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A critical study of tomorrow is ours

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Abstract

Tomorrow is ours protests against the forces of religion, fascism, imperialism and caste prejudices. It throws light on the sad experiences of its author in this antagonistic world. The novel studies the Indian society minutely. It shows the wide difference between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. It focuses on the hatred, detestation, complete isolation the former nurses for the latter. The novel stresses the need for compassion, affection, love and help for the poor and the neglected class. The high drama of the struggle for freedom, of the distress and dejection brought about by the ravages of the World War, the plight of woman in the male dominated society and finally the triumph of persistence are effectively and forcefully spotlighted.

Keywords: Fascism, religion, detestation, tomorrow

Introduction

Tomorrow is ours published in 1943 shows his concern for the poverty-stricken and underfed masses of rural India. The country was passing through a turbulent time. The feudal system existed and the bonds of caste and social status were very strong. In sun an atmosphere a young man educated abroad decides to marry a dancer and brings her to his home. The girl also the protagonist of the novel, who has been educated in a liberal urban atmosphere tries somehow to adjust with the conventional Feudal family but once they move out and looking at the poverty and squalor spread around she revolts as she considers it the responsibility of her husband's family to look after the well-being of the populous of their village.

Parvati, the protagonist of *Tomorrow is Ours* is a successful dancer. She is the offspring of a marriage that contradicts the caste-laws. She is a convinced adversary of castes. She and her husband, Srikant, share the social conscience. These characters along with others in the novel express author's anti-fascist and anti-imperialistic enthusiasm. Ajoy Kumar Bose, the producer of plays in *Tomorrow is Ours* is a character born and created out of the real life-experience of K.A. Abbas. He looms large on the mind of the readers as true and authentic.

The life of K.A. Abbas gave him ample opportunities to study and feel the social, economical, historical and political situations of the pre and post-independence days. His interest in men, women and his surroundings coupled with personal experiences, lent life to his characters. Abbas himself commented:

"This interaction of the individual and the social forces operating around man is of particular interest to me and it has inspired and provoked or coloured most of what I have written."

Tomorrow is Ours studies the contribution that a dancer can make towards the education of the masses and in awakening the national consciousness of her audience. A dancer's sphere of influence is wider than that of a writer's as a dancer can convey her message to an illiterate audience too.

K.A. Abbas is essentially a visionary. His novels establish it clearly. *Tomorrow is Ours* is no exception. Parvati is a twenty-year-old girl born out of non-traditional inter-caste marriage. Symbolic of the steady progress in the fortune of the dancer is the indication of the progress that India is making while the inter-national political scene of the time is disturbed by the Second World War and the liberty of the people of the world is threatened by imperialism and fascism.

This is the pivotal message in the novel which Abbas desires to convey to the readers.

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Parvati is interested in medical career so that she could heal the sick like her mother. Dancing is her hobby and she is devoted to her medical studies as well as to the muses. She is extremely good at dancing and is greeted with a thunderous applause when she performs on the stage for the very first time. Dancing is a personal pleasure to Parvati but it also becomes a social responsibility for her, as she is inclined towards socialism and egalitarianism. K.A. Abbas remarks:

“It was quite natural, therefore, that when the medical students arranged a variety entertainment to collect money for a new cancer hospital, Parvati should agree to contribute a dance to the programme.”

Parvati dances very well and impresses everyone. Nataraj Ratan offers her a job at once, with a salary of five hundred rupees a month—a big amount in those days, to join his troupe. He arranges dramas, dance programmes and variety entertainment. Nataraj Ratan says: “I can give you world-fame, too, for I am soon taking my dancers on a tour of Europe and America.”

Parvati learns from her mother that her father was a young lawyer with an independent ideology. He had married defying the opposition from his orthodox Brahmin family. He was ostracized by his community but he remained unperturbed. He set up practice at Allahabad High Court. When Gandhiji started his Non-Co-operation movement in 1920 and gave a call to all lawyers to boycott the British Courts, he gave up his lucrative practice. He began to participate in the nationalist struggle. He was jailed for this. His health broke down on account of the poor quality of food served in jails by the heartless, indifferent imperialistic authorities. Parvati's father carried on with his work for the Congress, neglecting everything else including his health, which was fast deteriorating. He was attacked by pneumonia and died in 1927, when Parvati was just an eight-year-old. Parvati has not blamed her father for not having left her any property. She feels that her father was a very worthy person to have devoted himself to the cause of the Nation. Parvati derives her pride from the Brahmin, Premchand and her humility from the lower-caste Radhabai: “In her two-streams of life had met—the majestic Ganges and the humble, softly-flowing Jumna.”

Parvati's father stands against slavery, exploitation and imperialism. He loves freedom. He comes under the influence of Gandhi and takes active part in the nation's fight for freedom. His sacrifice and devotion for the country, Parvati's feeling pride in the activities of her father and her no-regret-attitude for her father's failure to collect wealth—all these highlight the selflessness and the spirit to fight fascism, in Parvati's personality. This represents the author's ideology.

Parvati's mother developed high fever caused on account of meningitis. As she was overworking, her resistance power had come down and she succumbed to her illness. It was a fatal blow for Parvati. It seemed to her, as though the whole world had collapsed. She was in a melancholic state and kept weeping unconsolably. A number of practical problems demanded her immediate attention. K.A. Abbas seems to suggest that the people, who do not possess surplus capital, cannot even grieve to their hearts' content. Parvati's mother had taken a loan which was to be repaid. The hospital bungalow had to be vacated and Parvati was to give up her medical studies for want of funds. Life had suddenly

become very cruel for Parvati and she lamented: “But the economic problem could not be washed away with tears.”

Very soon, her maternal uncle, Bhagwati Charan, who had read about his sister's death in some newspaper, came to take her to Benares. Craving for security, Parvati left for Benares with her uncle. She arrived at Benares only to dislike it for her preference for Allahabad:

“In Allahabad where she had passed most of her life, thanks to the emancipatory influence of the Congress movement and the example set by the Nehru and other enlightened families, a freer social atmosphere existed in which the new women in Parvati's type were just beginning to breathe. To a slightly lesser extent the same was true of Lucknow. In Benares, holy and sacrosanct, the city of a thousand golden temples, men's minds were still filled with the superstitions and taboos of centuries ago. Religion, orthodoxy, priest craft help unchallenged sway and modern ideas were frowned upon as unpardonable heresies. A woman's position was particularly intolerable in this city where tens of thousands of widows, with shaved heads, passed their miserable days on the temple ghats. Parvati, rebellious soul, had spoken aloud against such indignities imposed on her sex by man-made social laws, but in the stifling atmosphere of Benares she found her voice choked.”

Parvati's uncle was a widower. There was a toothless woman who cooked for him and looked after his house. She was a poor relative of Bhagwati Charan. She was old, frustrated and crafty. She naturally made Parvati the object of vengeance and fired all her contempt for modern. She poisoned Bhagwati Charan's ears against Parvati. He arranged her marriage with an old goldsmith, a widower wanting a lady to ensure that his children could be looked after. Parvati realized that her uncle was selling her for a heavy price. She objected to her sale. Happily her uncle upheld it but to her dismay, Parvati felt that her uncle did not entertain a healthy and a respectable attitude towards her. So she left her uncle's house, on her own, on a cold night in the month of December. She experienced a feeling of triumph over her walk-out.

Indian society is full of contrasts. On one side of the fence exist slums and poverty, on the other side is the wealth and luxuries of the rich people. Feudalism was dying off making way to capitalism. Parvati was all alone in the vast, materialistic world and she soon realized that a young woman, looking for a job on her own was a game for the human wolves prowling all over the industrialized cities. K.A. Abbas emphasizes this predicament very beautifully.

“The old culture was decaying, along with other ruins of feudalism and what passed for the new culture was tinsel and trash discarded by the West and picked up by the awakening East, mistaking it for genuine modernism. The rising tide of industrialism brought in its wake the worst aspects of the profit-motive system and among them and intensification of the sensuous appetites, a dimming of the aesthetic and artistic values and a cynical disregard of the moral restraint.”

Parvati comes to Cawnpore. She hoped to get a job as a teacher as there were many schools in the textile-mill city. The high schools employed trained and diploma teachers. Only primary schools offered her jobs but the salary paid to the teaching staff was very low in the primary schools, sadly insufficient to lead a decent life. The schools run by the private philanthropists were worse, as they were managed

according to the whims and fancies of the affluent half-educated patrons. She gets a job in a private national school but rejected the offer as the secretary of the school, Rai Bahadur Mohan Lal wanted to exploit her by keeping her as his mistress. Parvati was tortured more by immoral males than by her poverty. She had to be alert all the time and this made her feel insecure. She was full of militant feminism and of a feeling of revolt. She, of course, needed a job to give her economic stability and social respect. K.A. Abbas has a strong zest for social reform. In *Tomorrow is Ours* he gives a scathing account of the poor socio-economic status of the school teachers in India. It is not possible to keep the body and soul together when one is paid such low salaries:

“She saw for the first time the problem of education from a new angle—the teacher’s angle. And she was revolted. Were these wretched, half-starved spinsters and stunted girls, living on salaries that a self-respecting mill-worker would spurn, expected to usher in the dawn of a rational system of girls’ education in India?”

Parvati joined Nataraj Rantan’s troupe to eke out a living. She felt that dancing would be more enjoyable, than the arduous teaching work in schools. She was introduced to Roopmati, the principal dancer of the troupe. Parvati began to give dance performance on the stage. Nataraj Rantan, the impresario, began to draw larger crowds and make greater profits. K.A. Abbas, a great advocate of artistic growth in human life, condemns the deterioration of the artistic standards promoted by the profiteering motive:

“But in her body was infinite verve and vitality, she danced with unabashed abandon and she had the knack of giving a sexy flavor to every little gesture and movement of hers. Parvati disdained this blatant vulgarization of art but even she could not fail to see that it worked with the audience. And while an expertly executed difficult movement or eloquently expressed mudra on her part brought the smile of appreciation to the faces of few connoisseurs in the first row, a well-timed wink of Roopmati brought the entire house down.”

Parvati began to realize that organizing a dance troupe is a practical business, motivated and designed to making money. Roopmati felt very jealous of Parvati. When Parvati was made the principal dancer, she went to her dressing room and began to shout abuses at Parvati but later she fell into a fit of weeping. She disclosed that she had become a dancer just to escape in a life in a brothel and to sustain herself. She would have to sell her body to inhuman loafers. This developed in Parvati an extreme sympathy towards the poor Roopmati. She felt profound tenderness for her. K.A. Abbas loathes the Indian socio-economic machinery which gives no security or protection to young belonging to the weaker economic sections. All that they get is mental and physical torture, agony and harassment. To top it all, they are pronounced immoral and hounded in a desperate fashion. Poor girls, like Roopmati, react to the ill-treatment meted out to them by the society in a tragic manner. They enjoy no peace of mind and are highly neurotic because of the extreme anxiety they encounter. K.A. Abbas criticises the cruel treatment given to vulnerable girls in the prime of their youth because of a faulty code of social values and the faulty socio-economic system. He vouches for a change in the social system. The pathos in the lives of hapless girls like Roopmati, who are economically weak is heart rending, their child-hood is cut short and there is jeopardized:

“Over the childlike face time had drawn deep lines, which were generally hidden under a thick coating of paint and powder but now lay revealed in the pitiless light of the afternoon sun, the map of a human life. How could she hate anyone who had suffered so much as those premature wrinkles revealed and suffered because of the ruthless laws of a man-made world which condemns women, even tender girls, to be sacrificed at the altar of masculine passion?”

Parvati’s instinctive sympathy for the suffering humanity engulfed her; she was full of anger towards the social factors and the economic system, which caused the unfortunate suffering of millions of girls at the hands of vulgar men since the advent of civilization. The feudal-lords and the capitalists, considered a beautiful girl born with a poor economic status as an easy and a convenient target of abuse without any qualms of conscience. Parvati felt happy to have Roopmati as her friend K.A. Abbas, being a socialist, embodies the view that there is a universal brotherhood among all human beings. This bond of inter-human goodness and brotherhood is ruthlessly destroyed by the dying feudalism and the thriving capitalistic forces of the present day. Friendship holds the sea of humanity in an eternal bondage. The great Abbas comments on the value of friendship.

“A friendless life is soul-destroying and after an experience of it, to have any kind of friend is to come into the sunlight from the gloom of an underground cell.”

Parvati, a progressive, educated modern girl, felt that men and women should be equal in all respects. She was a liberal thinker and discusses all issues under the Sun with men without feeling shy. These men loved analyzing burning topics of the day with Parvati. They were educated, but their minds were not at all exalted from reactionary ideology and prejudices of their fore-fathers. They assumed a modern and a rational outlook in order to wear western clothes, to drink and dance like hooligans. Knowing this, Parvati was interested in clearing their minds of the wrong notions, they entertained. Fools that they were, they misunderstood her to be seeking their hearts. K.A. Abbas describes Parvati’s behaviour towards the men folk in an interesting manner:

“She talked to men of education and intelligence without any coy reserve of false modesty, her rationalism prompted expression of her views on life and love rather forcefully and one who has learnt everything about human anatomy naturally did not feel shy while discussing the physical implications of love-about unequal marriages, divorce, birth control, even prostitution and venereal diseases. To Parvati all of these were important human problems which could not be solved unless they were discussed freely, frankly, fearlessly.”

Parvati a socialist at heart, is very derisive about the Indian rich wasting their wealth and time on the decadent club culture. She felt, like Abbas that they could have diverted their surplus profits and leisure hours to promote the socio-economic progress of their motherland. They lacked feelings of patriotism and faithfulness towards the country which had been the very source of their unlimited riches. Parvati felt that Indian troops should not be fighting in the African desert.

Showing his anti-militaristic ideas, K.A. Abbas remarks:

“Why should Indian soldiers and officers be fighting in Libya, Somali land all the other strange places in the African desert?”

Parvati excelled in dancing. As dance is an evolutionary medium of mass communication, she began to experiment on this artistic passion of heart. She always took into consideration, the response of the audience, while styling her dances. She cared more for the lower class patrons, than for the ones who sat on the front rows, having bought costlier tickets. She knew that the audience occupying the lower class seats, did not know how to distinguish between Bharat Natya and Kathakali or mudra and abhinaya, but they could understand what exactly good dancing meant and would offer a thunderous applause, whenever the dance touched the popular view of art. Parvati began to evolve her dance according to the traditions of the Indian folk-lore. Roopmati encouraged her in her endeavours:

“You are a lazy aristocrat,” Roopmati would say, “while I come from the study peasant stock. For me dancing is work, just like ploughing the fields or threshing rice. And that would set them talking about the folk-dances of which Parvati, the child of the city, was completely ignorant. But she was fascinated by what she heard about the colourful village dances and between the two of them; they modernized several, adding them to their permanent repertory after a few experimental performances had proved popular.”

As the flooring had come off on the stage, Parvati met with an accident and fell down unconscious. When she regained consciousness, she found Dr. Srikant beside her. He had attended on her and was treating her in the most compassionate manner. He was an admirer of her innovating dancing techniques. He returned from Edinburg and belonged to a family of landlords from Rajnipur, U.P. Parvati and Srikant became best friends and they exchanged their ideas on all subjects:

“What did they not talk about? Politics, Art, Medicine, Books, Themselves, Srikant expressed his admiration for Parvati’s courage in adopting a career that was looked down upon by society. Parvati envied Srikant for having studied medicine in the best colleges and hospitals of England and listened with unconcealed eagerness and admiration to his plans for making use of his medical knowledge not to get a big Government job but to raise the health standards of the people. He had studied the systems of socialized medicines and public hygiene in England, America, Sweden and particularly in Soviet Russia and he was impatient to try them in India.”

As Parvati was recuperating, Srikant beguiled the hours by showing her his albums with photographs of his seven years in Europe. Srikant had worked as a volunteer doctor in emergency hospitals during the War period. He showed her photos of the ruins caused by War. The loss of man and material, the fright and agony of the tortured common people, who were nowhere involved in the War, the torpedoes and the submarines deployed during the War to kill men, distressed Parvati. She was shocked at the ruthless beastliness:

“She knew the crimes of Hitler and Nazis but her reaction was of anger and bitterness not against any particular person of country or class but against the greed and violence and hatred among peoples that had brought the world to the edge of doom.”

In the Indian social set up it is very difficult for a single woman to survive without any male support. The forces of orthodoxy and vandalism chase her everywhere. K.A. Abbas calls for social reform of the Indian society so that the lot of

women folk is bettered. This state of affair does not affect the rich Indian women like Mrs. Mukund Lal, who dance away their wealth and widowhood in clubs, in the midst of booze and flirtation. For a single woman like Parvati, plenty of moral resistance was required to fight persistent intimidation, scandal and lustful advance of womanizers. So she was overjoyed to have a civil marriage, with her beloved Srikant as both of them did not care for rituals.

Ramadevi, mother of Srikant, was a strict feudalist. She combined religion with the Zamindari system. She was charitable towards Brahmins. She donated large sums of money to dharamshalas and gaoshalas. In spite of her charity she managed to be a ruthless slave and master disciplinarian of the Zamindari culture. She lacked basic humanism. She was callous towards other people who did not matter to her. Abbas, pointedly describes her life’s philosophy:

“According to her, life was organized on the basis of a set of traditional imperatives this should be done, that should not be done!- that had behind them the dual sanction of religious dogma and feudal economy. And the line of demarcation between the two was very thin, almost imperceptible. Religion, through perpetuation of caste, had secured the dominant position of the aristocracy and the grateful aristocracy in its turn, used its material privileges to help and strengthen the religious institutions. The priest and the Zamindar were sworn allies and comrades-in-arm. Between them they had ruled the peasants for centuries and hoped to continue doing so forever and ever.”

The money-lender also was a contender for the profit reaped from the poor peasants. Everyone would be subdued by the money lender be it a peasant or a Jagirdar, as almost everyone was in debt. Ramadevi also had borrowed a great deal of money for Srikant’s education and his sister, Kamini’s dowry from the Mahajan. Aristocrats like Ramadevi were experts at the art of pretension. Though she hated the Mahajan from within, she always acted politely before him. The poor peasantry was migrating to the cities to work in the factories, without paying the rents and revenue. She felt that, she could repay the money lender by exacting a heavy dowry, for her foreign-returned son, from a local Thakur with a large estate. Ramadevi’s hopes were disappointingly frustrated, the moment Srikant announced that Parvati was his self-chosen wife. Ramadevi detested Parvati as she had spoilt all her chances of getting financial relief from her economic distress. Ramadevi tried to convince Srikant to nullify his marital pact with Parvati and relegate her to the status of a mistress, so that he could make a mercenary marriage elsewhere:

“Of course the hot-blooded Thakurs had sometimes kept dancing girls as mistresses but then a mistress was a mistress and a wife a wife.”

Parvati was a totally unwelcome entrant to Ramadevi’s house. She did not have the capacity to survive in the feudal world of unreason and bigotry. She felt giddy and awkwardly uncomfortable.

While walking round the village with Srikant, the dirty, uneven roads and open drains running into cesspools captured her attention. Cattle and men were sleeping under the same roof. Emaciated children were weeping because of sickness. Minor girls of twelve or thirteen years were carrying babies of their own in their arms and in their wombs as well. Parvati was embittered by the poverty and disease in the village. Her conscience pricked her for these social wrongs. She felt that the Zamindars were a part of the

soulless exploitation of the poor agrarian folk. Srikant agreed that it was a sin against humanity. The system needed to be changed. He assured Parvati of his co-operation to improve and educate the peasantry.

Kamni, Srikant's sister, was married to an aristocrat, Harnam Singh with a hereditary title of "Raja Sahib". He had been educated at schools exclusively meant for the landed aristocracy and he went to London, Paris and Monte Carlo for his higher studies. Kamni, brought up without any exposure to ball-rooms and westernized society, found it difficult to adjust to hedonistic life-style of Raja Sahib. Parvati listened to Kamni's woes and felt that the super-rich who posed to be modern, had a casual acquaintance with the English language and the snobbish society. They drank and indulged in debauchery like their feudal ancestors. The modern male did not hide his contempt for all moral codes and principles. They practiced the vices of the East and of the West by dancing in ball-rooms and by maintaining dancing girls as their mistresses. Parvati disliked pseudo-moderns who compelled their wives to drink and dance wearing gold, platinum and diamonds. Parvati told Kamni that she should learn to respect herself and not be servile before her husband. Only her independent attitude would change Raja Sahib's behaviour towards her. Kamni thanked Parvati for her advice.

Parvati was an out-caste at Ramadevi's household, as she was ostracized by the mistress and the servants. Feeling very lonely and bored, she stepped out and walked in the direction of the dholak-beats. There she mingled with the sweepers and the cobblers dancing and singing. K.A. Abbas is full of appreciation for these lowliest of the low-caste citizens of India:

".....who had been condemned for centuries to lead a life of downright servility, eating caste way food and carrion, abused and insulted and pushed around. And yet they smiled their teeth flashed in the firelight yet they sang and danced and were moved by emotions. What was the secret of this race vitality? How much of intelligence and human and the finer instincts of mankind lay buried within these sun burnt bodies, toughened by toil, with the suppleness and elasticity that comes with honest labour? Parvati thought of all the under-privileged millions of her country-the Harijans, the poor craftsmen, the peasants and the workers. From childhood she had been brought up in a nationalist tradition. She knew that the national movement had been a mass upsurge too that Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress and the many reformers and humanitarians had done much to improve the lot of the low castes, to make them conscious of their rights. But was that enough?"

Parvati felt that a lot had to be done to develop the feeling of comradeship of the human family. There were many forces of dissension at work in the country. There was a strong tempestuous tide of corruption sweeping over the whole of the country through the ages. Flattery, bribery and lies never allowed an honest person like Srikant to get a job. Srikant was on a mission of job hunting, so Parvati walked out of Ramadevi's household to spend some time with the kindly low-caste folk. Parvati loathed the caste-system and she drank water from the copper bowl of Saloni, an untouchable. When she went back she felt that the news of her having mingled with menials had reached Ramadevi and her staff. There was a bitter reaction against her visit to the sweeper's quarters. She was supposed to be polluting the pious household. The cook objected to her entry into the

kitchen even to fetch drinking water from the pitcher. This enraged her and she ordered him to leave the kitchen. Then she herself took over the entire cooking and carried a Thali full of meals to her mother-in-law. She was greeted thus by Ramadevi:

"Please tell this woman that we in this household do not eat from the hands of those who mix with carrion-eaters and untouchables."

When Srikant arrived Ramadevi complained against Parvati's demeanor. Srikant was of the opinion that his mother's attachment to caste and religion was expressed in the form of feeding the Brahmins and offering donations of the cow protection societies which was not worth interfering with. So he asked Parvati to avoid and exhibitionism of her unorthodox attitude as caste was the nucleus of his mother's faith. The entire estate was mortgaged and Ramadevi was heavily in debt. The servants started quitting the household one after the other, like rats deserting a sinking ship. Rameshwar Dayal, the money lender learnt that Srikant failed to get a Government job. Perturbed by the anti-usury legislation, he insisted on the repayment of the debt. The pro-peasant laws passed by the Congress ministry, before it resigned on the war issue had hurt the interests of the landed aristocracy. The money lender cried about:

"All the new laws are cutting our throats. The peasants are beginning to think they own the earth. I am afraid of approaching even the humblest peasant for my dues these days as he might murder me one night. Believe me, Chhotey Sarkar these Congressmen and socialists are conspiring to murder all of us Sahukars. Several have already been killed in Punjab. What terrible times are coming! Hari Ram! Hari Ram!"

Parvati thought that it would be proper to opt for a divorce as Srikant's mother was full of contempt for her. If they could choose for dissolution of their marriage, Srikant could marry again for a big dowry, which in turn would ease out his financial distress. Parvati left Rajnipur in an indecisive fashion. She carried her love for Srikant in her heart. She joined the dance troupe again. Calcutta was brimming with crowds and Nataraj Ratan was making a brisk business:

"The Viceroy would be there for Christmas, so the Princess big and small had already come though it was only the seventh of December. Along with them had come the usual crowd of pleasure-seekers-taluqdars and Zamindars, the nouveau riche capitalists getting fatter on war contracts, industrial magnates, sons of the landed aristocracy of U.P. and Punjab with their sisters and their wives."

Kamni and Raja Sahib came to Parvati's dance show and Parvati along with Roopmati went to a 'Supper-Party' arranged by Raja Sahib. Parvati could not observe any grace or passion in the western dancing. She felt that it was just not artistically appealing. It was just the madness of fashion. While Roopmati and Raja Sahib were dancing, Kamni informed Parvati that the property issue was not yet finished the debt had not yet been cleared. Kamni requested Parvati not to insist on the divorce right then as Srikant was full of worries on account of the property deal.

Parvati sent five thousand rupees as loan to Srikant. It came back to her. This prompted her to post a letter to Saloni enquiring after the whereabouts of Srikant and Ramadevi. Saloni got the reply written by someone else, as she was an illiterate Harijan. Parvati learnt through Saloni's letter that Srikant had left Rajnipur along with mother. Rameshwar Dayal, the money lender had confiscated the entire estate

and was living in the Zamindar's house. Food was scanty, the prices had escalated on account of the war. The Sahukar was hoarding a lot of grain to be sold later at higher prices. Peasants were going to work in the factories in Bombay and Calcutta. Hunger compelled some members of peasantry to get recruited in the lower ranks of the Army. Saloni wrote that a school would be planted in Rajnipur soon and the Panchayat was interested in the teaching of English and General Awareness to the adults of the Harijan community. Parvati was amused with the letter, which made her feel sentimental towards Saloni.

The war was playing havoc with the lives of the people. There was terror all over Calcutta as Rangoon had fallen. Even the price of a cup of tea increased fourfold. The trains were over crowded with panic stricken passengers. Abbas observes that the masses were fleeing as they felt endangered and terribly insecure:

"A people's morale ultimately depends upon their faith in the ruler's capacity to defend them. But with the fall of Malaya and Burma a strange thing happened. The vast mass of Indians had lost faith not only in British's capacity but even in her will to defend India. *Pak Britannica* had gone down along with the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*."

The news reel had touched Parvati's feelings in a profound manner. When she went back to her hotel, she was told that Ajoy Bose was awaiting her return. He was an interesting young man and told her that she was in danger of losing her integrity and potentialities to do something useful and good for the poor Indians. He informed her that leisure and idleness tore her soul. She was required to toil hard. Ajoy Bose was an idealist and wanted Parvati to dance the dance of hunger and death which carried a message of education and enlightenment to the down-trodden masses. Her dance should help them fight the demons of capitalism, imperialism and fascism. Ajoy Bose wanted Parvati to choose the heroes and heroines from the common men and women fighting for the liberation of humanity. He was of the opinion that the dance-dramas with mythological Gods and Goddesses were propaganda for worn out superstitions of religious and reactionary origin. Ajoy Bose invited Parvati to join him and work for the cause of the masses;

"Come with me to the villages of Bengal where I am organizing a movement for the spread of patriotic and anti-Fascist folk-songs. I want you to see if you can use the dances of the people for the same purpose."

Parvati accepted the invitation of Ajoy Bose to work for the people and began touring the country-side of Bengal in order to explore the folk-lore. The mild and gentle peasantry of Bengal, was also suffering on account of the harassment by the land-lords. They were interested in popularization of "purposeful" songs and comparative study of folk-poetry of the different provinces. Their aim as socialists was to unify and integrate the peasantry of all the Indian states of fight the common monsters of imperialism, capitalism and fascism which were indulging in a steady exploitation process of the economic resources which rightfully belonged to the masses.

The newspapers carried the news of All India Congress Committee session in Bombay. The resolution sanctioning the start of Civil disobedience was passed. Prominent leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Azad were arrested. Whole of India was experiencing hartals, strikes, lathi charges, tear gas shelling, firing mob violence etc. A stunned Ajoy swang into immediate action. He summoned a meeting on the local

maiden. Ajoy tried to convince the audience that strikes and sabotage would destroy the motherland and open the gateways of the nation to Fascists' attacks. Derailement of trains and destruction of national property would not waken imperialism. These things would only sound the death knell of the country's economy. There was pandemonium all over the site of the meeting and a stone was pelted at Ajoy. The stone struck him and he was injured. Ajoy was pleading with the people not to help the saboteurs, but he was arrested to be jailed as it was illegal to hold public meetings. Parvati could not compromise with the shock of Ajoy's arrest. She would miss him heavily. He had left a vacuum in her heart, a void which none else could fill. He had given her immense support. It was a very cruel joke that a man persuading people not to damage Government property should be arrested. She felt very lonely.

Parvati began to seek solace in being a whole time exponent of dance:

"The stage was no longer merely a career. It was today a mission. Even more than that. A battle field on which she must fight the enemies of humanity, in her own way, with her own weapons. Inspiration had come to her from what Ajoy had told her of the People's Theatre movement of China where song and dance and drama, traditional as well as modern, were being used for the political education of the masses, to inspire them with the spirit of undying resistance."

Parvati left Nataraj Ratan's troupe so that she could devote all her time to the people's Theatre. Now she did not dance in a luxury theatre for the pleasure-seeking rich people. She now danced before an audience of mill workers, college students and trade union members. She had the satisfaction at dancing for the cause of the emancipation of the masses.

Parvati was enacting the role of a Chinese farmer's wife on the stage of the people's theatre when an air raid took place all of sudden. The audience and the actors were affected by the crash. She was admitted to the hospital on account of concussion. She was informed that there was a number of casualties. Parvati asked whether the medical mission to China had left India. She learnt that Srikant was one of the doctors in the medical team to go to China.

As he was seriously injured the medical mission to China could not proceed. Parvati rushed to see her beloved Srikant. His mother Ramadevi invited her in a loving fashion as she had cast away her pride and prejudice. Srikant's health was in a precarious condition he was struggling for his life. He was given oxygen; blood transfusion and artificial feeding were conducted on him. He recovered consciousness and under the able nursing of Parvati he began to recover. One day Srikant conveyed to Parvati what he really felt about their parting in such abrupt fashion.

"You thought I was a Zamindar's son, tied to the apron strings of my mother and the old order. I thought you were a society butterfly who could not endure the quiet life in a village and must seek the excitement and applause on a dance-stage. But perhaps it was good we acted that way. You could never have done what you have done for the people's theatre and I would never have thought of going to China and my mother would never have changed."

Srikant was happy about having got rid of Zamindari. He had started practicing at Patna. His mother had to live a life of enforced poverty as Srikant refused to employ a servant. This sort of non-aristocratic life made Ramadevi a very humane and an unorthodox person.

Tomorrow is Ours ends with Srikant flying off to offer his medical services to the Chinese people who were battling with fascism. Parvati educated the masses using dance as a medium of communication to awaken to socio-economic consciousness. She takes care of Srikant's mother while he is away in China and preaches a message of nationalism and national integration to the masses. Abbas in this novel successfully analyzes the problem of female illiteracy, male-dominance, dowry, exploitation which are the main social evils that have to be done away. The novel brings in to light the plight of the poor farmers, their excessive exploitation by the land-lords, the sin committed against the untouchables, the hatred to the caste Hindus and their complete aversion for the down-trodden and sick Harijans, the growing national consciousness and struggle for freedom. It also highlights some historical events. It comments on the horrors of war. It shows the destruction wrought upon the world by the World War. It shows the fall of Singapore and the plight of the Chinese. Casteism attracts the attention of the author. The weaknesses in the Indian society, the failure of the orthodox and the reactionaries to appreciate and feel the agony of the suffering masses, the alienated feelings of men and women on the stage of the world, the fury of the non-violent people at the acts of violence—all these things are excellently shown in the novel. The writer aims at reformation. He believes in art for the sake of life. He stresses the utility value of art and education. Very significantly, he emphasizes, the practical value of education and insists on help-the people ideology.

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