

RESEARCH ARTICLE



THEMES OF CORRUPTION AND FRUSTRATION IN THE SHORT STORIES OF OM GOSWAMI (A Dogri Writer)

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ABSTRACT

Society is a complex and complicated institution, with its ideologies to mould any human being. The present is the continuum of the past which leads to the future. This paper discusses different problems of the society, especially the Dogra society which changes the human beings through the short stories of Om Goswami. Corruption and frustration are the themes which are widely explored in the short stories of Om Goswami. In his short stories, there are several characters that are on the brink of corruption as there is a thin line between bending the rules and being corrupt. Corruption is obviously a widespread problem in Om Goswami's line of work; therefore it is always dealt with to some extent in his short stories. Corruption acts as a deterrent to growth and development in India as well as in Dogra society and is also one of the major issues that adversely affect the human beings. Thus the stories of Goswami represent an authentic and real picture of corruption and the frustration caused due to this corruption in the Dogra society.

Keywords: Corruption, Dogra society, frustration, malaise, have-nots.

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INTRODUCTION

Om Goswami's "*Sunne Di Chiri*" (The Bird of Gold) is a collection of Dogri short stories which received the Sahatiya Akademi Award in 1986. These short stories are then translated by Shivanath and published by Sahatiya Akademi in 1991 under the title "The Bird of Gold and Other Short Stories." It appeared in the Dogra society as a technically brilliant product. It is acclaimed as a work of art which sees beneath the surface realities of corruption and frustration and presents them in a bold conventional style. In Om Goswami's short

stories we find the operation of ideology in the background. His characters also come alive as real persona of the Dogra society. His art is committed to expose the social problems, economic exploitation, corruption and the plight of the suppressed classes in Dogra society. These short stories laying bare the social inequalities, the injustices, the exploitation of the 'haves' and the general erosion of the moral values in the modern times. These short stories display a good deal of human feelings and also portray the social evils like corruption, human frustration and unemployment.

Hues of Corruption: The short stories "The Crocodile" and "The Bird of Gold" comes under the umbrella of hues of corruption. In "The Crocodile" the writer's ultimate purpose is to expose the social evil, the corruption in the Dogra society and tries to uplift the level of the working class in the society. "The Crocodile" is the satirical attack on some of the evil and vices of the Dogra society. It is a story with a distinct social purpose. As crocodile engulfs other living beings to fulfil his appetite similarly *Shah Gandhamull*, engulfs the rights of his labours 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 is opposed to the oppression of the poor and the workers by the rich.

The incident of the story takes place in the Gharib Gurba Printers— factory of shah Gandhamull, a money minded man who is of the view that if you want to become rich you have to build your empire on the slums of the poor. Goswami has exposed the social evil in the Dogra society and presents beautifully the condition of workers in the Dogra society and their exploitation by their masters. It is not wrong to compare Om Goswami's "The Crocodile" with the *Hard Times* of Charles Dickens. *Hard Times* is a novel in which Dickens fiercely attacks on the evils of the Victorian society as Goswami attacks on the evils of Dogra society. Dickens attacks on the educational theory which was based upon 'facts' and 'statistics'; he attacks the unsatisfactory relationship between labour and capital; his attacks on the callousness of the factory owners and on the motives of the self interest promoted by industrialism as Goswami shows in his short stories. The suffering of the poor and the cruelty of the privileged class find a sincere expression in Stephen's defence of the workers when he is interrogated by Bounderby as in Karma's defence of workers in "The Crocodile." Asked by Bounderby what the workers, in a general way, complain about Stephen replies:

Indeed we are in a muddle, sir. Look around town- so rich as it is- and see the numbers of people as have been brought into being here, for to weave, and to card, and to piece out a living, all the same one way, somehow, 'twixt their cradles and graves. Look how we live, and in what numbers, and by what chances, and with what

sameness; and look how the mills is always a-going, and how they never works us no nigher to any distant object- excepting always death. Look how you considers of us, and goes up with your deputations to Secretaries of State about us, and how you are always right, and how we are always wrong. Look how this has grown and grown, bigger and bigger, broader and broader, harder and harder, from year to year, from generation to generation. Who can look on it sir and fairly tell a man it's not a muddle? (53-54)

The poor workers in "The Crocodile" are also in a muddle. They work hard, but they get nothing for themselves and remain poor as before as their benefits were taken by their boss, Gandhamull. These lines clearly indicate the social evil in the society. Shah Gandhamull, the press owner does not care for his workers. He knows that the compulsions of financial difficulties are capable of breaking steel strong principles so he does not care for his labours. He knows that they are in need of money and that give him the opportunity to capitalise on them. The character of Shah symbolizes cruelty, lust and evil in the society. Thus Om Goswami has exposed the social evil in its myriad manifestation and evocatively presented different layers of human experience in the fiction.

"The Bird of Gold" another short story is also taken from this collection of short story. The story tells us about the political corruption in the country. Political corruption is typically defined as the use of politically office or power for private gains. A number of themes emerged in the story, ranging from sources of political corruption to an analysis of the psychological causes of corruption and the accuracy of corruption perceptions indices. The story is a political fable of modern times. It tells the story of India, which was once known as the golden bird as there is a lot of wealth in the country and now in this country nothing is left due to the corruption in the country. This country is now ruined by the politicians for their own benefits. Due to these corrupt politicians the country is slowly and slowly becoming hollow from inside. These politicians just only to fulfil their illegal wishes exploit people very badly. They play with the sentiments of the people and promise them to do a

lot of things for them, but they just fulfil their needs and then move on.

Om Goswami presents the beautiful and realistic picture of the political condition of India in the disguise of Jaloosistan. Jaloosistan is the land of corrupted people. Everyone is corrupted here and make use of others to fulfil his benefits. The main motive of the politicians is to gain their own benefit by sucking the blood of others. In this country the reason behind the success of politics is to make fun and enjoyment behind social service and doing illicit distillation, gambling, etc. In the Jaloosistan the bureaucrats are allowing themselves to be blackmailed deliberately in the manipulations of these princes. They appear to be innocent in the eyes of the public. Goswami presents the realistic picture of politics that in the present world politicians pollute the politics by their wrong deeds like bribery, give-take, corruption, etc. This reality of life has been painted by the author very beautifully and depicts it in front of his readers.

The Universal Malaise: Unemployment: The stories "Down and Out" and "Bereavement" reflects the mirror of the hard core reality, i.e. unemployment of the Dogra society as well as Indian society. These two short stories describe the frustration and mental tension of the unemployed youth, and record the miseries felt by them. "Down and Out" and "Bereavement" presents mainly the frustration of unemployed, but on the other hand, they also present the corrupt social practices of Dogra society that how the people because of lack of money are deprived of honesty and truthfulness and adopt the path of corruption.

Goswami was born in an atmosphere redolent with dissatisfaction of things as he was in an atmosphere into which he infused his ardent belief that things could be bettered. He has presented the mental frustration and miserable condition of the unemployed youth in the Dogra region. Both these short stories are written with a purpose. These short stories are a powerful indictment of modern capitalistic Dogra society and feudal system with the shameless and tragic exploitation of the unemployed youth.

"Down and Out" is the story of two unemployed young men who have passed their graduation and now are in search of a job. Both of

them struggle hard to get jobs but all futile. Goswami in this story focussed on the reality of life that the real meaning of the life is to struggle hard and hard. He focussed on the problem of unemployment in the story and tells that the youth possessing the qualified degrees are not able to get jobs because of the corrupted people who sell their honesty for money and these desirable candidates wander from one place to other to get jobs.

"Bereavement" story also opens in a suffocating atmosphere because of the unemployment. The narrator is full of frustration because he is not getting the job; even his parents get frustrated as he is not getting the job. In the story the frustration of the unemployed and their exploitation by the upper class people is focussed. The narrator moves from one door to another in search of job, but the people having approach and by giving bribes filled the vacancies and the narrator again get disappointed. Both these stories attack the social setup; concentrate on the social evils which issue from an inequitable economic system which Om Goswami has presented realistically.

The Have-nots: Om Goswami's short stories "The Horned Moon" and "Ringworm" describe the suffering of the protagonists Pantoo and Kari-jang as they are neglected in the society due to their poverty. In these stories Goswami throws light on the ill-treatment of the society towards the protagonists of the stories. "The Horned Moon" and "Ringworm" give a voice to the predicament of the mute humanity in vicious circumstances. The suffering is not caused by the fault, but by the fellow human and the social surroundings from which the sufferings still have great and immortal hopes for the betterment of life. Goswami gives a real picture to his characters.

Pantoo the protagonist of the story "The Horned Moon" is an orphan and lives in the house of Buji. Goswami has presented the real agony, suffering and misery of Pantoo who worked as a labour in the house of Buji. The painful experience and the heart rending picture of the exploitation of Pantoo is presented in the story. Pantoo intends to establish meaningful contact with others, but always failed in this effort and spend a lonely life. He is unable to fit in that atmosphere and he also gets fed up with the harsh treatment and regular beating of

Buji. He is always ill-treated by the surroundings as he is an orphan and Pantoo feels very insulted because of that. All his sufferings end with the death of Pantoo which happens due to the beating of Buji.

“Ringworm” is the story of a poor fellow whose mind has been corrupted because of the social forces as he is neglected by the society because of his poverty. Because of the corruptness of the society the innocence of Kari-jang, the protagonist of the story is fading day by day. Corruption now becomes a termite which weakens our society and makes it hollow from inside. The story starts with the description of Kari-jang and his idleness. The story is the record of events in the life of Kari-jang. He has no money, but always talks on high grounds. He always wants to impress others by showing that he has good links with the people and always telling a lie about himself and his village. Kari-jang always tries to make money from others in every possible way. He is suffering from *daddari* (ringworm) which symbolises the poverty and loss of intellectual honesty. Kari-jang presents himself as a helpless figure in front of others to win their sympathy so that he gets successful in betraying those people who trust in him. Everyone makes fun of his poverty and due to these social pressures his intellectual honesty loss day by day. Kari-jang’s *daddari* (ringworm) is now slowly and slowly get converted into *Chambal* (eczema). Prof. Veena Gupta in *Shiraza* wrote:

This *daddari* in actual is the starting phase of losing honesty in Kari-jang and as this *daddari* get converted into *chambal* his intellectual honesty loses completely and he becomes a corrupted man. This *daddari* symbolises the lack of intellectual honesty which slowly diminish in corruption (16).

Goswami uses the typical Dogri words and proverbs in the story. Everyone taunts Kari-jang of his poverty and even Nek Ram one of the clerk makes fun of his poverty. At this Kari-jang reply:

*Nek Rama, Bind soch eh kamm-i Kabatta
Galiyen gi apani akhana ain kavata
Kavita de nan par lokengi de nayin butta
Hathi da kamm ai turana, dabi bhaunkai
kutta.(147)*

(Nek Ram ponder over it, this is dirty work, calling abuse poetry. Do not deceive people in the name of poetry. Elephants walk with dignity, but dogs only

bark and bark.) Goswami probes deep into various facets of human life through his characters by which he shows the evil designs of the society. Kari-jang a poor writer, who has no work transformed himself completely into a man without values. He does not even hesitate on calling his wife as his sister to earn money. Money becomes everything for him and he is ready to do anything for it. Kari-jang creates problems for his own by his corruptness. The corruptness has corroded the inner self of human beings.

CONCLUSION

Om Goswami is a short story writer of the people and for the people. He probes deep into the various facts and facets of the human life through his galaxy of characters. It is a specific study of his social ethos which has been betrayed by the evil designs of the society. All that, directly come out from the society he has seen in his life. His fiction brings forward the issues of corruption, but at the same time it strongly echoes the need for social metamorphosis for building up a better world where the empowerment of all human beings becomes possible. His protagonists keep on struggling against the severe circumstances, economic hardships and the physical and mental tortures and try hard to adjust themselves in the narrow space provided to them by the society. Goswami in his stories concerns about the issues of corruption, unemployment, poverty. He has deep concerns with the victims and through the work of art he wants to change the society.

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