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Valorization of Indian Peasantry in Premchand's *Godan*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Valorization of Indian Peasantry in Premchand’s *Godan*”  
submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Ms. Deepa  
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## Valorization of Indian Peasantry in Premchand's *Godan*

### Abstract

*This research paper explores issues of Valorization of Indian Peasantry in Premchand's Godan from the perspective of cultural materialism. It deals with the everyday activities of common people and their cultural values. It focuses on how Premchand creates history of commoners with marginal perspective. Through this fictional story, Premchand represents the Indian peasant culture and their deteriorating lifestyle. In the 1930s, the voices of the marginalized people were never recorded in the history. But in this novel, Premchand presents the pathetic condition of the Indian peasants and their cultural values in the Hindu community. He challenges the predominant definition of the culture and makes counterargument to the official history by presenting the common people and their cultural values at the center. Premchand demonstrates the voice of the common people and their miserable condition to give them equal position in the society. Throughout the research, I found the issues of Indian peasantry which creates the history of commoners along with material life of upper class people. This paper presents that common people also have their own culture and it play the significant role for the formation of the society.*

Keywords: cultural practice, cultural materialism, marginalization, domination.

## Introduction

This research paper explores how Munshi Premchand valorizes the common Indian peasant culture to counteract the elitist's dominant culture in his novel *Godan*. He posits the common people at the center of this novel. It presents the unheard voices, sufferings and pathos of the common people in Indian society during the period of the 1930s. In that period, voices of the common people were not recorded in the history. But here, in this novel, Premchand demonstrates the voice of the marginalized people and their miserable condition to give them equal position in the society.

Premchand delineates the practice of *Gaudan* (a gift of cow), common people and their religious as well as cultural values. Through this novel Premchand articulates the struggle of Indian peasants, industrial laborers and the so-called untouchable people of the Hindu society. He also incorporates the issues of caste and class and tries to depict how marginalized peoples struggle for their freedom in that conservative society in which higher class and civilized people are at the centre. In contrast, he tries to break the center by placing common people at the centre. Premchand, through his fictional story, advocates the marginalized peasant family and their deteriorating lifestyle. Premchand's novel *Godan* basically deals with the issue of everyday events of ordinary people. So this research project examines the subject matter of lower class, lower caste and their cultural values in the Indian society of 1930s with the reference to Premchand's *Godan*.

Premchand demonstrates the issues of Indian peasant and their cultural values of the 1930s that creates the history of commoners along with material life of upper class people. He represents the trivial issue in the novel to discard the traditional definition of culture which is posed in favor of elitist, since the lower class people are inevitable for the formation of the society.

Munshi Premchand's real name is Dhanpat Rai. Premchand (1880-1936) he is a famous writer of modern Hindi and Urdu social fiction. He is the first Indian author who introduces realism in his writing. He is a novelist, short story writer, dramatist and essayist. His writings rightly pose the miserable condition of the Indian peasants.

Premchand writes several novels on the subject matter of Indian peasantry and their problems. His best novels are *Sevasadn*, *Rangamanch*, *Goban*, *Nirmala* and *Godan*. With *Godan* he wants to show and make his readers aware of the problems of the urban middle-class and the country's people and their problems. He pleads for the Hindu-Muslim unity in the novel *Godan*. The novel *Godan* articulates the several themes such as caste segregation in India, exploitation of lower classes and exploitation of women and the problems posed by industrialization.

The whole story hovers around the life of Indian peasants. Hori, the protagonist, is an Indian peasant who faces many problems for being lower class and lower caste in the society. His family lives in Belari village of Uttar Pradesh of India. Premchand represents the country and city life of the people in the thirties. He tries to show how city and rural people in the *Godan* have been exploited by the Zamindars, factory owners and foreign rulers (British). Hori is the central character of this novel, who advocates the voice of Indian peasant. He belongs to lower class and lower caste but he has the genius mind. He has the deep desires of having a cow. In the Hindu society cow is a matter of prestige and dignity. Hori is already in a debt about three hundred rupees and one hundred interest each year. He does not have money to buy a cow and he takes loan of eighty rupees from Bhola, a cowherd from a neighboring village. In Hindu ritual cow is a form of goddess Laxmi.

In Hindu religion cow is regarded as a means of salvation but, here in this novel a cow becomes the matter of conflict between Hori's brothers. Jealous of Hori, his young brother (Heera) poisons the cow and flees because of the fear of the punishment of the

police. Hori does not want to go to the police station and he doesn't want his brother to get arrested. Dhanial, Hori's wife, is bold and revolutionary female character. She always raises the voice for justice. But Hori never hears the voice of Dhanial. He takes fifty rupees loan and gives to the police inspector to save his brother, Heera. It suggests that in the 1930s women were subjugated by patriarchal society.

Through the character of Dhanial, Premchand raises the voice of female in the conservative male dominated society. In the thirties the role and contribution of female were never acknowledged. Women were taken as a second sex and weaker than male. But here, in this novel Premchand presents Dhanial as a more bold and progressive character than her husband. She is a role model person and she advocates the voice of female who are oppressed in the society.

In the same manner, Premchand also raises the issues of child marriage and the widowhood. Jhunial becomes a widow in her early child age. To her to get remarried is not possible because to remarry is a sin in conservative society. Premchand dismantles that stereotypes and he marries a child widow named Shivarani Devi. Similarly, Gobar Hori's son marries a child widow Jhunial. Gobar falls in love with Jhunial and makes her pregnant. He runs away to the town because of the fear of the possible action from villagers. Hori and his wife Dhanial accept her as a daughter-in-law and this is a challenge to the conservative society. In that period widows were not allowed to marry. Premchand also highlights the issue of dowry system in India. For poor peasant dowry is another problem. As a result parents take daughter's marriage as a burden and it becomes a means of exploitation for the poor peasant. Rupa is Hori's elder daughter. She rejects the marriage proposal and she will marry only that person who marries a girl without dowry. Rupa is also progressive and bold female character. She challenges the dowry system which is deeply rooted in society.

*Godan*, gift of a cow, is published in 1936. *Godan* is the last novel that encapsulates the story of Indian peasants along with their religion and cultural beliefs. It basically deals with the cultural values of an Indian peasants and their miserable condition in the British colonial period. In Hindu religion, cow is regarded as the matter of prestige and dignity. The story line of this novel begins with that Hori's deep desires to have a cow and ends with the death rituals of Hori and with the act of *Gaudan*. *Gaudan* is taken as a means of salvation of dead soul in Hindu religion. Premchand valorizes common Indian peasant and his cultural values. Hori belongs to lower class and the whole story revolves around his everyday events. In the 1930s India is colonized by British ruler and the voice of the common people is suppressed. In this novel, Premchand represents the voice of common Indian peasants who are exploited by the British rulers and the then society.

Premchand represents the pathetic life of the common Indian peasants and their struggle in the society. Zamindari is one of the forms of exploitation that divides the society into the poor and the rich. Society is divided into several groups: haves and have not, colonizer and the colonized, Zamindar and peasant, factory owner and laborer, upper class and lower class and upper caste and lower caste. In the present novel the characters like Rai shaheb (Zamindar), Mr Meheta (a professor) and Pandit Ornakant show their superiority towards the poor peasant.

By narrating the story on the behalf of the common Indian people such as peasants, laborers, females, widows and untouchable's people, Premchand tries to rewrite the history of colonial India from the marginal perspective. Through the fictional story Premchand presents the reality of the then society. He valorizes Indian peasantry by challenging the dominant culture. In the period of the 1930s British colonialism is at the centre. In contrast, Premchand brings the peasant to the centre and valorizes the common people and their cultural activities. He challenges the predominant official history and tries to refer that elitist

people not only do have their culture but peasant and common people also have their own culture and own way of life.

In the novel, Premchand tries to discard the traditional definition of culture that favors British colonizer. They take that culture as a matter of civilization and civilized people only do have their culture. This concept is deeply rooted in the then period. Likewise, Premchand uses the simple way of storytelling and simple language. He follows the new writing techniques of multi plots, multi narration in Hindi fiction. Premchand tries to advocate the marginal voice of the country and city. He gives the voice for voiceless people. Through the help of the fictional story, he tries to bring the awareness on the poor peasant as well as factory laborers.

Similarly, Gobar in the novel is presented as a revolutionary as well as social activist. He plays the very important role for the formation of the society. After returning to the village Belari, Gobar raises the voice against the Zamindar and land owner who use to take advantage from the innocent peasants. Gobar is aware of the interest and money lender.

In the same manner, Premchand depicts the event of industrial revolution in the city area of India. The factory owner exploits the factory laborers and gives them low wage. This is the major cause for the conflict between the factory owner and the factory laborers. The factory laborers raise their voice against the factory owner and industrial revolution takes place. In the novel, Gobar after making Jhunia pregnant, he runs away to Lucknow and he works in sugar mill Factory. Gobar and other workers leave the work and they start strike. It suggests the awareness on the poor worker. They are not only exploited but also they can revolt against injustice and suppression.

In *Godan*, the central characters Dhania, and Miss Malti are progressive and revolutionary characters. They raise their voice against the exploitation. In the 1930s the role and contribution of women are being shadowed. They are presented as a secondary and

inferior. They never get the chance to show their capacity and talent, they can do as a male character in the society. The novel clearly depicts the hierarchy between male and female and its role in politics and access to power and resources has created a society. But in this novel, Miss Malti is a modern and educated Indian woman. She is able to take the high position in the society. Premchand presents Miss Malti as a doctor and he tries to dismantle the role of woman in the male dominated society. He gives the equal position for male and female in the society. By doing so, he tries to give the voice to those persons who are doubly marginalized in the society.

The present novel encapsulates the day to day activities of Indian peasants. He uses the simple day to day language of peasant. In the 1930s people are highly impressed by the British culture and English language. For imitator of British ruler, English is the means of superiority and civilization. In contrast Premchand valorizes the common language of ordinary people and he introduces a new form of writing in Hindi Literature. He brings into focus the issue of ordinary people and their struggle in the thirties.

Premchand illustrates the story of Datadin. He is a priest of the village Belari. His son Matadin does not like to marry any other Brahmins daughter and he wants to marry with Selia. Selia is a lower caste girl (cobbler). Datadin accepts Selia as a daughter-in-law. They do not care about the other people of the society. Datadin, giving instances from the Hindu *Purans* and presents the long list of Brahmins who have married girls of lower castes and their children have been accepted as Brahmins. With the character Datadin, Premchand tries to depict that all human beings are equal in the society. Religion never shows the difference between lower caste and higher caste. He insists that everything is created by the societies which in time develop into stereotypes. These stereotypes need to be dismantled.

Premchand presents the real picture of Indian society in the 1930s. He represents the life experience of marginalized people through the fiction. Hori Mahato, the protagonist of

the novel, represents Indian peasant and their panic lifestyle of the then period. Premchand valorizes ordinary issue like *gaudan* as well as he presents the everyday activities of Indian peasants. By doing so, he advocates the voice of common Indian peasants. He posits the pain and suffering of marginalized people at the centre of the novel. He criticizes the predominant history writing by putting the common people and their cultural values at the center. An Indian critic Makkhan Lal asserts, “We find different taste in Premchand’s novel which is not in these predecessors. His works are deeply oriented towards the social phenomenon rather than geographical and linguistic arena. In this novel (*Godan*), where the character is well established and this is the symbolic era of independence struggle” (120). It tries to depict that *Godan* is a realist novel which represents the real taste of the society.

Premchand presents several social issues like class, caste and religious values, poverty, colonialism, female subjugation, widowhood, child marriage and feudalism. It reflects the social reality of the then period. It demonstrates the story of Indian peasants and factory laborers and their social status. Factory laborers and peasants are being exploited by the factory owner and Zamindar. It does not only explore the domination of peasant but also depicts the growing awareness in the peasant against injustices. So we can say that this is the symbolic era of independent struggle.

In this novel, Premchand articulates the reality of the then period with the reference to painful lifestyle of lower class as well as lower caste peasants. The story is set in the rural area and in gloomy environment with the faint light of the hope. In the 1930s the voice of the common people is never heard and they are compelled to obey elitist people's order. But in with the poor peasants start raising their voice against the suppression and they are struggling for freedom and respect in the society. Writing in favor of Indian peasant, Premchand challenges the history of the elitist people. Regarding peasants struggle an Indian critic Nirmala Varma insists that:

*Godan* reflects in its own structure, the contradictions of the socio- ideological and cultural context. It organizes its own voices and views into an interstices dialogue, which is also a dialogue with the voices and articulated in the ongoing discourse in Indian society(including its tradition) . . . It tests and challenges the ideological context and in turn is itself challenged and tested by the reality to which it refers through the medium of language. (933)

These lines suggest that the novelties to present the socio-political scenario of the then period with the reference to cultural context and its contradiction. Premchand challenges the British colonial history by placing the peasant's culture at the center and he writes this novel on the behalf of common people.

As the novel deals with the issues of class and caste and it denotes the economic condition of peasant. Hori Mahato and other peasants are being exploited by the Zamindar and factory owner. Peasants are under the poverty and Zamindar use to take advantage from them by taking high interest. Peasants are perpetually in web of debt. They do not succeed to come out from poverty. It poses the poor economic status of peasant in the feudal society. They are compelled to pay high interest and work in low wage. The following lines from Arvid prove the plight of peasants:

Hori in *Godan* is the embodiment of Premchand's idealism. He has got a novel soul. He represents the Indian peasantry as a whole. He is devoted to his family; he loves land and oxen; he respects law and religion. In short, he is faithful to old feudal society but in this society he is exploited and oppressed even more. His family is broken; he loses his strip of land and his oxen; he is reduced to a mere wage –worker and through hard work comes to a measurable death. (5)

It clearly demonstrates the prevailing oppressing attitude of the higher class people of the then society. It denotes that how they show their superiority upon the poor peasant.

Hori, the protagonist, an Indian peasant desires to have a cow as all Indian peasants desire to have. Cow does not function as an animal but it is the matter of prestige, pride and the matter of an attempt putting one's social status in higher level depicting the ritual based rural of them. As Dr. Kumar Nagina Jain argues that, "*Godan* depicts the rural life through its tendency is social" (71). It suggests that *Godan* presents the rural life and the situation of Indian peasants in that period.

*Godan*, a gift of a cow, is a means of salvation. In Hindu religion, cow is regarded as the matter of charity. The story begins when Hori desires to have a cow and ends with his act of *Gaudan*. Critique of Hindu literature Indarth Madam declares, "*Godan* is not only the *godan* of Hori but it is also the *godan* of its author's belief from the Asharam" (124). It illustrates that *Godan* is a ritual of Hindu. Peasants are worshipers of cow according to their Hindu custom. Similarly, the following lines from Jagdish Lal Dawar and he argues that Premchand presents this novel on the behalf of Indian peasant and their culture which is the tools for counter hegemony:

Premchand emphasized the ingenuity of ordinary people in copying with the ideas imposed from above and interpreting those ideas in their own way. He attempts to regulate the test of the messes by changing some of the popular cultural practice and represented as alternative cultural forms and such as tools for counter hegemonic project on the part of subordinate section of society in his novel. (22)

Premchand presents ordinary issues depicting lower class people's suffering and their ritualistic value. It gives the idea that ordinary peoples also do have their role for the formation of the society. He valorizes the popular culture or common culture.

Premchand posits the common Indian peasant at the centre and he writes this novel from the perspective of marginalized people. He advocates the voice of the lower class/ lower caste people and valorizes their cultural values. It gives the idea that common people also do

have important role for the formation of the society. Here, the researcher tries to analyze how Premchand valorizes the Indian peasantry and why he posits the common people and their cultural values at the center of the novel. He advocates the voice of the voiceless people in the 1930s. Premchand challenges the predominant history of elitist.

This research paper attempts to analyze the text from cultural perspective. For this, the researcher uses methodological framework of cultural materialism developed by Raymond William basing particularly on his book *Culture and Society*. Cultural materialism deals with the issue of everyday events of human life. In society people have their own culture and distinct cultural beliefs and practices. As culture is socially constructed phenomena on it involves certain beliefs, social practices, rites, rituals and the ways of life.

Cultural materialism is a term coined by Raymond William. It deals with the issue of everyday events of ordinary people. It is the best way to understand the human culture which helps to examine the material condition of the people in the society. Cultural materialism mostly focuses on the common culture and their role in the society. It tries to raise the voice of common people against the so called elitist people. As elitist people consider culture on its monetary value and in their view, common and lower class people do not have their own culture. In contrast, Raymond William raises the voice against that predominant definition of culture. He tries to dismantle the concept of the elitist culture. So, cultural materialism deals with the everyday activities of common people and their cultural values which play the important role for the formation of the society.

The term cultural materialism was emerged in early 1980 by British neo leftist and literary critics Raymond William. From the 1950s people begin to write about the lower and common people's life experience and their role in the society. Before the 1950s the voice of the common people were never recorded in the history of elite. William raises the voice of lower class people and he gives the equal importance to the ordinary people. He challenges

the traditional elite culture which we can see clearly in his book *Culture and Society*. In William's views, "culture is a productive process and it is a part of the means of production" (XI). Cultural materialism is the strategy, which helps to understand the cause of differences and similarities between society and culture. It denotes that cultural materialism not only helps to understand the cause of differences and similarities but also helps to dismantle the hierarchy of the society. It gives importance to marginalized people and their culture with reference to history.

Culture is not the culture of elitist but a culture that is embedded in everyday experience and activity. The major concern of the cultural materialism is to articulate the politics, economics, and symbolic factors of a culture in relation to needs of that society. It helps to examine the text from the perspective of marginalized. It counter argues the canonical text which only denotes the culture of elitist people. Poststructuralist John et. al, in their book *The Practice of Cultural Studies* focus on the small units that cultural materialism deals with :

Cultural materialism has been one of the main approaches to fictional text in cultural studies and William's work has been highly influential in all kinds of ways. In contrast to the traditional work on the political economy of culture, however, it is primarily driven by a focus on the 'small units' of cultural production, specific texts, rather than on the larger structures and processes. . . rather than particular kinds of economy structures- come into being and are accorded the status of truth. (191)

Cultural materialism is the theory, which views the culture as a productive process, focusing on such arts as literature. It analyzes the historical and canonical text on the behalf of the common and lower class people. Most of the historical texts are written from the perspective of a winner or cannon, not in favour of marginalized, deprived and helpless people. As William counter argues that the concept of political economy, where economy is the base of

culture and economy determines the culture. He argues the ways of thinking about culture and he asserts that, “culture is not secondary, a delayed effect of a prior determining instance, but is itself prior or primary. It is not passive, a mere super structural reflection, but it is itself an active force in the social construction of reality. It is not separated from the rest of social life, in terms of a principle of wholeness” (IX). The given lines suggest that culture cannot separate from economy as well as from the society. It is an important part of the society. Cultural materialism examines the text through the lens of margin and it valorizes everyday activity of common people.

Premchand casts light on the marginalized people and their social, cultural as well as economic condition in the thirties. He depicts the life of the Indian peasant and their cultural values. He tries to delineate that common people also do have important roles for the formation of the society. It tries to show, as William claims, “culture is a whole way of life and the art is the part of a social organization which economic change clearly radically effects” (ii). It further strengthens the notion of culture that is not a mere expression of peoples’ way of life, but also exhibits their respect, tolerance and acceptance for multicultural practices.

The whole story of this novel veers around the life of the main character Hori. The novel presents the struggle of the common peasant in that British colonial period. In that period the voice of common people were never heard and never recorded in the history of British colony. However, Premchand is one of the most important Indian writers who advocate the voice of common people. He writes this novel on the behalf of the Indian peasants. He illustrates the everyday events of common people and their cultural values. He raises the several issues of religion, caste, class, feudalism, colonialism, child marriage, widowhood, dowry system and industrial revolution in India. He challenges the previous notion of history writing through the artistic piece. He counter argues those people who

exploit the innocent peasants for their being poor. Premchand not only depicts the pathetic conditions of the common people but also spreads the awareness in the readers mind.

*Godan* is a historical representation of the social and economic difficulties that exist between class and culture at the time. Through the characters of Indian peasants, Hori in particular represents lower class and lower caste. *Godan* is the story of Indian peasants who live in Belari village. Hori is the protagonist of this novel *Godan*. The story of this novel begins with the everyday activity of common people, where Hori has desire to have a cow and ends with the death ritual of Hori. The following lines suggest the everyday activity of peasants, “Dhania had been making cow-dung cakes and her hands are smeared with dung, “what’s the hurry, she said , have something before you go that’s why I say have something” (1). It presents the day to day language of peasants and making a cow-dung cake is a daily activity.

The portrayal of language in literature sees that language is not only a medium to express our experiences but it is also a means of production of those norms and values which is socially constructed. As William sates, “It is the sense of language as an indissoluble element of self creation” (IV). Language can reflect both society and literature so that language can be dependent on the cultural system. In this novel, the protagonist Hori asserts, “Give me the staff and mind yours chores. It’s all due to keeping on good terms with the Master that trouble has remained at arm’s length from us. Otherwisewe would have been wiped out of existence long ago” (1). The given lines suggest how peasants are exploited by their master. They work day and night for the sake of their master.

The production of literary works itself is not materialist but how we use and make it is materialist. Custom is also another important materialistic quality and how well the characters dressed is another materialist quality. Custom represents the specific culture of the people and they use to wear custom according to their culture and geography. Premchand

reflects the reality as something material which is placed among the higher social and economic classes. In the novel the following lines represents the custom of peasants:

The festival of holi was near; he thought he would as well by a few things to take home; the inherent prosperity of the miser to show himself off on festive occasions got the better of him. What better occasion was there to spend his hard earned saving if not now? He bought two *saries* each for his mother, his sister and Jhunia; a dhoti and chaddar for his father, a bottle of hair oil for Sona and pair of chappal for his father, a doll for Rupa; and a toilet case for Jhunia which contained a phial of hair oil, vermilion and a looking glass. For his child, a cap, a ready-made frock. (188)

It suggests that custom is another materialistic quality and it denotes the status as well as culture of the people and the society. As Gobar buy dhoti and chadder for his father and sari for mother and sister that represent the peasant custom and their culture.

In this novel, Hori is an ideal and submissive character. He never raises the voice against the exploitation. But Gobar and Dhania are more bold, progressive and revolutionary characters. They raise the voice against the rule and regulation of the Pancayat. Gobar involves himself in the industrial revolution for freedom. Likewise, in the conservative society women are given passive role and they are preferred as weak and submissive. But in this novel Premchand presents the female character (Dhania) as a bold and progressive woman rather than her husband (Hori). He never revolts against the exploitation of the Zamindar and he easily accepts the oppression.

*Godan* is published in 1936, during a time of social change such as industrial revolution has taken place and coincidentally the book acts as a reaction. A hegemonic capitalism use to exploit the lower class people as well as factory laborers. Factory laborers raise their voice against the capitalism. This social change affects literature. Premchand's *Godan* is a prime example of literature.

Furthermore, Gobar tries to convince his father and he asserts that no one is great in the society but all are equal. He mentions, “These are fancies, only to console the mind. God creates us all equal. Those who have power oppress the poor and become rich” (16).

Powerful people always exploit the lower people. In this regard an Indian critic Geetanjali Pandey asserts that:

Gobar refuses to accept the system because he has seen through its arrangements and its props, but, his sense of outrage at what is happening to his rebelliousness then, is directed towards ensuring that he as a person is not exploited. As Gobar inspires little confidence in terms of a new awareness. His destruction of the scene of exploitation apart, as a city-dweller with some consciousness of the social and political problems of his society. It is in the mentally liberating atmosphere of the city environment that the seed of his rebelliousness sprouts. (765)

In this novel, Premchand tries to spread the awareness in the reader's mind through the means of character Gobar. He is a revolutionary as well as a progressive character. He refuses to accept the norms and values of the conservative society.

Likely, Premchand raises the issues of capitalism in the then period. In capitalist world lower class people are exploited by the elitist people. In this novel factory laborer and poor peasants are exploited by the so-called capitalist people. It reflects the struggle of poor peasant in the capitalist society. Another Indian critic K. P. Singh presents the views of Premchand's about the capitalism and how he discards capitalism.

Premchand not only opposed capitalism but saw the Soviet social orders as only a way of discarding capitalism. In his novel *Godan* he argues, nobody has a right to fatten upon the labor of others. Such a social order in which a small part of society leads a comfortable life. Whereas large one with the under the fell clutch of hardship; has no right to exist. (49)

As the given lines suggest that, through the novel *Godan*, Premchand challenges the capitalist people and he advocates the voice of common people and factory laborer. It demonstrates that nobody has right to exploit the labor and lower class people. He tries to present that common people play important roles for the formation of the society.

*Godan* is a culture specific novel in Hindi literature. It provokes the panic life of Indian peasants in the conservative Hindu society. It represents the Hindu ritual and the cultural values of Indian peasants. Nothing is stable in this world. The definition/concept of culture also is changed. Culture is a means of production which produces some rules and regulation in the society. Culture will be changed with time, context and the society. In this regard, William mentions some idea about culture in his book *Culture and Society*, “The development of the word culture is a record of a number of important and continuing reactions to these changes in our social economic and political life, and may be seen in itself as a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored” (xv). In the novel *Godan* the concept of the culture also changes with time. The characters are not rigid as their ancestral.

In Hindu community cow is a matter of dignity and prestige and the cow is regarded as a means of salvation. For poor peasant to buy a cow is a challenging thing. Hori doesn't have money to buy a cow. The passage given below reflects his poverty:

The cow of course would not cost less than two hundred rupees. What did it matter? Didn't a cow tied by the door enhance the prestige of the house? And how auspicious to see a cow the first thing in the morning! Like every householder, Hori for a long time had been cherishing this desire for a cow. It was the brightest dream of his . . . to buy land or to build a palatial house as too lofty to find room in the narrow confines of his poor heart. (3)

These lines suggest that Hori has deep desires to have a cow but he does not have money to buy her. Indian peasants want to take a loan from bank rather than from the Zamindar.

Zamindar exploits the poor peasants by taking the high interest.

Most of the characters are from Hindu religion and they believe in Hinduism and Dharma. They can't commit any sin which is against the Dharma. They are ready to spend money for *Puran* in the name of god. They are worshipping towards the god for salvation of sin soul. Datadin is a priest of the village in the novel. Fear in the sense becomes their culture because fear of god is regard for spirituality. The following lines present how people are afraid about the dharma:

The shackles of dharma are very strong. I have to abide by the taboos of the community in which I was born and bred. If an individual of the lower caste loses his *dharma*, he doesn't have to suffer so much; but if a Brahmin violates his *dharma*, it's the end of him. His dharma is his heritage. I had to spend three hundred rupees for the atonement of my sin: but my *dharma* still remains defiled. With my *dharma* gone . . .

If you abide by the community, it pleases the community; if you have faith in man, it pleases God. (283)

Datadin is a Brahmin of the village and realizes that he does wrong towards the innocent cobbler girl Selia. He wants to get atonement of his sin soul by the accepting the lower cast girl. He accepts Selia as a daughter in law. It demonstrates that culture is not always the same it will change with time. Sometimes culture helps to change the mind of the people. Datadin challenges the stereotypes the society by accepting Selia as a daughter in law. In Hindu community Brahmin's are not allowed to marry with a lower caste girl. This incident reflects the culture that is emerging. Such a culture comes into existence by counteracting or revolting against the dominant culture. This sort of culture, as Williams's remarks, is an emergent culture.

Similarly, Hori also challenges the traditional and conservative society by accepting Jhunia, a widow girl as a daughter in law. In Hindu community widow is not allowed to marry. If they do it will be against the religion and society will punish them. Gobar after making Jhunia pregnant leaves her alone in that miserable condition. But his father Hori becomes kind to her.

Hori bent over her and caressing her back said, "Have no fear, daughter. This is your house. You are as much my daughter as you are Bhola's." Dhania, unable to control her feelings and said, "Stay in our house. As for your father and brothers, I'll deal with them when they come." These words were soft balm on her afflicted heart. She leaves Hori and falls at Dhania's feet. Dhania raises the girl and passionately hugs her to her heart, like a bird snuggling its young ones under the shelter of its wing. (103)

As the given lines suggest that, Hori and Dhania accept widow girl as a daughter in law. They challenge the deep rooted stereotypes of the conservative society. They think that, if they do not accept her, their dharma will curse them.

In the same manner, Premchand through his artistic piece *Godan* which he describes as literature of the people. He tries to relate literature to the social and economic history within it has been produced. Though Premchand tries to break the traditional boundary, he focuses on social and economic limitations. Literature incorporates the life experiences of people in realistic manner. His novel *Godan* depicts the socio-economic influence on literature by introducing characters of lower status which have been victimized by people who belong to dominant culture. They are powerful due to their strong socio-economic status.

Cultural materialism has always been embedded in our society. It is different from classical materialism. The classical Marxists give more focus on base-structure but cultural materialism does not only give focus on economy. They try to give voice to voiceless as well

as marginalized people. The cultural materialism uses the term for voiceless people as well as lower class people.

William challenges the previous definition of culture where economy is base. For them economy is base for production of culture. In contrast for William every art and literature is a cultural product like a film, book and other products. So art and literature can be a production of culture of the then period. It is a major concern of cultural materialism. So William challenges the concept of culture which is given by classical Marxist.

Furthermore, William gives emphasis on the concept of residual and emergent culture. Residual culture focuses on experiences, values and certain notion of rural past which still exist at present. The emergent culture deals with the new practices of such cultural values, norms, experiences and ways of life in their new form. In *Godan* characters share some cultural practices basically derived from the rural past which they cannot deny. *Godan* is a cultural novel that deals with the Hindu culture. Hindu culture is regarded as a dominant culture which challenged by emerging culture in which a widow is accepted by the family in *Godan*. The British bring Christianity as a new culture in India which directly affects the predominant culture and religions. Though, we can say that Christianity is regarded as an emergent culture with adaptation of cultural practices in its modified form. Despite dominant of Christian culture the Hindu's subsided culture remains as residual. "Residual means that some experiences, meanings and values, which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue-and-emergent, "new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experience, are continually being created"(William 496).

Premchand in the text also challenges the previous notion of history writing. As previous definition, history is always in favor of elitist people. As elitist people believe that, the one who is in power only can create the history. History is written on the perspective of

powerful people. But here, Premchand writes the history of marginalized and he presents the history of common people such as peasants. In the 1930s history/ literature was never written from the perspective of marginalized which is the very challengeable thing. In present novel, *Godan* Premchand depicts the voice of the oppressed people and their pathetic condition. An India Critic Jagdish Lal mentions about the operation of the common people as follows:

Premchand delineates this narrative from the point of view of the oppressed. Perhaps Premchand had realized that the critique of 'common sense' had to develop from within the oppressed groups without it being inculcated by the nationalist intelligentsia. *Godan* may be cited as one of these examples. The idea of the common sense does emerge from within the peasantry itself. (122)

In this novel Premchand presents the dominant culture which is powerful shaping culture and ruling class culture. By presents the story of Zamindari he tries to show how peasants are exploited by the pre dominant culture. Premchand articulates reality of the feudal society and the then period. Rai Shaheb as a Zamindar always exploits the poor peasants. The narrator reflects how Zamindar shows his superiority over the marginalized in these lines:

The Rai Saheb's forehead furred with rage. "Come, I'll set the rascals right. They were not served with food, in the past. What rights have they to demand it now? They were paid an Anna a day; not a piece more will they get now? Work they shall, whether they like it or not." He returned to Horri. "You may go now. But remember what I said. I accept a collection of Rs 500/- from your village". (13)

The dominant culture is present as a form of exploitation and domination of poor peasants. Through these lines we come to know that Zamindar rules over poor peasants. They exploit the poor peasants by taking high interest and giving them low wage. In the feudal society poor people are subjugated and controlled by the so-called Zamindar.

The novel, *Godan* is set in 1930s, when industrial revolution was on its way. The concepts of class and caste also dismantled. In this way Premchand articulates the painful situation of peasants. But the peasants are not always submissive and passive. They become aware of the fact and revolt against the oppression of Zamindar and factory owner. So this is the phase of social transformation. An Indian critic Geetanjali Pandey highlights the social transformation in the following lines:

Premchand kept moving back and forth between the vision of a social transformation and the advocacy of minimum necessary social reform. He vacillated all along between the need for political change as an essential prior condition and the possibility of suitably modifying the existing social arrangements. The men would not change unless the system changed. This is the revolutionary logic. (35)

Premchand presents the novel on the behalf of the common people. He writes the story of this novel by moving back and forth. It demonstrates that how the society is changed with time. As he asserts that for the reformation of the society there should be change in the system prevailing in the society.

Similarly, William also presents the concepts of the social transformation. Culture plays the significant role for the reformation of the society. And the concept of culture also changes with time. In this regard William Mentions:

We live in a transitional society, and the idea of culture, too often, has been identified with one or other of the forces which the transition contains. Culture is the product of the old leisured classes who seek now to defend it against new and destructive forces. Culture is the inheritance of the new rising class, which contains the humanity of the future; this class seeks, now, to free it from its restrictions. We say thing, like this to each other, and glower. (338)

As William insists that we live in transitional society. The concept of culture is also changed with time. Culture can be a source of humanity. It reflects the picture of the society and culture is the inheritance of the new rising class. William tries to focus that culture is the product of the society and it is changed according to time.

The novel, *Godan* is the history of the excluded which reflects the lived experience of Indian peasants and their position in the society. It presents the voice of marginalized people in a materialistic way. In the period of 1930s the voice of the common people is never recorded in the history. Through the artistic piece, *Godan*, tries to demonstrate the life of the common people and their suffering in the dominant society of the 1930s. Premchand has set the economical, political and social elements of the 1930s as the background of the story in *Godan*. It represents the caste problems, class problems, unemployment and exploitation of the British rule upon the native Indian peasant. He presents the tension between Zamindar and the poor farmers, factory owners and factory laborers, Brahmin and untouchables, dowry system and widowhood which represent the major issues of contemporary India. The story of Hori represents the story of whole Indian peasants. The narrator in the passage given below describes the apprising awareness of the common people:

The Rai Sahib frittered away twenty thousand rupees on his son's marriage and nobody raised a finger. Mangru, the money lender, spent five thousand rupees on his father's cremation and nobody questioned him. The poor also have sons and fathers. We can't keep pace with the rich, *bhai*. But we are also men like them. That's what you think. A man is not a man without wealth, power and education. We are no better than bullocks, born to be yoked. (19-20)

The passage depicts the true pictures of Indian society and how peasants are struggling for their position in the capitalist society. Through the story of Indian peasants, Premchand is able to present various roles in the contemporary political, social, cultural and economic

situation of India. He presents the reference of rising awareness among the common people and uprising awareness among factory laborers.

In conclusion, this research paper presents a reality of Indian society with various conflicts between landlords, religious leaders and peasant community of the 1930s. It represents the social, cultural and economic history of India. It tries to give voice to the voiceless people who are doubly marginalized in the name of caste and class. It reflects the cultural values of Hindu community as well as miserable condition of marginalized in materialistic way. Through this novel, Premchand challenges official history by presenting the common people and their cultural values at center. In the 1930s voice of the marginalized people were never recorded in the history. So, this paper has explored how successful is Premchand to represent the problematic life of people especially Indian peasants from lower strata and exclusively lower caste and their cultural values during the colonial period. Though, his artistic piece *Godan*, Premchand tries to create the history of commoners and he posits the lower class and lower caste people at the centre. By doing so, he tries to give equal position to the common people in the 1930s.

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