



STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE AND EQUALITY IN SELECT DALIT SHORT FICTION- AN OVER VIEW

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ABSTRACT :

*Dalit short fiction is a flourishing form in Dalit literature. The entire universe of Dalit experience and feeling seems to have descended into short fiction. Dalit short stories are an attempt to establish social values and bring out certain hidden aspects. Innumerable aspects of an individual as well as social experience reveal themselves. It can be seen standing up against **human existence, social justice, and human equality**, of the dawn of a new life. The expression of the customs, the way of life as well the hopes and aspirations of the Dalit community give shape to a different world altogether. There is a need for intense exploration of Dalit experience which is hidden in Dalit short fiction.*



KEYWORDS : Dalit, Short fiction, struggle, poverty, hunger, equality.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS PAPER

The main objective of this paper is to analyze a few short stories of Dalit writer's and present the structure of the society where Dalits struggle for existence, social justice, and human equality.

INTRODUCTION

Dalit short fiction is a flourishing form in Dalit literature. The entire universe of Dalit experience and feeling seems to have descended into Dalit short fiction. Dalit experience in Dalit Short fiction is considered as Dalit literature. Dalit short stories are an attempt to subvert literary canons by laying open the world of men and women whose once peripheral experience occupies the center stage today. Innumerable aspects of an individual as well as social experience reveal themselves. Dalit Short stories can be seen standing up against subjugation, humiliation, and atrocities; can be singing, intoxicated, of the dawn of a new life. The expression of the customs, the way of life as well the hopes and aspirations of the Dalit community give shape to a different world altogether. There is a need for intense exploration of Dalit experience which is hidden in Dalit short fiction.

On the basis of these things about human existence, social justice, and human equality, this paper is going to discuss few of the Dalit writer's famous short stories, where Dalit have struggled for existence and equality.

DISCUSSION

Dr. Kolakaluri Enoch's short story "**Hunger**" translated from Telugu into English by C. L. L. Jayaprada, tells the struggle life of a Dalit family for daily food. He here presents aspiration and hope of a child in Dalit families, though they live in utter poverty, and had to face humiliation everywhere. The story is about the life of seven-year-old Chinni, her ten years elder sister, three year younger brother,

and their parents respectively father and her mother. It was three days since Chinni had a meal. Along with her, her mother, sister, and little brother had nothing to eat except water. Her mother was on the bed because of the health problem. If the father got the day's wages for labor, they would eat food otherwise they filled their bellies with water. Father went for work three days back. They were still waiting for their father to eat. Hunger stayed on. She remembered the food that she ate when she met lorry accident by sitting under the tree. While crossing the road for the game, she dashed lorry but out of danger. That lorry owner gave some money as compensation for Chinni recovery. For six months, she ate good food. Now she was starving for food for the last three days. She thought that lorry can give food. She waited for the lorry. When the lorry appeared on the road, she ran closer to lorry across the road. The lorry crushed Chinni. She was no more.

The story starts with the gloomy atmosphere in the life of the girl. The innocent and seven-year-old girl Chinni was struggling for food for the last three days. The suffering of the girl was unexplainable. When we look at the child, it is not responsible for the child to gain or work for her food. It is the age of the girl Chinni to play games with friends and enjoy childhood life. Every child gets things what they want from the parents. At this age whatever the child asks that will be provided by parents. The wish or desire of a child is very small to parents to accomplish it compare to running the family on regular basis. But when we looked at the seven-year-old girl Chinni, she did not have anything to eat for the last 72 hours means three days except water. This is the age of every child to fulfill her desire. In the case of this girl, it was different. Why was it so? Did she commit any sin? She had a right to ask something to eat like every child asks their parents for the most liked one. But Chinni condition is different; she had pains in stomach and did not have water in her eyes to bring out, no energy to make cry. How did the girl demand her father or mother like another child to provide something to eat? She understood the conditions of her family background, father and mother. Her father was in such condition that he could not able to provide his children with minimum needs but not excess. Even he tried in his extraordinary level to give his children minimum needs but failed. What can a father do it when things are out of hands? Her father had a heart to love his daughter, hands for hugging, mouth for a kiss but helpless to give or provide the daily needs of his child. The writer says like this, "But at the dawn of the day before yesterday her hunger found no relief. Yesterday saw the sunlight, hunger stayed on. That morning the day broke. Her hunger intensified. When the day was about to break again, Chinni felt more miserable than happy" (Enoch, 73) So, the above lines describe the pathetic condition of the Dalit girl for the food. The seven-year-old girl has been struggling for filling the small belly. She had hope for the day that something will be got when sunrise appeared. One side she had hope for new things another side hunger consumes in her. Days were changing but hunger stayed on in the little belly. New aspirations increasing but she was unable to bear the pains in the stomach. It was very difficult to imagine hunger conditions in Chinni. No strength to accept pains. She was looking helplessly. Actually, that was the age to enjoy and be happy in life on depending parents. But it was different for Chinni. Instead of that, she was fighting with clutches hunger. She could not able to quench it. There was starvation. Her brother says to Chinni, "Our mother is groaning. She has been calling out 'Chinni, Chinni'. Come, let us go home" (Enoch,76)

This depicts the love among the Dalit family members. Though they were in the same boat of hunger, they had sacrificial and unconditional love among them. Actually, they were in a situation that they could not help each other but still there was irremovable affection from each other. Mother in the wretched condition that she could not move on the bed, was crying for her child. She wanted to give something to her child but nothing was there except her skeleton. Even though she was on edge of death, she wanted to pour her exceptional love for children. This best example of the love of family members "on the night of the day her father left home for the work, Mother gave all the rice to sister without keeping anything for herself. Sister, in turn, gave the whole of it to her and brother. Even she did not feel like eating. She pitied her brother. A few mouthfuls given to him, he ate off greedily. It was over even before his little brother belly filled". That was the unconditional love and sacrificial life for each other. The writer compared the other girl like this, "A ten-year old girl was returning home from school. Flowers in her hair. Silk blouse. Silk skirt. Even if there was no need full skirt reaching her

calves. Two plants. Leaping in the air slightly like a whip with several lashes. Like her plaits, arms; like her arms, legs; like her legs, gait was sprightly. Her head and eyes bubbling with liveliness. Her whole body betrayed a wave of vivacity. In her belly, in her guts, food was being digested energetically. That girl was the same age as her sister's Chinni broke out crying". (Enoch,79)

The interpretation of the above lines is that the girl who was the same age as Chinni's sister had to enjoy the childhood where Chinni and sister were suffering food daily food. Childhood is the blessed age where there are no burdens, unfulfilled desires and responsibilities compare to teenage, youth and old age. The writer brings out the picture of the life of a Dalit girl and another girl. Only the difference between the ten-year girl and Chinni's sister was the economic conditions of the family which created a big gap between them. They didn't do anything for that. But one was happy other was sad. Actually, that was the time of school days where every child got time to spend with a friend and enjoy life with innocence. But in contrast, these poor sisters were avoided for the opportunities. They were experiencing clutches of poverty. Even, they were not at all responsible for that inevitable poverty at that age. They stroked them to forget all childhood pleasures and reminded them always with pains and groans of hunger. These poor girls struggling like anything with starvation. That was the symbol of Dalit suffering for food.

In another story "**Loneliness of an Ex-soldier**" written by B. Rangarao from Marathi, tells the struggle of a Mahar Ex-soldier for social justice and human equality. He here presents the struggle against hostile circumstances, the social structure and pangs of untouchability. The story is about Wasudeo Bhivsan Khandare was a Mahar of a small village in the western region of Maharashtra, applied for retirement after fifteen years of service in the Indian army and well known for his unparalleled courage and heroism. After retirement, he decided to serve his parents and the community. When he was twenty joined in the army and returned home at the age of thirty-five. He had his old parents and only one younger sister whose name was Suman shortly called as Sumi. She was in her prime youth now, good looking like a Grecian urn and familiar for well-behaved politeness. She studied up to the tenth standard and was taking care of parents in her brother absence. Wasu had been looking for his sister's marriage. In addition to this, he was spending time with Mahar youth and interacting with them on different issues like education, sports, social upliftment, etc. In a short span of time, he brought tremendous change in the lives of Mahar youth as well as in their daily life which had never happened before. This was not digested by the village upper caste.

One day, when he was returning from his long distanced farm he had thirsty and wanted to drink the glass of water. He approached the well where women were drawing water. As he requested a woman for water, she was ready to offer the water. But someone shouted and prohibited her from doing so. Because of his caste, in reality, he was a Mahar and untouchable. If he drunk water, the well might be contaminated. The woman got fear and withdrew the attempt. Other incident happened that a cattleman was beaten up by the upper caste hooligans and a women's goat gone out to open field did not come back. Later, came to know that it was caught and killed. In the course of time, these happenings had changed views of Wasu. After some days, the news was created that someone had smeared the Hanuman God idol with muck. In view of that, they suspected the Mahar boys and arrested them. Unfortunately, there wasn't anything Wasu could do about it. And finally, when Wasu's sister Sumi went to the river for water, somebody raped and killed her. Even, police could not find criminals.

This story talks about the humiliation of human beings and social values. Wasu was struggling for human values and social justice. Though he has excelled in the Indian Army with his courage and heroism, he failed into the law's structure of village. The description is given by the writer like this, "No, no. He is Mahar and untouchable. He will contaminate our well. Send him away, send him away." (Rao, 84)

The above lines describe the treatment of particular people towards Dalit. The man belonged to Mahar Caste, was coming to from a long distance and was a thirst for water. When he came to the well for drinking water, he was not allowed to quench his thirst because of his caste. They shouted that he was Mahar. If a Mahar drunk water at the well, the water in the well would become impure. It was the practice of particular people to humiliate human beings. Though Dalits were educated and good in

things, there had still discrimination, degradation, and humiliation on them. In order to avoid such practices, it was needed to consider humans as humans. He says in the below lines like this, "However, Sumi did not appear. What he saw was unusual and shocking. Both his parents were at the door in a disturbed profile surrounded by women of the neighborhood. His mother almost began to cry at the sight of Wasu who, by now, had reached the door. "What's the matter?" he asked anxiously while trying to support his mother stand properly. "Sumi" his mother could utter the name with difficulty. "Sumi has not returned home yet. She has gone to fetch water from the river when the sunlight gleamed quite brightly. It's more than two hours now." (Rao, 86)

It was the real situation in the society. When Wasu was trying to bring some changes in the lives of Dalits, elders of the villages crushed him to downs. They targeted his family members. His only sister caught and killed by them. They didn't want the change in the lives of Mahars. Dalit had to remain slaves as long as they live on the earth. That was the main objective of the village elders. They didn't digest the improvement, growth and social conditions of Mahars. If somebody tried for changes, they would become a victim of village elders like Wasu. The writer explains the condition Wasu family when they stand for social change, "Wasu smelt something foul but he kept cool. Maybe, he thought, she must have been delayed because of rain, or detained by a friend or acquaintance. He talked to his mother in a pacifying tone- Don't worry too much. Sumi will be back soon. She must be on her way home. "She never takes so long to reach home", his mother told him in a heart rendering voice. (Rao, 86)

The above lines depict the love, care, and concern among Dalit family. Although he had a deep struggle about her sister, he consoled and boosted up the courage of his parents. He understood the situation and unable to accept the fact that his sister was no more. His aspirations and dreams about his sister were scattered and disappeared. Another side, with a broken heart he comforted old father and mother. His mother was almost in a condition like a heartbroken woman and unable to spell out words. Other hands his father who had plans for daughter was collapsed on the floor. For those old age parents, Wasu couldn't stop their misery. Though he had physical fitness and mentally strong, helpless to his parents in the village. He had plans to bring changes to the lives of Dalits but failed. When he attempted to do, his lovely sister raped and killed by village people.

CONCLUSION

In the short story "**Hunger**", because of poverty, Chinni has to be sacrificed her life, which was actually her silent protest against society. In the second story "**Loneliness of an Ex-soldier**" Wasudeo Bhivsan Khandare (Wasu) had suffered a lot of human equality. In most of Dalit Writer's short stories, use of Dalit's struggle for existence and social justice and human equality is very common and its effect in characters is very prominent. In fact, Dalit's struggle for existence is not different to Dalit than other castes, not even there's any particular relation between poverty and Dalit but everywhere Dalits are more affected by both the positive and negative impact of poverty. Dalit as an ideology and movement find that the oppression of Dalit is interlinked to the oppression of major society with the same castes centered attitudes and practices concerning to the patriarchal society, so all the discussed characters in this paper are greatly affected by poverty and caste, which presented Dalit's struggle for existence.

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