

## A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MUNSHI PREMCHAND'S ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses the significance of Munshi Premchand in Urdu literature. It studies the language employed by the writer and the underlying causes for the development of his stories. Its central focus, however, is to trace the epistemological development of Urdu literature towards the ultimate formation of the short story. The research is a qualitative classroom research. The discourse analysis model applied to describe interpret and explain the short stories is Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model. The research indicates that it was originally Premchand who introduced realism into Urdu literature and also that the passing of a century has not done much to significantly change the customs and belief system of rural India.*

### Introduction

This chapter gives a brief description of the discourse analysis model applied for analysing the text as well as a brief introduction to Munshi Premchand. The chapter tends to highlight the main objectives of the research, what it wants to discover, and what it aims to prove. It will also provide a list of questions that are answered through the research. The following research is a critical discourse analysis of Munshi Premchand's short stories originally written in Hindi and Urdu and later translated by acclaimed writer David Rubin. It will deal with the area of discourse in linguistics. It will be using discourse, critical discourse, CDA model by Fairclough and a socio cultural timeline to analyse said content. The basic aim being to critically analyse the underlying ideologies and implied meanings in the selected short stories written by Dhanpat Rai (aka .Premchand). The content will focus on highlighting the authors writing style as well as relatability of the context to the present day and age. In order to analyse the short stories extensive reading and inferential writing has been employed. The critical discourse analysis will be under Norman Fairclough's framework for CDA and will eventually be used to explain the evolution of Urdu novel and identify differences between daily life in premchand's colonial writings and modern life in India. The critical discourse analysis will then be used for a keyhole comparative analysis of social customs and norms and their evolution from colonial to post-colonial India. Social and female issues as well as the role of patriarchy will also be discussed briefly.

The purpose of this study is to analyze India's age old customs and rituals; its stringent caste system, anthropomorphism, deity worship, superstitions and ethnic and religious segregation through Premchand's short stories with the ultimate intention of comparing and contrasting the evolution and disintegration of said practices. For this purpose the stories: "a car splashing", "A day in the life of a debt collector", "The power of a curse", "The shroud", "Neyur", "Thakur's well" "Desperation" will be considered. A number of short stories have

been omitted from investigation to keep the paper brief. This analysis is also significant for academics interested in the epistemological evolution of the Urdu novel and short story.

One of the greater research gaps that lead to limitation in translation and analysis of Premchand's corpus is as is stated in the essay Premchand and Language: "The question still facing all Premchand scholars is whether the fiction he produced in Hindi is a translation of what he produced for his audiences in Urdu or not? Shall we call them revisions, Trans - creations, reinterpretations, or something completely different? And if what is at stake in the move between Hindi and Urdu reading publics is in part a whole set of expectations about differentiable communities, what does this do to our understanding of Premchand's anti-communalism?"(Shingavi). This Hindi- Urdu dichotomy has time and again bewildered translators and those wishing to examine or compile Premchand. As a result, many have taken solely to translating Hindi texts while others have translated text in both languages with a severe lack of effect. The unauthenticity of Premchand's translators with the result that only one authentic and accurate translator has been consulted throughout the study. The paper is also selective rather than an exhaustive analysis of some of Premchand's famous short stories. With the effect that the corpus for this researched was limited, if not, confined to a single collection of David Rubin's translation. Another limitation of a study of this nature is its complete reliance on previously published research and the availability of these texts for comparison and analysis.

In the book Premchand in world languages by M. Asadudin, Trivedi comments that "The English translations of Premchand are not even a shadow of the original".

### **Objectives**

This research aims to:

1. Analyze the society and culture of colonial and rural India .The discorsal analysis of the text will highlight social ideology underlying premchand's writings.
2. Determine the significance of Premchand's work on the evolution of the Urdu short story and novel.
3. Figure out interdependence and link between discourses, critical discourse analysis and social movements as in sociolinguistic analysis using Norman Fairclough's CDA model.

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## Literature review

This particular chapter provides a rudimentary introduction to the CDA model designed by Norman Fairclough. It lists all the researches done in the field of Hindi and Urdu literature regarding Premchand. It delivers the opinions and criticism of various literati on the work of Premchand.

The ascent of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has impacted many branches and sub-branches of humanities sciences by and large, and the branch of linguistics specifically. CDA believes as language and dialect as an effective means through which particular philosophies, characters, and culture are existing overwhelming in a general public. CDA researchers trust that the decision of dialect questioners make mirrors their expectations, belief system, and thought. This is a successful means for polarizing power in the general public. Basic talk experts distinguish and think about particular ranges of treachery, imbalance, bigotry, threat, enduring, bias, and so forth. In the International Journal of humanities and social science, Javad Riasati of the Azad University of Shiraz states

“Some scholars believe that there is no typical CDA method for collecting data. Some authors do not even mention data collection methods. The raw material for the analysis within CDA is the naturally occurring text and talk in their original contexts.”

Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (methods of critical discourse analysis, 2001) depict the concept in the following manner:

Norman Fairclough is a professor of Lancaster University and has been widely published in research journals since 1985 to 2005 including the journal of Pragmatics and the journal of sociolinguistics and has published a dozen books starting from Language and Power in 1989 to the most recent Critical language in 2014. Fairclough has been described as CDA's 'most... influential practitioner' (Widowson 2004: 90). Fairclough provides a three dimensional framework for the analysis of text and discourse: 1) the linguistic description of the formal properties of the text; 2) the interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes/interaction and the text, where text is the end product of a process of text production and as a resource in the process of text interpretation and lastly, 3) the explanation of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality. There are some fundamental presumptions behind specific choices of discourse. These suppositions are never innocent neither unrelated nor blameless; rather they are ideologically determined and spurred. By concentrating on the types of the language, we can find the social procedures and furthermore the particular philosophy installed in them. This prompts the investigation of dynamic relations that exist in the general public or group. Thus, Norman Fairclough puts stock in a "hidden agenda".

Considering a brief overview of developments of Urdu prose genres one finds that Urdu literature was generally composed more of poetry than of prose. The prose component of Urdu literature often followed the template of the ancient form of epic stories called Dastan (داستان). These long stories dealt with mystical and magical characters and settings and possessed complicated plots; one distinctive characteristic of Dastan was layering of multiple narratives within the same story. The Urdu novel often reflected one or more elements of the dastan. Some famous examples (in no particular order) before the arrival of Premchand's work were the **Mirat ul Uroos** by Deputy Nazeer Ahmed, regarded as the first novel in Urdu,

**Umrao jan** by Mirza Hadi Ruswa, **Fasana Azad** by Pandit Sarshar which because of its lack of plot is sometimes not categorised as a novel, **Saladin** by Sharar, **Anjam Aish** by Sarfaraz Hussain who wrote exclusively about the Tawaif and Nawab culture.

Munshi Premchand's contribution to that literary nationality has long been understood as the domestication of the Romance (Shingavi). The development in Premchand's fiction is far from Romance; far from the decadence and escapade; the detailed accounts of royalty and luxury and adventurous protagonists gallivanting through fables, for example, the *dāstān*, as exemplified by Mirza Hadi Ruswa's work, the setting of Mughal courts of Anarkali, and the epics of Akbar and also far from the allusive and material rewards that romantic involvement and sentiment may offer the protagonist for calmer and less enticing conclusions. The Munshi's writing was a stepdown into reality; a revolution into realism. The Munshi because of his profound understanding and valuation for the social issues in the life of average people, productively composed stories and books in Hindi and Urdu in simple language, something that everyone could understand and relate to. The issues he raised in his works have made him appropriate as an author till date. From the results of caste discrimination to the prevalence of dowry as a pre requisite of marriage. Premchand was an author who, as a predecessor of Manto discussed what had never been discussed before: uncensored real life in India. Despite his success Premchand remained a simple peasant; he had no interest for fineries other than intellectual refinement.

Niyati Bhatt, literary critic for The Indian website scroll states that Premchand's last collection of short stories, **Kafan**, was believed to be a climax of liberal literature because of its examination of the harsh socio-economic conditions of the lower castes and the working class and because of how it delves into the human psyche. It combined the interior and exterior worlds of the ordinary Indian under colonial rule. In spite of the time that has elapsed since then, these stories continue to reflect the actions that we as active participants in society take, and highlight consequences that are far more absurd and unjust than they were under colonial rule. The contemporary relevance of his work has only grown. One may propose that in spite of being an author who works in Urdu, Premchand is surrendering a significant number of the accumulated conventions vital to the ordinance of Urdu letters and short story, not in some uncouth concession, but as a consequence of scholarly, recorded and much deserved reactions to social developments occurring in Northern India.

Finally, a word on the translator; David Rubin is well known for his translations of the Indian novelist and essayist Munshi Premchand and is thought to be the best translator of Premchand's work till date. The author was a resident of Sarah Lawrence College, fluent in half a dozen languages and celebrated for his translation work.

**Application of Fairclough's three level Critical Discourse Analysis model on the text:**

### **LEVEL 1:**

#### **Description,**

A surface level lexical analysis of Premchand's writing shows extensive use of idioms and metaphors, as well as vivid imagery painted with simple language and personifications. The idioms used have sometimes been directly translated from Hindi to English at other times they have been substituted by English idioms with the same semantic value. Because of the complicated nature of idiom use in the translated work many of them cannot be analysed;

they are either literal translations of Hindi idioms or English idioms inserted into the translation by the author himself.

Especially in *Kafan* there is a distance between the original and the translation because Premchand, in writing the Dalit characters, wrote their collocation specially to show that they were illiterate. These colloquial markers are revealed when the protagonist used the word BewaPai instead of BewaFai. And the word Jindagi instead of Zindagi. Culture specific idioms have also been translated sometimes with little effect. In the story Madhav remarks that he was the one who put cinnabar in the woman's hair meaning that he was the husband and therefore had greater responsibility of obtaining a shroud for the woman. This is a culture specific idiom; the cinnabar or *Sindhoor*. According to *Indian Academy of Pediatrics*. (1973) The Sindhoor is a cosmetic powder obtained from Bixa Orellana family of Bixacea, the powder from the plant is used to dye the hair parting of a women; signifying that she is married, in India. The story also translates the idiom 'Kaale kambal per rang chadana' which means to be futile (for an endeavour).

In '*the power of a curse*' the wailing of the widow has been described as "it seemed as though hundreds of owl were hooting together." Further on, the Munshi ji, now a widower is likened to a prisoner in solitary confinement.

"As though the sun and clouds were battling each other." "You're a donkey to go on taking care of her." "She would lie around like a queen", "sweetened her tongue the way a sportsman baits the hook." Are some of the metaphors found in the story *Neyur*. Neyur himself is described as 'paralysed' with grief.

*Thakur's well* also employs metaphorical language: "Like some soldier stealing into an enemy's fortress at night she peered cautiously on every side." "The jaws of a tiger could not have terrified her more." The protagonist is also equated to a "strong armed athlete."

Imagery and Personification can also be found in these works. Seth Ji '*a day in the life of a debt collector*' is described as having a belly directly beneath his head and legs like two pegs. In the same story the ekka driver talks of his lost wealth: "the gold and silver were piled up by the boxful, and baskets were jammed full of jewels." The ekka driver's wife is: graceful, saucy, and mettlesome and wearing a pink sari and a heavy fragrance. Seth remembers his own wife as lumpish, flabby and clumsy.

In *a Car splashing* the story starts off with the Pundit paints a vermillion circle on his forehead, gets into saffron robes and wooden sandals and carries around astrological charts. The author sketches a complete picture of the protagonist using imagery. The mem sahib is described as wearing high-heeled shoes, silk sari, powdered cheeks, lipstick, and mascara as well as brandishing her umbrella.

*A moral victory* paints the greedy, hungry Pandit Ji devouring sweets; "Like a tiger smelling blood.....Pandit Ji thrust all that was left into his mouth." Later, Pandit Ji "devours the sweets with his eyes. A blind man whose sight has been restored would not gaze upon the world with greedier eyes."

In *A lesson in the Holy life*, describes bhangies sitting in the street, chanting their slogans and the general mood of the thoroughfares.



In '*Penalty*', Premchand uses simple words to describe the complex, confused movements of an impatient child : "she crawled after her mother time and time again, caught her sari, clung to her legs, then wallowed around on the ground and a moment later sat up crying again."

Other phrases employing imagery are employed throughout the stories.

"Golden rays of dawn" (p. 145)

"Eyes of doom" (p.149)

"She has no jewels, no clothes, she lives in a tiny rented house, she does all the housework with her own hands. " (p.151)

"It's a tiny house, there's nothing fancy and no furniture, not even charpoys." (p. 154)

"Sometimes we'd climb on to the courtyard walls and jump down or straddle the gate and ride it back and forth enjoying it as though it were an automobile." (p. 158)

"My eyes were on the heavens and that high flying traveller in the skies that glided smoothly down like some soul emerging from paradise." (p. 164)

"A whole army of boys came racing out to welcome it with long thick bamboo rods." (p. 164)

"Ishwari's house was a regular castle. A gate like a mosque. Watchmen stationed at the entrance, servants beyond the counting, and an elephant tied up in the courtyard" (p. 170)

"Relishes and curds with spices, three kinds of dried vegetables, a tasty curry, sweets." (p.188)

## **LEVEL 2:**

### **Interpretation**

Author and former JNU professor, Manger Pandey said "The best thing about Premchand was that he was a social writer and expressed himself in a language that people could easily understand. He touched different castes, cultures as well as religions and catered to everybody."

In the view of K.P Singh Premchand writing was " one of the most powerful and authentic accounts of national movements and people's lives; their aspirations, struggles, victories, defeats, injustice, exploitation, courage, cowardice and in particular community life of rural India, peasant common sense , non-conformism and sacrifice all these have been etched with a keen sense of realism."

Dhanpat Rai Srivastava (Premchand), otherwise called Nawab Rai, started his artistic vocation as an essayist of Urdu fiction since Urdu was the common medium of abstract articulation amid a great part of the nineteenth century. He had assimilated this convention over the span of his instruction. By around 1900, his social and political mindfulness step by step developed into a patriot cognizance. Nonetheless, from 1913– 1915 he relentlessly surrendered Urdu in inclination for Hindi (Rai 2002, 388). Premchand trusted in a letter routed to Munshi Dayanarayan Nigam (26 June 1915) that he had got little benefit from the specialty of composing (quoted. In *Premchand* by Gopal 1964, 108). Financially this was a lean period. Around a similar time, he continued considering, arranged assuming control

editorship of Zamāna, and conveyed stories to both Hindi and Urdu dailies. He got more prominent response from Hindi periodicals, daily papers and diaries and trusted in Nigam: "I think writing in Urdu won't do. Like the late Balmukand Gupta, I might need to pass the most recent days of my life in composing Hindi. Is there a Hindu who has separated himself in Urdu? What's more, if none has succeeded, by what means can I? (in the same place., 113). Premchand self-deciphered short stories and books all the time, changing over Hindi and Urdu into source and target dialects. Such ceaseless activities could have been provoked by the disparate fundamental sociopolitical and social examples and the assorted aesthetic and political targets and needs encouraged by the breakdown of the social and semantic synchronicity of once related customs. The social predominance and élitist nature of the effectively institutionalized Urdu in multilingual northern India could well have been simply the purpose behind Premchand's proceeded with interpretations notwithstanding his affirmed inclination for the new national dialect. A few different reasons might be credited to these activities which made a huge corpus of bilingual oeuvre. Maybe, at first, he took to writing in Hindi to stay away from the prescriptive eye of the administration. His proceeding to do as such may likewise be attributed to his being in legislative administration. The new authority dialect being Hindi, he imagined the need to build up an assemblage of writing in this cutting edge dialect. It is additionally likely that the unadorned, basic and direct style of present day Hindi writing, still in its developmental stage, rather than the lavish and verbose style of Urdu, was more qualified to conveying the message of mental, social and political authenticity on which his stories were focused. Premchand trusted that in the current politically and socially turbulent circumstances, writing should exemplify an ethical reason and express evident feelings and substances.

'What kind of custom is it when a living person does not get a rag to cover his body, the dead must have a new shroud?' asks Ghisu.

The story illustrates the father and son duo on one side and society with its hypocrisy on the other. There is a taught balance between the hollow ideals of society and bestiality. Customs and Rituals rest on shaky foundations; as the duo decide to shun values and head for the tavern; for whatever rituals and customs they undertake they will never be able to shake off the shallowness of their caste. Painting a stark picture Premchand makes the readers unable to take any sides; it is open to representation whether the father son duo are villains or anti-heroes plagued by their own culture.

Regarding Premchands representation of the lower castes Bhisam Sahni finds the story "striking a note of deep anguish and tragedy." Examining Premchand's elegance as a short story writer, Sahni adds that "the poorest of the poor are shown in the extremity of their condition, beyond which there are only terrors awaiting them. The stark simplicity of these stories presents their condition in all nakedness. They require no comment, no sermonizing, no rhetorical embellishments. They speak for themselves. And they are the products not so much of the anger and resentment that the author feels about the human situation, but of deep anguish." Author and analyst, Surendra Chowdhry honours the construction of the stories as "macrocosmic that has two major characteristics: first, a lively and eventful illustration of rural life and second, state of merciless economic exploitation prevalent in the society ... the story is both realistic as well as symbolic and raises several questions about the contemporary socio-cultural and economic systems." Many other critics esteem stories such as Kafan as

stories representative "psychological realism" that has been conceptualised in an accurate context emphasising on the level of fiscal abuse and how poverty "dehumanises".

"I am now almost convinced of the Bolshevik principles"

"I am not a Gandhian"

"I am a communist"

"Neither am I a Hindu nor a Muslim"

All these are Premchand's assertion that were found in his writings along the time.

Concluding that not only was Premchand's work influenced by Gandhi and the Swaraj movement but also the Dalit movement and the writings of the Bolshevik revolution.

### **LEVEL 3:**

#### **Explanation**

The stories translated by the author have been split into three groups. The first under the title the village include; *The power of a curse, a catastrophe, January night, Neyur, Thakur's well*. The second list includes stories that are linked to or take place in the town or a semi-urbanised setting; *a day in the life of a debt collector, a car splashing*. The third list is titled the world and contains stories such as *a servant of the people, the road to hell, intoxication, the shroud, the price of milk* and *deliverance* of which only *kafan* (The shroud) has been chosen for brevity.

The author claims that this division is purely arbitrary although he believes that the latter category has moral lessons and plots that are universal and transcendental; their relevance is beyond temporality.

*Neyur* is a sentimental story showing the love a simple village man has for his wife and how his death affects him. The man's grief is reflected in the last lines of the story:

"And even today he can still be seen sitting silent, unmoving, and lifeless, beneath the tree at the edge of the road."

The next story *Thakur ka kuan* or *Thakur's well*, revolves around a woman of lower caste trying to obtain clean drinking water from the well of a high born Rajput and eventually failing because she fears she might be lynched for being low-caste.

One of the major themes in these short stories is the cloistered environment produced by adherence to a caste system. The caste system dominates rural life in India and substitutes a kind of indestructible hierarchy that cannot be surpassed. The lower castes are also, unsurprisingly, the ones with the least fiscal resource; something that although they are aware of they can never really change. Premchand it seems is well aware of the adequacies and inadequacies of such a setup. He highlights it perhaps most starkly in *Thakur's well*. He describes the problem faced by the protagonist; "every evening Gangi filled the water jugs, the well was a long way off and it was hard for her to make several trips" However, on this particular instance the water from the well is unclean and gives off a stench so that it cannot be consumed by her ill son. The rigid restraints of the caste system add to the dilemma, since, there is no other well in the area save for *Thakur's well*. The *Thakur* is a title given to a clan



of the Rajput order and roughly translates to “noble” or “lord”. It becomes impossible for Gangi to access this well because people of a lower caste are not allowed onto the property of one who possesses a higher caste than them.

Her son Jhoku sums up fairly why she should not go to the well:” You’ll come back with your arms and legs broken, that’s all. You’d better just sit down and keep quiet.”

In **Desperation**: a young wife having borne many daughters wishes for a son. Her predicament is added to because her in laws think that because she has not borne a son she is of little value. “.....*She was always performing rituals, but no ritual had fulfilled her wish. Continually putting up with disdain, insults, scolding and contempt she had become disgusted with the world.*”

Eventually Nirupma who only wishes to be treated better pretends that she is with a male child. She often exclaims this and eats bhang so that her eyes will appear red; which is thought to be an omen for being pregnant with a boy. Her in laws start treating her with respect, they start gifting her things and serving her food and deciding what to name the boy.

“....*Nirupma went from slave to queen, the mother in law treated her with the highest consideration...*”

Eventually when the time for delivery comes; the woman dies out of fear of being discovered.

The relevance of this story can be assessed from the fact that India continues to have the highest rate of female infanticide in the world. About 2,000 female embryos are aborted daily in the country, according to Minister Monika Gandhi. It is no secret that the Indians prefer male offspring for economic support, they believe that women are financial liabilities and that sons carry on the family name.

The second section consists of seven stories related to semi urban or urbanised environment, human relations and the problems and complications faced by the masses of these areas. One of the interesting things that happens in an urbanised environment is the breakdown of caste relations and its replacement with a financial hierarchy. However, the stringency of caste is not always replaced and can lead to numerous difficulties when people of different ethnicities and religions choose to live in close proximity to one another. The story **Tagada** or a day in the life of a debt collector, introduces a religious Hindu protagonist: the Seth ji. The Seth is a debt collector and on his way to recover a small amount. He takes a ride in a rickshaw and refuses to pay the whole sum. The rickshaw driver, himself a Muslim takes the man to his own house where his beautiful wife tries to tempt the Seth to dine with them. Afraid that dining with a Muslim will affect his caste, the Seth flees and forgets his wallet full of money.

In an article published for the post magazine by Amrit Dhillon, the author explains the complexities of the dining of different ethnicities in India and how this is linked to their religious beliefs: “*As a new genre of caste-based cookbooks reveals, India's multitude of culinary customs not only denotes class and region, it also symbolises faith, dictates who you marry and can be used as a barrier to social mobility*”

Traditionally, the Hindus (especially high caste Hindus) and Muslims are not seen to dine and sit together. This is because for the Brahmin caste certain spices as well as garlic and onion are forbidden. Moreover, there is also the fact that Hindus are prohibited from eating cow

meat; a dish common in many Muslim regions and ethnicities. October 2015, a 50 year old Muslim man was dragged and lynched for allegedly eating beef.

Some other Hindu castes like Jain are forbidden from eating root vegetables whereas Muslims cannot consume swine. This makes feasting together or different castes and religions extremely complicated and difficult for which reason they prefer not to.

The question of identity is also raised in this story as well as in ‘**a car splashing**’. If ones caste and religion are the only things that lend identity to a man, then why does identity not cease when these barriers dissolve in an urban climate? And how do a variety of needs and wants affect a man’s religious identity? In the former story the Seth ji, even though he is aware that the rickshaw driver’s wife is Muslim begins to lust for her, sits close to her and relishes in her perfume.

*“....With every motion of her hand a fragrance hit him and intoxicated him. He’d never experienced such bliss He was used to looking at everything with disgust but now his very body was drunk....”*

However, Seth ji is aware of the fact that eating a morsel from the hand of a Muslim may render him unclean or even worse, casteless.

*“Seth ji looked around him, for he could not take Pan made by these people...For a moment he hemmed and hawed then stretched out with both hands trying to push her away and shut his lips tight”*

In the second story; **car splashing**. Identity is what motivates a mob to harass an elite family and shove their car. The narrator is a local Shastri who is making his way about town when he is splashed by dirty water by a passing car. The passengers are rich and westernised and refuse to apologise to the Shastri. He then motivates a mob against them and violence ensues. The Shastri feels insulted and pelts the car with stones and plans to himself: “I’d *show them a Brahman’s power!*” Further in the story a man comments: “If a *rich mans puffed up that’s one thing, but what are the drivers so conceited about? They take hold of the wheel and they can’t see straight anymore*”.

The Indian mob sees the passengers as vain and westernized. The passengers see themselves as superior to the other people and therefore do not care if they damage someone’s possessions or splash puddle water on them. This creates a certain disconnect between the locals and the anglicised Indians: the master of the car and the driver are both shown to have westernised clothing and the wife of the master carries a parasol, like a European. The locals because they see the passengers as dissimilar from them are quick to turn against them at the command of the Shastri. They see the westernised, anglicised Indians as a threat to their own identity. Identity is also power; the Westernised rich dominate the hierarchy because of their willingness to imitate the European identity. However, surrounded by individuals of their own culture they quickly discover that their borrowed ideals are of no use here.

Finally, the stories in the last section deal with issues such as prostitution, blind faith in fate, customs, poverty, hypocrisy and communal oppression. Perhaps the most significant and widely acclaimed of the stories is **Kafan** or ‘the shroud’. It tells the story of a Dalit family, a father Ghisu and his son Madhav. The son’s wife Budhiya is in the throes of labour, as the father and son sit outside and callously have a discussion. Because of their poverty they

cannot get any sort of treatment for her, this eventually leads to her death. The duo then set out to gather funds for the woman's burial shroud. Their stark poverty is reflected in their discussions. They discuss the ironies of paucity and blind belief in custom.

*"What a rotten custom it is that somebody who didn't even have a shroud to cover herself when she was alive has to have a new shroud when she dies!"*

Both of them also converse regarding the fact that had they had this money before they might have bought some medicine for the woman. The amount they believe has arrived too late. This is relevant to modern day India where 23% of its population or 276 million people still live below poverty line without access to medication, clean drinking water and bare necessities.

*"...What have we got to squander?"*

An analysis of the story reveals that it is about a duo of subalterns who are exploited at the hands of society and caste and decide to reverse this by misusing their ill fortune as an excuse for getting money they wouldn't otherwise be given. The victims of usual social injustice are also shown as exploiters themselves because it is because of their criminal neglect that the woman dies. The representation of Dalits in this story has been a topic of much argument. Especially after Dalit writer movement started in the late twentieth century; with writers like Om Prakash and Suraj Pal Premchand has been heavily criticised for his portrayal of Dalit characters as dirty, sleazy, drunkards and slackers. Dalit writings have found a new life in Telugu, Bengali and Tamil with Dalit writers claiming that Premchand although the first realist writer of the Progressive writers movement was not a Dalit writer but a progressive writer of the Gandhian movement. They argue that in portraying the Dalits he did not wish to cast a positive light on them but to down grade stereotypical portrayals of them.

It is true that in several places in the story the writer takes on a subjective tone of voice, seemingly against the Dalit characters: "But to be kind to Ghisu was like trying to dye a black blanket". It is also stated that Ghisu knows how to trumpet the zamindar's name and swindle money out of people.

Anita Bharti, a Dalit activist claims that even though Premchand aimed to write sympathetic work in favour of Dalits he did not quite succeed because his work does not reflect the ideology of Ramji Aambedkar and is therefore devoid of a Dalit consciousness.

Senior Hindi professor concludes that because the Dalit struggle and writers movement had not gained pace at the time of this writing the story is in fact sympathetic but lacking the authentic views of the Dalit community.

The literary scholar Ramanika Gupta claims that although many people see Premchand as Gandhian and against radicalism and violent assertion, he in fact reflected the philosophy of Ramji Aambedkar because in his novel Godaan, he shows Dalits conquering and beating a Pundit for misdemeanour.

## Conclusion

Colonial life in India had a fundamentally different focus to that of modern man and to connect with any culture across time one needs to familiarize oneself with those aspects of life that today people might deem insignificant. Ordinary toils were far removed from fast paced modern lifestyle of today and description of these can be found vividly from the work of Premchand who instead of focusing on elaborate dramatizations wrote about the beliefs and rites of a commoner and the struggle of peasant life. The CDA model has been used to evaluate the short stories on a basis level starting from textual analysis and broadening into socio-cultural analysis from a historic perspective of the Indian subcontinent. In addition the linguistic features highlighted will provide insight into the mind of a nation. The writings of Munshi Premchand not only reflect the major and minor issues of post-colonial India but are relevant to many issues in both India and Pakistan collectively. Premchand not only portrays an accurate picture of socio-cultural norms and beliefs but also identifies the problems plaguing the community. This he does by painstakingly classifying and ascertaining different social and cultural practices across a spectrum of communities living in the Indian subcontinent at the time. Premchand has also contributed single handed-ly to the evolution of the Urdu short story from its initial closed format of verse to that of prose to that of a realistic portrayal of society. In conclusion, since many of the linguistic, communal, ethnic and religious dynamics of south Asia remain largely unchanged the stories of Munshi Premchand continue to be relevant till date.

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