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FEMINIST LANDSCAPE: A STUDY OF DALIP KAUR TIWANA'S NOVEL
AND SUCH IS HER FATE

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ABSTRACT

Women writers have been presenting woman as the centre of concern in their novels. Women oppression, exploitation, cry for emancipation are the common themes in their fiction. Dalip Kaur Tiwana is one of the most distinguished Punjabi novelists who writes about rural women's physical, psychological and emotional sufferings in Feudo-patriarchal society. A woman can only know woman's sufferings, her problems, what she feels. Dalip Kaur Tiwana has observed Indian male-dominated society very closely and has much understanding of social contrasts which engulfs a woman. She can be considered an existentialist novelist as she is concerned with human conditions and explores the inner sufferings of her characters. This paper focuses on the theme of feminist landscape in the novel *And Such Is Her Fate*. It presents the miserable plight of protagonist Bhano who feels marginalized, alienated, isolated and detached in her life. Dalip Kaur Tiwana beautifully portrays the landscape of her mind. The paper shows how Dalip Kaur Tiwana presents the unfortunate image of Bhano in rural feudo-patriarchal society. Keywords: Marginalized, Feminine Psyche, alienation, oppression, detachment and existential crisis.

And Such is her Fate (Eho Hamara Jiwana, 1968) is a Sahitya Academy Award winning novel of Dalip Kaur Tiwana, a celebrated Punjabi writer. This novel is considered an anthropological statement or study on feminine condition in the lower peasantry of Punjab.

Dalip Kaur Tiwana has presented the miserable plight of downtrodden woman Bhano in a rural patriarchal set up of Punjab in which she always craves to be the part of society. Bhano is the daughter of poor peasant who sells her off to a man named Sarban at a cost of two thousand rupees to save the life of her brother Dogar. She is married in a family in which Sarban is living with his five unmarried brothers and has no parents. In these agriculture families, one son used to be married to avoid the division of landed property but Sarban's other unmarried brothers cast lustful eyes on Bhano and try to abuse her sexually because they think that she is an object to be used by either of them as they all contributed money in buying Bhano. Bhano is just other as Simone de Beauvoir points out women is nothing other than what man decides; she is just a sexed being for him called the sex. "He is the subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (6).

Bhano wants to lead a respectable life and narrates Sarban about their brother's bad intentions. She revolts against polygamy and refuses to be the wife of all brothers. Sarban is a kind, loving and understanding husband who understands his wife and starts living apart from his brothers. But his brothers are so jealous of his happy married life that one day they eliminate Sarban. She considers herself as the cause of his death and

feels guilty. Bhano returns back to her father's house in the hope of protective shelter but feels sad to know that her father again decides to sell her off and she expresses her grief, "I had lost my peace of mind and kept asking myself, was I so worthless that he should want to get rid of me without giving the matter a second thought?" (48). She refuses to accept her father's autocratic decision and leaves her home and tries to commit suicide by drowning herself in the Holy Ganga. This extreme step shows that she does not want to be the object of male society, but drunkard Narain saves her and brings her back to his village.

Bhano transformed the world of drunkard Narain who was leading a useless life before Bhano came into her life. But Bhano feels not fully alive of her new life with the Narain. She never forgets her first husband Sarban. She continually remembers Sarban day and night physically she is living with Narain and mentally and emotionally with the memories of Sarban. She feels herself alien in the house of Narain. She feels restless lying in her cot as roof was going to crash over her head, feels scared from darkness and sometimes even Narain seems stranger to her. On seeing her behaviour Narain comments, "Bhano, sometimes you look like a ghost to me... when I take you in my arms I feel as if my arms are empty-as if you are not there" (13) The lamp went out, long and dark nights, big silent house in the chapter 2 shows the frustrated, deserted life of Bhano.

But on the other side she also makes every effort to exist, to live a respectful life but this orthodox society does not allow her to lead a peaceful life and male friends of Narain and Gurudwara's Bhaji cast a lustful eyes on Bhano because all respect is denied to her as her marriage is not a formal marriage with Narain. Gill comments, "She is always a woman "bought" by someone. As such, she never enters a household as a "wife". She has no kith or kin. Once the bargain is struck, her relationship with her parents also gets detached" (124). She is living in a society where she does not get any respect. The women in neighbourhood also have no sympathy for poor Bhano except old Shanti who always stood by her side in all her odds. A village woman Dialo passes very sarcastic remarks about Bhano, "The one who has been used by so many and each time cast aside like a left-over!" (30).

Dalip Kaur Tiwana also tries to explore the unconscious psyche of Bhano in which she has stored her desires, feelings and memories of Sarban. Bhano considered herself the property of Sarban, had desired to have a child with him a remembrance to cherish him by, a prop for her old age when he died. When Narain asks her about her desire to have a child she replies, "Sometimes I feel that after his death, my inside has dried up. Now nothing is likely to grow there" (18). Therefore she fails to make any physical relation with Narain. Bhano did not like Jagar, Sarban's friend. She was angry with him but on hearing Sarban's name from him she becomes emotional and Jagar wants to make use of this opportunity to exploit her:

Forgetting her anger, Bhano looked at Jagar with tearful eyes and a sigh escaped her lips. Jagar suddenly got up from his pirha and held her arm. (33)

Narain's friend Jagar poisons Narain's mind against Bhano saying that his wife is not good, not worthy of him. Narain begins to beat her without knowing the truth and calls her a wicked woman. Bhano feels sad and longs for Sarban's love and respect. She becomes the victim of psychological turmoils and this feudo-patriarchal society is responsible for her mental and physical sufferings. Society also rejects her as she is unable to give birth to any child. She never realizes the sense of belonging in the society. She is a marginalized woman in rural society because of her gender and double marginalized because she could not bear a child. She feels her life is meaningless life and states, "Amma, I got nothing out of life. It has been a barren existence" (78). She is a helpless woman who feels her existence is meaningless without inner joy.

She struggles through the socio-psychological pressures. The arrival of Narain's sister brings some change in her life who has come to celebrate the marriage of her daughter. Then she makes every effort to be the part of the family. The kinship system begins and she realizes her belongings. But when Narain's sister leaves, she again feels herself lonely and deserted. In her life she has faced every situation with confidence. Gill remarks, "For her, to be, is to be a part of a social structure, however wretched it may be" (128). Thus she tries to make every effort of transforming herself from a non-being to a being, whether this occasion is provided by her relationship with Sarwan or Narain, or the advent of a sister-in-law, The celebration of a marriage which, alas, had not been her own personal experience, she fervently sets herself to an extremely engaging and intense activity of existential involvement. But she has never been accepted by society. She has to suffer at every phase of life.

She is an unfortunate woman who is forced to live her life facing insult and insecurity. Her life becomes the unchanging human condition and everytime she accepts it mutely to deal with her existential dilemma. She suffers from existential crisis. She herself states, "Nothing is going to happen to me." Bhano said "Even God ignores a useless person like me" (88). This feudo-patriarchal society never gives her right to exist. She is living in the society which totally dehumanizes her. There are some incidents in the novel which show she has experienced nothing in her life. It becomes totally meaningless when she comes to know that Narain is thinking to buy another woman. She becomes totally alienated and isolated as sometimes she spilled the milk, poisons the dal by adding salt twice by mistake. She opens Narain's mother's old box which contains khaddar, phulkaris, durries, kurtas, ghagras and sometime keeps gazing at these odds and finally locks the box. Hearing the Hawker's voice in the street Bhano goes out and sees all women are buying something. When Hawker offers Bhano to buy something then she said, "I'll buy something on your next visit." (86). When she hears the "Bangles! Wear new bangles, she came out and called the bangle –seller but suddenly said, "Bhai, I'll buy them some other time if I'm still alive by then" (89).

Bhano's emotional needs remain unsatisfied thus she withdraws into a life of loneliness. She suffers from anxiety. There is a tension in her mind which results in her broken life. She becomes lifeless, absent minded, always remains lost in thoughts and one day she fell from the terrace and got injured. She is hospitalized for one month and her world of love, hope and social acceptability comes to an end when she sees another woman named Bhagwanti in her house. Then she seems a forlorn, miserable and sick woman as Gill remarks, "She belongs to none. Both socially and individually, she does not "exist", she only "floats" (124).

Now she tries to adjust of her new role as a co-wife. But Bhagwanti treats her according to the definite pattern of her milieu. Bhano feels happy when Bhagwanti gives birth to a male-child and says it does not matter who is the mother of the child as long as Narain's house prospers. But Bhagwanti does not want to keep her child under the shadow of this barren woman and provokes Narain to sell her off as she is nothing. No body, not good for anything. Narain accepts Bhagwanti's decision and decides to sell Bhano to Fatta a man from Chaunda Village. She blindly accepts it. Bhano is a woman who is being sold and bought like a cattle and her journey can be considered her cry for respect, place and love in the society. She is exploited by everyone who comes in contact with her.

She makes every possible effort to be an integral part of this society which consistently rejects her. Finally all doors are shut. There is no exist and no one accepts her. Even this miserable, cruel human condition does not allow her suffering to be a part of its unbearable routine. Gill comments, "One cannot say that her existence is wretched. She is simply not permitted to exist" (129). But at the end she leaves Narain's house with awareness "Wearing no ghagra, her face unveiled, she passed by the village chopal like a stranger" (119). It shows that now she will not care the people and society for whom she has lost everything. Her struggle can be considered existential self-realization.

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