CHAPTER - IV

DALIP KAUR TIWANA

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And Such is Her Fate (1980) can be taken as a statement of feminine condition in the lower class peasantry of Punjab.

The narrative is about Bhano, the daughter of a poor peasant who is sold by her father under economic compulsions. The person to whom she is 'given' or 'sold' is the only boy in the family of several brothers to have a woman. As such all the brothers "want a share in the 'merchandise' ". This man, Sarban, however, views his relationship with Bhano quite seriously and the relationship develops into an affectionate and tender conjugal relationship. But this development is somehow not in harmony with the social situation and, therefore, the brothers make a fatal assault on Sarban under some pretext and get rid of him. Bhano, somehow succeeds in escaping and comes back to her father in the hope of a protective shelter. But the father intends to sell her again at the next opportunity. Bhano, in defiance, leaves her home for good. She comes to Hardwar with a plan to put an end to her life. But she is saved by Narian in this attempted suicide and brought back to his village.

Back in village Bhano and Narain are engaged in the difficult task of managing a household under pressing economic and social conditions. The sole occupant of the house, Narain, an addict to liquor and many other intoxicants, is subject to many other bad habits. After his father's death, he had fallen into bad company, squandered his means, mortgaged his land bit by bit and was living the life of a hopeless drifter.
Bhano takes up the challenge of reforming this incorrigible person, who is otherwise very humane and gentle. She makes considerable success in this enterprise and with her hard work and persistent efforts their household begins to acquire a certain status and respectability in the village.

The lustful advances of Jagar, a friend of Narain, once again upset the equilibrium of her life which she had so painfully achieved. Since she is not tied by a socially sanctioned bond of 'marriage', social acceptability and goodwill are denied to her.

While Bhano struggles through these socio-psychological pressures, outwardly their life starts falling into a pattern. The arrival of Narain's sister brings a drastic change in Bhano, she clings to Kartari who has come to her brother's house to solemnize her daughter's marriage. The kinship begins to develop and Bhano is overjoyed to be able to squeeze in, in this social, and for her, human acceptability. She makes all efforts to be an integral part of this cultural sequence and starts feeling the satisfaction of belonging.

Bhano couldn't bear a child though Narain's household has become prosperous with Bhano's hard work and perseverance. His new-found stability in life gives him reason to desire for an heir. He is persuaded to "buy" another woman and Bhano's world of hope and love, of social acceptability and a cozy home, crumbles down to dust. She is again the forlorn, miserable and virtually sick woman.

Narain shows all the sympathy for her and literally nurses her back to life in the hospital. But when Bhano returns home, the other woman is already there. She accepts the change most stoically and tries to adjust to her
new role of a "co-wife". Again she tries to flout the conventional attitude of jealousy and hatred and makes an effort to get the best of this miserable co-habitation. Narain's new woman Bhagwanti considers all this as the usual hypocrisy and treats Bhano according to a definite pattern of her milieu. When Bhagwanti gives birth to the much awaited son, Bhano feels happy and is apparently reconciled to the fact that it doesn't matter who is the mother of the child as long as Narain's house prospers. Rather, she is extremely fond of the child.

On the contrary, Bhagwanti thinks that she has had enough of this mockery and proceeds to put Narain on the normal course of the exclusion of the undesired. He agrees to "sell" Bhano to an old hog for a few hundred rupees. Though not expected, this terrible news jolts Bhano's world of fancy and self-confidence. For the first time she leaves the house of Narain with a resolution of extremely vivid awareness.

In the portrayal of Bhano, Tiwana has offered the image of a vulnerable woman who is not protected by the institution of marriage. Marriage gives some respectability to a woman which is denied to Bhano because her status is not that of a legally wedded woman. Later in Narain's household too, her hard work is appreciated by very few persons like Santi, her elderly neighbour. Rest of the women don't respect her.

*And Such is Her Fate* offers a powerful critique on the position of a woman in a rural patriarchal set-up and social institutions like 'marriage'. Patriarchy and its nature can be, and is, different in different classes in the same society; in different societies; and in different periods in history. Each
social system and historical period throws up its own variations on how patriarchy functions and how social and cultural practices differ. Quite contrary to the cultural milieu of Indira Goswami's *A Saga of South Kamrup* which depicts the tyrannical Brahmnical order, Tiwana focuses her gaze on women belonging to the poor peasantry of Punjab. This novel depicts another system of values which are contrary to the Brahmnical canons of purity and austerity.

Bhano, the protagonist of this novel, belongs to the Jat community of rural Punjab. She replies to Santi, her immediate neighbour, when the latter enquires about her village: "I'm from Bhari Ka Kotla. That's my father's place." (6) It is customary in Punjab to enquire about a person's village or "pind" to start a conversation. The two main groups directly engaged in agriculture in the North Indian plains are peasants; land owning cultivators, and landless agricultural labourers. "In Punjab the peasant cultivators are overwhelmingly Jat Sikhs. The indigenous, landless, agricultural labourers are largely from the scheduled castes." According to the caste hierarchy, Bhano belongs to the dominant caste of Jats, but in the social hierarchy, which in the villages is determined by the size of land holdings, she doesn't belong to a family of land-lords. She belongs to that large section of peasantry who are deficit producers. Deficit in resources, the small landowners relied mostly upon their family labour and some hired labour if need arose.

"Such an economy reinforced covetousness for male progeny. A male child came to be regarded as essential as the life giving rain." The woman
who fails to produce a male heir is seen as accursed, as one who has failed in her essential duty. "Among many communities the husband of such a woman can marry again – despite the existence of laws forbidding bigamy – and he will have full approval, even encouragement, from the community."^ Santi, who feels motherly affection for Bhano, informs her about Narain's plans: "Hariya has been instigating Narain to marry again. He said there was no hope of your giving him a child, that you had been living with Narain for the last two years and nothing had happened till now. It is said Hariya has struck a bargain with Narain at six hundred rupees to buy him a wife..." (82)

In such a set-up, therefore, a wife's worth comes to be crucially determined by her ability to produce male heirs. The sons are needed not only to work on land, but, more importantly, to keep the land within the patriarchal family and to provide support to parents in old age. Bhano presents the image of such an unfortunate woman who has been let down by society by using all prevalent customs against her. She is marginalized for being a woman in a patriarchal social set-up; she is doubly marginalized for not being protected through matrimony and further marginalized for not being able to produce a child, especially a male heir.

Vast differences distinguish the lives of rural women in different parts of the country and within caste, class, religious and ethnic groups. The peasantry of Punjab acquired a separate religious identity after the advent of Sikhism. However, in family organization and land holding patterns, they share many characteristics with other peasant cultivator groups. In the
agrarian milieu the socio-cultural ethos came to be coloured and determined generally by the agriculturist castes, and particularly the land owning classes; and among such castes, the Jats dominate. Irrespective of her religious status, an Indian woman's self-perception as also the society's expectations from her have for long been largely determined by the complex of ideas, values and beliefs codified in the Manusmriti and Dharamshastras. In mythical terms the dominant feminine prototype still is the chaste, patient, self-denying, long suffering wife, Sita. The values embodied in these ideal figures loom large in the consciousness of women even when they try to reject these role models. Santi and Bhano, despite their non-Hindu orientation seek solace in the myth of Sita. Referring to a woman's inevitable suffering Santi says: "She's born with Sita's curse on her head. Every house has a tale to tell." (8)

Instead of religion, the exigencies of an agrarian culture formulate the rules and customs which determine and shape the lives of women in the rural Punjab. Unlike Indira Goswami's Sattra in A Saga of South Kamrup, here, in this village of Punjab, religion does not hold the centre stage. Because of the reformist impact of the Sikh Gurus, the people are free from the ritualistic dogmas to a great extent. The society to which Bhano, the protagonist of And Such is Her Fate; holds a mirror is governed by a set of norms created by a 'subsistence economy'.

Commodification of woman is the central reality of woman's situation in And Such is Her Fate. Marriage laws and social customs in a particular society indicate the social status of a woman. They provide
significant clues to find out whether women are regarded as mere market commodities, bought and sold according to the principle of demand and supply and war-prizes and trophies or whether they are considered as indispensable partners in a happy domestic life. Social customs while indicating their status in society, also define and determine their image in society. Bhano, who goes through this process of 'sale' and 'purchase' more than once indicates that woman as commodity is under strict control of men. Because she is treated as a commodity, it reflects her lowest position in the social hierarchy.

Bhano, the protagonist of *And Such is Her Fate* is always a woman 'bought' by someone. She never enters a household as a 'wife'. She has no kith and kin. Once the bargain is struck, her relationship with her natal family is also severed. As a result all the intricate binding axes of father-daughter, brother-sister, on one hand and husband-wife and in-laws on the other are excluded from her behavioral patterns. Even in a small village she lives as in an island; like a social out-cast. She belongs to none. Prof. H. S. Gill comments in the post-face of the book: "Both socially and individually, she does not 'exist', she only 'floats' . . In one sense, she is a social leper. She is treated with sympathy and kindness but never with affection."^6

As the most important social institution, marriage has been regarded as a social and religious duty and necessity. "By about 300 B.C., marriage came to be regarded as obligatory for girls."^7 For women, marriage came to be considered a rite of significance equal to *Upanayana* (education) sacrament for boys. Marriage was enforced upon girls at a very young age to
ward off any possible resistance from them. Apart from the religious aspect, the importance of women in the agrarian economy made marriage an acknowledged 'economic necessity'. So much so that a man's inability to pay his revenue dues was put down to his unmarried status, since a single man cannot be expected to perform well agriculturally; and a widower was considered to be "half paralyzed". The important role played by women in the economy led to a wider acceptance of the prevalent custom of sale and purchase of brides among the economically hard up peasantry. In the nineteenth century, except among a few better-off families, this custom was observed to have been universal among the agriculturist castes as well as the lower castes. "Although looked upon as a 'disgraceful custom' and admitted by Jats with a 'certain amount of apology and obvious sense of shame', it was a practice that was gaining ground everywhere in the first decade of the twentieth century.".

Bhano was sold off to raise money for the treatment of her brother. Obviously the family was in dire economic strait. Narain was cheated by his first wife who disappeared all of a sudden after two months of her stay. He had paid five hundred rupees to buy her. He spends another six hundred to buy Bhagwanti in the hope that she would bear him a son. Bhagwanti keeps threatening him that she might go back to her parents. Narain fears that if it so happens "They'll promptly sell her off to someone else". Narain finds another buyer, Fatta, for Bhano when Bhagwanti makes things difficult for her. That the buying and selling of girls had become a dirty business in certain quarters of society is evident from this observation of Santi about
Narian's first wife: "She was a 'going concern' as they call it. Her parents would palm her off to some fool in lieu of money and she would give him the slip after a month or two. Next her people roped in someone else and this game went on blithely. It was a regular business." (4) Bachni takes pride in the fact that her parents never agreed to sell off their daughters. Though this custom enjoyed a tacit sanction of society, it always carried some stigma about it and was never elevated to a pale of respectability. Santi aptly remarks: "It is the touch-stone by which one judges the respectability of a family." (5)

The idea behind bride-price, probably, was that it would be disgraceful for a girl and her family if she was taken in marriage for nothing. The price paid by the bridegroom was originally a compensation to the bride's family for the loss of her services. However, it must be pointed out that though the custom undoubtedly prevailed in some sections of the community, it was vehemently condemned by the leaders of the society and people belonging to the higher caste/class. Those who followed it also knew that it was not commendable. When girls began to be married at a very tender age, it became easy for their avaricious guardians to settle the marriage more with a view to getting the highest bride-price than with the aim of finding the most suitable bridegroom. The custom has become common in the lower sections of the rural agricultural society. Inspite of the vehement denunciation and stigma attached to it the custom still exists in the economically lower strata.
A recent report published in *The Tribune*,

confirms with data that this practice is still prevalent in certain sections of society. However, it states that "Bride buying is an old practice in this region. It declined after the Green Revolution owing to the spread of literacy in this part of the country . . . Bride buying has been confined to either poor farmers or the scheduled-caste and Tribals." According to Kirpal Kazak, the sale of women in this region started after the arrival of the Mughals and Punjabi literature is replete with references of sale of women.

Bhano is also presented in the image of such an unfortunate woman who faces the ignominy of this deplorable custom of buying and selling women like cattle. She becomes a victim of a barbaric custom which turns her into a "merchandise". The fact Bhano is not the only victim and that many more girls undergo this dehumanizing experience is validated by another report appearing in *The Tribune* which gives voice to the mute suffering of such women who "cry for a place of their own on the earth." From being sold off by their own families to being shunned from social life for being "bought wives", these women look for life beyond mere existence. Even when they deliver the purpose for which they are bought – to bear sons so as to carry the clan forward – their social ostracism continues and not many in the village like to be associated with them. Having no contact with their own families, they continue to suffer the abuses and insults hurled at them."

Only because Bhano doesn't come to the village as a ceremoniously wedded wife, she is not accorded the usual welcome. Rather the community
turns hostile and taunts her for being a woman of easy virtue. Bachni a neighbour, comments, "God knows which innocent man she must have jilted before preying upon Narain." (1) Another woman from neighbourhood, Dialo spits the venom saying, "I saw her strutting about in her courtyard, putting on the airs of a legally wedded wife." (2) Bachni goes to the extent of saying: "These hussies have no sense of shame. They like to have a new husband every day". (2) The women claiming respectability because of their married status look down upon Bhano as a wily woman. They suspect some vicious design in her joining Narain, the good-for-nothing boozer. Bachni has no sympathy for her and wants to know, "Had she been a simple woman would she have cared to cast her lot with that boozer Narain?" (3)

Bhano represents countless women of poor families who are forced to live their life facing insecurity and insult due to social evils like dowry and bride-price. The combination of bride-price and dowry makes the existence of women a financial drain. Those accepting bride-price are looked down upon for this very practice and consequently, they can hardly affect a change in the dominant attitudes of others towards women. In turn, they blame the female species for being there at all, as a woman's existence meant bride-price which spelt ultimate shame to the family. "Izzat" or "honour" among the agriculturist families scored over economics, even in financially deprived households. Females, therefore, meant drain – financial for some and moral and ethical for others. Bride-price, therefore, fails to represent high-status for women in real terms.
For the first time, Bhano was married to Sarban, among the family of five brothers and he was the only one who had a wife. Money was contributed by Sarban and his brothers to buy Bhano. The brothers couldn't allow Sarban monopoly on the woman and demanded their share in this 'property' - Bhano refused to be a wife of all the brothers, insisting that since she had been married to Sarban, she would stay with him only. Consequently, the brothers fell out on some trivial issue and killed Sarban. Sociological study of this region shows that in poor families only one son, usually the eldest, used to be married.

The agrarian milieu imparted a somewhat flexible attitude and wide social acquiescence to certain practices involving women. In the given geo-economic background - the adverse female sex-ratio, the prevalence of bride-price and wife being an agricultural-labour asset - emerged the concept of the woman being married to a family rather than to an individual. In reality this concept meant that two or three brothers would share a wife. Besides poverty, the other reason for this kind of arrangement was to avoid the division of landed property. This custom of polyandry, though not as common as bride-price, found place in certain parts of Malwa region to which Bhano and her creator, the novelist belong. Such customs encouraged systematic and extensive sexual exploitation of women. In 1904, P.J. Fagen, a district level British official observed:

It is not uncommon among Jats and lower castes for a woman to be shared in common by several brothers, though she's recognized as the wife of only the eldest of them.
Bhano repulsed the idea of living with more than one man. Since she loved Sarban with all the natural instincts of a woman, she dreamt of a happy settled life with him. But this natural desire cost her the very life of her husband and changed the future course of her life. Like every married woman, the intense wish to create a two-person universe with the husband, is uppermost in her consciousness. In fact this is the real 'sasural' and husband's home (piya ka ghar) to which a girl looks forward after marriage and which a married woman keeps visiting in her imagination. Bhano presents the image of such a woman whose natural woman's instincts are brutally ignored by inhuman social customs. Such spiteful customs as polyandry, which get social acceptance may promote the interests of a patriarchal set-up but the interests of a woman are callously sacrificed. Santi, the elderly woman who has experienced life, makes a sagacious observation: "It's always the woman who suffers. The dice is loaded against her all the time. She's born with Sita's curse on her head." (8)

In sharp contrast to high-caste Hindus who under Brahmnical code prohibited widow-remarriage completely and considered the children of such a marriage as illegitimate, the peasant ethos of this region sanctified widow-remarriage for reasons of its own. The Brahmnical code adopted an extremely repressive system for widows which condemned them to a living hell – Indira Goswami's *A Saga of South Kamrup* stands a testimony to it. Such a state, especially among the child widows had led to a wide-spread social reform. As a response to this movement the Widow Remarriage Act XV of 1856 was passed by the imperial government which legalized widow
remarriage. For rural Punjab this act did not have much significance. In this region a form of widow-remarriage was not only being observed but was also legally recognized under the customary law of the land operable in the courts.

The agrarian needs which allowed bride-price also sanctioned remarriage. Like the former, this was also a feature which the agriculturist castes shared in common with the lower castes. However, the widow remarriage which was followed here had special features of its own. Known as Karewa or Chaddar pana or Churi dalana the custom is a throw-back to the old Rig Vedic nityaga or levirate marriage. However, this form of marriage was not accompanied by any kind of religious ceremony, this custom represented social consent for cohabitation and it conferred all the rights of a valid marriage. However, even this custom which saved women from forced celibacy and a repressive code of conduct for widows did not allow them freedom of choice. The widows' right as to whom she could marry was severely restricted. It could be settled only by her late husband's family. Although the widow could not be compelled to remarry, she was not free to marry without their consent. The dead husband's brother was considered most eligible claimant of the widow.

Widowed only after a year of her marriage Bhano faces this predicament. Recounting her experiences, she tells Santi, "People persistently urged me to accept bangles from one of my husband's brothers and have him as my husband." (9) Bhano resisted their offers because she feared that if she married one of them, it would only lead to further family
feuds. She blamed herself to be the cause of her husband's death because she made the other four brothers jealous and created bad blood among them. Bhano's situation reminds the readers of the great legendary queen Draupadi, who could keep the five great Pandavas under her spell and be a wife to all of them. The myth gets inverted as the ordinary peasant woman Bhano cannot make history. She only creates a wedge among the brothers consequently losing the man she deeply loves and whose memory she cherishes throughout her life.

Sarban's death entitles his brothers to a customary claim on Bhano despite her reluctance. Bhano relates her story to Santi, "They wouldn't let me leave their house, for, it was a question of prestige for them." (10) When four of her husband's brothers — "strong like bulls and straight like columns of stone" — were alive and living without a woman, how could she challenge their socially sanctioned right over her? Bhano spurns these lecherous men and sneaks away to her father's house where they send threatening messages that unless her father sent her back to them they would carry her away by force.

Bhano is presented in the image of a commodified helpless woman who has no control over her life. She is transferred from owner to owner like a lifeless piece of movable property. This custom which reduces woman to a commodity is an offshoot of the idea which considers her as man's property, which passes into the husband's family on her marriage. She is married no doubt to a man, but also in his family. So if her husband dies, "his brother or any other near relation would have her to wife or raise
children on her". If this was not done, there was also the danger of the widow marrying a stranger and being lost to the family. The great epic Mahabharata also validates this belief, "If a woman loses her husband, she married her brother-in-law."

The prevalence of this custom among the majority of land owning classes emanated out of the need for retaining landed property within the family. The main reason for this arrangement was to transfer control of her deceased husband's land from the widow to her brother or to a patrilineal family member; because a widow who remarried lost all her property rights; even if she married her husband's brother. Therefore, a woman's resistance to the peasant culture of remarriage which was designed to retain her within the family of her deceased husband was not allowed to surface. Once a marriage or remarriage status was accepted, on no account could a woman claim release from it. Forcing remarriage on her was more a strategy to deprive her of property rights than an act of generosity and genuine concern about her well being. Herself a totally deprived rootless woman, who has no rights but only duties, Bhano signifies woman only as a nimitta (a function) in a male project. She is there to consolidate the man's (with whosoever she is living) position as a farmer by assisting him in cultivation as a house­holder by managing his house and looking after his physical needs and comforts. Above all, she must serve as a fruitful womb in which his future heirs are nurtured. When she fails to be a vessel for carrying seed, she loses her utility and is discarded like a useless vessel.
Another renowned Punjabi novelist, Rajinder Singh Bedi, wrote his trend-setting novel, *Ek Chadder Maili Si* (1962) in which the title is derived from the common Punjabi custom of getting a widow married to her brother-in-law in order to keep the joint family together. *And Such is Her Fate* like *Ek Chaddar Maili Si* highlights another system of values in Hindu culture which is contrary to the Brahmnical canon of purity and austerity. The characters of this novel live on the edge of survival and lack refinement and sophistication and are unaware of the so-called high ideals of conduct. However, they exhibit a raw vitality of behaviour. There is a toughness and vitality in this race of Punjabi farmers who have borne the brunt of innumerable invasions and upheavals and learnt the art of survival in most adverse circumstances. While they struggle for the basic necessities of life – food, shelter and sex – according to Rajinder Singh Bedi, "They make their own laws and break them the very next moment out of sheer necessity. The mother goddess forgives them even before they commit any sin because they have suffered much . . . A Punjabi does not come into the world to whine or to philosophize. He is there to laugh, to play, to eat, to celebrate."

Bhano, the female protagonist of this novel also seems to possess this robust spirit. She is a highly realistic individual. She penetrates into every situation with an extreme self-confidence and immediately develops a lasting relationship with the man of the hour. As a woman she is 'sold' from one situation to another. She makes sincere efforts to be able to authenticate her being which is recognized neither by society nor by an individual. H. S. Gill writes in the post-face of the novel: "For her, to be, is to be a part of a
social structure, however wretched it may be.” Therefore, "she tries to stick to any human social or religious screen that comes along."\textsuperscript{19} Bhano represents a typical Punjabi woman who is pragmatic, confident and courageous. But in spite of all these individual qualities, she is victimized for being a woman in a predominantly male world.

In this milieu of typical subsistence economy, lower-caste/class women often claim a greater degree of relative independence as compared to men. They are usually more assertive than the protected upper caste/class women. At the same time they are more vulnerable to social patriarchy or social violence – molestation, rape, murder by local gondas, landlords, contractors, political bosses and so on. Sexually, they follow a different norm from the established social norm of "pativrata" but this very difference defines them as "bad" women who are considered fair game for sexual assault. A kind of dialectical circle exists : "within the framework of the dominant norms, purity and prostitution are two sides of the same coin, and the social definition of a woman's status is in terms of the duality of "good" (submissive, wife) and "bad" (independent, prostitute)."\textsuperscript{20}

Bhano left her father's home to escape being sold for the second time and tried to commit suicide. Narain saved her and brought her straight to his house without the sanction of any religious ceremony or any social contract. Consequently, Bhano becomes the object of constant jilting and taunting. The village community views her with suspicion. Bhano commits the sin of disobedience for which she is branded 'bad'. Her refusal to be sold like a commodity for the second time by her father is not appreciated. Her
desperate effort to run away from home and attempted suicide are not considered acts of courage. Rather she is branded as a woman of loose morals for not submitting to her father's wishes, and thus, defying the dikhtat of patriarchal authority; since, "the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying." The lawfully married wives of the neighbourhood are hell-bent upon driving Bhano out of their fraternity. All that she does with the best of intentions is perceived as an act of hypocrisy to hide her innate cunning.

Narain offers Bhano shelter because his own wife has deserted him and he needs someone to look after him and run his household. He himself is only an incorrigible boozer and a drifter; a physical wreck and many years senior to Bhano in age. Infact, he is no match to young and comely Bhano whom he brings to the village as a gift from mother Ganga that he can flaunt like a trophy. Among his male friends this good-for-nothing fellow becomes the object of their jealousy. Since Bhano is not protected by matrimony, despite her cautiously reserve behaviour, Narain's friends feel emboldened to treat Bhano irreverently. Male promiscuity has always been tolerated and dismissed as a sign of masculinity. But the idea of purity and chastity is still the norm for a woman and the slightest deviation tilts the scales of justice against her. The low-caste/class community too has different standards to judge Bhano and Narain.

Santi, who is a mother figure, pleads for Bhano and tries to persuade others into believing that Bhano is not "that" type of a woman. But Bachni and Dialo are adamant and refuse to soften towards her; unsparingly Dialo
because they lack that social awareness which could enable them to interpret Bhano's personal tragedy as a common predicament of women in a rotten system.

The faceless "that kind of woman" who is time and again referred to in the text, indicates the existence of a recognized group of prostitutes. They are a logical corollary of the concept of two separate worlds, 'domestic' and 'public'. This further relates to the marginal significance attached to the husband-wife relationship in the conservative society where joint family is the norm. In villages where poverty compels a family of half a dozen inmates to sleep in a single room, there are very few avenues available to the couples for their sexual and emotional fulfilment. Further, the distinction between "good" and "bad" women inhibits the formation of close bonds between husband and wife by laying down parameters of virtue and respectability. In such an atmosphere where free expression of desire is a taboo, these women symbolize romance, passion, refinement and talent, etc., the attributes which men crave for. Infact, they are a complete 'other' to what their women are expected to be "... He projects upon her what he desires and what he fears!" The "prostitute" functions as the "other" which allows a wife to construct a positive self identity as "pativrata".

The cliche that there is a prostitute in every woman only implies that the attributes of a "kanjari" or a prostitute naturally go into the formation of the "female of the species." But culture holds them under leash. A woman suppresses the "other" while playing various roles expected of her. But the "other" always threatens her and she feels insecure. The presence of Bhano
says: "Do such women grow wings to distinguish them from others? A woman who runs away from her father’s house – do you call her good?" (25) Even Narain has guts to say, "A woman can be upto anything. She can build up connections in a jiffy." (19) Bhano wants to convince them all that she is not "that kind of a woman," but since she does not know what ‘that kind of woman was like’, she has to keep quiet. Dialo accuses Bhano of falsity, "she poses to be very devout . . . it’s just a cover up to hide her sins." (26) Bhano is painted like a huntress, "she has been seen lying in wait for her quarry near our well." (29) Dialo maligns her and considers her worse than a common prostitute: "the one who has been used by so many and each time cast aside like a left-over." (30) She doesn’t stop and gives vent to the collective ire of a wife against a whore: "such women are full of trickery . . . By now she must have lost count of the men she lived with and ticked off." (30) No one is ready to sympathize with Bhano. When Jagar tries to molest her. Instead of punishing the guilty, they find fault with Bhano. Bachni tells Santi: "You don’t know these women, Amma. First they throw a bait before a man and when discovered they create a rumpus that the fellow was trying to molest them." (34)

Bhano’s portrayal is a telling comment on the ironical predicament of a woman in a patriarchal social system where a woman is punished for the sins committed against her. The society which brutally dehumanizes her by converting her into a saleable lifeless commodity, instead of empathizing with her, holds her responsible for her exploitation and use it as a ploy to malign her. The rural women like Bachni and Dialo, try to isolate her
doesn't disturb Santi because she has finished her role as a sexually active female. But it upsets both Bachni and Dialo who are relatively young and sexually active. Bhano enters their world as a new contender and a potent rival who seems to them more powerful because of her situation.

The men in the village consider Bhano a woman of easy virtue and therefore, readily "available", only because she has shown courage to defy the designs of her father to sell her, and reject her husband's brother as a prospective husband after Sarban's death. She has taken a self decision to live with Narain refuting the authority of her father and brothers-in-law, who are her lawful guardians. In a patriarchal society, where men decide the norms for women, a courageous defiant woman is always suspected as immoral. However, it is a pity that no one except Santi, tries to understand the circumstances which compel Bhano to take this decision.

Jagar, a friend of Narain, makes sexual advances towards Bhano and entices her with a proposal of elopement. Bhano feels sad and says: "perhaps you've taken me for a woman of 'that' sort" (69) . . . "I'm not a play thing."(70) But Jagar is not the only one who wants to take advantage of her situation. Inder, another village dandy, winks at Bhano while going to fetch fodder. When Jagar wants to talk to Narain in private, Banta, cuts a filthy joke targeting Bhano, "Has someone decamped with Bhano?" (28) Bhano feels enraged but swallows the humiliation knowing that, "Narain couldn't have done much." (66) In a feudalistic, patriarchal set-up where only "the brave deserve the fair" - Narain's peers believe that the spineless boozer doesn't qualify to own a woman like Bhano; and, therefore, all of them cast
Their avaricious eyes on her. Even the 'bhaiji' in the Gurudwara takes advantage of her situation and makes advances to her. In this typical rural set-up Bhano presents the image of a woman, who in the absence of a strong male figure, feels insecure and humiliated as the popular saying also propounds: "gareeb ki joru sabki bhabhi". This milieu and the typical patterns of behaviour validate the status of woman as property like land and to hold and control it man must acquire muscle power. In other words patriarchy upholds the dictum that "might is right". In order to retain and strengthen patriarchal interests, men formulate certain norms and customs which suit their purpose. But it is always the woman who bears the brunt.

Desire for a male child emerges as a recurrent motif in And Such is Her Fate. The wife comes to her own as a woman and establishes her position in the husband's lineage and community with the birth of a child, particularly a son, who is instrumental in acquiring status and position for a woman. Without a son, a woman is considered socially barren. A son is a woman's most precious possession and anchor of future security. Infact the cultural idealization and emphasis on motherhood as the predominant constituent of feminine identity is fully realized with the birth of a male child. Patriarchy, whether in its more traditional or modern form tries to glorify motherhood as the most prized vocation for women. Woman's mothering instinct has continued to be basic to woman's life and organization of the family and fundamental to the genesis of ideology about women. Indian mythology and cultural symbols glorify woman's role as a mother. However, motherhood is very much under male control and
operates strictly within marital framework and is not autonomous. Women may be accorded a low status in society but motherhood plays the most significant part in the social life of mankind. For a woman, matrimony and motherhood have been obligatory in Indian culture. A girl was trained to be a good wife and a good mother and was blessed by all elders with 'the motherhood of sons'. At the time of wedding a prayer was offered on behalf of the bride that 'she may never have an empty lap (asunyopastha)' 23 Immediately after the wedding ceremony the newly wedded couple prayed: "come let us join together that we may generate a male child, a son for the sake of the increase of wealth." 24 The aim of Hindu marriage is to promote the preservation of society and its culture by in (enjoining) upon the couple the procreation of children. Motherhood, therefore, has been the cherished ideal of every woman. The birth of a child immediately enhances her status. Since childlessness is regarded as the worst misfortune, fertility of a woman gets the highest premium. Barrenness of a woman is considered as an abominable curse and a barren woman is labelled 'inauspicious', whose sight is repugnant to the society. What a childless woman looks on, gods do not accept. Her fate is most pitiable in the family system. Tiwana uses barrenness as an oft-repeated motif in And Such is Her Fate. Bhano's tragedy lies in her inability to produce a child. It is ordained that "A barren woman could be cast away because she was possessed by 'Nirriti' 25 "The husband of a sonless wife should marry again." 26 The good woman is defined as the "one who pleases her husband, gives birth to male children and never speaks back to her husband." 27 Down the ages this craving for sons has remained
the uppermost desire in a woman's heart and she has practised austerities, observed vows, prayed and supplicated for fertility.

In the agrarian society of Punjab, the birth of a daughter is usually regarded as unwelcome even, often an occasion for sorrow and mourning. While a daughter is considered *paraya dhan* because after her marriage she departs to her husband's house and leaves her natal home, she is also a constant drain on the resources of her family. On the other hand a son will stay with the parents, continue the family line and take care of his parents in their old age. Therefore, the sons are needed not only to work on the land, but more importantly to keep the land within the patriarchal family. The strong preference for a son has to be viewed in relation with two institutions inter-linked with family: property and religion. Therefore, a woman who fails to produce a male child is seen as accursed, as one who has failed in her essential duty; as one who has lost utility and can be discarded and replaced.

Bhano faces this predicament because she has lived with Narain for two years and has failed to produce a son. Santi who is affectionate as a mother, would ask for a boon of a child on her behalf because, "without a child a woman is no better than a tinsel. Her sojourn through this life becomes meaningless." (78) Santi believes that the purpose of a woman's life is not fulfilled unless she becomes a mother: "And who knows you may yet have a small kid in your lap? And that may as well be the reason for your being destined together," (52) or with God's benediction, "you may be destined to send down your roots in this village." (52) In any case it's only
with a child that a woman feels rooted. Since Bhano could not bear a child, she remains a piece of property changing hands from one buyer to the other. Though Narain bears no grudge against her, he feels constrained to buy another woman to beget a son. He shares his feelings with Bhano:

"You know Bhano, in old age we must have someone to stay by us. I am doing this because I don't have a child . . . Bhano, if we had a child, it would have helped to carry on our lineage. That's what is weighing on my mind."

A woman's self-image or her self-perception gets conditioned by the attitudes of society. Bhano has also imbibed this image of a barren woman and she also views herself as a woman who has failed in the expected role of a good wife by not bearing a male child. She considers herself as a barren piece of land which, if discarded, has no right to protest. Narain buys Bhagwanti as if a womb to sow the 'seed' and procure a son. When a son is born, Bhano feels overjoyed because the family, now, has an heir to carry on the lineage. She exclaims with joy, "This child is as good as my own. A lamp has lit up in our house. I had prayed and prayed that it should be a boy."

Bhano is cast in the image of a woman who has internalized the attitudes and norms of patriarchy and who upholds and promotes that very ideology which victimizes her. The society condemns and rejects her for being barren and she, instead of protesting, craves for a male heir for the family and thus becomes instrumental in strengthening the concept of personal property, which in turn reduces a woman to a commodity or to a womb to manufacture male heirs to inherit the property. Since a son was
considered absolutely necessary, even it was included in the duties of the wife to urge her husband to contract a second marriage, if she had failed to present a son to him. Bhano accepts a co-wife meekly because she includes it in her wifely duty to accommodate the other woman who might provide the family with a male heir. She bears the stigma of barrenness without rancour and faces its implications without recoil. When Bhagwanti's son falls slightly ill, Bhano despite her genuine love and attachment for the boy, is blamed to have cast an evil eye on the child, since "a ghost and a barren woman's glances are considered ominous." (112)

The attitude to women and particularly to mothers is conditioned by the prevailing socio-economic conditions in which it arises. An agricultural primitive society needs many hands for tilling and looking after property or land. Incidentally it needs girls also who will marry and bring forth children. Hence a huge premium is laid on female fertility per se. Therefore, the women use fertility as a weapon of power. The mother of children feels more empowered than her counterpart, who is childless. In a polygamic family the mother of children enjoys social superiority over the childless, barren co-wife.

Inspite of Narain's solicitude for Bhano and his repeated promises made to her that she would, retain her position 'as the one who counts in the house, Bhagwanti's arrival upsets everything against her. Bhagwanti dictates terms and makes Narain dance to her tune. Fearing that he might lose the son, if Bhagwanti leaves the house, he agrees to sell Bhano to another "suitable" man. Inspite of her many talents as Santi describes: . . . "so
comely, so accomplished, so modest, such a woman is a man's most precious asset," Bhano is thrown out at Bhagwanti's behest; because as a mother of the son, she has that bargaining power which Bhano is deprived of.

Married women in villages are denied the opportunity for education, a personal vocation, independent social, economic and political identity. Child bearing is the one venue left open to a rural woman whereby she can prove her social utility and command some respect within the familial context. Women, who are totally dependent on the husband, the breadwinner, feel that by bearing children to the husband they were but repaying their debt to their masters. The majority of patriarchal religions interpret motherhood as sacred. In their maternal role women can receive legitimate power within the religious structure.

Initially Bhano shows courage and asserts herself by rejecting Sarban's brothers, defying her father's desire to sell her for the second time and deciding to live with Narain. But when she becomes aware of her barrenness and fails to provide a male child to Narain, she loses confidence and power. Negativity associated with the image of a barren woman plunges her into a depressing state of mind as she suffers from a feeling of low self-esteem. Consequently Bhano altogether loses the will to assert and protest and submits to fate passively. Bhano presents the image of a dejected childless woman who is abysmally marginalized because of her gender and further marginalized because she cannot bear a child.
A Journey on Bare Feet, an autobiography of the author, also substantiates the unique position of a son in the rural, agrarian culture of Punjab. A woman's position in her husband's family remains insecure unless she bears a son or an heir to the family. The grandfather of the author died with an unfulfilled obsessive desire for a grandson. In moments of utter disappointment, the old patriarch expressed his anxiety, "I can see the end of the family," and the only way out he could see to save the family from this impending doom was that the son should "go in for another marriage." A male child came to be regarded as essential as the life giving rain. A popular saying, in the rural agrarian communities, maintains: "meenh our bettya te koon dhappya sai" (who can be satisfied without rain and son). Another proverb upholds the superiority of the sons: "Chohra mure nirbhag ka; chori mure bhagwan ki" (the son of an unfortunate father dies, the daughter of a fortunate one dies). The above sayings reflect on the positionality of male and female child in the anthropological set-up of the rural Punjab.

After father and husband, the most important male figure in a rural woman's life is the brother. Evidently the brother-sister bond is invariably very strong. The very fact that the parents have a preference for a son, does not deter a sister loving a brother. In her autobiography the author as the elder sister presents herself as a surrogate mother to her younger brother who was born after her grandfather's death: "Veer came to us as a boon after many years' prayers." She reassures her worrying grandmother, "Leave it to me, Ma . . . I'll myself put him to school." The author had
always prayed for the most valuable boon of a brother while singing with other rural girls, "O Ram! give me a brother. I long to swear by him." A sister of many brothers enjoys a high status and it adds to her value as a prospective bride. The author's grandmother desired one such bride for her grandson: "Get him a wife whom he really likes. It matters little whether she is rich or poor. But she must have three or four brothers." The same desire was repeated when the author's grandfather planned a second marriage for his son, "she must be a beautiful woman having four or five brothers."

The brother-sister bond influences a woman's identity and self-definition. The Indian woman knows that a man's protection is a prerequisite for her survival in a patriarchal set-up. Apart from her father, husband and son, she looks to her brother for support. This makes her feel secure and competent to deal with the totally male-dominated world. Like the mother who is protected by the son she cares for, the sister also needs the protection of the brother to whom she has been a surrogate mother. She considers him a patriarch; at times being in the same age group, a comrade and a friend with whom she can share her inmost feelings and who in turn promises to help her confront problems in a hostile world. Apart from physical resemblances, other deeper resemblances bind them. Though they spend a small chunk of time together in their childhood, their hold on each other remains throughout their lives and they cherish it very intensely.

Folk traditions and folk songs profusely celebrate the brother-sister relationship. Bhano sings a song in which a tormented girl sends a message to her folks through a crow: "Only tell my woes to brother mine, He's the
one! Tell him once, tell him times! He'll rush to my rescue. Gallantly riding a blue steed." (55) Bhano presents the image of a woe-stricken village woman who feels orphaned by the death of a young brother upon whom she depends for support. She recounts the change her brother's death brought in her life, "My brother's illness brought us to the brink of ruin." (7) Bhano's life gets badly affected by his illness and consequent death since her father had to sell her as an item of property to raise money for her brother's treatment. On coming back to her parental home after Sarban's death she feels like an orphan, "... what protection could the old man give me ... A girl who has no brothers to take her under their wings has a miserable time in the village." (17) In a culture where physical might and valour are held at premium a brother is a patriarch – a symbol of power and strength. Utterly dejected, Bhano remembers her brother, "If my brother, Dogar were living I would have gone through life without a care." (80) Rural women with brothers to protect and support them feel empowered to deal with the hostile world. Kartari, Narain's sister is convinced that, "If a brother wants to meet a sister he would even hack his way through a mountain." (74) Bachni on being beaten by her husband, "sent word to my (her) brothers" (43) in utter desperation and the all three of them came the same day. Her husband cringed before them and since that day never dared touch her. Another village woman who has impaired her eye sight by weeping for her dead brother, mourns his loss, "when a brother is lost all links with life suddenly snap." (18)
The brother-sister relationship doesn't get significant treatment in the other women novelists' writing about rural life, but Tiwana lays a special emphasis on the place of brother in a sister's life. In the rural, agrarian milieu of Punjab sisters crave for brothers since they are their only links with the natal family and in a patriarchal feudal set-up they are the safeguards of their honour.

Significance of family for the women is more vital than for men. While a man is allowed independent existence, a woman's survival is not socially conceivable without a family. However, all its members do not experience the family in the same way. For some, it means security, resources, power, shelter and life-long insurance against a harsh world, for others it may be an existence with uncertainty and a threat to be thrown out of its membership without notice. More women in the family are likely to be in the second group. A woman like Bhano, never experiences family in its positive implications.

Marriage becomes a major turning point in a woman's life. She leaves her natal home and gets busy in the task of rehabilitating herself in the husband's home. From the certainty of this transfer evolves the whole culture of adjusting to her new family. It is a well-observed tradition among peasant castes to marry off their daughters into families who live sufficiently far away so that the women are away from keeping day-to-day contact with their natal families. Daughters are seldom married to men living in their parent's village. The structure of such patrilocal family makes it difficult for women to resist maltreatment. Since they are suddenly transferred to a
completely strange environment and are expected to please a family of new people who would, as they are told, gradually 'accept' them if they persevere in this effort to please.

The longing for the natal home becomes a part of a girl's psyche. It finds expression in the folk tradition. Bhano coaxes Narain to go and see his long separated sister: "Do you know when a sister or daughter sighs the walls of her parent's house start shaking?" (64) Bhano sings a folk song in which a girl married in a distant village asks the crow to be her messenger and take her message to her father's village: "O, crow, my good bird, while in flight, linger for a moment over my father's village." (55) In another folk song the girls say: "Beloved father! I beg of you, do not give me away in marriage." (76) Bhano doesn't bear any grudge against her father and remembers him day and night, "Bapu comes and plants himself right in front of my eyes... He must be having rough time." (80) Finding Bhano preoccupied and lost, Narain comments, "Is it your mother's home that you feel so nostalgic about?" (96) Bhano's longing for her native village reflects the fate of many other rural girls who face this estrangement. They become 'pardesans' (aliens) for their own people due to marriage and 'babul ka ghar' (father's home) always stays in their memory like a lost dream.

Marriage becomes the major turning point in a girl's life in the villages. It changes her situation drastically at many levels - anthropological, physical, emotional, sexual as well as existential. More than ever before she is expected to shoulder the major burden of upholding social and cultural values. The change emphasizes her emotional turmoil as
a newly wedded wife, particularly her sadness at leaving her natal home and uncertainty about future. The new surroundings impose multiple restrictions on her.

Reflecting upon the restricted existence of women Kumool Abhi comments:

It is through the sieve of the norms, values, cultural patterns and taboos of the 'purdah' framework that women are born, grow up, attain maturity, marry, experience motherhood, acquire power, position, prestige and finally come to the end of their journey.36

In the rural Punjab the practice of purdah is an important part of its cultural configuration. Purdah emerges as an important way of controlling women and confining them to domestic sphere both among the Hindus and the Muslims. In And Such is Her Fate the author depicts the poor peasantry of Punjab. The married women of this section of society keep their faces covered with veils, ghoonghat, whenever they go out. They don't move around without wearing ghaghra. The purpose of excluding women from the sight of others is achieved either by confining her within an enclosed space, or by manipulating her clothing. Women are expected to keep away from men in the public places and maintain silence in their presence, "Noticing men folk in Sath, they pulled down their veils over their faces and stopped talking." (445) When Bhano came out of her house without wearing ghaghra, her neighbour Dhankaur commented: Good heavens, Bhano! Where is your ghaghra . . . Have you a mind to make this village your parental home?" (65) Bhano apologized but the woman didn't miss to comment, "I
thought you had turned modern." (65) An unmarried girl is free to move around without the dress code but once she comes to the 'in-laws' village as a *bahu* she is bound to abide by the prescribed norms.

The focus on purdah, and the women's adherence to it or its gradual disappearance highlight the constant conflict between the anthropological and existential situation of the women. It is this spirit which refuses to accept the dictates of the rigid institutionalized anthropological positions which enable the women to subvert purdah, express their desires and passions, and seek a place for themselves in the patriarchal world. Towards the end of the novel *And Such is Her Fate*, Bhano refuses to abide by the norms of a cruel social structure which neither wants to "admit her within its holy precincts, nor allow her to remain apart from it." (129) The only way she could think to do so was by "wearing no ghaghra, her face unveiled, she passed by the village chopal like a stranger."(119) By this symbolic defiance she ultimately defies the system which completely dehumanizes her.

Emphasis on "honour" or "izzat" as the highest value puts a high moral responsibility on women. Honour and modesty as conceived by men, relate to the behaviour of women which is seen to reflect on the latter's male kinsmen – husbands, fathers, brothers and even sons. The stress on the physical modesty of women reflects the highly sexual connotations of these values. Important methods adopted for preventing the breach of modesty lie in restricting physical mobility of women beyond the threshold and ensuring sexual invisibility through purdah. While a man's honour in the rural society is assessed on several scores, the conduct of a family woman is always a
cardinal consideration. Acquisition of wealth, land and powerful contacts are valuable resources for maintaining and enhancing a man's honour but the family honour is reduced to dust if the honour of a woman in the family, particularly sexual honour is lost. The concern for honour or "izzat" is a fundamental value in this entire region which continues to persist despite major economic and social changes. It is the women who have to bear the main burden of maintaining and upholding it through their faithful adherence to the prevailing norms and code of female modesty and propriety. Legends, literature and the folk-lore of the land valorize their concern for honour. Women are expected to act as custodians of this "izzat" for they have the negative potential for disrupting the delicately balanced edifice of honour. Wives, therefore, become both "guarantors" and "disrupters" of family patrilineage.

Restricting women's freedom of movement is an important part of the strategy for making them dependent on men. Their fear of the external world borders on panic, so that many women learn to put up with any maltreatment at home rather than be forced to leave home for a world of which they know very little. Because of this dependence, men are able to exercise control over women's lives and labour. Women rarely have independent control over their income. Men, especially in villages of North India, see their ability to withdraw their women from paid labour and confine them to the house as an enhancement in their own social status. Debarring women from doing paid work outside their homes enhances the status of men but does not improve the lot of women. They are expected to
perform never-ending unpaid labour in the service of the family from which they can never hope to escape. Since this labour is seen as her 'natural' duty, she cannot seek any redress from it. Though the labour performed by woman at home is crucial to the survival of all the family members, it is under-estimated not only by the family and society but by the woman herself as "doing nothing, sitting at home". The "economic" man moves out of the house and the "domestic" woman remains in it feeling dependent on man; and, therefore, bound to fulfil his desires and obey his commands. The most respectable situation available to women within patriarchal ideology is to remain at home in purdah – a situation which renders them dependent on men and powerless.

In the rural set-up of Punjab to which Bhano belongs, women are not allowed any independent access to income producing sources of property. In a predominantly rural society, where land is the most important form of property, women's lack of control over landed property becomes the major source of their economic bondage to men. Even in families with substantial landed property, the status of women is similar in many ways to that of the landless poor who toil without any rights to land. In the prevalent family set-up where women are mere commodities, instead of being owners of property, they are treated as items of man's property, transferred from one family to another. Even control over women as over slaves, is passed from one owner – the parent's family – to the other, the husband's family. Bhano presents the image of a deprived woman who is victimized in each situation
because of her gender. Inspite of her best intentions she is not allowed to relate either to human beings or to material objects.

Recollecting her first sale, Bhano tells Santi, "First we had to sell our buffalo, and then bullocks." (7) After that her father mortgaged the land and then "as a last resort my father decided to marry me off." (8) Even when Narain entrusts her with the duties of housekeeping, she never feels like the mistress of the house. She hesitates in lending a little _ghee_ to a neighbour and tells Narain, "I thought I must first tell you about it." (19) Narain assures her, "Bhano, now this house is as much yours as it is mine. Do as it pleases you." (19) Narain sees no reason for her to be unhappy and sad. Simplifying things, he asks her, "Then, what makes you sad? You lack nothing. You have a free run of the house." (97) But Bhano's intuition makes her skeptic about her transient happiness. The hollowness of Narain's assurances comes to the surface when she is driven out of the house like a cow failing to prove her utility by producing a male child. Narain sells her to a new buyer because this time she is his property.

Before Bhano's advent in Narain's life, he was a derelict wasting his land in boozing and living like a vagrant. Santi tells Bhano, "For that matter, you've made a man of him. Before you came, one always found him boozed." (82) Bhano, with her diligence and accomplishments, gives a new lease of life to him. With her efforts and intelligent guidance, Narain reclaims some part of his land and acquires some social status and respectability. The acquisition of "private property" enkindles in him a desire for a male heir to carry on his lineage. Since Bhano couldn't provide
him a son, she lost her utility as a woman and consequently all her rights as a wife, because whatever meager rights a woman possesses, it is only through men.

The social milieu as depicted in And Such is Her Fate has no place for women's education. The society seems convinced that a woman should remain a housewife only and not jeopardize her position by stepping out of the house. Education, therefore, is looked upon with suspicion and is associated with an inevitable crumbling of the social order.

The only book which finds place in the homes of the villages is the Holy Book. Santi adores Bhano because the former considers her to be an accomplished woman. Since Bhano can recite the Holy Book, she commands respect, "Beti, I hear you're very good at reciting the Holy Book... some day recite it to me. We've lived like cattle all our lives." (56) Santi thinks that God has been quite generous in endowing Bhano with health, intelligence and looks; He only erred while writing Bhano's fate. Bhano jokingly replies : "He took advantage of my being unlettered... If I could read, I would have created a row over what He had written." (81) This innocently uttered sentence has deeper and rather prophetic inference. Women are capable of changing their fate and make their own destiny if they are allowed to read and write. Literacy can give them some control over their own lives.

Caste system in India has existed for a very long time and it has survived through major socio-historical changes. Caste affects a woman's situation in so many ways. Caste structure in rural Punjab is less
complicated. Sikhism was a revolt against the rigid Brahmnical order which laid utmost stress on caste or varna. Sikh Gurus laid stress on casteless society. However, caste system is so deeply entrenched in the Indian psyche that inspite of the impact of the great Gurus, the Sikhs also discriminate between the Jats (land owners) and the Muzhabis, the main group of landless, agricultural labourers who come from the scheduled castes. In a way caste determines the class also. A woman automatically belongs to the 'varna' or the caste of her husband. To whatsoever varna she may belong it doesn't give her any special privilege. Kamla Bhasin aptly comments:

Irrespective of 'class' or 'caste' women do in the family what 'shudras' or menial workers, do in society. Within every household women are the 'shudras' and men the 'twice-born' or 'upper castes'.

The attitude which regards women inferior to men is further expressed in the rules regarding marriages. A marriage where a man of upper caste marries a woman of lower caste is approved (anuloma vivaha) and marriage of "upper caste" woman with a lower-caste man is disapproved (pratiloma vivaha). Most serious punishments like excommunication and even death can be evoked for transgressing norms of caste. Woman as a guardian of "purity" has not to lower herself but she could be raised higher.

In And Such is Her Fate Dalip Kaur Tiwana doesn't aim at analyzing the caste structure and its functioning. Therefore, one doesn't come across a direct interaction and conflict among the castes of the village. But the characters presented in the novel function in a framework of caste and class. Narain rescued Bhano from drowning in the Ganges. He told the police that
she was his wife and Bhano also felt convinced that he was a boon granted to her by Mother Ganga. She took the plunge and agreed to live with him. Still she asked him only one question which seemed most important to her, "I only asked him if he was a Jat." (51) Not marrying a Jat or associating with someone below her caste could mean inviting endless trouble. To her question, Narain replied, "Of course, I'm a Jat! . . Do I look like a tanner to you?" (52) It shows the pride he takes in the caste which grants him a high social status.

The attitude regarding women's inferiority finds expression in the differential status of "bride-giver" and "bride-taker". In *A Journey on Bare Feet* the author's grandfather who is a rich landlord, feels humbled when the question of finding grooms for the daughters of the house arises, he says: "It's the way of the world. Fathers always have to humble themselves while looking for grooms. I'm no exception. I shall also stand before their fathers with folded hands."

Even within the caste, there are groups which are considered higher and for climbing high in the status ladder, the bride-givers have to give compensation in terms of dowry. With upward mobility of the group, women are immediately withdrawn from outside work and expected to observe purdah. Physical mobility is also restricted through caste norms. Bhano, doesn't sit idle for a minute, but she doesn't work in the fields like lower caste women.

A significant indicator of the low status of women in village society is that the women of lower castes are accessible to men of higher status, while
there is a very severe punishment for men of lower castes if they dare look at women of higher castes. Exploitation of lower-caste women by upper caste men is very common in villages. Hence to be a woman and then to be a lower caste woman places her at a double disadvantage. In *Doosari Sita*, another novel by Tiwana, the landlord abducts a beautiful woman of the *nais*, the barber caste, she is raped and sold further to another man from whose captivity she makes an escape and lands in Hardwar. Driven away from the protection of home and the affection of a loving husband and son, when she finds herself at a point of no return, she jumps into the river and puts an end to her life. Her family runs from pillar to post in search of justice but in turn get humiliated and crushed by the relentless social system, whereas, the actual criminals thrive shamelessly.

Women are victimized because of class and caste divide. Mira Mies analyses the vicious situation:

Women are seen as the only property that the pauperized men still possess. The rape of their women teaches poor men the lesson that their status is of absolute powerlessness and propertylessness. This sexual aggression on the part of landlords and police against poor women is a weapon with which to beat the men of the propertyless classes and to stabilize the existing or newly emerging power relation in the countryside. Class rule and the oppression of women are here closely inter-woven. He who owns the land owns the women of the land.
In *And Such is Her Fate*, women are invariably depicted as victims of violence. As Swapna Majumdar writes: "Violence against women is neither culture nor region specific, it cuts across community and class. Shocking though it is, the fact is that violence against women has become an acceptable norm of life." Men have always been taught to perceive themselves as the privileged sex. The behaviour of men stems from their understanding of masculinity and what their role should be vis-à-vis women, especially their wives. There is a complex linkage between masculinity and violence. Social conditioning makes them believe that they have to control their wives. Slight disobedience or disagreement on the part of women is taken as a threat to their masculinity. Hence force is justified to assert their power and control. Women themselves become a party to the perpetuation of this evil by refusing to resist it and break of the silence and stigma relating violence within the home. They continue to accept violence as a part of their married life until it becomes intolerable.

In rural Punjab researchers found violence within the house to be a norm rather than an aberration. In this region people associate power, control and the use of violence as traits of manliness or *mardangi*. Lack of chastity, lack of submission to her in-laws, disobedience and non-performance of her role as wife, were found to be justifying factors for wife-bashing.

Physical prowess of the Jat has always been his distinctive feature. He considers it a sign of masculinity to assert his right over 'zar, zoru and zamin', i.e. land, property and woman. There are certain other facets of the
Jat masculinity. *Khalasa* honour is the honour of its women. Such symbolism legitimizes male violence against woman and also against the violators of female honour. It is imperative for women to restrict their mobility and dress and conduct themselves as per the defined code so as to keep up a chaste behaviour and avoid male-aggression. Physical violence such as wife-beating, slapping and the use of physical force are considered normal and well within the male rights. So innate is this practice that it occurs unconsciously. Hitting a wife is considered just like hitting a wall or a cow or any other animal; and it is accepted stoically by the wife. The general belief is that "a woman, a boy, a walnut tree, the more you beat them, the better they be."

In the rural milieu of *And Such is Her Fate* almost every married woman has experienced beating by her husband. Heavily boozed and incapable of clear thinking Narain was easily instigated by the wily Jagar. Suspecting Bhano's fidelity, "without a word, Narain fell upon Bhano." (40) Taken by surprise at this unexpected attack, she took the blows on her arms and hands . . . "her flesh had turned blue where he had hit her." (40) He kept beating her and hurling filthy abuses on her. People from the neighbourhood tried to intervene. Their comments are typical of the prevalent attitude about domestic violence. Bachni stepped in saying, "Do you want to kill her? . . . I thought you were belabouring the buffalo for not submitting to milking." (40) She calls her husband for help as "Narain has run amuk and he is thrashing Bhano as if she were fodder." (41) Santi as usual makes a wise comment, "Narian, one should abstain from beating a
woman, who is like the earth, for they cannot hit back." (41) After his fit of fury Narain makes amends, "Bhano, madness seemed to have seized me . . . Bhano, don't be angry . . . Such things happen in every home." (42) Bachni, who comes to console, commiserates, "Once Chote's father (her husband) behaved in the same manner with me." (42) Santi tries to convince Bhano that she is not the only one treated in this manner, . . . Sita's husband also used to beat her, just for the fun of it." (44) Dialo's reaction is typical, "It served her right . . . such women deserve it." (44) According to her, Bhano "took the beating without batting an eyelid" because "obviously, she was at fault," and that, "no one ever beats his wife without reason." (44) On being told that the real culprit was Jagar who door-crashed into Bhano's house in Narain's absence, she retorts, "Why doesn't he enter other's houses? Why only her's? These crafty women lay traps for others and when exposed, they shamelessly disown their guilt." (45)

This kind of a situation in a rural community reiterates the fact that women stand divided against one another; look on each other as hostile rivals competing for the favours of men. When a man beats his wife, her female neighbours fail to give her unstinting support. And so each woman is tormented in the vicinity of her 'own' house. Lacking in social consciousness, these women struggle alone because they treat their problems as "personal" or "private". They fail to realize that their "personal" problems are social and "political" problems and in order to fight them they have to politicize the "personal".
Wife-bashing is closely linked with a relatively high rate of alcoholism among men in Punjab. Men are prone to heavy drinking in villages and besides drinking, they are opium addicts. Alcohol and opium are normally accepted things in the life style of the villages but when these addictions cross the limits, they adversely affect the lives of women and children. Most of the women are beaten by their husbands under the influence of liquor. Narain is a proclaimed boozer who lost his property and was rendered a complete physical wreck on account of excessive alcoholism. Bhano's neighbours wonder how a good woman like her could agree to live with him. Bhano lost her brother because he consumed country liquor, fell ill and couldn't recover. His illness cost the family their entire fortune and Bhano had to be sold. Santi comments on Narain's compulsive addictions: "you are guzzling down one intoxicant or another all the time." (21) Bhano's efforts fail to improve him. Harassed by him and his boozy friends, she complains, "He conks out after taking two drops of liquor and then his friends get roaring drunk and start ogling me." (23) It's in an inebriated state that Narain beats Bhano. It's again liquor that made Jagar forget all norms of propriety and he tried to molest Bhano. Bhano presents the image of such a rural woman who is forced to face countless miseries in her life because of men who are prone to bad habits which render them irresponsible and insensitive to the physical and emotional needs of women. It is not Bhano alone who has to face such indignities. So many women in the villages are subjected to similar conditions.
Bhano represents the class of women from the low peasantry who try their best to follow the accepted social norms relating to marriage. These norms have become a part of the collective unconscious of the people. Bhano starts living with Narain without any ceremony or ritual of marriage. Theirs is a union of convenience. But as long as she lives with him, she cautiously tries to follow the norms prescribed for a wife. Though she could never forget Sarban, her first husband, she constantly reminds herself, "... that past is dead and gone, that I should be thankful for having found safe anchorage with a man who has entrusted me with his entire house without asking a question." (17) Bhano has defined her dharma for herself. Like a true pativrata she wanted to be faithful even to the memory of her dead husband. She refused to marry Sarban's brother; left her father's house to foil his plans to sell her because the very idea of living with another man was repulsive to her. She wanted to die rather than be someone else's wife. When death also eluded her, she agreed to live with Narain, since this was the only alternative left with her. She needed male protection to survive in a patriarchal set-up of society. By accepting to live with Narain, Bhano feels, "I have lost by dharma," (52) yet she feels grateful to Narain and desires to remain faithful to him, "I would rather take a headlong plunge into the well than deceive you. You are the only one in the world whom I can call my own." (19) She performs this wifely role with all sincerity but finds herself incapable of fulfilling Narain's desire for a male child. For Bhano, love is sacred. She still lives in the illusion of Sarban's love and wants to cling to it as long as she lives. She confides in Santi, "Amma, one can't easily forget a
man like Sarban. Even birds weep for him." (10) Her love for Sarban is so intense that she wanted to die in the lap of Ganga so that her last wish was fulfilled in the next life. The only boon she asked for was "to restore me to Sarban." (19) She confesses, "I won't mind even if Sarban comes to me in the form of a ghost. I am prepared to have him in any form." (50) Bhano's predicament is aptly depicted in Narain's words, "Bhano, sometimes you look like a ghost to me. You do all my chores like a ghost who's under my spell. But when I take you in my arms I feel as if my arms are empty – as if you are not there." (13) To Narain's straight question, "Don't you wish to have a child," Bhano replies, "... when he died I wished I had a child, a remembrance to cherish him by, a prop for my old age. But after that ..." (18) Actually she can't think of surrendering her body and soul to Narain in such an intimate manner so as to bear his child. He, as a man, fails to enkindle desire in her. When Santi hints at her prospective motherhood, "... And who knows you may yet have a small kid playing in your lap," (52) she wistfully reveals the reality of her conjugal life, "Oh, no, the time for it is long since past. Your boozer can't even rise to his feet by himself... Once a tree has withered, does it ever turn green again? Intoxicants have dried up the sap of his life." (52) Bhano is a simple woman who failed to understand that in a patriarchal society, the only weapon a woman can use in her defence is her fertility. She couldn't separate love from fertility and to Narain's desire for a male heir, she responded in a guileless, naive manner, "If that is your desire, may God hear your prayer. As for myself, sometimes
I feel that after his death (Sarban's), my inside has dried up. Now nothing is likely to grow there." (18)

Bhagwanti was cleverer and knew that she could exploit Narain's weakness for a son and his physical impotence to produce one, in her favour. He wanted a woman only to provide him a male heir and in turn she could make her place secure in his house. She played the role with the innate cunning of a pragmatic woman and succeeded in replacing Bhano very easily.

Bhano has been presented in the image of such a rural woman who has absolutely no control on her life. She lives under constant stress to strike a difficult balance between her mental and physical life controlled by Sarban and Narain respectively. She buckles under this pressure and falls sick. The author doesn't aim at depicting Bhano as a pitiable, tear-jerking character. She rather, makes it her concern to focus sharply on the tension arising from Bhano's predicament and social reality.

Bhano manages Narain's household with remarkable skill. With her intelligence she puts his derailed life back on the track. As a contrast to the lazy good-for-nothing boozer, she is a tireless worker, "I can't sit idle. Work keeps me fit and my mind occupied." (60) Her sister-in-law compliments her, "you are really gifted. An excellent house-keeper." She amazes people with her versatile talents for singing, dancing and yet sparing time for all kinds of jobs, like grinding the grain, cleaning the dals and plastering the floor and the walls. During the wedding of Kartari's daughter she virtually managed the whole show single-handed. The deeply touched sister-in-law
had to say, "my Bhabhi deserves to be preserved in a casket." (76) She enters Narain's life as a boon. The pauperized household is filled with plenty and prosperity. Bhano has tremendous instinct for nurturing and caring. Santi acknowledges, "you brought a sea-change in Narain's life. From a filthy boozer whom everyone shunned, he has become a man of status. She taught him habits of cleanliness as a mother teaches a small child. Narain also regards her, "as a mother, sister, daughter and sweet heart, all roled into one." (63) On her falling ill, Narain feels miserable and says, "But I feel like an orphan without you. I, who have no father, nor a mother." (89) All such personal qualities and feminine charm fail in securing for Bhano a permanent shelter. Bhano's hopeless situation bears a testimony to the social reality that a woman, howsoever honest and sincere she may be, must face tragic consequences if she has ever deviated from patriarchal norms.

One common feature of the life of rural women throughout the country is that the sole responsibility of running the household and child care falls exclusively on their shoulders. Their activities are centered on a continuous round of domestic and field labour; and their working hours are much longer than those of their men. In *Such is Her Fate* women are seldom found lazing around. Even when they gossip they are doing things like spinning, kitchen-gardening, tending the cattle or collecting fuel and bringing water from the well. They snatch moments from their individual drudgery to share community living. These moments they spend in sharing their joys and sorrows with neighbours, helping each other, if required, and gossiping. Bhano finds Santi a compassionate motherly person with whom
she shares her confidence. When together, they have very intimate moments like picking lice from each-other's head. Such activities create a close bonding and create a small, narrow woman's world in which they live their lives. To interact with men is not encouraged, hence even in this seclusion and segregation their existence remains vibrantly alive.

The whole narrative in *And such is Her Fate* devolves around social inevitability and human fate to which Bhano and her men succumb. The conceptual opposition that forms the matrix of this novel revolves around social structure and women. This structure consists of many components which include not only economic and cultural exigencies but also religious and metaphysical attitudes. "The common denominator of 'Fate' seems to govern all human activity. Infact the idiom of the text is impregnated with images and allusions from the over-powering, compelling forces of nature which hang on all individual activity like the sword of Damocles." Whether the participant of this human situation talk about cattle, or failure of crops, it is "fate" or destiny that controls everything. Santi explains Bhano's co-incidental union with Narain in terms of fate, "You never know what God has in store for you. Besides, it's ordained that one must breathe the allotted number of breaths." (52) She further stresses her point, "Bhano, nothing rests in man's hands. One has to take the pickings from where one is ordained to live and eat." (52) Her fate in destiny is unflinching, "But you never know about God's benediction. You may be destined to send down your roots in this village." (52) Bhano consoles Santi with the same logic while the latter laments the loss of her young son, "That's how God must
have willed it, Amma. We have no say in these matters." (55) Man should always live in awe of these unknowable forces. Even to question is sacrilege. Therefore, the only way left to mankind is to resign and accept. Bhano surrenders unconditionally, "let Him please Himself at our cost. We shall stoically put up with what befalls us." (56) Narain decides to sell Bhano but he absolves himself of responsibility and blame since he is just an instrument through which the grand design of Fate is being carried out. He tries to explain to Bhano, . . ."And one good thing, you'll be happier in Chaunda. And if you ask me, nothing rests in man's hands. One has to go where one is destined to." (116) Bhano and her well-wisher Santi accepted their tragedy as the act of 'Fate'. Since these women are not empowered to transform their situation, they accept it as their destiny. The philosophical and metaphysical component in Bhano's personality manifests itself in her belief in fatalism.

Another component which determines a rural woman's image is their faith in religion which plays a very important role in their lives. It's religion which gives them strength to accept their destiny however, relentless and hostile it may be. In the villages of Punjab religion is free from ritualistic dogma. The Sikh Gurus have simplified it to a great extent. For the uneducated – even illiterate simple folk – religion means a very deep, unswerving faith in God; visiting the Gurudwara; listening to the Holy Book; and offering sewa or service in the name of God. Women are often more religious than men because they are more inclined to 'faith'. Bhano and Santi remember God at every little instance. The presence of God
permeates their little world and they feel Him as a living presence. Bhano
being a devout woman, follows all religious injunctions which irritates her
irreverent husband. He feels, "she must mend her ways. Whenever there is a
kirtan in the neighbourhood she hangs on there for hours together. She
cleans others' dirty utensils and dusts their shoes. If asked, she says she's
doing service." (24) Santi believes that good actions done in this life ensure
happiness in the next one, "One must earn some piety for the next life." (24)
Dialo considers Bhano's religious leanings to be a mere sham, "she poses to
be very devout. You will find her in the forefront in every pooja. It is just a
cover up to hide her sins." (26) Narain teases Bhano, "... that will take you
straight to heaven while I'll rot in hell." (61) Bhano can recite the Holy Book
which she learnt as a child. She goes to offer 'sewa' in the Gurudwara and
sweeps the floors there. Inspite of people like Bhaiji posing to be religious,
she doesn't lose faith in the inherent goodness of mankind. She tries to find
goodness even in Bhago, her co-wife and tormentor.

The uneducated rural women fail to understand the deep and
abstruse philosophical content of religion. Unable to touch the core of it,
they remain on the periphery and in the name of 'faith' they believe in
various superstitions and pseudo saints. They believe in everything and get
exploited because of their gullibility. They believe in spirits and all those
spurious remedies which they believe can cure them of their evil effects.
They believe in numerous good or bad omens, black magic, spells and
exorcists. The world of these women is a strange, subliminal world which is
dominated by blind faith, instead of reason and logic.
Bhano shooed off pigeons sitting on the wall "because their cooing was considered ominous." (86) She blew out the lamp and suddenly recalled that as a child her mother had warned her "never to blow out a lamp with her breath." (20) When Narain thrashed her, Santi suggested, "why not consult the Brahmin astrologer? It could be that you are under the influence of an evil star." Santi also advised her to seek the blessings of some saint in order to get a child, "It is stated in mythological stories that women who were bereft of progeny went to these saints and came back with a child in their lap." (53) Bhano tells Santi that she hears a sound in the dark; Santi believes it can be the soul of Narain's ancestors stalking about his house and the same should be propitiated by performing shradhs. Santi warns Bhano against examining Bachni's hair for lice because it could harm Bhano as "she (Bachni) goes to spell-binders for all sorts of talismans and magic threads." (79) When Bhano falls sick, Bachni's diagnosis is, "I think you're under the influence of some evil eye. Go to Marrudass cave and have the evil exorcised." (87) Such is the narrow, dark, superstition-ridden world of rural women.

Tiwana's novels focus on the tragic predicament of women in its varied aspects. The entire corpus of her writing presents the fictional image of one such woman who is victimized because of the social and cultural norms of a male-dominated feudalistic society.

The predicament of Bhano, the protagonist of And Such is Her Fate offers a critique on the functioning of a feudalistic society which reduces woman to a lifeless saleable commodity. In order to survive in such a milieu
she is forced to make hopeless choices. Either she follows Bhano's course – kills all her human desires and allows herself to be treated like a lifeless commodity of the market, or, she can follow Bhagwanti who cunningly manipulates men through a concealed defiance of gender norms. A poor, unprotected woman without resources, is left with no other alternative if she wants to exist in the prevailing social structure.

Unlike Maitreyi Pushpa's deprived women, Bhano is neither a rebel nor a revolutionary. She opposes none and nothing. She submits herself to all social and ritual contours of the life around. She neither interrogates the existing system nor desires to change it. Rather, she longs to be a part of this system in which a woman is discriminated and marginalized on every score: caste, class and gender. Her's is a movement from non-being to being; from an outcaste to be within a given caste. "* She makes all possible efforts to be integrated in the existing society which consistently rejects her. Finally all doors are shut on her. It is not only that her existence is wretched; her predicament is worse – she is not allowed to exist.

The female protagonists of Tiwana do not herald revolution or change. Bhano doesn't utter a word against the existing system. She accepts every situation silently and resigns to it in an apparently passive manner. Bhano may not be heroic in resistance, but she definitely shows heroism in endurance. The voice of protest in her may not be loud but she certainly fights against the system by stoically accepting the misery and pain which it causes to her. Through Bhano's image the author doesn't offer any clear-cut, popular recipe for women's emancipation and empowerment. Nonetheless,
the end of the novel becomes a metaphor of assertion by the voiceless and the meek. By deciding to cross through the village discarding *ghaghra* and *ghunghat* which are symbols of female bondage, Bhano inflicts a "transversal cut into the unmanageable amorphous mass." Through this symbolic act of defiance she rejects the system which refuses to accept her.

In *And Such is Her Fate*, Tiwana accentuates the necessity of a voice of dissent. With a supreme effort of body and soul Bhano strikes a blow on the edifice of social norms and conventions which she has, hitherto, been following. Even her sincere intentions to obey the prescribed norms couldn't ensure a peaceful existence for her. She was in turn subjected to undeserved suffering and pain. Bhano's last gesture of defiance is, though unuttered, a piercing cry of protest. Though the author is not a professed feminist, yet from the portrayal of her female protagonist there emerges the image of such a rural woman who has ultimately found her VOICE.
Notes and References


2. H.S. Gill, 'Postface', *And Such is Her Fate*, Tiwana, 121.


4. Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, eds. *In Search of Answers*.


12. In this report Kazak cites instances of this theme in literary texts like *Muldi Tiveen* and *Kudesan*.


15. Altekar *Position of Women* 144.

16. Altekar *Position of Women* 144. Quotes Rigveda: नारी तु पत्सभये देवरं कुपुरकलिनं। VII, 5, 7


23. Jalaluddin Ahemad Khan, "Ideology of Motherhood in Ancient India", \textit{Women in Indian History} 50.


25. Jalaluddin quotes \textit{Satapatha Brahmana}. The supreme emphasis on fertility produced this idea of a woman being possessed by Nirrti a negative concept of spirit who is extremely ugly and wholly evil but whose special function is to destroy every thing good. That the barren woman is possessed by Nirrti is a direct corollary of society's sub-conscious assumption that the woman's primary function and obligation to society was to reproduce.


31. Tiwana \textit{Journey} 84.

32. Tiwana, \textit{Journey} 85.

33. Tiwana, \textit{Journey} 85.

34. Tiwana, \textit{Journey} 85.

35. Tiwana, \textit{Journey} 86.

36. Kumool Abbi, 100.


40. Gill, Postface 126.

41. Gill, Postface 129.