

**POLITICAL ARTICULATION THROUGH
LITERATURE : A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF
PREMCHAND AND NIRALA (1920-35)**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled "**Political Articulation through Literature : A Sociological Study of Premchand & 'Nirala', 1920-35**", Submitted by Mr. Tribhu Nath Dabey in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** to this University has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is his original work.

We recommend this work to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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To
Mai and Babuji
From whom
I learnt Perseverence

PREFACE

I

The 'colonization of Indian mind' is an enduring effect still felt in academia as well as in intelligentsia not necessarily living by the former. Therefore, the thinking mind has followed or succumbed to particular *cannons* of knowledge generally variants of narrow and mindless scientism. In the process, it has simultaneously structured the nature of *legitimate 'knowledge'* on the basis of '*legitimate utility*' quite often along the structures of a hierarchized society. One of the extension of this logic is the hierarchization of disciplines and of subject matter of the study therein. Thus, it is not that only few subjects of study areas become important than others but also few disciplines become disciplines of 'power'. Here, it may be noted that the 'persistence of colonial mind' is added and felt needed also in a situation where knowledge becomes a *commodity* in a 'modernizing' market of, both, colonial and post colonial economies. History of Indian Sociology, particularly its long term structural-functional hangover, interestingly reveals the point.

II

Development of Sociology of Indian Literature is the victim of this phenomenon. The specific problems related to it have been, first, a doubt about the *reliability* and *relevance* of literary facts for the study of society;

secondly, the nature of *intelligentsia*; and thirdly, the *need* of Indian society placed in a particular stage of development

The empiricist rationality prefers *hard facts* of the society than the *fluid facts* as provided by literature and its *irrationality* which has the potential to defeat the whole purposiveness of empiricist or positivistic philosophy. Hence its anxiety about the reliability of '*fluid facts*' is genuine in the sense that it has inherent incapability to see the underlying structures of the society which lie beneath all social processes. I think, there would be few to deny that structural-functional empiricism has been the dominant methodology in sociology in India.

What about the nature of intelligentsia? *Colonization of mind* along with the affinity for English as the language of power, urbane tastes and metropolitan livelihood of *knowledge-elite* has made the intelligentsia a rootless social-group. In addition, the practical bilinguality or multilinguality, if they possess; and their diverse socio-cultural background making them alien to others do not seem to be handy for the sociological study of literature produced in numerous numbers of 'local' and regional languages.

Also, Indian society facing numerous development problems has shaped the subject matter of sociology to find out the reasons of 'failures', 'successes' and 'impacts' of nation-state. Thus the study of caste, class,

rural and urban process, etc. - the directly visible indicators— become more important than the reflective and obliterating nature of literature.

III

However, in both, the study of change in a society and in the age of growing importance of culture to complement the so far developed understanding about dynamics of developing society, the study of literature is of immense importance. Since it does not only provide the subtle facts obliquely documented within it but also represents certain kinds of social-consciousness. Thus the study of literature would mean to provide some more information and, may be, perspective towards some unfinished sociological concerns. It also may be studied as a cultural institution, in it self, constituting a social complex and may be useful when related to other cultural institutions, to enhance the sociology of communication, knowledge, gender, consciousness and so on.

IV

Keeping these things in view, this dissertation is a preliminary attempt to study Hindi literature sociologically. I have been a student of both the disciplines-Hindi and Sociology and therefore have tried to honour their distinctiveness while bringing them together. I have tried not to make the study either an exercise in *literary criticism* or to *sociologise* the literature

where literature just becomes any fact of society, loses the distinction made by literary standards and thus aesthetic intricacies can be done away with. This, I have done by attempting to study the social connotations of various constituent elements of the text to the extent it was possible for me.

The period of the study is 1920-35 where I have tried to understand the kind of politics the literature of two tall literary figures of Hindi—*Premchand* and *Surya Kant Tripathi 'Nirala'* — was playing. *Nirala* though contributed through prose, is largely known as a poet. *Premchand*, is world known novelist and short-story writer. Taking them together was thought to be useful not only in the sense that it will provide a scope for comparison between the two acknowledged personalities but also it will be an attempt towards the *Sociology of Poetry* which always has been challenging and fascinating to me.

V

The first chapter of this dissertation explores into the social identity and existence of literature and the possibility of a political articulation through it. As the literature has to be located in its '*moment*' and '*milieu*', the second chapter delineates the pre-1920 cultural nationalism in Hindi speaking region and its distinctiveness with that of the other region in brief; and then attempts to conceptualize the various narratives of nationalism during the period under consideration which mark the political currents of

that society. This exercise was done in order to provide the socio-historical background of production of literature and its consciousness. It finds that renaissance in India, unequally penetrated various regions, and therefore, provided varied responses to *nationalism*. The contradictions of national struggle and Indian society of 1920-35 were present in the literature of this period.

Third and fourth chapters separately deal with writings of Premchand and Nirala. Here an attempt has been made to identify trends in their writing which articulated their position and interaction in the society as well as their responses to the political process of their time. Interestingly, the middle class is an amorphous category and its level of consciousness and interest shape its actions and aspirations; are the main findings of these chapters. This applies to both *Premchand* and *Nirala*. Their writings characterize a transition from Gandhian social-philosophy and their inherited tradition to more radical social views and change. The fifth chapter concludes by the comparison between Nirala and Premchand, and tries to identify the links between literary and political consciousness. It finds that inspite of specialization of different *literary forms* they shared more or less the same consciousness.

This exercise has not involved itself in establishing the eternal value or importance of literature, rather had been limited to its give and take relationship with immediate social world and forms of consciousness. The

study does not deny its limits as far as wider coverage in terms of space and time is concerned.

VI

Dr. Avijit Pathak, has been more than a teacher and supervisor. As a teacher he has been constant source of encouragement and inspiration in reading sociology and life, critically. As a supervisor he did not only show his keen interest in this topic but provided me the space to articulate my ideas, worries and enthusiasm related to this work or otherwise which led to the completion of this work.

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My parents, elder brother and other family member's financial and emotional support to get me educated is perhaps the first tangible realization in this work. Though it is not a pursuit of '*arthkarividya*' which they really

need, they have been always curious and happy. This makes me more humble, than I have been to them.

I would like to acknowledge with thanks to Pushpesh for stimulating discussions, Fouzia and Basant for their constant concern, Maneesh Kumar and Maneesh Chiranjeev for their patience as room-mates and compilation of the bibliography. Jyolish Joshi has taken a lot of pains by providing rare books and Journals from his personal collection and other sources which have been a great help.

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My thanks are due to the office staff of CSSS and SSS, JNU and Library staff of Sahitya-Akademi. Ms. Aruna Sharma taking the complete responsibility of typing it and making me work freely, need special mention.

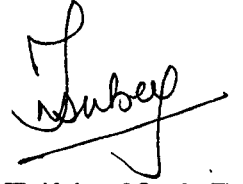
In the last but not the least, I attach immense value to Dr. Kiran Nanda, and Dr. Vidya Sinha, both lecturers in the Department of Hindi,

K.M.College (Delhi University) who did not only give me the opportunity to be a student of Hindi discipline but also nurtured and accultured me with '*bhasha-sahitya-samskar*' (socialization in language and literature). I acknowledge with earnest pleasure that the seeds of my interest in this work lies in the affection and the concerned scolding of these two early teachers of my college education.

However, the faults in the study remain mine.

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Tribhu Nath Dubey

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LITERATURE AS POLITICS

CHAPTER-I

LITERATURE AS POLITICS

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, on contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness".

— Marx¹

Sociology of Literature is primarily concerned with finding the *meanings* of literature and related issues therein to characterize its relationship with society and understand the *significance* of this relationship both for society and literature. The basic issue of exploration of this dissertation is whether literature articulates politics and if it does so, then to what extent? What are its structural limitations? Giving a political meaning to literature presumes social existence of literature, which is largely accepted today in, both, *Literary Criticism* and *Sociology of Literature*. However, it is not undebated. Therefore, this chapter will first try to highlight the interpretation of society and literature and then its political connotations.

I

Literature and Society

Theorizations about the inter-relationship between society and

1. Marx and Engels. *On literature and Art* Moscow : Progress Publishers 1976 (second rep. 1978) p.41.

literature may be broadly categorized into two groups : *Autonomy theory of literature* and *Theories of inter-relatedness between society and literature*.

Literature and its Autonomy

The 'autonomy theory' of literature says that inspite of the fact that literature is produced in the society and involves significant social factors, there are uniqueness of writers' experience, feelings, emotions, talent of writing, and ways of articulation which work together in a unique time and situation. This uniqueness, which comes because of the author, is central in the creation of any literary piece.

Moreover, literature, as being an 'artistic' product, has central function of giving 'pleasure' (*Ananda*). This pleasure is given a mystical character, since it can only be experienced in different degrees by different persons and consequently cannot be quantified and described in actual sense of the experience, even by the person who has experienced or enjoyed it.

This subjective nature of production and reception of literary creation is enough basis to provide it reasonable amount of autonomy and isolation, and make it beyond the scope of any generalization. Thereby, a sociological study or finding out any institutionalized pattern of authorship or its consumption is a futile exercise as far as 'literature', *per se*, is concerned.

This logic proceeds even further in a very interesting but contradictory

varieties of theorizations. By autonomizing 'text' and its 'meaning' one variant gives primacy to the meaning which author attached to it, while other liberates the reader to *read between the lines*. It is no wonder that whole project of autonomizing exercise may go on to endless 'factorial' autonomization and reduction to increasingly provide a fractured and fragmented vision of literature.

To illustrate, let us consider few examples in brief. The development of capitalism vis-a-vis complexities of social life threatened the autonomous and independent existence of literature since it was hostile towards 'ideals' of literature.² Twentieth century witnessed unprecedented debate about autonomy and freedom of literature. To understand this situation of literature the existing theories of 'aesthetics' and poetics were not sufficient and therefore it had to take help of other disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, history and sociology.³ In defence of autonomy of literature the major contribution came from Russian formalism, French linguistic structuralism and American 'new criticism' and semiology. They, however, gave too narrow and deterministic view of literature. According to *Russian formalism* and *French structural-linguistics*, the text was devoid of social institutions, audience, and educational opportunity since a living language

2. *ibid.* p.21

3. Manager Pandey. *Sahitya Ke Samaj Shashtra Kee Bhumika*. Chandigarh: Hariyana Sahitya Akademi, 1989, p.31.

or everyday speech can do without literature, and social relations have no separate existence than in everyday speech. American 'new criticism' and 'semiology' emphasized that the life of 'author' is irrelevant for interpreting a text.⁴ They felt that focusing on author as a source of textual interpretation is an 'intentional fallacy' since it denies the richness of text and meaning of openness.⁵ In this regard the debates in *hermeneutics* should also be remembered which are still unresolved that whether the meaning of the *author* attached to the text should be the legitimate source of textual interpretation or the meanings attached by the *audience*, because reading a literary piece means 'rewriting' it.

Indian thinkers have also contributed to this debate. The theories of **Sanskrit Poetics** inevitably make it spiritual (*Brahmanand-Sivad-Sahodar*) where it becomes a means of *transcendental pleasure* for both the author and the audience. This wisdom gives least attention to social relations of literature and creates a somewhat exclusive domain of 'author-text-audience' which converts even socially influenced concept of beauty and pleasure into the writer's *unique* creativity and *pure pleasure*. In Modern

4. H.S. Oberoi. *Literature and Society : An Approach to the Novels of Bhai Vir Singh*. Diss. CHS, SSS, INU, New Delhi, 1981, p.3.

5. *ibid*, p.3-4.

Also see F.R. Leavis' 'Common Pursuit', 1969 P.136 where he has extended the ideas of 'new criticism' by denying the effect of economic and material milieu in the production of literature.

India, thoughts of *Aurobindo*, *Tagore* and *Anand K. Coomaraswami*, regarding the meaning and purpose of literature are a reinterpretation of this literary wisdom. However their interpretations were done in the colonial context and foreign domination, which served a social and political function. Hence, the need for elaboration.

In *Tagore's* conception, the literature was a 'language of personality' where the *consciousness* of experience is expressed instead of *experience*. Literature for him was a means to unite the inner consciousness and the outer world. This unification is done by the positive emotions whereby the world first becomes the part of personality; and when expressed, after internalization, it again merges into the world of 'Thou'. Thus a two-way uniting link is established through the extension of '*Ananda*' from one individual to the other.⁶ He emphasized that the greatness of literature, which depended upon the attempt to establish the eternal truth, had little to do with the immediate world and thus might be unrelated to the contemporary social concerns. This mystical nature of literature, was a variant of his 'philosophy of international humanism' and 'idealism'. However, this nature remained the spiritual capability of literature, only from within which could unite the world.

6. Pabitra Kr. Roy. *Beauty, Art and Man : Studies in Recent Indian Theories*. Shimla : Indian Institute of Advanced Studies : 1995. p.6.

Also see *Rabindranath Ke Nibandh*, Vol.II tr. by Amrit Rai, New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi, 1977 (sec. ed.) p.282.

Same way, for *Anand K. Coomaraswami*, the art was an expression of 'eternal truth' and the artist was a 'metaphysician'. However, this character of art was only limited to ancient art and in modern times because of break from that artistic tradition, the colonized Indians had lost their metaphysical meanings. It led him to think it as a reason for foreign domination.⁷

Aurobindo provided more detailed explanation of existence and purpose of art. He conceived that the problem of life is the problem of harmony between human world and trans-human reality. This harmony being the ultimate goal of life, is achieved through a process of spiritual evolution which involves many stages and internal complexities. Reason and rationality have limits to explain these complexities. In this situation, Art and literature come as one of the solutions to these problems. Thus a poet or artist is not an 'intellectual' rather a 'creator' who reflects on life (rather than reasons it out) and expresses the revelations of the 'spirit'. The literature, through a process of "Katharsis" (purification of emotion), in the process of evolution serves a social function.⁸

Here it may be noted that these Indian thinkers were in a dialogue with the western knowledge and wisdom. The search for the meanings of

7. Pabitra Kr. Roy. op. cit. p.44-7.

8. *ibid.* pp. 63-4, & 76.

literature for them was a search for their identity which was beyond the domain of western dominance of power and knowledge. Thus, defining the literature was a project to differentiate it from western definition of literature and society. However, the role of society in the production of literature was underplayed in their definition. Whatever social function it served was a literary capability, *per se*, which inevitably advocated the independent existence of literature.

The above discussed theories of literature form one group which some way or the other advocates the autonomy of literature. Following discussion will give the other view.

Society and Literature—Interrelations

The other stream of thoughts which questions the notion of autonomy of literature (though not always with same emphasis) can broadly be subdivided into two.

First sub-group finds **mutual reciprocity** between both, literature and society, in general. It does not attach higher importance to either. This is because it suggests that society and literature both influence each other. Recent phenomenological study by Mary F. Rogers indicates that author's creativity is, to a great extent restricted by the market forces and the reader; and at the same time, literature in turn, serves and shapes the interest of

the reader in 'everyday day life world'.⁹

Second, namely *Marxism*, giving materialist conception of literature (or art) locates literature essentially in the domain of superstructure of society. More often this approach is misunderstood by non-marxists, and quite sometimes vulgarized by marxists themselves.¹⁰ Marxism, definitely gives a central place to economy, since it fundamentally shapes the state of things. This does not mean that it is too quick and desparate to see the 'direct' reflection of economic relations in literature. Writings of Marx and Engels are sufficiently critical towards any straight-jacket view of literature, cautious and repentant of vulgarized economic interpretation or partisan writing, since they are sensitive to peculiar position and nature of literature.

Marx and Engels left no major writing on literature but their collected ideas about art and literature are the logical extension of their revolutionary *weltanschauung* (world vision).¹¹ In this perspective, the essence, origin, development and social role of art, and thus of literature, can be fully

9. Mary F. Rogers. *Novel, Novdist and Readers : Towards a phenomeno logical sociology of literature*. NY : State University of New York Press. 1991. p.94 and 129.

10. See for examples the attempts of Bukharin to define literature by mixing of Marrison theories and positivious, detailed discussion in this regard may be found in Manager Pandey, op. cit, p.46-8.

11. Marx and Engels, op. cit, p.17.

understood only in the context of relations of production in society. Therefore, literature as a form of social consciousness, follows the process of change in social existence of men.¹²

They maintained that in history, art was influenced by class contradiction and ideology, and man's aesthetic qualities are not inborn rather socially acquired. In their opinion the 'content' and the 'form' of art have developed and changed according to definite laws of material foundations of society.

However they distinguished that upsurge of art or literature do not automatically coincide with the progress of other fields including its infrastructure. For, 'spiritual culture' of any period is not only determined by the material advancement but also by the peculiar social relations of that period.¹³

Their proposition about class nature of literature or art in society became more clear in their analysis of capitalist society. They found that capitalist exploitation and humanist ideals of literature are contradictory to each other and a conscious artist, despite his class origin, will inevitably be opposed to capitalist inhumanity. However, they explained that even in

12. *ibid.*

13. *ibid.* p. 20, 82.

writings of great authors, pressures of class society do get reflected despite their vivid representation of real life.¹⁴

Thus, they emphasised that art was an important weapon in ideological struggle between the classes and it could reinforce as well as undermine the process of exploitation.¹⁵

Ideas of Marx and Engels were later used by Leo Lowenthal, Lucien Goldmann and Raymond Williams to develop the systematic theories of relationship between society and literature. Ground breaking works by these sociologists of literature rejected the earlier dualism between 'form' and 'content' and emphasized that 'content', 'form', 'style' and 'language' all express the society of their time.¹⁶ Goldmann's conception of 'world vision', Lowenthal's emphasis on 'structures of meaning'. Raymond Williams' concept of structures of feelings, Adorno's perception of search for 'truth in the totality of text' are major efforts in this regard which tried to understand the society in the given literature while not denying its intricacies.¹⁷

Overall, it can be said that literature is essentially a social product and its appreciation can never be complete, unless it is examined in

14. *ibid.* p.21

15. *ibid.* p.22

16. Manager Pandey. *op. cit.* p.14.

17. *ibid.* p.14-15.

connection with all social factors and agencies, responsible for its existence. As social objects, in contrast with natural objects, it also involves the *process of production and consumption*. Production and consumption are carried out by some social agencies, factors and materials; though their category, indispensability and nature of relation with the things under production may vary. In this light, it is easy to name such minimum agencies and factors involved among others in the production and consumption of a literary piece: 'author' (with his rationality, experience, and emotions), 'language', 'literary traditions and forms', 'period of writing', 'script', 'publisher' and 'readership'. Therefore, the consideration of Meaning and Significance of literature, will never be complete unless the role of these factors, that make the literary piece social, are assessed comprehensively.

Author and Need to Write

In the production of literature, the author, amongst other agents, has got a central position. Since language and script etc. may be available to others as well, who think and have a reservoir of lived experiences, all of them are not writers. It is only few who find themselves able to express their feelings. In this regard, inborn qualities of authorship may be attached. However, I am not sure about any biology or genetics of such qualities. Nor am I sure about any theory of mystical 'Literary calling for few select'. I hold, that the 'literary self' of a person, in Meadian terms, develops as a

particular aspect of personality in the process of interactive development of self. Through development of literary self one acquires the ability to express and to feel in a particular way.

Here question arises 'why does author resort to express?' It can be said that 'one is compelled to write' is greatly a decision of the social 'self', who finds it the best possible way of interacting with the society. In other words, literature is a mode of interaction through which 'literary capability' chooses to 'suitably' interact.¹⁸ They interact with their feelings emotions rationality and irrationality.

Moreover, literature is a cultural institution. Therefore, there exists a more general social purpose. It provides a mode of interaction for the whole complex involved in the production and consumption of the literature. The interaction highlights and defines the negotiation of meanings and its structure of exchange within the social complex involved.

Social Significance

The social significance of literature lies in the fact that it serves social function (not in functionalist sense of the term which underplays

18. Here words 'capability' and 'suitability' need some clarification: Capability is used as 'capability constructed by society' and suitability has a profiting dimension(both, material or non-material) . Both of them inhere and explain the social position of writer.

the positive role of change). This aspect needs some elaboration.

I. *Reflexivity* : History of inquisitiveness regarding interrelations of society and literature starts from the later half of the 18th century, in systematic fashion, and continues to the date. Nevertheless, there exists, different degree of emphasis and approach among literary critics (who study literature in its pure terms), sociologists of literature, linguists and literary psychologists. But seemingly there is a consensus that literature is a reflection of society.

In this connection a question arises that *why do we read literature?* Is it for 'pleasure'? Seemingly but not really all the time. While reading '*Anna Karenina*', '*Crime and Punishment*', or story of '*Hori*' (in Prem Chand's *Godan*) who gets the pleasure? If '*pleasure*' is to be taken as a defining factor of literature then one will have to be doubtful while including such masterpieces into the category of literature.

Actually we read literature to read the society, to read ourselves and the writer. The writer by Choosing a 'theme', by using a 'language', 'dialect', or particular 'form'; or by developing a particular narrative and style; depicts the society as he perceives or to which he is subjected to perceive. By doing so he writes himself as well. It is a different matter that he may not be directly present in the narrative. Thus, a writer, through his writing performs a social action whose meaning is conditioned since

he is positioned in a differentiated society¹⁹. This does not mean that literature is always an ideologized form of their class, because at times through conscious effort they may transcend the boundaries of their class and its interests. It happens when writer perceives the historical reality or its future course. Even being in a particular class, one may feel for the other. A close study of the writings of *Shakespeare, Tagore, Bhartendu Harish chandra* or *Nirala* do reflect their social position if we study with the sense of historical grounding of their literary creations.

To be specific, let us consider 'Tagore' briefly, though many may not agree with this uncomfortable proposition. Tagore saw the birth of Indian National Congress (INC), its infancy as well as strong and popular youth. The INC started protest with a demand for concessions from the British rule; that too which were thought needful, by 'upper and middle caste - class leadership' to India's freedom from British Rule. Tagore closely witnessed the political development of freedom movement from a time, when freedom was unimaginable to the time when freedom became 'a birth-right'. Tagore came from a royal family of Bengal and was adequately informed by the modern knowledge brought by British rule in Calcutta, the then 'cultural and commercial capital' of India. Moreover, Tagore was also influenced greatly by the *Bhakti* poets of Medieval period. This, in a

19. Jean-Paul Sartre. *What is Literature?* tr. by B. Frechtman. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1950. p. 46-7.

sense, I think, provided him the strength neither to be dependent on British rule nor to be an aspirant in its visible system of power. At the same time, he had to save the 'honour' of his self and thereby of his society. To this effect, therefore taking the recourse to *Spiritualism* and *international humanism*' was the best possible way for him. Interestingly, he did not actively participate in the freedom struggle, and rather criticized the nationalist ideology which in his opinion undermined the *international brotherhood*; though the recourse taken by him, itself was very subtly a narrative of freedom from inhibitions of colonial rule. It must be noted here that inhibitions for Tagore were fundamentally different than ruining artisans or pauperizing landless farmers.

ii) ***Persuasive or Socializing character of literature*** : It is evident that literature, being written by a person, who has a 'position' in society and thereby an implicit stand on the issues of his interest, is always imbued with some ideology: status quoist or progressive. Accordingly, literature persuades or socializes the reader by reinforcing the values of status-quo or represents the dreams and utopias regarding future social relations or makes explicit the forms of domination. Thus, literature does not only reflect but also educates. It is all the three - *mirror, stick, and light*.

iii) ***Democratizing nature*** : Literature is a unique democratizing tool in the hand of author as well as reader. It provides a space, where most

private and subjective feelings, wishes, new mores, are made social through a medium like literature which may not be possible otherwise. Thus on the one hand, it manages the tension which could have arisen with occurrence of such non permissible feelings or wishes, in actual social world, while on the other, it brings writers' subjective world for critical appreciation, rejection, condemnation or acceptance by others. It does not only help the writer vent out his anger, agonies, frustration, communicates sufferings or shares happiness, but also links or reflects such feelings of other fellow human beings of the society. It creates the space where such '*absurdities*' which are not otherwise allowed by the society, are shared and normalised. It nourishes the society, in general, therefore, to soften and change the stubborn and inhibiting attitudes towards them, though in a slow process²⁰.

II

Literature and Political Articulation

It is evident from the preceding discussion that production and reception of literature is a social process. The *author, the milieu and the moment* of writing always creates a field where politics becomes an integral part of it. The author, just by being positioned in a differentiated society,

20. Nirala's writing would be a proper example in this regard. When he wrote '*Juhi ki Kali*' or '*Ram kee Shakti-Pooja*' or advocated unrestrained metre (*swachhand chhand*) to be appropriate for the poetry and society, was seen initially by many as absurd. But over the period of time Nirala was acclaimed as one of the great poets of his time.

is a political entity. He or she may be a part of different discourses of power in the society. For example he may be placed in caste or class divisions and may be receiver or non receiver of benefits of state. He may be in conflict or in harmony with the existing social structure. Thus his position, it can be said, is a sum total of various disadvantages and privileges. This proposition leads one to think that while representing society in writings, he or she inevitably articulates certain type of politics.

The study of history of literature vis-a-vis the history of society provides well established *institutional patterns* of literary practices in different epochs of world history.²¹ The rise of novel in west in 18th and 19th century is widely studied in relation to the development of capitalism and 'individualism'²² to see the link between both. Such institutional patterns are also involved in Indian history. A brief reference to Indian history will illustrate the point.

History of Literary Practice and Power Relations

In ancient India, the reading and writing were the absolute powers of ruling elite of the community. *Sanskrit* was the language of *Brahmin*-males

21. Ian Watt, 'Literature and Society' in the Arts in Society, ed. by Robert N. Wipon, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey : Prentice Hall, p.301.

22. Meenakshi Mukerjee. Realism and Reality : The Novels and Society in India. New Delhi. OUP. 1985. p.4.

and masters (with few exceptions), and *Kshatriya* kings. Women and lowly castes were not allowed either to read the vedic or puranic literature or to speak in the standardized Sanskrit. They could only use *Prakrit* or *Apbhramsha* (Aberrations of Sanskrit used by masses). The form of 'richa' (vedic *Shlokas*) was a appropriate form for collective writing to be accomplished at different times by different people. The epical form was a later phenomena which well suited the grandeur of ancient empire while narrative style of *Puranas* worked as an instrument of teaching and preaching.

The protest against this brahminical dominance by Jainism and Buddhism represented the protest of lower section : this order used pali and prakrit— the language of lower classes— in its doctrine and preaching.

Coming to the medieval period, broadly speaking, one finds two successive types of literary practices. First type was of Bhakti movement— a more radical defiance of Brahminical order and Muslim invasion. Most of the poets, who formed this stream and documented their protest in their respective '*bhasa*' (dialects), came from lower sections of the society. The epic as form and sanskrit as main literary language had vanished and a more appropriate form i.e. 'Muktak' (self sufficient verse of few lines which may or may not be a part of an epic) became popular which was most suitable to the social needs.

The later phase of medieval period marked the decline of monarchy and feudalism. Muslim as central rulers were getting acceptance by small princely states. In the changing society, poets largely changed the role of reformer or agitator. Their composition changed and they were seeking patronage in the courts. '*Samasyapurti*' (verse composed by poets on a given problem or sentence) and amazing ornamentation in poetry were the creations of this period. The literature of the period clearly represents the life styles of kings and their petty concerns.

In modern period, with the beginning of colonial period, literature gets revolutionized by being *earthly*. Man and his surroundings became the central question with decreasing emphasis on spiritualism. Literature was out of the feudal courts and was on the streets. The presence of press and development of prose provided impetus to new modes of literary writing which could widen the base of readership. Thus literature became more democratized by being more accessible to the people. Now it had a more developed and modern mechanism to reach the people (educated) — a well expanded but defined audience. Authorship of upper or intermediary caste - hindus, exposed to formal British education, was confronting new sets of existential questions and focussed on social and political problems. Hence, nothing reflects society more clearly and broadly than the literature of pre-independence India.

While there was the colonial rule and the problems of social reform which most haunted the literature of the period; the realist shift in post independence literature became more sharpened (being historically conditioned) as a result of the non-fulfilment of the aspirations of the people with independence and the fall outs of lumpen development - installed and consolidated by colonial rule but continued by post-independence government. This process echoed in the post-independence literature the most. Though this echo and perception of reality was not bereft of the marks of social and political backgrounds of the author.

Main theories of sociology of literature clearly indicate the articulation of politics in literary writings. Lowenthal emphasized that social consciousness of the author and the text should be given higher priority while studying the text because the author either supports the socio-historical situation or opposes it.²³ He conceived that man is involved in specific relations of production who are regimented socially in classes. Its development forms the real basis for the various cultural spheres. Thus proper explanation of literature is only possible through historical materialism.²⁴

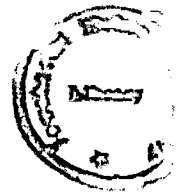
23. Leo Lowenthal. *Literature and Mass Culhere* (Communication in Society Vol.1) New Brunsmik ; Transaction Books. 1984. p.247.

24. *ibid*, p.247-9.

The basic contention of 'genetic structuralism' of Lucien Goldmann is that all human sciences are from within the society though with varying degrees according to the circumstances of intellectual and social life. Thus literature, by virtue of being from within the society is response of an individual or collective subjects in an attempt to modify or change a given situation for the fulfilment of their aspirations.²⁵

Hence, the literary creation is representative of the 'world vision' of a social group. They inhere an ideological content. The ideology is shaped by the period, and the social position of the author. The next chapter, therefore, tries to develop the historical understanding of Prem Chand's and Nirala's writings.

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25. See Lucien Goldmann. 'The sociology of literature : status and problem of method in Albrecht et al. ed. The Sociology of Literature, London : Duckworth, 1970 (rep. 1982) p.582-3.

RETHINKING HISTORY : 1920-1935

CHAPTER-II

RETHINKING HISTORY : 1920-35

"Liberty is the life breath of nation; and when the life is attacked, when it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable, - just as it is lawful for a man who is being strangled to rid himself off the pressure on his throat by any means in his power."

— Aurobindo¹

This dissertation attempts to study literary contributions of *Premchand* and *Nirala* and their political articulation. A sociological study of 'political articulation' requires to locate it in the socio political context. Hence, the need for this historical chapter was felt. The period under consideration is 1920-35. It is marked with both Premchand and Nirala's main literary contributions, and a significant development in Indian national struggle. In political sense of the term, various versions of Indian Nationalism finds more potent and decisive expression in this period. Some of them were already present in the prior nationalist discourse, others surfaced and got vitalized in the period itself. These versions of nationalism can be named as 'reformist', 'rationalist', 'extremist', 'centrist', 'leftist', 'Gandhian', 'casteist', 'Dalit', 'revivalist' etc. Also, Premchand's and Nirala's primary preoccupation is with Hindi speaking belt, therefore, in trying to

1. Quoted in Gangadharan, K. K. Indian National Congress : Growth and development. Delhi : Kalamkar Prakashan, 1972. P. 121.

understand the history, main attention is given to the society of this area and its relation with others. Other regions of India are referred only to characterize its specificities and commonalities in relation to them.

Similarly, The main focus is 1920 to 1935, but socio-political development of pre-1920 colonial India is also demarcated to characterize its bearing on the political discourse of the concerned period.

Accordingly, the whole chapter is subdivided. Here one thing is worth noting that Socio-political developments in colonial India were *asymmetrical*. What was happening in early and middle nineteenth century Bengal did not occur in Hindi belt at the same time. Mass political awakening in this area is a later phenomena, thanks to the shift in mass base of Indian National Congress. Therefore, while discussing and comparing various dimensions of colonial rule and national movement, this asymmetrical penetration of nationalist or 'cultural consciousness' in various regions of India has to be kept in mind and incorporated to bring out its regional differentials.

I

Pre-1920 Hindi belt and Cultural Nationalism

The period under brief consideration is a period of significant socio-cultural developments in Hindi belt from *Bhartendu* (1867) upto *Mahavir*

Prasad Dwivedi (1920). This era characterizes more of a cultural awakening than political. This does not mean that there were no political mobilization during this period. Sporadic tribal protest against intruders and peasant mobilisation against British exploitation existed earlier. Former existed as early as late 19th century and the later gave birth to Gandhian Nationalism in 1917 (Champaran movement)² However, they do not seem to have direct relation with 'Cultural Consciousness, and therefore its rationality, created by Hindi 'middle class intelligentsia. This added to both political intensification of 1920-35 'Hindi' belt and cultural development during this period.

Hence, the foregoing discussion emphasizes on the nature of cultural nationalism of Hindi-belt, the nature of middle class which brought it and its relations with other regions, especially Bengal.

Asymmetrical Renaissance and Middle Class : Comparison of Hindi-belt and Bengal

The cultural awakening in last century of India, often termed as 'renaissance' was a form of rationalist assertion³. It prepared a ground to assert the nationalist interest politically, in the last decades of the 19th

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2. Sumit Sarkar. *Modern India, 1885-1947*. Madras : Macmillan. 1983 (rep.1986) p. 44-45, 115.
 3. Partha Chatterjee. *The Nation and its Fragments : Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* Delhi : OUP. 1995 pp 6-8

century. The harbinger of this cultural awakening was the newly formed 'middle class'; generally coming from the upper strata of the caste-hierarchy; exposed to western education and ideas; receiver of prestigious government jobs or titles (*Khitab*); belonged to locally notable families and was settled in urban commercial centres. It was socially and materially influential.

Thus, the middle class literati or intelligentsia took up the 'mediating role' which enabled it to become cultural leader. Through this mediating role, it did not only define a 'spiritual domain of sovereignty by defining and interpreting religion, tradition, histories, and of course duties of women (*stree-dharma*) but also visualised a 'rational' material domain which needed reform, change and advancement.⁴ This process, as a necessity, contained revivalist, communal, harmonic as well as a rationalist content. The 'communal' and 'rationalist' contents got more intensified in later century⁵.

Apart from the instrumentality of 'middle class', the other catalysts of Indian renaissance were the advent of 'print capitalism' and the development of modern prose⁶. It enabled the middle class intelligentsia to discover the 'new forms of republic discourse' and 'new criteria of social

4. *ibid.*

5. See Chapter II of 'Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform : An analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse' by Bhikhu Parekh. New Delhi : Sage 1989.

6. Partha Chatterjee *op. Cit.* pp. 6-8

respectability' to set 'new aesthetic and moral standards'⁷.

However, the renaissance of Indian society was not a uniform phenomena, thanks to the localized nature of 'print capitalism' and the colonial logic of power. The first echoes of renaissance were heard in Bengal and Maharashtra. Both the cities became 'printing and educational centres. For other regions, especially north India, the printing and modern education were not an easy access. For higher education people had to go to Calcutta this phenomena continued till the early twentieth Century. First Hindi journals were published from Calcutta with the efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy. Some important journals of Hindi (i.e. *Matwala*) were published from Calcutta even in 1920s. Mature and widely concerned journalism in Hindi heartland only started in the late Nineteenth century⁸.

The varied penetration of 'print capitalism' and 'modern' English education did not only create regional leadership of renaissance but also a sense of regional and cultural superiority which was to be maintained even in the post-colonial period.

Cultural renaissance as it was evident, started late in North India. It borrowed a lot from Bengal and later from Maharashtra. The opinions about

7. Ibid. p 36.

8. See chapter '*Purvapithika* of Dr. Nagendra (ed.) *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas*. New Delhi: National Publishing House. 1973.

'women's status and problem' and other social reforms reflected in '*Kavivachan sudha*', '*Bal Bodhini*' and '*Harishchand Chandrika*', published by Bhartendu Harishchand who is known as the 'father' of Hindi renaissance.

Bhartendu was very much influenced by Raja Rammohan Roy and Ishwarchand Vidyasagar when he visited Bengal. When he came back from Bengal he was a 'changed' person and found Hindi speaking belt in utter degeneration as compared to Bengal.

But the 'middle class' (Bhartendu, his contemporaries and successors) which took up the 'mediating role' had something different, in addition to what they commonly shared with renaissance leaders of Bengal. That, it was not the same middle class as in Bengal. Few points of distinction may make it clear and its consequences to some extent :

- I. Bengali 'Middle Class' Intelligentsia, at large, was in receipt of direct influence of higher education and western knowledge. This was not the case in Hindi speaking belt. Here the cultural leaders generally were middle or higher secondary passed and acquired 'new' knowledge through their own efforts and readings.
- II. The intelligentsia of Bengal had greater penetration in British jobs and was influential enough to impress the British bureaucracy at times.

They came from relatively wealthy and educated families. In Hindi speaking areas, the intelligentsia, if was employed at all, held relatively lower posts. However the cultural leaders who received acclaim and recognition, were upper and middle castes, commonly in both the regions.

III. The Bengali intelligentsia was bilingual. They had developed modern Bangla prose: the language symbolizing 'Sovereignty' alongwith the acquisition of the language of 'power and elightenment, i.e. English. So did the Hindu intelligentsia. They were developing modern Hindi prose implying the creation of a 'sovereign domain' of discourse but also tried to acquire the languages of 'power and enlightenment'. However the language of 'power and enlightenment' for them meant also 'Bangala' and 'Marathi' alongwith English. Bhartendu knew both English and Bangla. Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi had mastery in Marathi apart from a good knowledge of English⁹.

IV. Hindi cultural leaders shared the necessity to reform'. However they tried to 'reform' mostly *through* literature and not through active reform movements like Raja Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar and others.

V. In Hindi most of the prominent writers were attached to 'print

9. The point came out in a discussion with Dr. Manager Pandey, currently Professor in the Centre for Indian Languages, JNU. New Delhi. in 1993.

capitalism' (from late sixties of the nineteenth century to early thirties of twentieth century): Bhartendu and his contemporaries, and Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi - the mentor of modern 'Khadi Boli' prose, and many well-acclaimed literatures of the second decade of this century. In their 'new forms of public discourse' apart from the search for 'new forms' and contents' of literature to suit their times, concern for all social and political issues are reflected¹⁰.

VI. Intelligentsia from both the regions tried to adjust between two mutually contradictory aspirations i.e. glorification of past and modernization of traditions.

VII. They also shared the tension between '*Rajbhakti*' (fear from, and therefore, the praise of British rule) and '*Rashtra bhakti*' (National feelings) : inherent in the writings of Bankim and historians of his time, as well as in Hindi intelligentsia.

VIII. In the formative years of renaissance, contrary to Bengal, the 'new definition of religion' is not seen in North India except '*Arya Samaj*' which penetrated Hindi belt effectively in Dwivedi-yuga of Hindi literature. Arya Smajist voice can be heard in the poetry of this period.¹¹

10. It is evident from the comparison between Partha Chatterjee, op. cit. and writings of Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma in Hindi on Bhartendu and Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi.

11. Mata Prasad (ed). *Hindi Sahitya Mein Dalit Kavyadhara*. Varanasi : Viswavidyalaya Prakashan. 1993.

Acceptance of Hindu religious personalities (*Sanyasis*) among rural masses was a later phenomena which at times reflected the 'Hindu image of Gandhi'.¹² The religiosity of Bhartendu is not comparable with that of Ramkrishna Paramhansa or Rajaram Mohan Roy. Bhartendu was a devotee, not a religious reformer¹³. Hence the spiritual content of religion as a means of 'social revitalization' and 'regeneration' was on its decline in Hindi belt.

Therefore, the renaissance brought by the 'middle-class' intelligentsia of Hindi-heartland apart from sharing, also maintained its own specific character than that in Bengal.

Hindi Literature and Social Consciousness

In Hindi one finds the efforts to distinguish between 'inner' and 'other'; 'self' and the 'other' in pre-1920s literature in order to demarcate a sovereign domain. The development of modern Hindi prose clearly characterizes this phenomena. As modern prose developed there was the need for *new forms* to represent the *new content* of literature. There were numerous translations from Bangala and English in Hindi. The authorship of this period struggled

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12. See Sumit Sarkar, op. cit. Useful discussion in this regard is found in Chapter IV and V.
 13. Bhartendu was a Vaishnava and his religious writing shows the influence of *Bhakti* Period. It must be noted that he also translated Quran into Hindi and compared Christ with Krishna. See his religious writings in '*Bharatendu Samagra*' ed. Hemant Sharma, Varanasi: Hindi Pracharak Sansthan.

to establish new 'forms' of literary practices. They were introduced to modern drama, novel and blank-verse through translations. It was difficult for early leaders of renaissance to use these forms with mastery as these were alien. Hence one's own rich literary tradition was looked into. Bhartendu translated various Sanskrit plays to illustrate the types of plays available in Indian tradition¹⁴.

Novels, 'not at all of available western type', being written in this period, first followed the tradition of 'Akhyaiika' (long narrative about kings or methodological characters) and catered as leisure pass-time of idle princes and *Zamindars* through its unreal, imaginary but engrossing 'aiyari' (spying) and 'tilasmi' (Mysterical) content. This phenomena of formative years slowly declined and the social concerns (first in preaching mould but later realistic) became evident. One can see this trend from Srinivas Das (*Pariksha Guru*- claimed as first novel in Hindi) upto Premchand's writings¹⁵.

Bhartendu, apart from translating Sanskrit and Bangla plays, himself wrote many plays. The favourite and suitable *form* he developed was 'satire'. '*Bharat Durdasha*' and '*Andher Nagari*' are best examples, which most suited

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14. Bharatendu, through the essay named *Natak* (play) discovered the varieties of play-writing styles available in Sanskrit literature. He indicated almost 18 varieties of plays. His both translated and originally written plays are 23. See Ibid. pp 283-555.
 15. See Chapter 'Hindi and Urdu Literature' in Vishvanath S. Naravene's *Cultural History of Modern India*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre. 1991 pp 160-202.

his times humorously ridiculing regressive social values and British rule, but at the same time saving oneself from the anger of British Raj¹⁶.

However written plays — also by others than Baharatendu — were not to be compared with modern European plays; as they also followed the traditional rules of play-writing. Also, the realist novels of the period were not modern European novels though it influenced the novel writing¹⁷. What it indicates that along with developing modern Hindi prose the cultural leaders were trying to 'Indianize' the new 'forms' to be suitable to their society.

In this creation of the 'self', the crucial achievement of these leaders was to create a modern Hindi 'nationality' (*Jati*) which was to offer the nation with a 'national language' (*Rashtrabhasha*)¹⁸. However this creation of the Hindi nationality was a fractured one, in the sense that Hindi and Urdu languages became mutually exclusive in terms of script and use of Sanskrit and Arabic- Persian words, inspite of the fact that writing in Urdu

16. See Hemant Sharma op. cit. pp. 460-70, 529-35.

17. See articles '*Premchand and Bharatiya Upanyason mein Bharatiyata Ki Samasya*, (Premchand and the question of Indianness in Indian novels) by Namvar Singh and '*Hindi Upanyas aur Gramin Paridrishya*' (Hindi Novels and Rural Scene) by S.C.Dube in '*Purvagrah*' No. 46-47. Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad Publication, Bhopal, September - December 1981. PP 9-13, 46-9.

18. Illuminating discussion regarding how Hindi nationality developed & got 'modernized' can be found in Ramvilas Sharma, '*Hindi Jati Ka Sahitya*' (Literature of Hindi Nationality). Delhi: Rajpal and Sons. 1986.

and Hindi were not community exclusive . There were many Hindu writers who contributed to Urdu including Raghupati Sahay (Firaq Gorakhpuri) and Premchand; and also Muslims who wrote in Hindi i.e. *Kabeer*, *Jayasi*, *Amir Khusro* in *Bhakti* period and *Insha Allah Khan* in modern period. Insha Allah Khan is supposed to be the first person who wrote first Hindi Kahani (short-story), though debatable; and is included in the literary history of both Hindi and Urdu. Even the syntactical forms in both languages are the same, as Urdu has 'developed from Hindi'. However, the use of words and script made them separate. Thus, separate histories of the 'twin languages were written, though some authors still remaining common, thus denying the possibility of a common identity¹⁹.

In addition, in glorifying the past, whole Muslim period was seen as a dark period. Thus the development of Indian renaissance, including Hindi marks a *creation of selves within self* which later got more crystallized with the political developments.

Construction of Social Reality

As far as representation is concerned the regressive values of semi-feudal society and atrocities of British rule were both criticized. Position of women in the society, child marriage, widows agony, low-caste status

19. Vishvanath S.Naravane, op. cit. pp 160-202. This also came out during a discussion with Manager Pandey op.cit.

and love for the nation were definitely spelt out. But participation of women and low castes in the Hindi authorship of this period is almost nil. There were voices coming from Dalits but they are unknown. Hardly you find any women memoirs written in this period²⁰. Hence, you also find this intelligentsia at times as the new *caste-Hindu patriarch*, defining and shaping the gender and caste- relations in *new ways* for its own historical needs, apart from its progressive character : need for self glory and necessary rationality of their time.

Let us consider *Yashodhra* written by a noted poet of this period, *Maithilisharan Gupt*. This 'Kavya' narrates *Buddha's* renouncement of his home, wife, relatives and pleasures of the world in order to attain the *liberating knowledge* so that 'happiness' is restored to the world. Remember, India was under shackles of British rule and Society was engrossed in despair. *Yashodhara* is Buddha's wife and the 'narrative' primarily depicts the 'trauma' and 'feelings' of *Yashodhara* along with other relatives, about Buddha's *Mahabhinishkraman* (renouncing the worldly relations). The change in emphasis and making 'Yashodhara' a protagonist, in itself, was a radical outlook since it was perhaps the first attempt ever made in Hindi and Sanskrit literature, so far as penning down of a woman's agony regarding husband leaving her even for a novel cause, is concerned. It denoted increasing importance of women that she was not merely an object

20. Discussion with Manager Pandey. op. cit.

for physical relations and performer of household duties. In a famous 'geet' (song), '*Sakhi ve ham se kah kar jate*' of the epic, Gupta depicts Yashodhara's Complaints:

I am proud that my master left me for enlightenment.
But not taking me in his confidence, makes me hurt.
Friend! I would have been asked!
Had he done so, would I have stopped him?²¹.

When Gautam returns as 'Buddha' (enlightened) everybody goes to see him but proud and hurt *Yashodhara*, who finds that what Buddha has received and possessed now is partly 'mine', and therefore, refuses to do so. Finally, 'Buddha' himself comes as to recognize her *individuality* and *existence*. As the poet informs us in the introduction to the epic, addressed to his younger brother that Buddha's importance is nothing for me, if I do not give importance to Yashodhara (*Gopa bina Gautam bhi grahya nahin mujhko*), he depicts a *new woman*, supportive of her husband's *sadkarya* (truthful work) for the betterment of the society, but can articulate her grievances, if feels cheated. Gupta's *Yashodhara* commands an 'individual'

21. The song is translated by me from - Maithili Sharan Gupta's *Yashodhara*. Jhansi : Sahitya Sadan 1988 (reprint) pp. 26-27.

The translated part of song is :

सिद्धि हेतु स्वामि गये यह गौरव की बात ;
पर चोरी-चोरी गये यही बडा व्याघात ।
सखि, वे मुझसे कहकर जाते,
कह, तो क्या मुझसे वे अपनी पथ-बाधा ही पाते ?

space. However this space is limited since husband is still a *master* and *right performer*. Thus, she has to be finally *anugamini* (follower) as Yashodhara accepts Buddhism before Buddha and follows him with her son.²²

Another poet, *Siyaramsharan Gupt* depicts the plight of untouchables as:-

They were born in Hindu *Kula*
Sing the name of *Hari*
They work for all of us
Why today they are untouchable
Unknowingly.
They may change their religion
They may become Muslim or Christian.²³

The main concern is not for the torture inflicted upon untouchables but the fear that they may convert to other religions. There are numerous poems written in this period, giving a fearful depiction that ill treatment of lower castes may force them to conversion. On the other hand, the

22. See Maithilisharan Gupt. Ibid. pp. 143-144.

23. Mata Prasad (ed). op.cit., See the section on *Gandhivadi, Rashtriya Andolan se Prabhavit Kavita Mein Ashprishyata Ka Virodh*. The Poem is translated by me from Hindi to English. The Hindi version is given:

क्यो अछूत हैं आज अछूत
वे हैं हिन्दू कुल सम्भूत
गाते हैं श्री हरि का नाम
आते हैं हम सबके काम
बने विधर्मी वे अनजान
मुसलमान किंवा किस्तान

compositions by Dalits are full of agony and forceful demand for social justice. However, their compositions were not a part of the general literary discourse of this period and remained in folklore and popular memory²⁴.

One may say that local discourses were more radical and retaliatory. This is not only exemplified by Dalits and low castes but also by others. The main stream literature of this period does not reflect any concern about mutiny of 1857 (the most important political happening preceding Bhartendu Yuga). In *Arrah* area, a part of Bhojpuri region in Bihar, where *Kunwar Singh* bravely fought the battle of 1857 with the participation of local peasantry, the battle is still remembered eloquently through the songs of Holi (*Hori-Geet*). The fear of British Raj would have been an inhibiting force for any such expression in mainstream literature. But the peasantry which made it a part of their festivals and expressed it every year in Holi in collective gatherings reflects a strong anger inspite of the British fear. Consider a 'Holi geet' which depicts a woman's urge to her husband that

24. Mata Prasad *ibid.* : A section is devoted on folk songs which contains forceful and moving Dalit voices though not of 'high literary standard'. The writing style and references of these songs indicate that they are composed by Dalits. Such depictions are not found, in my knowledge, in the mainstream poetry of the period.

In this regard one may also see the rare poem written by Hira Dom (an untouchable) and published in *Saraswati*, September 1914 (ed.) Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi.

Dear get up from the slumber
Mother India is calling you
I desire you to put
The brick red mark on your forehead
I request you to take the rifle.
and be ready for the battle²⁵.

Implication

In the backdrop of this political and cultural development, the Gandhian politics got a wider legitimacy in India especially in the northern part. The early leaders of renaissance did prepare a ground for his acceptance i.e. not only through developing a lingua-franca', but also through the spread of nationalist feelings and 'questioning the social evils'. It may invite an apparent contradiction in Gandhian 'traditionalism' and their sense of 'rationality'. But later analysis will make it clear, how they provided a fertile ground for Gandhian acceptance.

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25. The song is translated by me from Bhojpuri and taken from Karmendu Shishir (ed.) 'Basantgeet' Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh Adivasi Lok Kala Parishad. 1996. p.32.

The Bhojpuri song as follows :

सेजिया छोडऽ बालम मानऽ बतिया हमार ।। टेक ।।
भारत माता तोहे करती पुकार
रोड़िया चंदन के तिलक लिलरवा ।
इहे बा लालसा हमार ।। टेक ।।
हथवा में ले लऽ राइफल बनूकवा
जंगवा में जाए के होजा तैयार
इहे बा कहना हमार ।। टेक ।।

One also finds other such entries which depict the bravery of Raja Kunvar Sigh, the King of Arrah. See Pages 30-31 of this collection.

However Gandhi appeared on the scene of nationalist movement in the middle of second decade but it is only after 1920 that he manages to wield 'absolute' control of Indian National Congress and nationwide mass acceptance. The later analysis will try to find out the acceptance of Gandhian politics in Hindi literature and in Hindi belt visa-vis the other political discourses. Before doing that, it is necessary to review the socio - economic situation of India from 1920 to 35 and dominant political discourses therein.

II

Political Economy of Raj: 1920-1935

Narionalist aspirations cannot be seen in isolation from the economic Impact of British rule in this period, as it affected various sections of Indian society differently and therefore moulded their interests. This section tries to peep into the political economy of the British rule which worked as a catalyst to various nationalist expressions.

The impact of war and post-war constitutional reforms (Montague-Chelmsford Report, 1918 and Govt. of India act 1919) considerably affected the Indian political scenario and colonial economy.

This initiated the process of 'dyarchy' to create a 'responsible government' and a 'bicameral system' at the centre i.e. a council of state

and legislative assembly with elected majority, but no control over ministers and vice - regal veto' were of far reaching consequences. On the one hand, it devolved the financial institutions to the extent the local expenditure was to be managed on locally raised revenues. Only departments with less political weight were transferred with little fund to provincial governments as to discredit the leaders in the area of agriculture and education. There was more than 100 per cent increase in import duties, in this period, without an increase in excise on the export of Indian textiles²⁶.

Moreover, "the broadened electoral base through special reservations", "drain of wealth", "decline of handicrafts", "pauperization of Indian peasantry" and "obstacles to the growth of Indian capital" in this period revealed the contradictions between the Indian and the British interests²⁷. Simultaneously, it also effected the different sections of Indian society in varied ways, at times quite opposite. As Sumit Sarkar points out, the decline in the price of Indian agricultural produce affected the better-off Indian farmers alongwith bringing hard time for agricultural labourers. So, in post-war situation there was misery and fall in the living standards of majority but business groups accumulated fabulous wealth because of substantial industrial expansion²⁸.

26. Sumit Sarkar op.cit Pg 160-70

27. *ibid.* P 168

28. *ibid.* P 169-173

During the Twenties of this century the rural India was going through a crisis²⁹:-

- i) Over-pressure on agriculture : In 1891 there were 61.1% population dependent on agriculture while it became 73.0% in 1921 (the census figure of 1931 is said to have been manipulated through changing the basis of classification. (Dutta. India Today p.203). Also, there was declining trend of Industrial labourer (5.5 % in 1911 and 4.3 % in 1931) during this period as there was destruction of *old-hand industry*. (ibid. p.205).
- ii) There was stagnation of agriculture because of large area of cultivable land remaining unused, decrease in land - cultivator ratio, and successive fall in the yield of food grain (ibid. pp. 206-21)
- iii) The monopoly over land by British rule and later introduction of the new land system (Zamindari etc.) created a strong landordism. Bone-breaking exploitation continued with increase in revenue. It created a huge mass of agricultural labour, thus pushing the peasantry towards improverishment. (ibid. pp 222-55)

Sumit Sarkar points out that the mass upsurge of 1930s, was closely related to the worldwide economic depression. The depression caused sharp

29. R.P. Dutta. India Today. Calcutta : Manisha. 1940 (rep. 1992) p. 197-275. It provides a systematic description of far-reaching consequences of agriculture and related policies of British Government.

fall in the prices of agricultural commodities which gave a major blow to the export-oriented colonial economy. While, inspite of many problems which Indian bourgeoisie faced, the older economic ties altered creating new opportunities. According to Sumit Sarkar, "Agricultural prices declined much sharply than industrial while commercial and rural depression probably led to a transfer of capital from trade, usuary and land purchase to industry". The growth of capitalist in 1930s along with their 'increasing weight in national politics increased 'burdens on the working class'³⁰.

III

Gandhi And His Political Discourse

Rise of Gandhian Nationalism (1920-35) was a historical and regional necessity facilitated and restricted, both by political - economy of 'Raj', pre-Gandhian social consciousness and Gandhi's 'practical' experiment with '*truth*' and '*tradition*'. This section attempts towards appreciation of Gandhi's political discourse, its acceptance and rejection in various regions and 'social groups' of this period.

Gandhi's rise to hold a central place in national movement of India began from the middle of second decade of this century and was completed by early twenties, though this phase witnessed many ups and downs. His

30. Sumit Sarakar op.cit. pp. 257-61.

nation-wide mass acceptance was the outcome of both his 'radical traditionalism' and the political situation of his time. He gave a serious thought to the state of degeneration in the Indian society and was convinced that the society needed a 'revitalization' and 'reconstitution' of its foundations on the basis of new '*Yugadharma*'³¹. Which remained his life-long preoccupation from his days in Africa to his death.

Neo-traditionalism of Gandhi

Gandhian ideology developed through the experiences of passive resistance in Africa³², regenerative resources of Indian tradition and cross cultural borrowings (Christianity, Tolstoy, Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau)³³. His notion of '*Yugadharma*' constituted '*Sewadharma*' (service to the human kind, not the demand for justice and equality), non-violence (*Ahimsa*) and compassion. His political tool, worked out in 1906;³⁴ '*Satyagrah*' (non-violent opposition of specific laws) was the extension of this 'central philosophy'. As indicated, through cross-cultural borrowing he developed the constituent elements of his '*Yugadharma*' and presented it in Indian colour³⁵.

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31. Bikhu Parekh. *Colonisation, Tradition and Reform : An analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*. New Delhi : Sage. p. 11.
 32. Sumit Sarkar op. cit. pp. 178-179
 33. See Bhiku Parekh op. cit pp. 12, 72-75, 79.
 34. Sumit Sarkar op.cit p. 189.
 35. See Bhiku Parekh. op.cit. 2nd Chapter provides Gandhian synthesis of '*Yugadharma*'. Also see p. 73.

Gandhian thought, both, *continued and broke* with the notions developed by his predecessors regarding eastern and western civilizations. As he felt that Indians were in domination because of their social degeneration, he critiqued British rule, not politically, rather culturally and found that the colonial encounter was between 'ancient' and modern' since the former was spiritual and the latter was materialist. Gandhian interpretation of 'spirituality', though reported to be sometimes ambiguous, contained the spirit of 'love' and 'service'.

Hence being 'worldly and spiritual' was a departure from his predecessors. It was meant to teach that Indian pursuit is the spiritual well being while of humankind 'west' was losing its past glory by running after physical and material pleasures³⁶. Here it may be noted that Gandhi was also constructing two domains: 'inner/outer', 'spiritual/worldly', as Partha Chatterjee would say, but what contained in addition was the overtone of moral superiority and space for 'international humanism'. This re-formulation gave Gandhi an advantage which was not achieved by his predecessors³⁷. Bhikhu Parekh has discussed that Gandhi's foresightedness was a legitimate force behind his philosophy of *Yugadharma*. Gandhi knew that his was the age of modern science: a mode to acquire the legitimate knowledge. He also knew that his countrymen only accepted the authority

36. *ibid.* p.73

37. *ibid.* p. 72

of tradition and science was not appealing. Thus, to resolve this 'Science and tradition dichotomy' he insisted that all traditions, especially Indians, are scientific³⁸. Thus his '*Yugadharma*', an outcome of his intuitive feelings and experiences of his successful satyagrah, was also persuasive of a scientifically thinking mind.

It also may be noted that his theory of *Ahimsa* (Non violence) also involved a new interpretation of Indian tradition. Jainism also, which was a source of his theory of '*ahimsa*', in course of time, was criticized by him as it was not practical; and he claimed that all killings are not violence. He declared that violence was infinitely better than cowardice³⁹. And in practice, he sometimes settled for less than complete non-violence such as campaign for military recruitment in 1918⁴⁰.

Rise to Power and Politics of Reception

Gandhi became the leader of all Indian mass-base because his philosophy and 'moderate techniques of protest' (*Satyagrah*) were historically suitable to the masses, various interests and decisive sections of Indian society. Achievements of Gandhi's work in Africa reached almost all corners of Indian society through various communities working in

38. *ibid.* p. 35

39. *ibid.* p. 135

40. *ibid.* op.cit Pg.179

Africa. His theory of Ahimsa gave an umbrella kind of role to Indian National Congress (INC) which became capable to mediating the social rifts and organizing a joint national struggle of various sections⁴¹. Moreover, the social ideals put forward in 'Hind Swaraj' to restore the *Ramrajya*' brought opposing social groups (Zamindars, peasants, Industrial workers) together on the one hand, because the implied 'social harmony' suited the propertied class ; on the other, the ambiguity of Gandhian philosophy inspired to perceive the images of Gandhi in a way that fitted the interest of social group. The sudden outbursts of peasantry and the opted non-violent means of protests, though being a part of Gandhi's non-violent movement in this period explains both the nature of peasantry and the phenomena of Gandhi's varied image perception by different groups. His emphasis on *Ramarajya* and his overwhelming popularity, inspite of his effort to bridge the gap between Hindu-Muslim communities, led the Muslims to think of him, in general, as the 'Hindu leader'.

Role of rumour is also related to the process of varied image-creation and popularity of Gandhi. The research by Shahid Amin on *Gorakhpur* gives a detailed account of how rumours were instrumental in leading the illiterate peasantry to think about spiritual powerfulness of Gandhi as a potential leader or *deota* who could easily bring swaraj for them. In Gorakhpur, the local Hindi journal also helped spread the rumours, though

41. Ibid. pp: 179-80

passively, by publishing them or reporting them in-order-to refute them⁴².

However, the reception of Gandhi in various parts of the country varied in degrees according to the interests of associated groups. It may be considered that the acceptance of Gandhi was qualitatively different in Bengal, Gujarat, and Hindi speaking belt. The causes behind a formidable and successful Gandhian base are clearly explained by Sumit Sarkar⁴³. The comparison between Hindi speaking belt and Bengal needs more light since it is also related with the process of 'renaissance'.

The reason behind the lesser affinity towards Gandhian philosophy in Bengal, was the 'rationality' rooted strongly in the society of Bengal as a consequence of cultural reformism of middle class leadership of 19th century. The middle class and upper- middle class which became 'politically dominant' in late 19th century and the early 20th century carried forward that 'rationality'. Thus, the restoration of 'village-republics' became a naive idea. Moreover, the Gandhian idiom of *Ramrajya* named after lord *Rama* was distasteful as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's *Krishna* or Ramakrishna

42. Shahid Amin. 'Gandhi as Mahatma : Gorakhpur district. Eastern UP, 1921-22', in Ranjit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies III*. Delhi : Oxford University Press, provides a detailed information as to how rumour gave the impression of Gandhi's being 'Deota', Saint, Mahatma and possessor of magical powers.

Also see Sumit Sarkar op. cit. p.182.

43. Sumit Sarkar, op.cit p.185, provides the social and political reasons behind Gandhi's popularity and success in Gujarat.

Paramhans' *Kali* were more culturally associated.

As discussed earlier, the middle class of Hindi speaking belt was qualitatively different than that of Bengal. And so was its nationality. Thus the Gandhian idiom of *Ramrajya* was not only favourable because *Tulsidas* was so popular here than elsewhere, but also because the consciousness created by the middle class before 1920s Played an important role. Since whatever rationality it had created had little impact on the illiterate peasantry where traditional idioms of *Rama*, *Sita* and *Savitri* were still strongly rooted. The new generation of middle class, which had its rural roots, was educated in this rationality and had little opposing elements towards Gandhian philosophy.

Gandhi, Women and Responses from Hindi Belt

Closely related to above mentioned phenomena is the representation of Dalits and women which were solely done by this middle class leadership. Self-representation of women⁴⁴ and Dalits which had potential opposition towards Gandhian philosophy, could not find expression in the dominant literary consciousness.

44. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (ed.) *Recasting women : Essays in colonial History*, New Delhi : Kali for Women. in 'Introduction' gives very interesting analysis of how the construction of 'new women' in colonial India was class and cultural phenomenon. It implies that representation and perception of 'women' is conditioned by the class position of male leaders. See pp. 1-26

In pre-1920 period, there are accounts of voices of women coming through various journals. Most of them criticized the position of man, and advocated for change in the situation of women, through prohibiting child marriage and educating girls. However, all of them maintained a silence on widow remarrige as was the dominant middle-class consciousness. One can say that the middle class consciousness was, to some extent an inhibiting force for 'self speaking' women on the issue of widow remarriage or in organizing women at mass level. Interestingly, Gandhi had criticized 'adult widow-remarriage' while encouraging the marriage of 'virgin child-widows'.

It may be noted here that Gandhi brought many women to public sphere and advocated the 'male-female equality'. However, he attacked the progressive writings of Uma Nehru which were published in 'Streedarpan' since he felt that her ideas about women were that of upper-class women's conception of 'western gender relations'. Contrarily, Gandhi used the images of 'Sita', 'Damyanti' and 'Draupadi' who had great favour in the ordinary sections and middle class⁴⁵.

Gandhian image of women was subtly elitist and was not suitable to various sections of Indian women. Kapil Kumar' study of rural women in

45. Vir Bharat Talwar, *Feminist consciousness in women's journals in Hindi : 1910-29*, in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid. *ibid.* pp. 204-32.

Oudh (1917-47) indicates how ownership of means of production determined the social prestige and implications of patriarchal norms⁴⁶. Women taluqdars and money-lenders in Oudh were privileged and norms of patriarchy did not apply to them as they did to the cultivating and landless labourer women who faced the economic problem. Therefore, every woman placed differently in classes and cultures practically cannot be 'Sita' as Gandhi perceived. It reveals that the elitist content in Gandhi's conception of women was shared and idealized by the middle class consciousness.

Gandhi and the Question of Harijans

Gandhi tried to advocate improvement in the situation of Dalits but hardly found any contradiction in the untouchability and the 'varna system'⁴⁷. It is not only that the enlightened Dalit intelligentsia opposed Gandhi, the grievances of Dalits found in localized popular folk memory were potentially harmful for Gandhian acceptances, which did not get space in the mainstream literature of the 'middle class' of Hindi speaking belt.

It does not only explains the reasons behind the popular acceptance of Gandhi in the Hindi speaking belt, but also puts light on the Gandhian mode of political action, that characteristically 'drawing in the masses and

46. Kapil Kumar, Rural Women in Oudh : Baba Ram Chandra and the women's question, in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid. Ibid. p.337-69.

47. Bhiku Parekh op.cit. p.209-12.

keeping its activity restricted to the forms and ideas predetermined by the leader'⁴⁸.

Gandhian Hegemony and Trusteeship

The process of Gandhi becoming central in Indian National Congress (INC) helped him, to a great extent, to mould the national movement in the direction he willed. His emphasis on 'class harmony'⁴⁹ (Cooperation between Zamindars and tenants ; and capital and labour) derived from his theory of 'trusteeship' was decisive in marginalizing the genuine interests. It is noteworthy that congress cleverly managed to suppress the demand for 'no revenue' and consequently for the abolition of Zamindari system. It was the conviction of class harmony that Gandhi strikingly kept himself aloof from all trade-union activities even from those which were organised not other than moderate congress leaders. Gandhi in his famous interview with the Zamindars of United Provinces, Thus said -

"I shall be no party to dispossessing the propertied class of their private property without just cause. My Objectives is to reach your heart and convert you so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare."⁵⁰

48. Sumit Sarkar. op.cit. p. 179

49. *ibid.* p. 207, 224-25

50. R.P. Dutta op.cit p. 628

IV

Other Developments between 1920-35

Gandhi though created a counter-hegemony against the British rule, also hegemonised different aspirations which led to making Indian National Congress a 'Raj' in itself for the benefit of the propertied class largely ie. Zamindars and Indian bourgeoisie. Thus, British divide and rule policy, and authoritarian content of Gandhian Philosophy and praxis provided impetus to other socio-political developments. These developments are discussed below.

Communalism

The unprecedented growth of communalism in this period was a construction of both the Colonial policy and the uncompromising attitudes of political leaders. Between 1923 and 1927, there were 19 communal riots only in united province. This period witnessed a massive proliferation of Communal associations. The 'Montford reforms' had broadened the franchise but extended the base of separate electorates which stimulated the hunger for sectional slogans and communal benefits. The increase in population of educated youths and lesser opportunity for employment sharpened the rift regarding school, office and shop⁵¹.

51. Sumit Sarkar op.cit pp.223-4

The fraternity of Non-Cooperation Khilafat Movement, though limited to 'leadership alliance', was weakened by Gandhi's unilateral withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement. In addition to the exclusive cultural expression of 'secular *Ramrajya*, discussed earlier; there was a massive spread of Muslim communal organisations. However, '*Tabligh*' and '*Tanzim*' were largely responses to Arya Samajist '*Shuddhi* and '*Sangathan*' activities. Hindu Mahasabha, started in 1915 in the Haridwar 'Kumbh Mela', by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, initiated a major revival from 1922-23 by incorporating the Shuddhi program and suggesting, 'self help squads for Hindus'. Congress and Swarajists 'failed to control the Hindu communalism and could not deny the space to the 'apostle of *Hind-Hindi-Hindu*' (Madan Mohan Malviya and likes) within the congress, who had bitterly opposed the Non-Cooperation movement. Gandhi's fast to stop riot in 'Kohat' could not provide any permanent solution to the Communalism⁵².

In 1927, there were possibilities of amity between the two communities since 'all established political groups' had decided to boycott the Simon Commission including the caste organisations and muslim leaders (on pursuation by Jinnah). But, the bowing down of congress before Hindu Mahasabha leaders even after the already proposed concessions to Hindu factionalism in Nehru report and the uncompromising attitude of M.R. Jayakar, the Mahasabha leader, forced congress to back-out from the

52. *ibid.* p. 235-37

promise made in Madras Congress in 1927, and therefore enraged Muslims. This forced Jinnah to put forward his famous 14 points⁵³.

Caste Movements

The contradictions of Caste system of Indian society found expression through caste movements in this period as it was earlier, which meant caste benefit of jobs and 'sanskritization'. But, this period also saw the emergence of more radical caste ideology since through caste associations the hierarchized caste relations were challenged. There were the caste movements which provided all India peasant leadership (Sahajanand Saraswati), and interestingly non-loyalist anti-brahmanical movements, which at times confronted the landlordism and the system of exploitative moneylending. It also may be noted that the militant lower-caste movement also contributed towards the emergence of communist trends⁵⁴.

The birth and rise of Left Alternative

Bolshevik revolution of 1917 created curiosity and interest in radical and young nationalists. The disillusionment created by Non-Cooperation movement turned young participants to communist ideas in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta around 1921. S.A. Dange wrote famous pamphlet

53. *ibid.* p. 236-37, 262-3

54. *Ibid.* p. 282-4

'*Gandhi vs. Lenin*'. It visualized a prosperous country with redistribution of land and wealth. Accepting non - violence as a political tactic, he argued for 'no-tax' and for 'political general strikes' as weapons of nationalist struggle which was always opposed by the Gandhian leadership⁵⁵. M.N. Roy provided a secret link among communist thinking people in India. By the end of 1922 there were nearly half a dozen *left oriented* journals getting published in the country. This period also witnessed the proposition of worker's and peasant's party by M.N. Roy so that illegal communist activities could be undertaken.

By 1928 all the communist leaders tried to work within the congress, and thereafter tried to separate themselves since, by VIIth comintern M.N.Roy had not lost the praise for Gandhi. The restrictions on communists by British government were severe, though in 1925 an open Indian Communist Conference was held in *Kanpur*. The conference was composed of diverse social groups who proposed to break with comintern. Several organizations had been set up between 1925-27. These outfits intensified their activities with workers in Bengal and Bombay. But the countryside cadre remained marginal and theoretical primacy was given to work with 'city proletariat' Perhaps, for the greater success and mass base the more suitable approach was needed than the 'mechanical transfer' of the conceptual framework of Russian revolution. Hence, the peasantry remained

55. *ibid.* p. 177, 212-4

largely untouched in the first phase of its uprising⁵⁶.

By 1928, the difference of interests between congress and leftist leaders (who had organized various remarkable labour protests and strikes) became more clear. Two acts, the 'Public Safety Bill' and 'the Trade Dispute Act' of 1929, were proposed by the Government to silence the communists. These bills were officially opposed by the congress but during the debate over the former bill, a majority of congress leaders were absent. The arrest of prominent labour leaders during early 30s as an outcome of these developments slowed down the communist activities⁵⁷.

The '*Unity cum struggle*' approach of communists towards congress was shattered when, after the VIth comintern, congress communists started becoming aloof from the nationalist mainstream and committed a historical mistake by attacking Nehru—a congress leader known for his leftist/socialist leanings and critical attitude to Gandhi — rather than using him for leftist consolidation⁵⁸.

In 1934, the congress socialist party (CSP) was formed within the

56. *ibid.* pp. 241-50

Also see Shashi Joshi's analysis of left alternative in *Struggle for Hegemony in India*. Volume I. (1920-34) New Delhi : Sage. 1992.

57. Sumit Sarkar *op.cit* p. 270-79.

58. *Ibid* p. 331, and Shashi Joshi, *op.cit*, concluding chapter.

congress by socialists like Jai Prakash Narayan (J.P.), Narendra Dev, Sampuranand and Achhut Patwardhan etc. The ideology of the party posed various ambiguities as it wanted to remain in congress and criticized its leadership. Their ideology oscillated between radical nationalism to the 'scientific Socialism'. However the CSP advance in coming years stimulated thinking in congress about the questions of agrarian reform, industrial labour, future of princely states and non Gandhian ways of mass mobilization and struggle.

One of the significant achievement of CSP was the establishment of links with the Kisan movement, and being useful to the communists as Communist Organisations became illegal after 1934 to suppress the massive labour upsurge of 1931 in future⁵⁹.

Therefore the rise of the left alternative, though weakened through time and again because of congress hegenony and its dubious role as well as because of its own internal inconsistencies, in addition to the continued suppression by the colonial Government, generally showed a growing disenchantment with the dominant framework of the nationalist struggle. Hence, the dicussed political development other than that of the Gandhian fold marked a weakening of the Gandhian utopia.

59. Sumit Sarkar op.cit 332

V

National Movement and Cultural Expressions in Hindi Speaking Belt (1920-35)

The reflection of national movement in various cultural institution is not always the same, thanks to the nature of renaissance. The process of renaissance alongwith exhibiting regional variations in terms of space, time and quality, it also represented an institutional variation.

It was not only that the material impetus was enough for renaissance. Colonial incentives did affect the development of institutions and their variation. Even in the Hindi speaking belt, we find that cultural awareness in music, dance and the fine arts began late as compared to literature. However, more systematic studies on social concerns of former institutions are not available. Hence I intend to make few preliminary remarks.

Music and Dance

The music and dance which largely depended on patronage of kings, in pre-colonial period, was virtually neglected by the British rule. Perhaps, they fundamentally differed in their techniques and style from the west, Therefore, they were of little interest.

The revival of music is credited to efforts of Bhatkhande and Vishnu Digamber Paluskar in this period. Bhatkhande, besides establishing a

college for imparting education the music at Lahore: documented the *Ragas* and *Raginis* and provided musical notations of 'Alaps' which were not easily available to the disciples of various *gharanas*. It may be noted, that the eminence of Khayal style of singing, implying the imaginativeness while singing, perhaps suited the social psyche⁶⁰. But, there was no change in the basic philosophy and practices of music: the *guru-shishya parampara*', 'patron - client relation', 'the context of spirituality', 'the response of masses', 'privilege of leisure class', and of course 'the social and spiritual purposiveness'. The same is perhaps true with dance. The paucity of studies in these institutional aspects, so much sociologically relevant, is an inhibiting factor to make further remarks about their specific implications for the society of concerned period.

Fine Arts

Through government support, first fine - arts schools were opened in late 19th century in three coastal cities i.e. Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. The Indianisation of modern fine-art (which in early years of imparting education remained western), only started in Calcutta as there was a well established intelligentsia which could appreciate the artistic creations and

60. Mahadev L. Apte. Music and Mass culture in India, in Mahadev L. Apte (ed.) Music, Language, and Arts in India. Bombay : Popular Prakashan pp. 98-106.

Also see B.R.Deodhar. Pillars of Hindustani Music. Bombay : Popular Prakashan. 1993. and Evolution of Indian Music by Sumati Mutatkar in Aspects of Indian Music, New Delhi : Publications Division, 1957 (rep. 1976).

articulate the 'needed' ideology. Interestingly, even the late start of modern fine-arts reflected East - West dualism and eventually, the 'artistic' narrative of freedom was created by challenging the supremacy of western techniques and incorporation of Indian styles of painting including Mughal. Bengal proved to be the leader of this awakening again⁶¹.

The establishment of art school in Hindi speaking belt was quite late (1912 in Lucknow) but it was revitalized only when Abanindranath Tagore's leadership sent talented *Bengali* artists in 1925. The beginning of Indian style incorporating 'new' realism led to the prominence of lucknow school of fine art, but the popularity and acclaim which were received was restricted to the migrated bengali artists. The participation of artists from hindi belt in this process remained negligible in this period⁶².

Hindi Literature

The advent of '*Chhayavad*' (1920-40) in Hindi literature marked a significant maturity of Hindi language as more complex feelings could easily be expressed. This capacity was not seen in the early Khadi boli poetry. The language of early poetry was either simple (sapatbayani) or

61. Joseph James, '*Dakshina Bharat : Adhunika Bharatiya Kala*' in Krishna Narayan Kakkar (ed.) '*Samkalin Kala : Sandarbha Tatha Sthiti*'. New Delhi. Lalit Kala Akademi.

62. Madan Lal Nagar, in Main characteristics of UP art since the beginning of the 20th century in Krishna Narayan Kakkar. (ed.) Ibid. pp. 46-50

just like repetition of Sanskrit shlokas which were unable to bear the flux of emotions and at times created a sense of mismatched usage of words. This tension between '*bhava*' (emotions) and expression ceased to exist in '*chhayavadi poetry*'. This achievement in one sense reflected the potentiality of Hindi being able to take up the role of national language. However, it lost its 'Hindustani character' with more mature use of 'Sanskrit/Tatsam' (words with root in Sanskrit) words. It was a general trend both in prose and in poetry of the period except Premchand, which just reflected the subconscious cultural 'affinity' and 'rift'. Thus, advocacy of Hindi as national language was not an advocacy for commonsense '*Khadi Boli*' Hindi but was rather an imposition of Sanskritized middle class linguistic hegemony

'*Chhayavadi*' poets' individuality and romanticism often leads to think about their aloofness from socio-political concerns but the individuality which could not find more space in early modern hindi literature, was in fact the impact of 'modernity'. This implied a break with the tradition as did with the abandonment of rhyme in the poetry by the introduction of '*Muktachhanda*'. (blank verse) or *Swachchhand Chhand* (understrained verse).

A systematic study of *Chhayavadi* poetry reveals layers of contradictions and dichotomies as was the society of that time. It broke with the tradition but the break was not complete. It helped hindi mature

but restricted its use to the educated middle class. At times, it thought 'progressively' but tried to search the individuality in spirituality, mysticism and *vedanta* philosophy. For example, they introduced *Muktachhand*, symbolising a radical departure, but the bases of Ghanakshari and 'Rola' and *kavitta* Chhand (metre) were still there⁶³. Images of 'Karmavada' 'Vedanta', 'Saivadarsana', 'Advaitavada', and 'Bhakti' which are found in the poetry⁶⁴, also represent an individual which questioned the early literary Standards. The questioning of early literary standards did imply the questioning of certain public and social moralities, but they did share the construction of certain social consciousness to some extent such as the image of 'new women'. If they loved the woman, they loved her 'essence', the 'Shraddha', not the 'body' (however, this may not equally apply to 'Nirala', who transcended the barriers to a great extent. It will be discussed in the chapter concerning Nirala).

In this period, there was another stream⁶⁵ of poets who were primarily expressing nationalist feelings eg. Makhanlal Chaturvedi, Balakrishna Sharma 'Navin', Subhadrakumari Chauhan, Siyaramsharan Gupta etc. Some of them also participated in national struggle and were followers of Gandhi.

63. Namvar Singh, *Itihas aur Alochana*. Banaras : Sat Sahitya Prakashan. 1956. p. 74.

64. Nagendra (ed.) *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas*. New Delhi : National Publishing House, 1973. p. 549.

65. *Ibid.* p. 540.

A direct reflection of Gandhi is visible in this kind of literary production. It also may be noted that the 'Arya Samajist' poet's⁶⁶ fear about untouchables converting to other religions was still present as discussed earlier.

The writing in prose reflected a more tangible shift towards social realism. Rural India got a more extensive representation especially through Premchand's writings which marked a movement from Gandhian idealism to more focused and realistic representation. Thus, it can be said that, keeping contradictions apart, the shift towards more realistic representation, including Poetry; presence of valorising past, and patriotic feelings, and social anxieties were a mere reflection of contradictions of Indian society put forth by the Nationalist movement.

VI

What we have come to learn from readings in nationalism is that birth and growth of nations do not follow any singular political theory. Coming of a nation bears the mark of its social specificities whether the society is industrial, colonial or collective. In the same view, one finds the specific character of Indian nationalism as compared to other colonial societies.⁶⁷

66. Mata Prasad (ed.) op. cit. has compiled the poems of Arya Samajist Hindu poets.

67. A recent work by Sanjay Seth. Marxist theory and nationalist politics : The case of colonial India, New Delhi : Sage Publications, 1995, apart from providing specific nationalist imperative, focuses on how marxist politics got conditioned by and limited

Contd...

The concept of Indian nationhood is not monolithic. The various nations of nationhood are expressions of identities internally shared and externally differentiated : creation of 'selves' within self. The period of 1920-35 marked a critical moment in the history of colonial India where traditional regressive' and 'regenerative' ideas flourished and encountered progressive tendencies. It was concomitant with the consolidation of counter-hegemony against British rule. However, the concomitant counter-hegemony represented a prioritization of interest and preference of few 'selves' on account of 'other'.

This period also characterizes the growing recognition of this hegemony of 'few selves' represented by disenchantment with Gandhian politics and synonymity of congress with nationalism. The political developments beyond the core of national congress represented this phenomena.

The cultural nationalism of various regions was indicative of varied association with mainstream political nationalisms and with popularity of Gandhi. However, both, massive popularity of Gandhi and disenchantment with it, exposed the contradictions of national movement and Indian society.

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to nationalist politics. Also see *Struggle for Hegemony in India. Vol. I* by Shashi Joshi, New Delhi. Sage 1992. Interesting explanation may also be found in Patha Chatterjee, *op. cit.* chap. 1.

Thus we see that Indian society in this period proceeds from 'cultural romanticism' to 'social realism', though slowly but gradually. Hindi literature of this period interestingly marked this process of transition, particularly through **Premchand** and **Nirala**. Hence, the next two chapters will try to explore respectively in both 'Premchand' and 'Nirala' that how social and political reality manifested in their writing and how they presented it.

**PREMCHAND AND
NARRATIVES OF NATION**

CHAPTER-III

PREMCHAND AND NARRATIVES OF NATION

“A nation is not a *monolithic structure* that writer attempts to represent in his art ... it is an idea that if he is committed to or engaged in the task of nation building, tries to imitate and represent that in his narrative. Thus nation may be a fiction in a certain sense it is, however, more *important than many 'facts'* of our existence.”

— Sudhir Kumar¹

Premchand— the acknowledged Indian Gorky² and widely read modern Indian writer³, provides through his literary contribution a vital link between literature and socio-political atmosphere of 1920-35. Interestingly, one finds that his literary journey from *Premasharam* to *Godan* consists of a conscious dialogue with his situation and a transition in his ideas about Indian society, nation, and in his literary accomplishments. The chapter tries to study the transition of Premchand's artistic creativity both at the level of 'content' and 'form' and the social issues which Premchand confronts and therefore it delineates a certain kind

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1. Quoted from Sudhir Kumar, 'Narratives of Nation: Rading Godan through Things Fall apart' in *New Quest*, No.12, July-Aug. 1995, p.215 (Italics are added).
 2. Shyam M.Ashnani. 'An Indian Gorky' in *Indian Liteature*. Vol.18, no.2, 1975, p.103. Also see Manohar Bandopadhyay, *Life and works of Premchand* New Delhi: Publicationm Division, GOI, p.175.
 3. Ramvilas Sharma. *Premchand aur Unka Yuga*. New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1993, p.8.

of nationalist narrative. It will also take the life situation of Premchand into consideration briefly, in order to demarcate his background. It supposes that it will help us understand the ideas of Premchand better.

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I

Life and works of Premchand⁴

Premchand was born in a peasant family in 1880 in a village called *Lamahi* near Benaras. In the very early age he had to take up the responsibility of the family because his mother died when he was of 7 and father also followed the same when *Premchand* was just 16 - a year after his marriage. At this juncture, he had to earn to look-after his family consisting of a step-mother, two step-brothers and wife, and to satisfy his own urge for education. His interface with the tragedy in personal life (also shared with *Nirala*) and confrontation with the rigid social structure of rural life with haunting presence of conservative *Brahmins*, *Banias* and *Zamindars* perhaps made a permanent mark in his memory.

With great difficulty he managed to get admission in a college and through tuitions supported his family and the necessities of his student

4. Life of Premchand is well researched area today but I pointed out here briefly in order to serve the immediate purpose. The books consented on this topics are: Amrit Ray's *Kalamo ka Sipahi*, Shivrani Devi's *Premchand Ghar Mein*, both the writers are sun and wife of Premchand respectively; and, Bandopadhyaya op.cit., and Ramvilas Sharma, op.cit.

life. During this period he read the *tilasmi Hoshruha* - the *Chandrakanta Santati of Urdu* by sitting at a book shop and in return he sold the books of the shop among students. This reading invoked the imaginativeness in Premchand but the realities of life were later to mould it towards the complexities of real social life. His early education was in Urdu but during this period, we come to know that he learnt Hindi. About the material crisis of his life in this period, he describes:

“Those were the days of winters. I was absolutely penniless. Two days I had spent on my food spending one paise daily. My moneylender had refused to lend me further loan. I was hesitant in asking him again. The lights were lit. I went to a book-seller to sell a book. It was a book of solutions of *Chakravarty* mathematics which I had bought two years back and still had possessed it carefully but today I had decided to sell it after being disappointed from all the sides. The book was of worth two rupees but I could get only one.”⁵

Premchand had faced the agonies of money-lending in very early life and even at death he was in debt. In *Godan* the last completed creation of Premchand describes the tragic problems of money lending.

He passed the examination of intermediate with English, Persian and Philosophy and some time later the examination of B.A. and also attained teacher's training diploma. From 1900 he started working as assistant teacher in district school *Bahraich* on a monthly salary of rupees twenty. After a few months he was transferred to *Pratapgarh*.

5. Quote taken from Ramvilas Sharma op cit. p.19 and translated in English by me.

By this time he was engaged in his Urdu writing. In May 1905 he was transferred to *Kanpur*. These were the formative years of Premchand's writing and transfer to various places enriched his experience about rural life. In 1906, he married a child widow as his earlier wife died. It also may be noted that Premchand was a staunch supporter of widow welfare which is a recurrent theme in his novels. By 1907, he was a recognized writer in Urdu through his regular column *Raftar-e-Zamana*. While doing all these things he was also keeping his eyes on political developments in the country.⁶ In 1908, Premchand published first collection of short-stories *Soz-e-Watan*, full of patriotic fervour. It was banned in 1909 when he was transferred to *Mahoba* as sub-deputy inspector of schools. Therefore, Premchand had to burn 500 copies of *Soz-e- Watan*.

After this incident, he used *pseudonym* of 'Premchand' and he had to again establish himself because the name he had earned as *Nawabrai* was lost. From 1914 to 1916, he stayed at Basti and was trying to develop his own style. By this time he had read a good deal of European and Bengali writings. At this time because of his economic needs and larger scope of publication; the possibility to reach the masses who did not have an access to Urdu, he was seriously contemplating of writing in Hindi.⁷

6. Manohar Bandopadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p.11-17.

7. *ibid.*, p.27-31.

In 1916 he came to Gorakhpur, and translated stories of Tolstoy entitled *Prem-Prabhakar* and in 1917 his first collection of Hindi short stories *Sapt-Saroj* which were the translation of earlier Urdu stories embodying basic goodness of human nature, came out. In 1917 he had completed a Urdu novel *Bazar-e-Husn* in Urdu. Its Hindi translation got published first in 1919 as *Seva-Sadan* which dealt with the tragic consequences of dowry system and problems of prostitution. Through this novel Premchand also wanted to give some solution to this problem.⁸

In 1920, Premchand completed *Premashram* which was published in early 1921, earlier to the publication of its original Urdu version. It was first Hindi novel on the life of farmers.⁹ Here, Premchand shifted from Urban life to the rural life, where there were two classes i.e. peasants and Zamindars. With a depiction of real misery of rural life, the novel ends with the establishment of *Premashram* and the new Landlord abolishing the *Zamindari*.

In 1921, Premchand gave up the government job by being influenced by Gandhiji's visit to Gorakhpur and joined the non-cooperation movement. He tried to make a living by setting *charkha* shop in partnership with Mahabir Prasad Poddar. It did not succeed and was closed down.¹⁰

8. *ibid.*, p.35.

9. *ibid.*, p.41.

10. *ibid.*, p.49

Returning back to his native town Banaras in 1921 from Gorakhpur, he wrote in *Aaj*-daily magazine but there was no good response from the newspapers and to maintain the family he had to go to Kanpur to join Murwari High School. Thereafter, during the writing of *Ranghbumi*, he took up the editorial charge of *Maryada* in the absence of Sampooranand. The unstable income led him to establish a press in which he suffered a heavy loss. In 1924 he joined *Gangapustak Mala*- publishing firm- as literary advisor. By this time he had published the collection of *Prem Battisi*; and plays like *Karbala* (based on martyrdom of Hazrat Hussain in which Hindus also sacrificed) and *Sangram* (based on freedom movement and exploitation of Zamindars) were completed. His magnum-opus *Ranghbumi* was completed, originally written in Urdu as *Chaugan-e-Hasti*, in 1915. This novel, having a *chamar* hero *Surdas*, basically employed the Gandhian methods to protest against the socio-economic and political exploitation of the poor. Besides, it gives an interesting account of the history of its time.

Before the completion of *Kayakalp* (1925) he wrote among others two very important short-stories. *Mandir aur Masjid*, in which he attacked the religious fanaticism of Hindus and Muslims and, *Sawa ser Gehun* to indicate the exploitation by priests.¹¹

11. *ibid.*, p.66.

Kayakalp, again focused on the agrarian relations where peasants faced the princely states. However it also included the mystic experiences and problems of communalism. During this period only, his other novel *Nirmala* based on the problems of dowry system and unmatched marriage was being serialized in *Chand* magazine.

1927 proved to be a good year comparatively, when Premchand became the editor of *Madhuri* (Hindi) magazine. This year only his novel *Pratigya*— a developed form of an earlier novel *Prema*— was published whose subject matter was widow remarriage.

In March 1930, Premchand launched, *Hans*, to champion the political awakening, to fulfill the aspiration which *Madhuri* could not do even after doing a great service to Hindi. *Hans* combined the literary excellence with wide national awakening. He wrote in the April issue of *Hans*:

“There is no doubt that the *Swarajya* movement is the movement of the poor. It is the movement of workers, farmers and poor multitudes and is bound to succeed because the masses were behind it.”¹²

There is no doubt that Premchand gave *Hans* a national character by seeking and getting the cooperation of people from all corners of India and making it a mouth piece of cooperation between regional languages, he simultaneously distinguished the character of *Swaraj* in favour of lower sections of the country.

12. *ibid.*, p.96

In first half of 30s, Premchand became very active on the issue of language and communal harmony while fighting to keep, *Madhuri*, *Hans* and *Jagaran* (-journals) alive. In the meanwhile, he wrote two other very important novels : *Karmbhumi* (1932) and *Godan* (1936). He had started another novel *Mangalsutra* but could not complete it and died in 1936-in a Phase of economic instability and anxiety about Journals.

In the discussion to follow, we will try to concentrate on the creations of Premchand from 1930 to 1935 which will include his novels, short stories, letters and editorial notes.

II

Nation-Building and Representation of Issues

Premchand's preoccupation with national freedom was primarily concerned with the internal problems of Indian society. Premchand understood the imperialist logic of exploitation and opposed it in his own capacity. While his counterparts in mainstream politics were fighting against external enemy, and internal problems for them were either *secondary* or *a means*; for Premchand the change in social structure was an end in itself and the freedom of nation was a means to that effect. Thus Premchand goes deeper into the social structure of Indian society and brings forth its contradictions. This effort also points out that recasting the *glorious self* in public life was changing during the writing of Premchand. It is easy

to point out that main focus of Premchand, while he was describing the social structure, were (i) Peasants (ii) Women (iii) Caste System.

Problems of Peasantry

Between 1920 to 1936, except *Gaban*, *Nirmala* and *Pratigya* all of his novels pin-points the exploitation of peasants. Premchand has tried to locate the agony of rural poor in relation to 'Zamindari, system', 'the educated middle class', 'the relations of land', 'land rent and problems of loan'. In the meanwhile Premchand has also depicted the nature and values of this social group.

In *Premashram* (1920-22), for the first time the peasantry got the centre stage¹³ and it continued till the last creation which depicted the rural life. It also may be noted that Premchand did write on urban life but as the number of creations on rural life indicate, the well being of rural life was central to Premchand's vision of nation.

Premchand has systematically tried to indicate that the fight with Zamindari system was a long fight: the establishment of '*Premashram*' in the novel concerned could not stop Premchand from depicting the terror of landlordism in forthcoming novels. From 1920 to 1935, in the span of 15 years in all successive writings on rural life the shadow of Zamindari system

13. Ramvilas Sharma op cit., p.45.

is seen. *Vishal Singh* and *Dev Priya* of '*Kayakalp*', *Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh* of '*Rangbhumi*', *Sabal Singh* of '*Sangram*' (play) and *Raisaheb* of *Godan* are the same, and they keep on coming in the narrative. In spite of the Gandhian influence (stronger in the early novels and short stories) Premchand points out the difference of interests between peasants and Zamindars.

Premchand also depicts the relation of peasantry with the newly educated social group. In Premchand, we find that before *Godan*, the character of educated middle class is more of a social crusader, but in *Godan* it becomes a professional and its relationship with the peasantry had changed. We find that there are very few from the peasantry who are educated and if there are any, they are more violent champions of the cause of poor like *Balraj* in *Premashram*. *Balraj* is the educated son of *Manohar*- the leader of peasants. Amongst the peasants, *Balraj* is seen as the immediate rescuer from the exploitation of Zamindars.¹⁴ He takes revenge by killing '*Ghauskhan*' - a confidant of Zamindar, who had tried to dishonour his mother. This vindictiveness is not found in other educated characters, who work for peasants.

Other educated crusaders are *Premshankar* in '*Premashram*', *Vinay Singh* and *Sofia* in '*Rangbhumi*', '*Amarnath* and *Saleem* of '*Karmbhumi*'.

14. *ibid.*, p.47.

They possess a Gandhian view towards life and change. They bring out change in their own life and try to champion the cause of the deprived. Premchand recognizes, that this rationality of change has come from education. But he indicated that the sacrifice of this group has its own limitations as the swaragist politics and attitudes of the benevolent Zamindars in Rangbhumi denote.¹⁵

Strikingly, in *Godan*, the view of Premchand about the educated section drastically changes. Here the educated characters are *upwardly mobile middle class*. They are an embodiment of decadence, idolence, hedonism and frivolity. You find two categories of such characteristics; (1) Butterflies, ie. Malati and Mirza. Malati is possessor of glitter and coquetry and Mirza's effort for the well being of poor is for his entertainment. (2) Other section is of the educated liberals who are hypocrites. i.e. *Onkarnath*, the editor of peasant oriented newspaper; *Rai sahib*, who maintains a liberal out look but raises the land rent; Mr.Khanna, the businessman who talks of spiritualism and socialism; and Mehta the philosopher and individual materialist.¹⁶

However, in the end the character of Malti and Mehta undergoes a metamorphosis since Premchand was left with some sympathy for the

15. *ibid.*, p.47.

16. Daniel Carnie, 'The Modern Middle Class: In Premchand and Forster' in *Indian Literature Vol.XVII, No.1 and 2, 1974*.

educated section still alive and himself being positioned in middle class, perhaps wanted to make some possibility of positive action by the middle class.

While championing the cause of 'peasant' as the real owner of land and taking recourse to Gandhian reformism, Premchand did not do away with non-violence. The peasant and its struggle is depicted as violent, in Premashram, Kayakalp and in Karmabhumi. The non violent nature is induced by the intervention from outside. Even in Rangbhumi without *Surdas*, all retaliations are violent. The peasants of *Pandeypur* in *Rangbhumi*, have no reverence for non-violence. Thus, Premchand was also indicating the retaliatory nature of peasantry. In doing so, he also depicted the solidarity of peasantry. He points out that the solidarity of peasants is based upon the commonality of interests otherwise it is internally divided. It is well reflected in the day-to-day interaction of Pandeypur peasants. Here it must be noted that the internal divisions were not the cause of any organized conflict rather, they are a part of the everyday petty selfishness. Otherwise, peasants were generally peace-loving and harmonious. Here Premchand also indicated that the retaliation of peasantry, without the leadership of wide exposure and vision, against any exploitation, is recurrent but volatile. Same representation we also find in Nirala's *Alka* that when Vinay is jailed the peasant retaliation gets diminished.

Thus Premchand also depicted the values of peasantry both created among them and internalized in relation to others. His short stories, *Thakur Ka Kuan*, *Do Bailon kee katha* and *Kafan* are the stories which depict these values. *Thakur ka Kuan* (The well of landlord) depicts the internalization of values in relation to the caste and class while social realism points out the valuelessness in *Kafan*. *Do Bailon kee katha* (story of two bullocks) depicts the created values in peasantry where the love between peasants and animals find expression.

The vividness, with which Premchand has characterised the world of peasantry, the labourers either agricultural or industrial have not attained that space.¹⁷ Premchand has the sympathy for labour class which is depicted in *Godan* and he perhaps perceived it also as the destiny of peasants. So you find that Gobar, the son of Hori, comes to town and becomes a labourer. Hori himself symbolically dies as labourer in his last days of life, while making the road which goes to the town. However the peasantry was at that time a striking reality of India which was breaking down and Premchand did not see any bright future of Indian labour class which was made up of impoverished peasants. And therefore he concentrated on the problems of peasantry. This also denotes that how Premchand's narrative was intrinsically different than Gandhian politics at one hand and the urban centred politics of contemporary communist aspirations, on the other.

17. Ramvilas Sharma op.,cit., p.12

The Women

The improvement in the situation of women was one of the basic concern of Premchand's literary accomplishments. In the period under consideration Premchand wrote three novels keeping women in the centre: *Nirmala*, *Gaban* and *Pratigya*. The earlier novel *Sewasadan* is also based on women's plight. He also wrote short-stories relating to women's question i.e. *Dhikkar*, *Kafan* and others. In other creations also women have not got a back-bench, they are always in the Centre of the affair.

Nirmala, *Sewasadan* and *Pratigya* are the novels which argue that the position of women whether as a prostitute or widow or victim of dowry is caused by the values and structures of the society.

Premchand saw two kind of women: one who exercises some influence or they are not the direct victims of cruel traditions, second is the category where women are visibly a victim of cruel social customs. Vina (of *Pratigya*), *Nirmala* or the child widow of short story, *Dhikkar* or *Jhunia* of *Godan* come in this category. In the first category also, one finds that though these women are not the victims of prostitution or widowhood they are not beyond the social customs made by men. There are few women who assert themselves. Such views are present in the formative form in *Sofia* of *Ranghumi* and *Sakeena* of *Karmabhumi*. The assertion against decadent values of society are seen in more developed conviction in *Godan* in *Matati* and *Dhania*.

However, In the Premchand's depiction the question of women liberty or opposition of male-centred values have always been discussed in urban atmospheres. They are not a part of narrative related to village life. Here women's problem is discussed within the problem of peasantry. This was perhaps the realistic bent of Premchand's thinking because such questions were the outcome of urban mind which was more exposed; and in rural life the women in lower section which concerned Premchand primarily, had no such restrictions. Widow marriage is not the problem in low caste in North India. The virginity, chastity and *pativart dharma* were more associated with the ideology of middle class and upper caste and they exist still today.

One more thing is very interesting, which relates to this trend in Premchand's thinking is the question of love and widow remarriage. Love is a form of protest against the rigidity of society. It, in essence, does not follow any rule of caste or community. Premchand uses this notion of love to protest against the conservative values of society. *Sakeena* in '*Karmabhumi*' loves Amarnath, *Manorama* of '*Kayakalp*' loves Chakradhar. *Vinay* and *Sofia* are in love with each other, in '*Rangbhumi*'. These love-stories does not consider the barriers of caste and religion but strangely they never materialize. Even in favourable conditions, either of two dies. The widows and prostitutes, inspite of their all human desires, remain chaste through Gandhian reform within themselves, done either by themselves or initiated by some social crusader. Premchand himself

married a child widow but the child widow of short story Dhikkar even after getting remarried to a person whom she loves, commits suicide.

Premchand wrote a novel named '*Prema arthat do sakhion ka vivah* in 1907. Here vina is a widow who gets married to Amritrai but in *Pratigya* which was a rewritten form of *Prema* and was serialized in 1927 in Chand journal, Amrit Rai and Vina do not marry.¹⁸

This shows that Premchand before *Godan* had not overcome the typical middle class mentality and ideology of his time, concerning women. It is in *Godan* that there are two intercaste marriages. One is of *Jhunia* who is also a widow and other is of *Silia* who is *Chemar* and the community of *Chamars* forces *Pandit Matadin* to marry her.

Caste System

In one of the letters written to Indranath Madan, once he said:

"I believed in all pervading power because of orthodox belief. Today the Human affairs are beyond that".¹⁹

Premchand had questioned the existence of all knowing and merciful power. Thus, orthodoxy of caste system was a social evil which Premchand's

18. See the entry of *Prema* in *Premchand Vishwakosh* Vol.II, ed. by Kamal Kishore Goyenka. Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 1981.

19. Keval Goshwami, 'Premchand through letters' in *Indian Literature*, May-June 1984, No.101, p.101.

literature informs. Sevasadan depicts the deceitfulness and atrocity of *Purohits* and *Mahants*. Differences between Brahman and Achhut (untouchable) or *Sawarna* and *Awarna* are depicted in various forms in all novels of Premchand²⁰ The relationship between Matadin and Silia in *Godan* ridicules the Brahminical humbug that by having a bodily relationship a brhanmin does not lose his purity but in having water or food touched by untouchable finds the body contaminated.

The importance of lower caste realized by Premchand led him to make the *untouchables*, *shudras*, and lower castes heroes of his literary creations. In *Sawa Ser gehun*, *Thakur ka kuan* and *Sadgati*, Premchand confronts the Brahminical system of society.²¹ *Surdas* of *Rangabhumi* who is the hero of the novel, is a Chamar and is possessor of Gandhian wisdom. It was Premchand's concern for lower sections that he portrayed Gandhi in a Chamar and did not find any upper caste character to be able to bear those qualities. The deep thinking and foresightedness of *Surdas* was meant to question the general perception of upper caste and class that the lowly castes are always foolish and have no mental capacity is ill founded and obliterated vision. In *Godan*, Hori is a victim of both landlordism and system of moneylending. Pandit Datadin is one of the instruments of the

20. Avadhesh Pradhan. *Brahman Virodhi Chintan Parampara aur Hindi Sahitya* in Parishad Patrika, Patna; Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad. No.121-24 Dec.1993, p.117.

21. *ibid.*,

also see Ramvilas Sharma, *op.cit.*, p.45.

conspiracy which kept Hori indebted for whole life. Here Premchand tried to indicate that Brahminism has a material base and is reinforced with the system of moneylending, landlordism and imperialism.

When Premchand was writing against dowry, prostitution and widow remarriage and was simultaneously ridiculing the Brahminical humbug and deceitfulness, he was labelled as a propagandist. Premchand accepted that every literature which has a purpose behind it, is a kind of propaganda.²²

Imperative of Nationalism

Though bearing great deal of economic hardship to sustain the journals like *Hans* and *Jagaran*, Premchand was not only bringing the political awakening,²³ through his literature and writings on political issues he was also defining the nationalism.

Even when Premchand had not found ambiguity in Gandhian politics,²⁴ freedom for him meant different than the upper class-upper caste dominance in free India. He argued that **Swarajya** "was for those silent voiceless people who are plunged in wretched poverty everyday....our mission will

22. Shyam, M. Ashani, op.cit., p.9.

23. Manohar Bandopadhyaya, op.cit., p.94.

24. There are instances in Pre-Godan writing where Premchand has indicated the limitations of Gandhian Politics. It will be discussed later.

Also see Pratibha Jain, 'Premchand's *Rengbhumi* - A historical evaluation' in Indian literature vol.16 No.1 & 2 1973, p.32 & 34.

be fulfilled only when the condition of our wretched, starving, clothless people improve".²⁵

While Premchand attacked the anti-people actions and policies of the government and cautioned the youth that the money which is being spent by the governments and its agents (landlords and snob English speaking elite) for their luxury, is the money collected from the poor.²⁶ In all of his novels he indicated the need to work among the deprived. *Amarnath*, *Chakradhar*, *Premshankar*, *Amritrai* and *Padam Singh*, all are working amongst people. Interestingly, they are not the member of any party. Like *Nirala*²⁷ Premchand thought of the need of political' education of peasantry which no party was doing in reality.²⁸ Political freedom, thus for Premchand, was meaningless without social and economic freedom.

Language and communal cooperation was also a part of Premchand's narrative of nationalism. Premchand was critical of English language which was associated with elitism in the society. He supported Hindi as a National language but not at the cost of other **regional languages**. He said that the terror of English Language is more severe than the terror of British politics, business and imperialism. His anger against English was because he felt

25. Bandopadhyay, op.cit., p.96.

26. *ibid.*

27. discussed in next chapter.

28. Keval Goshwami op.cit., 101.

that the foundation of any nation is its language.²⁹ We must remember here that, Premchand's almost all writings were originally written in Urdu and he was of the opinion that through mutual exchange, a common style of Hindi and Urdu will evolve and that will definitely be the Language of common people.³⁰ Premchand's own creations were examples of this agenda which is neither sanskritized nor Persianized and thus, is not far from the language of common people.

The emphasis on **linguistic unity** or cooperation was also the part of Premchand's urge for communal harmony. *Kayakalp* starts with the indication of cooperation between two communities. *Yashodanandan* and *Khwaja Mahmood* are part of voluntary group which is helping the visitors of a Hindu pilgrimage. Both of them are symbols of communal cooperation and tolerance. Chakradhar - the protagonist of the novel, also gives importance to the communal unity. Premchand wrote *Karbala* (play) which depicts the fight of legendary figures, Hazrat Hussain, when most of the writer of his age and earlier who wrote on historical theme were involved in recasting the glorious past of their community. Premchand was perhaps the first writer who showed an interest in Muslim history. Here Premchand depicted the Hindu families who sacrificed life for the just cause by fighting from the side of Hazarat Hussain.

29. Ramvilash Sharma. op.cit., p.145.

30. *ibid.*, p.143-4.

Also see Goshwami, Op.cit., p.106.

In a letter to Banarasidas Chaturvedi, he criticized the religious riff-raff and fanaticism, which produced *Islam Ka vishvriksha*, saying that it is meant to spread Communalism.³¹

Thus, Premchand at one level was trying to bring about the unity on the level of language and community in the nationalist consciousness while on the other he was also making the space for the poor and deprived in it.

III

The Shift in the Narrative and Style

The writings of Premchand in the period concerned, reveal a process of transition in the artistic style of Presentation and also in the treatment of the subject. This transition in both the spheres of literary accomplishment is interrelated and represents the socio-political trend of the time which was exhibited in the nationalist discourse of the time. However it is not so clearly visible in the growth of Premchand as a writer and at times looks like contradictory. When seen in the socio-political atmosphere the contradiction and shift becomes understandable. It is indicative of both that nationalism is not a homogenous category, and, at the same time, because of inherent weaknesses of Gandhian Nationalism the other versions of nationalism were bound to be critical of it and were not to be limited

31. See Goshwami op.cit., p.104.

within Gandhian fold of politics. The transition at the level of artistic style and treatment of the subject will be discussed in the following illustrations.

The Literary Style and Form

When Premchand started writing, he had a tradition behind him. He started writing in Urdu because he was educated in Urdu and Persian. The forms which he opted (i.e. novel and short-story) had already started in both Urdu and Hindi. When he started writing, at that time the phase of *Chandrakanta Santati, Tilasmi Hoshruha* and the like has been ended and themes of social and educational importance had already initiated in literary concern. Premchand inherited the social shift and developed this in his literary exercise.

The Urdu prose was more developed when Premchand started writing while *Khadi Boli* Hindi was being nurtured for poetry. As compared to Hindi of this time the Urdu of 18th century was more close, simple and easily communicable to the common man if persian words were not used.³²

32. Consider see a complete of Meer:

सिरहाने मीर के आहिस्ते बोलो ।

टुक रोते रोते अभी सो गया है ।

Read it as prose and you will find it is so natural and spontaneous expression. Words used are the words of everyday use of our time.

Therefore, Premchand was benefited from the style of pinching satire of Bharatendu-yug writers³³ and live prose of Urdu. Moreover, when Premchand was writing he was writing for both the communities. Thus he had to develop a common Language. The greatest contribution for Premchand was that he wrote in favour of lower sections and developed a form which could reach the common man.

Novel and story was the appropriate form. But he changed the aesthetics of novel writing to a great extent. Making common and poor sections of Indian society, the central character of novel or story writing was a revolt against the earlier literary aesthetics and sensibilities.³⁴ Here distinguished personalities or glorious past was not the subject matter. Therefore in presidential address of first conference of progressive writers association he announced that the literature is the one which expresses truth and its aesthetics lies in the honesty of depiction, compassion and social justice embeded in the literature.³⁵

However Premchand inherited the style of narration (Kissagoi) from the predecessors and it remained a basic tenet of his style in pre-Godan writing.³⁶ This narrativizaiton of subject and event was helpful to describe

33. Rassivilas Sharma op.cit.,p.30.

34. Ibid., p.45.

35. Premchand. *Sahitya ka Uddesya*. Allahabad Hans Prakashan 1983, p.10 & 16.

36. Gopal Ray, 'Premchand ka Katha shilp' in *Alochana* year 33, vol. No.72, Jan-March 1985, p.12-13.

the problems and to provide the solutions in which the author was always present directly. This also explains the influence of Gandhi on Premchand that he was not only looking for the problems of Indian society but was also trying to provide solutions. Premchand has clearly accepted that the purpose of literature was to reflect on the social problems and provide solutions.³⁷

Contrarily, Premchand is startled in *Godan*. His direct presence is less. The society of *Godan* has come to stand still. In earlier novels Premchand is concerned with change : The customs change, institutions change, people live their occupation and start wandering in jungles, beggars fight the exploitation and heart easily gets reformed and purified. In earlier novels there used to be a main problem but *Godan* does not has any problem as one dominant problem and others as subsidiary.³⁸ There, all problems are interrelated and equally important to depict and *not to describe* the wholistic view of society.

However we find that even in earlier creations there are seeds of visualization instead of narration with the increased presence of visualizaiton in successive novels i.e. *Premashram*, *Rangbhumi* and

37. Premchand. *Sahitya ka Uddeshya* op.cit., p.11.

38. Vijaydeonarayan Sahi. *Vardhman aur Patanshiel*. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 1991, p.61.

Karmabhumi there is an increasing attempt to depict the totality of Indian life.³⁹ This process attains its highest form in *Godan*. In earlier novels, interestingly the 'social realism is used in favour of an ideology'⁴⁰ which is more of Gandhian mould, but in *Godan* the realism becomes a perspective — an end in itself.⁴¹

IV

Transition in Politics of Literature

This slow change in the narrative style is subtly linked with the change in the narrative of nationalism which Premchand stood for. There is no denying that Premchand inherited from the early authorship, the live language and forms; and touched the social issues, brought them at fore and tried to give solutions which most of the time remained Gandhian in treatment. However, the growing realism in Premchand, as in other conscious middle class nationalists who did not comply to Gandhian fuzziness about social reality,⁴² indicated a slow process of separation from Gandhian politics.

39. Gopal Ray. op.cit., p.12-3.

40. Vijaydeonerajan Sahi op.cit., 62.

41. *ibid.*,

42. P.C.Joshi, '*Munshi Premchand aur Bhartiya Gaon* in *Purvagrah*. 46-47, Sep-Dec.1981, p.51.

In Premashram, Sewasadan, Kayakalp, Gaban and Karmabhumi, Gandhian reformism plays a very important role. However, we see that in Karmabhumi, after the death of Surdas- the embodiment of tremendous ethical power and devotee of non-violence, the movement initiated by him abruptly ends. It manifested the failure of Gandhian economic and political ideas.⁴³ This Gandhism is completely defeated in Godan : There is no trustee of land like Mayashankar of Premashram or a visionary like Surdas. But women, peasants and their problems in more intense form are present.

Here, a brief comparison in *Premashram* (the early creation of the period concerned) and *Godan* (last complete novel) will be useful. *Premashram's* central problem is the relationship between peasants and landlord. In *Godan*, contrarily, there are money lenders, deceitful priests and landlord against the peasantry apart from the conflict between generations, rural life and urban life, old and new values; internal division of peasantry; breaking up of family values, the hypocrisy of upwardly mobile middle class and more haunting presence of capital.⁴⁴ There is Premshankar in *Premashram* but not such reformist you find in *Godan*.

This was indicative of his growing inclination towards socialism which he expressed in letters to Daya Narayan Nigam.⁴⁵ He idealized 'future'

43. Pratibha Jain, op.cit., p.32, 34.

44. Ramvilas Sharma, op.cit., p.5.

45. Keval Goshwami op.cit., p.101.

worker's rule but was not happy with the mainstream politics of congress and communists. In one of the letters to Nigam he expressed that he belonged to neither of the two parties. He expressed his willingness to be the member of a party which will make political education necessary for people.⁴⁶

Premchand belonged to the middle class and his depiction was definitely restricted in that sense.⁴⁷ But it is also true that middle class was not uniform, at least, on the level of concerns and consciousness, which was typical of Premchand's period. The next chapter on Nirala also explores into the nature of middle class consciousness through his artistic accomplishments.

46. *ibid.*

also see Ashani, *op.cit.*, p.64.

47. Mohammed Azam 'Premchand's mood and Urdu short storeis' in *Indian Literature* Jan-Feb, 1978, p.91.

**NIRALA - THE POETICS OF NATION
AND POLITICAL CREATIVITY**

CHAPTER-IV

'NIRALA' - THE POETICS OF NATION AND POLITICAL CREATIVITY

"This extraordinarily peculiar, invincible poet,
was given a cup full of venom;
Is bodily tumbled and broken
But, has not bowed down;
His skin is laxed and chest reclined,
Still has inexorably kept up his pledge;
And he, upholding high the flag of victory
is a poet of our people."

—Ramvilas Sharma.¹

Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', one of the most conscious writers and thinkers of his age, is known as one of the main pillars of *Chhayavadi* poetry of Hindi Literature. His span of writing spreads from 1916 to 1961.²

1. This is a translation done by me, of a Hindi poem on Suryakant Tripathi Nirala', written by Ramvilas Sharma - the most acknowledged scholar of 'Nirala' literature. The Hindi version is :

यह कवि अपराजेय निराला,
जिसको मिला गरल का प्याला;
ढहा और तन टूट चुका है,
पर जिसका माया न झुका है;
शिथिल त्वचा, ढलढल है छाती,
लेकिन अभी सँभालें धाती,
और उठाये विजय पताका -
यह कवि है अपनी जनता का।

2. It is well known that the famous '*Juhi kee kali*' was written by Nirala in 1916 but could not get published at that time. 1961 is a year of Nirala's death. By that time there were few writings which were not collected together and were done posthumously i.e. '*Sandhya Kakali*' (1969)

But the period under consideration is from 1920 to 1935. This is the period of rise of *Chhayavadi* poetry and also of Nirala's greatest literary accomplishments³ i.e. '*Tulsidas*', '*Saroj-Smriti*', and '*Ram kee Shakti pooja*' among others. Therefore, this chapter primarily concentrates on the writings of Nirala in this period for sociological analysis. Though it covers only half of the duration of 'Nirala's writing, still it is being considered because (i) the period under consideration is 1920-35 (ii) it is simultaneous to the literary contribution of Premchand, so that it may facilitate a possible comparison (iii) coherence in the nature of shifts and development in Nirala's writing.

Nirala, who is mainly known as a poet, also wrote short-stories and novels. He has been chosen for a study of this kind, mainly to unearth the social and political significance of *poetic* forms of knowledge. But his contributions in prose (novels, stories and essays) are also considered because apart from their explanatory capacity for 'Nirala's' poetry, they have been largely ignored.

The writing of Nirala is very vast and includes many trends and controversies. Here, taking everything into account is not possible. However an effort is being made to assimilate these trends as they will be useful to

3. Ramvilas Sharma. *Nirala kee Sahitya-Sadhna*. Vol. II New Delhi: Rajkamal 1972 p.237. also see Ramvilas Sharma ed. '*Rag-Virag*', Allahabad : lok Bharati Prakashan. 1987. p.36.

locate 'Nirala's' writing in its history, society and the political discourse. Here it is worth noting that sociology of poetry has been painstakingly challenging and therefore no proper system of knowledge to that effect has yet developed.⁴ Quite often, the sociology of poetry is vulnerable to destroy the intricate artistic nature of poetry. In the same way, one is not claiming here a fool-proof sociological study of Nirala's poetic writing but an attempt is made to study the nature and intrinsic fibre of his poetry only with the conviction that it is a social product and therefore will be a part of a political discourse.

I

Personality and Society

Society of Nirala and Premchand is extensively discussed in chapter II of this dissertation. The writings of Nirala will be seen in relation to it. The personality, psychology and immediate interface with the society do shape the writing of a person. The most part of Nirala's poetry is the poetry of 'repentance', 'darkness', 'woe', and 'death'.⁵ It is as much a part of colonial dynamics of power and Indian Social structure as it is the part of his interface with the immediate society which also explains the former

4. Manager Pandey: *Sahitya ke Samaj Shashtra ke Bhumika*. Cahndigarh. Hariyana Sahitya Akademi. 1989. p.219-26.

5. Ramvilas Sharma. 1972. op.cit p.237

and not necessarily is separate from it. Hence a brief account of literary socialization of Nirala will be useful in this regard.

Nirala, initial name Surjkumar Tewari, was born in a simple peasant family of 'Gadhakola' village of 'Unnao' district of U.P. which has partly settled in Mahishadal princely state of Bengal where Nirala's father was a sipahi in the princely state. At the age of three, Surjkumar Tewari had lost his mother. A motherless child at times received some harsh treatment from his irritable father for his childish possibly unconventional behaviour such as drinking water from the hand of a socially contemptible prostitute's son. He was educated till 9th class and was given initial education of music. But the obstinate child was much interested in playing. While living in Mahishadal, he read Tulsidas's Ramayana and became bhakta of 'Mahabir Hanuman'. At the same time he was engaged in the unresolving question of 'kuleen' and 'akuleen', regional superiority of Bengal specially literary; read Tagore, Bankim and D.L.Roy and learnt Bangla. The poetic inspiration he also received from the area of his paternal village which he used to visit time and again. This area has not only given many literary personalities in Hindi but also has a live oral tradition of literature where Kabeer, Tulsi, Surdas and others are a part of everyday life.⁶

At the age of 14 he was married to beautiful and gifted Manohara

6. Ramvilas, Sharma. *Nirala*. New Delhi : Radha Krishna. 1991. p.1-3.

Devi with whom he fell in profound love. After marriage he stayed in Gadhakola and in Dalmau the in-laws place. At both the places he mixed up with lower caste people and joyfully passed the time. After a very short conjugal life, Manohara Devi left Nirala alone forever leaving a son and daughter behind. After the death of his wife, Nirala was again shocked by the death of his father, uncle and cousin, who died due to the attack of influenza. At the age of twenty one, Nirala was burdened with the guardianship of four nephews and his two children but the search for livelihood was very difficult.⁷ He started writing as an occupation and worked in Ramakrishna mission for a year. It is only in 1923 that he got formidable base for his literary expression form '*Matwala*'. '*Matwala*' was published from Calcutta by the financial support of a businessman Mahadeo Prasad Seth and Nirala was the founder contributor of this journal. The journal was vehemently satirical against government policies, dubious politicians and regressive social issues in which Nirala played a very important role. It is this journal where Surya kumar Tiwari became Suryakanta Tripathi 'Nirala' and he initiated a new era in Hindi poetry.⁸

However, Nirala dissociated himself from *Matwala* as it could not give the regular income so necessary for him. The next five years for him

7. *ibid.* p.5-6

8. *ibid* p.7

also see Karmendu Shisir ed. *Matvale ka Mat*. New Delhi Rajkamal. 1994 and Arun Kumar, '*Matwala aur Rashtriya Andolan*' in '*Alochana*, No.72, Jan-Mar 1985. p.45

were again years of instability and economic crisis, along with mental and physical sickness. During this period he continued his literary writing which brought him mental disturbances, along with creative pleasure as anti-Nirala propaganda became very strong. Simultaneously, he did translations and wrote children's literature as and when he got the opportunity in the market which could fetch him some money.⁹

In 1929 he undertook the editorial work of '*Sudha*' a Hindi journal published by *Ganga Pustak Mala*. Here, he became popular in new generation of literature and got a supporting group which gave him both emotional support to bear the tirade against him propagated in various literary debates of old and conservative thinking intelligentsia. In many ways Premchand also had to fight the conservative thinking of his age. Association with *Sudha* and thereafter marked a special moment where Nirala did not only produce great literary works but also expressed his political views through editorial notes in *Sudha*.¹⁰ However, the economic instability and exploitation by publishers continued. For economic instability he could not provide proper treatment to his diseased daughter 'Saroj' who died of T.B.

During World War II, he was severely ill and lost at least two pounds

9. Ramvilas Sharma. *ibid.* p.7-9.

10. *ibid.* 9-11

of his weight. He shifted from Lucknow to Allahabad and took a house which was not really suitable to live. Till the end of his life he was completely on himself and always tried to support his dependants. Hereafter we find a more progressive shift in Nirala's writing. Hence, in reality, Nirala lived a life of struggle and darkness. In acute poverty he recognized the process of exploitation and Brahminical dominance which he constantly fought. Therefore we find his writing most colourful and different than any other Chhayavadi poet.¹¹

II

Literary Contribution

Although Nirala wrote extensively both in prose and poetry form 1916 to 1961, the writings which are being considered here cover the period till 1935. In poetry, therefore I intend to consider the following collections : '*Anamika*', '*Parimal*', '*Geetika*', '*Tulsidas*', and '*Apara*'. Some of these collections are published after 1935 but through extensive research of Ramvilas Sharma and Nand Kishore Naval (editors of Nirala Rachnavali) it is evident that they are written by Nirala in pre-1935 period.¹² In prose

11. *ibid.* 13

12. Ram vilas Sharma, *Nirala kee Sahitya-Sadhana* Vol.I. New Delhi : Rajkamal. 1972. also see, *Nirala Rachnavali* Vol.III. ed. by Nand Kishore Naval, New Delhi : Rajkamal, 1983. p.9-11.

we will consider his four novels. '*Apsara*', '*Staka*', '*Prabhavati*' and '*Nirupama*' along with his editorial notes in '*Sudha*'. Here it may be noted that I do not intend to treat them separately rather will try to use them in order to delineate the main trends in Niralas writing. It is also because what Nirala wrote in various forms was not fundamentally different in its content and positions apart from a progressive shift in his outlook and emphasis.

As indicated in the second chapter of this dissertation, Nirala's writing is full of dichotomies : inner-outer, self-other, old-new, tradition-modernity; Individual-collective etc. The following discussion will illustrate the point.

Influence and Originality

The literary intervention of Nirala created a long debate in Hindi literature about the influence of Bangla literature, especially of '*Tagore*' and '*Nazrul*'. Nirala's '*Janmabhumi*', his one of the first poems with overt nationalistic feeling had a direct bearing of D.L.Roy. It was published in '*Prabha*' - a Hindi journal, with acknowledgement of D.L.Roy.¹³ In the introduction, of his second collection of poems, '*Parimal*' Nirala himself accepted a remarkable influence of Bangla literature.¹⁴ Ram Vilas Sharma

13. Nirala. '*Asankalit Kavitayen* ed. by Nand Kishore Naval. New Delhi. Rajkamal. 1981 (3rd ed. 1989) p.11.

14. Nirala-*Parimal*, New Delhi : Rajkamal. 1978 (rep.1993) p.8.

has sufficiently illustrated the influence of Rabindra Nath Tagore on Nirala

He writes -

“The influence of Rabindranath's mysticism on Nirala stays partly till 1930. The concept of '*deva*' which continuously comes in the first poem of the second section of '*Parimal*', is Rabindranath's poetic god.... The romanticism of Rabindra Nath has more enduring influence of Nirala than his mysticism.... The many new words of Nirala for which '*Chhayavad* became defamed - and it should be so, were taken by him from Rabindra nath.”¹⁵

Efforts have been made to correlate the writings of Nazrul Islam's and Nirala's emotive intentions and chosen forms. '*Tulsidas*' and '*Saroj Smiti*' of Nirala is compared with Nazrul's '*Merubhaskar*' and '*Chitnama*'.¹⁶ Moreover, there are ample evidences of Nirala's borrowings from '*Shankaracharya*', '*Surdas*', '*Tulsi*', '*Balmiki*', '*Kritivas Ramayan*', '*Ramkrishna Paramhans*' and '*Swami Vivekanand*'.¹⁷

However, Nirala tried to assimilate them and give new and contemporary meaning to what he borrowed from the others. Like Gandhi, he was also an interpreter of tradition in his own ways. He remembered

15. Ramvilas Sharma, 1972 Vol.II,op.cit, p.525.

Also see, Avadh Prasad Bajpai, *Tagore aur Nirala*, Kanpur : Anusadhan Prakashan 1965 pp.118, 225-46, and , Indra Nath Chanduri, *Nirala Kavya Par Bangha Prabhava*. New Delhi : Printsman . 1984, p.124, 142.

16. Upendra Kr, Sharma. *Nirala aur Najrul*. Bhivani : Bhivani-Shankar Pub. p.67-68.

17. Ramvilas Sharma. 1972 Vol.II. op.cit. p.507-42.

'Tulsidas' because he himself found that the cultural glory of his country is lost —

The glitter of Indian Sky
Has dimmed, The Cultural Sun
Has Set today, All directions have become dark¹⁸

Nirala is also present in the form of *Tulsidas* and setting the social objective for his poet. His passionate characterization of 'Ratnavali' - the inspiring force for *Tulsidas* is also created by the character and memory of his wife Manohara Devi. The struggle of *Tulsidas* is also the struggle of Nirala. Moreover he gives a new interpretation of Indian weakness, which has been the reason for colonial domination. He says that Varnashram system has become meaningless and Indian society has weakened because the lowly people have been continuously crushed by upper castes :

This country was already weakened (since)
The Varna system was self-defeating
The Kshatriyas were rudely selfish and competitive
Were unable to protect the others,
The Brahmins were flatters,
And the poor inhabitants of cottage, were crushed.¹⁹

18.

भारत के नभ का प्रभापूर्य
शीतलच्छाय सांस्कृतिक सूर्य
स्तमित आज रे — तमस्तूर्य दिङ् मण्डल —

It is quoted from Niralas' '*Tulsidas*' New Delhi : Raj Kamal, 1993, p.11 and translated in English by me.

19.

यह देश प्रथम ही था हत-बल;
वे टूट चुके थे ठाट सकलवर्णों के,

Contd

It is this interpretation that led him to think later that future leaders of India are these crushed lowly castes and only in their leadership India can really be free.

Here it also may be noted that inspite of all borrowings, the expressions of 'grief', 'woe', 'struggle' and 'death' were established by him. His struggle and pain was personal. It was expressed in a 'concrete material form' unlike others who expressed their personal pain and grief generally in non-material terms. In '*Saroj Smriti*' one of the rare elegies of its kind, in world literature, Nirala repents :

Dear, I was a reckless father.
I did nothing to make you better
The Sorrow has been story of my life
.....

What Should I say which I never descrined.²⁰

.... Contd

तृष्णोद्धत, स्पधगित, सगर्व
क्षत्रीय, रक्षा से रहित सर्व;
द्विज चाटुकार, हत इतर वर्ग पणों के

It is quoted from *ibid.* p.70 and translated by me.

20.

धन्ये मैं पिता निरर्थक था
कुछ भी तोरे हित कर न सका !
दुख ही जीवन की कथा रही
क्या कहूँ आज जो नहीं कही

see Nirala. *Anamika*. New Delhi : Rajkamal . 1994 (rep.) p.90, 98. and also see Malyaj, *Kavita Se Sakshtkar*, Chap. '*Saroj Smriti aur Nirala*',

This helplessness is the outcome of Nirala's real-life agony and not a mental construct.

Liberation of Poetry

In introduction of his second collection of poems, '*Parimal*' Nirala mentions the opposition which his new poetry had received and comments on stagnancy of the established authorship. He said "The great writers and poets have been proving the old tradition of slavery in literature."²¹ Nirala maintained that he had given a new kind of Blank-verse or unrestrained metre in Hindi Literature which few were ready to believe and appreciate. When he was blamed of taking it from Bangla, and 'Pant'-his contemporary poet - claimed that he first introduced blank-verse in Hindi ; Nirala tried to make it more specific that what he meant by his self-willed or unrestrained metre of poetry. He said that poetry in vedas are liberated. They are unrestrained and metreless. He said that with the use of a metre in a particular age you can estimate the nature (open/closed) and consciousness of a society.²²

Nirala said that the kind of blank-verse he has seen in Bangla and in Hindi, even before the use by Pant, are not unrestrained metre (*Swachhand-Chhand*) because in such blank-verses there are even or uneven number of

21. Nirala *Parimal*. New Delhi : Rajkamal. 1993 (rep,) p.6

22. *ibid.* pp.9-10

'well thought-out' *matras* (length of time required to pronounce a short vowel). Thus, they followed a rule and regulation. Nirala maintained that there is a correlation between rules and regulations of poetry and structures of society: after vedas as the *poetic* strictness is a simultaneous process with the growth of rigidity in society.²³

Nirala defined *unrestrained* metre as a verse which does not follow any rule of metre. It is spontaneous so to denote the spontaneity of thought and freedom of human being. However he did not deny the role of metre entirely. He said that '*unrestrained*' metre is one which is based on some metre but is not restricted by its rules and limits. Here, he suggested that the most suitable metre for contemporary Hindi poetry is '*kavitta*'. Both these points are important for the assessment of Nirala's literature.²⁴

However, what is important here to note is that he specified and linked the liberation of poetry with the liberation of society and humankind. Thus consciously attached a historical role to be played by poetry as a carrier of liberty i.e. expression of self willed ideas and unrestricted feelings. But this liberation was not complete as making '*Kavitta*' as base of poetry itself was a '*limit to expression*'. Also Nirala's all poems are not written in '*unrestrained*' metres rather many of them follow the rule of some metre or

23. *ibid.* pp. 10. 13

24. *ibid.* pp.13-14

are the blankverse of the kind for which he criticized his contemporaries. In the same way, Nirala's love for 'annupras' (repetition of same sounds) and ornamentation to create magic of meaning indicate his rootedness in the tradition of established practices.²⁵

However, what we have just enumerated as *inhibitions* in Nirala's poems of unrestrained metre were, in other sense very meaningful for his literature. Both his love for 'annupras' and creating magical effect of meaning were an instrument to show the potency and maturity of modern Hindi, for which Nirala had constantly fought. The related question is why he opted 'kavitta' as inevitable and vital base for modern unrestrained poetry? It may be noted that most of the time Nirala was either speaking to himself (in a state of inner conflict or introspection) or he was in constant dialogue (*Samvad*) with others and 'kavitta' was capable to convey the structure of dialogue through its dramatic effects and provisions for low & high pitches.²⁶

Apart from it, the revolutionary role of unrestrained poetry of Nirala lies in the fact that it brought the language of conversation (its structures) in songs and broke the monotony of feelings. It also radicalized the poetry by breaking the rules of grammar, making new experiments in style and

25. Ramvilas Sahrma 1972 Vol.II. op.cit pp.415, 423-4

26. *ibid.* p.426.

treatment and using folk words, at times.²⁷

Brahma and Maya

Nirala's conception of '*Brahma*' does not provide any uniformity thanks to his varied reading association with the followers of Ramkrishna and his experiences from the personal life.²⁸ In Nirala we find a continuous dualism between *Brahma* and *Maya* : Sometimes the *Brahma* is the supreme and opposed to *maya*, sometimes both are the same and at times the *Brahma* is discarded for *maya*.

'Panchvati Prasang' is the creation of early period of Nirala's literary life. Here, one finds the presence of '*Brahma*' opposed to *maya*. But this form of *Brahma* has become continuously less absent in later creations.²⁹ In his poem, '*Tum tung himalaya shring/mein chanchal gati sur-sarita*' (You are the paramount Himalayas/I am volatile motion of river of tunes), the nature expressed here is phenomenal existence, a cosmic play, a creative illusion and *Tung Himalaya Shring* is the *brahma*, the paramount reality.³⁰

27. *ibid.* p.388-394.

also see Ramesh Chandra Shah. *Chhayavad kee Prasangikta*. New Delhi. Radha Krishna. 1973 p.60.

28. Ramvilas Sharma *Rag-Virag* - *op.cit.* p.24.

29. Ram Vilas Sharma 1972 Vol.II, *op.cit.*, p.182.

30. Indranath Choudhuri- '*Pradesha* in Hindi *Chhayavad* and after' in *Indian Literature*, Shaitya Akademi, New Delhi. March-April 1984 p.58.

The river, the phenomenal existence emanates from the Himalayas, the paramount reality but the dualism is established by 'you' and 'me'. Thus going towards the nature and describing it as 'subject matter' (*alamban*) and 'stimulant' (*uddipan*) was at times the description of the Brahma but also the assertion of individuality, love for nation and freedom from the choking Indian social structure. To illustrate, the woman has always been resembled with 'nature' and 'Maya'. The romanticist poem, taking nature as stimulant always remembered the beloved or lover in the state of separation; and most of the time the woman has been represented as non-material which ultimately becomes spiritual. In Nirala, one finds a woman with body and mundane desires when he described nature as stimulant. Even when he described nature as subject matter he does not lose the lust for form, body and smell. His passionate writing on 'Juhi', 'Bela', 'Nargis' etc relates to his desire for smell which linked nature with earth.³¹

Ram kee Shakti-puja, establishes the undoubted importance of Maya. Here Rama, embodiment of Brahma, worships Shakti. (the form of Maya) and finally the maya enters Ram to empower him to fight 'Ravana'. The difference between divine 'Shakti' and monstrous Shakti has ceased to exist because Rama worships the same 'Shakti' which is also worshiped by 'Ravana'.³² It also may be noted that this long poem indicates that to fight

31. Ramvilas Sharma *Rag-virag* op.cit p.2

32. Ramvilas Sharma 1972. Vol.II op.cit p.183

the injustice of this world, the power of Brahma is immaterial and useless, and therefore mundane power has to be accumulated.

The characterization of Maya (phenomenal reality) also includes the depiction of various *ritus* (flux/season) in relation to the Great time (Mahakala). Ritu (season) for Nirala symbolises, both, the nationalist aspiration and the fundamental change in Social structure. Nirala when describes the severity of a summer evening he finds therefore a picture of Indian subjugation and horror :

This evening
The cley is looking a scene of Final Destruction
.....
In the storm of dust, the country is vanishing. ³³

When he writes on rainy season, the cloud for him symbolizes the means of revolution in which the ignored and lowly become meaningful and beautiful. In famous '*Badal-Rag*' through clouds he deciphers the earnestness of peasantry for a revolution :

33. यह सांध्य समय

प्रलय का दृश्य भरता अम्बर
.....
उड़ रही धूल, नीचे अदृश हो रहा देश

—quoted from *Rag-Virag* ed by Ramvilas Sharma op.cit. p.21. (translation is done by me)

O ! revolutionary warrior
the weak and impatient peasant is calling you
O ! the source of life
His worth is sucked out
He is left with only bone in his body.³⁴

Individual and collective

The poems of Nirala are individualistic in the sense that it is identification of one's own self. It also depicts inner conflict, repentance and consolation. What we have also discussed earlier is that his poetry is also a continuous dialogue with others. This self introspection links it with others. Therefore he uses to convey it through dialogue to others that he has got something to say (also out of his personal life & introspection) which may be strange and peculiar hence a dramatic effect in the poetry and in the dialogue is needed. In the poem 'Adhivas' he says :-

I adopted the the way of my 'own'
Saw an unhappy brother like me
His unhappiness darkend my heart
and there was a sudden outburt of agony.³⁵

34. See Nirala, *Parimal*, op.cit p.139 :-

तुझे बुलाता कृषक अधीर
ऐ विप्लव के वीर !
चुसलिया है उसका सार,
हाड़ मात्र ही है आधार
ऐ जीवन के पारावार!

35. quoted from *ibid.* p.96 :-

मैंने 'मै' - शैली अपनायी,

Contd ...

III

The Social and Political Implication

What we have discussed above are the various kinds of dualities which concern both *form* and *content* of Nirala's poetry, are related to each other at some or the other level. His constant struggle in inner and outer life and a dialogue with the tradition, mark a progressive shift in thinking. Necessarily these were related to his society and characterized the development of a particular mode of thinking.

The question of 'nation' and 'nationalism' were a stimulus for the organization and developments of various frameworks of thought. In Nirala, what we see that both early cultural nationalism and present political activities were over-arching his various segments of thought. He confronts with the British imperialism, and various political discourse in his own artistic way which was an outcome of reflection on and interaction with his society.

..... Contd

देखा दुखी एक निज भाई
दुख की छाया पड़ी हृदय में मेरे,
झट उमड़ बेदना आयी।

(Translated by me)

Both his writings in Prose and poetry, were a version of nationalism but the nature of freedom became constantly different and critical of the dominant version of freedom. Like any other conscious person of his time, Nirala understood the dynamics of British imperialism. In 1932, he wrote in '*Sudha*' :

"Imperialism is the core of British politics. The history of imperialism is interwoven with the rise of commercial power facilitated by capital.

It is as heartless as capital".³⁶

Nirala thus understood the basic intention of exploitation of British rule and thus was not appreciative of European rationality and was opposed to the British reforms because it suppressed the basic dimension of change i.e. suppression of peasantry, labourers and their organizers. Therefore he criticised the government's attitude towards Meerut conspiracy case.³⁷ He possessed a revolutionary humanist perspective and did not only criticize British imperialism but also studied the European fascism and supported people's insurgence for democracy against monarchy.³⁸ Thus, Nirala was preoccupied with the question of nationalism and freedom but it fundamentally differed from the policies of congress and ideas of Gandhi. The centre of concern in Nirala's framework of thinking was (i) Peasantry (ii) Varna System (iii) Women, and (iv) Language. Gandhi did think over

36. Ramvilas Sharma. 1972 Vol.II op.cit. p.15

37. *ibid.* 16

38. *ibid.* p.17 .

these question but the priorities set by him did not match Nirala's. It will be clear from the discussion to come.

Peasants and Zamindars

Like Premchand, Nirala ponders on the problems of peasant life. In his novels, he does not only depict the plight of rural poor as clearly as Premchand, he also visualizes a revolution in peasantry, for him, which would be the real freedom. Nirala himself organized peasants in his village and in nearby.³⁹ He was a witness to peasant insurgency of Oudh in leadership of Baba Ramchandra. In all of his four novels, he shows the sympathy for peasantry, depicts the exploitation by the dominant section - Zamindar or king. Nirala, like Premchand, gives importance to organization of peasantry and its education so that it does not remain a follower rather becomes able to think over its own problems.

In '*Alka*' and '*Apasara*', the organization of peasantry is dominant theme. The meaning of swaraj for peasantry was abolishment of tax as *Budhua* and others mean in *Alaka*.⁴⁰ Nirala said that today we are trying to attain the political freedom on the basis of law. Newspapers and journals are making their business out of it. The education has become the means of accumulation of wealth for well-off sections. He criticized congress for

39. Nand Dularé Bajpai, *Kavi Nirala*. Varanasi : Vani Vitan 1965.

40. Nirala - '*Alka*' in Nirala Rachnavali Vol.III op.cit. p.137

its hypocrisy and said that political prisoning, as a form of protest, was not sufficient until the same energy is devoted with peasants.⁴¹ And therefore he proposes a revolution in peasantry in 'Badal Rag'. It inevitably does not digest the non-violent means of Gandhian framework which argued for harmony between Zamindars and peasants, and concealed the blooded jaws of landlords.

Varna System

We have discussed earlier that while remembering *Tulsidas*, Nirala reasoned out the emptiness of *Varnashram* systems which has pitted against the lower sections of the society. He finds this exploitative character of *Varna* system which has caused cleavages and weakened the Indian society. In *Prabhavati*, Yamuna says :

"This religion can never be saved by these Kshatriyas who defeated Buddhism to establish the '*Varhashram dharma*' because castes, in general, are troubled of the contempts of Kshatriyas and Brahmins"⁴²

It may be noted that the religion of '*Prabhavati*' was the Rashtradharm of Nirala's society and without the equal participation of lower castes, it is impossible to be saved. Therefore he wrote in *Sudha* :

41. *ibid.* p. 152-6

42. Nirala - *Prabhavati* *ibid* p.255

“The society which is old, inspite of its distinctiveness, it is dead for the new age We should have faught it first. After defeating it we should have made a society of 'liveing' people with their major participation. Then it would have been a first step towards the making of a nation”.⁴³

Nirala, did not only criticize the conservative practices of Brahmins which carried the sense of false superiority. He himself being a Brahmin, broke the caste barrier vehemently. He got his daughter married without fulfilling the 'required' Brahminical criteria and was a very good friend to the lower caste people. This occurred as an irony in his life :

I am the messenger of 'spring'
and an untouchable among the Brahmins.⁴⁴

Whatever he wrote about untouchables or low castes, he did not do so by reading Ambedkar, rather it was felt by him since he himself lived as an untouchable among brahmins.

Women

Nirala, similar to peasantry and *varnashram* system, had very radical views about women. Nirala's all four novels of this period have female protagonists. These female protagonists were totally radical and

43. Dr. Avadhesh Pradhan, '*Brahman virodhi chintandhara and Hindi Sahitya*, in Parisad Patrika. Patna : Bihar Rashtra Bahsha Parisad, 121-124 Dec 1993. p.118.

44. मैं ही वसन्त का अग्रदूत
ब्राह्मण समाज में ज्यों अछूत ।

independent in their thinking. It also symbolizes that when Nirala was dealing with the main problems of the society he gave a central place to women. She is not the follower of male counterpart neither she is dependent on him. *Kanak*, the protagonist of his first novel '*Apsara*' in spite of being a daughter of a 'prostitute' thinks to marry a person and her decision is final. She thinks once and for all. She is ready to bear all consequences. In the same way, we find a radical woman *Yamuna*, in '*Alka*', *Prabhavati* and *Nirupama*. These women do not only cross the barriers of caste, and region, they are competent fighters like any other male. They bear the equal responsibility of the society and overgrow the traditional conservative morality of women : Yamuna of Prabhavati says :

"The problem of dharma and country which is before our male counterpart is also before us.... Should we also keep on following our male ? I do not think so. I know that we have no say, still we have to be cautious."⁴⁵

This is an ideological construction of women but it remains different than the predecessors and that of Mahatma Gandhi. It is the same feeling which is expressed in '*Wah torati Patthar*' where a working woman is characterized as fighting alone (without any male help!) against the exploitation. In reality, he knew the need of freedom of women. Therefore said in poem '*Mukti*' (Liberation) :

45. Nirala, *Prabhavati*. op.cit. p.255

“Break, Break, Break the prison of stone
And come out as stream of the Ganges !”⁴⁶

Moreover his lust for female's bodily beauty and its passionate depiction, in all his romantic poems and also in '*Panchvati prasanga*' (the depiction of the beauty of Surpanakha) was a protest against the traditional conception of women. Women in Nirala is present in all possible forms. Which was neither found the contemporary romantic framework nor in Gandhian.

The Question of National Language

Nirala believed in the necessity of a national language for making of a nation in the same-way as he found the English language as a imperialist tool to exploit the Indians. He criticized the linguistic parochialism and at the same time, like Premchand, argued for the internal development and cooperation of regional languages. He also believed that development of national language should not become an inhibition in the development of regional languages.⁴⁷ He had the respect for other languages. In '*Nirupama*' where characters are incidentally from two regions and they know the

46. See, *Anamika* op.cit p.100.

तोड़ो, तोड़ो, तोडा कारा
पत्थर, की, निकलो फिर
गंगा जल धारा !

47. Ramvilas Sharma 1972 Vol.II p.63.

languages of each other, in conversation, they speak the language of the other. This was one of the solution of Nirala towards regional cooperation, 'Nirala' as early as in 1923 had suggested that the national language should be simple and magnificent because it has to express the feelings. But the language which Nirala developed was surely magnificent, able to express the complex feelings but was not simple, (as it has been in other languages), inspite of all of his effort to include new and local words.

IV

Gandhi was a towering personality of his time. He did effect the mode of thinking. There are many instances where Nirala made appreciative comments on Gandhi because he shared the dream of language, freedom and varna-system.⁴⁸ But this sharing was not fundamental. It is clear with the Nirala's treatment of the nature of freedom, question of women and Dalit. Nirala differed entirely. He wrote an essay on '*Charka*' and found that in his opinion, the views of Gandhi and Tagore, both are poisonous. The critically of Nirala towards Gandhi, even indicating the trend of thinking new generation which was propagating or was open to socialist ideas, he appreciated Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi at times. There were two reasons : (i) Nehru and Gandhi shared the view that Hindustani (read Hindi) should be the National language, (ii) Nehru projected himself as a

48. *ibid.* p.78.

socialist and Gandhi was fighting for national cause and projected himself as pro-people.⁴⁹ However, it does not mean that he was close to any blurred social philosophy. In '*Alka*' there comes a reference of Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi to show that even the socialist had no answer to the question of 'no tax for land' and a simple peasant like '*Mahangu*' was just somehow made convinced.⁵⁰

49. *ibid.* p. 85

also see Nirala Rachnavali Vol.VI. *op.cit.* p. 19-20.

50. Ramvilas Sharma. 1972. Vol.II *op.cit.* p.76.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION

“..... Whatever the opinions you might have professed, literature throws you in the battle. Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom; once you have begun, you are comitted willy-nilly”.

Sartre¹.

I

Literature is a kind of dialogue. It implicates the other. Private pleasure of creation for writer (transcendental or otherwise) as a pure category is incomplete view of purpose of literature.

By virtue of being a kind of dialogue it is oriented towards others. It contains the attitude of author shaped by society, thus also that of society in certain sense. However, this attitude is covert. Not always easily visible.

Words as symbols, have the capacity to always signify something than general perception. The use of this capacity is the creativity of writer. Thus a writer as creator always signifies something and therefore 'proposes a covert way of action' therein.

Taken literature as a form of action, the question arises what does the

1. Quoted from Jean-Paul Sartre. What is literature? tr. by B. Frechtman, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1950. p.47.

writer intend to do in the society? What change he/she aspires to bring?
How the action is received in the world?

It makes me hold the view, that literature as an action exchanges meanings in the society as happens in a dialogue. But a dialogue or even speech involves a relation of power between involved conscious being. Hence, literature even within its delicacy and intricacy involves a political position

Sociology of literature can demarcate that position to the extent it can be made perceptible from the author's use of 'form', 'theme' 'style', 'arguments', characters; and from the overall meaning delineated delicately which lie beyond the pure subjective domain of literature. For this purpose the link between all possible aspects of literature, can be located in its society, and the comparative meaning can be deciphered to be Sociologically meaningful.

II TH-6113

The nature and orientation of literature depends on the way the author is oriented towards society. It has been discussed earlier (see Chapter II) that echo of 1857 mutiny as the subject of literary creation is hardly attended by the mainstream literature in the years following the mutiny. The songs about mutiny in which the peasantry documented the protest and was

perhaps more vulnerable to British punishment, indicate the tendency to represent the existence, its best and worst, in literature.

Representation involves a consciousness which is implicit manifestation of the *ideology* of the writer. It gives the clue to identify the likes and dislikes of the authors including their limits. Hence a literature inheres the conflict or struggle of interests in society.

The interest of the pre-1920 modern Hindi literature was to provide a cultural leadership in terms of developing a consciousness which could bear the responsibility of cultural nationalism, at the same time, argued for a 'needed' change in the society. A link between the nature of cultural nationalism (praise of nation) and the kind of changes they advocated is possible.

As they dreamt of a glorious 'nation' they also wanted to be glorious of their 'society' and therefore they wanted certain kind of change in its social structure. They spoke for Dalit and women but the voices of Dalit and women remained limited as far as self-representation was concerned. They spoke because they wanted change but what they spoke throws a light on their consciousness. Chapter II has discussed the example of *Yashodhara* where the narrative of *Yashodhara* being a new kind of narrative provides a new image of women.

It indicates that there is a change in the way of treatment of the subject when compared to the previous literature. However this new conception of women also meant that this form of women would not deny the creator (or cultural leader) to feel glorious about her, since she is the goddess of sacrifice service, and tolerance; and follower of her husband, which ultimately makes her a strikingly different woman than the women in the West. The nation is different from the West, so the nation's women should be. Hence, a glorious nation must have graceful women and it was the responsibility of the middle-class leadership to indicate and search this gracefulness. This was the basic tenets of the patriotism of pre-1920 cultural-nationalism in the Hindi belt.

Gandhi also wanted a cultural change but defined traditions in a way which was indicative of proudness. This proudness was part of his narrative of nationalism and was shared by pre-1920 literature, indicated above.

The change proposed here did not imply the fundamental change rather a modification in situation and perception. Gandhi was primarily a political leader who had opted cultural means and modes of communication. The middle class which followed Gandhi in national freedom and at times worked as a Gandhian 'sub-contractor' to link up the masses and Gandhi, also had the same morality and consciousness which wanted a modification in the social structure, out of its generosity and sense of duty of a patriotic

leader.

In the period, of which the literary contribution of Premchand and Nirala are studied in this dissertation (Chapter III and IV), reveal a love and hate relationship with this ideology of the middle class. Both of them were providing a cultural leadership and their literature contained the contradictions of their time which implied the tension of break from the traditional perception of the social reality, however, were of far-reaching political consequences in favour of the deprived. Both of these writers aspired for national freedom but the national freedom for them meant happiness of the poor.

The analysis in the second chapter indicates that there were many political trends which Gandhian centralism was unable to converge. It indicates that the nature of middle class in relation to the pre 1920 middle class, was visibly changing because in this period the fundamental social cleavages along with the efforts for national freedom were given a more serious thought. Earlier political issues were unified and integrated with the *welfare of the entire society* ; while in this period the issues got divided as far as main stream political discourse is concerned, in favour of rich and poor, lower and upper etc. This leads me to propose that middle class of this period became diverse in nature and internally polarized in terms of their fundamental interests. Nirala's and Premchand's writings fit into

to this proposition

III

The life situation of Premchand and Nirala had remarkable similarity. Both lived a poor and traumatic life. Both were committed to and lived by the service of literature. Similarly, one finds a narrative coherence within their literary creation. As Nirala's poems form base of his novels, also in Premchand, images in his short-stories found elaborate presentation in his novels. The women of Nirala's novels are women of his poetry, and agony of peasantry is commonly present in novels and poems. The unity of images in different forms and levels in Premchand is exemplified by the similarity between image of *Halku* of *Poos kee Rat* and *Hori of Godan*, and also in images of women and peasantry scattered in his creation. Besides their internal unity of content they seem to equally share feeling for their subjects i.e. peasant, women and national freedom. Both of them tried to change the aesthetics of earlier literature standards and radicalized the purpose of literature. Bringing peasantry and their life in central literary concern by Premchand, was also a new aesthetics of literature since it denied the sole characterization of any important or acclaimed personality of society, neither it was meant to be a pass-time reading of an idle mind. Nirala's advocacy for *liberation of poetry (Kavita kee Mukti)* and its implementation in his literary creations, were implying the same ideology as far as liberation

of society from British rule and internal rigidities are concerned.

However what we find in Prem Chand is a continued shift towards social realism from idealisms (which is quite often a Gandhism). Apparently contrary to it, we find a strong sense of idealism still alive in Nirala even while he was depicting a real degeneration and exploitation in society. I think both of these perspectives were two sides of the same coin. Premchand's idealism was a Gandhian Idealism which has gradually decreased. In Nirala's, the social realism though present in his early writings, became increasingly obvious in the later writings but simultaneously we must differentiate that this idealism was not of Gandhian kind because it questioned fundamentally the basic foundations of Hindu society, and attributed and visualized radical role to the deprived. In representation of social problem he is a realist Premchand. The interrelatedness of both the positions is through realist representation. Premchand tried to express the suppressed contradictions of national struggle and society and Nirala visualized or dreamt of a society which was free of these contradictions.

IV

However Nirala and Premchand are not only writers of this period. Further study needs to explore that what kind of literary consciousness their contemporaries were creating? Even if Nirala and Premchand created

an alternative consciousness 'what was its success and limitations' needs a systematic study into the sociology of readership to indicate, the social groups who were following and responding. Related to it is also necessary to see that inspite of their different shift, Gandhi still remained popular and a dominant figure to be followed and imitated. A further study of this kind will not only explore the limits of literary influence but will also complement understanding of the social consciousness of that time. There is a commonality of dissent among Premchand, Nirala and the then communists against the dominant socio-political thinking. But how they diverge from each-other in terms of emphasis and degrees should also be studied along with a sociological study of development of literary self, if it exists at all.

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