



PREMCHAND'S GODAAN: A PROGRESSIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Premchand is known as one of the best literary geniuses of Postcolonial India. He is pioneer in fiction as well as short story. Through his creative works, he has contributed to the Indian language. He uses literary writing to serve his purpose. He is deeply dedicated to the cause of national awakening. He weaves the stories from folklore and gives them a new meaning. He combines the past narrative in the contemporary context. He reflects the strengths of indigenous imaginative writing. He knows where indigenous works requires modified. He is an educator and a crusader for new secular values.

Premchand's Godaan is about the story of peasants in western uttar Pradesh in the beginning of twentieth century India. It showed that the village in thirties was under threat from outside and inside. It symbolized a world of clashing interests. It described the existing levers of state i.e. police economic and religious bureaucracy. It portrayed the conventions, morality and ethics of peasantry in around the social environment. The peasant family consists of the husband Hori, the wife Dhanian and their children Gobar, sona and Rupa. Indian rural scene is known at that time full of economic pressures. The local landowners have direct contacts with the colonial powers. It also stresses the intense political ideological clashes. He captured a colonial experience which we face in our surroundings. The fiction directly hits the Rai Sahib_ Mehta-Malti episode from materialistic point of view. The economic edge of Rai Sahib's exploitation of peasantry can be seen. Under the principles of realism in fiction, the struggle is the best observed through a dramatic interplay between contending viewpoints and responses. Premchand assigned the new role for characters contributing the mass action against injustice. The suffering and the pain weave around the man's helplessness and predicament. Through the characters, he showed the dialectic between the economic and moral aspects. The fiction justifies the progressive urge to see each description of the social scene.

Key words: postcolonial, peasant, existing levers, morality, economic pressure

Post colonialism takes us into the paradigm of the society that confronts us in our times. Premchand's Godaan describes a progressive perspective on the issues we face. It took us directly progressive stance of a kind hearted landlord, Rai Sahib who sought to thrive on the popular support that the villages of his territory would provide him. The economic edge of Rai Sahib's exploitation of the peasantry can be seen as further sharpened by the ideology that most tenants evolved through interpretations of religion, morality and ethics in the novel. He extracted the maximum profit from peasantry's labour. Godaan was written in 1936. The depiction of the village in Godaan is as follows: "What was the village; it was Providence, ten to twelve houses, whose roof was half tiled and collapsing further." (1975:141)



A close study of Godaan mirrored very clearly in the novel. The writer peeped into the minds of many characters in the novel. They are changing and evolving before the eyes of readers. Premchand provided the seminal issues which are political requirement of the time. The village in the thirties was under threat from outside and inside. It symbolized the world clashing interests. India after Independence freed and moved towards some sense of equality and freedom which are projected during the national movements.

Godaan talked about a small number of peasants in a village and as a class they face the problems. . The peasant family consists of the husband Hori , the wife Dhanias and their children Gobardhan, Sona and Rupa. Indian rural scene is known at that time full of economic pressures.

In his review essay 'The Gift of a Cow: A translation of the classic Hindi Novel Godaan by Premchand(Translated by Gordan Roadarmel), Thomas Jandl (2005) points out that Godan sheds light on the issues of traditional and economic development policies in the context of values, beliefs and development of a society. He rightly points out that the novel pictures the role of cultural institutions and the traditional power structure prevalent in India which hinders the economic growth in the name of caste, religion and the sufferings of the poor(2005:201)

It studies about the plight of Indian masses emphasizing the need to question and resist the cynical ways of an exploitative social structure. Hori, the protagonist of Godaan died in the process of facing up to the challenges of living.

Hori, the main character of the novel, 'Godan', is suffering extreme poverty: "Even though Hori had to pay the entire barn of this crop, there was still a loan of three hundred rupees remaining, and an addition of a hundred rupees as interest. Five years ago, he had taken sixty rupees to purchase a bull, he had paid it, but the sixty rupees is still remaining because of the interest added. Hori had grown potatoes with the money thirty rupees taken from Pandit Daatadin. The potatoes were dug up by thieves, and he completed paying it on installments, in the three year period, a hundred rupees had been added as interest." (1975:39)

It can be truly considered a materialist and society centered. The writer continuously poses the questions why the poor peasants become poor. Hori and his two brothers lived together for a few years after their marriage and struggled to survive. The economic hardship suffered by the family under existing pressures created tensions .Premchand is aware of such developments in the life of peasant and share them with the readers. The peasants faced the financial crunch from landlords and the moneylenders. The writer saw this whole arrangement as entirely man-made. He chose minutest smallness and simplicity typifying the difficult existence of a toiler on the land. He presents the arrival of a cow at household is a gorgeous gift from the Almighty. Hori uses manipulation to acquire a cow from a familiar in the neighboring village.

The most excited is the woman of the house, Dhanias , having seen only misery. She feels in her heart the presence of a threat. Hori caught in the web of poverty, a man made thing and trying to find in vain the pattern of its logic. Hori's efforts are devoted to the workings of the world outside himself. Hori thinks of his misfortunes and wants to share his situations .All the village workers are putting their hardships on land belonging not to them. But the land lords squeezed them dry. At the same time these landlords stood for power. Let us see the caste formation in Hori's village. Both Pandit and Sahu belong to the chain of exploitation. This is known the typical situation of the Indian peasant. Hori as a peasant bore the burden of physical sustenance of the family as well as society. He represented the member of the community of peasant s in India. Premchand presents the typical Indian peasant. The novel represents the life of the Indian peasant in its typicality.

The human being in Godaan finds expression in the form of the husband and –wife, Hori and Dhanias. They integrated existence symbolizing the historical evidence. They provide a clear glimpse of tragic helplessness of the historical moment. Through Hori, Premchand has shown the dialectic between the economic and moral aspects. Hori's morality does not get defeated but the economic fact of poverty



swallows it inexorably. Premchand resolved the economic question under the progressive perspective. He showed the contemporary life- processes. People like Hori and Dhanu shall continue to be oppressed, while other will hide their animal greed. They wear the mask of gentleness and culture. Our life is caught in the powerful paradox of economic requirements. The social division of classes led to capitalism preventing men and women from approaching on the plane of humanity.

Helplessness of peasant is a result of his link with the land, orthodoxy and tradition as well as isolation from the revolutionary perspective of the working class. Ruralism may be an escape route from the crisis they are trapped in. Hori's death becomes an assertion of human trait of living with principles meant to bind all member of social group into a vibrant community of dignified individuals. Premchand dared to project his dream in terms of a society that evolved through struggles against forces of justice and violence. He identified such forces of in British imperialism, the Indian caste system and the emergent capitalism would spread its net wide in the decade to come.

The appeal of Premchand lies in this recognition of the forces of oppression in his time. The novel helps us articulate an appropriate response to our world from an angle that sets store by integrity, good will, fellow –feeling and justice. Hori's death brings forward these virtues of a life meaningfully lived. Godaan is a tale of woes and tragic happenings that Hori the peasant. Hori dies at the end of the novel; his comrade –in – arms Dhanu has survived to face the enormous network of the state, as well as social orthodoxy, morality and religion.

The progressive concepts are the notions of multiple dimensions, worlds, the worlds of Hori and the worlds of upper class earlier concern particularly reformatory which valuable in the present context. For the writer of time, if he looked at the general social developments with sympathy and approval, the most important thing was the educative role of literature. Due to the backdrop of imperialist exploitation, India needed a radical political consciousness. Literature should look at the prevalent challenges in the face. He writes the social evils and outdated traditional values. As a progressive writer he belongs to middle class and writes about common people. His progressive and humanitarian attitude towards life is clearly reflected in the novel. He asserts that literature is not a reflection of life in general, but it should have a social function. The aim of the literature is to guide the individual and the society in proper direction.

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