

# Survival: As a Saga of Struggle and Poverty

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**Abstract:** The story “Survival” is written by a Dogri writer Shiv Dev Susheel. The story depicts the pitiable condition of the protagonists in this present scenario, struggling each and every day for their survival in this corrupt world. The story presents the confused world and portrays the society without norms and direction. The story probes deeply into the inner life of the characters and exposes the chicanery, perfidy and corruption in the present world. The story is a treatise on the current social scene and portrays that how an individual strive with struggle and poverty to survive in the world. The story holds the mirror to present society that how the poor and the downtrodden get deprived of human qualities because of their poverty.

**Key Words-** Struggle, society, poverty, corruption, dehumanised.

The story “Survival” by Shiv Dev Susheel probes deeper into the inner consciousness of individual and also tries to focus on the decaying moral values in society. The story portrays the struggle for survival of the protagonists of the story Durga and Krishan who are toys in the hands of the modern world. The story presents the ill effects of poverty on them. Both the protagonists shed their honesty and the old world morality to survive in this corrupt world. The story condemns materialistic values. The protagonist in the story Durga, has face a number of hardships to survive in the city. She sings *bhentas* (prayer songs) in front of the passengers going to the shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi to earn money. But, it is not possible for her to make both ends meet with this small amount of money. Gradually, because of her struggle and poverty all her ideals, morals wane and she started to live a life full of compromises. She indulges in the profession of prostitution. The opening of story tells us about her miserable condition that how she begs by singing in front of the passengers by holding a *thali* (plate) with Vaishno Mata pictures wrapped in a scarlet piece of cloth placed in it. She wears a dirty *shalwar* and a torn shirt. She sings:

*Mata de darbar jotan jagadiyan*

*Sacha ai durbar jotan wali da.*

(Mother goddess court is lit with prayer offering lights. The court of the one  
with prayer lights is the true court) (154)

As she sings she thrusts her *thali* in front of the passengers, but few people put some small change in it, while others do not even bother to look at her. Meanwhile, there comes a policeman who shouts on her in front of everyone. “Get down – you slut, fleecing people! (155)”. She gets down of the bus and now the policeman talks to her in a very soft voice as he wants to take her with him. The situation is shown as:

The policeman’s voice is soft now, “I had called you yesterday. Why did you not come?

“Gajan Singh driver took me away.”

“Now call him to stand surety for you.” (155)

Durga silently follows the policeman. On reaching the police station, the constable takes her to the Inspector’s room. On seeing her, the Inspector becomes angry as she has not come to him yesterday. Here the author tells us that how the influential and powerful people use their power to harm others. In his rage, the

Inspector asks his constable to put Durga in jail, as she has not followed her orders. The story shows that how the poor are being exploited in the hands of the rich. The Inspector forces her to take his orders and if she resists he puts her in jail.

“ You bastard! You do not care for us anymore. Lock her up. Let her suffer a bit. I’ll book a case for prostitution tomorrow and take you before the magistrate.”

She moves her lips, “ No sir, he took me forcibly.”

“ Go, go, do not create a scene.”(155)

The constable takes her away and locks her in the locker. The story presents the alienation of Durga in the phony world. She feels herself powerless and alienated even from her own self as well as of her surroundings and society. She seems to be a victim of the modern de-humanized world. No one is ready to help her but everyone is ready to exploit her. As she is in need of money she is also getting exploited in the hands of these people. Her helplessness is shown by the writer as:

“What are you doing here? I have been looking for you so long!”

“Sardarji, the youngest daughter has got fever,” she said pointing to the infant seated on her lap.

“You should have taken her to a doctor.”

“Yes, but where is the money for the doctor’s fee?”

“No problem about that. You come with me.”

“Not today, The Thanedar has sent for me.”

“To hell with the Thanedar. Here, take this money for the medicine and come.”

Seeing the money, she had not been able to refuse. She had gone to a doctor in a nearby mohalla for buying medicine. Later she had gone to her rendezvous with the sardar. (158)

The other protagonist Krishan in the story points out the hopeless mess of life. The different forms of alienation have passed into his psyche. The present world is characterized by mechanization, urbanization and westernization brings out a change in the moral values of the individuals. It also brings out depersonalization, delusions and other maladjustments in the society. All these things together brought alienation in the life of the individual. Krishan was an innocent boy in his childhood but because of his poverty and his struggle to survive in the world transforms him into a corrupt man. His uncle Shankar who is a corrupt man teaches him the crime of pick-pocketing to earn the livelihood. It is shown in the story as:

Uncle Shankar has taught him two things-one, to polish shoes; two, to pick pockets. These have become his professions. He polished shoes in the daytime and picked pockets whenever he got a chance, and handed over his earnings of the day to Uncle Shankar. The day he did not bring enough he had to suffer a beating. On such days, Shankar’s sunken eyes turned red and he let loose his anger on Krishan. (156)

Both the protagonists therefore, take a bold step to reject the ways of the civilized work which does not suit their temperament. Both of them face all situations boldly and turn towards crime, corruption and towards the other worst forms for their survival. The story presents the psychological study into innocence, experience and expiation of the life of the protagonists.

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