

## IMTIAZ DHARKER (1978)

Imtiaz Dharker was born in Lahore, Pakistan. She was brought up in Glasgow (UK) , where her family moved when she was less than a year old. She is well known British poet, artist and filmmaker. In 2019, she was considered for the position of Poet Laureate, but she withdrew from contention in order to maintain focus on her writing. Presently she has been appointed as Chancellor of Newcastle University from January 2020. She has won Queen's Gold Medal for her English poetry in 2014. She now lives between London and Mumbai.

Dharker is an accomplished artist and documentary filmmaker. All her poetry collections are illustrated by her drawings, which forms an integral part of the books. Home, freedom, travel, geography, and cultural offset, the conflict within the society and the gender policy are the major themes of her poetry. In her collection of poems *Purdah and Other Poems* deals with the various aspects of a Muslim woman's life where Dharker explores the idea of oppression and violence thought to be the product through the culture of Purdah.

### "HONOUR KILLING"

Analysis : Honour killing is a free verse poem about the fight for freedom by a women in men's world. This poem portrays the struggles of women living under the guardianship of superior men. This narrator of the poems seems to break free

from the confined norms which are supposed to be followed by women of the time. On the other hand we see that the narrator is trying to take a stand in her life. After years of subjugation, she is being able to find her own identity. The freedom of being able to express oneself and standing up for her rights to make her own choices about the way she represents herself. She does not want to be defined by her culture, spirituality, clothing or image in the community.

Stanza 1: The first stanza of the poem is about disowning an identity. 'At last' used in the very first line of the stanza suggests that, after the long years of subjugation now the narrator is awakened by the strong courage to take off the black coat of her country. The coat refers to the shield of protection given to her by her protector. And by taking off that symbol of domination she makes the decision to speak out. Black coat of a country connects the narrator to her identity and her country. She wore the coat merely out of habit and which led her to accept the injustice of the time. She states that she was born wearing it suggests that as she was born a girl in the patriarchal society, she then and there had lost her identity, voice and rights. She believed that she had no choice but to live under the guardianship of men. The narrator seems to be disowning the coat and giving justification as to why she felt the need to renounce it. The stanza all together gives the

impression that the narrator has made a final decision to reject the coat.

Stanza 2: The first line of the stanza is a declaration that she getting rid of the veil too. The veil symbolizes the subjugation based on the religious and social ideologies. The veil is also black in colour. It was supposed to make her faithful towards god (religion). But instead she becomes faithless towards her own identity. She no more wants to be hidden behind the veil which keeps her unaware of her worth. She implies that the veil would make her mouth shut as to being a woman she had no freedom of speech, expression and choice. Line 13 and 14 are extremely powerful in conveying the narrator's anger and resentment to her previous self. Her suffering and hardship made her believe that her god has a devil face and the confusion and frustration she felt just resulted in to muting her own voice.

Stanza 3: In this stanza we see the continuation of the same idea of the narrator. Here, she says that she is taking off her 'silks' and 'lacy things'. Silk symbolizes the soft and tender heart of a woman, which enabled her to stay put under the dictatorship of men. Lacy things implies to the culture to drape women's body to enhance her femininity. On the same idea the narrator also rejects to wear those

lacy things to please the dictator's dream. She rejects the idea of how women were supposed to talk, behave and dress. Rather now she would like to choose what she wants to wear. Further in the stanza we find that she points out to those things like 'mangalsutra' and 'rings' which keeps her strained to the fact that she totally belongs to her husband and she lives her whole life according to his will and expectations. These cultural and religious jewelries states that by abiding these cultural codes she had been 'beggared' of her true self. The narrator feels trapped and stripped of her individuality.

Stanza 4: This stanza is the last stanza that begins with the statement of independence and freedom. We see that the narrator is freeing herself from her own skin. The narrator is detaching herself from all level of cultural, religious and social that dictates who she should be. She let go of her 'face', 'flesh' and 'womb'. She removes her face because it is the only thing which will bring about to construct her own face according her own want. She takes off her flesh because her body and flesh has always been owned by others. Womb symbolizes womanhood, only because a child is born with a womb, she is considered as a woman. And the society forces her to accept certain behavior and appearance which allow her to lead her life in subjugation. By disowning these things the narrator is emphasizing how

deeply she wishes to let go of her ties to the person and identity she has once hold.

Stanza 5: The stanza begins with 'Let's see'. It simply means that after taking off her everything, what else is left of her. This stanza focuses on her self-analysis. These lines imply what she has left behind and what she will find in the future. She wants to know whether she can take stand when the ideas and emotion in her heart will 'squeeze past the easy cage of bone'. Easy cage of bones refers to her body. When her ideologies leave her body and meet the world, she wonders if she would continue to stand up for herself.

Stanza 6: Again the stanza begins with 'Let's see' directing the readers to the future for the second time. The word 'making', refers to choices she has made in the previous stanzas. She is now able to make her own choices according to her will. The word 'crafting' refers to the ability to make and create her own body, face and cloths of her own choice. And 'plotting' refers to the idea that she is now strong and capable of making her plan for present life as well as for the future, instead of relying on fulfilling the expectation of the society. The last line of the poem suggests that she has removes herself physically from the culture that was forcing her to not be herself. She

will live according to her new founded geography (identity). After deconstructing the version of her that her society constricted she construct her true self at her new geography- new self away from the extreme culture that oppress her.