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Voicing for Social and Political Equality: In B. Kesharshivam's *Shool*

Mr. Hardik Udeshi

Department of English and CLS, Saurashtra University, Rajkot

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➤ **Introduction**

B. Kesharshivam a novelist, poet, autobiographer, essayist has contributed his work in Dalit writings. As a novelist he has contributed six novels where he takes the burning issue of inequality with Dalits and projects in his writings. He writes mostly about the sufferings of Dalits. His novels *Shool and Mool ane Dhool* projected him as a Dalit writer. B. Kesharshivam's novel *Shool* pens down in 17 chapters and spreads up in 256 pages talks about the physical, mental, social and political harassment on the backward people. The terror of upper class society over backward people is projected by B. Kesharshivam in his novel *Shool*. An educated well established person is harassed socially, mentally and physically as only being a dalit.

Ideally Hindu spirituality depicted in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Purans and the Smritees emphasized on "Human Equality Enlightenment, Upliftment, Love and Kindness to all, not only to human beings but also for every living creature" But generally this spirituality remained untouchable by the society. B. Kesharshivam shows this inequality in his novel *Shool*. As the novel begins with transfer of the protagonist Govindbhai Punjabhai Makwana who is a magistrate. Magistrate's transfer from a town to a city makes his child to get education in English medium school, making a pause in his thought that now he and his family will be living out all the notions of Untouchables and live safe and peaceful life. He makes a search for a rent house for settlement, using acronym as P.G Makwana to hide his caste identity. Gautam his son asked him "Dad are we from backward class?" Govindbhai in confusion answers "**Krimilayer**". This makes a point that Indian minds are always caste conscious i.e. the social hierarchy we live with.

➤ **Social and Political Issues:**

Magistrate owned a house in upper class resident area. Knowing that he is a dalit, the neighbours and the people of that area forced Govindbhai to vacant the house and leave the society. As the house was of dalit family the paying guest did not pay the rent regularly and after that also the person was living in the house as he was supported from the neighbours. B. Kesharshivam says:



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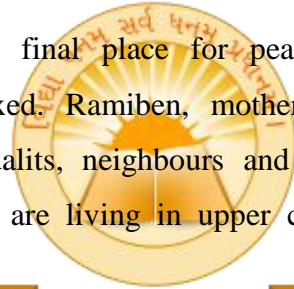
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“Manas par kutharaghat thai chhe... kadva
ghutada gadiya jaai chhe.... Ne hoodo pan
hod ma mukyo hato, chata police par teni dhari
asar na thai (pg 13) ne makan ni kimat karta bamni
rakam court ma case ladta kharchai gai chhe.
A pachi anamat andolan hobada vakahate ‘bahu fati
gaya chhe..... aa to sarkar na jamai chhe (pg 20)
jevi gaado khata”.

It is said that home is the best and final place for peace to any human being. When person reaches home automatically feels relaxed. Ramiben, mother to Govindbhai in *Shool*, is living in new house of Govindbhai but being dalits, neighbours and the mob during Anamat Andolan does not give peace to the aged couple who are living in upper class society. Ramiben says to Punjabhai her husband:



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“Diornu gamed macchar unghva deta nathi, aai
manas ughva deta nathi (pg 21).”

Mob doesn't have mind. Govindbhai rationally thinks about the protest that was going on. In his thoughts it struck “If this protest will take the life of his parents then?” The words were through to his heart like a pointed nail and it ached so much that it gave him restlessness. The protest reached the school of his son, being known that he was a dalit he was harassed physically in such a way that they torn his clothes off. To take any action against the mob then the hidden identity will come in front that the son of magistrate is a dalit and gradually the city will come to know that magistrate is a dalit. Here Govindbhai doesn't think about equality and steps back. He doesn't



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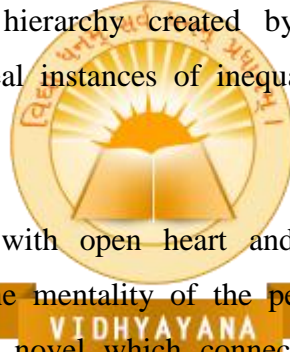
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go to meet the principal of his son's school. Taking incident into consideration B. Kesharshivam writes:

“Mohalla ma janmiya – jivya – mariya...
jindagi aa ritte jivvani chhe. Bijo koi rasto
j na hato.... Dagle ne pagle sangharsh karvano
rahese. Ana samay ma saririk ane mansik banne
prakar na humlao thi aene bachvanu chhe (Pg 29).”

This incident makes thinks that the hierarchy created by upper caste sets the narrow minded thinking of the people and gives the real instances of inequality of dalit samaj.



Various incidents have written down with open heart and the naked truth which has filled the pages. The protest of 80-82s has set the mentality of the people and the same mentality is there in G. P. Makwana the protagonist of the novel which connects the other incidents of the novel. For this Harish Mangalam notes that:

“Aasprustana kalank ne vegh karine jo nirupiya
hoy to te dalit sarjako a nirupiyu chhe. Ama
purepuri pratibadhta ane bharobhar nistha na
darshan thai chhe. Aasprusya adhikari bane k
moto pradhan, teao praty chhuta chhut padvama
aave chhe. *Shool* navalkatha no nayak G. P. Makwana



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taluka sathde thi badli mota saher ma jaai chhe,
parantu bhade thi makan madtu nathi, putra ke patni
ne jawab aapi sakta nathi..... Lekhake krimilayer
ni pacchati na lirelira udaviya chhe. Satirical Realism
no asarkarak dakhlo puro padya chhe”

(Dalit Vrutant pg 85)

Changing religion will not change the mindset of people, the seeds of being dalit will not let people live peacefully. From the terror of revolting mob the principal doesn't take steps against them and did not save the child from harassment. George the principal says:

“Varso pehla mara dada- pardada a na chhutke
Dalit mathi dharm parivartan kari Khisti dharm
aapnaviyo hato, badha dukho ni mukti mate...
aaje pan hu dharm badlayva chhata ane saada no
aacharya hova chhata sahan kari rahiyo chhu. (pg 33).”

‘The eternal other’, ‘the perpetual minor’, ‘an occasioned and incomplete being’, ‘a kind of imperfect man’ ---- woman is everything but a ‘Person’. She suffers during wartime and she suffers during peacetime. She has to fight in a situation where every revolution has a meaning but feminism. She is tagged along for every protest that concerns the society, yet, she has to wage her own war in a situation where only empty rights prevail, where each trivial victory is but a brief escapade. At the lower caste level, a more wretched landscape presents itself : Dalit women reparated naked, raped, her children and husband are forced to drink urine, she is made to carry shit on her head and told to force it down her throat too. Sheela has fire in herself of making revolt against all this. She is educated, a writer and a medical student who is the daughter of an



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income tax officer. In her college during Anamat andolan her beloved had set various programs in their college for show off.

The instance of Sheela is such that she loses her beloved as she was rejected from Shubhas' parents as she was from Dalit family. Being dalit do not they have soul? Aren't they same as the other humans? But here Sheela is separated from her beloved hence it creates inequality in love also. Shubhas leaves her as his mother threatens him that she will commit suicide. Noticing the drama of Shubhas family, Sheela's blood boils and she runs out from the Shubhas' house. As she had revolting ideas she threw stones on Shubhas' house and on the very next day she washes the statue of Gandhiji with her own blood.

A dalit writer speaks not as an individual, but as a member of a community. Dalit writer uses as many tools as many he can afford to say about his suppression. Vasantbhai, a sarpanch of dalit area starts revolting against the upper caste. As he wanted to revolt against, he starts visiting the saloons and tea stalls which are for public but are strictly prohibited for dalits. Society people makes cruel eye on Vasantbhai and plans to kick him off. Being brave Vasantbhai had thought to fetch a pot of water from the well where they were prohibited thereby to have equality in society and in politics too. His voice becomes the voice of suppressed community. Each and every dalit were ready to start the revolution against the upper class. Here one can say that Vasantbhai was provoked by Dr. Ambedkar's slogan: **"Get education, Be united and Fight for Rights"** and Vasantbhai not only for himself but for whole community he was fighting for equality in rights.

B. Kesharshivam writes about the novel in his "Mukam Karoti Vachalam" that in *Shool* there are hardly any instances of imagination but still there are some imaginative events which may become real incidents in near future. Ramanlal Joshi says about *Shool*:

"Samajna jivanyatrama je shool haju bhokai



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rahiyu chhe, ani aa katha chhe. Dalit sahityana
khana ma a muki devani katha hoy to mane
kadach atlo rasa na padiyo hoot. Pan samajna
bhagroop je mota varg aa aa shool bhokai rahiyo
chhe tena karane aa katha rasavah bani chhe. Ek
savedanshil vyakti aa shoshan, atyachar ane anyay
joi andar thi hali jai chhe a katha ne hradaysparshi
banave chhe. Katha a ritte ek savedan bani chhe.”

(Dalit Vrutant pg 87)



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➤ Conclusion:

India is a land of varieties and vitalities and unity in diversity seems to be the driving force of our country. But a lot of disparities in the name of class, caste and creed exist within the country. Artificial divisions are being promoted by the vested private interests. People are divided on the basis of caste so as to cause divisions in the society. The primary objective of such kind of class system seems to provide cheap labour in the society. The Sudras have been convinced of the fact that it was their duty to do the menial jobs.

B. Kesharshivam had wielded his pen in an attempt to show the class discrimination and inequality in the society. When the constitution of India was drafted by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, he had laid special rights to the scheduled castes and tribes. These rights are enjoyed by the people only on the condition that they should have sufficient documents to prove their identity as per government norms. Even after independence, the marginalization of the Dalits still continues to hold its prominent place in the society. The Dalits are naturally gifted people who can excel in different



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fields, but the societal class system doesn't allow them to do so. Nirzari Pandit sums up the pathetic condition of an untouchable, saying:

“The accident of being born an untouchable,
Handicaps a person in all spheres of life.
In spite of his extraordinary mental and physical
abilities, he has no rights to live a normal life”.

(Dalit Literature: A Critical Exploration pg 244)

The voices of Dalits are expressed by B. Kesharshivam in *Shool* from different characters who speaks from anguish anger and speaks on behalf of the community of the Dalits. They voice just to have equal place in society.



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