



**PROBLEMS OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES DEPICTED IN THE
NOVEL ‘GODAN’ BY PREMCHAND AND ‘GAMPERALIYA’ BY SRI
LANKAN NOVELIST MARTIN WICKRAMASINGHE**

Dr. RKD Nilanthi Kumari Rajapaksha,

Senior Lecturer in Hindi Department of Languages, Cultural and Performing Arts
University of Sri Jayewardenepura Gangodawila, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

Godan was written by the Indian novelist Premchand in 1936. Gamperaliya was written by Sri Lankan novelist Martin Wickramasinghe in 1944. Both the writers are from different countries, yet many similarities are found in their novels. With the influence of the British, there was a change in the Indian and Sri Lankan societies. Some of them were problematic. The problem of inter-caste marriage is one of them.

In the novel ‘Godan’ by Premchand, ‘Gobar’ is from the caste, ‘Kurmi Mahato’, but he loves Bhola Ahir's widowed daughter Jhuniya and keeps her at his home. The villagers get angry about this fact. Eventually, the father of Gobar, Hori, has to pay unbearable fines. Brahmin Matadin is involved in love with Cilia who was from a low caste ‘Chamar’. Matadin has to become a ‘Chamar’ through the love to Cilia, and starts to have food in Cilia's cottage.

In the novel ‘Gamperaliya’ by Martin Wickramasinghe, ‘Nanda’ is the younger daughter of a high caste family of ‘Muhandiram’. A young man named Piyal, who is counted among the low castes, earns well, and make a proposal to Nanda. Despite the shortage of funds, Muhandiram rejects the proposal by Piyal who is rich. After the death of Muhandiram, Nanda finally agrees to marry Piyal, but in order to retain the respect of her family; she refuses to go for Piyal's relation's marriage with Piyal's mother.

Thus, in both the novels, authors have illustrated that inter-caste marriage is problematic. They suffer in their society because they have to adhere to some rules of a particular caste.

Keywords: Premchand; Godan; Martin Wickramasinghe; Gamperaliya, Inter-Caste Marriage

Full Paper

The ‘Gobar’ discussed in the novel Godan written by Premchand is from the caste, ‘Kurmi Mahato’, but unintentionally, his love goes to Bhola Ahir's widowed daughter Jhuniya. This love grows so much that Jhuniya becomes pregnant. Gobar brings Jhuniya to his house, yet he runs away from home due to fear because he has engaged himself with a lady from a low caste. The villagers get angry due to this fact. Eventually, the father of Gobar, Hori, has to pay fines.

Furthermore, Brahmin Matadin is involved in love with Cilia who is from the low caste, ‘Chamar’:

“Datadin's boy, Matadin, was involved in love with Cilia who was from the low caste. It was known to the entire villages, but he used to apply *Tilak*, used to read the story *Bhagavath*, the performed the rituals of Brahmin. There was no shortage of his reputation. He would atone for his sins by having ritual bathing.”¹

The mother of Gobar, Dhaniya, criticizes this matter as follows:

“We do not have a lot of prestige so dear, that kill a human in the name of the caste. It is true that he is not married yet, but he is involved with her. He has taken her to my home. How to remove her from the house? The people from high class do the same thing, nobody tells anything to them.”²

This problem arises so fierce that Hori has to give 30kg of grains and 100 rupees as a fine, and Matadin has to become a ‘Chamar’ through the love of Cilia and starts to have food at Cilia's cottage.

¹ Premchand, Godan, 2003, p.103

² Premchand, Godan, 2003, p.103

In the novel, 'Gamperaliya' by Sri Lankan writer, Martin Wickramasinghe, 'Nanda' is the younger daughter of a high caste family of 'Muhandiram'. A young man named Piyal, who is counted among a low caste, earns well, looks beautiful, and proposes marriage to Nanda. Despite the shortage of funds, Muhandiram, rejects the proposal by Piyal as follows:

Muhandiram - "We cannot marry our daughter to Piyal. His grandfather was a vegetable seller. His father was a hotel owner. Our ancestors did not drink even water from any of his families."³

The author speculates that the elite class people are used to take care of the norms of their caste as worthier than money. Later, 'Nanda' has to marry the elite youth 'Jinadasa'. 'Jinadasa' of high caste, but poor. He has to go to do business in an unknown area. There 'Jinadasa' dies. Thus, Nanda has to become a widow in her youth. Her one and only child also dies.

From these incidents, the author explains that by making the basis of his nobility, 'Muhandiram' does not allow his daughter 'Nanda' to marry the young man, 'Piyal' from the lower class, and permits her to get married to the elite, but poor 'Jinadasa', which leads them to suffer the consequences.

However, after the death of 'Jinadasa' and 'Muhandiram', 'Piyal' marries Nanda, with the consent of 'Matara Hamine'.

Piyal is already in love with 'Nanda' in his mind. Even after 'Nanda' becomes a widow, Piyal's mother permits him to marry Nanda because 'Nanda' is a high caste woman:

Piyal- "Mother loves to travel around in the car with Nanda."⁴

The author emphasizes this fact elsewhere :

"Piyal's mother thought to go to Lisa's wedding with Nanda by the car. The beautiful woman of the noble house has now become her daughter-in-law. Getting down from the car with Nanda, was a matter of pride for Piyal's mother to appear in front of everyone in the village."⁵

³ Wickramasinghe, Martin, Gamperaliya, 2015 (47th Edition), p. 74

⁴ Wickramasinghe, Martin, Gamperaliya, 2015 (47th Edition), p. 202

But in order to maintain the dignity of her family, she refuses to go to Lisa's marriage with Piyal's mother-

“Go, mother, I do not go to the houses of such people. I didn't do it even in my childhood.”⁶

Thus, the authors of both the counties have revealed that the inter-caste marriages are problematic, as there is no balance between the families because the norms of the castes are different.

For one thing, they have to suffer as they have to adhere to the caste norms imposed by the society; for another, they suffer due to the deep-rooted caste-norms.

References

- Wickramasinghe, Martin, Gamperaliya, 2015 (47th Edition), Rajagiriya, Colombo, Sarasa Private Limited.
- Premchand., Godan, 2003, allabad: Priya Prakashan.

⁵ Do, p. 206

⁶ Wickramasinghe, Martin, Gamperaliya, 2015 (47th Edition), p.206
