

## **Rural Novel in India: Reading Village through Shrilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari***

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### **Abstract**

India has been a nation of villages that make the basic construct of our civilization. Over a period of time the villages or their clusters have evolved into towns, and further into cities. Even today more than eighty percent of Indians live in villages. Novel, being the 'slice of life', has over a period of time, touched upon the life of the rural India in different shades. From Munshi PremChand, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan down to Shrilal Shukla the Indian novelists have potently brought in the panorama of life on the literary canvas in the best of patterns. Shrilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari* (1968) is one of the best literary records of real power politics, which shows the traces and trajectories of administration and politics in rural U.P. villages somewhere around the late 1950's. *Raag Darbari* presents a fictional story of a village Shivpalganj, which symbolizes a typical Indian village. Shivpal Ganj is situated in Rae Bareilly District, South East of Lucknow. It depicts the struggle for power in the key village institutions viz. Co-operative Unions, the Village Council and in the College, as well it portrays the perverted caste system, distorted social values, corruption in administration and politics, use of muscle power, etc, the picture of which is still not much different even after fifty years of the publication of this novel. The proposed paper is an analytical study of the village lives both from the angle of its simplicity and complexity with special reference to Shrilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari*.

**Keywords-** Politics, Religion, Orthodoxy, Caste, Community Life, Habitation, Tradition

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best of the patterns. Shrilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari* (1968) is one of the best literary records which shows the traces and trajectories of administration and politics in rural U.P. villages somewhere around the late 1950's.

*Raag Darbari* presents a fictional story of a village Shivpalganj, which symbolizes a typical North Indian village. Shivpalganj is situated in Rae Bareilly District, South East of Lucknow. It depicts the struggle for power in the key village institutions viz. Co-operative Unions, the Village Council and in the College, as well it portrays the perverted caste system, distorted social values, corruption in administration and politics, use of muscle power, etc., the picture of which is still not much different even after fifty years of the publication of this novel. The proposed paper is an analytical study of the village lives which particularly relates to the villages of Uttar Pradesh both from the angle of its simplicity and complexity with special reference to Shrilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari*.

A K Ramanujan in his translated poem '*What She Said*' describes the village in these lovely lines:

Shall I charge like a bull  
Against this sleepy town,  
or try beating it with sticks,  
or cry wolf  
till it is filled with cries  
of Ah's and Oh's ?

It knows nothing, and sleeps  
Through all my agony, my sleeplessness,  
And the swirls of this swaying south wind.

O what shall I do  
To this dump of a town !

Auvaiyar Kur 28

(Ramanujan, *The Indian Landscapes*, 7)

We all had or are having attachments with the villages. Some of us must be visiting them regularly even today. Those memories of our villages still make us nostalgic and we many a times yearn to visit those. As soon as we start thinking of the village a faint or a dominant picture starts coming to our mind which most of the times is directly proportional to our attachments to the village. The memories consist of childhood, youth, middle and old age, some good or bad experiences, depending upon the amount of time passed in the village and we start remembering all those things which happened there at the slightest induction even today.

In a traditional village the scenery starts with farms/ fields which fall in our sight as soon as we leave the city and start approaching towards the village. Farmers can be seen working in the fields, sowing crops, irrigating, reaping, harvesting. Some

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of them carrying sheaf of grass, crops, logs of wood, basket of cow dung cakes on their heads, some digging grass, some fishing in ponds and canals, some sitting, talking, passing time and some sleeping under the tree. When approaching the village or passing through other villages in the way people can be seen riding the bullock cart, buffalo or horse cart with heaps of grass, sugarcane, husk, etc and sometime empty, bells ringing in the neck of bullocks, cows and buffalos in the fields or on the roads can be heard. When getting closer to the village the smell of the cow dung mounts which appear stinking to some and lovely fragrance to other can be observed. Shrilal Shukla presents this in *Raag Darbari* as:

. . . he began to distinguish bundle-like objects in the twilight on both sides of the road. These were women sitting in rows, . . . relieving themselves. Below the roads there were heaps of rubbish and their stench . . . From some distance away came the sounds of barking dogs. A curtain of smoke drifted. . . All this meant there was no denying that they had come to a village. (Shukla 7)

The first public place we encounter when reaching village through public conveyance is Bus or Railway Stations are shabby looking full of less- men and more- cattle with dogs inside. People from the nearby houses watch the passersby and judge their acquaintance with them with whatever faint memories they have. Some cows with their calves, dog and bitches with their young cubs can be found sitting in the main compound of the stations. “. . . resting sickly dogs” (Shukla 316). Among them sit those passengers who are waiting for their buses or trains. Shrilal Shukla describes bus station as:

The filth at the Shivpalganj bus-stand . . . Behind the bus stand was a small pond . . . used as an open-air toilet . . . pigs of Shivpalganj used to arrive there in the morning . . . They assimilated the human filth and scattered it around. The breeze blowing across . . . forced the passengers sitting at the bus stand to keep clothes over their noses . . . the pigs slipped straight from the road into the bus-stand and headed for the banks of the pond. (Shukla 315)

Nearby local liquor shop, some cycle and now a day's motorcycle repairing shops can also be found. “. . . the Tehsil Office, the Police Station, the toddy house, the Block Development Office, the liquor shop, the college . . . along the street you would see all this”. (Shukla 25) Walking with raised foot due to unbalanced brick road and stones on the way, bypassing the lanes and by lanes which defy any geometry and reach our houses located within.

Encroachments can easily be noticed which range from an inch to a foot, an arm's length to a meter not only on the *kacca* road by building extended platforms but also in the making of the thatched roof. “. . . On both sides there were haphazardly built thatched houses. The raised platforms outside them had been extended over the years and now took up most of the alley. . . philosophy of encroachment . . .” (Shukla 25).

Very few wells can be noticed in the whole village, most of which have dried up now due to fall in the water level. The culverts (*pulia*) which could be seen linking the ponds to each other or the canals nearby the villages. “In the country, small wayside culverts are put to

the same use as tea rooms, committee rooms, libraries and state assemblies are in the cities; that is, people sit there and gossip.” (Shukla 180) These places are at times also used by the village *panchayats* to hold meetings, government officials and other organisations to disseminate information and also for various ceremonies or ‘nautanki’s’ held across the village. Commenting on the social life and interaction of the people to each other, Oscar Lewis writes in *Village Life in modern India*,

Within the village one rarely sees a solitary figure. Crowds gather easily around the visitor and follow them down the narrow streets and in and out of houses. Children play boisterously in large groups; men chat and smoke hookahs together while women work on modern spinning wheels at their doors or sit sewing together. Cows and bullocks wander about through the streets among the people. (Lewis 14)

The houses existing today in the village are partially *kacca* and *pucca*.. There are very few houses which are completely *pucca* or completely *kacca*. Traditionally the complete *pucca* houses were mostly of the well to do families which were *Zamindars*, Landlords, *Seths* and *Mahants*, who had enormous lands and wealth under their control. “The house was Vaidyaji’s. Its front portion was of brick and quite impressive by rural standards. At the back the walls were of mud and . . . heaps of rubbish.” (Shukla 25) The houses normally had a drawing room which in the villages is called as *baithak*, few others living room for family members, and *aangan*, a veranda with a husk shed (*chappar*). “The front half of the house, which included a raised platform outside the door, a veranda and one large room was graced by the name ‘the sitting room’. (Shukla 26) The roofs of the houses are mostly made of logs of wood which also provides for living spaces for sparrows. The mud houses do not constitute fine geometrical shapes. Oscar Lewis, in a study of a Delhi village observes,

. . . mud homes of the poor, which have a comparatively shapeless appearance. As a defence against the rain, some mud buildings are equipped with a roof of tin sheeting and some with sloping thatch, but most *kacca* houses have flat mud roof. These mud homes are quite uncomfortable during rainy season, when cattle; dung, urine and mud accumulate and the houses become hot, smelly and full of mosquitoes. (Lewis 20)

The traditional conveyance of the village in Northern India has been bullock cart but horse cart and camel cart have also been used where people have been employing them as a mode of conveyance. Today the normal mode of conveyance has changed from bullock carts to cycle, motorcycle, jeep, matador, truck, buses and trains which provide faster connectivity. The carts are used for carrying various types of crops, cow dung cakes, fertilizers, wooden logs etc to markets. Though in modern times carts have been replaced by tractors. At times we can see children running after them and pulling the sugarcane sticks from the bundles loaded on them. “Some half starved children were running behind pulling out canes to chew.” (Shukla 15) Riding a bullock cart, horse cart provides fascinating experience and were a

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matter of pride who owns it. The slower the conveyance the soothing it proves. “Some bullock-carts were travelling along . . . the drivers lay on top of their carts, asleep and their faces covered. The bullocks, not on their own initiative but as a result of long practice, quietly pulled the carts down the road.” (Shukla 4) The bullocks when engaged to the cart used to till the fields. Many tales have sprung up among the local people from these bullocks like the folktales of ‘*Heera and Moti*’. A. K. Ramanujan on folk tales writes, “A folktale is a poetic text that carries some of its cultural contexts within it. It is also a travelling metaphor that finds a new meaning with each new telling” (Ramanujan, *Folktales From India*, Preface ii)

The cattle in the household too form an integral part and get the treatment of a family member. It is fed, cared and treated like a child and used maximum cultivation of crops. Oscar Lewis on the role of cattle writes, “Cattle are particularly important in the agricultural economy. . . Buffaloes are valued more than cows in the region . . . A cow gives eight to ten calves, one a year; a buffalo will give fifteen or more” (Lewis 39-40).

Shrilal Shukla has also described about the farming lands, the scenic beauty they hold and farmers love and dedication and hard work towards their land. The land is treated by the farmers as mother and is an asset of the family. “Farmers love the land dearly.” (Shukla 204) The sentiments of the farmers attach to the fields which get transferred from one generation to another but now seems to be missing. The farms have mud ridges (*medh*) in between them which are used as pathways for a catwalk from one farm to other. “. . . a narrow path, blocked in places by thorn branches. Ditches and irrigation channels had been dug across it, . . . traversed by mud ridges marking field boundaries . . . surrounded by bushes and shrubs . . . poked into you as you went down the path.” (Shukla 181,183)

Ponds, another water source for the villagers are used for various purposes. Farmers use the water for growing crops like *singhada*, *naari*, etc., for irrigation, bathing themselves and their cattle and even for washing clothes. Sometimes the green soft grass (*doob*) which germinates on their slopes is full of nourishment for the cattle. This grass on the slopes too appears and vanishes with seasons. “... pond despite its filthiness, had its own value. Its economic aspect lay in the good *doob* grass which grew on its sloping banks . . .” (Shukla 198) In the morning and evening it also serves as the place to relieve themselves.

The pond was dirty, full of mud stinking and very small. Horses donkeys dogs and pigs . . . Worms and maggots, flies and mosquitoes- . . . flourished there in billions . . . a couple of dozen boys, following the dictates of their stomachs, came regularly to the banks of the pond every morning and evening, and irregularly at any hour of the day, to surrender gas, liquids and solids- all three states of matter-and return lighter. (Shukla 198)

One another very fascinating habit among the villagers is to distort the names. The tradition of funny names has been very old and we can easily observe that these sort of names are kept of the people whose castes are considered lower in the social strata. Sometimes these



distortions can also be found in names of people with poor economic condition among the higher castes who have been living under the support and mercy of his caste men. These distortions are basically done to make fun of the people and take away the social respect which they may have achieved with time.

The schools too play major roles in this regard. Earlier when the children were taken to school for admission the name was mostly kept by the school master who too used to be prejudiced in doing it. These names were sometimes even worse than the name the parents gave to his child. These distorted names are in themselves an indicator of the person's social status/caste, leave alone the surname. These names too originate due to some particular characteristic property of the man. One who is blind, squint, has broad-bent-short-long nose, ears less developed-protruding out or very large, protruding teeth, who stammers or is dumb, short or long neck, amputated or polio affected arms or legs, one with hump, uncommon fingers, colour of eyes or squint or blind, or the colour of skin, or sometimes such names originate due to the season in which the birth took place. Many a times it too signified person's social class. "A lame man was called 'Langar'; a blind man . . . 'Soore'; anyone whose ears were pulverised by too much wrestling . . . 'Broken ear (tutte); . . . old man- deaf Grandpa . . . whose face bore the scars of small pox . . . 'Honeycomb' Prasad (chatta Prasad); 'Changu' or six-fingered; Squint-eye Prasad (Aincha-tana Prasad) . . ." (Shukla 265,266)

Abuses too form a part of our rich language. These exist in every language and region. Abuses are used not only when we are angry but also when we are happy and consider the other person very close and dear. The same abuse in one tone conveys the anger and in other the teasing. Abuses also range from superficial and light to serious and deeply hurting ones. Sometimes the abused are referred to some common animal or are correlated with some activity with someone in direct relation defying the established standards of society. "People were screaming out . . . abusing the opponents' mothers and sisters . . ." (Shukla 204).

Another habit which requires attention in the Indian society is maintenance of hygiene. Sanitation is given least importance in villages. The houses lack toilets and consider it an unnecessary wastage of money building them. Community toilet is a distant issue, though government over the decades has been trying to generate awareness among people through various programs but still a lot needs to be done. The women have to wait for darkness to relieve themselves. Going to a distant place in the dark makes them even vulnerable for other crimes.

Dress forms an important part of the culture of any place which evolves as per the climate of the area and is in turn decided by the geography of the place. Earlier thick and rough cotton was used which was called *khaddar* or hand woven rough *khadi* cloth and all the attires were made of it. "Rangnath stood head to toe, a vision of white khadi cotton, . . . He wore a khadi cap, shirt and payajamas, and over his shoulder hung a bag of the kind . . ." (Shukla 2). The poor and the rich, political and common man used to make all their clothes out of it. Some too would put on silk clothes. ". . . wore a white dhoti and a colourful bush-

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shirt. Round his neck he tied a silk scarf He kept the loose end of his dhoti on his shoulder.” (Shukla 13)

The occupation of people in the villages is mostly farming and allied activities such as cattle breeding, dairying and fishing. The people either own the fields or are agricultural labourers. Some even migrate to towns in search of jobs and come back during the sowing and harvest time.

. . . land had been donated for the betterment of the landless as part of the Bhoodan Movement. Then it had been taken back as a gift by the Village Council. Then the Village Council had gifted it to Pradhan. The Pradhan had gifted it firstly to his friends and relations, and on a straight cash-sale basis disposed off the remaining parts to some of the poor and landless. (Shukla 146)

To earn their daily bread the villagers are left with an only option to open small shops which includes grossery stores, medical stores, repairing centeres, cloth shops, *paan* shops and even *Dhabas*.

One of Vaidyaji’s professions was ayurveda, or traditional Indian medicine . . . he was Managing Director of the Co-operative Union and the college manager . . . (Shukla 28, 29); . . . had a shop which sold cloth and lent out money . . . (Shukla 96); . . . some grocery shops . . . (Shukla 181); . . . a barbers shop . . . (Shukla 185); The smoke from the owens where gram was being roasted . . . (Shukla 191); . . . ikka-wallahs, who, even after the spread of cycle rickshaws, were still surviving with their horses (Shukla 198); . . . co-operative dairy truck from the town which came to collect milk . . . oil-man who brought oil . . . (Shukla 340)

Schools and education system is in the most pitiable condition in the villages. Either there is no building and the classes are conducted under the tree on ground. The rooms are sometimes found to be full of stores of *gram pradhan* like wheat/ rice husks, cow dung cakes or some shop has been established in it temporarily.

The dak- bungalow with two big and two small rooms . . . On the three sides of it a thatched roof has been raised on mud walls . . . A little away a tin roof had been erected on pucca brick wall and a sort of shop had been created . . . under a large banyan tree, was raised a platform... Behind all this lay three or four acres of barren land . . . All these buildings were collectively called Changamal Vidyalaya Intermediate College, Shivpalganj. (Shukla 14)

These are either *kacca* with walls on three sides with a tin shed or *pucca* but mostly with no basic amenities like electricity, water connection, toilets cemented floor, etc. Sometimes all these things are there but there is no electric and water supply, separate toilet for boys and girls or are very dirty and not maintained at all. “. . . no idea what electricity is, what tap water is, what a pucca non-mud floor looks like, or what is meant by ‘a sanitary fitting’.”

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(Shukla 14) The teachers remain absent or if present they seldom remain interested in teaching. They keep enjoying and gossiping. They enquire not about the difficulty of the child in understanding their lessons but about the produce in their farms and entrust the task of bringing some of it for them the next day. Major time pass is political news and their personal opinions. “. . . condition of the college. It’s a den of louts and layabouts. The masters have given up teaching and just play politics.” (Shukla 27) The students too are least interested in studying and most of the times they pay attention to the activities outside the class which naturally offers them boundless premises as there is no boundary wall in most of the schools. “The drivers sitting at the front of the carts were swearing vigorously and at length . . . The oaths and counter oaths entered the classroom through the window, and provided background music for the boys echo were enjoying the drama and studying science.” (Shukla 15)

Recreation is an important part of human life. The villagers too have their amusements which is physical, musical, mental, etc. They play various games in leisure time. Men and women engage themselves in singing songs and playing musical instruments. “. . . uttering lung, cheek and throat-rendering screams, and producing the kind of shrieking which urban scholars and broadcasters call folk-songs” (Shukla 112) “. . . sing a tillana, dadra, or even a thumri . . .” (Shukla 128)

Fairs are other occasion of public gathering when people from villages all around near and distant meet and enjoy. Many a times its an occasion when relatives and families meet and exchange pleasantries, share joys and sorrows of each other, news and information of relatives and knowledge on various other important issues. “. . . women going to this fair. They were proceeding briskly, no veils on their faces or reins on their tongues . . . In between the groups of women were children and men. All of them were walking fast, all kicking up typhoons of dust. Bullock carts were racing against one another . . .” (Shukla 112) Some of the fares have special purposes like buying/ selling of animals. The fares are visited by villagers in groups who many a times travel day and night singing and enjoying together the village songs, adorned in colourful clothes walking bare foot. “. . . there were a few children in torn sweaters. The women were wrapped in colourful but cheap saris; practically all were barefoot . . . men, typical Indian *bandie*- half clean half filthy . . .” (Shukla 112) Today the craze towards visiting fares has reduced. People get to know about one another, their relatives and happenings of other villages through mobile phones. Television has taken most of their time of local amusement. Many keep visiting cities due to some or other work and therefore the craze of city has vanished. The shops set are eateries with local delicacies, normally colourful sweets which sometimes are as hard as brick, full of flour, potatoes, arum, etc in place of *khoya*, salty preparations such as chat, fried potatoes which are eaten with the *neem* stick, sometimes the oil used is of a very poor quality and the sweets stink.

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. . . a crowd in front of the sweet and chaat shops. Pile upon pile of barfi, the empress of Indian sweets . . . in the street-fight they could be used just like brickbats. . . instead of condensed milk they used arum, potato and rice flour, soil or even cow dung . . . pieces of potato . . . spearing with a neem twig from a leaf cup . . . stuff's made in castor oil or mahua oil. It stinks like goat droppings. (Shukla 121,123)

Religion has a deep impact on the people whether they are of city or village. It has its own importance of guiding the lives though sometimes the villagers are subjected to some illogical and foolish practices by few clever men of the village for their own benefit. Many times we find people living orthodox life for generations out of ignorance and suspect even those who give them insight to break those. Orthodoxy has made such a deep impact on them that they follow illogical practices without thinking right or wrong. This benefit is most of the times reaped by the village *mahants*. If at times somebody sensible and enlightened starts opposing or uncovering the truths then he is either forced to keep silent or is declared anti human, anti village, and is thrown out of the system.

The priest is very busy. He shouted get money out of your pocket and make an offering, then you'll find out what God it is! . . . Rangnath exclaimed "what sort of darshan is this? This isn't the image of a goddess! . . . This is undoubtedly the statue of a soldier . . . this is his helmet . . . this is a quiver . . . the chest is absolutely flat . . . The priest stopped his business of conducting pujas and collecting money and began to curse...the pilgrims too began assisting the priest in his abuse...the priest began to scream,'As soon as I saw your face I knew it! You're Christian! Spawn of the British!" (Shukla 119,120)

To the same scenario E.M. Foster in his book *A Passage to India* adds, that the devotees, "sang not even to God who confronted them, but to a saint; they did not one thing which the non-Hindu would feel dramatically correct; this approaching triumph of India was a muddle(as we call it), a frustration of reason and form." (Foster 280)

The religious faiths, beliefs and bindings are very tough and tedious. People start following something a practice just on the name of certain God out of unquestionable devotion. We even come across many tales floating among the villagers, which even though unbelievable are rarely challenged because faith stands supreme on logic in our country. "I've heard that Lord Hanuman appeared to someone in Shipalganj in a dream. On his orders people have begun to tie knots here(in the ends of the kans grass) . . . tie as many knots as you like . . . there's no restriction on matters of religion" (Shukla 187) People can be found talking of life before and after birth, fate, God. ". . . sins of previous existence, Fate, God and his plans for the next life." (Shukla 31) The devotion towards Vedic literature is such that as soon as people here Sanskrit form somebody respected they bow their head in reverence. "As soon as he heard the sound of Sanskrit, Sanichar joined his hands and said,' Praise be to

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God!’ He lay his head on the ground and in a paroxysm of faith lifted his backside towards the ceiling.” (Shukla 30)

. . . There is some jungle, a small hill and on that hill a temple of Goddess . . . convinced that the temple was made by gods with their own hands as the residence of goddess, after the battle between the gods and the demons. (Shukla 111); . . . the temple had been built in the Sat Yuga, millions of years ago...understood correctly only two terms concerning time- anadi and anant-time without beginning and time without end . . . (Shukla 11)

Another very important factor prevalent in the Indian society is the caste system. This caste system has weakened the bonding between human beings all over the country, but to a benefit of a few, it is maintained, nurtured and nourished even today with full justification and vigour. This casteism is stronger in the villages than in the cities. Its reigns have weakened over time. The castes are grouped into *varnas*. There are certain castes which are grouped in the lowest *varna* as per the Hindu *varna* system. This lowest *varna* is called *Shudra*. “. . . Langar had appeared in the doorway. He squatted down outside rather like a chicken and greeted Vaidyaji in the way prescribed in the scriptures for a low caste man meeting a Brahmin. This showed that in our country the scriptures are still supreme and all attempts at the eradication of caste, if not fraudulent, are at least romantic gestures.” (Shukla 32) There are many other castes in the Indian society which are outside the Hindu *varna* systems. They are called Untouchables. The *shudras* were considered to serve the three other *varnas* and would follow their instructions. Commenting on the origin and becoming of the *shudras* the fourth *varna* of the Indo Aryan society Dr. B R Ambedkar writes in his book ‘ *Who Were The Shudras?*’ ,

1-The shudras were one of the Aryan committees of the solar race. 2- There was a time when the Aryan society recognised only three *varnas*, namely Brahmin, kshatriya and vaishya.3- The shudra did not form a separate *varna*. They ranked as part of the kshatriya *varna* in the indo-Aryan society. There was a continuous feud between the shudra kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities.4- As a result of the hatred towards the shudras generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the upnayana of the shudra.5- Owing to the denial of the upnayana , the shudras who were kshatriyas became socially degraded, fell below the rank of vaishyas and thus came to form the fourth *varna*. (Ambedkar, preface iv).

The condition of the *shudras* and especially of the untouchables was very deplorable and inhuman. The *Chamars* considered untouchable used to deal with the dead animals and make leather products out of their skin. They and some other castes doing similar in human jobs were kept away from the rest of the society. “Chamrahi

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was the name of one quarter of the village where the Chamars, or cobblers, lived. Chamar is the name of the caste which is considered Untouchable. An Untouchable is a kind of biped which, before the enforcement of the Indian Constitution, people didn't used to touch." (Shukla 102) Their dwellings were visited sometimes during elections and forgotten in the rest of the period by those contesting. Today after tireless efforts of many especially Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, these depressed and downtrodden class have got equal rights under the constitution, in the society and their economic, educational and health conditions though still a big cause of concern is improving in all aspects of life. Whether it be agriculture, trade, business, government jobs or even education, a slow but gradual improvement can be seen. There was a feeling among people when it was said that the level of education has fallen because of the induction of *Bhangi-Chamar's* children to the school but this has been proven wrong by better performance of those children once they too got good food and education. "In my days boys from good families went to college, they concentrated on their work. Now the children of sweepers and Chamars are coming to study, so what sort of education can there be . . ." (Shukla 322)

The person of one caste is expected to remain considerate towards another of the same caste and is expected to maintain unity. ". . . 'You are a Brahmin and I am a Brahmin. You don't eat salt with salt, and it's no good thinking you can treat me like you treat other people . . .'" (Shukla 79) This considerateness at times can also be seen percolating behind the caste lines when any government scheme is launched which is for the deprived or lowest strata and is eyed by the high caste men to form a co-operative/ membership/ union to run. ". . . caste was completely meaningless, and that Brahmins like him were no different from Chamars. This was because a grant for curing leather was about to be distributed. The Chamars were dumbfounded, and he took the grant and spent it on making his own skin more sleek." (Shukla 150) Still true, effective and steady efforts need to be continued for the upliftment of these people from the lowest strata. At the same time we need to work towards a caste-less society.

Thus, we see that the villages of our country have a peculiar picture, life style, and culture found nowhere in the world. This has evolved over thousands of years and subsumed within many favourable and unfavourable inputs from the various indigenous cultures and invaders from across the world. This unique culture has its own panorama and pleasure, charm and chastity. Through the paper we also came across various evils which have deepened into the Indian system. We as patriotic Indians need to work diligently and carefully by preserving the virtues of the village-life unadulterated and untampered, and at the same time flush-out thoroughly the social evils which have crept within and make it a true civilized village of Gandhi and Ambedkar. Gandhi in '*Hind Swaraj*' calls out making of a true civilization which "points out to man the path of duty." (Gandhi 65) We should work for the improvement of the conditions of three-fourth of our fellow countrymen with good living conditions, sanitation facilities, necessary infrastructure of roads, schools and colleges,

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electricity, drinking and irrigation water, medical facilities, and provide them with necessary technical education which proves to be an opportunity for the inclusion of these village-folk into the main stream of our nation. Abdul Kalam in his book '*Thoughts For Change-We Can Do It*' says, "India is blessed with the largest youth power in the world. . . . Ignited mind of the youth is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth and under the earth. Their knowledge, courage and devotion will certainly make India a great nation, once again!" (Kalam and Pillai 276-277) Therefore our nation demands a serious effort so that there remains no difference between India and Bharat, and we could achieve the essence of our celebrated Preamble: India that is Bharat . . .

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