



## UNMASKING SOCIAL REALITIES : PREMCHAND'S *NIRMALA* AS A MIRROR OF ITS TIME

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### ABSTRACT

Premchand aka Dhanpat Rai Shrivastava born in 1880, was a prolific writer who used his pen to reflect the socio – economic and cultural fabric of India during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He is one of the most prominent figures in Hindi literature and celebrated for his ability to capture the essence of Indian society through his literary works. *Nirmala*, one of his seminal works stand as a treatment to his mastery of social realism. Premchand was a well-known author whose works depicted a realistic and vivid image of Indian life. Social realism, poverty, illiteracy, dowry, mismatch marriages, unhealthy social relationship, child marriages, degradation of the happy running families and unequal treatment towards women are major themes in his writings. This research paper aims to analyse the novel *Nirmala* in depth, examining its portrayal of societal issues, the intricacies of human relationships, and its enduring relevance in contemporary India.

**Keywords :** Degradation, Social Realism, Unequal treatment.

*Nirmala* was first published serially in *Chand* magazine from November 1925 to November 1926. The work still remains to be as one of his most popular novels not only in India but internationally too. It was published in novel form in 1928 and its multiple editions have published in Hindi and translated in European and other languages of India.

*Nirmala* can also be called in the terms of a revolutionary social novel since it talks about a story which tells us about the victimization of women in the early twentieth-century, where the main female protagonist walks through a tragic journey trapped in the cycles of social evils such as patriarchy through a very gloomy terrain of life shaded by the ills such as suspicions, neglects, and cruelties. This novel can also be called as a Social Protest Novel and Premchand had written it in a way to emphasis on the idea of a social change.

The novel *Nirmala* is based on the sacrifice of the Indian woman, the curse of dowry, the consequences of

mismatch marriage, harassment of the Indian woman, the dangerous consequences of remarriage to underage girls and the sexual and psychological conflict between the young step mother with her step children belonging to same age group, the husband's suspicious nature towards the wife's behaviour due to the age mismatch, the mismatch marriage of a girl due to poverty is visible around the novel *Nirmala*. *Nirmala* is the pinnacle of Indian woman's devotion to her name in excellent conduct. How *Nirmala*, despite her mismatched marriage, ignores the taunts of her husband. Her character reflects the patience and hard work of a woman.

Udaybhanu Lal was her father's name who was a distinguished lawyer and mother's name was Kalyani. Uday Bhanu was a proponent of humanism, arranged her daughter's marriage with Babu Bhalchandra Sinha's elder son, Bhuvan Mohan Sinha. Bhalchandra, adamant about not accepting dowry, therefore he creatively conveyed his decision to Udaybhanu Lal. If he wants to offer something to her daughter it is purely his decision but he

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## EXPLORING INNER CONFLICT : ANALYSIS OF FICTIONAL AND REALISTIC PORTRAYALS OF ACID ATTACK SURVIVORS

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### ABSTRACT

Acid attack is a serious matter for concern and it is a heinous crime against women. It comes under gender - based violence. Sometimes an innocent woman become its victim because of her rejection to a boy. Jealousy and revenge are the main reasons behind this crime. Nobody can understand the pain of their life except their family members because they live it with them. The family of acid survivors face many harsh comments of society against their daughters. The inner conflicts of survivors play very important role to overcome in this physical and mental injury. This research paper delves into the theme of inner conflict as portrayed in Namita Gokhale's fictional work, *The Book of Shadows* and in the real-life experiences of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal. The pain and agony in the life of acid survivors is described in this paper. Rachita and Lakshmi although their names are different but hindrances and difficulties are similar in their ways. By examining the narratives of both the fictional and the real, the study aims to draw parallels, contrasts, and insights into the emotional and psychological turmoil faced by survivors of acid attacks.

**Keywords :** Heinous, Inner Conflict, Hindrances and Survivors.

In India, Acid attack is a serious matter of concern. It is an act of throwing acid on any person with an intention. It affected their social, psychological and physical life and forced them to face a lot of problems in society when they started to live as a normal human being. Children are scared to see their burnt face and this scar is more harmful than the physical scar. No body wants them in their society so they started living in isolation. In India, it is analysed that most of the time this attack related with women and young girl and the observable reason being is the rejection of marriage and love or refusal by woman of sexual advances and dowry disagreements. The other noted reason for such attack could be land, property and any kind of business disputes.

Acid survivors are facing psychological trauma, acid attacks result in severe pain, permanent disfigurement, subsequent infections and often blindness in one or both eyes. This research paper analyses the inner experiences between realistic and fictional characters

specially women who are main victims of it. A psychological trauma is suffered by the victim when she perceives that her skin is burnt off and after the attack the defacement and the disabilities with which they have to bear for the rest of their lives. Some of the psychological problems which the victims suffer are insomnia, nightmares, depression, fear of facing the world, headache, tiredness, fear of other acid attacks. They also feel despondent and worried as they think they spurned an outcast from the society. The victim's life gets derailed as every time when she looks in the mirror and feels the same pain when acid throws upon her face. The orthodox and traditional Indian approach trust more in physical beauty rather than inner beauty. Not only this, but the society looks at the victim as an 'alien'. This consequently sheds an adverse image on her empowerment and mobility.

Gokhale has woven various other threads while narrating novels. She presents the plight of both, rural and

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