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### VICTIM BLAMING, MISOGYNY, AND HOSTILE SEXISM: FEMINIST STUDY OF UNDER THE RED FLAG BY HA JIN

*Asad Ullah Javed*<sup>1</sup>, *Ramiza Safdar*<sup>2</sup>, *Ayesha Khan*<sup>3</sup>, *Muhammad Asif*<sup>4</sup>, *Ejaz Hussain*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,4,5</sup>Department of English, Government College University, Faisalabad

<sup>2,3</sup>Mphil scholar, Minhaj University Lahore

Corresponding author: Asad Ullah Javed

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#### ABSTRACT

The present study a - to explore the factors like victim victim-blaming, hostile sexism, and exploitation of women worldwide, and with no exception, they are working women, traditional housewives, or something else. Women are victims of multiple forms of violence, and the behavior of the men towards women in economic, political, and societal ways is based on injustice and inequality. Various forms of exploitation against women take place around the planet: abuse, oppression, domestic violence, and misogynist attitude towards them as discourse also show them inferior to men, and they are not given equal rights in all spheres of life. The world is silenced about the multiple issues faced by women and speaking about less concerned women's issues. There are numerous various interventions when we talk about the equality of women. On the other, relevant and suitable resistance is required, which may lead to the equality of rights in all terms, and women may be able to stand straight with men in all walks of society. The true color of society is women, and they must be awarded equal rights and opportunities, and we have to stop the old norms and practices which are the cause of exploitation regarding women's rights. The study further implies the concept of prejudiced perceptions, oppression, misogynist behavior of society towards women in economic, political, and social terms, and other interlinked concepts theorized by Bell Hooks and Simone de Beauvoir for having a textual analysis of the stories.

#### INTRODUCTION

Under the Red Flag is a short story collection written by Ha Jin— a Chinese novelist and short fiction writer. All the stories are narrated through a third-

person point of view and deal with ' 'women's issues like misogyny, victim-blaming, the materialization of women, hostile sexism, and women as a sexual tool utilize for the pleasures of men. Women are abused in multiple ways around the globe and these stories speak about these issues and making us conscious to stand for the rights of women.

' . These tales display a population living without privacy about Ha Jin'' 's Jin's *Under the Red Flag*. In addition to personal enviousness, grudges and gossip are afflicted Communists who frequently misuse their sovereignty to different individual private acts of revenge or aggression. These stories reveal the public disgrace and near-lynching of sexually frustrated women who becomes an occasional prostitute to create balance in their lives. According to Weekly Publishers, "'Jin uses these simple stories to explore larger themes about human relationships and the effect of government on individual lives.'" A couple of stories show the struggle of women in terms of social, political, and domestic needs to be fulfilled and achieved in one way or the other. In another story, *In Broad Daylight*, when woman crushed one of the junior Red Guards for neglecting to give money, his companions approached her under the cape of party supremacy, driving her husband to murder himself out of guilt. The story, deals with a woman whose husband remain unable to satisfy her in the bed and consequently invites his friends to rape his wife just for the sake of mental satisfaction. While living circumstances are often tragic and many characters selfish, *Under the Red Flag*, expresses the ordinary people's will to sustain and exist. It is described as "terrified and fanatical, the characters in *Under the Red Flag* run amok. Ha Jin depicts the calamity of mass hysteria, which fueled the delirium in Mao-China's Cultural Revolution. Bluntness of which may cause readers to glide through passages describing acts as gruesome as gang rape and decapitation as if they were depictions of landscape." ([shenandoahliterary.org/631](http://shenandoahliterary.org/631) (2013/10/11)). Jin also discloses the arbitrary essence of existence living in the shadow of Communist repression. Terrified and fanatical, the characters in *Under the Red Flag* run amok. In his collection of short stories, Ha Jin depicts the calamity of mass hysteria, which fueled the delirium in Mao-China's Cultural Revolution.

### ***Objectives of the Research***

The objectives of this study are:

- i. To explore the struggle of women for an individual as well as a collective identity
- ii. To examine the unjustifiable prejudiced behavior towards women pressured by personal interests and enviousness
- iii. To look at the multiple ways of exploitation in social, political, and economical terms and the struggle of women to survive

### ***Research Questions***

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

- i. How are the stories showing the struggle of women to survive under fabricated social stratification where fewer opportunities are accessible for them?
- ii. How are women marginalized, brutalized, and oppressed and treated as others concerning these works?
- iii. How are patriarchal traditions stopping women to get their equal rights and choosing their desired goals and paths?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The writer have presented the true attitude of society towards women and the treatment which they receive, and the target of this research is to limit itself to analyze the texts from a feminist perspective in general and particularly the concepts of gender, violence, oppression, victim-blaming, and misogyny which are apparent in the stories. There is no significant work has been done on Ha Jin's *Under the Red Flag*. It is about many things like oppression of women, patriarchal traditions, women abuse, and victim-blaming. The works show the degenerative and demoralizing views about women in sociopolitical and economical spheres of life and the issues women face being a women. This short fiction unveils a multifaceted community where citizen's civic position and intentions are comprehended without explaining, and where the division of society and deprivation are indicated and impact all judgments taken in a crucial instants in the existence of characters.

The origins of literature and other related works which talk about women issues and emphasize equality regarding women rights dates back hundreds of years. *A Vindication for the Rights of Women* by Marry Wollstonecraft is considered to be the first work which she wrote about female issues and after that various authors raised their voices to stand for the sake of women's rights. Public protects were marched to stop violence and patriarchal norms around the globe and to preserve equality among all communities, to strengthen women, to end sexual harassment and multiple forms of oppression. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is another important breakthrough in the feminist tradition of writing in which she talks about the women who are unable to educate due to unequal opportunities. Male contributions to this field of writing include John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* and *The Origin of Family* by Friedrich Engels.

"Society has always been male; political power has always been in men's hands.", (Beauvoir 105). According to Tyson, "feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women." (83). Peter Barry defines it as, "this movement was...literary from the start, in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature" (116). The representation of women in literature contributes to the conditioning of socially acceptable feminine values, which feminist criticism seeks to challenge. Bell Hooks in her *Feminist Theory: from margin to center*, writes: "Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression" (26)., which is much needed in the context of these works.

Bell Hooks in her *Ain't I a woman*, also writes that “an imperialist racist patriarchal society that supports and condones oppression” (144)., against women, is apparent in these stories beautifully composed by Ha Jin. The concepts of victim blaming, misogyny, domestic and social violence, hostile sexism and other relative concepts will be applied as a tool of research for doing analysis of the texts.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The theoretical framework for this research is primarily taken from Feminist theory, specifically, the concepts of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Feminism deals with the issues of women and talks about the equality of women in all spheres of life. Feminist criticism explains the way in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women” (Tyson 83)., while many other critics identify three major waves of feminism and some recognize the fourth wave in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each wave was carrying different purposes with some complicated things but reducing to a single central goal. Feminism is a constantly evolving movement and has supporters around the world. The first wave of feminism deals with the plan and principles that drive to abolish slavery and middle class women's access to education, right for vote, and equal rights in marital life. Second wave began to flourish in 1960s. The slogan of “The Personal is Political” raised during this wave and women felt that the purposes demanded in first didn't practice properly and nothing was improved and they shifted their focus to eradicate inequality at workplace and issues related to sexual norms. Further, they sought to end female oppression and tackle injustices and struggled to legalize abortion and complete the physical assault. In the 80s black feminism emerged as a new wave of female rights. The purpose of this movement was to identify plenty of odds encountered by women of color.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present research will be analytical and descriptive. The qualitative research method will be used for analyzing the data. Both primary and secondary sources will be used during the research process. The primary source is the text of the short stories. At the same time, the internet, reference books, articles, journals, interviews, and other related research papers will be used as secondary sources to support the arguments, discussion, and analyze the text. The study will use the text to explore the struggle of women to overcome the multiple crises related to gender, identity, and multiple forms of violence and oppression, as well, inequalities and injustices with women. It will also explore the forms of violence and oppression used as a tool to control women, exploit them, and even get economic benefits from them. The research mechanism for the present study will be the concepts of feminist theory like gender issues, domestic and societal violence, marginalization, and other interlinked concepts. The textual analysis method will be used to explore the propagated facts behind the scenes, and for this purpose, the feminist perspective will be applied to the text.

### *Textual Analysis*

In a *Broad Daylight*, the first short story is the typical example of female suppression and the misogynist attitude of society towards women, which is triggered by personal anger and enviousness. It is narrated by a young boy, White Cat, who, with his friend, will see the prosecution procedure against a whore, Mu Yang, living some streets ahead of them with her poor husband. She became an occasional prostitute to balance the domestic needs and demands as the social circumstances were not reasonable and manageable during the cultural revolution in China. A “large crowd surrounded her at the front gate” (Ha Jin 4), and the narrator refers to her as a “bad woman” in the town where they are living. He called her a “shameless old whore” (Ha Jin 4). The rest of the crowd also labeled her with identical titles. Her husband requests the guards to let her go and accept that it is his fault that he didn’t “discipline her well” (Ha Jin 5). He asks for a chance to become a new person in the future. After these words were uttered, he was asked about his class status, which signifies that such a kind of restrictions and laws are just applicable for the poor people, not those who have worldly gains and influence society. Thus she is the example of what de Beauvoir writes “[women] is simply what man decrees; she is defined and differentiated concerning man.” In this story, she is what the patriarchal society wants about her. (Simone 590). She has tided a snake and “dirty bitch” who is poisoning and dirtying the organization where those uninvited who exploited her body for their sexual needs are labeled innocent. She is asked about the methods that how does she seduce the man, takes money, and poison bourgeois. She replies that “I’ve never invited any man to my home” (Ha Jin 7), and they wanted to sleep with her. After listening to these words a sound hissed in the crowd and she again defined as:

“Shameless!”

“A true whore!”

“Scratch her!”

“Rip apart her filthy mouth! “... “Fox Spirit!” (Ha Jin 7-8).

Later on, a stout young man struck her face to make her silent. The crowd demanded to shave her bald, and some others suggested that her hair should be cut, and they held her down to start the proposed process, and she requested them not to do these things with her, but they did not listen to her words and apply scissors skillfully on her head without considering her request. After this, when she is asked about the number of men she had slept with, and mentions three different men: an officer of the army, a farmer from the next village, and a red guard (the red guards themselves were holding her for these crimes). She faces the situation of an “imperialist, racist, patriarchal society that supports and condones oppression” against women. (Hooks 144). The later consequences lead her husband to commit suicide, and she remains alone in the town and ends up lying at the bus stop without knowing what to do next.

Mu Yang is the prime example of those women who are discriminated against based on gender, which is socially constructed. Even the men who exploit her body sexually and physically are not inquired about these issues as they can help her without indulging in sexual acts, and these activities continued more

than twenty times. Instead of investigating the reasons behind actions, they start blaming a woman who needed money which forced her to get involved. She is the mouthpiece of hundred of thousands of women around the globe who are victims of male dominance and imperialist patriarchal norms. They are sacrificed and utilized to preserve the honor of men.

The second story, *Man to Be*, does not exclude gender-based assumptions against women, which are generalized. Women are blamed for the deficiencies and weaknesses of men as it is stated that “no man is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility.” (de Beauvoir, 34). The previously mentioned words are excellently fitted for the character of Uncle Sang, who is unable to satisfy her wife during sexual intercourse and invites his friends to rape her wife, so in this way, he can fulfill her wife and overcome his anger. He says to his friends: “I invite you, boys, over to screw my wife,” and further he adds that “She’s hot all the time. I want you to give it to her enough tonight. Anger inflamed Sang’s eyes.” (Ha Jin 19). When they disagree to be involved in this act of shame and disgrace, he urges them to do so and challenge their masculinity by using different titles like “cowards” and “chickens.” After getting a written agreement, they all agree that they will not be responsible for facing future consequences regarding this event, and uncle Sang will take the responsibility if the case is filed against this act. He agrees and writes:

“On the third eve of Spring Festival, I, Sang Zhu, came to the ’Militia’s Office and invited five young militiamen— Hao Nan, Liu Daiheng, Yang Wei, Mu Bing, and Wang Ming— to have sex with my wife, Niu Shuling. By doing this, I mean to teach her a lesson so she will stop seducing other men and be a chaste woman in the future. None of the young men shall be responsible if any physical damage is done to her in the activity process. I Sang Zhu, the husband, will bear all consequences.”

The Pledger: Sang Zhu (Ha Jin 21).

It is how women are blamed and punished for the sake of mental satisfaction and keep women under the supervision of pre-established male-dominant patterns of society. A woman is always held responsible for the mistakes and flaws of men. Women are used as practices in sexual and physical terms for future days as one of the boys is engaged, and he has no experience of sexual intercourse. He prefers to learn these things when he is invited to assault the woman sexually. He thinks of it as “an opportunity to learn how to handle a woman.” (Ha Jin 22).

Later on, the ownership of women is also associated with men. Sang explains this when his wife tries to stop them from doing so and gives them the words of lords that she will not involve herself in any acts that can subscribe to her husband’s anger, but she does not listen to her but asks to shut her mouth and entitles her like a beast, “You beast that doesn’t know who owns you.” (Ha Jin 23). Women have no individual identity. Instead, they are identified and differentiated concerning men in social, political, and economic terms.

New Arrival, another short story, revolves around a married couple having no baby and their attitudes to one another in terms of sexual, physical, and social terms. The typical attitude of men towards women is also highlighted at various places in the text, and the materialization of women is apparent through the pages of this story. Misogyny and victim-blaming are mixed in the story as women are blamed for those defects with men they remain unable to satisfy in multiple ways. Jia Cheng is the main character in this story which is unhappy with his wife, whom he had brought from the backward areas notorious for prostitution. She was taken promise that she would not interfere in his extramarital affairs if there happened any, but she was bound to remain in the services of his husband for the rest of her life. This is how patriarchal norms stripping the basics rights of women where men are allowed to cross those lines which are confined for women. The writer writes: “she would remain his servant forever.” (Ha Jin 79). In this context, women are bound and confirmed within those norms of loyalty and purity attached to women, and men are free from these things. And “a long line of thinkers has insisted on stabilizing women as an object, on dooming her to immanence, to a life of subjection” (Simone, 37).

The character of Jia is the prime example of a misogynist who, throughout the story, leaves a diversity of expressions regarding women. He utters these words, “women are all greedy, he thought of his meeting with his mistress.” (Ha Jin 82). As the story progresses, these remarks against women become intense through the character of Jia, and he continues it in this way: “Greedy, so greedy. Women’s all the same.” (Ha Jin 82-83). Jia does not think about his attitude and abilities, which are less productive and successful in material and economic development. He utilizes his wife to get money and arrange a baby to feed upon the basis of monthly payments taken from the wife of a soldier. And this is how the dominant male society works.

The following story, Taking a Husband, is about women’s dependency on men in socio-economic conditions where women can not stand alone to take decisions and actions against the odds created by the male and patriarchal traditions. It’s about how women “live dispersed among men, tied by homes, work, economic interests, and social conditions to certain men.” (Simone, 28). The protagonist of this story is a beautiful young, beautiful young girl, Hong Chen, who is confused about choosing a partner for marriage. She possesses those traditional norms the women have in patriarchal societies, like virtue and honor. When her friend, Lilian, asks her to try both of the nominated boys for marriage, she calls her crazy and replies: “Once you sleep with a man, you’ll never get rid of him... remember the girl who hanged herself because her ex-boyfriend... nobody would marry me if I were known as a broken shoe.” (Ha Jin, 134). The previously mentioned lines have two apparent things: first, a girl has to maintain and save her everything for her future husband without considering whether her future husband cares about these things or not, but she has to do these things to survive and live a happy life according to the established norms. Secondly, those women who cross those boundaries defined by the organization for them will be punished and not considered specified by the community will be punished and not considered reverend and good in society. This is precisely precisely precisely what the state where “the ideological

woman becomes property, symbol, and ornament; she is stripped of her essential human qualities.” (Hooks 154-155).

Another essential thing highlighted by the writer is when a girl becomes adult and the problems attached to this developmental stage. After getting her first periods during school, Hong, was teased by the boys of her class who used multiple title after getting her bloody and make fun of her “kicking forward her roll of bloody gauze and laughing and whooping.” (Ha Jin, 135). Many other titles attached to her character after this happening as, “bad girl”, “broken shoe”, “shameless”, and “cracked melon.” (Ha Jin, 135). She often receives different eating items while sitting alone which were thrown by some anonymous person during regular intervals whose identity always remain hidden during the story. This is how women are brought up and develop their life lessons from such kind of incidents which modified their mentality and moods of thinking and “not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” (Simone, 14).

Taking a Husband is about a lot of things attached to female identity which are essential for the survival of women living under the influence of patriarchy. They must have to marry someone which is a traditional way of surviving in society. This is stated by Hong as she says: “every woman ought to marry; if she didn’t, people would think her abnormal.” (Ha Jin, 137). Woman faces multiple problems even after getting marriage especially those who remain unable to bore a baby boy in the societies where a male is a head of family and other social institutions. Hong mentions an event when she was talking with her friend about a well located near their home. She tells her that “two years ago, the daughter of the Tangs... had drowned herself and her baby girl in that we’ll because of her husband and parents-in-law had scolded her for being unable to bear them a boy.” (Ha Jin, 150). Women are mentally tortured in such a way that they become victims of psychological issues which are aroused by the false attitude of society and the people living around them. The effect of this mental and physical torture affects so hardly that it leads someone to end his life to escape such kind of situation.

Again, the *Spring Breeze Blew* is a powerful story written about the rights of women and for the empowerment of women. It is about a young widow, who loses her husband just after twenty months of living together with having one baby boy. Her husband dies in an accident while working on the upper portion of the building located near. She is humiliated and embarrassed by the traditional ways of the society where there is no value of widow and everyone looks at her with doubtful concerns as she has no male under whose identity she can survive. She is “the devalued woman” who “becomes a different kind of object.” (Bell 155). She was attacked by a lunatic criminal who attempted to rape her with having a sharp knife and threatened to kill her baby if she resists. After a lot of trouble and confusion, she succeeds to free her from the man and stabs him with the knife brought by the man. In this way, she successfully saves her chastity and honor, but the people around her bevo3ms more suspect that there is something which is not on the scene. This event is highlighted in these words: “Obviously, the man and the woman must have been doing it when he was struck down. Perhaps the spirit of the late husband had intervened.” (Ha Jin, 157). This shows the biased attitude of men towards women who instead of



knowing the reality and facts prefers more doubts and create suspense. This also shows the prejudiced behaviour against women who are not living under the supervision of males, and the superstitious attitude is also apparent here.

Later on, she was offered to marry a fifty years old man but she refused under certain conditions. She is disgraced being a widow and listen to the words like shameless. Different statements appear about her and she listens to these without considering any. She is forced to take effect of the terms that “you can’t live without a man.” (Ha Jin, 160). After investigation of the murder, she becomes disappointed about her life because the man which was killed by her has an influence. But her fortune changes when a police officer tells her that he was criminal and she did a great job. She was labelled as a chaste women, a honor preserver, a brave woman, and “virtuous, hardworking wife”. Her fame spread around the country when a stranger interviewed her and published it in a newspaper. She was invited at different occasions, proposed by officers, and receives a numberless letters around the every corner of the country. After getting a number of proposals she takes advice from her mother and she replies: “Men are always after a good woman, just like flies after blood.” (Ha Jin, 168). She also tells her that they all are behind her fame and the privileges which are bestowed on her from the state: “residence card, and her lucrative job.” (Ha Jin, 168). This is how a woman is materialized and utilized by the men. There is no place for women and this is always a man’s world and “the subordinate condition was willed in heaven and profitable on earth.” (Simone, 31). Women are always used and modified for the sake of males’ interests, whether they are materialistic, physical, sexual, political, or something else interlinked to the subordination of women.

## CONCLUSION

Women are targets of numerous patterns of violence. The attitude of men towards women in economic, political, and societal ways is founded on injustice and inequality and further triggered by prejudices and stereotypes. Multiple shapes of exploitation against women hold a spot around the planet: abuse, oppression, domestic violence, and misogynist behavior towards them; and discourse also illustrates them secondary to men, and they are not provided balanced rights in all domains of life. The world is quieted down about the considerable issues encountered by women and speaking less about tense issue of women. There are multiple interventions when we talk about the equality of women. On the other an appropriate and suitable resistance is needed, which may lead to the equality of rights in all terms and women may be able to stand straight with men in all walks of society.

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