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## IMTIAZ DHARKER: A GENERAL ESTIMATE AS A POET

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The main aim of this research study is to show that ImtiazDharker has touched the basic issues concerned with the women such as, women's identity, exploitation, harassment etc. After describing and exploring the various themes in the selected poems, an attempt has been made to point out how ImtiazDharker is different from the rest of the contemporary women poets in treating sensitive feminine issues. Contemporary poets also have talked about women and their problems but ImtiazDharker has talked about the same without any hesitation and fear about the society.

**KEY WORDS:**Contemporary Poet, childhood, home, exile, freedom, journey, gender politics, religion strife, geographical and cultural displacement, communal conflict, nationality, Identity crisis, feminine sensibility, women's struggle for freedom,etc..

### **INTRODUCTION:**

ImtiazDharker was born in Lahore in 1954, grew up in Glasgow, Scotland where her family had relocated when she was less than one year old and now lives in India. She went to a Protestant school, but also had a religious upbringing, a koranic school, her parents sent her to in the weekends rather than considering that her school education clashed with her family background.

She was educated in Scotland where she received M. A. in English Literature & Philosophy. She broke with her Pakistani family and married an Indian author from Hindu society. She moved to India after her marriage with an Indian, Anil Dharker, journalist, former editor of Debonair and well-known Columnist. He was the Founder and Director of the Mumbai International Literary Festival and Literature Live. Because of this, her family completely cut off all ties with her and she did not see or hear from them for the next fifteen years.

She has a daughter, Ayesha who is today a successful Britain-Indian actress. After the death of her first husband she moved to London and married a Welshman, Simon Powell in 2007. He was welsh, entrepreneur, the creator of Poetry Live, an organization which encourage young people from all over the world to read and write poetry. A series of events directed at GCSE and A-level students, where contemporary poets read their work to the children at various venues around the country. He died in 2009 after an eleven year-long battle with cancer. ImtiazDharker currently divides her time between the United Kingdom and Mumbai. She often describes herself as Scottish Muslim Calvinist, born in Lahore and adopted by India. She is also a documentary filmmaker. One of her documentaries won the Silver Lotus Award for the best short film in 1980. She is also an artist who has exhibited her work here and abroad.

She had a fairly traditional Muslim upbringing. She had freedom in terms of the education but less Social freedom. There was political pressure to ostracize her especially after her sister married an Englishman.

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Imtiaz Dharker was fond of music. She took interest in listening ghazals, Mukesh and Mohamed Rafi. She was a practitioner of languages. She showed interest in speaking Punjabi, Urdu and English. She tours regularly with Poetry Live, which provides an opportunity for GCSE pupils in England and Wales to see and hear live performances from a selection of the poets. In a special master class for young adults, Imtiaz Dharker teaches aspiring young poets the secrets of writing great poetry, focusing on the details of crafting a poem, such as line breaks, choice of words, rhythm and structure.

She met a number of good friends in Scotland. The school in Scotland was unusual. It had very strong values. They tried to encourage independence of thought. She once organized an event for which she invited members of different religions to talk about their Faiths- a Buddhist monk-, a rabbi and others. The school was a little worried but went along with it. They were strict but they also accepted that they needed to know about other ways of thought. The school also made her value austerity. Perhaps there was an over emphasis on it. But simple things like being on time were hallowed.

### **I.II.i. Her Major Works:**

Imtiaz Dharker has published six volumes of Poetry:

- i. Purdah and Other Poems (1989)*
- ii. Postcards from God (1994)*
- iii. I Speak for the Devil (2003)*
- iv. The Terrorist at my Table (2006)*
- v. Leaving Fingerprints (2009)*
- vi. Over the Moon (2014)*

While *Purdah and Other Poems (1989)* and *Postcards from God (1994)* were published in India, another volume also called *Postcards from God*, which combines the poems from her two previous books was published in England by Bloodaxe Books in 1997. Her other collections are also published by Bloodaxe Books publication, England.

She also illustrates her own books with elegant black-and-white drawings, and has also exhibited her works in Mumbai, Delhi, London, New York and Hong Kong as well as in other Indian cities.

Her poetry has been included in the AQA GCSE English Anthology, and in 2008. She has been on the judging panel of the Manchester Poetry Prize. She is a fellow of the Royal Society in Literature and was the poet in residence at Cambridge University Library in 2013.

### **I.II.ii. Her Films:**

Imtiaz Dharker is also a documentary film-maker, with more than 300 films and audio-visuals to her credit. She has filmed about many subjects, from street children to cancer treatment and the prevention of disabilities in 1980; she has been awarded the Silver Lotus for the best short film by the President of India. Many of her documentaries are concerned with social problems especially among the rural or poorer communities in India.

Dharker's films are also 'social concern' films. There was a film for policemen which suggested that there was an alternative to suggest street children to Dongri remand home in South Central Bombay. The alternative was the clubs for street children where they can have their own lockers, have bath, watch television. Another film was for a proposed South Asia design Centre aimed at linking at the craftsman to the customer. The craftsmen are not always well advised about what sells. So, perhaps someone who has traditionally made daggers could learn to make stainless steel cutlery. She is interested in films on women

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and children. Another film was on the architecture of India where she worked with architects such as Charles Correa and this was for the Festival of India. She was able to learn about the myths behind the structures. In Dharavi, some people have used the detritus of the city-blue plastic, corrugated sheeting and bits and pieces to recreate a replica of the village they came from in Gujarat, with buildings around a courtyard, and a tulsi plant in the center.

In 1980, started SOLO a company for the production, scripting and direction of video films. 1980 to the Present, over 300 films and audio-visuals including:

- The Festivals of India - In Japan, USA, Germany
- Vistara - Architecture of India
- Shelter - On Street Children
- Sadhana -On Children in need of Special Care
- UNICEF - Leprosy Case themselves Study
- Concern India -On Helping people help themselves
- CRY - Child Relief and You
- South Asian Design Centre - On the Crafts-People of the Region
- The World Population Council - On Productive Health
- National Centre for Performing Arts - On the Centre
- Tata Concern Hospital - On the Cancer Treatment
- IMPACT India- On the Prevention of Disability

#### **I.II.iii. Awards:**

ImtiazDharker won the Silver Lotus Award by the President of India for the best short film in 1980. She also got The Queen's Gold Medal for her collection *Over the Moon* was recently published in 2014 by Bloodaxe publication.

#### **I.II.iv. Award Winning Documentaries:**

- IMPACT- The Prevention of Disability
- CRY- Child Relief and You
- All India Artist's Association- BalrajSahni Award.

#### **I.II.v. Anthologies:**

- **2002:** *Staying Alive (ed.) Neil Astely (Bloodaxe)*
- **2004:** *Out of fashion (ed.) Carol Ann Duffy (faber)*
- **2004:** *Being Alive (ed.) Neil Astely (Bloodaxe)*
- **2007:** *Answering Back (ed.) Carol Ann Duffy (Picador)*
- **2011:** *Being Human (ed.) Neil Astely (Bloodaxe)*

(<http://www.imtiazdharker.org>)

#### **I.III. Poetic Collections of ImtiazDharker:**

ImtiazDharker has written six collections of Poems:

- i. Purdah and Other Poems (1989)*
- ii. Postcards from God (1994)*

- iii. *I speak for the Devil (2003)***
- iv. *The Terrorist at my Table (2006)***
- v. *Leaving Fingerprints (2009)***
- vi. *Over the Moon (2014)***

Her collections of poems are published by the poetry publishing house Bloodaxe. She deals with childhood, home, exile, freedom, journey, gender politics, religion strife, geographical and cultural displacement, communal conflict, nationality, Identity crisis, feminine sensibility, women's struggle for freedom, etc. The present work focuses on the thematic concerns in her works. The poetic collections are discussed in brief.

**I.III.i. *Purdah (1989):***

Dharker 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, and her feelings of exile. Her sensibility is concerned with relationship between mother-daughter, daughter-in-law and son-in-laws. She explores evil side in Islamic culture, where it is important for women to wear *Purdah*. It becomes symbol of their culture, where it is important for women to wear *Purdah*. It becomes symbol of their culture, having no freedom at all. In her poems, 'gender' becomes vital importance.

**I.III.ii. *Postcards from God (1997):***

Dharker's concern for socio-political events expresses her anguish about the suffering of common man in the face of communal violence and politics. The poetess says, the god created multicultural society and it was expected that the bonds between communities will strengthen and a complete ideal society will evolve out of it. But this dream of god totally defeated. Communal violence broke out and sufferings inflicted on innocent common people. For this, Dharker blames politics and politicians in a very aggressive way. The scene of violence, exploitation, fear, and disharmony makes the poet restless. As sensitive woman she records her impressions on a poignant way. She writes: God created society for peaceful living. This living is totally shattered and this oppresses her sensitive mind. She points out that woman are the first victims of communal violence and exploitation. Her feminine sensibility covers a wider social plane. These poems record a sharp cry of female against socio-political violence and politics in India. God's dream of ideal and peaceful world is totally shattered and now God is politicized and man is satanised.

**I.III.iii. *ISpeak for the Devil (2001):***

Dharker's poetry is not about self- reflexive introspection but about self-belief in the potential to bring about a change by evoking the Dharker not only speaks as a Muslim woman but represents womanhood as a whole. She intends to cross the boundaries of name, religion and nationality. Feeling of rootlessness, lack of freedom in speech, identity crisis, religious anomalies etc. are sensed in her poems in her book *I speak for the devil*. This book explores the condition of women irrespective of geographical boundaries.

**I.III.iv. *The Terrorist at my Table (2006):***

In this collection of poems ImtiazDharker talks about humanity's existence. She focuses on physical, emotional, religious and nationalizes attitudes, assumptions of human beings. However, she

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does not highlight social situation, political activities and violent actions of human beings. In her poems of this collection she refers to the violent provocative activities of a terrorist. But she reveals various images of that terrorist. She looks at him as a terrorist, a freedom fighter, a nationalist warrior, and a martyr. She also looks at a terrorist as if he were her son to indicate his innocence. She shows consciousness of terrorists and their victims in the context of tensions of a Muslim person after 9/11 attack in the U.S.A. and the earlier attack in England. Her poems refer to a human link with fearful activities in various areas.

**I.III.v. *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009):**

Imtiaz Dharker is a great poet reflects on some of the salient themes of lyric poetry: the self in identity flux, migration, travel, time, women and men, politics, particularly politics. She is also an accomplished artist, and all her collections are illustrated with her drawings. *Leaving Fingerprints* is her fourth book from Bloodaxe. She is a dislocated poet who tries to explore the reality of her identity through her journey into various countries, cultures and religions. In her poems there are serious issues or themes of dislocation, religious conflict related to physical existence as a woman in the postmodern patriarchal world. The 'fingerprints' of the title need to be understood as traces people leave on geographically, historically and socially- demarcated landscapes after they are dead, independently of one's own personal geography and ancestry. Conventions, objects and scraps of paper are all building up to form the fingerprinted landscapes each of us lives on. This is an interesting re-articulation of concepts such as belonging and marginality, and one that is clearly independent from any theories. Everything is connected in this universe: fingerprints to landscape, landscape to ancestry, ancestry to identity- and identity to fingerprints again.

**I.III.vi. *Over the Moon* (2014):**

This is the last collection of poems by Imtiaz Dharker. *Over the Moon* which won her the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. In this collection she talks about myriad of intensely personal emotions with remarkable skills and control and gives her poems a further context by her black and white illustrations which accompany her words. The theme of death and sorrow is found in this collection of poetry. The poems are set in London, where she has built a new life with- and since the death of her husband Simon Powell. The poems are of joy and sadness, of mourning and celebration: poems about music and feet, church bells, beds, café tables, bad language and sudden silence.

**I.IV. CONCLUSION:**

To conclude, It discusses about Imtiaz Dharker, her major literary works. Imtiaz Dharker is one of the most significant names in post-modern Indian English poetry. Due to her socio-political concern she got the significant place in literature. Her feminine sensibility reaches beyond the traditional modes and becomes a true modern poet to voice against such a patriarchal society and Communal violence. She remains an outstanding poet by her work.

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