

## GODAN: A CRITICISM OF NOVEL BY PREMCHAND

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### Abstract

*In the novel Godan, Premchand skillfully captures those nuances of violence that have been normalized by patriarchal ideology. The story is set in a small, poverty - ridden village called Belari in Avadh, Uttar Pradesh, during Pre. Independence Premchand lays bare the misery which is a permanent fixture in the lives of people who belong to the different ends of the social spectrum. A study of novel reveals the vein of corruption, manipulation hypocrisy that lies hidden under pseudo idealism. It lays bare the victimization of individuals at the hands of the representatives of powerful oppressive social institutions. It also shows the peripheral situation of women caught in the traps of poverty, feminine ideals and humiliating social practices moreover, the novel also shows those who are victims of self inflicted violence, mainly due to their submission to social malpractices. In fact, the narrative offers a vivid glimpse of the Mulati-faceted violence that is part of the lives of people residing in the villages and small towns of India.*

**Keywords:** godan, godaan, premchand, criticism

Premchand was born on 31 July 1880 in Lamahi, a village located near varansi (Banaras). His ancestors came from a large family which owned six bighas of land his grandfather Gur sahai Rai was patwari (village accountant) and his father Ajaib Rai was a post office clerk his mother was Anandi Devi of karauni village who could have been the inspiration for the character Anandi in his Bade ghar ki Beti Premchand was the fourth child of Ajaiblal and Anandi the first two were girls who died as infants and third one was a girl named suggi. His parents named him Dhanpat Rai while his uncle mahabir a rich landowner nicknamed him **“Nawab nawab Rai”** was the first pen name chosen by Premchand.

A study of Godan sheds light on violence that erupts out of the convergence between the feudalistic operations that control the lower castes and the capitalistic redactions that define the upper castes. It reveals the violence that underlines the social laws, rules and norms constructed according to the ideological standpoint of the ruling caste and class. The author focuses on the plight of the poor through his description of the everyday life of a peasant named Hori. He is caught between feeding his family with his meager earnings and trying to pay off the numerous debts leveled on him by corrupt officials. In fact, indebtedness is shown to be the primary socio-economic factor behind the victimization of the peasants and their families premchand discloses that the peasant is at the mercy of not one but several persons who never lose as opportunity to divest the poor man of all he has, several persons lead such parasitic existence on the peasants.

A critical analysis of Godan thus highlights the symbolic violence that culminates from the intersection of axes of power such as caste, class and religion. Patriarchy wields violence on individual by appealing to their code of honor. The basis of symbolic violence lies in the individual's need to obtain validation, and Maintain her or his status within society In Godan the two greatest acts of symbolic violence are the act of giving dowry and the gift of cow. Dowry comprises the gifts presented to the bride on her espousal. In a class based society, the status of the bride's family is measured according to the expense of the gift Hori and Dhania accrue a large amount

of debt during the marriage of their eldest daughter sona. In their desire to maintain false prestige, they reject the prospective bridegroom's proposal of marriage without dowry. Laden with fine clothes and jewels, sona becomes the embodiment of Hori and Dhania's social capital by the time of Hori's second daughter named Rupa reaches marriageable age, he is debt-ridden. He is penniless and incapable of arranging an adequate dowry for his youngest daughter. Hence Hori is forced to marry Rupa off to an old widower. Thus Rupa is another victim of symbolic violence. In the caste-driven village Belari, gifting a cow to a Brahmin is viewed as the most virtuous act for it absolves the gift-giver of all his past sins. Moreover, Hindu ideology promotes the perspective that the gift of a cow is mandatory for man's salvation after death. The entire novel focuses on Hori's desire to own a cow, the Hindu symbol of prestige and prosperity.

Novel tends to assume the form of an epic of common man and everyday life. It realistically describes the various aspects of life. It is rich in social awareness. It is a vehicle to express the rapid socio-cultural changes in modern society. Godan has epic dimensions as it deals with the epic struggle of the Indian peasantry against an established social order. Premchand reveals the pitiable condition of the poor farmers.

### **Central Theme of the Study**

In the beginning of the novel Hori fulfills the foremost wish of his life, that is to buy a cow, an act symbolizing the level of an individual piety, prosperity and prestige in the Brahmin community. However, this act of Hori's quickly spirals into his socio-economic ruination. The Priest Datadin along with other money-lenders get angry for they feel that possession of a cow has somehow made Hori and his wife Dhania less tolerant of the condescending attitude of ruling class of Belari. Also, the mere thought of rise in Hori's esteem among the villagers forces his brother Heera to commit the vengeful act of poisoning the cow. Heera flees after committing the crime, leaving behind his helpless brother to face entire village's accusations and out over the sacrilegious act. The Village officials along with the priest Datadin impose a heavy fine on Hori for committing "cow murder."

Moreover, Hori faces home another economic as well as psychological blow when his son Gobar flees home after impregnating Jhunia daughter of cowherd Bhola after being thrown out of her familial home. Jhunia is forced to seek shelter at the home of Gobar's parents. an honour-bound. Hori's kindness towards Jhunia leads to the imposition of another massive time upon him by the village officials. They are outraged at him for allowing a promiscuous woman to stay at his home. His plight worsens as he is forced to incur more amount of debt in order to plan his elder daughter sona's marriage with pomp and fair. Sona's prospective bridegroom agrees to marry her without making any demands for dowry. yet Dhania declines his offer for she believes that "money comes and goes but prestige lasts" Hori's staunch belief in dharma, his code of honour, and Dhania's sensitivity towards the maintenance of social prestige make both of them the perpetual victims as well as the perpetrators of symbolic violence. soon the time comes to find a suitable groom for their second daughter Rupa. However, the drastic deterioration of their economic condition forces Hori to wed his teenage daughter to a man close to his own age. This act shames Hori a great deal and he cuts himself off socially from others. Towards the end of the novel a physically Frail. Hori is shown working ceaselessly in order pay of his debts.

and to fulfill his cherished dream of buying a cow once again. Ultimately working long hours in scorching weather results in his falling gravely ill. Despite being in his deathbed, Hori continues to lament over things that never came to fruition that his failed attempt to buy a cow. Dhania tries to prepare medical concoctions to save her husband. But Heera along with other villagers puts a stop to her efforts and asks her to gift a cow to Datadin as charity. The novel ends with Dhania requesting Datadin to accept her meager earnings as the equivalent of a cow.

Malti is another character of the novel who is a doctor by profession but is devoid of any qualities that are associated with healing such as compassion, patience, kindness etc. she is a coquette who is more interested in catching the attention of men than paying attention to the sick. Initially Malti discriminates between her patients according to their caste and class. This prejudiced behaviour by Malati forms the basis of her interaction and verbal sparring with Mr. Mehta who is an acquaintance of Rai Shahib. Mr. Mehta is a professor. He is also a self-proclaimed idealist. He is an articulate intellectual and is frequently invited by educational institutes and social-rights motivated clubs to present keynote speeches. Mehta is also very vocal about his views on the role of women in society during his speech at Malati's club "the woman's league" Mehta points out that womankind's attempts to step outside the sexual binaries and interfere in "men's sphere is the greatest shame of the century." Mehta compares woman to a swan and sees man as the eagle. In his view, man's role as a philosopher, scientist, warrior, statesman, navigator, mahatma, founder of religions etc. has mainly been to initiate endless violence. On the other hand he defines woman based on the ideals of sacrifice, selfless service, non-violence and forgiveness. In his view the ideal of love involves successful incorporations within oneself another person's perspective about another person's perspective about one's self. In every situation revolving around love, the lover wants to be the absolute source of all the values of the beloved.

The novel ends with Dhania being forced to part with her meager earnings to appease Datadin over her inability to gift him a cow. The demand for a cow in charity is, in fact put forth by her brother-in-law Heera. The villagers insist upon Heera's suggestion of gifting a cow to Datadin so that he can pray for the recovery of a gravely - ill Hori the scene emphasizes the callousness inherent in the ideology of a caste and class driven society they show a blatant disregard for the fact that Dhania does not even have any money to pay the doctor's bill they are only concerned with upholding social conventions.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To know about the culture of our country through the famous work of the writer; To develop an outlook about the ancient history of Hindi literature; To know about the important changes and movements of the referred period; To create awareness of the famous writers of this period; To study the novel Godan by Premchand; To study the violence in Godan; To study the symbolic elements in Godan; To study the realistic interpretation of Indian village society.

### **Plot of the Study**

The story revolves around many characters representing the various sections of Indian community. The peasant and rural society is represented, by the family of Hori Mahato and his family members which includes Dhania, Rupa and Sona, Gobar,

Jhunia. The story starts from a point a cow as other millions of poor peasants. He purchased, on debt of Rs. 80, a cow from Bhola, a cowherd. Hori tried to cheat his brothers for 10 rupees. This in turned to fight between his wife and his younger brothers, Heera's wife jealous of Hori, his younger brother Heera poisoned the cow and ran away because of the fear of police action. When the police came inquiring the death of cow, Hori took a loan and paid the bribe to the police and was able to clear of his younger brother's name. Jhunia, the daughter of Bhola was a widow and eloped with Gobar after she got pregnant by him. But his determination to pay those 200 rupees and to have a cow to provide milk to his grandson, leads to Hori's death because of excessive work when he is about to die, his wife Dhania took out all the money. She had 1.25 rupees and made Hori pay the priest on behalf of Godan this eventually fulfils the traditional dream of Hori but still his desire to pay back the rupees 200 to his son-in-law and to his grandson remain unfulfilled. Hori is shown as a typical poor peasant who is the victim of circumstances and possess all the deficiencies of the common man but despite all this he stands by his honesty duties and judgment when time requires. He is shown dead partially satisfied and partially unsatisfied.

Getting a cow is something Hori does dream of it. It was his life's ambition. his greatest dream since any ideas of living of bank interest, of buying land or of building a mansion were too grandiose for his cramped mind to comprehend. In fact however, the book begins with his dream being fulfilled but the perfidy of a never-do-we brother means that this happiness lasts only short while. Among the consequences of his having accepted the cow from a herdsman from a neighboring village. Bhola. Hori's son Gobar falls headover heels in love with Bhola's widowed daughter Jhunai But because of criticism Hori did not accept Jhunia. This casts all in dishonor including Jhunia's dad and the whole village is outraged.

Caste is one of the central features of this society. The villagers largely of the same caste and it is the main thing that binds them together making them a sort of extended family. But caste brings obligations with it and violation the rules can mean excommunication. The major problem in the village is that everyone is deep in debt and that the debts keep growing Borrow thirty rupees and before you know it what with fees and compound interest you owe two hundred. Premchand devotes considerable space to money lending Practices, understandable, since money lending, is so central to all their lives cash problems don't only plague the poor and rural; folk, much of the novel also centers around a rich urban class, the zamindar and his circle of acquaintances which includes lawyers, professors, industrialist, doctor's newspaper editor and businessmen, several of them also have money trouble though things work out much more easily for them. The gift of cow is a political novel and Premchand occasionally perches but generally he concentrates more on recounting the lives of these many characters and showing by example. The contrast between village and city life is quite well handled and there is considerable cross-over between the two involving several of the characters. Godan is the main one bridging the two worlds: first he does well in town, but then returns to do the right thing in his village Taking Jhunia back to the city with him everything then goes wrong there.

### **Problems due to cast segregation and Industrialization**

People of different location and their respective castes represent the village. Datadin,

the Brahmin priest represents the uppermost caste; he exploits the lower caste villager's with his various religious sanctions. Hori, Bhola, selia represent the various hierarchies of lower cast in the caste system that existed in India. Growth of capitalistic greedy industrialist who exploit the labour class. Migration of youngsters from the villages to cities, conflicts and tension in cities are some of the problems.

### **Exploitation of the lower class and women.**

Premchand has drawn a realistic picture of the poor peasants exploited by the village zamindar and the greedy moneylenders. The zamindars collected the revenue and imposed time. Here Rai sahib fined Hori for the death of the cow, though he did not kill it. The peasants are unable to pay the debts in time and it gets multiplied with the passage of time. They are caught in a debt trap and they suffer like Hori until their end. The author is advocating the need to end the feudal system that existed in the country. The women characters such as Dhania, Jhunia, selia and Roopa are exploited by the manly love and are dedicated to. All women also struggle a lot from their near and dear ones.

### **Realistic portrayal of the Indian peasantry**

In Godan Premchand gives a realistic portrayal of the Indian gallery of contemporary Indian society. He reveals the pitiable condition of the poor farmers. In the novel Hori is such a victim of this cruel and heartless system. The novel tends to assume man and everyday life. It realistically describes the various aspects of life, it is rich in social awareness. It is a vehicle to express the rapid society-cultural changes in modern society. Godan has epic dimensions as it deals with the epic struggle of the Indian peasantry against an established social order. A famous critic Francis Stoddard remarks in this respect. "A novel is a narrative of human life under stress of emotion. It differs from the epic in that it is a narration of human rather than super human life."

### **A Tragedy of Indian Peasantry**

Godan is Premchand's best novel which concentrates on the poor economic condition of the Indian peasants. In fact Godan depicts the tragedy of Indian peasantry. Hori the protagonist is a God-fearing man who cannot think of violating the tradition values and customs. He has been brought up in an atmosphere of rigid orthodox religious beliefs. He is a very simple and sincere. He is an embodiment of the selfless service and ideals. He silently bears the unjust exploitation by the money lenders. Thus the helplessness and against the powerful money lenders and landlords is the leading theme in "Godan."

### **Blind Faith in Fate**

Blind faith in fate is another theme in this novel. The novelist presents his characters as simple and innocent. His characters like Hori submit to all kinds of exploitation by the rich they have an unshaken faith in the destiny. The hero, Hori says, "It is the voice of God that speaks through the punches, but what is written must happen. Nobody quarrels with fate." As a result, they can never stand against unfavorable circumstances. Here Premchand believes that the best way to study and understand society and its problem is to study an individual with his environment. He also believed that a change in society set up is sufficient to transform the lives of individuals.

### **Struggle of Individual in Social set up**

Thirdly according to the novelist ethos and status play an individual? Here different characters are personification of certain values and ideals for ex. Dhaniya knows that

Jhunia was responsible for their troubles. But she realizes that society judges the rich and the poor by two different moral codes. She says, when the rich commit wrong, no bother to blame them. If the poor commit the same wrong they lose five. The main theme deals with the life history of Hori and his family. In the sub theme we have selected individuals from the city is present a parallel point of view on life. These characters presents modern values and their names are also suggestive on the other have the names of the villagers like Hori Dhania, Jhunia, Gobar and matadin show their rural background. They represent their ethos and status. Here prem-chand is more of humanitarian like Togore rather than Gandhian. He believes that the environment has deep impact on the man's psyche and it shapes the grow of an individual. He asserts the instead of reforming as individual it is better to reform the social set-up which he lives. He wants to re-establish the essential goodness in man's life.

### **The Theme of Love**

Mr. Mehta and Miss Maluti are the living and charming, characters of Premchand. The novelist highlights the theme of love through them. They transcend the limitations of life. They stand for the essential goodness of human heart. They believe that love is pious an sacred feeling. Their notions of love are platonic truth them premchand advocates reforms in social set-up they follow radical and progressive ideas of equality and society.

### **Godan a Social Document**

The present work is an important document of premchand's contemporary society with its problem. The Indian farmer in the centre of the narrative. He is not aware of rights and importance in society premchand's novel has a very important social purpose for him society is not a reflection of the temperament of the age and its people but also serves as a yard stick to sedge their action and conduct. A change in social set-up is sufficient to transform the lives of the individuals the novel also shows the feudal loads like Rai saheb and Hori, the poor. It shows the distance between two worlds and life style.

### **Realism and Symbolism in the Study**

In Godan the portrayal of characters of miss Malati and Mr. Mehta is realistic. Their views on family life and love are objective and authentic. Premchand believes that a stable family life can give an individual the strength to face the hardship in life. Premachand believes in sanctity and the power in Indian family system. He presents his characters with their weakness and qualities. It is the humanitarian approach towards life that makes premchand's novels so appealing and they continue to retain their universal appeal and relevance.

Before the advent of munshi premchand on the literary scene, the majority of in India were virtually without any direction their writings were full of improbable situations and fantasy. Fiction writing was done solely for self gratification and entertainment. It lacked the element of realism and commitment. Premchand was the first novelist who infused the spirit of realism in novel by associating it with social problems. His themes and characters are more closer to life and reality. He gives a realistic portrayal of his contemporary society.

### **Findings of the Study**

Godan is a realistic interpretation of Indian village society; Cow is a symbol of wealth and prestige in rural India; In the novel, we find ideological Mystification and symbolic violence against woman; Godan elaborates on the misery inherent in the lives of the poor people living in India; Godan depicts tragedy of Indian peasants; The novel is vehicle to express rapid socio-cultural changes in modern society; The novel tends to assume the form of an epic of common man and everyday life

### **Conclusion**

Godan the Gift of a cow is a Hindi novel by Munshi Premchand. It was first published in 1936 and is considered one of the greatest Hindustani novels modern Indian literature novels of premchand. Godan was made into Hindi film in 1963 starring Rajkumar mehmood and shashikala. Godan is a story of stark realism, is premchand's most outstanding novel the realism artistry and tenderness with which he has created the characters, here particularly and unsurpassed in the whole fiction of India. Hori is an immortal characters symbolic of the peasantry of this country. The novel is the most realistic interpretation of Indian village society the backbone of India. It is a story of a changing people society, hungry and semi-starved yet hopeful and optimistic in the trust.

The novel is connected with Hinduism. The act of donating a cow in charity or Godan is considered to be an important Hindu ritual as it helps in absolving one of sin and incurring divine blessings. It is nevertheless not essential. The word Dharma has been used 39 times in the novel in different context and by different characters. The word connotes as religious, moral principles and values, conscience and duty, it has a different meaning to each character.

Premchand is very ambitious and he does tell a good story offering a good teeming picture of Indian society of this time still it's more than he can handle and too much is ultimately reduced to a too simplistic novel. But the Book is still impressive and it anything one wishes that he had been more patient and Taken fascinating stories he offers brief glimpses of the novel offers brief glimpses of the novel offers a rich picture of humanity and fairly well presented social criticism. And it's a good engaging to read. Thus, Godan is a masterpiece of Indian literature and the real test of great book is that it retains its relevance and suggestive value in all times. It never fails to answer the questions of its succeeding.

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