

Double Marginalization and Power Politics in Premchand's Thakur's Well

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ENG-2022-11015308

Volume: 11

Issue: 1

Month: December

Year: 2022

P-ISSN: 2320-2645

E-ISSN: 2582-3531

Received: 19.09.2022

Accepted: 26.11.2022

Published: 01.12.2022

Citation:

Priyanka, P., and T. Sekar.
"Double Marginalization
and Power Politics in
Premchand's Thakur's
Well." *Shanlax
International Journal of
English*, vol. 11, no. 1,
2022, pp. 78–81.

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/
english.v11i1.5308](https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v11i1.5308)



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Abstract

Munshi Premchand, the pen name of Dhanpat Rai Srivastav was an Indian writer famous for his writings in modern Hindustani Literature. He was known to be a founding father of social-based fiction in Hindi and Urdu. His writings were about socio-economic conflict that prevailed in Indian Subcontinent during his period. This paper focuses on double marginalization and power politics that exist in Premchand's Thakur's Well. Marginalization is a theory about an individual or a group of people who were pushed to the edge and ignored or relegated by dominated aristocratic individual or group. It also discussed how the female protagonist doubly marginalized based on Caste-based discrimination and gender bias that dwell in India. Power Politic is a term used to describe the people of higher classes and financially well-to-do people superintendence over vulnerable and proletariat people. The terms double marginalization and power politics has a unique and vital accommodation in this story Premchand's Thakur's Well.

Keywords: Thakur's Well, Water, Double Marginalization, Power Politics, Caste Discrimination and Gender Bias.

Dhanpat Rai Srivastav was a famous twentieth century Hindustani writer and he was known by his pen name Nawab Rai and he published his first work *Soz-e-Watan*, it was written in Urdu which brought him fame and recognition. But later it was banned and its copies were burnt as he wrote about social dispute that prevailed in society and it was like that brought acquaintance among the people. After this he changed his pen name as Premchand and still he is known by this name. His writings were known for his realistic attribute that prevailed in India in the field of political and social struggles. He wrote a dozen novels and nearly three hundred short stories. He is known as the prince of the novel by his contemporaries. The short story *Thakur's Well* was one among his collections.

The article, *Premchand's Thakur's Well: An Impersonal Observations* written by Abhishek Kumar Jaiswal (May,2017), in which Jaiswal dealt with the perspective of negative capability in the fields such as social, culture, ethical or scriptural. It was also about the approach on gender and untouchability through the Dalit couple Gangi and Jokhu. The article, *Double Marginalization of Dalit Woman: A study of P. Sivakami's The Grip of Change* written by Soni (October,2015) was about turbulent ferocity and bigotry behaviour towards the Dalit Woman which impacted on community system and benevolent. The article, *Is Caste Omnipresent in the Indian Society? A Sociological Exploration* written by Promita Roy was all about caste and gender bias that prevailed in

Indian Culture and Literature which existed in Premchand's Thakur's Well where he used well as a metaphor to bring the conclusion to story to get the targeted social-exclusion. P. V. Srividya's journal article Udumalpet honour killing Kausalya Shankar: The woman who lived was published in The Hindu on June 28, 2020. It was about assassination that took place in Udumalpet, Tamil Nadu by the Hindu community girl family for marrying a Dalit boy. Shabina Fatima's research article Deliniation of Marginalised Society in the works of Premchand (December 2018) analyses the life of marginalised people and how society played an important role in individual's life and suppression of minorities.

This short story Thakur's Well was a translated work from Hindi which was entitled as Thakur Ka Kuan (translated in English) which was published in 1932. It portrays the sufferings faced by dalit couple Gangi and Jokhu even for their basic necessity-water and it played a prominent role in the story. Water is a natural resource and everyone has a right to fetch and consume it from water resources because water is very essential for every living beings to survive. The whole story revolves around the well and for the water. There were three wells in the Gangi village, Utrakhand, i)The first well belongs to noblemen and landlords - Thakur's well. ii)The second well belongs to money lending shopkeepers - Sahuji's well. iii) The third well belongs to dalits - Neech jati's well.

As Dr. Ambedkar rightly said;

You cannot build anything on the foundation of caste. You cannot build up a nation; you cannot build up a morality. Anything you build on the foundation of caste will crack and will never be a whole.

(Roy, 1)

Untouchability must be eradicated from the country and there should not be any caste system in India. To evoke this, Premchand had thought of provoking the reality that prevailed in his native land through his writings to this world. The first is about caste discrimination, the couple Gangi and Jokhu were dalit, Gangi was a protagonist and she used fetch the water from the well that was mended from them every evening because it was far away from their house so she wouldn't go very often to fetch

water. Jokhu was sick and he was very thirsty, so he went near the lot a to have some water, as soon as he took the water near his nose, he came to know that the water was stinky and it had foul smell. Later Gangi came to know that some animal fell into the well and died, so she asked her husband not to drink the stinky water. Then the conversation between Gangi and Jokhu takes place and he asked her from where she would fetch the fresh water and he told her that there was only other two wells and they would not allowed her to fetch water. He says that if she was fetched water from Thakur's well, they would beat and broke her bone and the Brahmins would curse her and other Sahuji's well which belonging to money lending shopkeepers, if she took water from that well they would get money from her. From this, it is clear that there existed discrimination on the ground of caste where the dalit people not even have rights to fetch water from aristocratic well because of this discrimination on the basis of caste.

The Brahmins will give a curse, the Thakur will beat you with a stick and the money-lending shopkeeper takes five for everyone he gives. Do you think people like that are going to let you draw water from their wells?

(Premchand 62)

In Indian Subcontinent, even in this twenty-first century there exists caste-based discrimination that the dalit people are not allowed to enter the house of aristocratic people. Even if any girl from aristocratic family marries a dalit boy it will be a great problem for the couple and their life will be in danger as to keep their caste reputation. There was a real life incident which took place in Udumalpet, a semi urban city in Tirupur district, Tamil Nadu on 13 March 2016, the couple Shankar and Kausalya married. Ten month after when the couple went shopping, the relatives of the girl attacked the both brutally with intention to kill them and Shankar, the husband died and she was taken to the hospital in a phlebotomized state. But it is very rare case that a few families accept the love marriage. Still in some villages there are some restrictions that the untouchables are not allowed to fetch water from the water reservoirs which belongs to the aristocratic group, though the water was nature's gift to human kind. If these dalits mistakenly fetched water from the aristocratic well they would

be punished and tortured. Even today dalit people are not allowed inside many temples.

Gender bias, one of the aspects of marginalization can be found when Gangi went to fetch water from Thakur's well at night, as soon as she heard the footsteps of the ladies who came to fetch water, she ran away as deer which had seen its predator. She hid herself under the dark shadow of tree because if she was caught by them and she would be treated very worse and beaten to death. Then the ladies came near the well and began to fetch water, while they were fetching water they had a conversation and it was heard by her, it was about the men in their house. These men were treating the women as slaves and they were ordering them to fetch water even at this night time by sitting simply at home and having their food. "One said: ' There they were eating and they order us to get more water.' Then men folk get jealous if they think they see us sitting around taking it easy." (Premchand 62)

In a few areas of the Indian Subcontinent women are treated as second sex and there is a myth that the women are mended only to do household works and they are not allowed to go out of the house for work. These endeavours are keenly observed by Premchand and he wants to bring some advertency among the people worldwide regarding the social acts that prevails in India during his period, so he wants to evoke self awareness among people through his writing because of these kind of attitudes his first work *Soz-e-Waten* was banned and all its copies were burned. "That's right and you'll never see them pick up the pitcher and fetch it themselves. They just order us to get it as though we were slave." (Premchand 63)

The other term is Power Politics, it is that Thakur and Sahuji-the aristocratic groups have control over Dalit people, Gangi and Jokhu. It is clearly spotted at the end when Gangi comes out of the hiding place on a tiptoeing and she starts to fetch water and she slowly and quietly ropes on the pulley and drops the bucket very keenly and silently, she draws the pitcher as quickly as one can. But as soon as she hears the noise of Thakur opening the door, the rope slips from her hand with a huge noise. And she runs away from that place, when she reaches the house she glimpses that Jokhu is drinking the foul water.

In conclusion, Gangi is actually a poor innocent lady that she does not even knows that by boiling the foul water, it can be turned into good water. This is a best illustration how women are treated as dalit folks and they are suppressed by the male chauvinist society and they are restricted and cannot open up their thoughts in public places. "She had just stooped to catch and set it on the wall when suddenly Thakur's door opened. The jaws of the tiger could not have terrified her more." (Premchand 63). At the end, Jokhu and Gangi didn't get water from any of the well this shown the caste discrimination and power politics that till exist in India. Through Gangi's innocent Premchand shown the role of women and how they were treated, but now it is gradually changing in this twenty first century.

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