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REVIEW ARTICLE

DIALECTICS OF MARGINALITY IN POST- COLONIAL POLITICAL SCENARIO IN INDIA

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Dialectics of Marginality in Post-Colonial Political Scenario in India

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In the novel Raag Darbari, Shrilal Shukla clearly depicts the picture of post-colonial Indian political scenario which is dominated by certain sectarian interests, motives and evil political practices. This novel as a political satire clearly reveals the real face of India through image of the village Shivpalganj. In India the political domain is not an independent one because our political field is closely associated with certain social, religious, cultural and economic institutions. In our country the post-colonial political leaders and political institutions are deeply influenced by these institutions. By using this novel as a weapon, Shrilal Shukla criticise these kinds of political and social issues and he summons the whole India for a complete change in all fields of life. The picture of Shivpalganj stands for the typical Indian village which is very much alienated and neglected by the modern developments and more civilised 'modern Indian citizens'. In our country from a school child to a well-known political leader everyone daily uses the words like development, modernity, justice, equality etc... to point out the progress of our nation but it is very hard to accept the truth that majority of the Indian villages and village people are still follow a 'primitive tradition' which is full of supernatural beliefs, evil social practices and pathetic economic conditions. As a visionary writer Shrilal Shukla, declares the truth that the change has to be made from the bottom of the society. Both the social and economic development in the main stream of our country has to make a great influence on the alienated villages all over India that is why, Mahatma Gandhi once said that "India lives in its villages".

In India, politics and government are the two important aspects which decide the fate of our country. As Gillian Wright, writes in her introduction to the translated version of Raag Darbari that "Politics and Government are the two main themes of the novel". So, in this paper, first I make an attempt to give a historical background to these two important aspects of this novel. Because without the historical background to these institutions I believe the analysis of the post-colonial political scenario in India will not be complete. India was ruled over Three centuries by the British and

they have made tremendous changes and contributions to our social, cultural, religious and economic institutions. The idea of 'Politics and Government' is one of the significant contributions made by the British to the Indians. As an imperial power British ruled the fragmented and diverse India as a unified integral country. British made this kind of a hard task possible only through their own 'Western political tactics', legal, social and economic institutions. That is why Shukla writes about the Police in the novel that; "The British installed them, and in 1947 returned to their homeland" (p.9)

This line clearly indicates the truth that the police in the Indian legal domain are the British product and now these police act as the safeguards of Indian legal system. Another thing is that, here this police not just stand as a unique identity but it signifies the whole judicial system which was implemented in India by the British during the colonial period for their own smooth governance in India. English education in India is one of the most prominent contributions which were made by the British to the Indians. This English education made a lot of great changes in our country which can be range from the different cultural and social aspects to the present political systems. Before the arrival of British, Indians were leading an 'archaic' kind of life which was full of supernatural beliefs; evil practices like caste and sati were common among the Indian villagers. With the advent of English education in India, our cultural, social and religious domains began reflect sudden changes and progress along with the change from an 'archaic state' to a 'modern nation'. Shrilal Shukla clearly portrays the influence of English education in India by making the Master to ask a question to his student. There the Master asks to his student that; "How can you learn bloody science without English?"(p.15)

This question is not just applicable not only to science but it is a question which makes each and every Indian to think about the importance of English in all spheres of life. Our ancestors began to fight for the freedom when they realized the value of 'Western principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' through

the English education. They read about the French and American struggle of independence and they got an inspiration from all these great struggles in the history which later helped our ancestors to form a nationalist consciousness, the ultimate result of this kind of a consciousness resulted in the formation of a nation called India. During the colonial period British were the only enemy to our whole country but after Independence the Indians began to fight among themselves. Only the rulers have changed from British elites to Indian elites but the servitudes and exploited untouchables under both these regimes remained the same. So the fight between the ruling elite Indians and the common people in our country become a natural phenomenon. Shivpalganj village in this novel gives a clear picture of this kind of an Indian situation where Vaidyaji, village Pradhan and other teachers in the colleges are the representatives of Indian elites and the Chamars and the peasants in the village are the people who reflect the common people in India who have to suffer under all the ruling systems.

These transformations of power from the Western elites to the Indian elites have made a lot of changes in the political sphere in India. Especially soon after the independence, our country has witnessed the marathon rule of the Congress party for the next two decades. These two decades have a significant role in the history of our country. This was the period when our country began its real growth and development through different dedicated and sincere leaders' visions and dreams. In the beginning part of the novel 'RaagDarbari', Shrilal Shukla illustrates the influence of Gandhi and Congress on the Indians soon after the Independence through the description about Rangnath. Shukla describes that; "As the great God Vishnu stands head to toe like a pure lotus flower, so Rangnath stood head to toe, a vision of white khadi cotton, the homespun cloth popularized by Mahatma Gandhi. He wore a khadi cap, shirt and pajamas, and over shoulder hung a bag of the kind used by the Gandhian 'land gift' movement". (p.2)

This description about Rangnath shows how much was the influence of Gandhi and the ideologies of Congress over the people in India after the independence. On another occasion to describe the secular ideology of Congress Shukla writes that; "Gandhi and Nehru are not the names of caste, but the names of individuals. This is the simple way to rid the country out of the caste system. If you take the caste name away from a man and convert it into a surname, then nothing remains of caste. It destroys itself."

Here, Shukla uses Gandhi and Nehru only as the leaders who represented congress but he advocates the ideologies of Congress by praising Gandhi and Nehru, by giving this kind of an interpretation to their names. Gandhi as the father of our nation and Nehru as the first Prime Minister of India have made a lot of contributions to our nation irrespective of all caste, class and religious discriminations. Especially Nehru as the architect of modern India made the basic

foundation to our nation's development. Nehru's Five year plan played a vital role in making a strong foundation to our economic development. On the surface level people always give an 'economic' level interpretation to the Five year plans. But in his book 'The Idea of India,' Sunil Khilani observes that; "The enduring legacy of the Nehruvian state was not its economic achievements, but in the establishment of a viable structure of a relatively autonomous and democratic nation state at the core of society, committed to the idea of building a reformist, politically independent, capitalist society. During this period, the state stabilized, assumed responsibilities, ranging from the abolition of untouchability, establishment of places of higher education and culture, to building dams and nuclear reactors". (p.38)

The reflection of this statement is also very much visible in Shrilal Shukla's words too, because in the novel, he writes about the inscription on a foundation stone of a well which was built in Shivpalganj. There it is written like this; "Third Five-Year Plan. Village Council Shivpalganj" (p.202)

This inscription on the foundation stone also gives the message that Five year plans were made for the progress of the nation. And this development has to be from the bottom of the society. Another important thing is that the name of the Shivpalganj village on the foundation stone is the best example for the autonomous rule of village council in India. The name of the village council on the foundation stone displays the idea of an autonomous village council system, which was also implemented by the Congress after independence. In India the early Sixties witnessed a lot of changes in the agricultural sector; the Green revolution of 1960s has made its grand arrival all over the world by increasing the agricultural productions. The splendid effect of this Green revolution was also visible in the agricultural production of our country. And our leaders and Five year plans always gave the first preference to the agricultural sector. In the novel Shukla clearly points out that; "After this they (Political Leaders) explained that progress in agriculture was progress for the nation" (p.56)

So, this was the period when Indians started to gaze at the agricultural production to attain a steady growth of our country. Because, as Shukla observes everyone was pleading for the increase in agricultural production and as a developing nation India always trusted the agriculture sector than the industrial sector. That is what Shukla explains again when he talks about the Great politician in the novel who gives a visit once in a year. He describes about that politician like this; "He congratulated himself that thanks to the speeches he had made last year the winter crop this year was going to be good. The farmers were cultivating the land according to his instructions. They had realised that land should be ploughed, and not only fertilizer but seeds too should be put into it. They had begun to understand all they were told, and they had lost their apprehensions about new ideas. The farmers were

becoming progressive, and, in short, they only backward thing about them was they were still farmers". (P.159-60)

On the one side everyone talks about the industrial development and economic progress but on the other side, Indians who need the agricultural and economic development, will seal the farmers as 'uncivilised and downtrodden'. Normally the villages in India are very much alienated and neglected by the government and the developments. In this kind of a situation political leaders or government officials will only talk about the villages, when the matter of development come in to a more practical level then all these people will go for their own selfish motives. The best example for this kind of an alienation of villages from the modernity is that when Master asks his students that; "Who was it who brought a diesel engine into this village? Does anybody know?" Then a boy answers "You! You brought it." (p.17)

This is best example which shows the invasion of modernity into Indian villages. Master Motiram as an Indian is the one who spreads out the idea of modernity through his flour mill diesel engine. Here, Shrilal Shukla traces the invasion of modernity in to the Indian villages along with the developments in the 1960s. Another example which can be related to this idea of modernity is the description about Vaidyaji's house. There, Shukla explains that; "The sort of 'symbolic' modernization exemplified by India's gleaming airports and glittering five star hotels had even had an effect on the architecture of this house". (P.25-6)

These are the best examples from the novel which clearly explains the late 1950s and 60s quest for modernization and these were the periods when our country's social, economic, political and cultural domain started to get a steady growth. The steady growth or developments in all these fields are very much related to one another. For instance through the English education we Indians realized the truth that social evils like sati and untouchability which are the real barricades for the progress of our culture and society. In the novel there is a part where Vaidyaji remembers about Prime Ministers speech, in that speech Prime Ministers says that; "Village uplift was only possible on the basis of schools, co-operative committees and village panchayats". (p.104)

As I mentioned in the beginning of this paper schools, co-operative unions, community centres and village panchayats were the played an important role in the development of our nation. When India became an independent nation the first problem that was faced by our great leaders were illiteracy. In India this was a major hurdle to all forms of development and the only way to eradicate this problem was to provide free education to all in our country. It is because of this Shukla explains in the beginning of the Tenth chapter

that; "The Changamal Vidyala Intermediate College was founded to 'inspire the youthful citizens of the nation with great ideals and by providing them best education, to make them the means of the country's uplift.'" (p.73)

In the post-colonial Indian scenario other than education the government gave much preference to certain other factors like community centres, land reform movements and village panchayats etc... All these implementations were made to emancipate the farmers and the untouchables in the villages. The idea of community centres was introduced in India to secure the health of the villagers. As I mentioned in the first part of this paper, normally Indian villages are very much alienated from the so called 'development' and due to the lack of this development they were not aware of the hygiene, health care and epidemics. The villagers always associated these kinds of problems with the supernatural beliefs. So in this kind of an 'archaic' world, the idea of community centres was a great relief to the villagers all over in India. Land reform movement was another significant change of the post-colonial Indian government. Land reform movements in India first started as a reaction against the feudal land lords in India who were trying to dominate and exploit the poor farmers all over the country. For instance, in RaagDarbari, Shrilal Shukla clearly explains the importance of land reform movements in India. He says that; "Outside the village was a wide open plain which was gradually becoming barren. Now not even grass grew on it. It looked like ideal lands give away to Vinoba Bhave's Bhodan Movement"

Even though it is a sarcastic statement, Vinoba Bhave's movements name itself suggests the land reforms of the early 1950s and 60s and its influence on the society. The division of power is one of the most prominent features of the Indian democracy. In India the village council or village panchayats is the best example which stands for the division of power. Abraham Lincoln famously explained the whole essence of democracy in just few words. He said that; "Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people".

In the novel RaagDarbari, Shukla clearly illustrates the whole process of democracy through the villagers of Shivpalganj, their Pradhan, Vidyaji, Sanichar are the best examples who reflects the idea of democracy even though they have their own personal motives and interests behind everything. As Gayadin says to Mata Prashad that; "Brother Mata Prashad you don't have the qualities of a leader. A leader needs to know every vein in his people's body, but the people shouldn't know anything about the leader." (p.313)

The second phase of the Indian politics began with the fall of Congress in India in the late 1960s. This was the period which witnessed a lot of tensions and

conflicts all over the country. The developments and steady growth of agricultural sectors made our leaders to dream only about money not about the people who elected them as leaders. And these leaders become the proponents of sectarian politics. Most of the leaders who are supposed to serve the people began to serve their own caste and class people. In the novel *Rmadhin Bhikmakheris* the best example for a leader who follows this sectarian politics. Because Shrilal Shukla explains about him in this way; "Later on, when he fell victim to factional politics not for any particular reason, but just due to the influence of village or rather ,national, culture..."(p.42)

This kind of a politics which is based on the caste, class, religions made the situation of post-colonial India more pathetic. And the politicians began to make more money by using the power and from that huge amount they began to give a bit share of that money to the villagers just for the vote. Common people began to fight against this kind of justice through certain militant ways. The working class men, peasants and untouchables of our country began to form militant peasant and people's movement against the sectarian leaders and the dirty politics. That is why in the novel, Sub Inspector says that; "Bribery , theft, dacoity- now they've all become the same. Its communism" (P.10)

Here, the Inspector is talking about the Naxalbari system which was spreading as a reaction against this kind of a sectarian politics in India. And in the initial stages of Naxalbari movement people began to associate it with Communism because of its nature and ideologies. So the Naxalbari movements were the first reaction from the people against the sectarian politics. When the constitution of India was formed, people thought that the new constitution would provide equal rights and justice to all irrespective of caste, race and class. But the post-colonial Indian judiciary is full of corruptions and injustice. The common people and the peasants were very much alienated from the main stream judicial system. That is what Principal elaborates in the novel; "For even bigger people there are big high courts, and for the highest class of all the Supreme Court. If anyone can admonishing glance at them they go straight to Delhi to file a writ petition" (P.146)

Through the words of Principal, Shrilal Shukla clearly criticize the judicial system in India which stands for the idea of equal justice to all but in truth it provides only injustice. Thus these statements clearly reveal the truth that the judiciary in India is very much influenced by the politically powerful and rich individuals. For the common people the situation is very hard and that is why Chote says to the Magistrate that; " When you set foot in a court you already have one leg in jail and one out of it".(P.226)

Government is an important factor of post-colonial Indian politics. In the novel Shrilal Shukla explains bribery as a common phenomenon among the bureaucrats in India. And he observes corruption as a

natural practice among both the politicians and bureaucrats. The real situation of a government office is very much visible in Langar's words, when he talks about the clerk in the Tehsil office. There he says that: "So, now it's come to this. He squanders his salary on liquor and meat curry and takes bribes to get his daughters married" (p.34)

Again in the same part Shrilal Shukla describes what happens to an application that one submits in a government office.

"An application can be rejected at any time. Too few stamps, the file number incorrect, one column incomplete- any mistake like that is posted on the notice board and if it's not corrected by the prescribed date the application is rejected."(P.34-5)

Langar's experience is not a rare one; in India among the clerks and other civil servants it is a custom to knock on the office doors for several times to get any kinds of benefit or help from those officials. Against these kinds of injustice no one was there to raise the voice because majority of the people are still illiterate. The initial enthusiasm which our Governments and other officials have shown in the matter of education has lost in the course of time. The cases of literate individuals were more miserable than the illiterate ones. Because the literate individuals began to become more selfish and they just began to find solace in their own limited surroundings. They didn't raise any voice or made any agitations against these kinds of problems. That is why Shukla explains that; "Educated people in India occasionally afflicted with a certain disease which is known as 'crisis of conscience'. Among the educated people, this disease generally attacks those who consider themselves intellectuals". (P.147)

When India once becomes a developing nation then our politicians and bureaucrats began to forget the common people and their welfare and that is what happened in the case of education reforms too. Even in the modern India we are haunted by the evil effects of caste. For example in the novel there is a description about the untouchable's village side called 'Chamrahi'.

"Chamar is the name of Caste which is considered untouchables. An untouchable is a kind of biped which, before the enforcement of the constitution, people didn't use to touch" (P.102)

This description about the village part called Chamrahi where the Chamars live shows the segregation of untouchables from the mainstream public spheres. Our constitution may say everyone is equal and all, but in reality that 'equality' is just an old fashioned word on the pages of our constitution. Our country is full of these kinds of segregations based on caste, creed, class and religion etc...That is why the factional politics play an important role in Indian politics. When there is discrimination then the chance of violence is

very high and I think that is what we have been witnessing throughout the post-colonial Indian political scenario. In our country communal riots, corruptions, bribery, regionalism etc... are nothing for a modern Indian citizen.

Everyday our country brings out one or the other big scams and riots which happens only because off this sectional politics.

I believe the only way to save our political field is to 'negotiate' with the other, like the Vaidyaji in the novel, who in the end gets ready to negotiate with the other and he tries to embrace the other. So the only way to save our democracy is to embrace the other irrespective of caste, creed, class and religion. Then I believe we can be the best democratic nation in the world.

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