

# HUMAN VALUES, MORAL LESSONS AND TIMELESS WISDOM IN SELECTED SHORT STORIES OF MUNSHI PREMCHAND TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

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## Abstract

Universal human values are the basic building blocks of every ethical society. These values include honesty, integrity, justice, empathy, kindness, generosity etc. which transcend social, geographical and cultural boundaries and deeply resonate with people across generations. These are the values that guide individuals toward moral choices. In literature, such values are often explored through narratives that reflect social and individual conflicts and offer readers a deeper understanding of ethical behaviour and societal norms. Short stories, being concise in its form, are quite effective in portraying human values. Munshi Premchand (1880-1936), a prominent name in Hindi and Urdu literature, is widely known for the realistic portrayal of Indian society. He used his fictional world to describe the ethical challenges of his time and provide a profound insight into the human condition. His works, particularly, short stories, bring to life characters from various backgrounds who navigate moral dilemmas, display resilience, kindness and face adverse circumstances bravely. The present paper explores and analyses twelve short stories written by Premchand, translated into English, to examine how his narratives depict universal human values and convey moral lessons. Each story selected in this paper showcases a distinct aspect of human values. This paper underscores the enduring legacy of Premchand's stories as a vital contribution

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to the understanding of human values and moral consciousness in literature.

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## Introduction

Literature has always served as a mirror to society as it reflects its virtues, vices, complexities and ideals. It also acts as a torchbearer that illuminates the path towards a more ethical world. Through its various genres, literature not only reflects society but also shapes it by portraying ethical dilemmas, human emotions and moral choices that resonate universally across time and culture. It also acts as an instrument of change by challenging social norms and encouraging readers to aspire for a more humane and ethical existence. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-88), in his *Defense of Poesy* (1595), alternatively known as *Apology for Poetry*, famously asserted that poetry (and by extension, literature) “. . . is an art of imitation; for so Aristotle termeth it in the word *mimesis*; that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth: to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight” (Sidney 9). This definition suggests that the purpose of literature is twofold: it imparts moral lessons and delights the readers. Sidney’s view aligns with a long tradition of thought, echoing the perspectives of Aristotle and Horace. Aristotle appreciated literature’s role in purging emotions through catharsis, as it can lead to the moral growth of an individual. Horace also valued literature for its didactic and aesthetic functions and emphasised the importance of pleasing the audience while imparting wisdom. By imparting moral lessons through the portrayal of universal human values, literature serves as a guiding light that helps individuals in reflecting upon their own behaviour.

Human values are considered as foundations of ethical societies. They serve as guiding principles in shaping human interactions, decisions and perspectives. Values such as honesty, compassion, resilience, truth, justice, integrity, mutual understanding, respect and empathy transcend social, cultural, linguistic, geographical and temporal boundaries, as they reflect a universal desire for a harmonious world. Furthermore, they provide a framework for decision-making, enabling individuals to choose between right and wrong, good and bad. These values not only shape individual actions but also encourage people to prioritise the well-being of others. They play a crucial role in developing a society where diversity is

embraced, conflicts are resolved and individuals are encouraged to contribute in a positive manner.

Moral lessons are closely intertwined with human values, as they propagate the principles of honesty, kindness, justice etc. These lessons offer guidance on ethical behaviour and help individuals in distinguishing right from the wrong. Through moral lessons, individuals are made aware of the impact of their actions on others and also gain insights into the importance of inculcating ethical values in themselves. Such lessons inspire personal as well as societal growth. If rightly practised, moral lessons can create a culture where individuals act not only out of self-interest but taking common good into consideration. In this way, moral lessons and human values are essential in cultivating a world where social interactions and human relationships are guided by ethical principles.

In the gamut of literature, short stories are powerful tools that convey universal human values and moral lessons in the best possible manner and impart timeless wisdom. The narrative of a short story is succinct and its plot is focused, and therefore, it presents complex emotions and ethical dilemmas in concise and impactful scenes. Through stories of everyday people and their struggles, readers are invited to venture into a world where they can witness moral conflicts and contemplate their own values in light of the actions of the characters. Whether it be tragedy, comedy, or drama, short stories prompt readers to reflect on their own values and actions and give them insights into the complexities of ethical decision-making. Thus, short stories not only entertain but also take the readers into the world of retrospection. Since short stories draw readers' attention to both the internal and external struggles of individuals, they serve as a mirror to society by reflecting its values.

A master storyteller, Munshi Premchand (1880-1936), is considered one of India's most influential literary figures who has left an indelible mark on Hindi and Urdu literature. He is best known for presenting a realistic picture of rural India in his works. His works offer profound insights into the themes of poverty, social injustice and the struggles of ordinary people. A remarkable writer of short stories, novels, plays and essays, his works bring forth the plight of the marginalised communities and address issues such as gender discrimination, caste discrimination and the exploitation of the poor. Thus, he became a pioneer of a new form in Hindi literature by writing fiction with a social purpose. This new form is called social realism. His major novels include *Seva Sadan* (1919), *Rangbhoomi* (1924), *Nirmala* (1925), *Pratigya* (1927), *Gaban* (1931), *Godan* (1936) etc. Besides novels, he has authored more than three

hundred short stories. The translation of his works into many Indian as well as foreign languages and the various film adaptations of his novels are indicative of the timeless relevance of his insights into human values and societal issues.

### Analysis of Premchand's Selected Short Stories

In his short stories, Premchand has skilfully woven human values and moral lessons. His characters, whether rich or poor, urban or rural, can be seen facing moral challenges and their decisions reveal their deeper human values. Through his stories, Premchand glorifies the virtues: honesty, integrity and justice. For instance, Vanshidhar's unwavering commitment to his duty and job in the story "Namak ka Daroga" ("The Salt Inspector") highlights his incorruptible nature. When offered a bribe by Pandit Alopidin, Vanshidhar retorts, "Don't take me as one of those who sell their honesty for a few rupees. You are under arrest... Let's not waste our time by beating around the bush" (Premchand, *Selected Short Stories* 55). This refusal highlights the moral duty to remain honest even in a corrupt environment. The story is set in a society in which wealth dictates morality. However, Vanshidhar's decision to arrest a wealthy and influential man like Alopidin is an act of bravery that deserves commendation. Despite knowing the fact that arresting a person like Alopidin can ruin his career, he decides to do what is right. This moral courage underlines the story's lesson that remaining true to integrity sometimes requires standing against powerful forces. Over the course of time, Pandit Alopidin, who was initially an embodiment of materialism, realises Vanshidhar's noble character and appoints him as the manager of his wealth. This transformation signifies how integrity can penetrate the heart of even those who oppose it. The story showcases the moral power of goodness to influence and elevate other people. Thus, through this story, Premchand presents universal human values of justice, honesty, and dedication not only as personal virtues but as guiding principles for a harmonious society.

In Premchand's stories, human values are presented not only as essentials in shaping an individual's character but also in fostering communal harmony. Similar to "Namak ka Daroga," "Panch Parmeshwar" ("The Holy Panchayat") explores the themes of responsibility, justice, forgiveness, and empathy. At the heart of the story lies the idea that justice is a sacred duty that transcends personal relationships. Premchand shows that the role of a *panch* or judge is to act with fairness, impartiality and in an unbiased manner. Even if

the judgment goes against friends or loved ones, one should remain honest and sincere in his duty. When Algu Choudhary is chosen to settle a dispute involving his friend Jumman and his aunt, he understands the gravity of his role as well as the situation. Ultimately, he decides to favour justice over friendship as “friendship has its own place but it is extremely important to follow one’s *dharma*” (*Selected Short Stories* 16). Moreover, the author underscores the importance of truthfulness in small as well as significant matters. When Jumman Shaikh later gets the opportunity to judge a case that involves Algu Choudhary and Samjhu Sahu, Jumman realises his moral responsibility:

As soon as Jumman Sheikh took the position of the head of the *panchayat*, even he became conscious of his responsibility. He thought, “Right now, I am sitting on the highest throne of justice and righteousness. Whatever I would say would be taken as the word of God and no personal bias should contaminate the divine voice. I must not deviate an inch away from the truth.” (Premchand, *Selected Short Stories* 21)

Thus, Jumman puts aside all the personal conflicts and passes a fair verdict. The story shows truth and integrity as guiding forces that compel people to act with utmost honesty and sincerity. Through the impartial approach followed by both the characters, Premchand illustrates the sacred nature of duty. This reverence for duty implies that social and moral responsibilities should always be taken seriously. Ultimately, the story teaches the moral lesson that universal human values such as justice, impartiality, integrity, and respect for duty form the foundation of an ethical society. The story reminds readers that true justice is blind to friendship and enmity.

Similarly, the story entitled “Mantra” (“The Spell”) is a poignant exploration of the inner conflict between resentment and duty. The protagonist of the story, Bhagat, harbours a deep resentment towards Dr. Chaddha due to his unethical behaviour in the past: once Dr. Chaddha had ignored Bhagat’s desperate pleas to save his dying son. Bhagat’s son dies and he and his wife are left childless. The wheel of fortune turns when Bhagat is called after several years to cure Dr. Chaddha’s son who is on the verge of death after having been bitten by a snake. Initially, he decides not to help Dr. Chaddha, but as the situation unfolds, he is faced with an internal struggle between his deep resentment and sense of duty. Despite his anger and desire for revenge, he eventually chooses to fulfil his moral duty and responsibility. “There was revenge in his heart, but his work was beyond the control of the mind” (Premchand, *Selected Short*

*Stories* 197). Bhagat's decision reflects the belief that saving a life is a sacred duty. Ultimately, Dr. Chaddha's son is saved which leads to a transformation in Dr. Chaddha's character. Bhagat's selflessness has shown that acts of kindness can have far-reaching effects. The story echoes the Indian ethos expressed in the Gujarati hymn "Vaishnav Jan To": "Vaishnav jan to tene kahiyeje, peed parae jane re, / Par dukhe upkar kare toye, man abhiman na aane re" (A true human being is one who feels the pain of others and helps them in their suffering without allowing pride to enter into their heart) (Hariharan). These lines underline the virtues of selflessness and equality and inspire individuals to work for the welfare of others by putting aside their personal prejudices. In a similar manner, this story emphasises that a true sense of duty lies in putting others' needs above personal grudges. It also highlights how adhering to one's moral principles can lead to a positive change in relationships.

The short stories of Premchand present a realistic picture of contemporary Indian society, and "Sadgati" ("Deliverance") is no exception. In this story, universal human values are explored against the backdrop of caste discrimination, poverty and injustice. The story is a poignant depiction of the harsh realities of caste-based oppression, human suffering and the consequences of societal hierarchies. The story revolves around Dukhi, who is a poor and low-caste man struggling with the hardships of his life. One day, he goes to seek help from a Brahmin priest named Pandit Ghasiram and asks him to set a date for his daughter's engagement. The priest is presented living comfortably within the privileges of his caste. He agrees to come to Dukhi's house only if he would perform some manual labour for Pandit Ghasiram. He shows no real concern for Dukhi's well-being and manipulates the latter's desperation for his own personal gain. Ultimately, Dukhi dies in the priest's courtyard after physical exhaustion. In the end, Pandit Ghasiram performs the final rites but in a detached manner showing no compassion for Dukhi's soul:

Now, Panditji took out a rope. Making a noose of it he put it into the leg of the corpse and pulling the rope, tightened the noose. Light was still hazy. Holding one end of the rope, Panditji started pulling the corpse and he pulled it out of the village. After returning from there, he quickly took bath, recited prayers and sprinkled holy Ganga water in the house, (Premchand, *Famous Short Stories* 73)

The story subtly critiques the caste system and the deep-rooted discrimination faced by the lower castes. It highlights how the caste system directly impacts the dignity of individuals. Dukhi is portrayed

as an innocent and suffering soul who is dehumanised and ill-treated by Pandit Ghasiram just because of being born in a low-caste family. The story illustrates how societal hierarchies perpetuate exploitation and inequality. Pandit Ghasiram's disregard for Dukhi represents the apathy of the powerful and privileged towards the suffering of the oppressed. The lesson thus imparted through this story is that no society can lead to progression if it fails to uphold human values like justice, equality, compassion and dignity. By portraying the pathetic tale of Dukhi, Premchand's story advocates for a world where every individual is treated with respect and humanity, regardless of caste, occupation or social status. The story propagates the notion of universal brotherhood.

Since Premchand is a writer of socio-political issues, his stories also teach universal human values in the form of patriotism, personal responsibility and collective action. In his story, "Holi ka Uphar" or "A Gift of Holi," a young man named Amarkant faces a moral dilemma when he buys a sari for his wife from a shop that sells foreign goods. It leads to his confrontation with nationalistic volunteers who oppose the purchase of foreign goods. With the help of Sukhda Devi, his wife, Amarkant realises his mistake and becomes a more committed patriot. Eventually, he participates in a protest and is arrested by the police. Amarkant's initial behaviour of buying foreign goods without considering their national significance contrasts sharply with his later transformation. This shift represents the development of his sense of duty towards his country. It reveals how individual actions are helpful in contributing to a larger national cause. Patriotism is also visible in the ways in which the volunteers and Sukhda Devi act. These people were dedicated to the cause of independence in such a manner that they are willing to go to any extent to prevent the purchase of foreign goods. According to them, purchasing foreign goods is treason. Thus, in this story, patriotism is presented through the actions of resistance against colonial rule.

Initially, Amarkant is unaware of the implications of buying foreign goods and remains oblivious to the sacrifices that others are making for the cause. However, once he meets the volunteers, he feels ashamed at not fulfilling his patriotic duties. The group of volunteers highlights the strength of community and the power of collective action. Their actions represent a call for equality. It urges people to think critically about their choices, as it affects not only themselves but also the greater community and country. Thus, through Amarkant's transformation, Premchand presents the journey of an individual from ignorance to knowledge.



Similarly, the story “Hinsa Param Dharm” or “Violence is the Absolute Religion” again takes socio-political issues into account. The story presents human values such as selflessness, kindness and compassion against the backdrop of religious fervour. The story revolves around a character named Jaamid who dedicates himself and his entire life to helping others, even at the expense of his own well-being. His actions reflect a deep empathy for others, regardless of their social, economic or religious status. He helps everyone without expecting anything in return. Whether it's caring for sick people, performing tasks for others or standing up against injustice, Jaamid constantly sacrifices his own time and energy for others' sake. His actions reflect selflessness, as he helps others out of kindness and not for his personal gain. He is compassionate and always has deep empathy for everyone. His compassion is evident in his constant willingness to help those in need though it endangered his own safety. For instance, when he sees an elderly man being beaten by a young man, he immediately rushes to protect him: “Jaamid suddenly felt a surge of anger. He could not sit idle after seeing such a horrible scene. He jumped up and came out, and stood in front of the young man and said, ‘Why are you hitting the old man, brother. Don't you feel pity for him!’” (Premchand, *Selected Short Stories* 72). It shows that he is not only brave but also sympathetic towards those who are neglected by society. His compassion transcends religious and social barriers and he always stands for justice. He refuses to tolerate unfair treatment of the vulnerable which is visible when he saves a Hindu woman who is forced to convert to Islam. Despite being a Muslim himself, he rejects all such practices and shows his compassion by escorting the woman safely to her own house. Thus, through this story, Premchand presents a character that rises above social and religious constraints. Through Jaamid's actions, Premchand highlights the idea that true morality is rooted in humanity and compassion rather than in strict adherence to societal or religious norms.

In his short stories Premchand takes into account the issues of everyday life to make the readers understand the importance of upholding universal human values. By focusing upon ordinary and relatable situations, he illustrates how challenges faced by the marginalised, overlooked and women bring forth the resilience, compassion, and integrity that define true humanity. For instance, in “Bade Ghar ki Beti” or “The Daughter of a Cultured Family”, universal human values such as respect, compassion, forgiveness, and empathy are illustrated through the complex familial relationships in a joint family. Central to this story is the bond between Shrikanth Singh and his younger brother, Lalbihari. Srikanth Singh is an



educated man who upholds traditional values, but Lalbihari is the complete opposite of his brother and his pride and impulsive actions cause familial discord. Shrikanth is an embodiment of wisdom and patience. His commitment to his family and his insistence on maintaining family traditions reflect his sense of responsibility as an elder son. However, when Shrikanth's wife, Anandi, is disrespected by Lalbihari, he becomes furious with rage. He believes that though family unity is important, all members should respect each other's' dignity, particularly of women. He decides to leave the house but Anandi's involvement in the matter and her compassion and empathy save the family's honour. Although she is initially hurt by Lalbihari's action, her anger softens when she realises the impact that her complaint has had on the familial relationships. By observing Lalbihari's regret for his actions, she shows compassion and urges Shrikanth to forgive his brother. Through Anandi's compassionate intervention, Premchand demonstrates how empathy, forgiveness and respect are vital in maintaining family bonds. Her actions showcase that resilience and integrity in everyday life can overcome personal grievances. The story reminds the readers that upholding these values, especially when tested, can help in overcoming conflicts and preserving harmony.

Similarly, in "Do Bailon ki Katha" or "A Tale of Two Oxen," Premchand portrays the struggles of two oxen, namely Hira and Moti. They remain resilient, loyal and compassionate in the face of adversity. Although the story is centred upon animals, the values presented in it deeply resonate with human experiences. The story begins with the oxen working tirelessly for their poor master, Jhuri. But their lives take a drastic turn when they are taken away from their master. Despite their changing circumstances and the harsh treatment that they face in their new home, Hira and Moti remain devoted to each other. Their devotion teaches the value of loyalty; their loyalty is not dependent upon their physical well-being but on emotional connections. Furthermore, their loyalty towards their master is revealed when they run to Jhuri's home at the first available opportunity:

When Jhuri woke up the next morning, he found the two oxen standing beside the manger and the broken pieces of ropes were dangling around their necks. Their feet were soiled with mud and their eyes reflected the love they felt for their master. (Premchand, *Selected Short Stories* 128)

Hira and Moti face their hardships with resilience. Initially, they are taken away by Gaya, Jhuri's brother-in-law, to his household, where they are barely fed. After escaping from there, they are subjected to

the harsh conditions of the *Kanji house*. Yet they continue to fight for their freedom. Their resilience mirrors the struggles faced by those in difficult circumstances, particularly those who lack a voice. The way in which they fight with the bull exemplifies their resilience and strength: “The moment he hit upon Hira, Moti attacked on the rear side. When he turned towards him, Hira attacked him” (Premchand, *Selected Short Stories* 133). Through these resilient oxen, Premchand highlights the quality to remain courageous in adverse circumstances in the hope of a better tomorrow. Moreover, the story illustrates the power of kindness and the importance of respecting all creatures when Hira and Moti find their way back to Jhuri’s home in the end. Both the oxen return to the place where they are loved and respected. Through Jhuri’s love, Premchand suggests that the act of kindness is responsible for developing a harmonious relationship between human beings and animals. The oxen’s return is symbolic of the universal desire for fairness and compassion in life.

Premchand is known for his nuanced exploration of universal human values in his stories. His stories often portray a conflict between ethical virtues and unethical values. For example, the short story entitled “Prayashchit” or “Repentance” is a poignant depiction of the struggle between virtues like integrity, loyalty and honesty, and vices like greed, jealousy, and deceit. The story is centred around two characters, Madarilal and Subodh Chandra, who share a complicated history which is marked by jealousy, competition and rivalry. Madarilal harbours deep hatred towards Subodh, though Subodh considers him a good friend. Consumed by greed and resentment, he steals money from Subodh’s office and falsely accuses others. Subodh is unable to cope with the situation, and ultimately, he commits suicide, thereby leading to his tragic end. The story highlights the consequences of betrayal and the fragility of human nature. Subodh is portrayed as a humble and trusting individual who genuinely believes that Madarilal is his friend. Despite their history, Subodh believes in their bond. He consistently displays honesty and integrity in his dealings with his colleagues. Despite his high position, he treats every member of the office with humility and respect: “He was so cheerful and humble that anybody who met him became his friend for life. Even when he was angry, he never insulted anyone” (Premchand, *Selected Short Stories* 167). He never exploits his position for personal gain. Even when he learns that the money is missing from his office, he does not immediately assume that someone has stolen it but chooses to believe in the goodness of his staff. However, after Subodh’s death, Madarilal is left with an overwhelming sense

of guilt. He had never imagined the extent of the damage which his deceit would cause. The sight of Subodh's grieving family amplifies his guilt, and ultimately, he decides to take care of the family till his last breath. Thus, the story illustrates the importance of integrity and the destructive nature of jealousy. It also teaches the readers that genuine change is possible when one takes responsibility for his/her actions.

In Premchand's stories, universal human values are portrayed against the harsh reality of suffering. In "Poos ki Raat" or "A Wintry Night", he depicts resilience, compassion, selflessness and responsibility in the face of extreme adversity through the character of Halku. The story revolves around a poor farmer named Halku, who struggles to survive a bitterly cold winter night while battling the harshness of his circumstances. His struggle is not just against the cold, but also against the pressures of poverty, social neglect, and debt. However, despite his vulnerability, he never gives up and faces his situation courageously. He is determined to protect his crops from the freezing cold because they are the only hope for survival. The fact that Halku continues to battle the cold throughout the night with only a thick cotton sheet reflects his deep-rooted resilience:

A wintry night of *Poos*! Even the stars of the sky seemed to be shivering through the cold. Halku was lying on the edge of his field, under the shelter of the sugarcane leaves, on a bamboo cot with thick cotton sheet wrapped around him. He was shaking with cold while his pet dog Jabra was whining under the cot with his mouth pushed into his stomach. Neither of them was able to sleep. (Premchand, *Selected Short Stories* 63)

His firm determination at a state when all seems lost demonstrates a fundamental human strength: the will to survive. His endurance reflects the quiet strength that often emerges during times of crisis. Although he is physically exhausted, he refuses to leave his crop unprotected because he is committed to his duty as a provider of his family. He knows very well that the crop is their only source of income and it is his responsibility to protect it. His strength is driven by his love for his wife. Though they face extreme hardships, there is no sense of blame or resentment in their relationship. Their relationship represents a universal truth about the strength that can arise from human connection. Thus, through Halku's resilience, compassion and struggles against societal injustice, Premchand emphasises the importance of human connection, resilience and solidarity in the face of adversity. The story teaches the lesson of remaining hopeful even when life seems to be cruel and harsh.

Premchand beautifully portrays the values of compassion, humility,

and moral integrity in his story “Pariksha” or “The Test”. Through this story, he illustrates that these traits are essential for true leadership. In this story, Sardar Sujan Singh, the Diwan of Devgarh, wants to retire from service and therefore he decides to choose a successor. To test candidates for character rather than qualifications, he places an advertisement, thereby inviting all suitable men to Devgarh for a one-month trial. Hundreds of applicants arrive, applying for the position by displaying outward virtues. However, during a hockey match organised by the candidates, a farmer falls into a brook and fails to get help from any of the candidates. However, Pandit Jankinath, who has been injured during the match, comes forward to help the farmer. At the end of the month, Sardar Sujan Singh appoints Jankinath as the new Diwan. He explains that Jankinath’s gesture in aiding the farmer despite his injury makes him a true leader.

The story emphasises the fact that compassion and generosity are the core values that are required for good leadership. Jankinath’s willingness to help the farmer shows an innate kindness and concern for others. His compassionate actions without expecting anything in return contrast with the other candidates, who merely display good conduct which is superficial in nature. Furthermore, Diwan Sujan Singh’s resignation from his position out of concern for public welfare displays his humble and kind nature. This choice demonstrates the importance of selflessness, as one should always take others’ needs into consideration as well. These values teach that humility in serving others and avoiding pride leads to respect and honour. The story also reveals that integrity is more valuable than mere appearances. While other candidates in Devgarh change their behaviour just to make a good impression, Jankinath’s actions are sincere and unaffected by the competition. His character underscores that integrity defines character far more than any outward display. Thus, the story teaches that true leadership and worthiness are defined not by outward appearances but by genuine compassion, integrity and selflessness. These are the qualities which are innate and cannot be taught or feigned.

Premchand is widely celebrated for his ability to present the human condition with remarkable depth and sensitivity by highlighting ethical values that are universal. In his most famous story “Boodhi Kaki” or “The Old Aunt”, Premchand explores values like respect for the elderly, compassion, empathy and redemption by narrating the poignant life of an old woman to bring these ideals to life. The story centres on an elderly woman who is neglected by her family,

particularly after bequeathing all her property to her nephew, Pandit Buddhiram. Despite her sacrifices, she endures hunger, disrespect and isolation. Her pitiful state at the end of the story, where she can be seen consuming leftover food, emphasises the universal need for dignity and care in old age. She is often subjected to humiliation; she always has to struggle for food and is often chastised for expressing her hunger. The family's mistreatment of Kaki challenges readers to reflect on the significance of respecting elders. No one ever cared for Kaki except her granddaughter Ladli. Moved by compassion, pity and empathy, she brings food for Kaki secretly by saving her own portion of the meal. Buddhiram and his wife, Rupa, decide not to serve food to their aunt and Ladli's act of kindness and empathy highlights the inherent goodness that transcends age and social conditioning.

Another core value illustrated in the story is self-awareness and the path to redemption. Rupa's realisation of her misdeed is crucial. Upon seeing Kaki eating the scraps of the leftover food, Rupa is struck by the gravity of her family's mistreatment of the aunt. She recognises her own role in the injustice and is shocked by witnessing such a scene. This gives her a time for introspection and her immediate response is one of guilt, repentance and an urgent need to make amends. This moment of self-awareness is powerful because it highlights the human capacity for growth and change. Rupa's regret, her act of offering food to the aunt and her request for forgiveness from both Kaki as well as God symbolise her redemption. It is a moment of moral awakening where she understands the depth of her selfishness and takes responsibility for her actions. Thus, through this story, Premchand emphasises the power of empathy, repentance, and kindness.

### Conclusion

To sum up, Munshi Premchand's stories provide readers with deep insights into human values. The moral lessons and timeless wisdom imparted through his short stories are relevant even today. His short stories illustrate how human values are responsible in shaping personal identity as well as aid in social cohesion. In his stories, moral lessons are not imparted didactically but are embedded within the fabric of the narrative. It allows the readers to draw their own conclusions from the characters' actions and decisions. Through his storytelling, he brings to life characters who constantly struggle with poverty, injustice, discrimination and other

social challenges. Whatever the situation may be, the majority of his characters are the embodiment of compassion, kindness, humility, honesty, integrity, justice and courage. His tales highlight that the true strength of a person's character lies not in strictly following the stereotypical roles but in making ethical choices even if it means going against the norm.

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