

CHAPTER-II

IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING OF CHEKHOV AND PREMCHAND'S SHORT STORIES

Chekhov and Premchand are the bearers of the greatest banner that has been raised in the thousand years of Russian and Indian histories—the banner of a true and humane democracy, of freedom, of the dignity of the man. Central to the examining issue of contextualising are the ideals and values which are now going to be discussed in this chapter. In this chapter, contextual indications of the ideals and values which Chekhov and Premchand valued like compassion, freedom, humor, beauty, truth, goodness, humility, honesty, justice, and tolerance are ready to be examined.

Anton Chekhov's ideals and values are impressive in its breadth and its depth. Basically a writer of stories and plays, Chekhov had important words of ideals and values to say about how best to approach such genres. His dealings with a wide range of timeless issues such as love, sex, family life, aging, and death is like the works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. He is less judgmental in comparison with the two novelists. The ideals and values one can gain from the readings of Chekhov lies so much in all the answers his characters provide. In addition to dealing with certain ideals and values of Chekhov, his characters deal with important social, political, and economical concerns of his time, and to examine his approach to them is still very important.

Since this chapter will concentrate on various ways that Chekhov and Premchand displayed their ideals and values, it should be admitted here that there were several ways in which they did prove it in their short stories.

Anton Chekhov lived during a fascinating era of Russian history, and his stories and plays reveal much about this period. More than 8,000 characters appeared in the works of Chekhov, a Soviet scholar once calculated. Tsar Alexander II declared the emancipation of the Russian serfs, a year after his birth in the small Azov Sea town of Taganrog. They were about two-fifths of the Russian population and most of them were illiterate. Chekhov's paternal grandfather had once been a serf, but was one of a very small percentage of fortunate serfs who had bought their freedom. The emancipation of serfs was part of a larger program of economic reforms and modernization undertaken by Tsar Alexander II after Russian defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856).

Alexander and the tsars that followed him were not ready to give up their autocratic powers although being convinced that the Russian Empire had to modernize itself if it wished to remain a major power. Emancipation and other reforms awakened expectations but then disappointed people who expected something more in continuation. In 1881, when Alexander II was assassinated, Chekhov was studying medicine at Moscow University. The reactionary rule of his son Alexander III and his grandson Nicholas II lasted for the rest of Chekhov's life. The defeat of Russia in Russo-Japanese War in 1905 led to widespread disturbances which forced in 1905 Alexander II Nicholas II to make reluctant concessions, which eased some of the earlier reactionary measures.

Because of the tsars' wish for military strength and industrialization in Europe, Chekhov saw during his life the period of increased economic modernization. Modernization indicators like population growth, urbanization, literacy, industrial output, and the size of the middle class all increased at a more rapid pace in comparison to the earlier half of the century. If one compares

with Western Europe or the United States, in 1904 Russia was still an economically and socially backward country. Four-fifths part of its population was still of peasants and most of them were still poor and illiterate. Chekhov's short story "The Peasants" presents a wonderful portrait of their life at the end of the nineteenth century. Although factory and handicraft production in Russia increased at least tenfold from 1860 to 1913, still factory workers made up less than two percent of the empire's population by the time of Chekhov's death in 1904, a percentage equal to that of the Russian nobility. In Russia at the end of the 1890s, more than one-fourth of the infants of European Russian population used to die before their first birthday. Even after a decade the European Russian death rate for infants was about twice as high as those born in England and France.

The wish of the tsars to maintain their autocratic powers and political stability side by side with the modernization of military and other establishments led to all sorts of contrasts and tensions. Such kind of incongruities of the social -order, provided ample material for a writer like Chekhov despite some censorship. Despite being were emancipated, most of the serfs remained attached to peasant communes. Though they allowed their peasants to live and work in cities, the communes continued to exercise some control over them. A patriarchal and bureaucratic Russian society, still backward in many ways, produced writers and composers of world-class caliber like Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Tchaikovsky, Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov etc. who were part of an older generation still working during the life time of Chekhov. At the time of his birth The Russian Empire was a vast territory despite selling of Alaska to the United States in 1867 and it continued

to expand further up until his death. By then it was more than twice in size to the United States. At the end of the 1890s, ethnic Russians were less than half of the population of the empire that contained people of more than a hundred nationalities. Some port cities like St. Petersburg and Chekhov's hometown, Taganrog, also had a population of significant numbers of foreigners.

Chekhov believed that many of the problems of Russia linked to ignorance. He was sure that education is the only mean of improvement for the lot of common people. He stressed for improvement in education system and worked for it throughout his life. Because of his this belief in education, Chekhov strongly supported the role of rural teachers in Russia because he believed that education was so vital to future Russian development and progress. He once observed to Gorki that the Russian village needs a good, wise, educated teacher. He was convinced that the Russian state would eventually collapse unless it dedicates itself to the immediate development of wide range public schools staffed by well-educated, highly motivated teachers who would be able to win the respect of the Russian peasants. He lamented for the horrible condition of the teachers who were poor in spirit and training and poorly paid and were often harassed by school inspectors interested in regulations rather than education. Such a system produced teachers who led cold, isolated and ignorant lives who danced on the tune of leadership and fostered only the desire to escape the drabness of country life. Chekhov was so much concerned about the teachers that he once told Gorki that he would like to build a sanatorium for aging village school teachers. He conceived of a beautiful building with a library where lectures were delivered daily a teacher must know everything. Ernest Simmons, Chekhov's biographer, believed that in Chekhov

there was an instinct of an inspired teacher. He had an almost naïve and complete faith in the power of education to mold and guide the moral nature of men and women. For his zeal and dedicated contribution for national education, the government awarded him the Order of Saint Stanislaw. Chekhov's belief in education led him to stand squarely behind the tradition of the Zemstvo liberals and in the time-honored tradition of humanism. He saw education as the most important and most efficient way for salvation of Russia and worked for that salvation. Oscar Wilde rightly says in his *The Delay of Lying Intentions*: “The only beautiful things... that do not concern us. As long as a thing useful or necessary to us, or affects us in anyway, either for pain or pleasure...it is outside the sphere of art.” (16-17)

Chekhov as a writer as well as a citizen was a person having progressive mind set who believed that if humanity wish to make progress in education or in anything else, it needs goals, otherwise, life is meaningless. These goals must be at times lofty and remote. He rejected the idea that such kinds of goals cause problems because without the lofty goals, the man is just like the beasts doing nothing more than eating, drinking and sleeping. Humanity and higher goals justify the existence of the man. Chekhov believed in justice, freedom, the search for truth and also progress as his humble peasant background and family condition demanded it. Chekhov believed in remote and lofty goals but rejected just sitting around talking about abstract idealistic words or ideologies because he considered it the mere wastage of time and energy. He had a firm belief that without the direct action by individuals nothing is going to change. Chekhov's experience with the Zemstvo confirmed his belief in personal action which led him to support the Zemstvo schools and hospitals. Chekhov's personal

experience with Zemstvo and its staff gave him confidence and satisfaction that they were intelligent, efficient, and knowledgeable. He also saw the effect of Zemstvo work on people. Once he said that he did not have to convince the peasants that the doctors did not bring disease because they had seen Zemstvo doctors before. It was an indication that the health care system was beginning to deliver services well in the countryside. If the Zemstvo doctors would not have done the excellent work, Chekhov the physician, might have been physically attacked by the ignorant peasants as others had been in the past. In fact, when asked by a friend about building a hospital, Chekhov recommended that it should be constructed and run in supervision of Zemstvo. The Zemstvo would provide the blueprints, a doctor, and one will end up spending considerably less if the Zemstvo take a hand in the project. Chekhov stood squarely behind the Zemstvo and supported both Zemstvo schools and hospitals. He thought of writing a book on Zemstvo schools, similar in intent and scope to his work on Sakhalin, but due to paucity of time and ill health he could not materialize it. Chekhov depicts in his several stories that a man can save his grace by doing active good.

Chekhov's whole life was a full of humanistic acts and tried to solve the problems through his individual initiative involving his twin beloved science and literature. He tried his best to ease famine, fought epidemics, built schools, developed library collections, gave free medical care to thousands of peasants, aided many young writers and contributed his time and money to many humanistic causes. Even the trip to Sakhalin Chekhov undertook to feel the pangs of suffering of Russian people may be viewed as a humanistic act.

Chekhov was so much concerned about the sufferings of the Russian people that he said in a society where “happiness” is founded on sufferings and operations of million, one has no right to think of personal happiness (Yermilov 311). Chekhov’s humanism to some extent was in the line of Zemstvo liberalism. But scholars differ widely on the issue of his liberalism. As Soviet Scholar like Yermilov refuses even to admit Chekhov as a liberal. In *Culture with all its Great Values*, N. Berdjajev observed that his middle of the road attitude is not a Russian trait. Chekhov repeatedly rejected to be set in Russian mould instead rejected his middle of the road culture. Liberal position is necessary for the life of the ordinary man in day to day activities. If any political label could be put on Chekhov he seems consistent with middle of the road position. Chekhov as a liberal seems close to the liberalism postulated by J. S. Mill. The political party which followed the principals of Chekhov after Chekhov's death, was Constitutional Democratic Party.

In gauging Chekhov's politics one can say Chekhov was a rather traditional liberal in that he accepted points which traditionally are used to characterize a liberal. He believed in the individual and individual freedom. Chekhov believed in the critical and saving role of popular education. He even stressed the government's right and duty to protect people but resisted government intervention deep into society to the point that it hampered the individual's freedom. The progress in society would come from individual initiative and the solution to societies’ problems would come from individual action and individually run charities. The organizations Chekhov supported most were those that delivered primary services to the people. These were generally Zemstvo hospitals and schools as well as public libraries. He would

also aid individuals who were trying to get ahead, especially in the field of his greatest influence, writing. Chekhov was also humanistic in his belief in people for their own sake. He tied his belief in humanity and individual initiative to science and stressed the resulting progress.

His political beliefs reflect his liberal view and are consistent with his humanism. Anton Chekhov at various times expressed the desire for Freedom, Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Thought and Freedom of Assembly. He advocated justice and trial by jury and supported the concept of constitutional representative government. But Chekhov would not accept the kind of terrorism personified by Narodnaia Volia for achieving these ends. The end could not justify this type of means. Though Anton Chekhov was more close to the tradition of Maklakov, the Zemstvo liberal, than he was to Miliukov, yet he combines elements of both in his stories. In the final analysis, Chekhov, who hated labels, could not be clearly labeled, he was a liberal but a unique sort, close to, but not completely, a Zemstvo liberal. Chekhov did not depict his political ideals and ideas in his stories. The facts and situations were presented objectively in his fiction. He wrote subjectively about topics which he, as a liberal thinker, humanist, physician and writer, felt should be brought objectively to public review.

These issues were portrayed objectively, but the exactness of the description permitted the reader to observe the intrinsic problems that affected Russia. Chekhov hoped that the readers would attempt on their own initiative for resolution of the problems, put bare in his stories depicting his ideals and values.

Now comes the turn of Munshi Premchand. “There is a very intimate relationship between a writer’s private life and his writing. These experiences of his personal life constitute the very seed of his creation and serve as sustenance and support for his growth as a writer.” (Ray 94)

Premchand’s character was noble and immaculate except one episode of moral lapse which he confided with his wife during his last illness that he had relation with another woman before his marriage and also for some time after. There could be two justification of it, first his first marriage was a tragedy in itself and second he was also a human being. He was a man having a high sense of duty, impeachable integrity and honesty. His unassuming modesty, stark simplicity and unpretentious forced Hindi novelist, writer and one of his close friend and admirer Jainendera has to say: “One needs to be a little artificial in the world too; this is not the place where one can afford to be entirely open and warmhearted” (qtd. in Sharma 24). He had to pay the price for this uncommon simplicity and honesty that he could not get the recognition and respect which he deserved as a writer.

Premchand was born in *Kayastha* family. *Kayasthas* (scribes or writers) used to do white collar jobs like clerks, petition writers, secretaries, etc. and more successful ones became lawyers, teachers, professors and administrators. They have developed some peculiar habits and traits like astuteness and cleverness, a passion for success and an eye for the main chance. But Premchand being reared up in a small village and in the agrarian background these traits were completely absent in him. He always placed higher value on service and adherence to the principles. He expressed his cordial contempt for the worldly success in a letter to Banarsidas Chaturvedi: “I have no great

ambition regarding my sons. I simply wish that they be honest, truthful and steadfast. I hate children who are pleasure loving, rich and sychophantic.” (qtd. in Sharma 25)

Premchand was a simple man and used to wear simple attire like common Indian folk. Beside the simplicity of heart and choice of cloths, the ordinariness of the dress and deportment was a gesture of protest against exploitation and arrogance of extremely hierarchal Indian society. It was also an expression of solidarity with common people like the simple grab of Mahatma Gandhi but it came to Premchand naturally. Jainendera has rightly appreciated the simplicity:

The most outstanding feature of Premchand’s personality was that he was ordinary in every way. Thus he was the representative of the people and of the common man. Everyone wants to be uncommon; no one wants to be like the common people by being one of them. But this, as it were, was Premchand’s sole endeavour, for which a man like me can never be too grateful to him. (qtd. in Shrama 25)

Premchand was a man of strong convictions and firm adherence to the principles. But he never tried to impose his personality and thoughts on the others. He was completely and intensely human who always loved the society as well as the individual. He had a rich sense of humor which led him to be nick named Bambuk (a man who laugh loudly and a great deal). He was emotional and generous to the extent to be swindled by the designing knaves.

Premchand was born and brought up in the composite culture of Uttar Pradesh, the land of sacred rivers of Hindus- the Ganges, the Jamuna and Saraswati. The avatars of Hindu God Vishnu- Ram and Krishana- whose glories

are celebrated in the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were born in Uttar Pradesh. This fertile land of Uttar Pradesh has produced most of the greatest poets of Hindi and Sanskrit like Bhavbhuti, Bhartrihari, Tulsidas, Ban Bhatt, Surdas, Keshavdas, Kabir and in more recent times, Maithili Sharan Gupta, Mahadevi Verma, Jai Shankar Prasad, Nirala etc. and religious teachers and law givers like Manu, Yagavalkya and Kapil. Premchand himself was born near the holy city of Banaras where it is lucky even to die confirm the ticket for heaven.

But Uttar Pradesh has also been the center of Muslim culture and the capital city of Great Mughals' Agra, the impressive works of architecture-Taj Mahal, the Agra Forte, Fatehpur Sikri are also located in Uttar Pradesh. Lucknow was the capital of another famous ruling dynasty whose rulers were the great patrons of art, poetry, painting, music, along with other arts of civilized and luxurious living flourished at the court of pleasure loving rulers like Nabab Wajid Ali Shah.

Premchand received his early education in Persian and Urdu and he started writing his early creations in Urdu. He was in habit to prepare his literature first in Urdu and used to prepare Hindi version later. He was well read in classics of Persian literature and kept his deep love alive throughout his life. Though he later acquired mastery of Hindi language, his direct study and acquaintance with the tradition of Sanskrit and Hindi classic literature was minimal. He confessed before Banarsi Das Chaturvadi who was pressing him to visit Calcutta to preside over the function of honoring the contribution of great Hindi poet Tulsidas that he had not read the entire *Ramcharitmanas*. Premchand himself admitted: "This confession is shameful but true". (*Chitti- Patri*, 11, 90)

Though the elementary education of Premchand took place at many places in the hands of Maulvis and Pandits but the English medium schools and colleges provided the base of his knowledge and understanding of subjects like history, geography, mathematics and English language and literature in particular. Like many other thoughtful Indians Premchand was a keen student of history and was engaged in intense self examination to find out why his great country had become a victim of foreign rule and domination. Instead of taking shelter in sentimental glorification of the past he tried to look at the past in a critical way. He took past not as an ideal but as a starting point to discover the roots and history not something to be idealized but to be learnt from. He not only learnt from history but also from day to day life and from poor and common people also.

Premchand's attitude and stance was critical towards every issue he took up and same was the case with the west. Though he was deeply influenced by western scientific and rational spirit but disapproved its self-regarding individualism and its political and economic philosophy based on personal and national aggrandizement. He was in the favour of what was good and rational for betterment and relieving the suffering of poor and common people. He advocated for removal, for what was useless and defunct and putting obstacles in the progress and development of individuals, society and the nation. The elements of hypocrisy and superstition were dominating the Hindu religion because it sanctions ages old social structure based on exploitation and injustice and a complete disregard of the individual's rights as a human being. He was a kind and sensitive man with highly sensitive social conscience and for him value of an institution- religious, political, or social- depended on its

contribution to improve the lot of common man. He said, “ The greatness and distinction of any religion consists in these: to what extent does it make a man more sympathetic to another man; how exalted is the ideal of humanity which it projects; and to what extent is this ideal actually translated into action” (qtd. in Sharma 32). His anger against Hinduism was due to the vicious and corrupt social system it supported.

The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875, and the movement stressed the social and moral reforms attracted the attention of Premchand. Critics are sharply divided on the actual level of influence on the Premchand and his writings. It is, however, undeniable that he kept some form of association with the Samaj by paying his subscription regularly. He was impressed with its social work, particularly its efforts to alleviate the lot of the Hindu woman. He was never enthusiastic about the strictly religious aspects of the movement with its emphasis on *Vedas* as the words of the God like the Protestant theory of plenary, inspiration of the *Bible* and its strict formalism and ritualism.

Besides Arya Samaj there may have been other source of inspiration and enthusiasm about Hinduism, and particularly, his awareness about Vivekananda's ideas on religion and his success at the Parliament of Religions in September 1893 had created a stir throughout the country. Premchand's commitment to Hindu ideals according to some critics was more because of the influence of the ideas of Vivekananda than the Arya Samaj. As Arya Samaj had condemned idol worship while Ramkrishna and Vivekananda had defended it. Premchand's own attitude to idol worship is not hostile in his writings. According to Vivekananda the essence of religion is the service of the poor and

downtrodden which appealed Premchand the most and is also the undercover message of his most of the novels and short stories. Vivekananda's teaching was also free from intolerance of other faiths and religion that can be traced in Arya Smaj. He and his master accepted all religion as true like the different paths of reaching the same destination.

There were various elements in his thought and philosophy which could knit him with Mahatma Gandhi into a harmonious combination. Premchand was well impressed with Gandhiji's austere simplicity, closeness to common man and zeal to work for upliftment of downtrodden and outcaste people. Like Gandhiji, he supported Indian religious and moral traditions instead of following blindly the principles of Western political theories. Like Gandhiji Premchand realized that India was essentially a rural society, and a philosophy based on social and economic basic facts could be helpful in the reconstruction and resurrection of the Indian society.

The concept of 'Swadeshi' became popular during 'Freedom Struggle' of India and was discovered by Gandhiji. Etymologically the term 'swadeshi' means 'of one's own country'. However 'the country' component is not its connotation but its sub-characteristics. In fact, 'swadeshi' encompasses all the indigenous things – both abstract and concrete i.e. language, wisdom, culture, dress and all other products. Gandhiji himself defined 'swadeshi': "that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of remote" (Gandhi 117). The core of the concept is 'self reliance' and 'self governance'. Metaphysically, 'swadeshi' is love for soul: in social context, it is love for own cultural and self control; biologically it means to live in and with one's own nature and environment. From moral point of view it is

duty to one's neighbour; politically for self government and from economic point of view, it is strong belief in self reliance, balance growth for larger and deeper life not for the profit and market.

Historically 'Swadeshi' was a movement specially led by Tilak and Gandhi which spread very quickly throughout the country during the freedom struggle. In this way, it was a non-violent technique of conflict resolution. It was an effective means to remove all kind of exploitation and foreign domination. The movement grew rapidly after the bifurcation of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905. The people discarded foreign goods as a protest against British exploitation of India and 'Swadeshi' became their culture during those days. Sh.Surendra Nath Banerjee writes:

Swadeshism during the days of its potency coloured the entire texture of our domestic life. Marriage gifts that included foreign goods, the like of which could be manufactured at home, were returned. Priests would often decline to officiate at ceremonies where foreign articles were offered as obligations to the gods. Guests would refuse to participate in festivities where foreign salt or foreign sugars were used. (Singh 147)

All classes of people started weaving in their domestic industry. Even the rich people wore Khadi and boycotted British clothes. It was result of this Swadeshi movement that their own economy developed so rapidly that all countries of Europe lagged behind. Thus Swadeshi became a very effective instrument of ending foreign exploitation and paved a way for the freedom.

Swadeshi was basically an economic concept starting from boycott of foreign goods in beginning but in the age of Gandhiji it became positive for the

emphasis shifted from refusal of foreign goods to production of indigenous goods. Khadi and village-industries became the main focus of the movement. Gandhian concept of swadeshi was not the blind refusal of foreign items or assistance in growth of economy but people were advised not to use only those foreign items which were manufactured or could be manufactured in the native country. If one uses them, it can cause unemployment to his people and loss of their livelihood, and loss of control over means of production. Gandhiji believed that there is no harm in importing those items which could not produce and were essential for growth and development of economy as well as of human capital of nation. Swadeshi meant to him self-reliance at various levels.

In fact, swadeshi is a precondition of independence. If indigenous industries are not protected from competition, the native skills will be ruined. Villages, the larger part of country and basic units of the native economy needed to be strengthened where production is made for consumption not for exchange, commerce, market and profiteering. The Basic principle of swadeshi is to produce for fulfillment of basic needs. If economy is restricted to small units, it can influence the people morally and make them self-dependent. That is why Gandhiji was not only against the foreign multinationals but also against the native multinational industries which swallow the small scale industries and make a large section of people unemployed. It is also not true that Gandhiji was totally against industries and technology. In fact, he wanted a balanced growth of villages and cities, small scale and big industries. He wanted to make society exploitation free through his concept of swadeshi. His concept of swadeshi is not against internationalisation and universal brotherhood rather it is a means to achieve it step by step instead of jumping from the very first step. The old

scriptures support it: “Sacrifice yourself for your family, family for villages, villages for locality and earth for preservation of the soul” (Singh, 149). A self-dependent unit can really support the whole but a weak unit can neither sustain itself nor help others. Thus, Gandhian concept of swadeshi from economic point of view is a belief in self-reliant economy.

Munshi Premchand, the great voice in Hindi and Urdu literature was greatly influenced by Gandhian concept ‘swadeshi’ which clearly and amply gets reflected in his works, particularly in his short stories i.e. “Saree of Wedlock” (Suhag ki Saree), “Wife to Husband” (Patni se Pati) , “Salt Inspector” (Namak ka Daroga), “Gift of Holi” (Holi ka Uphar), “Sayayagharya”, “Maiku” etc.

The exact nature of the influence of the Communist thoughts cannot be measured because Premchand was not an abstract thinker who could be expected an expert in philosophical thinking of Carl Marx's Communism. As an ideal it had sound appeal for Premchand who believed in equal rights of all and brotherhood of mankind. His wife Shivrani Devi mentions that Premchand spoke eloquently about happenings in Russia where the rich had been deprived of their wealth and privileges and the poor were happy. She certifies that he was a firm believer in equal opportunities for all without discrimination.

The use of traditional concepts in the works of Premchand emphasizes his essential Indianness. Though he claimed to be a free thinker and atheist, the healthy influence of the religion as a moral force, can be traced in his imaginative writings in the form of Hindu religious idioms to convey his thoughts and feelings. It appears from his writings that he believed in the doctrine of *karma*. One can argue that the use of this concept was the result of

his strong belief in man's responsibility for his actions as a rational creature and his conviction of a moral order in the universe. He had a firm belief that evil cannot prosper for long and truth and goodness triumph in the end. In his short stories and novels most of the evildoers come to a sad end, while the good people may not succeed in the world but enjoy peace and tranquility of the mind. There are some other concepts of Hindu thought which begged the admiration of Premchand. He felt enchanted with Lord Krishna's doctrine of desireless action on his reading of *Bhagwatgita*. He wrote:

This glory belongs to Lord Krishna alone that he made synthesis of involvement and non- involvement. He gave birth to the ideal of the involved non involvement and noninvolved involvement. Act, but do not get entangled in it. Action is not bondage; it is desire of fruit from action which constitutes bondage; it is source of peace and joy. (Sharma, 35)

Being an acute and sharp observer of life, Premchand was highly appreciative of the role of religion in the life of the common people. He was the master of an independent and critical mind but his temper was traditional and conservative. He advocated for new ideas and questioning spirit of Western rationalism and free thought, but till the end he remained truly Indian in his outlook. He approved Western man's initiative and enterprise, his commitment to work and determination to shape his own destiny and even his attitude of enjoying life. He was critical of Western man's obsessive and aggressive individualism which instilled in him selfishness and acquisitive traits. He felt proud of his material possessions, his empires and dominations and it was an indication that there was something radically wrong the philosophy of life which showed scant regard for the lives, liberty and happiness of other people.

The Indian culture, on the contrary, puts stress on selflessness and on the spirit of service and sacrifice. But it does not mean that Premchand believed that every Indian is honest, selfless and committed to serve the humanity. Indian society was sunk in darkness, poverty, ignorance and superstition and many of Indians were no less selfish and greedy than their Western counterparts but still the Indian heart was in the right place.

Premchand like most of educated Indian who studied in English medium schools felt the impact of Western liberal thought without caring the different political and social theories based on individual right to life, liberty and happiness. Premchand mentions the name of Macaulay, John Bright, Charles Bradlaugh, Sir Stafford Northcote and among the British Governor Generals Lord William Bentick and Lord Ripon with some respect in his essay on Gokhale. Premchand had no doubt in his mind when he wrote this essay that it was useless and mere wastage of the time to expect from British people that they will provide independence to India if they will make them aware of the condition of Indian people and society. Premchand says in the essay, “Indians now know after a long experience that it is futile to narrate to the people of England the stories of our miseries; if ever our deliverance does come, it will be by our own courage and manliness” (Sharma, 31). However, despite his strong belief Premchand pays a handsome tribute to the contribution of Gokhale and other modernists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dada Bhai Naoroji and Phiroze Shah Metha etc. Premchand’s disillusionment with the Western liberalism grew stronger and stronger with the passage of the time when he was convinced of hypocrisy and insincerity of the Western Liberal tradition.

Munshi Premchand both as a writer as well as an Indian took each and every problem of Indian society seriously, whether these were the problems of women, untouchables, downtrodden, caste system or communalism. Premchand was the only Indian writer and thinker who had a deep knowledge, understanding and practical experience of Indian society, its customs and rituals. What he said while considering these social evils and problems have been and still proving to be correct. He took a critical stance against society and the government and suggested the measures of the resolution of these problems. Relevance of the Premchand's literature has increased more today's vicious atmosphere when the problems are demanding quick and proper treatment. Premchand was a unique writer as well as a human being. One does not find any difference between sayings and doings, this rare quality was the part and partial of his life and his literary works. He took the stand for what he described and expressed without caring for the price he had to pay for it.

Premchand wrote without any interruption between 1900 to 1936, the time when India was under the British rule. Women in Indian society were facing two level of slavery. Women were the most severely affected victims of colonialism and feudalism. It is evident from history that the women of the nation or the community under the foreign rule had to bear the most of the burden. To impose the superiority on the opponent, abduction of the ladies was the most popular and easy tool. In the history of human civilization it will be too hard to find a cast or community which had been liberal to another race under their rule. Great Hindi poet Tulsi Das who known for his severe comments on women has written very acute and sensitive lines:

Kat Vidhi Srijni nari Jag Mahin

Paradhin Sapnehu Sukh nhain. (Sharma, 35)

These lines depict the condition and the pain of the women throughout the world and Premchand was very well aware of the pain of the women. He knew it that it was not possible to liberate the Indian society, leaving the half of the population un-liberated. He suggested that as the Indians are concerned about their freedom and happiness, they will also have to think about the women in the similar manner and will have to enable them to take care of themselves. He used to put maximum stress on the girl education. Once talking about the dowry he says:

The only one solution of the problem in my view is that the girls should be provided the best education and let free to make their own path in the world, as we do with the boys. We should give up the wish to see them the girls married and should show the faith in them as we do in the case of boys ignoring the fear of their straying away from the path. (Sharma, 38)

Here two things become clear, one is Premchand's wish for complete eradication of dowry and second men's desire to continue the ages old male-dominance in Indian society. Man uses the physical weakness of woman as a tool to keep woman within the four walls of the house hold. Men fear that if women come out of the household they may win the kingdom, so it is the best way to stop their exit on the very threshold of the house. A girl was used to be tied like an animal and had no right to utter a single word of her wish. Premchand knew it very well that the difference between man and woman is more cultural than natural while the man enjoys both and the woman lives the life of a prisoner.

Premchand advocates the efforts of bringing women out of this prison and let them roam freely because it is the need and demand of the time. Education and freedom to take the decisions can improve the condition of women in India. Premchand in his article "Ideal of Girl Education" writes:

This is the problem that men have tortured woman too much that they do not want to become mothers and house wives but adamant for their economic freedom. When men do not know how to cook food and bear children then why should women learn these things after getting the education men earn livelihood and treat with women as slaves, women also wants to learn the same art. Why should not they become lawyers and teachers instead of cooking at home? Our ladies should decide what shot of education their girl should get and should not accept the decision of the selfish men. (Sharma 37)

It reflects the broad and sensitive attitude of the Premchand towards the life. He clearly believed that girls should get all the right of life of human beings. He was against the mismatch marriage of girls without knowing their wishes or for dowry. Such kind of marriages either meets the fate of *Nirmala* or reaches in the condition of the *Rupa*. In his short story "Widow having Sons" the brothers marry their young sister to an aged man in order to save the dowry money. Dowry system is the result of the capitalism though it was also prevalent during period of feudalism but capitalism flared and aggrieved it. In his article 'Kayasth Conference' he writes:

Now the only solution to this problem is that girls should decide their fate themselves and should not marry till they do not get such grooms, who surrender before them out of love. The caste can rise only when the self respect is aroused among the girls. (Sharma 41)

In India Premchand was the first progressive and aware writer who freely and frankly raised the women issues in highly conservative society without caring for the consequences. In February, 1931 in his article “Rights of the Woman”, he takes women-issues fervently and suggests some radical solutions:

1. The rule of single marriage should be applicable to both on men and women. No one should be allowed to marry again in his life time till his first wife is alive.

2. Wife should have right on the property of the man.

3. Girls should have right in the property of the father.

4. Divorce law should be made with equality for both men and women.

5. A woman should get half of the property of husband at the time of the divorce and also get the share if some moveable property is there. (Scholar’s own translation from Srivastava 16)

One can imagine how much revolutionary and important these ideas could have been in 1931, and what reaction and response men dominated society might have given after reading and listening Premchand. One does not find such a clarity of thought and ideas in no other writer of the time except Premchand.

The Influence of feminist movements can easily be traced in the fictional and non- fictional writings of Premchand. He was of firm view that the woman is the central pillar of Indian society on which the whole structure of Indian society is standing. If this very central pillar itself become weak what will happen with Indian social structure a layman can also imagine it. Freedom of physical relations is also one of important questions raised by Premchand in his novels as well as short stories. No Indian woman wants to indulge in the profession of prostitution but the economic constrains and the lust of the man

forces her to do so. The heroine of *Sevasadan* leaves it after reaching at a certain situation because without love and desire how long one can exploit the body. Premchand makes it clear through the words Jhunika of the *Godan*, who says in the very beginning of her love affair:

If the man will go after second woman then the woman will also run after men. Deceit in love hurts the woman as it hurts the man. Learn it. I have made it clear to my man if he tried to go after some other woman then she will do whatever she would like to do. (qtd. in Srivastava 17)

Premchand felt that there is a lot of difference between the rights of men and the women. A man cannot run his life without the help the woman even than he never forgets to show his power over her. But he was against the free sexual relations because such kind of relation can never give rise to a healthy family. In any progressive society love of a man or woman should be respected but limitless freedom in the name of love, neither of man nor of woman can be justified. In his articles on the one side he supports love and love marriages on the other side he justify the traditional methods of the marriage. He considers the desire to live a free life by women is the blind following of the western civilization. If a woman acquires the characteristics of man she may loss the natural powers of love and care. Whether it is Malti of the of the story “Malti”, Padma in “Miss Padma” new bride of “Manovirti”. In his stories Premchand shows the woman characters suffering and heart- broken who decide to live their life in epicurean style.

Critics criticized him for the inner conflict in him saying that on one side he advocates for love and women education on the other side he does not like the women like Malti who takes bold decisions and wants to live life on their

own conditions. It becomes clear from this inner conflict that Premchand wants the solution of the woman problems within established structure of Indian society. Critics termed it the limitation of a writer as well his characters.

But the condition of Indian society today itself speaking loudly that Premchand was right when pressed for the maintenance of basic womanly qualities by women. One finds newspapers full with news of heinous crimes in which the women of so called open and modern society are found involved. Deviation in the behavior has led to the disintegration of families, increase in the number of suicide cases, increase in cases of psychological diseases and rise in case of general crimes. But it does not mean that Premchand wished to keep women subservient to men, he demands nowhere less than the equality in his fiction and never justifies the misdeed of men. Rather his women characters are more balanced emotionally and tough psychologically. They guide their male counterparts whenever they feel helpless and dejected. So Premchand was very well aware of the woman's role as the binding force of family as well as of society. He tried to make the people understand that if the woman gives up her duty, no one can save the family and society from disintegration. In "Daughter – in-law from a Noble Family" Anandi saves the family from the breakup by her acumen and timely intervention. Men instead of being indebted to women, treat them as second grade citizens.

Women in each and every household face the discrimination but there some categories of women whose life is too much miserable to be described, particularly of the widows. During Premchand's time people used to show sympathy with widows but they did not treat them sympathetically. The sensitive heart of Premchand was very hurt on miserable condition of the

woman. In 1933 he wrote a comment on a child widow, in which she says: “I am a child widow. I am tired of life. I do not want to live in this world. Why are you hurting me, let me die” (*Mansarovar-III*, 14). In another comment “Act on the Livelihood of Widows” he says: “If main reason for fall of Hindu society is caste discrimination then the miserable condition of the women is also an important factor in it” (Sharama, 41). In his short story, “The Widow having Sons” Premchand's description of the condition of Fulmati after death of her husband is heart rendering. Her son says: “This is the law that after death of father the property goes to sons. Mother can only get only food and clothes” (*Mansarovar-IV*, 33). In the story “Dhikkar” protagonist Mani who is a child widow who out of love and desire to see her cousin sister in the attire of the bride reaches in her room. Her aunt becomes furious as soon as she sees her and cries: “Who invited you here? Get out” (*Mansarovar- 7*,103). It puts a deep impact on her mind. In the story “Partigha” the protagonist widow Purna anyhow saves herself from the clutches of Kamlaparsad the son of her patron Badariparsad. For a young widow the beauty and body are nothing less than a bane. The society neither allows the widow to remarry nor let her live with peace. In the story “Nagpuja” Tilotama’s father Jagdishchander favours her remarriage her despite the hard opposition from society. Premchand writes: “It was not the remarriage of Tilotama but an active example of the social reform” (*Mansarovar-V*, 214). Premchand understand his society very well that is why the way in which he could expose the misdeeds of the society is rare in the literature. He chooses the widow of the Hindu society because he was very well aware of their condition in the society and wished to reform it through his hard hitting words.

The miserable condition of women in Indian society was the one of the main reasons for the acts of prostitution in Indian society. In male dominated society the woman was considered as a thing of luxury and enjoyment. Prostitutes are result of such kind of thinking of men. Prostitutes either came in the form of city- bride or the temple dancers and later in the form of the women to whom society leaves no other option to earn their livelihood. Premchand ponders seriously over this utterly miserable condition of the women. In one of his article he considers that the reason for this problem is more economic than social. He writes that the main reason of this kind of problems is economic. Unemployment is increasing day by day. Labourers are not getting work, farmers are getting ruined, educated people are not able to get their two ends meet and businessmen are suffering losses. In such kind of conditions what will happen if this kind of incidents do not take place.

In the story "Prostitute" Premchand holds men responsible for this problem and thinks that men might have started this profession. It is a sufficient reason for fall of any society if the women become prostitutes for satisfying the lust of the men. The Protagonist Madhuri in this story says: "A woman can never surrender herself for the money. If she is doing so it means that she has no other way out" (*Mansarovar-III*, 87). In another story "Curse of Life" the protagonist Gulsan expresses her opinion about the men in the society: "All earn the money with the help of the illegal means and live unnatural life." (*Mansarovar- II*, 21). She further says, "Man is too shameless that he satisfies his lust even in his worst condition of the woman and too unkind that he declares her bad character to see her die suffering helplessly." (*Mansarovar-II*, 21)

It becomes clear that Premchand in his stories desired for such a society in which women are treated equal to men and have equal rights in each and every field. The ideal of the empowered woman in Premchand's view is that woman should equally contribute in the progress of the nation without being treated inferior, weak, soft or dependent. Rather both should work as the complementary force to increase the efficiency and commitment towards their work and duties. It may be that Premchand might have some limitations during his time but none other among his contemporaries had ideas and courage to show progressive attitude in women related matters. He was the first writer in Hindi literature who opposed the tyrannical treatment to women and kept his struggle on for the status of human being for her.

The evil of untouchability and caste system has been damaging the vitals of Indian social system for centuries. No writer till the twentieth century could dare to raise the issue of the untouchables, the inhuman treatment to a large chunk of population of Hindu society. In the Beginning of the twentieth century Premchand showed courage and dared to touch the issues of the untouchables. He not only touched the issue but treated it with too much intensity and sensitivity that people realized the heinous crime being done against the humanity. As a sensitive human being and a patriotic citizen, Premchand knew the pain and suffering of the foreign rule; he realized that it is not the cast and religion but the man is important for the man and communalism in any form is dangerous for the society and the nation. Premchand was very much hurt with the system of Hindu society where a person is not judged by his merits or demerits but by his caste. This discrimination on the basis of the caste was the main reason that India remained under foreign rule and suppression because the

talent could not be used properly. A person born in a particular caste used to do his family business irrespective of talent and aptitude of the person. There was no doubt in Premchand's mind that this sacrilegious system is dangerous not only for Hindu society but also for the Indian society. He wrote in his article "Our Duty" on September, 1932: "Our duty will be complete only when we will remove this untouchability completely" (Shristava, 33). He does not want here a little change but wants the system to be revoked completely. It shows how much revolutionary and prophetic thinking and ideas Premchand had, living in the conservative Hindu society of first half of the 20th century. He further writes in this article:

Whether can any Varnasharma say from the core of its heart that untouchability is justifiable from religious point of view? No, no one can say so. Vested interest is the only cause of it. It must be kept in mind that this vested interest may satisfy you for one or two years but in the future time it will throw away even the old and strong base. In reality, the toy of vested interest with which they are playing like children is dynamite which will destroy their seven generations. It should be thrown away, otherwise it will not give the time to repent. (Shristava 33)

During the time Premchand was writing on this burning question in his fictional and non-fictional works Gandhiji was fighting the evil on political and social field on the ground. He said:

If untouchability lies in Hindu religion, then I will have to say that it is full of evil, not of the sacredness. But I believe strongly that Hindu religion has nothing like this. Till every Hindu do not consider his *chamar* and *bhangi*

brethren Hindu like their real brothers, I will not consider them Hindu at all. The man cannot live with both kindness and hate. (Shristava 34)

In these words of Gandhiji one finds that 'religion' being important but it is not important than the tolerance. No country or society can progress when there is intolerance in it. Both Gandhiji and Premchand were fully aware of this hard reality.

Entry of untouchables in temples was the burning issue during the third and the fourth decade of the 20th century. This was the issue which British Government wanted to capitalize and divide the Indian society. Being a sensitive and aware writer Premchand analyzed it at large. While pondering over the question of untouchable he put maximum stress on the entry of dalits in the temples. For the entry of dalits in temples was more important from tolerance point of view instead of religious point of view. This was Premchand's tolerant view that he wrote using hard words: "Is the Hindu caste is made of the *pujaris* and *mahants* ? Whether without the worshipers the helper in performance of worship will be successful in keeping the temples intact." (Shristava 36) In this article he further writes: "If your God is too weak to get polluted as soon as someone touches him, then it is false to call him God. God is that, a cruel man becomes pure hearted as soon as he comes before him" (Shristava 36). There is no need to say that to express such kind of thoughts in Premchand's time might have needed a brave heart. He bore the consequences for his serious and thought provoking writings. It becomes clear that he never wrote for cheap popularity. He was restless from the inside. Progressive thinking gets reflected in analytical writings and short stories of Premchand.

Premchand was too hurt from inside about this maltreatment to a large section of the society that he called 18th December a historic day saying: "... This '*Harizen Divas*' will be the festival of the whole Hindu society." (Shristava 38) In this article he further writes: "We will have to remove this feeling from our heart that we are superior than them. We have only captured their rights with the naked force. We can be powerful but never superior. Power is not the parameter of the moral superiority" (Shristava 39). Premchand expressed a great idea and showed mirror to those who considered power, the indicator of the superiority. He was very much impressed from the social and political ideas of the Mahatma Gandhi. During those days Gandhiji said: "Mind cannot accept untouchability because it is against the truth and non-violence, hence it is not the religion. We are superior and others are inferior, this very idea is inferior in itself" (Shrivastava, 41). Premchand believed that the truth of those things one can judge with his mind and which are against the humanity, justice, non-violence and the truth, one does not want to bring them in his behavior. He has a clear view that Hindu community will not do any favour to let the untouchables enter into the temples but will remove its stigma.

Premchand was very well aware of the fact that there is no scarcity of such people in the upper castes who try to put hurdles in the way of the progress of the untouchables by bringing the issues of their illiteracy and their way of living. Such people think if the untouchables will get education and progress than who will do their odd jobs without any payment! Who will be their yes men! By whose exploitation they will satisfy their hunger of the superiority! Premchand knew such people very well. It is said that the untouchables have bad habits such as they do not take bath daily and do prohibited works etc.

Whether the *brahmins* of Kashmir and Almora take bath daily? I knew such *brahmins* in Kansi who use to take bath once in a month during the winter season. Even then they are pure. Whether *brahmins* do not take liquor. In Kansi there are thousands of *brahmins*, that too who use to put vermilion on their forehead use to drink even then they are *brahmins*. *Brahmins* are living with *chamarins*, even then there appear no hurdle in their purity but a untouchable whether he use to take bath daily, how much pure his character may be, he cannot enter into the temple. Whether Hindu religion can stay intact on such kind of policy? (Shrivastava, 44)

B R Ambedkar commenting upon the cruel clutches of casteism on the Indian society writes: “The Problem about the caste is endogamy which prevents endosmosis. Unless we are bonded by blood relationship all other means to eradicate caste remain ineffective” (Ambedkar vii). Premchand's this very question is standing as such in other contexts. He considers the deceptive behaviour of the people in power equally responsible for the woes and sufferings of the untouchables. Filled with such thoughts, Premchand wanted to open the temple of heart for equal status to all. Premchand was imagining an India free of all kinds of bondages in which there will be no discrimination on the basis of gender, caste and religion. He was a prophetic writer and knew it very well that without removal of the hurdles of the caste and religion India cannot progress. That is why he wrote on January 8, 1931:

Only a few days of the dominance of the priests are left. Benefit of the society and nation lies in it that this caste based discrimination, one sided dominance and blood sucking habit should be removed as I have said it earlier also the first condition of the nationality is that this *varanasystem*, the

discrimination of high and low and religious superstitions must be dug out from their base. (Shristava 49)

Premchand was a prophet who realized before Independence that reservation in educational institutions and in jobs could be an effective tool for improving the social and economic condition of the dalits. In his article “The Pious Date” on December 26, 1932 he wrote:

The real problem is the economic problem. If we want to raise our *Harijan* brethren then we will have to create such resources which can help them to rise up. In schools they should be given scholarships and in the jobs they should be given a little concession. (qtd. in Sharma, 141)

Premchand desired for spread of education among the dalits by which they would remove the darkness in their own life as well as in the society and realize the relevance of their life in this light of the knowledge. But Premchand was not in the favour of separate schools and hostels for the dalit students (Shristava 50-51). So, one can say that Premchand struggled and tried to eradicate the social evils prevalent in Indian society from its very roots. The spirit of such nationalism is rare in the contemporary literature. It will be unjust to call his writings as the literature of sympathy.

The problem of Hindu- Muslim disharmony has been one of the major socio-political problems of Indian society. Premchand pondered over the problem when India was under the foreign rule and British Government was trying to add fuel to the fire in order to continue their rule of suppression and exploitation. Premchand understood the design of British people very well and he was also well aware of the fact that freedom would not be achieved without

the collective and combined struggles of Hindus and Muslims. That is why he advocated strongly for the Hindu- Muslim unity and harmony. Though today also this problem is a serious one but the most painful aspect of it is that people are not able to live harmoniously together even after getting a collective hard fought freedom. People are ready to go any extent to establish their dominance over each- other as different Hindu-Muslim riots after independence show the picture of the society. Both the communities have their different cultures, festivals and rituals, and Premchand believed that they will appear like different and colorful flowers in a vase if Hindus and Muslims live together harmoniously. But the leaders from the both sides the people for becoming popular in the eyes of their own community and forget the national interests and even interests of their respective people in the real sense. Premchand wrote without any hesitation human life is more important than any religion:

Unfortunately today religion has become the tool of political vested interest instead of being the collections of sanctities of beliefs. Its situation has become that of the madness, which has only one rule that everything for me and nothing for others, the day on which religion will give up the race to surpass the others after that day nobody will bother about the religious conversions. (Shrivastava 54)

It is clear if the tool of fulfilling the vested interests gets destroyed then it will not get the extra importance. Premchand knew it very well that one can be politically strong by effacing the communal jealousy. The proverb union is strength is applicable to any age without any discrimination.

The problem perplexed Premchand that people disturb their simple day to day life flowing with religious feelings evoked by cunning persons having

vested interests. In such situations the religion may not get benefitted but human beings certainly receive great losses. Explaining the concept once he said:

When we accept that the God is one and there is only difference of ways of worship then why should wait for, if Muslims will respect our religion only then we will respect their religion. If respecting a religion is good, it is good in every situation and there is no need of any condition for it. Everyone praises if someone does a good work. (Shristava 54-55)

Such kind of thoughts in the field of religion and God show the progressive attitude of Premchand because progressivism remains always contemporary to the nation and the age.

The issue of Cow and Pig is one of the major issues of the contention among Hindus and Muslims. Premchand wrote with reasons in *Vividh Parsang* that Hindus have taken a unreasonable stance in the matter of the killing of the cow. People have right to consider any animal pious but to hope that the follower of the other religions will also do the same is just like fighting with a peddler going his way. Cow meat is eaten throughout the world, than Hindus will take the whole population worthy of being chopped off. It cannot be a matter of dignity for neither any furious religion nor for Hindu religion which has the basic principal "*Ahinsa Parmo Dharama*" to teach lesion of enmity with the whole world. He further says that cow is not less than a boon in a country like India where agriculture is the main profession, but there is no other importance of it than the economic importance. Premchand writes boldly and clearly that there is no use of intensifying the fight. He has tried to awaken the conscience of Hindus by showing them the philosophical aspect of their

religion. People should keep in mind that Premchand was the only writer who dared to make harsh comments on his own religion.

Premchand understood the sociology of the riots very well. While commenting on the riots, he wrote in 1931 that why eyes of the people are not able to see the loss of the nation due to these genocides. It is very important for strengthening the bond of nationalism that people should forget all the enmity. Premchand wrote in 1932:

.... Outwardly how much we may try to show ourselves as nationalist but inwardly all of us are communal and see everything from communal point of view. Is it not true whenever a communal riot takes place, we become eager to know how many Muslims and how many Hindus killed? If the number of Hindus is more how much enraged we feel. On the contrary if the number of the Muslims is more we take a sigh of relief. This kind of bent of mind is murderous for the feeling of nationalism. (Shrivastava 57)

Premchand is considered a great champion and describer of farmer life and their problems. The minute details and realistic picture of rural life found in his writings, is rare in literature. The seriousness and depth one can see about the problems of the farmers in his works was due to his concern for the nation. He knew it very well that without uplifting downtrodden, women and farmers the progress of the nation is not possible. There is no need to describe the worst condition of the farmer during the reign of the British Government and feudal system. The whole income of the innocent and illiterate farmer was used to be snatched away and the producer of the food remained hungry. In his article "The Unfortunate Farmers" he wrote:

The profession of eighty percent of Indian population is agriculture. Many percent like carpenters, barbers and ironsmiths are dependent on it for their livelihood. Whatsoever income the nation has is due to the hard work of these labors and farmers. Our schools and educational institutions, our police force and army, our courts and legal institutions, all survive on the income of these workers. But the producers of food and the cloth strive for filling their bellies, shiver in the cold and die like flies. (Shristava 73)

Bhishm Sahni too commenting upon the condition of the Dalits and farmers writes at one place: “It is said that Premchand was propagating in fiction what Gandhiji was doing in politics. This is true only to the extent that he was deeply impressed by Gandhiji’s teachings and his programme of action.” (Kalia 129)

Feudal lords were dominating the social scene before independence in India. Most of the feudal lords were the yesmen of the English officers and used to do atrocities on the poor tenants. British Government was using these lords as tools for strengthening their rule. For their physical comforts and enjoyments they used to impose tax on the farmers. They were not only torturing the innocent farmers but also weakening the national freedom movement. Premchand says at one place, it is irony that feudal lords considers themselves the owner of the land. Before British rule their position was like brokers who were kept to collect the revenue and were fired out if fail to deposit it timely. Their social status improved during the British reign because government needed a group to maintain its grip on the public. Premchand puts the question mark on the relevance of the very existence of the feudal lords. He writes:

You are not only the owner of the land we may consider you God but what do you do for the public. You take fifty percentage of the tax taken from the public but what kind of behavior you do with them. If you give them the seed, you take one and half times in return; if you give them the wood and bamboo, you force them to work four times of its value like bonded labors. Today your existence has become so much irrelevant that you are worried that your existence may come to an end in the future. (Shrivastava 74)

Premchand criticizes the efforts of the British Government to save the properties of the lords as many of these feudal lords lived their life is in all kind of comfort in the cities. Public for them was like a simple, voiceless and milking cow and their only function was to milk the cow. They were not concerned whether the cow gets its food or not. Many of them even did not visit their area once. Agents gave them money and they do not bother about the sorrows and sufferings of the farmers. Government will give rise to the easy living tendency of such feudal lords. Premchand understood it very well that without progress of farmers and labors India cannot progress. He stood in their support with the same ideology. He felt very sad that a few percent lazy and easy living people suck the blood of eighty percent people hard working people. In 1932 in one of his article he wrote:

Who do not know that Indian farmers are under the pressure of the heavy loan. Often their every work is done with the help of the loan. Seeds they take on interest or from the Pathans. They use to purchase their bullocks from the wandering cattle businessmen. They have to take loan on the occasion of the marriage, pilgrimage and other religious occasions. (Rubin 16)

What more Premchand could have said about the condition of the loan ridden farmer as he says in his article “Jaberdasti” (force): “The miserable condition of Indian farmers of today cannot be described in the words. If someone can feel there this miserable condition, it is the God or they themselves” (Shrivastava 76). This is the situation expressed in almost all of the short stories where the ideals and values typical of Munshi Premchand got perfect expression.

Works Cited

- Ambedkar, B.R. *Annihilation of Caste with Reply to Mahatama Gandhi*.
Mumbai: Higher & Technical Education Dept. Govt. of Maharashtra,
2013. Print.
- Gandhi, Mahatama. "The Gospel of Swadeshi." *India of My Dreams*. Delhi:
Rajpal, 2008. Print.
- Kalia, Mamta. Ed. "Premchand as a Short Story Writer." *Hindi: Language
Discourse Writing*. Vol. 4 July-September 2009. Print.
- Naravane, V. S. (1980). *Premchand - His Life & Works*. Delhi: Vikas
Publishing House. Print.
- Premchand, M. (2002). *Kuchh Vichaar*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books.
Print.
- . *The World of Premchand: Selected Stories of Premchand*. Trans. David
Rubin. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969. Print.
- Rai, A. *Premchand – His Life and Times (Translated by Harish Trivedi)*. New
Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.
- Ray, M.K. ed. *Studies in Comparative Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic
Publishers, 2002. Print.
- Sharma, G.N. *Prem Chand: Novelist and Thinker*. Delhi: Pragati Publications,
1999.
- Singh, Dashrath. "The Concept of Swadeshi: Gandhian Perspective".
Perspectives in Gandhian Thought. Delhi: Commonwealth Pub., 1995.
Print.
- Srivastava, Jitendra. *Bhartiya Samaj ki Samasyaien aur Premchand*.(Hindi)
Delhi: Shabdshristi, 2009. Print.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Delay of Lying intentions*. London: OUP, 1913. Print.

Yermilov, Vladimir. *Anton Pavlovich Chekhov: 1860-1904*. Trans. Ivy

Litvinov. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d. Print.