

Hypocritical Attitudes Rooted in Fear Contrasted with Innocence that is Forgiving without Pomp, in The Story “Big Brother” By Prem Chand

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In this story “BIG BROTHER”, we enter the CHILDREN’S world, especially the relationship between brothers. Here is an elder brother, who finds it innately difficult to study, mainly because he has developed a deep-rooted fear and awe of the subjects of study. He is not inherently free and that is why his brain does not function. Yet he cannot accept that. He has that inner need to justify his lack and position himself as superior. He does that by subtle bullying and exploitation of his younger, lively, fearless brother.

The story is gently ironic, and you can see how the simple story speaks volumes which, if one attempted to write as essays, would maybe fill a library.

Here is the role of fear, comparison, innocence and its link to studies, the mistaken belief that studies make you superior. Here is also a foretelling of the future with such attitudes. The bully in childhood becomes a conformist and the innocent becomes a fresh spring and talented in later life.

There is also the need to be happy to grow up without fear, and the stress of “proving oneself”. There is also the link between intelligence and innocence and fearlessness.

The genius of Premchand lies in stating, or rather understating, the facts so simply, almost heartbreakingly, that the message of the need to have happy attitudes and not being a slave to “studies”, CRIES out to be heard.

It cries out mainly because the message is inherent in the facts of the story. The story yet again in Premchand’s masterful hand becomes a microcosm of a life, and the whole life of happiness and sorrow, playfulness and seriousness, awe of studies to innocence towards it, the subtle conformism and bullying comes out.

But Premchand is gentle all the way. Finally, the boys are together, and the very innocence of the younger one heals the elder one’s inner pain, and the bully becomes gentle at the end!!

Here is Premchand’s gentle celebration of the innocence and gentle criticism of the hypocritical, superficial bullying. Here Premchand shows that the “bad” is actually nothing, a small mind trying to cover up and losing. An innocent mind, by contrast is free, happy and even forgiving without thought!!

Here is a moral and message but silently pierced into our brains- a showing of society’s hypocritical cover ups, the soul’s need to justify mediocrity rooted in fear, and the power and joy of innocence!!

The message is also applicable to the adult world, and in fact very ironically. This is the same bullying that happens with other variations where the weak tries to be strong because it is weak, self- doubtful and fearful.

This story has got a sharp satire of the hollowness of rationalizing evil and cruelty. Yet the human side is never missed, and no hate results. One wonders at how well Premchand’s integration comes out with both the human elements and the sharp satirical elements contrasted.

Premchand is not screaming here or shouting. He is not even preaching. He is simply presenting facts, and gently urging us all to- SEE!!

This story illustrates the genius and the power inherent in great literature to “cure” evils and Premchand’s unique and brilliant style of expressing profound truths through understatement.

Reference:

बडे भाई साहब (BIG BROTHER) – मुंशी प्रेमचंद्र (BY PREM CHAND)