

**Caste Segregation, Lower Class And Women Exploitation In
Premchand's Godan**

RAYA ALI

1 MA English

Jain Deemed-to-be University

Raya534585@gmail.com

Abstract: Revealing the reality of social system and the suppression of low class people in India can be represented clearly in Premchand's Godaan novel (The Gift of a Cow). In Godaan it is so obvious how the caste system has spread its roots deep down in Indian society. In addition, the constitution of Indian society, with its hierarchy is an ideal place to portray the oppression that Indian people suffered from. Premchand is generally considered the greatest Hindi writer who depicted the reality of Indian poor people as it is including all the aspects of poverty, corruption, exploitation of the lower class, exploitation of women and caste segregation. Moreover the economic and social struggle in a north village are deeply described the condition of the pre-independence of a countryside. This can be definitely described as the poverty and ignorance period in India. However, the situation has not changed as greatly as it had been expected and the condition of Hori's family cannot be changed, even though Hori does everything to achieve his life to buy a cow. And, according to Hindu's mythology at that time, giving a cow as a gift to Brahman before death will help to attain salvation. In Godaan we can notice that Hori is shown as a typical poor peasant who is the victim of circumstances but despite all these he stands by his responsibilities and goodness when time needs. However, he is not able to rebel at all. The Godaan novel also shows the position of women in a family and society such as, Miss Malati, an England returned doctor and a social reformer. She is enthusiastic and demands equality with man in regard to votes and equal status in society. In conclusion, Munshi Premchand shows the whole world the voice of an oppressed community highlighting the main negative features which exist at any place in the world, especially India.

Key words: segregation, exploitation

Godan is a Hindi novel by Munshi Premchand, translated into English as the "The Gift of a Cow". It was first published in 1936 and it is one of the greatest Hindi novels of modern Indian literature. Moreover, Premchand can be considered as the most prominent Hindi novelist and Godan is his renowned novel. Premchand deeply depicted the condition of the pre-independence of a countryside in a north village. This phase can be considered as the era of ignorance, poverty, segregation and exploitation of the illiterate peasants at the hands of rich landlords. And through the sequence of Premchand's Godan events, many widespread themes including caste segregation, exploitation of the lower class and women have been indirectly described and it really shows the life of an average Indian farmer under colonial rule with the protagonist facing cultural exploitation and caste segregation.

Premchand's Godan represents the exploitation of lower class in Indian progress, which can be clearly illustrated when Hori says, "God has made them masters and we are their slaves". These lines can hardly demonstrate the major subjugation and manipulation that happened frequently in this era. On the one hand, there are people like Hori who devoted his life to work in a field to produce a meal for his family and on the other hand, there are people who live a wealthy and luxury life. So, Godan deeply imitates the socio-culture condition of rural India. In addition, there is the character of Dattadin who represents the Brahmin caste; he is a greedy moneylender priest. He oppressed the lower caste villager by his power of religious authorizations. Hori and Bhola belonged to the lower caste. Hori is not simply an individual; he is the illustrative of a whole class. In addition, Premchand through his novel "Godan" portrays the representative picture of the lower caste people enslaved by landlord. The peasants could not give the debts on time and it gets increased with dual down payment. According to Premchand's point of view this can be understood as if it is an endeavor to end the feudal system which occurred in many societies in India.

The caste system in Premchand's Godan is so powerful even an individual who makes a complete break from the system cannot get an actual independence. For example,

average Indian peasants cannot rebel against the upper caste because the system reaches down and rebellion would cut off all social support. Hori is unable to rebel at all. Even though he has spent his lifetime trying to maintain his dignity and social standing. Gobar was like a bond between the two worlds. He went to the city and learned everything about the city life . And when he came back to the village, he raised his voice against landlords. Gobar was responsible for the villagers conscious about the political system. Hori is shown as a typical poor peasant who is the victim of circumstances. He stands by his goodness. Gobar in the other hand gets exposure in the city of Lucknow and learns to be practical and worldly. So, exploited by the village Zamindar and the materialistic moneylenders. The Zamindar always composed the revenue and forced fine. This can be portrayed when Rai Saheb fined Hori for the death of the cow though he did not kill it. In general Premchand touches the inner feelings of the low caste people through his detailed description of the peasants suffering that was widely common not only in India but it can also be applied to any tortured society in the world.

Premchand was a visionary and a social reformer who used to write about social evils that existed in Indian society. Almost all of his stories are set up in a rural India, which is full of human emotions. Aside from a novelist and author, Premchand was also a social reformer. The remarkable characteristic of his writing was the reality that he depicted as exploitation of poor people especially women. This novel shows exactly women's position in a family and society, it is like the central theme of the novel. Miss Malati is an England returned doctor and a social reformer. She always demands equality with man in order to have her right in voting and in regard to have an equal status in society. She finally comes in contact with a professor "Mehta". She falls in love with him and forgets all about her standards. However, women such as Dhaniya and Jhunia were obviously exploited by the men of their dominated and aggressive society. They did not get even the freedom of speech. And as all know Premchand is considered as a modern writer of India, where inter caste marriage and love would thrive. The conception of Gobar and Jhunia inter caste marriage has real thought provoking discussion on love and sympathy issues. It appears as if they present

the voice of modern India. Literature before Premchand was full of fantastical and imagination. However, his appearance added a realistic and logical aspect to literature .He gave the message on social evils like poverty, exploitation of women and corruption. He was the first writer of twenty century to reflect reality in the literature.

Conclusion:The essential reason behind Munshi Premchand's writings about social issues was his background as a social reformer and creative thinker. He raised the voice of an oppressed community and embodied the suffering of Indian people. Also, the remarkable characteristic of his writing was his text flexibility, which could be applied on any society. And through his novel "Godan", Premchand underlined the social codes, rules and regulations formulated on the basis of ideological viewpoint of the ruling class and caste.