



PATTERN IN PREMCHAND'S STORIES

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Three configurations

Premchand wrote almost three hundred short stories, first in Urdu, then in Hindi. He died in 1936, but the stories for many years were presented to the public in ill-assorted collections, his stumbling first efforts placed beside the best works, undated. For a long time the bewildered reader could not but wonder if all these stories had been written by the same author. The stories, whose order of composition was finally established by Premchand's son Amritrai in the famous biography of his father, *Premchand: kaalam kā sipāhī*, cover the span of his last thirty years from about 1907 to 1936.¹

Though Premchand wrote something almost every day (even while on his death-bed), he could not make an adequate living with his pen. To support himself and his family he worked as a government school teacher, a sub-deputy inspector of schools, an editor, and a publisher in that order during his life. Only once (apart from nine months as a scriptwriter for a Bombay cinema company) was his pay as much as two hundred rupees a month, or about \$67.00 in the exchange rate of those days.² This need for money may have made him write too much and too fast. Some of the raw first stories perhaps should not have escaped the wastepaper basket. Some editors seemed ready to take anything they could lay their hands on to fill their magazines. The small sums of money they paid out, however, would have discouraged any writer who did not have an unflagging optimism.

If the need for money can be blamed for some of Premchand's less memorable writing, it seems odd to say that when he wrote from an almost opposite vantage point, he also produced a set of unsuccessful stories. This happened when he felt the public-spirited need to teach his countrymen what virtues they must possess if they expected to be free. He also reminded them insistently of the lofty moral and ethical standards practiced in India's past, all of which predated contact with the West.

One is compelled to remember again that he wrote during the most stirring years of the Indian nationalist movement. The noble precepts of leaders from Dayananda Saraswati to Gandhi were everywhere being quoted and put to noble slogans or chanted before liquor stores, foreign-cloth shops, and the closed iron gates of government houses.³ All of India's creative impulses seemed drawn into a fixed fervor for independence and the blessings that would flow therefrom. It is not surprising that the noble feelings of those times should also require an ardency of language able to support the subject matter.

More than one hundred years after Premchand's birth, the world now knows that all the heated rhetoric of those days has assuredly had its effect. When to the newspapers, speeches, stories, and plays are added several hundred million voices daily shouting "British Go Back! British Go Back!" with many variations on that theme, and being heard in the segregated cantonments, at the club in the civil lines and in the viceroy's palace itself, then the sum total of the effect--now that the British have indeed gone back--seems like laboratory evidence for the power of words.

We can imagine Premchand in the midst of the national frenzy writing every day.⁴ He wrote short stories, novels, and plays. Three volumes of his

editorials have also been collected by his son Amritraj.⁵ All the genres show that his thoughts dwelt daily upon the topics that were agitating the country.

He wrote forceful editorials. In his last years his own periodicals, *Hañs* (The Swan) and *Jāgraj* (The Awakening), both just one step ahead of bankruptcy, were fined by the government for being too outspokenly anti-British.⁶ After being called in to explain himself, he might soft-pedal the next few editorials, but not too many days later he would renew his habits of *lève majesté*. One can say he did his editorial bit for independence.

It seems natural that the social and political subjects of the editorials should infiltrate his fictional writing. Fiction is supposed to reflect life. As new events happened before his eyes in the years from 1907 to 1936, his stories show a full fictional use of the passing scene in India. Although the ideals recommended for obtaining independence, social change, or cultural and religious revival made especially fitting topics for politicians, reformers, scholars, and editorialists, there was no reason they should not also be appropriate subjects for novelists and storywriters. Good fiction is noted for embodying great ideals or great attempts at ideals.

The implication often turns up in this paper, however, that something bad can happen to a high ideal or noble aim when it is admitted into fiction. Ideals brought into the contrived world of fiction should be carefully pre-packaged in attractive boxes. In the event that such ideals are brought in past the fiction border guards in heavy concentrations, they can confuse the locals of this land of realistic make-believe with such practices as instant conversion of incorrigible villains into incorruptible heroes, or insistence upon covering the naked charms of the happy female indigens with long dresses that will make them prone to diverse fictional diseases. To admit the missionaries of high ideals without rigid conditions (including very brief visits) written into their passports could make the inhabitants of a prose Eden self-conscious and cause them to try and hide their natural nakedness. Harsh lights turned on in the wrong places can ruin everything. Only certain genius sadhu-types who can mix magic with their morals should be given extended visas.

In his early years Premchand called himself an "idealistic-realist." When the whole sweep of his work is considered, however, one can say rather that while his early stories stressed idealism, the later ones showed greater concern that "realism should be mingled with it."⁷ These terms suggest that there was always a struggle within him between stressing didactic purposes and feeling that he might do better to camouflage them.

The stories develop in three major patterns. In the early period, 1907-1920, they are didactic stories set in romantic environments. The stories of the middle period, 1921-1930, are also generally didactic but placed in contemporary Indian settings, and appear to be strongly influenced by the teachings of Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Gandhi in particular. The themes of Premchand's final stories, 1930-1936, are more various, and their point of view seems to have shifted from the dictated prescriptions of the author to the individual story problems of the characters.

1. Pattern One: 1907 to 1920.

In the early stories patriotism is acted out by romantic figures in whom all ordinary human complexities are ironed out in order to stress the quality of that patriotism. Premchand's first story, "Duniyā kā sab se anmol ratna" (The Most Precious Jewel in the World), one of a collection of five that was confiscated and ordered burned by the British district officer of Mahoba District, U.P., as being subversive), is set in a region reminiscent of Persia.⁸

The hero, commissioned by his beloved to find for her the most precious jewel in the world if he hopes to win her love, wanders all over the Middle East until a messenger of God suggests that he turn his steps toward India. There he comes upon a battlefield filled with wounded and dying men. He tries to staunch the blood of a dying Indian warrior who stops him, saying that he would rather die than live on in a conquered land. The hero catches in his hand the last drop of the warrior's blood and brings it to his beloved. It is this drop of blood that proves to be the most precious jewel in the world.

Another series of early stories, those of medieval Rajput history, are a step closer to realism only by virtue of the fact that they are peopled with characters in whose veins runs Indian blood. However, the personalities of these Rajputs, too, are wholly romantic and heroic. They die or kill for any number of reasons--jealousy, hospitality, wifely duty and stubbornness, revenge for the death of a cow--and all these situations serve to show that these medieval characters are both brave and Indian.

2. Pattern Two: 1921 to 1930.

In 1921 Premchand heard Mahatma Gandhi speak at Gorakhpur in northeastern Uttar Pradesh (then the United Provinces); a few days later he resigned his job as a government schoolteacher. Whatever masks of romantic setting or historical moment he had hitherto used to express his nationalism were now torn off. His setting henceforth would be the contemporary Indian scene.

The decade of the 1920s began and ended with the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements. In between lay violent Hindu-Muslim riots, the growing rift between liberals and Congressmen, and the division among Congressmen themselves between those who wanted to contest elections under the provision of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and those, following Gandhi, who turned away from politics temporarily to devote their main attention to social programs.¹⁰

Premchand, no longer a government servant, turned his eyes away from far-off places and discovered his subject matter in the streets about him. Still guided by the idealistic part of his idealistic realism, he created a host of characters who at the beginning of a story act contrary to the Indian nationalist program. They drink liquor, buy foreign cloth, or refuse to give up a favorite sari of imported silk.¹¹ By the end of the story, as if upon the advice of Gandhi, they give up liquor, burn their foreign cloth, and sacrifice their silken wedding saris to aid the cause of independence.

In the story "Dussāhas" (Brazeness) one character, a prominent lawyer of Lucknow named Munshi Maikulal, always spends his evenings with rather disreputable cronies drinking and taking drugs. They have stimulating conversations:

Apart from his profession and these intellectual conversations, munshi-jī borrowed no other headaches for himself. He had no connection with any national movement, any organization, any social reform. The Bengal partition came and also the swadeshi movement; the *naxam* and *garam dāls* were organized; political reforms appeared; the desires for self-rule had their birth pangs; the call for spiritual salvation began to ring through the land; but they made not the slightest difference in munshi-jī's deep equanimity.¹²

Nevertheless, one evening the munshi's servant, sent to buy wine, comes back from the liquor shop empty-handed. Congressmen, he says, were picketing the shop. The munshi then goes off himself with his four friends. As they approach the liquor shop one of his companions, a Muslim, is stopped by a Muslim divine who says with some irony, "Friend, this is your prayer time.

How is it you've come here? Do you think you can solve the Khilafat problem by this kind of religiousness?"¹³

One by one the munshi's friends are quickly persuaded not only to turn away from the liquor shop but to swear an oath that they will never touch another drop of strong drink. The munshi, however, pushes his way through the picketers, buys his bottle of liquor, and takes it home. As he tries to drink alone, he curses his traitorous friends on whom he has spent so many rupees uselessly. Then he remembers all the angry eyes that glared at him as he was forcing his way into the liquor shop. This makes him see himself as others see him, a wastrel and a fool. In the end he throws his bottle of liquor crashing into the street.

Premchand has often been called a Gandhian writer, but it is difficult to keep a good writer penned up all the time. His plots sometimes escape from their non-violent denouements. Among his nationalist stories appear those in which a central character goes ahead and defies all the accepted tenets and achieves what he thinks are good Gandhian results by violent means; or a shopkeeper sells forbidden English cloth in spite of Congress picketers; or a customer, hoping not to be seen by the picketers out front, sneaks in through a back door to buy a silk sari for his wife or mistress.¹⁴

The conversion of a person sometimes takes place under humorous conditions, which make it seem more palatable. But the purpose of the story is usually the same: to humiliate an Englishman, to castigate an Indian loyal to the British, to have an Indian see the error of his ways, or to show that Muslims were as true Indians as Hindus were.¹⁵

In most of these stories the part of Premchand's "idealistic-realism" which is realistic--the setting, the action, the characterization up to the moment of conversion--is often made lively by humor, dramatic and witty dialogue, and a simple and supple language.¹⁶ In it one can see the home life, the processions, the connivings, the sacrifices, the misery, the Hindu-Muslim riots, the details of marriage parties, all kinds of people doing all kinds of things to each other. To think over Premchand's stories in the aggregate is to remember what North India was like before independence. Premchand often looked to the Indian past for inspiration. There he saw things that, if brought back and shined up, could return the country to its own animating principles. To emphasize the old virtues he liked to look to the West for apt contrasts. Justice he saw served well by a panchayat but full of paper work and corruption in a western court.¹⁷ The joint family (whose impending breakup he seemed to see towards the end of his life) he regarded as the upholder of qualities of unselfishness and cooperation, whereas the single-unit family encouraged self-indulgence.¹⁸ He saw courtesy in India as opposed to arrogance and rudeness in the West.¹⁹ He saw possibilities of forgiveness, mercy, and non-violence in the East, and a harsh, egotistic concentration on money, power, and pleasure in the West.²⁰

On the subject of Indian women he also hammered home his point by contrasting traditional Indian women with modern westernized types who talk in public with men, flirt, wear high heels and lipstick, and refuse to get married because it would infringe upon their freedom. His ideal is someone like Sita or Savitri, who sacrificed all personal wishes to her husband, and whose glory came as a reflection of her service and self-denial.²¹

This does not mean that Premchand was blind to the evil practices that had crept into Indian society over the centuries. He found much that was repellent in modern marriage customs. He hated to see young girls married to old men and young widows unable to remarry; he denounced the corruption and greed in the dowry system,²² yet his heroines, falling helplessly into all the

cruel traps laid by superstition and rusted custom, are generally true to the description drawn of them by an Indian critic who writes: "In one sentence, Premchand believes woman is the visible image of service, self-denial, self-sacrifice, purity, love, affection, self-control, courtesy, forgiveness, firmness . . . and other beautiful and generous emotions."²³ Luckily, virtues thus strung out do not allow for the exceptional heroine or the more numerous minor female characters who manage to break out of author-captivity.

In the story "Nairāsy" (Despair) a woman, Nirupama, keeps giving birth to unwanted daughters and no sons; as a result, she is insulted and treated as a slave in her home. She finds that by going to see a famous holy man and getting a sacred guarantee from him that her next child would be a son, she can gain for herself nine months of respite:

When she became pregnant, new hopes began to flutter in everyone's heart. Her mother-in-law, whose every indrawn breath before had inhaled curses and every exhalation sarcasm, now moved around her like a proffered dish of betel nut. "Daughter, let it be; I'll prepare dinner; your head will begin to ache!"

If Nirupama went to fill a jar of water or lift a bed, her mother-in-law came running, "Daughter, let it be; I'm coming, you mustn't lift anything heavy. It's a different matter with daughters, nothing affects them; but boys must be respected even in the womb."²⁴

Premchand could look with tongue-in-cheek at his own society when he wanted to. He was always prepared to lash out or mock men who acted evilly, but it also seems that he felt social evils could be cured without destroying the cherished institutions into which they crept. Indian women should be treated better, he felt, but in marriage they should remain modest, self-denying, and husband-adoring. If honest brahmans replaced dishonest ones, temples and worship need not be destroyed. Of course, many brahmans in his eyes were unsalvageable. He was merciless to temple priests and holy men who preyed upon the credulity of the poor and unwary. In "Manuṣy kā param dharm" (Man's Highest Duty) he shows Pandit Moteram appearing on the ghats at Benaras and gathering a crowd to hear his words:

"Brothers," he yelled, "you all know that when Brahma created this insubstantial world, He made the brahmans from His mouth. Nobody doubts this matter?"

Audience: "No, *mahārāj*, you are telling the absolute truth."

Pandit: "So . . . the brahmans come from Brahma's mouth. This is definite. Therefore, the mouth is man's best part. So . . . to give happiness to the mouth is man's highest duty. Is this so or not?"²⁵

Pandit Moteram then explains that there are several ways to give happiness to the mouth. One could sing the praises of many gods, worship Brahma alone, associate with pious men, but the highest method was to feed the mouth of a brahman with the best quality sweets. He then lists his favorite kinds of sweets and leaves no doubt--his brahman mouth watering--what he expects of a proper, orthodox, Hindu audience.

To bring out the mendacity and greed of priests he elsewhere involves them in heinous activities: helping the British rulers break up a nationalist

satyagraha struggle, swindling villagers with a promise to double their cash by mystic means, and ruining a farmer through the penances they set for the accidental death of a cow on his property.²⁶

Through this fertility of invention emerged every imaginable kind of plot whose events and conflict were drawn from an intimate knowledge of the country in which he lived. The extent and the detail of his description is so manifold that it adds up to the creation of a whole fictional United Provinces. To create something like this, even though it was not a whole world and took its creator more than seven days to complete, is something creditable even for computerized times.

3. Pattern Three: 1930 to 1936.

Some of Premchand's strongest stories and his classic novel, *Godān*, tell about village life.²⁷ He knew the village well. He was born in one, and as a sub-deputy inspector of schools he wandered from village school to village school through the poverty-stricken districts of eastern United Provinces for several years. His pity for the peasant made him long for reforms on their behalf. They worked against such impossible odds.

In his earlier stories he sought to make a blueprint for reforms in fiction by seeking the help of Tolstoy, Swami Dayananda's Arya Samaj, Gandhi, even British art historian and social critic John Ruskin (1819-1900). Through their teachings of love, mercy, self-denial, and nonviolent soul-force, he sought to make evil landlords, corrupt police officials, and greedy priests see the error of their ways and become kindly fathers of their people.²⁸ These stories, unfortunately, make one feel that Premchand was forcing his subject down roads it did not want to go. He knew the villagers very well but may never have seen the prototypes for an idealistic landlord or a social-reforming moneylender.

Even in these earlier stories the parts that are truest to life are precisely those where the peasants are left to themselves. Premchand had heard their kind of humor, had seen their selfishness, their generosity, and had witnessed their despair and endurance. When stories concern conflict between peasant and peasant, they bear the mark of his master knowledge.²⁹

After 1930 Premchand's village stories are generally more self-contained. They are not programmed to Gandhian to Tolstoyan prescriptions. Heroes do not travel from town to the village to convince case-hardened landlords and moneylenders why they should forego their ruthlessness and become fatherly for free. Thus no pink glow on the fictional horizon suggests hope for tomorrow. The outcastes and poor are on their own. One reads the stories as if looking in and seeing everything without being seen oneself. The comedy and the tragedy are unpostured.³⁰

Some critics see in this change simply the fact that Premchand was becoming disillusioned with Gandhism and interested in more revolutionary ideas. On the other hand, Premchand's own words on the writing of the short story at this period show that he had begun seriously to question the validity of using fiction as a deliberate arm of legislature or moral reform.³¹ One could hope for those kinds of things, he felt, but let them now come into the story as cleverly disguised fringe benefits.

During the last five or six years of his life Premchand wrote a series of stories sometimes connected with village life but also often set in city or town. These may stand through time as among his best writings. The characters appear to have taken over their own world, the creator to have concealed himself. Instead of abstract themes sent down from above, such as "In order to get rid of the British we must be strong and brave" or "The landlord should

be self-denying in order that the peasant may get a decent living," the new stories are content with smaller, more concrete bits of the great truths: "How can an older brother maintain his pride and authority over a younger brother who is smarter than he is?" or "What happens to the fixed principles of a young socialist when he goes for a weekend to a rich landlord's house?" or "What are the reactions of certain passers-by at sight of a respectable-looking, middle-class girl sleeping on a bench in a public park in broad daylight?"³²

One such example will suffice. The story of the big brother and younger brother ("Bare bhāī sāhab") is seen through the observant eyes of the latter. The boys go to the same school. The younger brother plays all the time and never studies, while the older stays in his room and pores over his books. Nevertheless, when the examinations are held, the younger brother always passes, and the older fails. This goes on year after year until only one class separates them. The elder brother scolds the younger severely for not studying. When several classes still separated them, the elder says:

"Don't go by the fact that I failed. When you come to my class, even your teeth will begin to sweat when you have to chew the iron gram of algebra and geometry and English history. It's not easy to remember the names of the kings. At least eight Henrys lived. Do you think it's easy to remember what happened in the time of which Henry? If you write Henry VII instead of Henry VIII, you'll lose all your points. . . . There have been dozens of Jameses, dozens of Williams, scores of Charleses. Your mind begins to go round and round. You get cyclone sickness. . . . And geometry--for that you'll need the help of God! Write a-j-b instead of a-b-j and all your marks will be lowered. . . . If you eat lentils-rice-bread instead of bread-rice-lentils, what's so special about that? But do the examiners care?"³³

But when the younger brother has almost caught up to the big brother and has proved capable of passing history and geometry with very little study, the elder is forced to alter his sermons. He turns to other arguments such as: after all, education is not everything. And finally, one day when he catches his younger brother flying kites with some bazaar youths, he shouts:

"Don't you even respect the fact that you're no longer in a low class and that you've reached the eighth class and are only one class behind me? A person should consider his position. There was a time when people who passed the eighth class became assistant *tahsildārs*. How many middle-school graduates don't I know who are Class-1 deputy magistrates or superintendents. . . . How many eighth-class passers are now our leaders and editors. . . . And you, you come into the eighth class and play with bazaar loafers."³⁴

The reader laughs and sympathizes. As time passes, year after year, the older brother keeps failing and is forced to devise new sermons as he twists and maneuvers to hold on to his slipping pride. At the same time his bafflement in the face of a curriculum that includes all the Henrys and Charleses but no Ashokas or Akbars offers--without the author's outrage showing--a theme on freedom that can capture a reader's feelings as well as his credence.

Premchand's name is now a part of Indian history. Critics with pens like picks and shovels will dig around among his writings for symbols. Politicians will call attention to his name in order to draw attention to their own. Children, under duress, will have to read him in class and graduate perhaps

remembering only his name. So his name will somehow last. Whether it will be honored and his work loved will be seen more clearly on his bicentenary in 2080 A.D. Then Premchand will have found his own level of remembrance in history. By then it will be known whether he is remembered only by his statues or if he lives on in much-thumbed paperbacks.

Notes

1. Amritrai, *Premcañd: kalam kã sipāhī* (Premchand: Soldier of the Pen) (Allahabad: Hans Prakashan, 1962).

2. Ibid., p. 143. When he was thirty-five years old his salary was Rs. 50 and then sixty. But he was not unshrewd. Such paychecks only drove him to find a house in a poor Muslim quarter that rented for just Rs. 4 a month.

3. Dayananda Saraswati: for a note on him, see p. 53.

4. Pyare Lal Shakir, in *Premcañd smṛti* (Premchand: In Memoriam), ed. Amritrai (Allahabad: Hans Prakashan, 1959), p. 130. Shakir says he came to visit Premchand and found him lying on his stomach writing furiously, his feet waving about in the air as if keeping time with his pen. He claims Premchand did not like sitting at a desk unless he had to.

5. *Vividh prasāṅg* (Miscellaneous Topics), ed. Amritrai, 3 vols. (Allahabad: Hans Prakashan, 1962).

6. Amritrai, *Premcañd: kalam kã sipāhī*, pp. 484-85.

7. *Kuch vicār* (Some Thoughts) ed. Amritrai (Allahabad: Saraswati Press, 1961), p. 30. "The idealists," he wrote, "ask what is the value of showing the realistic shape of the real? We see that with our own eyes. . . . Idealists do not regard literature as a mirror of society, but as a light. The ancient literature of India supported this idealism. Of course, realism should be mingled with it that it may not go far from the truth."

8. *Soz-e-vaṭān* (Passion of the Fatherland) (1908; rpt. Allahabad: Hans Prakashan, 1961), pp. 1-14.

9. See respectively "Rājā hardaul" (King Hardaul), *Mānsarovar*, 8 vols. (Allahabad: Saraswati Press, 1962), 6:12-26; "Rānī sārāñdhā," (Queen Sarandha), 45-62; "Maryāda kī vedī" (Worshipper of the Proprieties), 98-114; and "Pāp kã agnikunḍ" (The Fire of Sin), 127-38.

10. Montagu-Chelmsford reforms: revisions in laws promised to India during World War I; these were to serve as the basis for the 1919 Government of India Act, which introduced the concept of dyarchy.

11. See respectively "Dussāhas" (Brazeness), *Mānsarovar*, 8:202-10; "Ākhīrī tohfā" (The Final Gift), *Gupt dhān* (Hidden Treasure), 2 vols. (Allahabad: Hans Prakashan, 1962), 2:81-93; and "Suhāg kī sārī" (The Wedding Sari), *Mānsarovar*, 7:270-79.

12. *Mānsarovar*, 8:202-203.

Naram (soft) and *garam* (hot) were names given to the moderate and extremist groups of the Indian nationalist movement led by G. K. Gokhale and B. G.

Tilak. The word "extremist" has been inflated since then. For a note on Gokhale and Tilak, see p. 121.

Bengal partition, swadeshi movement: the partition of Bengal into two administrative units took place in 1905; resentment by the Bengalis was so deep that leaders such as Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925) agitated against the partition by advocating the use of *svadeśhī*, i.e., indigenous manufactured products, and the boycott of British goods; the partition was annulled in 1911.

13. Khilafat "problem": a movement among Indian Muslims after World War I which opposed the dismemberment of the Turkish Caliphate.

14. See respectively "Maiku" (a proper name), *Samar yātrā* (The Battle March), 7th ed. (1930; rpt. Allahabad: Saraswati Press, 1953), pp. 95-100; "Cakmā" (Deception), *Mānsarovar*, 6:220-26; and "Holī kā upahār" (The Holi Gift), *Kaṣṭan* (The Shroud), 10th ed. (Allahabad: Hans Prakashan, 1961), pp. 111-17.

15. See respectively "Istifā" (Resignation), *Mānsarovar*, 5:321-32; "Vicitra holī" (The Strange Holi), 3:227-32; "Lāl fītā" (Red Tape), *Prem caturthī*, 2d ed. (1929; rpt. Benaras: Saraswati Press, 1959), pp. 48-72 (*caturthī* refers to the fourth day of a lunar fortnight); and "Mandir aur masjid" (Temple and Mosque), *Gupt dhan*, 2:156-69.

16. For a discussion of humor in Premchand's language, see Michael C. Shapiro's "The Language of Humor in Premchand's Short Stories," pp. 99-111.

17. See respectively "Paic parameśvar" (Inspired Power of the Panchayat), *Mānsarovar*, 7:152-64, and "Iśvarī nyāy" (Divine Justice), 5:248-68.

18. See respectively "Bare ghar kī betī" (Daughter of a Respectable Home), *Mānsarovar*, 7:142-51, and "Algojhā" (Separate Arrangements), *Grāmy jivān kī kahāniyān* (Stories of Village Life) (Allahabad: Saraswati Press, 1961), pp. 13-38.

19. "Unmād" (Insanity), *Mānsarovar*, 2:120-41.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

21. Sita, the wife of Rama, and Savitri, the bride of Satyavan, are classical heroines of Hindu legend. Their utter devotion to their husbands cannot be matched. For discussions of various aspects of Premchand's women in this volume, see Suresht Renjen Bald, "Power and Powerlessness in Rural and Urban Women in Premchand's *Godān*," pp. 1-15; Nirmala Jain, "Women in Premchand's Writing," pp. 40-44; and Ranjini Obeyesekere, "Women's Rights and Roles in Premchand's *Godān*" pp. 57-64.

22. See respectively "Nayā vivāh" (New Marriage), *Mānsarovar*, 2:335-71; "Nairāśy-līlā" (The Play of Despair), 3:53-65; and "Ek ānc kī kasar" (A Dwindled Flame), 87-95.

23. Gita Lal, *Premchand kā nārī citraṇ* (Premchand's Portrayal of Women) (Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Samsar, 1965), p. 9.

24. *Mānsarovar*, 3:119-20.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

26. See respectively "Satyāgraha" (Truth-Force), *ibid.*, pp. 282-96; "Neyur" (a proper name), 2:275-85; and "Mukti-mārg" (The Path of Salvation), 3:233-44.

27. *Godān* (The Gift of a Cow) (1936; rpt. Allahabad: Saraswati Press, 1972); this work has been translated into English twice: *Godān*, trans. Jai Ratan and P. Lal (Bombay: Jaico, 1957) and by Gordon C. Roadarmel as *The Gift of a Cow: A translation of the Hindi novel, Godaan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968).

28. "Updeś" (The Lesson), *Mānsarovar*, 8:279-300.

29. "Mukti-mārg" (The Path of Salvation), *ibid.*, 3:233-44. See also "Balidān" (Sacrifice), 8:64-73.

30. For example: "Pūs kī rāt" (A January Night), *Mānsarovar*, 1:157-63), "Kafan" (The Shroud), *Kafan*, pp. 5-14); "Dūdh kā dām" (The Price of Milk), *Mānsarovar*, 2:212-22; "Sadgati" (A Good Place in the Hereafter), *Mānsarovar*, 4:18-26); and "Ṭhakur kā kuāñ" (The Landlord's Well), *Mānsarovar*, 1:139-42.

31. *Mānsarovar*, 1:5-11.

32. See respectively "Bare bhāī sāhab" (My Big Brother), *ibid.*, pp. 88-98; "Nasā" (Intoxication), pp. 113-21; and "Manovṛti" (Mental States), pp. 331-38.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Tahsīldār: a collector of revenue in a *tahsīl*, an administrative sub-division of a district.

