



OBSTACLES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARGINALIZED SECTION OF THE SOCIETY : AN ANALYSIS OF *KALOOKI NIGHTS* BY HOWARD JACOBSON

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ABSTRACT :

Jews are often considered as a paradoxical. They are mixture of secular and sacred ideologies. Harsh stroke of destiny shattered life structure of Jews. They were forcefully executed from their own land and were compelled to live the lives of wanderers. Time and again Jews were forced to live the lives as per the norms of their host nations. They were marginalized and subjugated by the rulers of host nations. In order to create a pure Aryan race Adolf Hitler created the enormous brutality in Germany. Traumas of concentration camps horrified Jews from generation after generation. Christians boycotted and abandoned Jews from their lands terming as heretics or Christ killers. Thus, Jews often faced subjugation not only in their own lands but also in their host nations. They had to struggle a lot to prove their innocence and to maintain their existence in the world. This paper is an attempt to project the conditions of Jews as marginalized other. It again aims to explore antisemitic prejudice against Jews. It will try to discuss impact of holocaust in the lives of Jews.



KEYWORDS : Antisemitism, Other, Marginalized, Jews.

INTRODUCTION

"Marginalization is the pushing of a group to the "margins" of society, where they hold little social, political or economical power, and suffer ignorance, stereotyping and racism. People may be marginalized due to their social class, educational status, disabilities, and gender identities." (01) Jews are often treated as insignificant in the world. They are treated as different from Christian and Muslims. They are considered as the dhimi members of the society. Holocaust is the most heinous act done to Jews. It shows the antisemitic prejudice and atrocities done to the Jews. It is a genocide in which Adolf Hitler along with his team killed six million Jews. Jews are considered as hostile, cunning and vindictive. They are called as tricky and deceitful. Traumas of holocaust always follow the Jews. Atrocities against the Jews were started in Europe. Christians considers Jews as the murderer of Jesus. Due to this Jews were humiliated, insulted and prosecuted. Jews were banished from the places they live in to separate residential areas. They were forced to wear identifying marks. During the 1920s and 1930s antisemitic influences came into prominence. Antisemitic prejudices considered the Jews as an inferior and dangerous race. It desired to restrain the economic and public lives of Jews in their own countries. In 1938, mass arrests of Jewish people took place. The Social lives of Jews are also restricted. New rules and regulations were imposed.

Primarily, there were legal measures functioned to isolate the Jews from society and strip them of their rights and property. Organized attacks on Jews broke out several weeks after Hitler assumed

power on March 9, 1933. Lots of people were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Approximately one week later, the first racial law that attempted to isolate Jews was passed. It banished Jews from the public services (judicial system and public medicine). Jews were separated from the society and excluded from German cultural life. Public book burnings took place throughout Germany because some of them were written by Jews. Jewish actors were dismissed from theaters and Jewish authors and journalists were refused to publish their works by newspapers and publishers. (01)

The "Nuremberg Laws" were passed in 1935 by Nazis. These laws imposed various restrictions on the lives of the Jews in Germany. It exiled them from social and economic life. It discarded citizenship of Jews in Germany. It restricted the marriage between Jews and non-Jews. It prohibits Jews from getting a high quality education since they were unacceptable in universities. On October 5, 1938, Jews' passports were marked. A requirement from Germany government said that their passports should be marked with their typical Jewish names so that they are easily recognized.

"[May I] share with you the feeling of urgency, if not, emergency, that we believe Antisemitism represents and calls for. I must confess to you, I have I have never felt the way I feel since 1945. I feel there are reasons for us to be concerned, even afraid ... now is the time to mobilize the efforts of all of humanity." (Wiesel 01)

Jews were deprived from having equal rights in housing, education and employment. They were not allowed to have equal position in political, economic, scientific and academic areas. People were prevented from entering Jewish-owned stores and businesses. Jewish-owned shops and businesses were destroyed and their wealth is legally taken by force. Economically Jews were paralyzed. Jewish companies experienced financial losses. Jews were forced to sell out to the companies to Nazi-German government.

Antisemitism is a prejudice against Jews or hatred of Jews. It covers the hostile actions or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group. People who hold such feelings are known as 'Anti-Semites'. It is a form of racism. It aims to project the Jews as inferior to other people. In 1879, German journalist William Marr coined the term 'Anti-Semitism'. It denotes the hostility to or hatred of Jews. It also talks about the hatred of various liberal, multinational and international political inclinations of the 18th and 19th centuries often associated with Jews. Jerome Chanes in his book *Anti-Semitism: A Reference Handbook* identifies six stages in the historical development of anti-semitism.

Anti-semitism is easily classified historically as pointing to at least half a-dozen varieties. (1) The pre-Christian anti-Jewish activity in the ancient Greco-Roman world, most of which was not what we would call "anti-semitism," was primarily ethnic in nature. (2) There is the classic Christian antisemitism of antiquity and the middle ages, which was religious in nature and which extended into modern times. (3) Traditional Muslim antisemitism is—at least in its classical form—highly nuanced in that Jews are *Dhimmi*, members of a protected class. (4) There is the political, social, and economic anti-semitism of Enlightenment and post Enlightenment Europe, which laid the groundwork for racist anti-semitism. (5) There is the racial anti-semitism that arose in the nineteenth century out of Enlightenment thinking and that culminated in Nazism. (6) Finally, the contemporary anti-semitism of Israelophobia and "Zionism Equals Racism," a relatively new phenomenon, is what many characterize as the new anti-semitism. (Chanes 06)

These six stages could be merged into three categories i.e. "ancient anti-semitism, which was primarily ethnic in nature; Christian anti-semitism, which was religious; and the racial antisemitism of the 19th and 20th centuries." (Chanes 06)

Christians considered Jews to be responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Such dogma has brought the horrible consequences for the Jews. Christians denounce Jews from their society for the death of Jesus. The Holocaust is the most dreadful act of antisemitism. It is also known as the final solution, a mass devastation which happened between 1933 and 1945. Jews faced countless harassments and brutalities. They were forcefully separated from their land. The Jewish minority achieved some rights after the Enlightenment in Europe. Gradually, Europe turned to become more secular, and Jews were assimilated into mainstream society, this led to the birth of political forms of antisemitism. People targeted Jews for their ideas and their roles in the society. The Nazis and their

associates exploited Jews during World War II, resulted in the Holocaust. It is the systematic murder of Jews in Europe. Adolf Hitler wanted to create a pure 'Aryan Race' in Germany. Therefore, he tried to banish the Jews from Germany. "Anti-Semitism presupposes that the Jews are radically other, fundamentally different from the mainstream population—different, therefore deviant." (Chanes, 03)

Howard Eric Jacobson is one of the most eminent English novelists. Jacobson was born on 25 August 1942 in Manchester in Lancashire. He was brought up in Prestwich. Jacobson is a British writer. He is a great comic writer. In *Telegraph* it is mentioned "Spot him across a room and you would not guess that he is our funniest living writer". The works of Jacobson's revolve around the plight of British Jewish characters. He is a Man Booker Prize winner for the book *Finkler Question*. Howard Jacobson has written *Zoo Time* (2012); *J a novel* (2014) and *Shylock Is My Name* (2016). A collection of his journalism work is titled as *Whatever It Is, I Don't Like It*, was published in 2011.

His novel *Kalooki Nights* (2006) was also short-listed for the Man Booker Prize. In an article on *Tablet Magazine* Jacobson described *Kalooki Nights* as "the most Jewish novel that has ever been written by anybody, anywhere"(01). It won the 2007 JQ Wingate Prize. *Kalooki Nights* is set in Manchester in 1950. The protagonist of the novel is Max Glickman. He is a cartoonist. He is the narrator of the novel. One of his influential works is "Five thousand years of bitterness". It is the reminiscence of his childhood in British Community. His mother is engrossed with the game 'Kalooki'. His father is a boxer. The book discusses the question of Jewish identity. It again focuses on long lasting effects of Holocaust.

Jewishness 'Jew, Jew, Jew. Why, why, why, as my father asked until the asking killed him, does everything always have to come back to Jew, Jew, Jew?' (7)

Othering (Wordpress1) or the concept of other is a continental philosophy (philosophical tradition of 19th and 20th century covers the movement like Hermeneutics, Existentialism, psychoanalytical theory etc. The term other mainly refers to the third world countries in the words of West. For them they are the same and we are the other, the exotic. Apart from this idea if we take the concept in general then it will reflect that we all are other of one another. There is hardly any demarcation of other. Every day the other is changing. Mainly the notion of *we* and *they* brings th3e demarcation of *I* and the *other*. In the field of literature the term has been interpreted differently by different critics. Hegel introduces the concept in relation to self consciousness; Husserl uses the term to indicate intersubjectivity, whereas Spivak talks about the other as east in the words of west in her essay *Can the subaltern Speak*. Michel Foucault describes the term as-

Othering is strongly connected with power and knowledge. When we "other" another group, we point out their perceived weaknesses to make ourselves look stronger or better. It implies a hierarchy, and it serves to keep power where it already lies. Colonialism is one such example of power. (01)

Jews are always considered as other. They are not allowed to live a free and peaceful life. In the novel, *Kalooki Nights* Jacobson projects same conditions of Jews. Jews leads the lives of outsiders in their host nations. Christians treat Jews as murderer, Christ killer and discarded from their society. Such behavior restricted Jews from leaving a serene life.

Jews don't do Paradise Regained. Once you are out you are out with my people. The gates swing shut behind you, the cherubim flash their flaming swords, and that's that. This is what means to be Old Testament. You're always conscious of having blown your chance of a good time. (3)

Max the protagonist of the novel stated that he was born in a very peaceful situation. At that time, the society was different from the society his parents lived. No Nazi government, no holocaust, no gas chamber. It was more serene and safe. Though, the outer part seemed to be peaceful yet inner treatment for Jews remained same. Traumas and after effects of holocaust always follows them. Even after so many years of holocaust Jews are treated as others. Terror of death follows them like shadows. Jews have to always pay back for their birth as Jews. Their identity as Jews forced them to suffer the pain of marginalized others.

I was a child of peace and refuge. Manny too. But there was no refuge from the dead. For just as sinners pass on their accountability to generations not yet born, so do the sinned against. (5)

The father of Max was a boxer. He witnessed the pain of holocaust and its consequences.

Holocaust has created a border line between Jews and gentiles. It forced Jews to stand in the margins of the society. Identity of being Jew becomes the burden for them. They often try to avoid such pain. "My father was thinking up ways to make Jewishness less of a burden to the Jews. J%]= j" (7)

Max didn't have a peaceful married life. He was in fact insulted and frightened by his wife for being Jew. Neither Max was permitted to speak in front of his wife. Like Jews were terrified by Nazi police during holocaust similarly, Max was frightened by his wife.

Don't, she said. 'I know what's coming. Because you're Jewish. And you can't ask a Jew a question without him thinking you're Gestapo. Since I wasn't permitted to speak, I turned my face into a question mark. So wasn't she Gestapo?' (9)

Jews don't have any existence and respect in the society. They are often ill treated and blamed. Host nations didn't provide equal space and place to Jews. Jews are ignored and avoided by Christians. The stories about Jews are also written by Jews only.

'Oh, Jews, Jews, Jews!'

'Well, they do figure in the story.'

'They figure in *your* story!' (9)

Max the narrator of the novel also suffered a lot for being Jew. Jews are allowed to depict anything openly. They can't express their wishes, desires and emotions. Such conditions lead Max to become a cartoonist. This occupation helps Max to express something, to find out his locked emotions and also gives to opportunity to acquire some love and respect for him.

But I can explain- which is at least a start- why I took up crayons... Because I discovered I could do a likeness. Because I felt there was some emotion locked away inside me that I couldn't get at until I drew it on a piece of paper. And because I wanted people to admire and adore me. (12)

The novel gives us a vivid description of Nazi rules and terror of holocaust. Such terrified memory of holocaust was passed among Jews one generation to other generation. It was poisoning the psyche of Jews. Though holocaust occurred many years ago yet it horrified Jews of present era. It forced Jews to put a question mark on God and its justice on chosen people. Mass extermination compelled Jews to face ignorance and torture of host nations.

The same uncle who was always saying that for this the Nazis wanted to exterminate us, though it was my father's contention that was actually for him, Tsedraiter Ike, that the Nazis wanted to exterminate us. (13)

History plays a very important role in building the psyche of Jews. It is the main cause of their alienation. Due to their terrified past Jews stated living a confined life. They restricted their dealings to their community only. Jews were sidelined from mainstream of society that's why they need to struggle a lot for their identity and survival. "Why do you have to look so Jewish all the time?" (23) Holocaust is the result of racial antisemitism. It discriminated Jews as a racial group. However, Christianity and Islam discarded Jews because of religious conflicts. The identity of being Jew becomes the matter of shame for them. They feel so painful and shameful to disclose themselves as Jews. Jews try to hide their identity as Jews to avoid the pain and sufferings. Though, it is assumed that the violence towards Jews reaches an end yet Jews are still struggling with themselves and with the people of their native land to justify their innocence, to avoid the traumas of past and to create a peaceful nation for their future generations.

"What my father tried to do was ditch the J-word as a denomination of suffering altogether. Not to forsake all those who'd travelled on that train, but to reinvent the future for them." (18)

Jews are always marginalized and sidelined in society. They faced lots of trouble in their lives. Like Jews females, colonized and dalits have also found various impediments their lives. The never ending process of pain and struggles has reshaped the psyche of Jews. However, holocaust and its aftereffects played an important role in framing the lives of Jews. They are downtrodden and marginalized in the society. They need to always face antisemitic prejudice. Antisemitism hostility deprived Jews from living a peaceful and normal life. They have to always struggle for their survival and

existence. Jacobson in the novel *Kalooki Nights* presented the struggle of Jews even after holocaust and impact of same. Living a normal life is not easy for Jews. Insult and torture of host nation forced Jews to live an ashamed life. They can only think or imagine about new beginning. They can only fight back to have it. New life and new beginning is dream for Jews because terror of holocaust always follows them. Moreover, the unfriendliness of host nations compel them to live an alienated life.

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