



RELOCATION OF THE FEMALE VOICE THROUGH DIA'S CHARACTER IN UZMA ASLAM KHAN'S TRESPASSING

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Abstract- This research aims to interpret Pakistani women and focuses on exploring Dia's character in Uzma Aslam Khan's masterpiece *Trespassing* (2003). The research highlights the fact that Uzma Aslam Khan encourages her female characters to establish an identity of their own and Khan supports feminine consciousness in Pakistani society. The critical study will substantiate that Uzma Aslam Khan allows her female characters to regain their status as individuals having free-will, having a right to question, and to develop an identity of their own by never giving up and by fighting down their problems. Through transitivity analysis, presented by Sara Mills in *Feminist Stylistics* (1995), this research will trace the representation of Dia's character. Specifically, the research employs material and mental process from *Feminist Stylistics*. Through the textual analysis, it is shown that Dia's character presented in the novel holds material process dominance. Analysis of Dia's character highlights that women with dominant mental process have been replaced with a new woman who is more active through her actions. Furthermore, she is independent, strong and vivid in vision, but still trying to present her voice to opposite and same gender. The significance of this critical study is that women have always been portrayed as weak and submissive but this research highlights women as having a strong and fierce character. Also, the research addresses a fundamental social issue of Pakistan and gives an insight into Pakistani society. Future studies can extend this research by increasing the sample excerpts from the novel or by comparing female characters with male characters.

Keywords: female characters, representation, new woman, voice, transitivity

I. INTRODUCTION

In Pakistani context when the word woman is mentioned, the first thing that prevails our thought is the physical aspects of that gender. The focus is not only on the physical appearance but also on the physical efforts which relate to that gender e.g. routine of doing house chores is the prominent of all others. We see the similar mindset among both genders over the years and majority of them still hesitate to defy these stereotype (Chen 1). However, many of the stereotypes and generalizations that are relevant to women are still appropriate in contexts around the world. For example, it is quite known thing among people from distinct cultures that women are prone to talk more in their life (Sandberg 137). These all generalization were actually derived on the basis of the expectations from women in conventional society. An English Proverb directly refers to this as it says "silence is the best ornament of a woman" (Coates 25).

Women all over the world face coarse behavior in order to meet society's expectations (Tobias 78). They experience oppression from patriarchy politically, economically, psychologically and socially in almost every aspect of their life where the patriarchy reigns (Chesler 3). However, in eighteenth-century roles associated with both men and women were different in Britain. Olsen further explains that during that period, the duty of men was towards supporting a family, while, women's task was to take care of the children as well as maintain home (7). For example, during that time they didn't have the right to practice voting rights, they received nominal wages as compared to men in the same occupation and they faced clear restriction by society to enter in number of professions.

The question which deals with women's orientation in our society has also been a part of Pakistani fiction since 1947. Pakistani female characters presented in the works of Pakistani writers focus on highlighting customs, norms, values and traditions that are oriented towards shaping the life of a woman in our society. It is also reflected in the works of many of the Pakistani English fiction writers. In the early days, after independence, names such as; Bapsi Sidhwa, Zaibunissa Hamidullah, Zulfikar Ghose and Sara Suleri came forward as major ones to tackle the question and included women as major characters in their writings. However, in the recent times, names such as Mohsin Hamid, Muhammad Hanif, Talat Abbasi, Kamila Shamsi and Uzma Aslam Khan are dealing with the similar question.

When we examine Pakistani fiction, we find number of things that have changed over the period of time. In Pakistani fiction of the early time, women have been presented as subordinate to men which also reflects

the societal structure of that specific time. We have rare examples such as Fatima Jinnah and Ruth Pfau and Safia Begum, portraying the real power of women. However, other than these few names, females in our society are always seen as the suppressed characters and are dependent on men.

In *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and *Moth Smoke* (2000), women are not presented as suppressed or minor gender in the society. However, their female characters presented political and spiritual change. Following this, two recent novels *The Sweetness of Tears* (2011) and *Yasmeen* (2015) respectively written by Nafisa Haji and Sophia Khan present female characters as brave and understanding characters as women in these texts face society's questioning, criticism and subjugated circumstances and at the same time they are fulfilling their roles being in family.

Uzama Aslam Khan has written number of novels to highlight different issues, revealing the real face of country and culture of the country. She uses multiple characters in her writing with the major emphasis on the female characters. Khan's novels *Trespassing* (2003) and *The Geometry of God* (2008) concentrate on presenting female voices raising their individuality in a patriarchal society.

Trespassing (2003) by Uzma Aslam Khan is a novel of love, deception, rivalry and destination. This tale portrays the position of female characters in Pakistani society. Through this novel, Khan digs into the world of contrasting radicals, from the suffocating demands of the traditions and family to the political brutality, from the charismatic silk farms to the brimming streets of Karachi full of corruption and hypocrisy.

The central character is Dia, who is the daughter of Riffat. Just like Riffat, Dia is also free-spirited. She is representing a girl, who is independent in her thinking and free to marry the love of her life. Dia also seems to be deeply interested in the silk farm business of her mother. Things become challenging for her when she meets Daanish. The life of Dia is presented as full of roller coaster turns in this novel.

Another major character is Riffat, a strong and an innovative business woman. Riffat had a passionate relationship with her husband Shafqat in the late sixties, but this relation fades away. In early Nineteens, Riffat through her constant efforts attains the glory in her silk farm business. Along with her successful business, she is also a widow and a mother. The presence of Riffat is most interesting in this novel, she is presented as independent and pragmatic. Also, she is representing a strong and contended mother which is very rare in this society.

The next important character in the novel is of Anu. She is a true representative of the traditional wife and mother in our society. Anu is presented as disliked personality by her husband and was always the point of fun for everyone in the society of her husband. She is portrayed as traditional Pakistani wife, spending most of her time working in the kitchen, doing dishes and cooking food for her husband and for her only son Daanish. After the death of her husband, Anu seems to be a very controlling and needy Pakistani mother, who pushes her son Daanish into an arranged marriage with Dia's best friend Nini.

Another character in this novel is Nini who is the best friend of Dia. Nini is representing a dutiful and obedient daughter, who is trying to be extra dutiful to make up for her early British education as well as trying to be liked by Anu so that she can marry her son Daanish.

Trespassing (2003) was short-listed for the Commonwealth Writer's prize in 2003. Khan raises a strong female voice in her novel. It presents Pakistani women's image from the eyes of Uzma Aslam Khan.

The research focuses on the exploration of female characters through transitivity in Uzma Aslam Khan's *Trespassing*. This research will be of great use to see Pakistani women as strong and independent, striving to raise their voice as Pakistani women have always been presented as weak and submissive who don't try to raise their voice.

Research Questions

1. How Dia's character presents feminine consciousness in her different role as a friend, daughter, and as a beloved/wife in *Trespassing* (2003)?
2. How resistance against society is portrayed by Uzma Aslam Khan through Dia in *Trespassing* (2003)?
3. How transitivity choices presented by Sara Mills are used by Uzma Aslam Khan for the portrayal of Dia in *Trespassing* (2003)?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will highlight the scholarly research carried out on Uzma Aslam Khan's *Trespassing* (2003) in order to contextualize and narrow down this research. Furthermore, this section will also focus on the evolution of Transitivity Analysis as a textual analysis framework. In past, *Trespassing* (2003) has been analyzed through various perspectives which generated different interpretation of the text.

Irum et al. explored *Trespassing* (2003) in their article from the economic perspective to identify the impact of commodity culture on contemporary Pakistani society (17). Kabir in her research "Deep topographies in

the fiction of Uzma Aslam Khan” also examined *Trespassing* (2003) by Uzma Aslam Khan, for analyzing the deployment of a complex symbolic apparatus by the author that are constructed from prehistory, geography and history (173). Kabir found that Khan delineated a deep topography for Pakistan as a source of emotional as well as symbolic re-rooting (173).

Yaqoob focused on the comparison of Pakistani English fiction in her study and found that characters especially female characters presented in *Trespassing* (2003) provide space to women who are confident, wise, and independent to take charge of their own and other oppressed women in our society (10).

Saleem in her article “Marketing Otherness: A Re-Orientalist gaze into Pakistani fiction with focus on *Trespassing* and *Typhoon*” focused on exploring Uzma Aslam Khan’s *Trespassing* (2003) and Qaisera Shahraz’s *Typhoon* (2003) from the perspective of Re-Orientalism based on Graham Huggans and Lisa Lau’s work for essentialized, reduced and skewed representation in the fictional work (149). He found that in both novels process of self othering is continuously present, both have used techniques of re-Orientalism in projecting the indigenous cultures.

Furthermore, Rehman in her inquiry “Karachi, Turtles, and the Materiality of Place: Pakistani Eco-cosmopolitanism in Uzma Aslam Khan’s *Trespassing*” talked about eco-cosmopolitanism in Uzma Aslam Khan’s novel by specifically focusing on the techniques presented by Ursula K. Heise.

Burton employed transitivity choices for the purpose of exploring and representing that the use of transitivity processes contribute to the character’s passivity or agency (23). Her study on Sylvia Plath’s novel *The Bell Jar* (1963) presented that it is not in the hands of narrator to control her environment and herself. Burton’s feminist analysis highlighted numerous differences in power relationship between the doctors and the patients. The use of in-equal power demonstrated that the female patients have limited powers to influence anything in the society, while the doctors have sufficient powers to influence the treatment process (67).

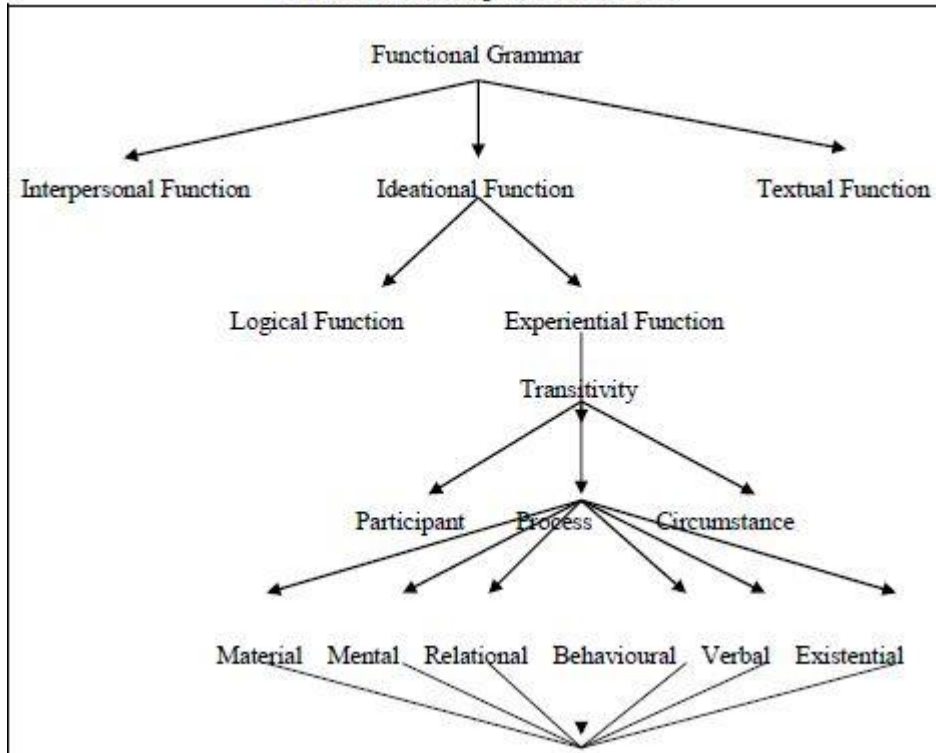
The above discussion highlights the fact that the novel has not been explored through transitivity analysis which focuses the significance of this paper.

III. METHODS OF THE STUDY

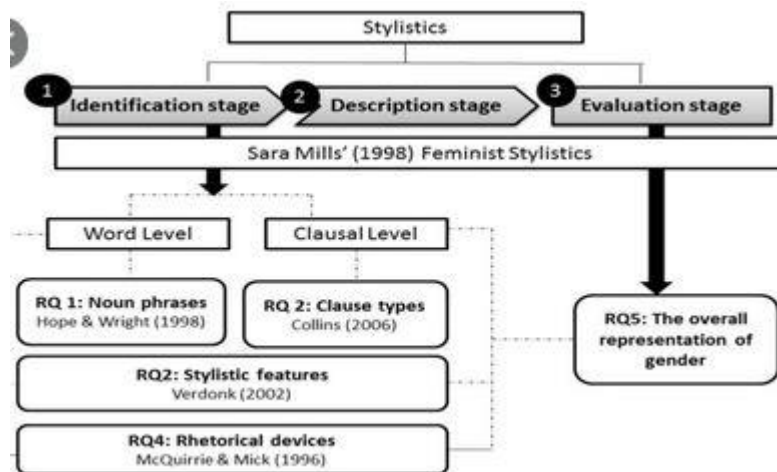
This research is qualitative in nature. The research considered *Trespassing* (2003) as primary text. Books and articles are used as secondary sources. Sara Mills’ framework has been used for textual analysis from the novel.

Sara Mills is the author of numerous books and has vast experience of research. Her research orientation focuses on gender and language, social media, and politeness. She presented her work *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) which is the focus of this research and it was first published in 1995. In *Feminist Stylistics*, Mills has offered a feminist-stylistic approach to analyze literary texts. She initially put forwarded the textual analysis model at word level, sentence level and discourse level. According to her, the orientation of feminist stylistic analysis is not to describe sexism in written texts, but the focus also revolves around analyzing, how information is presented in text in the form of any point of view, metaphor, agency or transitivity and has close relation with the gender.

Table 1 The conceptual framework



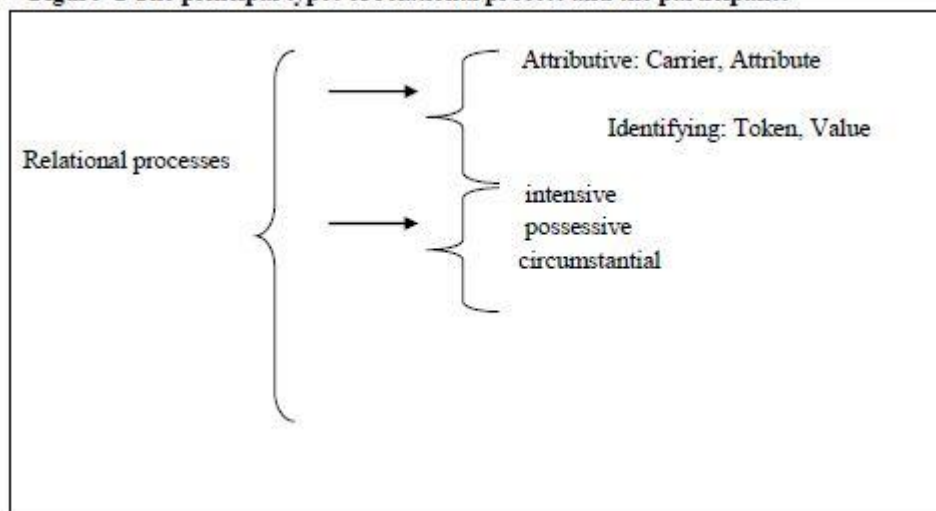
Transitivity analysis works on three W's in which the relationship of who does what to whom is analyzed. Different patterns of transitivity analysis are oriented towards the expression of internal and external experiences in textual analysis which is regarded as the ideal function of language. The specific aims are concerned with the explanation of power relations that are present between two or more conflicting parties of human beings and the representation of these conflicting characters in their surroundings (Wales 466).



Theoretical Framework

In his 1971 essay, Halliday demonstrated that the use of certain systematic transitivity choice can provide help reader to differentiate the world-views. As in the case of Golding's novel, the world-views of characters in the novel, Halliday presented the diverse use of transitivity choices. Halliday also argued that these transitivity choices are relevant to agency, embody a perception of the world where the characters of the text are prone to operate within, but not on nature, where they behold varied senses as the receiver of any action instead of the instigator of the action. Thus, the analysis of patterns for exploring transitivity choice patterns to present comparatively more general statements relevant to the characters own perception of their self and others (37).

Figure 1 The principal types of relational process and the participants



This study's main focus is on Dia's character in *Trespassing (2003)*. The research focuses on the material and mental process of Dia in the novel.

IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis of Material and Mental Process in *Trespassing (2003)*

Following the model of Sara Mills, *Trespassing (2003)* has been analyzed. Material and mental actions of the central character have been analyzed from the novel. The analysis has presented us with the representation of different female characters in the society. Their roles, difficulties and the perception of society about them.

I. Material and Mental Process of the Character of Dia

Dia is the female protagonist of this novel. After the analysis of her character, we come to know that she is a true representative of today's independent female. From her actions, we can see that she is more active in her material actions as compared to the mental one. Furthermore, data is observed from the analysis of the character of Dia in her different roles in the novel.

a) As a Friend

As a friend, Dia is highly concerned for her friend Nini and her life. Their relationship in this novel is full of ups and downs. Dia always tries her best to make her friend happy, despite of their arguments on so many topics, they love to tease each other and always throw pranks for this purpose. Dia wants Nini to make her own decisions independently about her life and stops her not to rush in some relationship just because of her parents' will. From the role of Dia, we come to know that she is materially active. For example, 'Look. I said I was sorry.' Dia leaned into the wall of the dining room, popping mulberries with one hand, holding the phone with the other" (Khan 90). "Material Action Intention"

Though she pranks Nini but she does not want to lose her friendship. "Dia smacked her forehead in dismay. 'Of course'" (Khan 96) "Material Action Intention"

Dia does not want Nini to break off their friendship so she is ready to try out any strategy to get her back as a friend, "Dia decided to use the strategy that had brought them together in the first place, when their math teacher paired them up to solve a sum, advising: 'when in doubt, count your fingers'" (Khan 93). "Material Action Intention"

Dia considers Nini a fool as she decides to marry an unknown man. Dia says, "She's a fool, Inam Gul, don't you forget about it" (Khan 94). "Material Action Intention"

Slowly and gradually as the novel moves forward, tension grows between two, both of them start making harsh comments about each other and their parents but Dia still tries to make her relation better with her best friend. For example, Dia tries to recall Nini about the way they used to think, "Oh please,' Dia cut her

off. 'Like Ama? She used to be our role model, remember?' How conveniently Nini used Riffat when it suited her and condemned Riffat when it didn't. That was just how the public treated her mother-as a useful name to drop. Nini was as two-faced as the rest of them" (Khan 114). "Material Action Intention"

Though Dia is against Nini's decision but she still cares for her and wants to tell her worth, "Dia wanted to be the one to take her hand now. She wanted to say, you're beautiful, desirable, and will have many chances yet. Good chances" (Khan 116). "Material Action Intention"

Their relationship completely changes when Daanish comes in between them. Dia on one side feels that she is betraying her best friend by building a relationship with him but on the other side, she also wants to thrive her relationship with Daanish. At last, their trust diminishes for forever. Dia is observed materially less active and mentally more active when it comes to apologize for her own mistakes. Though she considers losing the friendship of Nini as a loss, but she is still confused whether she is responsible for it or not. For example, "She missed her friend. Never again would she love another woman with such ease. Their trust, impervious for nine years, was gone forever.... Dia considered it her second-greatest loss, after her father. Only this time, contrary to what Daanish insisted, she was responsible. Or was she? (Khan 289) "Mental Internal Cognition"

b) As a Daughter

The relation of Dia with her mother is very emotional and strong. Her mother raised her as an independent and liberal girl and they talk about every topic and discuss everything openly. It is observed that she also misses her father and reminisces the old time. Dia loves her mother and is seen materially more active in her actions as compared to the mental actions. Dia is quite considerate towards her mother. Through her mother's appearance, she is able to understand what her mother is going through, "Dia alone looked close enough to see the signs of weariness: sometimes, when Riffat's ulcers made her wince, she forgot to color the gray roots of her curls or conceal the bags under her eyes.... her efficacy revealed cracks-instead of studying her notes on farm productivity, like Dia, she was seen gazing dreamily at butterflies and clouds" (Khan 199). "Material Action Intention"

Dia admires her mother's "strong nerves" (Khan 197). For example, "Riffat would have a plan, and unlike Dia's disastrous one at the Quran Khwani, she would not leak. How she wished for her mother's strong nerves and sense of purpose, intimidating as it was" (Khan 197). "Material Action Intention"

For Dia, her mother is the strongest lady despite of all the odds. We observe that when Riffat tries to tell her something about her dark past, Dia could not tolerate it and here we see her doing mental process more as compared to material process. So, it is observed that Dia is passive in terms of emotions regarding her mother. For example, When Riffat tells her about her own difficulties, Dia gets uncomfortable with the conversation as the conversation was suggesting that "she too would have to think about these things" (Khan 202). "Mental Internal Cognition"

Dia does not want to hear Riffat's story about how she and her father got married as she thinks that "she didn't want to know. If they'd little between them, she wouldn't hear it. The man was dead now. It wasn't fair" (Khan 202). "Mental Internal Cognition"

"Dia studied her intentionally. But Riffat's face gave away nothing." (Khan 202) "Mental Internal Cognition"

c) As a Lover

As a lover, we come to know that there is a strong chemistry between Dia and Daanish. At first, Dia is seen nervous whether to jump into the physical relation with Omar or not as she thinks whether it's too quickly or not. But later it is seen that she herself wants Daanish more, which highlights her feminine desires. Here we see from her role that she is doing more mental process and is not submissive in her relationship. The good side of their relationship seems to be short-lived as their argument begins right after their first meet up, when Dia asks Daanish about his life in America. Dia wants to take her decisions by keeping Daanish in her mind which shows that she is serious about him. So we observe her character shifting from material to mental process. For example, "Daanish, I want you to share more of your other life with me" (Khan 294). "Material Action Intention"

Despite of their misunderstandings, Dia seems to save her relation and is materially active in it. She wants to get closer to him but due to the cold response of Daanish, she changes her mind. For instance, "He walked one step ahead of her. His spine was dark, sinewy ladder. She lifted a finger to touch each bow of muscle, but changed her mind" (Khan 297). "Material Action Supervention"

Daanish seems to be confused, he wants to be in a relationship with Dia but at the same time he wants to make his mother happy by accepting the girl she has selected for him. After solving their issues, Dia is materially active to thrive her relation with Daanish.

Even after getting Daanish, Dia sometimes seems to be unhappy from her relationship and is seen doing mental action. For instance, "with the sea crashing into the cave and the walls bellowing like a furious monster awakening.... The mild terror she always felt when the ocean wrapped around her was all the more acute now, with the fiendish cave on one side, and a fiendish lover on the other. She knew which one to walk away from" (Khan 300). "Mental Internal Cognition"

After Daanish goes, Dia feels lonely, so she sees world from his eyes but at the same time, she feels miserable and helpless. For example, "She began to see her world from his eyes, as if the rain had pulled her into the sea, and all the land dwellers had changed to their earlier, watery state" (Khan 301). "Mental External Perception"

Another example is, "She held herself tight, cold and miserable. The opposite was happening to her" (Khan 301). "Material Action Intention"

V. CONCLUSION

By applying the framework of Sara Mills, material and mental process of the character of Dia from *Trespassing* (2003) offer a new and different way of perceiving the novel. The objective of this analysis is to identify the representation of female characters in the novel through Dia's character. The collected data from the novel has been analyzed at two levels, Material Action and Mental Action.

The main female character Dia in *Trespassing* (2003) by Khan has been presented as materially dominant. Dia is the woman who lives her life by choosing her personal autonomy. We see in the novel that she has been given with the autonomy to do things according to her own will, but at the same time she remains a trustworthy personality.

Dia is the daughter of strong and independent business woman and her mother is a continuous support of her. From the analysis, we see that Dia is very close and open to her mother than any other person. They discuss every matter whether right or wrong. So from this, we interpret that despite of the problems that Dia faces, her mother is always by her side and due to her presence, she becomes stronger.

This study finds that Dia's material process dominates as she possesses strong and professional attitude, she clears the point that woman in 21st century have completely different dimensions and notions. In her character, we find no male dependency which shows the freedom of this era's women.

To sum up, Uzma Aslam Khan in her novel *Trespassing* (2003) portrays a strong female character through Dia as her character has a strong will of her own and she shows resistance towards the traditional beliefs and ideas of being a female in Pakistani society. Hence, Khan relocates female voice in Pakistani society as strong and empowered.

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