



**THE DEPICTION OF A MARGINALIZED SOCIETY IN
O. V. VIJAYAN'S *THE LEGENDS OF KHASAK***

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ABSTRACT

*O. V. Vijayan, one of the pioneers of Malayalam novels, depicts an alienated world in *The Legends of Khasak*. He speaks of the people who are marginalized in terms of their culture, language and beliefs. They do not have a connection with outer world which exercises economic social and political dominance. The people in Khasak are socially illiterate and uneducated. Their life is mostly dominated by myth and beliefs. Most of the women characters remains illiterate and they are exploited by the male dominated society. They do not have the mental strength to reveal their identity. They are merely treated as instruments by the men in the contemporary society to gratify their physical needs. Likewise, the poor people are also ill-treated by the dominant class. They do not have an opportunity to come in the mainstream of the society or they find difficulty in maintaining their status. Thus, the various issues in Dalit community are also powerfully treated in the novel. He speaks of the 'excluded' in the social order. The depiction of women characters in the novel brings the concept of an 'other world' to us. The main character 'Ravi' remains an outsider throughout the novel. His knowledge about the external world is not much helpful to him to live in Khasak. His intellectual pursuits and beliefs about life become ineffective. He is extremely haunted by boredom, but he never expresses it. His arrival to Khasak is not an escape from his own life, but as a constant pursuit of life. In search for an another world where he can experience the ultimate truth of life which he never experienced in Khasak. Eventually, he succumbs to death. The depiction of Marginalization in *The Legends of Khasak* reveals the social and economic inequalities prevalent in Kerala.*

Keywords:- Marginalization, Glory, Superstition, Exploitation, Religious

INTRODUCTION

A human society is a group of people involved in a persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the

JAYAN T.

DR. S. SELVALAKSHMI

1Page



same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships (social relations) between the individuals, who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may be described as the amalgam of such relationships among its constituent members. In the social sciences, a larger society often evinces stratification or dominance patterns in subgroups.

In so far as it is collaborative, A society can enable its members to benefit in ways that would not otherwise be possible on an individual basis; both individual and social (common) benefits can thus be distinguished, or in many cases found to overlap.

A society can also consist of like-minded people governed by their own norms and values within a dominant, larger society. This is sometimes referred to as a subculture, a term used extensively within criminology.

More broadly, and especially within the structuralist thought, a society may be illustrated as an economic, social, industrial or cultural infrastructure, made up of, and varied collection of the individuals. In the regard society can mean the objective relationships people have with the material world and with the other people, rather than the individual and their familiar social environment.

Social marginality is the process in which individuals or entire communities are systematically blocked from various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to the members of a different group. It is fundamental to a social integration within the particular group .They are prevented from participating in the economic, social and political life of the society in which they live.

Marginality is an experience affecting millions of people throughout the world. Being poor, unemployed, discriminated against, or being disabled by a society that will not work around the problems of impairment; ultimately lead to the risk of exclusion. Being excluded from economic, social and political means to promote one's self-determination can have adverse effects on the individuals and communities. The term "marginality" has remained as a frequently discussed topic in the geographical studies, encompassing a wide spectre of phenomena from remote rural regions to disadvantaged urban populations.

Marginality is a term which has been widespread in the different spheres of our intellectual arena. It has made its inevitable influence in all the forms of arts, especially in literature. Most often it takes the predominant role in the literary forms such as novels, stories, poems etc. And it plays an important role in cultivating attitudes and good values in the society especially in moulding one's personality. It has no exception in terms of language, culture and language. Billson has suggested, that marginality has been applied in the sociology in three different ways: a) as cultural marginality, referring to the dilemmas of cross-cultural



identities and assimilation, b) as social role marginality, describing the tensions which occur when an individual is restricted from belonging to a positive reference group, c) as structural marginality, referring to political, social and economic powerlessness and disadvantage. It is especially the latter strand of research which has gained most attention in the last decades, and the concepts of power and oppression are regularly fused with more “culturalist” ideas of “outsidedness” to create a generally accepted contemporary definition of “marginality” as the lack of power, participation and integration experienced by a group, or a territory.

There are many marginalized groups in the society and they are inflicted with varied problems. Among these, some groups are exposed to the socially dominant problems and some other groups suffer internal struggles which are not often revealed to the outer world. The most affected groups are the women, people with disabilities and dalits. The aged people are having the domestic and social restrictions and they do not have the accessibility to the different possible avenues. There are sexual minority groups who suffer silently and they hesitate to protest. The hardships and the problems are often known to the outer world by the literary forms such as novels, films and theatre. The language plays a vital role in exposing the social evils and suggesting possible remedies to mitigate its ill-effects.

Among the south Indian languages; Malayalam has always been an indomitable element in the enrichment of literature and most of the Malayalam novelists and poets are well known in the terms of their intellectual caliber and power for imagination.

O .V. Vijayan is one of the pioneers of Malayalam Novels. He reached the mind of the keralites through his powerful novels. In the beginning of his career, Vijayan’s writing brimmed with energy and biting humour. His novel ‘*The legends of Khasak*’ for the first time presented the characters with internal lives. As he grew older, his writing became more contemplative.

Each writer has an internal urge to do experiments in exploring and portraying his mental arena teeming with the scattered thoughts. He makes use of the language as a medium to present his thoughts. And each writer struggles hard to maintain his level of thinking and its expressions. So he has to defend himself and keep himself aloof from external influences. Generally a writer has to negotiate with the words that he has already conceived through constant reading and writing. He succumbs to those temptations and refrain himself from using those words in the work of art. O V Vijayan makes alterations in the language and tone structure of the novel. He likes to make a refinement in the language used. He penetrates into the essence of words and tries to find the eternal truth inherent in it.

His novel ‘*The Legends of khasak*’ is with full of dense images of nature, old folk customs, evocations of caste differences and the rich play of dialects. In the novel, the writer has succeeded in exploring the salient features of a marginalized society. The novel is a careful

portrayal of a society which is completely detached from the present world. He has presented the troubles and turmoil in a different way by the way of his powerful language and careful portrayal of images. Sometimes the images reveal more than the life history of a writer represents. It maintains the time and the milieu of the novel. In the novel, the writer has created a myth, the characters delve deep into the foregone days; at the same time, it retains the vitality throughout the novel. The characters depicted in the novel do not worry about the hard realities of their life. They do not repent their actions too. They turn to be ignorant of it and actually it provides a kind of protection and security feeling to them. The entire feeling is governed by the superstitious beliefs, myth and the ignorance about the happenings around them. Another interesting thing is the villagers' attitude towards the time. They are in no hurry. The concept of time existed there does not conform to the normal notion about the Time which existed outside Khasak. The protagonist of the novel, Ravi remains as an outsider throughout the novel. His knowledge about the external world does not help him to live in Khasak. His intellectual pursuits and beliefs in life become ineffective. He is extremely haunted by boredom, but he does not express it. His arrival to Khasak is not an escape from his own life, but a constant pursuit towards life. He searches for another world where he can experience the ultimate truth of life. He cannot achieve it in Khasak; Eventually, he succumbs to death. The depiction of Marginalization in *The Legends of Khasak* reveals the social and economic inequalities prevalent in Kerala.

Thus the novelist has created an extra-ordinary atmosphere for the narration of his story. In other way, one can ascertain that the atmosphere depicted in the novel epitomizes the atmosphere of a society which is distinct from the outside world.

The novel '*The Legends of Khasak*' is a novel of its time which transcend decades. It is an imagined village in the north Kerala where the protagonist, Ravi, arrives to start a school. During his brief stay, Ravi experiences all the intense passions of life: sex, politics, and religion. The novel wove a magical web around the readers. A story goes around a young collegiate, with disheveled hair and angst-ridden eyes, and once goes to a railway station asking for a ticket to Khasak. No one can console him that there was no such place because he insisted he belonged to that place.

The characterization made in this novel epitomizes the title given by the novelist. In the novel, the arrival of Ravi, the main character, to Khasak was an unexpected one. He joined in anew single teacher school, one of the schools of the district board. The district board had leased a house for the school, a modest dwelling of two rooms and corridor. It was situated on the outskirts of the village and belonged to Sivaraman Nair; the impoverished feudal chief of Khasak. He had been waiting for Ravi's arrival.

Here, the main character Ravi represents the modern man. In some or other way, the Khasak itself is synonymous to the central character Ravi. He is the representation of the outer world,

but he is not capable enough to assimilate and lead a life which conform to the social structure of the outer world. Actually he is marginalized from his society where he is born and brought up. In order to flee from his own life he tries to find comfort in Khasak which is an alien land to the outer world. The other main Character, NizamAli, represents the world of prediction. Maimoona represents youth. Kunjamina is the symbol of youth and sex. Appukkili is the transcendental child of the union of virtues and vices. He starts his search for his own soul through the conversation done with Kunjamina. They are the products of a marginalized society.

In the novel, some characters represent the Dalit community. In Khasak they are being marginalized by the elite class. The upper caste is always ready to embrace the changes being happened to their society because they are the beneficiaries. So it is accelerating the formation of different groups always fight against the upper class. They do not have the role in the development of the society.

Alla pitcha, the mullah of the madrassa, is a religious leader and he is the person who tells the saga of Khasak to the pupils. He convince the pupils that the sheik is sleeping in a rock crypt on top of chetali. The contradiction is that the exact location is not visible for the naked eyes. The Mullah Says;

“The Allah will come and sit on our backs. The almighty will straddle the infirm and the destitute, as his hosts stand by in veneration” (p12)

Every day the mullah joins with his colleagues. All the mullahs are in beard dyed red to show their orthodoxy.

He speaks to the pupils of the perils of new school, its angular letters and its reckoning used in forbidden usury. He evokes fearsome visions about the new school in the minds of the pupils. He speaks of the sheik and his second coming. In such a way, he rumours about the superstitions and tries to confine those pupils within the corridors of religious Fundamentalism.

In Khasak, there are two schools; where the mullah taught the Koran, and the ‘Ezhithupally’, literally the house of writing, run by a family of hereditary Hindu Astrologers. The aim of those two schools are two-folded. In the ‘Ezhuthupally’ there are no students from outside the Khasak and the authority of the school was struggling hard to save the school from closing down. When Nizam Ali, a person from khasak, visits his village again as the self – proclaimed khaliar (Khazi in English), the mullah and others fear that he would destroy the old order and the new school overthrows the hallowed myths.



The school students of Khasak had maintained a unique mindset teemed with superstitions and numerous apprehensions regarding Chethali, their locality For example; they believed that the hedge lizard sucks the blood of children. The grown up characters are not exempted from it. The character like Kuttadan was the oracle of the lower caste. The characters like Kuppu-achan, the toddy tapper and the minor characters like kunhu nooru, Chand umma, Karuvu, nachi, Kochi, Pechi, Kali , and Neeli have their own beliefs and hallucinations about their inner world .They have no connection to the outer world.

All these represent the Dalit community or the so called downtrodden community. They have been segregated by the upper class in Khasak .For example; in Khasak there is an upper – primary school in the adjoining village and it was owned by Kelan, an untouchable. Sivaraman Nair, an upper caste family and the owner of the Ezhuthupalli, do not want Kelan to prosper. He denounces all the teaching by the low-born and he talked ramblingly about it to the villagers and even more to himself. Though Kelan was a low-born, he does not forget to seek the blessings of Sivaraman Nair before starting the school. It exemplifies the dignity of the Dalit community .They are not helped by anyone from the upper class. They suffer a lot and have become tried to accommodate their interests for the benefit of the upper caste. The children are the carriers of the secrets and the ballads existed in the world of Khasak. Altogether one can say that that the elite class does not contribute much for the sustainment of the social milieu of Khasak. Thus the Dalit community rather becomes a tool in the hands of the novelist in setting up a social scenario for the novel.

The Dalit community is the people doing manual works. There is various sub caste among them. For example; Kuravu , the student character belong to the Thottiya caste who are the ancient maritan clan. They roam the villages with their performing monkeys to make a living. The school entry details of Kuravu exemplify the status of their people in khasak. It goes like the following way.

C Kuravu, Son of Mr Chenthiyavu Thottiya, prominent monkey trainer. (p44)

Their language has no script, a script less language is helping them to penetrate into the forest depths of Chethali. The other students like Chathan and Parekkadan keep away from letters taught by Ravi, their master. They have their own oath to the mountain God. They do not want Ravi, their master to unlock the mystery attached to their lives. In Khasak, the superstitions and hallucinations about the human life are mainly tied to the downtrodden community and the characters like Ravi and Sivaraman Nair are not the ardent followers of it. It is the custom for the villagers in Khasak to help each other to mend the thatch of their roofs and it clearly shows the unity existed among them.

Many toddy tappers in Khasak have to quit their job because the villages in Palghat, where the village Khasak existed, are in the throes of temperance. The primitive alchemists take

over the inebriation trade .Brewing and distilling begin with the substances picked up at random from the confectioners' essences to insects and vermin. As a result ,the students turn up to the job and they are after the hunting centipedes. The government does not have major role in enhancing the status of the Khasak society. They are an alien community for the government. Moreover there are no monitoring system to safeguard the downtrodden from the inadequacies related to their education and health status.

The people of Khasak resorted mainly the mullah; Kuttadan, the oracle; Ramacchr, theastrologer for mental comfort. They treat the poor people of Khasak by the way of exorcising the so called evil spirits attached to their body. They are not exposed to the modern medicine .It is Ravi, who has brought the colorful capsules from the town ship of Kozhanassery in order to relieve Rukmini of her serious health problem.

The women folk in Khasak are not fortunate enough to uphold their interests and attitudes. The characterization of Thithi-Bi; Wife of the mulla and the life of Maimoona are examples for it. They represent the women folk lived in Kerala villages especially in 1960s' .They do not have much role in the domestic and the social scenario. They did not have the strength to protest and uphold their needs in the male dominated society. They are treated as 'the other' in the Novel.

It seems that there exist different marginalized groups inside the socially marginalized society in Khasak.For example; the emotional gulf between Sivaraman Nair and Kelan. So the aim of the novelist is multi-faceted.

Conclusion

A microscopic view of the society in Khasak reveals the fact that the settings or atmosphere and the characters provide the details which can be conformed to the features of a marginalized society. The depiction of religion, politics and the social milieu seem to be staying apart from the physical world outside. In Khasak, the atmosphere created is predominated in the presentation .The distinction is that the life of the characters are the byproduct of the atmosphere created in the novel.The novel searches again the history, religion and the anthropologic nature of the universe.Its direction gives a descending nature to the linear development of the novel.Here,the history does not proceed through strifles,but becomes the state of missing of the soul.Both the living and the foregone characters make the appearance in the novel.It retrieves the primitive nature of the religion.It outlives the conventional mode of writing and remains lively and primitive. A great work of art surpasses all the conventional methods and universal appeal.Likewise,'The Legends of Khasak by O V Vijayan is the compiled form of the mental horizons of the universe.



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