



**THE CURSE OF BEING A MARGINALIZED WOMAN IN
'AND SUCH IS HER FATE' BY DALIP KAUR TIWANA**

BRIJESH KUMAR

(Research Scholar)

Department of English & MEL, University of Allahabad, Allahabad



BRIJESH KUMAR

ABSTRACT

And Such Is Her Fate is a Sahitya Academy Award winning novel of Dalip Kaur Tiwana, a renowned Punjabi writer. It depicts the tragic life of the female protagonist, Bhano who represents the pathetic condition of most of the marginalized Indian women. She is such a woman who is exploited and oppressed by her family and almost by all those who come in contact with her. Her father sold her to save the life of her brother. She has no other option but to accept whatever her fate decrees upon her. Sarban, her husband, loves her but his untimely death pushes her again in the darkness of the world. When she hears that her father wants to sell her again, she runs away from the home with the intention to commit suicide. When she is about to jump into the river, Narain, a drunkard, saves her and accepts her as his unwedded wife. She has managed his house so beautifully that most of the women in her locality, feel jealous. Many young boys have their lustful eyes set on her but she saves her dignity from everyone. But God has some other plan for her. When she does not bear children for Narain, he leaves her at the instigation of one of his relatives and marries to Bhagwanti, another woman, who ultimately bears a baby boy for him. After giving birth to a son, she becomes Narain's true wife in the male dominated society. This event has pushed Bhano on the periphery of the household. She tries her best to hold the unity of the family but fails when her own husband informs her that she has to go with someone else in the last phase of her life. She has become the 'other' because of her gender and class. She feels alienated in this world which is full of people but none her own. The patriarchal setup of the novel does not allow a woman to lead a simple life of a wife and mother.

Keywords: Marginalized, Pathetic, Dominated, Periphery, Patriarchal

©KY PUBLICATIONS

"She has no kith or kin. Once the bargain is struck, her relationship with her parents also gets detached. She lives in an island of social outcast even in a small village. She belongs to none. Socially and individually, she does not exist, she only floats" (Gill 124).

Dalip Kaur Tiwana is one of the most original, insightful and creative women writers of contemporary era in Punjab. She has written around twenty seven novels, many short stories, and an autobiography with the title *Nange Pairon Da Safar*. She, in her own individual unique style, explores the

themes, concerns and issues pertaining to the female psyche. In one of her interviews she says, "I have faced problems because I am a woman." Thus, Dalip Kaur Tiwana explores extensively the theme of women's marginality in most of her novels. Her much acclaimed Punjabi novel *Eho Hamara Jiwana* which is translated into English as *And Such Is Her Fate* by Jai Rattan is a poignant tale of such a marginalized lower class rural woman who wants to lead a dignified life which for her, is to be a wife and a mother but she fails because of her individual and social problems. She is a representative of most of the lower class women of rural Punjab of twentieth century. She becomes the victim of her destiny that does not allow her to be a part of the society she lives in. She has no other option but to accept whatever her fate decrees upon her. She lives on the periphery and is time and again destined to be the marginalized 'other'.

The protagonist of the novel is a downtrodden woman named Bhano who belongs to a poor peasant family and coincidentally becomes wife of Narain, a hard drunkard. As she is the unwedded wife of Narain, she becomes an issue of discussion among the neighbours who use very crude and bitter words and expressions to discuss Bhano because they guess that she has either been purchased or has eloped with Narain to start living together as husband and wife. It becomes very clear even in the starting when Bachni, one of the neighbours, is sure without having any kind of interaction with her, that Bhano is a wicked and a clever woman who wants to lure men at any rate. She says, "But have you seen that wretch? A full-fledged woman to the hilt! God knows which innocent man she must have jilted before preying upon Narain! These hussies have no sense of shame. They like to have a new husband every day" (Tiwana 1).

It is only later on that the reader gets familiar with Bhano's past when she informed Shanti about her past and it was then that she regained her so called chastity and reputation in the eyes of Shanti. Recounting her past she tells that she was a motherless child. She had a brother named Dogar who was very ill. Bhano's father had done all he could to save his son. He had sold his land and his

cows too to save his son. But that was not sufficient, he needed more money for the treatment of his son. So under the influence of neighbours, the father sold his daughter Bhano to a man named Sarban at a cost of two thousand rupees. The daughter had to suffer for saving the son. This is where Tiwana tries to reveal how society has different standard for a male and a female child.

Her life then took a different direction. The family to which she was sold, had no parents but only five unmarried sons. Sarban was the only one who married. The other four unmarried elder brothers casted lustful eyes on the new bride. They considered her to be an object that anyone of them could use in case of need, since their youngest brother had paid for her. In the early twentieth century rural Punjab, the skewed sex ratio was also one of the reasons why women were more prone to sexual harassment. The unmarried men had no option left and so they cast lustful eyes on all the women around. However, Sarban was a sensible husband, who soon realized the intentions of his lecherous brothers. He started living in a separate house with Bhano. The brothers were too jealous of his happy married life that one day, in the fields, they started fighting with Sarban. The result of this feud was that one of the brothers hit Sarban on his genitals and Sarban died on the spot. After the death of Sarban, life of Bhano became more and more difficult. Sarban's other brothers had proposed her for marriage but she did not want anymore fighting in his family and so she returned to her father's place. At this juncture of life she was about to be sold again by her father because her father was under acute pressure from sarban's brothers.

Completely shattered, Bhano is unable to grasp why her own father wants to get rid of her for his personal benefit. Conditioned to believe that the only way of existence is by being in the protection of a man, Bhano does not think that there may be other options that she may explore. So she decides to leave the house and take refuge in death so that she may re-unite with her beloved Sarban. She tries to drown herself in the river Ganga because she believes that a person who dies in this river is granted his last wish. Fate however has something else to offer as Narain, rescues her and brings her to

his home. Narain is an alcoholic and a drug addict, but Bhano immediately accepts his condition and engages herself towards transforming this boozier into a respectable family man.

Bhano, with full vigour of a wife, started transforming the shattered household of Narain into a new home. But unfortunately, here also she becomes the prey of another lustful man, Jagar, Narain's friend. As Bhano is not legally married to Narain, people around obviously point towards her piety. In her struggle to balance the psychological trauma, she finds a ray of hope which appears in the form of Narain's sister, Kartari. Kartari who has come to celebrate the marriage of her daughter, recognizes goodness of Bhano and gives her support and a sense of belonging. Delighted to find acceptance in the family fold, Bhano throws herself wholeheartedly into performing the various chores and responsibilities. One actually feels her joy as she squeezes herself into a socially acceptable structure. Happily she transforms into being the lady of the house, the sister-in-law performing her duty. Despite her untiring efforts to assimilate into her personal existential universe, she again fails as the social structure around her overpowers her short term happiness.

Bhano lives in such a traditional society that values a woman's real worth when she becomes mother and thus her plight returns once again because she is unable to produce children for Narain so she cannot be accepted as an integral part of the family. One of the guests who has come to attend the wedding of his niece, negotiates with Narain and persuades him to "buy" another woman, for a prosperous house like his must need an heir. With this Bhano's aspirations, her temporary assurance of social acceptability and a warm place of her belonging come to an end. She once again ends up lonely and dejected. Even though Narain agrees to bring another woman in his house, he still has a soft corner for Bhano. He actually nurtures her in the hospital when she is unwell. But when Bhano returns home, the second woman is already there. Surprisingly, Bhano even then tries to adjust to her new role as a co-wife. The other woman Bhagwanti however is not ready to accept her peaceful attitude and considers her to be a hypocrite. When

Bhagwanti gives birth to a son, Bhano feels fulfilled with the idea that at last, Narain's house has prospered. Destiny intervenes once again as Bhagwanti manages to convince Narain to sell Bhano to an old man for a few hundred rupees. At the end of the novel we find that Bhano once again has surrendered to her fate and has submitted herself to the society which time and again rejects her and make her a destitute. She has to leave the home which she herself established and now she walks in the street like a stranger as if she had never been there.

Bhano leads a dejected life not because she is not able to form or sustain relationships, but because of failure of others to keep her in their care. All those who know her, love her and appreciate her, be it Sarban, Narain, Santi or Kartari. As Tiwana portrays, Bhano lives in a system where a woman is worthy and respectable only if she has the protection of a man, father, brother, husband or a son. Possessing no other skills, except those of a nurturer, she is unable to voice her own wants and desires. Society has conditioned her to be an accommodating "good" woman, and that is all she can be. The work is completely enveloped with a strong resonance of the power of human destiny and the vicious network of social predictability. The characters in the work have to submit to destiny as well as to the society. Complex inner duality of Bhano forms the basic theme of this work. She desperately wants to stick to an even social system as a respectable part of it but every time she tries to fit in the system, she is thrown out of it like an "absolute non- entity." Tiwana thus raises important issues even though she does not offer any solutions. Her aim is not as much to challenge as to reflect reality while she leaves it to the readers to do soul-searching to reach the right conclusions. As Natarajan and Nelson rightly put in their Handbook of Twentieth Century literatures of India, this work has been "her most outstanding work...a very moving tale of a poor peasant girl who becomes a victim of reckless human lust" (264).

WORKS CITED

Bhangu, Jaspreet and Birinder Kaur. "Dalip Kaur Tiwana's And Such is Her Fate." *Sub-Continental Women's Vioces* 37 (2011):

n.pag. *Muse India*. Web. 1 Jan. 2016.
<<http://www.museindia.com/featurecontent.asp?issid=36&id=2531>>.

Gill, Harjit Singh. "Postface." *And Such is Her Fate* by Dalip Kaur Tiwana. Trans. Jai Rattan. Patiala: Punjabi U, 1980. Print.

Kaur, Harleen. "Gender As Fate: Tiwana's "Eho Hamara Jiwana". *Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations*. 2.2 (2014): 502-05. Web. 31 Dec.2015.
<<http://www.researchscholar.co.in/downloads/83-harleen-kaur.pdf>>.

Natarajan, Nalini, and Emmanuel Sampath Nelson. *Handbook of Twentieth Century Literatures of India*. USA: Greenwood Publishing House, 1996. Print.

Tiwana, Dalip Kaur. *And Such is Her Fate*. Trans. Jai Rattan. Patiala: Punjabi U, 1980. Print.
