



## *Aadujeevitham*: As a Mirror Reflecting Social Realism

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**Abstract:** This paper has tried to investigate the most treated theme of social realism in the novel Benjamin's *Aadujeevitham*. It is a canvas in which the author has drawn the society that he could see and experience in his own land Kerala and the society that a pravasi lives in the hot desert sand of Arab countries. By picking out the elements of social realism we are trying to pay a justification to the author's own words in the author's note: "This is not just Najeeb's story, it is a real life. A goat's life." This analysis contains

**Index Terms – Social Realism, utilitarianism, necessity, hope, survival.**

### INTRODUCTION

"I was one of the goats. Mine was a goat's life." (*Goat Days*, 253) Thus ends the novel *Aadujeevitham* ends. Any reader who had gone through the novel would certainly be in a dilemma - whether it is a fiction or a real life. The book's cover says, "All lives which we didn't experience are fables for us." So a reader who had read the novel with his heart would eagerly read the author's note expecting something. As we desire, Benjamin doesn't disappoint us. He concludes his note with these lines, "This is not just Najeeb's story, and it is real life. A goat's life."

Benjamin had resolved some questions arise in us. Yes! It is real or it has some sort of realism in it. To pick out the elements of social realism in the novel we started our journey by re-reading the novel, the life of Najeeb, the life of a goat.

### ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL REALISM

Some person's fortune is another person's misfortune. The novel starts with a scene in front of a police station in Riyadh. We could see the protagonist Najeeb and his friend Hameed trying to get arrested and get into the prison. Here we get a hint of what is going to come ahead. A prison is a place where the criminals are placed, not a tourist destination. It is a haunting memory for the culprits. We usually complain for the sufferings and the freedom we do not have. But when we undergo more sufferings and pains we would get the strength to withstand what others cannot. We can trace this realism in the following lines of the novel "None of us could sleep that night, as we sat packed together like we were in an overcrowded train compartment. And with the Arabs spreading their legs comfortably, others had to suffer even more. Still, compared to what I had endured, that narrow cell was heaven to me." (8)

The theory of utilitarianism states that the basic instinct of human beings is the minimization of pain to maximize their happiness and pleasure. Even in the time of worst realities and harsh conditions we spare time to enjoy any small piece of happiness we get. Najeeb and Hameed succeeded in their effort to enter into the prison. Najeeb's life was full of miseries and sufferings. It is a practice in the Arab jails to cut the hair of the prisoners into bald heads. Najeeb and Hameed have also undergone a haircut. Seeing their bald heads, Najeeb and Hameed laugh at each other, forgetting their pains.

Catharsis is the name given to the process by which we get rid of the excess of emotions we have by subjecting ourselves to those emotions, especially in a tragedy. We could get a relief from our pain, grief and sorrow when we share it to someone. This is because human being is a social being and he has no existence without his fellow beings. Similarly, listening to the stories of others also helps us to feel that how lucky we are compared to the sufferings of others. This gives us a motivation to overcome our sorrows and grief. There comes a new definition to catharsis.

Loss of companionship is another element of social realism in the novel *Aadujeevitham*. The theme of universal brotherhood could be seen throughout the novel. To be with our friends is our greatest happiness. Friends are those who stand with us when every other left our side. We cannot imagine a world without our friends. We could not bear the separation of a friend from us. We would be haunted with memories we had with them. In the prison Najeeb suffers this sadness when his companions in the prison were separated - some into freedom and others again into slavery.

The chapter 'desert' is a journey of Najeeb through his memories – what his dream was and what fate had given him. Here it opens to the social realism of a pravaasi. When mother India could not feed all her children it let go her precious sons and daughters out, searching for jobs. Hungry stomachs back home increased the suffering level of an average pravaasi. With the inflow of quick money, the desert became a dream for many. Najeeb also dreamt of the heaven called 'Gulf' forced by his poverty. "How about going abroad for once? Not for long. I am not that greedy. Only long enough to settle a few debts. Add a room to the house. Just the usual cravings of most malayalis." (35)

Woman – it is the synonym for love, care and mother. The primary instinct of a woman is love and care. Whatever difficulties they face, a woman always care for her health. This basic fact of women psychology – psychology of love and care could be traced in the novel. "Finally that day arrived. I did not have much luggage. Some lemon pickle and some upperi that my pregnant Sainu had fried with love. Some chammanthipodi which umma had pounded, disregarding her exhaustion." (41)

Here we see two women, one the mother of Najeeb and other his wife. They are the ones who would be haunted with memories when Najeeb sets off. Sainu, though she was pregnant, disregarding her unhealthy made him pickle and upperi. Najeeb's ummah also, though she is exhausted and unhealthy pounds him some chammanthipodi. The things that they made for him is entwined with their love and care. This shows the love and care of a mother and a wife. Najeeb's ummah and Sainu stands for the entire women in the world. They would be alone at home when Najeeb sets off. They happily bid adieu him disclosing those pains in their hearts.

The real voyage in the desert was not the one in his dreams. The slave or the worker has no freedom in any context and it is the power of the master which eventually wins and conquers over the slave or the worker. It is the condition in the whole world that most of the masters are cruel and harsh towards their slaves or workers. In this novel *Aadujeevitham* - the Arbab - is the master who is very cruel and cunning towards his slave, Najeeb. This cunningness of the master who represents the power of the master over his slave could be traced in the novel. This is a harsh reality that the whole world should accept. The inner thoughts or the questions that every slave tends to ask his master is shown in the following lines of the novel. This testimonies the lament of every slave in the world on the harsh realities or worse conditions to which they are subjected to, a suppression of the power even in this modern world.

Desert is always a wonder for those who do not belong to the desert. It is a place which has least elements or source of resources to support a life, as desert lacks that liveliness. The protagonist Najeeb, like many other malayalies, had dreamt of a heaven 'The Wealthy Gulf' but the fate gave him a hell – the reality of the desert. By the time Najeeb had realized that he had been trapped in this unending wildness of the desert and his life has bounded to the goats. So he should now learn the rules and laws of the desert, moreover those of his Arbab. What a cruel play called 'fate' had played in his life? Najeeb was a man with dreams, desires and hopes, and had done an economic migration to the Gulf country dreaming it would be his heaven. Fate always brings either fortune or misfortune but why is it that fate always loves misfortune!

Necessity is the mother of invention. Whatever things human beings discovered or invented was a result of their necessities. When we need something at the most or feel anything very necessary that urge or force it would make us inventors or discoverers even if it is a trivial thing. Every creature in this world discovers something. Even a silly thing if his situation demands.

It was a noon time and for a brief while it was rest -time. So Najeeb searched for a little shade to rest but was nowhere to be found. Finally Najeeb found the little rectangle of shade under the cot. It was his necessity to find a shade to rest. As his situation demand, he discovered little shade and was rewarded with a short pleasing nap. The door opens for only those who knock.

Nostalgia, it is the word that is apt here, nostalgia is the term called for the home sickness. We human beings are the victims of nostalgia. Our home is the place where our minds are rooted. Even in the extreme end of the world, far away from our home we would be haunted with the memories and security of our home. We would be only physically separated from our home but our roots of mind are deepened inside the foundation of our home and among our beloved ones staying back in our home. The memories of our beloved ones will remain a pain in our exile from our home land. We would be get haunted with the images of our beloved ones, the familiar surroundings of our home land and our house. This is a harsh and painful reality that a 'pravasi' undergoes in his life.

Here in this novel, Najeeb was going to sleep in the night. His bag was his pillow. Then he had got the scent of pickle. Inside his bag were pickle and other items that his Ummah and his wife Sainu sent. So the scent of pickle invoked in him the memories of them and his child who grew inside Sainu. He felt a heart burst with the memories and it became unbearable for him with emotions. The greatest pain or drawback of human beings is that we can think and that thoughts haunt us like nightmares.

A lot many creatures live all around us. The situation could hardly have been different had I been called to rear cows or to look after dogs. It is only when we had a need that we think about them and regret that we hadn't noticed, learned or understood them when we had the chance. It was only after falling head long into this situation that I realized the need to keep our eyes open to our environment. (89)

These lines in the novel serve as an appreciation for the nature and its creatures around us. The world and the environment around us is created by the God with an intention that we must enjoy it with all our heart. Also, only when we open our eye into the outside world we get a motivation to live and all human beings should have that. And also it is to be noted that all human beings will learn a lesson in their life even from these feeble creatures around them.

Najeeb had now learnt to accept the harsh and the cruel game of fate. How could one lament on his loss till his death? If one needs to survive he or she must get rid of their sentiments and haunted nostalgic memories. *Aadujeevitham* is a novel which had a theme of hope wrapped inside it. Najeeb had a lot of hopes, dreams and desires of his gulf life. But he was subjected to the bitter sufferings in the desert and now he had learnt to accept the truth that his dreams and desires were no more and he cannot escape from these sand dunes. So he passed the first test of survival – to accept the truth and somehow survive. Najeeb had accepted the truth that the world of his wife and Ummah and unborn child had become alien to him. So he forgot the anxieties and worries of his past life and began to identify himself in the wildness of the desert, his present homeland and live in the actual truth - the 'now'.

The actual essence of the novel *Aadujeevitham* is hope. It is the factor that gives a motivation for a human being to live. Without hope one's life is in vain. Hope could be said as the greatest gift that God has given to us human beings. Najeeb got exhausted in the harsh realities of the desert. He had lost all his faith and dream and he had accepted the fact that he has no return to his past and his life is subjected to this wildness of the desert. But we are unaware of what God prepares for us. God is our caretaker and he loves all of us, as we are his loving children. God would insist in our mind through same images that would be sometimes through the nature and its elements.

The change in season had taught Najeeb the lessons of hope. He came to the desert under the scorching sun, the unbearable summer. But as the season changed and winter came Najeeb saw the rain drops of hope in the desert. Najeeb was in a condition and mind without any hope and totally exhausted. That time what he required was some positive notes of hope to go on with his survival. The force which keeps our mind stable even in worst adversities is the driving force of hope. There had been no signs of life on those burning sands. But as the cold wind blew, signaling summer's end, a green carpet surfaced on the dry sand. Najeeb got an energy or motivation to resurrect. It was the nature's sign to Najeeb to preserve his life. It conveys a great message to every humans. We usually end up by giving up our struggle in the adversities we are subjected to. But what we need to is fight

with all adversities that we face. Life is an unending struggle. Everything in this world gets its turn in the right time. We should patiently wait for the right moment without surrendering to the adversities of life, to resurrect into freedom, the ultimate happiness.

Najeeb in the meantime had gone through his prison days, memories of his home land and his beloved ones, the beginning of his gulf life and the sufferings he faced in desert and told us the story of his transformation into one among the goats in the masara. As the title of the novel suggest and Najeeb's testimony that his life was a goat's life, goats is the important characters in the novel along with the protagonist Najeeb. After his Ummah and wife Sainu, his life is more attached to those goats in the mascara or we must say that he has more affection with the goats than any other living beings in this world. The novel *Aadujevitham* portrays greatly the human – animal relationship. Animals are more affectionate and loving than most of the human. Animals do not know to cheat or betray. Their world is full of satisfaction and happiness. They have no greed neither they didn't harm the environment. With his life with the goats Najeeb had realized that the world of animals is his heaven and their company was far better than that of human beings. In one context he says that the goats in the mascara understood him, his sufferings, pains and sorrows than his Arbabs. Also in another context, we could see one among the goats saved the life of Najeeb by sacrificing his life. One day when Najeeb went for a walk with the goats as usual. Then, because of his extreme desire to escape, he ran away from there but was chased down by the Arbab and he fired his gun. But the goat saved Najeeb's life by being the target of that gunshot. After that he had a feeling of brotherhood with the goats and he never eat mutton even in the prison.

As mentioned earlier, the goats are the important characters in the novel. There is a universal connection or relationship between every creature in the world. Right from the book of Genesis in Bible, other Holy Texts, different literary works from the ancient period there are strong evidences of this animal – human relationship. In this world everyone is dependent on others, and human beings have an inter relationship with all other living creatures in the world. The God has created human being as the crown of all creations. He has given the duty to look after the environment, and its creatures. Life of a human being could be compared greatly to those of other animal in many situations.

Despite my best efforts to remind composed, those death kept haunting me. Especially, the death of the pregnant goat. The goat was going to give birth for the first time! I could see its pride in all its movements and looks. Even though it was a goat, it too must have had dreams. How many times must it have dreamt about becoming a mother, feeding its child and playing with it? Poor thing, all of it ended in one night. That is life. (155)

Every creature in this world has dreams and desires, especially the human beings. But the harsh reality of life is that our dreams and desire are shattered down by the cruel hands of fate. On seeing the death of a pregnant goat Najeeb contemplates on the unpredictability's of life. That goat died out of a snake bite. It was the one which was going to give birth for the first time. Najeeb remembered its pride in all its movements and looks. Even though it was a goat, it too must have had dreams. It must have dreamt about becoming a mother, feeding the child and playing with it. But all of it ended up in one night. That is the unpredictabilities of life. That is the real truth. We are unsure of what is about to come or where we will be tomorrow. Every night when we fall asleep we are not sure that we would see the sun the very next morning. The protagonist Najeeb compares that condition of the goat with the life of every human and eventually into his life. Here he contemplates on the theme of life. God has planned everything right from the time when he creates a living being. God has planned or written a script of life of every creature in the world. In the script there would be sufferings, happiness, sorrows, grieves, pleasures and so on. If we are destined to suffer certain conditions in this script written by God Almighty, then we should endure all that suffering in the world and there is no escape from those harsh realities of life. That pregnant goat was destined to die when it was pregnant without fulfilling the desires to become a mother. Similarly Najeeb was destined to go through this hell, bearing the worse conditions of the devilish desert. He too had even seen his child.

Merciful Allah, you perform great miracles in the lives of many (155) There is one force behind everything in the world. That is the ultimate Creator or the God Almighty who is that caring hands that created this entire universe and is protecting the whole world with His immense kindness. There are two types of people in this world – believers and non-believers. Some people did not believe in the presents of God or the force that drives everything in order in the entire universe. But even the non-believers of God cannot answer the question of who is behind everything that even science could not explain. In the hospitals, doctors often say that we had done the best of our part and pray to the Ultimate power who would do the things that human beings could even not imagine. Miracles have no scientific strength in this modern world of technology. People try to compete with the

power of God with his scientific knowledge. But miracles are only meant for God Almighty. God performs several miracles, great miracles in the lives of many. Those miracles usually challenge the common sense the human beings. People could not scientifically prove the fact behind the miracles. Najeeb had gone through the sufferings and pain of the desert and the cruel fate of life. Najeeb has accepted the truth of his present situation and adapted to the bitter truth of the sufferings of the desert. But as a change in his fate, Allah had given him a new hope in his life to survive and withstand the grief and pains he suffers now, to fly into a sky of freedom. He prays to God to perform a miracle in his life, even it may challenge the common sense of the world. He waits for the rays of hope that eventually leads into his freedom.

Najeeb had gone through various experiences of his life. He has suffered the most a human being can endure, but he suffers everything in the name of God, his Savior. God gave him new hope to life through images of the nature. Najeeb now feels a strong urge to escape his worst condition. There would be a climax for every experience in life. We have to take risks in our life to improve our present condition. Life is meant for only those who struggles and fights the unending battle that would determine our destiny. It is our decision that matters. If we have decided to take risk of escaping from our suffering condition then we would live rest of our life with happiness. But this is not sure, if we fail in this try, it would be more fatal. So Najeeb had decided to put an end to his sufferings, a climax to his worst life and he hopes this decision to be a pleasant one.

The climax that Najeeb wish for has become a pleasant one. He had reached the shores of freedom and happiness after suffering greatly in the desert. But in the end we came to know that Najeeb had suffered some ones else's fate. The Arabab of Najeeb and Hakeem had betrayed them and illegally kept them as his slaves. We could also trace the elements of fate in the novel. Najeeb had suffered some other's fate. But he was destined to endure those harsh realities. It was the decision of his God 'Allah'. God decided what ever things that should happen in the lives of his creatures. That is the destiny that the god declares to his children. In the novel Najeeb walk into a faith of someone else but he was destined to suffer and go through it. But he never cursed his God nor did him complaints on these sufferings he faced. He overcome all the sufferings and he says that he would not think any deeper about it as he would become crazy.

## CONCLUSION

*Aadujeevitham* is a novel of survival. The novel portrays this sufferings and pains through which the protagonist Najeeb has gone through. We have traced many elements of social realism in this novel. Najeeb, a poor human being, suffers harsh realities, sorrows, grieves and pains which are realities of truth; of bitter life. We could see humanism and the bitter realities of human life as portrayed through the experience of the protagonist Najeeb. Over all the realities of life the most important one is the presence of an invisible force in the nature. The truth of God is beyond all human expectation and predictions. It is the ultimate truth that there is some invisible hands which leads us and protects the entire universe. Najeeb, the protagonist of the novel had immense faith in God. We could trace the word 'Allah' in various places in the novel as uttered by Najeeb. It was god who had given him all the sufferings. But Najeeb, even in a single moment, never curses God. He is happy that it is the wish of Him who has gifted this life. As a reward of his immense faith , Allah conserves him with his care and love in each and every moment saving from the poisonous teeth of snakes, protecting him while his escape , creating an oasis in the desert when he is about to die without water and so on. God even arrives to help him when he required It., disguised as Ibrahim Khadiri, Kunjikka and the Arab who picked him to the city in his car. Najeeb feels the presents of Allah with him in various situations which gave him new hopes and new life "I wept. I had realized that Allah occasionally travels even in a luxury car." (238) Yeah true! God lives!

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