

CONCLUSION

What this analytical journey has tried to demonstrate through the analysis of the short stories of Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand is that the authors had perfectly positioned their short stories contextualizing with a specific social, political and economic contemporary issue. Contextualizing the short stories is an important motif for Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand. It is wonderful to see that their contextualizing reflects the respective Russian and Indian societies as successfully as Yoknapatawpha for William Faulkner, Wessex for Hardy and Malgudi for R.K Narayan. They contextualise more truly than any other writer. The elements of history, politics, sociology, economy, culture and nationality inherent in their short stories are the main factors responsible for the intensification of the characters' feelings. Thus, closer the context, the tenderer and deeper is the issue raised by them. This equation is clearly demonstrated in their short stories.

This study has included the original script with endnotes and a structural analysis of the selected short stories of Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand. Social as well as historical backgrounds of the characters are presented. This background includes the history as it pertains to Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand and the national mindset in prerevolutionary Russia and India.

This background which formulates the contexts is integral not only in the development of the character, but also in the script which supports the characters of the short stories. Much of what is contained in the short stories is from elements of history, politics, sociology, economy, culture and nationality

of these writers to which correspondences, anecdotes, and written material from and about Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand strongly support. These materials are perfectly used in the short stories as interpretive tools in the development of the characters, and included clues to physical appearance of the authors' personality and its contextualising.

The short story analysis contained herein this study is, in part, a reflection of the historical and environmental contextual concerns. In addition to all this, external and internal portrayals of the characters and the means used to achieve them are being discussed. These means included emotionally and energetically presence of the active authors.

Since this study falls under a comparative interrogation, the active contexts of both the writers has taken the form of the texts and characters have reflected their subsequent ideologies. This phenomenon, and its effect on the readers, is the basis of this study. The acting approach in execution of the contexts is also reflected in the study, which contains a record of the successes, challenges, choices and adjustments made by Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand in the process of writing these selected short stories. Included among these are the various adjustments made by them in order to achieve a highly perfect level of spontaneity in the narration, propagation of their respective ideals, and the semi improvisational approach which aided in adjusting to each unique context in reading.

The contextual or historical background necessarily incorporates for a complete view of the character of Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand's short stories. To discuss first Chekhov, this background information includes the political, social and cultural happenings of the late imperial period of

Russia. Consideration is given basically to the period of Anton Chekhov's life, the years he lived between 1860-1904. The social and political upheavals during this era of Russian history are the precursors to the 1917 communist revolution that followed. The Russians, during this period, were experiencing a change from the previous era. In addition to all this, various key examples of the Russian mindset are detailed.

Almost for two hundred years earlier to the birth of Anton Chekhov, Russian nation had been under the cruel control of a Tsarist autocracy which had long depended on a strict class system, began with the nobility and leading down to the gentry, peasant, and the serf classes. This kind of social organizational set up made it possible to sideline a central governance and control the production of agricultural inputs, which were significant for the economy.

The demolition of serfdom in 1860 was a kind of catalyst for a restructuring of an old economy. This old economy was powerfully linked to the social stratification present at this time in Russia. The serfs were at the low levels of society, overseen by all the land-owning gentry, for whom they worked. This arrangement was a backbone of the agriculture that drove a large part of the Russian economy. The issue of serfdom reached at a violent, protest-filled height at the middle of the century, prompting government action to peasant's revolt and a strong public opinion against the firm feudal institution. Soon after the serfs were completely freed, the government began to turn over some sort of rule to local governing bodies, that is, called zemstvo. The zemstvo reforms were enacted in the year 1864, in reaction to the fact that the gentry could no longer be governed and organized the newly

freed serf population. Chekhov himself had direct experience with zemstvo, working together with the local governments in both Melikhovo and Yalta to organize all and everything from the famine relief to the construction of the schools and libraries.

Another effect of the abolition of the serfdom was upheaval in caste system of Russia. Without the serfs as free or cheap labour, many of the gentry classes found it economically impossible to flourish. At the same time, the serfs were being displaced in an economy and social structure by the growing middle class (Riasanovsky 188). This middle class was created almost by a climate of the “reform” in 1860s Russia, which the Tsar Alexander II had instigated out of the economic necessity and peasant unrest (Riasanovsky 168). This was a time of new bureaucracies, such as a zemstvo and the civil service, and the reform also hastened the industrialization and the creation of a new urban working class (Riasanovsky 172). Ruler Alexander II’s reforms stopped sort of a constitutional government, however, and thus began the powerful anti-Tsarist sentiment throughout the country (Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia 99-100). The Tsar bore many assassination attempts, culminating in his death in 1881.

Alexander II’s son, Alexander III, ruled Russia for the next fourteen years (1881- 1894). His reaction to the assassination of Alexander II was to cease all progressive reform measures (Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia 101), and to re-establish a strong central control. This did not, however, cease the protest activities, particularly among all the intelligentsia and students at the universities.

Since the loss of Crimean war in 1856, the intelligentsia and the writers had openly criticized the Russian autocracy for its inflexibility and also for falling behind all the cultural and technical advances of the Western countries (Offord 45-46). By this time, Anton Chekhov had begun his career as a writer and the political protest was reaching its culmination, both in print and in the streets. This period of the late 1880s and 1890s reflected, in many ways, the great cultural and the political upheaval of 1960s United States (Hingley Russia 134). Like the United States in the 20th Century, 19th Century Russia had, specifically by late mid-century, swung politically from a kind of patriotic, nationalistic state to the period of upheaval and questioning. Like United States's Vietnam experience, Russia's failure in Crimean War generated various questions about Russia's political and the economic priorities. A good deal of this kind of questioning was generated by all the intellectuals and the youth power of Russia.

Much protest was occurred in university campuses, where almost all the intelligentsia held sway over the new views of young students. Nihilism, generated by a distrust of authority and the elevation of an individual, took root (Riasanovsky 174). Populism was also experienced resurgence, due to the terrible famines and epidemics which gripped the Russia in the earlier years of 1890s. One of the leading proponents of the Populism in the press was Mikhailovsky, same leftist critic and the Marxist who had reviewed Chekhov's literary work (Offord 98-99). At the death of Tsar Alexander III in 1894 and the ascension of his son, the weaker Nicholas, the political opposition to the autocracy reached its zenith. Overall, the period from 1881 until 1904, year of Chekhov's death, was an intense time of the change. Due to

the modernization and a history of protest leading up to it, the autocracy had more difficulty in controlling opposing public opinion and the unrest (Moss 52). Leo Tolstoy became the primary critic of Russian society as a whole, and the Russian Orthodoxy in particular. For his pains, he was then excommunicated (Moss 53). The Orthodox Church, like the autocracy, was the singular power. This was resulted in the intolerance and persecution of the other religions, and the Jews suffered most particularly. Other writers, as Maxim Gorky, were exiled or arrested for political views, but this did nothing to stop the tide of the anti-Tsarist sentiment.

Despite their political predilections, writers in Russia were a part of the period of greatness in the arts. In Chekhov's time, there were the restraints on certain forms of the political expression, but the artistic expression was flourishing. Chekhov himself had to deal with the possibility of the censorship when working with the imperial theatres like the Alexandrinsky, which had the hierarchy leading to the Tsar himself (Frame 20). Still, the free artistic discourse was the order of the day and such arguments as to merits of the Symbolism versus Realism (Frame 13) were the lively ones. First of all, Chekhov had to deal primarily with the Tsar-approved theatres, most of them were in St. Petersburg, a long-acknowledged cultural capital. But the gradual death of the theatrical monopolies in the Europe had its effect. In 1881, the Russia abandoned the monopoly system as well. (Frame 12)

The independent theatres sprung up in the latter days of 19th Century, foremost among these being the one and only Moscow Art Theatre. There, of course, Chekhov would flourish as a playwright. In literary circles Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Gorky achieved the international prominence. This

was not a mean feat, considering that Russia was struggling to pull itself out of several hundred years of the isolation. The Russian classical music was also on a zenith level, with such great people as Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Rubinstein. This period saw the Russian music heavily influenced by the European Romanticism (Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia 222- 24). The overall success and the advancement of the Russian artistic and literary endeavors stood in the stark contrast to her struggles in developing socially and economically.

The society of Russia in late 19th Century is inevitably related to the historical experience. This past experience had created the mindset among the Russian nationals. This was uniquely carved out by the history, economics, ethnic orientation, world view and the long-established ways of living the daily life. In the case of Anton Chekhov, this mindset was begun by his birth as a peasant in the caste society. In spite of the abolition of the serfdom in the year of his birth, 1860, the caste system was still ingrained in the fabric of the Russian society and therefore in its people. Being a serf or peasant in the 19th Century Russia would not tend to bring the feelings of inferiority. This is due to the fact that the individual rights and expectations were predetermined by the caste into which a person was born (Gorer and Rickman 94). It was an infrequent occasion when the member of a caste was allowed to marry outside that structure, for example. It is also interesting to note that, while child-rearing was usually done in a responsible manner, there would have been no romantic notion of the modern love attached to the process. There would not have been any sense of the masculine or feminine fulfillment attached to the child bearing, as it was viewed as an inevitable facet of the life (Gorer and

Rickman 95). The work habits for rural peasants would have long been centered on system of the seasons. The harvest and the planting cycles served to provide not only the frame of the reference for the passing of the time, but the rhythms of the everyday life. In Chekhov's time, these attitudes and the life ways would have still been quite prevalent. Because of the freedom from the legal caste restraints he was free to advance socially and intellectually. As his grandfather had to purchase his freedom during the serf era, in the same way, his family had been free to pursue the interests in business, art and the literature even before the abolition. In a nutshell, Chekhov had the freedom to become a cosmopolitan.

But Chekhov could not have easily escaped the psychological traditions of the old culture. For example, the Russians of his time frequently looked upon themselves as having opposing qualities. Being humane meant, at that time, also being cruel; being the industrious had its antithesis in the laziness. This latter contrast is the example of the phenomenon of the *strada*, a suffering related to the short bursts of the energy and work expended in the traditional country life. This would have followed all the age old dictates of the seasons where, for example, the flurry of the harvest activity would be followed by the inactivity in the winter (Hingley 34-35). Chekhov himself always joked about his "Ukrainian laziness," yet he himself proved to be the exceptionally hard worker.

Anton Chekhov certainly understood the concept of the *toska*, which is the feeling of yearning or the longing, often for that which is the unattainable (Gorer and Rickman 149). Here are evidences of this in Chekhov's writings, nothing more obvious than the longing for Moscow and the better life in *The*

Three Sisters. Another interesting point of seemingly opposing behaviour is the love of togetherness that coupled with the tendency to be uncooperative. The communes and the collectives were familiar to the Russians before the Revolution of 1917. The unanimity was highly prized in the decision making there, and the Russian Orthodox Church had the sense of strong community mindset. However, the group action, as opposed to the mindset, involved a lot of the individual counter action and the resistance (Hingley 122-25). The resistance was often passive, and based on the orientation towards the individual concerns. This could be construed as the prototype for Chekhov's depiction of the close knit groups who could not act in the concert with one another. Related to this phenomenon of the emotional community coupled with the resistance is the "failure to communicate," seen in his short stories characterized by no communication on the surface level, but the agreement on a sympathetic level. (Hingley 127)

These examples of the long-held attitudes and the behaviours were supplemented by a so-called higher culture that Chekhov was exposed to by his upward mobility. The intellectual attitudes which mentioned earlier were certainly familiar to him, which was the critical concept of the truth-verity versus the truth-justice (Riasanovsky 179). The former correlation is referring to the objective truth, which Chekhov vigorously supported in many of his scientific observations. The latter refers to the subjective truth, which Chekhov came to the terms with later in his life. Subjective truth is that which is related to envisioning the best society for all the people. Chekhov roundly criticized the writers who used the subjectivity to get their point across the issue, but also came to realize, through many of his experiences at the Sakhalin and his

clinic practice, that this kind of projection of a better social reality definitely had its place.

Intellectual Russia of the late 19th Century was certainly emerging from a period of the great Romanticism. The romantic notion of the late 19th century Russia was effectively destroyed by the questions that were being raised by loss of the Crimean War in 1856. The imperial supremacy was suspected thereafter, and the Russian economy was beginning to be scrutinized. The tendency of Russia to idealize the Tsar and treat their leader's will as the mysterious and divine (Gorer and Rickman 166-69) had been seriously eroded by the loss in war and reforms that brought new freedoms to the Russians as a whole. The public opinion became the catalyst in the emerging, modern country. The addition of the industrial business caused capitalism to be introduced, and new economic freedoms gave more power to the emerging urban middle class. Many universities opened in latter part of the century, giving the youth a forum for advancement as well as for the debate and protest. Reforms of Alexander II were like a genie in the bottle and, once released, could not be completely rescinded, even amid the reactionary environment of his son, Alexander III.

The new, emerging Russia was one that Chekhov was to expose when he came to the Moscow city as a medical student in the year 1879. There Chekhov observed and read about the changes occurring in his own country, but he did not accept himself to be swept away by that. Instead, Chekhov was enthralled with the science and medicine, both of which were in the period of the huge advances. Ivan Pavlov's studies of the conditioned reflexes was during this period, and Alexander Popov created the first radio receiver in

1895 (Riasanovsky 192). At the same time, the Russian literature was also enjoying the period of greatness. Chekhov's foray into writing began at the same time he was in medical school. With the swirl of political change, new ideas in the social reforms and student protests, he began using the observation from the science to write about what Chekhov had experienced in his life. In spite of Chekhov's love for Moscow and his experiences of abroad, many of his stories and plays mirrored his rural experiences, his knowledge of all the old systems of the peasantry and gentry and his keen observation of Russian mind.

In various ways, Chekhov was like his country Russia. Clashing and merging of the old, the rural ways and the new industrialism or the intellectualism was a part of both the fabrics. The reflecting-image aspect of Russia's mindset: the humane and cruel, the community mind and the sense of the individual, had manifested itself in politics and the culture of the land. Chekhov observed and absorbed the best of both the worlds. On the more immediate level, he had great love for the both: the individual and the greater good; both: the steppe and the city of Moscow. He maintained almost all these connections through management of his country estates at Melikhovo and Yalta; his closeness to his family; and travel all over the Europe and Russia. In his later years, the social and political questions played on Chekhov more powerfully, but he never tried to leave the roots of his art, the peasant blood, the love of science and the observational skills.

The above mentioned contextual factors got reflections time and again in the short stories of Anton Chekhov. The short stories of Chekhov discussed in the earlier chapters have an impression of these historical, national, rural,

cultural and political aspects of Russia of Chekhov's times. Same is the case with the short stories of Munshi Premchand.

The contextual or historical background is necessary for a complete view of the character of Munshi Premchand's stories. This background information includes the social, political and cultural highlights of Indian freedom movement. Consideration is given primarily to the period of his life, the years 1880-1936. The social and political upheavals during that period in Indian history are the precursors to the 1947 independence that followed. The people of India, during most of that period, were experiencing change from the previous era.

Munshi Premchand was writing during the first half of the twentieth century when India was facing colonialism, imperialism and National Liberation Movement. He wrote on numerous subjects touching almost each and every aspect of the contemporary Indian social and political life. Right from the beginning of his creative life, he advocated the cause of farmers, exploited people and marginalised sections of society. He understood that the writers have a mission to envisage revolutionary changes and they must perform a committed role in nurturing the literary and artistic trends which bring awakening and freshness to the society and throw light on the real problems of the people. Premchand resigned from his government job in 1921 after attending the public meeting addressed by Gandhiji in which he appealed people to join the non-cooperation movement and he contributed to the Freedom Movement as a writer-activist.

Premchand's writings are voluminous, ranging from the novels, plays, short stories, essays and the journalistic writings with the extensive notes on

the contemporary subjects that reshaped the very course (including content and the form) of Hindi literature, which got immensely influenced by his style and narrative technique.

Literature, for Premchand, becomes the beacon for the politics that guides it at all the directions. Literature is exploration for the harmony, having equality, liberty, solidarity, the compassion and independence as the salient principles to cherish with the idealistic realism that generates the dynamism, struggle and the uneasiness and a new kind of aesthetic sense that has to be evolved and generally testifies a sense of the independence, essence of aesthetics, soul of reconstruction and the regeneration embedded in the problems of human life.

This understanding of literature led Premchand to write on the different contemporary issues, which were being faced by his own times. He also wrote on the many problems of Untouchability along with other topics in his journalistic writings, novels and short stories. In the beginning, he wrote with the Gandhian outlook but with the passage of time, got influenced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In his later writings, Premchand considered many of the problems of Untouchability that cannot be resolved unless the inherent exploitative Caste System is eradicated and the *Dalits* are the economically empowered and politically assertive ones. He regarded Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the unparalleled leader of a community and got the inspiration from the on-going *Dalit* movement that Dr. Ambedkar was leading at the time of the first half of the twentieth century.

Premchand is always blamed for having a kind of soft corner for the oppressed. In most of his short stories Premchand portrays this class as the one

with a heart of gold and having no fault whatsoever they commit. They just work hard to make both the ends meet, and even then they always remain the oppressed.

The years between 1930 and 1940 were the crucial years in the history of the twentieth century: India in general way and for the *Dalit* movement in the particular. These years witnessed the important developments during the great National Liberation Movement e.g., the Civil Disobedience (1930-31), the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (March 5, 1931), the Second Round Table Conference, the Communal Award (August 1932), the Government of India Act, 1935 and the twenty-eight months of the Congress Rule, the peasants uprisings and the more intensive attack on the British *Raj*.

This was the same period when the northern India was also experiencing the *Dalit* uprisings and the political consciousness among the *Dalits* got enhanced with its political articulation and the expression. All these developments, particularly Dr. Ambedkar's leadership was extensively influencing the very shape and the expression of political consciousness among the *Dalits*.

It is important here to note that during this time, the *Dalit* movement was trying to explore the new possibilities for autonomy, their identity, the mobilisation and empowerment with the dynamic leadership of Dr. Ambedkar. Now the fact was that the *Dalit* movement was shaping itself, not specifically on the lines of the 'Reformative movements' but really attempting to create the alternative socio-cultural structure for the egalitarian society.

In north of India, there was a political assertion during the mid-1920s to 1930s by the *Dalits* in the shapes of the *Adi Hindu* Ideology, the *Bhakti*

Resurgence and the challenge to the Arya Samaj's *Shuddhi abhiyan*. Recent researches on the *Dalit* movement are highlighting the various levels of assertion during these years. For example, the leaders like Swami Acchutanand and Ram Charan were highlighting the importance of education, the economic independence, the social and religious reforms and asserting the dignified self-identity that is inherently political with equality. Swami Acchutanand there organised a massive Untouchable Conference in 1922 at the Old Fort, Delhi and he proposed a seventeen point Charter of Demands then to the Prince of Wales. That Charter primarily asked for a political representation of the *Dalits* in all the local and provincial bodies.

The then Secretary of State, responding to the Charter of Demands, ordered the nomination of one representative from the *Dalits* to the local bodies. It was also then ordered to all the district authorities that Swami Acchutanand would be given permission to organise the conferences and rallies wherever he wanted. This was a kind of significant achievement and Swamiji then subsequently, organised the several rallies and conferences in the different parts of Uttar Pradesh and then attended such events in the other provinces of the country for the cause of *Dalit* empowerment.

Ambedkar's influence was significantly spreading in the north part of India and the people from the *Dalit* community were making conscious attempts to challenge the *Brahmanical* Caste System at all the possible levels: intellectual, political and social with the explorations from the historical anecdotes: the popularising Ravidasji and Kabirji; establishing the contacts with the Marathi *Dalit* Literature; proliferating the ideas of Phule and Dr. Ambedkar; and participating in the Freedom Movement with the vision of

Independent India where the equality, liberty and fraternity could be ensured to all the nationals.

Thus, it becomes clear that years between 1930 and 1940 were very crucial in the history of the *Dalit* movement in the Indian sub-continent and the developments during these years had a positive impact on the movement. There was an all-round challenge was being felt in all walks of life then to the *Brahmanical* social and caste system. Hindi literature was also started responding to these *Dalit* issues and Premchand became the prominent writer to address these types of issues in his literary works.

The most important characteristic quality of the literary writings of Munshi Premchand, signifying the traditional Indian mindset, is his everlasting sympathy with the downtrodden people. Premchand's association with the Progressive Writers' Association is better understood and well known, and hence this kind of feeling of sympathy seems to everybody arising from the left-wing politics. The short stories are replete with many Hindu mythologies in which the Gods themselves support the weak (for instance, Rama supported Sugreev against his brother Bali; Krishna favours the Pandavas against the Kauravas). His very famous short stories are those that explore the plight of the downtrodden, those who live and die poverty-stricken, and also those who deal with the untouchability, and do not hesitate in condemning the well-to-do moneylenders and the landlords who belong to the upper castes.

The social and economic condition of the Indian people belonging to the marginalized sections is a topic much debated and discussed all over the world. In an economy like India, with around 70% of the total population

living below the poverty line, and more than 80% of the population engaged in agriculture for their employment, and there were no sufficient opportunities for the poor people to improve their conditions. Despite the social reformative efforts by the people like Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar and also by the writers like R.N. Tagore who gave their voice to these people by pointing out their problems in front of that section of society which just ignored their situation, the scenario was improving but only in a snail's pace. People were so poor at that time that they were not able to manage a proper food to satisfy themselves. They were continuously oppressed by the people of upper sections in the society. The upper castes had always considered them as lower even than the animals or any inferior breed. Most of the people in India were born in poverty, lived in poverty, and died in poverty.

Reflecting his cosmopolitan attitudes, Premchand's Marxist ideologies are evident within his short stories in which he incessantly supports the cause of the oppressed and criticizes the powerful or the oppressors. Though he has written on a number of themes including the nationality, romance, the Indian middle class, and the discrimination on the basis of gender, it is his sympathy with the poor classes that makes him stand out from the rest of the literary authors. It is also very important to understand the background from where he came, as many believe that he himself had faced the similar hardships to help him painting in a more realistic portrait of them.

Thus, it becomes clear that both Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand share similar backgrounds which subsequently serving as the contexts of their short stories. It would positively help in contextualizing the short stories of both the writers. In order to do that, this study draws primarily

on their experiences and the conclusions, the outlines of the targeting issue. The synthesis of their philosophical conclusions about life begins with the history of their life; where they had been, what they had done, who they had known and what effect this had on their literatures.

Thus, this study is an attempt towards understanding the social and the economic contexts of the marginalized sections of the society during the last years of the 19th and earlier years of the 20th century by studying the contextual portrayal of these sections in the short stories of Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand, finding out the important themes therein, and then finding out the relevance of these themes in today's society.

Anton Chekhov, today accepted the world over as an unsurpassed master of the short story, had to overcome innumerable difficulties in his early years and to struggle against many moribund traditions before he gained the recognition of both readers and critics and took his place in the world of great literature.

Though Chekhov himself believed that everything he had written would be forgotten in a few years, he nevertheless realized that he was breaking new paths in literature. An author's originality is not only in his style or the technique but also in the mode of his thinking, in his convictions, etc. Thinking all this Chekhov made innovations both in the ideology and style. The artist, as he believed, must have always a new word to say. He must find a new angle or range from which to look at the outside world, at the life which surrounds him and all the people he depicts, and all this means that he must also find a new kind of way of revealing this phenomena in his art. He must find a new form for his works.

The Russian literature of the period immediately preceding Chekhov (the sixties and seventies of the 19th century) showed a great tendency to follow the trends of the magazine essay; Chekhov whole heartedly endeavoured to re-establish the short story in its own right. His short story is always a “snapshot” photographed by a master painter; a sketch or the draft that has, nevertheless, crystallized into an integral, the finished product with its own specific rules of the style.

Some of the sketches, studies or portraits of Chekhov which at first sight claim to do nothing but more than play up a curious incident in everyday life, depiction of some accidental meeting or conversation, photography of some moment in the lives of very ordinary human being, suddenly and unexpectedly reveal the broad picture of the Russian life to the reader. That is why world renowned writers and critics have spoken very admiringly of Chekhov’s ability to create an unforgettable story out of simple, everyday material.

Indian culture is reflected through its villages, and Premchand, in his literary writings portrays every aspect of the Indian culture. He commands the living, the language, and the characters of his time, and the time itself, which it is said keeps changing. Even if one looks at the villages of these times, he or she does not find the conditions of poverty and helplessness as fully changed. If they have changed, they have changed for the worst. His writings are as relevant today as they were at the time they were written, and this makes him a great story-teller and a writer of excellence.

Premchand was a writer who did not rely on a kind of ‘readymade tent’ to connect with his readers. He used to dig in the psychology of his characters

in search of the characters of his writings. He did not try to portray a character as innocent only to project him or her as an ideal. It is said that the History remains always the way it was, yet everything seems always fictional, and story is mostly fictional, but it seems to be real. His writings move ahead with the time, hence there is no scope for the stagnancy. He made efforts to change the face of the society to make it always worth living. But he does not hold hands with the religion and virtue to bring about the equality. His language is replete in ‘motion’ and ‘passion’, without which poetry too seems feeble.

Premchand’s characters make ready to the readers with the power and grit to deal with circumstances. He holds the view that there is a new and better way than Gandhiji’s *Ahimsa* to take revenge. In 1931, he wrote in the magazine *Hans*, “Himsa would only lead to our destruction. On the other hand, Ahimsa in just the physical sense would also not suffice. We would have to internalize Ahimsa in our bodies, minds and souls” (Kumar, J. 14). He supported Gandhiji by saying that “Gandhi’s sole aim is the welfare and happiness of the farmers and the labourers. He is leading a movement and I am trying to encourage and support him through my writings. Gandhi wishes unity among the Hindus and the Muslims and I am trying to mix Hindi and Urdu to create Hindustani.” (Kumar, J. 14)

This contextualising of Anton Chekhov and Munshi Premchand through these selected short stories, includes the national mindset in prerevolutionary Russia and India. This background is integral in not only the development of the characters, but also of the text which supports the characters. Much of what is contained in the texts is from scenario, anecdotes, and written material from and about their respective societies. These materials

will be used as interpretive tools in the development of the character, and includes the clues to the physical appearance and personality. The characters analysis contained herein is, in part, a reflection of these historical, social and economical concerns. In addition, external and internal portrayal and the means used to achieve them are thought provoking.

In the Russian and Indian contexts, one comes across mainstream Russian and Indian writers challenging the dominant British or American tradition, thus paving a way for establishing their true Russian and Indian literary ethos. In the same way these writers too have inspired their contemporary writers to empower national literature.

Similar comparative studies as the present study are being done in various languages at present. But the emphasis is more on living or modern authors rather than authors of the previous centuries. Studies such as the present one can be an incentive to fruitful research on writings of earlier writers. Premchand was a writer who was very sensitive to the happenings in the world and to the emerging trends in the literature. So comparative studies on the writings of different writers like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Galsworthy as well as of Bhartendu Harishchandra, Prasad, Yashpal and Premchand can be topics of further research. Similarly Chekhov can also be made the focus of some other research and a comparison can be made between Chekhov and various other writers belonging not only to his own climate and period but also to different milieus and periods.

An analysis of the contemporary and the modern Indian writers in comparison with Premchand and also among themselves can be done without any problem. For example, the novels of Mulk Raj Anand can be compared

with the novels of Premchand and the poetry of the noted Urdu poet Mohammed Iqbal can be compared with the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. In the present literary environment the poetry of Khalil Gibran echoes the sentiments of the metaphysical poets, and of Omar Khayyam, Mirza Ghalib, Rabindranath Tagore and Mohammed Iqbal. Studies can be pursued always keeping this idea in mind. Comparisons can be made in general or with the specific approaches in mind.

Influential studies, the analogical studies or the studies combining both the influential and analogical aspects can be pursued. The list of writers, the movements and ideas for the topics in Comparative Literature would be exhaustive. The present study only forms a reminder to provide impetus further research in the genre of Comparative Literature.

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