

DEPICTION OF SOCIAL EVILS IN MUNSHI PREMCHAND'S GODAN

Parul Agrawal (Research Scholar)
Department of English,
Banasthali University
Rajasthan

ABSTRACT

Literature reflects all the things which are present in the society. It is correct with the novels of Munshi Premchand as in Godan. Mismatched marriage, exploitation, untouchability, violence against women, have been shown in Godan very beautifully. Through the character of Hori, Dhaniala, Punia, Gobar and Rupa the novelist gets success in the depiction of social evils and ills. Today these social evils are widespread in our society. In the rural areas mismatched marriage can easily be seen, in which the bridegroom is of forty and bride of sixteen and less than sixteen. Casteism has badly affected our development and made the human beings' thinking narrow. Exploitation and violence against women in home and outside of home have made the condition of women deplorable in our country as well as hindered the way of progress of women.

Keywords- Social Evils, Exploitation, Violence against women, Mismatched marriage, Untouchability,

Munshi Premchand's place in the field of Hindi and Urdu literature is prominent. His real name is Dhanpat Rai. He has written in Urdu as Nawab Rai. Premchand is the first Hindi writer to introduce realism in his writings. He has introduced corruption, poverty and colonialism into Hindi and Urdu literature. He has written approximately 12 novels and 250 short stories. His works have been translated into many Indian and Foreign languages. Many of his works are later made into movies and television serials. He has been regarded as "Upnys Samrat". Out of his 12 novels and some novellas, few have been translated into English language. *Godan* (1936) is one of them. Translation has been proven as a major factor for the development of culture all over the world. Translation has now been recognized as an independent field of study.

Munshi Premchand has depicted social evils in his *Godan* such as – mismatched marriage, exploitation, untouchability, violence against women. "Society may be likened to a thorny tree. In the beginning there are no thorns, they appear later on the tree" (Tripathi 30-31). This paper tries to reveal those social evils which are still rampant in our society.

The marriage between young girl to fully grown up man is called Mismatched marriage. Mismatched marriage can be seen in contemporary scenario and it was in practice in ancient time. Parents have to marry their daughters with elderly person due to deficit of money. Sometimes its consequences are bad and sometimes bride endeavours to adjust in life. In 'Godan' the marriage of Rai Sahab's daughter is negotiated with an elderly widower because of deficit of money- "But recently, he had got a wonderful opportunity at hand. He had come across Kunwar Digvijay Singh whose wife Yaksha was no more and it was his ardent desire to get married as soon as possible. The marriage was negotiated in reasonable demands..." (235).

For Kunwar Singh, this wedding is just an expedient chance to enhance his power and influence. This thirty two year old man is the embodiment of all vices like drinking, ganja, charas and all types of intoxication who runs after the rural women of low caste. The novelist wants to show the result of this mismatched marriage in these words- "Meenakshi could not respect such a man from the deep folds of her heart. Her reading habits had made her aware of Women's Right and she started frequenting the 'Ladies club'... Meenakshi did not want to even see her husband's face" (335-6).

Rupa-Ramsewak is another couple of mismatched marriage in Munshi's 'Godan'. The reason is same behind the marriage-deficit of money. Once Pt. Datadin approaches to Hori and informs about Ram Sewak Mahato-"His wife died a few months ago. Unluckily, they had no children. If you want to marry your Rupa to him, I will negotiate the marriage with him and convince him for it. He will value my word. The girl is gaining maturity and it is not good to delay her marriage. It's a bad world indeed. This is a very good opportunity. Your daughter will be married and settled and your farms too would be saved. Moreover, all your expenses would be saved too" (359).

After pondering over this situation Hori and Dhanias have become ready to get married Rupa with Ramsewak. Here Munshi ji has shown the happy relation between Rupa and Ramsewak. "Rupa was happy in her in-laws house. Her poverty-stricken childhood had found the most precious thing to be money. Ample of desires and wishes would wane unfulfilled in her heart. Now they were finding expression into fulfilment and Ram Sewak had become young again. He was husband to her and that was of paramount importance and earned her unquestioned respect, love and devotion" (368).

Exploitation is bestial evil of our society. Unprivileged people are oppressed by aristocrat class. "...all history has been a history of class struggle of struggles between exploited and exploiting between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social development" (Bapuji 25).

Exploitation finds expression in Premchand's Godan effectively. 'Godan' is a true picture of our peasant India. In Godan when Hori's brother Heera has eloped after giving poison to cow who has been standing in front of house of Hori, Dhanias has reported it to police. The Inspector comes to investigate the real condition and wants to hunt Heera's house. On hearing this Hori becomes restless and wants to give money to inspector so that he may not search Heera's house but he is penniless. Then other villagers have decided to collect money to give inspector, seeing this Dhanias reveals the real situation of exploitation in the village-

“...when we were asking for rupees twenty-five to pay back debts, nobody came forward to help us. Today everybody is promptly coming out with palms full of money. I know everything. Here there is a loot waiting to happen, everybody was to be obliged with hushed money at the cost of our lives. This killer is the head of village suckers of blood of the poor. He charges interest, compound it many times whopping up on the principal, be engaged in bribing, sending gifts, whatsoever be the ways, just loot the poor. On the top of it, they also want self-governance. Just going to jail the self-governance won't be available, it would be got by righteousness and lawful activities” (113).

The simple rural man Hori again and again is exploited by the cruel hands of Panchayat. Here Goberdhan, Hori's son has eloped leaving his pregnant lover Jhunia near to his house. Hori and Dhania both give shelter her in their home out of mercy- thinking that she is their daughter-in-law but the villagers dislike it that this type of activities would encourage illegal work in their village. The novelist has depicted the punishment which is given to Hori for a benevolent act- “The panchayat announced its verdict that Hori should be fined hundred rupees and three maunds of wheat” (127). Dhania has spoken in a tearful voice- “Pancho you are harassing a poor person. You people will not be happy. Just keep this in mind” (127).

On hearing this Hori becomes sad and has to bear the punishment-“...Hori carried grains from his barn throughout the night and deposited them in the drawing room of Jhinguri Singh. It was twenty maunds of grains to be deposited, so he carried five maunds of wheat, the same quantity of pea, same quantity of gram and oilseed too” (128).

When Hori is filling grains in the drawing room of Jinguri Singh, Dhania has denied to give the remaining grains because of her children. At this Hori says, if the councillors feel pity on him, they will return something for his children. Boiling in anger Dhania discloses the condition of exploitation again- “They are not councillors, they are demons, the perfect monsters. They all only want to snatch away our lands and fields and usurp our properties. The penalty was only a pretext... How could you hope to get kindness from these devils!” (129).

Farmers have generally been exploited by money-lenders and government officials. Hori, a laborious farmer, suffers for his dependence on these exploiters. He works very hard, grows various crops, yet starves because all his crops have been given away to clear the dues. He makes efforts to protect his family dignity but fails because he is continuously being exploited. When Hori's bulls have been taken by Bhola because he is unable to pay money for his cow. So Hori has decided to work as a labourer in the fields of Datadin but after returning from the city his son Gober denies him to do work in the fields of Datadin saying “What labour? And whose? No one is anybody's slave here, all are equal. Is this a joke? On the hundred rupees that you lend one, you expect him to toil as a slave throughout life? And the principal remains intact. This is not money-lending, this is sucking blood” (223).

On the occasion of Holi, Gober gets mimicry played by different villagers of the money lenders. With this Nokheram gets annoyed and decides to take revenge-“I will set them all right! The scoundrels! First of all, I will file charges against him for non-payment of land revenue. Let them also face the music and realize what I can do...But I have still not given

him the receipt. What proof does he hold that he has paid the taxes? Besides, no one checks the records. I will have him fetched today” (226).

“Hori thus becomes an archetypal peasant of India who is a victim of the deterministic forces like economic poverty and intellectual poverty combined together. He is therefore exploited by the village leaders moneylenders and revenue owners at all the critical moments... He thus becomes an unheroic hero of modern life and is easily comparable to Willy Loman (Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*), Bakha (Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable*), and Choma (Shivram Karanth’s *Choma’s Drum*). The creation and delineation of an excellent character like Hori testifies to Premchand’s keen observation of the harsh reality of rural India and knowledge of human nature in general. Premchand breaks the romantic tradition of India and depicts the social problems of the country in a realistic manner and can be compared to Charles Dickens and Maxim Gorky in spite of the minor difference among them” (Naikar 254).

Violence against women is not only a women’s issue but a social issue also. Violence against women is a direct result of unequal gender power relations. Violence against women is a serious problem in India. Overall one third of women 15-40 have experienced physical violence. Men consider wife battering as their natural rights. There are various forms of violence which are women-rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence etc. The most common causes for women battering include-greed for dowry, refusing to have sex with the partner, desire for a male child, alcoholism of the spouse, going out of home without telling the partner, infertility in females, indulging in extra marital affairs etc.

The orthodox mindset makes them tolerate the suffering without any protest that if she separates from the spouse, children will undergo the hardships.

Munshi Premchand has portrayed violence against women in *Godan*. In *Godan* Heera, the younger brother of Hori beats his wife Punia. Once he has heard that Punia is having a fight with Chaudhari only on a petty reason of bamboo cutting, he has started abusing her. At this she curses her husband. On hearing her cursing language- “...he leapt on Punia and catching hold of her by hair, he started thumping her head on the ground. And dragging her on the ground in this manner, he shouted-If my hands and legs would fall off then what would I do with you!” (35)

In the same novel after hearing the wrong words about Malti from Govindi, Khanna, husband of Govindi has become out of control because he has love feeling for Malti and abuses Govindi- “Khanna’s eyes had turned red and so had become Govindi’s face. Khanna got up in his fit of rage, boxed her ears and gave her three tight slaps on the face” (195).

Casteism and untouchability are other evils of our Indian society. Upper caste people oppress lower caste and think them untouchables. The caste system has been adopted in a positive manner to divide the people to perform their duty in a better way and to make a healthy society. But now the caste system has become a symbol of evil for society. Untouchability is

the direct product of caste system. It is evident in nearly every sphere and practiced in a number of forms in rural India.

In 'Godan' Siliya a cobbler falls in love with Pundit Matadin, who does not accept her as his wife at the request of Siliya's parents. At his denial Siliya's mother angrily reveals the truth of society- "You claim to be a man of religion and supposedly pious and scrupulous. You will sleep with her but will not drink water in cobbler's house." (256)

Thus Munshi Premchand has depicted such type of social evils in his Godan. Today these social evils are rampant in our society which have been presented in this paper. In the rural area mismatched marriage can easily be seen, in which the bridegroom is of forty and bride of sixteen and less than sixteen. Exploitation and violence against women are making the condition of women pitiable in our country as well as hampering the progress of women. Casteism is badly affecting our development and making the human beings' thinking narrow.

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