



Representation of Indian farmer through the eyes of Munshi Premchand

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Abstract

Munshi Premchand was profoundly affected by the wretched conditions of Indian farmers and collaborated the life of farmers through his literature. Farmer, the backbone of Indian culture, has always been a strong link in the Indian economy. Being an agricultural country farmer played predominant role in the history of. Indian culture agriculture is not only the major part of Indian economy but also the part of Indian civilization. Munshi Premchand described the farmers of his time and the complications faced in their live. The farmers of his time lived a very dreadful life and also victims of injustice and exploitation of upper class. Landlord, moneylender, priest and police all were the main source of their exploitation. Farmers were always repressed by them and never get a chance to live with happiness and prosperity. The extent of their exploitation is even to be told that their crop used to balance in the field and they would stand empty handed.

Keywords: farmer exploitation, repression, poverty

Introduction

Indian Literature is incomplete without the greatest contribution of Munshi Premchand. His name is not only a significant in Hindi Literature but also an in comparable to the novelists of Hindi Fiction writing. His name comes to our mind from the entire Indian Literature to epitomize in writing, a perfect blending of historical since wimp literary sensibility. His fiction is attributed to the accurate presentation of his time period. Premchand belongs fifteenth century, where writers used to portray imaginative ideas and believe in art for art sake. But Premchand has contradictory opinions for the work of art. "Art of novel-writing, for him, was nothing but the art of bringing about "radical" change in the social consciousness of his times so as to bring his age in line with the changing value ^[1].

Depiction of reality was initiated by Premchand in Hindi Fiction writings. To prove the point Shiv Kumar Mishra says, "Premchand transformed the whole art of fiction writing and laid the foundation of vigorous tradition of realistic and socially relevant fiction ^[2].

Aim of the Study

The objectives of this paper is represent the idea of Indian farmers through the fiction of Munshi Premchand farmer, the feeder of the country but were exploited since ages. The aim of this paper is to analyze the miserable conditions of farmers and to explore the cause of their miseries and poverty. How the farmer is repressed throughout the life even after the life. The aim of this paper is to disclose the image of landlords, money lenders, Government employers and priest. They were like the curse to the farmers.

Munshi Premchand, the great exponent of novel writing, presents the true picture of society. He raised his voice against social injustice through his writings. The major social issues of his time were dowry system, unmatched

marriage, exploitation of women, peasant and farmers, maltreatment of poor people and the unprivileged class. These are some major evils prevalent in society. The unpleasant conditions of farmers is the crucial issue prevalent in his society, was depicted effectively by Munshi Premchand. He is the messiah of Indian farmers. There was none but only Premchand, who took the very first time, farmers, as the primary subject matter on a very large scale. He gave notable place by making them protagonists in his short stories and novels. Dr. Ramvilas Sharma says, "Not many novels were written in Hindi on the problems of farmers, and the ones that were written lacked the understanding of Premchand ^[3].

India is a land of agriculture from the very origin of Indian culture and it were farmers who made India agricultural country, but the sad part is that the farmers never got the satisfactory place and also face the obnoxious suppression by money lenders, landlords, police and priests also. Premchand has seen the life of farmers from very close quarters and unfold the causes of their exploitation with great sensitivity. In one of his article, 'Krashi Sahayak Banko ki Jarurat', he explained how a farmer has to face unwelcomed consequences of farming, he says, "Agriculture is the main business of India, but there is no one to encourage him, all are to snuff out. He has to die by starving and seeing the face of Mahajan for money ^[4].

Though agriculture was the primary occupation of our Indian society and farmers are food giver since ages, they produce food material for we people, but never treated like an honorable person in our society. They seem to be worthless object in the eyes of rich people. The same kind of exploitation Premchand showed in 'Godan' where Bhola says to Hori, "Who says you and I both are also humans? Where is our humanness? He alone is human who has wealth, power and yoked to plough and to salve for others

¹ (Hasan 94)

² (VII)

³ (44)

⁴ (486)

[5].

It was the time of Pre-Independence and India was a colony of Britishers. Munshi Premchand took birth and till the end of his life, country was not free from the British Government. During that period villages were considerably important for Indian economy than that of today. But the conditions of farmers were extremely awful; they face utmost poverty just because of the faulty system of foreign Government. During that era feudalism was extensively prevalent in India. These landlords were the richest person of the society. They got huge parts of land from their ancestors without doing hard work and lived a very comfortable life. They never worked in the fields. They were the blood sucker for Indian peasant. Inder Nath Madan writes about the characteristics of landlords, "The landlords are effete, morally destitute, subservient to authority, lacking in all elements which go to make up character [6].

They were the steward of the British Government and appointed to collect the rent from the people. This feudalism was curse for Indian farmers because landlords have no pit even for their own people (country man). They tortured the poor peasants and imposed heavy rent on them just to maintain their luxurious life. Premchand presented the reality of these cruel landlords in his Vividh Prasang; the humiliation is that even today the zamindar sahab considers him to be the owner of the land. Before the British Government, his position was that of the brokers, those who were kept to collect rent on behalf of the emperor and were taken out if they couldn't pay rent, and with a lot of insult. Their reputation a batch that helped to establish his rule over the people, took work from those who collected these rents. From that they started thinking of themselves as the owner of the land [7].

Premchand's short-stories, novels, letters and complete literature are filled victimization and their ill-treatment by every section of society. Through the story Updesh, his satires on the ignorant attitude, towards farmers, he writes of Pandit Devrath, He has special love for agricultural subjects. Whenever he sees the description of any new manure or new invention in the letters, immediately mark it with red pencil, and used to discuss in his article. But even though he has a big village, a little away from the city, he was not familiar with any of his assumes. In the story, Pachtawa, Kuwar Vishal Singh said, "The outstanding rent will be paid on these farmers, and I will auction the crop, will swell when they die hungry. Offer the money that has been recovered to the seed and loan account [8].

Thus their life was not a bed of roses but had to move on thorns for their survival. Their life passed on through the triple exploitation cycle of foreign Government, landlord and mahajan. Due to their forced demands and exploitation, all the produce of the farmers was balanced in their fields, and they used to stand there empty handed. The farmers had nothing left to sustain themselves. They were forced to take loans for living. Consequently they were deeply involved in debt and this debt piled up day after day. Ramvilas Sharma, a very famous critic of Munshi Premchand, indentifies indebtedness as the prime cause of peasant's problems. Farmers are bound to pay agricultural fine and after paying fine they become penniless and had to take debt for their

livelihood and once they took debt, they never come out of it. Premchand explained in his novel Godan, 'A loan was like an unwelcome guest, who, once in the house, dug himself into a permanent fixture [9].

At one place we see Hori was thinking about his debt, "In this crop, even after weighing everything in the barn, there were some 300/- loan on him, on which someone used to grow 100/- interest. Lagaan was also left with 25 and on the day of Dussehra, money was also to be made for the omen [10]. One more desperate situation showed by Premchand here, 'Five mouths to feed and not a crumb in the house. Already heavily in debt, another loan was ruled out [11]. These Mahajans took such a heavy interest on simple amount of loan. Mangroo son has given 50 rupees to Hori, which was become 300 in 10 years. He took 30 rupees from Dulari sahuain before five years back and when it became 100 in three years, got sampled and in next two years increased 50 rupees interest [12]. All the farmers of the village-Hori, Shobha, Heera, Gierdhari's all are drowned in debt. As soon as the harvesting starts, from one side dulari comes, another side Mangru, on third side Pandit Dattadin & fourth side Lala Pateshwari and Jhinguri Singh's power. They all are like devils that will die by recovering their debt [13].

So these farmers faced starvation, illness, ignorance, misery and death, their future is completely dark and it is hard to find a ray of hope or light in their lives. Premchand wrote in Vividh prasang which shows the agony of farmers in debt:

"Who does not know that the farmers of India are badly buried under debt? Almost of their work is done through debt-seeds take it from sud or pathos. He also borrowed bulls from the traders who ferried. They had to take a loan to protect their honor-marriage, hotness, pilgrimage. Many of landlords and money lenders make laborers to farmers and peasants for the whole life by lending them fifty rupees [14].

Nobody was behind in repressing the farmers; everybody kept their greedy eye on the farmers. Even the Government employee, police and priest were not giving relaxation to farmers.

In the event of the death of Hori's cow, the policeman come for investigation and tried to get some money from them. It was Dhaniya who saved Hori from this conspiracy. Purohit Dattadin was above the police and Mahajan in the exploitation of farmers. All of them exploited Hori while alive but high priest Dattadin extends his hand for Godan, ever after the death of Hori. It was a very athletic scene when Dhanian has only twenty paisa, that too taken by Dattadin without thinking. There is a statement of Ramsevak from Godan, which depicts the harsh cruelty of the rich and depicts the high culmination of exploitation he says.

Police station, courts are all there to protect us, but nobody does defense. There is loot all around. Everyone is ready to cut the neck of the poor and helpless. The farmer here is the soft fodder for everyone. It is difficult to stay in village, if you do not pay attention to Patwari. Station officer and constable both are like sons-in-law, when they move around

⁵ (22)

⁶ (98)

⁷ (506)

⁸ (233)

⁹ (85)

¹⁰ (39)

¹¹ (130)

¹² (186)

¹³ (196)

¹⁴ (483)

to village, it is essential dharma for farmers to honor them and persuade them with offerings, and the consequences come out in unfavorable manner for villagers^[15].

This is a fine example of their deprivation and there is no end to their atrocities. This system also called free without payment or we can define it with forced labour without Payment Rahul Pandey defines it, "just as obtaining births is a birth right of a Government employee, giving physical or financial forced labor is an essential requirement of life for farmers^[16]. It is very much found in Godan, Karmabhumi, Premasharm, Sevasadan and many of his short stories.

Premchand showed in Sevasadan that their religious hobbies were also fulfilled by forced labor given by the famers. In another novel karmabhumi Premchand said, "Sometimes thakur ji born, sometimes marriage, sometimes yagyopaveet, sometimes Jhula, sometimes there is a water park. Assamies had to be forced to perform forced labor on these occasions; mend dispositions had to be paid under the names of "Prayer-offerings"^[17].

The conditions of farmers were extremely pathetic but a positive thing had started at that time, which was that the farmers now started speaking for their rights. Premchand's farmer was not less than anyone; he is also seen speaking for his right from place to place. Sometimes he is giving statement against the injustice.

In Kayakalp, Premchand has shown farmers speaking against forced labor. The preparations for the Tilak festival are going on all around and the people are continuously working day and night are not going to ask for their food. A youth says at the culmination of this atrocity, 'we are giving grass for eight days without eating, will horses not sun even for a day without eating? Have the horses gone by us?'^[18]

Apart from this I quoted one more sarcastic conversation between a pesant and Thakur. Actually it was a farcical drama staged on the occassion of Holi. The peasant comes and placed for ten rupees and finally Thakur consents to lend him ten rupees. At this he is surprised and says, 'They are only five, master'.

'They are not fine; they are ten. Go home and count them.

'No, master, they are actually five'.

'One rupee as your nazrana,' syas the money lender.

'Yes, master'.

'One rupee for the draft'.

'Yes, master'.

'One rupee for the Government paper'.

'Yes master'.

'One rupee as dasturi'.

'Yes master'.

'And five rupee cash. Does it make ten or not?'

'Then master, keep these five rupee with you', syas the peasant.

'What a fool you are!'

'No, master, one rupee as nazrana to the senior Thakurani, one for pan beeda. One rupee as nazrana for the junior Thakurani and another for pain beeda. And the balance, of one rupee for your cremation sites^[19].

Here the last statement is filled with irony and shows the

determination of farmer against the maltreatment of rich people.

Apart from this the sufferings of farmers were not going to stop here. Just to repay their debt they had to sell their daughters even. Premchand demonstrates this aging in the life of Hori, when he takes 200 rupees to pay his debt and marries his daughter to Ramsevak. It was his highest defeat.

Conclusion

Thus it is right to say that Premchand has always given his voice for the betterment of common people. He devoted his life the exploration of social evils. He had a keen intellect to differentiate between what is fruitful and what is not to reconstruct the society on the basis of equality and fraternity. He had firm faith in human justice and remorselessly fought against everything which he contemplates as stumbling block in the path of social progress. He recognized the fact that the ending of landholding is the significant step, should be followed by the Indian Government. Being a social reformer Premchand believes in giving the solution with spreading the awareness. So the outlook of farmers' life and the complexities of their life are very practical and the solutions given by author are very beneficial to them.

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¹⁸ (93-94)

¹⁹ (201-202)

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