

ISSN 2347 - 503X

Research Chronicler

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Vol III Issue I : January - 2015

Editor-In-Chief
Prof. K.N. Shelke

www.research-chronicler.com

A detailed still-life composition featuring a quill pen as the central focus. The quill is positioned diagonally, with its tip resting on a scroll of aged parchment. The scroll is secured with a red wax seal and a red ribbon. In the background, a lit candle in a brass holder casts a warm glow. In the foreground, a glass inkwell with a quill inside and a red wax seal are visible. The entire scene is set on a dark wooden surface.

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A Peer-Reviewed Refereed and Indexed International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

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Reading Women and Colonization: *Revenge*

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Abstract

Today the world is free from colonial rule, but still colonial experiences can be observed in the form of few social incidences. There are still the so called power centers, behaving like colonizers and taking advantage of weakness in social structure and religious applications. Such power centers have control over economy, religious norms; behavioral norms and politics. The imagination of society is based on basic assumption; that is to empower the common human being, be it man or woman. There is another fact, that society can never be imagined without man or woman in a proper ratio. In present post modern age, still, due to some weakness in social legislature, we are unable to maintain that equal ratio and harmony between man and woman. Dominated women are being treated as colony of few social bodies, the so called power centers which are pushing them at the margin of society. Perhaps somewhat the similar case with the dominated men as well. Taslima Nasrin, the well known writer from Bangladesh, in her novel *Revenge*, has highlighted the story of a woman Jhumur, who is colonized by her own husband. She faces the similar colonial experiences and suffers like India had suffered, as the colony of British Empire. My attempt, in this paper is to highlight several related issues of a woman and weak points in social legislature, that are major causes behind the exploitation of a woman as colony. In this paper I have tried to prove the importance of decolonizing the minds in this regard. The present paper is the reading of a story of the women from the colonizer/colonized point of view. This point of view seems to be better and innocent enough, in understanding, the story of a dominated woman in the present society, as it connects all the links that are lying in the form of bits and pieces in the novel that can highlight all the colonial experiences of Jhumur, the colonized woman.

Key Words: colonizer colonized, exploitation, social structure.

Colonial oppression lead to anti-colonial movement, in the language of natives termed as war of Independence. It is the way colonized people tried to remove the clutches of empirical oppression in several forms and fields. The colonized people used several weapons, and in fact still using to get rid of the colonial impact and ill effect on their race, culture; language and mindset -the process of decolonizing the mind. If we cite the example of Indian freedom struggle against British rule, we find that two

type of weapons were used, one of non-violence and another of violence-the kind of 'revenge' against colonial tyranny. One weapon was admired in the world and another was condemned even by some people of India who favored Mahatma Gandhi. In the end, it is clear that it all happened due to colonial oppression and tyranny.

Revenge is the wild justice, we all know but what leads to revenge is most crucial point to

know, to get something concrete and real. The people generally waste their time in proving themselves true rather than knowing the truth. The essence lies in the process but it is general tendency of the human beings that they take interest in discussing the concluding results from that process. Why someone is put in the conditions that agitate him/her to take revenge? It is the crucial question that needs better answer from society and humanity. Revenge is not a willing criminal activity, unwanted for each but what else can better cure and console a soul for the unjust made to him/her by his/her opposition. In many cases we find that revenge is highlighted only because it is taken against powerful entity by comparatively weaker and already tortured entity and perhaps the reason why the people cannot tolerate it and criticize. From the childhood we teach our children that actual criminal is not that who commits crime but that who bears it. Do we follow the same, when we condemn those who oppose and attack their opposition in the same way for the unjust and cruelty made to them?

I find a kind of politics in the statement 'revenge is wild justice' with reference to the novel *Revenge* written by Taslima Nasrin, the well known woman writer who raises the voice of woman in their own perspective. We are aware of this fact that Taslima Nasrin is a banned writer and civilian in Bangladesh and presently living in India. The novel is the story of a woman named Jhumur who seems to be representative of Bangladeshi common women and perhaps Taslima herself. Jhumur takes "revenge" against unjust, cruelty and inhuman acts done by her own husband and Family members. The kind of revenge that is neither violent nor tyrannical, but ironically hurt whole the Bangladesh and perhaps Taslima is being treated as other in her own mother country for this. The revenge which consoles the heart of a neglected and hurt woman, but it is condemned because it has the possibility and power to destroy and harm the religious and ethical

norms, which constitute the sociological structure.

Nobody has interest in the complete story, rather than this they discuss the conclusion and obvious resultants due to this. In general the logic behind this discussion may be that everybody wants to strengthen the sociological structure already exists as this is simple task for common that can be pursued by criticizing and condemning an entity. No one has interest in examining, evaluating and verifying the present sociological, religious and ethical norms, that upgraded, well-reformed and human friendly social structure can be created; as it requires initiatives, hard work, revolutionary steps and visionary actions which are difficult, and avoided. We forget this fact that humanity and religion exist, only because existence of human. All the norms which are made to govern the humans, be it religion, ethics and morals or law itself, only there to run the humanity and society smoothly and strengthen the people on individual level that they can stand in front of humanity as a whole. Taslima indicates towards this when Jhumur recalls the words of her mother- 'Religion is the preoccupation of those who have no work at hand.' (41) This statement expresses the agony that in general we prefer religion over human.

Once we accept this fact that humanity and society are due to human existence only then we can be able to define the relation between human and society at the same time we will be able to verify and evaluate both in connection to each other. If we investigate and analyze the character of Jhumur as a woman entity, we find the she is not who willingly takes the revenge. She is forced by the circumstances created by her own husband and family to commit such an act of revenge. Often people declare that such persons who commit any type of crime be it sociological, psychological or physical are problematic from birth or have wrong upbringing. Parents are condemned for producing such anti- social

elements. Even this problem is not with Jhumur as for as her upbringing is concerned. Basically, she seems to be very much natural, ethical; practical and sensible as a woman entity. Her parents have very good and modern thinking regarding their two girls. They have the sense of responsibility and try to give their best to their daughter, so that they could prove themselves equal against male empire.

Jhumur recalls her family conditions-‘my family was not rich, but we were by no means poor. Baba had sent both his daughters to university and taken care of our desires.’(35) This statement shows the thinking of her parents regarding their daughters which distinguishes them from the common society people who are of thinking that a girl child is a kind of burden – a loan which they are bound to pay. Jhumur recalls that her parents did not bind her with the boundary line of home like many others, she got complete freedom like a boy gets-“I was apt to play with boys in the neighbourhood, slipping and falling, tearing my clothes on a thorn. I had remained contrary and impulsive and any challenging tree still invited me to climb.”(39) She recalls the thinking of her parents regarding the girl child-Baba, naturally, had a university degree. (41) To be fair, Baba never complained about having only girls. If people expressed pity, he proudly pointed to me and said, “This one is my son...she’ll do everything a boy would.” I took my father’s pride in me as permission to do what a son might-run to the pharmacy to pick up medicine or to the market for fruit, run faster than the boys, run interference with my beautiful older sister.(40)

Her mother even being uneducated has very clear and logical thinking at having only daughters- “Ma had been married off at fifteen without even finishing school. And though neighbours expressed their sympathy to her as well, she, like Baba, had no regrets at having two daughters. Even when friends took her aside and urged her to try for a boy, Ma bristled. “Will

a boy solve all our problems? He’ll take to smoking at thirteen, at fourteen ogle girls outside the school, and at sixteen carry a knife! Girls are much less trouble.”(41)

Apart from this her parents are dedicated to their daughters and their future. The elder daughter Nupur is married to Dulal, a fine man with a fine job, within a year, they produced a daughter who drove everyman, but they were happy.”(35) These incidences show that Jhumur has learnt practical ideas from her parents and internalized them very well.

She has got a very good university education that is sufficient to put her equally in front of a good man. She is a sharp and hard working student. She is fed up of the unnecessary pressure situations at home and puts this point forward in front of her husband Haroon, that she has got the good education that can provide her a bunch of opportunities-“I asked him, had I bothered to collect university degrees just to spend my life at home twiddling my thumbs?” I worked hard to pass all those exams. Had I done all that just to learn how to run a household? ” (48)

In contrary, Haroon, her husband except of being proud of and support his educated and dedicated wife, is shocked to hear such statements of his wife. He very skillfully and cleverly tries to restrict Jhumur to work at office. He gives several reasons for this-“Don’t I bring home enough money?” Sweetheart, you are responsible for my parents and my brothers and sisters! They all depend on you! “Your success lies in winning their hearts; Don’t you understand that? Don’t you know how happy you make me when you look after my family?”(48)

She is the girl of character and initially she tries to remove the clutches of love trap used by Haroon. He used to call her again and again and she tried to reject those calls. She recalls how she was trapped to love an unknown man, whom

she hardly liked at very first sight; she failed to judge the character of man like Haroon, which proved to be biggest mistake of her life-

“But I couldn’t imagine that anyone would ring me up after such a brief acquaintance. No doubt it was not so easy to locate a phone number, even given the address. But I didn’t ask how he’d found me. I cut the first call short. “I’m busy,” I said. But he called the very next day, and the day after that.

“What’s up?” I asked.

“Are you annoyed?”

To tell the truth, I wasn’t feeling too comfortable about carrying on a conversation with a man I hardly knew, and my experience had always been that I could easily cut off such chatter after an initial exchange of pleasantries. But what was typical didn’t seem to work with Haroon. He just kept talking, and about everything, under the sun. Anything, it seemed, to keep me on the phone. He was an engineer, he told me, and had started his own business- manufacturing generators – in Savar. He had an office in Motijheel, but he lived in the Dhanmudi section of town with his parents and siblings. He drew a picture of happy family.” (25)

This shows that how a woman of character is followed by a characterless man, who merely for the pursuit of his narrow desires, enters a woman’s life to ruin it. Today’s experiences and incidents indicate that the society is filled with such so called gentlemen. In this age of science and technology where women are proving themselves in every area; and humanity is also appealing that women are a free and equal entity like man; the present social structure is working as umbrella for such non- humans. What happens to a man who considers a women goddess and adores her till she is trapped in love? What is changed in her after getting involved in love or after marriage?

She is naturally human like man, the bunch of same desires and emotions. She is neither

goddess nor icon for virtues, but simply a creature like man with few biological differences. Jhumur is ultimately trapped in love and what wrong in it, everybody wants to be loved like a child and respected like an old. To seek love and get respect are the two most intense desires of a human- be it any man or woman present over earth. This is what we are taught from birth. She recalls that how she got involved in love with Haroon-

“Haroon kisses me for the first time that day, digging his tongue deep into my mouth, my lips swelling as if stung by a bee.(30-31) I was inexperienced and that he was the first man to touch me thrilled him, but getting home with reddened swollen lips was unpleasant. I was so nervous I confined myself to the darkness of my bedroom to avoid a barrage of question. (31)

Undoubtedly there were several questions in her mind related to her value and identity in the view of Haroon. In the quest to get the answer, asks-“what are you looking at? “Your soft, pure; virgin lips! They puff up with the first kiss!” (31) “What do you find exciting? “A kiss, a cuddle, the soft feel of your breasts.” Such answers indicate that Haroon was only interested in physicality of her, which she fails to analyze in the excitement of love and desire which she realized later-“My body trembled. I was young and easily excited, ready to fall headlong in love. I liked all of Haroon, my misgivings overcome by the power of new desire.”(32)

Her love towards Haroon may not be natural and intentional, but once is in love, like an ideal beloved dedicates herself to love. Here we have to understand that this dedication is many times effected with socio-political impression on the minds of lovers, especially a woman. According to present social structure and thinking, we know that once a woman exposed that she is in relationship with someone, she becomes unaccepted and unbearable to rest of the society, even to her own family. Rather than understanding the situation and supporting, the

parents due to so called social fear leave her to her own condition. Today's crime incidents with women are evidence that many a women suffer due to lack of family support and perhaps more or less the same can happen with male entity as well.

Many people adorned with different type of powers, politically use this weakness of social structure and thinking to seduce the economically, mentally; physically and socially weak girls/woman, or other human entities. Haroon did the same with Jhumur. Once he succeeded in getting physical with her, he exposed her in front of her friends and family member to make her baseless and socially weak till she gets ultimatum from her parents:

We had little time to ourselves, and often to be alone together, we stayed out late at night. Seeing all this, my father called to me one evening, and, with a brittle sharpness in his voice, declared, "Either marry Haroon or stop seeing him!" I was completely taken by surprise. "I don't want to find that boy hanging about my house and the two of you spending all that time together without a betrothal," he said. "It is not proper."(33-34)

This was the starting point for the colonization of woman entity by male entity. The entity/land which has no strong social, cultural or economical base, been favorites of empirical powers to get them as their colony. Marriage was the official bond for Haroon to prove Jhumur an official colony/possession of his own. Taslima indicates to prove this here through the voice of Jhumur's mother. Jhumur recalls her mother's statement made to her to make her aware for the future-

"Then I remembered my mother once explaining to me how a man's desire differs from a woman's. No matter how much you are loved, "she said, "you are his possession, his territory." At the time I dismissed her as old fashioned, but

now her words returned and strangely, they comforted me." (75)

As we are familiar with the fact, that the empirical powers colonized only fruitful and fertile lands. Before colonizing they appreciated those lands in several regards (e.g. India was called The Golden Bird), in the process of colonization made several beautiful promises and once colonized them, started exploiting in several manifestations. Those who promised to make a strong and compassionate relationship, to strengthen, and develop faith with those colonized lands, broke all the records of brutality, tyranny and exploitation to redefine these words in to one named as- colonial exploitation.

Jhumur, just after marriage faces the same truth. The girl whose laughter fascinated Haroon in all the regards suddenly becomes unbearable for him. He tries to suppress her psychologically, ideologically and socially, by demoralizing and frustrating Jhumur-

"My dear husband couldn't have been more wrong! I knew I was the *bau* of the house only too well. I didn't dare think otherwise even for a second. I knew that the moment I entered the house I had to reduce my voice to a murmur and keep my eyes lowered, fixed to the ground, so I wouldn't meet the eyes of any other person." (13)

...I was just laughing, "I said. "Don't you know that the people next door can hear you?" What was he thinking?" Hadn't I always laughed like that? Hadn't my gaiety promoted him to remark more than once that my sense of humour was what he liked most about me? Just laughing?" He said. "Yes, I said. "Just laughing." "It is not wrong to laugh," he said, "You mustn't laugh so loud. You sound like a man! Not only did he now disapprove of my laughter, he was at pains to track whatever else I did. Had my head been covered when I stood out on the balcony? He was horrified when I said I couldn't remember.

“What will our neighbours think?” he snapped, sounding for all the world like a mother-in-law. “Have you ever seen women staring from those balconies?” he asked, pointing to the apartment building across the courtyard. “A good woman stays indoors,” he said. “The more hidden a *bau*, the better her reputation.” (13-14)

With the help of such social preaches and instructions, Haroon and his family tries to change the individuality of Jhumur. She is taught to behave like slaves, forced to accept, realize and internalize the changed conditions. Her brain is washed to build it favourable for family. Suddenly she gets the declaration from her husband-“Your life is changed, Jhumur,” he said, with a smile on his face I hardly recognized. “Your new life must bear no traces of the old.” (14) Such forced conditions ultimately got victory and she unwillingly internalized the situations- I was no longer Jhumur, Haroon’s wife, but Habib, Hasan and Dolon’s precious sister-in-law and *bau* to Amma and Abba. I couldn’t imagine how I was going to have any life of my own... (50)

Brutality has no limitations and dimensions. It goes along with the imagination of criminal. The things for which Jhumur had left her Parents and home, were nowhere around her life. Haroon and family started consuming and exploiting like colony, the much they can. She had completely lost her faith in relations; still she tried to maintain the harmony in the family with her efforts and hard work. Haroon did utilize her but had no sign of faith, sympathy and empathy with her. Conditions become even more critical, when she became pregnant with her first child. She is like any other woman very excited and happy regarding her first child. It is said that a woman is completed, when she becomes mother otherwise she is considered barren and condemned by society. It is the ultimate desire of a woman to become mother and make contribution to the creation and society. “A woman’s life is meaningless without children.”

(105-06) It is also true that for a mother, child is the most precious in the world. Still, in this post-modern age mother and child relationship is an ideal relationship among all kind of relationships. A mother can break any relation, but can never bear the separation from her child.

Jhumur tells Haroon that she is suffering through the symptoms of pregnancy. But due to lack of trust he did not believe. He refused to accept the child as he was doubtful regarding the character of Jhumur. Jhumur tried her best, pleaded; convinced, cried and did everything she could, to save her child, but nothing could change the stone-hearted Haroon-

“I had tried hard to talk to Haroon. “Look it’s our first baby we can’t do this...how can you be so wrong about your own flesh and blood? You’re making terrible mistake and you are humiliating me with these suspicions.” I pleaded with him, reaching for his hands, but he jerked away, threw me off, pushed me toward the closet where my clothes were and told me to dress fast. I cried and cried, handing out the closet door. But Haroon pulled at me and said, “Change into fresh clothes, quick now!” I grabbed one of his hands and placed it on my belly. “This is your baby. You are killing your own child.” “I want to.” Haroon’s voice harsh.” (73)

He forced her, to abort the baby just because, he was suspicious about her. She recalls-

“Feelings of suspicion had been brewing in Haroon since our first night together. I was a virgin, but I had not bled. I remembered now Haroon fussing over the sheets to find a stain as I took in the pain of my first lovemaking.” (66-67)

Suspicion and misconceptions are two major reasons behind the failure of relationships, especially in case of love marriage. Often lovers turned spouse develop mistrust with each other due to this feeling that- if someone can do it with me, he/she can do the same with others as

well, and thus they start leading the relationship in dilemma and conflicts.

It is naturally unbearable for someone, who is dedicated in relationship to know that his/her partner is suspicious about him/her. Jhumur felt the same-“Seeing myself as Haroon saw me, I almost believed I was a degraded woman, a wily slut who had betrayed her husband, manipulating him into marriage.” (67)

Murder is crime, and killing a child in mother’s womb is brutal crime, unforgivable. By doing this, a criminal kills two- the innocent child and the mother, the living dead. The imagination to kill the child in womb broke Jhumur, the mother-

“My body began to tremble. “But why?” I asked. The trembling was uncontrollable. My hands and face turned numb as the room swayed and I clutched at the mattress to steady myself. I began to weep out loud. Haroon stepped back when I began to wail, but he didn’t try to comfort me. I grabbed him with all my might. “This is our first child!” I was shouting now, tears bursting from my eyes. “It is our first child and you want to get rid of it?” What’s come over you? Who has put these evil thoughts into your mind? Who has come into your life that you want our child out of the way?”

“So you think it’s possible to conceive in six weeks times.” Haroon snorted, standing there, looking down at me.” (65)

This was not end of pain; rather it was background to give deep scars to an innocent woman, the scars which had the power to destroy both body and soul. Jhumur is taken to doctor for abortion. She can never forget the murder of her body and soul, the way her own flesh and blood was ruined and crushed-

“I was not put under general anesthesia, and so I watched as the doctor scooped from my inside the gore which would in time have given way to my child’s shape. The local anaesthetic numbed me and I stared, dazed, at the spilling of the

clotted blood, the vital fluid. If someone had found his way into my heart just then, he would have discovered a sticky lump of blood there too, but I could hear the doctor declaring the operation success. “The womb has been thoroughly cleaned out. There is nothing left.” (74-75)

A woman is considered to be the icon for sacrifice, love, and dedication. It is the woman, through which creator has been able to perform his function. In the views of law too, a woman is not less than a man. She is the one who completes man. If she has to suffer like this, for which we are creating and preserving society, law and religion. Look at this man Haroon, for which a woman is mere a colony to be consumed and exploited. Soon after abortion, when she was suffering through physical and mental trauma, instead of caring he enjoyed with her. Jhumur recalls-“I still wept, but only to myself. Even Haroon, so close to me when we slept, was unaware. He’d started making love to me four days after the abortion, ignoring medical advice.” (78)

Any man who has heart and sense, can put himself in her position to feel the traumatic experience she had gone through. Experiences are necessary for maturity and to give a shape to the person. Such traumatic experiences can change a human into animal or devil. Jhumur feels-“I was merely an animal; I had nothing to call my own.(89) She has feelings of the colonized people- “I was prisoner in my own house, forbidden to step outside to see friends, and forbidden to seek a job, even though I was more than qualified.(95)These bitter colonial experiences changed her completely- I couldn’t give Haroon my love, and, in spite of myself, I began to hate him.(84) As my sense of powerlessness grew, my anger smouldered, and I could feel Haroon move away from me.(96) She shifted herself towards Afzal, to deceit Haroon.-“ I set Afzal’s natural- looking stubbly cheeks against Haroon’s blueish, clean- shaven

ones. I compared Afzal's poetic eyes to Haroon's Hawk-like gaze. Afzal spoke in a deep voice; Haroon had a sort of bark. (87-88) She decides to take revenge and to give back Haroon the same unwanted for which he had exploited her-

"I was not a loose woman, I Was merely taking my revenge, getting even. Except for this deception I followed all the rules of society." (125) I had slept with Afzal for seven consecutive days, inventing a raft of increasingly imaginative excuses for not allowing Haroon even to touch me. (130)...I took only a month. Finally there were symptoms of a child. (141) ...Weeks past and my abdomen grew heavy. (152)...I gave birth to a male child at three o'clock in the morning. (167). By giving birth to a socially illegal child Ananda her son, she takes revenge. From society's point of view she may be wrong but she felt extreme happiness for giving answer to Haroon the colonizer in his language –

"I do not harbor any regret for the manner in which I brought Ananda into the world. I took

the opportunity to avenge the loss of my first child and the indignity. I'd suffered as a woman. But my heart lifts with happiness when I leave for work and Haroon takes Ananda in his arms, when our son calls to Baba as often as he calls to Mama. I have taken back my life and doused the fires of suspicion and jealousy that raged so fiercely in my husband's heart they left my own heart charred. In the years since the birth of my son, I been bathed with a contentment I could never have imagined." (186)

The society provokes man are in against, condemning and opposing such type of revenge, for breaking the norms of society, but hardly think over the conditions which are created in front of individuals, that put them to take such revenge. What else a simple human can when he/she has to fight against a colonial empire, the social structure? In such conditions, is it right to blame only that individual completely, just because we don't have courage to investigate and bear the truth? It will be like that, if we cannot fold strong streams of river; let us flow accordingly. It is not a good sign for the humans of the scientific era.

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Dhanashree Publications

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