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Social Realism Of Post-Independence India In The Select Novels Of Shrilal Shukla

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Abstract: Social realism is a popular and influential movement in post-independence Indian literature that aimed to depict social and political realities and struggles of ordinary people. This style of literature tends to focus on the lives of marginalized communities, the exploitation of the poor and the socio-economic challenges faced by the newly independent nation. “Soonī Ghātī Ka Suraj” and “Raag Darbarī” by Shrilal Shukla are adequately packed with the elements of social realism. Indian society after independence had a harsh and bitter confrontation with the declining values, morals and ideal standards that deviated from the expected ideals of free and equally thriving societies after independence. These novels expose the plight of the socially stratified, oppressed, marginalized and common rural population in the system/structure of a corrupt union that is run by the politics of the nefarious.

Key Words: Social realism, post-independence rural fiction, marginalization, reality vs ideal, politics

1. INTRODUCTION:

Shrilal Shukla, whose contribution in the Hindi literature is unquantifiable; is well known for his realist perspectives. He writes focusing on rural India with all its corrupt governance structures, bureaucracy imbroglio, and socio-political drive among other things. Shukla tells his stories using satire and irony to unmask societies' false values and moral corruption. Many novelists, in times both past and present have often written to fulfil certain social, political as well as economic objectives. Thus, the main aim is not only to bring about enlightenment on the social evils and malpractices that exist in the society, but also using fiction for the purpose of social reform.

The institution of a novel reveals itself through various forms in almost every sector of social life, a principle referred to as Social Realism. Social Realism in the context of post-Independence India has paid more attention to ordinary, day-to-day activities within the society mostly among the middle and lower classes or castes where personality is largely shaped by social factors. It records or reflects truly the real way of life. It shows accurately dreams and ambitions, failures and successes, motives and experiences in life that became severely affected.

His works are translated into English much later and the process is still going on because of his relevance and significant contribution towards understanding of the failure of Indian rural society in the hands of snollygosters. Not only does he draw exteriors vividly, but he also makes the reader think about systematic unfairness and the necessity of changes. By integrating satire into his artwork Shukla's fiction goes far beyond his period, opening new borders and entering conversation with different generations discussing government principles, ethics issues, morality codes as well as transformations needed for better quality of life today. Such input into Hindi literature that also includes navigating societal issues has etched his name into the annals of best Indian realistic writers. He uses his characters to reveal how ordinary folks fight in

life, how they are controlled by the prestigious and how village life often seems ridiculous. Shukla does not simply criticize but feels the deep empathy in his displays of the societal matters illustrating a deep insight in humans and social systems.

2. Sooni Ghati Ka Suraj

Shrilal Shukla's novel titled *Sooni Ghati Ka Suraj* can roughly be translated as *The Light of the Lonely Valley*. The naming of the novel is apt and suggestive of the primary idea of the post-independent India's desolate village where a common man assumes the role of a light bringer by bearing a torch light for the fellow downtrodden villagers to expose them to a world that is illuminated. Georg Lukacs admits that practitioners of socialist realism have not always handled their plot progression in a convincing manner, but it cannot be applicable to *Sooni Ghati Ka Suraj* of Shrilal Shukla because of his remarkable ability to maintain the cohesion. The protagonist of the novel, Ramdas is a typical "positive hero" of literary romanticism used pseudonymously for social realism. There are some minor modifications in the positive hero of Shukla who dispenses with quite a few traditional social norms while paramount loyalty to party and readiness for any sacrifices are still important.

The positive hero rejects the discrimination based on caste or community (Hindu-Muslim in particular), which, it must be remembered, are among the most widespread and deeply entrenched social realities in the subcontinent—and beyond that, the world at large. Ramdas is hungry and determined to build a secure future for the fallen by being decisive, self-sacrificing, and not letting any external factors divert him from the socialist goal he hankers after. Ramdas' ceaseless struggle to remove social, religious and economic barriers to a classless and casteless society must be fought on many fronts, and he occasionally engages in minor skirmishes with other prevalent decadent social behaviours.

The portrayal of Ramdas is significant because of the subliminal and subtle criticism of the unjust Indian society through the rejection of the oppressive social structure that has led to the unequal wealth distribution, caste-based discrimination, poverty, marginalisation, reign of corrupt capitalist, fascism, privilege and unfairness in opportunity. Ramdas' vision is to uplift the society so that the differences are negated and a society with equal opportunity could be created. Ramdas attains education because of the assumed power that comes with it. But his journey is full of compromises; he had to work for the landlords, obey their commands, had to give in to their whims and desires to fulfil the basic need to gain education. He becomes obliged to blend in and surrender to the oppressive structure of the free society but after crossing a certain extent he chose to retain his moral and uncompromising conscious self. His diligence had a purpose. The purpose was to work selflessly for the dalits and all downtrodden to make them climb the ladder of the progress. But his dream was crushed by the system that was exploiting from these very plights of the rural, desolate valley (ghati).

The vision of Ramdas is the vision of all. It is an objective reality for the Indian youth who dreams to change the unfair society that was supposed to be fair after the independence. But being oppressed by own people is much worse than the outsiders. The administrative officers, public servants, landlords, businessmen, politicians assumed the similar role as the colonisers took. Indian bureaucrats, officials, delegates were the manifestation of British colonial regime. *Sooni Ghati Ka Suraj* is the most authentic expression of social reality. It becomes objectively appealing because of the underlying struggle of nonconformity in the form of resistance that has existed forever among the oppressed. Social Realism in Shukla's context is different from the Soviet or European realism. Caste based discrimination becomes alien to the realism outside India. There is no ladder for the lower castes to climb for equality and progress in the society after independence. But the representation of social realism in literature of Soviet and Europe is optimistic because class is not assigned at birth or inherited, it can be changed, upward mobility is very common phenomenon. Shrilal Shukla promotes the idea of communal harmony in this novel. Ramdas is a Thakur, a privileged individual in the caste-based Indian society but the poverty is all-encompassing, it does not discriminate nor do the corrupt, blood sucking leeches who exploit. But Ramdas has several peaceful and beneficial interactions with the Muslims of the society.

The radical critics of the Indian society consider it "utopian dream" rather than reality but historically the religious harmony have existed and Shukla's representation of social realism in this regard is apt and adequate. The character of Ramdas is almost real except his conformity with the features of positive hero of romanticism along with a deviation that becomes more real as he fails to save the society, his goal is not

attained, his hard works are not paid off and he fails to deliver a “happy ending” that is objectively felt. Shukla’s social realism coincides with Maxim Gorky’s idea of exploitation by the capitalist social system that gives birth to the struggles of the oppressed. Education plays a crucial role in combating injustice but attaining education efficiently is the toughest challenge faced by the youth of India who strives to gain knowledge. What Ramdas went through is the social reality of everyday, not just a few decades after the independence but even worse in the contemporary scenario. Based on the relevance of Shukla’s representation, his works are being circulated in the academia to spread awareness among the intellectuals to reform their society by promoting inclusivity, equality, equity and harmony.

3. *Raag Darbari*

Raag Darbari is a satiric novel by Shrilal Shukla that comes before the world in 1968 to bring into the limelight the socio-political set-up of rural India. The setting of the novel is Shivpalganj, which is a village that hovers from inventing its sense of life and gradually builds up the corruption, bureaucracy, and decay of all moral values. On performing a critical analysis of social realism within *Raag Darbari*, we can really get down to how it is that Shukla uses satire to open social grossness. Shrilal Shukla’s Hindi novel *Raag Darbari* is about the death of the idealism of the nationalist movement that extended but waned to sustain itself in the post-independence era; this failed ideal of independence is termed as “post-Nehruvian cynicism” by Akhil Gupta. The politics of the reformation failed to implement the policies for the welfare of the state.

Shrilal Shukla’s *Raag Darbari* is a participative constituent work in Hindi literature that embarks on a biting critique of corruption and bureaucracy in post-independence rural India. Through the swings in the vortex of systemic inefficiencies and moral decay in this fictional village, Shivpalganj provides a vivid tableau of socio-political life.

He does this with the help of various characters and interactions that expose how deep-rooted this corruption has become. Protagonist Ranganath brings into the limelight the power game in a village—how the local politicians, bureaucrats, and big guns manoeuvre the system to their advantage. The representation of corrupt practices is not limited to obvious activities but captures part of daily life to demonstrate a deep mental malaise. Vaidyaji is the central character and the corrupt politician. He manipulates the administrative processes and, by influencing the local governance, assures his dominance through nepotism and favouritism. Badri, the Headmaster, represents a decaying system of education. His example also brings forth that corruption has not spared even those institutions which were meant for the welfare and well-being of the public. Lack of integrity and misuse of power for personal benefit have been portrayed through his character, tainting the novel’s critique of systemic rot.

Shukla shows how bureaucracy emerges as an instrument of exploitation. Procedural delays, bribery, and red tape delay justice and development and point out the administrative inefficacy rampant in rural India. A local administration in Shivpalganj has been portrayed as a maze of corruption where self-interest is foremost, reigning over public service. The realism in *Raag Darbari* is derived from the authenticity of the setting of rural life. In a way, it captures the dialect, cultural nuances, and socioeconomic conditions against which the critique of corruption is to make a greater impact. The minute detailing of everyday interactions and ubiquitous corrupt practices give credibility to the narrative. The bureaucracy in the novel is just like an appendage to the colonial administration totally ineffective to get attuned to the requirements of an independent nation. Bureaucratic machinery has been portrayed as ineffective and isolated from the very people masses that they are supposed to serve. He has pointed out the flaws in the structure of the bureaucracy. The novel exposes that the bureaucratic position is used for self-serving personal gains and not as mere public servants. Its inefficiency and lack of accountability make it out of touch with the karmabhumi and ordinary people of the region.

Ranganath is one of the means whereby Shukla depicts individual disillusionment against the system. The observations and experiences that Ranganath makes regarding Shivpalganj substantiate the frustrations of coping with a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy to underscore the broader point about citizens’ discontent. The village Shivpalganj becomes a microcosm of Indian society writ large. The inefficiency and corruption of the bureaucracy reflect a wider national dilemma. The crudification detects the depths of this problem in the rural and urban landscape. The social realism of Shukla, lucidly described and characterized, constructs an effective narrative that does not turn out of date. The novel presents, with equal vividness, the socio-

political problems of that period, but stands as a timeless comment on the continuing battles for combating corrupt radical forces and an owner-bureaucratic red-tapism.

Satire and irony are Shukla's tools to make the social realism of the novel more effective. He overstates the absurdity in village life to focus on the deep problems of Indian society. The witty elements of this novel are darkened and biting, as they make readers reflect on how serious the implications will turn out to be. The drive of his satire allows Shukla to judge society's norms without being didactic, engaging the reader in a way not probably doable through just realism. The novel gives an exact and realistic presentation of village life, outlining all the complexities and intricacies involved in village dynamics. Shukla avoids getting carried away by the romanticism of the village setting and instead presents the realities that villagers face. In that regard, he has brought out, with amazing lividness, the tussle for power, caste dynamics, and daily hardships involved in rustic life. This kind of representation is needed to offset the ideal impressions of rustic India as they come across in literature and in the media.

The characters in the novel function in the capacity of social archetypes and represent different dimensions of society. For example, Ranganath is the protagonist who is an outsider and comes to Shivpalganj to act like a lens through which all the operations of the village are to be viewed. His observations and interactions that happen with other characters unfold the deep-rooted issues in society. Vaidyaji, it may be recalled, represents the corrupt politician; other characters represent such social roles as the opportunistic businessman, the disillusioned youth, and the subservient villager. These correspondences enable Shukla to create a miniature representation of Indian society. Shrilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari* represents social realism with satire aimed at the socio-political realities of rural India. Its depiction of corruption, bureaucracy, and the different patterns of life in villages has reflected strongly on the bottom line of society in India. Broadly speaking, it is the blending of humour with critical insight that helps Shukla hold his substantial work together and makes it relevant today as it was when published.

4. Conclusion:

In *Raag Darbari*, Shukla raises a scathing critique of the rampant corruption, inefficiency, and moral decay that characterized post-independence India. By taking the microcosmic example of Shivpalganj, he unravels the complexities of village life to show how traditional values are manipulated by self-serving persons to meet their ends. Humour leavened with irony brings out the deep sense of disillusionment with the political system and social institutions that pervades the novel. Similarly, while emphasizing a somewhat different set of themes, *Sooni Ghati Ka Suraj* does take up some of the gloomier aspects of village society. According to Shukla, it is in the concentration of power, caste configuration, and economic inequality that the plight of the subaltern is to be understood. Realism in the narrative has its origin in relentless portrayals of the brutal factualities faced by the rural poor alongside their resistance and acts of agency.

The two novels thus typify social realism, as they encapsulate the incisive view of rural Indian society. Shukla then becomes a great raconteur, with the looking-glass eye of satire to push the reader into confronting those very uncomfortable truths about justice, power, and societal change. In the novels *Raag Darbari* and *Sooni Ghati Ka Suraj*, Shukla presents not just a critique of the status quo but calls for introspection and reform; hence, the work is of lasting resonance in the discourse of social realism in Indian literature.

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