WOMEN CLEVERNESS IN PREMCHAND'S STORIES

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Abstract: Premchand is also called the Indian Shakespeare. He is a social novelist and storyteller. Women are physically weaker than men. In the society of men, cleverness is the quality that protects them. Since ancient times, we have been hearing stories of women's cleverness. Cleverness means skill and grace in dealing with others. Since ancient times, the world has admired women's tendency to be talkative and eloquent. In the Hindi literary tradition, where women were not present as more than just characters in the stories, Premchand made the political advisory expression of his female characters possible by placing them on a solid socio-economic basis. Literary critics and historians have tried to understand the voice of women in Premchand's literature, and every time, our understanding of Premchand's literature has increased. The community of female characters formed in Premchand's fiction can be broadly included in four categories. The first category is of women who have taken the ideal form of womanhood, the second category is of women who are influenced by Western culture and are not at all perfect women, the third category is of those who are exploited and suppressed, and the fourth category is of women who are rebels or raise their voice and are clever. Premchand has depicted clever women in his stories who avoid being exploited by their cleverness. They not only protect themselves but also rescue their loved ones from trouble. In many places, women have misused their cleverness, and instead of helping other women, they have been put in more trouble. Premchand has described the cleverness of women in his stories with outstanding balance. Women are clever by nature. The only thing is that they should not let their emotions dominate their cleverness.

Premchand's pen has been very useful in writing stories and novels. Premchand is a famous novelist and a top-class story writer. Premchand's stories are compiled in eight parts under the name Manasarovar. Premchand has written more than three hundred stories. Premchand is an idealistic -realistic story writer. Everyone likes the ideal form of life. However, life is what it is in reality. That real life has to be lived. Nevertheless, the ideal form of life fills that real life with a ray of hope. Hope is the most tremendous boon given to man by God. Every man wants to live a good life. He always strives for it. Life is very simple; it is a man who makes it complex. If man works smartly, then even complex life becomes simple. All tasks done smartly are accomplished. Shyness, sarcasm, and cleverness are feminine qualities. Women are physically weaker than men. In the society of men, cleverness is the only quality that protects them. From ancient times, we have been hearing stories of women's cleverness. Premchand is a social writer. Most of his literature is written on women's problems. He has depicted women's cleverness in great detail in his stories. From Agyocha, Shatranj ke Khiladi to Idgah, women's cleverness is described in great detail in stories.

Premchand is also called the Indian Shakespeare. He is a social novelist and storyteller. Premchand has written stories about the then-Indian society. At that time, the country was ruled by the British. The country was bound in the shackles of slavery. Whether it is the Vedic period, the British rule, or the present modern times, women have always been bound in the shackles of the slavery of men. Despite being weaker than men in physical strength, women have made them dance on their fingers on the strength of their cleverness. Men tortured women who lacked cleverness. She was left as an object of

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pleasure instead of a living being. From the Vedic to modern periods, only cleverness has protected women. Her modesty, affection, compassion, and sacrifice could not melt the hearts of men. In this corrupt society, women have protected their identity and existence only with their cleverness. Premchand is a social writer. In his stories, he has beautifully highlighted the cleverness of women. A woman is beautiful. She wants to be praised for her beauty. With her cleverness, she makes men praise her beauty. Sometimes, she cleverly praises her beauty. One should not praise oneself. However, if someone else not praises you, then there is no harm in praising yourself. (Kumar, 2024, 81) Cleverness means skill and grace in dealing with others. Since ancient times, the whole world has admired women's talkative nature and eloquence. One such beautiful description has been given in this shloka (stanza) which is very enjoyable. This dialogue between Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati tickles the mind:

> Kastvam? Shooli, Mrigay-Bhishajam, Neelkanth Priyaham Kekomekaam Vad,
> Pashupatirneva Drishye Vishaane.
> Mugdhe Sthanuh, Sa Charati Kathaam?
> Jivitesh: Shivaaya Gachatavyaamiti Hatavacha Paatuvashrachandrachudah.
> Mugdhe sthanuh, sah charati katham, jiviteshah shivaya, gachch atavyam iti hatavachah patu vaah chandrachudah.
>
> Shankar ji called to open the door of his house.
> Parvati ji asked who are you?
> Lord Shiva said - I am Shuli (trident wielder).
> Parvati ji said - If you are suffering from colic (colic), then find a doctor.
> Shiv ji said - Dear! I am Neelkanth.
> Parvati ji said (in the meaning of peacock) - Then make Keka sound once.
> Shankar ji said - I am Pashupati.
> Parvati ji said - Are you Pashupati (bull)? Your horns are not visible?
> Shiv ji said - Foolish! I am Sthānu.
> Gaura said - How does Sthanu (stump) walk?
> Bhole said - I am the husband of Shiva (Parvati).
> Shiva said - If you are the husband of Shiva (fox in different meaning) then go to the forest. Thus left speechless, may Lord Shiva protect all of you.

In Premchand's story "Algyojha," Bhola Mahto's second wife troubles his son Raghu. When Bhola Mahto got engaged for the second time after the death of his first wife, his son Raghu fell into bad times. Raghu was only ten years old at that time. He used to roam around the village playing Gilli-Danda peacefully. He had to work in the mill as soon as his mother came. Panna was a beautiful woman, and beauty and pride are closely related. She would not do any heavy work with her hands. Raghu would remove the dung, and Raghu would give fodder to the oxen. Raghu would wash the dirty utensils. Bhola's eyes changed so much that he could see only bad things in Raghu. As per the ancient tradition, he would accept Panna's words with closed eyes. He would not care about Raghu's complaints at all. The result was that Raghu stopped complaining. Who would he cry in front of? Not just his father but the whole village was his enemy. The boy is very stubborn; he does not understand Panna at all. The poor woman pampers him and feeds him. It is the result of that. Had there been another woman, the marriage would not have happened. However, Panna is so simple that they manage. Everyone listens to the complaints of the strong; no one even listens to the pleas of the weak. (Premchand, 2014, Story-Algyozha, 1) Panna, with her cleverness, gets everyone on her side and tortures the innocent child Raghu. Her cleverness outweighs the womanly compassion. There are two groups of women in the village - one of the daughters-in-law and the other of the mothers-in-law. Daughters-in-law go to their group for advice and sympathy; mothers-in-law go to their group. The councils of both are different. (Ibid., Story-Algyozha, 8)

In the story "Swamini," Rampyari takes care of the entire house with her cleverness. Several months passed. As soon as Pyari came into power, it was as if spring had come to that house. Inside and outside, wherever you looked, you could see the signs of the skill, good thoughts and good taste of an expert manager. Pyari had tightened the key of the household machinery in such a way that all the parts started working properly. Food is better than before, and is served on time. There is more milk, more ghee and more work. Pyari neither takes rest herself nor allows others to take rest. There is such prosperity in the house that whatever you ask for, it is found in the house. From man to animal, everyone looks healthy. Now the condition is not like before when someone is roaming around wrapped in rags. (Ibid., Story-Swamini, 75) Pyari was appreciated in the village. She is very young, but she is managing the entire house. If she wanted, she could have got engaged and lived peacefully. She wastes herself in this house. She never laughs or talks to anyone. It is as if she has undergone a complete transformation. (Ibid., Story - Swamini, 76)

In the story "Thakur ka Kuan," Gangi cunningly goes to Thakur's well to fetch water. Gangi's rebellious heart started attacking the traditional restrictions and compulsions- why are we low, and why are these people high? Is it because they wear a thread around their neck? Everyone here is better than the other. They steal, they cheat, they file false cases. The other day, this Thakur stole a sheep from a poor shepherd and later killed and ate it. Gambling takes place in this Panditji's house all year round. This Sahuji mixes oil in ghee and sells it. He gets the work done, and it is hard to pay the wages. In what way are they superior to us? Yes, they are superior to us. We do not shout in every street that we are exceptional. Whenever one comes to the village, they look at us lustily. It is as if a snake starts rolling on everyone's chest, but they are proud that they are superior. (Ibid, Story-Thakur's Well, 85) When both the women left after filling the water, Gangi came out from the shade of the tree near the well's edge. Carefree had gone away. Thakur, too, had closed the door and was going to sleep inside the courtyard. Gangi breathed a momentary sigh of relief. Somehow, the field was cleared. Even the prince who had gone once to steal Amrit, too, might not have gone with so much caution and understanding. Gangi climbed the well's edge stealthily. She had never experienced victory like this before. She put the rope noose in the pitcher. She looked around cautiously as if a soldier was making a hole in the enemy's fort at night. There was no hope of forgiveness or leniency if she was caught at this time. Finally, remembering the gods, she strengthened her heart and put the pitcher in the well. The pitcher dived into the water. Very slowly. There was no sound at all. Gangi made two to four quick movements. The pitcher reached the mouth of the well. Even a strong wrestler could not have pulled it so fast. Gangi bent down to hold the pitcher and put it on the platform when Thakur Sahib's door suddenly opened.

The mouth of a lion could not be more terrifying than this. Gangi let go of the rope. The pot fell into the water with a thud along with the rope, and for many moments, the sound of splashing could be heard in the water. Thakur approached the well, calling out, 'Who is it, who is it?' and Gangi was jumping from the well and running away. (Ibid., 86) The older woman said with a haughty voice - So, will you compete with the boys? The Harijan is defeated! The older woman finished him off with a single verbal attack. His tense eyebrows loosened, the fire in his eyes was extinguished, and the flaring nostrils became calm. He fell to the ground like a wounded man. "Will you compete with my boys?" This sentence kept piercing his heart like a long spear - there was no end to the heart nor to that spear. (Ibid., Story-Gharjamai, 90) In the morning, when Prema woke up, a strange courage had risen in her mind. We take all essential decisions suddenly as if some divine power pulls us towards them; the same was the condition of Prema, till yesterday she considered the decision of her parents to be valid, but seeing the crisis in front of her, she developed the courage of the wind in front of which a mountain has

come. The same slow wind climbs the mountain's top with great speed, crushes it, and reaches the other side. Prema thought this body belonged to the parents, but the soul was mine. Whatever my soul has to suffer, I will have to suffer it through this body. Now, she was thinking that hesitating in this matter was not only inappropriate but also fatal. Why sacrifice your life for a false honor? She felt that if the basis of marriage is not love, then it is the sale of the body. How can surrender happen even without love? Her heart rebelled at the thought that she would get married to some unknown young man. (Ibid., Story - Coward, 144) When Ramu's wife learned that Subhaagi would not marry, she became even more angry. She was always up to some or the other problem. It was as if she enjoyed making her cry. (Ibid., Story-Subhagi, 160) Jugnu did not get time to breathe that day in the ashram. She told the whole story to Mrs. Tandon. Mrs. Tandon rushed to the ashram and told the news to other women. Jugnu was called to confirm it. Every woman who came would hear this story from Jugnu. Every rehearsal added some more color to it. So much so that by afternoon, this news echoed in the civilized society of the entire city. (Ibid., Story-Illusion, 175)

In today's sensibilities, the women portrayed in Premchand's literature can undoubtedly be seen as having their existence erased by tradition or patriarchy. Still, if we look at his narratives in the context of historical dynamism, we can see that these women expanded the scope of their time and their role at a time when it was extremely narrow. Premchand is such a writer of modern Indian literature whose works seem more relevant in every era for their rereading of the ideology inherent in them, or it could be said that new needs for his literature keep emerging with every passing time. In the Hindi literary tradition, where women were not present as more than mere characters in the story, Premchand made the political advisory expression of his female characters possible by placing them on a solid socio-economic basis. Premchand's time was when the struggle between Indian nationalism and colonialism became more intense. It was the period when, seeing the changing role of women in the broad background of the nation-state, he imagined a new image of women in his stories and their place in society. Along with all this, Premchand's female characters' critical view is that he highlights women's cleverness in his stories very minutely. Literary critics and historians have tried to understand the voice of women in Premchand’s literature, and each time, our understanding of Premchand’s literature has only increased.

The community of female characters that form in Premchand’s fiction can be broadly included in four specific categories. The first category is of women who have taken the ideal form of womanhood; the second category is of women who are opposite to the ideal women but are influenced by the Western civilization; the third of who are exploited and suppressed; and the fourth category is of rebellious or vocal women who are clever. In Premchand’s story “Swarg Ki Devi,” the central character, Leela, maintains her patience and faith despite all the adverse circumstances of life. This story, based on the change of heart of a man, shows how a woman can overcome any adverse situation through her sacrifice, service, and cleverness.

In the story “Bade Ghar Ki Beti,” through Anandi, Premchand shows how the high values of a woman save a family from breaking up, and thus, the dignity and respect of a joint family lie in a woman’s cleverness. Just as Gandhiji talked about the feminization of Indian politics to deal with colonial oppression, the qualities of women, like patience, sacrifice, tolerance, forgiveness, kindness, cleverness, etc., were considered a powerful technique against colonialism and imperialism. At the same time, Premchand was expressing it culturally in literature.

In the story “Miss Padma,” Padma is a smart woman who is a lawyer by profession and a supporter of liberal philosophy. She considers marriage to be the evil of the social system, due to which women are always cursed to remain slaves of men. Novelist Munshi

Premchand not only mentioned the pitiable condition of women in his works but also talked about equal rights for men and women. In most of his works, he has expressed different social, economic, familial, religious, and cultural problems in women's lives. Literature mirrors society, and the accurate and authentic information about the social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of Indian society found in Premchand's literature is hardly found in any other literature. Premchand, in his literature, only talks about the problems of the voiceless people of society, marginalized women, and women's liberation. However, the liberation of women is in the hands of women themselves. Women are not as strong as men; they can achieve liberation only through cleverness. Premchand has depicted clever women in his stories who escape being exploited with their cleverness. They not only protect themselves but also rescue their loved ones from trouble. In many places, women have misused their cleverness, and instead of helping other women, they have been put in more trouble.

Premchand has described the cleverness of women in his stories with much balance. Women are clever by nature. The only thing is that they should not let their emotions overpower their cleverness. Munshi Premchand considers women superior to men because of their qualities. He believes that love is the fundamental basis of a woman's life, that she embodies sacrifice and affection, and that this is her essential nature. He respected women a lot. In Premchand's female characters, the urban class, village farmers, and the elite are seen. Premchand's novels investigate such harmony and coordination between women and men that the social system becomes strong and permanent. In India's male-dominated society, whatever role women may be in, be it mother, daughter-in-law, or sister-in-law, Munshi Premchand has done a challenging task for other writers in portraying their accurate picture in the picture. Because of how Munshi Premchand has portrayed lively female characters, it is not seen anywhere else. (Singh, 20123) Munshi Premchand considers women to be the development of the power of love. Premchand believes marriage to be a bond in the development of women. He says that a woman's life changes after marriage. Marital incompatibility allows many abnormalities to develop in society. Therefore, he has written many stories related to marital problems of women - Dharam Sankat, Saut, Bhool, Swarg Ki Devi, Naya Vivah, Sohag Ka Shav, Miss Padma etc. (Ibid.) Munshi Premchand emphasizes the remarriage of women. He says that when the wife dies, the man marries again. Therefore, women also have the right to remarry after the death of their husbands. He wrote stories related to widow-remarriage like Dhikkar, Swamin, Prem Ki Holi, Balak, Betone Wali Widow, Jyoti etc., which are collected in Premchand's complete stories Manasarovar - 1. (Ibid.) Munshi Premchand has tried his best to save the village women from atrocities in his literature. Parallel to the purdah system, child marriage, mismatched marriages, or other social evils, the society of Premchand's time is also struggling with the problem of prostitution. (Ibid.)

In the story "Kusum," Kusum writes a flattering letter to convince her husband: ...I ask, don't I have any rights over you? Even the court punishes a criminal and then puts some charges against him. It takes witnesses and listens to their statements. You did not ask anything. If I had known my mistake, I would have become cautious. I would have fallen at your feet and said, forgive me. I swear, I do not know anything about why you got angry. The qualities you wished to see in your wife, I may not have them. Of course, I have not studied English, I am not familiar with the customs and traditions of English society, nor do I know how to play the English game. I may have many more mistakes. I know that I was not worthy of you. You should have a woman much more beautiful, talented, and intelligent than me, but my God, punishment should be given for crimes, not mistakes. Then I am ready to follow your instructions. Please let me know how soon I will make up for my mistakes. Your loving sarcasm will make my beauty bright, my intellect

sharp, and my destiny strong. I will be rejuvenated after getting that glory..... (Premchand, Manasarovar-2, Story-Kusum, 2014, 4)

In the story "Kusum," when Kusum's parents are about to send money to their son-in-law to study abroad, Kusum opposes it. Kusum is an intelligent and clever woman. She knows her husband will study abroad on her money and will not accept her. She is not such a fool that she will let herself be cheated even after understanding everything. Kusum frowned and said： Amma, tell Dada there is no need to send money. The mother looked at the girl in surprise - what money? Well! That! Why, what is the harm in this? If the boy wants to study abroad, he should go abroad. Why should we stop him? Anyway, he is his; he is also named after him. Who is there to take him with us? "No, you tell Dada not to send even a penny." "What is wrong in this?" Because this is the same kind of robbery that bad people do. They took a man away by catching him and extorted a good amount of money from his family as Mukti Dhan. "The mother looked at her with scorn." What are you saying, daughter? After so many days, the Gods have become righteous, and you are teasing them again. "Kusum said in irritation - Such a God should remain angry. I cannot live with a man who is so selfish, so arrogant, so mean. I tell you, if the money goes there, I will commit suicide. Do not think it is a joke. I do not even want to see the face of such a man. Tell Dada this, and I will tell him myself if you are afraid. I have decided to remain independent. (Ibid., 13)

In the story of the prostitute, Leela smilingly says to her husband's friend Dayakrishna ： What do you care? Whether I am ill or well, it is not your problem! You kept on going on your outings. When you remember me after six months, you ask, are you ill? I am suffering from that disease which takes life before letting go. Have you seen the condition of this gentleman? What does my heart feel when I see him like this? Will you understand only if I say it out loud? I am now forced to stay at home and live shamelessly. No one cares or worries about me. Not only did my father die, but my husband also passed away. If I try to explain anything, I am made a fool of. He disappears all night long. Whenever I see him, he is drunk and does not come home for weeks so that I can talk to him; if he continues like this, then within a year or two I will be left without food. (Ibid., Story-Prostitute, 24)

In the story "Prisoner，" Ivan goes straight to meet Helen after being released from jail. Ivan is going to Helen after getting down from the train. He does not care about his family. He does not care that his mother and father are dying in his separation. He is going to Helen, mad with the feeling of violence that he had nurtured in his fourteen years, but there is no thirst for blood in his violence. There is only a deep burning malice. He wants to satisfy his eyes by extracting the essence of the tortures he has suffered in these fourteen years in a few sentences, by filling Helen's arteries with poison, by watching her writhing in pain. Moreover, what is this sentence? Helen, the betrayal you have committed against me is perhaps unparalleled even in the history of womanhood. I have surrendered my all at your feet. I was only a slave to your orders. You are the one who inspired me to kill Romanoff, and you are the one who testified against me only to satisfy your evil lust. There was no other evidence against me. Romanoff and his ordinary police could not defeat me in false testimonies, but you betrayed me only to satisfy your lust, only to enjoy Romanoff's poisonous embrace. But when I opened my eyes, I saw that the same Ivan whom you had trampled under your feet is standing in front of you today to expose all your deceits. You had taken up the task of serving the nation. You wanted to sacrifice yourself at the altar of the nation, but at the first temptation of evil desires, you gave up all your charisma and started becoming a slave of sensuality. You pounced on the first piece of power and prosperity, wagging your tail. Shame on your sensuality, shame on your sensual life! (Ibid., Story-Prisoner, 55)

In the story "Griha-neeti," The mother complains to her son about her daughter-in-law and says: Are you listening to the words of your beloved queen? She has come here not as a maid but as a queen. We both are here to take care of her; her job is to rule over us. Who will tell her to do any work? I myself can do anything, and you listen to her carefully. Your mouth never opens to scold or explain to her. You keep trembling. (Ibid., Story-Home Policy, 177)

In the story "Kanuni Kumar," Mrs. Kanuni Kumar says to please Kanuni Kumar: Working for the name is not a bad work, if you have desire for fame then I will not condemn it, not even by mistake. I will tell you such a method, by which you will get so much fame that you will get bored. There will be so much rain of flowers that you will be buried under it. There will be so many garlands around your neck that you will not be able to straighten your neck. (Ibid., Story-Lawyer Kumar, 185) Mrs. Kanuni Kumar tactfully taunts Kanuni Kumar and says - Well, I will hold my ears. Now I will not laugh. I have thought of a law to stop those evils. Its name will be – "Couple Happiness and Peace Bill." It will have two main sections and you should fix the legal details. One section will be that the man should give half of his income to his wife without making a sound; if he does not give, then five years of rigorous imprisonment and five months in solitary confinement. The second section will be that men between fifteen and fifty should not be allowed to go out of the house, if someone goes out, then ten years of imprisonment and ten months in solitary confinement. Tell me, is it acceptable? (Ibid., 186)

In the story "Naya Vivah," Asha says to Jugal: After all, a wife is for work? Just then the sound of a car is heard. Don't know how the pallu of Asha's head slipped and came on her shoulder. She quickly pulled the pallu and put it on her head and ran towards the room saying that come after Lala has finished his meal. (Ibid., Story-New Marriage, 211)

In the story "Prostitute," Leela charms Dayakrishna with her cleverness to get her work done. When Dayakrishna left here, his heart was joyful, like flying in an airplane towards heaven. Today, he had found such a goal in life, one for which he could live and die. He had become the confidant of a woman. He would never let go of this gem from his hands, even if it meant losing his life. (Ibid., Manasarovar-2, Story-Prostitute, 25)

In the story "Shatranj Ke Khiladi," Mir Saheb's wife thought it best for Mir Saheb to stay away from home for some unknown reason. That is why she never criticized his love for chess; instead, sometimes, if Mir Saheb got late, she would remind him. Due to this, Mir Saheb had the illusion that his wife was very polite and earnest. However, when the chessboard started being laid out in the courtroom, and Mir Saheb stayed home all day, Begum Saheb started feeling very sad. Her freedom was hindered. She would yearn to peek at the door all day. (Premchand, Manasarovar-3, Story-Chess Players, 170)

In the story "Shatranj Ke Khiladi," the rider comes to Mir Saheb's house and fools him. Mir Saheb's wife told the rider that you have fooled me well. The rider replied: I make such village girls dance to my tunes. Chess has eaten away all their intelligence and courage. Now, they will not stay at home even by mistake. (Ibid., 171) Actually, the gopis were crazy about the Raasleela. Krishna was infamous for no reason. (Kumar, 2024, 10)

In the story "Kaushal," Maya plays a trick on her husband, Pandit ji, to get the necklace. She cleverly pretends that the necklace has been stolen. Maya - This is not a debt. Pandit - What else is it? It is revenge. Maya - It is not even revenge. Pandit - Then what is it. Maya - Your token? Pandit - So will I have to get another necklace made to make up for the debt? Maya - No, that necklace was not stolen. I had made a false noise. Pandit - Really! Maya - Yes, I am telling the truth. Pandit - I swear by me! Maya - I am saying this by touching your feet. Pandit - So you played a trick on me? Maya - Yes? Pandit - Do you know what price I had to pay for your skill? Maya - More than 600 rupees? Pandit - Much more. For this I had to sacrifice my self-freedom. (Premchand, Manasarovar - 3, Story-Skill, Premchand, 144)

In the story "Swarg Ki Devi," Leela saves her husband, Sitasaran, from the company of his sycophant and drunkard friends with her cleverness. Leela pointed her finger towards her heart and said to Sitasaran: Come and sit here. You run around a lot, now I will keep you tied. You have enjoyed the spring of the garden, now see this dark room too. (Ibid., Story-Goddess of Heaven, 49)

In the story "Pariksha," all the Begums show their cleverness and save their lives by obeying Nadirshah. (Ibid., Story-Examination, 63) The literal meaning of "Triya-Charitra" is the cleverness or cunning shown by women at a particular time or situation. Premchand's stories are full of stories of women's cleverness.

Conclusion

In the story "Pariksha," all the Begums show their cleverness and save their lives by obeying Nadirshah.[30] The literal meaning of "Triya-Charitra" is the cleverness or cunning shown by women at a particular time or situation. Premchand's stories are full of stories of women's cleverness.

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