



Nirmala

Munshi Premchand

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Premchand's novella Nirmala, first published in 1928, is one of the most poignant novels in Hindi on the theme of the young adolescent yoked to an elderly husband. Clearly reformist in its agenda, this novel succeeds in exploring sensitive and even dangerous terrain. Alok Rai's English translation includes an Afterword which takes note of the novel's special context, placing it in perspective and making a contemporary reading of the work possible.

Nirmala Details

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Author : Munshi Premchand

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From Reader Review Nirmala for online ebook

Shubhi Agarwal says

Written in early 90s, this story is about Nirmala, who is married off at a young age, to an elderly man, and how she suffers till her death for no fault of hers. This story shows everything that was wrong with Indian society back in old times, and remnants of which still are seen here and there around us.

The plight of girls in the society, blaming them for all bad that occurs, dowry system, male domination in families, and how man reacts without thinking of consequences of his actions, is so painfully shown here. By the time you reach the end, you feel really sorry for Nirmala, but also kinda lucky for not having been born then yourself.

I read the English translation, but undoubtedly, the only reading it in Hindi can do justice to this piece of literature.

Gorab Jain says

Rich in conversations, this book is anti-cliche.

1. In arranging a girl's marriage, dowry is not the biggest problem.
2. There is no friction between Sauteli Maa-beta. Albeit over abundance of love!

In spite of this, it is a depressing tale of young and mature Nirmala who is married to an immature old man double her age with 3 sons.

And it has far more twists and turns than anticipated. A gripping page turner. Very interesting story.

Ankit Saxena says

What I always thought and have observed from any writings of Munshi Premchand is that he was too far advanced from his fellow writers. Its not only about this book but considering any of his works. **Importance of Education, social behaviour, societal courtesy these are among few matters that he explained very well in his most of the works, which were not so common in his era.**

Nirmala is a story of a female from her mid-teenage to her early twenties. Story of a naive girl to a distressed, matured, socially-detached and forcefully-responsible woman; who seems to have everything but lacks everything that she actually needed. Hard to say after reading this, that no one can understand women so easily, 'coz Premchand did. Every single emotion of a girl from her *child-like-age* to her *becoming-of-woman-age* has been depicted very deeply and precisely.

Premchand did so well with this work of his and I loved it with every emotion of mine.

For me its more than what I have given, though its: **5.0/5.0**

Ravi Gangwani says

So I have committed one mistake ... I read this book in very darkest period of my life and it made me more depressed.

I swear I'll not read Premchand's any book in life ... there is only gloomy sadness and dark fates. It made me very tensed.

This book was so depressing that it took me 12 days to finish this small book.

Too sad and converging into miserable fate.

Anshul Gaurav says

Nirmala, It was my first encounter with a Hindi Novel and what a pleasure it was. The story, broadly based on the life of an Indian village girl viz., Nirmala, who is forcibly married to an elderly man almost her father's age, due to the untimely death of her father. Besides, an inability to pay for her dowry. The story proceeds with Nirmala mired in the household with the man, his three sons and his widowed sister. Besides the overall tragic underpinning there are flickers of hope for the protagonist during some period of her life but, it ends on a tragic note.

Premchand, in this novel, has done away with jargon and has concentrated only on characters. His subtle humor is hard to miss not to mention his analogies. His depiction of India of an era not so long ago (or perhaps still prevalent in some parts) is quite genuine indeed. Of course, perhaps it was meant to be a tragedy, hence he has gone into exaggeration of the events but well within the scope of his literary licence. Overall, a must read especially for those who want to battle it out reading Hindi literature. Munshiji Rocks
\m/

Pranjali says

4.5 stars!!!!

Premchand did it again!!!! this book reminded me why he is my fav *_*

This is journey of Nirmala, the way she slowly grows up, matures and understand the ways of world. This story is an an attack on all the problems, faced by women of that time (some of them are still relevant today), but not in a preachy way. It does have a social message but not of a feminist type and only if you are looking for it.....

The story is about ordinary people, people you can find all around you. these people are not black or white, you can't categorize them as good or bad. they are just people who did some good stuff and some bad. The story is all about how circumstance change people, how they react and what they become in different situations. it reflects complex human emotions, hard to decipher and even harder to understand.

This is a very tragic book but it never became boring, conversations are real page turner and also have amazing character development.

Thanks Gorab and Arpit for buddy read :)

Santosh Kashyap says

Indeed the first psychological novel in Hindi literature. It opened a new era in Hindi literature. A must read

for any Hindi literature student.

Madhulika Liddle says

The eponymous Nirmala of Munshi Premchand's novel is, when the story begins, a girl of fifteen, the eldest daughter of a fairly prosperous lawyer. Nirmala's parents have found a match for her, a young man from a wealthy family. Besides the fact that the prospective groom is very eligible, what makes the match even more attractive is that the family has said they want no dowry; their only request is that the *baaraat* be looked after well. This—not an outright demand for dowry, but a definite assertion of authority, of showing that the groom's people have the right to command the bride's people—is the start of a chain of events that will have far-reaching, tragic consequences.

Because Nirmala's father, in his effort to leave no stone unturned when it comes to hospitality, far surpasses his budget, and as a result has a quarrel with his wife, who advises caution. The quarrel makes him leave home in a huff one night. He ends up bumping into a criminal whom he had got convicted, who had threatened to have his revenge... and who now kills Nirmala's father.

Suddenly, things fall apart. Since Nirmala's mother is unable to afford a lavish wedding (and the dowry which had been expected, even if it had not been asked for), the prospective in-laws call off the wedding. Nirmala's mother, desperate to get Nirmala married, searches about for other grooms, and finally settles on Totaram, a widowed lawyer with three sons, the eldest of whom, Mansaram, is a year older than Nirmala. And with Nirmala's marriage to Totaram begins the tale of her woe, the story of how a bright, beautiful girl is reduced to despair. Of how Totaram begins to suspect the relationship between Nirmala and Mansaram, and how that suspicion fuels other emotions—all snowballing into disaster.

Nirmala is, first and foremost, a hard-hitting commentary on two social ills that plagued Premchand's India: dowry, which is still as prevalent as it was back then; and the practice of marrying off young girls to much older men. All that befalls Nirmala and her family—her husband, his sons, the daughter who is born to Nirmala and Totaram—can ultimately be traced to the extremely ill-matched marriage of Nirmala and Totaram.

The social relevance of the novel notwithstanding, this is a fine work of literature in itself. The plot is good (and it's interesting to see the way Premchand weaves the story so that one thing leads to another, *one* action—Totaram's marrying Nirmala—leads to tragedy, even several years later). The writing is crisp, lucid. And the characters are *memorable*: three-dimensional, interesting people, none of them completely black or white, but many shades of grey. These are people with strengths *and* weaknesses, people who can be affectionate and kind but also jealous, suspicious, selfish, people with very human frailties. Nirmala herself, while being the good, patient, long-suffering heroine (literally ???????, 'pure'), has her fair share of weaknesses, makes her share of mistakes.

An excellent book, and highly recommended.

Onaiza Khan says

What a gem.

