

# Ideology, Class, and Gender in the Works of Prem Chand and Yashpal: A Socio-Political Analysis

\*Sravanthi Maddela, \*\*Anshu Sharma

\*Research Scholar, \*\*Research Guide,

Department of English, Shri JTT University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India

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## Abstract

This paper presents a critical socio-political analysis of the literary works of Prem Chand and Yashpal, focusing on the interconnected dimensions of ideology, class, and gender. Situated within the historical framework of late colonial and early post-independence India, their writings offer significant insights into structures of inequality and resistance. Prem Chand's literary vision is shaped by ethical realism and reformist ideals, whereas Yashpal's works reflect a more radical orientation grounded in Marxist thought and political activism. By employing an interdisciplinary framework that integrates Marxist and feminist criticism, this study examines narrative strategies, character construction, and ideological positioning in their texts. The paper argues that Prem Chand initiates a discourse centred on moral reform and social empathy, while Yashpal advances a more direct critique of systemic inequalities, particularly those related to class exploitation and gender oppression. Despite their ideological differences, both authors contribute significantly to the progressive evolution of modern Indian literature and remain relevant in contemporary discussions on social justice.

**Keywords:** *Ideology; Class; Gender; Prem Chand; Yashpal; Marxism; Feminism; Social Realism*

## 1. Introduction

Literature has consistently functioned as a powerful medium for reflecting and shaping social realities. In the Indian context, especially during the late colonial and early post-independence periods, literary discourse became closely aligned with socio-political concerns. Writers began to address issues such as economic inequality, social hierarchy, and gender discrimination, moving beyond purely aesthetic considerations.

Prem Chand and Yashpal are central figures in this transformation. Their works not only portray social conditions but also engage with ideological debates concerning reform, resistance, and justice. Prem Chand's narratives are grounded in ethical realism and emphasize compassion, social responsibility, and moral reform. His depiction of rural life highlights the struggles of marginalized communities, particularly peasants and women, within oppressive social structures.

Yashpal, in contrast, adopts a more radical and confrontational approach. Influenced by progressive and Marxist ideologies, his works challenge established social norms and advocate structural transformation. He critically examines power relations and exposes the mechanisms through which inequality is sustained.

This paper explores how ideology, class, and gender intersect in their literary works. It aims to analyze how these authors construct and critique social hierarchies and how their ideological positions influence their representation of marginalized identities.

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## 2. Literature Review

Scholarly studies on Prem Chand have primarily emphasized his role as a pioneer of social realism. Critics have highlighted his commitment to portraying the struggles of rural communities and addressing moral dilemmas within a hierarchical society. His works are often associated with reformist ideals and ethical humanism. However, some scholars argue that his approach remains limited in its capacity to challenge structural inequalities, as it focuses more on moral transformation than systemic change.

Yashpal has been extensively studied within the framework of Marxist criticism. His works are characterized by a strong engagement with political ideology and social transformation. Scholars have noted his emphasis on class conflict, economic exploitation, and ideological critique. His representation of women has also been widely discussed, particularly in terms of agency, autonomy, and resistance.

Despite the rich body of research on both authors, there is a lack of comprehensive comparative studies that simultaneously address ideology, class, and gender. This paper attempts to fill this gap by adopting an integrated analytical approach.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

This study employs a combined theoretical framework based on Marxist and feminist criticism.

Marxist theory provides a lens for analyzing class relations, economic structures, and ideological dominance. It helps in understanding how literature reflects and critiques material conditions and power dynamics within society.

Feminist theory focuses on gender relations, patriarchy, and the representation of women. It examines how gender identities are constructed and how women negotiate their positions within social and cultural constraints.

The integration of these perspectives allows for a multidimensional analysis of the texts, highlighting the intersection of class and gender within broader ideological contexts.

## 4. Ideological Foundations

Prem Chand's ideological framework is rooted in ethical realism and reformist thought. His works emphasize moral values, social harmony, and the importance of empathy. Rather than advocating radical change, he focuses on gradual transformation through ethical awareness and collective responsibility.

Yashpal's ideology, on the other hand, is shaped by Marxist principles and revolutionary thought. He views social inequality as a result of structural exploitation and advocates for systemic change. His works challenge dominant ideologies and expose the contradictions within social and economic systems.

The contrast between these approaches reflects differing perspectives on the nature of social change — whether it should be achieved through reform or revolution.

## 5. Representation of Class

Class is a central theme in the works of both authors.

Prem Chand's narratives are primarily set in rural environments, where he portrays the struggles of peasants and labourers. His depiction of poverty is characterized by empathy and moral concern. However, his solutions tend to focus on ethical reform rather than structural change.

Yashpal presents a more critical and analytical view of class relations. His works emphasize conflict between social classes and highlight the role of ideology in maintaining inequality. His characters often demonstrate awareness of their socio-economic conditions and engage in collective struggle.

This difference underscores the varying ways in which literature can address class issues.

## 6. Gender and Representation

The portrayal of women in the works of Prem Chand and Yashpal reveals significant ideological differences.

Prem Chand's female characters often endure social constraints and patriarchal oppression. While they display resilience and moral strength, their agency is frequently limited by societal expectations.

Yashpal's representation of women is more progressive and assertive. His female characters challenge traditional roles and actively participate in social and political processes. He addresses issues related to gender equality, autonomy, and identity with greater openness.

This evolution in representation reflects broader changes in social attitudes and intellectual discourse.

### **7. Intersection of Class and Gender**

The intersection of class and gender creates complex patterns of marginalization. Women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds experience multiple forms of oppression.

Prem Chand addresses this intersection through a humanistic approach, focusing on individual suffering and moral resilience. Yashpal, however, provides a structural critique that links gender inequality to economic and ideological systems.

This intersectional perspective highlights the need to consider multiple dimensions of identity in literary analysis.

### **8. Discussion**

The comparative analysis of Prem Chand and Yashpal demonstrates the diverse ways in which literature engages with socio-political issues. While Prem Chand emphasizes ethical reform and empathy, Yashpal advocates for critical awareness and systemic transformation.

Their works contribute to a broader understanding of literature as a medium for social critique and ideological engagement.

### **9. Conclusion**

This study concludes that Prem Chand and Yashpal represent two distinct yet interconnected approaches to socio-political literature. Their works highlight the importance of addressing class and gender inequalities within broader ideological frameworks.

Prem Chand's emphasis on moral reform complements Yashpal's focus on structural change. Together, they offer a comprehensive perspective on the role of literature in social transformation.

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