this she has extreme respect towards Biblical parable of creation of world, original sin. She is not sparing religion also. There is the continuation of religious influence but in some different manner. As an artist, she believes that an artist can create his / her own world and it's a greater claim or call that she creates her own world. Darker as a poet has her own creative world. 'Word' is an attempt to create order in this world and God has given us the 'word' and for the artists like her she says that forget or keep aside that the God created the world, take ordinary things into account if you want, you will definitely find an order in that. God seems to have hoped that there would be order in the world created by him but regrettingly there is lot of disharmony in the world. The picture that emerges in the poem is that God is extremely unhappy with the state of affairs in the world he created. Actually the poet herself is satirising the state of affairs God's world had order and that is lost. She says:

"When I began  
It was simpler world  
Things, perhaps, got out of hand"

(Postcards from God, pp. 107)

The order of this world is lost. Our duty is to bring back that order which is lost. 'Adam's Daughter' is a poem dealing with the problems of life like hunger and poverty. The poet speaks about a small girl, whom she calls Adam's daughter. The girl at such a small age of three has seen so many problems and that is why she lives in dread. The poet says:

"Hands give and often take away  
There is no pattern to it.  
The food is there and sometimes  
disappears"

(Postcards from God, pp.130)

This is the stark reality of girl and her mother's life. She is probably the daughter of a poor ragpicker and they make their living by collecting scrapes. The mother of the girl is dissatisfied and frustrated as whatever scrapes she brings doesn't help them to buy them sufficient food. The family of the girl is going through such worst problems. The street worms rules against her spine. Even after going through the problems also 'her mind' is still. And the girl keeps watching the poet minutely to see what she will be doing, next. She may hope that the poet may help her in some way or the other. The poet is always in the habit of criticizing religion in one way or the other. She doesn't make any difference between two major religions, namely Christianity and Islam when she attacks the hypocrisy and double standards of religious minded people.

By calling the beggar woman's daughter as Adam's daughter she achieves two things. The first thing is that Adam being the son of God and always has been referred like that nobody has even referred to Adam's daughter. She attacks the male centered way of looking at things. The second thing that she achieves is that religion has no mechanism at all to care for such daughters of Adam. All the talk of charity and service to mankind seems to be the humbug, when we read this poem. There is scathing attack on the indifference of all the people walking on the road. They are quite insensitive to the suffering of such destitute women and beggar children. The women with 'heavy shoes' in the poem

which are rich women are portrayed as insensitive. She compares them with crows. Even the sun was blocked; such was the darkness around the poor girl who is suffering.

The next remarkable anthology of poems by Imtiaz Dharker is *I Speak for the Devil* (2001). It is about the devil in our mind that is not visible like the terrorist portrayed in her other collection of poems, *the terrorist at my table*. There is the usual inversion of the term 'Devil' in this collection. Unlike the conventional perception of the devil that is not related to our day to day life, she has portrayed the devil to be the part of our minute to minute existence.

The poem 'Stitched' attempts to answer the consistent query in the mind of the reader regarding the poet's fascination for the terrorist or the devil. It seems that the fractured personality of poet on account of multiple nationalities, mixed faiths, merged identities and multi-lingual emotional mindset is discreetly associated with the fractured existence of the terrorist. The strong experience of neglect from the society is commonly shared by the terrorist whose existence is marginal in society and the highly intellectual woman poet who has a natural claim to be in the main stream of the society. The verb 'stitched' is expressive enough to prove the aforesaid sharing of the world of experience by the mainstream poet on the one hand and the marginal terrorist on the other. Her fractured identity is further clarified when she tells us that she is well –versed with many languages and their respective cultures, like Punjabi, Scots, German and French. Belonging to all these culture but not being tagged by any one particular language or culture renders her to be a 'garbage bag'. Despite the extreme emotional turmoil and humiliation, she has survived. She is not sure whether she did the right thing. She is desirous of undertaking 'dangerous summersault'. She wishes to start everything a new, back from square one.

In the poem 'Slit' the poet has pegged down men to be fundamentally responsible for two things in all social dynamics, the first thing, is that they hold women to be responsible for all crimes, especially for making men's life tragic, forcing them sometimes to end their life too. The second thing is that it is actually men who commit all crimes and it is they who have established the unchallenged system of religion to hold women responsible for everything. The 'rare genius for revenge' in men is the creation of the system that covers men's violence and has created God to put a full stop to the reasonable enquiry of such violence. The poet tells the world that only the men in religious authority and God know why accidents occur and why someone's head is blown off. She says:

"Ask the man carrying  
Holy books,  
Ask God  
He knows"

(I Speak for the Devil, pp. 85)

There is a pungent comment on self centered, selfish and greedy nature of man. The whole world of thought and religion is controlled by men in order to hold women responsible for all sins in the past and the present. There is an obvious reference to the original sin by which Eve was held responsible for the fall of man from innocence. In the current social picture women are held responsible for accidents, sabotage, political animosity and all other problems in human life.

'Undressing' is the poem which should be read in the light of the another significant poem 'Opaque'. These poems deal with the most intimate relationship of man and women. In Opaque, she wants him to let her wear the dress of light and in 'Undressing' she wants him to be slow and steady while undressing her. There is the prominent pun on the word that it is he who is undressing in a hurry and another meaning is that it is she who is undressing him slowly and patiently. The second meaning seems to be more appropriate because she wants him to be patient and bear with her. She wishes to get closely acquainted with the knee of this particular man when she says 'this knee'.

She definitely has 'that knee' at the back of her mind. She apologizes to him because 'her fingers are trying to remember the texture of being free'. The idea of freedom is inverted here because she wishes to lose her freedom in his company rather than get it. In this different equation of freedom absence of the freedom is the presence of it. The poet is known for such type of oblique ways of presenting the menu of her poems on earth than saying the things in a straightforward manner.

In the poem 'Exorcism', there is the culmination of the man- woman relationship which she has spoken about in the poems like 'Opaque' and 'Undressing'. This is a stage further when there is the act of consummation which is suggested here. She is a strong minded and individualistic woman whose breath belongs to herself and not to anyone else. In support of her statement that she is in control of herself and that she is doing fine, she goes ahead and denies her various roles as a woman in the lives of many other men, in one or the other type of relationship. She says that she is not the daughter in Sialkot, a sister in Lahore, a wife in Bombay, a mother in London, nightmare in Glasgow, a devil in Delhi and a fantasy in Rome. She has developed cold feet so far as her movement from one place to other is concerned but her breath is still warm. She can easily dance on cause and drums. She is also swirling and falling. There are all the ways that establish her relationship with the people and especially with the man of whom she is talking. She does not restrict the relationship of man and woman only to the relationship of husband and wife but she equates all other relationships where man and woman are related to each other. However the supreme relationship is the one which she has mentioned in the poems 'Opaque' and 'Undressing'.

Dharker's next anthology *the terrorist at my table* published in 2006 is obviously about the unheard voice of the isolation, the rebellion and the unique interpretation of the contemporary issues of international terrorism as well as disintegration of counties from one into two and many more. According to the poet the invisible walls that divide the nations are actually the consequence of a few divisive minded evil politicians. They suppress her breath of creativity in the poem 'My Breath' in this collection. The narrative voice is making an appeal to the representative of the insensitive majority to listen to her breath. The cultural identity of nation has constituted her personality. She says:

" .... Do you remember...  
The shape it used to have  
inside my body?"

(the terrorist at my table, pp. 18)

The deep rooted scars of partition forced people to migrate from the small village into town, on highways. Her breath makes a journey like this migrating population. Her breath will have some sort of significance only for him who can listen to her. Now days her breathing aspires for one more 'dawn a new beginning in her life. The communication is now possible when her neighbor is lighting a fire. The appearance of the wood-smoke sends her mind back into the past when the shape of the world is different because they had not yet 'made new maps'. She says:

"... before the documents changed hands"

'The terrorist at my table' is a beautiful poem in which the poet combine, the small domestic chores like cutting onions and kitchen work with international issues like peace, Gaza tension, Palestine issues, dooms day rain and registers her protest against all this by bringing them on the same plateau. Sentences are like onions. She says that sentences on chopping board seem more organized than they appear in news. There are terror attacks on trains. There are hostages taken. Though she is doing her everyday chores, she is disturbed by all these savage attacks. She says:

"when things are in their place,  
they look less difficult".

(the terrorist at my table, pp. 22)

She does not only mean the household things here but the things on broader level. She compares facts with onion rings. The facts which are harsh come finely chopped and sliced. It is very difficult to digest these volatile activities around the world. The minute details of the work in the kitchen which has two possibilities of organization and destruction are finely associated with the constant unrest in the Gaza strip. There is inversion in the effect of knowledge which leaves a stain after giving and taking between two parties e.g. Gaza problem or the creation of Palestine as nation is the creation of such knowledge which some people choose to 'give away' . They have divided the world by cutting and chopping the delicate minds of the people. The giving away of such knowledge makes people violent:

" your generosity turns my hands  
To knives  
The tablecloth to fire"

(the terrorist at my table, pp. 22)

The table cloth which weaves people actually has divided the world by few people. Giving away of such knowledge is itself a travesty. It is the most powerful poem.

She says that she feels that it is raining in outside Jerusalem, which is not auspicious which reminds us of the dooms day the end of the world.

The poem 'who made me?' is the philosophical foundation of the title poem 'the terrorist at my table'. It is the quintessential question expressing the deep rooted spirit of enquiry in the mind of the terrorist. The series of questions start with holding the gun in the hand and end with the terrible anger for the person who has given the gun in that hand. Between these questions, there is the most ironical question of freedom from gun and offering the democracy to the terrorist.

The most quizzical aspect of the mind of the terrorist is expressed in the sweetest desire and partial fulfillment of that desire:

“Who stroked my head  
sang me to sleep  
who fed me”

(the terrorist at my table, pp.  
34)

The feeding hand is contrasted with the hand that has given gun in his hand. His conscience would not have troubled him if the feeding wouldn't have been there. The poet has presented the supreme irony in the life of the terrorist by presenting the contrast between the two hands.

The next poem 'open' is the fine example of the extreme sense of restlessness and the most mysterious and secretive aspects of the poet's personality while it presents the inside view of the mind of the protagonist. It also uses the modern technical term like 'unlocked' as a contrast with the sensitive mind of the narrator, poet. The poem puts before us the most humiliating part of the life of the terrorist and that is people's attitude towards them. He just cannot enter the 'public spaces' like any other individual. He is moving without arms (weapons) and says that his arms are more relax now'. He has dealt with the fear of facing the public at last. He has conquered over his sense of humiliation not by giving the public the license to jeer at him but by giving them their own space to foster hatred towards him. Each one of her poems deals with various types of human situation and there is strong inversion of meaning in all poems, similarly in this poem she makes the terrorist to jeer at the people whose lives are locked within the false and sham ideas of the so called life of terrorist. It is a sort of the state of being locked in one's own prison. On the other hand the terrorist accepts people's humiliations and by giving them their space, he unlocks his own life.

'The Password' is another poem in the same continuation of the previous poem 'open'. It is not possible to live one's life 'unlocked' unless one remembers the password. We cannot get into the system that we own without the password. We have to remember the clues to the password like our date of birth or the name of first lover it could be the maiden name of our mother or anything like 'the city', 'the village', 'the road', where we belong. In the situation of losing the password, you have to bid a good bye to all the processes.

'Jaan', the next poem in the theme of protest speaks about the relationship between terrorists and women in their life. The first among those women is the women who call him Johnnie. Actually the protagonist is known by the names by which all these women address him. There are so many types of personalities merged within the same person who is called by four names. Jaan, Johnnie, Janu, John. He is unable to maintain and lead the constant integrated life like an ordinary individual. His craving for love is called 'another kind of light' by the poet. He cannot continue the relationship with any one particular woman because he will be caught, once his identity is revealed. He has to move quickly onwards and reach out to a new doorway each time he craves for love. There is a deep sense of sympathy for the terrorist who is denied the most fundamental human thing like love from any one woman for his life time.

In the poem 'Never trust the daffodils', the poet takes the self of the terrorist to a different level in this poem. The terrorist has been waiting for crocuses that bring spring. He is optimistic that the flowers will surely be there, however his hopes are never fulfilled. Because of this experience he has stopped being romantic and has learnt that things are always ordinary and never extraordinary as one dreams to be. "He has learnt to question the ordinariness of things". Against his expectation, some green shoots, appear in winter and he feels the 'touch of springs'. Still the poet says that he should never trust the daffodils and must never be romantic but realistic to accept the ordinariness of things in his life.

There are a few poems, about love written by the poet. The poem previously discussed which talks about the young terrorist learning to question the ordinariness of things leads us to the togetherness in the poem 'walk'. Both of the poem mention the arrival of seasons especially spring which runs with the protagonist and her lover through the park. Both of them recall the people who came in their lives and became the part of their relationship.

Spring leads to summer and meanwhile she gets the warmth of his love (passion) when they spend long time together when her hand warms herself in his hand. The whole intention of walking together is fighting the frost by breathing together and the whole fantasy of walk and hand in hand lends to the culmination point in the poem when we learn that he has been languishing on her lap when she waits for him to wake up.

There is a sense of rebellion even in the love poems of Imtiaz Dharker. In the poem 'Opaque' she expresses very special love for herself as a woman. This is the most beautiful love poem, so far as the woman being a woman poet and her own description of herself as a woman are concerned. She doesn't approve her clothes to be not yielding to her desires. From times immemorial men have dictated the apparel of the women to be oppressive to her desire to wear clothes as per her fantasy. Men have no right at all to pin point the sensual outlines of her cloth. A woman must have freedom to choose what she wishes to wear. The poet takes the highest flight of her fancy in saying that her dream love should customize a costume a light for her and his vision should pass through a medium of 'blue' when she feels through that vision. She says:

"Weave me a dress of light,  
a net made out of blue"

(the terrorist at my table, pp. 101)

She wishes that dress to be "switched on runways in the dawn"

Her intention to make the dress to be 'runway' is that the flight of his groping senses misdirected in the sky of his mind should land perfectly at particular point of her physical existence.

'In Camera' is a poem speaking about the relationship of gadgets like camera to the creative process of the poetic mind. A camera makes record of all her movements on and along the street. It is not only the static camera that takes picture but also the video camera that sends your clips of your opinions and stories to all corners of the world. It is honest with the person and it is also acerbic in stating the truth. Camera reminds her of the person with whom she spent the beautiful moments and whose 'untouched' glass of wine is lying idle on

the table. The camera doesn't make a choice between what to show and what not to show.

'Anarkali Lahor', is the poem, quite unique to be a poem in English and dedicated to the most romantic tragic woman of the Moghul period Anarkali and dedicated to the central character, Anarkali, the memory of herself. Anarkali is like the omnipresent God living in the minds of all those sensitive minds who share the common grief of her tragic death. The poem is written for Khushwant Singh who loved Lahore as much as the poet. The poet feels the anklets of Anarkali in the water courses of Shalimar her shadows march towards the pomegranate blossom, where the love lorn prince touches his forehead. Lahore is the continuation of the romantic past where Anarkali still lives in the minds and memories of the people. She is beyond the human definition of sacred and profane. She has entered the poetic psyche of Lahore. It is Anarkali who sings Faiz and Iqbal is her rhythm. The place where her story took place does not resonate anymore with romantic songs of Anarkali. Here people whisper false stories about Anarkali. The cultural ethos of Anarkali is cherished and stayed in the minds of the people in Lahore because of people's emotional support where as people in Delhi have forgotten her, except a few old men. The fond memories of Anarkali lurk from south all to San Francisco to Hong Kong in a different mode. She says that the shadow of Anarkali is breathing inside the minds of all these people. Her shadow alters the climate in the hearts of the people.

The poet seems to have the deep rooted sympathy for the terrorists in general and she seems to have developed intricate relationship with probably a persona of a terrorist in particular. We don't find an over support to the terrorist activities but there is a covert and substantial plea for understanding the inner voice of the terrorist. There is a shocking realization that terrorists have keen sense of beauty and strange passion for love which may not be present in the minds of the material men. In this manner, the poet has expressed the unheard voice of the terrorist in this collection of poems, '*the terrorist at my table*'.

In the next collection of Dharker's poetry, *Leaving Fingerprints* there is an onward journey from previous collections of poetry to *Leaving Fingerprints*. This collection of poems deals with the natural corollary of terrorist activities and that is the battle.

The poem 'A Place Called Battle' is the detailed description of the location called the battle field and the proverbial place known for the battle of Waterloo has been left far behind and she has passed Tone Bridge, High Brooms, Tone Bridge Wells, Wadhurst and Stonegate. And there comes a place called Battle. She remembers her history book in which there were dates which looked like footprints. However here in this place called battle there are the bigger boot prints made by the boys. At the other place, there is the field of poppies and that place is called battle. The poet has surprisingly taken a ticket for this place. The stations that she passes through have become her daily bytes of news-reports which she is supposed to cover. She is a journalist who is supposed to cover these reports. Actually there is a backward and forward journey of time in this poem. The place called battle must be the place where the battle was fought many years ago and the poet has reached this place as if she has reached a fictitious place. She interacts with another persona who is equally interested in this business of delving into the root cause of violence. Therefore the poet says that

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she lives in this place along with that other fictitious persona. She says “these conversations are making space for my voice” (as a poet).

There is a reference to poppies in the second stanza. People tend to forget the all positive aspect of life and they live under the influence of poppies as if they are affected by drugs. The place called battle seems to be a microcosm that projects the microcosm of the larger world outside where people are constantly engaged in violence and battle. The poet is forced to live in this place which is called Battle.

The poem ‘Walling her in’ is the reenactment of the epic romantic incident in immemorial Mogul period in Indian history symbolized in the character of Anarkali. The poet has made the person who was given the job to wall Anarkali in the wall as the narrator of the poem. He is a mason who was simply busy mixing mortar and carting stones. He started walling her in from her feet. He felt her scent before he came to the level of her face. It was the scent of the living thing. Her song stood in front of his face and he understood what she was saying. She was saying his name and the names of his children and his wife as well as the name of his village. She was singing his heart out. The process of walling in Anarkali is described as the most heart-rending incident in the Indian history of love and love making. She doesn’t stop singing even when she bids her last goodbye to the world.

The poet has created the character of mason as the significant person in the history who was given the job of walling the most beautiful woman behind the stones.

In the poem ‘I’m sorry to say’ the poet laments the total neglect of the society of the artist or the poet. The printed form of her poems will not tell the world anything about herself as the person but will only tell that she touched a piece of paper on which she wrote the particular poem. The printed paper will not tell whether she was woman or man or whether she was black or white or also whether she played violence. It will only tell the world that she touched the piece of people to write a poem. She probably means that people should not go beyond the written word to find out any personal information about the poet. Her literary creation is her only identity and existence. She prefers to be known by that identity only and not by anything else like whether she is a man or a woman

The poem ‘What the Palm Reader Said Then’ points out the basic uncertainty in our life. Lines on the palm change your destiny but sometimes lines themselves change like the people in our lives. It is not enough to plan your journey and to be punctual but it is important to notice and keep in mind that there are people who stand in our way, sometimes they are the hindrance in our life and at other times there is someone who is able to listen to a river instead of listening to the final call on the airport. The fate lines fall away from an open hand like the people who walk round you. The palm reader has told these things long ago in the life of the poet. However just like the changing lines that change our fortune the prediction of these lines does not harness that change. Ultimately, the uncertainty in human life prevails at all times. There is a close study of the significance of ‘time’ in our life in this poem. The poem also marks the helplessness of the human being who is a victim of the changing lines and people coming in the way.

The poem 'The Room with two doors' is a philosophical poem dealing with life and death and what happens between. The narrator wants the wine to be passed to her because it is about time to leave that place and the wine may be left unconsumed. Both of them were quite aware that they were there for a while and they were visitors. The host was quite hospitable to both of them and served carafes of wine to them. This might mislead the visitors to think that they were free to stay there in that room having two doors. They might think that they can stay happy time there, drinking and eating and telling stories to each other. These doors stand for the birth and death in our life. We can only enter from one door and we must exit from the other. The wind leads them through one door. The wind stands for the die hard reality in our life which sweeps us and sways us making our life always unstable. The wind has left both of the visitors in the room and waits outside the room moving restless fingers in the trees. The wind is impatient to take the visitors along with him. He keeps on waiting for both of them for some time and tosses them to the earth like 'finished leaves'. The poet has made creative use of the verb and noun 'leaves'. The wine will be in the position to 'leave'; they will leave their place (room) from the other door. The wind tosses them down, like finished leaves and the collection is called *Leaving Fingerprints*. In this manner, there are many varieties of the meaning of exertion 'leaves' in this poem which is associated to the title poem of this collection. Life must be lived full to the brim if one has to consume the glass of life in full and not in part.

As it has been observed in the last paragraph, the poet has made creative use of the expression 'leave' in this collection of poems called 'Leaving Fingerprints'. The most literary meaning of the expression 'Leave' is that things and persons changes their form but they are always there with us. The unfinished wine is left behind by some people, keeping the memories of them alive. The fingerprints stay behind to remind us of those persons who have left us or fingerprints themselves are the persons left behind in a different form.

The real tragedy is this, in this final phrase, the religion which pretends to interpret God on earth, turns a deaf ear to this 'quiet crowd' who are 'thrown together, like thousand prayers, washing against the wall of God'. The poem foreshadows the major question raised in the next collection of poems *Postcards from God*.

The theme of these poems is the relationship between power and sexuality which has been basic to feminist thinking, the polycentric society's conversion of heterosexual love into a tool to subdue women.

Imtiaz Dharker emerges from her poetry as a strong uninhibited personality, honest to herself and daring to call a spade a spade. She places the purdah where it rightfully belongs in the patriarchal society, on the victimizer. This makes her project acquire an emphasis different from that of the usual feminist projects (*Beyond God the Father, Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, pp. 116).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Imtiaz Dharker is observed to be a daring poet in her expression which is amply proved during the study of the poems. It is clear that Imtiaz Dharker is indeed a remarkable in attracting global attention for the first time when we look at her in comparison with other poets who were writing before her. It is

indeed difficult for the women writers to get their works published. The world of publication is dominated by men and this poet gets due credit for getting her works published in India and abroad. Women poets don't seem to be getting enough attention from the critics also. It is her treatment towards love, protest and life which is unique and completely different from all her contemporaries. There is restlessness and a quest in her poetry. Imtiaz Dharker is relatively unexplored but she has been obviously proved to be a powerful poet. In the writings of Dharker one can easily notice that there is a conspicuous restlessness and quest. After close and comparative study of the poems it is seen that Imtiaz Dharker speaks about the marginalization of women and other neglected and unprivileged sections of society like the poor, the needy, the beggars, the victims and sufferers of various social evils and injustice. The striking feeling one comes across from the poems of Imtiaz Dharker that the poet is bold, direct and daring in her creative expressions which is obvious in the poems. Her views and treatment towards religion, God and spirituality have also been unique and different. Indian English poetry has gained momentum as the major contributor to the modern world poetry due to the contribution of the poets like Imtiaz Dharker. The poet possesses distinctly feminine sensibilities. The strong aspect of Imtiaz Dharker is her sense of rebellion against religion, personal life and social customs. She registers her protest and disapproval in emotionally charged language. Her images are steeped, literal as well as metaphorical denotations and connotations.

We have seen a strong individuality and creativity of Imtiaz Dharker who doesn't seem to have received as much attention by the critics and academic circles as their male counterparts. We also have seen that Love is an abstract noun which for some people is meaningless and unattached to anything real or sensible and for others it is a meaningful emotion, and those who are drenched in it, their life, personality, self and their whole world is affected and changed with it. Love plays a very crucial and major role in all the cultures. It is reflected in literature, films, music and on a large context in lives of people also. Love has been theorized by different perspectives in a different areas of study like history, ethics, religion, philosophy, literature and the like. But it was mainly an area of study in philosophy. It has been treated in a variety of ways ranging from physical aspect (animalistic love) to the spiritual love or Bhakti Sankalpana or the Aristotelian concept of two bodies and one soul. The English concept of Friendship roughly captures Aristotle's definition of *philia*, as he writes: "things that cause friendship are: doing Kindness, doing them un-asked, and not proclaiming the fact when they are done. The theoretical discussion on love and friendship was integral to this work. The concept of love in Imtiaz Dharker's writing connotes the visualization of a man and a woman through which the partners involved attain the ultimate goal of their being. For the poet, love is often considered on the one hand an end in itself whereas on the other it is treated as a means to attain greater meaning & significance in life. For poet the concept of love acts as an elixir between the man and the woman rather than confining them to the creature like relationship which involves both the body and mind in an equal proportion that pushes in attainment of the greater satisfaction by the partners involved in it. But the absence of involvement of mind and body will lead to way for frustration and agony between the partners. She craves for a

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possible understanding between man and woman as equally interdependent personalities struggling to measure each other's personality mutually in an atmosphere of what is discussed in earlier chapter as a agape or Christ like charity. There is kind of restlessness and disturbed-ness in her poetry. She craves continuously for the ideal companionship which is almost impossible to get.

We have seen that Dharker exposes the purdah system. It is a rebel and protest against patriarchal society. This protest is international and intentional. It is against religion. Purdah is a symbol of restrictions on women. Her writings are the combination of Calvinist, Islamic and Christian traditions. Women are given the secondary treatment. Men do not own the sin, though they commit it. Men hold the whole religious system of Islam to ransom by creating façade of protecting women by the so called system of purdah. Poet Dharker is the staunch supporter of woman as an individual. Her attack on individual and oppressive social norms is expressed in her poems like 'Purdah I' and 'Purdah II', 'Zarina's Mother' 'Masque' and 'Rope'. The poet also projects the woman as the centre of man-woman relationship. And so the Love is the most significant aspect of life according to the poet. Imtiaz Dharker does not describe the man-woman relationship in the enigmatic terms but, she uses the technical terms to appropriate tricky aspects of this relationship in the modern techno savvy terms. To sum up, there is a feministic consciousness in this poet. She continuously rebels against the prevailing problems of women at different level and upholds the individuality of women. The observations mentioned above indicate at the most crucial points regarding the theme of love and protest.

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