



**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DUAL DIMENSIONS FOR
FEMININE IDENTITY IN MUNSHI PREM CHAND'S STORY,
"THE CHILD"**

DR. ASHA ARORA

Associate Professor in English
Ch. Ballu Ram Godara Govt Girls College,
Sri Ganga Nagar
(RAJ) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Munshi Prem Chand (1880-1936) was the penname of Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, a great Hindi short-story writer and novelist. He was born in a village near Banaras (Varanasi) and his childhood and youth were marked by extreme poverty and domestic problems. He was well-versed in both Hindi and Urdu, growing up as in an environment where both languages were used. As a writer Prem Chand was deeply influenced by Gandhiji, Tolstoy, Gorky, Victor Hugo and Romain Rolland. He disregarded all social taboos and married Shivrani Devi, a child widow. He gave up his government job in 1920 when Gandhiji launched the Non-cooperation movement and immersed himself in political and literary writings instead. This accentuated his intimate knowledge of rural India. 'The Child' is one of the important stories of Prem Chand. In it, he raises the issue of his times as widow-marriage. The story revolves around the character of Gangu, a poor and old-fashioned Brahmin servant, who works for the narrator. The present paper attempts to compare the two different angles of characterising a woman, and it reflects on the supremacy of the honoured attitude for woman that has been reflected even by a servant over the biased and patriarchal thinking as reflected by the owner who is the narrator of the story also.

Key words: domestic, launched, accentuate, supremacy and patriarchal

INTRODUCTION

Munshi Premchand had a progressive outlook and brought a new sense of social awareness to fiction. He is considered one of the outstanding short story writers in literature, with more than three hundred short stories in Hindi and Urdu to his credit. His literary writings reflect

DR. ASHA ARORA

1P a g e



the harsh life of the Indian peasants with empathy and insight. He depicts the peasant as being caught in the web of inhuman landlords and heartless moneylenders. The novels Nirmala, Gaban, Rangabhumi and Godan are some of his well-known works.

The story 'The Child' is written by Prem Chand revolves around the character of Gangu who is a poor and old fashioned Brahman. He was a servant in the author's house. He was Brahmin by caste. Therefore, he considered himself superior to other servants. He never touched used utensils. He considered it below dignity to sit with other servants. He was short tempered. Even his master (the narrator) hesitated to ask him to perform any menial task. Gangu had very few friends. He never prayed. He never bowed to his master as other servants did. He didn't like backbiting to his master as other servants did. He never demanded advance against his salary. He was completely illiterate. In the story, the woman character-Gomti was a widow. She had entered the Widows' Home some years ago. Twice the home authorities had got her married off but both times, she had come back after a week or so. Ultimately the home had expelled her. She had now taken a room in the locality and was an object of great interest to all the love-lorn young men.

One morning, Gangu came to the narrator and requested him to release him from his work. The narrator was surprised at Gangu's request because the servants thought it their good luck to stay on with him while Gangu was leaving. Gangu made the narrator much surprised telling him that he had decided to marry with Gomti who was a lady of disrepute. The narrator called Gangu a fool. He told him that he is befooling himself intentionally. Gomti will not live with him. She had already left two husbands. She will definitely leave him one day. But Gangu was firm on his decision. He was full confident of his love and Gomti. He understood troubles in Gomti's life and did not find any fault in her when she returned twice after her marriage. The narrator considered it wise to keep aloof because it could save him from all sorts of complications. Gangu didn't want people to raise their fingers at his master on account of his marriage to Gomti, so he left the job.

Finally, Gangu married Gomti and he adopted the work of a hawker to earn his livelihood. He earned about a rupee a day. After buying his stock, he was left with ten annas to support his family. However, he was happy. He loved Gomti very much. But after five months, one day Gomti ran away from home without telling anything to anyone. Gangu had never expected this. He could not understand why Gomti had left him. He began to find out fault within himself. He thought that Gomti certainly didn't want to live him for his illiteracy. The narrator was fully assured that one day Gomti would run away leaving Gangu. He was always curious to know about the married life of Gangu and Gomti and whenever he saw Gangu as happy, he was jealous with him and thought his advice went failed. But when he knew that Gomti had run away, he became pleased in his heart. He was happy at his prediction that became true. He spoke jeering at Gangu that he had already told to be away from Gomti. But

DR. ASHA ARORA

2P a g e



Gangu without destroying his trust in her replied that Gomti is goddess. Certainly, he must have been unable for Gomti. He said that Gomti would return surely. This answer surprised the author as he had estimated that the woman, who had left two husbands, will not stay even with him. The biased nature of the writer did not allow him to find out what could be the reasons of her leaving them; the reasons may be from husbands' part but who blames males in male-dominated patriarchal setup. But Gangu's behaviour for her breaks this taboo and forces the narrator to think that wherever a woman gets true love, she responds sincerely. Gangu remained happy in severe poverty but loved his wife profoundly. When Gomti went away, he was heart-broken but he believed that Gomti would come back to him. He didn't allow the narrator to reprehend his love.

The story continues as, before going, Gomti had told her whereabouts to a friend. Seeing Gangu very sad that friend told Gangu about Gomti. Soon Gangu reached to Lucknow where she had gone. There Gomti gave birth to an illegitimate child at the Women's Hospital. We see that Gomti faced all the sufferings and challenges of her life. She honoured Gangu's love and married with him. But she was ashamed of giving birth to an illegitimate child. So she left the house. She was the victim of her misery. But Gangu exhibited strong moral courage in marrying Gomti who was considered socially as a widow of doubtful reputation. He displayed profound morality in accepting Gomti's illegitimate child. He feels proud of Gomti's new born baby, whom he accepts as a gift of God although he knows that it is not his own child. In doing this great work, he shows that he is large hearted, courageous and an embodiment of humanity. In the end of story, the narrator accepted that his middle class morality made him ashamed at his own thinking. He felt low before Gangu's courage and sincerity. When in the end, the narrator asked Gangu whose child he was; he replied in a decent way that that was a child of God. This answer shattered the narrow ideals of the narrator for stamping a deliberate and predetermined image of a woman and for a new born child. In this way, the story attacks on the deliberate labelling on a woman's character society and paves a way for the establishment of woman's honour in society.

REFERENCES

<https://englishliterature99.wordpress.com/2020/08/22/the-child-by-premchand-a-short-summary/>

<https://hicasenglishliterature.wordpress.com/short-fiction/>

<http://ghai-tc.blogspot.com/2016/07/premchands-story-immaculate-child-in.html>

DR. ASHA ARORA

3P a g e