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## IN SEARCH OF FORTUNE: GOBAR'S MARCH TO THE CITY

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**INTRODUCTION:** The present paper is based on Premchand's masterpiece Godan. This paper explores the mental realm of its protagonist Hori's son Gobar, who is enchanted with the idea of going to a city. The city acts as a magnet in his life. However his flight to city was a combination of multiple factors. <sup>1</sup>Firstly village economy was overburdened therefore a push factor acted as a catalyst. Secondly the attraction of employment in city industry was also an important reason. Thirdly the temptation to lead life in city was no less important. Finally Gobar's flight to Lucknow was also emanated from the threat that could follow from the pressure of village community because he had a legion with a Aheer girl Jhunia who was pregnant with his child therefore she was thought to be unethical being in the village society. Paper seeks to interpret the narrative of Godan as it is represented by Premchand.

Gobar started that night from Ahirana with pregnant Jhunia back towards his village. He was trembling with fear as if he has lost his face in the village community. The expected uproar over the issue of pregnant condemned woman Jhunia entering in the village and fear of Dhania who was supposed to punish Jhunia was acting like a drag on his feet. He was not so much afraid of his father than his mother. He could not think of any other alternative where he could go, the question danced before his eyes. He kept on moving towards his home. Shelter for Jhunia was on the agenda. If Jhunia fell on Dhania's feet and apologizes for her sin Dhania might relent thinks Gobar. Jhunia was frightened more than Gobar. Her heartbeat became faster. She would have like to run somewhere else with Gobar but was unwilling to move towards Gobar's village. Gobar assured her not to be frightened. After having taken a world from him, she started moving towards Gobar's village. They finally reached to the village. Jhunia's shelter was to be monitored by Gobar. His senses sharpened but finally when he saw that Jhunia was given shelter by his parents he was filled with joy. He became all the more responsible after this incidence. This had a churning affect on his heart. He would wash away the poverty by earning in the city. Desire to wipe out the blot, sense of responsibility towards his family and the all pervasive poverty; all made him to look for alternative. Search of fortune was called for. City had called on him, as it had called many like him by then. It offered a gateway for salvaging his family's condition. He responded to the call. This call emerged as much from within as from without. Historian has concentrated in second part alone material condition mechanically determining the migration. Here flight and migration both are linked. Lying in the hutment of Hori in the field he then started building future castle. He heard from somewhere that Beldar earns five for six ana in the city.

<sup>1</sup> Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India, Chapter 7, Orient Blackswan pvt ltd, New Delhi, 2004*



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If he spent one on food and shelter and save five on everyday he would able to save ten rupees in a month. It would come around 120 rupees in a year. If he save 120 and come back to the village nobody would dare to belittle him. He then started thinking how difficult it is to earn a livelihood through agriculture. He would save handsome amount from the city and would bring gift to every member of his family. He started marching towards Lucknow. City was acting like a magnet. On his way to Lucknow he visited Kolhuwada where Gurh was being made. Kolhu was likely to be replaced by sugar mill next year. Villagers offered him juice of cane.

People from neighboring village too were flocking to the city. They landed in the Aminabad's Bazar before night fall. Gobar wondered to see thousands of people assembled and congregated in that Bazar for work. Most of them were specialized worker. Cot menders, masons, stone cutters, iron smith and carpenters#. Jajmani system was cracking in the village economy and large scale migration towards the city was taking place. Gobar was not a specialized hand. Those who were specialized got recruited one by one. City had offered them new avenues of employment. All kind of construction activities were concentrated in the city. Only Gobar and old people remained there. Gobar had no hope to be recruited because he was not a specialized hand. Suddenly Mirza Khurshid appeared from no where offered six Anna a day for playing the Kabaddi. People thought of him as a crazy (Sanki) person. They demanded wage in advance. Kabaddi was organized. Mirza and Mehta was the captain. Comment of city people on the village folk shows the snobbish attitude of city people towards villagers. Even VIPs were viewing the game but they were more interested in something more significant. Khanna was trying to trap Raisahab by selling insurance policy and also wanted to sell the share of sugar mil. Tankha was trying Malti to fight election. She knew the role of money in election. Therefore Rani Chanda was more suitable candidate in her opinion. Rani would open her purse to buy the boat. Malti was convinced that wealth was important not the personality. Only when the movement reaches to the peak, that money becomes irrelevant for a while. But in the normal time it is money that dominates the scene. Mehta emerged victorious in the Kabaddi. Mehta and Miraza Khurshid talked about love, marriage and women. Mehta cherished the idea of ideal woman. Compassionate, self abnegatory, self effacing one who merges her identity with that of her husband was the woman of his dream. Mrs. Khanna's example readily came to his mind. Love is the name of mingling of two souls. Before that it was no more than less. Khurshid was not satisfied with Mehta. Finally Gobar found shelter in Mirza's compound. It was to prove an anchor for his life.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This section becomes valuable in the context of sociological literature like that of Satish Saberwal, *Mobile Men*, where he discusses the crake in jajmani system and migration to the city. Nevertheless, others had migrated to Lucknow in search for employment big big lives there and development activities were taking place in Lucknow.. However, in our context Gobar's departure to city was more of a combination of both flight and migration. *Mobile men: limits to social change in urban Punjab*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study in association with Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1990.