

# The Depiction of Extreme Penuary and a Postition of Homelessness in Avinash Dolas's Short Story 'The Refugee'



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## Abstract

Avinash Dolas is thinker and an activist of Dalit Buddhist Movement in Maharashtra. He is a prolific writer of fiction and non-fiction works related to the movement. Here in this paper there is an analysis of one of this short stories 'The Refugee' Which published in the book of world fame 'Poisoned Bread' by Arjun Dangle. The story illustrates the painful saga of an untouchable boy Santu (21 Years old) who realizes that position of Dalits is worse even than the condition of refugees in India. The Refugees in India can obtain security and protection from the governments but for Dalit community it cannot be granted at any rate. That's why they have to face extreme penury and a position of homelessness throughout the country.

The story presents the realistic picture of Dalit community throughout the country. Though the story is centered at Maharashtra but the condition of Dalits is as pitiable in every corner of India as is depicted in the story about Maharashtra. Even today they are facing a number of threats of their peaceful existence, they are beaten up on the different fronts of life on the name of caste and customs.

**Keywords:** Penury, Homelessness, Dalits, Buddhist Movement, Threats, Untouchable, Community, B.R. Ambedkar Varana System etc.

## Introduction

Turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses every path of your life. You cannot have any kind of reform unless you kill this monster. India's caste system has bewildered the world. Much has been written about it, more still awaits the writing. Many scholars have tried to fathom its origin but ultimately contributed only further conjectured, Many have tried to define it but have failed to capture its complexity.

### Dr. B.R. Ambedkar,

Dr. Ambekar himself declared 'Mahad Satyagraha (1927) as the beginning of the untouchable liberation movement and a large number of movements are working at present to break the caste system in India. As the generation are proceeding to latest technologies day by day, the caste system is becoming more the and more powerful. Much has been said through the books films debates and NGOs but this devil is defeating everyone and everything. Day by day it is becoming more dangerous. It is breaking the hopes and dreams of Dalit upliftment. They people are crying from the state assemblies, parliament to UNO but the voice and protest is being crushed down by this powerful monster because of its powerful presence in policy making bodies and the courts of India. The policy making people and the people working in different courts believe in Varna System rather than in constitution of India.

They prefer to sing the songs of ancient Brahmin lord and saints rather than the songs of state and democracy because they don't want to distribute the natural resources, jobs and opportunities among all the people equally well, that is why they are opposing all the schemes which are made to strengthen the marginalized communities. These are the reasons which made Dalit communities more poorer and wretched, yet the struggle is on.

There have been many Saints and Mahatmas who interested themselves ameliorating the lot of unto untouchables, but none before has correctly diagnosed the disease. Dr. Ambedkar alone tracked it to its source and prescribed the proper treatment the

task of terminating social discrimination while still retaining the Indian culture could only be achieved by embracing Buddhism.<sup>1</sup>

Dalit literature totally based on Ambedkar's ideology is a literary movement fighting against the social discrimination and injustice. It is a movement to attack all evil forces which are working as the hurdles in the ways to upliftment of Dalits. The present paper is an attempt to depict the extreme penury and a position of homelessness in Avinash Dolas's short story *The Refugee*.

The theme of entire Dalit literature reflect the harsh and hard realities of their day to day life. Short stories by Dalit writers in the same way present the voices of pain and anguish trying to build an identity equal to the other so called high castes.

In the story a mother is reduced to such wretchedness on account of caste and customs that she is forced to order her son to leave the village in which she lived " *My son go away from here!*" and the boy has to leave the place to the world unknown where he himself does not know where to go and what to do because he knows very well about the caste realities as he belongs to the Mahar Caste. The story writer beautifully expresses his mental and physical condition when the order was given by her mother.

He just could not bear it. He staggered like a blind man whose support had suddenly been taken away. Today on account of his quick temper, he had to sever himself from his relation. Every part of the road looked to walk steadily. How often he felt like turning and looking back! But his stubborn mind would not let him,. His father was not his father any more, nor was his village his village, and mother who gave him birth could not call her son any more. His mind burned with the thought . All of them were alien to him. He was an outsider amount them- an orphan<sup>2</sup>.

All these thoughts are attacking his psychology, he became restless but the forced order of her mother is imperative to him. The write describes his physical condition in the give paragraph.

His forehead was covered with beads of sweat which appeared like blood pimples all over his body. He felt his nose tingling and his eyes filled with tears. Overflowing his eyes, the tears ran down the slopes of his nose to the hem to his lips, and the felt their stinging saltiness. He said to hem self. ' One should not call them tears. This is just water. It is worth nothing, and it knows no other way but to leak out of the eyes like this<sup>3</sup>.

Sharan Kumar Limbale's in his ' *To wards An Aesthetics of Dalit Literature* says the Dalit literature does not follow the aesthetics set up by the savarna literature because the beauty of Dalit Literature lies in expressing the pain, agony suffering, passion, desire

and the dreams of its people not the beauty of outer world . As he says.

If the pleasure is the basis of the aesthetics of Marathi Savarna literature, pain and suffering is the basis of the aesthetics of Dalit literature. Will the readers be distressed or angered or they will be pleased by reading the pain and revolt expressed in Dalit literature.? It is a literature that is intended to make restless or angry. How can the aestheticism in discussion of beauty be reconciled with the ' Dalit Consciousness' in Dalit literature? The revolutionary consciousness is based on ideas of equality, liberty, justices and solidarity rather than pleasure. This is why it is important for Dalit critics to change the imaginary of beauty. In every age, the imaginary of beauty is linked to prevailing ideas. At one time, for example, kings and emperors used to be the subjects of literature. But today, the life lived in huts and cottages situated outside the boundary of village has become the subject of literature . It has become necessary to transform the imaginary of beauty because it is not possible to investigate the creation of Dalit literature and its commitment of revolt and rejection within the framework of traditional aesthetics<sup>4</sup>.

Let us contemplate on the aesthetical view point of the story when the protagonist of the story is on the way to an unknown world and when he comes out of the sight of the village. The trees and bushes has obliterated it. It was as if nothing had happened . Now his village his people were not with him. He wipes his face with a handkerchief and starts waking again.

His feet were slipping out of his sticky chappals. for a moment he thought that the slimy, slippery chapplas might suddenly give way. What was his life anyway? Was it not a feat or trying to keep his balance standing in the mire of slimy customs for twenty one years? The tenuous folds of casteism would hem in his mind every now and then but it would still struggle to breakout . he slipped on a rock in the path and his wet chappal suddenly shapped. Calling his own ancestors a thousand names he hurled the chappals away. Cursing he walking on, barefoot. He was surprised to realize that he could use such ugly words of abuse and spoke to himself. ' My name is itself a curse<sup>5</sup>.

Santu again reaches to a crowded railway station. There was the continuous arrival and departure of trains. But he was in dilemma of his movement, he fails to choose the direction of his departure.

Where should he go? To the north or to the south? East or west? He should go where the road took him. or his feet. After all, where you went, you'd find only human beings whether in a village or in a city to the south or the last. Shameless thieving, servile, wretched days who sit chewing the crumbs thrown to them, and getting beaten like mad dogs, if they don't submit some back at morsels thrown to them just like me. His heart chocked with a rapid rush of emotion. Thinking in this manner, he had called himself a dog. He Turned back and walked, taking long strides<sup>6</sup>.

And again we find the beautiful expression of his penury. Standing on the railway station he sinks into the dreaming of an incident in which his sister Chandra asked him to lend her five rupees for the treatment of her son but he could not give her money. He finds himself helpless.

He remembered Chandra who had asked him to lend her some money brother Santu, spare me five rupees until Friday. I have to take my son to the doctor. H is very ill. Her old father was blind. Her husband was caught in the explosion of dynamite in a well and was bed ridden, his limbs turned to jelly. And yet he had not been able to help her. she sold her body for the sake of five rupees- for her child- to Tulya, the grocer. He was the male and she the female- it was a payment in terms of body, caste, circumstances. Santu held his hands together tightly, shook his head and turned away"<sup>7</sup>

In the position of empty pocket he ran to a man who was standing on station to beg some money. *He said saheb give something in charity*" but he could not give him anything except a strange expression. finally he climbs a train going to Bombay unknowingly. And in a over crowded compartment he fell in a dialogue with a Bangladeshi citizen who has came to India as a refugee in Bombay. Here is the dialogue between two passenger one from India and another from Bangladesh. One is untouchable and second is a refugee. The writer of this story wants to convey the message how even a refugee is better than an untouchable in India.

"Where are you going Sahab? startled, he looked in the direction of the voice. The man standing near him had asked the question. 'To Bombay' the words escaped his lips unexpectedly. He must say something more so he asked and you?

"I am going to Bombay'

He did not feel there was anything special about it. Everyday thousands of people go to Bombay where do you live?

I beg your pardon?

Where do live in Bombay?

Matunga he said for no reason.

I am going to Santacruz'

He didnot say anything. The man waited a little and then asked again.

Do you have relation in Santacruz?

'Relation? he murmured, almost to himself. Brother, its sheer bad luck that we had to come to Hindustan. He was tartlet to hear that, and looked at the old man, who had said it in such a sad, doleful manner.

'What do you mean? he asked

'What can I say, saab, we from Bangladesh.

'Bangla Desh?

'Yes.

'But there is quite a massacre going on there. Instantly the headlines in the newspapers floated before his eyes. 'Of course there is a massacre, we are also fighting back.

'your name?

'Surji

'And what other news from there?

'We are fighting with all our might

'Then what brings you to Bombay today?

'Saab we have our relations in Bombay.

Bangla Desh massacre, A whole series of scenes passed before his eyes. A man leaves Bangla Desh to see his relations in Bombay. The govt. A India gives shelter to thousands and millions of the homeless. And here I am a citizen of this country"<sup>8</sup>

And again on the expression of untouchable and caste customs. The writer says.

A woman in a village drew water from the well of high caste, so they beat her up. They ordered all Mahars to empty the well. A young man like me trying to break out of casteism could not stand all that. I resisted. The whole village was furious. They beat up the Mahars as they do their beasts. They stopped giving them work, they would not allow them water and food just because they were untouchables. they told me to beg forgiveness, to grovel and prostrate myself before them, confessing my wrong doing, or else, they threatened to burn the entire Mahar settlement. Just because we were untouchables. I agued, I protested for my rights. but my own mother she took my younger brother in here lap, and touched my feet, her own son's feet and said, 'Don't do this, and finally told me, 'My son go away from here! A mother tells her own son to leave the village- she is reduced to such wretchedness, only on account of caste and customs"<sup>9</sup>

So these were the circumstances which compelled Santu to leave the village. He was thinking and rethinking the incident.

On one hand there was Bangladesh in turmoil and the other, the community of the Mahars, in agony, One homeless Bangla Deshi was going back to his relations after twenty years. And one Mahar, even after twenty years was homeless in his own country"<sup>10</sup>

As we know that literature is the powerful weapon to change the society the writer tries to say that even after a long period of independence dalit community is still struggling for identity in its own country.

The story reflects the hard realities of life. it provides an insight on the question of identity. It is the best example to see the voice of pain, struggle, penury and homelessness. Although Indian constitution does not permit the caste system but it still lingers in all the ways of life with firm grasp in the minds A Indian people.

Dalit literature and Dalit identity are closely connected because Dalit literature is playing a vital role in establishing the Dalit identity. As Ahmad Khan from Salman bin Abdul Aziz University writes.

Dalit literature has today become a potent tool for projecting identity. By providing critical insight on the question of Dalit identity, their literature projects their victimization and social subordination which no other writing could do as subtly and as pointedly. The writings of Dalits are directly or indirectly linked up with the social, political and cultural ethos of the Dalits, however this literature does not constitutes a homogenous or unified identity. There are divergent currents and tendencies, which these writers use to voice their anger and protest.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Aim of the Study**

The Aim of the paper is to present the real picture of Dalit Community in Indian society.

#### **Conclusion**

The paper reflects the hard realities of life. it provides an insight on the question of identity. It is the best example to see the voice of pain, struggle, penury and homelessness. Although Indian constitution does not permit the caste system but it still lingers in all the ways of life with firm grasp in the minds A Indian people.

#### **End Notes**

1. *Anand Bhadant : Had There Been no Ambedkar (Ed.) Samyak Prakashan, New Delhi 2009 page-120*
2. *Dangle Arjun : Poisoned Bread (Ed.) The Refugee, Orient Black swan, New Delhi, 2009, Page-248*
3. *Ibid- Page- 248*
4. *Limbale Sharan Kumar, Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature , Orient Black swan, New Delhi, 2010, page-114-115*
5. *Dangle Arjun : Poisoned Bread (Ed.) The Refugee, Orient Black swan, New Delhi, 2009, Page-249*
6. *Ibid - Page- 250*
7. *Ibid - Page- 250*
8. *Ibid - Page- 252-253*
9. *Ibid - Page- 253*
10. *Ibid - Page- 253*
11. *Khan Ali Ahmad : Identity Crisis in Dalit Shorts Stories from Maharashtra (Arab World English Journal) Issue No 01,2013, Page- 314.*