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## A STRUGGLE OF AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD IN KOLHATI COMMUNITY



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### **ABSTRACT :**

*“It is the story of an illegitimate son of a tamasha dancer from the Kolhati community, set against the harsh and apparently hopeless life of its women!”(v)*

*Against All odds is written by Kishor Shantabai Kale to confess unseen world of Kolhati dancer and her illegitimate child. Kishor Kale has narrated the first hand experiences of Kolhati dancer and her child. He has recorded the life of tamasha dancer and her illegitimate child with full of sorrow and exploitation. The parents of Kolhati community never supposed the welfare of tamasha dancer and her son. They were treated brutally for shellfish purpose to earn*

*money. Yet the parents of Kolhati community made the life of Kolhati dancer and her son miserable and deplorable. The parents were completely depended on the earning of their daughter and sister. They forced them to join in tamasha party. The parents boldly separated the son from her mother to achieve their material goal in Kolhati community. Kishor Kale was separated from her mother Shanta to get more benefit. The tamasha dancer with her son got less value in tamasha party. Thus An illegitimate child is deprived of love and affection from their parents.*

**KEY WORDS :** An Illegitimate child, Tamasha Dancer, Exploitation, Predicament, Frustration, Kolhati Community, Humiliation, Torture.

## RESEARCH PAPER

Kishor and Deepak were illegitimate children of Shanta, a kolhati woman. Shanta's father deliberately made an effort to separate Kishor from Shanta. Kishor could not get her mother's love. He was always lagging for her mother's love. Shanta took a decision to live with Krushnarao Wadkar who was her owner. She was fed up with the trouble of her father and to dance in tamasha party. She was sure that her brother and father would treat her more brutally once her beauty lost. Shanta was also not interest to keep Kishor with her at Sonpeth where she lived with her owner. Krushnarao Wadkar did not permit Shanta to allow Kishor at Sonpeth. Kishor's grandparents strictly warned Shanta not to take Kishor with her at Sonpeth. They thought if Kishor would live with Shanta then they would not receive fixed money from her. There was harassment of Kishor by his grandparents. Kishor was helpful to his grandparents at Nerla. They lodged a burden of works on kind hearted Kishor. He mutely accepted every work at his grandparent's house at Nerla. He was treated as the most unwanted child in his family. He was offered leftover stale food without any taste and nutritious contains. He was given the task of tending to the cattle and the hens in the little farm. He had to take food to old Jiji stayed in the farm. A single mistake on the behalf of Kishor received severe punishment at Nerla where he lived with his grandparents. Starvation, humiliation and exploitation became the essential part of Kishor from his innocent childhood.

Once he was sent to farm with tiffin for Jiji in the night. Suddenly he felt that he was surrounded by the witches on the way to the field. He was so much threatened that he became restless and wandered unconsciously here and there. He tried to escape from the haunting of witches but fell in the ditches. Luckily Kishore's friend's father appeared on the road. He helped Kishor who was paralyzed with fear. Kishor told him that he was carrying Jiji's dinner. The person surprised to see the critical condition of Kishor and stated as "Have the kolhati men no heart, no shame, sending off a little child to the field at night! Those pimps! Living off their mothers and sisters has made them useless, the good-for-nothing." (81) Nobody showed sympathy towards Kishor with his terrible incident. There were many illegitimate son of kolhati dancer suffered lot for love and affection in kolhati community.

One day Kishor was asked to bring lunch for Popat Mama and his worker at their farm. So Kishor started off with lunch box on his head. He was attacked by the dog on his way. He felt the teeth sink hard into the flesh of his thigh. He fell on the ground crying. A passerby took Kishor to the doctor where the wound was bandaged and a course of anti-rabies injections started. After that big injury, Kishor did not reduce his daily burden of chores at Nerla. Many times Kishor was blamed by his Kondiba Ajoba on minor issues. Kishor was always conscious about his continuation of study in critical situation. He always followed his school by avoiding many obstacles. He was asked many works on the behalf of family member. But sometime he refused their order and continued his study. He never stopped his hard work and study. He hoped for better life and studied in a critical condition. It was his attempt to liberate himself from the clutches of their parent's slavery.

One day Kishor was sent to the flourmill with a small bin of grain. Actually he had come straight from school and was hungry. Nobody was there to take care of Kishor. There was a big crowd at the mill and Kishor was late for home with the flour with him. So he walked with the bin of flour on his head as fast as he could. As he passed the gutter, he heard pigs snoring and fighting in the dark. In the dark, he stepped into a pothole and fell hard on the ground. He was injured on his knees in his fall. Nobody bothered of Kishor for injuries and fall. While supplying food in the house, he fell with the filled plates and food scattered all around. On this occasion Popat Mama started beating Kishor on his mistake of dropping plates. Thus there were many occasion in Kishor's life received beating and humiliation on trival issues in his grandparent's house.

Once Kishor bought new books and notebooks out of the money Ramesh uncle and his Susheela aunt had given him. Incidentally just then twenty rupees were found missing from his grandfather's pocket. He suspected Kishor and started beating and accusing of having stolen his money to buy the books. He did not wait to know the real fact. At last it was found that Popat uncle had stolen money from his father's pocket. There was neither remorse nor apology from the grown ups after the incident occurred with Kishor. He was frequently beaten unnecessarily without any reason. The only mistake with Kishor was being an illegitimate child of a tamasha dancer. The condition of an illegitimate child in kolhati community was pathetic and helpless. He was orphaned on every side. Neither was he treated properly by his mother nor his grandparents. His condition was like a stray dog. R. S. Jain rightly describes the helpless condition of an illegitimate child of

a tamasha dancer as "Kishor was like a beast in the herd of cattle, a proverbial mad dog to be kicked from all direction"

Shanta came to Nerla from Karmala with her son Deepak after a long gap of seven years. Everybody in the house felt happy to see Shanta. She had brought new clothes for Kishor. She dressed him and oiled and combed his hair. Kishor was extremely happy to meet her mother Shanta. He was always lagging for Shanta's love at Nerla. Kishor tried to sit with her mother and talked. He did not want to live apart from her mother. When her mother said Kishor go and play outside, then he was disappointed and felt lonely. The state of mind of Kishor is narrated as "Sadly, I went off into the Veranda. I sat in a corner, and tears ran down my cheeks. I was seeing my mother after such a long time and I could not even sit near her, it seems there."(81) No doubt Shanta loved Kishor but she was afraid of such attachment. She thought that Kishor would get too attached to her, or she to Kishor. It was her limitation to live with certain distance from Kishor. She was strictly warned not to bring Kishor at Sonpeth by Krushnarao Wadkar. Here nobody cared the feeling of mother and an illegitimate son. The owner of Kolhati women had no attachment with an illegitimate son. The grandparent also showed their disinterest towards an illegitimate child.

Departure of Shanta from Kishor is a climax of love between mother and son. Krushnarao Wadkar came from Sonpeth to take back Shanta to Sonpeth. It was day of departure of Shanta. Kishor was burning with fever. She held him close and her eyes filled with tears. Kishor was moaning with pain. So Shanta came and sat next to him and lifted his head on her lap. She spends the whole night sitting with her back against the wall. It was too much trouble for Shanta to leave Kishor in terrible condition. She was bathed, dressed and packed and ready to go. She had Deepak in one arm and her purse in the other. But her feet wear leaden and she could hardly step out of the house. As soon as she crossed the front door, Kishor started wailing loudly. She immediately put the purse round her neck and ran back to Kishor. She hugged and kissed him. The temperature of Kishor was still quite high. Kishor was not permitted to go with her mother to Sonpeth. He had to live at Nerla without her mother. Krushnarao Wadkar was hurrying to leave Nerla with Shanta. So Shanta held Kishor's hands, got up and took him outside with her. The whole family had come out to see her off to the bullock cart. Kishor was still wailing and clinging to her mother Shanta. Jiji and Aji pulled his hand away from Shanta so she could climb into the cart. Kishor was desperate because Shanta was going away from him again. Kishor tried to run after her mother but Jiji's grasp

was impossible to break. Thus Kishor threw himself on the ground and rolled in the dust. Shanta looked back at him with tears running down. The departure episode between Shanta and her son Kishor sharpened our feeling of love. There were innumerable children in Kolhati community deprived of love and affection of their mother. The narrator is honestly tried to reveal the heart touching experiences in the present memoir.

Kishor did not gain any joy with his flying colour result of class three. He was continuously in memory of her mother. He expressed his feeling of nervousness as "I was ill for nearly a week after Bai left. Even after the boil on my finger healed and my fever came down to normal, I remained sick at heart. I missed Bai all the time. My class three results were declared and I topped the class, but I felt no joy. My heart only yearned for my mother." (87) Kishor had deprived of every kind of love and affection wherever he went. He is felt isolated and lonely in his every sphere of life.

He was always curious and conscious of his own education in a terrible condition. He came to know that his destiny would not change without his education. So he was continuously struggling for his completion of education. He did not bother about the obstacles came in his path while getting education. He had not sufficient books and notebooks in his schooling. Every body refused to give him money to buy books and pencils at his grandparent's house at Nerla. Kishor did not loose his confidence in his every hurdle. He studied day and night and appeared for primary board exam at Salsa. The life of an illegitimate child in Kolhati community was full of exploitation and harassment. The narrator Kishor Kale was also one of the illegitimate child portrayed his miserable and painful life with realistic accounts in the present autobiography.

Kishor faced all sorts of physical attacks, torturous humiliations and unqualified deprivations at Nerla in his grandfather's house. All the members of the family except Jiji expected him to die or go back to his mother or disappear.. Life at Nerla became worse for Kishor when Jiji was driven to the farm forever. Everybody in the house wanted Kishor to do their obediently without the slightest thought for his childhood sensibilities. He was beaten badly if money was missing from the house, even if cattle did not return on time. He felt isolated and sorrowful many time in his life. His state of mind can be observed through his dialogue as "What kind of life is this?" I thought 'why my mother did give birth to me? My life is like that of a stray dog – any

passerby can kick me or shoo me away, and I have to run.(99) Such feeling of tender hearted Kishor made us to realize the miserable condition of illegitimate child in Kolhati community.

Kishor passed fourth class and intended to go at Sonpeth to meet her mother. But Ajoba of Kishor denied him to go to meet her mother at Sonpeth. Ajoba was afraid of the income source of money which was being sent regularly by Shanta for Kishor. If Kishor left, the money orders would stop coming and he would not be able to keep himself as well stocked as he liked. Beside, Ajoba was worrying about the chores around the house in the absence of Kishor. Thus Kishor was purposefully opposed to go to Sonpeth to meet her mother Shanta by his Ajoba. Even the letters from Shanta was not exposed to Kishor for inviting him at Sonpeth. Kishor was very much delighted to meet her mother Shanta at Sonpeth. He was interested to live with her mother at Sonpeth forever. Thus Kishor went back to Nerla after ten days. He always insisted to live with her mother. But the parents did not allow him. It was Shanta's problem to be with Kishor. Shanta's owner Krushnarao Wadkar opposed Kishor to be with them at Sonpeth. Thus the parents of Kolhati community and dominant people of the mainstream society exploited the tamasha dancer and an illegitimate child in one way or the other.

Repeatedly Kishor is forced to involve in routine work around the house of Ajoba. Once he was asked to take the buffaloes to the field to graze. He was terribly caught in raining and lightening while grazing buffaloes. Kishor narrates as "Huge drops of rain began to fall and within a few minutes turned into an enormous down pour. Lightening cracked setting the sky ablaze and there was a huge roll of thunder. I screamed in fear, but there was no one to hear me for miles around. I was sure I would be struck and killed by the lightening- there was no place where I could shelter. Sobbing, I called out for Jiji. But she was far, far away. I reached the road leading to the village. The rain grew heavier and turned into a hailstorm. I abandoned the buffaloes who refused to hurry and ran ahead looking for some kind of shelter" (107) Somehow he could escape from the heavy rain and lightening and approached to house. There were several incidents in his tiny age where he had gone through suffering and harassment by the elderly people in the house. The only mistake on his part was being born an illegitimate child. He had been always caught in the problems one after another.

At one evening he had been sent to flourmill it was nearly 7.30 p.m. in the evening, but no one had bothered about Kishor's going to the flourmill. Actually Kishor was somehow managed to come out from high fever recently. In addition he was insisted to bring flour and Ajoba put the three kilos of jowar on his head and two kilos of wheat on his shoulder. The weight was more than he could easily carry. It was nearly 8.30 p.m. to return from flourmill with the box of the wheat flour. He came across Rokadi, a mad woman. She picked up a stone and threw it at him with all her strength. It hit Kishore's leg and caused bleeding. The mad woman threw another stone and it hit on his forehead just above the eyes. There were many critical situation came in the childhood of Kishor at Nerla. Nobody bothered about the problem of kind hearted Kishor at his grandparent's house. They looked down upon him at every incident. Thus he was blamed on various accounts and exploited by his grandparents at Nerla.

Kishor was in class five. The work of household chores was increased. He had very little time to study. He had chores in the house, the farm and the fields. He had to take the cattle out to graze on holiday. Sometimes, he used to miss school and follow the order to carry the cattle. He had been often scolded and beaten in his grazing of cows and buffaloes wandered off and destroyed the crops in a neighboring field. At the time of harvesting his chores increased and he was compelled to give them priority over his study.

Apart from daily chores, Kishor was forced to join Jalsa party in his holiday. The work at Jalsa party was even harder than the work at Nerla. The works at Jalsa party were not defined and organized. He had to run errands not only for the women, but also for all the men who visited the women. Kishor had to follow the order of various people continuously such as: 'Kisrya, hook up my blouse for me'/'Kisrya, get the flowers for my hair'/'Kisrya, have you got my sari pressed?'/ 'Kisrya, have you collected the money from that man?'/ 'Ay you monkey, the tea hasn't come yet, just go and see, and get it with you'/'Kisrya, have you washed the clothes?/Otherwise, I'll be in trouble.' (113)

The works at Jalsa party were whole night for Kishor. The stay at jalsa party was troublesome for Kishor. He did get little time to take rest on his traveling of Jalsa party. He was harassed at every moment during his childhood. The works had been carried out in Jalsa party was low and disgraceful. Such shameful work in the small age of Kishor damaged his tender feeling.

The painful experiences of Kishor were the representative of the entire illegitimate children in Kolhati community narrated in the present work

Kishor used to save enough money from his tour on Jalsa party to buy the books and keep the remaining money safe in his school bag at Barshi. For that he had done all kinds of chores and back breaking works in Jalsa party. Kishor did not find the money that he kept in his school bag. So he blamed his grandfather for that incident. But Kishor was abused by his grandfather for blaming him as "I will beat you till you die, you vermin. How dare you insult me. Your mother has not left a pot of money here for you. You eat our food and dare to insult us. Get out of here." (118) They send him off to the field at all hours of the day and night continuously. Kishor was so upset with the incident occurred with him and missed her mother lot.

He wished to meet her mother. But he realized that no use of going to her mother at Sonpeth. He was not allowed to stay for long time with her mother at Sonpeth. Kishor expressed his feeling through his argument: "Why didn't my mother let me live with her? Was I not her son? Did she not love me? A million tormenting questions raced through my mind and I thought I would go mad." (119) The argument of Kishor raised number of question in our mind. Kishor was lagging for the love of her mother again and again. But nobody was there to understand the tender feeling of Kishor, an illegitimate child in Kolhati community. Those who are deprived of mother's love could understand the important of mother in their life.

Kishor appeared for sixth standard and passed. Then he joined the seventh class. He had to live at Nerla for only one more year. The school at Nerla was till seventh class. At this moment grandfather was not interested in Kishor's education. He was telling Kishor to work in the fields or join the jalsa party instead of schooling. This thought of Ajoba made Kishor sleepless with anxiety and despair. He also argued with himself in lonely. He frequently felt uncertain in his life. He thought that every parent wished that his child should learn and achieve respectable place in society. On the other hand Kishor's position was something different. Nobody wanted that Kishor should study and settle well in his family. Even her mother also did not care of Kishor's future. So he reacted against her mother with number of question as "Why doesn't my mother worry about this? Does she never think of what is happening in my life, what is happening to me.?" (121)



Kishor was admitted for class VII at Sonpeth. So he was grateful and happy. The work of Kishor at Sonpeth was not easy than the work he did at Nerla. Mostly it was troublesome for Kishor at Sonpeth. Here Kishor had to go through physical as well as mental harassment. Krushnarao Wadkar used to play cards and to dabble in matka. He poured all the anger and frustration on the family members in his loss of money at club. Kishor was beaten up out of sheer anger and frustration by Nana. Thus the harassment and exploitation of Kishor was continued at Sonpeth too. The innocent Kishor was suffered a lot in his childhood. He wanted to get free of burden and miserable life, but he followed all kinds of sorrow and despairs. He lived complete isolated and lonely life in his childhood. He was frequently accused on false charges and oppressed.

The struggle of Kishor in his childhood is one of the major aspects of this autobiography. He had to live undignified life while getting education. Kishor felt nervous when her mother Shanta discriminates between Deepak and him. He got secondary position in each and every activity in the family. Once, Kishor was caught while eating fruits in alone. In the result he was scolded by Krushnarao Wadkar. He asked the account of household to Kishor and yelled for not providing records: "You will be true to your caste, what can you be put thieves. Nothing and nobody can turn you into anything else" (139) It was routine for Kishor to bear beating and abusing words in his childhood in the family.

Kishor worked with tamasha dancer at Jalsa party. Number of works lodged on Kishor at jalsa party. The customers at Jalsa party used to send him off to buy paan or bottles of liquor or cigarettes. Some used to ask him to massage their bodies. The dance went throughout night so he worked all night. During the day, Kishor ran errands for the women. He bought them pin and flowers for their hair, snow or kumkum from the market. Some dancer wanted him to press legs or was to help in plaiting their hair or even buttoning their blouses. He was disgusted with the work in dance party. Nowhere had he got dignified life. He was exploited everywhere he went. He had got crucial experience at Nerla, Sonpeth and at Jalsa party in his childhood.

The strong desire of Kishor always inspired him to learn. He realized that nobody would change his life. So he did not stop his study in such critical situations. He strongly believed that only education would transform his destiny. Subsequently Kishor passed 10th class exam at Sonpeth and admitted to the Yogeshwari College at Ambajogai. He was humiliated by the

classmates in the college due to his lower Kolhati caste. He had to change his room frequently. He did not want to disclose his own caste. He was afraid of his humiliation and exploitation due to his lower caste. He avoided to come into contact with his Baby aunt whenever he confronted at Ambajogai. If somebody came to know his relation with tamasha dancer, he had to go through humiliation and dishonor. So he frequently deny to show his relation with her aunt. He met her aunt Baby secretly at Ambajogai. Thus Kishor was suffered and oppressed due to her lower caste..

Twelve class was a crucial year for Kishor. He studied hard in his innumerable difficulties. He surpassed every kind of obstacles came in front of him while studying in twelfth class. He was supported by Nagin Mausi from Parbhani who was a wife of MP. He did not receive any help from Krushnarao Wadkar in twelfth class. His hard work helped him to get admission in Grant Medical College for MBBS. But it was once again difficult for Kishor to complete the course of MBBS. The days he surpassed during his education of MBBS were crucial and terrifying. He received every kind of harassment and exploitation in those days. He was helpless during his medical education from all the sides. Kishor took immense efforts to adjust in medical college and its hostel.

Kishor's life in the hostel was made difficult by the other students. They teased him constantly and played practical jokes on him. Hostel mates looked down upon Kishor due to his birth in lower community. He was ill-treated constantly at hostel. He had not received dignified life during his education at medical college. Life at the medical college in Mumbai was dogged by the persistent worry about how to finance his education. He had to work at the clinic for fees. But he didn't continue his job at clinic. Sometimes he bought shirts and fabrics from Mumbai and sold them in Ambejogai and Parali to fulfill his need of money. Financial problem was a major problem for Kishor during his medical education. In the course of time,

Kishor had gone through number of problems while completing education of MBBS. He also supported her mother in her illness by providing money received in his scholarship. Beside he helped Deepak to complete his fees of twelfth class in critical condition. At this position financial condition of Kishor was too weak to get two time meal. He had to take up several part time jobs at his education. The burden of work and study made Kishore weak and thin. He was in full of frustration and despair during his education of MBBS due to his weak financial condition.

Subsequently, he tried to take sleeping pills in his sorrow and despair. Fortunately his friend Prasad interfered and saved him.

It had been a very long and very tough journey for Kishor to live dignified and successful life. He came across every hurdles and pitfalls in his way of life. It is a collective voice of An illegitimate child in Kolhati Community. There is a predicament of many Kishor Kale in his community faced hardship and humiliation on the way. Kishor Kale came across all the barriers of caste and identity and continued his efforts till achievement of his goal by becoming a Doctor.

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