

Premchand's "Idgah"

Deepak

Assistant Professor (English, MGCUB)
Former, Jr. Research Assistant, Penn State University, USA

Idgah

- ▶ It is part of a “Maansarovar,” a collection of short-stories by Premchand.
- ▶ Story revolves around Hamid and his Grandmother; and it would be incomplete without including Hamid’s friends along with their toy-characters which were purchased from the fair.
- ▶ The background of the story is the festival of Idgah and a fair in a nearby area.
- ▶ The content is poverty ridden family and narrative is defining child’s point of view of looking at things.
- ▶ The theme is sacrifice of a child to fulfil the family needs.
- ▶ His consciousness and wits wins over his friends, who were enchanted towards the earthly and handmade toys.



Child's Mind

- ▶ Various novels are written from child's perspective and some notable examples are Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*; Mark Twain's *Adventure of Huck Finn*.
- ▶ Like them, Premchand's story too transport readers into the mind of a child named Hamid.
- ▶ It shows the growth how a child behaves like a grown up man and purchase tongs, instead of sweets or toys.
- ▶ It clearly reflects the love and care of Hamid towards Grandmother.



Education System

- ▶ Premchand's this short-story criticized educational system.
- ▶ Its critique of college runs thus:
 - ▶ Then come big buildings: the law courts, the college and the club. How many boys would there be in this big college? No sir, they are not all boys! Some are grown-up men. They sport enormous moustaches. What are such grown-up men going on studying for? How long will they go on doing so? What will they do with all their knowledge? There are only two or three grown-up boys in Hamid's school. Absolute duds they are too! They get a thrashing every day because they do not work at all. These college fellows must be the same type--why else should they be there!
- ▶ However, reality of the story is dim in English translation, yet it portrays the value and nature of education, at least for the poor boys like Hamid.



Supernatural

- ▶ Many version of supernatural are used by Premchand to make it a story of rural area and poor people. The debate among boys on Jinns is its perfect example
 - ▶ They say that after 11 nightfall, Jinns come and buy up everything. "My Abba says that at midnight there is a Jinn at every stall. He has all that remains weighed and pays in real rupees, just the sort of rupees we have," says Mohsin. Hamid is not convinced. "Where would the Jinns come by rupees?" "Jinns are never short of money," replies Mohsin. "They can get into any treasury they want. Mister, don't you know no iron bars can stop them? They have all the diamonds and rubies they want. If they are pleased with anyone they will give him baskets full of diamonds. They are here one moment and five minutes later they can be in Calcutta."
- ▶ Second example is
 - ▶ And the Masonic Lodge. They perform magic there. It is rumoured that they make human skulls move about and do other kinds of weird things. No wonder they don't let in outsiders!
- ▶ In fact, binding of rural and supernatural makes it more realistic story and one transported in the realm of supernatural through the debates of children.

Critique of Landlord System

- ▶ Hamid unknowing cited landlord with the reference of Jinn
 - ▶ "I do not know," replies Mohsin, "but the Chaudhri Sahib has a lot of Jinns under his control. If anything is stolen, he can trace it and even tell you the name of the thief. Jinns tell him everything that is going on in the world."
- ▶ Hamid did not stop here and continues:
 - ▶ Hamid understands how Chaudhri Sahib has come by his wealth and why people hold him in so much respect. It begins to get crowded. Parties heading for the Eidgah are coming into town from different sides--each one dressed better than the other. Some on tongas and ekkas, some in motorcars. All wearing perfume; all bursting with excitement.
- ▶ Here, the wealth and Jinn are synonymous to one another and Hamid realized it.



General Overview

- ▶ Thus, the story revolves around a poor Muslim women, who is taking care of her grandson, Hamid, only four years old.
- ▶ It nearly impossible to survive for a lonely woman whose son died and she has to take care of only male, that is a small child.
- ▶ She is so brave that even poverty did not burdened her from responsibilities.

