

REALISM AND THE INDIAN SHORT STORY :
A Comparative Study of Mulk Raj Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay
and Sadat Hasan Manto

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled 'Realism and the Indian Short Story: A Comparative Study of Mulk Raj Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay and Sadat Hasan Manto', submitted by Rajeev Sharma is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree to this University or to any other University and his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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INTRODUCTION

It is our endeavour in this dissertation to discuss the rise and use of realism in Indian prose fiction. But before we come to this, it is necessary that we define realism and track the origins of modern day realism. Realism in art and literature does not originate in the modern age. Realism was widely used in antiquity in Greek arts - especially plays and sculptures. It was used in the ancient classical Sanskrit plays in India. But this tradition was lost in the middle ages. It was only with the emergence of modern age in Europe that Greek art was rediscovered. During the Renaissance, the humanist writers, artists and scientists, influenced by the predominantly humanist Greek art, started depicting in their works, a world recognizably bound by the same laws as the world they lived in.

From Renaissance to the twentieth century realism developed further in Europe, because the European society also developed during this period. Feudalism came to an end and capitalism emerged to replace it. And with this transformation emerged realistic prose fiction. "The impulse towards realism in prose fiction", says Arnold Kettle, "was part and parcel of the breakdown of feudalism and of the revolution that transformed that realism."¹

In the crises ridden capitalist society, the class conflict between the ruling classes and the working people sharpened. Many realistic writers, who had come to understand the true characteristics of capitalism, were disgusted with it. These writers were sympathetic to the workers and peasants because they realized that only these two classes under capitalism had the potential to effect a social change from capitalism to socialism. These writers, who were called critical realists later, depicted the life of the exploited people.

Under the influence of the widespread crises in the Western capitalism, a number of artistic movements emerged. These movements wanted to delink literature from social reality. These movements, like Surrealism, Absurdism, Dadaism, Fauvism etc., started towards the end of the 19th century, but did not last long. In the post World War II, realism again became the dominant mode in prose fiction all over the world.

In India, both prose fiction and realism developed under the influence of European realistic prose fiction. Prose fiction made appearance only in the colonial India in the nineteenth century. It was initiated by writers who had come in contact with European literature through their

knowledge of English. Initially prose fiction was not very realistic. But as the Indian writers became aware of their position as a colonized nation and of the problems in their society, they took to realistic prose fiction.

Realism came of age in Indian literature with the writings of Premchand. Premchand started as a writer under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. But as he matured as a writer he realized that the national liberation would be incomplete without the liberation of the exploit classes from capitalism. In his later works he dealt with the dismal condition of the exploited people of urban and rural India. Premchand was followed by a set of younger writers who followed his commitment to the exploited classes and national independence. In the last year of Premchand's life this group of young writers founded the All India Progressive Writer's Association. In their first Conference in 1936 Premchand was made the President. This association was from its inception itself committed to realism and was sympathetic to the working class and peasant movements. Within a few years of its founding, the progressive writers' movement became the most widespread literary movement ever seen in India. With this movement all literary genres -- drama, poetry, novel and short story-- developed at an unprecedented pace.

Before the progressive writers' movement, short story had been a rather underdeveloped genre in Indian literature, since short story arrived rather late on the Indian literary scene. Premchand perfected the medium of short story. He left behind a large number of excellent short stories. The progressive writers explored the medium of short story very extensive and very effectively. Short story became the chronicler of the events in the history of Indian people. By the 1940s, it had become an established genre in all Indian languages. Short story recorded the most painful details of the cataclysmic events of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. In the following years it fulfilled its duty as a chronicler of history by recording the hopes and aspirations, failures and disasters, struggles and dreams of the working people of India and other sections of the society.

To study the emergence of realistic prose fiction in Indian literature, the development of realistic prose fiction in four languages - Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and English has been traced from their inception. To analyse the use of realism in Indian literature short stories of Mulk Raj Anand, who writes in English, Manik Bandyopadhyay, who wrote in Bengali and Sadat Hasan Manto, who wrote in Urdu, have been taken up. This study covers the developments roughly

till 1955 -1956, because two writers taken up in this study -Sadat Hasan Manto and Manik Bandyopadhyay- died in 1955 and 1956 respectively.

This study has been divided into three chapters. The first Chapter has been further divided into two sections. The first section deals with the definition of realism and its main characteristics. The second section deals with the development of realism in Europe. Main features of realism at various stages of development -- like Renaissance realism, Enlightenment realism, Critical realism and Socialist realism-- have been dealt with.

The second Chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the emergence of Indian prose fiction under the European influence. It covers the developments in literatures of Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and English from their inception to 1936. The second section covers the development in literatures of the above given four languages from 1936 to 1955-56. 1936 was the year when the All India Progressive Writers' Association was founded. This Association influenced the literature in India most profoundly for the next two decades. The last section of this Chapter deals with the emergence of short story in India and the developments in it under the influence of the Progressive Writers' Association.

The last Chapter, in which a critical analysis of some of the short stories of Anand, Manik and Manto has been made, has been divided into three sections. Sections one, two and three deal with Anand, Manik and Manto, respectively.

One of the major difficulties faced during this study was the small number of translations of short stories of Manik and Manto available. Even after more than thirty years of Manik's death, only two volumes of translations of his selected stories and two novles are available in English, and a few are available in Hindi also. Only two volumes of traslations of Manto's stories in English - both brought out in the last four years- are available. But many of Manto's stories are available in Hindi translations and some are available in Devanagari transcriptions. Many of these Hindi versions of Manto are brought out by small time publishers from Delhi and are pushed forth as erotic pulp literature and these are often very unfair in their selection of stories.

There are two major exclusions in this study. One is the exclusion of a South Indian language in the study of development of realistic prose fiction. And second is the exclusion of a Hindi short story writer in the third Chapter. These exclusions have affected the study

adversely. The first exclusion to because of my lack of acquaintance with the literature of South India, and also they are sparingly available in translation. The inclusion of atleast one representative Hindi writer would have helped this study immensely, but the need to delimit my work prevented me from doing so.

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CHAPTER I

Modern day literary realism made its appearance in Europe. The appearance of mature realism was not sudden. Various traits of realism developed at different times. It was with the Renaissance that some important features of artistic realism appeared first. With the subsequent changes in the European society, realism also matured. critical realism, in the late nineteenth century, came to be the dominant mode of literary production. In this Chapter we shall discuss, in the first section, the definition of realism. In the second section we shall trace the development of realism from the Renaissance to the twentieth century.

SECTION - 1

M.H. Abrams states that :

Realism is used in two ways : (1) to denote a literary movement of the nineteenth century in prose fiction (beginning with Balzac in France, George Eliot in England, and William Dean Howells in America); and (2) to designate a recurrent way of representing life in literature, which was typified by the writers of this historical movement.¹

The Soviet aesthete G.A. Nedoshivin defines, realism as follows :

Realism, in literature and art, is the truthful, objective reflection of reality by specific means characteristic of various types of artistic creativity. In the history of art, realism has been specifically associated with well-defined creative methods -- for example, Enlightenment realism, Critical realism, and Socialist realism. Although these methods are interrelated by a degree of continuity, each of them possesses its characteristic properties.²

Both these definitions very clearly distinguish between realism as a literary method and as a literary movement. Literary critics who have critically examined realism and believe that literature should be seen as a social product hold that any theory which treats literature in isolation (for instance as pure structure or as a product of writer's individual mental processes) and keeps it in isolation, divorcing it from society and history, will be deficient in its ability to explain what literature is.³

The understanding behind this preoccupation with reality is that reality is not something subjective and to

know reality it is necessary to have a theory of knowledge corresponding to truth. Truth is not something "to be discovered by a formally logical and abstract process of thought, or by intuition. Truth can only be reached through man's own intense investigation of an object, and that investigation is above all a human activity.... "Truth", wrote Lenin, "is formed out of the 'totally of all' aspects of a phenomenon of reality, and their (mutual) relationship".⁴ What is here understood by the totality of life is that immediate relation of sense and being in which, with all his inclinations and tendencies, his interests and endeavours, man is involved. This totality, according to Arnold Hauser, is encountered only "twice in the whole field of human activity, once in the motely, turbid, irresoluble complex of ordinary everyday existence and once in the single homogenous form of art, all of which are reduced to one common denominator."⁵

Of the many critics who have evaluated realism and elaborated the various concepts of realism, perhaps the most prominent one is the Hungarian critic, Georg Lukacs. He elaborated on the concepts touched upon by Marx and Engels and was engaged in fierce debates with Bloch and Brecht over the question of Expressionism. Of the many features of realism, dealt with by Lukacs and others, perhaps the most

central one is the concept of 'typification'. This term occurs first in Engels' letter to Margret Harkness, where he says, "Realism... implies besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical situations".⁶ According to Lukacs typical is "a peculiar synthesis which organically binds together the general and the particular, both in characters and circumstances."⁷ In a letter to Minna Kautsky, Engels, talking about the "precision of individualization" wrote - "each person is a type, but at the same time a completely defined personality - 'this one' as old Hegel would say. That is as it should be".⁸ So typification does not mean negation of a character's individuality for the sake of generalization. Belinsky says that the type is a 'familiar stranger' -- 'familiar' because it reveals features and traits to be found in real life. 'Stranger' because a type can also imply discovery.⁹ Describing as to what a type is not, Lukacs says :

What makes a type a type is not its average quality, nor its mere individual being, however, profoundly conceived, what makes it a type is that in it all the humanly and socially essential determinants are present on their highest level of development, in the ultimate unfolding of the possibility latent in them, in extreme

presentation of their extremes, rendering concrete the peaks and limits of men and epochs.¹⁰

Sometimes the diverse facets of the profound context of reality can only be revealed by extreme hyperbole, by a sharpening or grotesque exaggeration of the evident reality. Comparing Zola to Balzac, Lukacs points out that Balzac's characterization, which is at times melodramatic with its romantic exaggeration and grotesqueness, is far more profoundly typical than the highly stereotyped, schematic characterization of Zola even though, at first glance Zola will seem to be fulfilling the basic tenets of realism itself.

Realism does not mean photographic exactitude. Realism should be selective in its selection of social reality. Differentiating naturalism from realism Lukacs says :

The demand for a realistic creation of types is in opposition both to the trends in which biological being of man, the physiological aspects of self-preservation are dominant (Zola and his disciples) and to the trends which sublimate man into purely mental, psychological processes.¹¹

So instead of depicting life exactly as one sees it, its contents should be divided into spheres of greater or

lesser importance; into spheres that throw light on types and spheres that remain in darkness.

Lukacs' exposition of realism is illustrated by his comparison of realism and naturalism in Balzac's and Zola's novels. Zola, according to Lukacs, considered Balzac's 'bred-in-the-bone dialectic'¹² as unscientific and in his overwhelming fervour to expose the contradictions of capitalism, Zola substitutes "a 'scientific' method in which society is conceived as a harmonious entity and the criticism applied to society formulated against the diseases attacking its organic unity, a struggle against the 'undesirable features' of capitalism".¹³ Thus Zola's naturalism is in sharp opposition to the traditions of older realism of Balzac. In Zola a "mechanical average"¹⁴ replaces the dialectical balance between the type and the individual. The 'average' characters, who "act without a pattern"¹⁵, replace human beings who are both human beings and representatives of important class tendencies at the same time. Zola wanted to "go beyond the grey average of naturalism in his composition".¹⁶ And due to this urge to go beyond naturalism he produces some extraordinarily effective pictures of his times, but still he fails to achieve "what Balzac or Tolstoy or Dickens accomplished.... Man and his surroundings are always divided in all Zola's works".¹⁷

Lukacs' preference for Balzac over Zola may seem strange because Zola was a left-wing intellectual and Balzac was a royalist catholic in post-revolution France. Engels explained this contradiction in Balzac's literary work and real-life politics in following words :

Balzac was compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favourite nobles and described them as people deserving no better fate; he saw the real men of future where, for the time being, they alone were to be found -- that I consider one of the greatest features in old Balzac.¹⁸

This brings us to the question, whether a realistic writer's work essentially reflects his world-view or not. According to Lukacs the *weltanschauung* (world-view) and his political attitudes are not the things which matter alone: What matters more is the picture conveyed in the work. Talking of Balzac, Lukacs says that no one experienced "the torments which the transition to capitalist mode of production inflicted as every section of the people",¹⁹ as Balzac did. Even though he sided with the royalists in politics, he saw that the transformation was not only inevitable, but also progressive.

It would be, however, not very correct to conclude that artistic creativity does not depend on author's world-view, even if in certain cases it may transgress it. In most cases; realism, especially in our century, is associated with advanced social movements and arises as the artistic expression of society's progressive potential.

SECTION - II

Although realism developed into a fullfledged literary movement only in the nineteenth century, but a number of essential features of literary realism appeared first during Renaissance, primarily in the works of Shakespeare and Cervantes (especially in the typification of their characters).

The emergence of realism started in Europe from Renaissance onwards. Regarding the Renaissance, Le Roy and Beitz state :

The Renaissance was a period of rapid advance in social consciousness, with stripping away of religious and feudal modes of thinking, revolt against the intellectual dictatorship of the church, new discoveries concerning the potential for freedom and power in man and new sense of man's responsibility for himself.²⁰

Renaissance was an age of iconoclasm. The beliefs, which were held as sacrosanct till then, were questioned and demolished. The crises in the feudal society which had been developing over centuries started manifesting themselves; cracks appeared in the firmaments of the feudal society. With the mercantile capitalism the bourgeois class also emerged - a class which would be fatal for feudalism. The emerging bourgeoisie upheld the great principles of the ancient Greek civilization; humanism because the order of the day. Man became the centre of the universe. The major themes in art and literature, in this age of change, were the inner and earthly experiences of man.

Perhaps the greatest realist of Renaissance was the British playwright William Shakespeare. Writing in the age of falling feudalism and rising capitalism, Shakespeare portrayed his society with a very rare understanding. "In Shakespeare", says Lukacs, "a whole set of the inner contradictions of feudalism, pointing inevitably to its dissolution, emerge with greatest clarity."²¹ He very clearly brings out the contradictions which rid "the uneven but fatal path of feudal crisis."²² He does not mechanically portray "the older, declining human stock of feudalism"²³ in opposition to the new humanistic hero of the age of Renaissance. He sees the triumph of humanism, but also

foresees the rule of money in the new world to follow, the oppression and exploitation - "a world of rampant egoism and ruthless greed".²⁴

In Shakespeare's plays what matters, says Luckacs, "is precisely the generalizing nature of his characterization".²⁵ His historical plays are not merely re-enactment of the event and characters of his contemporary world in ancient settings, but in his plays, he bring to life events from antiquity which were similar to those of his own time; "so that the generalized form of drama reveals the features which the two ages hold objectively in common."²⁶

Renaissance realism was succeeded by realism of the age of Enlightenment. The 17th and 18th century, were important, because they heralded the emergence of prose fiction in the form of novel. The Enlightenment brought a new stage in the revolt against feudalism, with the development of philosophic materialism and the new historical consciousness associated with it. It was during this period that literature can be said to be democratized. First, due to the development in the printing technology in the 15th century, and subsequent improvements in the machines made books available to much larger number of people much more easily; and secondly, in comparison to the

literature of the earlier ages, which had primarily reflected the life style and ideals of the feudal upper classes, the 18th century literature selected its principal heroes from the members of the middle class, whose every day activities and family lives were described realistically.

Though the 18th century realism faithfully recreated the ordinary life of the contemporary society and reflected social and moral conflicts, but its treatment of characters is linear and is subordinate to moral criteria. Heroes are sharply distinguished from villains in the works of this period. One finds only in exceptional works, like novels by Fielding and Sterne, is the portrayal of personality outstanding for its complexity and for a dialectical and contradictory quality.

Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe, a novelist of the age of Enlightenment, according to Ralph Fox, is one of "the two greatest stories in the world",²⁷ the others being Homer's *Odyssey*. Both the stories represent different societies. Odysseus lives in a society without history; "a society in which myth and reality are indistinguishable and time is without terror".²⁸ Odysseus' whole fate is dependent on the gods. Compared to Odysseus's world, Robinson's world is real, he is always ready to fight his enemy, the nature.

His world is not inhabited by unreal creatures; it is described in great detail. Robinson's faith in himself, unlike Odysseus' faith in gods, and "his naive optimism enable him to found his ideal colony beyond the seas".²⁹ Robinson is a typical individual of the age of Enlightenment -an individual who lives entirely outside himself, an individual who has discovered that he alone can conquer the world, without the help of gods. Because of this the supernatural has little role to play in his life.

Despite all the development in science and unprecedented geographical discoveries, the advance in social consciousness during Renaissance and the Enlightenment was partial and superficial. Religion and feudalism still were not completely spent forces. The control of religion on individuals becomes clear from the burning of many of his own works by Sandro Botticelli, the famous Renaissance painter from Italy. The works were burnt in the bonfires of decadent art, i.e., art influence by humanism, lit by the Florentine revivalist clergyman Fra Savonarola³⁰. The time had not yet come, say LeRoy and Beitz, "when conditions will be ready for the leap in consciousness that comes with an understanding of the relationship between material forces in a society and the capacity of the reason".³¹ That leap in consciousness came

only with the rise of critical realism in literature. Although Enlightenment realism was concerned with the social essence of its characters, it differed from critical realism as it placed its typical characters in experimental circumstances rather than in typical circumstances. (Richardson's *Pamella* and Defoe's *Crusoe* are two such characters). The task of placing typical characters in typical situations was accomplished by critical realism. Also, the enlightenment realism, like critical realism, is directed against feudalism and aristocracy, but unlike critical realism, its critical thrust hardly affects the bourgeoisie.

Romanticism, which succeeded the Enlightenment, was another period of development in social consciousness, especially as to what human being had the power to achieve, individually and collectively. Romanticism reflected an euphoria caused by the 1789 French Revolution. There was, in Romanticism, also a revulsion against the ghastly features of the emerging capitalistic society. This resulted in a retreat from problems of the real world and this retreat led them to a new interest in nature and also to a preoccupation with the supernatural.

Critical realism has some generic ties with Romanticism. Though the Romanticists were initially

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euphoric about the French Revolution, but when the Revolution let loose its reign of terror they were disgusted with it. But the French realists, unlike the English and German Romanticists who retreated from reality into an idealist and bucolic world, took a position severely and uncompromisingly critical of the bourgeois society. This position taken by the French realists, was made possible, even inevitable, by the sharpness of the class struggle in France, which made it difficult to retain any illusions. The changes in social reality, due to the rise of capitalism, which for the first time in human history established a worldwide economic system, were embodied in critical realism. The main feature of critical realism is its highly developed awareness of the 'typical' -- it very affectively portrayed typical characters in typical circumstances.

Another distinct feature of critical realism was the way in which it viewed history. With the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, history for the first time became part of "a mass experience".³² Mass armies replaced the mercenary armies of the past, hence making national defence and wars public experiences, so that people came to think of their own experiences as historically conditioned. So in the 19th century, capitalism, which was the root cause of

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all the socio-political changes, came to be seen as an historical era in human development. This view best emerges from the novels of Balzac and Dickens. "This is no doubt", says Arnold Hauser, "what Marx had in mind when he declared that he had learned more about the history of modern France from the works of Balzac than he had from all the history books of his time"³³ Balzac understood the post-revolutionary social processes and modern class struggle in France better than the social science of his time.

Realism emerged and developed along with the emergence of capitalism in the West. Realism reached its most mature form --critical realism-- after capitalism had established itself after bourgeois revolutions in various European countries. But the contradictions within capitalist countries became too sharp to be resolved peacefully, and they snowballed into unprecedented crises at the beginning of the 20th century. This led the capitalist countries to wage two World Wars, and also to the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany. It was in this context that realism came under attack. And various literary and artistic movements like Expressionism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Fauvism, Absurdism etc. emerged. They later came to be known as Modernist movement, because all these were common in opposing some basic tenets of realism.

According to Eugene Lunn there are four main features which unite modernist movement. First feature according to Lunn is the formal preoccupation of the artists. "Modern artists, writers, and composers often draw attention to the media or materials with which they are working", says Lunn, "the very processes of their own craft. Novelists for example, explore the problems of novel writing within their works (e.g. Joyce's *Ulysses* or Gides *The Counterfeiters*)".³⁴

The second binding feature is spatial montage "Instead of narrating outer sequential or additive time", says Lunn, "modern novelists explore the simultaneity of experience in a moment of psychological time in which are concentrated past, present, and future (e.g. Joyce, Woolf, and especially Proust)".³⁵

The third feature is the cultivation of paradox by the modernists. "Instead of an omniscient and reliable narrator, modern writers developed either single or multiple, but all limited and fallible, vantages from which to view events. Open ended paradoxes may be structured insuch a manner as to suggest to the reader or audience how they may resolve the contradictions outside the intentionally unfinished work (as Brecht attempted to do). More radically, however, the paradoxes may be heightened to the point of apparent irresolution, confronting the reader or audience with "Janus-faced" reality, unpenetrable in its enigmas (e.g. Kafka or Beckett)".³⁶

Fourth and the last

major feature is the demise of the integrated individual subject. A character in a modernist work is not "coherent, definable and well-structured", says Irving Howe, "but is a psychic battlefield, or an insoluble puzzle, or the occasion for a flow of perceptions and sensations".³⁷

Modernism which reflected the effects of the capitalist crises,³⁸ lost much of its initial momentum after the World War II. With the fall of European colonial empires, and independence of many Asian and African countries, the literary attention shifted, to quite a large extent, to Asia, Africa and Latin America. And in these countries realism was more popular than modernism.

When modernism was making an impact on the European literature, there was another development which took place and cannot be ignored. With the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and the establishment of socialism, creative artists realized that critical realism, which had served their purpose till then, was no longer appropriate for reflecting their social reality. They worked out a new realism - socialist realism. Socialist realism became the official method of Soviet Union after the First Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934.

Socialist realism is described as an artistic method by the Soviet aesthetes. In Socialist realism, 'realism' means, says C. Vaughan James, "art that sets out to present a comprehensive reflection and interpretation of life from the point of view of social relations; 'socialist' means in accordance with the policy of the Communist Party".³⁹ The Soviet aesthetes also maintain that socialist realism is a development on critical realism. It is a progress which became inevitable due to a change in the social system.

The roots of socialist realism have been traced to Lenin's essay 'Party Organisation and Party Literature'.⁴⁰ In this essay Lenin says that "literature must become 'part' of the common cause of the proletariat.... Literature must become a component of organised, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party Work".⁴¹ He further says, "All Social-Democratic literature must become Party literature.... Only then will "Social Democratic" literature really become worthy of that name, only then will it be able to fulfil its duty and, even within the framework of bourgeois society, breakout of bourgeois slavery and merge with the movement of really advanced and thoroughly revolutionary class".⁴²

Based on this essay, the basic principles of socialist realism have been drawn - *narodnost* (people-ness) - the

relationship between art and the masses; *kassovost* (class-ness) - the class characteristics of art; and finally *partiinnost* (party-ness) - the identification of the artist with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.⁴³ Due to the very definition of socialist realism-- as the realism which depicts the construction of socialism-- it is hardly practised outside the socialist countries⁴⁴ The Soviet Union has produced many world renowned writers like Maxim Gorky, Alexic Tolstoy, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Mikhail Sholokhov, Chinghiz Aimatov, Mikhail Shatrov and others.

Realism presents a picture of the world recognizably similar to the one in which the author lives and interacts with, but which is not a photographic representation of it; as realism does not take an uncritical attitude to reality. Realism also leaves a lot of scope for experimentation. As realism started to decline in Europe, it caught momentum in the literatures of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Realism is widely used by the progressive writers of the third world countries as a tool to fight unjust social systems. They draw their inspiration from the great realists of the 19th and 20th century from Europe. Even in European and American literatures realism seems to be making a comeback.

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42. *ibid*, p.49.
43. C.V. James, *op.cit.*, p.1.
44. One does not know how to place Lenin's essay, 'Party Organizaion...' as Lukacs quotes from a letter by N. Krupskaya, where she states that Lenin's essay was not meant to cover literature as a fine art (Lukacs, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, p.7). The later development of socialist realism seem to be more influenced by Stalin's observation - "If the artist is going to depict our life correctly, he cannot fail to observe and point out what is leading it towards socialism. So this will be socialist art. It will be socialist realism" (Quoted in C.V.James, *Soviet Socialist Realism* p.86).

Chapter II

In Indian literature prose fiction is, primarily, a genre of this century. Poetry, drama and literary criticism have a long tradition of centuries. Compared to these genres, prose fiction is barely one century and a few decades old, and realistic prose fiction even younger. It was only with the formation of the All India Progressive Writer's Association in 1936¹ that realistic prose fiction became a dominant method. But before that the prose fiction rambled through various other forms and methods.

Prose fiction as a literary genre emerged in India as a result of India's contact with Europe - especially England. The earliest Indian novelists were those who had come in contact with the European literature and by the 1850s a large number of English and some other European novels were available in many Indian languages. The influence of Dickens and Scott can be seen in many early Indian novels.²

In European literature realistic prose fiction developed with the emergence of capitalism and the decay of feudalism. In India it did not really follow this path of development, because being a colonised country, India did not economically develop in the same fashion as European countries did, where capitalism developed without the

hinderance of colonialism. In India, prose fiction first appeared in Calcutta, which was the first city to be urbanized and which remained the centre of activities, first, of East India Company, and later the British Government, for a long time. The spread in the popularity of novel came with the spread of the national freedom struggle in the first two-three decades of this century. It is only with the emergence of progressive writers that realistic prose fiction gained popularity in India. To study the development of realistic prose fiction, it would, therefore, be worthwhile to trace the development of prose fiction itself. We shall look into the development of prose fiction and, later, realistic prose fiction in four Indian languages: Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and English. In the first section of this Chapter we shall trace the development upto 1936 - the year Progressive Writers' Association was founded and in the second section, the developments that took place under the influence of the Progressive Writers' Association till the 1950s. The third section deals with the emergence of short story in India.

Section I

The province of Bengal was the first to be colonized. And it was here that novel appeared and developed first as a

literary genre. T.W. Clark links the development of novel to a general change in Bengali culture. Three factors, according to Clark "put an end to the old and inaugurated the new".³ One, the transfer of power from the hands of Nawabs and other princes to the East India Company. Two, the uncertainty and insecurity due to the transfer of power, that was further aggravated by the catastrophic famine of 1768, and the widespread dacoity that accompanied it. Three, the emergence of Calcutta as a "new economic Mecca"⁴ which attracted Hindus and Muslims from all walks of life to it. "From them was born the modern Bengali", says T.W. Clark, "a man cut off from the life and culture of the past, which he was rapidly forgetting. He began to shape his life in a new political, social and economic mould, out of which grew in time a new culture, a new literature, part of which was a creation hitherto unknown in Bengali, that of prose."⁵

Talking about the development of novel in Bengal, D.K. Biswas says that "the modern literature of Bengal originated as a result of synthesis between the Bengali mind and the bourgeois mind of Europe. It synchronized with the rise of middle class in Bengal".⁶ Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta observes about the writers of the 19th century that they were "relatively sophisticated, secular, had urban outlook. They

received English education, learnt Western arts, hitherto unknown".⁷

Before 1835, when Lord Macaulay issued his famous Minute and made it possible that English be taught in Indian schools, various agencies helped in spread of English language-- Christian missionaries, enterprising British officials, book societies etc. The 19th century ushered in with a significant event--the foundation of Fort William College on 9th July, 1800, and the appointment of William Carey and Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar as teachers there. Fort William College, which survived till 1854, produced a group of Bengalis who wrote semi-historical works in Bengali. The famous ones were *Pratapaditya Charita* (1801) by Ramram Vasu, *Maharaja Krishnachandra Rasya Charitam* (1805) by Rajiblochan Mukhopadhyay and *Rajavali* (1808) by Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar. Regarding these works, produced by the teachers of Fort William College, Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta says, "Strictly speaking, all works cannot be called history--in fact, they are mostly mixed with fiction"⁸

The emergence of newspapers also nurtured the rise of Bengali novel. By 1830s the Bengali newspaper was firmly established in Calcutta and its neighbourhood. "The newspaper," says T.W. Clark, "provided Bengalis with a wider

scope for literary activity, and soon prose narrative contributions, some of which may be described as social tales or serialized social novels, began to be published."⁹ Compared to Bengali, other Indian languages were slower in realizing this potential of the newspapers. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the newspapers were able to play this role in Hindi and other north Indian languages.

What is now acknowledged as the first novel in Bengali was written by Pearey Chand Mitra, a product of Hindu College.¹⁰ This novel was called *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (The Spoilt Child of a Rich Family) and was published from 1855 to 57, in a monthly magazine *Masik Patrika*, a magazine for women edited by Pearey Chand Mitra himself. *Alaler Gharer Dulal* has been described as a picaresque novel.¹¹ The novel narrates the career of the elder son of a rich elderly man. The uneducated father allows his elder son to do whatsoever he wants to do, which finally invites the downfall of the son. But just before the ultimate tragedy could strike, the younger brother comes to the rescue of the wasteful elder brother. According to T.W. Clark it is in the portrayal of characters that this novel fails. All the characters are either good or bad. Majority of the characters, which includes the elder brother-the main protagonist of the

novel-are bad, with no redeemable feature whatsoever. Clark also observes that the denouement of the plot is very unconvincing, because of its improbability.

Talking of Pearey Chand Mitra, his successor, Bankim Chandra says that "he was the first to write in a language which was not only understood by all Bengalis but which was also the language they themselves used. Moreover he was the first who did not go hunting in the treasury of English and Sanskrit as his predecessors had done, but found his material in the store of his own experience and feelings."¹²

The next novel of some importance to hit the Bengali literary scene was Bankim Chandra Chatterji's *Durgeshnandini* (Daughter of the Feudal Lord), which was published in 1865. *Durgeshnandini* was not Bankim Chandra's first literary endeavor, he had published an English novel *Rajmohun's Wife* in 1864. *Rajmohun's Wife* was published serially in an English language journal called *Indian Field*. After *Durgeshnandini* Bankim Chandra published *Kapalkundal* (1866), *Mranalini* (1869) *Vishavriksha* (1873) etc. Perhaps the best known of Bankim's work is *Anandmath* (*The Mission House of Anands*), published in 1882. Sukumar Sen calls it a "political novel without a sufficient plot"¹³ The novel is based on the sanyasi rebellion in north Bengal in 1773, the time when Muslim nawabs were of out of power but the British

were yet to consolidate their power. Meenakshi Mukherjee says that "*Anandmath* is by no means Bankim's best novel, nor is its historical framework authentic, yet the novel is significant for many extra-literary reasons, especially for the tremendous impact it had on subsequent nationalist movements, in Bengal and other parts of India."¹⁴

From *Anandmath* onwards Bankim Chandra turned to Hindu nationalism. Kazi Abdul Wadud attributes Bankim's turning to Hindu nationalism as a reaction to "the British rulers' stubborn unwillingness to recognize the growing aspirations of the Hindus and the latter's wounded and accentuated sense of self respect and self-dependence in, this predicament."¹⁵ Kazi Abdul Wadud also gives two other reasons-- the influence of Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan*, which recounted the exploits of Rajput kings in wars against Muslim kings; and the tributes paid to Hinduism by Madame Blavatsky and by other European scholars. It is in *Devi Chaudhurani* (1884) that Bankim's conversion to Hindu nationalism is fully revealed. *Devi Chaudhurani* deals with the life of a neglected wife of a well-to-do brahmin youth. The young wife turns into a formidable dacoit and joins a group of dacoits which follows the cult of Krishna. Ultimately, she returns to her husband as a dutiful wife. The rapid metamorphoses of the heroine seems very unconvincing.

The next major novelist to follow Bankim Chandra was Rabindranath Tagore. Though Tagore wrote his first novel *Bauthakuranir Baat* (The Junior Lady's Market) in 1883, his other novels came much later. Tagore was much more responsive to the contemporary political and social atmosphere than Bankim. We find this in his novels *Choker Bali* (The Eye-Sore) published in 1902, *Gora*, published in 1910, *Chaturanga* (The Quartet) 1916, *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World) published in 1918 and others. *Gora* is perhaps Tagore's best known novel. The protagonist, Gora, is born of Irish parents. He is orphaned during the 1857 rebellion and is subsequently brought up by a Bengali Hindu family. Due to the atmosphere in the house of his foster parents-the father is a reformist turned orthodox Hindu and the mother and unorthodox lady -Gora becomes a militant Hindu. But he falls in love with a Bramho-Samaj girl. This love affair leads to him to a crisis as he tries to convert the girl to orthodoxy. All his militancy crumbles down when he discovers his true parentage. He even patches up with his foster mother, whose unorthodoxy he had resented before. The novel gives a vivid description of the conflicts that ravaged the society of its time.

Though the fame of Tagore as a novelist has been overshadowed by Tagore the poet, but the fact still remains

that Tagore is a major precursor of realistic novel and short story in Bengali. As Humayun Kabir puts it: Tagore was the pioneer of realism in Bengali fiction and yet an element of romantic idealism coloured his later novels. Like Moses, Tagore pointed to the promised land of realism but could not himself enter it."¹⁶

Sharatchandra Chatterjee was another precursor of realism in Bengali fiction. The fame enjoyed by him as a novelist was unprecedented in Bengal. He was the first Bengali Novelist who could live off his earnings from writing. His *Devadas* (1917), *Srikant* (in four parts in 1917, 1918, 1927 and 1933), *Charitraheen* (Characterless, 1917) etc. became immensely popular during his lifetime itself. Though he was not as alive to social and political issues of his time as his contemporary in Hindi, Premchand, was, he was certainly conscious of some social evils, especially those relating to the plight of women as wives and as widows. But as a critic of social practices he knew the limits he could take his readers to. "He was certainly critical of the contemporary society," says S. Sen, "but he never flouts the accepted moral basis of the Hindu society at any time"¹⁷ Sharatchandra also lacked the incisive insight into social problems, which his successor Bibhutibhushan Banerji had. Sharatchandra had a tendency of

falling into sentimentalism every now and then, and that was one of the reasons of his popularity. But he used a naive kind of realism, especially when describing the sufferings of a wife or a widow. But he failed to place the problems of women in their social context and tried, instead, to sentimentalize these problems. Humayun Kabir, however, has a higher opinion of Sharatchandra, he says-"Chatterji's affinities with Charles Dickens are striking....He rediscovered Bengal for the common man and in the discovery made himself uncommon".¹⁸

It was only with Bibhutibhushan Banerji that Bengali realistic fiction can be said to have come of age. His masterpieces *Pather Panchali* (The Song of the Road) published in 1929 and its sequel *Aparajito* (The Unvanquished) published in 1932 show him at the height of his creativity. These two novels depict the growing up of a young boy, Appu, and his sister, Durga, in rural Bengal. The hunger, the poverty of rural India has been very realistically placed before the reader. The communion of Appu and Durga with the nature plays an important role in the novels. The nature, as a metaphor, keeps returning with new meanings-sometimes as a teacher, sometimes to terrorize, sometimes to give solace. The young boy wants to learn, and despite all odds goes to a school and after that to a

college in Calcutta. He keeps returning to his village until the death of his mother, when his last ties with the village are snapped. Very few people have succeeded in depicting rural Bengal in the way Bibhutibhushan did. Bibhutibhushan was also a writer of short stories of highest order. After Bibhutibhushan came a new brand of writers-- the progressive writers-- with whom we shall deal in the next section of this Chapter.

Although the Bengali novel developed first, it did not take the Hindi novel long to catch up with it. The earliest fictional work to appear in Hindi was by an Urdu poet, Insha Allah Khan. This novel was called *Rani Ketaki ki Kahani* (The Tale of Queen Ketaki), published in 1800. The novel, *Rani Ketaki ki kahani*, according to R.L.Handa, was written by Insha Allah Khan to prove to his friends his competence in Hindi¹⁹. The work was replete with the romantic and magical elements. The novel, *Rani Ketaki ki Kahani*, dealt with a prince who fell in love with princess Ketaki, but their union was prevented by a war between their families. Then it was discovered that a yogi in Himalayas controlled Ketaki's fate. It was only after a lot of magic had been let loose that the lovers were united. The book is written in easy language but leans very heavily on magic and has little relation with real life.

After *Rani Ketaki ki Kahani*, another work of fiction did not appear till 1870. In the meanwhile the Hindi press had established itself. Though the first Hindi paper to appear in Hindi was *Udant Martand* in 1826, the press gathered momentum only in 1870s. It was heralded by poet-playwright Bhartendu Harishachandra's journal *Kavi Vachan Sudha* which started appearing in 1868. After that many Hindi papers started publishing from various parts of north India.

The next work of fiction to appear was Gauri Dutt's *Devrani Jethani Ki Kahani*, which came out in 1870. The book can hardly be called a novel as it is more like a parable. The work deals with as to how should women behave in a Hindu joint family and is didactic in nature. According to R.S. McGregor, it was "written from orthodox viewpoint for an overwhelmingly conservative public"²⁰. The first work of fiction which can be "fairly described as a novel"²¹ is called *Pariksha Guru* written by Srinivas Das in 1884. This work too is didactic in nature but is not like a parable. *Devrani Jethani* and *Pariksha Guru* were followed by a number of similar didactic works by other writers. R.S. McGregor says that the general outlook of these novels was conservative and their main aim was to "fortify orthodox Hindu society against effects of Western influences"²².

These novels were also influenced by Hindu nationalism and various other reform movements which were widespread in north India in 1870s and 80s.

The man who really popularized Hindi novel was Devaki Nandan Khatri, a writer of racy romances of great voluminosity. His romance *Chandrakanta*, written in 1892 was in the same mould as Insha Allah Khan's *Rani Ketaki ki Kahani* which was written ninety two years ago. No novelist was as popular and successful as Khatri was. It is said that thousands of people learned to read Devanagari script just to read Khatri's work. This prepared a novel reading public for later novelists, like Premchand. Khatri's novels *Chandrakanta*, *Chandrakanta Santati* and *Bhutnath* among others, were completely divorced from social reality and there was an excessive use of magic or 'tilism'. His immense popularity was due to his easy language and suspense which held the readers' attention to the very end.

"After rambling in the realms of thrill, mythology, fanciful romance, magic, flights of imagination the supernatural etc, "says R.L. Handa," the Hindi novel reached its consummation in the hands of Premchand"²³. Premchand rescued fiction from inane unrealism and took it to the heights of realism. His achievements in realistic prose

fiction remain unmatched even to this day in any Indian language. As David Rubin puts it :

To Premchand belongs the distinction of creating the genre of serious short-story -- and the serious novel as well -- in both Hindi and Urdu. Virtually single handed he lifted fiction in these languages from a quagmire of aimless romantic chronicles to a high level of realistic narrative comparable to European fiction of the time; and in both languages, he has, in addition, remained an unsurpassed master"²⁴.

Premchand led a very active life as a writer, editor, publisher etc.. He left behind twelve novels, nearly three hundred short stories and many essays, editorials, plays, screen plays, letters, translations etc. And all this was despite a life dogged by serious illness.

Premchand's commitment to realism is without precedent. Unlike most of his predecessors, Premchand drew his material from rural India and Urban lower middle class. Premchand started writing just as Mahatma Gandhi was taking over the leadership of the freedom struggle. Premchand was greatly influenced by the Gandhian ideology. In *Rangbhoomi* (1921) there is a vivid portrayal of the freedom struggle.

Premchand was highly sensitive to the social evils and unjust social practices. The sad plight of Indian women and the practice of child marriage became the butt of his attack in *Seva Sadan* (1919) and *Premashram* (1921). In these two novels one finds a high degree of generalization. Premchand deals with the problems of Indian women without sentimentalizing it like his contemporary Bengali novelist Sharatchandra. His deep and incisive insight tries to reach at the root cause of these social problems.

Premchand's outlook of life and society underwent a considerable change with time. He started as a writer influenced by the Gandhian ideology and progressed as a writer with socialist leanings. Though, always with the peasantry and the working class, initially he believed, under the Gandhian influence, that class-antagonism could be solved within the framework of the present system itself. But as he got to know the Indian social reality more intimately, he changed his views. In 1933 he wrote:

To hope that the capitalist will desist from exploiting the helpless condition of the peasantry is like expecting a dog to stand watch over a piece of meat. To protect ourselves against this bloodthirsty beast we must arm ourselves.²⁵

Again in one of his last essays 'Mahajani Sabhyata' (The Capitalist Society) written in 1936, he says:

In this capitalist system the one motivation of all action is money.....From this point of view, it is the capitalists who rule the world today. Human society has been divided into two sections. The bigger section comprises the tillers and toilers, while far the smaller section comprises those who through their might and influence hold the larger section under their subjugation. They have no sympathy for this larger section and pity whatever.²⁶

These convictions of Premchand can best be seen in two of his last works - 'Kafan' a short story and *Godan*, his last novel and undoubtedly his best. 'Kafan' (The Shroud) (1936) depicts, in an ironical tone, the inhumanity, which poverty can dictate on human beings. *Godan* (The Gift of a Cow) published 1936, forms the climax of Premchand's work and all his work had been leading to such a mature *objet d'art*'. It is in this novel that "the utopian solutions found in Premchand's work, have been discarded."²⁷ The life long yearning of Hori, the protagonist of *Godan*, to own a cow and the suffering and exploitation borne to fulfil this dream unsuccessfully, is the tale of rural India labouring under the exploitation of feudalism. The portrayal of rural India

is highly realistic and Premchand's understanding of the peasantry is unmatched in literature even to this day.

Premchand died in 1936 after a prolonged illness. He died as the first President of the Progressive Writers' Association. This movement caught on very fast in Hindi literature. We shall deal with the progressive writers in the next section.

Premchand was the first realistic fiction writer not alone in Hindi, but also in Urdu. The Urdu prose fictions had made a beginning long before Premchand. Maulvi Nazir Ahmed is commonly considered the first Urdu novelist.²⁸ His first novel *Mirat-ul-Urus* (The Bride's Mirror, 1868) is said to have been a compilation of stories he originally told to his daughters to explain how good and respectable women should behave. It is, in the purpose it is supposed to serve, quite similar to Gauri Dutt's *Devrani Jethani ki Kahani* published in 1870. Nazir Ahmed was also a very good translator. Among the works he translated were Urdu translations of English novels and the Indian Penal Code. Regarding his original prose work *Raghupati Sahaya 'Firaq'* says - "His prose is simple and easy, but it is lacklustre."²⁹

Three major Urdu fiction writers before Premchand were Pandit Ratan Nath 'Sarshar', Abdul Halim 'Sharar' and Mirza Hadi 'Ruswa'. Pandit Ratan Nath 'Sarshar's magnum opus is *Fasana-e-Azad* (The Tale of Azad, in four volumes), which was published serially in *Awadh Akhbar* from 1878 onwards. Firaq calls him the first realist in Urdu literature.³⁰ *Fasana-e-Azad* has a vivid picture of Lucknow of the 19th century. Firaq says that the work describes "situation where the rich are put in humorous circumstances. The customs of the elite houses and the life of women, fairs and market places, thieves, robbers, dacoits, zamindars, maulavis, pandits, sadhus - you will find lively portraits of all these and also the contemporary society in all its shades - good and bad."³¹ But Sarshar's language is full of Arabic and Persian words and is very difficult.

Abdul Halim 'Sharar' wrote over a hundred books. In 1887 he started his own newspaper called *Dilgudaz* in Urdu, and most of his novels appeared in this paper. His work is usually historical in nature. His most acclaimed work *Flora Florinda*, published from 1893 onwards, is set in Spain of 9th century AD, when Muslim power was at its zenith. The novel deals with the past glories of Islam. Flora, the protagonist of the tale, is born of Muslim father and a Christian mother. She is secretly brought up as a Christian

by her mother. Despite her brother's opposition, after her parents' death, she runs away and joins a convent. There she is raped by the Patriarch and becomes pregnant. She dies in the end after killing the Patriarch and renouncing Christianity and declaring herself a convinced Muslim. Faiz Ahmad Faiz, in an article on *Flora Florinda* says, "it is rather a harsh thing to say, but all the same it must be said, that when in his moral and religious zeal he depicts the evils of the churches and monasteries....his writing borders on pornographic."³² Sexual lust, allied with religious fanaticism is shown as the major characteristic of Christians.

It was only with Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa's work *Umrao Jaan Ada* (1899) that "a real novel, in the internationally accepted modern sense of the term, at last makes its appearance in Urdu literature"³³ *Umrao Jaan Ada* is the life-story of a Lucknow courtisan, whose name forms the title of the novel. The novel deals with the sad events in the life of Umrao Jaan before and after the 1857 rebellion. Ruswa deeply sympathises with Umrao Jaan, and sees her as a victim of others' sins. "The story is beautifully told," says Ralph Russell, "and extraordinarily well constructed. Not only are the characterization and the dialogue excellent; the story has proper plot, and real development, with a beginning, a middle, and an end'".³⁴

However, it was with Premchand that the realistic Urdu prose fiction reached new heights. Premchand's earliest works were written in Urdu, under the pen name of Nawab Rai. His book of short stories in Urdu called *Soz-e-Watan* (The Dirge of a Nation) was banned by the British Government for its nationalistic fervour. From 1919, the year he wrote *Seva Sadan*, he started writing in Hindi and then translated his novels himself into Urdu. *Seva sadan* became *Bazar-e-Husn* in Urdu, *Premashram*, (1921) became *Gosha-e-Aafiyat*, *Rangbhoomi* (1921) became *Chaugan-e-Hasti* and *Godan* (1936) became *Gaudan* in Urdu.

Premchand established a school of realism in Hindi and Urdu literature, which the coming generation of writers were to follow as an example. After Premchand's death in 1936, the literary scene in Urdu was dominated by writers from Progressive Writer's movement. But, unfortunately, in Urdu, novel remained rather underdeveloped but short story excelled and achieved perfection in the hands of writers from Progressive Writers' Association.

Indian prose fiction in English did not start as early as in the Indian languages. It caught momentum in the 1920s.³⁵ The reasons for this delay in development are not far to seek. The English language started spreading in

India only at the beginning of the last century and the real impetus came in 1835, when English education was introduced in India. Till the beginning of this century the readership for English writings was very small in India. The Indian writers in English were not easily accepted by the English public. These are the primary reasons for the slow development of English prose fiction in India.

The first work of fiction in English to appear in India was Kylash Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of 48 Hours of the Year 1945*, which appeared serially in *The Calcutta Literary Gazette* in 1835. It narrated the story of an imaginary unsuccessful revolt against the British in the twentieth century. Ten years later Shoshee Chunder Dutt wrote *Republic of Orissa: Annals from the Pages of the Twentieth Century*, which appeared serially in *Saturday Evening Harkaru* in 1845. It dealt with a similar theme as Kylash Chunder Dutt's work, but was more optimistic in its approach. It depicted the setting up of a democratic republic in Orissa after a successful revolt against the British in 1920s.

According to Klaus Steinvorth "the first Indian who wrote an English novel was Bankim Chander Chatterji"³⁶. He wrote only his first novel in English and later shifted to Bengali. *Rajmohun's Wife* was published in 1864 in the weekly *Indian Field*. *Rajmohun's Wife* is a highly

melodramatic tale about the sufferings of an ill-treated wife of a feudal lord. It does not reach the quality of Bankim Chandra's later Bengali novels.

A talented young woman writer, whose career was cut short by her untimely death, was Toru Dutt. Her incomplete novel *Bianca : Or the Young Spanish maid*, which was published posthumously in 1878, narrates the romantic love story of a Spanish girl, who has migrate with her parents, to England, where she falls in love with an English lord. Toru Dutt even wrote a novel in French, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d' Arvers* (1879). Talking of Toru Dutt, Klaus Steinworth says: "The two features of Indo-English literature, writing in a prestige language and having the Western audience in mind are quite obvious here"³⁷.

In the first three decades of this century, historical romances dominated the Indian English novel. A look at the titles is evidence enough : *Padmini: An Indian Romance* (1903), *1001 Indian Nights: The Trials of Narayan Lal* (1904), *The Slave Girl of Agra: An Indian Historical Romance* (1909), *Nur Jahan : The Romance of an Indian Queen* (1909), *The Love of Kusuma: An Eastern Love Story* (1910), *The Dive of Death : An Indian Romance* (1912), *Dilkusha: A Romance of Sind Life* (1925), *Baladitya: A Historical Romance of Ancient India* (1929), *The Tigress of the Harem* (1930), *Indira Devi*

: *A Romance of Modern Political India* (1930) etc..³⁸ These novels can be viewed in the context of rising nationalism in India.

It was in 1930s that the three best known prose fiction writers of Indian English emerged. They are Mulk Raj Anand, whose first work-- a collection of short stories, *Lost Child and Other Stories*, appeared in 1934; R.K. Narayan, whose first novel *Swami and Friends* appeared in 1938; and Raja Rao, whose first novel *Kanthapura* was first published in 1938. These novels were in realistic mode and helped in popularizing Indian English prose fiction.

So, in the four languages that we have examined-- Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and English-- we find that realism had established itself by the 1930s. The decade of 1930s, and decades after that too, were dominated by the progressive writers, who consciously believed in realism and did not believe in keeping their writings insulated from politics and society.

Section II

Realism in Indian fiction reached its zenith with the founding and subsequent expansion of the All India Progressive Writers' Association (referred to as the PWA

hereafter) in 1936. Premchand in his Presidential address to the first All India Progressive Writers' Conference, held in Lucknow on April 9-10, 1936, said.

Literature, properly so called, is not only realistic, true to life, but also an expression of our experiences and of the life that surrounds us.... Fairy tales and romantic stories of princely lovers may have impressed us in olden days, but they mean very little to us today. Unless literature deals with reality it has no appeal to us³⁹.

The formation of the PWA was neither sudden nor unexpected. As Sajjad Zaheer, the first General Secretary of the PWA, in a volume recording the proceedings of the first Progressive Writers' Conference, put it: "The need for organising progressive writers' movement in India was being felt by many of us for last two or three years. In many parts of India groups of writers, mostly young, were feeling the need of making a break with the supine and escapist literature with which the country was being flooded; of creating something more real, something more in harmony with the facts of our existence today, something which will make our act full-blooded and virile."⁴⁰

As Indian writers became politically conscious, they in their writings started attacking the British imperialism. The British government reacted with repression-- by banning books, by harassing writers. From 1930-34, 348 magazines were closed down, the distribution of books by Gorky, Thoreau, Marx, Engels and Lenin was declared illegal, and Tagore's *Roos Se Chithi* (A Letter from Russia) was proscribed ⁴¹.

Even while the urge for a concerted writers' movement was being felt by progressive writers in India (Premchand had unsuccessfully tried, more than once, to form such an organisation), the All India Progressive Writers' Association was founded in London in 1935 by some Indian writers there. Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer were made President and General Secretary respectively. Both Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer were influenced by the first Soviet Writers' Congress, held in 1934, and the world conference of Writers' for the Defence of Culture Against Fascism, held in Paris in 1935⁴². Sajjad Zaheer came to India and got the progressive writers together to found the PWA. The Manifesto of the PWA, prepared before the first Progressive Writers' Conference in 1936, was signed by Premchand (who, after initial hesitation, also accepted the Presidentship of the PWA), Abdul Haq, Daya Narayan Nigam, Abid Hussain,

Ahmad Ali, Firaq Gorakhpuri and Sumitra Nandan Pant among others.

Premchand elaborated upon the aims and objectives of the PWA. "Literature", he said, "can best be described as a criticism of life"⁴³. He criticised writers like Devki Nandan Khatri for creating escapist literature. He said that it was the duty of a progressive writer to help and advocate the cause of those "who are downtrodden, oppressed and exploited."⁴⁴

Describing as to what he meant by 'progressive', Premchand said:

For us 'progressive' is which creates in us the power to act; which makes us examine those subjective causes that have brought us to such a pass of sterility and degeneration; and finally which helps us to overcome and remove those causes, and become men once again.... The only art which has value for us today is that which is dynamic and leads us to action ⁴⁵.

Sajjad Zaheer describes the word 'progressive' in following words.

A progressive outlook means precisely the kind of comprehensive and dynamic outlook which takes the

totality of the many-sidedness of life and reality into consideration; which is capable of seeing both that might be bad and vicious and powerful, but also new, the dynamic, the good and the necessary which ultimately will overthrow and destroy that which negates the law of social development. The progressive writers stand with the working peoples, for these are the instruments of history who will defeat reactionary forces and build the new equilibrium of tomorrow. Through their writing and creations they strive to help the forces of historical progress⁴⁶.

In a similar vein Premchand had declared from the Lucknow Conference : "We shall no longer tolerate a social system under which a single individual can tyrannize over thousands of human beings;... our self-respecting humanity will raise the standard of revolt against capitalism, militarism and imperialism.... we shall actively participate in building of that order which is not opposed to beauty, good taste and self-respect"⁴⁷.

Though the PWA in its first Conference and also in its subsequent conferences accepted that realism was the medium by which it could become "a touch-bearer to all the progressive movements in the country"⁴⁸, but it could not

settle as to what kind of realism should it be- critical realism, socialist realism or some Indian version of realism. But some members with leftist leanings were highly intolerable to any deviation from socialist realism. Shivdan Singh Chauhan, one such member, took exception to "Chhayavadi" tendencies and Freudian influences in the works of some writers and called them reactionaries. Ramvilas Sharma, in a more balanced way, answered him thus: " Chauhan wants to deny the Indian literature all the development, and dreams of establishing socialist realism and he thinks this is the best way of applying Leninism in literature"⁴⁹. The PWA debated on the question of realism at great length but without any conclusion. But it is also true that it never tried to force its members to follow socialist realism.

The PWA initiated an unprecedented literary movement, as a result of which realistic and progressive literature took roots in almost all major Indian languages. Never before had India seen such a widespread and concerted literary movement. Within a few years of its founding, the PWA established its branches all over India -- Bengal, Andhra, Bombay, Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar, Punjab, a different section for Urdu literature, etc. A new life could be felt in all Indian literatures.

In Bengali literature Tarashankar Banerji, Samar Sen, Naresh Chandra Sengupta, Sailaja Nanda Mukherjee and Manik Bandyopadhyay, among others, led the movement in fiction. The best known writers in this group were Tarashankar Banerji and Manik Bandyopadhyay. Tarashankar Banerji was a "born story teller"⁵⁰. Tarashankar in his novels and short stories dealt mainly with two things. One, he painted the life of decadent rich, with their memories of past riches and inability to maintain a grand life style due to the absence of resources they had in the past. Two, he very vividly painted the lives of tribals and semi-tribals, who emerging out of their primitive conditions encounter the modern life. With vivid realistic details he keeps his readers spell bound in his novels and short stories. Among his well-known novels are *Ganadevata* (God of the People, 1942), *Panchagram* (Five villages, 1943), *Hansuli Banker Upakatha* (The Legend of Hansuli Bend, 1947) and *Arogya Niketan* (House of Convalescence, 1952). He also has several collections of short stories to his credit.

Humayun Kabir calls Manik Bandyopadhyay "a proletarian novelist"⁵¹. Manik Bandyopadhyay joined the PWA in 1942 a commitment he honoured till his death in 1956. Humayun Kabir in a grudging complement to Manik says, A majority of people of Bengal live in sub-human conditions, where all

their energies are exhausted in their bare struggle for life. Sex offers to many the only pleasure they have in life. Is it surprising that with a background like this, Manik Banerji should be engrossed in problems of sex, hunger and death?"⁵²

Manik Bandyopadhyay was a strict adherent of realism. In 1920s and 1930s literary realism had taken roots in Bengali literature. *Kallol*, a periodical of young writers, took up arms against, what they called, the "romantic" heritage of Rabindranath Tagore and Sharatchandra. "This heritage, they said, lacked contemporaneity"⁵³ And they said this was due to the middle class dislike to all unpleasantness in social reality of the day. Even though Manik joined this group for some time, his realism was different from that of the *Kallol* group. Manik Bandyopadhyay was aware of socialist realism. However, these models, as Malini Bhattacharya puts it, "serve as points of departure"⁵⁴ for him.

Manik Bandyopadhyay had a special fascination for the works of Maxim Gorky, especially for his preoccupation with the lower sections of the society. Manik's realism can best be seen in his novel *Padma Nadir Majhi* (The Boat Man of Padma, 1936). Sex, hunger and death, which Humayun Kabir seems to take as the seminal motives of Manik's work, are

just incidents in the life of a boat man in rural Bengal. Exploited by the feudal lords, the money lenders, dogged by hunger, poverty and death, the boat man of Manik is a typical character of rural India.

Among the writers of fiction in Hindi, in the PWA, a very heated debate took place between the realists and the Freudians. The works of the former have been called 'socialist' novels and the works of the latter psychological novels by Ram Daras Misra.⁵⁵ This debate later on took the shape of a debate between realism and modernism. Ajneya and Ila Chandra Joshi, the psychological novelists and modernists, left the PWA and launched an attack on the PWA and realism and also on the writers of the PWA. Joshi called progressive writers "unliterary, professional propagandists, lacking depth, cunning" etc..⁵⁶ After the independence, when the political atmosphere of the country polarized, Ajneya and his friends founded the 'Congress for Cultural Freedom'. They attacked the PWA writers. Ajneya wrote: "Progressives were no different from the sadistic mental orgies of the Decadents.... As it [the PWA] became more and more a communist 'closed shop' organisation, its writings became politically more explicit, guided and canalised and any further suggestion of Romanticism (as in any other 'ism') became taboo. But even before it became

completely stupefied itself through intolerance, its ablest exponents were not free from a disguised sadism. Yashpal and Nagarjun indulge in such writing not unoften."⁵⁷ The attack was bitter, unfounded and vicious. The PWA defended its position very successfully. The 'Congress for Cultural Freedom' soon fizzled out.

In Hindi novels written in the 1930s, it is in Nirala's novels that social realism matures. In *Alka* (1933) and *Nirupama* (1936) he brings out very effectively the subjugation of women and the exploitation of peasants by feudalism. His understanding of these problems is not just skin deep and he goes into the basic contradictions which lead to various social problems. The Zamindari system, capitalism, exploitation of peasants under feudalism, atrocities against the untouchables etc-all become the butt of his attack.

"Premchand had raised the issues relating to peasant life and women", says Rekha Avasthi, "but Yashpal raised the issue of organised workers and independence of women."⁵⁸ In Yashpal's *Dada comrade* (1944) the middle class revolutionary Harish represents the worker's struggle and the questions of independence of women are raised by Shaila, who herself belongs to upper middle class. One criticism often made of

Yashpal is his depiction of sexual relations. One critic says that in the novels of Yashpal "politics and sexual problems intermingle."⁵⁹ *Manushya Ke Roop* (Faces of Man, 1949) deals with the affair between a poor widow and a truck driver. In this novel we do not find the sexual relationships very central to the book, but it very successfully shows the sufferings of a widow and gives the whole society with a critical eye.

One gets a feeling that Yashpal only strives for betterment in economic conditions and abandons the question of proletarian revolution, even though most of his works deal with the organised working class movement. In most of his works the protagonists are from middle class and one gets the impression that Yashpal looks at the working class from outside.

Like Yashpal, Upendra Nath Ashk also deals with the middle class, but he deals with the predicament of whole of the middle class rather than middle class characters. There is a high degree of generalization in his novels. Ashk himself considers his novels and short stories to be written in the mode of critical realism. His first two novels were *Sitaron Ka Khel* (The Game of stars, 1937) and *Girti Diwaren* (Crumbling Walls, 1947). *Sitaron Ka Khel* is considered by

critics as an amateurish attempt, but *Girti Diwaren* is considered by many as an important realistic novel⁶⁰. The novel *Girti Diwaren* deals with the life of lower middle class in Punjab in great detail. Ashk also came under attack for the depiction of sex in his novels, both from progressive and non-progressive critics. Ramvilas Sharma considers *Girti Diwaren* to be similar to the character of Shekhar in *Shekhar-Ek Jivani* (Shekhar-A Biography) by Ajneya, and he does not consider both these novels to be progressive.⁶¹ These allegations are not wholly untrue, but sexual relationships are not the central theme of *Girti Diwaren*.

Many creative writers who were associated with the PWA produced good fiction in Hindi. Rangeya Raghav, Rahul Sankrityayan, Amrit Lal Nagar, and Amrit Rai just to name a few. Many of these writers are considered important writers even today.

It was in the field of short story that Urdu realism reached new heights. One of the first short story collections of the progressive writers, *Angare* (Embers, 1935), created a controversy. *Angare* contained stories by Sajjad Zaheer, Ahmad Ali, Rashid Jahan and Mahmud Zafar. Considering that it was the first endeavour of most of the

writers, it was a good effort. But Sajjad Zaheer himself wrote in *Roshnai* (Ink), [Sajjad Zaheer's memoirs, which were written in a Pakistani jail while Zaheer was waiting to be tried for an alleged conspiracy to overthrow the Government], that "most of the short stories in *Angare* lacked seriousness and restraint and had anger and disgust against the reactionaries and orthodoxy in the society."⁶²

Krishna Chander, who was one of the greatest short story writers in Urdu, was a realist. His reaction to the bloodshed which followed the Partition of Punjab is recorded in his collection of short stories called *Hum Wahashi Hain* (We Are Beasts). 'Peshawar Express' from that collection narrates the horrors of the communal holocaust of 1947-48 in Punjab. The story is in the form of a first person narrative by a train, which narrates its last journey from Peshawar to Delhi and the murder and rape which it witnessed on both sides of the new border. Similarly, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's 'Sardarji', which was tried in a court of law and its title had to be changed from 'Barah Baje' (12 O'Clock) to 'Sardarji', deals with communal feelings of a Muslim towards his Sikh neighbour. The Sikh neighbour ultimately sacrifices his life while saving the life of the Muslim narrator from a mob of communal rioters.

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Other major short story writers in Urdu were Sadat Hasan Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Ismat Chughtai, Qurratul-ain-Haider and Upendra Nath Ashk.

Though the PWA made significant achievement in the field of short story in Urdu, but the Urdu novel basically remained underdeveloped. Very few novels were written during the first three decades of the PWA. One of the few notable novels written was *Aisi Bulandi Aisi Pasti* (Such Zenith and Such Nadir) by Aziz Ahmad, which deals with the extreme decadence and depravity of the Hyderabad aristocracy. The protagonist is a womanizer and when he himself gets married he suspects his wife of infidelity. This results in frequent beatings of the wife and ends in a divorce. The hero remarries, this time his wife is a meek creature, but the novel ends abruptly with the hero's death. The novel lacks a proper structure and at time seems like a picture gallery. *Khuda Ki Basti* (The Habitation of God) by Shaukat Siddiqi is also very sketchy. Muhammad Sadiq calls it a 'picaresque novel'.⁶³ This novel deals with the evils of the city. It gives quite a realistic impression of evil, of crime and exploitation, of thieves, pick-pockets, corrupt officials etc. Another eminent novel of the period is Qurratul-ain-Haider's novel *Aag Ka Darya* (The River of Fire). This novel deals with a very wide canvas. She has

tried to give a panoramic view of the Indian civilization since Vedic times to the Partition of the country. Her reconstruction of Indian history, though not always scientific, is highly imaginative and creative.

The PWA was least successful in influencing the development of Indian prose fiction in English. One of the only Indian writer in English, who keeps in touch with Indian reality is Mulk Raj Anand. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar says that "Anand is engrossed with the many "underdogs" of Indian society."⁶⁴ In *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1938) We get acquainted with Anand's commitment to the realistic fiction and the exploited workers. *Two Leaves and a Bud* is set in a tea plantation in Assam in pre-independence India. The novel narrates the life of bonded labourers on tea estates owned by the British. The coolies are grossly underpaid and are forced to live in horrible condition. The two weak points in the novel are its characterization and some slackness in the plot. Though the characters are excellent typifications, but they are undeveloped as individuals. But as far as the depiction of the exploitation rampant in the tea gardens of Assam is concerned, the novel has brought it out very realistically.

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) describes the impact of the freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi on a small village in Karnataka. The novel, though very idealistic, is realistic in its description of a village-- an Indian village with all its caste differences and class differences. It reflects the impact of Satyagrahs and the police repression which followed them and also brings out the aspiration of the Indians for a free India.

A few other novelists also wrote realistic novels like *So Many Hungers* (1947) and *He who Rides a Tiger* (1954) by Bhabani Bhattacharya, *Train to Pakistan* (1956) by Khushwant Singh, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas' *Inquilab* (1955), Ahmad Ali's *Twilight In Delhi* (1940) just to name some. One of the major reasons for the lack of a concerted movement in English literature in India is the difference in literary concerns between the Indian writers in English and writers in Indian languages. Indian writers in English write their books with the Western readers in mind, and in this endeavour they write books which would be more acceptable to the Western readers. Many of the better known writers have either lived all their grown up life in the West or at least a major part of it. All the 22 well known authors, taken by Steinworth as "important" authors, have published their first books, and many of the subsequent ones also, from

England or America, with the exception of two, who published their first books from India.⁶⁵ "Indo-English novelists are in permanent contact with the West," says Klaus Steinvorth," but do not come in contact with each other. There are no groups, trends, literary or common discussions that can be observed with them."⁶⁶ None of Klaus Steinvorth's "important" authors have a book forwarded by another Indian author; most of them are forwarded by English authors. In such a context, one cannot expect these writers to be much concerned with the social issues in India; these issues concern them only as far as they concern the Western readers.

Section III

Short story is considered by many as the oldest literary genre in the world. Tales, fables, parables of various lengths have existed in almost every ancient culture. But the short story basically differs from these ancient forms. M.H. Abrams defines the short story and differentiates the short story from the ancient fables etc. in the following way:

A short story is a work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component parts, the types and various narrative techniques of the novel are

applicable to the short story as well. It differs, for example, from the anecdote-- single and unelaborated narration of a single incident-- in that it organizes the action, thought, and interaction of its characters, the artful patterns of a plot, which also has a beginning and develops through a middle to some sort of a denouement.⁶⁷

The short story is also generally contemporary and realistic in its subject matter. Georg Lukacs describes short story as "the most purely artistic form, which sees absurdity in all its undistinguished and unadorable nakedness, and the exorcising power of this view, without fear or hope...."⁶⁸ But, unfortunately, very little attention has been paid to this literary genre by the literary critics.

In India the short story, as the novel before it, emerged under the influence of Western literature. It gained immense popularity from 1920s onwards. It was with Premchand that the genre of short story was perfected, it and influenced the subsequent generations of not only of Hindi and Urdu writers, but also of other Indian languages. The short story entered the arena of Indian literature when the nation was in a ferment. In the 1930s the ferment changed into a turmoil. The progressive writers wrote not

only against imperialism and capitalism and in favour of the working-class and peasantry, but they also had to combat communal ideologies. These communal ideologies led India to one of the worst crises in Indian history, the Partition. The progressive writers in their works, and especially in their short stories, recorded critically all these unsavoury developments.

The short story, as Frank O'Connor puts it, deals with the 'submerged population group.'⁶⁹ The short story, due to its form, lends itself to portray the exploited and underprivileged sections of the society. The progressive writers also utilized, the short story to this effect. But for a short duration of time some of the very talented people deviated to the very extreme. Their works appeared to be more naturalistic than realistic. "We dug open the gutters, as it were, and let out the stench," says Kartar Singh Duggal, a progressive writer from Punjabi, "the ugly and the deformed dominated the scene. In our anxiety to project the poor we chose the debased and the decrepit. In search of the commonplace, we landed on the scenes that were grim and lurid. There was a morbid tilt."⁷⁰ Sajjad Zaheer, the General Secretary lashed out against such tendencies in a conference in Hyderabad in 1944. "Before long we realised", continues K.S. Duggal, "that this was not the

progressivism we had debated under the chairmanship of the noted Hindustani fiction writer Premchand in Lucknow in 1935 (sic). It was neither socialist realism nor healthy, depicting the filth alone and propagating morbidity."⁷¹ This tilt towards morbidity was corrected very soon more or less by majority of the writers. Realism got the upper hand and some of the best short stories were written by these writers.

Realism was a firmly established mode of writing in almost all major Indian languages by the 1950s. But soon the influence of the PWA itself started to wane a little. But despite this weakening of the PWA as movement, the tradition of realistic prose fiction is firmly entrenched in the Indian literary scene and it is difficult to overthrow or undermine it. Many writers even these days are writing very good realistic prose fiction in Indian literatures and are highly acclaimed writers.

Short story, which is more widely written and read than novel today,⁷² as a genre has been a faithful recorder of some of the most important events in social and political life of India. In the next chapter we shall analyse the role played by the short stories of Much Raj Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay and Sadat Hasan Manto.

Notes and References

All the translations from Hindi and the texts in Devanagari scripts are my own.

1. For details about the PWA see Sec. II of this Chapter.
2. See T.W. Clark, ed. *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1970), pp. 18,27,63,70 80 and 101, and Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality*, (New Delhi; Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 6.15, 18 and 43.
3. T.W. Clark, 'Bengali Prose Fiction upto Bankimcandra', *Novel in India*, ed. T.W. Clark, p. 21.
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid*, p.22
6. D.K. Biswas, *Sociology of Major Bengali Novels*, (Gurgaon: The Academic Press, 1974), p. 37
7. Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta, "History in Bengali Literature: 19th and 20th Century" *History in Modern Indian Literature*, ed. S.P. Sen, p.14.
8. *ibid.*, p. 21.
9. T.W. Clark, Introduction, *Novel in India*, p.11.

10. Hindu College was founded in Calcutta in 1816 by a group of Bengali and British men, one of them was Raja Ram Mohun Roy. The purpose of this institution was the education of native youth in European literature and science through the medium of English. T.W. Clark, 'Bengali Prose Fiction ...' in *Novel in India*, p. 27.
11. S.Sen, *History of Bengali Literature*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1960), p. 209.
12. Quoted in T.W. Clark, op. cit., p. 36.
13. S. Sen, op. cit., p-214
14. Meenakshi Mukherjee, op. cit., p.48.
15. Kazi Abdul Wadud, 'Bengali Literature', *Contemporary Indian Literature: A Symposium*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1957), p-20.
16. Humayan Kabir, *The Bengali Novel*, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1968), p. 64.
17. S. Sen, op cit, p. 313.
18. Humayun Kabir, op cit, p. 92.
19. R.L. Handa, *History of Hindi Language and Literature*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1978), p. 269

- 20 R.S. McGregor, "The Rise of Standard Hindi and Early Hindi Prose Fiction" in *Novel in India*, p. 152.
21. *ibid.*, p. 153.
22. *ibid.*
23. R.L. Handa, *op. cit.*, p. 339.
24. David Rubin, Introduction, *World of Premchand*, stories of Premchand, trans. by David Rubin, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), p. 13. / 25. Premchand quoted in Amrit Rai, *Premchand: A Life*, trans. Harish Trivedi, (New Delhi, PPH, 1982) p. 291.
26. *ibid.*, p. 364.
27. G.C. Roadarmel, Introduction, Premchand's *The Gift of a Cow*, trans. G.C. Roadarmel, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.), p. 5.
28. Some people refer to Mir Amman's *Bagho-Bahar* (1802) as the first Urdu novel. But it was a translation of *Kissa-e-Chahaar Durvish*, a Persian book attributed to Amir Khusro. See Firaq Gorakhpuri, *Urdu Bhasha aur Sahitya*, (Hindi) (Varanasi: Infor. Dept. U.P., 1962), p. 88.
29. Firaq Gorakhpuri, *op.cit.*, p.172.
30. *ibid.* p. 186

31. *ibid.* p. 186.
32. Quoted by Ralph Russell, "The Modern Urdu Novel" in *Novel in India*, pp. 128-129.
33. *ibid.*, p. 132.
34. *ibid.*, 134.
35. Klaus Steinvorth states that only 25 works of fiction sketches, short stories, legends, novels appeared in the 19th century, 26 titles appeared from 1900 to 1930, where as from 1930 to 1970 180 titles appeared in English in India, Klaus Steinvorth, *The Indo-English Novel*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1975), p.4.
36. Klaus Steinvorth, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
37. *ibid.*, p.4.
38. See Klaus Steinvorth, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
39. Premchand, 'The Nature and Scope of Literature', *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, vol.I, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (1979 rpt.; Calcutta: Pustak Bipani, 1985), p. 38.
40. Sajjad Zaheer, 'A Note on Progressive Writers'

- Association". Sudhi Pradhan, *Op. cit.*, p. 1-2.
41. Rekha Avasthi, *Pragativad Aur Samanantar Sahitya*, (Hindi) (Delhi: Macmillan, 1978), p.5.
 42. Mulk Raj Anand attended the second conference of this body in London in 1936, as a representative of the PWA.
 43. Premchand, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
 44. *ibid*, p. 39.
 45. *ibid*,
 46. Sajjad Zaheer, "Thirty Years of the IPWA", *A Tribute to Sajjad Zaheer: The Pen and the Vision*, ed. Ali Baquer, (New Delhi: Seema Publications, published for Afro-Asian Writers' Association, 1987), p. 43.
 47. Premchand, *op.cit.*, p. 41.
 48. *ibid*.
 49. Quoted in Rekha Avasthi, *Op. cit.* p. 32.
 50. Humayun Kabir, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
 51. *ibid*, p. 108.
 52. *ibid.*, p. 109.
 53. Malini Bhattacharya, Introduction, Manik Bandyopadhyay,

- Selected Stories*, ed. Malini Bhattacharya, (Calcutta: Thema, 1988), p. 8.
54. *ibid*, pp 9-10
55. Ram Daras Misra, *Modern Hindi Fiction*, (Delhi: Bansal and Co., 1983), p. 43.
56. Rekha Avasthi, *op-cit.*, p.146.
57. Agneya, 'Hindi Literature' *Contemporary Indian Literature*, p. 78
58. Rekha Avasti, *op. cit.*, 146.
59. *ibid*, p. 146.
60. *ibid*, p. 151.
61. *ibid*, p. 152.
62. Sajjad Zaheer, quoted in Rekha Avasthi, *op. cit.*, p.175.
63. Muhammad Sadiq, *Twentieth Century Urdu Fiction*, (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1983), p.322.
64. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar, 'Indian Writing in English' in *contemporary Indian Literature*, p.42.
65. The criterion adopted by Steinvorth is not very

- objective. He has taken 22 Indian authors in English, who have received three or more than three reviews until 1972. Klaus Steinvorth, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
66. *ibid*, pp. 52-53.
67. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1978), p. 157.
68. Georg Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock, (London: The Merlin Press, 1978), p.51.
69. Leslie A. Flemming, *Another Lonely: The Life and Work of Saadat Hassan Manto*, stories trans. Tahira Naqvi, (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd., 1985), p.35.
70. K.S. Duggal, Introduction, *Modern Indian Short Story Vol. I*, ed. K.S. Duggal, (New Delhi: ICCR, 1975), p.5.
71. *ibid*.
72. Klaus Steinvorth, op.cit., p. 30.

CHAPTER - III

"Ours is the age of the short story",¹ says Kartar Singh Duggal. Many major novelists of this century have turned to the genre of short story, as a few nineteenth century novelists of eminence had done before them: Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Thomas Mann, Ernest Hemingway, Somerset Maugham, Albert Camus; in Indian literature: Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay, Yashpal, Rahul Sankrityayan, Sant Singh Sekhon, Gurmukh Singh Musafir, R. Krishnamurthy (better known as "Kalki" in Tamil literature), Takazhi Sivasankar Pillai, Chinta Dikshitulu, Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, B.C. Ramachandra Sharma, Quratul-ain-Haider - the list can be endless. Then there are also those who will be remembered in the histories of literatures primarily for their short stories: Anton Chekov, Maupassant, Turgenev, O'Henry; Sadat Hasan Manto, Krishan Chander, Razia Sajjad Zaheer, Ismat Chughtai, V.V.S. Aiyer, Ponkunnam Varkey, P.C. Kuttikrishna, Mannu Bhandari, Mohan Rakesh, Samar Sen - this list too will not be a small one.

In this Chapter we will discuss how realism came to be practised in the genre of short story in India. For this purpose, we shall analyse some stories of Mulk Raj Anand,

who writes in English, Manik Bandyopadhyay, who wrote in Bengali, and Sadat Hasan Manto, who wrote in Urdu. All the three writers were born in early part of this century - Mulk Raj Anand was born in 1905 in the North West Frontier Province of undivided India; Manik Bandyopadhyay was born in 1908 in Dumka in Bihar; and Sadat Hasan Manto was born in 1912 in Sambrala in Ludhiana district of Punjab. All the three belonged to middle class families. They all started writing in early thirties. Their first creative works to be published were collections of short stories - Mulk Raj Anand's *Lost Child and Other Stories* appeared in 1934; Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Atasi Mami o Anyanya Galpa (Aunt Atasi and Other Stories)* appeared in 1934; and Sadar Hasan Manto's *Atish Pare* (Sparks/Quarrel Provokers) appeared in 1935. Mulk Raj Anand, became a member of the PWA right from 1936; Manik Bandyopadhyay became a member only in 1942; and Manto, though he was initially with the PWA, never had an easy relationship with the leadership of the PWA. Manto died in 1955 in Pakistan due to excessive drinking; Manik died in 1956 because of epilepsy and penury. Mulk Raj Anand is still active in the PWA and the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference. We shall analyse some of the short stories of Mulk Raj Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay and Sadat Hasan Manto in sections I, II and III respectively of this Chapter.

Section I

Mulk Raj Anand was born in a Punjabi family. After graduating from Punjab University, Lahore, in 1925, with honours, he received a scholarship to go to England for research in philosophy. There he was greatly influenced by the British miners' strike in 1926. He visited the Soviet Union the same year. His acquaintance with the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin converted him to Marxist. He was into a greatly influenced by the happenings in the Soviet Union and other countries in the field of literature and as a result of this, he, along with Sajjad Zaheer and a few other Indian writers, founded the All India Progressive Writers' Association in London in 1935. He has been associated with it ever since then. He also helped Sajjad Zaheer and others found the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in 1958, a movement which has brought together the progressive writers of the two largest continents.

Mulk Raj Anand is much more well known as a novelist than as a short story writer. But by 1956, he had already published four collections of stories - *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934), *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944), *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947) and *Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories* (1954).

Right from the beginning of his literary career, Anand has shown a commitment to realism. His stories show his understanding of the Indian society. His story, 'The Barber's Trade Union'² is narrated by a young boy, who tells us about a young and daring barber boy, Chandu. The crisis in the story starts when Chandu, breaking all norms of dressing, dressed like a doctor for his job -- to go around the village, shaving the rich people. The insolence immediately invites the wrath of the high and the mighty of the village. Chandu, instead of leaving his new dress, strikes work. He buys a bicycle and starts going to the town everyday and he earns well in this way. In the meanwhile, the village rich became unshaved and unkempt, and everyone starts laughing in their face. Chandu then gets together with a few others like him and starts a hairdressing saloon. "It was time," Anand says, "the elders of the village came to him to be shaved rather than that they should dance attendance upon their lords and masters. 'Rajkot District Barber Brothers' Hairdressing and shaving Saloon' has been followed by many active trade unions of working men in our country". (p.9)

Though the story has been written in a lighter vein, but till Chandu emerges as quite a rebel. He stands up against tyrannical customs and conventions, which have

always been used to repress and exploit the people of lower caste and class. Chandu, being from the lower caste, is supposed to follow some conventions because they suit the rich. And Chandu stands up against such customs and succeeds in his endeavour. The story starts with a mock-heroic tribute to Chandu for his contribution to the trade union movement in the country:

Among the makers of modern India, Chandu, the barber boy of our village, has a place, which will be denied to him unless I press for the recognition to his contribution to history (p.1).

This mock-heroic tone continues throughout the story, but the questions raised about caste-relations in villages are grave. The rich of the village are dependent on Chandu (at no point of time do they even think of shaving themselves). Chandu realizes this fact and makes full use of his advantageous position. Chandu demonstrates the fact that striking work can be an effective tool in the hands of the people like him who want changes in the existing social system.

'The Cobbler and the Machine'³ is one of Anand's best stories. The setting again, like 'The Barber's Trade Union', is that of a village and the narrator is a school going boy.

Saudagar is the village cobbler and the narrator is from a better off family. The narrator, who studies in a school in the town, informs Saudagar about a machine, with which he could sew shoes much faster and very neatly, which he had seen in the town. The cobbler's imagination is also fired. The cobbler takes a loan from a businessman of the village and gets the sewing machine from England. But the machine does not bring in the prosperity the cobbler had dreamt of. All the profits go to repay the loan. To repay the loan Saudagar works himself to death.

The last lines of the story, spoken by the narrator point at the cause and magnitude of the tragedy: "If only I had known that it was not enough for Saudagar and his pupils to love that machine and work it, but to own it, I could have defied the verdict of the village which said that Saudagar was killed by the devil disguised in the image of the sewing machine". (p.80) Saudagar wanted to improve his lot by increasing his production but due to the loan, the machine virtually belonged to the money lender. His labour increased man folds, but the profits went to the repayment of the loan. The very delicate balancing of the humane and the ironical in the story lends it a very tragic touch. The machine which, before it was bought, seemed like a symbol of human endeavour and prosperity to the poor cobbler, turned out to be a monster of exploitation and depravity.

'A Promoter of Quarrels'⁴ deals with the exploitation of two nomadic cowherd women - Hiro and Basanto, by a petty shopkeeper - Lalla Nanak Chand. The shopkeeper exploits the two women by provoking them to fight amongst themselves about the quality of their milk. He talks in such a fashion, that after he himself has added water to Basanto's milk, Basanto thinks that Hiro is also calling her a cheat. Hiro is actually accusing Nanak Chand of fraud. But a war of abuses is let loose by Basanto against Hiro. The shopkeeper takes advantage of this fight and threatens the women that he would hand them over to the police for adulterating the milk and pays them much less than was due to them. Ultimately the women get to know his designs, but it is too late by then.

The relations between the poor cowherd women and the exploitative petty shopkeeper are beautifully depicted in the story. Lalla Nanak Chand knows that in order to exploit he has to provoke a fight and thus divide his victims. Lalla Nanak Chand first favours Hiro, the younger of the two women, this infuriates the older woman. Though Hiro becomes aware of the swindle, Basanto, in her humiliation and anger does not listen to her pleas. The crowd that gathers to witness the warring women also realizes Nanak Chand's swindle; some one from the crowd shouts to the fighting

women: "Whether you eat or not, the mouth of wolf there is dreadful." "He is only encouraging you to fight." (p.92)

A similar policy of dividing the workers to meet their ends is attempted in Manik Bandyopadhyay's story 'Craftsman'⁵, but the attempt is unsuccessful. The setting of Manik's story is a weavers' colony in the rural Bengal. Mihir Babu a rich man, wants all the weavers to take up employment with him, for which he wants to pay much less than the weavers actually earn. The weavers do not accept this. But Mihir Babu and his assistant, Bhuban, see to it that no yarn is available to the weavers. The weavers still do not budge. Bhuban realizes that he has to break the unity of the weaves to make them accept his terms. Though he manages to persuade two weavers to take up employment with him, but he realizes that the key to the problem lies with Madan, a master craftsman, who is held as an example by the other weavers. Bhuban tries to tempt Madan when Madan's wife is about to deliver a child and he does not have any money. Bhuban sends some cheap yarn to Madan's house to weave cheap towels and dhoties. All night sounds of loom being used are heard from Madan's house. Everyone in the weavers' colony feels cheated. But they discover in the morning that Madan had not woven any cloth in the night, he had just used the empty loom in order to keep his body in shape. So Madan does

not fall into the trap and the weavers hold forte. 'The Craftsman', like 'The Cobbler and the Machine' by Anand, also depicts the transition of means of production from under feudalism to capitalism.

Anand's 'A Kashmir Idyll'⁶ depicts the inhumanity of the feudal system. This is related by a middle class narrator. He relates about a visit to Kashmir in the early part of this century. During his stay in Kashmir the narrator is taken for boating on the Lake Wullar. They are accompanied by a Nawab, who is a "rather silly young man with manners of a lout and a high blood pressure in his opulent flesh." (p.121). When the touring party reaches a village on the shore of Lake Wullar, the sky becomes overcast and shows signs of an impending storm. The Nawab brushes aside all the requests to leave immediately for Kashmir so as to escape the impending storm and goes to have a turkish bath in the village. After finishing his bath, the Nawab catches hold of the first young man he comes across and orders him to help his boatman in pedaling the boat faster. The young man says that his mother has died, and he has to arrange for her burial. Instead of taking pity on him and letting him go, the Nawab is infuriated: "Run, run towards the boat", bawled the Nawab, "or I'll have you flogged by the Thanedar. Do you not know that this is the

kingdom of which I am a nobleman. And you can't refuse to do begar." (p.126). When the Nawab forces the 'begari' to go to the boat: he moaned: 'Oh, my mother! Oh, my mother!' mechanically, in a voice which seemed to express more the cowardice of the Kashmiri which has been bred by the oppression of one brutal conqueror after another." (p.126).

The agony of the begari youth, his face twisted with pain and humiliation, amuses the Nawab so much that he redoubles with laughter, but then:

...the balls of his eyes rolled suddenly; his face flushed red and livid; his throat twisted like a hemp rope, gave vent to grasping, whistling voices, and his hand fell limp by his side...and he fell dead. He had been choked by his own fit of laughter. (pp. 127-28)

The system of Begar existed in many parts of rural India. Under this system, the peasants were obliged to work for the royal family and nobles, without any wages, for some days every year. The peasants could not refuse begari. This was an obnoxious feature of Indian feudalism and amounted to forced and bonded labour. The story in its setting and character is quite realistic. But the sudden and unexpected death of the Nawab seems to be more of poetic justice than probable. The story brings out insensitivity of the feudal

lords and their inability to ascribe any human emotions to their subjects. Another thing brought out very vividly is the cowardly behaviour of the Kashmiri youth. More interesting is the reaction or the non-reactions of the narrator and the other people on the boat to this whole affair. None of the other people on the boat try to intervene in this whole affair, though the narrator sounds very critical. The middle class narrator also refused to give up his situation of privilege.

'The Reflections on the Golden Bed'⁷ is also in a humorous tone. The story relates the career of Lalla Ram Narain. In his pursuit of wealth Lalla Ram Narain uses all sorts of ethical and unethical methods. His greed leads him to bankruptcy more than once, but he regains his prosperity every time. However, he is troubled by his conscience. So he visits an astrologer to quiten his conscience. The astrologer tells him that his curse is this lust for gold, and his fear of losing his money has been troubling him. He advises the Lalla to invest all his money in a golden bed studded with precious stone. But when this is accomplished Lalla Ram Narain is worried about the safety of his golden bed. He himself keeps guard over the bed:

What was he to do? Was there no way by which he could ensure the safety of the indescribably beautiful

monument of his industry and pain, this golden bed is which his wealth lay concentrated?...The only thing was to keep it under stricter control, to be more vigilant... So he began to spend longer hours in bed. (p. 126).

This invites all sorts of diseases and eventually his death. Avarice of Lalla Ram Narain - to acquire wealth by all means - even illegal and unethical - and then the paranoia which sets in about its safety has been very beautifully brought out in the story.

'The Maharaja and the Tortoise'⁸ is set in the kingdom of Udhampur in Rajasthan. The ruler Maharaja Ganga Singh, on the advice of the royal priest gets a pipeline and a tank built to get water from Ganga for performing rituals and prayers to prepare for the journey to the next world. Lakhs of rupees are spent on this lavish project, not counting the free labour rendered by the subjects of Ganga Singh. But the Maharaja loses all interest in the 'journey to the next world' soon after the completion of the tank. Only after being cajoled by the royal priest, does he go to perform the rituals. There he is bitten by a tortoise on his toe. The tortoise is arrested and put on a trial. The royal priest quotes from scriptures saying that it has been forecast that the next incarnation of God Vishnu will be a tortoise-

incarnation and the tortoise-incarnation will manifest itself to a descendent of the Sun, which the Maharaja is. The Maharaja passes the following judgment on the tortoise:

We, Sir Ganga Ram, Maharajadhiraj of Udhampur, scion of Suraj-Bansi clan, Knight Commander of the Star of India (2nd class) etc., order that the tortoise in the royal tank, which is suspected of being either an arch-criminal or an incarnation of God vishnu, be exiled to the River Ganga for a year, so that it can prove its authenticity by a miracle of divine will etc. (p.28).

During that year a tortoise bites all the five toes off the foot of a washerman and the Maharaja was blessed with a son. "and everyone believed that the God vishnu had become incarnate in the old Maharaja and that Ram Raj had come to the Udhampur, that it had become a perfect state". (p 28)

The Maharaja's name itself sounds ridiculous, with titles like "scion of the Suraj-Bansi clan, Knight Commander of the Star of Indian (2nd class)". (2nd class) is quite an anticlimax. The Maharaja spends one hundred and eighty lakhs on a tank which will be of no use to his subjects. To complete the pipeline the subjects provide free labour: "to enable His Highness to offer oblations, and prayers to his ancestor the Sun, all the manhood, as well as the womanhood

and even the childhood, of Udhampur was conscripted" and the payments of the labour would be "the blessings that would indirectly accrue to them through the Maharaja's realization of easy passage to heaven". (pp. 18-19)

Anand's short story "A Rumour"⁹ deals with the problem of rural craftsmen who all rendered jobless of industrialization. Dhandu, a village carpenter, who has no employment in his village, hears a rumour the jobs are easily available in the factory in the town of Bariwal. He sets out for the town and after walking for three days when he reaches the town he finds that there is a strike in the factory. He is not even allowed near the factory when the pathan gatekeeper learns that the man who gave Dhandu the information about the jobs in the factory was the 'ring leader' of the striking workers. Dhandu, in a dazed state of mind, steps on the road in front of the factory and is run over by a lorry, and "a rumour reached Deogarh some months later that Dhandu, the old carpenter of the village, had become resident of the celestial heaven". (p. 52).

Manik Bandyopadhyay's stories, like Mulk Raj Anand's stories, also deal with the underprivileged sections of the society. But there is difference in their method of portraying the characters from lower sections of the

society. Anand very frequently takes recourse to humour, irony, and farce to ridicule the exploiting classes; Manik does not do this. Anand, at times, tends to resolve the problems, which arise out of class antagonism, by means which seem improbable. In "A Kashmir Idyll" the Nawab dies of a laughing fit and in 'A Rumour' Dhandu, the carpenter, dies by being run over by a lorry. These seem to be very unlikely resolutions to clashes in class-interests. But in many other stories, though he adopts a farcical tone, he does not go in for such easy resolutions: As in 'The Barber's Trade Union', 'The Cobbler and the Machine' or 'The Promoter of Quarrels'.

Manik Bandyopadhyay, on the other hand, does not go in for immediate resolutions of problems of class antagonisms. His work thrives mostly in his depiction of the social contradictions and conflicts of his time. Manik, unlike Anand, did not start as a writer under Marxist influence, but came in touch with Marxism later. But, as Aparna Mahanta puts it, "from his earliest days as a writer Manik Bandyopadhyay had been, like Maxim Gorky, fascinated by the down-and-outs of society, social outcasts like Bhikhu of 'Prehistoric' or the thief Madho of 'Thief' in addition to the middle class types in a decaying feudal set up."¹⁰

Section II

Born in 1908, Manik Bandyopahyay spent his childhood and youth in remote districts of Bihar, Orissa and Bengal, as his father was a resettlement officer and was frequently transferred. After passing Matriculation examination in 1928, he joined the Presidency College. But he gave up studies in 1929, to take up a writers' profession. But writing never brought in enough money for him to live comfortably. Manik joined the Anti-Fascist Writers' and Artists' Association (an organization launched by the PWA during the world war II) only in 1942, but his works written before 1942 also show his commitment to realism. About his conversion to marxism, Manik himself says:

Not that my attitude to life and literature did not undergo any change before this. But my study of Marxism made me feel now, as never before, the vital need to bring about total transformation in my outlook towards men and things.... Marxism alone can give us the meaning of the past and the present with entire accuracy. It also holds the key to the future of mankind. Lack of acquaintance with Marxism on the part of a writer is therefore sure to lead him to all kinds of mistakes and self-contradictions in whatever he may attempt to write.¹¹

He was elected as the member of the Presidium of the second conference of the AFWAA in 1944. In early 1950s Manik's health, and also his financial position, deteriorated. He died in 1956, at the age of 48 years.

In his early short stories, Manik mainly deals with the decaying feudal system in rural Bengal. The chief protagonists of these early stories are traditional professionals, who were rendered jobless due to various reasons which we shall discuss later. His story 'Prehistoric'¹² depicts "the dregs of a dying society animated by an overpowering instinct for survival"¹³ 'Prehistoric' relates the story of Bhikhu. Bhikhu is a thief. During one of his burgling expeditions, he is hurt on his shoulder. He escapes and comes to his friend Pehlad's house to recover from his wound. Pehlad is scared of the police and takes Bhikhu to the forest and settles him there on a raised platform. In the forest, due to rain and insects, Bhikhu's wound, instead of healing, starts rotting and gangrene sets in. Pehlad, seeing Bhikhu's condition, takes him home after a few days. Bhikhu slowly recovers, but his arm becomes atrophied. Even before he is fully recovered, Bhikhu makes a pass at Pehlad's wife; infuriated, Pehlad beats Bhikhu up and throws him out of his house. Bhikhu avenges himself by setting Pehlad's hut on fire. The

second phase of Bhikhu's "primitive, uncivilized life began that night". (p.37) Bhikhu becomes a beggar and starts leading a "life of ease and filling meals". (p.39) Soon he regains his health completely, and feels the need of female companionship. He becomes interested in a beggar woman, Panchi, but she lives with another beggar. Bhikhu murders that beggar and leaves with Panchi for another place. The escape is on an a crescent moon night:

There is a history of that moon and this earth. But the inherited continuum of darkness that Bhikhu and Panchi had gathered from their mother's wombs, that had stowed away in their bodies when they came to this earth, the darkness that they would have hidden inside the fleshy contours of their own children -- that darkness is prehistoric. The light of the earth has not been able to reach it till this day-- it will never be able to do so. (p.46)

The sub-human existence of Bhikhu, Panchi and others like them , fueled by most primitive of desires and appetites -- sex and hunger, and driven by law and civilized society to the companionship of animals -- have been very effectively brought out in this story. Among the prehistoric desires the most significant is Bhikhu's lust

for life when he is battling for life in the forest. Aparna Mahanta says about this story :

Indeed the story calls into question the very concept of humanity and inhumanity. Or the message seems to be that in an inhuman society one can only survive by being inhuman, and indeed one can preserve the hope of being really human only by surviving in the first place and, as millions of Indians can tell, the art of survival is one that demands a high degree of skill and determination, and is indeed the only art practised by many.¹⁴

Manik does not sentimentalize Bhikhu's struggle for life in the jungle: "Bhikhu fought for his life with all his might....He would not die. In such a condition a wild animal cannot live; but a human being would certainly live" (pp 34-35)

In the Story 'Thief',¹⁵ the main protagonist, Madho, belongs to the community of milkmen, but the lack of employment has forced him into being a thief. As the narrative opens, we are informed that Madho, who was very sick for many days, is recovering. That night he is planning to burgle Rakhal Mitra's house. He had been planning this burglary during his sickness. For the purpose

of getting acquainted with Rakhal's house, he had forced his wife, Kadu, to take up employment at Rakhal's house. After her mission in Rakhal house is fulfilled, Kadu refuses to give up the employment, even after Madho's repeated entreaties. Madho also feels that Kadu did not nurse him wholeheartedly during his sickness. He thinks that he can regain Kadu's affection with the ornaments he will burgle from Rakhal's house. But when he returns from his burgling expedition, he discovers that Kadu has eloped with Pannalal, Rakhal Mitra's son.

Madho is a product of "Land-alienation and displacement of those in traditional profession by colonial policies"¹⁶. This story was written during a very significant period of our national history. This and many other stories reflect the lived reality of an era of crises, change and upheaval. Due to the massive economic depression of the late twenties and thirties in the Western Countries, the colonial exploitation reached a climax in India. In rural Bengal, where the revenue was collected by Zamindars, there "the process of land-alienation, by which subsistence-cultivators were being turned into share-croppers, was greatly accelerated from 1929 onwards. This 'tragedy of land relations' as Manik Bandyopadhyay would later call it in one of his articles, would eventually contribute to the man-made

famine of 1943"¹⁷. The fall from tenancy to share-croppership and with the deepening crises the land - alienation led to the marginalization and then dehumanization of a very large number of peasants in rural Bengal. These crises also affected the professionals of urban areas. Another phenomenon which occurred was the indulgence of a section of middle class in speculation and hoarding of food grains. The purchasing power of the people had already been reduced to nothing and the hoarding of food grains culminated in the Great Bengal Famine of 1943, in which millions of people perished.

'Why Didn't They Snatch and Eat'¹⁸ is one of Manik's most acclaimed short stories. The story is written against the backdrop of the Famine of 1943. The title is perhaps derived from a statement by Pundit Nehru about the passivity of the peasants who died of starvation, when hundreds of godowns were filled with food grain. The narrator of 'Why Didn't They Snatch and Eat' is a middle class political activist, who is visiting a village immediately after the Famine, when people had started returning to their villages. The narrator is mostly silent in the story, the main body of the narrative is a long monologue by Jogi, a low caste peasant, who has just returned home after a two year term in prison for looting a government food consignment during the

Famine. Jogi recounts his experience of going to the city in search of food at the height of the famine. About the people who died of starvation he says:

Died like flies, but still they did not snatch their food and eat. Why, sir, tell me that! Not one, not ten, but hundred and thousand and millions of them went under. Came out begging, went whining for rice water, fought like curs for scraps of food from garbage-heaps. Yet they didn't move an arm to snatch their food, to grab it. And the food was close at hand too. The shops were bursting with snacks and sweets, and they sat with tongues hanging out, at the front doors, waiting for crumbs and wrappers. (p. 198)

Jogi joins the beggars who flock the free kitchen started by the government. But the food served there is no good. Jogi exhorts the beggars to snatch and eat "their food", but the beggars do not listen to him. Once he creates a furore at the railway station and gets rice for the free kitchen before it is frisked by the government officials. For a few days the quality of the food served in the kitchen improves. The beggars grow militant and ask Jogi to lead them for snatching food. But, as Malini Bhattacharya says, "Jogi is not just a robber, he is an organizer. And he takes time to

make plans for launching the attack."¹⁹ But when Jogi is busy making elaborate plans, the rice again vanishes from the kitchen, and beggars, who are back to their usual frugal unhealthy meals, once again relapse into lethargy, and refuse to accompany Jogi, and die by hundreds every day. Jogi later joins a looting party, which loots food and gives it to the poor and also rescues women, Jogi lands in jail for a couple of years.

Jogi ridicules the reasons given by the 'gentlefolk' for the fatal passivity of the starving people:

One gentleman said, oh, but they are most of them poor peasants, harmless and dumb, they have never broken law. How can they every think of looting food? Now, doesn't that make one's blood boil sir? Afraid of breaking law indeed! Someone who knows he will die if he doesn't snatch food, counting his steps in fear of breaking law - the police might catch him, he may be taken to jail! Why, he would thank his stars if he could go to jail! (p.200).

Jogi gives reasons for this passivity, as he has seen it from very close quarters:

So then! I know sir, why people starve to death, why they never snatch and eat even with food within their

reach. When one goes without a meal, it is not just the body that gets dried up, but the urge to fight for life and grab food goes down too. Then you get something to eat once more, and the urge is back. Then you starve for a few days, it goes down again. (p. 206)

The Great Bengal Famine of 1943 prepared the ground for the 'tebhaga' movement. The call for the 'tebhaga' movement was given by the Bengal Province Kisan Sabha in Sept. 1946. This movement was for the implementation of Flood Commission recommendations through mass struggle. Flood commission recommended, two-thirds of the crop - 'tebhaga', (i.e. division of the crop into three parts), instead of half or even less, for the share-croppers, who worked on the land rented from 'jotedars'. Communist cadres, including many student activists, went to rural Bengal to organize the share-croppers. Over 60% of the peasants were share-croppers in some pockets and these areas became the 'tebhaga' movement strongholds. The movement became widespread in North Bengal. But the police repression, combined with the jotedars, took toll of more than 49 'tebhaga' activists. But soon due to the partition of the country, the movement had to be withdrawn. But the success came in 1950, when an act made 'tebhaga' a law ²⁰.

Manik's sympathy lay with the share-croppers. His short story 'Haran's Grand Son-in-Law'²¹ is set in the 'tebhaga' region of rural Bengal in late 1940s. The story starts with the police raiding a village, where peasants forcibly harvested the crop. At night the women of the village are keeping a vigil against any police raids, because the men have worked for three days to harvest the crop and they are resting now. At the time of the raid a leader, Bhuban, is staying in Moina's house. The whole village acts as one entity to defend their leader. It is Moina's mother's presence of mind that saves Bhuban. When the police comes to search her house, she claims that Bhuban is her son-in-law, i.e. Moina's husband, who had come to their house to meet his wife. The police cannot prove otherwise. Manmatha, the police inspector, leaves in frustration, threatening the village with dire consequences.

Bhuban is allowed to escape the next morning. The vindictive police inspector arrests Moina's brother the same morning. The story takes a new turn with the arrival of Moina's real husband, Jagmohan. He has heard a rumour about Moina's having "slept with somebody last night" (p 219) and he is in a rotten mood. Moina's mother, who had acted with great courage and presence of mind the night before, breaks down: "It was possible to fight with the landlord, the

inspector and the police, but one could not fight with a foolish brute of a son-in-law". (p 221) The same night the police raids the village again, only to find Jagmohan instead of Bhuban. When Manmatha tries to harass Moina and her mother, Jagmohan surprises everyone by attacking the police inspector. Manmatha arrests everyone in the house. The story ends with the villagers blocking the way of the police.

A huge crowd, about seven or eight times more than the previous night, blocked the way. The people had gathered from not only the village, but from neighbouring villages as well. Manmatha had not expected this.... It was a sea of humanity. It was not possible to fight against the storm-tossed waves of this sea. (p. 222)

The story is a very fine and sensitive portrayal of the revolutionary upsurge which swept rural Bengal, and in which all generations living took part. The whole of the village community come together twice in the course of the story: Once to save their leader Bhuban, and the second time to save themselves. First time they gather to save the prestige of their village. But the second time, the motivation is different. "It is something more elemental. It is the force that moves mountains, that creates

revolutionary upsurge. It is the spontaneous exaltation of solidarity of a people attempting to build a new world".²²

Some of Manik's stories deal with the middle class. 'The Matted Lock of Shiva',²³ relates the story of two closely related families. One is Sarama's family: two daughters - Suchitra, who is "partially deaf and mute, nearly idiot" (p.63), Sumitra and a son Hemanta and his wife Sulata. The second family is that of Sarama's brother Jadav's : his son Satish, Manorma, Jadav's married daughter who has recently lost a child and Jadav's very pious wife. Both the families are trying to find a husband for the idiot girl, Suchitra. But she surprises everyone by claiming to be already married. Ponchu, a fifteen year old boy, seems to be her 'husband'. The story is further entangled by many incestuous desires. Hemanta is very childish in his behaviours. His wife, Sulata does not like this. She is attracted towards her husband's uncle, Jadav. Sumitra is once found showing her breast to Satish. Satish, on the other hand, has a fascination for his aunt, Sarama.

The Story brings out the abnormal desires of the characters. The name of the story itself suggests pent up desire: the myth alluded to in the title, is the one related to the bringing of river Ganga to the earth by king Bhagirathi. Lord Shiva was cajoled by Bhagirathi into

hiding Ganga in his locks. Shiva ultimately married her. Once Ganga tried to wash away Shiva and remained a captive in his locks for a thousand years. 'Mahakal' (as Shiva is called in the original Bengali title of the story) means 'great time' or 'something like a cyclic eternity.'

Manik's story 'The Clerk's Wife'²⁴ deals with Sarasi who is married to Rashbehari, a clerk. She has been brought up in a village. As a result of an incident, in her adolescence, where a boy tried to seduce her, she is admonished and insulted so much by her mother that she recedes into her inner self and becomes a very timid girl. Rashbehari, her husband, who is a clerk in the city, is 'of mediocre size, mediocre looks, mediocre intelligence. Middling, in short. He loved Sarasi according to the rules of mediocre love'. (p.114) Rashbehari and Sarasi live with Rashbehari's elder brother for sometime after their marriage. In the new city environment Sarasi feels very suffocated in her husband's household. She often steals to the roof of the house to escape the claustrophobia that encircles her. Her sister-in-law misunderstands this and thinks Sarasi to be of loose character. But soon Sarasi and Rashbehari shift to a flat of their own. For the first time in her life Sarasi is her own master and can do whatever she wishes to do, without anyone misunderstanding her motives.

Manik Bandyopadhyay and Sadat Hasan Manto faced similar criticism for the depiction of sex in their fiction. But both of these writers use sex to meet different ends. Manik uses sexuality to bring out the class characteristics of the characters. For him the notion of chastity of women is historically associated with the commoditization of women. "The moral and emotional enormity associated with the loss of chastity," observes Malini Bhattacharya, "developed later on the basis of the commoditization of women."²⁵ Manik's peasant women are placed in the context of famine and economic depression and the results these have on Indian society. Where all other means of subsistence have failed, the bodies of women have become a source of income. In Manik's story 'World, Flesh and Family Bliss',²⁶ Nirmalendu, a big landlord cum factory owner, spurned by his wife-to-be, turns to Sumati. Sumati is the wife of a poor peasant, who is a land-tenant of Nirmalendu. Sumati's reaction at the near-rape by Nirmalendu, is very interesting. She says to her husband, who is furious at the behaviour of his landlord:

'For heaven's sake! There are so many men living quite happily even with whores. And your much-prized treasure, this unmarried wife of your's, what was she before?'

'...And besides, it wasn't any old no-good ruffian, but a rich brahmin's son after all. Once upon a time, whenever holy godmen visited, the kings would send their queens to do them service. They considered it their good fortune.' (p.124)

Manto does not directly relate the questions of commoditization of women with the question of class. He relates it mainly either to psychological problems of individuals or exploitation of women as commodities of pleasure. But Manto, at times, when his description of sexual perversion becomes necrophilic, shows some signs of naturalism. But in most of his stories he shows his commitment to realism.

Section III

Manto was born of Kashmiri parents. His father was a barrister. Manto grew up in the city of Amritsar. Bhagat Singh's slogans - 'Long Live Revolution' and 'Down with Imperialism' - from the Lahore court in 1929, affected the mind of seventeen years old Manto. Soon Manto discovered the works of French and Russian realistic writers. He translated Victor Hugo's *The Last Days of a Convict* in 1934, under the title *Sarguzast-e-Asir* and Oscar Wilde's *Vera*, under the same title in 1934 and also a collection of Russian short

stories *Rusi Afsane*, which also appeared in 1934. In 1934 he entered the Aligarh Muslim University. Here he came in contact with many of those writers who later on contributed greatly to the PWA - Ali Sardar Jafri, Sibte-e-Hasan, Jan Nissar Akhtar, Majaz, Ahmad Ali, Surur and Others. But he had to leave the AMU in 1935 and he settled in Bombay in 1936, where he remained till 1948, except for a small stint at AIR Delhi in 1941-42. He left Bombay for Lahore in 1948, when the communal tension in the city became too much for him. Economic difficulties, a long drawn out legal battle on 'Thanda Ghost', which was ultimately proscribed in Pakistan and many other problems hounded him in Pakistan, as a result Manto took to heavy drinking which ultimately caused his death in 1956.

Manto, unlike Anand and Manik, had a love-hate relationship with the PWA. He was very enthusiastic when the PWA was founded, in fact he suggested the name of the Urdu magazine *Naya Adab*, brought out by the PWA. Sajjad Zaheer, the General Secretary of the PWA, denounced Manto's short 'Boo' (Odour) in Hyderabad in 1944. 'Boo', remarked Sajjad Zaheer, "was a very painful and stupid story, because of the portrayal of the sexual perversions of the satisfied member of the middle class, no matter, how much reality it is based on, is a waste of writer's and reader's time, and, in fact,

it is as much an expression of escape from the most important demands of life is an old fashion reactionism"²⁷ After this the relation between Manto and the leadership of the PWA remained strained. But, even within the PWA, the opinion on Manto remained divided. Faiz Ahmad Faiz in an interview in 1981 said: "Basically, neither Manto nor Ismat Chughtai, wrote pornography. It is true, though, that their style of writing and some of their themes could sometimes be misunderstood as pornographic. I too had my views on the subject, but as far as their integrity and their commitment of realism were concerned, they were above reproach."²⁸

Manto has been variously evaluated by different critics. Mumtaz Shirin calls him 'Manto: Our Maupassant',²⁹; where as Muhammad Sadiq calls him the 'Prince of pornographers'.³⁰ The second comment seems to be rather unjustified. Muhammad Sadiq, to prove his points, deals with Manto's worst stories and leaves out his better stories like 'Toba Tek Singh', 'Khol Do' etc. from his analysis. According to, Manto's biographer and critic, Leslie Flemming "Manto was indeed heir to nineteenth century European fiction."³¹ Two aspects of Manto's stories bear the mark of the European influence on him: One, his sympathetic portrayal of the socially oppressed characters, second is his preference for neatly structured plots. Another

important influence on Manto's work is that of the progressive writers. Despite all his differences with the leadership of the PWA, there is no doubt that the influence was not insignificant.

The story which earned him the wrath of the PWA was 'Boo' (Odour)³². The story describes Randhir Singh's aversion to his newly wedded wife. When he sleeps with his wife he remembers an earlier encounter with a Ghatan girl. One rainy day he had called a Ghatan girl inside his house to let her escape from getting wet in the rain and then he slept with her. He was fascinated by the strange odour that emanated from her body. He unsuccessfully looks for the same odour in this newly wedded wife's body too. Mumtaz Shirin, Ismat Chughtai and Leslie Flemming have defended the story as being very creative. But it cannot be denied that the story, in its graphic detail of woman's body and sexual passion, lends itself to be called an obscene story very easily. In many of his stories like 'Kali Salwar', 'Sharda', 'Insult', 'Babu Gopinath', 'Mummy'³³ etc., Manto portrays the characters of pimps and prostitutes very sympathetically. But he does not always place them in their proper context. The characters are highly individualized, but unfortunately, lack typification.

But many of Manto's better-known stories do not deal with sexual themes. 'Naya Kanoon' (The New Constitution)³⁴ relates the hopes Ustad Mangu has from a 'new constitution'. Ustad Mangu, a tonga-driver, picks tit-bits of information from the conversations between his passengers about the India Act 1935 and concludes that the British will be rendered powerless from 1st April onwards, because a new constitution will come into operation from that day. He very eagerly waits for that day. But when nothing extra ordinary happens on that day, he deliberately picks up a fight with a British soldier and is taken in custody by the police, shouting, "The new constitution, the new constitution".

The protagonist has been very realistically portrayed as a member of the lower class. He is the only one, of all the characters in the stories, who takes the 'new constitution' seriously. First, he does do not know much about the 'new constitution' except from snatches of conversation he has picked up; secondly, he fails to realize that all the constitutional amendments were just a facade used by the British colonialism to prolong its rule over India. But still, Mangu, even in his ignorance, represents the vast mass of Indian people and their aspiration to free themselves from the yoke of slavery.

Some of Manto's best short stories deal with communalism, Partition and the events that followed the Partition. In his fight against communalism Manto was not alone, the PWA fought a pitched battle against it. The seeds of communalism were sown in the nineteenth century itself. The two main reasons for the rise of communalism were: One, the conflict between the elites over jobs and political favours; second, the policies of the British government, which helped the growth of communal ideologies. However, the tragic fact, says Sumit Sarkar, "has to be accepted that communalism acquired a mass dimension from an early date—though not unconnected with the activities of the elite groups."³⁵ Communal riots had become almost commonplace in Punjab, Bihar, U.P., Maharashtra and Bengal from 1880s onwards. In 1920s and 30s the situation worsened, with spread of communal organizations like RSS, Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha etc.

Manto's story 'Three Simple Statements'³⁶ is a telling statement on the pathetic state-of-affairs. The protagonist who is never named, has the occasion of going to a urinal, situated between the Congress House and Jinnah Hall thrice in the story. On his first visit to the urinal he finds these words on the wall: "Ram Pakistan up the you-know-what of Muslims". On his second visit to the urinal he finds

another inscription, under the first one: "Ram Akhand Bharat up the you-know-what of Hindus". But when he leaves the urinal after his third visit, he has inscribed on the wall for the earlier two writers: "Ram Mother India up the you-know-what of both Hindus and Muslims". (p.132)

The protagonist's message on the wall shows his clear disgust for communalism. Communalism, instead of uniting people of India for a mightier struggle against the British colonialism, divided people and weakened the struggle for independence. And ultimately the freedom came, but at what cost! One country was not freed, two countries were freed. With the Partition of India, came the golden hour of communalism, which was abetted by the inaction of the departing British colonialism. Riots broke out in many parts of the country - in U.P. Bihar, Bengal and Maharashtra. The grand finale of this human catastrophe was performed in Punjab, where loot, murder and rape became the order of the day. Between March 1947 and March 1948 over 1,80,000 people were murdered; ten and a half million people became homeless refugees; thousands of women were raped and abducted. It virtually became a forcible and complete exchange of population between the two countries.³⁷

The short stories written at this time depict the gory happenings of the cataclysmic event and its repercussions.

"In India, as in Pakistan," says Aijaz Ahmad, "the principal genre that served as a virtual chronicle of the Partition was the short story".³⁸ Anand's 'The Parrot in the Cage'³⁹ describes the plight of an old woman refugee, Rukmani, who doesn't have a soul in the world to call her own except a pet parrot. Rukmani had to flee from Lahore to escape the murder and mayhem there. Homeless, the old woman is completely dazed and lost in the new city. Her parrot's condition is no better than her condition. It keeps on calling her name, over and over again.

Another story which depicts the rioting which followed the Partition is Krishan Chander's masterpiece 'Peshawar Express',⁴⁰. The story is related by a train, that had covered the very painfully journey from Peshawar to Bombay during the period of rioting. It relates how murder, rape, looting and dishonouring of women took place on both sides of the border. In the world of chaos, only the train is a 'being' which has emotions to wail the dead and violated women:

A child in one of the compartments went over to an old woman and staring at her naked body, asked:
'You had your bath?'

Yes, child, I was given a bath day by the sons of my motherland! And tears gushed into her eyes. (p.47).

When the train crossed over to India, it feels that the worst is over. But it is disillusioned soon:

I was now entering free India, where else could one find such air of freedom?...Here, too, there were place of corpses, but of Muslim evacuees. (p.48)

The train cries out for a young girl:

The girl lay dying in the grass. In her hand she was clutching a book on socialism, its theory and practice. She must have been an intelligent girl with dreams of serving her people and her country. (p.50).

The train would not like to go on a similar journey once again. Now it would like to transport only some people:

And transport in my compartments happy and carefree peasants. Children with smiles on their faces. People who would salute the brave new world where there would be no Hindu and no Muslim. They would be all peasants and workers. Just human beings. (p.51)

Manto's story 'Toba Tek Singh'⁴¹ is set in the lunatic asylum of Lahore. 'Toba Tek Singh' is one of Manto's best works. It is a scathing attack on the inhumanity involved in the Partition. In the story, the drama of Partition is re-enacted by lunatics, a few years after the actual event. It was decided that a transfer of lunatics would take place. Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistan would be sent to India, and Muslim lunatics in India would be sent to Pakistan. This announcement invoked various responses in the asylum. One Sikh asked another, "Sardarji, why are we being sent to India? We don't even know their language." (p.12) As to where India and Pakistan were, nobody seemed to know anything. One inmate went up a tree and refused to come down saying: "I wish to live neither in India nor in Pakistan...I wish to live in this tree." (p.12-13). One muslim lunatic declared that he was Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In response to this a Sikh lunatic declared himself to be Master Tara Singh. "Apprehending serious communal trouble, the authorities declared them dangerous and shut them up; in separate cells." (p.13) But the main protagonist Bishan Singh, who was known in the asylum, after the name of his village, as Toba Tek Singh, kept on asking where Toba Tek Singh was? Nobody could tell him whether it was in India or Pakistan. When he was taken to the border to be handed over to the Indian authorities, the officials told him that Toba Tek

Singh was in Pakistan. He wanted to run back to Pakistan -- the country where his village was -- but was stopped:

...There he stood in no man's land on his swollen legs like a Colossus. Just before sunrise, Bishan Singh, who had stood on his feet for fifteen years, screamed and as officials from the two sides rushed towards him, he collapsed to the ground.

There, behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh. (p. 18).

The story states with a very farcical tone, but soon the farce turns into a tragedy. Toba Tek Singh is not an insane man in a sane world, but a sane man in a senseless and callous world. He, like hundreds of thousands of Indians, fell prey to the machinations of communal politicians and lost their mother land. But Toba Tek Singh refused to be cowed down; he gave his life instead.

Another very powerful story written by Manto about the excesses committed during the Partition riots is 'Khol Do' (The Return)⁴². The events of the story take place immediately after the Partition. Sirajudin's wife is killed

during the rioting and he flees with his daughter, Sakina. But on the way to Mughalpura from Amritsar, he loses his daughter somewhere. He cannot remember as to where he lost her. He searches refugee camps one after another in a vain hope of finding his daughter. At last, eight young volunteers come forward to help him in tracing his daughter. They were going to Amritsar, they would search for his daughter also. Sirajudin prays for their success. During their first trip to Amritsar, the volunteers are unsuccessful in tracing Sakina there. On their second trip to Amritsar, they find a girl, who resembles Sirajudin's young daughter. She accepts being Sirajudin's daughter, Sakina. But when Sirajudin asks them about his daughter, volunteers say that they will find her soon. The same evening a young girl is brought unconscious to the camp hospital. Yes, it is Sirajudin's daughter. The doctor, feeling her pulse, asks the old man to open the window. At these words:

The women on the stretcher moved slightly. Her hand groped for the cord which kept her salwar tied round the waist. With painful slowness, she unfastened it, pulled garment down and opened her thighs. "She is alive. My daughter is alive!", Sirajudin shouted with joy.

The doctor broke into cold sweat (p.38).

The old man is too happy with the realization that his daughter is alive, to realize the full import of her action and the hell she has been through. The depiction of human tragedy in the story is par excellence.



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Mulk Raj Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay and Sadat Hasan Manto, to my mind, would have done honour to the literature of any language they had written in. In their opposition to imperialism, capitalism and unjust social practices, they represent not only the Indian progressive writers' movement, but also similar movements all over the third world. Anand, Manik and Manto differ in their use of realism. Anand, many times, uses the literary tools of irony, farce etc. to bring out the grotesque in imperialism, capitalism, feudalism and other evils in the Indian society. Manik deals with famine, economic depression and the 'tebhaga' peasants movement in many of his stories, but he does not use irony and farce in his stories. Manto was some sort of an 'enfant terrible' for the PWA. Some of his best stories were written after his migration to Pakistan. It would be unfair to judge Manto on the basis of his bad stories like 'Boo', 'Thanda Ghost', 'Dhuan' or 'Nangi Awazen'.

Mulk Raj Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay and Sadat Hasan Manto reflect the reality of our society. Though their styles and themes differ, but their writing is inspired, not

only by realism, but also by a political conviction that society needs a more just social order; also by the belief that "the life of the artist is determined by his social environment, and he cannot ignore its vital needs and struggles."⁴³

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CONCLUSION

Realism emerged in India under the influence of Western Realism. There is one essential difference between Indian and Western realism- both reflect different realities. They reflect two societies at different stages of development. The problems dealt with by the European critical realists stem from the capitalist contradictions, whereas the Indian realists reflect the reality of a society torn between emerging capitalism and feudalism, colonial exploitation, religious fundamentalism etc.. Realistic prose fiction emerges in India simultaneously with the emergence of a formidable political movement against imperialism. These anti- imperialist and one anti- capitalist sentiments are very well expressed in the progressive writers' movement from 1930s onwards. The progressive writers sympathized with the working people's struggles and have come to be identified with the left movement in the country.

Though many of the leaders of the PWA were Marxists in their conviction and sympathized with the Soviet Union, but even then, socialist realism was never forced on the progressive writers' movement by these leaders. The reason for this abstention is not far to seek. Socialist realism is the realism of the proletarian revolution and socialist society. Though the proletariat has a role to play in the

national liberation movement, as proletariat did in India, but that does not make the national liberation struggle a proletarian revolution, because in a proletarian revolution the leadership is in the hands of the proletariat itself but that was not the case in the Indian national liberation movement. Thus, the PWA keeping in view the difference of views of its members-- among whom were nationalists, liberals and socialists-- stressed on the need of realistic depiction of social reality. The writers associated with the PWA used various tenets of critical realism.

All the three Writers-- Anand, Manik and Manto-- associated with the PWA, analyzed in the preceding Chapter, can be called critical realists. Mulk Raj Anand in his short stories deals with workers, peasants, decadent feudal lords, petty bourgeois characters and other sections of the society. In many of this short stories Anand uses irony and farce, which give the stories an air of levity, but they bring out the exploitation of workers and peasants very effectively.

Class relations are very well depicted in Anand's stories. But, at times, Anand seems to suggest improbable solutions to the problems of class antagonism and exploitation. The problems seen in the wider context of class are resolved individually for characters. Compared to

Anand, Manik Bandyopadhyay does not go in for simplistic resolution of such deep rooted problems, the resolution of which lies only in fundamental restructuring of the society. Anand, because of his long absence from India, does not have the deep insight into the Indian reality which Manik, because of his constant touch with the people, by the virtue of being a member of AFWAA (later named 'Pragati Lekhak Sangha') and also being a member of the Communist Party of India - Communist Party led the widespread peasants' movement in Bengal (the 'Tebhaga' movement) in 1940s. This experience - of being in close touch with a peasants' struggle - was lacking in Anand and hence in his work he was never able to grasp the reality as firmly and clearly as Manik did.

Manik Bandyopadhyay's stories deal with peasantry of rural Bengal. He brings out the problems of land-alienation of small peasants and the problems of the land tenets, who were being reduced to share-croppership. Another theme dealt with in Manik's stories is the Great Bengal famine of 1943, which was caused by the callousness of the government and the repacity of hoarders.

Manik came under severe criticism for the use of sex in his stories. But many have very unjustly condemned him as a

writer of sexual perversions. But for Manik, however, the purpose of depiction of sex is not to provide voyeuristic pleasure to his middle class readers, but it is an integral part of his stories. It brings out the class based view of chastity of women.

Though not much is similar in the themes of their stories, but both Manik and Manto were similar in many ways. Both were harassed by their publishers and Manto was also harassed by the government. (Five of Manto's stories were tried for obscenity). Both were the most talented writers in their respective languages, yet died in penury; Manto died a mental wreck and a dipsomaniac; Manik died of epilipsy.

But this comparison not can be extended to the themes of their stories very successfully. Manto also suffered from the same handicap as Anand, lack of a close contact with a mass struggle. The impression one gets from his autobiographical writings is that he was quite a anarchist person in his personal life. Unlike Manik, in many of his stories, Manto makes sexual perversion the central theme; this led to a permanent estrangement between him and the leadership of the PWA. It is also surprising that most of his better stories were written in Pakistan after the

Partion. While judging Manot as a writer one has to overlook many of his stories which tend to become naturalistic with scatalogical detail. Unfortunately, many critics have condemned him as a pornographer by discounting his better stories completely.

When one says that Anand and Manto lacked close contact with mass struggles, one does not condemn them as ivory - tower intellectuals. This criticism is valid only when comparing them to writers like Manik. Neither does one condemn them for their lack of commitment to a more just social order. All the three - Anand, Manik and Manto - were extremely critical of the social order of their time - a social order that breeds inequality, exploitation and social malpractices. And in the light of this criticism they can be called critical realists.

But the same observations cannot be made about all the writers of prose fiction of this period. It would need a much wider study than the present one. A study to analyze the general character of Indian prose fiction-- both short story and novel - would have to include major writers from all the major languages of India.

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