



**LIFE OF TUSHAR BHAGYAWANT: AS DEPICTED IN HIS  
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL: *KONDAL***

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**Abstract**

*'Kondal'* a novel by Tushar Bhagyawant deals with the sorrows and sufferings of the dalits; where as their struggle for existence. It is a story of violence, discrimination and exploitation made by the people from upper-strata of the society. It is realistic picture of the society projected honestly by the writer. The various incidents described in the novel are touching. The writer who belongs to the new generation of Dalit writers of the post-independence era gives faithful account of the socio-economic condition in Maharashtra; whereas the dominance of castism that still exists after more than 65 years of independence. Whatever he has experienced in his life reflected in the fiction. He is a typical representative example of dalit who has been still suffering being a dalit, even though he is educated and serving in the noble profession of teaching. His novel is an attempt to expose the sorrows and sufferings of dalits in Maharashtra.

**Key words:** dalit, exploitation, castism, representative.

**Introduction:**

Tushar Bhagyawant is a dalit writer, came from downtrodden strata of the society. The new Indian society as emerged in the post-independence era marked the social change that took place in all backward communities. The new generation from this community struggled hard for education that transformed their lives. This newly educated generation voiced their sorrows and sufferings in their literary works. Almost all dalit writers made their debut by writing autobiographical novels. In the 1970s appeared 'Upara' by Laxman Mane, 'Balut' by Daya Pawar, 'Katyawarchi Pote' by Uttam Bandu Tupe, 'Athawanichi Pakshi' by P. E. Sonkamble, 'Akkarmashi' by Sharnakumar Limbale, 'Uchalya' by Laxman Gaikwad, 'Abhran' by Parth Polke following the footsteps of these

dalit writers Tushar Bhagyawant wrote his autobiographical novel : 'Kondal'. The social reformers like Mahatma Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj inspired them to write. The writings of all dalit writers are influenced by the teachings of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar : the slogan 'Shika, Sanghatit Vha ani Sangharsh Kara'. These writers portrayed the lives of downtrodden as they experienced; their sorrows, their sufferings, their toiling, their humiliation and their struggle for survival, it was realistic. It is the faithful account of the said society. When the books of dalit writers appeared, the readers from middle class and upper class almost stunned by reading realistic picture of the life of dalit. The injustice and discrimination, where as exploitation of the people from upper class were reflected in their stories. When the socialistic leaders and communists were making propaganda of new society based on equality, fraternity and liberty. The sordid reality of the downtrodden class as reflected in these autobiographical novels was shocking for all. These writers did not conceal anything, while narrating the situation of the time, or portraying the characters from the contemporary society.

Even after more than sixty five years of independence sorrows and sufferings of down trodden are not eradicated from our society. It is my humble attempt to discuss this aspect as it is reflected in Tushar Bhagyawant's autobiographical novel 'Kondal'.

The novel opens on the setting of a small village named Satawane from Chandgad Taluka of Kolhapur district (Maharashtra). The village is a representative of rural Maharashtra. The people belonging to all class and creed live together. There are majority people of Maratha caste and people from upper class are also there; in addition to that there are small settlements of down trodden class people - such as *Mahar*<sup>1</sup>, *Mang*<sup>2</sup>, *Chambhar*<sup>3</sup>, *Ramoshi*<sup>4</sup> and *Dhangar*<sup>5</sup>, their

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<sup>1</sup> Mahar : A low caste; people from this caste were treated as untouchables, formerly they were engaged in sundray work, and living on the outskirts of the village.

<sup>2</sup> Mang : People from this caste were engaged in making ropes.

<sup>3</sup> Chambhar : People from this class were engaged in making shoes and chapples and leather items (Cobbler).

<sup>4</sup> Ramoshi : The work assigned to these people was to protect the village from thieves and poachers. (In British India this was included in Criminals.)

<sup>5</sup> Dhangar : A nomadic tribe, engaged in the occupation of breeding sheeps traditionally.

dwelling are called as 'Maharwada, Mangwada, Chambharwada etc. The life of those down trodden class people once upon a time was very difficult. The writer belongs to this sector. He has experienced it; and even today, there is no drastic change in the life style of the people from the down strata of the society. This is the reality. The writer portrays the life and struggle of the community, as he belongs to that class and has experienced all sorrows and sufferings; faced the difficulties and struggled to survive inspite of the adverse circumstances and hardships that he met throughout his life. It is his attempt to throw light on the life of those people, with the view that it should be changed. So it is expressed everywhere in his fiction. He does not want to conceal anything that took place in his life, nor does he want to suppress it. It is his expectation that it should be changed.

Tushar is the son of Ravalu and Parvatibai. His parents were working hard in the adverse circumstances to earn daily bread. The small child Tushar observed their struggle and hardships and discrimination made by the people from the society. The family used to play musical instruments like *Pipani*<sup>6</sup> and *Tasha*<sup>7</sup> at the time of family functions and ceremonies to make money. In spite of the odds that he met in his early life he had been helping the family, as he was aware of the poverty and the situation around him. Later on after passing B.A., he completed his post graduation in Arts and Education (M.A. & M.Ed.) and he joined his service at Pancham Khemraj College, Sawantwadi as a Jr. College teacher. During this period he wrote his novel 'Kondal'. The novel deals with the various incidents those took place in his life. The characters he portrayed are the characters of flesh and blood, as they are from the contemporary society. He describes in detail whatever happened in his life. He faced humiliation and discrimination as he belongs to the lower class; sometimes the people from upper class exploited him all these made him rich in experience. However, he never hesitates to write the impact of tradition and customs on the life style of the people. The undue importance of outdated customs and traditions made the life of downtrodden difficult and unbearable. The realistic life that is described in the novel is representative of dalit community. He portrays life of dalit people; he writes, "Even though Mahar

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<sup>6</sup> Pipani : A musical instrument played by blowing wind with mouth.

<sup>7</sup> Tasha : An instrument played by hands.

was gifted with speech, he could not protest; he had wisdom; but he could not oppose any one; he wanted justice, but he was speechless (tongue tied); in short his life was life of exploitation." (Kondal, P. 36) The above comment throws light on the situation of dalit people. This castism has reached at its extreme even today. Not only the people from Mahar community were suffering in that fashion, but almost all castes from dalit community were living in the same situation. Hence, it is very important that the society should be free from caste discrimination. The shackles of castes should be thrown away. The people from this community should not lose their courage, but should come together and make every attempt to throw away the shackles of castes. As a writer Tushar expects that there should be a de-caste society as it was dreamt by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

Tushar Bhagyawant narrates all incidents from his early childhood those took place in his life. Those incidents indicate discrimination, exploitation, starvation sorrows and sufferings that he experienced. The writer's family was living in poverty, family members were struggling for survival, this adverse situation made them rational and inspired them to cast away superstitions. The following incident from the novel clearly indicates it, "Those were the days of harvest, Laxmikar placed the box of Goddess Laxmi in front of the house of Balya Mahar, the neighbouring women came there with the alms of rice they began to offer it to the goddess, the Laxmikar gave them ashes (Angara) as blessing, Tushar's mother went there and prayed to the goddess Laxmi, and when she was about to leave the place then a bangle from the hand of goddess dropped into the plate. Laxmikar told her that she should offer a coconut blouse piece and alm of five rupees to the goddess. Then goddess will bless her, then there will be progress and success in her life. Mother bewildered with all this became panic and told this to my father; he listened it, thought for a while and asked my mother to throw that bangle in to the dustbin, further more he assured my mother that god will not be angry with us, and let us face whatever may happen. He added that if there is a god in his box why should he (Laxmikar) beg from place to place; mother realized all these things, but she was not ready to throw that bangle into the dustbin, she said, "I will return it the goddess'. So she went there with my father, and put it in front of the goddess; Laxmikar looked with awe to her and said that it should be returned with coconut, blouse piece and five rupees. My mother strongly stated that we have nothing to do in this connection. Probably she

voiced the protest and it was representative of all dalit women." (Kondal, P. 51) The incident underlines the thought of Babasaheb Ambedkar that inspires dalit community to make change in the society.

Tushar Bhagyawant a dalit writer who has realized the importance of education. He is inspired by the teachings of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Education makes drastic change in the personality of an individual; and Tushar is the representative example of this. Today the socio-economic situation of Maharashtra has changed; the very objective of education is shifted from enlightenment to earning easy money. These people do not like government policies, like reservation for people from lower castes and education for masses. They hate the people belong to downtrodden class, who work in various sectors in government and non-government organizations. They think that policy of reservation made this possible. Not only this but they are of the opinion that they (people from upper caste) are deprived of jobs due to this policy. So they deliberately spread rumours about the people, they are unwilling to co-operate them, rather they do not want to accommodate such employees in their so called society. This discrimination demoralizes the young generation who is serving in various sectors. Even today there are incidents of violence made by people from upper class in the society in this respect.

The second part of the novel deals with the writer's life after he joined his duties. He began to serve in Pancham Khemraj College, Sawantwadi at the same time he had to face many difficulties and challenges put in front of him deliberately by the people from upper caste. Many incidents described in the novel actually took place in his life. He experienced injustice, discrimination, humiliation and sometimes he had to face violence. Even today people from dalit community meet with same experience while working in any institution or organization. Unfortunately they have to accept this type of situation as they have to earn their daily bread and that is the only source of income for them. This reality is depicted in the novel. The education is the only mean to make the change in the life of a man. Hence, great social reformers like Mahatma Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil and Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur tried their level best to educate the masses for the upliftment and enlightenment of the society. They advocated education for downtrodden to change the social scenario. Following the footsteps of these mentors in education Tushar Bhagyawant is trying his

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level best for the upliftment of the downtrodden society. His novel 'Kondal' deals with his experiences and advocates the importance of education. He is not only a creative writer, but an activist who registers his protest against the social situation through the novel.

Tushar Bhagyawant follows the thoughts of Mahatma Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. He is the true followers of these social reformers. His protest against puritans, ethnics, established people and brahmnism in Indian society is explicit in this fiction. He poses questions in front of them and challenges them in the following words; "People from upper strata of the society expect that downtrodden should suffer and live in poverty. They should lead life of beggars and struggle for food and die for food so that people from upper class easily snatch the land named Mharki<sup>8</sup> and enjoy its benefits - seems to be the noble purpose (thoughts)" (Kondal, P. 98-99) Such pessimism should be discarded by dalit people and make protest against this situation. So it is needed that they should be educated. Education will change their lives. That will make them aware of social circumstances around them. It will ultimately result into the realization of injustice, discrimination, humiliation and violence made to them. They will slowly understand the importance of social justice and equality and they will fight for that; this is the long standing procedure, but that will take place slowly and steadily in the society. This thought is underlined in the novel.

The new writers of this generation are contributing extensively to dalit literature their words are like social documents of the said society. Their writings aim at the transformation of the society. They try to expose the sorrows and sufferings of dalit people and humiliation and exploitation made by people from upper castes. Their literary works no longer remain fictitious but they are realistic. Furthermore it is essential to focus on the thought of humanity. Tushar Bhagyawant advocates thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and makes all dalit people aware about it; he appeals them for struggle against injustice so he writes, "The portrait of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in the every house of dalit was making an appeal : awake, arise, learn, come from darkness to light, education will show you a way of life." (Kondal, P. 102) Tushar Bhagyawant accepts this thought and prefers to go by the same way. He believes that the thoughts of Dr.

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<sup>8</sup> Mharki : Cultivable land that belongs to people from Mahar community is called Mharki.

Ambekdar will help the dalit people to search the opportunities and means of education. He writes, "If dalit people want to become part of the society, they should discard the thought that education is meant for employment; no doubt it increase employability; but it should not be the sole aim of education; on the other hand you should turn to inculcate social commitment." (Kondal, P. 103) Education has become the only mean for employment; however dalits should change this attitude. They should be devoted to it, and express their scholarship and devotion by their activities. They should be committed to education and any profession that they deal with. It is often criticized that quality of education is deteriorating due to dalit people, who are working in this field. It is far from the truth; there are many scholars in different disciplines who are from dalit community. Today young dalit people have realized the double dealing of the people. Education teaches humanity. Tushar Bhagyawant writes, "It is essential that dalit should be educated, it should be the top priority, later on one can think about humanity values, culture, tradition and ethics." (Kondal, P. 103) Education is essential for survival, it makes life meaningful. It should be the aim of every human being; there should be means for living, so also there should be opportunities. So the dalit community should realize that education is not only meant for employment, but it enriches personality it inculcates humanity and ethical thought.

Dalit community has been suffering from exploitation, poverty, ignorance, violence and discrimination for long time. To overcome these difficulties writer appeals to all sectors from downtrodden community to come together and from 'inter group feeling' as sociologist call it will increase and it will give inspiration to overcome the difficulties such as poverty, discrimination, exploitation and castism. Hence, the people from this community should take the search of various opportunities of earning for livelihood; they should look for opportunities and seize them. They should learn, as education is the only solace for the people. Writer similarly attempts to project the real life of the community, as the character of Ravalya expresses his thoughts in the novel. It shows that writer strongly believes that only education can change the social scenario. However even today, the people from upper class are not ready to treat the people from downtrodden class equally, infact they cherish caste and with the air of superiority treat downtrodden. He writes, "Brahmins were looking down upon the people from lower castes such as - *Mahar, Mang,*



*Chambhar, Berad and Nhavi* (Barber) and were exploiting them." (Kondal, P. 122) Even today there is hardly any change in this situation as it is described in the novel.

As there is no sun shine without shadow, so also there is no life without sorrow. Man faces difficulties, experiences unhappy moments, sorrows and suffering, but he enjoys happy moments also. However, the sufferings and sorrows make lasting impression on his mind and especially if it is caused by cast discrimination it is everlasting. This sometimes results into the protest against the established social system as they want to prove that they are not the mute sufferers like animals but they are human beings. Eventually such incidents turn into the turning point in the life of an individual who has suffered a lot; and who is the victim of social circumstances. Tushar Bhagyawant has experienced this and expressed it in his novel. Hence, his narration no longer remains fictitious to entertain the reader, but it is realistic and hence it touches to the heart of the reader and moves him.

Tushar Bhagyawant as he belongs to downtrodden class, he gives a piece of advice to his fellow men - that the entire community is in the state of lethargy moreover the shackles of caste, outdated customs, religious dogmas and superstition have made them spineless. It is the need of this hour to enlighten them; so that they will throw away these shackles and be free from all. The great social reformers like Mahatma Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Rajarshi Shahu made all efforts for the upliftment of downtrodden classes. Tushar Bhagyawant's 'Kondal' is an attempt to reform the society, as he advocates the thoughts of social reformers in his novel. Tushar Bhagyawant is following the same path paved by Laxman Mane, Uttam Bandu Tupe, P. E. Sonkamble, Daya Pawar, Godavari Parulekar and Narayan Survey. The autobiographical works of these writers encouraged him to write a novel; not only that but boosted him to become activist. The literary works of Dalit writers advocate the principles of social change. I hope such literary works will play vital role to establish new society based on socialistic ideals.

**Notes and References:**

- 1) Tushar Bhagyawant - 'Kondal', Ajab Pustakalaya, Kolhapur, January 1986, P. 38.
- 2) Ibid, P. 51.
- 3) Ibid, P. 98-99.
- 4) Ibid, P. 102.

5) Ibid, P. 103.

6) Ibid, P. 104.