

CREATIVE WRITING

SHORT STORY

THE SHACKLE

[Originally the story entitled “Bedi” is written in Hindi by Jayshankar Prasad(1889-1937), a prominent and prolific poet, playwright, short story writer, novelist and essayist. He is regarded as one of the most distinguished pillars of Chhayavad (Romanticism) in Hindi literature.]

Babuji, give me a penny.

I was surprised to hear that. What a piteous voice it was! When I looked at, I saw a nine-ten year old boy who was standing there holding the *lathi* of a blind man. I said, “Surdas, Where did you find this boy?”

It is a better expression to address a blind man as Surdas rather than calling him blind. This expression was a blend of sympathy and respect towards poverty of the destitute rather than a satire.

He said, “Babuji, this boy is my son. He is the support of my sustenance. I can beg a stomachful food by dint of his support and save myself from being trampled”.

“I gave him one paisa”, the boy uttered enthusiastically, “Wow one paisa!”

The old man blessed, “Long live the almsgiver”.

I moved forward and kept on thinking. Life is the most valuable gift even the thoughts of those who survive with so much hardships. Oh God!

“Oh God! Why did you delay”. I heard a loud voice while I was going towards Dashashvamegh. The voice was filled with same honest humility that is prevalent in Tulsidas’ *Vinay Patrika*. Similar restlessness, call of companionship and groaning of the one who is distressed by the strong blow started floating in the atmosphere even getting disappeared in the arrogant roar of the motors. Being speechless I started looking at him, he was the same blind old man but he was alone today. I asked him giving something, “Hello, where is your son today?”

“Babuji, I used to save money out of the given alms but he took it and ran away. I don’t know where he went.” Tears started rolling down from his swollen eyes. I asked, “Didn’t you find him?” How many days did pass?

“People say that he has gone to Calcutta? I got angry with that naughty boy and moved towards the *ghat* where a Vyas ji was narrating the story of Kshraavan-charit. I got agitated while listening to the story. I saw that the water vapour was spreading like the python in the eastern side of the sky.

The same old man was seen at the *chauk* after many months. The same boy was standing stiffly there holding his *lathi*. I asked angrily, “Why? Where did you run away leaving your father behind?” The boy spoke smilingly, “Babuji, I went to search for a job. My anger got pacified by his sense of duty. Giving him something I advised him, “Hey boy, this is your job, don’t run away leaving your father behind.”

The old man expressed, “Babuji, now he won’t be able to run away. The shackles have been put on his feet”. I saw with hatred and surprise, there were indeed shackles on his feet. The boy was moving slowly. I said to myself, Hey God, father can also put shackles on the feet of his sons for making him beg alms. And even then that innocent boy was smiling. Long live the world!

I moved forward.

I was waiting for a gentleman. We had decided to go for a boating. Vehicles, motor cars and horse carriages were running, colliding with each other. As if, everyone was perplexed. Like a philosopher, I was criticising the hustle and bustle of their city life. I heard the same voice in the corner of Sirastree. The old man stated, “Don’t take money for three days. I have told Ramdas, your *kurta* will be tailored in seven *annas*. Now the winter season has begun”. He said whiningly, “No, give me money today, give me money, I will eat *kuchalu*. See that, it is being sold on that side”. Boy’s mouth was filled with saliva and eyes with tears. Unfortunately, the old man couldn’t give money. He was adamant on not giving it. But the boy won. He took the paisa and started going on that side of the road. His shackled legs were moving awkwardly. / manoeuvringly as if he was going to win the war.

Navin Babu was driving his car with the speed of forty miles per hour. The boy fell down with the noise of the onlookers. The crowd rushed. The motor moved/passed on and this old man started weeping anxiously. Where should the blind man go?

Someone said, “The wound is not deep”.

Another voiced, “The killer has put shackles on the feet otherwise he would not have got hurt”.

The old man said, “ Baba, cut the shackles, I don’t want”.

And I saw bewilderedly that the boy’s soul had already cut the shackles of life.

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POEMS**Shadow of Solace**

In drapes of darkness
Like diamond studs
A helm and harness
In rain and bloods

In the shadow of your warm love
I feel so glad and secure,
And your soft, caring hands
Urge me on to bravely endure

You are the apple of my eye
The reason that I live
You are all that wish for,
My heart to you; I give

Hand in hand we walk together
In pleasure and pain
The step you trod,
Under the shadow of solace.
Damsel lady

Damsel Lady

Clear night and burning star
The lady of beauty and brawn
Stout, musky body of July char
Prevented me unto the gown

Body-tide though barred her sleep
willing to cope her but unseen
I was shaken to the deep
To enjoy the damsel of nineteen

Night was over, dimmed the star
Crack of dawn, beamed the lady
Busy in chore, kept me afar
Ended the day waiting the brady

Again, sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me
She was ready, no more war
Sweated her body with glee.

Solitary Soldier

Behold me single in the field
Yon solitary aimless mad
walking and talking to myself
Pay me little or let me glad
Evening full of crab and spawn
Chirping Sparrow and cooing swan
Away from cities and passers-by
Mustard field and lonely Sky
Wheatfield hailing narrow Row
Barking dog and flying crow
Homing parrot west to east
Rising moon to its crest
Let me return to my duty
Enough now to Barnala beauty

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