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Social Realism in the Short Stories of Om Goswami

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Abstract:

Literature has many threads which can weave the beautiful piece of art. Each thread has its own importance in the creative way. In the same way, there are different narrative techniques for the narration of literature and realism is one of them which describe life without idealisation or romantic subjectivity. This work mirrors realism in the short stories of Dogri writer Om Goswami. They have thematic varieties and have deep insight into human realities and characters. The stories mentioned below represent an authentic and real picture of the human soul which is heart touching and convincing.

Keywords: Corruption, Dogra culture, exploitation, humiliation, hypocrisy, malaise.

In the collection of stories “The Crocodile” occupies the first place. The incident of this story takes place in the Gharib Gurba Printers — factory of Shah Gandhamull a money loving man. The author has appropriately given the title “The Crocodile”, as the crocodile engulfs the living organisms to fulfil his appetite similarly Shah Gandhamull engulfs the rights of his labourers for his appetite for money. The theme of the story seems to be concerned with a radical criticism of the very structure of society. Goswami’s ultimate purpose is to expose social evils in the Dogra society and tries to uplift the level of the working class. In the story “The Crocodile” Goswami has focussed the attention of his readers to the exploitation of the workers. He introduces us to the lower strata of the society with the depiction of workers of the Garib Gurba Printers and their exploitation by their press proprietor Gandhamull. It deals with the theme of corruption, social burden and obligations faced by the workers in the Dogra society. He describes the social and economical conditions of the labourers of the press. He presents the reality of the condition of the labours in Dogra society in front of the readers.

“The Crocodile” is the satirical attack on some of the evils and vices of the Dogra society. Goswami has exposed the social evil in its myriad manifestations and evocatively presents different layers of human experience in his fiction. One day, servant of shah, Geegu tells the workers of the factory about the brutal behaviour of the Shah Gandhamull. “Once when I expressed a desire to go to my village, the Shah grew wild with rage and threatened that if I tried to leave, he would cut me up into pieces and throw them to the crows and dogs” (17). Goswami narrates the humiliation felt by Geegu and others in real words. Goswami use the typical Dogri words to make the short story real.

The story “The Bird of Gold” is a political fable of modern times exposing the corruption in the country which was once known as “The golden bird” for its material prosperity and also there was lot of property and wealth in the country but now this country is ruining by the politicians for their own benefits. Goswami presents the beautiful and realistic picture of the political condition of India in the disguise of Jaloosistan. These politicians have made the country hollow from inside. They just want to fulfil their illegal wishes and to fulfil their wishes they exploit people very badly and during election times they disguise themselves as honest persons with clean reputation.

“During election days, the citizens of Jaloosistan stand in a long queue. The candidates for the legislature come with a rush and a tin of polish and starts polishing their shoes. The one, who shines the maximum number of shoes, wins. The polish lasts for five years and during these five years, the legislators shower shoe-slaps on the heads of their constituents. After five years, the chameleon appears again with his brush and polish and joins his tarred palms in supplication: Here is your servant from head to foot . . .” (72)

The story “Down and Out” and “Bereavement” deal with the problem of unemployment. These stories are the hard core reality of Dogra society as well as the Indian society. It throws light on the frustration and mental tension of the unemployed youth and record the miseries felt by them. These two pieces together have brought the change in the Dogri literature as they touch the heart of many unemployed youth. His short stories convey the emotional truth as well as the social realities and interpret social problems. In these stories Goswami presents the corrupt practices of the society.

“Down and Out” is the story of two unemployed young men Abhimanyu and the narrator himself. Both have passed their graduation and now enter into the practical life. Goswami uses the words like chappal to symbolise the struggle which they are now going to face in their lives or which every unemployed has to face and is the reality of life. Brother always make them aware of the hard ships of life which is clear in the statement. “A point comes in life when all the roads to happiness take a turn towards the sea of sorrow” (76-77). Goswami has painted the realistic alley where these unemployed youth stay and wait to be humiliated by other employed people. In the story it is shown that the wealthy and the resourceful persons are able to get jobs and others again become helpless and wandering again from one office to another giving interviews and getting rejection. “It is clear that in interviews, it is not the shine of the shoes but the force of influence and resources of wealth that works” (84). In this context Prof. Veena Gupta wrote in Shiraza:

In today’s corrupted world it is not the potential of the man which is judged in the interviews and not even his degrees matter. The thing which makes the difference is the influence of the person who has come to give interview means the person who is wealthy, resourceful and having political approach is selected in the interviews. (17)

This is the reality which one can face during unemployment. “Bereavement” story also deals with the same frustration of unemployment. The story begins with a philosophical statement—“Life is a chain of chances but if one is missed; life loses its charm like a word that has lost its meaning” (98). The story starts with a suffocating atmosphere because of unemployment. Goswami deftly deals with the social problems in his short stories. The stories attack the social setup; concentrate on social evils which issue from an inequitable economic system which the writer has presented in realistic manner. “Bereavement” is the story of modern Dogra society and in it the universal malaise unemployment is depicted. Om Goswami narrates the psychology and frustration of the unemployed youth who tries to get job. This malaise is generally noticed in today’s world. In this story the frustration of modern younger generation has been predominantly depicted.

“The Horned Moon” is one of the significant stories in the collection. The theme of the story is related to a young boy Pantoo who is an orphan and lives in the house of Buji. Buji’s treatment with the boy is not good. Pantoo intends to establish meaningful contact with others but painfully failed in his purpose and leads a lonely life. The surroundings of Buji’s home are old and he is unable to fit in the old surroundings as he finds changes everywhere. He is lonely and estranged. It is a saga of suffering of Pantoo and Om Goswami gives a real to his characters. The suffering of Pantoo is not caused by the fate but by fellow human and the social surroundings from which the sufferings still have great and immortal hopes for the betterment of life. Om Goswami’s characters are from real life and his short stories have main stream of social realism. Dr. Ramlakhan wrote in Sahatiya Ki Vidaya, “To highlight every aspect of life and analyse it according to his ideology and vision is the main aim of Goswami”(112). Pantoo’s life is broken into small pieces like a horned moon. Pantoo is very much upset from his life and also fed up from the beatings of bua. Everybody hates him as he is an orphan and insult him. One day even the shopkeeper shouted on him, “Saala, you should not come so early to be the first customer” (124).

In this statement Goswami has presented the realistic agony, suffering and misery of Pantoo who worked as a labour in the house of Buji. This is the story of an ill-fated child fighting for his better survival but this survival ends in his death. This story gives a psychological insight and panoramic picture of lower class people or orphan children and also the treatment meted to them by the upper crust of the society.

“Ringworm” is a story of a poor fellow Kari-jang whose innocence gets converted into corruptness because of some social forces as he is neglected by the society because of his poverty and his eczema. Kari-jang’s poverty is beautifully described by the author. Kari-jang always tries to take money from others in every possible way. Goswami uses the typical Dogri words and proverbs to highlight his social reality.

Kinyan chalda oh dang
Badalai chah te shami bhang
Dhiddai par daddari’ poten rang
Phi bi khush rawai Kari-jang. (147)

In these lines Goswami clearly shows the reality of poor people that how they live without food and money in the words of Kari-jang. The above lines means (I wonder how he subsets by taking tea in the morning and hemp in the evening with ringworm on the abdomen and colour on the finger Kari-jang still keeps himself happy).

Goswami understands and analyses human nature and consider man to be ‘the maker and the breaker of the world’. He holds that it is not divinity but only man who can solve the problems that he has created. Kari-jang creates problems for his own by his corruptness. The corruptness has corroded the inner self of human being.

In real term the stories of Goswami are correct picture of real human experiences and the human life and the world is brought through characters and situations.

Om Goswami has felt concerned with all those countless people of Dogra society who have been oppressed, repressed, dispossessed, disinherited, downtrodden in the name of class, employments, religion, poverty, etc. in his short stories. He stressed the need for an humanistic approach to life.

Social realism is the foremost and chief essence in the short stories of Om Goswami. After the profound investigation of Om Goswami's short stories one could say that they are written for the betterment of society. There is no doubt that social realism is the principal layer in the short stories of Om Goswami. He is truly the social realist who tries to remove the tears of poor by presenting his passionate mean against existing evils in society through these short stories.

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