

## GENDER AND PATRIARCHY IN DALIP KAUR TIWANA'S SELECTED WORKS

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### Abstract

The research paper analyses Dalip Kaur Tiwana's translations *Who am I*, *And Such is Her Fate* and *Mark of the Nose- Ring*. Through her female characters she has not only represented the society of Punjab but also provided the suggestions for reformation to the gender centric society. The theme of domestic violence, man-woman relationship, male preference and gender issues are broadly discussed. The character of Bhano, Pawan and Kiranjeet provide the essence to the lost existence of the women. Tiwana is bold personality who empowers the widows to live their lives in their own way. Her female characters are independent enough to deconstruct the assigned gender role in the society. Kiranjeet being the widow of Tejwant Singh Gill continues to wear the bangles and nose pin that symbolizes her sense of individuality eliminates the societal orthodox norms. Pawan carries the strength to reject the role of mother and wife for self-realisation as her monotonous relationship continues to suffocate her. Kamla Bhasin's theory of gender resolves the issues related to gender discrimination, male domination and patriarchal powers in the society.

**Keywords:** Punjab, Women, Gender, Sex, Patriarchy

Dalip Kaur Tiwana is recognized as Jane Austen of Punjab, one of the most brilliant short story writer and novelist. She successfully represented the condition of women in Punjab through her prominent works such as *And Such Is Her Fate*, *Who am I* and *Mark of the Nose- Ring*. She being the Punjabi woman had experienced the patriarchal society of Punjab and its' traditions to which the women are obliged. The theme of man-woman relationship, female foeticide, dowry system, women education and suppression of widows are broadly discussed in her works. She interpreted the women as the subject to empower them to move out of the social canvas set by the patriarchy. Her female characters are mélange of facts and fictions empowered to discuss the social and political issues faced by women in Punjab. She rightly scrutinized the women psyche and beautifully portrayed the dilemma, suppression, alienation faced by women as second sex. Dalip Kaur Tiwana's novels are critiqued through Kamla Bhasin's theory of gender. Her novel *And Such Is Her Fate* is translated from *Eho Hamara Jiwan* won Sahitya Academy award. The novel is about the life of Bhano who was sold by her own father to save her brother named Dogar. The psychological trauma faced by Bhano represented the various other women who were sold and purchase. Tiwana commented on this practice in her interview with Amandeep Kaur. She said:

'This practice of paying bride price was confined to the harijans and in a very few cases, to the poorest segments of the peasantry. By and large women are no longer brought and sold in Punjab. Instead offering dowry has become the norm.' [Kaur, 2019] Bhano's husband Sarban was a loving husband but was murdered by his own unmarried brothers in the conflict of

protecting Bhano from their lustful eyes. She was not only rejected by her own father but also by the society. According to Kamla Bhasin the suffering women faced in the society is not because of sex but gender is responsible for it. There is huge difference between gender and sex. Sex is something natural whereas gender is socially and culturally constructed. The practice of purchasing bride or having second wife defines the socio-cultural tradition of Punjab. Gender is never constant as sex though it changes from culture to culture and time to time. It is the gender that emphasized the feminine and masculine role for women and men in the society respectively. Bhano after her husband's death settled with Narain without marriage as he saved her from committing suicide. She failed to get the status of Narain's wife as she could not give the birth to his child. It seemed that the status of women or respect she earns is by giving the birth to the male child. The research article by Gursharan Kaur Tiwana described the condition of Bhano in following words:

***'She is always a woman brought by someone as such she never enters a household as a wife.'* [Tiwana,2017]**

Tiwana's another novel *Who am I* was translated by Dr. Rajinder Singh. The novel is about an educated and married woman named Pawan who was forced to move out of the monotonous relationship with her husband Dev Datt. Kartik, their son became the victim of their disastrous married life. The following conversation between Pawan and Dev Datt not only signifies the disillusionment in their marriage but also enforces the affects of gendering in Punjab:

'What sort of mother are you? Mothers usually protect their children like floricans even from long distance.

Pawan would retort - All the responsibilities do not devolve on mother alone, leaving all the time to father to get lost in his philosophy.' [Tiwana, 2012]

Dev Datt repeatedly denounces the roles and duties of male and female as designed by the society. To him man's responsibility is to earn lots and lots of money to provide the maximum privilege to family members. Bhasin acknowledged the fact that women are naturally designed to give the birth to the child so, they automatically carry the responsibility of caring or upbringing of child. The society enforces the practice of gendering failed to realize that taking care of child is something even man can do. It is important to determine that gendering is socio-cultural process rather than a natural one. Bhasin in her work *Understanding Gender* discards the division of roles, attributes and responsibilities framed on the basis of gender. As she comments:

***'If a woman can cook, so can man because a woman doesn't cook with her womb.'* [Bhasin,2003].**

Tiwana created Pawan a bold female character who possessed the power to deconstruct the social and cultural norms. She moved out of the roles of conventional Punjabi women and chose the path of shadhvi. The novel provides the various instances where Pawan questioned the duties and roles of women not only to her husband but also to the sadhus she met on her journey of salvation. She was strong enough to overpower her motherly notions by leaving Kartik to his paternal grandmother. Dev Datt always defined the functions assigned to women being the representative of patriarchal society. He is of the opinion that women are of limited understanding so, they are forbidden to study Vedas also women are at the lowest rank in the process of evolution of humans beings. He rebukes Pawan with such harsh comments without recognizing the fact that she is teaching in the college as music lecturer. She has also introduced

herself to the work of Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Albert Camus's *The Outsider* Mahabharatta and Tagore's stories. Pawan's subordination doesn't even end after entering in the religious world. She faced the domination and sexual assaults at different level. The patriarchal ideologies find it's ways in the ashrams symbolic of peace and religious practices. Bhasin introduced the readers to the discourse of patriarchy. Patriarchy is about the rule of father over the wife, children, servants in the domestic sphere exerting the male domination. It is important to determine that patriarchy is not only restricted to the domestic world but it's nature changes in different time, history and classes. The following conversation between Pawan and sadhu exemplified the subordination she faced in the ashram:

***'I beg you, your body for a few minutes. In the same manner as Menaka had freed Vishwamitran of desires.....Excuse me, you are not Vishwamitran nor am I Menaka.'***  
**[Tiwana, 2012]**

Pawan somehow managed to escape from the sadhu. His religious clarification for building sexual relationship with Pawan defines the control exerted by religion in the context of patriarchy. The social institutions such as family, education and religion encouraged the superiority of male domination. Dalip Kaur Tiwana's *Mark of the Nose-Ring* is the symbolic novelette about the woman named Kiranjeet. The novelette is translated by Jai Ratan into English language. After few days of her marriage she lost her soldier husband named Tejwant Singh Gill in the war who was considered as martyr. Kiranjeet, not only lost her husband but also lost her status in the society and faced the existential crises. She wrote the following words in her diary:

***'People talk of Tejwant all the time as if he is living and I am dead. This might be so.'***  
**[Tiwana, 2009]**

The novelette portrays the pain of widow and records the instances how Kiranjeet and her mother were instructed by society after losing their husbands. The ideology of patriarchy designed the social frame for the women where they are considered as dependent, inferior and can't live their without any patriarch. It is critiqued that society being overpowered by patriarchal belief system yet not accepted the idea of independent and educated women capable of earning the bread- butter for the family. In the society of Punjab gender and sex played an important role. Kamla Bhasin's words delineated the male dominating social structure in the following words:

***'Gender division of labour or sexual division of labour, refers to the allocation of different roles, responsibilities and tasks to women and men based on societal ideas of what men and women should do and are capable of doing.'*** [Bhasin, 2003]

When Kiranjeet lost her husband and father professor Avtar Singh advised her to break the conventional canvas set for widows. He suggested Kiranjeet to visit England and marry Englishman to have child by him also to drink English wine and have fun. But before leaving he provided Kiranjeet his address and offered her to visit him in the absence of his family. The miserable condition of widows is analyzed when grandmother informed that Bachana's widow is sold by her father for one thousand rupees. The patriarchal society continues to rule because gender divisions and gender inequalities are reconstructed over the passage of time. The men and women mastered their roles, tasks and skills assigned to them by the gender oriented society. Tiwana's women characters are beyond these gender roles as Pawan of *Who am I* emancipated herself from the role of mother and wife in order to find the true knowledge.

Kiranjeet was bold enough to continue her life as the normal girl after her husband's death. She used to wear bangles and nose pin as the widow of late Tejwant Singh Gill. She completed her

masters after Tejwant's death and started teaching in her own college. Her mother also faced the suppression being widow. As Kiranjeet's grandmother instructed her mother in following words:

***'Either you come and live with us in the village or let his sister's son stay with you under this roof. Though he's studying in the eighth class, he can make himself useful, sunning small errands for you. Times are bad one should not live alone in such time.'*** [Tiwana, 2009]

To the above statement Kiranjeet's mother boldly rejected the grandmother's instruction and replied that she is capable enough to fend her family. The series of ideas adapted by the society that women bodies are responsible for the particular roles assigned to them are challenged by the characters of Dalip Kaur Tiwana. The objectification of women in Punjab never gives a thought that subordinate status of women is not natural though it is something structured by the society. Kamla Bhasin clearly explained how gender and sex are closely related but still there is huge difference that influenced the institutions of society. The process of gendering is encouraged by asserting that the biological or sexual differences between man and woman are natural so, the suppression the women faced is also considered as something imposed by nature and they are born to suffer. Bhasin also rejects Aristotle's principle of active and passive in the context of gender where male is active and female is passive. The principle of active and passive is explained on the basis of biological difference by Aristotle but it seems more of gendering. He is of the opinion that females are born out of the mutilation of males. This biological inferiority of women is enough to make them inferior at the different stages of life. It means they are subservient in their capacities, decision making and abilities. Dalip Kaur Tiwana's novels provide the various instances where women played an active role took their own decisions and carried the power of resistance to preserve their self-respect and individuality. Pawan strongly decided to become the hermit and left her home. Kiranjeet and her mother rejected the conventional idea of widow's way of living and empowered to live independently. In order to reform the society it is important to analyze that sex and nature are not responsible for the gender differences, inequalities and injustice done to women. It is to be recognized that gender inequalities and discriminations are man-made similar as classism and racism. Women are beyond their bodies and sex. If they can give the birth to child with different body structure it doesn't mean that they are deprived of the opportunity to explore the different social institutions. They should not be assigned the roles on the basis of their history, body, sex and conventional ideas.

## CONCLUSION

Tiwana beautifully scrutinized the subjugation of women at social, psychological and emotional level through the character of Bhano, Pawan and Kiranjeet. She created the female characters who induced the power to challenge the conventional value system of Punjab. The issues related to women such as plight of second wife, oppression of widow, sexual assaults, religious corruption and male domination are broadly discussed. Kamla Bhasin's ideas of patriarchy, gender role and gender division allowed the readers to analyse the fact that these gender issues are socially constructed and need to be revised to provide the equal rights to the men and women. The interpretation of difference between gender and sex encouraged the society towards the sense of individuality. The process of gendering deliberately continues to define the allocation of duties, tasks and responsibilities divided on the basis of gender. Bhasin's work *Understanding Gender* resolved the problems related to gender, class, labour and sex. Tiwana's translations challenged the orthodox practice of purchasing bride also the patriarchist role

assigned to women as mother, daughter and wife. As a mother she is responsible for taking care of child and household. Pawan was rebuked for discarding the role of mother and leaving Kartik behind to become sadhvi. Woman as a wife supposed to fulfill the sexual desire of her husband and in order to maintain her status in the family she is forced to give the birth to male child. The character of Bhano is miserably tortured for not giving the birth to the child of Narain. The responsibility of daughter is well explained by Kiranjeet who questioned her grandmother where is her father's turban and what is it's color when she was asked not to dishonor her father's turban. The sense of equality and individuality of women is well preserved in the society through Dalip Kaur Tiwana's work and Kamla Bhasin's ideology of gender. Bhasin said: 'To be considered equal to men, women have to be twice as good as men.

.....Fortunately that's not difficult.' [ Bhasin, 2003]

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