

# HORI, AS A SUBMISSIVE PEASANT PROTAGONIST IN MUNSHI PREMCHAND'S GODAN

Krisn Kumar Jaiswal  
Research Scholar English  
Awadhesh Pratap Singh University Rewa (M.P.)

**ABSTRACT:-** Munshi Premchand is regarded as a master-minded novelist of Hindi literature who has created many remarkable characters. Out of these characters, Hori, the main protagonist of *Godan* stands supreme. He is a simple farmer around whose pivotal personality; the entire story of *Godan* revolves. As a man Hori has his incorrigible faith in the sanctity of the social set-up. Hori is a man of submissive nature and has full faith in his fate. He is ready to accept everything as a part of his destiny. Throughout his life he surrenders himself before the society yet he does not possess any negative idea against upper class dominating society.

Hori, cannot even think of usurping the money of others and specifically of Brahmins because of his religious orthodoxy. These kinds of orthodox religious beliefs cause the great pains and suffering in his life yet he cannot get-rid of it. He proves himself a submissive peasant protagonist of Munshi Premchand's *Godan*.

**KEYWORDS:** Pivotal, Incorrigible faith, Submissive nature, Usurping money, Orthodox beliefs, Peasant protagonist.

## INTRODUCTION:-

The death of Hori proves total collapse of the dreamland of peasant and of the path of surrender and submission. The ousting of Hori's family from the peasant way of life and the exit of his son Gobar to the town, for lively hood is also symbolic of the ultimate fate of villagism and peasantism and of the ultimate triumph of cash nexus over the old society. This death of a peasant of the old type as in other words symbolic of the death of old society which could not be reformed from within. The old and antiquated society must die for the new one to be born over its ashes; this is clear message of Premchand as conveyed through *Godan*.

On the other hand Hori remains a victim of his fear of injustice and Adharma. He is a lonely struggler against the circumstances that make his life more and more

painful. Hori's son Gobar assists him financially to get his second daughter married. As Gobar goes back Locknow Hori is again helpless and alone. As a man of religious fear Hori has to work in the hot sun to clear the debt of a Brahmin. He falls ill and unconscious because of sun stroke and gradually reaches on the verge of death. His wife Dhaniya sobs on seeing dying face of Hori.

Hori has lost his vision and he cannot see anyone whereas he can only hear the voices around him in his lost movements. The villagers suggest the family members to perform *Godan* for dying man Hori. "It is ironical that throughout his life. Hori struggled to earn enough money to buy a cow but now even in his death there is no release to his soul in agony with a proper *Godan*."<sup>1</sup>

Lastly Hori breaths his last as his eyes become lifeless like stone. Husband of Dhaniya has gone from this world forever and forever and this realization makes Dhaniya unnerved. Throughout his life Hori's struggles for getting a cow or clearing the debt for cow but it remains a thing of a dream for Hori.

In *Godan*, Hori's life story is a tale of helplessness and suffering. He never gets relief from pain and suffering. The social obligations are too powerful for a simple soul like him and knowing well about the evil designs of the greedy money-lenders, Hori can think of standing against a Brahmin. It will be sinful. Throughout the novel, Hori suffers and suffers without any hope of redemption. Throughout the narrative, the atmosphere remains grim and depressing. Though Hori is not capable to waging direct war against the rigid social set-up with its vices, yet his belief in the essential goodness of man and his dignity remain the redeeming feature in his character. At times, his wife Dhaniya tries her best to make him understand the reality, but he refuses to go against his basic nature. He is an individual with an abundance of truth in his dignified personality. His wife

Dhaniya and son Gobar know that he is incorrigible and under the curse of saintliness.

As a central character of novel *Godan* Hori is an incorrigible simpleton, God-fearing and tradition loving farmer who cannot think of violating the traditional values and customs. Being fatalist he cannot even dream of going against society, religious traditions and institutions. His simplicity and saintliness become a curse for this innocent creature. He becomes an easy prey to injustice and exploitation of the stone-hearted landlords and money-lenders, yet he cannot stand against oppression.

Apart from being a very simple and God fearing man Hori is also a very tolerant man who bears many severe injustices but Dhaniya is a rebel who fights for human existence. Hori is lonely in his struggle against the circumstances and his fear of injustice and 'adharma' has made his life miserable. He can face poverty and starvation but not a humiliating and lonely existence away from his community. The bounds of community are too strong for him to break. He does not spare community, tradition, religious beliefs, customs and the custodians of religious beliefs. He is seen frightened and awed by the dictates of his community: Hori asked Dhania to keep quiet, "It's the voice of God that speaks through the panthes."<sup>2</sup> But what is written must happen: no body quarrels with fate.

The central character of *Godan* Hori is a dedicated peasant and novelist has made the protagonist. The most beautiful aspect of Hori is that he is very dutiful. We find that the privileged persons are totally indifferent to the welfare of the peasants who slavishly serve them. Even for the bread, the basic necessity of human existence, the peasants have to depend on the mercy of landlords. The landlords of the village, living in the cosy cocoon of orthodoxy and respectability, are rudely shocked because they view the whole situation quite differently.

Premchand has highlighted the drawbacks in the character of Hori as he gets a cow by deceit and selfishness. He gives the false promise to Bhola, the farmer of another village, that he would get him a second wife. While going to meet Rai Saheb, a zamindar, he sees Bhola with his cow in the way and is overjoyed. Bhola was approaching old age, even then he was

nourishing intense desire for remarriage. During the conversation Bhola said to him; "A woman feels orphaned and forlorn at her husband's death: a man feels crippled when his wife is gone ...Last year Bhola's wife had died of loo. Desire for a woman had made Bhola's eyes eloquent."<sup>3</sup> This was clear hint to Hori that Bhola wanted to be re-married. He throws a bait to Bhola, saying that there was a girl at his in-laws' place, whose husband had left her sometimes ago, and she had no children. Bhola made a promise and was caught in a net of Hori. Hori feels happy; it was a wind-fall though he knew that he had cheated Bhola.

However, the novelist's view is that it was not a deceit for a man of Hori's moral sense. He would swear to the money-lender that he didn't have a paise though he had several rupees at home, or soak the jute or cotton to increase its weight:

"There is no doubt that the peasant is selfish to the core. It takes a lot of wheedling to get a bribe out of him. He is a past-master in driving a hard bargain. To get a single penny of interest condoned he supplicates himself before the money-lender for hours. It is difficult to tempt him against his conviction. Nevertheless his entire life is wedded to nature. The trees bear fruit but for others; the land yields grain to appease the hungry mouths; the clouds send showers to assuage the parched earth. In such a scheme of things there is hardly any room for selfishness."<sup>4</sup>

Munshi Premchand has tried to draw a picture of socio-economic pressures on his hero Hori. In *Godan*, we see that the socio-economic pressure does not allow Hori, the protagonist, to assert his freedom of choice. By and by he is deprived of his property. He is bound by social systems. He bears a lot of pains to keep his name in society. Indian peasants, clearly revealed in the novel, do not worry much about their daily comforts of food and clothing but with all their capacity they maintain a place in their society. They cherish the ideals of devotion and in the end die in harness. In psychological terms, they become a victim of Molten interplay of Eros and Thanatos. Hori considers 'paap' and 'punya' and urges his son to leave him as such. We find that the life of Hori continues to proceed further with such a deep concentration that in the end we are so much convinced with Hori's life that his compassionate sensibility

touches the very core of our hearts so deeply that we begin to desire that others, too, should like that story as we do. Dr. Shailesh Zaidi presents about the author of *Godan* thus:

“Writer’s awareness of his age gives us a picture of the historical situations of the nation at one hand and builds up a harmony with the international thought at the other hand. His thought keeps a reference to an awareness of nation and time. As a result neither he has cut himself off his environment nor he remains a mere professor of foreign thought. He rises above the feudal values of victory and defeat, paap and punya and good and evil; and regards freedom as a central force of man. In his eyes man inspite of being free, is condemned to be free. The reason is that values are not created by God but are related to man. That is why they are related to the personal decision of man. Firmness of decision only provides man his freedom.”<sup>5</sup>

All the episodes of the novel reached their final endings in a justified manner. Justice was done to all good characters. Hori suffered all his life but the novelist makes a spectacle of beauty of his death. Both of his daughters were happy in their homes and his son Gobar had returned to the family fold at the end. Hira and Shobha were repentant. Hori begged pardon of Dhaniya. He was sorry that he was leaving Dhaniya in strait circumstances and could not realize his dream of having a cow. “He said to Dhaniya with tears rolling from the corner of each eye-

“Forgive my mistakes Dhaniya. I am going now. The longing for a cow had to remain a longing. And that money will go for the last rites. Don’t cry, Dhaniya. How much longer could you have kept me alive any way? I have suffered every possible misfortune. Now let me die.”<sup>6</sup>

Hori had tears in his eyes, indicating “the sorrow of things left undone.”<sup>7</sup> Hori had the pain for making orphans of those to whom obligations could not be met. As Hori was sorry for Dhaniya, gave him a tearful farewell. It was a send off to a life-long friend, without a complaint, since both had struggled and suffered

together. And she gave all the twenty annas that she had for the *Godan* to ensure peace to his soul in heaven.

#### **CONCLUSION:-**

In *Godan*, the main protagonist Hori is a victim of such cruel, heartless and selfish money-lenders. He is aware of the fact that he has been wronged and exploited, yet he cannot stand against oppression. Premchand presents his peasants fighting against a rigid, cruel and indifferent social set-up. The money lenders suck the blood of these poor victims. *Godan* deals with the Indian peasantry represented by Hori. He has to face economic crisis, illness and death as his present and future are equally darker. His character has been portrayed in detail by Premchand. To some extent, some autobiographical elements can be traced in the life history of Hori. At each step, the tragedy in his life deepens. He seems to be an easy victim of circumstances. I. N. Madan observes:

“The Indian peasant has been robbed of his death, his honour, his spirit and his very life. He has been plundered and profaned, disinherited and dispossessed by those who exploit him...He was born, he suffered and died. The birth and death of Indian peasant were not significant; but the suffering did not loom large in his life. The novel does not end in the triumph of the peasant; it ends in an atmosphere of pessimism and despair.”<sup>8</sup>

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