



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

HELPLESSNESS AND SUFFERING OF THE INDIAN PEASANTS IN GODAN

Dr. GAJENDER KUMAR

Assistant Professor of English

Govt. College for Women, Ateli (Mahendergarh), Haryana



Article Received: 24/05/2022
Article Accepted: 28/06/2022
Published online:30/06/2022
DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.10.2.277](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.10.2.277)

Abstract

Peasants and labours are considered the backbone of Indian economy. Peasants have always been treated as outsider by the higher-class society. They have been exploited by the system since beginning. Munsii Premchand realized the problem of oppressed, exploited peasants through Godan. He chooses rural life of Indian peasants in Godan with description how Indian farmer are victimized in the hands of powerful Exploiters. Hori, the protagonist is entrapped between feeding his family and paying heavy debts to officials. He is so poor and oppressed that he can not raise his voice against the system. He is merely a puppet in the hands of zamindars and money lenders.

Keywords: Backbone, Oppressed, Victimized, Entrapped and Puppet

Godan is one of the famous Hindi novels of Munsii Prem Chand. It was published in 1936. It depicts social economic deprivation as well as the exploitation of the poor Indian peasants. The story revolves around many characters representing the various sections of Indian community. The poor peasants and rural society of the time has been depicted through the family of Hori Mehto including his wife Dhanian, daughters Rupa and Sona, Son Gobar and daughters-in-law Jhunian. The central character Hori wants to have a cow as millions of peasant's desires. He purchased a cow from Bhola on debt of 80 rupees. Hori tried to cheat his brother for ten rupees. It resulted in a fight between his wife and his younger brother Heera's wife. Heera was so jealous that he poisoned Hori's cow and ran away. The police came for inquiry about the death of the cow. Hori took a loan and paid the bribe to the policeman to remove his brother's name from the culprit. In mean time Bhola's widow daughter eloped with Gobar as she was pregnant by him.

Fearing from the villagers, Gobar also ran away to town. Hori and Dhanian were in dilemma as they have to protect Jhunian and his son. The village panchayat fines Hori for sheltering Jhunian. Hori is again compelled to take a loan and pay the penalty. He was in heavy debt and recently his daughter Rupa was married for mere two hundred rupees to save his ancestral land. Hori was determined to save two hundred rupees and to have a cow to feed his grandson. It resulted in his death. When he is about to die, his wife Dhanian took out all the money she had around 1. 25 rupees and made Hori pay the priest on behalf of Godaan. his desire to payback two hundred rupees to his son-in-law and to have a cow to feed the milk to his grandson remained unfulfilled. Hori has been presented as a typical poor peasant who is the victim of circumstances and possesses all the deficiencies of common man but despite all this, he stands by his honesty, duties and judgement.

Munsi Premchand depicts the plight of the poor and illiterate farmer through the character of Hori Mehto. The story is set in Belari, a small, poverty-stricken village of North India. The beautiful description of the village in the novel is as follows:

“What was the village, it was Providence, ten to twelve houses, whose roof was half tiled and collapsing further.”

Hori is entrapped between feeding his family with his meager earnings and on the other hand trying to pay off the numerous debts to the officials. He is not even able to protest against the system and suffers throughout his life. He typically represents the basic traits of the Indian peasantry and the manners in which the peasants are merely puppet in the hands of the rich and wealthy people like zamindars and the money lenders. Later these moneylenders exploit farmers capturing them with the false ideas of religion. In the novel, Hori himself expresses:

“A man is not a man without wealth and power and education. We are no better than bullocks, born to be yoked.”

There was poverty in Indian villages. The consequences of poverty make them stuck into the money lending system which leads the peasants to indebtedness that is an important social economic aspect behind the ill treatment of the peasants and their families. In the novel, Hori suffers from extreme poverty:

“Even though Hori had to pay the entire barn of this crop, there was still a loan of three hundred rupees remaining, and an addition of a hundred rupees as interest. Five years ago, he had taken sixty rupees to purchase a bull, he had paid it, but the sixty rupees is still remaining because of the interest added. Hori had grown potatoes with the money thirty rupees taken from Pandit Daatadin. The potatoes were dug up by thieves, and he completed paying it in installments, in the three year period, a hundred rupees had been added as interest.”

The peasants have to work under Zamindars in their own land. zamindars collect revenue and fine from them. Hori is fined by Rao Sahab for the death

of the cow though he did not kill it. Hori describes the situation in these words.

“You know how many people here in the village have been thrown off their land or had their property taken away. When, someone’s heel is on your neck, it’s best to keep licking his feet”

Hori loses his bullocks to a money lender. He does not have enough seeds to sow and allows another man to cultivate his land. Later he is unable to pay the debts in time and with the passage of time it gets multiplied and he is trapped in debts and suffers until his death.

Munsi Premchand raised the voice of the oppressed community and gave it a writing form. He wrote on social issues, evoked our social consciences. Premchand laid the foundation of the realistic tradition in the Indian novel. He picturized the realities of common man’s life. His main focus was on the rural india and exploitation of peasants and poor man in the hands of the lords and zamindars. He brought realism in Hindi literature which inspired to the writers of different languages and brought radical change in man and society.

References:

- [1]. Bodh, P. C. *Farmers’ Suicides in India: A Policy Malignancy*. London: Routledge India, 2019.
- [2]. Mukherjee Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- [3]. Pratap, Mahendra, and S. B. Singh. “Peasants ‘s Problems, Consciousness and Struggle in Premchand ‘s Novel. ” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 61, 2000 pp. 922-929.
- [4]. Premchand . *Godan*. New Delhi: Rajpal and Sons, 2005
- [5]. Premchand. *Godaan: The Gift of Cow*. Trans. Gordon c. Roadarmel. Permanent Black, 2012.
- [6]. Sarkar, Anupama . “Godan by Premchand”
- [7]. Singh, Amardeep. “Comparing Translations: Godaan”