

## CHAPTER-IV

### UNDERSTANDING PREMCHAND THROUGH HIS SHORT STORIES

Premchand was a sharp and sensitive observer; he had a wide range of experiences of rural life from his childhood and saw closely the city life during his student life and as a government servant. His description of rural as well of urban life of India is so vivid, live and so vibrant that a reader feels that he is actually roaming in the environment of his description. He not only describes the atmosphere but the inner feeling, emotions and characteristics of the society reflecting their way of thinking, living and dealing with the different situations. In this chapter there is an attempt to analyze Premchand's treatment of different problems and resource of Indian society of which he with his sharp and sensitive observation speaks. The effect of Anton Chekhov on the short stories Premchand can be assessed by this observation of David Rubin in the introduction of his *The World of Premchand: Selected stories of Premchand* (Trans.) that the stories of Premchand are preoccupied with social problems and their tone and techniques are essentially Chekhovian (Rubin 14). The discussion will on some of the stories from the *Premchand: Deliverance and other stories* translated by David Rubin and published by Penguin Books New Delhi.

The first and opening story of the volume is "The Road to Salvation" and its original title was "Mukti Marg" (Salvation Road). It is a story about rural life including farmers, untouchables and minorities. Premchand's narrative starts with the description of the feeling of a farmer when he sees his crop flourishing: "The pride of the peasant takes in seeing his fields flourishing is like the soldier in his red turban, the coquette in her jewels or the doctor in the patients seated before

him. Whenever Jhingur looked at his cane field a sort of intoxication came over him.” (Rubin19)

Jhingur, the farmer becomes angry and loses his temper and starts beating sheep of the shepherd Buddhu who is a shrewd man. Buddhu in order to take the revenge burns the sugarcane field of Jhingur and other farmers. Premchand was very well aware of vulnerability of the farmer. As the narrator comments:

To take vengeance on a farmer is easier than slicing a banana. Whatever wealth he has is in his fields or barns. The product gets into house only after innumerable afflictions of nature and the gods. And if it happens that a human enemy joins hand in alliance with those afflictions, the poor farmer is apt to be left nowhere. (Rubin 20-21)

Jhingur realizes his mistake. He wants to make peace with Buddhu because “a farmer’s prosperity comes precisely from being humble. God doesn’t like when a peasant walk with his high head” (Rubin 20-21). Jhingur did not like the idea of going to Buddhu but others urge him to do so. When he reaches out of village, he sees the fire in the fields and run like a leopard to save the crop but in vain. Jhingur and others know very well that it was none other than Buddhu who has put the crop on fire. Jhingur decides to cultivate an intimacy in order to take the revenge and to bring the Buddhu on the same level as he was prospering day by day. Jhingur starts working in a jute factory in the city.

Jhingur hatches a conspiracy with Harihar, the tanner, for teaching a lesson to Buddhu. Here also Premchand presents a fine piece of human psychology through the plot of Jhingur and Hariher . He tries to reveal the mystery of human nature in these words:

But when a thief finds another thief in distress he helps him. Everybody is united in hating evil so the wicked have to love one another; while everybody praises virtues so the virtuous are jealous of each other. What does a thief get by killing another thief? Contempt! A scholar slanders another scholar and attains glory. (Rubin 25)

In this story Premchand again shows that not only the farmers but the people doing other professions dependent on agriculture are also easy prey to trap. Here the real masters are the Brahmans who keep other illiterate peoples under their foot in the name of religion and fear of hell. They decide the plenty for breach of the code of behavior set by them. The narrator exposes the intension of the Brahman.

The Brahman, the divinely also stood to profit from the imposition of penance. Naturally he was not one to neglect an opportunity like this. The outcome was Buddha was charged with death of a cow, the Brahman had got very incensed about it too and he determined the manner of compensation. (Rubin 27)

Buddhu's punishment included three months of begging in streets, after that a pilgrimage of seven holy places, donation of five cows to Brahmans and feeding of 500 Brahmans. Buddhu who was living a prosperous life is ruined while performing the rituals of punishment and finally starts working as a laborer in the city with Jhingur.

The story "The Road to Salvation" not only describes the problems of farmer, their hard life and the vulnerability but also the ways of exploitation by upper castes of the uneducated and naïve villagers in the name of the religion and social customs. Though Buddhu belongs to an untouchable community hence

Brahamans and other upper caste cannot eat and drinks the food and water of his house. But the food cooked by the upper caste people in the household of the untouchable becomes pure because the fire purifies everything. Such kind of ambivalence and dual standards can't be swallowed by Premchand and he exposed it in this short story very well.

Premchand understood it clearly that in such a hierarchal and stratified caste system, only the Brahamans who are on the top can enjoy and flourish at the cost of the others. He also made it clear that economic well being of a person decides the states of a person in the society. Buddhu belongs to an untouchable caste but none in the village dare to challenge him because he is a rich man in the village and all have to come to his door for one reason or another. Premchand in his article "The Unfortunate Farmers" wrote:

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

"A feast for the Holy Man" is another story showing the miserable condition of Indian farmer. In this story Premchand reveals the dilemma of a farmer family when a holy man (Sadhu) comes to their door for food when they themselves had nothing to eat as the narrator describes: "The crops had been cleaned out of barn, the money lender had taken the half, the landowner's agent's

agent had collected the other half, and the chaff had been sold to get the ox-trader of their back and that was all.” (Rubin 30)

After dispensing with whatever was there in the house including the flour kept for offering to God the poor family sleeps hungry. The Sadhu enjoys the food offered by the farmer Ramdhan. Ramdhan could not say no to the holy man to go vacant handed. A farmer would like to die before facing such a situation. In the end of the story when the holy man was enjoying a sound sleeps in front of his house after having a healthy meal Ramdhan says to himself, “Well he is a better man than I am.” (Rubin 32)

The original title of the story “The power of Curse” was “Garib Ki Hay” (The Laments of the poor) and was first time published in 1911. In the story Munshi Ramsevak refuse to return the money of a Brahman widow who kept her money with him for safety purpose. Nobody in the village came for her help and gradually the widow’s mind gave way. Everybody in the village was frightened of her because she used to remain to bare food and without clothes. Finally Munga, the widow died on the door steps of Munshi. After this, there began the train of event crossing misfortunes for Munshi’s family. Munshi’s wife Nagin died due do the fear of Munga’s ghost. Ramsevak left home to and became a Sadhu and his son Ramgulam went to jail for burning the crop of a landowner where he used to work.

There is a lot of moralizing in the story. Premchand here seems to bring home the point that a man can’t remain happy and enjoy on the money snatched or earned through illegal means. Munshi Ramsevak is ostracized not because he is a wicked man but because he is responsible for death of a Brahman. Premchand is critical of villager in no loss terms because they remain silent and

inactive. In Premchand's view the person who sees the crime silently is equally culprit with the person who commits it. Premchand also highlights the situation of widows in Indian society where no one comes forward to help them but everyone tries to exploit them economically as well as physically. To set an example before people, Premchand himself married with a widow.

The next story of the volume "A Catastrophe" originally it named "Vidvance" (Destruction) was written in the early twenties. In this story Premchand depicts how merciless and cruel landlords used to treat and exploit the poor and landless workers. Pandit Udeybhan, the landlord of the village Bira, in the story orders to dig up the oven of a Gond widow, who fails to complete almost impossible task of parching the two full big baskets of grain. The description of Pandit Udeybhan and his justification of his inhuman deed are sarcastic and ironic in tone. Pandit Udeybhan forces Bhugni to do all the odd jobs of his household without paying anything because he has allowed her to live in the village. As narrator tells "it couldn't be called an injustice it would have been an injustice only if he had paid her for it. In his opinion if she receive food for working for him, how could be considered a work done without pay." (Rubin 44)

Bhugni again tries to rebuild her oven and it makes Pandit Udeybhan angry. He hit her with his leg and orders to light the stack of dry leaves and the little hut on the oven. Bhugni with a violent dash hurled herself into the flames. The whole village is engulfed in the fire spread out of the Bhugni's immolation.

Premchand puts before the reader miseries and exploitations of a woman of a lower caste and that too a widow. Bhugni do not stand for a single widow of lower caste but represent the all women of lower caste who unfortunately became widows. Nobody cares for them and everybody is ready for exploitation whoever

and whenever finds an opportunity. Bhugni represents the weakest section of society being a woman and a widow. She is triply subaltern. These people are more honest, humane and emotionally attached to their native place, people and environment. Bhugni refuses to leave the village when the pundit Udeybhan asks her to do so. She raises her voice in the protest. She says “how can I? After twelve years of working a field the tenet earns a share in it. I have grown old in this hut. My in laws and their grandparents live in this same hut. Except for Yama, king of death, nobody’s going to force me out of it now.” (Rubin 47)

The pain and anger of Bhugni represents the pain and anger of the poor and exploited. If the all such people will stand and raise their voice the exploitative system of landlords will be destroyed like the mansion of Pandit Udeybhan in the fire of rage of the people who are suffering it from centuries. O. Henry in his play *The World and the Door* (1908) rightly point out: “My purpose is to show that in every human heart there is an innate tendency towards a respectable life; that even those who have fallen to the lowest depths in social scale would, if they could, get back to the higher life; that the innate propensity of human nature is to choose the good instead of the bad” (Quirk 38)

“January Night” (Original Title of it is “Pus ki Rat”) *Pus* is a month in Hindu solar calendar corresponding to the December-January presents an eye opening account of the working conditions of a farmer who works day and night in all weather even without sufficient cloths and food to save him from devastating and murderous effect of the weather.

In this story when Halku ask his wife Munki to give the three rupees saved for purchase of a blanket for giving it to the landlord who was at his door. When she refuses to give the money, Halku tries to coax her in order to avoid the insult

from the landlord. He makes an excuse that he will figure out another plan for blanket. Munni draws herself away in anger and her pain comes out in the form of anger in the following words:

You have already tried “Some other plan” You just tell me what plan can be found. Is somebody going to give you a blanket? God knows how many debates are always left over that we can’t play off what I say is, give up this tenant farming! The work’s killing you, whatever you harvest goes up to pay the arrears, so why not finish with it. Were we born just to keep paying off debts? Earn some money for your own belly; give up this kind of farming. I won’t give you the money, I won’t! (Rubin 49)

But when Halku retorts, it’s fine and I am going to bear the insult; self esteem and reputation is very dear to farmers, the words of Halku charged Munni like a wild beast. Handing over the money to her husband Munni said: “Give up farming this time. If you work as a hired laborer you’ll get enough food to eat from it. No one will be yelling insult at you. Fine work, farming someone else’s land! Whatever you earn you throw back into it and get insulted in bargain.” (Rubin 50)

In this and most of the other stories, the woman character raises the voice of protest against the exploitation but within the four walls of household. It is so because in Indian Bramminal social system, if a woman comes out and speaks, the man loses his social reputation. Hence there is a full proof action plan for each and every section of society. There is a check and balance everywhere: the upper caste people are there to stop the lower caste people and within the lower castes and communities there is an hierarchy. Fifty percent population is blocked in the chain of the four wall of house hold in such a manner that there is no



danger of revolt from that side. Bhugni in the story “A catastrophe” is able to speak because her husband is not there to stop her. Premchand understood and exposed this exploitation system in his stories.

Premchand in his story “Neyur” delineates how life of a happy and loving couple is ruined by the greed for money. Neyur the protagonist in the story is a simple hearted, hardworking laborer who loves his wife and leaves no stone unturned to keep his wife Budhiya happy and comfortable. A cheat in the disguise of a Sadhu robs all of his saving & and jewellery kept for the livelihood of Budhiya if she lives after Neyur. Neyur himself becomes a Sadhu in order to cheat others for regaining the money. He could not cheat an abandoned woman and return the money back. He comes back to village and is shocked too much that he loses his speech when he comes to know that his wife is dead.

There is superb description of the relationship of husband and wife and the love between them. Only a master craftsman like Premchand can dare to enter in this field. Premchand asserts his belief that simple and hardworking village folk are easy prey to cunning cheats. But there the naive people can't cheat others even they wish to do so. They remain faithful to each other even in the worst situations. Budhiya dies after three day when Neyur left the village without eating anything. Neyur remains in the same hut even when plague broke out in the village.

Premchand was a great psychologist, who understood not only the human psychology but also the psychology of animal and birds which lack the gift of gab. In his story “The Story of Two Bullocks” Premchand analyses the basic characteristics of different animals and also tries to reveal whether the calling of a particular animal Donkey the fool is justified or not. Premchand

ascertains in his stories that animal also have emotions as they feel happy angry and sad.

Premchand raised the voice of voiceless in his writing than how he could have left the animal that are voiceless literally. In his stories he not only gives voice to these speechless creatures but also demand for their rights. The narrator while talk about the bad reputation of the jackass in the story says: “If they learned to fight back, well, maybe people would begin to call them civilized. The example of Japan is before us a single victory has caused them to be ranked among the civilized people of the world.” (Rubin 64)

The animals also expects love and care from their owners. If they receive it, they return it in multiples in the form of loyalty, hard work and devotion. Take two bullocks do not receive the love and care in the house of the in-laws of Jhuri, which they used to receive in the house of Jhuri. They become weak but as soon the little motherless daughter of Jhuri’s brother in law gives them some pieces of bread lovingly, they feel as they have been fed with a full meal. It is the result of love that even though they eat a few mouths full of dry straw they did not grow weak.

Premchand’s satire is on the philosophy of “Karma & Dharma” in the story very pungently. It is ironical that Brahamns binds other in different kind of dharma while they themselves do not follow it and mould it in accordance to their suitability. When, Gaya, the brother in law of Jhuri beats the bullocks on the way to his house. Moti wants to teach him a lesson but Heera stops him saying “No that’s not the dharma of our community” (Rubin 68). Again after escaping from Gaya’s house, when they realized they have lost their way, Moti says, “you took to heels without thinking. It would have been better if we would have knocked

him dawn load on the spot” (Rubin 69). Then narrator through Heera again retorts: “if we’d killed him what would the world say? He abandoned his dharma, but we stuck to ours.” (Rubin 69)

Premchand here takes to the task the Indian concept of valour that one should fight with one and one should not attack a fallen and sword less enemy. After defeating the bull in the pea field, when the two bullocks were coming back, Moti says that “I felt like killing the bastard” (Rubin 70). Heera scolds him and says that one should not attack on a fallen enemy. Moti protests: “That’s all hypocrisy. You ought to strike the enemy down so he doesn’t get up again”(Rubin 70). Because of these ideals and philosophies India had to remain under foreign rules for centuries and Indian glory touched the ground.

Many NGOs Groups are working for the animals on various such grounds. Indians used to leave everything on the God as Heera leaves when the butcher was taking them away but Moti does not leave the hope and waits for an opportunity to strike. When they see the familiar path, they run towards the house of Jhuri. When the butcher tries to take them away Moti takes him to horns and forced him to run away. It is right that fortune favours the brave. The writer seems trying to awake the Indian people for the freedom struggle and their rights: “For getting the right one will have to rise and fight for them. Nobody will give you voluntarily you will have to.” (Rubin 70)

Premchand in the story “Ramlila” bring to light the reality of so called religious and prestigious people who abstain from charity for promotion of religion and its teaching but waste money for satisfaction of their lust. There is danger of abolition of ancient custom and traditions because of reckless following of Western culture and concepts. Premchand here brings home the points that

children learns from our behavior not from our teaching. In the story the narrator who is not able to respect his father from the day when he gives a gold sovereign to the dancing prostitute Abadijan while he puts nothing on the worshipping tray of Ramlila procession. On the other hand village choudhary strikes a deal with the leader of prostitute, Abadijan about the money she is going to extract out of the pockets of the people who will gather to enjoy her dance on the last night of *Ramlila*.

The story “The Thakur’s well” depicts the inhumane and miserable living conditions of a large section of Indian society. See the double standards of the high people that they get polluted if someone from an untouchable caste touch them or their food, it gets polluted, but they and their household is not polluted when they do all the odd jobs for them. There are so mean and inhuman that they cannot allow them to take a jug of water from their well for ill and thirsty person. In the story Jokhu, an untouchable by birth, who has been sick for many days takes a ‘*lota*’ of polluted water to drink it because there was no other options to him from where he could get the fresh water. There are two other wells in the village but he knows the result of the effort to bring water from there, that is why he stops his wife Gangi when she goes out to bring water: “You’ll come back with your arms and legs broken, that’s all you’d better just sit down and keep quite.” (Rubin 83)

Gangi despite knowing well the consequences of going to the Thakur’s well, waits for the opportunity, hiding herself behind a tree, near the well when all will go the sleep, to steal a jug of fresh water for her sick husband. Gangi’s resentful and agitated heart questions the validity of restrains and barbs of customs:

Why was she so low and other so high? Because they wore a thread around their necks? There wasn't one of them in the village wasn't rotten. They stole, they cheated, they lied in court.... Just how were they so high and mighty? Whenever she came into the village they looked at her with eyes full of lust. They were on the fire with lust, every one of them but they bragged that they were better than people like her. (Rubin 84)

This resentment of Gangi is genuine and exposes the duality of character and behaviour of the rich and high society people. They had no answer for the simple and basic questions of the people of the community of Gangi and hence resort to use of force for subduing their voices. They do not get polluted when they force the woman of untouchables to sleep with them. Premchand had firm belief that individual and scattered effort will not be able to bring the desired change.

The entry of untouchable in the temples was a contentious issue during the first half of twentieth century. The heroine of story Mandir (Temple), Sukhia is denied entry into the temple by the temple priest when she tries to worship for the cure of illness of his son Jiavan. She breaks the lock of the temple in the night but the priest wakes up and makes a noise. Upper caste people not only stop her from entering into the temple but also beat her severely that Jiavan falls from her hands and dies. The rationale of the priests to ban the entry of untouchables into the temples who were counting bags of money, was exposed by great saint Namdev when he was not allowed to enter into the Vitthal Temple. Namdev sang a song to Vitthal how the deity saves the fallen and most wretched of the world. Hearing the song the doors of the temple open suddenly to the amazement of all including the Brahman priests. (Bhagavan 39)

In this story “A Desperate case” Premchand picks up a very crucial problem of Indian society i.e. the discrimination between a male and female child. This discrimination is result of a superstition that only a male child can carry forward a family line and he only can offer tributes to the fore- fathers in the heaven. It is also believed that parents without a son cannot get a berth in the heaven. It is common in Indian that couple keeps on increasing the number of children till they get at least a male child. The mother who gives birth to a male child is respected in the family and the mother who fails to do so is considered as ill omen. People consider woman responsible for the birth of girl child but it is scientifically proven that woman has no role to play in it.

Nirupma is the unfortunate wife of a lawyer Ghamandi Lal Tripathi, he and his family hold Nirupma responsible for not giving them a son. So she is maltreated when they come to know about the blessing of a saint to Nirupma for a son, their behaviors change altogether and Nirupma becomes a queen from a maid. Sukeshi, the sister in law of Nirupama plays the trick with Gamandi Lal and his family. She is absolutely right when she say to Nirupma, “The people of your house are very cruel to curse fate for having three such darlings! They must be heavy for you, give them to me” (Rubin 88). Sukeshi prepares Nirupma for the trick of the saint because she feels that to pull the wool over the eyes of such a selfish person is not the sin but a virtue. Nirupma dies after giving the birth to her fifth daughter, heart- broken thinking what will happen to her daughter after her death.

Ghamandi Lal though an educated person seems ashamed to give credence to blessing and other such thing in this day and age but the desire to get a son blinds him to believe it. Premchand gives a satirical and touching

description of Nirupma's condition in the family that it forces the reader to think seriously about it. Nirupma's in-laws call the saint a cheat but do not look in themselves how big fraud they are.

In the story Premchand makes it clear that the condition of woman is no better even in Brahman families and the woman there are in more wretched condition than their counterparts in the lower sections of the society.

Seth Chetram of the story "A Day in the Life of a Debt Collector" is a typical money lender. He knows how to take back the principal amount with interest. Sethji treats his defaulting customer so severely and directly that no one could dare to deny him. It is the normal routine of Sethji to go out for dunning exercise as the narrator describes "He was absolutely dedicated to the theory that persisting dunning was a way to prosper. From right after breakfast until evening he was constantly occupied in dunning." (Rubin 99)

Sethji not only used to collect money during his visit to the customers but also used to enjoy the delicacies of milk, *ghee*, *puris screeet* and other dishes at his debtor's expenses. He has saved at least 800 rupees in thirty year of his profession at the rate of one *anna* per meal. If he visits a customer second times he takes crude oil, vegetables and cow dung cakes and other fuel as gift. One day when Sethji was on a dunning expedition of a farmer who owed him five rupees and the rogue had paid neither principal nor the interest for last six month. Sethji engages an *ekka* driver with an intension of making food of him with gift of his gab. But table is turned and the *ekka* driver who is a Muslim proves superior in the art of cheating. He and his wife makes Sethji run in order to save his religious soul, when the wife of *ekka* driver tries to induce a pan leaf in his mouth. A miser person like Seth Chetram do not care his purse full of money because he think

that he can earn money again but not the another soul. It proves religion is like the opium which never allows a person to escape from its effect. Premchand also bring this point home that a cheater meets another cheater one day or another.

The Story also deals with the theme of prostitution. Ekka deriver works as an agent who entices customers while his wife robs the rich and gentleman customers. If one is trapped it is very difficult to come out of their trap.

The narrator is the protagonist in the story “A Car Splashing” is also a pundit. He is a healthy and strong man because he enjoys the best food in the houses of rich and wealthy customers, who feels obliged if he accepts their invitations. When he was on the way to his customer’s house a passing by car splash through a puddle and spatters his cloths and face. It makes him angry in the rage and he with other onlookers beats and misbehaves with the people in and every car passes through that road. The protagonist says that he select and tells the auspicious occasion for his customer and in return gets a lot of money. The scene of disorder and muscle power dominates the road till someone says that police is coming. The narrator like the other onlooker enjoys the scene of beating and manhandling. Here Premchand shows how miscreants and hooligans make a fuss of a small incident of a splash by a moving car and take law in their hands, without caring the problems, pain and miseries of the passer by people.

There is no scope of any doubt about Premchand’s intension to speak for those whose voice is unheard. He not only raises the voice of subalterns but also suggests the ways for alleviation of their suffering and resolution of their problems. Caste base discrimination and inhuman treatment with down trodden is not a new thing in India. In his stories he depicts the beastly behavior of the upper caste people in such a touching way that the reader feels agitated against this



irrational behavior. Though in most of his stories he presents the miserable and wretched conditions of the lower sections of the society but there are some stories in which he offers before the reader and society the practical solutions of their problems. "From Both Sides" is one of such stories.

In this story Premchand through his narrator suggests that nothing is going to be changed with mere lip service in seminars, discussions and debates. Most of the so called crusaders of change become the presidents and secretaries of associations and societies; give their statement in newspaper, magazines and other media in order to remain in the limelight and that is all. But the protagonist "From Both Sides" is a different sort of person. He has established a little society for the upliftment of untouchables and devotes his leisure time and a small part of his income to this charitable cause. After finishing his work in the court he takes his cycle and rides to the villages surrounding the city. There he sits with tanners scavengers, sweepers and other untouchables and converses with them in their own rustic language about morals and behavior. He takes their children in his lap and arranges magic shows and other entertainment shows for them. It is the effect of his company and sympathy that a lot of improvement can be seen in the behaviour of the untouchables of the district as the narrator narrates: "The eating of dead cattle was completely stopped. And if the consumption of liquor did not altogether cease, nevertheless Hamid Khan the police inspector, was much displeased no doubt from the decrease of fights and rows that liquor had formerly caused every day." (Rubin 111)

In this manner he establishes a fraternal relationship with the untouchables. He attends the patients if someone is ill and offers medical and financial help for it but in most of cases his love and sympathy was sufficient.

Behind his these achievements it was not the money but selfless humanitarianism and zeal for social service. He produces a sort of revolution in the houses and huts, in their eating and drinking habits and in their rituals and customs through his enthusiastic and unflaggingly sympathetic endeavors. And the most important and significant thing is that they learn to respect themselves. He not only taught them good ways of living and behaviour but also broke the centuries old tradition by dining with them in the wedding of tanner community- headman's daughter. Eleanor Zelliot warns the Indian people that "Rationale for conversion was psychological, but it is clear that this is not enough. Economic improvement for the masses, freedom from village harassment and urban prejudice, room at the top for the ambitious and the able- all this must come through some other path" (Bhagavan 7)

In this story Premchand stresses this point that there naïve and simple hearted people are not thankless like the clever and sophisticated people. They pay back more than they receive, when Pandit Shyamsarup do not return to these villages even after a waiting for two weeks. They reach at his house. Panditji speaks a lie that his wife is ill instead of telling that his wife has taken a vow from him to break the connection with the untouchables that is why he has broken this connection. They bring the best doctor available in the area for treatment of Panditji's wife paying their fee in advance. Panditji's wife Kolesari Devi realizes her mistake that she had stopped her husband from going to such honest and loving people just because of a sarcastic remark of a rich and haughty woman. She herself joins her husband in this holy and soul satisfying cause.

So through this story Premchand asserts that social revolution can be brought not through mere words but by the real and practical work which motivates other also to follow the suit.

The story "Penalty" highlights the deplorable working condition of lower class working people as well as their miserable living situation. The protagonist, Alarakkhi is hardworking sweeper woman as the narrator describes: "During these chilly days she would be out with broom before it was light and go on assiduously sweeping the road until nine" (Rubin 153). It is her misfortune that she has not received her full pay since her joining the duties. A part of her pay is cut in lieu of the fine imposed for neglect of the duty. She finds the sanitation Inspector Kharat Ali Khan on her head whenever she sits down for a moment to catch a breath. She can't sleep even at night partly because of cold and partly because of the crying of her daughter who is suffering from cough and fever. Alarakkhi becomes so much frustrated as she is not able to attend her ill and crying daughter. It is visible in the following words: "Shut up, Alarakkhi brushing the broom. If you don't I'll hit you with the broom and that'll be the end of you. The bastard of an Inspector's going to show up at any moment." (Rubin 154)

Inspector reaches there at the very moment and rebukes Alarakkhi for not caring the little girl. He tells her to go on leave. Alarakkhi's simple answer is "If my pay is cut, Huzzor, what will we have to live on? (Rubin 155). Alarakkhi fears that she is going to be fired for abusing the inspector. The words of Husaine, her husband, while consoling her press for the need of a union of worker for the safe guard of their rights and for the protection from undue harassment. "If our people stuck together like that would Khan Sahib ever dare

fine us so much” (Rubin 155). Here one can see the effect of the principles of Carl Marx on the writing of Munshi Premchand.

The readers also see in the story the pay day is no less than a festival for the workers. Vendors and Peddlers gather at municipality office to sell their items because it is the only day on which the workers have some money in their pockets. Not only vendor but moneylender Pathans are also swarming there to collect their installment from who owe them.

The story “The Price of milk” was published in 1934. The story contains in it every aspect of the rural social life. There are characters from every section of the society and even animals are not left. Premchand unravels the mentality of everyone in the society whether they are landowners, Pandits, untouchables, servants, children or dogs. One can see the miniature of Indian rural social life live when he or she reads the story. Premchand not only offers a live account of the social activeness but also raise pertinent and valid question or the customs and rituals of the society in this short story.

In the very beginning of the story Premchand takes the issue of the lack of Medical facilities in rural India. Nobody can imagine of the availability of doctors and nurses for deliverers. The delivery room remains in the charge of an uneducated untouchable woman. Secondly he describes the differences of atmosphere at the birth of a girl child and a male child. Babu Maheshwarnath, the Zamindar of the village, though an educated man waits eagerly along with all other villagers for the birth of a son. He has three daughters. There are celebrations in the village and everybody is given gifts, sweets and fruits. Bhungi, the sweeper midwife takes care of the child and feed him her own milk at the cost of her own child. She becomes an important person in the house hold. The

mistress promises Bhungi that she would eat at ease right down to her grand children's time. She will receive five *bighas* of rent free land.

Bhungi once daared to answer the remark of Maheshwar Nath because of her this position when he said that sweeper will remain sweeper and it is too hard to make civilized people out of them. On this Bhungi Says: "Master, it is the sweepers who make it possible for the high caste people to be civilized. Just let somebody do the same for us!" (Rubin 225). But keeping the care of his child in the mind Maheshwarnath only remarked, "Bhungi always has something wise to say." (Rubin225)

The period of Bhungi's rule in the Zamindar's house could not stay more than a year because the Brahman objected to the child being nursed with and untouchable woman's milk. Pandit Moteram Sastri wishes for a penance, though nursing is abandoned but the question of penance was laughed away. Taunting the Brahman Maheshawrnath says: "A penance Shastrij? Very Sensible! Until yesterday the child was nourished by the blood of this same Untouchable, so he must already be contaminated. My, my that's the great religion you've got." (Rubin 225)

Bhungie dies of snake biting while cleaning a sewerage drain in Bablu Maheshwarnath's house leaving his son Mangal alone to dwell on the leftovers of the family, as her husband Gobar had already died of plague. He lives under a Neem tree in front of Maheshwarnath's house in all weathers. He used to go to visit the ruins of his house where he found the love and care. He used to weep there while sitting on a jagged wall. A dog named Tommy, his only friend understands him. He is mistreated by other boys during the play and forced to serve as a horse to them. He runs away from the house out of fear when mistress

threatens him for touching Suresh. She restrains her from beating him because after that she would have to take purificatory bath. He returns back when he sees no place to go. In the evening the servant calls Mangal for the leftover food. He receives the food with humble gratitude. Mangal says to Tommy that his mother nursed Suresh. In these words of simple hearted Mangal lie the deep irony: "They say no body can ever really pay the price of the milk, and this is the payment I am getting." (Rubin 232)

Premchand was a writer who picked every nerve and pulse of society that nothing could escape from scanner of his visilent eyes. His characters are from each and every walk of life but they are not a typical type because the variety in the nature and behavior can be seen in every section of the society. This story "The Shroud" is sufficient to break this conception that all untouchables and lower caste people are not simple hearted honest and hardworking and all upper caste people are not exploiters cruel and miser.

In this story Ghisu and Madhav are father and son who are more concerned about the roasted potatoes than Madhav's wife who is in the labour pains inside the cottage. They are cheaters and know very well how to exploit the hardworking farmers and other villages. They always succeed in getting something from them in one pretext or another. They sleep soundly near the fire after drinking water without worrying about the condition of Budhiya inside the cottage. She dies at night and in the morning they weep and beat their chest in order to receive the sympathy of the people. They are able to collect sum of five rupees in the name of funeral arrangements but waste the money in drinking wine and eating delicacies in the market knowing that people will do everything for her funeral. Ghisu is sure that she will get the shroud as he answers to the question of

Madhav “How do you know she won’t get a shroud? Do you think I am such a jackal? Have I been wasting my time in this world for sixty years? She’ll have a shroud and a good one too.” (Rubin 239)

Premchand makes it clear through his story “Deliverance” that the untouchables or other subalterns of society which suffer continually until they stand against injustice and atrocities of upper caste people. If they do not unite together they will have to serve and face humiliation at the hands of Brahmins and other upper caste people. Dukhi services Pandit Ghasiram whole the day and dies while splitting a trunk of a tree. Pandit binds his legs in a noose of rope and threw him in an open field to be picked up by kites, dogs and crows. This treatment of the upper caste Hindu to the untouchables is heart rendering and disgusting. Through such kind of description Premchand wants to awake the almost dead soul of the people. He also hopes to incite the humble and dormant untouchables to stand and unite for a dignified and respectable life.

The story “The Road to Hell” presents what a girl expects from her husband and married life. The mismatch marriages were common during the time of Premchand and poor parents under the pressure of social customs used to marry their daughter to old persons least she will not remain hungry. They do not think about her tender feelings, her hopes and aspirations in the life. In the story the narrator who is young girl married to an old man feels that she would have been happier if she might have stayed at her home.

She narrates: “But because of accursed custom it’s felt to be inevitable that every unfortunate girl must be tied to neck of some men or other. They do not know how many tender hearts shaken with longings are trampled under its foot.” (Rubin 194)

Narrator describes not only the girl but the old man who marries a young girl always feels suspicious about her and want to keep her like a caged bird. She describes the condition of such an old man in the words: “A beggar sitting on a King’s throne can’t sleep in peace, one enemy after another seems to appear on every side. I think this must be state of any old man who marries.” (Rubin 195)

The narrator compares her with her friend Sushila who is poor but enjoy love and care of her husband and the empire of three worlds is nothing before the love of husband and wife if it is mutual and pure. After death of her husband the narrator leaves her house at the night and falls in the hands of a wicked woman. Her desire for true love remains unfulfilled. She urges parents that they may kill or poison their daughter but should not marry them to ugly old men because a woman can bear everything except the trampling down of her longing of youth.

Premchand was a writer who understood basic nature and characteristic of each and every section of the society, society as well as of the family. None of them can depart from this basic rule of his or her nature. In the story Premchand puts bare the basic characteristics of nature of the man and the woman. A woman is by nature if infatuated or attached to someone, she will do anything and will remain loyal to him. On the contrary, a man runs after a woman until if he does not get her. Once he gets her he becomes fed up and tries to get another one with hope that he will get more love and satisfaction which he never gets.

Miss Padma a young, beautiful and educated lawyer considers marriage an unnatural bond, decides to remain independent and enjoy the life. She sees no more harm in sexual enjoyment and considers it an appetite of the body. She has a dozen of lovers from high society and professions. But she finds all of them



mere sensualist who like the bees want to drink the nectar unconcernedly. Now she realizes that her heart demands not just physical enjoyment but complete dedication, which she has not found. She becomes infatuated with Mr. Prasad, a professor in the local college. She proposes him and asks him to stay with him without marriage after an oath to remain faithful to each other. Miss Padma spends happily on his extravagances which go on increasing. He starts ignoring her and he enjoys cinema with college girls and finally runs away with a college girl taking all the saving of her away when Padma was going through delivery in the hospital.

In the story the writer delineates the repercussions of man woman relations. Padma shows her weakness and hence Parsad cheats and exploits her. For him she becomes like a rare commodity, no longer prized, because of over availability. In the end of story when Padma sees a European woman going with her husband tears come out of her eyes. It confirms Premchand's belief that there could be no parallel to institution of marriage for living a happy life. Exploitation of woman in the hand of man will continue till she gives up her weakness and faces the problem boldly.

“A Servant of the Nation” is shortest story of Munshi Premchand, but it is the most striking one. Premchand knew and understood very well the hypocrisy and affectation of politicians. They play with the emotions of the people for their political benefits. He speaks about the equality of all, high or low, untouchables or upper caste. He brings a low caste young man into the temple but turns away his face with eyes of doom when her daughter Indira asks for the permission of the marriage with the same young man.

Premchand was well aware that roots of caste are so deep in the psyche of the people that the caste discrimination can't be stopped without finishing the caste itself as Dr. Bhim Rao Amedkar said in his essay "The Untouchables" that the fortress of caste can be broken if the people starts marrying beyond their castes and it will bring the equality and change in the behaviour of the people.

Almost all the stories dealing with the theme of freedom struggle depict the freedom fighter heroes sacrificing their money, life, happiness and every comfort for the sake of the freedom. Because ,the man who is not free, cannot be happy. The characters whether man or woman in these stories comes forward and set an example before others. Seeing the dedication and selfless service of these freedom fighters, other people also become ready to participate in this holy struggle for freedom. "A Little Trick" and "A Moral Victory" are such stories dealing with the theme of freedom struggle. He wants to convey the message that the moral courage and non violence can make to bow even the most powerful.

Premchand was a writer of progressive thinking. He believed that without active participation of the all, a nation can't progress. One of the major reasons of backwardness of India is that a few work and most of the people sit idle and eat. This habit of the idleness is to be change otherwise it will surely take India into deeper in the gorge. This kind of behaviour of Indian people forced the country to remain under the foreign rule for centuries. If they will not change this nature how long it will remain God knows.

In the story "The Chess Players" two aristocrats Mirza Sazzed Ali and Mr. Raushan Ali spend their whole time in playing chess without carrying for the affair of states. They live a luxurious life without doing anything. English Army takes the Nawab of Awadh without any struggle because those who were

appointed to defend the state were lost in the luxuries. In the end they kill each other with their sword in the name of superiority of blood and reputation of their forefathers.

Through the story “The Chess Players” Premchand gives a message to those who brag of their past glory and reputation of the family that life runs on the present not on the past glory. It is one's duty to maintain the glory and add some more features to it otherwise the situation of the country will be like the state of Awadh and the Nawab of Lucknow.

Premchand was a writer, a writer who never compromised with the ethics and principles of writing from beginning to end of his career. He wrote freely without any hesitation and fear that's why the copies of his first short story collection *Soje Vatan* were seized and the book was banned and it was only by the grace of God that he escaped the prison. Then he started writing with a pen name 'Nawabrai'

In the story “The Writer”, Pravin who bears all the hardship of poverty and devotes his life and energies for writing sincerely. A writer always remains hungry for the name and fame. Once he gets an invitation from Raja Sahab to attend a party in his house where Raja Sahab introduces him with the English loving people and who were his guests. One of them suggests him for translating the poem of English poets. Pravin retorts him saying that the Indian poets and Hindi language are no way inferior to them, then why should he should translate English poets. Whenever Raja Sahab introduces Pravin with his guests that Pravin is a Hindi poet then every body's answer was the same, “Oh I see, you are a poet! (Rubin 165). It made the poet heart of Pravin angry. He bluntly refuses to recite a poem when chief guest, a judge of the High Court arrives and Raja Sahab

asks him to do so. Then irritated Raja Sahab says that he had wasted his time while introducing him to the guests. Pravin answer in the similar tone “You have indeed wasted your time (Rubin 166.) In response to a guest who suggests that he should recite some other poet’s line, Pravin says: “Certainly not if you will forgive me. I’m not minstrel or street side story teller” (Rubin 166). He departs from the party immediately for his house and feels relieved and happy. In response to the question of his wife for her happiness, he responds, “Only because tonight I learned a lesson for all time. I’m a lamp and I was created to burn. Today I forget that principle. But the good Lord didn’t let me astray for long. This wretched dwelling of mine is heaven for me. I understood the truth that service of literature demands complete sacrifice.” (Rubin 167)

Through this story Premchand reminds the writers of India their duty. He urges them not to mortgage their dignity and self respects to the rich and rulers. They are born to serve the humanity and society not the blood sucking lords and professionals.

This debate that Pramchand is greater as a novelist or as a short story writer has divided the critics. Ramvilas Sharma casts his vote in the favour of Premchand as a novelist. In contrary Indernath Madan believes that indeed undoubtedly Premchand is a great novelist, he is even greater as a short story writer. Ganga Parsad Vimal slightly says in this regard that a comparison of this kind is hardly proper because Premchand as a short story writer and Premchand as a novelist are not different persons. On the basis of the stories or novels alone he would have not attained the status as a literary artist (Sharma 143). More than 250 stories make Premchand’s world thicker and fuller as they were effective and

important means of maintaining nearness and relations with the reading public even more than the novels.

The most important thing of Premchand's short stories is his unusually wide range, including characters representing Rajas, nawabs, aristocrats, feudal landlords, westernized sahibs, middle class men, clerks, shopkeepers and professionals like doctors, lawyers, judges, professors, engineers and workers. The spectrum of village life in which Premchand himself was brought up and observed its each and every activity with his sensitive and unerring eye of a society based on rank and states, caste, class, age and sex. He stands for and fights for the case of downtrodden and provides them voice through his stories and non fictional writings. Women and untouchables beg his love and respect and vent his anger against the social sanctions and conventions which perpetuate them inferior status just like political and social exploitation and religious corruption. Much before the term like socialism, feminism and progressivism acquired their modern definitions Premchand wrote for uplifting and championing the cause of untouchable, peasants, widows and prostitutes.

The discourse whether the subalterns can speak or whether their voice can only be recovered with the interventions of some postcolonial writer or historian, Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak is of the view that subaltern cannot speak and postcolonial intellectual must represent it. She finds her subaltern in sati (a Hindu widow burnt on husband pyre) and provides the air for the fire of the debate but widow remains absent. The issue has been high jacked instead of taking the issue from its roots. Subalterns have existed and represented by intellectuals and writers like Munsii Premchand in his novels, short stories, non-fictional writings and speeches. It is naïve to assume that there were no cases of labor, peasants,

dalit, tribal and minority movements in pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial period. Or to assume that lower and oppressed casts and classes were never in a position to rebel or stand against the powerful and oppressors. Though they were powerless even then could negotiate the shortcomings of dominant people. The people rebel, resist and challenge to change their fortune and not for anybody else. On the contrary the desire of intellectual to represent sub subaltern has nothing much to change their lot but as Baudhrillard is of the opinion that the major theme of every discussion on subalterns of the social considerations which they have to deal with.

Spivak's selection of the Hindu widow as the perfect choice of subaltern silence is a choice of convenience. Ania Loomba questions the representation of all the *satis* of colonial India because there were few who survived to narrate their tales of agony. Sati was a practice prevalent from medieval times. Her discourse on sati starts from British government's legislations and patriarchal narratives and did not ponder over document and literature available in vernacular media. That's why post colonial critics and intellectuals charge her of not being able to pay heed to the natives and their voice. They drive their theories from the field of psychoanalysis, post structural, and post modernism and take literature in English as the text for subaltern studies. The stories of subaltern experience and resistance representing their concerns and commitments can be better found in vernacular literature.

Munshi Premchand was the first writer who narrated and showcased the whole gist of these experiences in his short stories and novels during the first three decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though his condemnation of Indian feudal and caste system is not explicit yet he gives them sufficient space to raise their voice and

opportunity to register their wrath anger and frustration. His social realistic mode presents a live and vivid reality of subalterns exposing complacencies and affections of dominant, feudal and patriarchal suicide. In his stories “The shroud,” “The Road to Salvation,” “A Catastrophe,” “The Thakur’s Well,” “A Desperate Case,” “The Story of Two Bullocks” and almost in all the stories, Premchand exposes and satires the philosophy of exploitation as well as the exploiters and management of situations by the subalterns.

In the story ‘*The Road to Salvation*’. Buddhu the shepherd belongs to an untouchable’s community invites the wrath the Jhingur the farmer, who beats his sheep severely because they break into his field. Buddhu do not care about the threats of Jhingur although he speaks meekly. “He thinks! If I derive the block back for a few little threats how will I graze my sheeps?” (Rubin 20). Buddhu is a tough man, who owes 240 sheep and gets eight *annas* per night to leave them into the fields of the farmers. He sells milk as well as blankets made of the sheep wool. He further thinks: “why he getting so angry? What can he do to me? I’m not his servervant” (Rubin 20). Buddhu burns the crop of Jhingur and whole village and destroys the framers but nothing could be done against him without a proof.

Narrator rightly describes that “to take vengeance on the farmer is easier than slicing of banana” (Rubin 20). Premchand highlights the vulnerability that he gets his produce into the house after so many afflictions of nature and God and if a human enemy joins hands he is apt to be left nowhere. Jhingur regrets himself and other held him responsible for the ruin of the crop because if he had not stopped Buddhu at all, the crop would not have been ruined.

“The Shroud” is the story (*Kafan* original title) on which Mrinal Son has made a film. It is not an explicit or interventionist story condemning the caste and feudal system. Ghisu and his son Madhav belong to *chamar* community among the untouchables sit at the door of their hut besides a dead fire eating the roasted potatoes. Budhiya, the wife of Madhav is going through the pains of child birth. They do nothing to help her out of this situation but waiting for her death so that they may sleep with peace. Father and son are more concerned about the roasted potatoes than her screams. Ghisu knows the trick how to exploit the villagers without doing any work. Clever Ghisu knows the inverted logic of society and tells Madhav: “The very people who would not give us a piece before will send for us tomorrow and give us rupees” (Rubin 234). As expected they find Budhiya dead in the morning. They go begging around the villages in the name of cremation of Budhiya and within an hour collect a sum of five rupees. They enjoy afeast in the city instead of purchasing a shroud for Budhiya because Ghisu was more than sure that villager themselves will make all the arrangement for her cremation.

Premchand begins his story with a depreciatory note castigating the father and son for their laziness. They are described as useless from upper caste point of view because upper caste people are not able to get free or cheap labor out of them. The value of lower caste people in the society is measured by their utility to the upper castes. As Dukhi, a man of the same community to which Ghisu and Madav belongs follows the orders of upper caste Brahman meekly and works whole day without eating anything and dies. His body is dragged out of village by the Brahman like an animal with a noose of rope around his legs and left to be eaten by crows and dogs. The people of Dukhi’s community defy the order of the



upper castes and refuse to take away the body of Dukhi. The Gond (a lower community) whose house is nearby to Pandit goes to tanner's settlement and says: "Careful now! Don't go to get the body. There will be a police investigation yet. It's no joke that somebody killed this poor fellow." (Rubin 248)

But Ghisu and Madhav and Buddhu are perceptively different from other subalterns who resist all the efforts of their exploitation rather exploit upper caste to satisfy their anger for the exploitation they are bearing for centuries. Even though Ghishu and Madhav are able to resist the exploitative forces but surprisingly and tragically, Budhia the only and poor woman in the family who catapults Ghisu and Madhav to a bargaining position and she herself dies without a voice. They exploit her even after her death and enjoy a sumptuous feast while she is lying dead. After her arrival in the house they stopped whatever they use to do to fill their stomach. Just like the ruling upper caste people they are also not short of justifications. Ghisu say to Madhav about her going to heaven that she never hurt a fly, never bothered any soul throughout her life and even after death fulfilled their dearest wish. If she will not go to heaven than who will? The privileged always justifies the exploitation in order to serve his self interests. Budhiya is crushed under the tripartite forces of poverty patriarchy and feudalism. The story explains the complexicity of relationships in agrarian society. Premchand raises of the problems of lower caste woman more pathetically even without any word from Budhiya.

Beside the woman character there are so many other characters who resent and fight against the atrocities of the powerful for example Munga in "The Power of a Curse" Subagin in "Subagi," Bhungi in "A Catastrophe," Padma in "Miss Padma" etc. Padma even being and educated and open minded lawyer is

being cheated and exploited by Mr. Parsad as he understands her weak points.  
(Looma 41)

Women whether in the upper castes or in lower castes suffer in Indian patriarchal society. It is the women who work day and night and treated badly because they are considered weak. It is not that Premchand depicts them only in the hands of men but he also expresses their discontentment and frustration and their voice of resentment and rebellion in his short stories. One can see various instances of resentment and revolt of the women character nailing from the all sections of society. In the story "The Desperate Case" Nirupma with the help of his sister-in-law Sukeshi makes her in-laws suffer and exploits their desire to have a male child. When Nirupma asks her sister-in-law Sukeshi whether it would be sin or not to lie before the husband, Sukeshi says "To pull the wool over the eyes of a selfish fellow like him is a virtue" (Rubin 89). Nirupma plays the trick of boon of a saint that she will give birth to a son this time, so her in-laws leave no stone unturned to make her comfortable and happy. She leaves no opportunity to exploit their weakness. She thinks "The more I torment you selfish ones the better you honor me, don't you, only because I'm going to give birth to a child who'll carry on your name. I'm nothing, the child alone is everything. I have no importance, everything hinges on your child." (Rubin 90)

In the story "The Road to Hell" a young girl who is also the narrator of the story is married to an old man by her parents. She suffers from the pangs of agony, frustration and desire to get the true love. After sometime her husband dies and she leaves home at night and falls in the hands of a wicked woman and becomes a prostitute. She held her parents and her husband responsible for her suffering and hell like life. She says: "Still the responsibility of my ruin is not on

my head but on my mother and father and that old man who wanted to be my husband” (Rubin 199). She further says that she is writing all this only because the other girls may be saved from this kind of mismatch and hell like life emerging out of such kind of mismatch.

The condition of farmer is not less miserable than the other subalterns of society. He works day and night but what he gets in return is poverty, humiliation and hunger. Everybody in society exploits them whether it is landlord, moneylender, beggar and other professionals of the society. There are so many hurdles which he has to cross before reaching of the crop in the barn, such as unfavorable weather, attack of insects, pests, animals and human enemies etc. Till the crop remains with the farmer the prices remain low but as soon as it goes out of hands of the farmer the prices touch the sky. The grain merchants store the crop and sell this very produce back to farmer in the form of seed at a very high rate. Being illiterate and naive he is bound in social customs and rituals that he follows them blindly without applying his own mind that he has to take the loan from the money lender on the occasions of each and every such activity. He always remains indebted without any hope of being free from it. Premchand observed all the activities of farming community very closely; hence he was able to bring the pain, suffering and problems of the farmers on the surface in his short stories. They are people who can do anything but cannot let their self respect and dignity lower in the society. They can't leave the profession because for them to work for others as a labourers is shameful and below dignity. Premchand in his story “*A Feast for the Holy Man*” present the pathetic condition of the farmer in these words:

The crops had been cleaned out of the barn, the money lender had taken half the landowner's agent had collected other half and the chaff had been sold to get the ox trader off their backs and that was all. For themselves they had saved a small sack. By threshing it over and over again to had managed to get scarcely mound of grain out of it. Somehow or other they got into the spring, but God knows how they would go on or what the oxen would eat or even the people in the house. (Rubin 30)

The farmer had learnt to face all such kinds of situations from the centuries. But dilemma before Ramdhan and his wife is that how they will make the Sadhu (The holyman) who is waiting on the door for food because a farmer can't bear it that a holy man goes empty handed from his door. So Ramdhan offered all the edibles to the Sadhu including that his wife had kept aside for offering to the God and they themselves sleep hungry just drinking water of dal.

In another story "Night January" (original title: Pus ki Rat) when Halku, the farmer asks his wife Munni to give him the three rupees kept aside to purchase a blanket in order to save him from the cold in cold night in the fields, as the landlord's agent was standing on his door. His wife becomes angry and says: "God knows how many debts are always left over that we can't pay off" (Rubin 49). In his anger and frustration she advises Halku to give up the tenant farming because the overwork was killing him and all the production goes into the payment of arrears. She further says that we are born just to pay off the debts. So he should give up the farming and earn something for his own belly. In the last when Halku cannot bear the cold of January he goes to a nearby grove of trees, collects the leaves and burns them to save himself and his dog Jabra from the cold. He falls asleep there near the warm ash and the cattles ruin the whole

field and she remains shocked to see the condition of the field. She awakes Halku and says “that now” he will have to hire himself out to earn to pay off the rent and taxes. Halku answers with a contended smile: “But I won’t have to sleep nights out here in the cold.” (Rubin 49)

It is clear from the stories and historical documents that condition of farmers in colonial India was even worse than the wage earning labourers. In the story “Neyur” Neyur is a wage earning labourer. Through his hard work he is able to earn too much that he provides her wife all kinds of comfort, cloths and jewels. She does nothing in her household even then Neyur has saved and deposited twenty five silver coins and some silver jewellery for his wife. In a conversation about his wife his co-worker Deena says: “She tries to give young woman a run for their money. All she thinks about cinnabar, make-up and jasmine for her hair. You never see her without a fancy colored sari and what more she can’t live without jewels.” (Rubin 56)

Neyur only knows handwork but not the ways of the world that is why cheated by a cheat in the disguise of a Sadhu, of all the money he had and the borrowed from others to make it manifold. But it is not that the condition of the worker was good during the colonial period. In the story “The Writer,” Pravin the writer is a mill worker and also earns some money through his writings in magazines and newspaper even than his condition is miserable. He wears tattered Cloths, drinks tea without sugar and milk and every shopkeeper owes him. In the similar way in the story “Penalty” both Alarakki and his husband Husaini works whole day even than they are not able to earn sufficiently to eat contentedly. They are fine even for a little negligence in duty without caring for the reason of

the negligence. So Husaini feels the need for the union of the workers in the story.

Children are also subalterns of the society, particularly the orphans who suffer at the hand of all in the society. In the stories of Premchand one can see many examples of such children who suffer from every side in the society. In the short story “The Price of Milk” Mangal suffers maltreated and dejected by the other children as well as by the elders of the society. Their woes know no found because there is no one in the society to listen them. Mangal is forced to become a horse by other boys despite her unwillingness. When he makes Suresh, the son of the landlord falls from the back, he starts weeping and tells a lie to her mother that Mangal has hit him. This shows the resistance of Mangal despite all the odds. The resistance is also visible in these words of Mangal: “So long as I’m not going to get a rider, I won’t be a horse” (Rubin 228). Being an untouchable and orphan Mangal has to bear all humiliation and disagree because he had no other option to go anywhere but to live on the leftovers of the Jamindar whose son was fed with her milk by her mother.

The motherless girl, who gives Hira and Moti pieces of bread in the household of Gaya in the story “The Story of Two Bullocks,” is ill-treated by her step mother. She knows the pain of being helpless that’s why she sympathizes with the bullocks. It is she who sets the bull free in order to save them from atrocities and it is a sort of resistance against the inhumanity and cruelty. There are other cases of children maltreated and exploited in the stories of Premchand like Hamid in the Story “Idgah.”

Human beings have power of speech and they can express their disgust, pain frustration and sorrows by telling it to others but what about the animals

who cannot speak. They bear all the cruelty and injustice without an expression of it. The cases of zoo animals' killing their caretakers and others whenever they find opportunity are common. In the story "The Story of Two Bullocks" Premchand in the beginning talk and about the nature of animals like dog, ass and finally starts the story of two bullocks of the vegetable farmer Jhuri named Hira and Moti. Jhuri takes a great care of them and they work for him whole heartedly without and complain. An intimacy and friendship has been developed between two because they had lived together for a long time.

Once, Jhuri sends the two bullocks to his father –in- law's house. The animals think that the master has sold them, hence feel very sad and dejected. They resist Jhuri's brother in law Gaya's attempts to take them away. The bull thinks if the God would have given them voice they might have asked Jhuri: "Why are you throwing us poor wretches out? We have done everything possible to serve your will. If the hard work as we did couldn't get the job done you could have made us work still harder. We are willing to die laboring for you... so why did you sell us into the hands of this tyrant." (Rubin 65)

When the two friends run away from Gaya's house and Gaya comes with a dozen of men with stick in their hands. Moti says that they will show him a little fun if he beats them with stick. But Hira cautions him and advises him to stand still. But Moti in rebellious tone say. "If he beats me I'll knock one or two of them" (Rubin 68). Hira again cautions Moti that it is not the dharma of their community. Seeing the rage of fierce looks Gaya and his helpers concluded that it is best to put off this time and take the bullocks' home without beating them. Now they are bound with thick rope which they could not break even after trying their best. This time the little girl who used to give them bread comes to their

rescue and opens the ropes. They do not want to run away because it would cause problem for the girl but the girl makes a noise that the bullock have run away hence leave no choice for them but to run away. In the hurry they forget their way and taken into custody and finally sold to a cattle trader. In the way they recognize the path and reach to the housed of Jhuri. In this way through combined efforts of both patience on the part of Hira and aggression on the part of the Moti, they win their freedom.

From this story Premchand seems to support the middle path which is the golden path for success. Directionless aggression can also cause harm and with too much submissiveness one can't achieve his goal. So he never supported Gandhiji's idea of complete non-violence in his novels and short stories.



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