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## **PREMCHAND AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT: NAVIGATING TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION OR CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

This article examines the influence of Enlightenment thought on the literary oeuvre of Munshi Premchand, focusing on his navigation of tradition and transformation within the socio-political context of colonial India. Premchand was a very active writer who sought out new forms and ways to use artistic language and narrative to convey the themes that inspired him. The free form of the novel, the study novel, and the factual novel – all of which are quite popular today – were essentially established by him. Being at the level of the demands of his era was one of the most crucial aspects of his creative output. The roots of realistic literature, which reflects the process of man's awakening and is primarily linked to upbringing, conventional foundations, and beliefs and biases, were established during the national liberation fight. However, because it started during a time when the spiritual forces of the entire population were under tremendous strain, the author frequently left out crucial social, everyday, and psychological details that were crucial to the development of a person's character. These details surfaced later, when things had calmed down and it was necessary to take a closer look at oneself and one's surroundings. By engaging with Enlightenment ideals such as reason, individualism, and social justice, Premchand critiques traditional norms while advocating for progressive change. Through a detailed analysis of key works, including *Godan*, *Nirmala*, and *Kafan*, the study highlights how Premchand's narratives reflect the struggles of individuals grappling with the shifting dynamics of modernity. This exploration underscores Premchand's significance in Indian literature as a bridge between cultural heritage and modern thought, revealing the enduring relevance of his insights in contemporary discussions about identity and social reform.

**Keywords:** enlightenment, novel, modern novel, Premchand, realism, humanism, society, literature.

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## **Премчанд және ағарту: дәстүр мен трансформация немесе сабақтастық пен өзгерісті шарлау**

Бұл мақалада Ағартушылық ойының Мунши Премчандтың әдеби шығармашылығына әсері қарастырылып, оның отаршыл Үндістанның әлеуметтік-саяси контекстіндегі дәстүр мен трансформациядағы шарлауына назар аударылады. Премчанд өзін шабыттандырған тақырыптарды жеткізу үшін көркем тіл мен баяндаудың жаңа формалары мен жолдарын іздестірген өте белсенді жазушы болды. Романның еркін түрін, оқу романын және фактілік романды – бүгінде өте танымал болып табылатын романның барлығын негізінен ол белгіледі. Өз дәуірінің талабы деңгейінде болу оның шығармашылық табысының ең шешуші аспектілерінің бірі болды. Адамның ояну процесін бейнелейтін, ең алдымен тәрбиемен, шартты негіздермен, наным-сеніммен байланыстыратын әдебиеттің түп-тамыры ұлт-азаттық күресі кезінде қаланған. Дегенмен, ол бүкіл халықтың рухани күштері орасан зор шиеленіске ұшыраған кезеңде басталғандықтан, автор адам мінезінің дамуы үшін маңызды әлеуметтік, күнделікті және психологиялық бөлшектерді жиі қалдырды. Бұл егжей-тегжейлер кейінірек, жағдай тынышталып, өзіне және айналасына мұқият қарау керек болған кезде пайда болды. Премчанд парасаттылық, индивидуализм және әлеуметтік әділеттілік сияқты ағартушылық идеалдармен айналыса отырып, прогрессивті өзгерістерді жақтай отырып, дәстүрлі нормаларды сынайды. *Годан*, *Нирмала* және *Кафанды* қоса алғанда, негізгі жұмыстарды егжей-тегжейлі талдау арқылы зерттеу Премчандтың әңгімелері қазіргі заманның өзгермелі динамикасымен күресетін адамдардың күресін көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу Премчандтың үнді әдебиетіндегі мәдени мұра мен заманауи ой арасындағы көпір ретіндегі маңыздылығын көрсетеді, оның сәйкестік пен әлеуметтік реформалар туралы қазіргі пікірталастардағы түсініктерінің тұрақты өзектілігін көрсетеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** ағартушылық, роман, заманауи роман, Премчанд, реализм, гуманизм, қоғам, әдебиет.

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### **Премчанд и просвещение: навигация по традициям и трансформации или преемственности и переменам**

В этой статье рассматривается влияние идей Просвещения на литературное творчество Мунши Премчанда, уделяя особое внимание его навигации по традициям и трансформации в социально-политическом контексте колониальной Индии. Как писатель Премчанд был чрезвычайно динамичен в выражении волновавших его идей, в поисках новых форм и средств художественного повествования и языка. По существу, он заложил основы свободной формы романа, романа-исследования, романа-документа, столь популярных и сегодня. В этом проявилась одна из важнейших черт его творческой деятельности, быть на уровне требований своего времени. В период национально-освободительной борьбы были заложены основы реалистической литературы, отражающей процесс пробуждения человека, во многом связанного воспитанием, воззрениями и предрассудками с традиционными устоями. Но поскольку он начался в эпоху колоссального напряжения духовных сил всего народа, то нередко писатель опускал многие важные социально-бытовые, психологические детали в формировании характера человека, которые вышли на поверхность в другое время, когда обстановка стабилизировалась и появилась необходимость более внимательно заглянуть и в себя, и в свое окружение. Занимаясь идеалами Просвещения, такими как разум, индивидуализм и социальная справедливость, Премчанд критикует традиционные нормы, одновременно выступая за прогрессивные изменения. Благодаря подробному анализу ключевых работ, включая Годана, Нирмалу и Кафан, исследование подчеркивает, как повествования Премчанда отражают борьбу людей, борющихся с меняющейся динамикой современности. Это исследование подчеркивает значимость Премчанда в индийской литературе как моста между культурным наследием и современной мыслью, раскрывая непреходящую актуальность его идей в современных дискуссиях об идентичности и социальных реформах.

**Ключевые слова:** Просветительство, роман, современный роман, Премчанд, реализм, гуманизм, общество, литература.

### **Introduction**

Dhanpatrai Srivastava, better known as Munshi Premchand, is a titan of Indian literature, specializing in Hindi literature. As Jayendra Kumar said: "Premchand is the greatest writer of Hindi literature. We Hindi speakers cannot appreciate it accurately: we stand too close. It's like coming close to a large painting and trying to immediately grasp with your eye the variety and depth of its colors and its vital content. I believe those who return to Premchand's work ten or twenty years later, or those who translate it into other languages, will understand Premchand better, appreciate him more deeply, and do him justice. Premchand will gain widespread recognition in other languages as well."

This opinion about Premchand, expressed by the famous Hindi prose writer Jayendra Kumar (1905-1988), has been fully confirmed. Throughout the 20th century, Premchand remained one of the most significant figures in modern Hindi literature. Premchand is one of the most powerful and authentic accounts of the national movement and people's lives: their aspirations, struggles, victories and defeats, injustice, courage, cowardice, and in particular the community life of rural India (Singh K.P., 1976).

Two significant events were commemorated by Indian authors in the early 1980s: the first was the centennial of the first Hindi-language books being published ("Pariksha Guru" or "Life is a Teacher"). The first was the centennial of the birth of the distinguished Hindi prose writer Premchand; the second was the publication of this work by Lala Srinivas Das in 1882, which acted as the catalyst for the development of this genre. The second date went beyond the literary realm of the Hindi-speaking region, became a momentous occasion for the entire Indian society, and attracted considerable attention from outside the country, whereas the first date was only commemorated by a few articles in periodicals and remained largely the purview of literary scholars and critics.

Readers of many ages and cultural backgrounds find resonance in Premchand's writings. Millions of people admired Premchand because of his literary prowess, social criticism, and deep compassion for the common man. The aspirations and struggles of the average Indian are often reflected in Premchand's direct and honest prose. Through his stories, he addressed a variety of social issues, offering poignant insights into the human condition, such as poverty, colonial oppression, gender inequality, and the caste system.

Because of Premchand's deft storytelling and nuanced characterizations, readers were captivated and able to understand the joys and sufferings of his characters. Premchand's stories have a startling depth and compassion to them, whether they show the struggles of a struggling farmer, an ostracized lady, or the moral dilemmas that people face in a rapidly changing world.

His writings connect with larger philosophical currents that influenced contemporary thought in addition to reflecting the sociopolitical realities of his era. One of the most important factors in comprehending Premchand's literary achievements is the Enlightenment, a movement distinguished by a focus on reason, individual rights, and social reform.

In the context of Indian literature, the Enlightenment is extremely relevant, especially during the colonial era when Indian intellectuals' perceptions of modernity and social justice started to shift. Premchand's stories frequently address the enduring effects of tradition while also promoting change. His depiction of characters torn between the demands of cultural heritage and the hopes for a more just society exemplifies this contradiction.

Since, literature cannot belong in the category of "pure art" as many works, topics, themes, and content are still influenced by real-world events (Gavryushina N.D., 2006), this paper posits that Premchand's works serve as a critical lens through which one can examine the interplay between tradition and transformation, informed by Enlightenment ideals. By analyzing key texts, such as *Godan*, *Nirmala*, and *Kafan*, the study will illustrate how Premchand navigates these complex themes, revealing his role as a mediator of social reform. The central thesis of this paper is that Premchand not only reflects the struggles of his characters against the backdrop of colonialism but also articulates a vision for a more just society, rooted in the principles of reason and human dignity. In other words, the central thesis of this paper is to demonstrate the impact of the educational literature of Premchand on societal transformation, examine inequality within literary contexts, and highlight the aspirations of the populace to change their nation, pursue education, and resist colonial rule.

In the following sections, the article will delve into the historical context that frames Premchand's work, the specific Enlightenment ideals that resonate within his narratives, and the tension between tradition and modernity that defines his literary legacy. Through this exploration, we aim to highlight the enduring significance of Premchand's contribu-

tions to the broader discourse on cultural identity and social reform. Thus, this article aims to reveal the role of Premchand as a mediator of social reform and illustrate how Indian society has changed as a result of enlightened literature, as well as how society has modernized, woken up the dark, and turned away from poverty in favor of education as a result of Premchand's contributions.

## Materials and methods

The sociopolitical climate of colonial India was significantly shaped in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Indian society was significantly impacted by British colonial control, which resulted in notable shifts in social hierarchies, cultural customs, and economic systems. A heightened sense of national identity and the rise of movements calling for independence and social change characterized this era. In this context, Enlightenment principles started to seep into Indian intellectual thought, offering a foundation for challenging established conventions and imagining a society with greater equality.

According to Sudhir Chandra (1985), the works of late nineteenth-century Hindi writers Pratap Narain Mishra (1856–1894), Radha Charan Goswami (1859–1925), and Harishchandra Bhartendu (1850–1885) reflected a suppressed social consciousness based on ideas and stereotypes (Castaing A. 2019).

The author's depiction of the repressed mental pictures and the condition of the dark people is not unjustified. His goal was to change individuals by showing them who they were.

It should be noted, nevertheless, that Western education was a major factor in introducing Enlightenment ideas to Indian intellectuals. Inspired by Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke and Rousseau, notable individuals like Pratap Narain Mishra (1856–1894), Radha Charan Goswami (1859–1925), Harishchandra Bhartendu (1850–1885), and Raja Ram Mohan Roy started promoting social reforms, such as women's rights and the elimination of caste-based discrimination.

As the struggle for independence gained momentum, writers and intellectuals began to reflect on the implications of Enlightenment ideals for Indian society. The discourse on nationalism was intertwined with discussions of rights, justice, and the role of the individual within the community. Premchand is among the writers from India whose works heralded a new chapter in the history of their country's literary canon. Just like for other authors,

for Premchand also the experience of world classics was especially important. Among them are the names of Charles Dickens, W. Thackeray, W. Hugo, L. Tolstoy, A. Chekhov, M. Gorky, A. Kuprin, R. Rolland, A. France, B. Shaw, and others. Premchand's awareness of everything that related to literature, not only Hindi, but also other literatures of India and Europe, wrote Jainendra Kumar. "I was surprised at how deeply he comprehended the trends in the development of modern literature. In European literature, he knew all the most worthy things, and not only knew but carefully studied, trying to understand these works from the inside" (Kumar J., 1980).

Urdu literature served as the foundation for Premchand's writing during the early stages of his career. Premchand was a Hindu by birth and a member of the Kayastha (scribes) caste, who historically spoke Urdu in their line of work. The author's education was in Urdu. His first exposure to literature, in general, came from literary translations into Urdu and the works of well-known Urdu prose writers from the final quarter of the 1800s. Long after he started writing in Hindi and creating his style in a new literary language, Premchand started reading prose in Hindi.

Premchand, nevertheless, maintained his connections to Urdu literature by attentively following the writings of all notable Urdu authors. His works were published in both Hindi and Urdu, and he frequently used Urdu in his lengthy correspondence. During his artistic career, Premchand advocated for harmony between Muslims and Hindus. For him, it represented a powerful force in the fight to eliminate colonial control while also helping the majority of Indians advance spiritually. Premchand underlined that Muslims and Hindus speak the same spoken language, Hindustani. To produce writing authentically vernacular, accessible, and intelligible to both the Hindu and Muslim segments of the Indian community, he made every effort to combine the two literary styles of Hindustani, Hindi, and Urdu. All modern Urdu and Hindi authors were urged to do this by Premchand.

Generally speaking, in the early decades of the 1900s, India's national liberation movement assumed a national character. To survive, the author had to create works that would convey the suffering, grief, and hopes of millions of people fighting for their freedom. This required an Indian writer like Premchand to balance the intricacies of their cultural background with the pursuit of novel social ideas.

Thus, Indian scholars continue to pay close attention to the topic of how much Premchand's inventiveness reflects an engagement with Enlightenment principles, demonstrating a commitment to rational thought and a belief in the potential for human improvement, while simultaneously drawing upon the rich tapestry of Indian cultural heritage. In this context, Premchand's works can be seen as a response to both the colonial situation, cultural heritage, and the Enlightenment's call for reform. This duality is central to understanding his narratives and the transformative power of literature in shaping social consciousness.

Premchand is still regarded by Indian writers and literary scholars as one of the most authoritative prose writers when it comes to the fundamentals of the modern Hindi realistic novel, even though many talented realist writers entered the field after him and greatly contributed to the development of the novel (primarily through the mastery of new artistic techniques, genre techniques, and stylistics). Premchand had an acute sense of time, history, or, to put it another way, modernity, as almost all scholars have stressed. Shivakumar Mishra said, "Premchand's amazing gift lies in the fact that he saw those forces that were just emerging and those that were already leaving the stage of social life" (Mishra, 1975).

This article employs a textual analysis methodology to explore the intricate relationship between Munshi Premchand's literary works and Enlightenment ideals, focusing on how these elements navigate the dynamics of tradition and transformation in colonial India. The approach is multi-faceted, allowing for a comprehensive examination of thematic, narrative, and stylistic elements within Premchand's key texts.

#### The Objective of the Study:

The article's methodology is to assess the main topics, creative approaches, and societal context of Premchand's works through a methodical examination of his literary legacy.

#### 1. Selection of Research Methods

The following approaches are used to achieve the objectives of the study:

- Finding recurrent motifs, topics, and ideas in Premchand's writings through substantive analysis is known as qualitative text analysis.

- The study of works in the context of India's sociopolitical circumstances in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is known as the historical and cultural method.

- Comparative literary method: Premchand's writings are compared to those of his contemporaries.



raries and literary examples from around the globe.

- Sociological approach: Examining how his writings reflect societal issues including poverty, inequality, and the caste system.

## 2. Selection of Sources and Materials

- Premchand's writings (essays, short tales, and novels) will be used in the study. As the most significant novels, *Godan* and *Karmabhoomi* will receive particular attention.

- Articles and monographs that are critical: an examination of academic publications that focus on Premchand's work, together with reviews and summaries of analysis.

- Historical documents: Premchand lived and worked in colonial India, where resources that capture its social and political reality are used.

## 3. Research phases: Gathering and evaluating primary data; reading and analyzing important literature.

Contextualization is the process of connecting a work's content to its historical and cultural setting.

Themes and motifs are categorized, emphasizing key concepts like humanism, the fight for independence, and critiques of the caste system.

- Generalization of findings: putting the study's key findings into conclusions regarding the importance of Premchand's writings for Indian literature and society.

## 4. Rationale for the Methods Selected

The complexity of Premchand's thoughts can be revealed through qualitative research, while sociological and historical-cultural approaches offer a chance to comprehend how his writings represent societal tensions and prevailing ideals. Premchand's place in the global literary landscape can be evaluated with the use of the comparative literary method.

## Results and discussions

The history of every state has the imprint of the so-called "Era of Enlightenment." The premise that reason and science are necessary to understand the true nature of society and man gave rise to a broad cultural movement known as Enlightenment.

This period of intellectual progress based on the universe, social construction, the advancement of civilization, the critical function of the human mind, and the power of science had a significant impact on the worldview of individuals who were subject to governmental oppression. These ideas had a significant influence on social life, necessitating reforms, revolutions, and modernization.

Similar to liberalism, the Enlightenment is a ma-

major source of ideas in contemporary politics. Most of these concepts started with the belief that democracy and political freedom ought to be the main tenets of modern civilization. Numerous laws and constitutions, administrative structures, religious tolerance, capitalism, market mechanisms, and the scientific method were all founded on these ideas.

It is clear from analyzing Munshi Premchand's writings that his stories are also heavily influenced by Enlightenment principles. In addition to permeating his narrative, ideas like reason, individual rights, and social justice also influence how he depicts characters and their conflicts with social conventions. Premchand places his characters into a framework that questions established structures and promotes a more equal society by deftly examining these subjects.

Activities that would help people understand the internal and external causes of crisis and impotence, become conscious of their colonial status, and finally help them find answers are specifically linked to Premchand's well-developed sense of enlightened ideals.

The writer's creative intuition guided him in the correct direction. He exerted great effort to make the book one of the most useful tools for researching and comprehending society and humanity. Premchand bitterly observed in one of his letters that no Hindi writer had yet made a special study of any one of the various social environments that make up Indian civilization. "I took on the peasants," he wrote, "but there are still so many social layers that need to be depicted in literature. Nobody has touched the sadhu yet. Among us, fantasy reigns supreme, not experience. And all this is because we still cannot master literature professionally" (Premchand, 1962).

In 1909, British colonial officers in Kanpur stole a small collection of stories called *Soz-e-watan* (Love of the Motherland) and burned it in the open. Dhanpatrai Srivastav, a young, aspiring writer at the time, signed the collection under the pen name "Navabrai." Furthermore, the five short stories in this collection deeply alarmed government censorship agents, even though he was a little-known and despised author. At first glance, it seemed that the author was following a tried-and-true path: the same fairy tale plot, the same traditional presentational approach. However, it became evident after reading the story that the censors knew the author was more interested in enlightening and patriotic ideals than in love stories.

The tales exalted love for one's country, and it was declared that everyone's greatest responsibil-

ity was to serve it (Balin, 1962). In colonial India, where slavish humility was encouraged and maintained, they were considered seditious beliefs, and the government censorship apparatus resolutely suppressed them. The aspiring writer was given a severe and severe warning.

Threats and fines, however, did not affect Dhanpatraya Srivastav. He eventually stopped signing under the moniker “Nawabrai” and switched to Premchand. The author entered the history of Urdu and Hindi literature as well as the history of international literature with this moniker.

Subthemes about bribery, the dowry system, and “unequal” marriage are interwoven with the main plot. Premchand emphasized the value of logical reasoning in questioning social norms, even though he never attempted to offer utopian answers to these very real issues. Premchand emphasizes the transformative power of Enlightenment ideas in bringing about societal change by presenting characters that use reason to examine their surroundings.

In general, he was fully aware that these problems could not be eliminated without fundamental changes in the social structure and the people’s outlook. At this point, Premchand’s perspective was widely divergent from Gandhi’s who in 1921 suggested an ideal solution to the problem of prostitution for example. As he states: “If all the sisters of your class in Hindustan would leave this dirty job and take to spinning instead, India would very speedily be lifted from her present degradation” (Rai, 1979).

To alter the social structure and the populace’s perspective, Premchand instead strongly emphasized reason and logical reasoning, individual rights and agency, social fairness, and ethical responsibility. The Indian people were motivated by Premchand to struggle for their independence, alter the social order, and alter their perspective. He used all of his creativity to do this. As he witnessed poverty, suffering, humiliation, and tears, he frequently pondered what a writer could do to better the lives of those around him. Despite their differences, Gandhi’s early political initiatives – which were mostly aimed at improving the lot of the peasantry – had a significant impact on Premchand. He immediately entered the fray. In 1921, Premchand wrote an article titled “The Benefits of Swaraj” (“Swaraj ka Fayda”), in which he fully shared Gandhi’s views and advocated the course of action he suggested. This was during the period of the national liberation movement’s rise in 1912–1922 when a widespread campaign of civil disobedience spread throughout India under Gandhi’s leadership. The movement

started by Gandhi was unique: not violence, but perseverance in truth (Satyagraha) was to become its main driving force. Gandhi asserted that this type of conflict was the result of a religious obligation. All of these ideas were linked to Indian traditional beliefs and had the power to elevate people’s spiritual states at the deepest levels. But unlike many other Indian writers, Premchand was infused with the progressive spirit of his humanistic goals rather than the tragedy of Gandhi’s holy search. He cleverly adopted one of Gandhi’s most significant democratic principles – that the people are the bearers of moral ideals and that the life of the average person is complicated, fascinating, and significant to study – while never concentrating on the religious aspect of the Gandhian worldview.

Three major periods in Premchand’s creative output are typically distinguished by scholars. The first spans the early 1900s until roughly 1919–1920; the second spans the start of the national liberation movement’s ascent in 1919–1922 till the end of the 1920s; and the third spans Premchand’s final six years, from 1930 to 1936. Since each of these eras is intimately related to the others, it makes sense for one to follow the other. To better understand the development of Premchand’s innovative ideas and his function as a social change mediator; let’s take a closer look at each of them.

In addition to his early years as a writer, Premchand spent the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century working as a tutor, teacher, school inspector, and small-time government job.

Premchand had a childhood desire to graduate from college; however, this dream was never fulfilled. For Premchand, life became a “university.” Premchand’s primary sources of knowledge and life experience that inspired his writing were his work as a teacher, his extensive life observations, his ongoing self-education, and above all his intense interest in Indian and international literature.

Already in the first years of his creative activity, Premchand was acutely aware of the discrepancy between the canons of old prose and the new requirements of the time. He was deeply disturbed by the gap that existed between life and literature, and, consequently, by the complete unpreparedness of the Indian reader to perceive serious literature. More than once in his letters, Premchand noted: “... it is difficult to imagine how gullible and I our reader is, brought up on fairy-tale literature about beautiful princesses and princes” (Vajpeyi, 1963).

One of Premchand’s primary goals in his work is to raise a new reader – one for whom the world of

a fairy tale would lose its appeal and real life would gain its greatest strength. Many years later, in his book of memoirs about Premchand, his close friend and coworker Jainendra Kumar would praise this writer's merit. "Premchand was the one who was able to take the reader from one realm to another. He served as the reader's spiritual guide, mentor, and instructor. The writer had to devote his entire life to this enormous project, which depleted both his physical and spiritual resources" (Kumar, 1980).

Premchand was well acquainted with the life of the people of the vast regions of the United Provinces of Northern India, which, as Jawaharlal Nehru aptly noted, "had long been considered the heart of Hindustan." Due to the nature of his service, for many years he constantly traveled to many cities and villages in this region. Sometimes he lived for some time in cities such as Lucknow, Kanpur, Benares, and Allahabad, but most of Premchand's life was spent in the village where he was born, with which his teaching activities and his entire writing and life destiny were connected. Much later, at the end of his creative activity, in a letter to the writer Banarasidas Chaturvedi, Premchand will note: "I am glad that my fate turned out in such a way that I shared the fate of poor people – this is what allowed me to understand them, to understand the true values of life" (Premchand, 1962).

As a result, traditional values are emphasized in many of Premchand's stories, highlighting the importance of morality and cultural legacy in the lives of his characters. Tales like "Kafan" and "Gaban" explore the moral quandaries that the main characters encounter, frequently finding themselves torn between following their interests and conforming to social and familial norms. The conflict between the prevailing values of individuality and self-determination and the long-standing traditions that define their lives is embodied in the characters' struggles. For example, Premchand's novel was expressed in the writer's decisive protest against the widespread custom of *dahej* (lit., bride's dowry), which was supposed to correspond to the amount spent by the groom's parents on his education. It is clear what a heavy burden this custom placed on those families where there were only daughters. In Hindi literature, Premchand was one of the first writers to oppose this tradition, but, unfortunately, it cannot be eradicated even today. This is evidenced by works of art and frequent press reports about tragic incidents occurring precisely for this reason. Premchand tackled a subject that almost every family faced in "Shelter", so it's no wonder the book sparked such intense

reader interest. The author exposes the reader to numerous social and political issues about urban and rural life, as well as colonial rule while detailing the struggles of a single family.

In 1918, Premchand's first novel, "Shelter" ("Se-vasadan"), became a notable milestone in the development of his work. The novel was published in the *Saraswati* magazine and was enthusiastically received by critics and readers. And, as a consequence of this success, in the future, almost all of Premchand's novels will be published in two editions – in Hindi and Urdu. It is interesting to note that the first version of the novel "Shelter" was first written in Urdu under the title "Bazaar of Female Beauty, or a Bride for Sale" ("Bazaar-e-husn"), but was published later than in Hindi and did not have such success. Perhaps this was explained by the fact that in Urdu literature the reader still very well remembered one of the best novels of the famous Urdu writer Mirza Ruswa (1857-1931) "Um-rao-Jan-Ada" (1901) (in the Russian translation "Dancer", 1960) (Sukhochev, 1971). The subject of both books was the same: women's helplessness in Indian culture. As a result of several mishaps, the heroines of books ended themselves in the role of a "fallen woman", a dancer who captivates the attention of affluent people. Both women's worldviews and their respective destinies differed. Premchand's work was fully entrenched in the world of an orthodox Hindu household, whereas Ruswa depicted the tragic fate of a girl from an affluent Muslim family. While Premchand concentrated the reader's attention on the issues facing his modern civilization, Ruswa transported the reader to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While the bad fate of Suman, the heroine of the novel "Shelter", was the result of social difficulty, the sad vagaries of Umrao-Jan-Ada's (the heroine of Ruswa) life were primarily due to chance (she was abducted from her home as a child). Inspector Krishnachandra, her father, a lowly clerk, was unable to give his daughters a life that was befitting of their upbringing. All of the sad and awful things that happened in his family had their roots here.

Premchand's characters often serve as vessels of transformation, navigating the complexities of tradition and modernity in their quests for identity and meaning. The internal conflicts they face – whether it be the conflict of duty versus desire or the struggle against systemic injustices – highlight the broader societal changes occurring in India.

In general, Premchand's efforts in developing new issues caused a natural reaction among the reading public. The writer had a new reader, more

attentive and sensitive to the questions that he raised in his works. This interest arose primarily among young students, who at that time were still very few, but for Premchand this fact was of great importance. A few years later, it was from this environment that the ranks of writers of Hindi literature began to swell. Many of these young people, who became acquainted with the works of Premchand while still at school, subsequently submitted their first literary experiments to his judgment. In this regard, let us cite a very characteristic statement by one of the prominent figures of modern Hindi literature, poet and translator Harivanshrai Bachchan. In his book of memoirs, he wrote: “As works captivated readers. The first time I came across his novel “Shelter” was when I was in the seventh or eighth grade. The book turned out to be so interesting that I could not begin to do anything else until I finished reading it to the end. And since then I have been very closely following all of Premchand’s new works. I looked for his books and despaired when I could not find them. I became a fan of his work” (Bachchan, 1962).

Ultimately, the relationship between tradition and modernity in Premchand’s work is dialogic rather than oppositional. He does not present modernity as a straightforward rejection of tradition; instead, he illustrates how the two can coexist, influencing and reshaping one another. The nuances of his narratives invite readers to reconsider the binaries of tradition and modernity, emphasizing that cultural evolution is a complex process characterized by *continuity and change*.

For example, the emotional appeal from Premchand such as “the mission of a writer is not to decorate and entertain the society of the elite. Don’t humiliate a writer with such a role!” (Amritray, 1963) – conveys not only the atmosphere of the nationwide upsurge of the period of the national liberation struggle. It also came from the spirit of the democratic traditions of Indian literature. Suffice it to recall the medieval Indian bhakti poets, who embodied in their work the idea of equality of people before God.

Also, Premchand’s novel, from the point of view of its organization, structure, and psychology of characters and characters, relies to a greater extent on the ancient Indian epic, especially on the tradition of oral transmission of works that existed in India for centuries. Premchand could not help but take into account the enormous popularity of the ancient Indian epic among the people, as well as the readership level. Very interesting and important information in this regard is given by Gopal Rai in a

book devoted to the problem of the influence of the tastes and interests of the reader on the development of Hindi prose: in particular, he notes that in 1921 in the Hindi-speaking area, the number of literate men was only 14.2%, and women – 1.9% (Rai, 1965). Compared to other regions, central North India remained one of the most backward regions in terms of literacy (mostly among Hindi speakers). The researcher emphasizes that out of every hundred people, only one person, due to his financial situation, could afford to buy and read books (Rai, 1965). The writer was placed in such conditions when he had to write works that would be intended not only for the reader but also for the listener of the people. All these points were taken into account by Premchand, and today it is no coincidence that many Indian researchers characterize the writer as an excellent storyteller and emphasize the fabulous style of not only his stories but also his novels. For example, in such large novels as “Shelter” or “Reincarnation”, a small section often ends with a moralizing maxim, often containing universal truths, and each chapter provides the beginning of a new story. This is typical of the style of his other novels. As one of the most authoritative critics of Hindi and Urdu literature, Muhammad Hasan, notes, the narrative tradition, dating back to ancient times and expressed in the stories of Hitopadesha, jatakas, anecdotes, fairy tales, was of great importance for the structure of Premchand’s novels (they gave a concentrated expression of the wisdom of the people and the life of their era). Premchand also sought to capture this in his novels, making extensive use of folk sayings and proverbs of his time. Premchand thinks in images, and the comparison of characters and situations leads the reader to a certain conclusion. Hence the special composition of his novels. Here we must approach the assessment from the point of view of the previous narrative tradition, popular narrative genres, and, in general, the characteristic Eastern tradition (playing on old traditional plots) and “do not compare with the modern European novel after the industrial revolution in Europe” (Hasan, 1980).

In terms of the direction of his work, Premchand, of course, continued the traditions of outstanding Indian enlightenment writers of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Articles and notes by Premchand on the works of Bharatendu Harishchandra, Ratannath Sarshar and A.H. Sharara, Harinarayana Apta, and finally, his great contemporaries – Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal – testified to how much these writers meant for his creative searches. It is no coincidence that



Premchand began his article "On a new direction in the development of world literature" with Tagore's thesis that the Beautiful should be seen in its entirety: "The vision of beauty in all its manifestations and the process of knowing the world through joy are captured in literature" (Tagore, 1965). Continuing the idea of the necessary connection between the understanding of the Beautiful and the surrounding reality, Premchand wrote: "If we look closely at the characteristic trends in the development of new literature, we will see that it is developing precisely in this direction. Literature no longer thinks about exceptional characters. Now her heroes come from a social class that any purist would previously have been afraid to even touch".

In general, the 20-30s were the most fruitful years in Premchand's work. During this period, he created most of his novels, and stories, wrote many articles, and published the magazine "Hans" ("Swan"). His novels "The Abode of Love" ("Premashram", 1922), "Nirmala" (1923), "Rangbhumi" ("Rangbhumi", 1925), "Reincarnation" ("Kaya-Kalpa", 1928), "Embezzlement" ("Gaban", 1931), "Battlefield" ("Kar-bhumi", 1932), "Retribution" ("Godan", 1936), unfinished novel "Blessing" ("Mangalsutra", 1936), collection of short stories "Martial Path" ("Samar-Yatra", 1928-1932), "Savan" ("Kafan", 1936) and others – all these works, vividly and figuratively capturing the turbulent events of those years, over time became a kind of artistic history of the life of Northern India that period. They reflected the moral dilemmas faced by the protagonists, who often find themselves at a crossroads between adhering to familial and societal expectations and pursuing personal desires. Nagendra wrote about the epic nature of Premchand's major novels many years later; the scientist noted the scale of life scope characteristic of Premchand, his ability not only to penetrate different layers of social reality but also to see its development in people's destinies. Nagendra especially emphasized that Premchand's works provide a comprehensive understanding of the life of Northern India in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with all its socio-political, economic, and cultural problems. Premchand, the critic noted, approached literature as an important means of interpreting modern life, and he managed to fully identify his creative interests with the tasks and goals of the era. "Premchand's ability to penetrate the very thick of life was limitless," the researcher further continues, "he was interested in all aspects and complexities of life. Truly the writer was endowed with an epic genius and was able to perceive

life in its entirety. In terms of the number of artistic images he created, representing people of different social classes, different castes, and religions, in the variety of human types with different characters, morals, and temperaments, Premchand far surpasses not only his contemporaries in Hindi literature but also literature in other Indian languages" (Nagendra, 1980).

Nagendra pays tribute to the magnitude of the writer's creative thinking. Indeed, all of Premchand's main novels, starting with "The Abode of Love" and ending with "Retribution" (in Russian translation "Sacrificial Cow"), are a kind of epic tales about the life of the country, about the fate of hundreds and hundreds of its people. This is where the characteristic density of Premchand's novels comes from. It is difficult to present the plots of these novels in the entire sequence of their development: each novel has dozens of intersecting plot lines, but each of them is very significant and necessary for the writer to reveal the complexity and diversity of Indian society.

It is quite understandable what a huge significance this discovery had for Premchand. In the 1920s, a colossal historical shift was taking place in the fate of the Indian people, and Premchand sought to capture this era and its people. And no matter what Premchand's novel we take, be it "The Abode of Love", "Rangbhumi", "Battlefield" or "Retribution", in all his works we will, first of all, be presented with a unique picture of people's life. His ability to navigate these realms not only enriches his narratives about people but also serves as a lens through which we can better understand the ongoing dialogues about identity, culture, and change in contemporary society.

Indeed, Premchand, taking into account the cultural situation, and the level and capabilities of the readers, always moved forward. Premchand's son, the famous writer Amritrai (1921-1997), wrote about this very well in one of the first books about the life and work of the writer, very symbolically called "Soldier of the Pen" ("Kalam ka Sipahi"). He emphasizes that in his creative and journalistic activities, Premchand never imposed any restrictions on the course of his thoughts: "He always wanted to go two steps ahead and was not upset if he saw that people today do not think this way or are afraid to think so. He was confident that tomorrow they would think differently. And he fought for it day after day" (Amritray, 1963). From here stems the educational pathos inherent in many of Premchand's works, the problem of the ideal hero, the relation-

ship between idealism and realism, and finally, high romantic aspirations.

During the period of the struggle for national liberation, the foundations of realistic literature were laid, reflecting the process of awakening of a person, largely connected by upbringing, views, and prejudices with traditional foundations. India needed heroes, and Premchand wanted a realistic depiction of life not to exclude the romance of heroism, struggle, and quest, and the desire for moral self-improvement. It was on these paths that he sought a solution to the problem of human self-realization.

In his work, Premchand never abstracted himself from reality, regardless of whether it concerned his works of art, journalism, or criticism. The writer always proceeded from life experience. Hence the nature of Premchand's idealism.

Premchand often repeated the following words to his friend, writer J. Kumar: "We are with society, we are in society." And in his works the writer never forgot about this: they reflected the actual picture of the state of Indian society. Indian reality could not help but nourish certain idealistic views of Premchand, but this same reality corrected his views over time. We fully share the main result of the research of the domestic Indologist V.I. Balin, who made a great contribution to the study of Premchand's work, that "Premchand's ideological views and creative method developed by the development of the historical experience of the liberation struggle, during which the political consciousness of the Indian people grew" (Balin, 1973).

Supporters of "pure art" often reproached Premchand for being biased, and for propaganda significantly detracting from the artistic merits of his works. To these reproaches, Premchand replied: "All writers, to one degree or another, engage in propaganda – political, moral, spiritual, and intellectual. If there were no propaganda, there would be no need for literature in the world. He who cannot propagandize is deprived of thought and has no right to hold a pen in his hand. I proudly accept this word – propaganda..." (Vajpeyi, 1979). Premchand saw his writing duty to society primarily as being a true people's writer; in this regard, he tirelessly developed the idea that the lives of millions of ordinary workers could become a topic worthy of fiction. In this regard, he completely agrees with Gandhi: "What can be useful for starving millions seems wonderful to me," Gandhi emphasized. "Let us give today, first of all, what is urgently necessary for life, and everything that adorns it will come later... I want such art and such literature that can speak to

millions" (Nehru, 1955a). Some critics reproached Premchand for excessive attention to the lives of ordinary people and the rare use of biographies of outstanding personalities. But Premchand remained firmly in his opinion: "Great people, of course, often have great feelings, and it is interesting to write about them. But how many great people are there, how often do they meet in everyday life, when our dream of happiness is connected with the experiences and feelings of ordinary people? A sword cannot replace a needle" (Premchand, 1962a). According to some researchers, preoccupation with social issues developed in Premchand a predominantly utilitarian approach to art and literature (Naravane, 1980). The writer's attention is entirely drawn to the concerns and destinies of a real person in his everyday connections.

Indeed, to understand the evolution of a writer's creative method, each of his works is important. And if from this point of view, you look at his largest novels – "The Abode of Love", "Rangbhumi", "Battlefield", "Retribution" and others – then it is easy to see that each new novel is a new turn in the writer's views, a new perspective on the events taking place.

As in "The Abode of Love" and "Rangbhumi," the novel "Field of Beats" (1932) reflects the events of the late 20s and early 30s. The problem of the situation of the peasants remains at the center of the novel. Premchand again shows the appalling poverty of the village, exposes the arbitrariness of the landowners and their henchmen-managers, the extortion of policemen, officials, lawyers, and money lenders, the parasitism of clergy, etc. But besides this big topic, the novel also includes other, no less important aspects of the social life of those years. Premchand shows how the Indian woman is becoming more and more actively involved in the social movement (images of Munni, Sakina, Naina, Sukhda, etc.), how, against the backdrop of a general upsurge, the young intelligentsia is becoming more and more demanding of themselves and their responsibility for the destinies of the people (images of Amarkant and Salim). It is characteristic that the two main characters of the novel belong to two different religious communities: Amarkant is a Hindu, and Salim is a Muslim. Only friendship helps both of them overcome many personal prejudices, and difficulties along the path of life and join the struggle for social transformation. Thus, Salim, under the influence of Amarkant's activities, abandons his careerist aspirations and goes to the people to help the peasants in their demand to reduce taxes. In turn,

Amarkant, neglecting caste regulations, lives in the village of untouchables, trying to protect and defend the interests of the peasants.

Although the writer is increasingly inclined to think that in an antagonistic society, there are few people in whose souls a string of sympathy and sacrifice would sound, he continues to bring out heroes in his novel, full of sympathy and compassion for the poor. More than once in the pages of the novel, the answer to the just demands of the people is violence: mass beatings of peasants, executions of peaceful demonstrations, illegal imprisonment of a huge number of people, cruel bullying by jailers, etc. It is no coincidence that the novel ends with a grandiose demonstration of the people in front of the city municipality building: "The people walked calmly and orderly, like military columns. This endless procession moved in rows of eight people; people walked at a measured pace, united by a common idea, common goals, and common faith, experiencing a stormy surge of internal strength. Their chain did not break: it stretched and stretched, as if from the womb of the earth" (Premchand, 1958). This demonstration already sounds like a formidable warning: "If the authorities are so arrogant and cruel that they dare to drown out the voice of the poor with gunfire, well, it's their mistake: every drop of shed blood will give birth to a new fighter. If the rulers hear our call, they will easily atone for their guilt: the hour is near when the people will emerge from their deplorable state and take what is rightfully due to them – power and authority" (Premchand, 1958). This offers a fresh perspective on the character of the people's fight for their rights. As a writer, Premchand progressively came to see morality as a socially constructed class category by exposing social injustice. Although he did not downplay or ignore the significance of the moral self-improvement challenge, it is evident that the focus on this issue has changed in the final years of Premchand's writing. Moral self-improvement seemed to the writer an important moment in the fate of an individual, but it was not able to bring changes to the life of the entire society. To some extent, Premchand came to this understanding in the novel "Battlefield", where, ultimately, priority is given not to the moral awareness of their guilt by representatives of the authorities, but to the growing organization of the people for their rights.

On the moral and ethical side of the issue in the transformation of society, the principle of moral self-improvement of the individual remained essential for Premchand until the end of his life. Ego-

centrism, acquisitiveness, and the happiness of one against the background of the general misfortune of others were unacceptable to him. In 1936, a month before his death, Premchand wrote the article "Usurious Civilization" (Mahajani Sabhyata). With great bitterness and pain, the writer noted that the principles reigning in capital society – "time is money", "business is business", "achieving prosperity and success by any means and means" – not only subjugate all spheres of economic life, but they spin human relationships, cripple human souls, kill a person's sense of humanism, friendship, love, and sympathy. "Usurious civilization" gives rise to unhealthy instincts in a person for profit and hatred, for power and superiority over other people, for moral and physical decay and ultimately leads a person to complete disbelief in "his human dignity. The entire mechanism of "usurious civilization" is aimed at drowning out the work of consciousness, or rather, forcing it to work in the direction necessary for capital. For this purpose, all means are used, mainly literature and art. With all the greater force he criticizes the basic principles of morality of the capitalist way of life (Premchand, 1979).

A fierce and sometimes irreconcilable struggle of opposing points of view, the separation of friends who find themselves in different camps, tragic and cruel women's destinies, unexpected turns in their life paths, painful searches for their place in life, spiritual insight, new reunions, and the awakening of the people's political self-awareness are all examples of the dramatic fates of the heroes in Premchand's novels. Premchand is still regarded as a renowned national writer for his writings. First and foremost, each of his books clarifies the historical circumstances of Indian existence. A borrowed storyline, motif, compositional approach, etc., was not anything the author aimed to incorporate into his work.

Premchand's innovative use of realism has had a lasting impact on Indian literature, paving the way for subsequent writers to explore social issues through a realistic lens. His ability to intertwine personal narratives with broader social themes has influenced generations of authors, demonstrating the power of literature as a vehicle for change. The legacy of Premchand's realism continues to resonate, inviting ongoing dialogue about the role of literature in shaping consciousness and inspiring social movements. The author produced the first notable works in this genre and identified the traits that characterize the growth of Hindi realistic fiction. For this reason, Indian literary academics are correct when they say

that Premchand's progress as a writer is reflected in the history of the Hindi novel. He elevated the Hindi novel from the Middle Ages' abyss to the pinnacle of contemporary literature. Premchand brought the Hindi novel to life by tackling current societal issues. Premchand has made a significant contribution to Hindi literature, and no one has been able to match his creative personality to this day (Madan, 1956).

### Conclusion

One of the primary characteristics of the book as a form that was strongly tied to the ideologies of his era was precisely understood by Premchand. He was distinguished by a sharp sense of modernity and an uncommon social alertness. It is no accident that the author brings up the issue of "eternal" and "transitory" themes; time does not negate timeless ideas; rather, it gives them a new meaning. In his articles, Premchand incisively addresses the need for a clearly stated author's perspective as well as the tendency of the modern novel.

Many writers and reviewers have pointed out that Premchand raised many important issues in his novels and illuminated them from a point of view that makes them still relevant today (albeit they do not exclude critical remarks about the writer's work). For this reason, Premchand is still of interest in India. His many creative endeavors are consistently at the forefront of Indian literary studies' scientific investigation. It is reasonable to state that a unique literary direction known as Premchand studies has developed in India as a result of the large number of scholarly publications regarding Premchand's work that have been published there over the last few decades. Numerous articles, monographs, memoirs, and publications of Premchand's correspondence with literary and

public figures, as well as people close to him, open new pages from the writer's life, provide new literary material and facts testifying to the important role that Premchand played in the formation and development of the modern novel Hindi. We partially used this material in this chapter.

Many of Premchand's creative principles remain important for the development of the realistic movement in this genre today. This can be judged because Premchand's novels and his creative views are often at the center of many discussions and debates that take place on the pages of Indian literary magazines these days. Not only do readers, writers, and critics continue to show keen interest in Premchand's works, but philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists are reading his novels with increasing interest. They see in them not only works of art but also consider them as a valuable source and documents that have not lost their significance even today. "The Premchand tradition is a living tradition, important for understanding the true character of Indian realism," notes the new generation critic Shyam Kashyap in the article "Third World Realism" (Kashyap, 1986).

In conclusion, Munshi Premchand's literary works, which were greatly impacted by the ideas of Enlightenment philosophy, show a deep conversation between tradition and change or continuity and continuation. In addition to capturing the complexity of colonial India, his stories also touch on more general issues of social justice, individualism, and reason. Premchand was a very dynamic writer who was always looking for new ways to express the subjects that excited him through imaginative language and storytelling. He essentially laid the foundation for contemporary research, documentary, and free-form book genres. This showed that one of the most important components of his creative work was being at the level of the necessities of his day.

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