

ISSN 0976-8165



The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Quarterly Refereed & Indexed Open Access Journal

April 2013 Vol. 4 Issue- II

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DOWRY

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She was much happy after purchasing a new braid for hairs. It became routine that whenever the hawker used to visit their village, she used to buy any hair-band, hair-clip, lipstick, or any beauty cream to beautify herself. The day on which she bought anything that day was a memorable for her. She remained cheerful for daylong. She had never received any pocket money from parents because of misery and poverty. She used to sell eggs of her hens, which she nourished, from cute chickens. This was her only property on which she had full rights. She used to collect eggs and after selling those, the money she got, that was her pocket money. Mostly her brother stole those eggs and ate up. Then a quarrel took place between her and her brother and at the end, the parents solved the problem. The saved money was treasure for her but whenever she bought anything that was taken by her mother and put in a box. Her mother told her that this all material was for her dowry. When she would get married then it would be given to her and every time her desires were dead by such comments. She was never able to wear anything that she had purchased. She stared the box wistfully that when the day would come and she would wear all these things.

She was twenty now and from last six years she was collecting the things which were locked up in this box and its keys were in the custody of her mother. The youth had started to writhe in depth of her being. She was dreaming for any prince who might come and she might get the ease of whole world in the lock of his arms. Her days used to pass in the dreams and after every daydream she used to look towards the box in which the treasure of her all dreams was abiding. A box filled with lot of dreams...!

She had opened eyes in a hut and her home was consisted upon two huts. In one hut she was living with her brother while in other one, her parents were leading life. This yard of two huts was her world. Her father used to work on daily wages while mother used to visit village to wash the utensils of people. She used to visit pastures and fields to collect the woods. Sometimes her brother used to accompany her and sometimes she had to perform all duties lonely. These woods were not only useful for their cooking but the strongest one were used to rebuild their huts and her father performed this job. She had to sweep huts and during sweeping at the hut of parents, she used to pass a lot of time so that she might be able to pass much time with her box. Mostly her mother on wasting so much time just in sweeping rebuked her. Even now, the mother had started to sneer her because of her laziness but she always turned deaf ears to her mother. She wanted to adorn herself with all those things that she had collected from her childhood. The desires were writhing in the depth of her being and every dream wanted to change into reality. She wanted the touch of her every thing. She was waiting for the day when she would have the key of box and she would open it with her hands.

She collected money again to fulfill her every desire and now she was waiting for the hawker anxiously. She looked her hands and felt shy thinking about the day when her friends would design these with *henna* and its smell would madden every one. After waiting for a long, a day the voice of the hawker echoed in her ears and seized her feet. She at once ran towards her hut, carried the saved money and hurried out. She wanted to buy each that thing which might increase her grace and beauty. She also bought a mirror to look her beauty. After watching mirror, she felt proud that her face was really bright like a moon. She became shy. Still she was in dreams that her mother entered in the hut and caught her theft. She collected all the things in

the box, saying that 'these all are yours, just wait for your marriage.' Because of shyness, she could not utter a single word and bowed her head. She looked her empty dirty hands and then the packet of henna desirously which her mother caged in the box.

Life was in a flow that the raining season started. The rain cheered up each face, the intensity of heat decreased in this desert and sand imbibed the water. The raining continued for a long time in the area where the rain used to shower, occasionally. The muddy walls of their huts softened and lines of worry became apparent on the forehead of her father. She understood that the raining was not much beneficial for them. The roofs of huts also started to rinse the water. Her mother put her box under the bed so that the drops of rain could not spoil it. She was much worried about the situation. The walls of hut were getting weak day by day and the raining was at its full swing. The father was much worried and after each shower of rain, he used to check out the walls. His father told that they would repair the walls as the rain would stop. Due to leakage of roofs, now much water was flowing on the floor of the hut. The muddy floor of hut became slippery. The most worried moment for her was that, when water touched the bottom of her box. She was dismal about her hard work of years. The prince of her dreams had not arrived yet but the water had started to gush with the poor walls of her hut. The father told about the news of flood and they collected their bag and baggage. Her heart displeased to hear this bad news. She stared the box in which each desire and every wish was locked up. No one among her family wanted to migrate.

It started raining continuously again. The thunder of clouds lightened the dark night. The raining and fast wind turned into a hurricane and blew away the straws of their roof. The water was dribbling from the roof and now the bottom of the box was drowned. She was near to mad to see such a situation. The sound of gushing water baffled them more. The father ordered to leave the huts because the gushing water could swallow them. The water began to touch their ankles and their half body disappeared in water. The father managed to take care of the material collected in a bundle; the mother had to take care of her brother while the heavy box of her treasure was put on her head. The dreams turned the heavy box into weightless and all burdens vanished. She was wading across the surging water putting the box on her head. The billowing waves were weakening her steps. The father was carrying the luggage not only on his head but his both hands were also carrying different things. The mother was carrying luggage in her one hand while with other she was helping her brother. The water level was rising as well as due to increasing speed; their feet were pushed back as they stepped forward. The water created gap among all three persons. The father remained behind while the mother and the brother moved forward. She was in the middle and water reduced her speed. The dowry box was affixed on her head and the desires of years were trembling on her head like a sick man in a chilling cold. Her feet slipped again and again in the muddy water. She was tired now and in the darkness, she was unable to see anything. Not even she was able to see her mother or father. All were out of sight. The water was rising constantly and still she was unable to find any shelter. Her neck was wearied because of much burden. She was thinking about her dreams that were locked up in the box above her head, all those desires that she had collected from early childhood and each wish was somersaulting in her body. Every dream was dancing before her eyes. The adorned hairs with braids, hair-clips and hair-bands, decorated hands with henna glimpsed before her eyes. She was in her meditation; she turned into senses when water touched her neck. She lost her way and her steps moved towards deep area where the surface of water was already raised up. She moved her eyes all around but there was water everywhere. She called father and mother in a trembling voice but found no reply from their side. The water was near to swallow her, she wanted to

change her track but her feet were unable to feel any way. The box of dowry was quivering on her head. She was in search of direction that all of sudden a gushing wave came and she lost her balance. The box fell from her head and disappeared in the water, her head was already tired so it dipped in water. She tried to get rid of it and raised her hands but in vain. Last time her hand appeared and that was empty from *henna* while *henna* had flown away in the water with the dowry box.