CHAPTER - III

HINDI NOVEL IN THE AGE OF PREMCHAND

The Hindi novel was in a state of evolution in the nineteenth century. Before Premchand, it revolved around magical or tales of deception, entertaining stories and religious themes. Thus the Hindi novelists before Premchand could not fulfill the precise purpose of the novel as they were either only didactic or only entertaining lacking the didactic element. They failed to blend both of them satisfactorily and even could not benefit from the development of the novel in the West. Premchand for the first time understands the form and purpose of the novel and blends idealism and realism with the Indian themes, issues and worldview in this western form. He not only enriches it by his valuable contribution but also provides the literary form a specific direction and growth. Thus Premchand is considered one of the most revered figures in the field of Hindi novel and progressive movement. The demarcation of the Hindi novels as Pre-Premchand age and Premchand age is not only chronologically based but is based on these distinct literary characteristics. Similarly Premchand age and Post–Premchand age too represent two distinct streams of literature. Thus Premchand placed between his preceeding and succeeding age seems to signify specific standards for Hindi literature.

The Hindi novel that witnesses a sea change after the arrival of Premchand, had access to the tilismi- aiyari and the detective novels. Historical romances too were no different. Socially educative novels and works of social reformation such as Bhagyawati or Aadarsha Hindu, having tilt towards
Sanatan dharma were available. These works either espoused or opposed the purdah system, the unconditional fidelity of a wife to her husband, co-education and child-marriage according to their social affiliation. Premchand intervenes at this place and provides a direction of realism to the Hindi novel by salvaging it from such confusing and reactionary conditions and emphasizing on the issues faced by our nation and society. He is the flagbearer of this new literary consciousness.

With his comprehensive reading of Western literary works of Dickens, Henry James, Lord Chesterton among others, Premchand arrives at definite literary conclusions, that are to be comprehensively discussed in this chapter, and sets a blue-print for the Hindi novel. With a specific view regarding novel, he rejects the earlier tilisma and aiyari works as unfit for his age, as they focussed on romance and were escapist in nature. Premchand believes that the “objective of poetry and literature is to further intensify our perceptions; but human life is not limited to the love of the opposite sex.” (Sahitya Ka Udeshya, Kuch Vichar p-9) He questions that “can the literature that considers it important only to escape from the harsh realities of life, fulfill our requirements concerning ideology and expressions? Shringarik disposition is one of the parts of life. It serves neither as a matter of pride nor an example of good taste if the majority of literature of a particular race associates with it.” (Sahitya Ka Udeshya, Kuch Vichar p-10)
Premchand perceives the change of the literary taste among the contemporary readers and appreciates their tilt towards realism. Elaborating on this change in literary taste, he remarks:

Parantu hamari sahityik ruchi badi teji se badal rahi hai. Ab sahitya keval man-behlav ki cheej nahin hai, manoranjan ke siva uska aur bhi udeshya hai. Ab vah keval nayak-nayika ke sanyog-viyog ki kahani nahin sunata, kintu, jeevan ki samasyaon par bhi vichar karta hai, aur unhen hal karta hai. Ab vah sfurti ya prerna ke liye adhibut ashcharyajanak ghatnaen nahin dhoondta aur na anupras ka anveshan karta hai kintu use un prashno se dilchaspi hai jinse samaj ya vyakti prabhavit hote hain.

(“Sahitya Ka Udeshya”, *Kuch Vichar* pp-10-1)

But our literary taste is rapidly changing. Now literature is not only a means of entertainment but has some other objective too. Now not only does it narrate the story of union and separation of the hero and the heroine but also discusses the issues related to life and attempts to provide their solutions. Neither does it derive inspiration from the amazing and astonishing incidents nor does it investigate the assonance. But it is integrated in those issues that influence the society and the individual.

Premchand believes in framing high standards for literature. He believes that, “literature that does not create good taste; does not provide spiritual and mental satisfaction; does not provide us strength and progress; does not arise the love for beauty – does not provide us the determination to triumph over difficulties is useless and does not deserve being called literature.” (“Sahitya Ka Udeshya”, *Kuch Vichar* p-11)

Prior to the age of Premchand, the change in literary taste from escapism to realism goes even beyond the incidents of magic and deception such as depicted in *Chandrakanta Santati*. It even finds its influence in characterization and their authenticity. He believed that the activity of the presentation of real state of affairs in modern literature is so much on the rise that the contemporary story does not cross the limit of the probable direct experiences. Just the resemblance to human beings from the psychological point of view too does
not content the readers and unless the author has provided us an authentic biographical delineation, they are not influenced by the actions and views of the imaginary characters as they do not have faith in people created by imagination. The reader should be assured that the creation of the writer is based on direct experiences and it is the language of the common man that the character speaks.

Premchand changes the concept of novel that existed prior to his age. Redefining novel and its function, he observes:

Main upanyas ko manav charitra ka chitra samjhta hoon. Manav-charitra par prakash dalna aur uske rahasya ko kholna hi upanyas ka mool tata hai…Usi bhinti, sab admiyon ke charitron men bhi bahut kuch samanta hote hue kuch vibinnataen hote hain. Yahi charitra sambandhi samanta aur vibhinnata- abhinnata men bhinnata aur vibhinnata men abhinnata dikhana upanyas ka mukhya kartavya hai. (“Upanyas”, Kuch Vichar p-49)

I consider novel to be an image of human character. Its principal attribute lies in its ability to throw light on human character and unveil its secrets…Similarly despite many similarities, human characters have some dis-similarities. The primary function of novel thus is to show all similarities and dissimilarities, commonalities and difference and above all similarity in difference.

The principal contribution of Premchand to the Hindi novel is “idealistc realism”. He divides his contemporary writers into two groups of realists and idealists. According to Premchand realistic novelists “try to present characters realistically as they are. They are not concerned if the consequences of worthy and unworthy conduct are good or bad.” (Upanyas, Kuch Vichar p-51) Their characters end their given roles by showing their merits and demerits as they are. Since in the real world, the result of good and bad is not always good or bad, and is often opposite, so good people suffer and are often insulted. Their goodness breeds opposite results, whereas villainous human beings prosper,
become popular and renowned. Their evil acts bring about opposite results. This is a strange rule of nature. The realist is fastened to the fetters of experience. The world is full of evil characters and the characters of even very good people have some or the other stains on them, so realism is a naked portrait of our weaknesses, contradictions and cruelties.

Premchand opposes the presentation of stark realism in literature. He believes that its excess can have a negative impact on the readers. His opinion is that realism makes us pessimist and we lose faith in human characters, for we begin to see the world around us permeated by evil. Indubitably, realism is appropriate for drawing attention to evil practices in society without which it is possible that we might exaggerate the evil and show it in darker light than it is. However when realism crosses the limits of propriety it becomes intolerable. Moreover, human nature has another quality that of “the presentation of pettiness, cunningness and deceit, that permeate it, does not please it. It wants to fly to a world, at least for some time where it is free from perverted feelings and thoughts. It wants to forget that it is imprisoned by anxieties and tensions; it wants to see such lively sensitive and kind creatures as are free from acrimony and opposition, intrigues and conspiracies. Human beings think that if they have to deal with the same kind of characters in the fictitious narratives as they see in life, then why they should read such books.” (Upanyas, Kuch Vichar p-51)

Suggesting the merits and demerits of idealism, he believes that the idealist novelist introduces us to such characters whose hearts are pious, who
are free from selfishness and lust and are saints by nature. Though such characters are not practical in the ways of the world and they are easily deceived because of their simplicity, yet human beings fed up with knavish cunningness, seek unique pleasure by seeing such simple yet unpragmatic characters. If realism opens our eyes, idealism transports us to a charming place. However, the attributes of idealism make us aware of the suspicion that we might tend to portray such characters as mere idols of ideals. He remarks that “it is not difficult to imagine a God, but it is difficult to infuse life in that God.” (Upanyas, Kuch Vichar p-52)

Premchand combines idealism and realism and coins a new term ‘idealistic realism’. All his works except Nirmala and Godan represent idealistic realism kind of works. He avers:

Isliye vahi upanyas uchh koti ke samjhe jate hain jahan yatartha aur adarsh ka samavesh ho. Use aap aadarshonmukh yatharthavad kah sakte hain. Aadarsh ko sajeev banane ke liye hi yathartha ka upyog hona chahiye, aur achhe upanyas ki yahi vishesta hai. (“Upanyas”, Kuch Vichar p-52)

Therefore good novels are those as combine realism and idealism in them. You may term it as idealistic realism. Realism should be used to concretize an idea and that is the attribute of a good novel.

Premchand considers characterization too to be very important and has specific views regarding it. According to him, “the greatest quality of a novelist is the creation of such characters as would enchant their readers with their noble behaviour and thoughts. The novel bereft of this attribute is worthless.” (Upanyas, Kuch Vichar p-52)

It is not necessary that the characters should be free from blemishes to sublimate or to idealise characters. Even the great men can have some
weaknesses, and there is no harm in portraying their weaknesses in order to
enrich their character. These weaknesses make that character a human being. A
character free from all weaknesses would become a God and we would fail to
associate ourselves with him or to understand him.

Focussing on characterization, Premchand proposes that characters
should have a positive influence on the readers. The job of a literary writer is
not to amuse his readers; this is the job of Bhats (panegyrists or flatterers)
jugglers, jesters and jokers. The seat of literature is much higher than this. It
acts as a guide, and thereby it awakens our humanness. It is a transmitter of
virtuous disposition in us and widens our perception. In fact, only this should
be his objective. To achieve this end, it is necessary that his characters are
positive and they do not succumb to temptations. They should rather defeat and
support passions without being trapped in their claws, and therefore set out on
the march of victory.

According to Premchand, characterization has to be very skillfully
handled by the novelist. The more clear, profound and developed the portrayal
of characters, the greater influence, “will it have on the readers. Just as we do
not become familiar with the mentality of a person by just casting a glance at
him; the secrets of his personality are revealed gradually as we become
intimate. Similarly the characters of a novel too are not imagined in entirety;
but they develop gradually.” (“Upanyas Ka Vishay”, Kuch Vichar p-69) This
growth is so confidential and unclear that the reader does not perceive any
change. If any character remains the same in the end of the novel as he or she
was in the beginning – no growth of its strength-intelligence and emotions takes place; then it is an unsuccessful character.

Premchand is of the view that the highest ideal of literature is when it is created for serving art. He observes:

Kala ke liye kala ke siddhant par kisi ko apatti nahin ho sakti. Vah sahitya chirayu ho sakta hai, jo manushya ki maulik pravruttiyon par avalambit ho. Irsha aur prem, krodh aur labh, bhakti aur virag, dukh aur lajja ye sabhi maulik pravruttiyan hain. Inhi ki chataa dikhana sahitya ka param udeshya hai aur bina udeshya ke koi rachna hi hi nahin sakti. ("Upanyas", *Kuch Vichar* p-54)

No one would object to the principle of ‘Art for arts sake’. Only that literature would last which is dependent on the original tendencies of men. Love and jealousy, anger and greed, affection and separation, sorrow and shame all these are aur original tendencies. It is the prime objective of literature to show their splenour. Without objective it is not possible to create.

Premchand believes in ‘Art for Arts Sake’, and is against literature propagating certain social, political and religious beliefs. But a realistic assessment of the situation makes him take a practical point of view. He elaborates:

Kewal aajkal parishthitiyan itni teevra gati se badal rahin hain, itsa naye naye vichar paide ho rahe hain ki kadachit ab koi lehak sahitya ka aadarsha ko dhyan men rakh hi nahin sakta. Yeh bahut mushkil hai ki lehak par in parishthitiyon ka asar na pade – vah unse andolit na ho. Yahi karna hai ki aajkal Bharatvarsha ke hi nahin, Europe ke bade bade vidvan bhi rachana dwara kisi ‘vaad’ ka prachar kar rahe hain. Ve iski parvah nahin karte ki isse unki rachana jeevit rahegi ya nahin, apni mat ki pushti karna hi unka dhyeya hai, iske sivay unhen koi ichha nahin. (Upanyas, “Kuch Vichar” p-54)

However situation is too rapidly changing and so many new ideas come into existence that no writer can keep the ideals of literature in his mind. Author can no longer remain unaffected or un-influenced by these changes and situations. Thus not only in India but also in Europe even great scholars are publicizing one or the other ideology. They do not care if their works would live or die because of it. They do not have any other desire but to propagate their ideology.
Citing great literary works of literature and defending works that propagate specific ideology, Premchand observes:

Magar yeh kyonkar maan liya jaye ki jo upanyas kisi vichar ke prachar ke liye likha jaata hai, uska mahatva kshanik hota hai? Victor Hugo ka Le Miserable, Tolstoy ke anek granth; Dickens ki kitni hi rachnaen, vichar-pradhan hoti hue bhi uchhhoti ki aur sahityik hai, aur ab tak unka akarshan kam nahin hua. Aaj bhi Shaw, Wells aadi bade bade lekhakon ke granth prachar hi ke udeshya se likhe ja rahe hain. (‘Upanyas’, “Kuch Vichar” p-54)

But why should we think that the novel based on certain ideology, has some temporary interest? Hugo’s Le Miserable and novels of Tolstoy and Dickens, despite being concerned with certain ideas are works of literature having immense literary significance. They have not lost their charm even today. The works by contemporary writers such as Shaw and Wells among others too are written with an objective of propagating specific ideas.

The works that represent the principle of ‘Art for Life’s Sake’ whose today Premchand avers “are more viable than the ones representing the principle ‘Art for Art’s Sake’. The age of ‘Art for Art’s Sake’, is when the nation is prosperous and well to do.” (Upanyas, Kuch Vichar p-54) Premchand questions as to how is it possible that we are not alarmed when we find ourselves shackled with various political and social limitations and all around us we observe pathetic pictures of sorrow, poverty and the lament of adversity? The novelist should exercise caution that his ideas are expressed indirectly and they do not become a barrier in the naturalness of the work; or else the novel would become uninteresting.

Premchand finds the scope of the subject-matter of a novel is as broad as that of characterization. It is related to their actions and ideas, their divinity and savagery and their sublimation and fall. The principal subject of their novel is the diverse form of their disposition and their growth in diverse conditions.
Creativity and sharp observation, according to Premchand, are indispensable for a good novelist. He observes:

Usmen aur chahe jitney abhav hon; par kalpana shakti ki prakharta anivarya hai. Agar usmen yeh shakti maujood hai to vah aise kitne hi drishyon, dashaon aur manobhavon ka chitran kar sakta hai jinka use paratyaksh anubhav nahin hai. Agar is shakti ki kami hai, to chahe usne kitna hi deshotan kyon na kiya ho, vah kitna hi vidvan kyon na ho, uske anubahav ka kshetra kitna hi kyon na ho, uski rachna men sarasta nahin aa sakti.

(“Upanyas ka Vishay”, Kuch Vichar p-65)

He might be deficient in several matters; but sharp observation is inevitable. With this ability he can describe various scenes, situations and dispositions of which he has no direct experience. Without this ability his works will lack grace and refinement even if he is a globe trotter, a scholar having a vast experience of life.

He insists on a lively and impressive creative style of delineation by the novelist that should not be mere jugglery of words eluding the readers to believing that the work contains a deep hidden motive. Though writer’s dealing in ostentations of words might achieve temporary popularity, but the masses provide a seat of honour only to those novels whose distinctness is not their obtruseness but their simplicity. Though he does not object to the inclusion of specific incidents in a story for creating interest, he puts certain conditions for the same. He remarks:

Lekin shart yeh hai ki pratyek ghatna asli dhanche se nikt sambandh rakhti ho. Itna hi nahin balki usmen is tarah ghul-mil gai ho ki katha ka avashayak ang ban jaaye anyatha upanyas ki dasha us ghar ki si ho jayegi jiske har ek hisse alag-alag hon.

(“Upanyas ka Vishay”, Kuch Vichar p-66)

But the condition is that every incident should be closely associated with the basic structure. Not only that but it should be intricately woven so as it becomes an important part of the story, or else the condition of the novel will be similar to a house whose every part is unconnected.

According to Premchand, everything in the world is fit for becoming a subject of a novel. But, “the significance of a subject and its depth too play an
important role in the success of a novel. He finds the most important quality of a successful novelist to be to succeed in raising the same emotions in his readers that exists in his characters.” (Upanyas ka Vishay, Kuch Vichar p-67)

The readers should forget that they are reading a novel, a feeling of intimacy should be created between them.

He emphasizes more on the dependence on presentation of significant conversations in a novel rather than the descriptions provided by the novelist. He presumes that the novel will be more beautiful with the abundant presentation of conversations and less descriptions by the writer. But the conversations should be customary. Every sentence should throw light on the mentality and the nature of the character. The conversations should be entirely natural, appropriate to the situation, simple and brief.

He not only had comprehensive understanding of the contemporary taste of the readers but also had foresight about the change that would take place and the qualities with which the future novelists would have to equip themselves with. Like a prophet of novel, he foretells:

Bhavishya unhin upanyason ka hai, jo anubhuti par khade hon. Iska aashay yah hai ki bhavishya men upanyas men kalpana kam, satya adhik hoga, hamare charitra kalpit na honge. Kisi had tak to ab bhi aisa hota hai, par bahuda ham paristhitityon ka aisa kram bandhete hai ki ant swabhavik hone par bhi vah hota hai, jo ham chahte hain. Lekin bhavishya men pathak is swang se santusht na hoga. (“Upanyas ka Vishay”, Kuch Vichar p-72)

The future is of the works that are based on experience. It suggests that the future novels will have less imagination and more truth. Our characters will not be imaginary but will be based on the lives of the individuals. To some extent it is so even at present but very often we create such a series of situations that the conclusion, though natural is of the type we wished. The more skillfully we make pretence of naturalness, the more successful we are. But in future the the reader shall not be content with this pretence.
The Hindi novel which had no specific direction up to now finds a meaningful and definite direction with the arrival of Premchand. He zealously discusses each and every point meticulously and leaves nothing to speculation. Thus Premchand through his views regarding the novel drafts a blueprint for the future novel in Hindi which he himself adheres to and also guides his contemporaries and successors.

The new spirit of realism in literature lent a powerful stimulus to the creativity of the writers of fiction. The age demanded that one of the chief factors of interest in any fictitious image of life should be its resemblance to truth. Premchand and the other eminent writers of the age imbibe realism as an important element in their work. Thus, the objective of art in this age is the study and the depiction of reality.

I

Sevasadan (1918) is the first principal novel by Premchand in which the novelist has raised the issues concerning women in the Indian society along with several other associated social issues such as the custom of dowry, mismatched marriage and prostitution. His basic preoccupation has been the reformation and rehabilitation of the prostitutes in the society.

The inability of Daroga Krishnachandra, an honest police-officer and the father of Suman to manage a good dowry for his daughter, leads to her mismatched marriage with Gajadhar, a thirty years old clerk earning a meagre salary of fifteen rupees per month. Inspite of the best efforts from both sides
differences soon crop up, their marriage ends on the rocks and with the consequence Suman ending up into prostitution.

Vithaldas, a zealous social reformer, meets Suman and urges her to give up the sinful profession and begin a dignified life but fails to specify precisely the dignified occupation. Suman exposes the hollowness and the hypocrisy of the society that pushes innocent women to this profession. Ultimately she gives up this sinful life and joins a vidhwa-ashram, an institution supported by several donors and social reformers.

Though Suman accepts a dignified life the stigma of her past sticks to her. Thus, the marriage of her sister Shanta fails to solemnize as her past is revealed to her in-laws. Emphasizing the disastrous influence of social morality on the fate of women, Ram Darash Mishra observes:

‘Sevasadan’ men nari jeevan ki pratarna ka roop aur bhayankar ho uthata hai jab vah apni samagra pavitrata, sundarta aur gundharmita ke bavjood apne parivarvalon ke doshon ke karan thukra di jaati hai…Vyaktitva ki itni badi avmanna kitni bhayankar hai, ghatak hai. (Hindi Upanyas: Ek Antaryatra p-40-1)

The deception of the life of the women acquires a sinister form in ‘Sevasadan’ when she is rejected in spite of all her chastity, beauty and virtues just because of the faults of her family members…How dangerous, how fatal is such a huge unrecognition of individuality.

Premchand has very subtly exposed the contradictions of the Indian society wherein on one hand it forces an honest police-officer, Krishnachandra to accepting bribe and pushing a virtuous women like Suman to prostitution while on the other hand considers Shanta who is beautiful and chaste to be condemned and ignored just because of being the daughter of Krishnachandra and the sister of Suman. The society with its contradictions, weaknesses and
worn out values of life comes alive in *Sevasadan*. The root cause of all is economic impoverishment.

Though the plot of ‘Sevasadan’ is well arranged, yet critics have observed some discrepancies in it. From the beginning of the story to the incident of Suman giving up her home and husband is very systematically presented. But the later incidents are not beautifully presented. The description of Suman’s stay at Dalmandi is drily presented. Premchand has devoted a large part of the novel to Suman’s introduction to life of prostitution and the social and psychological conditions responsible for it. Then he immediately diverts the story to a reformation mode. If he wanted to bring such a swift change in Suman, then he should not have spent such a large part of the novel to the incident of Suman’s introduction to prostitution.

The proceedings in the municipality, the debates and the motions passed among others though associated with the issue of prostitution, are not properly connected with the main story of Suman. Nanaddulare Vajpai observes:

> Yadi municipality ke ye sare vrutant Suman ki kahani se aur adhik sanshlist sambandh rakhe to upanyas ki kathak adhik samanvit aur arthpurna hoti. (*Premchand: Sahityik Vivechan* 15)

The plot of the novel would have been better balanced and meaningful if the details of the municipality had been better synthesized with the story of Suman.

Suman’s story of giving up prostitution and joining a vidhwa-ashram is brief. But another objectionable matter is that the latter part of the novel presents not the story of the chief protagonist Suman but that of her sister Shanta. Probably the novelist had nothing significant to add to the story of Suman after her joining the vidhwa-ashram. Shanta becomes the protagonist in
the latter second half of the novel. Premchand fails to establish a proper connection of the two that would provide a smooth flow to the novel. Thus the story of Suman, the action in the municipality and the story of Shanta appear scattered. The strings connecting the three different stories are very weak.

Suman, Gajadhar, Shanta, Sadan, and Padamsinh are the main characters of the novel. The faint sketch of Suman’s portrait provided in the beginning of the novel is quite effective. The novelist delineates:

Badi ladki Suman sundar, chanchal aur abhimani thi; choti Shanta bholi, gambhir, sushil thi. Suman doosron se badhkar rehna chahti thi. Yadi bazaar se dono baheno ke liye ek hi prakar ki sadiyan aatin to Suman mooh fula leti thi. Shanta ko jo kuch bhi mil jaata, usi se prasann raheti. (Sevasadan 5)

The older girl Suman was beautiful, playful and proud; while the younger one Shanta was credulous, serious and cultured. Suman always wanted to outdo others in every matter. Suman would become haughty if similar sarees for both of them were brought from the market. Shanta would be content with whatever she got.

Thus the novelist has through their behaviour portrayed the individual personality of the two sisters right from their childhood. Premchand has, at several instances attempted the psychological delineation of Suman’s behaviour, though it was not important to do so. The character should get an opportunity to open up on its own. There is no need of comments.

Suman’s psychological reactions to the prostitute ‘Bholi’ living in her neighbourhood are delineated at length by the novelist. The change in her approach towards her from detestment to her gradual tilt towards her and ultimately her willingness even to live with her is the consequence of the impact of the social reaction on her. Thus, the character of Suman is an individual and also depicts progress in the sphere of characterization. In the earlier works the characters had no individuality and were just types
representing some social class. The novelist has also succeeded in portraying the grey areas of personality from the earlier entirely black or white.

The other characters of the novel Gajadhar, Krishnachandra and Padamsinh are all realistic characters with a mingling of their weaknesses and strengths. Gajadhar, the husband of Suman, is a typical middle-class character. The flaws like being hot-tempered and demanding as a husband, presented in his character are not his but of the contemporary age and its economic conditions. Within his limited resources he is unable to fulfill the desires of his wife. Thus he turns Suman out of his house and even repents later for his deeds. Probably his renunciation and becoming an ascetic is atonement for his actions. The novelist has utilized the services of Gajadhar in providing solace and solution to the other distressed characters. By the end of the novel he is a social reformer and represents the idealism of the novelist. Thus, through the character of Gajadhar, the novelist comes true to the theoretical conception of ideal characterization as presented in his views on the novel form in his essay Kuch Vichar.

Sevasadan is a milestone regarding socio-economic and cultural ideology from its earlier works. Earlier too the novelist have dealt with the issue of prostitution but the treatment by Premchand is different. He touches the very core of the issue and exposes the causes that lead women to prostitution. He empathises with the prostitutes and considers them to be the victims of the perversions prevalent in society. He considers the custom of dowry and mismatched marriages among others as the social factors that create
a breeding ground for this social evil. Earlier the characters of prostitutes were presented as inherently evil. Premchand for the first time provides a human touch to this fallen class and considers them sympathetically. He has focussed more on the social and economic conditions that lead women of good families to this sinful profession. Thus the novelist suggests that shifting the brothrels away from the city is not the proper solution. The main issue is of economic emancipation of the prostitutes after giving up their sinful life and merging them in the mainstream of society. Several characters in the novel attempt to provide a practical solution to this issue but fail to do so. The only way that seems viable to the novelist is that social service organizations can function in the eradication of this evil only by the generous donations of the rich citizens of the town.

The language of the novelist is simple and intelligible barring the two chapters where Premchand has exhibited his knowledge of Urdu. The Muslim characters are depicted speaking fluent Urdu just on the pretext of naturalness but causing inconvenience to the Hindi readers and also creating an odd environment in the novel.

The novel very well fits into the definition of ‘idealistic realism’ provided by the novelist. The concerned issues are presented realistically and an idealistic solution too is attempted. Though the first work of the novelist, it is as a form superior to most of his other later works.
Besides Sevasadan, Premchand’s Nirmala (1927) is another women-centric novel. The principal concern of Premchand in Nirmala is the state of Indian women living an accursed life since centuries within the male-dominated societal structure. As such Premchand has depicted the tragic reality of the lives of the women in his earlier works such as Pratijna, Vardan, and Sevasadan. But such a tragic and realistic presentation is not found in his earlier novels. The novel highlights several social issues such as the evils of dowry system, mismatched marriage, suppressed sexuality and the subsequent disintegration of the family structure.

The marriage of Nirmala, the older daughter of Munshi Udaybhanulal had been fixed with Bhuvanmohan, the son of Bhalchandra and Rangeelibai. But the change of situation with the untimely death of Nirmala’s father and the subsequent inability of providing an appropriate dowry seal the fate of Nirmala with the calling off of the proposed marriage. Ultimately she is married off to a middle-aged widower Munshi Totaram, a father of three. The tragedy of Nirmala’s life begins with the death of her father but with her mismatched marriage to a middle-aged widower her tragedy is all the more evident.

Nirmala compromises with the realities of life and fulfils her duties of the house-hold but fails to submit herself into accepting Totaram as her husband. Revealing the psychological state of Nirmala, the novelist delineates:

Nirmala ko na jaane kyon Totaram ke samne hasne bolne men sankoch hota th. Iska kadachit yeh karan tha ki ab tak aisa hi ek aadmi uska pita tha jiske samne vah sir jhukakar, deh churakar nikalti thi. Ab unki avastha ka ek
aadmi pati tha. Vah use prem ki vastu nahin samman ki vastu samajhti thi. (Nirmala 26)

By some reason Nirmala hesitated to inter-act with Totaram. Probably because upto now a man of the same age was her father to whom she bowed her head and maintained physical distance. Now a man of the same age was her husband. She did not consider him as one who could be loved but as one to be respected.

Through such psychological delineations of Niramala, the novelist reveals the psychological suffering of an adolescent caused by suppressed sexuality. Instead of imposed morality, the realistic novelist brings within his range of sensitivity that bitter truth of Nirmala’s life that makes him stand in support of crores of voiceless Nirmalas.

Munshi Totaram leaves no stone unturned in winning the heart of Nirmala. He not only provides her with all kinds of cosmetics but on the advice of his friends also tries his best to prove himself a manly person. All his efforts fail from enchanting Nirmala towards him. Rather the proximity of Nirmala and his adolescent son Mansaram sow the seeds of suspicion and from this point onwards begins a new tragedy. Being overaged and suffering from the inferiority complex, Munshi Totaram doubts the relationship of Nirmala with his adolescent son Mansaram. Nirmala perceives the suspicion of Totaram and distances herself from him. Playing safe Totaram admits Mansaram in a boarding school. The innocent Mansaram is so much shocked at his father’s behaviour and suspicion that he suffers from consumption and dies. But he proves his innocence before breathing his last. His last words of clarification are:

Ammaji is abhage ke liye apko vyartha hi itna kast hua. Men apka sneh kabhi na bhooolonga. Ishwar se meri yahi prarthana hai ki mera punarjanam apke garbh se ho, jisse apke urna se ururn ho sakun. Ishwar janta hai ki maine
aapko vimata nahin samjha hai. Men apko apni mata samajhata raha. Apki umar mujhse bahut jyada na ho, lekin aap meri mata ke sthan par theen aur maine apko sadaiv isi drishti se dekha…Ab nahin bola jaata amma, kshma kijiye yeh antim bhent hai. (Nirmala 73)

Mother, you simply had to take so much trouble for such an unfortunate as me. I shall never forget your affection. To repay your debt my only prayer to God is that I be reborn through your womb. God knows that I did not consider you my step mother. Though you are not much older in age to me you were in the place of my mother and I always looked upon you with the same reverence…I cannot speak further mother, please forgive me this is our last meeting.

By the time Munshi Totaram realizes the truth it is too late and he too is ashamed of his mentality, but apart from repentance nothing else is left in his life. His other two sons too hate him. He becomes unfit even for Nirmala’s hatred and becomes an object worth pitying. Nirmala gives birth to a baby girl and Totaram sees his late son in her. But as the family even earlier lacked coordination and harmony the second son Jyaram commits suicide after committing theft and the youngest son Siyaram leaves the home after being beguiled by a gang of imposter sadhus. Totaram leaves home in search of his son and Nirmala is left alone with her daughter and his widowed sister Rukmini. During this period she comes close to Sudha, the wife of the doctor Bhuvanmohan, one who had treated Mansaram during his illness. Her company provides her the strength to face the hardships and uncertainties of life.

Doctor Bhuvanmohan is the same person with whom the marriage of Nirmala had been fixed but had been called off due to the inability of managing an appropriate dowry. Co-incidentally the marriage of Krishna, the younger sister of Nirmala takes place with Bhuvanmohan’s younger brother. When Sudha comes to know of Bhuvanmohan’s decision of rejecting Nirmala just for
the sake of dowry, she reproaching him avers:

Aaj agar use maloom ho jaye ki aap vahi mahapurush hain to shayad fir kabhi is ghar men kadam na rakhe…Tum mera vakhan karte ho. Men to uski londi banne ke yogya bhi nahin hoon…Tumne yeh bada bhari anyay kiya hai aur tumhe iska prayashit karna hoga…Kaho to kal Nirmala se tumhari mulakat karva doon. Vah bhi jara tumhari surat dekh le. Vah kuch bolegi to nahin par kadachit ek drishti se vah tumhara itna tirasskar kar degi jise tum kabhi na bhool sakoge. (Nirmala 78)

Today if she comes to know that you are the same great man then she probably will never step again in this house…You praise my beauty but I am not even worth being her servant…You have done great injustice and you will have to do repentance for the same… If you insist I can arrange a meeting with her. Let her too have a look at you. She wouldn’t utter a word but her single glance of scorn would be enough for you to remember for ever.

Nirmala is the central character of the novel and the title of the novel too suggests the same. The novelist has presented her as a traditional and weak character, as one who accepts misfortune as her destiny. Though unhappy in her situation she never attempts rebellion as Sudha does. Thus she has surrendered to her situation.

Through the character of Nirmala, the novelist has depicted his insight and comprehensive understanding of the human nature. In presenting the psychological truth he has even crossed the traditionally insisted limits of morality. Thus her attraction towards Mansaram, her step-son is a natural attraction to the opposite sex. She is shocked when she finds that her husband doubts their relationship. She naturally wishes to be intimate with Mansaram and at the same time is forced to maintain distance from him. Living a dual life, she is under pressure from both the sides. Her instinctive desires clash with the traditional values. She only attempts to strike a balance between the two. Confessing her attraction towards Mansaram to her sister Krishna, Nirmala
Vah ladka hi aisa tha ki jo dekhta tha pyar karta tha. Aisi badi badi doredar aakhen, maine kisi ki nahin dekhi...Aisa sahasi ki agar avsar aa padta to aag men fand jaata. Krishna men tumse kehti hoon jab mere paas aakar baith jaata to men apne ko bhool jaati thi...Yeh jaanti hoon ki agar uske man men paap hota to men uske liye sab kuch kar sakti thi...Haan yeh baat sunne men buri maalom padti hai aur hai bhi buri parantu manushya ki prakruti ko to koi badal nahin sakta. Tu hi bata – ek pachas varsha ke mard se tera vivah ho jaye, to tun kya karegi. (Nirmala 84-5)

He was such a boy that no one could help loving him. I have never seen such large round eyes of anyone …so courageous that if situation demanded he could even jump into fire. I confess Krishna that whenever he came and sat beside me I forgot myself...I know that if he had evil intentions then I could have done everything for him...Yes, this might sound bad and it is definitely bad but no one can change human nature. You yourself tell me what would you do if you were married to an old man of fifty?

The treatment meted out to Mansaram by his father in his suspicion regarding him and his step-mother; consequently shifting him to a hostel and his suffering from tuberculosis, shocks the readers’ sensibility. The motherless, innocent child is a victim of his father’s suspicion and is tortured to the last breath of his life.

The lone inspiring figure in the novel is that of Sudha. Having an independent identity of her own she serves as a foil to Nirmala. She is not only her role-model but also her only source of inspiration. Regarding her husband’s attempt to sexually abuse Nirmala and consequently his suicide after being exposed, she avers:

Ishwar ko jo manjoor tha vah hua. Aise saubhagya se men vaithavya ko bura nahin samjhati. Daridra prani us dhani se kahin sukhi hai, jise uska dhan saap bankar kaatne daude. Upvas kar lena aasan hai, vishaila bhojan karna usse kahin adhik mushkil. (Nirmala134)

Whatever happened was God’s wish. I do not consider widowhood bad in comparison to such a married life. A poor person is much happier than a wealthy man whose wealth itself acquires the form of a snake and bites him. It is easier to fast rather than consume poisonous food.
Various dignified female characters too in the novel include Kalyani and Rangeelibai who submit themselves to the male dominance, but they do not lack independent identity. The achievement of the novelist lies in the fact that in a short novel he has provided several male and female characters having individual traits and characteristics.

From the beginning to the end the strings of torture and suffering weave the tragedy that finally with a great force jolts the sensitivity of the readers. It is the story of the ruining of a huge and prosperous family and enveloping within its tragic facet more than one family and several people.

The tragedy begins with the death of Nirmala’s father, Udaybhanulal and after it begins a series of unending tragic incidents. One incident gives birth to another similar incident and the tragedy is evident in its full bloom. The death of Udaybhanulal leads to mismatched marriage of Nirmala with Munshi Totaram, the mental suffering received by Nirmala in the family of Munshi Totaram, suspicion cast on her as a woman and on her status of a mother, the tragic death of Mansaram, the suicide by the second son Jiyaram, Siyaram the third son abandoning the home in the company of imposters in the guise of sadhus, Munshi Totaram leaving in the search of Siyaram and Nirmala’s lonely life at her home, the connection of the tragic story of Sudha and Doctor Bhuvanmohan with the main plot, the suicide by Doctor Bhuvanmohan, the widowhood of Sudha and the death of Nirmala due to illness and suffering, all the incidents make the story an endless saga of compassion. Shivkumar Mishra
states:

Ye saare prasang nihayat swabhavik aur yatharth prasang hai jo Bharatiya
parivaron, paramparagat samyukt parivaron men sadiyon se apne ko duhrate
adhavadhi usi tarah se chale aa rahe hain. Yeh hamare parampara aur
rudhirgast parivarik jeevan ka yatharta hai jo lambe arse se hamare ghar
parivaron ko tabah aur barbad karta chala aa raha hai. Hajaron lakhon
Nirmalaon ki bali ghar parivar ke aise hi prasangon aur sandarbhon men
chadhti rahi hai. (Nirmala145)

All these are very natural and realistic incidents that keep re-occuring since
centuries in Indian families and traditional joint families. This is the truth of
our tradition and our orthodox joint family life that is ruining and destroying
our families from a long time. Thousands and lakhs of Nirmalas have been
sacrificed on such occasions and contexts.

A profound melancholic raga keeps re-sounding from the beginning to the
end of the novel. In this sense it is the lone novel of Premchand. Rangbhoomi
and Godan too have an unhappy ending, but along with unhappiness and
suffering are also presented the joyful and interesting incidents that provide
relief from the tragedy. But there is not a single incident in Nirmala that is full
of joy and happiness. The tragedy that begins with the death of Udaybhanulal
gradually intensifies and ends with the death of Nirmala.

At a deeper level, Premchand is not just narrating a tragic story of a
woman but through this medium he is raising some strong and basic issues and
also addresses us with some new questions that had earlier not been presented
in this manner by any one else. The issue of love and sex has come to light in
Nirmala on a very concrete social and psychological context. Being punished
by mismatched marriage Nirmala lives a life of unexpressed love and
suffocation. Her love with her contemporary older son acquires a
compassionate form. Traditional morality is very much emphasized in a closed
and rigid society. Consequently the entire society historically becomes a canal
of tragedy. Thus it is clear that whenever Premchand raises any such issue of the tradition of dowry, failure of love, mismatched marriage or widow re-marriage, he is simultaneously in search of a new sexual morality and economy. The Indian society presently as it is rigid is even today very concealing regarding sex. The proportion of sexual suppression and sexual exploitation too is vastly present. The traditional orthodox marriage system too leads to sexual suppression or exploitation. Thus Premchand has raised marriage as the chief Indian issue because in it the relation of economic and sexual crisis is more evidently visible.

For the first time in Hindi literature *Nirmala* associates economic impoverishment with sexual crisis. Our homes and families are on economic foundation and economic impoverishment gives birth to several issues. These include issues in various forms of sexual suppression and sexual exploitation. Only because of economic impoverishment thousands of girls are married off to unsuitable matches and then begins a series of problems. Whether it is flesh trade in the form of prostitution or illeligitimate relationship, sexual suppression through traditional morality, sexual exploitation through muscle power, widowhood and its related issues, all by some or the other means are related to either economic reasons or economic impoverishment. *Nirmala* is an illustration of tragedy caused due to economic impoverishment. The root cause of her mismatched marriage with an old widower Munshi Totaram is economic impoverishment. The greed for dowry of Bhalchandra and his son Bhuvanmohan is responsible for rejection of Nirmala’s hand in marriage. She
ultimately marries Munshi Totaram and then begins her saga of miseries. Lack of tuning between Nirmala and her husband, suppression of sexual desires, her causal attraction towards her step-son, Mansaram, her contemporary, suspicion cast on their relationship, tension in the family, death of Mansaram and ultimately the death of Nirmala due to illness. The root cause of all these issues is economic impoverishment. The issue presented in the novel is not only mismatched marriage, untimely widowhood or the subsistence of widows but what superficially seems to be a sociological problem is actually an economic problem.

The novel *Nirmala* suggests the fact that balance cannot be achieved in society without eradicating economic suffering and freedom from economic slavery. Diagnosis of social issues is difficult without setting in order the economic issues.

The novel also exposes the feudal structure of the Indian families wherein the man, whether father, husband or the head of the family is a virtual dictator. He is the controller of the future and the fate of his wife and children. Nirmala and Mansaram have to give in to the wishes of Munshi Totaram. Thus not only women but the male children in the feudal structure are also exploited at the hands of the head of the family. Ramvilas Sharma observes:

*Is jarjar samanti samaj men striyon ki tarah ladke ko bhi swadhinta nahin hai. Yeh tathya sabse pehle Premchand ne pesh kiya. Mansaram apni vimata ka gulam nahin hai, vah gulam jaisa suluk pata hai apne pita se. Totaram ke ladke chori badmashi seekhne ki azadi haasil kar lete hain. Lekin Mansaram ke sahaj vikas aur uski swabhavik ichhaon se pita ka swarth takhirata hai, vahan ladke ko dabna padta hai. Pita use usi tarah apni sampatti samajhata hai jaise stri ko.* (Shivkumar Mishra148)

Similar to the woman, the man too has no independence in this worn-out feudal society. This fact was first presented by Premchand. Mansaram is not
a slave to his step-mother but receives treatment fit for a slave from his father. Totaram’s children can acquire independence for thieving and mischief but Mansaram has to give in when his natural growth and instinctive desires clash with his father’s interest. The father considers him also as his property as he considers his wife to be one.

The message of the work is loud and clear and is summed up by the protagonist, Nirmala in her last words before her death to her sister-in-law, Rukmini. She observes:

Bachhi ko aapki god men chod jaati hoon. Agar jeeti-jaagti rahe to kisi achhe kul men vivah kar dijiyega. Men to iske liye apne jeevan men kuch na kar saki, keval janna dene bhar ki apradhini hoon. Chahe kawarin rakhiyega, chahe vish dekar mar daliyega par kupatra ke gale na madhiyega… (Nirmala 135-6)

I am leaving behind this child in your care. If she survives marry her in some good family. In my life I could not do anything for her accept being a culrit of giving birth to her. My only request to you is either to keep her single or poison her but don’t impose her on some unworthy suitor…

Nirmala, one of the most realistic works in Hindi fiction, depicts a growth from the earlier works of Premchand as well as the other contemporary writers. Accomplished in matters regarding the plot, characterization and theme the novel studies the contemporary issues from the socio-economic-cultural perspective, which provides unprecedebted dynamism to the novel.

III

Ingrained in the socio-political tribulations dominated by religious discrimination, Premchand’s Karmabhoomi is a psychological probing delineating the human relationships. Through his protagonists and their yearnings, the novelist subtly brings alive the India of the early decades of the twentieth century and simultaneously delivering a powerful social and political message. Karmabhoomi deals with issues such as Hindu-Muslim unity, shared
welfare of these two communities, the non-violent struggle of the untouchables, peasants, and the urban poor.

Set in the background of the twentieth century Uttar Pradesh, *Karmabhoomi*, delineates the peaceful existence and the sudden outburst of the Hindus and the Muslims with the initiation of education. The commencement of education is a direct attack on the social barriers between the Hindus and the Muslims. On an apparent level though *Karmabhoomi* is a picture of society, human life is portrayed as a field of action in the novel by which the character and the destinies of individuals are formed and revealed through their actions.

Amarkant, the protagonist of the novel, has a disregard for degrees and hates the contemporary education system. Condemning the education system and the incompetent teachers, the novelist avers:

> Jab vah apne adhyapako ko tuition ki gulami karte, svarth ke liye naak ragadte, kam se kam karke adhik ke liye laabh ke liye haath pasarte dekhta, to use mansik vedna hoti thi, aur inhin mahanubhavon ke haath mein desh ki baagdor hai. Yahin kom ke vidhata hain. Inhen iski parvah nahn ki Bharat ki janta do aane paison par gujar karti hai. Ek sadharan aadmi ko saul bhar mein pachaas se jyada nahn mihte. Hamare adhyapakon ko pachas rupay roj chahiye. Tab Amar ko us atit ki yaad aati jab saare gurujan jhopdon mein raha karte the, svarth se alag, lobh se door, satvik jeeyan ke aadarsha, niskaam seva ke upasak. Veh rashtra se kam se kam lekar adhik se adhik dete the. Veh vaastav mein devta the aur yeh adhyapak hain, jo kisi ansh mein bhi ek mamuli vyapari ya rajya karmchari se pchee nahin. Inmen bhi vahi dambh hai, vahi dhan madh hai, vahi adhikar madh hai. Hamare vidhyalay kya hain, rajya ke vibhag hain, aur hamare adhyapak usi rajya ke ansh hain. Ye khud andhkar mein pade hue hain, prakash kya failaenge – Aisa maloom hota hai ki garibon ki laashon ko nochane vale giroh ka samooch hai. Jiske paas jiti badi degree hai, uska svarth bhi utna hi badha hua hai. Mano lobh aur svarthha hi vidvata ka lakshan hai garibon ko roti mayassar na ho, kapdon ko taraste hon, par hamare shikshak bhaiyon ko motor chahiye, bangla chahiye, naukaran ki ek paltan chahiye. Is sansar ko agar manushya ne racha hai to anyayi hai, ishwar ne racha hai to use kya kahoon. (*Karmabhoomi* p-71-2)

When he used to see Professors as slaves to fashion, demeaning themselves for their petty selfish ends, doing the least amount of work and craving for maximum benefits, then he used to suffer from immense anguish because those gentlemen were skippers of the country. They were the makers of the
nation, yet not concerned with the fact that the people of India survive on two annas a day. A common man does not get more than 50 rupees a year. Our teachers, however, need fifty rupees per day. Then he would remember about the past when our teachers used to live in cottages away from selfishness and greed, practiced ideals of pure life, as worshippers of service without caring for the result. They took the least from the nation and gave it maximum in return. They were real gods. And our present day teachers are in no sense less than petty traders or state officials. What enlightenment shall they bring about when they themselves are in darkness? It seems that all are herd of vultures gnawing at the corpses of the poor. The more and higher degrees one has, the more inflated his selfishness. It seems that greed and selfishness are the attributes of scholarship. Poor people do not get meals and clothes, but our educated people need motor car, bungalows and a platoon of servants. If this world is constructed by man, then he is unjust, and if by God, then what to say to him.

Amarkant’s criticism of the modern education associated with the colonial rule does not come to an end even when his father stops providing financial assistance for his education. His frustration and disregard for the modern higher education is evident in his reply to his wife, Sukhada, when she proposes him to go to his in-laws at Lucknow and study there without any monetary worry with the prospects of going to England for acquiring further qualifications. He avers:

Mujhe degreeyan itni pyari nahin hain ki uske liye sasural ki rotiyan todu agar mein apne parishram se dhanoparjan karke padh sakoonga, to padhoonga nahin koi dhanda dekhoonga. Mein ab tak vyarth ki shiksha ke moh mein pada hua tha. College ke bahar bhi adhyayanshil aadmi bahut kuch seekh sakta hai. Mein abhimaan nahin karta lekin sahitya aur itihaas ki jiti pushthaken in do teen salon mein Maine padhi hain, shayad hi mere college mein kisi ne padhi hon. (Karmabhoomi p-14)

For degree it is not so necessary that I become dependent on my in-laws. If I can earn some money on my own, I would study or enter some business. I was infatuated uselessly with education. A studious person can learn a lot outside the college. Without having any sense of pride let me state that the books of literature and history that I have read in these years, perhaps no one in the college would have read them.

Looking at the introduction of Higher Education as one of the systematic tool of the British colonizers in uprooting the traditional systems and establishing their superiority, Avadhesh Kumar Singh remarks:
Colonialism necessitates political defeat of the nations by a dominant, not necessarily superior, cluster of interests whose centre lies not in the colony but in a far off land, and involves systematic unsystematization of native material and psychological structures – religious, educational, bureaucratic, judiciary economic and their replacement by their institutions in the names of modernization. Thereby it justifies its presence in colony. Its principal purpose is exploitation of native resources-economic through loot, natural resources as raw material, human through the use of natives as cheap labourers, and intellectual through its appropriation and translation. For they constructed discourses denigrating the native institutions and thereby justifying there presence in the colony and validating their intervention in the existing structures e.g. the educational system.

(*Discourse of Resistance in the Colonial Period* p 50)

Thus, the novelist castigates the educational structures imposed on India by exposing the evils of the newly introduced higher education system and its emphasis on degrees and not on knowledge and values. Traditionally the education system is considered very sacrosanct, pious and noble, but the new education system introduced by the British is imparted by incompetent, indifferent and insensitive teachers, who are no longer committed as the gurus in the traditional Indian education system. The entire education system functions as a business, regarding which the novelist avers:

Hamare schoolon aur collegon mein jis tatparta se fees vasool ki jaati hai, shayad maal gujari bhi itni sakhti se nahi vasooli ki jaati. Mahine mein ek din neeyat kar diya jaata hai. Us din fees ka dakhila hona anivarya hai. Ya to fees dijye, ya to naam katvai, ya jab tak fees na dakhil ho, roj kuch jurmana dijye. Kahin kahin aisa bhi niyam hai ki usi din fees do guni kar di jaati hai, aur kisi doosri taarikh ko doguni fees na di to di naam kat jaata hai. Kashi ke Queens College mein yahi niyam tha. Saatveen tarikh tak fees na do, to ikkisveen tareekh ko doguni fees deni padti thi, ya naam kat jaata tha.

Aise kathor niyamo ka udeshya aur kya ho sakta tha, ki garibon ke bachhe school chhodkar bhaag jayen – vahi hridayyheen daftari shasan, jo anya vibhagon mein hai, hamare shikshalayo mein bhi hai. Vah kisi ke saath riayat nahin karta. Chahe jahan se laao, karz lo, gahene girvi rakho, lota-thali becho, chori karo, magar fees jaroor do, nahin dooni fees deni padegi, ya naam kat jayega. Jameen aur jaydad ke kar vasool karne mein bhi kuch riayat ki jaati hai. Hamare shikhalayon mein narmi ko ghusne hi nahin diya jaata. Vahaan sthayee roop se martial law ka vyahvar hota hai. Kachheri mein paise ka raaj hai, hamare schoolon mein bhi paise ka raaj hai, usse kahin kathor, kahin nirday. Der mein aaiyen to jurmana na aiyen to jurmana sabak na yaad ho to jurmana kitaben na kharid sakien to jurmana koi apradhd ho jaye to jurmana shikhalay kya hai, jurmanalay hai. Yahi hamari paschimi shiksha ka aadarsha hai, jiski taarifon ke pool bandhe jaate hain. Yadi aise...
The earnest compulsion with which fees is collected in schools and colleges surpass the hardships even in the collection of revenues. On the fixed date of the month the fees is to be submitted. The inability to do so would lead either to cancellation of the name or pay the fine if delayed. In the Queen’s College the rule was that the fee was paid on the 7th day, the fee was doubled by the 21st or the name was cancelled. What can be the objective of such strict rules but to drive away the children of the poor from the schools? The same heartless bureaucracy which dominates government offices also dominates the working of our educational institutes. Bring fee from whatever source – borrow, mortgage your ornaments, sell off your utensils, steal but pay the fees by all means. Else it would be either doubled or the name would be either deleted. Some concession is given even in the collection of taxes pertaining to land and property. The entry of kindness is disallowed in our educational institutes. The marshal law is permanently imposed in there. Money reigns supreme in our educational institutes as in the courts with greater rigidity and and greater hardships. If you get delayed you are fined, if you are late you are fined, if you do not remember your lesson you are fined, if you are unable to buy books, you are fined, you commit a mistake you are fined. Is it an educational institute or an institute to impose fines? That then is the purpose of Western education which is being praised in hyperbolic terms. Should it surprise us if these institutes produce children as are unwilling to sacrifice everything for money, cut throats of poor people and sell off their souls for money?

Besides condemning the modern education system, the novelist does not even spare the western civilization for its misplaced faith in its education system. The protagonist Amarkant’s friend, Salim, who helps him with his fee and other means asks Amarkant to help him with a few points for his speech on the topic of Western civilization:

Aaj jalse mein jaoge?
Majmoon kya hai, mujhe to yaad nahin?
Aji vahi paschimi sabhyata hai.
To mujhe do char point bata do, nahin to mein vahan kahoonga kya?
Batana kya hai – paschimi sabhyata ki buraiyaan hum sab jaante hi hain. Vahi bayan kar dena.
Tum jante hoge, mujhe to ek bhi nahin maloom.
Ek to yeh taaleem hi hai. Jahan dekho vahan dukandari. Adalat ki dukan, ilm ki dukhan, sehat ki dukhan. Is ek point par bahut kuch kaha ja sakta hai.

Would you go in meeting today?
I do not remember even the topic.
The same old topic of the western civilization.
Thus Premchand was not a blind imitator of the Western civilization. He was against its selfish values and their uncritical imitations by the Indians. The protagonist, Amarkant, putting his words into action, along with Prof. Shantikumar opens a pathshala free from the penalty of donations, which aims at the natural development of tiny, innocent children who would be courageous, contended, and serving citizens of the society. Amar’s idealism makes him demand the resignation of Prof. Shantikumar from the post of professor. Describing this clash as of between idealism and practical/pragmatic idealism that demands some regular economic support for the institutions, Avadhesh Kumar Singh, in the preface of *Discourse of Resistance in the Colonial Period* remarks:

Hence, Premchand was not merely constructing discourses of resistance against the colonial system of education but providing an alternative as well, based on the pragmatic idealism of the people who have been a part of the system as a student or teacher as well. Salim, Amar’s friend is an example of those who make use of education system to attain an administrative position so that they can rule by joining the tribe of the colonizers in one way or the other. (*Discourse of Resistance in the Colonial Period* 54)

The novelist wove a few suggestive texts to the fabric of the novel. Though the issues of untouchability, poor peasants and village life and Hindu-Muslim unity are dealt with in the earlier works of *Sevasadan, Rangabhoomi*, and *Kayakalpa* in a different way, *Karmabhoomi* depicts the revolt against religious segregation and even suppression of the low caste people, as they were not allowed to listen to the katha or enter the temple. The high caste
people deprived low caste people from entering the temple and even sitting in the back-rows from a distance for listening to the katha, for according to the Brahmins, they were unworthy of it. All efforts to eradicate this custom proves futile. Thus a satyagraha is launched by Naina, Shantikumar and Sukhada, as they wish to settle the matter once and for all. The harijans are awakened by the inspiring words of Shantikumar. He remarks:

Tum tan man se doosro ki seva karte ho par tum gulam ho. Tumhara samaj mein koi sthan nahin. Tum samaj ki buniyaad ho. Tumhare hi upar samaj khada hai, par tum achoot ho. Tum mandiro mein nahin ja sakte. Aisi aniti is abbage desh ke siva kahan ho sakti hai? Kyat um sadaiv isi bhanti patit aur dalit rehna chahte ho. (Karmabhoomi 139)

You serve others wholeheartedly, but you are slaves…You are the foundation of the society. The society is based on you, but you are untouchables. You cannot go to the temple. Where else can there be such an unethical practice, except in our unfortunate country? Do you want to remain downtrodden and dalits like this forever?

The movement against untouchability is a mass movement and the harijans under the leadership of Shantikumar are successful in achieving their objective of the right to entering the place of worship.

The movement against untouchability is followed by another movement for the construction of municipal quarters for workers. The municipality rejects the proposal and Satyagraha is again launched in which Samarkant, Sukhada and Naina participate and are arrested. Naina’s martyrdom compels the Municipal Board to succumb to the demands.

Premchand takes up the matter pertaining to the reducing of the revenue tax of the farmers by a cordial meeting between the protagonist Amarkant and the Mahanta, who combines religion with land lordship, and does not see anyone without receiving the present of one gold coin. The hollow promises of
the Mahanta compel Amarkant to lead an agitation, which very clearly depicts
the Gandhian influence as he asks the people to be patient and non-violent.
Further, the subsequent discourse speaks of the resolution on the part of the
hitherto voiceless minor characters to resist oppressive ways. Even bureaucracy
has realized that the days of the rich people are over. Gaznavi, in conversation
with Salim and Amar are prophetic. The novelist remarks:

Dear, this was to happen some day or other. The rule of rich people would
last only a few days. The country is ruled by the Englishmen so even rich
among us who naturally side with rich are now happy to side with poor
because by being with them they get honour.

The novelist through these words emphasizes on the change in
perception of the poor and the oppressed and the willingness of the haves to be
with them depicts the general change in the Indian psyche for freedom.
Gaznavi, the senior I.C.S. officer of Salim too can see the trend and criticizes
the bureaucracy. His observation about Swaraj and Hindu-Muslim relationships
and the apprehensions of the Muslims are not only valid but anticipate what
was to follow in the form of Muslim League a few years after the publication
of the novel. Gaznavi states:

Swaraj hum bhi chahte hain magar inqulab ke siva hamare liye aur koi raasta
nahin hai. Itni fauj rakhne ki kya jaroorat hai jo sarkar ki aamdani ka aadha
hajam kar jaye. Fauj ka kharch aadha kar diya jaye, to kisano ka lagan badi
aasani se aadha ho sakta hai. Mujhe agar Swaraj se koi khauf hai to yeh ki
musalmaanon ki haalat kahin aur kharab na ho jaye. Galat tavarikhen padh
padh kar dono firke ek doosre ke dushman ho gayen hai aur mumkin nahin ki
Hindu mauka pakar musalmaano se farji adavato ka badla na le lekin is
khayal se tasalli hoti hai ki beesvin sadi mein Hinduo jaisi padhi likhi
jamaat mahjabi gerohbandi ki panaah nahin le sakti. (Karmabhoomi 212-13)
We too want Swaraj, but except for the revolution there is no other way. What is the need of such an army which eats up half of the revenue of the government? If the expenditure on the army can be halved, the tax on the farmers can easily be reduced to half. The only fear that I have from the Swaraj is that the condition of the Muslims would become worse. By reading wrong histories both (Hindus and Muslims) have become enemies and what if the Hindus, given an opportunity, take revenge for false animosities. But I get consoled by the fact that educated people like the Hindus would not be victims of religious gansterism.

The characterization is very apt with characters of Saleem and Lala Samarkant depicting a change of heart from the greedy, power hungry to the compassionate and welfare oriented. The novelist has provided a comprehensive canvas to the portrait of Sukhada. She, initially leaves the house with her husband, but returns to serve her ailing father-in-law. Later she takes charge of the movement to provide residential quarters to the poor sections of the society. She is misunderstood even by her husband, Amarkant, who thinks she loves her ornaments too much to part from them. But Sukhada before leaving her in-laws house to accompany her husband gives up all her ornaments. All arguments of Amar fail to persuade her, as she avers:

Tum samajhte hoge, maine gehano ke liye kone mein baintkar roungi aur apne bhagya ko kosoongi? Striyan samay aane par kitna tyag kar saakti hain yeh tum nahin jante. Mein is fatkar ke baad in gehano ki aur taakna bhi paap samajhti hoon, inhen peherna to door ki baat hai. Agar tum darte ho ki mein kal hi se tumhara sir khane lagoongi, to mein tumhe vishwas dilate hoon ki agar geelho ka naam meri zubaan par aaye, to zaban kaat lena. Mein yeh bhi kahe dehi hoon ki tumhare bharose par nahin ja rahi hoon. Apni gujar bhar ko aap kama loongi. Rotiyon mein jyada kharcha nahin hota, kharcha hota hai adambar mein. Ek baar amiri ki shaan chhod do to, fir char ane paise se kaan chalta hai. (Karmabhoomi 77)

You would think that I would cry for ornaments and curse my fate. You do not know the kind of sacrifice that women can make? After the rebuke I consider even looking at these ornaments as a sinful act; leave aside the question of wearing them. If you are afraid of the fact that I would clamour for them tomorrow, then I must assure you that even the word ornament would never come on my lips. If I ever do so, chop my tongue off. Also I must say that I would not be dependent on you. I’ll earn for myself. One does not need much for meals, only show off demands more money. If you give up the false world of rich people, then you can manage in few annas.
Sukhada too surprises the readers from her materialistic lifestyle to a revolutionary, having a firm control over the masses, under whose pressure the municipality board too has to succumb. Thus Awadhesh Kumar Singh in *Discourse of Resistance in the Colonial Period* avers, “…their transformation expresses the novelist’s faith in the possibility of human regeneration.” (p 56)

Naina too joins the movement of providing land for the housing of the urban poor and becomes a martyr at the hands of her own husband who is depicted as a hypocrite with vested interest, not valuing the virtuous qualities like dutifulness, simplicity and caring nature of his wife, rather wishing to have a partner who could be of more help in furthering his business interests. Premchand thus shatters the false image of a woman as weak, lover of luxuries, ornaments and dependent on men for financial security. The strong women characters like Sukhada, Naina and Sakina speaks volumes about the novelist’s concept of woman.

The language of the novelist is simple day to day Hindi, with the Muslims characters like Salim and Gaznavi speaking with a sprinkling of Urdu words like “jehmat”, “lafz”, “majmoon” and “takhmina” among others.

Premchand successfully presents the mirror of the society and also suggests the means in making the society a better place to live in harmony for the different sections of society, without any discrimination of caste, creed and class. Though the protagonist occupies the centrestage, the novel is symbolically poignant defining the society as the *bhumi* and the human conduct as *karma*, combining which forms the *karmabhoomi*. 

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Premchand, the pioneer of progressive writing in Hindi novel studied social issues like a sociologist and presented them as an artist, arousing noble emotions of love, kindness, charity and pity among others. Godan (1936) his last complete novel is considered his best work. It is the most realistic interpretation of Indian village society, the backbone of India. It is the story of changing people, hungry and semi-starved, yet hopeful and optimistic, in the truest spirit of the age it represents.

A novel of epic dimensions, Godan portrays the exploitation of the farmers by the landlords and the money-lenders. Hori, the protagonist and a farmer owning five acres of land represents the agricultural class that was mercilessly exploited by the zamindars and moneylenders. The agents of Rai Saheb, the zamindar, besides collecting rent also collect fines imposed upon the farmers on false pretexts and sometimes without any pretext. Occasional collections for celebrating festivals too are made by the zamindar. When guilt ridden, exposing the darker side of the zamindari system, Rai Saheb observes:

Don’t go by the look of things. Our names are big. But our deeds are small. The poor are selfish and spiteful; this is out of an instinct for self-preservation. I consider such self-interest excusable…But a zamindar’s animosity and jealousy are for pleasure. We have become so big that deceit is now the salt of our lives. In fact, we have reached that stage of divinity where the other man’s tears only arouse our mirth. (Godan16)

Apart from the zamindars, the money-lenders leave no stone unturned in exploiting the poor helpless farmers. Rather it is the nexus of zamindars and money lenders that completes the cycle of economic exploitation. Whenever
the zamindar demands rent from the tenants, the farmers rush for help to the money-lenders. The money-lenders not only charge exorbitant rate of interest but also fool the poor illiterate farmers through miscalculations. Exposing the villainy of Pandit Datadin the moneylender, Gobar observes:

From thirty rupees to two-hundred rupees in nine years! How much would it be at the rate of one percent? ... In ten years it comes to thirty six rupees. Added to the principal, that makes it sixty six. We’ll let you have seventy. I won’t pay a coin more than that. (Godan 56)

The clout of the moneylenders in the pre-independence India can be judged from the fact that Godan depicts a variety of moneylenders. One such money-lender is Jhinguri Singh who maintained an accounts ledger, deducted an annual instalment in advance, charged not only for the stamp paper but even for drafting the deed. Thus on a loan of twentyfive rupees the farmer got in hand not more than seventeen rupees. Similarly Pandit Datadin and Pateshwari’s amount given as loan multiplied like the germs of cholera. Dulari Sahuain dealt in wood and kerosene but was perfect in her calculations with the scale of benefit weighing heavier on her side. The money-lenders fooled the poor farmers. They also exploited the helpless condition of the poor farmers. Supporting this issue, Jhinguri Singh, one of the village money-lenders remarks:

If a farmer is badly in need he’ll go on bended knees and get elders to sign. In any case we’d deduct twenty-five percent. (Godan 65)

It is evident that moneylending was a booming business in the pre-independence period. What is interesting to note is that it is not limited to the business community; rather it has been adopted by the Brahmins and the Thakurs as well. On this basis Awashesh Kumar Singh concludes:
Iska arth yeh hai ki nai arthik vyavastha mein sabhi oonchi jatiyan daliton aur kisano ke nirdhan varga ke khilaaf khadi hain. (Saakhi 221)

It means that in the new economic system all the upper castes are pitted against the economically weaker sections of the dalits and the farmers.

Thus, the duo of the landlord and the money-lenders exploited the poor farmers with impunity. Godan depicts the zamindars as a burden on society. Rai Saheb admits that the zamindar’s were the parasites, extorting money from the poor farmers to live an extravagant life, unmindful of the harm it was doing to them. He observes:

It is ridiculous and disgraceful that a few people can make thousands by governing and commanding those who can’t even get a crust of bread. I know very well how dissolute, how immoral how dependent and how shameless we zamindars have become in these circumstances. (Godan 17)

The novelist attempts to drive home the point that living a life of luxury by exploiting the poor farmers was not good for the zamindars themselves. The feeling is that they can’t even justify themselves from the point of view of self-interest. In order to sustain such ostentation they have to destroy their conscience to such an extent that they are left without a trace of self-respect.

Though living an extravagant life-style but he and the other zamindars are far from happy. He also reveals the mutual relations and jealousy prevalent among the zamindars and their ego of supremacy. Revealing these sentiments he states:

…What I cannot stand is the laughter of my squads; it is full of jealousy and sarcasm. Why not? I find plenty of laugh at them when they are hard up. Hori, riches and fellow-feelings never go hand in hand. We give in charity, of course; but only to outshine our equals. Our benevolence smacks of vanity. If one of us is served with a decree or ejectment order or jailed for not paying revenues, all of us have a good laugh at his expense. (Godan 15)
The novelist presents a complete chain of exploitation existing in the pre-independence Indian society. Ironically the zamindar is the class that is the exploiter as well as the exploited. Rai Saheb revealing his helplessness observes:

We are forced to plunder our tenants. If we don’t give expensive gifts to the officials, we are branded as traitors. If we don’t live in luxury we’re branded as misers. At the slightest suggestion of progress, we start trembling and run to the authorities appealing for help. We’re like spoon-fed babies – fat on the outside but weak inside, debilitated and impoverished. (Godan18)

Awadhesh Kumar Singh considers colonialism to be responsible for this loss of innocence of the colonizers as well as the colonized especially the natives who come into the contact of the colonisers. Studying the urban characters such as Rai Saheb, Khanna, Tankha and Omkarnath Pande from colonial perspective in Godan: Vaad ke Dayre Mein ya Vaad se Pare, he remarks:

From the economic, cultural and psychological point of view, colonialism is the cause and the consequence of the loss of innocence – for those who colonise and for the victims of colonization too. The victims of colonization first oppose and resist the colonizers and then become hand in glove. In this process they acquire the demeanour of the colonizers and gradually they become skilled in them too. Written in the background of colonialism and its resistance, the novel Godan depicts its devastating consequences, especially on those natives who directly or indirectly come into the contact of the colonizers.

Thus urban characters like Rai Saheb, Khanna, Tankha and Pande among others, who come directly or indirectly in contact with the colonizers
acquire the similar demeanour in their attitude and conduct towards the rural natives. Rai Saheb is with the colonizers as well as with the freedom struggle too. He talks of change but would not let zamindari be abolished. Khanna represents the new capitalist class that exploits the poor miseryable labourers as well the farmers coming from the rural stock through his sugar mill and as an office bearer of a bank.

The novel can be studied from the point of view of internal and external colonisation too. The plot does not have scope for external colonisation, but its indirect influence is definitely observed. No representative of that world is directly present other than characters such as Raibahadur Amarsingh, Prof. Mehta, Malti, Khanna, Pt. Omkarnath and Tankha among others. Focussing on the internal colonization, Avadhesh Kumar Singh in *Godan: Vaad ke Dayre Mein ya Vaad se Pare* avers:

Savarno, mahajano, zamindaro aur sakari mulajimono dwara bhautik aur prakrutik sansadhano ke shosan mein antarik upniveshvaad ki jhalak milti hai. Apne hi desh mein upnivesh banane wale deshvasi aise parjivi hain jo apne hi logon se kar aur arthik dand ke roop mein paisa aithkar sarkar ko dete hain aur kuch hissa ya to apne aishoaram par kharch kar dete hain ya fir aise dikhav mein jisse unki samajik pratishtha ya jhooti shaano shaukat mein ijafa ho. Ye log baajo ki tarah hain jo chidiya ka shikar apne liye nahin, kisi aur ke liye karte hain. Ye upniveshakon ke gagh dalalon ka kam karte hain jo kisi aur ke liye kam karte hain aur is beimani ke dhanve mein apni kuch dalali kama lete hain. Upniveshvaad ko pratyaksh roop se kathanak ka hissa na banate hue bhi upanyaskar is tathya ko rekhan kit karta hai ki kis tarah upniveshvad bharatiyon ke jivan ko alag-alag tarah se prabhavit karta hai.  

*(Sakhi 196)*

A glimpse of internal colonization is found in the material and natural resource exploitation by the upper caste, mahajans, zamindars and government servants. Those colonizing within the country are such parasites that they collect tax and fine the people on behalf of the government, and in the process, keeping a part of it for themselves which they spend on exhibition that raises their social standing or raises their false prestige. These people are like eagles who prey the bird not for themselves but for others. They work as the cunning agents of the colonizers, and in this process earn some commission for themselves. Though not depicting colonialism as a
direct part of the plot, the novelist reveals the various influences of colonialism on the lives of the Indians.

The novel is written in the background of the post First World War and the great depression of 1929. Throwing light over the global conditions prevailing during that time, Awadhesh Kumar Singh in *Godan: Vaad ke Dayre Mein ya Vaad se Pare* writes:

> Is kaal ka aham tathya hai ki upniveshaad apne charam par tha aur beesveen sadi ke doosre sadi ke doosre dashak mein pruthvi ka lagbhag 85% hissa upnivesh ban chuka tha. Is ke saath hi uth khade ho rahe the upniveshvaad ke khilaaf sangharsh jinhone akhirkaar use khatma kar dala. Iske saath hi bharatvarsha ki aam janta se lekar sudoor kshetron ke majdoor tak ‘great depression’ ke asar se bach nahin paye the aur taklf bhi unhin ki sabse jyada thi. Halaki is ghatna ke adhikendra Europe aur uttari America the, lekin baaki duniya, khaskar vah jo upnivesh ban chuki thi, ne bhi is ghatnachakra ke dhakke ko bakayda mehsoos kiya…In tathyyo ke maddenazar jis sachhai ko nazarandaz nahin kiya ja sakta vah yeh hai ki upniveshvaad ne samaj ke manovaigyanik aur arthik dhanche par apni amit chhap chhodi hai. *(Saakhi 195)*

The basic fact of this period is that colonization was at its peak and by the second decade of the twentieth century almost 85% of the earth’s surface was colonized. Also arose from this the struggle against colonialism that ultimately brought it to an end. Along with it the common masses of India and the labourers in the interiors too could not be uninfluenced by its impact and they suffered the most too. Though the epicenter of this incident was Europe and North America, the rest of the world especially that was colonized, too witnessed the drawbacks of these series of incidents…On the basis of these facts, the truth that cannot be ignored is that colonization created an irrevocable impression on the psychological and economic structure of the society.

Hori represents the poor village farmers who are the victims of the exploitation by the zamindar’s and money-lenders. He is not only an individual but a class in itself. He has good as well as bad qualities. He loves his family and is also a God fearing person. He has experienced the harsh realities of life and even in most trying situations he never loses his temper. Till the family was undivided he showered fatherly affection upon his younger brothers too and even after division in the family considered their honour as his own. In spite
of being an honest and hardworking man he experiences no comfort or happiness in his life and is with every passing day further burdened under the weight of debt. He loses his fields and turns into an ordinary farm labourer from a dignified farmer. His wife and daughter too join him in as helping hands in the fields of others yet they cannot even manage two square meals a day. Fatigue, exploitation, poverty, undernourishment and helplessness all put together takes its toll on him.

The zamindars, moneylenders and the government administrators leave no stone unturned in exploiting and victimizing the poor farmers. Yet the credulous farmer fears being ostracized from the community to be more dreadful than being caught in the clutches of the moneylenders. The simple farmer cannot even imagine his life out of his community. Thus to save him and his family from being ostracized, Hori is ready to pay a hefty penalty for supporting the marriage of his son with Jhuniya. He is ready to pay a bribe even for the brother’s house not being searched as it would bring disrepute to his own family. For paying all these penalties he has no alternative but to seek a loan from the moneylenders.

Hori breathes his last after succumbing to the hot winds while working empty stomach at the the road construction site. Hori’s fate is the fate of the common farmer who is exploited to the core by the zamindars and moneylenders during the pre-independence period.

The novel has a very wide canvas and the characterization presented is very authentic and extensive. The characters are befitting the role they play
which also reveals the minute observation and sharpness of the novelist. Thus the Rai Saheb presented here is a zamindar with a difference. Traditionally zamindars were known for their atrocities on the tenants and for their extravagance. Rai Saheb also realized fines and rent from the tenants but he was conscious that what he was doing was inhuman and wished that the system could be proscribed.

Rai Saheb was a member of the council. To be elected to the council he had to make publicity of his pro-poor policies wherein he spoke of abolishing zamindari. But inherently he finds it difficult to digest. Delineating his views on zamindari, the novelist avers:

I was brought up in a tradition where the king was God and the zamindar, God’s minister. My late father was so benevolent that in times of frost or drought would waive half or even the whole rent. He would distribute grain from his own store-house to the tenants and would sell the family jewellery to help with the marriage expenses of the village girls but only as long as the people acknowledged him as both ruler and divine representative and worshipped him as much. Taking care of the people was his religion, but he wouldn’t surrender one particle of authority. (Godan 18)

Rai Saheb contradicts his own social and political values when on one hand he is not ready to give up his own interests and on the other hand he curses the zamindari system for exploiting the poor.

He reveals that the world thinks them to be happy and fortunate as they own lands, palaces, carriages and scores of servants. But a person who cannot sleep peacefully for fear of the enemy, who licks the shoes of the officials and sucks the blood of his people, cannot be called happy.

Rai Saheb represents the class that was seeing a decline or a downfall. The zamindari system was in the last throes of its life. The novel in itself is
about the fall of feudalism. It is not about the tragedy of their lives as they themselves are a class of evil incarnate, the most debased of them being the disdain for labour, and exploitation of the poor farmers. It is a cruel mockery as the feudal class is depicted as prosperous and flourishing but this prosperity is only superficial as it is based on deceit and exploitation. Though materialistically prosperous, mentally they are sick and intellectually bankrupt. This intellectual bankruptcy can be observed in the other characters like Raja Saheb, Khanna and Mirza too. They exploited the poor farmers and the tenants and in return were exploited by the British rulers. Thus as the poor farmers fear the zamindars they too fear the British rulers. Revealing this fact to Hori about the fear of the officials, Rai Saheb states:

   When the British officer comes on tour or on a hunt, I follow him like a shadow; a frown from his face freezes me to death. To what length I go to make him happy. If it comes to that, I don’t even hesitate to prostrate myself before him. (Godan 17)

Premchand has very aptly created his characters. Undoubtedly Hori, Dhaniya, Mehta and Malti are strong characters, they are not merely individuals but represent various institutions. Rai Saheb represents the feudal class that is the exploiter, hypocrite and opportunist. Inspite of these negative qualities he does have some good qualities too that separate him from the rest of his class as he leaves some land for the grazing of the cattle. He also supports the views of Mehta in the ‘Women League’ though he does not apply them when it comes to his acceptance of the intercaste marriage between his son Rudrapratap and Malti’s sister Saroj. Shyam Behari Tankha too, a lawyer and a broker represents a class of parasites that has no values or morals and
which prospers in all situations. Malti and Prof. Mehta represent the new educated class that is progressive, optimistic and committed to their values and ideology. Khanna, the Bank manager and the director of the Sugar Mill, does not leave any stone unturned in displaying himself as the messiah of the poor but claims the strike of the exploited mill labourers as unjustified and illegal. Mirza Khurshid represents the fallen Muslim feudal class. The editor of the daily *Bijli*, Pandit Omkarnath represents the ‘press’, is the watchdog of society and talks of high moral values but in reality cannot think beyond his own personal interests.

The novelist through characterization also depicts the hypocrisy prevalent in the pre-independence rural society. One can keep committing sins and yet would be secure in the community if he followed the necessary rituals laid down by the community. Pandit Datadin serves as an illustration to this fact. His illegitimate relationship with a low caste woman was known to the entire village. But he still applied the tilak on his forehead and performed religious rituals. There was no loss of status in his case. Thus those who followed the artificial social customs were spared even if they violated the traditional social norms while the merciful and God fearing like Hori were penalized. But the novelist also sees a light of hope at the end of the tunnel. This hope is observed through the characters like Gobar, Matadin, Siliya and Jhuniya who oppose these hollow customs and rituals and emphasize more on truth and humanity.
Premchand had infinite faith in the traditional Indian culture. Along with the faith in the Indian culture he also emphasized idealism and moderate path. He firmly believed that only that nation or society can progress which desires to inculcate culture, truth and ideals. These values find their voice through Prof. Mehta, the teacher of Philosophy. Through him he also rejects feminism of the West which was spreading its wings in India too. Stating his views on an ideal wife, he elaborates:

In my idea, a wife should be an embodiment of sincerity and self-abnegation who effaces her own individuality and merges herself with her husband’s personality; the body is of the husband and the soul that of the wife. You will ask: why should the man not do the effacing? Why the woman? It’s because no man is capable of of it. If he effaces himself, he’ll become an empty vessel. He will retire to a cave and dream of merging his soul with the all-pervasive soul. He is mercurial; and in his vanity, he thinks that he is imbued with wisdom. And he aspires to identify himself with the God-head. But the woman is patient like the earth, tranquil, forbearing. If a man takes on the qualities of a woman he becomes a Mahatma. But if a woman imbibes the qualities of a man she becomes evil. A man is essentially attracted towards a woman who possesses the attributes of a woman. (Godan125)

Prof. Mehta is the mouth-piece of the novelist. Addressing an audience of The Women’s League and emphasizing the greatness of the traditional Indian culture and the traditional Indain woman in comparison to that of the West, Prof. Mehta remarks:

I am sorry to see that our women are taking to the West as their ideal. There the women has fallen from her place of honour, she is no longer mistress of the home, but a show piece, a prize exhibit, an object of pleasure. The woman in the West wants to be independent, so that she can enjoy life to the hilt. But physical pleasures have never been the ideal of our women; they have dominated and run the family through service...But aping others blindly is a symptom of moral bankruptcy. The women of the West no longer wish to remain housewives. They have surrendered their modesty-that priceless trait!-at the altar of pleasure. When I see the educated women in the West openly parading the charms of their bodies, the arms, the legs I feel pity for them. Their craving for sensations has blinded them so much that they can no longer think of being modest. There couldn’t a greater curse come on women. (Godan154)
It is not that Premchand has depicted male characters at length in his works but he has equally profound understanding of the female sensibility and has presented them in a manner as Shakespeare presents the female characters in his plays. In the same manner the character of Dhania, the wife of Hori is the mouthpiece of the novelist in representing the women of the Indian villages. Besides serving as a foil to Hori she also exposes the tyranny that Hori was obliged to bear mutely. Hori lives his entire life fearing the land-lords, the village Brahmins and the money-lenders. But Dhania is fearless and wished that Hori too lead a life of dignity. Dhania avers:

Why bother with all this flattery for land that could not even provide food for our stomachs. (Godan 5)

She is unhappy with her husband’s cowardice and blind obedience to religious beliefs. His humility and respect for the social set-up have made him an easy victim for the money-lenders and Brahmins. Dhania is dynamic and powerful and raises her voice against injustice and exploitation. When the village money-lenders wanted Hori to borrow thirty rupees from them to give to the police inspector for not searching his brother’s house, Dhania could see through the villainy. Acquiring the ferociousness of a tigress, snubbing Hori and exposing the village money-lenders, Dhania roars:

Here we are starving at home, longing for just a grain of food, with nothing to wear, and you go tossing out handfuls of money just to save your honour. You think you have that much honour left to be saved. (Godan 98)

Dhania has the right to be ferocious because she has not only lost her cow but also has to lose other thirty rupees to avoid the house of Hira being
searched. She has the courage to call a spade a spade and bluntly accusing the police inspector states:

I have seen what your justice is like – and your brains too. Cutting the throats of the poor is easy enough. But separating milk from water, running an honest investigation, is something else.

(Godan 105)

Thus Dhania’s boldness and freedom of speech saved the home from paying an unnecessary fine of thirty rupees.

As a mother, Dhania is very affectionate. She loves her children form the core of her heart. She weeps bitterly when Gobar decides to live in the city. She is equally tender-hearted and when situation demands she can go against society and shower tenderness on the victimized. She has the courage to accept Jhunia as her daughter-in-law even though she does not belong to her community and is largely concerned for her because of her bearing the child conceived through Gobar. When the village panchayat imposed fine on them for accepting a girl of another community as a daughter-in-law, Hori meekly accepts the judgment while Dhania angrily retorts:

Sell our fields and gardens and then live in luxury yourself! Not while Dhania is alive. You won’t…We don’t have to stay in the caste…staying in the caste won’t bring us salvation. We’re living by our own sweat now, we’ll keep doing so even if you out-caste us…Why didn’t I drive her out and let her beg in the streets, you ask. Is that what you call justice? (Godan 88)

Dhania’s kindness is revealed not only for Jhunai but also for Siliya, a low-caste woman who was no way related to her. Siliya was left in lurch by Matadin and her own parents in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Pandit Matadin after making her pregnant refused to marry her as she belonged to low-caste. It is none other than Dhania who takes pity on the miserable
condition of the woman and makes arrangement for her delivering the baby. She can rise to the demand of the occasion and can fight against the rigid orthodox norms of society in providing succor to the underprivileged and the have-nots. Thus cursing Matadin for his dumping Siliya and escaping from duty, Dhania remarks:

Men are all like. No one was upset when Matadin defiled her. Now the same thing happened to him, so what is wrong in that. Doesn’t Siliya’s virtue count as virtue? That’s exactly the punishment hoodlums like him deserve. (Godan 156)

Similar to traditional women, she is a typical mother-in-law. When Gobar decides to take Dhaniya with him to the city, she is unhappy and believes that Jhunia must be responsible for all the trouble-making decisions and poisoning Gobar’s mind. Dhania is thus an alter-ego of Hori, with whose help he hopes to see the fulfillment of aspirations and ideals in life. She becomes an extension of Hori’s self. She is a woman of grit, determination and also of delicate emotions. Not surprisingly called “Bhawani” (the Goddess of Power) by the villagers.

The concluding pages of Godan touch the depths of our heart. Hori hounded by money-lenders and ostracized by the social evils, continues his struggle till the end. Gobar feels that prestige and honour have no meaning when a man can’t fill his stomach. If Hori had been like others, squeezing people by the throat and making off by their money, he too could have been well-off. But he stuck to his principles and this is the punishment he got for it.

Hori stood stripped of all his belongings at the time of his death. He was penniless, but he still had his principles and philosophy which he stood by till
the end. Yet in all the adversity he had not lost his sense of humour. When his brother Hira remarks that he has grown thin, Hori replies that the only people who get fat are those with no worries about debt or prestige or honour. To be fat these days is downright shameful. A hundred have to grow thin for one man to get fat.

The obsession of the cow still exists and now he wants it especially for his grandson Mangal, for whom milk is so necessary. Thus when a contractor started digging gravel near the village for road construction, Hori hurried to him and got work of digging gravel at eight annas a day. If the work lasted two months, even then he’d be able to earn enough to buy a cow. He worked in the loo throughout the day and returned home half-dead. In the night too he spun yarn and did not sleep until midnight. It is his dream to pay-off all his debts as soon as possible and make a new beginning. He observes:

Only those who have leisure fall ill… If I can get rid of this debt this year, it will mean a new life for me. (Godan 346)

Presenting his views regarding the obsession of Hori for cow from religio-cultural and mythological perspective, Awadhesh Kumar Singh avers in Godan: Vaad ke Dayre Mein ya Vaad se Pare avers:

Sach to yeh hai ki khetihar arthavyavastha mein gay kisan ki naav bhi hai aur nav khene vala chappu bhi. Vah parivar ke liye doodh ka strot hai aur uske bachde kal ke bail hain jo khet jotne mein kaam ayenge. Kalantar mein brahmano ne gay ke irdgird aloikta ka ek jaal bun diya aur yeh niyam bana diya ki marne ke pehle har vyakti dwara Brahman ko godan karna anivarya hai. Yeh ek trasadi bhi hai aur majak bhi ki Hori ke jis bhai Heera ne gay ko jehar de diya tha vahi heera chahta hai ki Hori marne ke pehle godan kar de. Adhure kartavyo aur Heera ke liye adhure vaadon ke beech Hori chal basta hai aur peechhe chhot jaati hai uski patni Dhania jo Hori ki un ataarkik manyataon aur khud par thope mulyaan par lagaatar savaliya nishan lagati rahi – ve mulya jinse kabhi bhi vah nahin mila jo chaha tha. (Saakhi 199)

The fact is that in an agricultural economy the cow is a farmers boat as well as the spade for rowing. It is source of milk for the family as well as its calves
are the bulls for tomorrow who will help ploughing the fields. With passage of time the Brahmins weaved a myth of divinity regarding cow and made it a rule that every person is to inevitably gift a cow to a Brahmin before death. It is a tragedy as well as a joke that Hori’s brother Heera, who had poisoned the cow, that same Heera wishes that Hori perform Godan before death. Hori passes away with unfulfilled commitments and promises towards Heera and leaves behind his wife Dhaniya, who always questioned Hori’s illogical beliefs and the views imposed upon her – those values which never delivered that they promised.

Before his death Hori also had the satisfaction of seeing his fugitive brother return after several years. His happiness knew no bounds on seeing his long lost brother. Describing his joy the novelist avers:

Who said he had lost the battle of life? Was this pride, this joy, this verve, the sign of defeat? …If his barn contained a few hundred maunds of grain and his purse a few hundred rupees, he, would not have got the same joy as he did on seeing Heera. (Godan 350)

By presenting Hori the protagonist of the novel as having ideals and principles, as one who emphasizes more on family and social bonds rather than the materialistic gains, the novelist conveys the message of the richness and strength in the traditional Indian culture and its superiority over the self-centred individualism of the West that was gaining ground in the Indian society. He also suggests the superiority of the joint traditional families and laments the breaking down of this sacred institution.

Hori represents the resilience that has developed in the Indian peasant after facing hardships throughout their lives and the lives of their past generations. Even such hardships and miseries cannot steal him of his sense of humour, zest for life and his humanity.

Hori succumbs to his working unclothed in the hot loo on an empty stomach, not taking rest even at night and uninterruptedly working throughout the day. Thus on the ill fated day of his death, he felt strangely heavy in body.
After doing little work he was breathless. Drinking little water, he vomited and blood drained away from his face. He had caught loo working in the heat on an empty stomach. He vomited again and darkness swarmed before his eyes.

Describing his hallucinations, the novelist avers:

His eyes closed and one by one old memories came alive and danced before his eyes...came his childhood, when he snuggled in his mother’s lap and played gulli-danda ...He found himself milking a celestial cow, giving the milk to Mangal. (Godan 350-1)

Dhana and other villagers arrived. Seeing his brother breathing his last, Heera suggesting salvation for Hori, observes:

Bhabhi have patience, give a cow in charity. Dada is about to leave us for ever. (Godan 352)

Dhana had no money with her except the twenty annas she had earned from the sale of yarn. Placing the coins in the hands of Hori and looking at Datadin, painfully states:

Maharaj, there’s neither a cow, nor a calf nor any money in the house. This is all the money I have; this is all I can give. Take this in place of the cow. (Godan 352)

Hori who in his life-time could never fulfill his dream of owning a cow is insisted to donate a cow to attain salvation. The system that exploited him throughout his life does not even spare him in death. Regarding the tragic ending of Godan, Awadhesh Kumar Singh in Godan: Vaad ke Dayre Mein ya Vaad se Pare remarks:

Upanyas ke ant mein Hori ki trasadi to khatma ho jaati hai lekin usse bhi bhayankar trasadi ki shoorat hoti hai Dhania ke jeevan mein. Agar Hori ek purush hokar purush pradhan samaj mein nahin jee paya to bhala ek stree khud ko kaise bacha payegi? Premchand jaanbhooj kar is sawal ke jawab nahi de ni hain kyunki chahte the ki pathakgan swayam hi Godan ke alikhit shesh bhag mein apna yogdaan de. Jitne prakar pathakon ke hain utne hi prakar ka ye sheshbhag bhi hoga sivay ek samanta ke ki ‘nayak’ Dhaniya hi hogi. (Saakhi 205)
To the conclusion of the novel also ends the tragedy of Hori but with it begins an even more dangerous tragedy, the tragedy of Dhania’s life. If Hori as a male could not survive in this male dominated society, then how could Dhania as a woman survive? Premchand deliberately does not respond to this issue as he wished that the readers themselves contribute to this unwritten part of the novel. The variety in the unwritten part of the novel would equal the number of readers with the only similarity of Dhania as the protagonist.

Thus, the novelist through the last scene very vividly brings out the picture of the exploitation, suffering and helplessness prevalent in the contemporary pre-independence society.

On one hand Godan depicts the rural life through the characters of Hori, Dhaniya, Gobar, and others while the urban life is presented through the characters such as Dr. Metha, Malati, Rai Saheb, Mirza Khursheed, Khanna and others. Barring the money-lenders and the Brahmins, the life of the majority of the characters represented such as the farmers is tough, full of challenges and facing exploitation. On the other hand the urban characters live a luxury life of enjoying the theater and organizing hunting parties for pleasure. These two worlds are poles apart and nowhere do they overlap or come together.

The novelist who had been a reformist and also had coined the term “idealistic realism” seems extremely frustrated with the condition of the society in this novel. Who as a reformist had earlier provided solutions in work such as Sevasadan to tricky issues such as prostitution and mismatched marriages, is without any solution to the issues raised in Godan. The novelist has rejected all the major political and economic options. He has depicted the change taking place in society from the decline of the feudal order to the rise of the capitalism.
in the Indian society. Thus the urban capitalists are indirectly present in the rural society through their representatives and the industries where the rural populace provides manpower. The novelist has rejected capitalism as unfit for a healthy society but has not provided any alternative as he has rejected communism which because of the bloody revolution goes against the Gandhian principles.

*Godan* for the first time in Hindi literature realistically depicts the shift of power taking place in the Indian society: the feudal structure crumbling and the capitalism taking over. It suggests that the change of the society from the feudalistic to capitalistic did not change anything for the poor exploited farmers, farm labourers or the labourers working in the industries. The exploiters changed but the fate of the exploiters remained the same.

Ideologically too the novel depicts the triumph of the Indian traditional culture over the West through the transformation of Doctor Malati from Madam Malati to Malati Devi. The novel also rejects feminism and suggests keeping it at bay from the Indian society.

Dealing with such diverse perspectives justifies the novel with the critical acclaim due to a masterpiece. Thus, Namvar Singh remarks:

…Sahitya ke roop mein *Godan* tamam upanyason ke beech kya sthan rakhta hai? Aur kyon mahatvapoorna hai? Baavjoood iske Hindi mein uske baad Jainendra ke upanyak hai, *Maila Anchal hai, Naukar ki kameez hai, Raagdarbari, Aadha Gaon* hai. Upanyak is ke is lambi parampara mein Godan kyon aaj bhi aparajeya hai? Koi uski gehrai aur vistar ke saath hi uski marmikta ko nahin vyakt kar saka hai. (*Saakhi* 16-7)

…As literature what place does *Godan* have amongst literary works? And why is it significant? Besides it, after it in Hindi there are the novels of Jainendra, *Maila Anchal* is there, *Naukar Ki Kameez* is there, *Raagdarbari*
and Aadha Gaon are there. Why is Godaan uncomparable even today in this long tradition of novel. Nobody has been able with such subtlety to express such profundity and comprehensiveness.

It is obvious that Premchand’s writing was not limited to any ‘ism’ or ‘class’. No good writer would become a supporter of any ‘ism’ to the extent that it becomes as obstacle in his creativity. A writer is a supporter of life and its values that are integrally interwined and a characteristic of his writing. He is always committed to the issues and struggles concerning existence, especially of the downtrodden, the exploited and the marginalized. Thus, Premchand gives a voice to the suppressed through his writings which were earlier unprecedented in Hindi literature. By selecting the rural setting and the exploited poor masses as domain of his creative surge and his commitment towards them make him a legendary Indian novelist.

As a novelist, Premchand has dealth with the various issues such as caste structure, communalism, prevailing economic inequality and how the rich and uppercaste for their vested interests make efforts to perpetuate this inequality. Thus, he brings the age live to the readers with its evils, strengths, weaknesses and challenges.

The novelist’s journey from Sevasadan to Godan depicts the several issues and conditions that plagued the pre-independence Indian society. From the minutest incident of the family to the significant social and national issues find place in his works. His sharp observation analysed the nation and the society from various perspectives and also attempted to understand the ambiguous human nature.
The plots of Sevasadan, Gaban and Nirmala are more organised as they present issues concerning either a single family or a particular single class. Thus, the plot begins with an individual or a particular incident and the other related incidents becoming complementary and nurturing the main plot. All these three works contain a single theme. Karmabhoomi too takes up several issues simultaneously from Hindu-Muslim unity, to the struggle of the peasants and the downtrodden and the rural and urban poor. Godan contains several tales having independent existence clubbed into one and it becomes difficult to identify the main from the rest. It should not be forgotten that Godan represents the diverse classes present in the Indian society from the farmer, labourer, zamindar, capitalist, urban and rural along with their issues and concerns. The novel also introduces the awakening among the masses and suggesting revolution to be imminent. Thus it is not possible to organize the plot similar to the manner of the works having only one main plot and limited sub-plots. Rather the novelist deserves praise that inspite of dealing with several important issues and challenges of the Indian society in one work, he has attempted to strike an appropriate balance and connection between them.

IV

It would be unfair to compare two distinct literary works or writers yet one cannot stop from terming Vishwambaharnath Sharma ‘Kaushik’ as a writer of the ‘Premchand School’. His Bhikharini (1929) presents a tragic love-story of a prosperous and gentle youth Ramanath and Jasso, a daughter of a beggar
Nanadu. Attracted to Jasso, Ramanath provides refuge to the father and daughter by hiring them as servants in his home and the bond of love between Jasso and Ramanath becomes strong. Later on it is learnt that Nandu is the only son of a prosperous Thakur landlord. He was in love with a girl of his village belonging to the same community and wanted to marry her. Facing parental opposition he eloped to Calcutta and married her. But the death of his wife shattered him and he took to begging along with his daughter. On learning about the whereabouts of Nandu, his father Thakur Arjun Singh along with his wife come to Ramanath’s place and take their son and grand-daughter home. But the separation torments the lovers. When Ramanath cannot bear this separation he takes help of his friend Brajkishor and through him sends a proposal of marriage with Jasso. Nandram, now a son of a big zamindar, considering social limitations and the traditional mindset of his father rejects the proposal of inter-caste marriage. He does not wish that the incidents that occurred in his life and the trauma he faced are repeated in the lives of any one else. Jasso too is not in favour of elopement. Ultimately giving up efforts and succumbing to family pressure and in consultation with his friend Brajkishor, Ramanath marries elsewhere. Jasso and Nandu too turn up to attend the marriage ceremony. Inspite of Thakur Arjun Singh’s sincere efforts the marriage of Jasso with a suitable match fails as the deeds of Nandu’s past life haunt the family. The grandparents die with the unfulfilled desire of seeing their granddaughter in the form of a bride. With the death of the parents, the lonely life of the village torments Nandu and Jasso. Ultimately, they donate
their entire property for the welfare of the village and living life of mendicants move about in the vast world in the form of beggars.

The novel presents a subtle picture of the conflict between the natural attraction of the heart and the orthodox social conventions. Even today when the caste division and affiliations are very strong, one can imagine the situation in the pre-independence Indian society when orthodoxy was at its peak. The writers of the time too did not have any solution to this issue. Thus the fate of such couples opting for inter-caste marriage was either to face social condemnation or to face the pangs of separation. The trauma of Nandu and Jasso was due to these stringent social codes. Ramanath eventually got married to a beautiful bride and almost forgot his love for Jasso, but Jasso by vowing to remain unmarried, sets a high ideal of love.

The characters of Thakur Arjun Singh, Nandu, Ramanath and Brajkishor are presented in a natural manner and all these characters represent specific class they belong to. Thakur Arjun Singh represents the class of the traditional zamindar, Nandu is the son who rebels against the strict social codes, Ramanath is a weak character who does not have the courage to boldly challenge the orthodox social codes and Brajkishor is a practical youth advising Ramanath to live a comfortable life instead of taking up the challenges of society and living a life of misery. The dialogue between Ramanath and Brajkishor when they come to know of Jasso and Nandu donating their entire property for the welfare of the poor people and turning mendicants makes the point evident. The novelist delineates:
Brajkishor ne kaha – “Tum bade bhavuk ho Ramanath. Maan lo tumne is samay khana na khaya to isse kya hoga?”
“Hona havana kya hai?”
“To fir?”
“Is samay zara tabiyat ranjida ho gai.”
“Bewkoof ho! Chalo utho, in baaton men kya dhara hai.”
“Bhagwaaan jaane tumhara hridaya kahe ka bana hai.”
“Mera hridaya us vastu ka bana hai jo vyartha ki bhavukta se prabhavit nahin hota… (Bhikharini 245)

Brajkishor said – “Ramanath you are very sentimental. What difference will it make if you don’t take your meal?
“What difference will it make?”
“Then what?”
“Presently I am a little disturbed”
“You’re a fool! Get up, what’s there in such talk.”
“God knows of what your heart is made of?”
“My heart is made of that material that is not influenced by useless sentimentality…

The readers get an understanding of the characters more from their dialogues and their conduct. The characters influence us by their attitude, their words and actions. Jasso the female protagonist leaves a strong impact not only on the readers but on the male protagonist Raamanath too. The novelist delineates:

“Ab to asambhav ho gaya.”
“Kya asambhav ho gaya?”
“Jeevan ki is ghatna ko bhoolna. Yadi Jasso vivah kar leti tab to sambhav tha, parantu ab asambhav ho gaya. Jasso ne is karya se hamare hriday par apni chhap amit kar di hai.”
Brajkishor ne avishvas aur sandehpoor na swar me kaha – “Aisi baat hai! I too will atleast remember her giving up her entire property. I agree with you if your reference too is the same.

(Bhikharini 244)
Her sense of sacrifice sends a strong message to the characters like Ramanath and Brajkishor who are driven by self-interest. It makes them realise their weaknesses and blemishes which is contrasted with her greatness and distinction.

The novel lacks sub-plots or intricacies as the novelist does not attempt to present the issue raised in its diversity or entirety. The novelist has attempted with limited characters and some heart rendering incidents to present a particular realistic picture of society. The story moves forward at its own slow pace and usually the development takes place only through the characters. The novelist does not resort to lengthy delineations that serve as an obstacle in the smooth flow of the story. The story though simple contains spots where emotions are presented intensively, thus providing a beauty to the work. The work contains some co-incidences but they are beautifully organized so as to seem natural. Especially the incident of Jasso and her father Nandu donating their entire property for the welfare of the poor farmers and the villagers is known through a news article printed in the newspaper ‘Leader’, read by chance by Brajkishor and Ramananth. Also the incident at the conclusion of the novel when Ramanath encounters Jasso after several years of his marriage in the guise of a sadhvi at the station of Haridwar serves as an appropriate illustration.

The incidents in the works of Kaushik do not contain several branches and sub-branches. Originating from a single point they develop in a straightforward manner without inter-mingling or creating any complications.
The plot opens with the arrival of Jasso and Nandu as beggars and their refuge at the house of Ramanath, the attraction between the Jasso and Ramanath, the arrival of Thakur Arjun Singh and the separation of Ramanath and Jasso, the consequent marriage of Ramanath to another girl and the novel concluding with the ultimate asceticism of Jasso.

As a subscriber to the ‘Premchand School’ the novelist shares several similarities to Premchand the literary flagbearer of the age. One cannot fail to notice the similarities in his and the works of Premchand in matters regarding the narration style, theme, plot and characterization. Similar to Premchand, ‘Kaushik’ too took to writing in Hindi after initially beginning in Urdu. Similar to Premchand, ‘Kaushik’s’ works too are inclined towards idealism.

VI

The years from 1915 to 1936 are to such a great extent dominated by Premchand that other writers seem dwarfed in his comparison. But it would be wrong not to credit the other writers for their contribution to Hindi literature. Unlike Bhikarini, dealing with a love-story, published in the same year is Jayshanker Prasad’s Kankal, dealing with serious social issues of hypocrisy of the established institutions of society. Jayshanker Prasad’s novel Kankal (1929) exposed the hypocrisy and the double-standards of the Indian society.

Kankal depicts a contemporary particular class from a particular perspective. Human beings, in the course of the growth of the civilization have established certain religious and ethical values. The basic purpose of these values is collective welfare. But the over insistence over these values leads to
neglect of the individual and the suppression of the basic rights. *Kankal* is a story very subtly depicting the conflict between social taboos and the individual’s natural instincts.

Prayag, Kashi, Haridwar, Mathura, Vrundavan and other places of religious significance are the centres of the plot of *Kankal*. Tara, the illegitimate child is denied refuge by her own father inspite of his knowing that her mother has expired and she has fallen into flesh trade. Mangal, an Aryasamaji comes to her rescue but when he comes to know of her being an illegitimate child, he too withdraws and disappears on the day of marriage itself. Tara is pregnant as they had started living together as a husband and wife. Thus the cycle of exploitation is repeated. She faces the same exploitation similar to her mother. She attempts suicide several times but is unsuccessful and ultimately gives birth to a male child. She deserts her child and lives a life of a destitute.

Kishori, the wife of Srichand, a businessman of Amritsar gives birth to a child fathered by her childhood friend Niranjan, now Dev Niranjan and a renowned sage. Srichand hates her and sends her to Kashi with her son and sends her the finance necessary for survival. She names her son Vijay. Tara too reaches Kashi in the form of a destitute and she is hired as a servant by Kishori. To conceal her past Tara changes her name to Yamuna.

Vijay loves Tara now with the name changed to Yamuna but is disillusioned as his love remains unrequited. He now turns towards Ghanti, a child widow, but the society does not permit him for marriage with her too. The
third time Vijay falls in love with Gala, the daughter of a dacoit Madan Gujar born out of a relationship with a Muslim woman. She too rejects his marriage proposal as he has taken her refuge. Mangal ultimately ends up marrying Gala. On the other hand Batham the Christian priest is attracted to Ghanti. Thus Kankal satirises all the recognized institutions of society.

Thus, the plot of Kankal is well knit and enfolds chronologically. All the incidents depicted in the novel are mutually related and removing any one of them would ruin the beauty of the work. Thus none of the incident can be considered unnecessary as they either reveal the qualities of a character or they provide velocity to the story.

The novelist either unfolds his plot directly or suggests the incidents indirectly. Being a skilled dramatist Jayshanker Prasad has imbibed the dramatic elements in his novel. The novelist has presented most of the institutions through the conversations between the various characters but not presented them directly. The childhood friendship of Niranjan and Kishori is revealed through the internal conflict of Niranjan and the story of Mangal and Ghanti is revealed through the blind beggars. Vijay absconds after committing a murder and gets refuge from the bandits of a Gujar gang. He changes his name from Vijay to ‘Naye’. But this fact too is not revealed directly by the novelist. The fact comes to light by the conversation amongst the characters. In the same manner the details about Gala’s mother are made available through her autobiography and the mystery of the parentage of Tara or Yamuna is revealed through the letter to Niranjan. Thus the novelist has devised new
techniques such as letters and autobiography. The novel succeeds in raising the curiosity of the readers from the very beginning itself.

The plot should develop on the basis of the law of causality but the novelist seems to resort to a larger extent on the elements of chance and coincidence. Though the plot contains several sub-plots their presence is justifiable and rational.

The knowledge of being an illegitimate child has a profound impact on the personality of Vijay and he becomes cynical and a rebel having bitterness towards society. Srichand, the father of Vijay too is aware of this illegitimacy and distances himself immediately after his birth. Though he provides finance and does not reveal the truth to anybody he does not shower the love and affection that a child receives from a father.

The novelist emphasizes through Vijay the importance of parental love and affection and its importance in moulding the personality of an individual. The personality of Vijay is presented as abnormal or disturbed and the reason is obviously his illegitimate birth. He is denied affection from Srichand and from his biological father Dev Niranjan.

Though the love relationship exists between Kishori and Dev Niranjan it is concealed from society and it remains an enigma for Vijay too. He never has any feeling of respect for Dev Niranjan as normal children have towards their fathers. Rather he never refrains from any opportunity of publicly criticizing Dev Niranjan. The reason of Vijay being critical of social values and norms is his illegitimate birth. The presentation of Vijay as a social rebel is a
consequence of the illicit relationship of Kishori and Dev Niranjan. He becomes a misfit in society. All that Vijay needs is unconditional love and he searches it in Dev Niranjan, Yamuna, Ghunti and Gala. He wishes to marry Yamuna but his proposal is rejected. Later he had a physical relationship with Ghunti but did not marry her. He is attracted towards Gala too.

Looking at the circumstances of Vijay, it can be concluded that he is not responsible for the situation that he is in. His desire for receiving love remains dissatisfied. At the same time he does not reveal the emotional trauma he faces and conceals them from the society.

Vijay is presented neither as a hypocrite nor as a hollow man. There is no artificiality in him. If he rebels against society it is public. Mangal serves as a foil to Vijay. He talks of eradicating the evils of society but does not have the courage to implement his words into action. He promises to marry Tara and even makes her pregnant but deserts her on the day of marriage. Vijay is not such pretentious and what other people do slyly is done publicly by him. In fact Vijay is bold, courageous, benevolent and truthful. He provides refuge to the orphaned Ghunti without caring for its consequences. He supports Yamuna when Dev Niranjan reproaches her. Inspite of being virtous he is unsuccessful. His pathetic condition at the end of the novel arouses the feeling of pity and compassion in the readers.

The character of Mangal though sacrificing and hardworking represents religious cowardice. He speaks of overcoming social fear but he himself could never overcome it. Though ideologically an Arya Samaji but in practice he is no
different from a Sanatani. Thus his character oscillates between weakness and ideals.

After indulging in physical relationship with Kishori, Dev Niranjan does not spare a widow Rama too. Tara or Yamuna is thus a biological child of Dev Niranjan. But this makes him realize the hollowness and emptiness of a life of an ascetic. He realizes the superiority of family life and the irrelevance and hypocrisy of the life of the mendicants. His illegitimate son Vijay serves as a foil to him. Inspite of being the father of Vijay he does not publicly accept him as his son. It depicts not only his hypocrisy but cowardice too. The character of Dev Niranjan represents the class that experiences its weakness and even repents them but cannot boldly face the society.

Of all the characters Vijay has the maximum canvas and is also the protagonist of the novel. Though all the characters are fictional they appear to be real and succeed in impressing the readers. In fact the characters of Kankal are based on realism. Majority of the characters are presented as weak. The work depicts live realistic characters and all the characters are worldly and we do not find unnaturalness in their actions. Thus the novelist successfully presents a realistic reflection of real life.

The unique feature of Prasad’s art of characterization is that they develop naturally and following the principles of psychology. Similar to modern thinkers the novelist too has emphasized the significance of situation in shaping the human character. The characters in the novel struggle against the situation they face and ultimately adjust their nature appropriate to the situation
they are in. Thus the male protagonist Vijay is by nature haughty, rebellious and unrestrained. It is the environment and his surroundings that influence his behaviour. Similarly the sacrifices of Tara or Yamuna, her ability to bear pain and remain neutral are appropriate to her circumstances.

The novelist has resorted to the dramatic technique in the portrayal of the characters. For the analysis of the actions of characters, the novelist has resorted to the use of conversations. The characters state their opinion regarding another character during their conversations, implicitly revealing their conduct. Thus Mangal is exposed through his conduct. He is depicted as a hypocrite because there is difference between his actions and words. In the same manner Dev Niranjan too is exposed. Behind the veil of service and worship of God is a lustful and evil individual is what is revealed through his deeds. Thus all the characters have been successfully portrayed in Kankal.

The novel very forcefully conveys the message of rejecting the established institutions and hollow values of society. The novelist attempts to present the grandness of the characters by favouring the characters rejected by society. In contrast, the characters considered to be ideal are in fact the suppressors of the very values and ideals they represent in society. The novel shakes the faith of the readers in the class that is worshipped as divine and virtuous and is never doubted upon. The ascetics in the novel are depicted having the same weaknesses that are observed in an average man. In contrast the class of prostitutes and illegitimate children that are neglected and
condemned can also contain greatness that might be non-existent in the privileged and the adored.

The novel is basically a satire on the pre-independence Indian society. The chief purpose of a satire is to reform. The satire becomes very effective in the hands of a neutral and kind hearted writer like Prasad. The satire is evident in situations and in the dialogues and the actions of the characters. The union of the sage Dev Niranjan with Kishori is satirical. The act of establishing a physical relationship by Mangal, a volunteer of Arya Samaj, with Tara and later deserting her on the day of marriage and ending up marrying the daughter of a dacoit Badan Gujar born out of his relationship with a Muslim woman is satirical too. Kishori adopts another child while her son Vijay passes his days as a beggar in the streets of Kashi. The novel contains several instances where individual, society, situations and fate are satirically presented. But the objective of the writer is not to hurt the sentiments of anybody but to reform.

The title of the novel suggests that our society is externally idealistic and beautiful but is internally hollow and ugly like a skeleton. The objective of the novelist is to present this ugly picture of the society to the readers. The novelist has taken care that while presenting the moth eaten structure of society has also suggested the re-building of society. Thus the approach of the novelist is not only critical but creative too. He presents his view that society is created for man and it is not the activity of society to suppress the natural desires of man. Rather it is in helping the man to satisfy these desires by providing appropriate education and reformation. The work also depicts that conventions gradually
assume the form of religion. It is not necessary that all the customs get recognition in society. Some of them may be a burden on society too.

Though we do find a couple of other good novelists during this age such as Vishwambharnath Sharma and Jayshanker Prasad, it is Premchand who is the forerunner of this age. The success of Premchand can be attributed to his fidelity to life of common people like peasants and workers, interesting narration style, simple language, and the avoidance of highly Sanskritized words as was the trend among other writers and the use of the dialect of the common folk. Premchand deals with the issues ranging from corruption, the rights of the peasants, communalism, zamindari and colonialism, bringing the Hindi novel out from the flights of magical events, of deception and detective fantasies. These works move, edify and instruct the readers. They have a psychological and moral substance – a kind of social realism – that adds greatly to their value as realistic studies of character and society. Thus Premchand stands true to his own words that “a writer by his nature is progressive or he cannot be a writer.”