



Tussle Between Old Power and New Power and Machination in Civil Society

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Abstract

This paper talks about the conflict between journalism and power of the landlord caused by rural actors and ultimate collaboration between power of the lord and the power of the press within the framework of Premchand's masterpiece Godan.

Keywords: Premchand, Godan, Landlord (Rai Amarpal Singh), journalist (Omkarnath), Bijli or Flesh (Newspaper), Village Headman, Resistance, machination in power structure.

Introduction

This paper attempts to analyze how the village headman's and their deeds create tension or conflict between powerful landlord and journalist. Their idealism was false and unity of their interest was emphasized upon. Finally landlord succeeded in gagging mouth of the press and journalist willingly accepts the bribe.

The moment Raisahab heard about the fact of Hori being fined and ostracized from the community by Panches (Traditionally five persons in Panchayat called punches) He was quick to intervene. For it amounted no less than infringement in his total domination. He immediately sent for his bellif (Karinda or Agent) Nokheram. It was just intolerable that he was kept in the dark in such a matter of great importance. He interrogated him. Nokheram explained him that he was not alone and that other Panches were equally responsible and that he alone could not have done anything but Raisahab was furious came heavily on him. He wanted that he should have been reported first about the incidence because Hori was trusted tenant of his estate that Nokheram should not have let the Panches to realize money from Hori without first reporting to the master. He also told Nokheram that Raisahab had no other

channels of income and that the fine actually belongs to him and not to the punches. His dualism and hypocrisy is clear here. On the one hand he said that Hori is the trusted tenant of his state therefore he shouldn't have been fined on the other hand he was demanding the money from Nokheram and others in village power structure who had expropriated Hori as the money actually belongs to Zamidaar. He talked about the range of expenditure that he had to incur every now and then and that the income should be immediately handed to him and threatened all of them of sending to jail if the amount is not send to him before the night fall. Raisab's threat sent shock waves in the Panches. They were utterly confused. Their mind was not functioning. They set down and discussed the matter among themselves blamed each other and then fell into the quarreling. Thanks to the daily flash that offered them a way out. Pateshwari occasionally used to flip through the flash in the court and have some idea of news item which used to be published in that newspaper. They conspired and decided to send a anonymous letter to the editor of flash mentioning that Raisahab extort the peasant on slightest pretext.

Actor in the first world thus contributed to the tension and tussle in the second world



between Omkarnath and Raisahab i.e., new power and old power respectively. Omkar always waited for such letter. It provided him an opportunity to counter balance his position with Raisahab because of the very fact of his controlled over press media. Omkarnath occasionally used to receive such news item and he made best use out of it. He sent a letter to Raisahab in no time. The language of this letter is important “the correspondent has furnished such irrevocable fact that despite he doesn’t wish to believe in the truthfulness in the news, he can’t disbelieve it either at the same time”, and that he would publish Raisahab’s note too if he wishes to offer rejoinder but he would not let his duties to be seduced by friendship or threat. He knew well that Raisahab was quit chummy with officials and he was influential member in the council but he feared nothing and nobody.

Raisahab at first thought of beating Omkarnath but then carefully weighted prose and cones for he felt that if he publishes the news would impair his prestige both in the countryside as well as in the city. He didn’t want thing to let slip out of his hand in order to bring thing in his control. He walked down to Omkarnath’s office. Omkar behaved like a judge treated him casually. Raisahab could not deny the allegation. Although, he had not received the money directly from Hori. He had ordered Karinda for the same. Never the less he wanted to see to what extent Omkarnath could go. Omkarnath boosted his commitment to journalism. Raisahab asked him to allow letting the friendship and duty to go together. He reminded him of the fact that how he invited him on every occasion whenever any celebration took place at his home. That he was offering gift on every Diwali, Dussera, Holi, that he was subscribing his newspaper paying him 75, all to gag his mouth. Raisahab initially mixed threat also but when Omkar said he is helpless and would go on publishing this news, Raisahab asked him to see reasons for avoiding news from being published enumerated the entire range of

expenditure. He said, that he had to incur heavily on his kin folk and officials, he was to give huge money on donations and that he was attended by many sellers and peddlers and someone coming up with Kashmiri shawl other selling perfume and tobacco, people coming to sell magazines, papers and periodicals and so on and how he was black listed by officialdom for his participation in congresses activity. And he told Omkarnath that they were sailing in the same boat. Raisahab further said that you shout Swadeshi and give enough space for the advertisement of the foreign good and other things and that there is no shame in accepting fines from the tenant because it is a matter of survival for him, that both should co-exist. If a dog keeps on guarding the bones what he would eat? That he is not Omkar’s enemy. The exaggerated sympathy, threat and many other elements got combined in his discourse to bring Omkarnath to home. That he knew Omkarnath was facing hard time perhaps more than Raisahab himself and that’s why he used to help him in tiding over his crisis every now and then. At least Raisahab accepted the fact that he realizes fines from the countryside from his tenants, and if Omkar wishes to deprive him from this source of income he will also stand to lose. The unity of their composite interest was stressed upon and live and let live was the principal of the day. One’s harm is equally the harm of the other. That they could co-exist together, what is the point in cooking up a farce? The fair play or duty would undermine the position of the both. He succeeded driving Omkar home agreed to subscribe 100 newspapers which amounted something like 1500 rupees. It helped Omkar in tiding over his crisis. The salaries of Press Karmacharies remain unpaid from last three months. Circumstances drove Omkar to accept the offer despite the sarcasm in that entire discourse with Raisahab. Hollowness of his ideals comes to the fore. His idealism evaporates in no time. He too was a hypocrite. No less was his



willingness responsible for acceptance of that domination. Both knew each other. Raisahab knew how to control Omkar. Omkar knew too how to catch Raisahab on wrong point. Things were finally amicably settled and the news item was successfully prevented from being published. Raisahab's hegemonic control remains intact, thanks to Raisahab's resourcefulness and power. The unity of their interest is revealed here.¹ His dominance got reestablished. It's a clear cut example of machination in power structure. The resistance of Pateswari Datadin and Nokhetram went in vain. These tout were powerful in the village society and were willing to resist the power of landlord but at the same time they were frightened of Raisahab's dominance in the village society. Landlord through his stratagem had a control over entire village. The gap between tout and small peasant is also clear.

Conclusion

landlord Rai Amar Pal Singh had lifted his image as a champion to the cause of peasantry. He participated in the national movement. Similarly Omkarnath who spoke against colonialism and was issuing a journal called *Bijli* and boasted of his nationalism. As our narrative above has shown that their nationalism was compromised.² It was not born out of their altruistic desire to serve the nation but their self interest was paramount. Landlord successfully gags the mouth of the press and kept his dominance intact.

References

1 Sabyasachi Bhattacharyya has talked about the fact of civil society at war with state and that Gandhi was hegemonizing civil society. Here, we find a collaboration between power of zamindar and new power of local press, see, his "Notes on the Role of the Intelligentsia in the Colonial Society: India from Mid-Nineteenth Century:", in *Studies in History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1979.

2 Seal, Anil, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, 2009 and Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Macmillan, 1983.