

*Nation and Society in Literature:*

*A Study of Progressive Writers Association (1936-1947)*

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## DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that the thesis entitled *Nation and Society in Literature: A Study of Progressive Writers Association (1936-1947)*, submitted by me for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the record of work carried out by me during the period from *28th November 2008* to *2nd April 2015* under the guidance of *Dr. Radhika Seshan* and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, titles in this or any other University or other institution of Higher learning.

I further declare that the material obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

  
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## Introduction

India is one of the oldest cultures and has among the longest lived traditions in the world. India has enjoyed over four thousand years of civilization and every period of its history has contributed something to present day life. The most important feature of Indian civilization, as it evolved through the ages, is its unity in diversity. The ancient civilization of India was different from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece because Indian traditions have been preserved in some form till the present day. India has not only a vast region but also includes many different cultures, languages, religions and economic conditions. "The subcontinent of India (including Pakistan and Bangladesh) has an area slightly more than half that of the United States and is inhabited by more than three times as many people".<sup>1</sup> Geographically, India is bounded on the north by the Himalayas and on the south, east and west by the open sea. On the north-east and on the north-west, ranges of hills connect the main chain of the Himalayas with the sea. India is naturally protected on all sides. The hills separate India from the rest of Asia; but it does not mean these barriers isolated India, for Indians have carried their commerce and culture beyond their frontiers by a great many routes across the mountains, as well as by sea. "The Indus River now in Pakistan, had the earliest civilization, and gave its name to India".<sup>2</sup> It may be said that India alone contains greater varieties than the whole of Europe. It is because of this that through colonial times India was regarded

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Mac Nall Burns, Philip Lee Ralph, Robert E. Lerner, Standish Meacham, *World Civilizations*, Seventh Edition, Vol. A (Delhi: Goyal Publishers, 1991), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Third Edition (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1967.) p. 2.

as a 'geographical expression'. In fact it was stated that "India cannot thus be looked upon as a country in the same sense in which we apply the term to modern European countries like France or Germany. It would be more rational to look upon it as a continent and its different province as so many countries. India is a subcontinent not a country".<sup>3</sup> Among the most important features of India are her different religions, races, traditions and culture and this making her different from other countries.

### **Indian Literature and Culture of the Eighteenth Century**

*"The age is not like the previous one Mir,*

*The times have changed; the earth and sky have changed".<sup>4</sup>*

This was a judgement pronounced on the eighteenth century. It proclaimed the age as one of all round decay and stagnation, political, intellectual and moral. This cultural decline was emphasised along with political weakness to explain the success of the British in India, in the nineteenth century. This judgement has been questioned by historians who argued that first, the eighteenth century cannot be dismissed as a period of general decadence and second, that it is historically incorrect to link this general decadence of the state in society with the decline of imperial power. Medieval social organizations and institutions in fact showed great

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<sup>3</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient India*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1977.) p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Israt Haque, *Glimpses of Mughal Society and Culture – A Study Based on Urdu Literature in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, (New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1992), p. 13.

vitality in survival and remarkable continuity and adaptability at village levels to rapid political change during the eighteenth century.

The eighteenth century of India is described as a dark age because of chaos and anarchy. The Mughal Empire collapsed and the regional powers failed to establish an Empire. Historians of the Cambridge School believed that stability returned only with the spread of British supremacy in the late eighteenth century. They therefore, painted the eighteenth century of India as black, so that British rule would show up as a blessing in comparison. This view is to be seen in writings like that of the Rev. W. Tennant who reflected on the nature of society and polity in pre-colonial India. He said that “it may be questioned whether a nation presents a great community when plunged in a deep and gloomy condition” as India was facing after the decline and fall of the Mughal Empire.<sup>5</sup>

The eighteenth century is described as the Dark Age by several European administrator-historians and observers, such as Henry Beveridge, James Mill and John Marshman. Many used the pre-colonial political anarchy, intellectual stagnation and cultural backwardness as an explanation and justification for the conquest of India. Almost every work on eighteenth-century India showed a connection between political anarchy and socio-cultural development. Raghuvanshi, for example, wrote that civilized life cannot flourish in condition of insecurity and oppression. Hermann Goetz argued that political instability did not lead to overall decline in culture. He wrote that

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<sup>5</sup> K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, (New Delhi: Tulika, 1995), p. 34.

“The symptoms of decadence which reproach to eighteenth-century India are distinguishable in all those glorious period. They have been the shadow of splendour and brought the final collapse, but we overlook them because dark sides have passed away and splendour is still a living heritage. A similar splendid side was in Indian civilization of eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Can we overlook the fairy like palaces and gardens of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Dig, Udaipur, Lahore, Lucknow, Murshidabad, Poona etc.? Can we deny the sweetness and the refined taste of the paintings of that time? Can we forget the Golden age of Urdu, Bengali and Marathi Literature? Must we not come to the conclusion that the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have been a period not only of political and economic decline, but also of highest refinement of Indian culture?”<sup>6</sup>

Such views have increasingly been challenged. Historians now assert that the eighteenth century of India is not a dark age, nor an age of overall decline. The fall of Mughal Empire was not as widespread or deep as was believed. Hence the idea of decline is perhaps an inadequate theme for the understanding of the eighteenth century of Indian history. The decline of one pan-Indian Empire was followed by the rise of another, the intervening period being dominated by variety of powerful regional states. This century should be considered, as Satish Chandra says, as a distinct “chronological whole”. For India, it appears to have three aspects.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

1. There were cumulative indigenous changes reflecting commercialisation, the formation of social groups and political transformation within the subcontinent.
2. There was a wider crisis in west and south Asia which was a sign of the decline of the Mughal, the Ottoman and the Safavid empires.
3. There was a massive expansion of European production and trade during eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

Part of the argument about the eighteenth century in India is that whatever appeared in other countries during the eighteenth century had an impact on India also. There is no doubt that the eighteenth century in India was a period of great change and fluctuation. The emergence of regional states in this century represented a transformation rather than a collapse of the polity. It signified the decentralization of power, and not a power vacuum or political chaos. The independent states of the eighteenth century established a considerable degree of political stability in their own regions, and the result was a corresponding economic growth and prosperity in different part of India. Economic activity continued even in what was seen as an unfavourable political condition. Consistent economic growth and prosperity rather than poverty and crisis thus provided the context of local political turmoil. The emphasis on region and locality shifted political power from the centre to regions, and created regional systems that continued to flourish due to their vibrant

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<sup>7</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 1, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 3.

economics.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, merchants and commercial groups had considerably increased their power and often dominated political life to have direct political power in eighteenth century. This century, in India, had two phases of transition which changed the structure of power and initiated important social and economic reconfigurations. The first phase of transition was from the Mughal political economy to regional political orders. The second transition was after the Battles of Plassey and Buxar, as a result of which the English East India Company steered its way to a position of political prominence in the polity, society, and economy of north India.

The gloomy picture was initially derived from a Delhi centred view of political condition of India. The decline of Mughal authority led to continuous struggles between various forces for political power. Military adventurers, both Indian and foreign, used these struggles to make their fortunes. One the last Persian writers of this century, Ghulam Hussain, characterized the eighteenth century as an age of 'senseless, slothful princes'. The political process that followed the breakup of Mughal Empire was the emergence of autonomous states, many of which continued or modified Mughal systems but effectively maintained the structures of the state. For instance, Bengal under Murshid Kuli Khan and Alivardi Khan had efficient administration. So had Hyderabad before the French intervention. Travancore under Marthanda Varma was recognized for its administration and became a powerful force in the region. What would have happened to Indian polities if such tendencies had continued without colonial intervention is of course an

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<sup>8</sup> Sandhya Sharma, *Literature, Culture and History in Mughal North India: 1550-1800*, (Delhi, Primus Books, 2011), p. 22.

impossible question to answer. We have proof that more than one Indian ruler in the eighteenth century attempted to restructure the economy and the military of their states, indicating their awareness of the need for modernization. Tipu Sultan, for example, showed the willingness and ability of Indian leadership to try new paths that could affect the emergence of new socio economic formation. The eighteenth century was a period of change and the willingness to accept or initiate change is proof that in the intellectual realm there was still considerable activity.

### **Cultural Trends and Aspect**

If at one level the eighteenth century was one of internecine warfare, and rapid political change, at another level, the age also proves the development of art, architecture, music, painting and poetry at the capital as well as at provincial level. A large number of prominent writers, scholars, theologians, mystics and poets richly contributed to the artistic and intellectual activity during this period. There may have been many limitations because of the traditional limited educational system and the prevailing political instability but despite such drawbacks the period was also a very fertile one in terms of literature in different parts of India. As Romila Thapar has said, India became the centre of attraction for many Europeans because of her traditions, culture, knowledge, philosophy and prosperity. But later these were criticised and lost their attraction.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Romila Thapar, *Bharat ka Itihas* (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2003), p. 11.



## Art and Painting

Existing knowledge about painting, music and literature of the eighteenth century does not indicate stagnation. In certain fields creativity reached new heights. Shifts in centres of patronage, as a result of the emergence of new power centres, resulted in, among other things, new urban centres like Lucknow, Hyderabad and in some of the Rajput states. Each of these cities came to be associated with a particular style of painting or language or poetry.

Miniature painting is a good example of creativity and change in patronage of the eighteenth century. It had flourished during Mughal rule itself, where it bore the mark of Persian influence. During the same period, it became popular in the Rajput states due to Mughal influence. But miniature painting thrived in Rajputana, and had a distinctive character and style, long after the Mughal School came to an end. Rajput and hill paintings also mark a change in the painters' interest. Scenes from everyday life, religious festivals and ceremonies, mythological subjects, in particular episodes from the legend of Krishna dominated their interest. The tendency to identify living personalities with mythical characters could also be interpreted as an initial expression of the process of transition towards what became secular art. The palace dominating the city of Jaipur laid out by Raja Jai Singh on a geometric grid is an example of Rajput cultural patronage.<sup>10</sup> In Delhi, too, in the first half of the eighteenth century, there were signs of continued patronage to architecture, particularly in the Jantar Mantar complex, and in the tomb of

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara D Metcalf and Thomas R Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, ( New York: Cambridge University Press 2002 ), p. 39

Safdarjang. Maharaja Jai Singh's effort in the field of astronomy, town planning and development of architecture during the eighteenth century are significant.

Through the medieval period India produced an amazing amount of literature consisting of mystical and theological writings as well as poetry, which richly contributed to the cultural achievements of the periods. This was the age which had seen rapid growth and development of regional literature and thus the languages of the country already had a tradition which could be built upon in the course of the eighteenth century. Regional states promoted region-based literature. Thus literature already had a role to play as an expression of identity well before the growth of national consciousness.

## Music

A similar picture emerged in music as well. It was during the eighteenth century that the great schools of Indian music were founded in regional power centres in both north and south India. The Hindustani *gharana* tradition became firmly established in places like Banaras and Gwalior. Dharwad, which has produced many of the most renowned singers of contemporary India, also began to be important towards the end of the eighteenth century. Carnatic music was given great impetus in the court of Tanjore<sup>11</sup>, under the influence of scholars of music like Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Shastri. Tyagaraja, in fact, created a new form and a new style of composition which were reflected in his *Geya Natakam* and *Ghana raga pancharatnam*.

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<sup>11</sup> C. A. Bayly, op. cit, p. 42.

## Literature

*“Literature is a reflection of its age; the thought and emotion that quickened the contemporary human spirit inevitably find their way into its literature”*,<sup>12</sup>

Indian literature is as old as its sculpture, painting and music, but the sustained study of the history of literature began only in the nineteenth century. Initially, it was believed that literature existed to create language, rather than to influence ideas and expression. So it was said that only when language acquired a permanent status, and attained a perfect form, did it have the power to articulate views and emotion. Literature could then be strong enough to analyse issues of religion or science.

Literature draws sustenance from its age and society. Stories are often re-told but even an old plot, told in a different time is organised in a new way. It has to reflect the consciousness of the age and give a deep and true vision of life. Literature can interpret history in a modern way because the facts of history are given new meaning and contemporary relevance through writing. The skeletons of history are imparted flesh and blood and have contemporary meaning. They are dug out of the recesses of history, and placed in the daylight of dynamic life. Literature uses history, instead of accepting it as it is. History is a valuable record of the facts, it is related to the present and future, it provides stock of human experience. For example, the court chronicles of ancient or medieval times are a record of history, of

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<sup>12</sup> Hans Raj ‘Rahbar’, *Premchand, His Life and Work*, (Delhi, Atma Ram and Sons, 1957), p. 147.

the court itself and of the consciousness of that time. These are called literary sources but it should be remembered that literature expresses national consciousness or the consciousness of the time even outside these sources. The plays of Kalidas or the poetry of Amir Khusrau are both literature and history. In modern times, novels, plays and poems were consciously used to spread the ideas of nationalism and to mobilise people to understand their past and present to build a better future.

*Literary history is an account of the state of learning.*<sup>13</sup>

Samuel Johnson.

Literary history and history of literature are two terms that are often merged and many feel first one is a fashionable rewording of the second. But it is desirable to keep the two terms separate as these are two concepts or ways of thinking. The coming together of literature and history and the use of the methodology of both have made literary history one of the important fields in history. Through this approach, new frameworks emerged for the understanding of literature and its relation to history. Central to literary history are the ideas of culture and cultural meaning and the study of these texts and meanings in their own time and space. “*A literary history, as distinct from a chronology, is expected to deal with the phenomenon of changes in the literary tradition, in the relationship among the participants in the literary production, in the modes of transmission of literature and in the canons of criticism and taste in a given society*”.<sup>14</sup> The texts are not only interrelated and often interdependent, but also a part of the total history of the

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<sup>13</sup> Rakhshanda Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change: A Literary History of The Progressive Writers' Movement in Urdu*, (New Delhi: Oxford University, 2014), p.14.

<sup>14</sup> Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature: Western Impact, Indian Response, 1800-1910*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1991), p. 1.

community which creates them. Literary history deals with nature of literary theory, aims of literature, idea of literary history, reading process, hermeneutics, relation of linguistics to literature, literary change, literature value, definition of period and their uses in interpretation and articles from other discipline that help to define literary history. "*Literary history may perhaps be conceived in epic terms as a journey to the underworld, where the illustrious shades are to be encountered and engaged in a continuing dialogue*".<sup>15</sup>

While literary history provides a method of establishing the relationship between literary activity and other human activities and makes diversity of data available to literary historians, the main concern of such history has so far been comparison of texts in different periods and the conditions under which such texts have been produced. This relationship cannot be adequately established within a linguistic and stylistic history alone, but are to be explored in the general history of the people who value that literature. "*Literary history, like any other history, is an account of genesis as well as change of certain phenomena. It assumes the existence of a general pattern at particular time without ignoring the uniqueness of literary works – and tries to record the exercises towards innovations and to account for them whenever possible*".<sup>16</sup> The development of literary history is closely concerned with the concept of modernity. When you study literature in context of time/space, compare to other places and the facts collected over a period of time contribute in literary history. This research has to some extent drawn upon the ideas of literary

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<sup>15</sup> Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdes, *Rethinking Literary History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature*, op. cit., p. 12.

history to try and understand the connection between the National Movement, the literature that emerged during this movement and the aims of some of the authors who consciously tried to bring together literature, society and national consciousness.

Literary history is concerned with describing the expression in literature of people, during a period of time, in a place, and usually in a specific language.<sup>17</sup> Serious attention was paid to the subject of literary history in nineteenth century Europe, due to formation of new nationalism in the world. The term 'national literature' may have gained importance from this time, and added a new dimension to the definition of literature. In addition to being a special possession of languages, literature also became a special property of a nation. This aspect appears in Indian literature at the end of nineteenth century, when western education had become more widespread in India. With the advent of western education in India, knowledge and respect for literary tradition was strong and pervasive, but there was no awareness of literary history among Indians. This awareness was only seen after the introduction of formal study of history and literature in Indian College and Universities that were modelled on British institutions.

The history of Indian literature is considered to be the sum total of the histories of the literature in the various languages of the country, composed separately by scholars drawn from each region and language. All modern languages have found evidence of literary composition dating back to at least A.D. 1000.

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<sup>17</sup>Sujit Mukerjee, *Towards a Literary History of India*, (Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1975), p. 29.

Among the Dravidian languages works in Tamil are of even older vintage.<sup>18</sup> Since 1800 onwards in all Indian languages the track is distinct and unmistakable, but it provided an ample body of works in every language, which to build history of literature of that languages. The history of Indian Literatures in the most comprehensive sense of the word is the history of a literature which not only stretches across great period of time and an enormous area, but it is also one which is composed in many languages. Earlier studies of Indian literature through history were carried out only by European scholars. Such works included M. Garcin de Tassy's *History of Literature of Hindi and Hindustani*, (two volumes, French Original, 1839-47; revised enlarged and published in three volumes in 1870-71), Albrecht Weber's *History of Indian Literature* (German Original, 1852), George A. Grierson's *Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan* (1889), Ernst P. Horowitz's *A Short History of Indian Literature* (1907), Maurice Winternitz's three volume *History of Indian Literature* (German Original, 1908-22) and Herbert H. Gowen's *History of Indian Literature* (1931). However, there were many limitations in these studies. For example, Weber's "*History of Indian Literature*" discussed only the Vedic and Sanskrit periods of the Indo-Aryan language, while Winternitz's surveyed Vedic and Upanishadic literature and writings in classical Sanskrit and Prakrit in his '*History of Indian Literature*'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Sujit Mukherjee, *Towards a Literary History of India*, (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance, 1975), p. 17.

<sup>19</sup>P.P Raveendran, "Genealogies of Indian Literature", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol – 41, (June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006), p. 2560.

Representing the ideological interests of colonial governments, these writings did not take into account India's regional literatures and languages. They did not recognize the value and authenticity of the several kinds of modern literature in Indian languages. Thus western Indologists did not give any idea the kinds of changes that had already taken place in Indian literature. It was left to the Indian literary historians to take up, in the first half of century, histories of the different Indian languages and their literatures. They took up the task of elaborating a concept of Indian literature.

These works drew the attention of Indian scholars and they began to study Indian literature, but from a very different perspective. Like the nationalist historians of the same time, who were beginning to question colonial interpretations of history, these Indian literature scholars also began to criticise the European studies of Indian literature and the impact of these studies on India's culture. As with history, so with literature, such questioning resulted in new kinds of thought that have been called reformist, nationalist and modernist. The growth of such new literary trends can be seen as being an innovation in Indian literary history. This new trend gave the emerging Indian literature a distinct character for, as it became more nationalistic, it also became a powerful medium of new thought and sensibility. Not only did scholars study Indian literature, but they also highlighted the problems then seen in Indian society and consciously used literature as a tool for promoting national consciousness.

Literature is necessarily language based, and language is a cultural phenomenon. Literature is always written in a specific language. As language expresses the identity of people and place, India's literature in its various languages expressed the ideas of Indian identity. The concept of national literature was

embedded in more than one language in India. As the Tamil Nationalist poet Subramaniam Bharati said that “*Indian Nation speaks eighteen languages, though her chintanai (that is thinking) is one*”. So Indian unity lies in its diversity. The progressive literary movement was an attempt by Indian Authors to unify Indian Literature of different languages. Progressive Writers’ Association had launched a Journal ‘*New Indian Literature*’ which was one of the steps in that direction. They had been propagating the idea of the unity of Indian Literature, by using the slogan “*Indian Literature is one though written in many languages*”. A nation obviously should have an army and a currency, but it should also have a literature of its own.

One of the dimensions of the study by Indian scholars was an attempt to examine the literature of the pre-colonial period. It has been pointed out that eighteenth century literature showed a shift both in form and content from the traditions of the earlier period. These were continued into the nineteenth century as well. For example, Mir Dard and Sauda in Urdu, Brajanatha Bodajena in Oriya, and Bharatchandra Ray in Bengali and Vemana in Telugu set new standards in literature. There were also experiments in literary form, as for example, the *Chatur Vinoda* written by Brajanatha Bodajena was written partly in prose and partly in blank verse which had never before been tried in any Indian language. Another distinctive feature of this work was that it was in easily understood language, the language of the common man, and so made literature more available to the common reader. The first half of the eighteenth century was period of great literary activity in Bengal. Bharatchandra Ray author of *Annapurnamangal* is considered the most outstanding poet of Bengal before Tagore. *Vidyasunder*, part of the trilogy, influenced literary circles in Calcutta till the end of nineteenth century. An important feature of Bengali poetry during this period was the popular style of portraying Gods in the image of

common men. Urdu literature of eighteenth century was romantic and had poetic imagination. Poets like Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai writing in Sindhi, and Waris Shah in Punjabi produced masterpieces of mystic poetry that reinterpreted local folk stories.<sup>20</sup> Waris Shah's *Hir Ranjha* and Abdul Latif's *Sasui Punhoon* tapped the popular love story to give touch of a Sufi preaching. Few other outstanding poets in Urdu literature like Sauda, Mir and Dard symbolized the tragedy of common men under feudalism.

In Oriya, Bengali, Telugu and Malayalam the shift towards popular literature was visible in eighteenth century. Literature was breaking the limits of princely courts and increasing the sensitivity to the stress and strain of life outside. Purist views this shift as decline, while many considered it a healthy sign. This tendency came to an end during the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century saw the dawn of a new era in Indian literary history. The new literary forms and its values became rooted in new India. Indian literary history began with new themes and issues, new political and religious powers entered the sub-continent and the repercussions began to be felt in every part of the country. New ways of thinking provoked different kinds of reactions which found their way into literature. Influenced by colonialism, nineteenth century Indian literary history moved forward out of the colonial period, and to this extent became a modernist and reformist project. Colonialism, modernity and nationalism provided the concepts for new literary trends and movements.

Modern literary history thus developed in the nineteenth century as part of a gradual change from simply recording the past, to rewriting it within the context of a

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<sup>20</sup>Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature*: op. cit., p. 39.

wider public debate about national origins, linguistic identity and political entitlement. It also emerged in other forms of writing like essays, novels, plays, history book, and newspapers. These forms spread fresh thinking about literary history. Newspapers, journals and magazines claimed glories and inadequacies of classical text. Novels commented on a literary past through imitations and through direct references to earlier texts and traditions. "With a self-reflexive and transparent reformist agenda, the novels served as an extension to the journalistic debate over the scope and value of newly revealed literary history. The modern studies of Indian literary history also trace the eighteenth century, when it was researched and reflected upon by the early orientalisers. Literary histories did exist before, as reflected in medieval hagiographies of poet-saints and in anthologies of poems compiled in Indian languages right up to nineteenth century and after".<sup>21</sup>

This thesis is as an attempt to understand the nature of the links between nationalism and literature, through a study of the Progressive Writers' Association. The Association was established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but was based on various political, social, cultural and literary forces that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century itself. It was both an advance and a reflection of the concerns of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for it was rooted in the ideas that had emerged at that time, but went on to engage with the concerns of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both in India and the world. Many of the writers involved in the movement were deeply influenced by socialism and communism, but were at the same time committed to the cause of nationalism and a free India. The Progressive Writers' Association was thus a reflection of national consciousness,

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<sup>21</sup> Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia, *India's Literary History*, (Delhi: Permanent black, 2004) p. 2.

which was seen in many forms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – in the political movement as seen in the Indian National congress and other such organisations, in the revolutionary movement of Bhagat Singh and others, and in the emerging communist movement.

Nationalism is a belief, creed or political ideology that makes an individual attached to a nation. Nationalism is involved in national identity, social conditioning and personal behaviours that support a state's decision and actions. *Nationalism refers to an ideology, a sentiment, and a form of culture or a social movement that focuses on the nation.* Nationalism opposes the colonialism or imperialism. Nationalism has provided a significant framework for writings. The emergence of the nation into political consciousness could be seen in nineteenth century, as there were attempts by political leaders to craft new national identities. The eighteenth and nineteenth century saw the resurgence of national ideology. It is generally believed that the European philosophers had brought the thought of political ideology of nationalism. Nationalism today is thus the most successful political ideology in human history. It has caused the political map of the world to be completely redrawn.

The emergence of nationalism in India has been generally viewed as a consequence of the introduction of European ideas and institutions, but actually these facts provided the growth of nationalism among Indians. In India, nationalism in some form can be seen to have been fostered from ancient period. Nationalism in Ancient India was of tribalism than nationalism. As Nehru said that, nationalism prevailed in Ancient India. He gave reference of Nationalism in ancient India in his book, '*The Discovery of India*'. During the medieval period, Nationalism was present in India but it was not in modern sense or of secular type. The point is that

Nationalism was present in India, from the early period and it was re-defined by British in modern sense. Nationalism had originated in India as modern sense at the end of nineteenth century with the organization of the Indian National Congress. According to Nehru, "*Nationalism in India arose in modern sense as a reaction to foreign invasion*". He said that, "*But now periodic invasion by strange people with strange customs had shaken her up and she (India) could no longer ignore these eruptions, which not only broke up political structures, but endanger her cultural ideas and social structures. The reaction was essentially a nationalist one, with the strength as well as the narrowness of Nationalism.*"<sup>22</sup>. Hence Indian nationalism was aspiration of political freedom, liberty, rights, force of unity and oneness inherent Indian culture and civilization.

Indian Nationalism manifested itself in various stages. At the beginning, it was limited to elite people. These elite people had belonged to English educated class, which greatly admired the British institutions and culture, and had belief in the British sense of justice and fair play. They were inspired by patriotism and spirit of sacrifice for the motherland, and this belief influenced Indian writings. The writers of this period expressed the feeling of nationalism, but on other hand they were also in favour of British rule. The environment of this period made them to speak of an enlightened person, one who believed in his own nation, but also still belief in positive role of British in the growth of Modern India. The works of the missionaries and civil servants, whatever their primary purpose for which these were carried on, had played important role to arise the feeling of nationalism among Indians. These made Indian intellectuals aware of their own cultural heritage and fanned the decade

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<sup>22</sup> Parmanand Parashar, *Nationalism: It's Theory and Principles in India*, (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 1996), p. 134.

old spark of freedom in them. Struggle to achieve freedom from British had begun in 1857, but until the first decades of the present century, it had not taken the form of mass movement. Indian Nationalism had for a long time being, dominated by elitism-colonial elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism. The variety of elitism shared that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness nationalism were a process of elite achievement<sup>23</sup>. Although it had not reached the masses, their achievements made many Indian Scholars aware of their cultural roots. Many of them became impatient to be free and feel free. India was suddenly awakening from the centuries of slumber. She had to sweep away the incursions of English culture to find her own roots and identity<sup>24</sup>. And literature was to great extent instrumental in stimulating the spirit of nationalism. Now Indian scholars realized that nationalism in India could not be made recognizable only by the collective emotions, hidden in the hearts of deprived masses on the other hand, it had to be made manifest in the national language, national epic, ancient thought and wisdom, value system and literature. But in India, there was a problem with nationalist literature, because here question of language appeared. This problem was more relevant in a discussion of Indian literature. The problem of nationality in Indian literature can be understood if we understand the concept of American Nationalist literature. American Nationalist literature contains some interesting lessons. After centuries of American Independence, American writings were considered as an extension of English literature (i.e. British). Since they shared a common language with Englishmen's literature, Americans were denied the possibility of separate National literature. They were chained to one language

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<sup>23</sup> Sugata Bose, Ayesha Jalal, *Nationalism, Democracy and Development State and politics in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Amaresh Dutta, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*, Vol – II, (New Delhi, Sahitya Academy, 1998), p. 1274.

literature formulation until; in nineteenth century American scholars began to consider the cultural history of people as the primary basis of people's literary tradition. Norman Foerster, one of the pioneers of American Literary History movement, stated that American Literature had its own tendency arising from these conditions. If we apply the same concept to India, the concept of national literature was embodied in more than one language. In the same way, it could perhaps be argued that the various languages of India can be united through the medium of literature, after which a truly nationalist literature would develop in India. The constitution of Indian literature came in first half of twentieth century. The Progressive Writer's Movement acted as a great unifying force at this juncture. The Progressive Writer's Association had launched a journal "*New Indian Literature*" in 1939, from Lucknow, and was one of the steps for unifying Indian Literature. The Progressive Writers Association became an umbrella or a platform for all Indian Writers, including regional writers. It constructed a united front not only in literature, but also among writers. India is one country, although her children speak with many tongues, but their voice comes from one undivided heart that is India. Therefore the launching of Progressive Writers Association was an attempt to bring unification in all Indian literature. Progressive Writers Association provided organization, form, space and direction for writers, whose agenda was to bring nationalism in literature. They were nationalist writers and their writings were dominated by patriotic overtones. They reflected the story of nationalism through their writings. They provided encouragement to the national movement, by focusing attention on nationalism, love for country and freedom from foreign rule. Thus their writings became part of freedom movement. The writers of the association were influenced by ideology of nationalism, and they highlighted the problem of nation

like hunger, poverty, inequality and exploitation. They discussed about freedom movement and hoped that, through constant struggle change would come. They wrote about democracy and ending exploitation of poor. They created the background for fight against imperialism on literary front. The works of the association included that of writers like Premchand, who was not a member of the association, but was associated with the first conference. He was a nationalist writer and his writings contributed towards the nation and nationalism. At the first conference, he delivered a passionate presidential address. He pointed out the causes of social illness and pointed to the possibility of change in the society. His novel '*Godan*' (1936) showed a deep malaise in the social order, the novel captured the economic and social conflict at the heart of rural India before Independence. He was a realistic author, and his writings had a realistic approach. He did not only expose British exploitation, but also pointed out the exploitation within the society. He fought for national struggle, social un-justice, orthodoxy, superstition and blind faith until his last breath. Premchand's work started debating the meaning of freedom.

As with Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand also felt brutality of colonial power. He wanted to write about ordinary, everyday experience of Indians, who were not kings and priests. His first novel '*Untouchable*' (1935) dealt with a single day in the life of a sweeper boy. This novel showed the domination of caste hierarchy and strict rules governing the ideas of purity and pollution. His work depicts the life of ordinary people. For him, literature was the interpretation of the truth of people's lives, which had to be the result of felt experience and not books. Hence his writings were espousing the oneness of humanity.

Sajjad Zaheer, one of the architects of Progressive Writers Association, wrote a novel "*London Ki Ek Raat*", (*A Night in London*) which was published in 1937.



Here he pointed out the identity crisis then prevalent in society, and emphasised the need to search for one's own roots to create one's identity. His other book was "*Light*", where he evoked the new consciousness among Indians, to understand how alien rule had ignored languages and suppressed the culture.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a revolutionary poet and one of the most famous poets of Urdu and Punjabi. He also joined the All India Progressive Writers Association in 1936. His poems were revolutionary and reflect the politics at that time. His poem "*To the Political Leader*" criticises the political leaders.

Yashpal was a progressive Writer and regarded as one of the best writers of Hindi. His works depicted the contemporary, social and political realities. His novel '*Dada Comrade*' (1941), describes the conflict between established order and new values and ideologies. He indicated the direction of solution. He presented the socialistic point of view. He pointed out that dependency was not only due to foreign rule, but also due to western education and ways of life adapted by Indians. He identifies the problem clearly. For Yashpal, Literature was used for showing inequality, social problem and exploitation by British.

Ahmed Ali was a novelist and member of Progressive Writers Association. His novel '*Twilight in Delhi*' (1940) achieved international fame. "*Twilight in Delhi*" was an historical novel; here he showed how indigenous culture of India declined under British rule. Through this novel, he showed the feelings of nationalism.

An association of writers was a noble idea in India. They played important role to present the relationship of literature and politics and role of writers in society. Their literary work used Indian themes and characters to probe aspects of social life that were usually ignored or treated as a peripheral to literary output. The internal

dynamics of colonial oppression and the maturing nationalist movement provided essential ingredients to the motivations of these writers, who were desired for change in country. The Progressive Writers Association was first national literary project in India and also imprint of South-Asian cultural history that persist to this day.

### **Hypothesis:**

- Literature is an important dimension of the growth of consciousness.
- Literature both reflects and influences this consciousness.
- Nationalism and social reform were important markers in the growth of an organisation for change in literature and society.
- The study of an association of writers, the Progressive Writers' Association, will help in understanding the nature of political and social consciousness in society and literature.

### **Methodology**

As this work is based on literature, the primary sources used have been mainly the works of the writers of the Progressive Writers' Association. As Premchand was an important literary figure of the time, even though he was not a member of the PWA, his works have been studied in some detail.

Many of the works written by the members of the PWA were banned. Therefore, archival documents referring to the colonial government's concerns with the PWA and its influence have been used. Secondary sources dealing with the writers and their works have also been referred to.

This thesis is divided into five chapters along with an Introduction and a Conclusion.

The **Introduction** discusses the importance of the topic, and the need to understand the nature of social, political and literary awakening in India, as a background to the Progressive Writers' Association. It also briefly gives the hypothesis and the methodology followed in the work.

**Chapter I** discusses the **Growth of National Consciousness**. The rise of national consciousness among Indian people was, initially the result of British rule. Economic, social and political changes brought by British rule resulted in the oppression of all classes of Indian people giving rise to wide spread dissatisfaction among masses. This chapter therefore focuses on the nature of the impact of the British rule and the Indian responses to this rule.

**Chapter II** is titled **Literature as a Reflection of National Consciousness**. It examines the kind of writing of the time, and focuses specially on the works of Munshi Premchand, who is one of the most celebrated Hindi writers. While Premchand was never a member of the Progressive Writers' Association, he greatly influenced the writers who became part of the movement.

**Chapter III** studies the **Factors Contributing to the Formation of the Progressive Writers' Association**. It studies the impact of the ideologies of communism and socialism on the young writers of the time, and examines, in particular, the reaction to the publication of the collection of short stories, entitled *Angare*, which is seen as the main cause for the formation of the PWA.

**Chapter IV**, entitled **Establishment of the Progressive Writers' Association**, studies the events leading to the formation of the PWA. The Association was founded in London, by a group of young writers, including Sajjad Zaheer, who was responsible for setting up the Association in India. It gives the

details of the resolutions that were passed when the Association was launched, before going on to examine the various conferences that were organised by the PWA. In addition, the resolutions passed during the various conferences have been given in detail. The spread of the movement, and the work of the regional branches of the Association, have also been studied.

**Chapter V** is entitled **Progressive Movement and its Impact on Indian Literature**. In this chapter, the impact of the movement on writing in different Indian languages, especially Hindi, is studied in detail. Some of the important writers in Hindi, such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Yashpal have also been studied. The chapter also studies in detail some of the main literary figures of the PWA, such as Sajjad Zaheer, Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmad Ali, and others.

The last chapter is the **Conclusion**. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the impact of the movement and of literature in general on the national movement. The period that has been studied was an extremely important one in the national movement for India's freedom. Writers were influenced both by the movements in India and those taking place in the world, such as the Russian Revolution, the growth of Nazism and Fascism, and the spread of different ideologies. All these affected the young writers in India, who believed that their work, as Premchand said, was to be 'a mirror of society'. The Progressive Writers' Association was one of the responses that these writers found, to the movements in India and the world in this time.

## Chapter 1

### Growth of National Consciousness

The rise of national consciousness among Indian people was, initially the result of British rule. Economic, social and political changes brought by British rule resulted in the oppression of all classes of Indian people giving rise to wide spread dissatisfaction among masses. The emergence of modern ideas and the development of social protest and religious dissent in the nineteenth century have been generally viewed as a consequence of the introduction of European ideas and institutions in India.<sup>25</sup> Nineteenth century was a marvellously creative age in human history. Marvin significantly described it as the “the century of hope”. During this age, new political consciousness emerged the world over, resulting in great political movements, which still affect human thought and life.<sup>26</sup> It was marked by brilliant achievements in the domain of knowledge, varied currents of thoughts, some of these flowing through revolutionary channels, and tremendous triumphs of science and culture, causing a transformation of economy conditions and social life. During this period, India did not remain untouched by these world forces. India had already become part of the global scene, as the centre of the British colonial empire; but in

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<sup>25</sup> K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, (New Delhi: Tulika, 1995) p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> K.K. Datta, *Dawn of Renascent India*, (Bombay: Allied Publisher Pvt. Ltd, 1964), p. 1.

this century, India experienced her own renaissance, to discover and rediscover the wealth of Indian thought, culture and traditions.

The different phases of Indian's life in the nineteenth century were permeated with the spirit of renaissance and great awakening of National consciousness among Indian people. The growth of Nationalism in India was a result of the interaction and intermingling of various factors: social, cultural, religious, political, economic and spiritual racial, and of the western and eastern, the foreign and indigenous origin. Moreover the uniform system of administration, development of post and telegraph, railways, printing press and educational institutions created by British for running their administration also became instrumental in providing favourable conditions for the rise and growth of National movement.

### **Rise of national consciousness among Indian people.**

#### **A. Economy**

The most important factor was the impact of British rule on Indian economy. The British economic policies led to the ruin of Indian agriculture and handicrafts. The peasants, artisans and other classes were badly impoverished in this process. The economic policies followed by the British led to the rapid transformation of India's economy into colonial economy, whose nature and structure were determined by the needs of British economy.<sup>27</sup> In nineteenth century, the British changed the whole economic structure of India.

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<sup>27</sup>Bipin Chandra, *History of Modern India*, (Hydrabad: Orient Black Swan, 2009), p.

## 1. Agriculture

The British Agrarian policy was mainly aimed at drawing out maximum land revenue. With the establishment of new land revenue systems like the Permanent Settlement, the land revenue was fixed for the zamindars (to be paid to the states). The zamindars kept charging more from the peasants for paying to the state. The peasants had to borrow money from money lenders. These money lenders charged exorbitant rates of interest for the money they lend to the peasants. Whenever these peasants resisted the exploitation by landlords and money lenders, the official machinery helped to suppress the resistance. The peasantry was ruined because of the burden of taxation. Due to indebtedness land passed into the hands of non-agricultural money lenders, who took no interest in the development of agriculture.

The British transformed Indian agriculture into commercial agriculture. The peasant began to grow commercial crops such as indigo, jute and opium, which were needed for export to foreign countries. The peasants produced for market instead of producing simply for home consumption. The commercialization of agriculture did not, however, benefit the peasants since much of the profits went to the banyas or middle man.<sup>28</sup>

A large number of cash crops (like indigo, cotton and sugar cane) were taken by the British on dictated price to be used as a raw material. Cotton and Indigo cultivators were the worst affected. Due to British land revenue policy, large numbers of peasants were reduced to landless labours. The number of landless labour was as high as 20% of the population in 1901. As Radhakamal Mukerjee

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<sup>28</sup>P.N. Chopra, B.B. Puri, M.N. Das and A.C. Pradhan, *A Comprehensive History of Modern India*, ( New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 2003 ), p. 142.

remarked, “so long as there is no radical change in the rural economy of India through land adjustments, agricultural co-operation or scientific farming, the problem of landless peasants will become more and more acute, and there will be a tendency for this class to stay in line with the industrial proletariat of the cities. That will portend social upheavals.”<sup>29</sup>

Under British rule, Indian agriculture did not grow into prosperous agriculture. The material condition of the agrarian population as whole also did not rise. Indian agriculture as a whole did not reach any high level of organization and productivity. In fact Indian agriculture under British rule became increasingly disorganized.

## 2. Trade and Industry.

One of the most important facts in the history of India during British regime is the decay of the flourishing Indian trade and industry. They ruined Indian traders and artisans (weavers). The weavers were compelled to supply textile goods at un-economic rates. The company imposed one way free trade policy on India. The British could bring their machine made textiles without taxes to India, but imposed heavy duties on Indian textiles in Britain. The Indian artisan also could not compete with the goods produced by machine in England. With the coming of machines the artisans had suffered in England. But in that country they were soon compensated by alternate employment opportunities in new factories. In India, machine made products were coming from England, and development of factories in India was very slow as it was disfavoured by state. Because of these conditions, a large number of

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<sup>29</sup>A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1949), p. 72.

artisans became jobless. The workers of mines and plantations also suffered. They were paid low wages and lived in extreme poverty.

Indian industrialists and entrepreneurs began to emerge in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But the newly emerging Indian industrialists faced many hardships due to government policies related to trade, tariff, taxation and transport. The British used India as a source of raw material for their industries and later as a place for the investment of British capital. The British capitalist had vast resources and provided all the facilities, while Indian capitalist classes who were just emerging, needed government patronage which they did not get.

The economic grievances played an important role in fostering anti-British feeling among Indian people. Therefore Indian nationalists had the view that under British rule, Indian suffered from economic domination even more than from political dominations.

#### **B. Unified system of administration**

The second factor was unified system of administration. British brought a unified system of administration, land revenue administrations, police, law and order machinery and judicial system. These were some important policies adopted for bringing about this uniformity in administration.

#### **C. Communication network**

Post and telegraph services were extended and improved. All the major towns were linked with telegraph. Railway lines were started in 1853 and plan was to connect the presidencies with each other and the hinterlands with major ports. The developments of railways had significant social and economic results. The economic

result was that British goods were carried on the cheap mode of transport from ports and back. The social result was that people living at distant places got new opportunities to interact with one another. Railway made it possible to spread progressive social and scientific ideas among the people.

#### **D. Indian press**

The introduction of printing press made the transmission of ideas easier. A number of newspaper and periodicals started appearing.

Newspapers: The *Indian Mirror*, the *Bombay Samachar*, *The Hindu*, the *Prakash*, the *Hitavadi*, the *Maratha*, the *Bihar Herald*, the *Patriot*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Kesari*, the *Bangali*, *Voice of India*, *Induprakash* and several others educated the Indian public opinion, and made people aware about the ills of the government, and promoted the national spirit among Indian people. The Indian press was a powerful agency that shaped and educated public opinion on a large scale throughout the country. Such tremendous role was played the Indian press in creating national consciousness that Sir Thomas Munro and Mount Stuart Elphinstone expressed the fear that a free press and a foreign rule could not exist together.<sup>30</sup> Earlier newspapers were published only in important cities like Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Allahabad, but later newspapers began to be published in smaller towns like district headquarters as well. Most of these newspapers were in vernacular languages. The newspaper reached remote villages and would be read out by readers to others. Every piece of news or editorial comment would be read or

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<sup>30</sup>Birendra Prasad, *Indian Nationalism at Asia*, (Delhi: B.R. Publishing corporation, 1970), p. 6.

heard and thoroughly discussed. The newspaper not only became the political educator; reading or discussing it became a form of political participation.<sup>31</sup>

Through the publication the problem in different part the country could be shared by people. The press played an important role in the development of national consciousness among the literate section of the people.

#### **E. Education**

One of the important factors which helped more than others in bringing about the great transformation of India was introduction of education. The English education and the western ideas which flowed along with it, form the foundation of all the progress in India during British rule. The requirements of administration and commercial intercourse forced the Indians, particularly the residents of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras to cultivate the knowledge of English in eighteenth century, or even earlier.<sup>32</sup> When British established their rule in India, it was necessary for the British government to understand the Indian people and understanding could be gained by knowledge of language, literature and institutions. And then British introduced new education system, which transformed the methods and the subjects of learning, and created a new consciousness among the people.

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<sup>31</sup> Bipin Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857 – 1947*, ( New Delhi: Penguin books, 1989 ), p. 103

<sup>32</sup>R.C. Majumdar, *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, Part II Vol 10, (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965) p. 31.

## F. Enlightenment era

Nineteenth century India was marked by a process of social reform and intellectual awakening. Intellectuals of the nineteenth century believed that the social practices and religious beliefs that existed at the time were features of a decadent society, characterized by constraints, credulity, status, authority, bigotry and blind fatalism. The intellectuals wanted these to be replaced by the spirit of reason, tolerance and the sense of human dignity. They made an attempt to study and critique the existing society with a view of transforming it along modern lines. Trained in western liberal thought, these intellectuals were firm believers in education as a cure for all the ills of society. They traced the source of all ills in Indian society, including religious superstition and social obscurantism to the general ignorance of the people. The dissemination of knowledge therefore occupied a central place in their programme of reforms.<sup>33</sup>

Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, M.G. Ranade and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were among the leading intellectuals of the nineteenth century who contributed to the awakening of national consciousness. The British, while providing a justification for foreign rule had tried to project the pre-British period (eighteenth century) as a period of stagnation. With this they tried to establish that Indians had no achievement in the field of science and technology and were incapable of providing a proper government. But the educated Indians countered this by bringing to light the achievements of Indians in art, architecture, literature, philosophy and science. This enquiry into the history of India, led to a new awakening aimed at reforming Indian society.

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<sup>33</sup>K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony*, op. cit., p. 9.

### **G. Indian response towards British**

When the elites of the Indian society were busy with religious and social reforms to change their society, the rural society responded towards the British in a different way. They opposed British exploitation and harmful policies and they resisted British rule. The establishment of British power in India was a prolonged process of piecemeal conquest and consolidation and colonization of the economy and society. This process produced discontent, resentment and resistance at every stage.<sup>34</sup>

The colonial policies affected the peasants, tribal and artisans. They were oppressed by the colonial state and the internal exploiters of Indian society (like landlord and money lenders) and this oppression resulted in popular uprisings. In official language these uprisings were described as dacoities, riots, rebellions and so on. But in reality, these uprisings came as a protest by the exploited society. These uprisings came up at different intervals of time and in different region. In the late eighteenth century or nineteenth century India, the land revenue and the high revenue demands of the British government had severely affected the entire rural population that all sections of the Indian people, in different part of the country, participated in a series of violent protest. During British rule these uprisings were started by peasants and tribal.

### **H. The 1857 revolt.**

The British rule was resisted by Indian people from its very inception. The British conquest of India and their consolidation had made various sections of Indian

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<sup>34</sup> Bipin Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, op.cit., p. 41.

people very unhappy. The rulers resisted the annexation of their territories; the noble men were angered by the loss of their Zamindari. The peasants and indigenous communities hated the exploitative system of land revenue collections. The craftsmen were against the new trade policies which created unfair competition between Indian goods and British goods. The Indians who served in British army were also affected. All these different sections of society expressed their anger and hatred of British rule through their revolt. A large number of revolts broke out in almost every district and province of the country. As Eric Stokes, one of the foremost historians of 1857 has said that it was not one movement but many.<sup>35</sup> All these rebellions posed a threat for British rule in India. The culmination of traditional opposition to British rule came with revolt of 1857, in which millions of peasants, artisans and soldiers participated.<sup>36</sup>

### I. Middle class consciousness

During the nineteenth century, a new consciousness was developing in the educated section and it was middle class consciousness, which became the chief medium for channelization of popular discontent and was instrumental in the development of national consciousness in India.

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The middle class (educated classes) began to critically examine the Indian society and made an all-out effort for reforms. Raja Rammohan Roy was the pioneer in this field. He established Brahma Samaj to fight social evils. Dayanand Saraswati

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<sup>35</sup> 1857: *Essays from Economic and Political Weekly*, (Hyderabad: Orient Longman in association with Sameeksha Trust, 2008.), p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Bipan Chandra, Amal Tripathi and Barun De, *Freedom Struggle*, (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1993), p. 41.



formed the Arya Samaj, Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission. Many organisations were formed to remove the social evils like sati, untouchability, rituals etc. these reform movement came through the middle class sections to develop a national social consciousness among Indian people and deepened their sense of belonging to the common culture.

With the social consciousness, political consciousness was also developing among the Indian people. The educated Indian middle class that included merchants, traders, industrialist, and professional groups like lawyers, teachers, journalists and doctors were also suffering under British rule. These classes compared to peasants and workers could see more clearly the imperial designs and analyse the nature of colonial rule.

Earlier this class supported the British rule and considered it as a blessing. They believed that the means of communication, railways and other industrial enterprises were going to be of benefit for Indians. But later this understanding of the middle classes gradually changed towards the British and their rule in India. The early enthusiasm over the blessings of the British rule faded. Now it became clear that the British administrative measures were to help the British rule and their economic policies were for benefit of British merchants and capitalists. But unlike the peasants, tribal and workers whose protest was expressed in the form of uprising and revolts, this class followed a different policy.

Their response took the following forms:

- They started writing books, articles and publishing newspapers to critically analyse the British policies and develop consciousness among the masses.



- They formed organisations, associations and societies for joint programmes and activities.

The introduction of printing press made the transmission of ideas easy. Ram Mohan Roy published a number of books and started a journal called *Sambad Kaumudi* (Bengali) which published several articles on various themes. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote the play *Nil Darpan* depicting the plight of indigo cultivators. Bankim Chandra wrote *Anand Math*, an early story of nationalist aspirations. In Urdu several works were written in prose and poetry about the degraded conditions of the masses and destruction of many urban centres. In Marathi, Hindi and Tamil also a number of works were published. A number of periodicals and newspaper in different languages started publications. These publications were in English and vernacular languages. The prominent among them were: the Hindu Patriot, Amrita Bazar Patrika (Bengali), Sanjivini (in Bengali), Mahratta and Kesari in Bombay, the Hindu, Andhra Patrika and Kerala Patrika in Madras, the Hindustan and Azad in UP, the Tribune and Akhbar-i-am in Punjab. In 1877, there were 169 newspapers in vernacular languages. A number of nationalist literary figures also came into prominence such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, Subramaniam Bharati, Bhartendu Harish Chandra and Altaf Hussain Holi.

This middle class also formed associations and organisations. Some of the early organisations were the Landholder's Society (1838), Bengal British Indian Society (1843), British India Association (1851), the Bombay Association and the Deccan Association (1852), and the Madras Native Association. The main objective of these organisations was collective action against the British policies which were

harming their interests. Their methods were mostly legal actions in courts or petitions against the East India Company.

After 1857, when Indian administration was taken over by the British Crown, there was a belief among some people that things would improve. It was felt that the British government would improve the Indian economy and work for the welfare of the country and stop the economic exploitation. However, it soon became clear that there would be no end to exploitation. Political activities increased and a number of new organisations appeared. Associations were established outside India as well, as, for example, the India Association, which was founded in London. Later, this association was merged with the East India Association (1866). In Maharashtra Poona Sarwajanik Sabha (1870) and Indian Association (1876) were formed. In Bengal Indian National Conference (1883) and in Madras Mahajan Sabha were organised.

These organisations were formed by the middle classes and these were political organisations. Their main work was protest against the British policies through petitions and resolutions. They tried to awake the masses through public meeting and statements. They also exchanged the views on the national issues. All these organisations were the precursors of the Indian National Congress (1885). At the same time the British government passed some repressive measures like Lincoln Act, Vernacular Press Act, lowering the age for Indian civil services etc. The reaction to these measures was very strong. Thus directly or indirectly, due to the British policies the national consciousness developed among the Indian people. At the mass level the popular uprisings in different part of the country strengthened national consciousness in their own way. Although uprisings failed, they created an

anti-British feeling and prepared the ground for the mass struggle at the national level.

The middle classes gradually developed this consciousness and ultimately channelized it into the national movement.

### **Social and religious reforms in Modern India**

The various socio-religious reform movements took place in India during the British rule. The British introduced English education as well as certain modern ideas. These ideas, including those of liberty, rationalism, universalism, humanism and social reform etc. had a tremendous impact on Indian society.

The rationalistic spirit which led to reform in religion also introduced reforms in social customs and manners. During the nineteenth century, numerous of social evils existed, which were highlighted by the reformers of the time. These reformers argued that such practices were outdated and irrational, and needed to be eradicated.

During the same century, a number of European and Indian scholars started the study of ancient India's history, philosophy, science, religion and literature. This growing knowledge of India's past glory provided the Indian people a sense of pride in their civilization. It also helped the reformers in their work of religious and social reforms, for their struggle against all type of in human practices, superstitions etc. Indian intellectuals began to realize that the reform of social institutions and religious outlook of people was a necessary pre-condition for the growth of national unity. As Ram Mohan Roy wrote in 1828, "I regret to say that the present system of

religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinctions of castes introducing innumerable division and sub-division among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the law of purification have totally disqualified them of patriotic feeling and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from under taking any difficult enterprise. It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion at least for the sake of political advantage and social comfort".<sup>37</sup>

Therefore the spirit of reform embraced almost whole India. The social-religious reforms in nineteenth century were oriented towards restructuring the Indian society along the modern lines, and fostering the growth of national unity and solidarity. Rationalism was the most significant element of these movements where in social religious practices were judged on the stand point of their social and contemporary relevance. The rationale behind taking together both social and religious aspects were the religious one being closely inter-woven with social structure. It was clearly understood that society and religion went hand in hand, and it was not possible to reform one without the other.

Thus various religious and social reform movements occurred in India during the nineteenth century. It is to be remembered that all social and religious reforms occurred when India was under the colonial domination of the British. It is widely accepted that the emergence of modern ideas and social and religious movement in the nineteenth century were a consequence of the British rule. The early historical writing on reform traced their origin almost entirely to the impact of the west. J.N.

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<sup>37</sup> Bipin Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, op.cit., p. 82.

Farquhar who wrote one of the earliest books on this subject stated that: “The stimulating forces are almost exclusively western, namely, English education and literature, Christianity, oriental research, European science and philosophy and the material element of western civilization”.<sup>38</sup> Later several historians repeated and elaborated this view. According to Charles Heimsath the methods of organisation of socio-religious movements were also a western inspiration. The western impact on Indian society in nineteenth century is undeniable. In other hand, if all the process of reform views according to British, it was manifold blessing bestowed upon the Indian people but it limited the views and viewed only positive dimensions. It was overlooked and failed to do justice to the complex character of the phenomenon. Sushobhan Sarkar (in *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*, New Delhi, 1970) showed the fact that “foreign conquest and domination was bound to be a hindrance rather than a help to subject people’s regeneration”. Therefore reform movements should be seen as a response to the challenge posed by the colonial intrusion. The socio-religious reform was not an end in itself, but was part of the emerging anti-colonial consciousness. These movements went back to India’s history to try and instil a sense of pride among the people. Thus they often introduced an element of revivalism and a tendency to harp back on the Indian past and to defend Indian culture and civilization. These movements played an important role in creating cultural consciousness among the people.

### **Nature and scope of reforms**

The reform movements of nineteenth century were not religious movements but socio-religious movements. The reform movement’s nature was progressive and

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<sup>38</sup> J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, New York, 1915, p. 4.



rational. Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal, Gopal Hari Deshmukh (Lokhitavadi) in Maharashtra and Veeresalingam in Andhra supported religious reform for the sake of political advantage and social comfort. The perspective (view) of the movements and their leaders was characterised by connection between religious and social issues. They used religious ideas to bring social changes. One example is Keshub Chandra Sen who interpreted the ideas of religion and philosophy to talk about the removal of caste distinctions in society. Some important social problems viewed by the reform movement were:

- Sati, Child and Widow Marriage.
- Casteism and untouchability
- Education

In the religious area the main issues were

- Idolatry.
- Polytheism
- Superstition
- Exploitation by priests.

### **Principles of reforms**

For the socio-religious reforms many principles were adopted. Four major methods are:

### **I. Reforms within the society**

Intellectuals like Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed that for any reform to be effective, it had to emerge from society. The main thrust was to create a sense of awareness among the people in nineteenth century. They tried to do this by publishing tracts and organising debates and discussions on social problems. Few examples of these are Ram Mohan's campaign against Sati, Vidyasagar's pamphlets on widow marriages.

### **II. Reforms through government**

The advocates of this principle like Keshub Chandra Sen in Bengal, Mahadev Govind Ranade in Maharashtra, and Veeresalingam in Andhra believed that reform efforts needed support of the state. They appealed to the government for legislative sanction for reforms like widow re-marriage, civil marriage and increasing the age of consent. They did not realise that the interest of British government in social reform was limited to its own politico-economic interest.

### **III. Symbol of change**

The Derozian or Young Bengal Movement attempted to initiate change through non-conformist individual activities. The Derozians attacked old and decadent customs, rights and traditions. They supported women's rights and demanded education for them. However they could not create a movement because of the social conditions. Another weakness was that it remained a primarily urban movement, which did not take up any of the issues of peasants.

#### **IV. Social work**

Some of the intellectuals believed that reforms were to be made through social work, like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar dedicated his entire life to the cause of social reform. However, it is to be remembered that all these reforms were motivated by the intellectuals' belief in rationalism and religious universalism.

#### **Impact on Indian Society**

The reform movements of the nineteenth century have made some important contribution in the evolution of modern India. They were an integral part of the evolving national consciousness, democratization of society, removal of superstitions, spread of enlightenment and the development of a rational and modern outlook. These movements attempted to change the values of the society by resisting against colonial, cultural and ideological hegemony.

Two directions could be seen in the socio-religious reforms. One was towards opposing systems like sati, caste, and widowhood and child marriage. The second direction was an attempt to modernize the Indian society and appealed for reasoning, rationalism and tolerance in the society.

Thus the social and religious movements infused self-pride and nationalistic outlook which generally contributed to national awakening. The social and religious reforms movements brought about a spirit of nationalism, an essential element of the effort for independence. Social reforms were the base for nationalism and it was a great factor in the preparation for independence. The emerging idea of nationalism among Indian people made them aware about their nation, its value and idea of

national identity. The conscious minds of Indian were starting to raise questions about the British rule and this became one of the causes for the freedom struggle. The Indian nationalism not only impacted society, politics and economy, but also impacted literature. A strong feeling of nationalism was beginning to be visible in the context of Indian literature.

## Chapter II

### Literature as a Reflection of National Consciousness

*Lo surkh savera aata hai, aazaadi ka, aazaadi ka,*

*Gulnaar taraana gaata hai, aazaadi ka, aazaadi ka*

*Dekho parcham lahraata hai, aazaadi ka, aazaadi ka*<sup>39</sup>

#### Makhdoom

Indian literature exhibited a new sensibility that was nationalism which provided theme such as the love of the nation. Literature played a significant role in national consciousness. When nationalist ideas began to emerge and literature in different Indian languages entered its modern phase, many writers began to write literature for patriotic purpose. In fact, most of them believed that they belonged to an enslaved country; it was their duty to create literature of a kind that contributed to their society, and paved the way for national liberation.

With the passage of time, as the freedom movement began to attract larger sections of people, and the demand for freedom became more insistent, literature strengthened the growing idealism of the people. Literature inspired the people to make all kind of sacrifices for the cause of the country's liberation, and also exposed the weakness of nationalist movements and its leaders. The national consciousness emerged in India due to socio-religious reforms, influence of western ideas and British rule. Growing contacts with the world outside, a deep seated and heartfelt

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<sup>39</sup> Raza Mir and Ali Hussain Mir, *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry, Anthems of Resistance*, (New Delhi: IndiaInk Roli Books, 2006) p.55.

urge for the revival of the culture of the past, the pressing demands for social reform, and the revolutionary changes in political as well as economic conditions of the country, “naturally caused the unfolding of Indian genius in manifold petals.”<sup>40</sup> The contact with outside world, social reforms, changes in political and economic conditions opened the Indian’s mind and they became more aware about their nation and the problems that the nation faced, from within and as a result of foreign rule. The growth of national consciousness among Indian people made them aware about their nation, its value and idea of national identity. This national consciousness influenced the Indian literature and produced the nationalist writers who wrote about the nation. It transformed the attitude and thinking of the Indian writers.

The idea of national identity emerged in Indian literature during nineteenth century. The Indian writing turned into voice of nationalism. The writers of nineteenth century expressed the feeling of nationalism, raised the question of why the British ruled over them, and the nature and extent of British exploitation of Indian people through their writing. They were bringing the message of patriotism and revolutionary thought. Their literary writing expressed the Indian nationalism but it was still more in favour of British rule. The writers like Bhartendu Harish Chandra, who was father of Hindi literature, raised the question against British, but at same time he admitted that if the British had not come to administer India, the country’s ruin would have gone on without interruption. Even Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, well known for his patriotic writing, believed the British rule saved India from a chaotic social, political condition of the post Mughal period. They adopted

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<sup>40</sup> K.K. Datta, *Dawn of Renascent India*, (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Ltd, 1964) p. 50.

dual approach towards the British rule and it was general pattern of the educated Indians response to the British rule. The environment of this period made the writers speak as an enlightened person, one who believed in his own nation, but who also still believed in the positive role of the British in the growth of modern India.

### **Emergence of Literary radicalism in India**

In the last quarter of nineteenth century, many writers emerged and marked it as one of the richest periods in the Indian literature. Many trends which reached their full development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had their roots in the earlier century. One of the basic concerns in the literature was impact of western civilization. It affected Indian writer's sense of history, understanding of the past, and idea of the progress, in short total view of life. The influence of western forms of literary expression and modern atheistic value become more prominent in the last decade of the nineteenth century. A number of prominent writers now came into the limelight. The traditional form of story writing gave way to the newer forms of characterization and construction of plots. A unique Urdu poet was Akbar Allahabadi, who is remembered for his humorous and satirical verses, which created a new form of poetic expression. A bitter attack against the unthinking and superficial imitation of the western mode of life is the most remarkable feature of his poetry.

There were some factors that helped Indian literature to grow faster and reach a larger audience. The first was of course the printing press, which carried literature far and wide and made it unnecessary for creative work to be restricted largely to forms that could be memorised. It made the transmission of ideas easier. A number

of newspapers and periodicals started. By the middle of the century journals were being brought out in a number of Indian languages, in different towns.

The second factor was the official introduction of English education in India in 1835, which opened new horizons of learning and thinking among those Indians who received English education and imbibed the ideas of western science and philosophy.

The third factor was the revolt of 1857. The revolt failed, but the revolt itself, and its suppression by the colonial power, had a tremendous impact on Indian literature. As oppression by the colonial powers increased, there was greater strife and poverty. In response to the growing disaffection, folk poetry began to praise the revolt leaders, such as Rani of Jhansi and Nana Saheb, and these voices were heard in almost every Indian language. The patriotic fervour was inspired by revolt.

The fourth factor is the rise of middle classes. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a new middle classes emerged in India to share and communicate its awareness of contemporary situations. Exposure to western education heightened the spirit of enquiry and facilitated interaction with new ideas and intellectual perspectives.<sup>41</sup> These middle classes worked on two fronts.

- They started writing books and articles, and published newspapers to critically analyse the British policies, and develop consciousness among the masses.

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<sup>41</sup> Saroj Sharma, *Indian Elite and Nationalism*, (Jaipur, Rawat Publication, 1997), p.

- The second method was to form organizations, associations and societies for joint programmes and activities.

Thus middle class consciousness was a powerful factor.

The fifth factor was the social-religious reform movement and the revolt of 1857. Both these developed the spirit of pride and desire for liberty. “Writing in India acquired a strong nationalistic overtone and included love for the mother tongue. Each literature looked to its own past tradition and its historical antecedents, in order to create for its patrons a strong sense of identity/regional and culture.”<sup>42</sup> The love of liberty and motherland became main themes for literature. Self-reflection and self-criticism was another marked feature of the literature that emerged at this time.

The sixth factor was the transmission of modern scientific ideas from the west. This resulted in a dramatic change in mindset among the people exposed to these ideas. According to Akshay Kumar Dutt, who was the first Indian to propose a national scheme of education, the traditional system was to be totally rejected. In Akshay Kumar’s scheme of education, the students were to be introduced to basics of scientific knowledge at a very early age. He considered science education to be the most urgent need of the times and therefore, advocated the establishment of schools of technology, agriculture and ship-building. The importance of a scientific outlook and the acquisition of scientific knowledge were also emphasized by

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<sup>42</sup> Anjana Neira Dev, Bajrang Bihari Tiwari, Sanam Khanna, *Indian Literature: An Introduction*, (New Delhi: Pearson, 2006), p. XX.

Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Veeresalingam.<sup>43</sup> Then came the “zest for the modern way of life accompanied by zeal for reformism. Close on its heels came distrust and anger against alien rule. And finally the intellectual instruments of analysis and of an immense awareness of social economic forces, of psychoanalysis and Marxism. Perhaps never before in Indian history were our people subjected to such a crowded series of intellectual and emotional impacts in such a short period.”<sup>44</sup>

The three factors – the printing press, the rise of the middle class and the transmission of modern scientific and sociological ideas were among the major causes for the rise of literary trends in many Indian languages. As a result of these influences, certain broad characteristics can be identified in the literature of most Indian languages.

The general characteristics are-

- The development of prose and with it, the novel and short story,
- The introduction of social and psychological issues as literary themes,
- The appearance of very individualistic expressions in poetry, which included personal symbols and different kinds of imagery,
- The emergence of realism as an accepted technique in all literary forms.

These four salient features can be perceived in Indian literatures.

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<sup>43</sup> K.N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, op.cit., p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

In the twentieth century a new trend in literature became discernible. "Indian literature of the twentieth century is a memorable record of the triumph and tragedy of Indian people involved in most significant engagement in their history- the struggle for independence and the challenges that followed the achievement of that goal tragedy."<sup>45</sup> In addition to experimentation with literary forms, this literature engaged with human problems, universal and regional or linguistic, and with the society of the time. At the same time, the literature reflected a sense of pride in the past of the country, and of the problems created as a result of its current position as a colony.

The Indian writers constantly expressed their views about the political fate of their country. They questioned the ideologies that dictated the nature of the political systems, along with questioning the perceptions of art and history. "Indian literature began to negotiate with the changes in the literary community from the nineteenth century that witnessed the introduction of the printing press, the rise of a new middle class under a new educational dispensation, and slow decline of the old tradition system. The greater writers of this period had expressed a nostalgic feeling for the past glories of India. They had passion for social reform, and urge for rational inquire and a quest for new value."<sup>46</sup> The emergence of movement for national freedom and the reconstruction Indian life had profound effect on the development of literature. Many poems were written to express the national sentiments and depicted the feeling of dissatisfaction with foreign rule. The Indian writers started to

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<sup>45</sup>Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature, 1911-1956*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

write about the political tension in the country and their impact on literature. Now the literature became natural vehicle of socio-political movements as much as these movements received momentum from literary texts and activities.

It was at this time that literature became, in its truest sense, both a reflection of national consciousness and the creator of this consciousness. Much of this literature emerged from the English educated classes, but by its very nature, literature is capable of finding a wider audience. They set before society a mirror of the present state of the nation, and inculcated in them a sense of questioning and therefore, a desire for change. Motivated by the spirit of nationalism, they expressed this sense through their own writings, which, in turn, found a place in society.

The twentieth century witnessed remarkable changes in style and diction in literature in different languages. Individual writers explored the possibilities of existing genres, created new forms of expression, and continuously experimented with metres and narrative structures and dramatic modes.<sup>47</sup> This century opened up wide opportunities to the authors: the national movement encouraged the writers look into pre-colonial literary and artistic traditions which opened up a fresh world. Equally important, they also began to interact with literature of different languages within the country. Thus writing as a whole showed greater awareness, both of different languages within the country, and of the various social, and occupational groups in different parts of the country. Twentieth century literature displayed the writers' understanding of the social reality and their response to the emerging socio-political forces in their own time.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

## Impact of social reform movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Indian literature

The nineteenth century reforms and social awakening had resulted in gradual changes in Indian society. Literature could obviously not remain untouched by these forces of change. It is aptly said that literature is a mirror of contemporary society. Literature activities increase when there is a change in social, political situation or there is a religious upheaval.<sup>48</sup> Both literature and society interact with each other and are interdependent. The impact of social reforms movement brought about a specific viewpoint among some intellectuals, and that was religious and cultural revivalism. Most of the reformers popularised the idea that “if we study our past, we would find in it values, which if we understood properly and acted upon, could help arrest our collective and individual decline, and help us to take our place in the world with dignity.”<sup>49</sup> These reformers believed that the reason for decline of India and the success of western imperialism was that the last rulers of India had disregarded the old values. They had become pleasure seeking, indolent, and selfish and these qualities had spread to all. It was necessary to bring into society once again qualities like ‘fear of god, simplicity, justice, truthfulness and humanity’, for these values were ‘the fundamental cause for the greatness of our ancestors’.<sup>50</sup> It was these qualities that had to be revived and disseminated through reforms and education. So the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century was a period of

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<sup>48</sup> Saroj Sharma, *Indian Elite and Nationalism*, ( Jaipur: Rawat Publication, 1997 ), p.

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<sup>49</sup>Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light, A History of the Movement for Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.28.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

more or less comparable reformist, revivalist and educational movements. The new Urdu and Hindi prose and poetry were influenced by these reforms, revivals and educational movements. Hali's *Musaddas*, the *Tahzeeb-ul-akhlaq* articles of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Maithili Sharan Gupta's *Bharat Bharati* in Urdu, and Harish Chandra Bhartendu's plays and articles in Hindi were the products of similar modes of thought. All of these emphasise that the lost golden era had to be brought back in life.

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The middle class also began to be aware of the need for political and social reform. But whenever the question of finding a goal for Independence came up, the picture that emerged in the minds of the reformist was that of British Parliament, government and western capitalist democracy. This political view was the result of the condition produced by political domination and economic exploitation of the country by British imperialist. The British imperialism did not bring any new fundamental changes in economic and social areas in the country. The material changes had occurred in middle class intellectuals and they began to see the essence and democracy in the past era. New ideas and concepts came into being because the material condition of society and conflict that is the needs of evolution required them. British Imperialist implanted in the mind of all Indians that English <sup>e</sup>man were superior to them in every way, and that the British rule over India was not only appropriate and legitimate, but it was also a blessing of God. To be loyal to the British and their government was declared to be political and religious goal of every Indian. These views propagated through all government and semi-government schools and colleges, text books, semi-government newspaper, Christian missionaries, paid mullahs, pandits, Government officials, big land owners and all other people whose lives would be controlled by British capitalist and their institutions. The

reason behind this was one considered the great civilization of one's homeland worthless, and ignores it, that one valued everything western and foolishly mimicked it. That is why such views were propagated. They were meant to create a feeling of inferiority among Indians so that mentally Indians became obedient tools of colonial power. British historians of the nineteenth century have presented this viewpoint in their works.

Many people who belonged to landlord's families had lost their jobs due to decline of Mughal Empire and Princely states. Among them there were many who had learned English in English school and colleges and were influenced by the democratic ideas and literature of Europe. Movements for religious reforms and modern education like Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj were emerging from these groups. Their preference for revivalism and efforts to present religion in a new light was a way to promote rationality and democratic ideas. While the British rulers were trying to create a sense of inferiority among Indians, the revivalists were trying hard to present the historical and cultural achievement to preserve dignity of Indians. While British rulers helped to spread ignorance and conservatism, the reformist countered the British policy by finding examples of rationality and equality among Indian tradition. When the stress to follow the examples of British rulers, they meant that Indian should give up the superstitious and the habit of lamenting our fate, and begin to think and work in modern way to take our place in modern age. The cultural awakening was at once a redefinition of India's national identity in terms of its past glory and re – examination of traditional social structure.<sup>51</sup> This shows an enquiry of factors that caused degeneration that happened gradually over previous centuries.

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<sup>51</sup> Asha Kaushik, *Politics, Aesthetics and Culture*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988) p. 46.



These questioning involved fresh looked at fundamental of governance with dignity and justice. Thus cultural renaissance became the foundation of political nationalism, inspiring both liberal and radical traditions of political protest. These new ideas and concepts were influenced intellectuals and writers.

### **Movements and ideologies in Indian literature**

By the 1930's the reformist movement had reached in the fields of culture as well as political area. There was an internal dynamic influence among the Indian intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century. The freedom struggle emerged as a mass movement in Indian politics, with the ideas of socialism and liberation increasing among activists. The socialist ideas spread widely among middle class intellectuals and within and outside the congress. The politics of left emerged prominently in the congress, which was largest party in the country. The 1930's also witnessed the nation-wide awaking and organization of the peasants and workers in India. Leftist movement emerged out from the Indian National movement. For understanding of its ideology and orientation it was both a nationalist and revolutionary movement. The leftist movement was historically linked with Indian struggle for freedom under the Indian National Congress. The left wing leadership within the congress concentrated on National liberation and propagated radical, social, economic changes only as a means of strengthening the nation. They believed that national independence could be restored and the nation made to flourish only through a radical socio – economic transformation. They were disillusioned with the conservative socio – economic ideas of the early nationalist leaders as well as with the “anti – modern” philosophy of Gandhi who was not only opposed to any drastic

change in the traditional social hierarchy but also set his face against modern science, technology and industrialism.<sup>52</sup>

Leftism in India was, whether inside the national congress, or as a projection of the international communist movement, had grown due to the condition of imperialism and as a reaction against the ideologies of the orthodox leadership of the Congress. Although various groups of left-wing had different from one another with their tactics and ideological orientation, but all these ideology made Indian nationalism more dynamic content and a more purposeful orientation. As a result of the leftist ideas, the communist party and socialist party were formed.

### Communist

The Communist Party of India was founded in 1925. The background of events in Europe, and the trouble that many European countries were facing because of the Trade Union movements and the many strikes that were taking place in Britain, made the British government very hostile towards the Communist Party of India. As at the time the Communist International was very active, there was greater suspicion of the Indian party because of its affiliation to this International body. In India, the communist political movement also became very active, formed the peasants and workers parties in Punjab and Bombay. They also participated in workers strike, for example the Bombay textile workers called for massive strikes against the wage cuts. The communist played the most prominent role in this strike. Within the Indian National Congress as well as outside the Congress, the Communist

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<sup>52</sup> Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftist Movements in India: 1917-1947*, (Calcutta: Minerva Associates Publication Pvt. Ltd, 1977), p. 27.

Party was very active. The British government panicked and found it difficult to tackle the communist, so they banned the communist party of India in 1934. Thereafter many of the communist carried on their activities within Indian National Congress, and in the newly formed Congress Socialist Party.

### Socialist

Due to British government ban many communist party carried on their activity through the Indian National Congress and the newly formed Congress Socialist Party. Socialist ideas attracted a great many intellectuals, both within and outside the Congress. The socialists wanted to transform the society and economy of the country, but they did not want to cast off the intrinsic values of Indian life and society. Thus, they were seen as an alternative to both the radicals who wanted revolutionary transformation, and to the capitalists and the conservatives, who were resistant to change. The socialist ideas influenced the leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. They spoke about socialism but nothing concrete was in that direction. This idea got concrete shape when a group of young congressmen started introducing themselves as socialists. They were Jaya Prakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, S.M. Joshi and Acharya Narendra Dev. The first All India Congress Socialists Conference was convened at Patna by Jaya Prakash Narayan in May 1934. The conference was presided over by Acharya Narendra Dev. The socialists within the Congress believed in Marxist ideas like the communists, but did not want the revolution in which the communists believed. Both socialists and communist became a part of the struggle for independence against British rule. These ideas greatly influenced the Indian intellectuals, and among other things, were reflected in literature, in which it brought about what has been called 'progressiveness in literature'.

## Socialism influences in literature

The political formation of the left which emerged was the communist party of India and the congress socialist party. The ideas of socialist/communist ideology with progressive nature came together and also found support in the vision of congress leadership like Nehru. The fusion of these ideologies had direct impact on the flourishing of the writer's movement. In those circumstance where the conflict between freedom and darkness, love and racial hatred, right and wrong, writers had to contribute to the efforts to 'pull people out of the whirlpool of depression and defeatism and make them aware of their power. Socialism offered a vision for which those among, who believe in social justice and in struggle, must be grateful. The emergence of progressive writers 'movement in India can seen as part of socialist ideology. It defined the social agenda for a whole generation of writers. It composed the goal of the anti-colonial struggle was seen as not merely independence, but formation of a socialist society. For them the freedom struggle was inextricably intertwined with socialist aspirations. The end of one form of oppression, it believed, would come hand in hand with the end of all forms of oppression.

The foundation of the Progressive Writers' Association indicated the growing left influence in literature. The initiative for starting an All India forum for left leaning writers was taken by a group of Urdu – speaking intellectuals headed by Sajjad Zaheer, who drew up a manifesto in 1935 while he was a student in London. This manifesto stated that it was necessary 'to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people' through focusing on 'the problem of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation'. The Progressive Writers' Association was launched on 10 April 1936 at Lucknow and Premchand presided over the first session of Progressive Writers' Association. Premchand also published the manifesto

in Hindi translation in the October 1935 issue of the monthly periodical *Hans* (Swan), the prestigious Hindi literary journal edited by Premchand.

Premchand is perhaps the most famous of the Hindi writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though he never formally joined the Progressive Writers' Association, his influence on the movement and on literature in India in general is immense. It is therefore necessary to study his writings to some extent, before moving on to the Progressive Writers' Association itself.

#### **Impact of Premchand's works on Indian Literature and Nationalism (1880-1936)**

*"Literature is the mirror of its time, the expression and ideas that energized the heart of people also cast its shadow on literature"*

As said above, Premchand presided over the first meeting of Progressive Writers' Association, but he was not a member of the association. When the struggle for independence of India began and gathered momentum, a number of major writers emerged but Premchand holds a unique place among them. The writings of Premchand have been called the 'voice of the millions of Indian masses, especially of the Indian peasants'; his writings are characterised by simplicity, and his language is simple, clear, straight forward, and down-to-earth and full of common sense. Mahatma Gandhi wrote about Premchand after his death, "When our country will be independent and our village-folk will be free from bonded labour, unemployment, poverty, exploitation and illiteracy, then people will not even imagine that the ordinary kisan or worker in India was ever living in such appalling condition. Then

Premchand's novels and short stories will be read as classics and they will give you an idea how the society in Premchand's time was".<sup>53</sup>

An influential figure in the field of literature, there were two aspects in particular that brought him into contact with the organisers of the Progressive Movement. The first was his commitment to the cause of literature in general. Throughout his life, he encouraged young writers, both by publishing their works in the literary monthly *Hans* that he edited, and by writing letters to them, as well as by attending literary meetings at which the young writers were present. In his early writings, the influence of Gandhi's ideology is clear; but over a period of time, he apparently became slightly disillusioned with the "Gandhian approach to question of India's freedom from Britain, the plight of the Indian masses, and the role the writers in society, and looked to a more forceful, aggressive political, social, and literary activism to attain these various problems."<sup>54</sup> There has been some debate among later scholars about this new aspect of Premchand, with some calling it a 'vague sort of leftism' and others terming it 'communist'. What seems clear is that in the Progressive Writers' movement, Premchand found it possible to provide encouragement to young writers through assistance of an older or established author. The fact that the movement was characterised by political thinking of a distinctively

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<sup>53</sup> Dr. Nagendra, *Contours and Landmarks of Hindi Literature, Premchand An Anthology*, (Delhi: Bansal & Co., 1981), p. 71.

<sup>54</sup> Carlo Coppola, "Premchand's Address to the First Meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association: Some Speculations", *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol.21, No. 2, (Michigan State University: Asian Studies Centre, 1986), p. 21.

leftist cast was possibly an additional factor that influenced him in favour of the movement. It should be remembered that basically, Premchand was a creative nationalist, and a fighter both for literature and for the nation. In one of his letters, he writes; "I do not want to sit in peace, I want to do something all the time for literature and for the country". He was a worker, "breaking the chain of exploitation and slavery of his people by the hammer blows of his words." The work of Premchand marked him as an idealistic and nationalist writer. Premchand's time was a period of awakening of Indian people. In the world as a whole, and in India, there had been a tremendous upheaval after the events of 1905. That year had seen the defeat of Russia by Japan, a revolution in Russia, and the partition of Bengal in India. All these events greatly affected both the intellectuals and the common people in India.

While the Indian people honoured the great writers like Rabindranath Tagore and Mohammed Iqbal, they felt special affinity with Premchand – they considered his voice as their own and found reflection of their own suffering, hopes and desires, rights and struggle in his writing. The voice of medieval saints and poets like Kabir and Tulsidas appeared to be heard after some centuries in a different way, in the novels and short stories of Premchand.

The age of Premchand extends from 1880 to 1936. This was a very significant period in India's history. During this period the Indian struggle for freedom gathered force and momentum. The Indian National Congress started its career under a moderate leadership but gradually passed under the control of Gandhi. He desired to launch mass struggle against Britain and this meant giving up a comfortable arm-chair existence and courting imprisonment and suffering. Other leaders also had appeared on the scene who sought define the political and economic

content of freedom in the terms of socialism. These included men like Nehru and several leftist group and parties. Premchand sought to keep pace with the national struggle throughout his career. Premchand was, as said earlier, a nationalist writer and his work is dominated by patriotic overtones. For him:

*“The literature of a people is the correct picture of the age which produces it. Now when the national thought of India has advanced a step forward on the ladder of maturity, and patriotic feelings have begun to raise their heads in the hearts of the people, how is it possible for literature to remain unaffected by these forces? The few stories presented here show but the beginning of that influence, and we believe that our ideas attain further heights, the more a literature of their kind will develop.”*

NAUBAT RAI (Premchand’s earlier pen-name).

This is an excerpt from the preface to Premchand’s first collection of stories “*Soz-i-watan*”.<sup>55</sup> The ideas contained in these lines clearly showed that even in the early stage of his literary life, he had a clear perception of the social role of literature and of the relationship that existed between literature and the freedom movement of the country. All the stories of his first collection *Soz-i-watan* are full of patriotic feeling. The British government ordered this collection of five short stories, to be burnt as ‘sedition’ and proscribed the book. This is how the literary career of Premchand began. He started his literary career as an Urdu writer under the pen name Naubat Rai, later he turned to Hindi and his pen-name was Premchand. He

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<sup>55</sup> Shiv Kumar Misra, *Premchand Our Contemporary*, (New Delhi: National, 1986), p. 4.

wrote more than three hundred short stories, about a score novels, a number of biographies and plays, in addition to a large body of journalistic writing on different current issues, both national and international.<sup>56</sup> His stories and novels are a mirror in which we can still see clearly reflected different aspects of the most momentous epoch of the national history of India, with all its faults and virtues.

Some characteristics in his writing themes are:

1. The peasant's tale of woe and suffering,
2. Orthodoxy, superstition and blind prejudices,
3. Social movements and national upsurge,
4. Historical interest : medieval history and recent Indian history,
5. Themes of patriotic fervour,
6. Satire and exposure of pretence and hypocrisy,
7. Themes of social injustice,
8. Transformation of character under the impact of social reality.

Premchand has been understood to have created socio- political novels. His novels can clearly be seen to have more political colouring than the other writers of his own time. Studied from the angle of both literature in history and literary history, Premchand's writings are of immense importance, for they indicate the trends visible at the time, and have educative value. He always wrote with purpose, the main purpose of his stories was to point out the social evils and raise the moral standard of the readers. He wrote articles and editorial comments on varied subjects, like The role of literature in the struggle for independence, Dominion

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<sup>56</sup> D.N. Panigrahi, *Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1985), p. 435.

Status and Swaraj, Simon Report; Boycott of the Round table Conference, and showed, through his writings, his great involvement in the national struggle.

### Short stories

His short stories are technically superior, and it is true that stories written during the years of the First World War he shows a well- developed mastery of his craft. Without doubt he produce short stories comparable in standard to say, those of Guy de Maupassant, and nearly for two decades, until the short- story writers of the Progressive Writers' Association began to make their mark, he was virtually alone in this field.<sup>57</sup>

His short stories also gave graphic portrayals of the different aspects of nationalist movement – picketing of shops selling liquor and foreign goods, the impact of the Simon Commission and the reactions of the Indians to that, and many more. For example, *Julus* reflects the temper of the Simon Commission report, *Sarab ki Dukana* echoes the boycott of liquor shops; *Samara Yatra* captures the mood of the nation during the Satyagraha movement, *Ahuti* portrays the temper of students who left schools and colleges to join the non-cooperative movement. All his stories talked about freedom, but at the same time, were not limited to freedom from the British alone. For him, freedom did not mean the replacement of the British with Indian masters. He said that freedom did not mean that the old evils continue, with the difference that those evils had become *swadeshi* and were no longer *videshi*. He was among the earliest to say that if property enjoyed the same power, and if the educated people remained selfish, then *swaraj* would be meaningless. His literature

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<sup>57</sup> Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 197.

displayed, clearly, the ideological dimension of his involvement in the freedom struggle, for through his works, he not only debated the nature of free India but also cared about a certain kind of society to be established after the country had won independence.

### **Novels**

Premchand's writing took a revolutionary turn after Great October revolution which influenced him till his death in 1936. Premchand has been described as 'the first Indian author to hear the call of Great socialist revolution and to understand its true meaning'. At the time of writing *Premasrama* he had been deeply inspired by the ideas of the Russian revolution. Through this novel he showed rural society of India, the life and problems of the Indian peasants, exploitation of *kisan* by the agents of zamindars, government officials and the police. In this novel, a young peasant Balraj declares in a village gathering, "You mock as if a peasant is nobody. As if he was made only for forced labour. But the newspaper I get, says that the peasants rule Russia and do whatever they like. Nearby is another country Bulgaria, only recently the peasants have dethroned the king there and a committee of peasants and workers rules there." His understanding of the duality of class and growing influence of socialist ideas in nation were seen in this novel. He realised the power hidden in the tormented masses.

In the 1920's Premchand came under influence of Mahatma Gandhi, he and his wife took active part in the national movement. He jumped into the struggle for independence with his pen. His novel *Rangbhumi* (1925), presented Gandhian influence. In fact realism of this novel presents special feature of colonial system. It was against the alliance between feudalism and imperialism. Here he showed the

relationship between British and landlords (zamindars). The factory which was the symbol of industrialization harmed only the peasants and did not damage the landlords. The book quite clearly showed that within Indian society, those who belonged to the rich and wealthy class were not going to support the fight for independence. *Rangbhumi* portrayed a strong protest against the unholy alliance between imperialism and feudalism. The hero of this novel was blind Surdas, a beggar belonging to the cobbler caste. The dialogue given below, between Surdas and Mithua a ten year old boy, indicated Gandhian philosophy.

- "Dad, where shall we live now?
- We shall build another house,
- And suppose someone burns it down?
- Then we shall build again
- And if he burns it again?
- Then we shall build again
- And if they burn it down a thousand times?
- Then we shall build it thousand times.

Surdas, the hero of this novel was cast in the mould of Mahatma Gandhi. *Rangbhumi* is the novel that established Premchand's reputation as the best novelist in Hindi.

His novel *Karmabhumi* presented the disturbing side of the nationalist struggle. It was written against the background of the national movement. The Bardoli movement or the peasants opening of the gates of the Laksminarayana temple for the untouchables at Vardha, Gandhi-Irwin pact, the ten- point programme of Mahatma Gandhi, all had affected Premchand. He had earlier commented on these

events in the journals *Jagarana* and *Hans* but wrote the story on this phase of India's national movement in *Karmabhumi*. It is a political novel depicting the struggle of the people against the British rule supported by the rich and well-to-do landlords, industrialists and the upper class. The novel was revolutionary in many ways, for not only did he criticise the British rule, but he also exposed the selfish and educated nationalist leaders. This selfishness, he said, was disguised as humanism and radicalism. The novel declared that these leaders themselves deluded themselves that everything they were doing was in the interest of the country and the people, even the compromises and secret dealings with the rulers were in the interests of the nationalist movement. Premchand criticized leaders of the struggle for independence whenever he found them deviating from the requirements of the struggle. In the journal *Jagarana*, he wrote an article in 1933 about the economic plan and Jawaharlal Nehru, stating that the Congress could not become a national organisation without supporting, and support from the policies of the capitalists, and asking why this should be so. Whenever he saw any tendency in the freedom struggle to compromise with imperialism, capitalist or feudalism, he warned and alerted the people through his writing. As a writer who focussed on the problems of the peasants in particular, his writing constantly pointed out that the bureaucracy, the police, the law-court, the zamindars and all money-lenders had exploited the farmers. He understood that the enemy is nowhere outside; it is within the house itself and this realistic reflected in his novel *Godan* (1936), exploitation being its basic theme. *Godan* portrays a sad and cheerless world. *Godan* is a masterpiece and one of the greatest Indian novels, which provided depressing view of nationalist politics. The three characters of *Godan*, showed the role of money and petty material considerations in Nationalist politics. Rai Saheb (the Zamindar), joined the

Satyagraha and then went back to the politics of the Legislative Council and used money to bargain for personal gain. Similarly Khanna, the banker and small industrialist, joined the civil disobedience movement then started making money by foul means. Omkarnath, the journalist used nationalism for self-promotion. The novel clearly shows that the villains in Godan reflected the socio-economic and political arrangements within the society, where exploiting was almost a way of life. Godan shows that the exploitative class was a part of larger network which included businessmen, industrialists and Zamindars, who had vested interests, and they had a sense to put a joined front against those who threatened their supremacy. This is how peasants and workers continued to be oppressed. In Godan, British imperialism is behind the scenes. The novel captures the economic and social conflicts in the rural India before independence. This novel centres on the life of the peasant Hori, a poor peasant who had five *bighas* of land. Hori is exploited by people whom he considers his well-wishers. He wants to live in peace with them for this he compromises with them, day by day his condition worsens, and one day he is reduced from a peasant to a farm labourer. Hori has only one desire, to live with dignity. For fulfilment of this desire, it was necessary to gift a cow to a Brahmin, this would guarantee his salvation. Godan was historical epic novel of Indian village life.

These novels continue to be seen as masterpieces of realistic writing. They gave, and continue to give, knowledge of the complex totality of social reality, and the political processes of the time. They clearly show the conflicts and internal clashes as they then existed, both in the social and the political spheres. Premchand lifted Indian literature out of the narrow circle of mysticism and middle class domestic life. He was attached towards the Indian humanism by making the peasants masses his heroes and founded a new and living tradition of realism in literature.

Premchand presented the new patriotic and democratic consciousness of India, which was far above narrow nationalism. He realised that the Indian struggle for independence was a part of the struggle of masses of the world for social justice and new life. Thus his writing became significant for all those who continued to struggle for peace, democracy and socialism.

Premchand is one of the greatest writers of twentieth century India. He believed that no writer, particularly in a colonised country, could afford the luxury of writing without a social purpose. So long as India remained 'under the yoke of Alien subjection', she 'could not scale the highest peak of art'. Her writers were obliged by their political and social conditions to educate the people whenever it was possible for them to do so. The more intensely they felt, the more effectively educated became their work.<sup>58</sup> Premchand understood the demands of society and demands of literature, because he succeeded increasingly in creating works that combined social purpose and artistic excellence. But demands of society, as also those of literature, would be seen from a variety of angles. Premchand chose to see from the viewpoint of the oppressed, persecuted, and the deprived. He understood the multiple dimensions of nationalism and nationalist movement. Nationalism, he said, was operating at two levels. At the level of sentiment, it was symbolised by the struggle against imperialism, and "tended to bring millions of subject people into an undifferentiated fraternity of the exploited. But at another level, it operated as to promote the material interest of some section within the large fraternity: without off-course, forgetting to make vague generalized promise to all once freedom had been

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<sup>58</sup> Sudhir Chandra, "Premchand and Indian Nationalism", *Modern Asian Studies* (Vol. 16), No 4, 1982, p. 601.



won.”<sup>59</sup> He read about socialism, Marxist and soviet system but his writing was based on his own experience of life. He searched for solutions of social problems which he understood through his direct contact with the life of people. At the same time, he pointed out to the people the problems of superstition and blind faith. He believed that it was the duty of the writer to point out the problems prevalent in society, and therefore was a strong critic of mysticism, romanticism and other such elements in literature. He supported the realist writers of west but rejected the anti-realism in the contemporary western writings. He offered solutions to traditional problems by himself, and the characters he created, while fictional, were at the same time familiar in the context of Indian society as a whole. Such characterisation had earlier never been part of Indian writing, but were to become subjects of hot discussion soon after. He presented the “reality in undistorted and unembellished form, in a way that it does not become an occasion for mystic or moralist sermonizing but a standing indictment against the existing social order. It does not instil a sense of futility but disgust against the existing order of things, which cries for change. Premchand was the first in Indian literature scene to achieve this, and his achievement remains enviable even today. Making such a big break with tradition (e.g. rejection of religion as a solution to human problems, etc.) he remains deeply rooted in Indian soil. His best works speak in comprehensive images capable of expressing the multidimensionality of reality. That is why their relevance does not exhaust.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Shiv Kumar Misra, *Premchand Our Contemporary*, New Delhi, National Publications, 1986, p. 199.

His writings were rooted in Indian society and especially rural social problems. He showed the nature and scope of social changes. He knew that Indian society had many problems, and through writing he held up a mirror in which these problems were clearly depicted. As someone holding up such a mirror, he did not give a solution of the society's problem, but he pointed out the problem and gave a clue that there was a possibility of change in the society. He therefore identified the problems that needed to be addressed.

As said earlier, he was influenced by socialism and communism. In his writings, he always showed the exploited and exploiters. He talked about the different economic classes, the wealth and the poor people, and at the same time he talked about changes in the society. He showed the duality of the class and nation, and it was not easy to understand how the duality could be resolved. He showed the inequality in the society and supported the cause of equality among Indian people. For independence of country from the British, it was necessary to create a united front of all the classes of Indian to fight against British rule.

Due to his faith in socialism and humanism, he supported the new realistic literary movement known as the Progressive Literature and helped to establish an organisation of Indian authors under the name "Progressive Writers' Association", which later played a historical role in the development of Indian literature. As said earlier, in April 1936, he presided over the first meeting of "Progressive Writers' Association", but he was not a member of the Progressive Writers' Association. He always participated in those movements which were related to the Progress of Nation and literature. Through literature, he showed the political and social reality. His writings contributed towards the nation and nationalism. He set a standard for other writers. In the early years, Progressive Writers' Association writers or members

belonged to the elite class, but later members or writers belonged to intellectual background, who talked about freedom with the new age of society. Premchand influenced the intellectuals of his time to a great extent. According to him, political movement was one important part of freedom movement, but real freedom could be achieved when society changed. Society cannot change without being uplifted by people.

*"I feel that the nature of a poet is entirely based on searching. He is the creator and cherisher of wishes. The poet is like the heart in the breast of the nation. A nation without poet is like a heap of clay. The poet is a prophet, an artist to prophesize. Premchand indeed was one. He was a nationalist and idealistic writer. His writing is part of life, part of reality, closely bound with spiritual destiny".<sup>61</sup>*

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<sup>61</sup> Dr. Nagendra, *Contours and Landmarks of Hindi Literature, Premchand, An Anthology* (Delhi: Bansal & Co., 1981), p. 189.

### Chapter III

#### Factors Contributing to the Formation of Progressive Writers' Association

The political consciousness, the desire for the formation of a new nation, economic upheavals, and social, cultural and religious reform movements, all occurred in the form of waves in India, and these new trends brought revolutionary ideas and the new awakening in national thinking. Politically and culturally the age of nationalism had taken a revolutionary posture. The fast moving events of inter-war period, the successful socialist revolution in Russia, the political formations of the left which emerged were the Communist Party of India (CPI), and the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) gave a revolutionary thinking among Indian intellectuals. The national movement, which took a concrete shape in 1885 with the establishment of Indian National Congress (INC), was slowly gathering momentum under the inspiration of these great social changes. The British government sought to control it, by imposing several restrictions on freedom of association and expression.<sup>62</sup> But it only sharpened and infused the imagination among Indian intellectuals, which had already been inspired by the Russian revolution and the socialist literature. It gave new content in literature and very often to national movement as a whole. Songs of patriotism became more outspoken in tone. The British government offers of constitutional reforms came too late to satisfy even the liberals and 'nationalist India stood poised for a major political strike'. The mass movement of the twenties saw

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<sup>62</sup> Ali Jawad Zaidi, *History of Urdu Literature*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1993), p. 348.

the merging of the Khilafat movement into political mainstream. This unity gave a boost to Progressive National thinking and lot of patriotic poetry was written. The acceptance of the call for 'Complete Independence' (*Poorna Swaraj*) by the Indian National Congress marked a complete break from the reformism of the past. The slogan of "*Inquilab Zindabad*" (long live the revolution) reverberated throughout the country and the theme of freedom or revolution became more frequent and direct in the verses of most of the writers.

The motive behind the writing of revolution was the freedom to rule the nation's destiny according to the people's wishes. When Jawaharlal Nehru added his voice in support of the socialists and a group of young Congress men began functioning as its Congress Socialist wing, most communists joined it as the Communist Party of India was banned. It flashed the message of working class and peasantry who were joining the National movement. The plight of these classes was echoed in the literature. As a result of all these ideas, India was "rocked by huge political hurricanes between the end of First World War and 1935. The non-cooperation movement, the Khilafat movement, the two civil disobedience movements of Congress, movements for revolution by young terrorists, the conservative poisoning, spraying of communal Hindus and Muslims, what did all these lead to? In the eyes of common man, all these were failures, because of British Imperialism; with its paranoiac arrogance it continued to prevail over us."<sup>63</sup> The shadow of oppression, hunger and ignorance still hung over the country. The people of the middle and lower middle classes had constantly lived under economic stress.

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<sup>63</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light, A History of Movement for Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 27.

They had borne the brunt of political humiliation, and had lived under the shadow of want during the world wars. People like Sajjad Zaheer firmly believed that while the literature created by such a class may lack variety, it already carried within it the sense of revolt and resentment, which found a ready echo in the writings of the leftists. The young writers were staggered by new forces of change, and these inspired them to explore and experiment with the new styles and techniques in writings. They had experience of colonial subjugation and inspired by the revolutionary, radical trends and had zeal of changes in their society.

The first attack on the society through their literature was the book “*Angare* (Chingaree)” – A collection of ten short stories’, by Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Ahmed Ali and Mahmuduzzafar. It was published in Lucknow in December 1932, and marked a major turning point in the history of Urdu literature. According to Aziz Ahmed, a historian, “It was a declaration of war by the youth of the middle class against the prevailing social, political and religious institutions”.<sup>64</sup> The *Angare* stories dealt with the prevailing problems of the noble families and descendants, hypocrisy of social and religious life in contemporary India, and took more than one pot-shot at religious orthodoxy, attacking it with what Ahmed Ali later referred to as the ‘absence of circumspection’.

Within a month of its publication, it was condemned by a variety of organizations and Muslim circles, as “obscene” and “blasphemous”. Newspapers and journals published angry editorials and articles denouncing the book. “The

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<sup>64</sup> Shabana Mahmud, “Angare and the Founding of the Progressive Writers’ Association”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 447.

Hindustan times of 21 February 1933 carried an article entitled “Urdu pamphlet denounced: Shias gravely upset”, and quoted a resolution passed by the Central Standing Committee of the All India Conference, Lucknow. This resolution stated that “the meeting strongly condemns the heart rending and filthy pamphlet called “Angare” which has wounded the feelings of the entire Muslim community by ridiculing God and his Prophet and which is extremely objectionable from the standpoints, both of religion and morality”.<sup>65</sup> The book was banned by the government of United Provinces under Section 295 A of the Indian Penal Code on 15th March 1933, which reads “whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of his majesty’s subjects, by words, either spoken or the religious belief of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment either description for a term which may extend to 2 years, or with fine or with both”.<sup>66</sup>

Once the book was banned, all but five copies were destroyed by the police. In reply to this widespread criticism, on 5th April 1933, one author of “*Angare*” issued a statement in the newspaper *Leader* (Allahabad) entitled “In Defence of ‘Angare’, Shall we submit to Gagging?” It was drafted by Mahmuduzzafar.

The text read:

“Some five months back four young authors, among them young women brought out a collection of short stories in Urdu under the title ‘Angare’. I happened to be one of the contributors to this collection.

This book at once raised a storm in Moslem circles. It was said to be

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 448.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 450.

shameless attack on Islam and everything decent in society. The book has already been proscribed by the UP government under Section 295-A of the I.P.C. It is even said that funds are being collected to start the prosecution of the authors. Shall we submit to such gagging? That is the question I wish to raise here. Coming to the contents of the book itself, the stories of my friend S. Sajjad Zaheer are concerned chiefly with the criticism and a satire of the current Moslem conceptions, life and practices. His attack is directed primarily against the intolerable theological burden that is imposed from childhood upon the average Moslem in this country – a burden that leads to a contortion and a cramping of the inquisitive or speculative mind and the vital vigour of body of both man and women. Ahmed Ali essays into the realms of poverty, material, spiritual and physical, especially the poverty of the Moslem woman, and imagination and admirable boldness breaks through the veils of convention to expose the stark reality. Rashid Jahan, who is also a doctor of Medicine drawing on her practical experience, also portrays vividly the ghastly plight of the woman behind the purdah. My own single contribution is an attack on the vanity of man which seeks to find an outlet at the expense of the weak and defenceless womanhood. Nobody can deny the truthfulness of those portraits, and anyone who chooses to exert himself can see that they are not drawn for the sake of literary ‘flair’, but spring from an inner indignation against ‘this sorry scheme of things’. The authors of this book do not wish to make any apology for it. They leave it to float or sink of itself. They are not afraid of the consequences of

having launched it. They only wish to defend ‘the right of launching it and all other vessels like it’... they stand for the right of free criticism and free expression in Indian people in particular. They have chosen the particular field of Islam not because they bear any ‘special’ malice, but because, being born into that particular society, they felt themselves better qualified to speak for that alone. They were surer of their ground there. Whatever happens to the book or to the authors, we hope that others will not be discouraged. Our practical proposal is the formation immediately of League of Progressive Authors, which should bring forth similar collections from time to time, both in English and various vernaculars of our country. We appeal to all those who are interested in this idea to get in touch with us. They may communicate to S Ahmed Ali, M.A. Jalal Manzil, Kucha Pandit, in Delhi.”<sup>67</sup>

Hence the idea of forming a league of progressive writers was seen in this statement. This does not in any way imply that this was the original intended goal of the *Angare* authors. Ahmed Ali commented that it was published ‘as a result of a creative urge of a few young writers...its direction being determined not by any foreign influence but by social condition and the degrading state of society’.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Leader*, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1933, p. 9

<sup>68</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism, The Progressive Writers’ Movement in South Asia, 1932-56*, (New Delhi: Routledge 2009), p. 18.

Whatever the author's goals may have been, the publication of *Angare* was indicative of the fact that certain intellectual and emotional changes were taking place among Indian youth with which Indian literature would soon have to contend.

### **The early history and background of Progressive Writers' Association**

The thirties were important historically. The political impact of the economic crisis that engulfed the world took the shape of the dictatorship of Hitler and his Nazis in Germany. Ruthless, fascist repression was fast spreading from Italy and Germany to other countries. Writers of the east and west became united in a wave of anti-fascist sentiments, fuelled particularly by events in Spain, and Japanese invasion of China.<sup>69</sup> Reacting against the "Art for art's sake" movement of the nineteen twenties, writers and poets began to turn towards politics, society and humanity as a whole, to argue that literature had a social and political relevance. The ideological inclination of the thirties has been seen as intellectual Marxism. The passionate feeling aroused by the Spanish civil war led to the emergence of literature that was sensitive to social decadence, class difference and outmoded and repressive religious institutions. The rise of fascism and growing danger of another world war was holding the threat of mass destruction of people and their cultures. In the sphere of culture, Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse brought together writers of various shades from many countries in Amsterdam in 1932. They expressed their determination to fight against fascism and war, and for the defence of national

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<sup>69</sup> Estelle Dryland, *Faiz Ahmed Faiz 1911-1984*, (Pakistan Vanguard Books Pvt. Ltd, 1993), p. 34.

cultures.<sup>70</sup> In the same year, some young Indian Intellectuals prepared the Progressive Writers' Association Project to transform the face of South Asian Literature and help to reshape the society under colonial rule. All India Forum of Writers was itself proof of the fact that it was the need of the hour. The writers who came together to establish this forum were energetic and talented. Most of them belonged to the middle classes, and as educated intellectuals, were able to see and be frustrated by the situation then present in India. They had a deep-rooted desire for active participation in building a new life where exploitation had been ended and creative potential of man allowed full play. Inspired by Marxism, they wanted to "give expression to reality as it existed in the world of matter and to impart new content to this realism by exposing the evil and projecting the contemporary conflict and the vision of the future progress through clear and moving world images."<sup>71</sup> They were capable of doing it through language that was both elegant and fiery. Their main targets were the reactionary and revivalist ideas about society, war, family and religious institutions. They were determined to promote literary trends that opposed social dogmas and human exploitation. They prided themselves on being the heirs of the Indian Civilization, and believed in the need for an open mind to accept what other cultures offered, especially in the sphere of scientific thought and technology. They challenged all the orthodoxies that they saw in the indigenous cultural and social practices as well as colonial rule. Therefore they were launching the Progressive Writers Movement in India.

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<sup>70</sup> Shiv Kumar Mishra, *Premchand Our Contemporary* (New Delhi: National, 1986), p. 194.

<sup>71</sup> Ali Jawad Zaidi, *A History of Urdu Literature*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1993), p. 361.

In the middle of the 1930's, the progressive literary movement took shape and created a noticeable impact on literary writings and activity in India. The 1930s were the most exciting and turbulent period of India's struggle for independence. This was the decade that saw the end of Gandhi's spread of fascism in Europe. The conditions of India were conducive for launching of the literary movement, which could give a new orientation to literary expression. India saw lot of political discontent and large mass of the people and the middle class intelligentsia were being drawn into the struggle for independence. At the same time, sections of the working classes and the common people were beginning to respond to new forces which sought to prepare them for a struggle to secure better conditions of living, while the underprivileged were beginning to challenge their native exploiters. Writers felt that they could not continue in the old mode as it was not possible remain unconcerned with the life's and thoughts of the common people. Strong nationalist feelings began to emerge in literature, particularly Urdu literature which, according to Ralph Russell, reflected "empathy for the poor, a questioning of existing customs as well as desire for liberation from foreign rule and indigenous elites."<sup>72</sup>

The developments of the 1930s culminated in 1936 with the formation of the Progressive Writers' Association. It succeeded in attracting the old and new writers, poets and scholars from almost all important sub-continental languages. It included such stalwarts as Rabindranath Tagore, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Maulvi Abdul Haq, Vallathol, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and several others. Another great writer was Munshi Premchand, who, as said earlier, gave his blessing to the new literary

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

movement. The association was an All-India Association and included in its ranks writers of a number of India's major languages.

In the words of Ahmed Ali, one of the writers of the Association

*"The Progressive Writers' Movement was essentially an intellectual revolt against the outmoded past, the vitiated tendencies in contemporary thought and literature, the indifference of people to their human condition, against acquiescence to foreign rule, enslavement to practices and belief, both social and religious based on ignorance, against the problems of poverty and exploitation, and complete inanity to progress and life".*<sup>73</sup>

The PWA project would be more radical and uncompromising in its thoughts. Reflecting back on the founding conference, Sajjad Zaheer stated that it had to be a project that broke from the language of Mir and Ghalib. By 1930, it was felt that a different kind of language was required for literature of such bold and new venture. He said that what distinguished this from earlier movements was its revolutionary component, and its commitment to transformation of society through literature, as well as the transformation of literature itself. Even though the social responsibility of intellectuals was not new, the Progressive Writers' Association marked a different way of showing this commitment to the cause of social upliftment. As said earlier, the first move towards the formation of Progressive Writers' Association was the publication of book *Angare* in Lucknow in 1932, which caused an enormous controversy. This book was the subject of both

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<sup>73</sup> Priya Joshi, *In another Country*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002 ), p. 207.

widespread criticism and praise, and that criticism drew the attention of progressive writers, and encouraged them to come together. The book was banned by the British.

After the banning the book in April 1933, Mahmuduzzafar issued a press statement in which he said that they made no apology for what they had done. He called for the immediate formation of a Progressive Writers' League, appealing to all who agreed with them to contact them for this purpose. This aim was finally realised in 1936. From the reaction to the founding of this Association, it is clear that the response to *Angare* was by no means uniformly hostile, and that many who felt that the *Angare* writers had gone too far nevertheless sympathized with their desire to break the taboos which had hitherto excluded important areas of life from literature and muted justifiable social and political protest.<sup>74</sup> So that when the PWA provided a channel for a more moderate realization of that desire it met with widespread welcome.

### **London**

While Ahmed Ali and Mahmuduzzafar were defending their publication in India, the next phase of Progressive Writers' Association seems to have been made in London, in the Nanking restaurant in Denmark Street, in November 1934. "On the evening of 24 November 1934, the atmosphere at London's Nanking hotel must have been electric. A group of young Indian intellectuals were engaged in an intense discussion over a draft document that had been circulated by the convenor of the meeting, Sajjad Zaheer. The document was audacious in its scope, for it sought to

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<sup>74</sup> Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature, A Select History*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 208.

articulate a manifesto for the future of Indian literature."<sup>75</sup> It was there that a number of radical Indian students and intellectuals met, discussed and formulated its original manifesto and made plans to establish the movement in India. They included Mulk Raj Anand, Sajjad Zaheer, Jyoti Ghosh, Promod Sen Gupta and M. D. Tasir. According to Sajjad Zaheer he and his Indian friends were gradually drifting towards socialism. "Our minds searched for a philosophy which would help us understand and solve the different problems. We were not satisfied with idea that humanity had always been miserable and would also remain so. We read Marx and other socialist writers with great enthusiasm, solved the historical and philosophical problems through mutual discussion. Our minds became clear and our hearts contented".<sup>76</sup> The exposure to Marxism, the political situation of Germany, the young men, mostly students, who shared a wish to become writers, all these factors contributed to a desire to do something for the country. And writers what do except writing, therefore there was a need for a forming a literary association. The writers who drafted the manifesto setting out the literary creed of the proposed movement professed socialist views. They were clear in the minds that what they aimed at was a broadly based organization of writers belonging to different schools of thought or with no affiliation. They sought participation of nationalist's liberals under influence of Hindu and Muslim revivalist movements' of late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Progressive movement, like Aligarh movement, was motivated by social and political objective. However it was broader based and its impact was also far

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<sup>75</sup> Raza Mir and Ali Hussain Mir, *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry, Anthems of Resistance*, (New Delhi: IndiaInk Roli Books, 2006) p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Carlo Coppola, *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature*, (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1988) p. 6.

reaching and long lasting. One of the <sup>5</sup>reason for this was that it did not have to fake historical links, as its root were deep in reformist movement of the past and shared social sympathies with common readers. Sajjad Zaheer and his associates emphasised that the basic principles of literary progressivism were based on the writer's commitment to cause of independence, identification with common man and adoption of rational outlook on life.

Acting as a catalyst to bring about the formal organization was the British leftist critic and essayist Ralph Fox. With Fox's help the group of about six or seven individuals began to organize an association. A committee was formed, and as could be expected in such instances, the beginning was very slow. "But soon all of us took greater interest", Zaheer remarked.<sup>77</sup> It was decided that a manifesto should be drafted to formulate the aims and objects of the association. Mulk Raj Anand prepared the first draft which was later given to Dr. Jyoti Ghosh, who presented draft before the committee. Sajjad Zaheer rewrote the drafts of Anand and Ghosh and prepared a final draft. By the end of meeting, the attendees had decided to formalize their group as an institution, which would be called the All India Progressive Writers' Association. The PWA was to be based in India, and Sajjad Zaheer volunteered to give it institutional shape in the subcontinent.

Subhas  
introduce

A version of the manifesto was published in India in the October 1935 issue of Hans (Swan), the prestigious Hindi literary journal edited by Premchand.<sup>78</sup> The English version of the manifesto was published in the Left Review (London) of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

February 1936. This manifesto in its multiple variants is the basic document in the development of socialist realism in India.

The Hans version of the manifesto is given below.

1. "Great changes are taking place in Indian Society."
2. "And the foundation of old ideas and beliefs are being shaken and a new society is being born."
3. "[*This point is left blank in the original source*]"
4. "It is the duty of Indian writers that they should give the dress of words and form to the existent changes in Indian life and should assist in putting the country on the path of construction and progress."
5. "After the destruction of the ancient civilization, Indian literature having run away from the realities of life and hidden in the protection of asceticism and devotionism."
6. "The result is that it has become lifeless and ineffective."
7. "Today in our literature, in both form as well as in content, there has come an excess of devotionism and asceticism. There is a general exhibition of emotion; reason and thought have been totally ignored –nay!- rejected!"
8. "In the preceding two centuries which have been the declining period of our history, most literature which has been produced has been of this very sort."
9. "The objective of this association is to take our literature and other art forms from the monopolistic control of priests, pundits and other conservatives. It (the association) should bring them (literature and other art forms) nearer the people. They should be made to reflect life and reality so that we may be able to light our future."

10. "Preserving the best traditions of India, we will comment pitilessly on the decadent aspects of our country and will depict in a critical and creative manner all those things with which we may arrive at our destination."
11. "It is our belief that the new literature of India must respect the basic realities of our present-day life, and these are the questions of our bread, plight, our social degradation and political slavery. Only then will we be able to understand these problems and revolutionary spirit will be born in us."
12. "All those things which take us toward confusion, dissension, and blind imitation is conservative; also, all that which engenders in us a critical capacity, which induces us to test our dear traditions on the touchstone of our reason and perception, which makes us healthy and produces among us the strength of unity and integration, that is what we call progressive."
13. "Keeping these objectives in mind, the association has passed the following resolutions:
  - a. To establish organizations of writers in the various linguistic provinces of India; to establish contact and cooperation among these organizations by means of meetings, pamphlets, etc. to produce a close relationship among the organizations of provinces, the centre, and London.
  - b. To establish an association with those literary organizations which are not opposed to the aims of this organisation.
  - c. To create and translate progressive literature which should be healthy and powerful, with which we may be able to erase cultural backwardness and advance on the path towards Indian freedom and social progress.

- d. To propagate the acceptance of Hindustani as the national language and Indo-Roman as the national script.
- e. To struggle for freedom of thought, opinion, and expression of ideas.
- f. To protect the interests of authors; to assist people's authors who may want help in order to publish their books."

The *Left Review* version is as follows:

1. "Radical changes are taking place in Indian Society."
2. "Fixed ideas and old beliefs, social and political institutions are being challenged. Out of present turmoil and conflict a new society is arising."
3. "The spiritual reaction, however, thought moribund and doomed to ultimate decay, is still operative and is making desperate efforts to prolong itself."
4. "It is duty of Indian writers to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and assist the spirit of progress in the country."
5. "Indian literature, since the breakdown of classical literature, has had the fatal tendency to escape from the actualities of life. It has tried to find a refuge from reality in spiritualism and idealism."
6. "The result has been that it has produced a rigid formalism and a banal and perverse ideology."
7. "Witness and mystical devotional obsession of our literature, its furtive and sentimental attitude towards sex, its emotional exhibitionism and its almost total lack of rationality."
8. "Such literature was produced particularly during the past two centuries, one of the unhappy periods of our history, a period of

disintegrating feudalism and of acute misery and degradation of Indian people as whole.”

9. “It is the object of our association to rescue literature and other art from the priestly, academic and decadent classes in whose hands they have degenerated so long; to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people; and to make them the vital organ which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead us to the future.”
10. “While claiming to be the inheritors of the best traditions of Indian civilization, we shall criticize ruthlessly, in all its political, economic and cultural aspects, the spirit of reaction in our country; and we shall foster through interpretative and creative works (both native and foreign resources) everything that will lead our country to the new life for which it is striving.”
11. “We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today – the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation, so that it may help us to understand these problems and through such understanding helps us act.”
12. “[*This point has been left blank in the original*]”
13. “With the above aims in view, the following resolutions have been adopted:
  - a. To establish organizations of writers in the various linguistic zones of India; the coordination of these organizations by holding conferences, publishing of magazines, pamphlets, etc.

- b. To co-operate with those literary organizations whose aims do not conflict with the basic aims of the association.
- c. To produce and to translate literature of a progressive nature and of high technical standard; to fight cultural reactions; and in this way, to further the cause of Indian freedom and social regeneration.
- d. To strive for the acceptance of a common language (Hindustani) and a common script (Indo-Roman) for India.
- e. To protect the interests of authors; to help authors who require and deserve assistance for the publication of their works.
- f. To fight for the right of free expression of thought and opinion.”

Hence the deliberate aim of the Progressive Writers’ Association was to “produce and translate literature of a progressive nature and high technical standard, to fight cultural reaction, and in this way to further the cause of Indian freedom and social re-generation”.<sup>79</sup>

A noticeable feature of both the versions of the manifesto is that the writers involved with it were committed to using their literary works as means to secure freedom for India from Britain. Hence, the thinking of aspirations for their country’s freedom, cause of communism and nationalistic hopes could be seen in it. Communism seemed to be the best alternative to British imperialism and domination at that point of time. Before 1936, there was very small effort by Indian Writers to organize themselves. There was a practical set of resolves offered to writers for them to ply

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<sup>79</sup> Rosemary Marangoly George, *Indian English and the Fiction of National Literature*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 31.

their craft, like the publication and translation programs, assistance in preserving freedom of expression and opinion, and even a hint of financial subsidy in resolution. Prior to this there was no country wide effort to help writers, and very little literature was translated from one language to another. The left review manifesto speaks of using both native and foreign resources in achieving the new life for India. The Hans version mentions to depict in a critical and creative manner all those things with which may arrive to our destination. It showed that manifesto was unabashedly modernist and approach was radical, and the radical changes taking place in literature and to place things that were Indian in the foreground. While the preparation of manifesto the young Indian writers in London setting were able to put aside their individual linguistic, provincial and communal dispositions for what they perceived as a greater national good. It has seen as solidarities among Indians writer. The manifesto emphasized realism, that literature be used as a tool to display the actualities of life. It was an astute political document, and a highly ambitious one that sought to position the PWA as the harbinger of revolutionary changes in the literary landscape of India.<sup>80</sup> The manifesto made a list of ambitious tasks that the Association should take and the cultural and literary objectives for which it set out to win support. This included the resolution to 'produce' and to 'translate' literature of a progressive nature and of a high technical standard, to fight cultural reaction; and in this way, to further the cause of Indian freedom and social regeneration.<sup>81</sup> The manifesto makes explicit the progressive in defining the concept of progressivism, what their aims were and how they should work. In this respect it was landmark in

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<sup>80</sup> Raza Mir and Ali Hussain Mir, *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry*, op.cit., p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, op.cit., p. 20.

Indian history and first time established a platform for writers to organise and propagate views on political, social, economic as well as literary concerns. The manifesto was full of scathing comments about the state of Indian literature and its society. It was striking in its denunciation of past forms and bold in its assertions of transforming the literary world.

### **Paris**

Political events of the world had an immense impact on the literary works of the time. The international political, social and economic background was also instrumental in the formation of the PWA. The world economy was still reeling from the aftershock of the Great Depression of 1929. There was an increase in unemployment and poverty in Western Europe. Fascist parties had come to power in Germany in 1933 and Italy in 1922. In the face of such disasters, they were able to get support from those who were frustrated and desperate, and succeeded, as is well known, in directing this resentment and frustration towards convenient scapegoats such as the minorities. In the same period, the success of the Russian Revolution was seen as an inspiration and a new social experiment in the face of the barbarism of Nazism and Fascism. Vibrant communist parties were an attraction for a new generation of youth disillusioned with the perceived shortcomings of established left socialist parties. It was a period when many writers and journalists were receptive to the ideas and practice of what they saw as a new dynamic democratic society in the making.

All writers were influenced by these great political and ideological currents. Even the most apolitical and impartial writers could not avoid the political questions

or avoid taking a stance on issues relating to war, fascism and colonial practices in Africa and Asia.

Stephen Spender, a British writer and critic, stated: "I felt hounded by external events. There was ever increasing unemployment in America, Great Britain and on the continent. The old world seemed incapable of solving its problems and out of the disorder fascist regimes were rising".<sup>82</sup> Increasingly, writers in the 1930s began to feel and say that minds could not, and should not, remain immune to the general political fate of many millions of people. So it is clearly visible that literature is not away from the politics, it can depict political aspects. At the same period many writers had openly declared their pro-fascist sympathies. It was French writers who acted against fascism, which was growing in Europe. The *Left Review* carried an announcement of an International Congress of Writers to be open in Paris on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1935, called "by a committee of French writers who believed that the perils confronting cultural freedom in a number of countries to-day are such that measures should be taken for its defence."<sup>83</sup> Similar announcements from the organizational committee of the Congress were sent to many writers and journals throughout the world. In India it came from the committee through the journal *Sawera* (Dawn) of Karachi:

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"Fellow writers! Support life against death. Our pens, our art, our knowledge should not relent against those forces which invite death, which choke mankind, which rule with power of money, which establish the dictatorship of industrialists and tyrants and finally appear in the

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<sup>82</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, op.cit., p. 22

<sup>83</sup> Carlo Coppola, *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature*, op.cit., p. 17.



various guises of fascism. And these are the very forces which suck the blood of innocent human beings".<sup>84</sup>

Around two hundred writers attended; according to E. M. Forster, a member of the British delegation, fifteen countries were represented. From India it was Sophia Wadia, who was delegate of India. The representatives from the Progressive Writers' Association had also participated in the 1935 writers' congress for the defence of culture against fascism in Paris and had received the attention and encouragement of other writers such as Louis Aragon, André Gide, Henri Barbusse, and Alexi Tolstoy.<sup>85</sup> Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer attended this International Congress for the Defence of Culture in Paris, which emphasised freedom of expression and the interrelationship between art and society. After this Congress, Anand went on to present an address at the Conference of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture in London, 19-23 June 1936. The main aim of this Association was to bring together writers on a common platform and to stimulate translations of great works. In addition, the Congress believed that it was necessary to try and seek arenas for publication of works which were censored in the country of the author, as well as to set up a foundation for a world award, and fight, through culture, against war and fascism. Anand and Zaheer absorbed much of what was said at these Congresses, and their acceptance of these ideas can be seen to have shaped the central issues of concern for the PWA.

These conference encouraged Zaheer for his mission to form the Progressive Writers' Association in India. In summer of 1935 he had finished studies in London

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>85</sup> Priya Joshi, *In Another Country*, op.cit., p. 208.

and came to Paris where he met Louis Aragón, a French writer who had great experience in organising writers association, and who helped Zaheer greatly with his advice. Zaheer returned to India, and landed at Bombay harbour in November 1935 with the idea of an All India Progressive Writers' Association firmly in his mind.

## **India**

After returning to India Sajjad Zaheer made contact with several established writers across India who were already predisposed towards the progressive cause. He met Allama Iqbal, a famous Urdu poet, Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Premchand, Maulvi Abdul Haq, a linguistic scholar and Urdu poet, Maulana Hasrat Mohani a *ghazal* writer and Urdu poet and many other old and young writers. Most of the writers agreed with the aims and objectives of Association because the manifesto did not contain anything that an enlightened freedom loving writer could find objectionable. Zaheer had contacted Ahmed Ali who was in Allahabad and Rashid Jahan and Mahmuduzzafar who were both in Amritsar. In Bombay he was introduced to some writers who were sympathetic to his mission, and also encountered resistance amongst some writers who lectured him about the reality of religious caste and communitarian strength in India.<sup>86</sup> In Allahabad he met with Tarachand, who was drawn to the prospect of the progressive movement in literature. Zaheer knew that if the movement was to be successful it needed to be representative of all the linguistic tradition of India. Bengali, Punjabi, Marathi and writers representing south Indian Languages were quick to respond and gave their blessing and support to the project, but Hindi writers were slow to respond. So he

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<sup>86</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, op.cit., p. 29.

was delighted when Firaq Gorakhpuri, an eminent writer of Hindi as well as of the Urdu literature world, came forward with his support.<sup>87</sup>

In India under the leadership of Sajjad Zaheer the first All-India Progressive writer's conference was held in Lucknow on April 10, 1936.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

## Chapter IV

### Establishment of Progressive Writers' Association

The definition of 'Progressive' according to the Association was as follows:

“All those things which take us towards confusion, dissension, and blind imitation are conservative; all that which engenders in us a critical capacity, which induces us to test our tradition on the basis of our reason and perception. This makes us healthy and integrated, that is what we call progressive”.

The rise of Progressive Writers' Association is period of ascendancy, it played a crucial role in the struggle for independence and its unflagging spirit of resistance against injustice. The establishment of Progressive Writers' Association is neither an accident nor a conspiracy. According to Sajjad Zaheer, “it is not true that the movement for progressive literature was launched under the direction of an enemy or a foreign power. It is in fact a movement founded on patriotism humanity and liberty. Its purpose is definitely not to reject our old civilization and morals, and their manifestation in literature or the art. Instead, it attempts to revive the best elements of this country's civilization, and with that as the foundation to create new and better literature, art and culture by adding leaven to the old culture. The Association of Progressive writers is a cultural institution for the creation of literature and the promotion of progressive views. This does not mean that its members must not entertain opinions on political issues or they should not express them through their association. Progressive writers will always continue to write in support of liberty for their people, and end to exploitation of one group of people by

another, and protection of basic human rights. They will always assist progressive forces in society, for that is the source of power for progressive literature. They will not be weakened by the attacks of the reactionaries”<sup>88</sup>.

So the formation of the association was natural result of the circumstances prevailing at the end of First World War. Billions of rupees worth of goods was destroyed and millions died in the war. The people who profited by all this were capitalists, moneylenders, bankers and mill owners. By the time this war ended, a huge economic collapse began. This crisis began in America and spread over to all other countries. Millions became jobless and people began to die of hunger. In the meanwhile fascism surfaced in Japan and Europe. The events that followed made the future of mankind seem dark. The writers felt deeply the effects of the existing international situation with the worldwide economic debacle. In the times when there was suffering and capitalist's greed, it was progressive writers, who shared the grief of suffering humanity and attempted to bring willingness to struggle for their rights. In India in the middle of 1930's the situation was fairly difficult. The prolonged struggle with the British had produced dissatisfaction with Gandhian methods and sympathy for more modern left-wing, Marxist influenced political solutions. Nehru expressed these views very well with his Harrow and Trinity education and his closeness, through his father and through the long continued patronage of Gandhi, to the older establishment congress leadership, further enhanced the range of his appeal. This was period in which the Congress, for good tactical reasons, committed itself to a programme of radical reforms. The British did not recognize the extent, to which it was gaining ground, but by 1935-36, Indians estimated the prospect more

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<sup>88</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light*, op.cit., Introduction, p. x.

accurately, and many felt that the agreeing to the radical sentiment of the prospective future government was thoughtful.

The period between 1936 and the end of 1939 (when Second World War began) was the time of new ideas, revolutionary movements, noble resolutions and glimmering hope for country. There was never a time, during all of enslavement to imperialism, when the yearning for freedom was absent from the hearts of people. Sajjad Zaheer said “New writers were in a grim mood. The feeling that life is suffocated in slavery, became a stream deprived of water, and that in freedom it is a vast ocean, the feeling that we are not free, that we ought to be free and the burning certainty that we will be free, all these feeling had gathered intensity during this period”. The result of this was that many writers like Allama Iqbal, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Munshi Premchand, Josh Malihabadi and others in this age emerged as heralds of freedom, and so the literature of protest was born in the sub-continent and writers began to write about national, international issues and different aspect of social life.

The Progressive Association took forward these same traditions. It was not foreign plant transplanted in an alien land. It had been nurtured here, in our own homeland. This was the reason why when Sajjad Zaheer and his friends established the association of progressive writers, freedom loving writers of all schools of thought, old as well as new, welcomed the association. There were communist, socialist and nationalists.

All-India Progressive Writers’ Association was launched at Lucknow in 1936. The formation of All India Progressive Writers’ Association is a landmark in the cultural history of India, presented new sensibility in depicting the social and



political realities. They brought about the radical approach which led to a qualitative transformation of the creative realm, resulting in the production of some outstanding works of literature. They represented the cultural avant-garde, which was based on the radical and progressive practices by taking the problem of the oppressed, and confronting feudal conservatism and capitalist imperialism. The contribution of this movement in two different ways, first its positive impact on cultural creativity and secondly, by critical introspection about its present state and tracing its relationship with the past.

The Progressive Writers' Association is considered a tumultuous episode in the intellectual history of India. It was first regional language based organization and brought the mass of cultural practitioners under its umbrella or provided a platform for them to articulate their ideas and they shared several national issue in the common ground.

The Progressive Writers' Association indicate the question of culture, identity and transformation issue. They (the association writers) had own vision or view for community and nation in the context of the anti-imperialist struggle and the struggle for social justice. The first All-India Progressive Writers' Association meeting in 1936 was largely political and stamped with a certain ideology. The inclusion of writers from other parts of the country did place the movement on a broad base.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Carlo Coppola, *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature*, op.cit., p. 43.

### **The Conferences of the All India Progressive Writers' Association**

The first All India Progressive Writer's conference was held in Rifah-e-Aam hall in Lucknow on April 10, 1936. The choice of this place and the date for the conference were significant. In April the annual meeting of All-India national congress was scheduled to be held in Lucknow, and Jawaharlal Nehru had been chosen to preside over its sessions. This was the period of United Front, and Soviet diplomacy encouraged foreign communist parties to enter into anti-fascist alliances.<sup>90</sup> It was decided that Chaudhry Mohammed Ali Radolvi, who was landlord and belonged to upper classes of Oudh, become the chairman for the committee. The conference commenced with Chaudhry's welcome. He had written address, which was a useful record adherent of an older civilization and literature welcomed Modern, progressive literature. After Chaudhry Mohammed Ali's speech. Munshi Premchand was unanimously elected president of the conference.<sup>91</sup> Premchand's selection for the presidency was tactically wise. He was a master of Urdu and Hindi, was at the highest pinnacle of fame, having written about a dozen novels, two plays and almost two hundred short stories. Presiding over the session of the conference, Premchand delivered an address on the Nature and Purpose of Literature. He said that "A literature that does not awaken food taste in us, that does not afford us spiritual and intellectual satisfaction, does not energize and warm us, does not kindle a sense of beauty, a literature that does not produce in us the determination to

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<sup>90</sup> Hafeez Malik, "The Marxist Literary Movement in India and Pakistan", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1967, p. 643.

<sup>91</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light*, op.cit., p. 62.

overcome obstacles, is of no use for us today. It cannot be termed literature. Premchand reminded the writers that society was their court of Justice and they were answerable to this people's court, their answer could be accepted if they sincerely promoted humanity, decency, justice and truth".<sup>92</sup> He pointed out that earlier discussions had usually centred on language and its development, rather than ideas and opinions. It was very important task as without language views and emotions could not be shown. The language is mode of communication and with development of language comes the development of literature. Although, earlier literature had great achievement but now it became strong enough to analyse issues of religion, science and politics. A good literature reflects truth and reality, which continued for centuries. Literature should contain elements of reality, experience of life and truth, and had quality of touching the heart and mind of people and is a mirror of reality.

The definition of literature is 'criticism of life and progress'. that which creates in us the power to act; makes us examine the subjective and objective causes that has brought a pass of degeneration and finally helps us to overcome those causes.

Those things which give pleasure to the rich can be the cause of sadness to the poor. The best religious, moral and spiritual leaders have always presented a model of equality, brotherhood and civilized behaviour, and always attempted to change this dream into reality. But experience shows that the dream of human freedom, brotherhood and equality can only become real, and the ideal realized, when acts within the forces of progress. The society made progress when it is based on equality and literature must present this progress. The difference between Indian

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

literatures to international literature can be noticed in subject discussed in the conference. Indian literature had limited boundary and writers thought that superficial understanding and quick pen is enough. This idea was responsible for decline of Indian literature. So writers would have raised the standard of Indian literature that it can be more advantageous for society. Indian literature should attain status in society which it deserves, and it analyses and criticised all aspects of life. It was necessary to create own identity in literature. The literature as progressive means thoughtful, which awakens in spirit of freedom and of beauty; which is creative, which is the realities of life, the literature that will produce movement, restlessness and a tumult within us, that will not put us to sleep – because any more sleep can only be a precursor of death”.<sup>93</sup>

Others who took a part in this conference were Dr. Abdul Aleem, who was a lecturer in Arabic in the Aligarh University, Maulana Hasrat Mohani who was a ghazal writer and Urdu poet, Firaq Gorakhpuri, a writer of Hindi and Urdu literature, Ahmed Ali was a writer of Angare, Mahmuduzzafar was the vice principle of the MAO college in Amritsar, and writer of Angare. Rasheed Jahan was a doctor and also writer of Angare. The other parts of literary delegates from Madras, Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Sindh, Bihar and U.P also participated in the conference, socialist leaders Jaya Prakash Narayan, Yusuf Meher Ali, Indulal, Yagnik and Mian Iftikharuddin were other participates of the conference. Sarojini Naidu well known Congress leader and poet sent a message of encouragement and support to the conference. The constitution of association was approved and drafted

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<sup>93</sup> ‘Hans’ Magazine, Microfilm in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, dated July 1936, Banaras, p.84, Hindi Speech reported, translation done by the researcher.

by Dr. Abdul Aleem, Mahmuduzzafar and Sajjad Zaheer became the general secretary of the association.

### **The resolution adopted by the conference**

The resolution was that denouncing Benito Mussolini's aggression against Abyssinia, Japan's attack on China and criticised the suppressing of British Government on Indian press and civil liberties. The progressive writers supported the peace, freedom and democracy and believed that liberty and global peace were necessary for the development of civilization. Thus the progressive literature became a part of the freedom struggle of India, with its resolutions. It drew the attention of British Government and home secretary, government of India; M.G. Hallet noted the rapid growth of the association with its inaugural conference in Lucknow. He confiscated the copies of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association publication new Indian Literature under the See Customs Act, on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1936, the home secretary of India sent report to the India office about the confiscation in India of copies of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association publication. "New Indian Literature" which read: "Information has been received that S.S. Zaheer has advised M.R. Anand, secretary of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association in London that copies of the association publication NEW INDIAN LITERATURE" have all been confiscated in India has suggested that steps should be taken to have questions asked in the House of common about this matter.

It is established that this association is connected with commenter via the Indian Students 'Secret communist groups and therefore all copies of its publication, "NEW INDIAN LITERATURE", which have or may come to notice in India are

liable to be withheld under the general communist notification'.<sup>94</sup> It appeared that all India progressive conference make great upheaval in Indian society and the government tried to prove that Progressive movement was more political than literary, because of its resolution. Therefore the government confiscated the new Indian literature, but it does not mean that PWA did not function. They organized the further meeting of the conference. With the in-augural of conference the Progressive Writers' Association had a huge and it became an umbrella, where all writers could find a place. The PWA understood their mission for constructing a United Front of writers against Imperialism and reactionary social tendencies. Never before had writers across India been mobilised around a single platform so effectively, and in no previous movement had a literary school, so redefined the terms of its creative output and its engagement with its society and times.<sup>95</sup> The central office of All India Progressive Association Writers was in Allahabad, and members of committee decided to continue the further conference meetings. The PWA's anti-colonial reputation made the British Government suspicious, and Home Secretary of India, M.G. Hallet issued a circular to all local government to watch the movement, as in his opinion it was in accordance with the current policy of the Communist International. His circular on warning conveyed to local government regarding the Indian Progressive Writers' Association read as:

central office

It will be noticed that the list of contacts attached to the P.U.C contains the names of considerable number of professors in Indian Universities and of editors of

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<sup>94</sup> File no. 41/17/36, Home Political, 1936.

<sup>95</sup> Raza Mir and Ali Hussain Mir, *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry*, op.cit., p. 9.

Indian newspaper. In view of the antecedents of the originators of this association (vide page 248-52 of India and Communism (Revised) 1935") this preponderance of intelligentsia is hardly surprising. The membership is drawn largely from the suspecting or unsuspecting friends of a few persons such S.S. Zaheer (the son of an ex-Chief Judge of Oudh Chief Court), Zainul Abedin Ahmad (the son of D.I.G of Police in Sindh), or Promod Ranjan Sen Gupta, son of Public Prosecutor, Krishnagar, Bengal.

The Association is a typical example of the methods of infiltration now being pursued by Communists in all countries in accordance with the current policy of Cominter. I do not think that either journalists or educational authorities could resent – and I think that many would welcome – information on these lines clearly with the object of putting them on guard and with no suggestion that the I.P.W.A as a body was necessarily subversive or revolutionary organisation."

A circular was further sent to all local Governments, which said

"I am desired to address you in connection with the organization known as the Indian Progressive Writers' Association. This association held its first conference at Lucknow simultaneously with the annual session of the Indian National Congress in April 1936. Since then S.S. Zaheer, the General Secretary, and other members of the Executive committee have been active in forming local branches of the Association and such branches are known to exist in Aligarh, Allahabad, Andhra, Calcutta, Delhi, Gujarat, Hyderabad (Deccan), Poona and the Punjab. The association also has contacts in a number of other educational centres.

This Association owes its origin to an association of the same name formed in London about a year ago. S.S. Zaheer, the secretary of the Association in India,

was one of the signatories of the original manifesto defining the aims of the association when it was first started in London.

The proclaimed aims of the association are comparatively innocuous and suggest that it concerns itself solely with the organisation of journalists and writers and promotion of interest in literature of progressive nature. There is reason to believe that the association has already attracted interest and some support from persons of an intellectual type who are unlikely to have any sympathy with communism or other revolutionary theories. The association is, however, a typical example of the methods being pursued by communist in all countries in accordance with the current policy of the communist International. Though it is not suggested that the Indian Progressive Writers' Association as a body is necessarily a subversive or revolutionary organisation, it is desirable for the reasons given that its development should be watched with some suspicion".<sup>96</sup>

After the establishment of All India Progressive Writers' Association in Lucknow, the first All Indian Progressive Conference was held in Allahabad in 1937. The association members decided to choose Maulvi Abdul Haq presidium for the 1937 conference. He occupied a permanent place in the evolution of the Urdu language and secretary of the long established society for the advancement of Urdu (Anjum taraqqi – Urdu organisation founded by Maulvi Abdul Haq in 1903, in Aligarh for its advancement or evolution of cultural heritage). Unfortunately, he did not come to preside over the conference due to his illness, but he sent his presidential address. In it he exhorts the progressive to-do for Indian society, what the

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<sup>96</sup> File no. 7/9/36 Political, 1936.

Encyclopaedists had done France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>97</sup> (They suffered at the hands of reactionaries, and were thrown into prisons. Their books were banned and burned, but their resolution did not weaken, and it provided substance for enlightenment and revolution of thoughts).

This time Acharya Narendra Dev and Pandit Ram Naresh Tripathi took chairmanship of the association. The conference was in Allahabad in 1937 and this brought together political leaders and writers. So the congress socialist politicians Acharya Narendra Dev and Jaya Prakash Narayan attended as well as the Hindi writer Narendra Sharma and Ram Naresh Tripathi.<sup>98</sup> A large number of students from Allahabad University participated in the conference of Allahabad. The eminent Hindi writers Shivdan Singh Chauhan, Narendra Sharma and Jainendra Kumar took part in the conference. Ramesh Chandra Singh and Om Prakash Singal, political activists and editors of the Hindi weekly paper of the communist party were also there. In 1937, there were no conferences held for Progressive Writers' Association, instead two convocations happened, Once in Delhi (probably in winter 1936) and once in April 1937 at Haripur (district Bombay), where the annual convention of the congress had been scheduled. The All India Progressive Writers' Association meeting took place in Delhi and was attended by Dr. Aleem, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who was a prominent Urdu poet and Indulal Yagnik at the same time All India Congress Committee's meeting was there and there was also a convention of the All India Peasant Committee. During the same period, the Spanish civil war was in progress

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<sup>97</sup> Ralph Russell, *How Not to Write, The History of Urdu Literature, and Other Essays on Urdu and Islam*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 79.

<sup>98</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, op.cit., p. 33.

(Spanish Civil war was fought between the republicans, who were loyal to the established Spanish Republican and the Nationalist Rebel group led by General Francisco Franco). The Progressive Writers' Association supported the Spanish democrats and criticised the fascist Francisco Franco and his followers. In Delhi, a committee was formed, comprising different democratic parties to help the democratic Spain. The association became member of this committee and its general secretary was elected the secretary of the committee. In Bengal, the workers of association published a statement from Rabindranath Tagore in support of the Spanish democrats and in condemnation of the fascists.

The other meeting of Progressive Writers' Association in Haripura was informal, and Sarojini Naidu presided over this meeting. The one thousand people attended this meeting. The Progressive Writers' Association also participated in the meeting, sponsored by Amritsar Kishan Shaba (Peasant Organization), in the summer of 1937.<sup>99</sup> The Kishan conference was held in Jallianwala Bagh, and progressive writers meeting was also scheduled to be held there. Faiz had organized the meeting, as he was a leading activist in the labour movement in Punjab, and Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Mahmuduzzafar attended this meeting. Basically, Faiz Ahmed Faiz wanted the progressive writers to understand the problem of the workers. The main theme was middle class writer's relationship with workers and peasants which was main subject of the writers work. After this meeting, Sajjad Zaheer met with Iqbal, who said that he was interested in socialism and he supported the Progressive Writer's movement. The second conference of Progressive Writers' Association took place in Allahabad in 1938. Pandit Bishambher Nath Pandey was

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

in charge of the conference, and also secretary of the Allahabad branch of the Progressive Writers' Association. He was Hindi poet and writer and member of the congress. The presidium included Josh Malihabadi and Sumitranandan pant, Maithili Sharan Gupt, Faiz Ahmed Faiz from Punjab, Ali Sardar Jafri, during this time he had taken admission in M.A at Lucknow University, Premchand's younger son, Amritrai and other Hindi writers from Banaras attended this conference. The Urdu writers Syed Aijaz Hussain, Firaq Gorakhpuri took part in conference. The most important thing in the conference was involving of Hindi writer's among these Jawaharlal Nehru also attended the conference, and spoke on the theme of progressive literature and the role of writers. In this session Rabindranath Tagore sent a message and it was read in the conference:

“To live in seclusion has become second nature to me, but it is a fact that the writer who holds himself aloof from society can deprives himself of the experience which comes from mingling with number of people. To know and understand society, and to show the path to progress, it is essential that we keep our finger on the pulse of society and listen to the beating of its heart. This is only possible when our sympathies are with humanity, and when we share its sorrows ... New Writers must mix with men and recognize that if they live in seclusion as I do they will not achieve their aims. I understand now that in living apart from society for so long I have committed a grave mistake... This understanding burns in my heart like a lamp, and no argument can extinguish it”.<sup>100</sup> In this message he criticised himself and also advised writers to dedicate themselves selflessly to the service of their country and their people.

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<sup>100</sup> Ralph Russell, *How Not to Write*, op.cit., p. 80.

Jawaharlal Nehru gave the speech in the conference. In his speech he denied that socialism can crush the individuality of a person or an artist. He said that the writers showed the world with reality. According to him "There is an imaginary world, in the mind of the writers, which the writer thinks can be accessed by real world. The way this is done is by showing this imaginary world to other people, by building a bridge between the imaginary and the real worlds. Masterpieces are such bridges. Those who cross these bridges, at first watch the imaginary world with longing, and then they try to walk towards it". In India too, writers have had a good deal of influence for example, Tagore has influenced Bengal. But so far, there have been few writers who have helped the country forge ahead. That is why the establishment of the association of progressive writers fulfils a great need. We have great expectation from it.<sup>101</sup> For him Progressive writer's movement was progressive when it linked to social movements, which were advancing the society.

The conference was stronger than previous years. It united the writers who associated the movement and those people who supported them, creating harmony and solidarity among them. It made movement of progressive writers look like next progression of national literature. One of the Progressive Writers' Association Conference was held in autumn of 1938 in Patna. It was presided by Syed-wazir-hasan, who was the father of Sajjad Zaheer. The conference was attended by Mulk Raj Anand, Majaz and Ali Sardar Jafri. During an informal meeting, held in Patna,

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<sup>101</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light*, op.cit., p.124.

whilst the young poet Majaz recited his poem 'Aawara', Ali Sardar Jafri recited a poem by Mirza Ghalib, against despair.<sup>102</sup>

### Calcutta

The Second All India Conference of the Association of progressive writers was held in Calcutta in December 1938.

In those days leftist movements were spreading in Bengal. Already Saratchandra Chatterjee a well-known Bengali Writer, who was influenced by Gorky and other soviet writers, boldly declared in his article "Art and Corruption in literature" in 1924 that modern literature was no longer satisfied with dull monotonous lives of kings and zamindars; it should record the feelings, miseries and sufferings of the downtrodden as in the soviet literature. Only then would the writers be able to find a place for themselves in world literature.<sup>103</sup> In 1938, a new awakening and turbulence came in Industrial workers. Peasants were fighting for their rights and peasant movement mobilised hundreds of thousands of peasants. The student organization had been established and after long period communist party started functioning legally. Many young terrorists who were freed from Andaman and other Jails were adopting Marxist socialism. All this democratic flurry and organization were main reason for the growth and strengthening of progressive literature and Marxist view in Bengal.

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<sup>102</sup>Squadron Leader Anil Sehgal, *Ali Sardar Jafri: The Youthful Boatman of Joy*, (Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 2001), p. 19.

<sup>103</sup> Sarojmohan Mitra, "Progressive Culture Movement in Bengal" *Social Scientist* Vol.8, 1979, p. 115.

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Calcutta was chosen as the venue of the second All India Progressive Writer's conference, and this was held at end of December 1938. This conference opened with an address by Tagore.<sup>104</sup> But, due to his ill health, he gave his address to Mulk Raj Anand and Ali Sardar Jafri, which he had written in praise of Mustafa Kamal as a revolutionary leader in Turkey, who had upset the caliphate and initiated new Turkish democracy. His address was read out by Professor Hiren Mukherjee in the first session of the Progressive Writer's Conference in Calcutta.<sup>105</sup> Dr. J.N. Sengupta, was in the presidium. Other writers who attended the conference were Bengali novelist Parmatama Chaudhry, Buddhadev Bose who was poet and novelist, Tarashankar Banerjee a novelist, Manik Banerjee a modern Bengali novelist, Maulana Abdul Razzaq, Malihabadi who was editor of Calcutta Urdu daily, *Hind* and Sardar Jafri. A large number of workers were also present in conference not as audience but participated as delegates to the conference. The delegates from Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Tamil Nadu were present in the conference. Representative of Gujarati, Marathi, Bihar and Calcutta were also present. Krishan Chander who representative of Punjab also attended, Balraj Sahni and his wife Damyanti from Shantiniketan also participated in the conference. Balraj Sahni was lecturer in Hindi literature at Tagore's Shantiniketan. Those who came from Lucknow were Ahmed Ali, Dr. Abdul Aleem, Sajjad Zaheer. Mulk Raj Anand was member of presidium.

This time some changes were made in the association. It approved plans for better and more regular organization. One of the important changes was that Dr.

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<sup>104</sup> Ralph Russell, *How Not to Write*, op.cit., p. 80.

<sup>105</sup> Squadron leader Anil Sehgal, *Ali Sardar Jafri*, op.cit., p. 21.

Aleem replaced Sajjad Zaheer as the secretary of the association. The central office of the association shifted from Allahabad to Lucknow. It was decided to publish a magazine of the association – *New Indian Literature*. Its editorial and financial responsibilities were taken by Mulk Raj Anand, Aleem and Ahmed Ali, and all the linguistic regions provided editors from their own regions for its editorial board.

The second conference of the association made more confident and was enthusiastic about creating New Progressive Literature. The Statesman, the newspaper of British Capitalists, had published the conference proceedings in its article *Faults of Indian Literature*.

### **Writer's Conferences**

Crisis as discussed in Hindustani News Paper is as follows:

“Indian Literature since the breakdown of the classical culture has had the fatal tendency to escape from the actualities of life”, said Dr. Mulk Raj Anand who is one of the founders of Indian Progressive Writers' Association, at the second All-India conference yesterday, which is meeting in Calcutta.<sup>106</sup>

The title “Progressive Writers' Association” Dr. Anand said, had led to confusion by suggesting some kind of regimentation of writers or by giving the appearance of a clique or a new coterie. But this association was merely a collection of readers and writers grouping together in spite of different individualities towards the realization of certain definite principles. Dr. Anand went on to give a brief account of the activities of “Progressive” Writers in India, and to trace the recent

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<sup>106</sup>*The Statesman*, Monday, December 26, 1938, p. 2.5/15



tendencies as shown by their works. Concluding, he said that the task of building up a national culture out of debris of the past, so that it takes root in the only way by which we can take our place among the writers of the world.

### Delegates Papers

Delegates from the different linguistic and regional zones in India then read a number of papers, each dealing with the special problems that affected the writers of their own area. The general theme of the papers was "the crisis in culture".

The morning session was opened under the president ship of Mr. Hiren Mukherjee. He gave an account of many obstacles in the path of culture today.

Mr. Narinda Datta from Punjab, who spoke next, said that each phase in human society developed its own policy of art, the earliest literature that we find is of religious type, man being depicted as the victim of fate and nature.

"With the development of society and with the domination influence of man over nature, development of art took a different turn, man taking the place of gods. Thus we come to the romances enacted in castles, with kings and queens as heroes and heroines. With the advent of commercialism merchants began to displace kings and today the man in the street is beginning to enter literature even in the role of a hero.

### Hindustan's Problem

Mr. Ali Sardar Jafri (U.P) spoke on the crisis in Hindustani literature. Mr. Balraj Sahni, the Hindi short story writer from Shantiniketan, said that the way out of the present crisis in Hindustani literature lay in the successful attempt by

progressive writers to bring Hindi and Urdu literature closer to each other, which should be one of the mission of the Progressive Writers' Association.

Hindi & Urdu  
closer  
to each other

Dr. Aleem of Lucknow University, also spoke on the problems of Hindustani. He said "Hindustani is the language, which in one form or another is spoken in the land called 'Hindusthan' by the ancients. It is difficult to trace the origin of the language but most probably it is result of a mixture of the Prakrits which were current in Maddha desa in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. With the advent of the Moslems in India the vocabulary of this language began to be enriched by Arabic and Persian words. The mixed jargon spoken in the Moghul military camps acquired the name of Taban-i-urdu but the common name of this language was 'Hindi' which simply meant the language of India. For literary purpose, however sanskritize and persianized version began to be more and more frequently used and in the end has brought about this complication in Urdu-Hindi problem".

"The Congress", Dr. Aleem continued, "has done nothing concrete in trying to evolve a common language. Moreover some very prominent congressmen are open supporters of sanskritized Hindi for which the Hindi Sahitya sammelan stands. This has enabled opponents of the congress to use it as a convenient handle to discredit it among a certain section of Indian population.

#### Question of script

"The chief problem before us" said Dr. Aleem "is that Hindusthani is not as yet a well-equipped literary language. It is up to progressive writers to develop it on sound lines". With regard to the question of script he said that learning both scripts was no solution. He was more in favour of an Indo-Roman script on scientific lines,

which would bring out a complete reorientation of cultural concepts, help in nationalizing one literature and bring us in line with most of the civilized world.

Bengali literature formed the subject of a number of interesting papers. Mr. Sailaj Mukherjee, Mr. Premendra Mitra and Mr. Samar Sen read papers on different aspects of Modern Bengali literature, while an interesting paper was read by Mr. Subharao Naidu from Andhra on "South Indian Literature".<sup>107</sup>

#### Faridabad district Gurgaon

Before Calcutta there was other conference convened in Faridabad in the summer of 1938. This conference was different from the other conferences; it was a conference of Hindustani speaking poets from the areas surrounding Delhi and the rural areas of U.P. and Punjab, who wrote poetry in the Brijbhasa or Haryani languages. The conference organized by Syed Muttalebi Faridabadi, a well-known and prominent Syed family who belonged to Faridabad. He took part in organizing the peasant's movement in his district of Gurgaon, and creating a strong left wing.

The conference participated by the rural poets from Faridabad, Mathura, Gurgaon and Rohtak. The leftist political leader Bahal Singh also attended the conference. Among the participants from urban areas, was Ahmed Ali, Sajjad Zaheer, a few teachers and students of Jamia Millia and about half a dozen political workers from Delhi. The atmosphere was as peasant conference. All the poems and songs had modern political and social topics, people being sent to prison for involvement in political movement, Bhagat Singh was hanged for seeking freedom and his mother and sister lamented for their beloved son and brother, the plunder of

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

poor peasants from land lords. A Brij poet, Swati Sharma sang poems, which showed the real condition of peasants in rural areas. She also shed light on weakness and deficiencies of freedom's struggle with the musical Brijbhasha. Later when Rajani Palme Dutt's book *Modern India* was published, its chapter on India's agrarian life began with Swati Sharma's poem. In general, the writers have talked about how and why freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh were hanged? But here the peasants talked about the feelings of his mother and sister on their son and brother being hanged. Thus the peasants attempted to show the feeling and sorrow of the society.

The peasant movement spread and grew stronger; the progressive literary movement began together with the peasant poets into its fold. The peasant movement has its own peasant poet, and it was necessary to organize them, to educate them, and to help them to publish what they write. By such means the association of progressive writers can become truly comprehensive movement of people's literature. The conference of peasant's poet in Faridabad was the first step in this direction. Ahmed Ali wrote report of this conference and it was published in Progressive political monthly, New Era which was published from Madras.

In the middle of 1938 and 1939 all the work of the association was done from Lucknow. Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali, Dr. Abdul Aleem and Sajjad Zaheer took over the central work of the association. The association manage to publish magazine New Indian Literature in November 1939. Two issues appeared in 1939; then Mulk Raj Anand left for a visit to England, and was stranded there when war broke out. And in 1940 Abdul Aleem and others were put in Jail and the journal

never appeared again.<sup>108</sup> Certain events or controversies occurred one after another, which had experience of bitter reality. The first major controversy within the movement surfaced around 1939 when Ahmed Ali, one of the contributors of *Angare* and the then editor of English language progressive journal *New Indian Literature* contended that there was a growing tension between what he termed the 'creative section' and the 'political section' of the movement.<sup>109</sup>

tension  
- 2 Sects

Later he claimed that he was pressurizing to refuse to publish work which was not significant in the point of workers and peasants soon after result of this rift, Ahmed Ali dropped out of the Progressive Writers' Association. A major disaster came in September 1939 when the Second World War began. Arrests began to be made of all who wanted freedom or progress. Press rules were tightened. The second world war that blew out of Europe, spreading darkness and affliction all over the world. It was blowing out all the torches of culture and literature. There was no Progressive Writers' Association conference held in 1939 to mid of 1942, the period when progressives identified with the most militant sections of nationalist movement and were subjected to the ban.

### The third All India Conference, 1942

In June 1941, Hitler's Germany attacked on Soviet Union, so most fundamental changes brought in international politics, which affected India also.

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<sup>108</sup> Ralph Russell, *How Not to Write*, op.cit., p. 81.

<sup>109</sup> Raza Mir and Ali Hussain Mir, *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry*, op.cit., p. 28.

India was under control of British imperialism, which Indians were fighting against. Therefore with war between German and British imperialism, Indian freedom fighter did not want the resources of India to be used in fight between two imperialists. Indian freedom fighter wanted profit from this affliction of British imperialism and used it to accelerate the struggle for freedom of the country.

The Soviet Union attack was understood by every freedom seeker that if Hitler's fascism were successful in the war, fascist imperialism would rule the world, all subjected countries would be enslaved and crushed even more harshly. On the other side if the Soviet Union emerged as the winner, the revolutionary movements of the workers and freedom movements in the subjected countries of the world would be strengthened. It was better chance to success in the struggle for freedom in India.

Under these situation the struggle for freedom in India should be conducted differently under the changed circumstance, with this different mode which should be helped to organised power of people and unity in the country so that they fight against the British imperialism for the freedom and at the same time the power of this country could be used to win the war against international fascism. But this was not in British mind, they wanted to maintain their control, and continued to oppress freedom seekers and common people to use the resource for the war in imperialistic ways. Thus a complicated situation emerged among freedom fighters, they could not understand if British imperialism continued its dominance, then how could they struggle to liberate themselves from British and how they could support the war for victory against fascism. The reason for this was that many leaders were in Jail and so the party could not function properly. But in the end of 1941, many members and leaders of congress were released, and they had clear vision that people's war in

Long sentence

which the defeat of fascism was linked with the freedom of all subjected countries of Asia as well as India. In March 1942, Sajjad Zaheer was also released from Jail and started to reorganize the association, which was mess as result of political oppression and terrorism. The third All India Progressive Writers' Association conference was held in Delhi in May 1942. At the same time the Soviet Union had entered the war and was ally of British and France. The members who took part in the conference were old Urdu writers like Maulana Salahuddin, Maulana Abdul Majeed Salik, Hafeez Jallundhri, Krishan Chander, Dr. Abdul Aleem and Sajjad Zaheer. A large group of young writers from Lahore and Amritsar attended the conference. The conference was chaired by Maulana Salik.

Delhi, 1942

### **Resolution**

It was decided that Indian writers had sympathies with allies, and they were opposed to fascism. They also declared that they would use their pen and influence to support all democratic war efforts and create awareness in the country about fascism, also said that the independence of India was linked with the victory of democratic powers. It criticised the British imperialism for not prepared to grant independence to India in such delicate conditions and emphasized the nation unity in order to gain independence. The third All India Conference of Progressive Writers' Association in Delhi had put new life in the organization.

The Delhi All India Progressive Writers' Conference was published in The Statesman newspaper in may 1942 from Delhi on Wednesday. In this newspaper's article progressive writers were opposed to fascism and described duty of Indian writers.

*Fascist Menace Must be Fought* ?

*Writers Duty to Strengthen People's Moral.*

“Let us resolve to mobilize our people spiritually to defend their motherland – for that lies freedom for our country,” said Mr. Sajjad Zaheer in his speech on behalf of the presidium at all the All – India writers’ conference which opened in Delhi on Tuesday.

He said “we are meeting at a time of grave crisis for our motherland India is threatened with an imminent Fascist invasion. No section of our people can remain indifferent to it. Indian writers, the custodians of Indian culture, cannot ignore this danger; they cannot remain neutral to the prospect of the Fascist enslavement of their country. True we are not free people, we have no national government, no national militia. Still this country is ours. It is our duty to protect it, whatever the attitude of British government.

“Writers should undertake to remove the doubts and fears of the Indian people to make the people conscious of their great right and resources, to unite them, to help them to fight sword in hand the barbarous Fascists who are avowed enemies of all culture.

“We should not let this land of Valmiki and Tulsidas, of Khusro and Mira, of Tagore and Iqbal, to undergo the shame and humiliation of Fascist enslavement. If we do our duty now, we shall live, if we remain indifferent, we shall perish.”

**Writers' Duty**

Mr. S. H. Vatsyayana, chairman, of the reception committee, in his speech said that since the country's future was threatened they had assemble to declare their attitude, to explore the channels along which their efforts must be directed in order

to meet the Fascist menace and to evolve a permanent organization to attain their objects. ref 9

Continuing he said: "In the past, the writer's contribution to the collective life has been mainly subjective; to – day the titanic struggle of the forces of progress and reaction demands a degree of objectification unknown at any time in the past. It still remain true that literature has high purpose, and that purpose is essentially subjective: but it is equally true that literature has now acquired a value in this conflict which is essentially objective. "The conflict that we are witnessing is not merely a military or a political conflict, not even a war of brutalization, athwart this battle, the struggle of an intelligent minority to extract from the vast demented chaos a rational conception of life. In this many fronted battle; Fascist victory will be the tragedy of humanity. It is this multi – faceted totalitarian danger that we have to meet, resist and overcome. Mere subjective disapprobation will not achieve that object: the regimentation of the writer will achieve even less, it is the very spirit of regimentation that we want to fight. The only hope lies in united organization and conscious efforts in this voluntary renunciation of lesser liberties in the cause of liberty; in the shedding of little concepts of social dignities for the one fundamental dignity of man. That writer can make this sacrifice and initiate this effort has been proved for us by the writers of soviet Russia and china. It is the people's moral that must be an impregnable fortress, and it is the writer's foremost duty to guard and strengthen it. "Let our conference announce its implacable opposition to Fascism which is synonymous with organized reaction, let us decide to use the forces of reason and progress that have been unleashed by our cultural, renaissance, let us affirm our faith in the will of the people which it is our double duty to express, and to mould; let us finally try to evolve an organization of writers which will help us to



continue our efforts and watch over the fruits thereof. In hope and in faith let us work and achieve.”

1 Nov 47

### **Menace of Fascism**

.The following resolution was passed by conference: -

War has reached the borders of India and Indian coastal towns have already been bombed. Our homeland is threatened with an imminent invasion by the Fascist armies of Japan. In the not too distant background of this conflict is the organized might of international fascism locked in mortal conflict with the forces of progress. The aim of this fascist imperialism is not merely the political subjugation and the economic exploitation of the whole of Asia, its aim also the total destruction of the cultural and intellectual heritage of India, the deliberate harnessing of peoples along the path of progressive cultural bankruptcy. This aim is not merely an inferred aim; it has been callously proclaimed and unscrupulously carried out in all the countries that have fallen under the Fascist yoke. We have seen the deliberate and ruthless destruction of cultural and educational institutions occupied china.

We realise that this behaviour of Japanese is the outcome of militarist system which has enslaved the very people from which it draws sustenance Fascism, whether Japanese, German or Italian, is the offspring of worldwide system of capitalism and imperialism. The barbarous and anti-cultural activities of the Fascism should not however, be attributed to the “evil nature of the people of Germany, Italy or Japan. We recognize and value the great contribution of these gifted people of Art, science and literature. But to-day they are groaning under the evil dictatorship of a hand of fascist rulers who, through their control of the economic life of people, through malicious propaganda, through the Gestapo, the concentration camp and the

firing squad, have succeeded in stilling the best that is in these nation. The destruction of Fascism therefore is not merely the defence of the cultural entities threatened by aggression from outside; it is also the liberation of the helpless captives of these Fascism rulers.

We Indian writers have nothing in common with fascism. We who have always stood for the freedom of India from British imperialism and have struggle for liberation of our country do not and shall not overlook our rightful political aspirators; but we realize and declare that India's greatest danger to-day lies in the imminent Fascist invasion. The success of such as invasion will mean the annihilation of all political aspirations. Its defeat on the other hand, will pave the way for the final liquidation of imperialism and will reveal the tremendous possibilities inherent in an alliance with the other democratic countries ranged against the greatest enemy of liberty.

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### **No Neutrality**

We, therefore, consider it our duty in this hour of great crisis to warn our countrymen against the complacent attitude of neutrality.

A Fascist victory in the present world conflict would mean the beginning of a new dark age. The Indian people must play their part in averting such a catastrophe. They must join the valiant peoples of Soviet Union, the heroic Chinese nation, and anti-Fascist peoples of all the other countries. The peoples of the countries already under Fascist domination must be rescued. It is our task to-day to rouse in the peoples of our country the patriotic favour for defending the motherland – against the Fascist invasion. It is our task to expose the true nature of Fascism and to save our people from falling a prey to Fascist propaganda. It is ~~a~~ our task to unify the

country and to heal the stretch between the communities of India in order to pave the way to immediate national Government and an all-out defence of our homeland. It is our task to combat: defeatism and to create in our countrymen the will to resist all foreign aggression and domination.

We are the custodian of the great and valuable cultural heritage of India. It is up to us to protect it from the hands of the Fascist vandals. We should help the people to fortify themselves mentally against Fascism through our things. Through the book and pamphlet the radio and the cinema, the song and stage, we should approach the people in their million. It is our duty to respond so call of our motherland and keep a light the torch of liberty and culture. The resolution moved by Mr. S. H. Vatsyayana and supported by Dr. A. Aleem, Mr. Prakash Chandra Gupta and Mr. N. N. Seth. The conference also passed resolution of greeting to the Soviet Union and China paying tributes to their heroic resistance to Fascism. These two resolutions moved from the chair.

### **Papers Discussed**

About 300 delegates from all over India and beginning to different linguistic zones attended the delegates meeting in the morning. Later crafts of resolutions to be discussed at the open session were considered. In the afternoon Maulana Salahuddin, Professor Vartar Singh Duggal and Mr. Prabahtat Machave read papers on literary and cultural topics and each papers was followed by a discussion. Professor Mirza Mohammed Saeed presided. Among those who are attending the conference are Mr. Harindra Nath Chattopadhys, Mr. Sajjad Zaheer, Mr. Krisana Chander, Mr. Rajinder Singh Bedi, Mr. Srizvasa Rao, Maulana Salahuddin, Mr. Nirad Chaudar, Mr. Subodh Bose and Mr. Cheytian Anshd.

A message wishing a success to the conference sent by the Chinese commissioner to India, Mr. Shen shi-kya was read by Mr. Sib shon-heng, the consul of the republic of china. Among others who sent message are Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, Professor Humayun Kabir, Mr. K.M. Munshi, and the Yuvaraja of Pithapuram, Diwan Chaman lal, Khwaja K. G. Salyidias, Dr. Ram Kumar Verma, Mr. Gopal Halder and Mr. Srirangam srinvasa Rao.<sup>110</sup>

#### **The fourth All India Conference, 1943**

After August 1942, British government arrested congress leaders; quite a change had taken place in national politics. Generally congress leaders were putting their best effort in running the movement, the purpose behind was to impede the war effort. This was done when Japanese forces had reached the frontiers of Bengal and the west decisive battle of Stalingrad was at its peak. The progressive writers opposing the British government's imperialist politics of arresting the patriots are rejecting the demand of independence for India. All with the blatant and brutal attack of Japanese fascists came the devastating famine of 1943 which took the toll of 35 lakh of men, women and children.<sup>111</sup> Due to the war owing to the shortage of food, black marketing and profiting had become common in the country. Such was the critical situation in the country during which fourth All India Conference of the association of Progressive writer's was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1943 in Bombay. Josh Malihabadi Chaired the conference of the association. The presidential address was

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<sup>110</sup> *The Statesman*, Delhi, Wednesday, May 20, 1942, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Sarojmohan Mitra, op.cit. p. 118.

given by Shripat Amrit Dange, who was known socialist leader and Marathi writer. He stated that “ If you believe that the victory of the nations led by soviet union is no concern of yours, you are not paving the way for freedom from your colonial enslaver, you are aiding a worse slavery to take his place, you are aiding not only your annihilation, but the annihilation of all peoples, all cultures.<sup>112</sup>

Dr A. Dange’s presidential address was best in the whole conference, he made all the writers sit up and think. His address showed way which the best creators of our literature have followed in the past, which the soviet and the Chinese writers are following today, the way of patriotism of love for humanity of relentless struggle against tyranny and oppression.<sup>113</sup> Other writers who participated in the conference were, Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan, a Hindi writer, Satish Mazumdar, a Bengali writer, Sachpaia, a Telgu writer, Dr. Abdul Aleem from Lucknow and Makhdoom a Urdu writer from Hyderabad Deccan. Among those who participated in the conference were Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, Saghar Nizami, Krishan Chander and Sardar Jafri. Beside these there were two writers of Gujrati and Kanarese.

### **Resolution**

One Important resolution that was passed in the conference was the manifesto, which laid down the duties of all writers in the country, especially the progressive writers, in regards to the national and international circumstances of resulting from the war. It reflected the feelings and ideas of patriotic writers with different political views that belonged to different school of thoughts. In the view of

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<sup>112</sup>Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, op.cit., p. 91.

<sup>113</sup> Pradhan Sudhi, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, Vol. III (Calcutta: Dustak Bipani, 1985), p. 3.

Progressive Writers' Association it was vital to create a united front of all writers who believed in liberty, democracy, humanity and progress. The writers believed that they could build the foundation of unity through discussion and debate within the association and then take it forward with intellectuals and writers outside the association.

The centre of association shifted from Lucknow to Bombay. Sajjad Zaheer was chosen as general secretary of the association. Khwaja Abbas was chosen joint secretary of the association. The Progressive Writers' Association's conference were not held at national level between 1943-47, but local functions happened, with writers encouraged to present their essays, stories and poems for feedback and discussion. It was here that writers discussed the problems like war, freedom movement, art and propaganda and writers talked about India's literary heritage.

### **Hyderabad**

The Hyderabad Association was one of the best and strongest branches. It suggested to the central association for conference of progressive writer's, and they managed to convince the centre for having the conference in Hyderabad. The All India Conference that convened in October 1945, was in Hyderabad. During those days, the citizen rights in Hyderabad were only in name, and there were restrictions on the expressing democratic views. Hyderabad was ruled by Nizam under British protection, so there was Nizamate and feudal system. Hence there was a need of progressive writers, who could give expression of the people who were suffering, and the desire for democracy and freedom. They raised the voice against the imperialism, but it was not possible if there was a state ruler. So the main concern

*branch*

was to rescue the people from the feudal system and spread the meaning of progressivism. Through the conference the progressive writers showed that they were supporting those people who were fighting against feudal forces. The Hyderabad conference was inaugurated by Sarojini Naidu, with a sentence 'I inaugurate the conference', because she was not permitted by the Nizam government to make public speeches.<sup>114</sup> The conference presidential was Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Dr. Tarachand, Krishan Chander and Firaq Gorakhpuri. Firaq Chaired the session on poetry. Krishan Chander chaired the session on short story and novel, and Tarachand chaired the Urdu-Hindi issue. At this session Sajjad Zaheer presented a paper on the question of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani and Sardar Jafri wrote a paper on Iqbal. Sahir Ludhianvi a popular Urdu poet, came from Punjab to participate in the conference.

### **Resolution**

Like other conferences, here also a resolution was passed in the conference. This was a period when Muslim league movement was at its height. In this period, communal atmosphere was also present, but none of the progressive writers wrote under the influence of communal concept and thoughts. Dr. Abdul Aleem prepared the resolution on the issue of obscenity. He said that the conference want to clarify that progressive writers are against obscenity in literature and they condemn it. Maulana Hasrat suggested adding – 'but they have no objection to the expression of elegant eroticism'. After long discussion it was decided to take back the original resolution and later publish it in consultation with Maulana Hasrat.

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<sup>114</sup> Mohan Lal, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*, Vol. IV, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1991), p. 3383.

## Regional Branches Conferences

*Hum akele hi chale the janib-e-manzil magar,*

*Log saath aate gaye aur karvaan bante gaye*<sup>115</sup>.

-Majroon Sultanpuri.

The establishment of All India Progressive Writers Association led to establishment of many regional branches of the association. As Premchand said in the first conference of Progressive Writers' Association, that "our parished stands for the advancement of literary and sanctity of all other kinds of work." The All India Progressive Writers' Association established many branches in different places in the country, and these branches did function during 1943-47. It encouraged the writers to present their essays, stories and poems for feedback and discussions. It was here that the writers discussed about the problems of the war, freedom movement, art and propaganda and attitude writers should take to India's literary heritage. This kind of discussion and debates were seen in Bombay branch. The Bombay branch organized the meeting of progressive writers in Book club in the mid of 1942. The meeting was organized by Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, who was assistant editor of the Newspaper, Bombay Chronicle. Mama Varerkar a famous veteran Marathi writer, who presided over this meeting, he and worker-poet Anna Bhau Sathe represented Marathi, Gujrati writers Baku Lesh Swapnashta, and Bhogilal Gandhi, Hindi writers Narendra Sharma and Ramesh Sinha, Urdu Writers Sardar Jafri, Ahmed Abbas and Sajjad Zaheer and there was also Kanarese writers. This meeting was attended by 30 people for the evolution of the progressive literature, the association invited people who were outsider and not member of association, and ask them to express their view about

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<sup>115</sup> Rakshanda Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change : A literature History of The Progressive Writers Movement in Urdu*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.190.

poems, short stories and essay which was read in meeting. It was not necessary to agree with their views but at least knew about weakness. The Bombay branch was of unique nature and multi-lingual character. In its meeting poems, short stories and essays were read in Marathi, Gujrati, Hindi and Urdu. The Bombay branch had some activities like: meeting special function organized to commemorate event such as Premchand, Iqbal and Ghalib Day. First commemorate was 'Maxim Gorky Day' in 1936, on that day Association paid tribute to Maxim Gorky and speeches were highlighting specific feature of his work. Bombay Association also arranged the meeting to welcome other writers. In 1942, Bombay association held the meeting to welcome Josh Malihabadi and Saghar Nizami and hear their poetry. The association held similar meeting for Jigar Moradabadi, the Hindi poetess Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, the English novelist E.M. Forster and Maulvi Abdul Haq. Here they discussed about famine relief for Bengal. A large movement was started to provide relief to the famine-stricken and progressive writers participated in it. Agra, Allahabad, Banaras, Cawnpore and Aligarh were branches that continued with the literary gatherings of presenting of literary works. The Aligarh branch was composed of several folk-poets who were leaders of local peasant trade unions and their collection was based on struggle of peasant families. The Cawnpore branch made success when the most respected Hindi writer Sri Kausikji, became the president of the branch. The Agra branch was led by the great Hindi writer and critic Ram Vilas Sharma. It organized writing campaigns against fascist in Agra in 1946. The association also organized folk songs, poetry recitation etc.

Banaras branch was organized by Amritrai, Premchand's son. These branches organized literary activities, and they also had political agenda to extend

the progressive writers from Hindi literary and attracted new and young writers. By 1940, Hindi writers were the main stalwarts of the movement, particularly in U.P.

One of the conferences was held in Kashi in February 1945. It was inaugurated with the speech of Pandit Nand Dulare Vajpayee and Pandit Vishwanath Prasad. This conference was presided by Pandit Nand Dulare Vajpayee. Vishwanath Prasad in his speech talked about Progressive thought and Swapurna Nand talked about life and literature.<sup>116</sup>

The Progressive movement was resuscitated in Bengal in April 1942, when the anti-fascist writers and artists union was formed at a meeting presided over by Ramanand Chatterjee, doyen of Indian Journalism. But following month, S S Chauhan editor of the Hindi monthly Hans, was arrested, while in the process of reactivating the national organization.<sup>117</sup> The Bengal branch organized the conference of Progressive Bengali in 1943. Their provincial office was established, and the famous Bengali monthly Parichay became the official organ of the association. It had thousand members in fourteen branches, with five hundred of these in Calcutta. Other were in Dakha, Chittagong, Murishabad and Howrah. They organised weekly meeting on Adader Lekha (new writings) and Purana Lekha (old Writings), where writers would read out new or classical works and then have forthright discussion on the merits, relevance and interpretation of these.<sup>118</sup> Bengal Association organized the separate sessions on poetry, novels and short stories.

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<sup>116</sup> 'Hans' Magazine, p. 295, Hindi article, translation done by researcher.

<sup>117</sup> Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India* (California: University of California Press, 1959), p. 432.

<sup>118</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, op.cit., p. 98.

The Andhra region had conference in December 1945; It was opened by Sri Srirangam Srinivasa Rao, a local revolutionary poet. The Andhra region had sixteen branches, spread over Hyderabad and Secunderabad, madras, Telengana, Vizianagram, Masulipatam and Bezwada. Their activities included poetry and short story recitals and the development of fine arts, with all the branches being out monthly manuscript magazines to report on their work. The Bihar region had branches in Patna, Bhagalpur, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Dhabhanga, Chapra and Ranchi. They organised relief work for Bengal famine and their activity was in the rural areas, where they drew many folk poets. Songs were composed in traditional forms and dances were performed in villages throughout Bihar to attract support for famine victims. Karnataka also had branches in Mangalore, Hubli and Bangalore. Their work included symposiums, discussion groups, meetings to commemorate Tagore and Premchand anniversaries, encouraging folk literature and local themes as well as international events as the war, and raising funds for famine victims. These branches functions showed the long reach of Progressive Writers' Association tradition. The branches activities used the public performance in form of poems, poetry recitals and mushairas etc., which were added in addition to the literature. Basically the content of the Association was political and social, concerned about the topics which affected people's life like poverty, famine. But they also focused on the wider issue like the impact of war, the dangers of fascism and release of nationalist leaders.

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In 1944, the first official conference of the Progressive movement was held at Shoranur, central Kerala.<sup>119</sup>The conference was presided by poet Shankar Kurup. Another Progressive literature conference was held in Kottayam in 1945. Professor

<sup>119</sup> Carlo Coppola, *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature*, op.cit., p. 172.

Joseph Murad Sheri was president and poet Harinder Nath Chattopadhyay inaugurated this conference. In this conference, the writers discussed the definition of “progressivism”. Here M.S. Devadas, editor and progressive critic of Malayalam writings, presented the article on the “progressive”. Another writer, Kuttikrishna Marar echoed similar sentiments in his “a letter on progressive literature”. Here writers discussed about the progress of Malayalam literature.

## Chapter V

### Progressive Literary Movement and its Impact on Indian Literature

The formation of Progressive Writers' Association and movement became landmark in the Indian literary history. It was first cultural movement in South Asia, where all writers organized themselves and raised the voice that arts had connection with lives of ordinary people and political activity. The progressive literary movement had great impact on Indian literature. It transformed the face of Indian literature which was based on the '*art for art sake*' into '*art for common people's life*'. It insists on a root and branch transformation of Indian Social life. This was writer's movement. It was ideological one, and as such the Progressive Writers' Association was as much a political and social movement as a literary one. The progressive writers raised the slogan of "*art for the people*", they had contended against well-known masters of literature, nurtured in the old outmoded conception built by the reactionary classes. The new generation of writers, however were sure that it was they and not their critics writers that would be vindicated by history, as they saw that the masses of people were appreciating the new literature in spite of the denunciation by the so-called "scholars".<sup>120</sup>

From 1857-1947, the national movement has expressed itself in several pages and expects an each one of these has found its due place in literature. In the thirties of the twenties century, the patriotic thoughts of Indian writers underwent an important change. The failure of civil disobedience movement and the upper classes

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<sup>120</sup> Sudhi Pradhan, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, op.cit., p. 72.

of Indian society were able to bring liberation that made new turn in the political and cultural life of the people. New left parties were formed and peasants and workers were organized into their unions to fight for their demands, as well as for the Independence of the country. The science of dialectical and historical materialism began to be studied by a section of youth and the intellegencia. Hence the culmination of this process was seen in the writings of Progressive in mid-thirties. The progressive literary movement was the reflection of the new writings of the writers. It was the beginning of a new literature in India, an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal literature of new type that called upon the people to struggle against the imperialism and feudalism, till the goal was reached. The Progressive literary movement showed the differentiated between the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal literature of the old type, with its weakness for seeking compromises with imperialism and feudalism and anti-imperialist and anti-feudal literature of new type, avoiding such compromises and rallying the people to fight consistently and to the end for national independence and democracy. Thus the progressive literature is the literature for national independence, peace and democracy. The progressive literature was a new era of the Indian literature. It played a very catalytic role in the development of modern Indian Literature. This movement brought positive significance change in Indian literature.

- It was an umbrella or a platform for all Indian writers including regional writers. It functioned as an umbrella where all progressive writers could find a place. It constructed a 'united front' among all Indian writers against imperialism, reactionary social tendency, and for a life affirming art. Never before had writers across India been mobilized around a single platform so effectively, and in no previous movement had a literary

school so re-defined the terms of its creative output and its engagement with its society and times.<sup>121</sup>

- Progressive literary movement made a bridge between all Indian writers, now writers were connected with each other. Initially there was no way to connect between all writers. Through this they knew that all of them faced the same problem which other writers faced. They knew each other hopes and aspiration, ideas of the period and problem of common wea or woe. Everywhere the same powers and stimulants that were active in literature, were imply, writers and intellectuals to find new paths in literature for the common man.<sup>122</sup>

- The All India Progressive Writers' Association established many branches in different places in the country. These branches functions made development in Indian literature. As Premchand said in the first session of conference, that "Our association has entered the field of duty with some principles. It does not like literature to remain a slave of wine and glamour. It claims to make literature a message and a song of action and adventures. It is not much concerned about language. When the idea is broad, language becomes simple by itself. Our purpose is to produce such an atmosphere in the country, in which un-sophisticated literature can be created and developed. We want our associations to be established in all the literary centres, and their regular discourse be held on the various techniques in literature, essay be read, discussion be organized and there should be

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<sup>121</sup> Ali Hussain Mir and Raza Mir, *A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry*, op.cit., p. 9.

<sup>122</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light*, op.cit., p. 147.

criticism and counter-criticism. Only then will such an atmosphere be build. Then alone will there be the birth of a new epoch in literature. We want to establish such association in every province, and in every language, by which this message can reach everywhere in every language. It will be wrong to think that we are inventing something new. In the heart of those who want to server literature, the feeling of getting organized is already present. The seeds of these thoughts have been sown in every language by nature, and by circumstances and at several places, they have started even sprouting out. To water it, and strengthened its aim is our purpose".<sup>123</sup> So the establishment of branches produced such environment where literature was created and developed. The association branches were publishing magazine, most of the magazine pages published the stories, essays and poetry that presented the new spirit of writing, new literature and change in political and cultural life of the people. The branches of association were opened in Lahore, Lucknow and Hyderabad. The Lahore branches published *Humayun Adabi duniya* and *Adabi-i-Lateef* magazines. The works of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Krishna Chander, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Rajinder Singh Bedi and Upendra Nath were first published in these magazines. They were talented writers who brought out the progressive literary movement at high level.

- Punjab branch also established the *Muktab-e-Urdu* publisher and it published beautifully and skilfully the works of Progressive writers of Punjab and later even from outside Punjab. Faiz Ahmed Faiz's *Naqsh-e-Faryadi*, Krishna Chander's *Tilism-e- khayal*, Rajinder Singh Bedi's *Dana-o-Daam*, Ahmed Nadeem and Upender Nath Ask's collection of short stories

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<sup>123</sup> Han's Raj `Rahbar', *Premchand*, op.cit., p. 182.

were published by *Muktab-e-Urdu* around the Second World War period. During the Second World War, the conferences of Progressive association were not held, but Progressive literary work continued to be created and published.

- In Lucknow branch, Sibet Hassan and Sardar Jafri brought out the Urdu magazine *Naya Aadab* in 1941. Officially, *Naya Aadab* was not the organ of the association of Progressive writers, but it was mouthpiece of the movement. In *Naya Aadab*, there were aggressive poems of Josh: *Baghi Ruhon ka chorus*, *Jahan main tha*, *East India Company ke Farzandar se khitab*. Firaq's poems were also present in the magazine, which started new trend in literary world-The essays of Firaq, "*The place of Ghazal in modern Literature*". Majnoon Gorakhpuri's article- *Progressive literature*, Faiz Ahmed Faiz's article-*Progressive literature*, Dr. Abdul Aleem's-*The primary rules of literary criticism* etc are works that laid the foundation of new outlook in criticism in Urdu literature. The international Progressive literature was represented by translated short storied of Maxim Gorky and some Chinese writers. Tamarai of Patna translated Chinese short stories that later came in book with title of *Zinda Cheen* (The Living China). The Progressive writers' branch of Lucknow established a publishing house to publish and market the progressive books. It was called *halqa-e-adab*. It published *Ahang*, a collection of Majaz's poetry, a collection of Sardar Jafri short stories, Sajjad Zaheer novel *London ki ek Raat*, and *Aazadi ki nazmain* (poems of freedom) edited by Sibet Hasan. It was selection of Urdu political and revolutionary poetry from Ghalib to present times. *Aazadi ki nazmain* contained Josh's poems *India Company ke Farzandon se khitab* (Address to

the sons of East India Company) Josh had ended his poem, '*East India Company ke Farzandon se*' with the lines:

*Ek kahaani waqt likhega naye mazmoon ki*

*Jis ki surkhi ko zaroorat hai tumhaare khoon ki.*

Needless to say, this poem was banned immediately after it was published, and Josh's journal *Kaalim* (The Pen-Wielder) was forced to close down. This poem was proscribed under the defence of India rules by the government of UP. The letter from the Chief Secretary stated

"I am directed to enclose for the information of the government of India, a copy of notification no. 135/II/IV-440 dated June 22, 1940, issued by this government under rule 40 (I) (c) of the defence of India Rules prohibiting the printing and publishing in the United Provinces, of the book in Urdu entitled "*Aazadi ki Nazmen*" published by Sibet Hasan and printed at the *Umdatue Mataba* Press, Lucknow".<sup>124</sup>

At end of 1942, the publication of *Naya Aadab* from Lucknow was stopped. Later it was brought by Sardar Jafri, Sibet Hassan and Sajjad Zaheer in Bombay. The first issue of *Naya Aadab* was published with the statement of Josh and Saghar Nizami on the duties of writers under circumstance of the war. Josh Malihabadi and Saghar Nizami issued a joint statement that our objective is full independence for Indian and socialist order of government. In 1942, Josh Malihabadi and Saghar Nizami issued a joint statement which, while espousing the deoli's people war' stance, also reflects very clearly their nationalist aspiration. They stated their objective to be full independence for India and socialist government. They condemned the Tyrannical policies of

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<sup>124</sup> File No. 37/64/40 Government of India, Home Department, Political Section 1940.

British, citing the Soviet Union as the repository of all that was conducive to freedom, democracy, happiness, a classless society, Universal fraternity and equality.<sup>125</sup>

Later, Majaz an Urdu poet also expressed his thought on the statement. He said: “We progressive writers have always been using our art as a sword. We have always raised our voice against oppression and injustice of all kinds. Therefore there is no reason why we should sheath our swords when it comes to confronting fascism, the greatest enemy of humanity and civilization. Our songs should yet again echo in our homeland so that inspired by feeling of unity, confidence, courage and freedom, we remove from our path every obstacle placed there by the blind imperialists”.<sup>126</sup> It showed the unity of views on the important issue and it made the association stronger.

- In Andhra Pradesh, the progressive literature grew faster and spread. This movement appeared as the revival of Telugu nationalist literature and national consciousness. Many Telugu writers joined it and its branches were established in various cities.

In both these regions of the country, when a few individuals had been associated with the central association made splendid progress in progressive literary movement. In both these regions national liberation movement took a wide and popular aspect. The political workers of left mostly socialist organized and mobilized the farming community in province as well as large part of lower middle classes. The awakening of the peasant, the imperialist

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<sup>125</sup> Estelle Dryland, *Faiz Ahmed Faiz*, op.cit., p. 44.

<sup>126</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light*, p. 190.

system and struggle of the peasants against the big landlords and money-lenders who exploited the rural people, became the foundation of the Malabar and Telugu people's struggle for national independence. The awakening of peasants means awakening of the common people for struggle of national independence. So the struggle of national independence has another name agricultural revolution against feudalist and imperialist exploitation. In this time peasants achieved people's agricultural revolution, when they united with urban industrial workers, in the cities. On the basis of this strong unity between Urban and Rural workers, the intellectuals of the middle class and those capitalists who did not get right or prosper because of imperialist schemes, opened their united front. This unity, awakening and restlessness came among Kerala and Andhra peasants and the progressive writers of these regions were expressing this new restlessness, yearning, confidence strength and the enthusiasm for building a new, prosperous life of the community. With this literary movement, other movements also began in various art forms like song, dance and old fashioned Katha writings. It was an old style but the content was new and progressive. Through this way progressive movement became people's literary movement and literature became relevant and reflected common people, their lives and struggle, their yearning and desire. It began to turn into a genuine weapon in the hands of the working people in their struggle for social change. In both ways its significance and its contribution were a major step for the progressive movement.

- Progressive Writers' Association provided a school for many new talented writers. It encouraged and gave freedom for writer's expression. Many new talented writers emerged like Upendranath Ashk, Nagarjun,

Yashpal, Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi, Majoor Sultanpuri, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Kartar Singh Dooghal and Amrita Pritam. Through writings they reflect the movement for National freedom.

- The Progressive literary movement made the writer's horizon broadened. Writers became more aware of International Problems. They took sides on world issues. They became conscious of a continuous war against exploitation, poverty, ignorance and blind superstition.

- The Progressive literary movement also included other progressive writers, who were not members of the association, but their writing or poetry showed progressiveness. Like Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Hasrat Mohani, Maulvi Abdul Haq, Uma Shankar Joshi (Gujrati Poet), Gurbaksh Singh (Punjabi Writer), Anna Bhau Sathe (Marathi Writer), Josh Malihabadi etc. They were established and well know scholars of the countries literature. They shared their knowledge and experience with young writers and also encouraged those, without their guidance and teaching, without the knowledge of country's science, its history and culture, good modern literature cannot be created. So they contacted the other Progressive Scholars and Writers and created modern Indian literature. With this it had succeeded in broadening the horizon of Progressive Writers' Association influence. The progressive literary movement created modern progressive trends in Indian literature. It tried to link the face of literature with the fate of common people, they were workers, peasants and the middle class. Thus it gave a new direction to literature. It does not change the reality directly, it only change the mental and emotional attitude, not with the rational argument, but with the delicate sword of aesthetics, where the arguments

became ecstasy. It was a literary movement, but it was vitally with the freedom struggle. This movement widened its base among Indian writers. It succeeded in establishing a pan-Indian organisation that covered the majority of linguistic areas and by 1947, just before partition; there were fifty branches with a total membership of 3,900.<sup>127</sup> Through its manifesto and initial resolution PWA was able to unify the intellectual community around specific political and literary commitment to the great political issue of the period. It provided a form, space and direction for writers who had agenda of political commitment. This was first national literary project in India which achieved some ambitious goals. The Progressive Writers' Association writers' movement was created from the experiences of writers in Europe, who were opposing fascism. The Indian writers were using their experiences of taking part in European conferences. But their motivation was based on the internal dynamics of colonial oppression and maturing nationalist movement. The Progressive Writers' Association project showed that the writers were not only political engaged, but the issues like freedom struggle, famine and communal violence were concern for the intelligentsia. It also advanced the motion of a new type of literature which had a vision of a popular unified nation that would emerge after the colonial rule.

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<sup>127</sup> Report by Sajjad Zaheer on PWA (1943-47), in Virendra Yadav, (ed.), *50 Years of PWA: Golden Jubilee Celebrations Souvenir* (Lucknow: Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee 1986), p.62.

### Progressive or Pragatisheel movement in Hindi literature

In 1936, a new literary movement sprang up in India, which was known as progressive writers' movement. A large number of writers in all the languages of the country joined this movement. This movement made a great mark on the development of literature. It can be said that through this movement, a new literary trend had established in the literature of all other languages of India. This may be called revolutionary or progressive literature. In this context the formation of the Progressive Writers' Association was landmark in the progress of modern Indian literature. After the first conference of progressive writers' association, many branches were founded in other Indian languages literatures. One of the branches was founded in Hindi literature. The first conference was presided over by Premchand, who was doyen of Hindi and Urdu literature. In his presidential address he said that: "*literature in order that it may be effective must faithfully mirror the truth of life. It has a purpose than that of diversion alone. It must no longer continue to dwell upon the union and separation of the hero and the heroin, but also consider the problems of hard realities of day-to-day life. The emotion of love, after all, represents a single phase of love, after all, represents a single phase of human life, and a literature the larger part of which deals exclusively with it, can neither be a source of pride to the community nor a sound indication of its refined taste*".<sup>128</sup> In this speech it is cleared that reality was taking place in literature. The progressive trend in Hindi literature saw a distinct shape in thirties. All those writers who were concerned about the evil impact of British Imperialism on Indian life and culture, started writing against that impact. At the same time, they found themselves against the orthodox values, which resisted any radical

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<sup>128</sup> R.L. Handa, *History of Hindi Language and Literature*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1978), p. 441.

change. Their writings had critical treatment of the existing condition of peasants, Harijans, labours and the middle class in general. There are evidence in magazines like *Hans*, *Naya Sahitya* and *Naya Path*, that shows desire to contribute towards socio-political and cultural needs of people. This trend could be said to be part of national movement against the British. The political unity of different section of people to overthrow the British rule created the background for the fight on literary front also. The writers of the progressive movement wrote about the democracy and ending exploitation of poor<sup>129</sup>. Progressive movement became popular in Hindi literature and gained huge support from the greatest writers, poets and thinkers of the country and almost became a common creed of the time. In Hindi literature, romanticism and pessimism had become quite fashionable among Hindi writers, now the reference of Marxism had become the dominate note among these writers. Due to influence of Russian revolution and their post achievements, the Hindi writers started talking about same ideology. The Indian communist party was founded and the Marxist philosophy of dialectic materialism gained ground.<sup>130</sup> This new historical approach and materialistic philosophy awakened a keen social consciousness and awareness of economic exploitation and suffering. This new movement of ideas impacted almost all Hindi writers and poets. The slogan 'Art for common men life' widely accepted by the Hindi writers. Marxism was talked of as the panacea for all the social, economic and political ills. This movement gave a broader base, a realistic approach with awakened sense of the problems of the people to the Hindi writers. It made healthy development and progress in Hindi literature. According to Marxist

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<sup>129</sup> Front Matter, Anand Prakash, *Progressive Hindi Writers Conference and assessment*, social scientist, Vol –I, No. 11, June 1973, p.56.

<sup>130</sup> Indu Prakash Pandey, *Hindi Literature: Trends and Traits*, (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1978), p. 16.

concept in every age there is a clash between two orders, the dying old order and the rising new order. The dying of old order was the exploiters, feudal lords and capitalists. The rising of new order was the exploited, the peasants and labourers. The powers try to destroy the old and establish a welfare state. These new powers are not of the individuals but of the class that is exploited. These exploited class does not only face agony and destitution, it has also an unshaken faith in life and has beautiful dreams for the future. One who understands this conflict is a true realistic. Only those literature which created from this point of view were truly represents the reality of its ages and becomes a source of inspiration for future ages.<sup>131</sup> Every age has its own conflict and social problems. The Hindi progressive literature of ever age presents the problems and conflicts of its own age. It describes the new social awakening in its various forms. The progressive literature regards as idealistic and based on the reality. In its opinions the truth is that the new source forces always fight against old dilapidated powers of exploitation. The concept of classless society with unshaken faith believes in human values, creates healthy tradition in every age. In modern age, the progressive powers are those that trying to destroy capitalism and replace it by socialism. A literature identifies and supports these powers gives strength to their struggle and gives blow to self-centred, dilapidated structures of capitalism. Thus the progressive Hindi literature creates new social realistic and idealistic literature which is fulfilment of needs, hopes and ambitions of common men. Progressive literature looks upon beauty from new angle. It finds beauty in common man life. The famous Marxist philosopher N. G. Chernyshevsky says: "Man loves life most, hence the most satisfactory definition of beauty is – beauty is life".<sup>132</sup> Progressive literature depicts

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<sup>131</sup> Rama Darasa Misra, *Modern Hindi Fiction*, (Delhi: Bansal & Co. 1983), p. 180.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, p. 181.

social life and believes in social realism. Hindi progressive writers emphasise the social, especially the economic aspect of human life. The change of economic structure bring about a change of social relationship, which gives birth to a new civilization and culture, new art and literature. They found that in every age there was economic exploitation in various forms and in ever age there was conflict between the exploiting authority and exploited people. The Hindi progressive writers had sympathies with the exploited common humanity and the new powers struggling to establish a new economic order, while they express resentment against those who live on other's labour, who have a false sense of dignity, who advocate the old rotten standard of inequality. In modern age many social, moral, religious values and politics have been challenged, but selfish persons who stick with their own pretty interest and under their cover wanted to struggle the new realities of life. The Hindi progressive writers presented the realistic picture of contemporary political struggle, natural calamities like floods, famines etc.

The writers of Hindi progressive were Yashpal, Upendra Nath 'Ashk, 'Amritlal Nagar, Rameshvar Shukla 'Anchal, 'Nagarjun, Suryakant 'Nirala' etc. They wrote about the problems of hunger and poverty, exploitation of the peasants by the rich land lords, the evil result of Casteism and the Hindu family system, the frustrations of the urban middle classes and the general social backwardness of the country. Their writings could meet the standards of "purposeful art." They depicted the various aspects of social and political life in India on the basis of Marxist doctrine. Their works are leading Marxist ideology in Hindi. Their works or writing showed the expression of their political beliefs, values, their perception of nationalist movement, and their attitude towards the existence political system in India. Through Marxist writing in Hindi they light of the political culture in India. The

traditions of socialist realism in Hindi novels starts with Rameshvar Shukla "Anchal", a poet turned novelist. He was basically romantic poet and attracted to Marxism and Marxian ideas of a classless, stateless society. According to him "progressivism starts with Marxism at its base."<sup>133</sup> His novel *Chadhti dhup* (1945) describes the struggle of peasants, farmers, and working class. Following the Marxist lines, Anchal stresses that peace and prosperity are possible only in a society founded after the proletarian revolution.

#### **Yashpal – (1903- 1976)**

*"I always wanted to point out the wrong in the society, I always wrote with a purpose."*

Yashpal was a progressive writer. As a writer of the progressive movement, Yashpal was and always had been deeply committed to the idea that literature should be purposeful<sup>134</sup>. He was influenced by revolutionary freedom fighters Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev. In February 1931 when Chandra Shekhar Azad became a martyr, he was appointed as commander – in – chief of the Hindustani Socialist Republican Army. It was organization whose purpose was to overthrow British rule and establish Indian independence and socialism. He was arrested and spent fourteen (14) years in imprisonment. He had given his revolutionary days in his autobiography "Simhabalokan". He was freed after serving six years of a fourteen – years – to – life term for revolutionary activities against the British. In his autobiography he said that "*I am often asked whether, since I do not belong to any*

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<sup>133</sup> Indu Prakash Pandey, *Hindi Literature*, op.cit., p. 103.

<sup>134</sup> Carlo Coppola, *Marxist Influences*, op.cit., p. 162.

*party, I have dissociated myself from politics. Dissociating oneself from politics means that one feels no relationship with existing conditions and the future of one's society and country... I am not that kind of ascetic... I will do what I must through literature.*" This quotation showed, he chose the literature instead of political activism for social change. He comes from lower middle class of Punjabi Hindu family. He brought up under Arya Samajist and had completed his graduation from National College of Lahore. While imprisoned he study many Marxist ideas and was influenced by them. After release in 1938 he started to write Marxist novel in Hindi. He was regarded as one of the best writer of Hindi. Through writing he showed the political and social change. Yashpal's first collection of the short stories '*Pinjare ki Uran*' was published in 1939 and '*Marxvad*' was published in 1940.

His first novel '*Dada Comrade*' (Dada kamred) was published in 1941. In his novel he disguised incidents of his life in the Hindustan Socialist Republication Army, but main story line was the maturing of the political views from terrorist to Marxist. Here he has tried to present the new, slowly awakening, historical consciousness. He has described the conflict between establish order and new values and ideologies. He indicated the direction of solution. At the end of *Dada Kamred*, Harish a hero of the novel, was a labour organizer, together with other organizers, he led the strike and was charged for dacoity and murder. Although they were innocent, they were found guilty because of nature and inevitability of the class struggle. To publicize the issue and reason for their sacrifice, he addresses the court thus:

".... Because we want to change the institutions we consider unjust and which this court is duty bound to uphold we can be looked upon by the court as criminals. But the justice who looks upon all men as equals, the justice that gives to each man the right of all his labour and does not permit

one to seize the fruits of another's labour, in the sight of human morality, we are innocent. We have complete faith that justice which awards luxury to a few, while 99.9% of the people have no rights or means, will one day be changed, and that our sacrifice will make it happen."<sup>135</sup>

Here he shows the inconsistencies of orthodox system and capitalism, and speaks in defence of human equality and social justice. Yashpal has tried to present the theme from a socialistic point of view. The country was dependent. The feeling of dependence was not only due to the foreign rule, but also the result of western education and western ways of life adopted by the Indians. The novelist identifies the problem clearly. That is why on the one hand he supports the forces fighting with British and on the other he realizes the internal conflicts among these forces and wants that power should go into the hands of the right person. Hence the freedom of the country means the freedom attained by peasants and labourers. Yashpal had at that time concerns concerning the introducing socialism to India.

Yashpal's next novel was, '*Deshdrohi*' (traitor, 1943) was published in 1943. This novel presented the political aspects of CPI policy, in India during the second world war when German attack on Russia, the party adopted the line that the "Imperialist – Fascist war" had been transformed into "People's war." At the same time congress party launched Quit – India movement. CPI chose the "people's war" and that made them unpopular. They earned the contempt of an important segment of the congress party and the people, who thereafter, regarded communists as traitors. Yashpal himself supported the view that protection of Russia as a bastion of socialism was important. He gave equal importance to the view point of the congress

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<sup>135</sup> Yashpal, *Dada Kamred*, (Lucknow: Viplav Karyalay, 1959), p. 172.

socialist party in their support of the Quit – India movement. In his novel *Deshdrohi* he believed and expressed that the congress socialist party was failure to introduce socialism in congress platform. It was for this reason that he considered the CPI as the only alternative.

Dr. Khanna, the hero of the novel, after many adventures in Afghanistan and Russia returned to India in late 1930s, as an underground CPI worker, while Shivnath his boyhood friend who has served many years in jail for the manufacture of bombs to fight the British, is now a member of the congress socialist party. Dr. Khanna has been ordered to convince political leaders of congress that the Quit – India movement is folly and that at this time the congress should cooperate with British to defend. This novel pointed out that Yashpal's commitments towards socialism realism. He believes in socialism and knew that socialism come in India through the CPI policy, therefore he supported the CPI.

His next novel was '*Divya*' and it was published in 1945. *Divya* was historical novel set in ancient Indian times. It is a picture of the dynamic life of the individual and society. Yashpal looks upon the individual and society from a Marxist view point. To recognize man as a living and creative being, should analyse history instead of accepting it as it is. History is valuable, because it is related to the present and the future, it provides with stock of human experience: but this is possible only when it is closely studied and analysed and not taken for granted. *Divya* is an analytical study of history. Here Yashpal tried to provide a Marxist reinterpretation of Indian history. His historical novel: *Divya* describes the power struggle between upper and lower caste groups in an ancient Indian people. He has drawn a life – like picture of the age by describing its social customs, people's dress and also presented the inconsistencies of social relations and values, and the individual's dynamic

mistakes.

power of action, his struggle and his suffering. Basically Yashpal was socialist and progressive writer. Through writing he expressed his ideology, philosophy and his world view. He was progressive writer so he had been deeply committed to the idea that literature should be purpose. His writing was depicting the social problems and injustice rule of British. For Yashpal literature was weapon that he used for showing inequality, social problem, injustice, exploited etc. Through India's literary treasury, he showed ideas and society always changing. It is progressive writers who reflects the new idea, by examining the literary treasure of India and trace the changing ideas. Yashpal was against British Capitalism and favours the Marxist ideology of classless society. His ideology was based on socialism and equality. After Premchand he was one of progressive and famous writer in Hindi literature. He was a revolutionary writer of Hindi literature and the writers of progressive movement.

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### **Rangey Raghav (1923-1962)**

He was also a progressive Hindi writer. His '*visadmath*' (1946), is a description of the heartless exploitation of the people of Bengal by British and the Indian capitalist class, during the Bengal famine of the 1940's.

The other Hindi writers or poets who threw their work/writings considered as progressive writers were Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, Sumitranandan pant, Nagarjun, Kedar Nath Agarwal, Ram Vilas Sharma, Bhairav Prasad Gupta, Shivdan Singh Chauhan etc. In 1937, Shivdan Singh Chauhan published a long article entitled "*Need of Progressive Literature in India*" (Bharat me pragatishil ki avashyakata) published in 1937 in *Vishal Bharat*, a well-known Hindi journal<sup>136</sup>. Through this

<sup>136</sup> Indu Prakash Pandey, *Hindi Literature*, op.cit., p. 111.



article, he discussed Marxism, class war, materialism and the decadence of the capitalist society and appeal to the writers to write about proletariat. Sumitranandan Pant and Narendra Sharma started a monthly Journal “*Rupabh*” in 1938, it became forum for Progressive Hindi Writings.

### **Suryakanth Tripathi Nirala (1896-1961)**

— The most uncompromising genius of modern Hindi literature. His ‘*Bhikshuk*’ (1921) presented a picture of beggar, and a social system which has reduced him to the status of a dog. His *Bhikshuk* carried class consciousness. His next poem ‘*Wah Todti Pathar*’ (1935, breaking stone) presented the woman working on the road. Her class struggles were very clearly seen. He wrote several very good satires against Hindu orthodoxy. He did not spare the opportunist politicians. His ‘*Kukurmutta*’ (the mushroom – 1942), is a satire on the upper class of Indian society. Nirala’s this poem shook the Hindi poetic world. “*Kukurmutta*” is progressive poetry and exposing the artificiality of a nurtured aristocratic life. His *Billesura, Bakariha* (1945) short novel presented the progressive or realistic literature. Here he pointed out the importance of the economic life, and the work can be called a progressive novel.

The progressive Hindi writers or poets made significant contributions to modern Hindi literature. They depicted the Indian social and political life through their writings, and were successful in exposing its evil aspects. They criticised the traditional norms of social behaviour and rejected the caste hierarchy and other related aspects of Hindu society. They strongly advocated secularism in politics and religious tolerance in social life. Through their writings, they have also forced the

Hindi writers to look beyond the national horizon and to confront the internal issues of war and peace.

In the history of political culture in India, the years 1920 marked the beginning of the new phase in the nationalist movement. Mass politics, indigenous languages, popular participation, counter symbols, and counter authority began to play an unprecedented role<sup>137</sup>. New leaders and congress party emerged from this phase of movement, at the end of 1930 and indigenous political leadership also emerged. Many activists and leaders who emerged came from the world of Hindi journalism. Writers believed that they were serving the movement by fighting with their pens. Literature was seen as continuum effort to liberate the country. Thus the foundation of Progressive Writers' Association acted as a powerful catalyst and started a major change in the form and content of Indian literature. A new epoch in Hindi literature, opened up after 1936, when progressive writers conference met under the chairmanship of Premchand. Before the establishment of Progressive Writers' Association, Hindi writers began to feel that Hindi literature or poetry had entered a blind alley, a kind of 'cul-de-sac'. The Progressive Writers conference gave a call for creating a new order of sensibility. It asked the writers to keep their ears trained on the unheard symphony of the toiling masses. After the first conference of Progressive Writers' Association in 1936, one branch of association was established in Bihar. The Hindi branch of Progressive Writers' Association was led by Rahul Sankrityayan and Ramvrka Benipuri. Rahul Sankrityayan wrote "Jine

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<sup>137</sup> Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere of Nationalism: Language and Literature in the age of Nationalism*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 309.

ke liya” and Beni puri wrote ‘*lalchain*’ and ‘*laltara*’. In September 1939, when world war began, many Bihari Progressive writers were arrested. Between 1939 and 1942, the Bihar Progressive Writers’ Association work was stopped. Again it was rebuilt in October 1943, and writers who participated and were selected for chairman and members were Professor Rangin Chandra Halder, M.C Samadar, Brajnandan Azad, Jagdish Prasad Sharmik and Surendra Balupuri. During 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January 1944, the conference of Bihar Hindi Progressive Writers’ Association was held in Hindi Sahitya Sammelan Bhavan. This meeting was attended by Bengali, Urdu and Hindi writers. The conference was inaugurated by Bengali writer Gopal Halder. The branches of the Progressive Writers’ Association increased in Patna, Gaya, Chapra, Muzzafarpur and Ranchi. The second conference in 1944 was held in Patna. It was attended by Hindi, Urdu and Bengali writers. The participants were Prakash Chandra Gupta (a teacher of Allahabad College), Professor Aktar Urenavi and Gopal Halder. Nagarjun also attended this conference. In this conference, village people participated. Even Nagarjun sung his poem in regional language – *Maithili*.<sup>138</sup>

Due to success of branches meeting, the Progressive Writers’ Association became literary force in Hindi literature. Premchand was the greatest progressive force in Hindi literature. He declared in his presidential address in the first conference of Progressive Writers’ Association that literature was not meant to entertain, but to provoke new thinking and inspire the good in people. He had insisted on the need for purposeful writings. He pleaded for literature that would

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<sup>138</sup> ‘*Hans*’ Magazine, “Conference of Progressive Writers’ Association in Bihar”, article written by Rama Avatar, (Benaras, February and March 1946), p. 335.

generate dynamism, struggle and uneasiness (*gati, sangharsh aur bechaini*).<sup>139</sup> With this speech, it was clear that literature became purposeful. Literature must have the high purpose of educating and uplifting the ignorant and poverty stricken people. The untold miseries of the teeming millions of the country became subject matter of Progressive Writers. Literature does not only talk about the social problems but also talks about politics. As Lenin said that “literature is the most powerful weapon in the political education of masses”. Hindi progressive writers adopted the Lenin’s view and Premchand’s speech. They started writing about social, economic and political problems. Through their writings, they showed caste system, orthodoxy Hindu system, blind religious belief etc. Due to the ideas of socialism and revolution in air, the Hindi progressive writers were in favour of revolutionary ideology. They started writing against outmoded past, indifference among people, foreign rule, poverty and exploitation. At the same time, strong nationalism feeling had to emerge in literature. Then nationalism took a place in literature context. The patriotic sentiment and revolutionary ideas brought new trends in Hindi literature and it was progressive and radical trend. The progressive Hindi literature broke away from the old notion of literary value and brought the literature to the closest touch with common people. They used old literature in new form and their writings were based on the glory of Ancient India. The Hindi progressive writers did not only write against the exploitative order of the bourgeoisie allied with the rich landed interest, but also wrote against the ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old order, against caste and all forms of suppression, which was called the tradition of the old community.

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<sup>139</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality, The Novel and Society in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 145.

*Chalo ki aaj sabhi paayemaal roohon se,  
Kahen ke apne hare k zakhm ko zabaan kar den,  
Hamara raaz hamara nahin, sabhi ka hai,  
Chalo kai saare zamane ko raazdaan kar de.*

- Sahir Ludhianvi

The Hindi progressive writers drew attention to crucial issues of hunger, poverty, inequality and exploitation. The progressive movement in Hindi literature thrived because it spoke of its time, its history and its politics. It introduced a new sensibility and that was common man. Most importantly, it provided encouragement to the national freedom movement, by focusing attention on nationalism, love for country and freedom from foreign rule. They issued the pamphlet called 'Angregi Sarkar ab chand roje hai', which was banned by the Bihar Government in 1941. Progressive movement became popular in Hindi literature and became common creed of the time. The idea of progressive literature had come at time when Hindi literature began to move away from "chayavadi yug" (Romantism era). Hindi writers were inspired by Russian revolution and their post achievement. The writers who were influenced by modern trend and Marxist ideology, called themselves progressive. Their writings exposed the evil result of casteism Hindu family system and general social backwardness of the country. Their writings could meet the standards of "Purposeful art". Thus the Hindi writers through their writings contributed to Indian intellectualism and political activism in modern Hindi literature.

## **Some Other Writers of the Association**

Before the formation of the All India Progressive Writers' Association, the patriotic writers of early periods were supporting the struggle and aspiration of the common people-workers, peasants and exploited middle classes. Thus the concept of the "Nation" was becoming concrete. Anti-Imperialism and freedom was defined as an ideal of working peoples rule, as the ending of all forms of exploitation of man by man and the building of new life on a socialist basis. Later many of these patriotic writers joined the Progressive Writers' Association. The writers associated with this movement were people who wrote not necessarily for the joy of crafting great literature; they wrote because they saw and were quick to seize the great inescapable link between literature and socio-political change. Literature for them was a valuable tool in the cause of nation-building and social transformation.

Very soon Marxism ideology increasingly became the leading and dominating ideology of the new Progressive writers and poets.

Some of the writers like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmed Ali, Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand were associated with the Progressive Writer's Movement in India and these writers occupied an outstanding place in the literature.

### **Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984)**

Faiz Ahmed Faiz was born in 1911, in Sialkot, now part of Pakistan. His father was a barrister. He studied in Scotch Mission School. He joined the Murray College at Sialkot for intermediate study. For M.A in English Literature, he studied

in Government College of Lahore and then in Oriental College for M.A in Arabic Literature. In 1936, he joined the All India Progressive Writers' Association. During Second World War he joined the Indian British Army, where he became lieutenant colonel in the Public Relations Directorate of British Indian Army. He was awarded with O.B.E (Order of the British Empire). He was an influential left-wing intellectual, revolutionary poet and one of the most famous poets of Urdu and Punjabi. After the partition of India in 1947, Faiz shifted to Pakistan. His writings were of new verse form in Urdu poetry based on western models. He was influenced by the works of Allama Iqbal and Mirza Ghalib, assimilating the modern Urdu with classical one. He had been very active in political, social and cultural activities. He also wrote newspaper editorials and articles. Faiz produced seven volumes of verse, of which only the first two concern us here. His first collection, '*Naqsh-e-faryadi*' (1941), was followed by '*Dasht-e-Saba*' (1953). Faiz took the message of Marx and carried it to a younger generation, who were in the light of the growing importance of the PWA, more receptive to its egalitarianism, concern for the poor and advocacy for change. He remained a Marxist long, but never an in doctrinaire one, nor was he ever a member of the Communist party. He demanded the development of socialism in the country, and was of the opinion that finding socialism was the only solution of countries problem. Faiz Ahmed Faiz discussed with his colleagues that Marx, Lenin and Engels were not manual workers and had not worked in any factory. Similarly, much would depend on the progressive writers to understand the problem of the workers and act wisely and sincerely. In absence of physical contact with the workers the power of imagination, literary expression and natural sensitivity, could be used as substitute.

According to Copola the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a leading activist in the labour movement in Punjab. He organized the Progressive Writers' Association meeting. A meeting was held in Jallianwala Bagh and the meeting was sponsored by Amritsar Kisan Sabha. In the meeting he discussed about whether middle class writers could identify with and relate to workers and peasants. His poems '*Naqsh-e-Faryadi*' was published in *Muktab-e-Urdu* from Lahore in 1941. His poems in '*Naqsh-e-Faryadi*', '*A few more days*' and '*speak up*' showed political nationalism colour of India. This poem was published in 1941, about six years before the end of British Raj. This period was full of political turmoil; protests against British, leaders were thrown in Jail, and protests were banned. His other poem '*To political leaders*' which was published in '*Dasht-e-Saba*' in 1953, but the poems were written during the time of Second World War. His poem '*The Dawn of Freedom*', August 1947, (*Subh-e-Azadi, August 1947*), was also published in '*Dasht-e-Saba*'. In his poems he showed that freedom was like dawn, but its red colour was not from its revolutionary, socialist fervour but from the blood of partition and his poetry reflected of time in a somber, mournful tone. Faiz Ahmed Faiz famous lament in '*Subh-e-Azadi*', exemplifies this mood:

*Ye daagh daagh ujaala, ye shab gazeeda sahar*

*Voh intezaar tha jiska ye voh sahar to nahin*

The division of the nation along religious lines, particularly the formation of Pakistan as a state founded on the basis of Muslim nationalism, was repugnant to him. Here he expressed that independence had produced a condition that was far removed from his cherished dream of socialist, united India. The use of religion as a means to unite, and consequently divide people, was widely criticised by both sides

of the border. His poems showed the political patriotism, and criticised the government authorities. He included the political ideas in nationalism through the poems. After independence he shifted in Pakistan and became the editor of 'The Pakistan Times' a socialist English language newspaper.

### **Sajjad Zaheer**

Sajjad Zaheer was born in 1905 in Lucknow. His father Syed Wazir Hasan was a judge of the High Court at Allahabad. He got his bachelor's degree from Oxford University in 1932, and three years later he qualified as a barrister-at-law in London, but he never practiced law. He also gained diploma in journalism from London University. He was the most important intellectual figure in twentieth century South Asian literature. He was one of the authors of '*Angare*' (1935), the ground breaking and controversial collection of works by him and three writers Ahmed Ali, Rashid Jahan and Mahmuduzzafar. The collection included five short stories by Sajjad Zaheer. He returned to England, took the bar exam, published the novel '*London ki Ek raat*', and hammered out a manifesto with like-minded Indians. He returned to India in 1935 with the intention of setting up an AIPWA.

The formation of the Progressive Writers' Association can be seen as the major contribution made by Sajjad Zaheer. Through the Association he gave a platform for new writers. He was instrumental in spreading awareness about this proposed new association whose first conference he organised in Lucknow in 1936. It has been said that his real achievement lay in his ability to provide a platform for the unfolding of the finest talent in the sub-continent. He inspired hundreds of new writers. "He evoked the new consciousness among Indian writers to understand how

alien rule had ignored languages, suppressed cultures and own over their allies among forefathers to false value of snobbery, money contempt and cynical betrayal of humanness.”

His other works of fiction included the novel '*London ki ek Raat*' (*One night in London*) published in 1937, and it was written three years earlier. It depicted the angst of the young men, who were angered by repressive British policies in India, engaged in anti-imperialise activities while in London. Zaheer shows the socio-political concerns in “A night in London and India’s nationalist aspiration”. It reveals Zaheer’s personal struggle to use his art-literature, his creative writing, as an instrument of social change. It was the first novel to display the ideologies and aspiration of Indian youth in political context of India. *A Night in London* is regarded as chronicling the emotional, ideological and political aspirations of an entire generation of Indian students in Europe. The novel sheds light on the late imperial London-English working-class politics and anti-colonial sentiment and race relations. The novel was anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and nationalist, and clearly displayed an ideological commitment to social transformation and national liberation. In his book '*The Light*' he gave details of progressive Urdu literature. Here he described how, through education and literature, the British succeed in implanting in the Indian minds the belief that Englishmen were superior to Indians. This resulted in making Indians consider their own civilization worthless and ignore it, at the same time making them value western civilization and foolishly copying it. It was meant to create a feeling of inferiority among Indians, so that mentally Indians became obedient tools of colonial power.

Sajjad Zaheer is remembered in Indian subcontinent for the new direction he gave in literature and writing in the turbulent times when the country was locked in a

life and death struggle with a colonial power. In 1948, after India's partition, Sajjad Zaheer left for Pakistan.

### **Ahmed Ali**

He was founder member of the PWA; he first shot to fame as a contributor of two short stories, namely, *Mahavaton ki Ek raat* and *Baadal Nahin Aate in Angare*.

Ahmed Ali, a novelist, poet, critic, diplomat scholar, was born in Delhi in 1910. His father had been a civil servant in the British administration and posted as Assistant commissioner to the Punjab. Ahmed Ali had a consciousness about political events and nationalist sentiment, and his first political statement was made at school when he refused to wear a medal for the Prince of Wales's visit. Instead, he tied it around his shoe, for which he was punished.

He studied English at Aligarh and Lucknow Universities. He taught at the University of Lucknow, Allahabad and Agra from 1932-46 and joined the Bengal senior education service as Professor and Head of English Department at Presidency college Calcutta (1944-47). He was BBC's representative and Director in India during the war and went to China in 1946 as British Council visiting Professor at the National Central University, Nanking. After the Indian Sub-continent was divided he lived in Pakistan. He was known as the pioneer of English fiction and poetry among the Muslims of India. His literary career began during British rule over India and his significance as a writer is both historical and social. He was first to accept modernity, social, realism and then symbolism from the western sources among Indian Muslims writers. In Lucknow (1929), he published short stories in English in

Lucknow University Journal. He wrote Urdu short story 'Mahavaton ki ek raat' (*A night of winter rains*) published by the literary magazine *Humayun* (*literary magazine published from Lahore*). He met with Sajjad Zaheer and Mahmuduzzfar, both were socialist intellectuals. This friendship with radical's intellectuals brought Ali in touch with socialist and liberal ideas. His short stories, 'Angare' made a significant contribution to the progressive movement in Urdu literature. He was a founding member of All India Progressive Writers' Association and speaking at the first conference of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA) in April 1936, thus expressed the turmoil of an entire generation of young intellectuals:

*The Indian renaissance is beginning to be shocked into frankness about itself. Its old, confused, inconsistent, and contradictory ideology is turning upon itself and today the most significant fact everywhere in India is process of universal heartsearching- it is painful process in the throes of which India is finding herself today, finding herself between two worlds, the one dead and the other yet unborn.*<sup>140</sup>

He expressed the nature of the PWA movement through this view.

His essay – *A Progressive view of Art* – included in the association's first official publication, *Towards a Progressive Literature*, announced a commitment to the cause of social realism, a method which informs this detailed portraits of Indian Muslims households in a post imperialist and pre-independence Delhi. He actively participated in the conference of Progressive Writers' Association. In Calcutta conference, he attended this conference and was convinced that the young members of Progressive Association neither understood his talent nor respected them adequately. According to Sajjad Zaheer, it was true that Ali Sardar Jafri, Sibet

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<sup>140</sup> Ahmed Ali, 'Progressive View of Art', *Golden Jubilee Brochure*, Ghulam Rabbani, Tapan Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, (NMML).

Hasan, Majaz etc., who were the most high-ranking, riotous, even passionate among the progressive minded young people in Lucknow, did not like Ahmed Ali. They regarded his art with suspicion, and thought his Progressive ideas were insincere and shallow. On other hand, Ahmed Ali considered them in-experience and ignorant compared to himself. As result the mutual coolness was bound. Ahmed Ali was touchier and frequently took umbrage. He was a good friend of Sajjad Zaheer and tolerated only Sajjad Zaheer's criticism. After that Sajjad Zaheer felt that Ahmed Ali could not keep his link with Progressive Movement for long. Ahmed Ali also attended the conference of peasants' poets in Faridabad in 1938. He wrote an excellent and detailed report of this conference in English. It included translation of the works of peasants' poets who had participated in the conference. This report was published in progressive political monthly, *New Era*, which was published from Madras. The Progressive Writers' Association decided to publish the magazine '*New Indian Literature*'. Its editorial board consisted of Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, Dr. Abdul Aleem and Ahmed Ali. Around 1939, the first controversy surfaced within the association. Ahmed Ali contended that there was difference between the creative section and the political section and the political section was pressurizing him to not publish work that was not significant from workers and peasants point of view. Probably, this caused a rift between Ahmed Ali and Mulk Raj Anand. Finally, Ahmed Ali left the Progressive Writers' Association, but he did not stop writing. He made progress in his skill and knowledge while adhering to the path of humanity, realism and progress.

Ahmed Ali achieved international name, with his novel '*Twilight in Delhi*', which was first published by Hogarth Press in London in 1940. *Twilight in Delhi* is the only Indian novel that called for the freedom of India from British rule. It brings

history alive, depicting the decay of entire culture and way of life. *Twilight in Delhi* novel was based on the city of Delhi, once the capital of Mughal emperor's and even those days (1940). The story relocates around the Delhi based Nihal household, and it is through the gradual undoing of Nihals over the years (1910-1911) that this novel articulates its larger elegy for the historical culture. Governed by the authority of their unwilling government (British), Mir Nihal, this family witness a succession of misfortunes. His son Arghar, was romantic and had his own sorrows to think of, and his own life to set right. He was fascinated about western culture and unconcerned whether the country lived or died. It showed that young generation were fascinated about the western culture and felt their own culture was inferior. It made them selfish, they were not concerned about their country's political turmoil. In the novel there was some realistic and symbolic aspects, like the visit of George V in 1911, the great influenza epidemic, the life of Muslims aristocratic families in the traditional mohallas (localities) of Delhi. This makes the novel a work of historical realism, the detailed description of daily life, makes the novel a valuable sociological description of dying culture.

*Through Mir Nihal Ali showed the feeling of nationalism when Mir Nihal wiped the grand child's tears and said that "see there goes the horses and the firangis...Don't you see them? Those are the people who have been our undoing, and will be yours too..." "But you will be brave, my child and fight them one day won't you ...? You will be brave and drive them out of the country ..."*<sup>141</sup>

Overall the whole novel deals with social, cultural decline and nationalism, it was historical novel. Ahmed Ali's other works included collection of short stories *Hamari Gali (1940)*, *Quaid khana (1942)* and *Maut se Pahle (1945)*. Ahmed Ali had

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<sup>141</sup> Ahmed Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, (New Delhi: Rupa.co, 2007), p. 147.

deep interest in Sufism and a passion for Ghalib. His writings voiced concern over the decay of Muslim culture and the injustices of colonial powers. After independence he shifted to Pakistan.

### **Mulk Raj Anand**

The fiction of 1930's and 40's was dominated by the voice of Mulk Raj Anand. He was born in Peshawar (now in Pakistan) in 1905. His father was a coppersmith and soldier. His work exemplifies nationalism, modernism, marxism, Gandhism and Nehruvian socialism. Anand's political career began with an early involvement with non-co-operation movement in 1921, for which he suffered imprisonment. He was educated at Khalsa College, Amritsar and he graduated from the University of Punjab in 1924. Anand went to London in 1925 to study English at Cambridge and the University College London, gaining his PhD in 1929. He studied and later taught at the League of Nations school on Intellectual Cooperation in Geneva and he also taught at the Workers Education Association, London, between 1932 and 1945. He became part of the literary crowd known as the 'Bloomsbury Group', where he met writers like T.S. Eliot and E.M. Forster among many others. He was surprised that even without visiting India, European writers had formed their view of India by Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, and he felt that it was typical of colonial fantasies of India. To change these perceptions, he wanted to write about ordinary and everyday life experiences of Indians who were not kings and gods.

The genesis of Anand's first novel *Untouchable*, recounted his decisive shift from Bloomsbury to Sabarmati. The novel *Untouchable* was published in 1935, and its story is based on the life of the most down trodden and oppressed section of

Indian society, the outcastes, *Untouchable* narrates one day in the life of Bakha, a young sweeper who lives in the outcastes' colony in a small cantonment town in northern India. His daily work involved cleaning up the dirt of the rich and powerful, who despised him because of notions of purity and pollution. Governed by caste rules, he had to announce his 'impure' status when passing through the streets. The book clearly depicted the humiliating experiences of Bakha and his search for some release from degradation of his life, as well as the range of possible solutions present, shown in the portrayal of the well-meaning Christian missionary Colonel Hutchinson, who promises a life of social equality in Christ. The book includes a surprise visit by Gandhi, and his declaration of untouchability as the greatest disgrace of Hinduism. *Untouchable* was Anand's most famous novel. Anand's chosen social context offers a unique perspective on British officials, who supported the Hindu characters that harassed Bakha's world.

Before the publication of his novel *Untouchable*, he showed early draft to Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram, where he lived with Gandhi. Gandhi criticised the novel and said that it was too much of a Bloomsbury intellectual.

Anand continued to write of oppressed classes, as could be seen in his second novel *Coolie*. *Coolie* was published in 1936. Here Anand has shown concern for industrial workers. *Coolie* provides an account of Bombay textile strike of 1930, as experienced by a young boy Munoo. Munoo an orphan travels from his mountainous village through north India and finds himself in Bombay. He works as domestic slave, factory worker and as coolie. In each situation, Munoo is subjected to harassment, beating and financial exploitation at the hands of employers and money lenders. *Coolie* is an important social chronicle, especially for its sketches of early trade-union activity in Bombay and of the complex relationship between colonial

factory managers and colonised Indian workers. In this novel he also represented the incipient strains of religious discord and inter-communal violence.

His other novels are, *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1941), *Sword and Sickle* (1942), *The Big Heart* (1945), Anand's last novel before Independence. Through writing, he showed injustice and social inequalities in India.

Anand was founding member of Progressive Writers' Association in London and co-authored the original Manifesto in 1935. One of the original signatories of the Manifesto at Nanking Hotel in London, he was never a member of the Communist Party, but always a sympathizer and avid supporter of the movement all through its tumultuous history. He was elected the first president of the PWA set up by Zaheer and other Indians students in England. He made a name for himself with early successes in England first with the *Untouchable* (1935) followed by the *Coolie* (1936). With a preface by E. M. Forster, his very first book was well-received and Anand became the toast of literary circles in London. His politics as well as his writing expressed a keen desire for social transformation and political change. Though he lived in London, he was present at several important junctions of the progressive movement, such as the Calcutta Conference of 1938, and remained in constant touch with the Indian progressives, especially Zaheer. He represented India at the Second International Writer's Congress in Spain in 1937 and went to the war front with Republican militia and came to India to give Indian progressives his eye-witness account of the struggle against fascism being waged in Spain. In London, Anand read Karl Marx's writing on the Indian Meeting in the New York Times. He was so impressed with these that he published them with an introduction in 1939.

Anand can be seen as a pivotal figure in making the experience of Indian writers available to an international audience. He helped to bring an international dimension to the progressive writer's movement in India.

## Conclusion

*“Bhadka rahen hain aag lab-e-naghmagan se hum,  
Khamos kayan rahenge jamane ke dar se ham,  
le de kar apne paas faqat ek najar to hai,  
kyon dekhe jindagi ko kisi kin ajar se hum,  
mana ki is zamane ko na guljar kar sake,  
kuch khaar kam to kar diye,  
guzre jidhare se hum”.*

– Sahir Ludhianvi.

The formation of Progressive Writers Association was an attempt to reflect the story of nationalism in the mirror of literature. It created a new national culture. The progressive writers highlighted the tyrannical conditions and torture faced by peasants, workers and middle class in general. They hoped to bring about a change through constant struggle. They presented man as a dignified and a significant creature, capable of proving himself in a capitalistic and feudal society that was exploiting him. The Progressive Writers' Association became milestone in the history of Indian literature. It was considered as a tumultuous episode in the intellectual history of India. The Progressive Writers' Association made their greatest contribution towards the literature in the period from 1936 to early years of independence in the late forties. It appeared as the declaration of a new movement in literature. It attacked the old and decadent institutions and ideas, and invited the new writers to use their pen fearlessly. Its goal was to use literature in order to raise the fragmented social, castes and classes of India and united them against British

Imperialism. Since the emergence of new western inspired literary forms in the nineteenth century, Indian literature had experienced a vigorous and healthy development, which Progressive Writers continued.<sup>142</sup> The formation of All India Progressive Writers' Association is a landmark in the cultural history of India, they showed the new way, how literature used to depict the social and political realities. The progressive literature aroused great hopes because of its humanitarian approach and realistic overtones.

In 1936, when the Progressive Writers' Association was launched, it included writers of all of Indians major languages. Those who joined the association or sympathised with its aims made great contributions to Indian literature which are still recognised as path-breaking. Equally important was the sense of unity that was displayed with writers of so many languages coming together with linguistic or religious conflict. The Progressive Writers' rejected certain unhealthy and un-enlightenment trends in literature. They rediscovered with new experience and added fresh dynamism to literature as a whole. Another important feature of their writing was that they did not give up older forms of literature all together. Themes that had appeared in classical literature were reworked and in many ways showed that the content of literature, when shown in a new form, made for new and revolutionary literature. Thus, they presented what has been called 'new wine in old bottles'. The new wine was provided by the reactions to colonialism and the emergence of nationalism, while the old bottles were the ways in which these writers described the

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<sup>142</sup> Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature, A Select History*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 208.



continuing problems of Indian society. Nation, society and literature all came together in their writings.

The formation of Progressive Writers' Association was an attempt to reflect the story of the Nationalism in the mirror of literature. It highlighted the problems of Nationalism, the anti-colonial struggle against the British. The general agenda of the organisation was to create a new National culture. The first meeting of the Progressive Writers' Association held in Lucknow in 1936 and was presided over by Premchand, whose presidential address gave a new aesthetic direction to Progressive Writings:

“We have to change the criteria of beauty. It was a new approach and different from the classic where beauty was an aristocratic princess of ivory tower”. He talked about the relationship between literature and politics – “Literature is not the camp follower of politics. It is the torch of light that shows the path of politics”. Here the word politics does not stand for the program of any political party. It means that the understanding of the whole social and economic factors which created history and change in society, human thought and emotion, gave a new direction in the literature and arts. In turn literature became an instrument of understanding and change. He also concluded the definition of Progressive in Literature. Progressive means that which creates in us power to act which makes us to examine tradition and make us healthy and produce among us the strength of unity and integration that is what we called Progressive. And the progressive literature, which is thoughtful, passion for Freedom and beauty, the light of realities, created turmoil and turbulence, makes us restless and does not put us to sleep that is progressive literature. Premchand's address made all South Asian intellectuals to wake up. The first All India Progressive Writers' Association conference was the largest cultural

movement that South Asia had ever seen. During the period of 1936 and the end of 1939 was a period when new ideas, revolutionary movement, novel resolutions and new enthusiasm were seen among young Indian people. There was not time for enslavement to imperialism. At the same time restlessness surfaced in many different forms, hatred and anger against imperialism was continuously expressed, those people who supported British and joined them in oppressing their own people were despised, and common people looked down upon those who copied the living style of British rulers. This feeling and perception of people reflected literature. The influence of socialist ideas among people, students, lowers and middle classes became especially wide spread. The largest political party – Congress, had suddenly increased members of the left wing. The socialist party formed within the congress and many young people who were sent to Jail for participating in Civil disobedience movement in 1930 and 1936, had become communist after they were released. The other speciality of this period was new awakening among land workers who organised their own independent organism like the Kishan Shabha. The leader of this land workers came from Communist or Socialist, or from the left winger of the congress. The trade union movement of the industrial labours became more active and united, and leadership came from the left wingers. After the 1937 election, the congress victory showed itself the defeat of Imperialism. Within two or three years land workers and Industrial movement and left wing political parties too, experienced great enhancement. The political upheaval and awakening of the fundamental national and international economic reasons cannot be separated from the Progressive Writers' Association movement. It was a truth that political and economic turmoil came in the mind of Indian intelligentsia. They understood and began to regard with suspicion the stand points of Gandhian and revivalist

philosophy, the politics of reformism and vague nationalism. Simultaneously, there appeared in International horizon, the success in Soviet Union and socialist society and other side the capitalism in the terrible form of fascism over Western Europe. This was making deep impression on some section of the intelligentsia, even the congress which was dominated by capitalist, Jawaharlal announced in the annual meeting of the congress in Lucknow that soviet socialist experiment had proved successful, soon whole world would give up the Capitalist system and adopt the socialist economic system. It became easier for progressive intelligentsia to discard the politics views from the bourgeois classes and to take part in the movements and activities of the workers.

During this period, 1937-38, the Progressive Writers movement spread in Urdu, Hindi and Bengali writers. After the huge success of first Progressive Writers' Association conference in Lucknow, it made solid gains in the Hindi, Urdu speaking areas, wherein 1937, 38 and 1939 organized joint conferences of Hindi and Urdu progressive writers. In earlier conference, Hindi writers did not come, but in Allahabad conference in 1938, poets of Hindi like Maithili Sharan Gupt attended and read a poem. Nehru also attended and spoke at the same conference. In this conference, Sajjad Zaheer succeeded in getting support and message in the conference from Rabindranath Tagore. The Calcutta conference, also helped in the progress of Progressive Writers' Association. The Progressive Writers' Association planned to issue a quarterly journal from Lucknow. The first magazine, 'New Indian Literature' appeared in November 1939. Its editorial board consisted of Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali and Dr. Abdul Aleem. The magazine contained articles: Sudhindranath Dutta from Bengal wrote on Bengali literature, Anand wrote about the Progressive Writer's movement and D.P Mukherjee wrote about modern Bengali

art. Sudhindranath Dutta's and Anand's articles were the presidential address that had been read out at the second conference of the Association in Calcutta in 1938. The short story written by Ahmed Ali, who translated Premchand's story *Kafan*. Due to Second World War two issues appeared in 1939. One was Mulk Raj Anand, who left for visiting England, but war broke out and it was impossible for Anand to return to India. Second issue was in 1940, Abdul Aleem was put in Jail, and it made entirely impossible for Journal publication. When war started, the citizen rights began to be impounded and most of the Progressive Writers who were associated with the socialist movement were arrested. As a result, the association was suspended and its meetings and conference stopped. But very soon, Faiz Ahmed Faiz's *Naqsh-e-Faryadi*, Krishna Chander's *Tilism-e-khayal*, Rajinder Singh Bedi's *Dana-o-Daam*, Ahmed Nadeem's and Upendranath Ashk's collections of short stories were published by *Muktab-e-Urdu* in Lahore. (Muktab-e-Urdu was established by Barkat Ali and Chaudhry Nazeer for publication of new and progressive literature. Rajinder Singh Bedi, Ahmed Nadeem and Upendranath Ashk were other talented writer who emerged during this period.)

Although, the conferences of Progressive Association was not held, but Progressive Writers could not stop their writing in that difficult years (1940-41). They continued their literary work through writings, publication of magazines, books and articles. So progressive literary movement could not stopped.

The Progressive Writer's movement revived again in 1942 and 1943. The 1942's conference was held in Delhi and 1943's conference was held in Bombay. After the Bombay's conference, the next conference convened in Hyderabad. It was not national level conference. At the conference of All India Urdu Progressive Writers' Association was held in Hyderabad in 1945. In this session Sajjad Zaheer

presented a paper on the question of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani. Sardar Jafri and Kaifi Azmi (an Urdu poet) presented their political nasnavis (narrative poems). The Progressive Writers' Association movement was a patriotic movement of All India Writers belonging to various patriotic groups and classes. A common feature among these writers was their writings against feudalism and imperialism. The Progressive literature is the literature of national independence, peace and democracy and direct against the deadly grip of imperialism and feudalism on the basis of economy and culture. Due to Progressive Writers' Association's anti-imperialistic outlook, it had faced many difficult and complicated paths. It came during British Raj in India, so British government was not pleased with this movement. Colonial power had clear one policy for culture and literature. With the coming of William Bentinck, as Governor General (1825-35) to planting of western ideas and knowledge of the science through education and added the British language 'the key to all improvements'. Thus Persian, the centuries-old court language was abolished as well as Arabic and Sanskrit were objected. As Lord Macaulay's Minute in 1835 said that '*a class of person, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste and character, in moral and intellect*'. Hence all schools and colleges were set up to convert Indians to brown Englishmen through knowledge in English language. Bentinck's westernization and Macaulay's painting Indian faces brown, with a brush of Anglicization, ignorance had increased a hundred of Indian people forgot their culture and literature even that their mother tongues. British historians presented Indian's picture as ashamed, demoralized and distorted. Orientalists, and trained propagandists from missionaries and civil servants to Anglo-Indian journalists like Rudyard Kipling felt suffocated in an atmosphere of inferiority. The plan of brain washing of Indians from whom British had wrested power and implanted a sense

into their minds of being backward, uncivilized and conquered people through manipulating propaganda like Vincent Smith's 'History of India', was well planned and successful. In the meantime, the radical writers of Europe and Russia, strived romantic feeling of Freedom and Patriotism, which led Indians to look around and find the social order in shambles. In the process of transformation from Indian to brown Englishmen, Indians were losing their freedom, culture and individuality. Even that they lost their own self-identity. British's intention was to present India as a backward and uncivilized, and attempted to bring inferior feelings among Indians.

Their purpose was to support the education and views which created sense of superiority of the British ruler's and western capitalist's culture and civilization, and a feeling of inferiority among Indian. The British had not attacked the movement foolishly; they had done so very cunningly. They knew that Progressive Writer's movement was spreading the idea of democracy and liberty among the intelligentsia and through them among common people, and it would replace despair and dejection with the resolve to end their slavery and exploitation and build a new fulfilling life, and instead of narrow minded and selfishness it would encourage making sacrifice to attend high ideas, therefore it was necessary for them and their supporters to stop the movement from growing and spreading. The British government treated the association workers harshly, and deprived them of jobs and all resources of the government that were able to grant livelihood. The intellectuals who were employees of the government were prohibited from joining the association. Between 1943 and 1947, the national executive committee of the Progressive Writers' Association did not meet and National bulletin was not published, although, there were huge changes in the policy and practice. The lack of National level meeting shows the nature of the period which the Progressive Writers were facing difficulty in squaring the

Nationalist aspiration with their communist commitment of insuring and allied victory.<sup>143</sup> But it does not mean that the Progressive Writers and their association should give up the right of their own independent political viewpoint, under the pressure of threats and hardships.

The Progressive writers were also active during the Second World War. Sardar Jafri, Sibet Hasan and Sajjad Zaheer were planning to publish *Naya Aadab* (the Urdu Magazine) once again from Bombay. Earlier it was published in 1941 from Lucknow.

The branches of association were opened in Lahore, Lucknow and Hyderabad Deccan. Two magazines *Humayun* (Urdu Magazine) and *Adabi Dunya* were published from Lahore. The works of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Krishna Chander, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Rajinder Singh Bedi and Upendranath Ashk were first published in these magazines. They were talented writers who brought out the progressive literary movement at high level. The progressive writers brought out *Adabi-i-lateef* which was influenced by the Progressive movement. It was published from Lahore. They also established the *Muktab-e-Urdu* for the publication of new progressive literature from Punjab. *Muktab-e-Urdu* was an important publisher and it published beautifully and skilfully the works of progressive writers of Punjab and later outside Punjab.

In Lucknow, Sibet Hassan and Sardar Jafri brought out the Urdu magazine *Naya Aadab* in 1941.

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<sup>143</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, op.cit., p. 96.

Later it was bought by Sardar Jafri, Sibet Hasan and Sajjad Zaheer in Bombay. Raza Ansari who was teacher in the school and also participant of Progressive Writers' Association brought out progressive monthly called *Manzil* from Lucknow. During the period 1939-40, the organization of association was suspended and its meeting and conference was stopped. But very soon Faiz Ahmad Faiz published *Naqsh-e-Faryadi* in Muktab-e-Urdu. In his poem:

*"Bol ke lab aazaad hain tere,*

*Bol zabaan ab tk teri hai"*

*Speak for your lips are still free,*

*Speak for your tongue is still yours.<sup>144</sup>*

Through this poem he awakened the All Progressive Writers to fight for independence of their homeland. During those difficult years (1939-40), the progressive writers could not stop writing and the creation of progressive literature and its seeds of progressive views, put in the mind of young people and bright intellectuals.

Progressive Literary movement was impacted in Andhra and Malabar. Like Premchand, one of the greatest writers of Modern Malayalam literature in Malabar was Vallathol Narayana Menon, who associated himself in the movement of progressive literature. His son a young writer became the secretary of the association. The association formed in different cities and a provisional centre and its office were instituted. The progressive writers of Malayalam brought out a

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<sup>144</sup> Riz Rahim, *In English Faiz Ahmed Faiz*, (United States of America, xlibris Corporation, 2008), p. 92.

monthly literary magazine. Anthologies of short stories, poetry and translation of foreign progressive literature were published.

The period covered in this work was a time of ideological and social changes in the political make-up of India. During this period, different leaders of Ideas and practice came to India. These included the leftist movement, resulting in the establishment of the socialist party and the communist party. The country went from being a colony, having minimum constitutional representation to independent country. The Progressive Writers' Association mainly attempted to move in three directions. Firstly, it tried to win individuals who were not committed to any cause. Secondly they tried to get support of those whose allegiance was elsewhere and thirdly gain champions in individuals who were already established leaders with followers who could be used for this new project. The accomplishment of Progressive Writers' Association was quit considerable in the three directions. They were able to move (get support) from large number of writers and other artists and non-artists. They also got support from national leaders like Nehru and Sarojini Naidu, in the literary field writers like Premchand and Tagore were among their champions. This movement widen its base among Indian writers.

The Progressive Writers' Association movement was one of great importance in Indian Literary history. This movement brought out the relationship between literature, politics and society, and this occurred first time in Indian literary history. The Progressive Writers' Association had objective which was successfully achieved by the association. It had objective to change the purpose and structure of literature and to change the literary theory, an arts for art's sake, in arts for common people. According to Andre Gide a dominant literary figure, Art that had no contact with reality, with life was artificial. He argued that great literature came from below,

through the experience of ordinary people. It was also seen in Indian literature, so the progressive writers made Indian literature for common people. Indian poet Sahir ludhianvi said that "*fan jo naadaar tak nahin pahuncha, apne meyaar tak nahin pahuncha*", the art that does not reach the poor Has not achieved its potential. Progressive Writers' Association created the progressive literature, which was contributed towards Nationalism. Progressive literature is the literature for National Independence, democracy and peace. The Progressive Writers and poets participated in freedom struggle through their writing and poems, like Bismil Azimabadi from Bihar wrote "*Sar-farosi ki tamanna ab hamare dil me hai, dekhana hai zor kitnaa baazu-e-quatil me hai*".

"We are prepared to sacrifice our head, let us see the power of the executioner's arm", and this line immortalized by Ram Prasad Bismil. Makhdum's poem *Jang-i-Azadi (War of freedom)*. "This is a war of freedom under the banner of freedom". The poem was heart-warming and mobilize people. The writers of Association also wrote about Indian politics like Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem '*To the political leaders*' (*Siyasi leader ke naam*). In this poem Faiz criticised the politics of those leaders who did not understand the nature of Second World War and made the nation as a spectator of the war.

The Progressive Writers presented international issues like impact of war, the dangers of fascism. Through literature, the writers of association depicted the Indian society, common people's life oppression, exploitation and poverty of people. They traced the exploitation of India by British imperialism. They made the literature in easy language so that common people could understand it (labour, farmers etc.). They exposed all forms of British imperialism and imperialist interference in the life of people. The progressive writers questioned communalism. They wrote articles,

short stories, poems and songs to make peace and brotherhood among Hindu and Muslims. Krishna Chander's short stories '*Hum washi hain*' (We are Barbarians) is a plea for the peace and sanity between Hindus and Muslims. Overall the Progressive Writers' Association made great contribution to the Nation and literature. It produced the excellent quality of work. The great contribution of movement was breaking the taboos which earlier literature had accepted and portrayed vividly with great artistic skill all the new social realities of the thirties and after. Soviet Academician Barannikov justly said in his message to the Delhi Progressive Writers conference: "The All India Progressive Writers' Association consolidates the most advanced creative forces of the people of India". It is necessary to carry this work of consolidation further.<sup>145</sup>The primary objective of Progressive Writers' Association was achievement of national independence. The independence was won by Indian people, but the problems and reasons remained in the society. Although problems had changed after Independence, but the way was same. Thus progressive writers could not stop writing, and attempted to show the problems and right path through literature, and made people aware of the problems. Even after Independence, other progressive writers like Yashpal, Bhisham Sahni and Kaifi Azmi etc. continued to write about Indian social reality and problems.

The formation of Progressive Writers' Association was a major literary movement against imperialism, colonialism and for democratic rights of south Asian people. The Progressive Writers' Association played a critical role in mobilizing the masses through literature. It acted as a great unifying force for Indian literature.

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<sup>145</sup> Pradhan Sudhi, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, Vol. III, (Calcutta: Dustak Bipani, 1985) p. 58.

Generally, aspects of literature and nation are looked at separately, but here, attempt was made to understand and look at both nation and literature together and their impact on each other. The concept of 'nation' in Indian literature had come when the cultural awakening (socio-religious reforms) was once re-defined the Indian's national identity in the terms of its past glory and re-examination of traditional social structure. The idea of India as a nation being in the nineteenth century literature and mostly Indian writings turn into voice of nationalism. Initially in the patriotic writings in different languages the concept of India as a whole was missing.

But India as a nation was defined by geography in early period. The community people of India are demarcated by territory. From about fourth century B.C, the territorial conception of India or Bharatvarsa (Jambudvipa), consisted mighty Himalayas all along the north and the seas in south with the Karakorum and the Hindukush, the Assam and Chittagong hills marked the eastern and western boundaries. Through the centuries, poets and leaders of thoughts have held this territorial vision of India. In directly this consciousness nourished by daily rituals and prayers fostered a vague sense of patriotism in early Indian literature. With passage of time the regional writings of patriotism were accepted by whole India giving way to a uni-cultural nationalism. A very important aspect of the development of Indian nationalism that is the conception of all the people of India living in different parts of the country as one nation found in the book '*True Tales of Indian Life*' written by Dwijendra Nath Neogi in 1917. Although Indian languages are known to be widely varied, the momentum of freedom struggle created a unifying bond. As it can be seen in the slogan '*Inquilab Zindabad*' (long live the revolution), which was a Persianised Urdu idiom, but was popular among Indian people because of its objective to the struggle. At the time of freedom struggle, it

was not only concerned for a unified nation, but also started using language with unified structure. Now various Indian languages narrate the Indian nation with all complexity, diversity, and plurality. It constitutes an un-official history of sub-continent depicting the people's version of what happened or what went wrong. The origin of the Indian novels coincided with the rise of Nationalism as an ideology in the public sphere. Thus the emergence of the nation was also the emergence of nationalist sentiment, which was taking place in Indian literature context. It was reflected in the writings of Indian writers like Premchand, Iqbal and Rabindranath Tagore, etc., categories of writers who preached love of the nation and stood for a secular approach. They were describing the nation, its people and society through their writings. The freedom movement in India was an event of immense importance for the country and it transformed the attitude and thinking of the people considerably. It was not merely a political struggle, but it was emotional and ideological experience spread over a longer period of time than any other national revolution in world history. It gave a tremendous stimulus to creative writing in India. It made many writers aware of their own linguistic and individual identity and past. India's struggle of freedom gave new wave in literature. It redefined the nation and nationalism in the literature. Indian writers came forward to reflect the new consciousness of nationalism and idea of the nation. The patriotic feeling of Indian writers underwent an important change. It was the beginning of a new literature in India and anti-imperialist and anti-feudal literature of a new type that was called Progressive Writers' Association. The formation of the Progressive Writers' Association was a landmark in the progress of modern Indian literature. It began with tracing the gradual emergence of political and social consciousness from the mid-nineteenth century, as reflected in the literature of this period. Ideas of

Progressive Writers' movement acted as a liberating force in literary and cultural field on a scale which was unprecedented in Indian history. It was a step forward from the enlightenment which started in first decade of nineteenth century. It was started by advanced intelligentsia and was scientific, critical assessment of the past and assimilation of the finest. Progressive movement was not satisfied by mere reforms. It pointed out the real cause of social illness which lay in the system, and a call to change the system to bring about new social order. The significance of the Progressive Writers Movement is uncontested for most commentators on the literary history of India. The writers of Progressive Writers' Association, some of them were well-established, others were upcoming, some were already committed communist, and others with socialist leanings, had the desire to change the world. These writers changed the course of Indian Writings. Their writings, across the country, were in different languages, but they followed certain common directions, creating a common aesthetics. They drew their inspiration from the world around them, and from political and social events, both within India and world outside. The Progressive Writers' Movement introduced a new literary sensibility, one that was more attuned to the common man, than even before. It brought out more faithful, more ruthless, more accurate mirror of society, which were not seen before. It was influenced by the ideas of liberty, equality, and justice and drew attention to crucial issues of hunger, poverty, inequality, exploitation, gender, justice, education and human rights. Most important, it provided an impetus to the national freedom movement by focusing attention on nationalism, love for the country and freedom from foreign rule. In the struggle for Indian independence, the Progressive Writers' Association took very seriously the charge that literature had a role to play in proving Indians worthy of independence and as closely associated with the entire

movement of freedom for the country. It showed the true colour of nationalism through literature. The notion of progressive in Progressive Writers' Association literature was nationalism, socialist realism, humanism and common man. The process of tracing the birth and development of the Progressive Writers' Association shows that there is a relationship between nation and literature. Both were visible within the Progressive Writers' Association, and an understanding of the way in which the writers took up progressive causes and ideology displays the influence of nationalism on various writings of the Progressive Writers' Association's writers in different times and phases. The Progressive Writers' Association combined the progressive ideas and politics with nationalist ideas and politics, bringing the nation and literature together through their writings.

Plato observed that "ideas are the principal realities". The individual objects or material things may undergo change and flux, but Plato believed that ideas are perfect, internal and immutable. Movements propelled by ideas may die or end or be curtailed, but ideas, such as the idea of Progressivism itself does not die. It lives whenever a writer speaks out against injustice, inequality and oppression. As Sajjad Zaheer said that "*A movement that is fuelled by the energy of the masses can neither be suppressed nor ended. Its future will be more radiant than its past and its present*".

While the Progressive Writers' Association may not be as prominent or as important as it was during the period studied in this thesis, it continues to exist. Recently, on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2010, on the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Progressive Writers' Association, a public Conference was held in collaboration of Progressive Writers' Association UK and South Asian People Forum and Indian Workers Association at

the Youth Centre in Birmingham, UK. At this conference, the older ideas and the continued importance of the writers of that time were once again emphasised.

## Appendices

### Munshi Premchand



Munshi Premchand, Munshi being an honorary prefix, was one of the most celebrated writers of the Indian subcontinent, and is regarded as one of the foremost Hindustani writers of the early twentieth century. He began writing under the pen name "Nawab Rai", but subsequently switched to "Premchand". A novel writer, story writer and dramatist, he has been referred to as the "Upanyas Samrat" ("Emperor among Novelists") by some Hindi writers.

Born: July 31, 1880, Lamhi

Died: October 8, 1936, Varanasi

Full name: Dhanpat Rai

Notable Works:

- *Godan* (1936).
- *Karmbhoomi* (1932).
- *Rangbhoomi* (1925).

## Sajjad Zaheer



Syed Sajjad Zaheer was a renowned Urdu writer, Marxist thinker and revolutionary.

Born: November 5, 1905, Lucknow

Died: September 13, 1973, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Education: University of Lucknow, University of Oxford, University of London

Notable Works:

- *Angare* (1932).
- *London Ki Ek Raat* (1934).
- *Roshnai*.

## Ahmed Ali



Ahmed Ali was an Indian novelist, poet, critic, translator, diplomat and scholar.

Born: 1910, Delhi

Died: January 14, 1994

Education: Aligarh Muslim University, University of Lucknow

Notable Works:

- *Angare* (1932).
- *Twilight in Delhi* (1940).
- *Hamari Gali* (1940).
- *Qaid Khana* (1942).
- *Maut Se Pehle* (1945).

## Faiz Ahmed Faiz



Faiz Ahmad Faiz, MBE, NI, Lenin Peace Prize was an influential left-wing intellectual, revolutionary poet, and one of the most regarded poets of the Urdu language, being considered four times for the Nobel Prize in poetry.

Born: February 13, 1911, Sialkot, Pakistan

Died: November 20, 1984, Lahore, Pakistan

### Notable Works:

- *Naqsh-e-Faryadi* (1941)
- *Dast-e-Sabah* (1953)
- *Zindan-nama*.

## Mulk Raj Anand



Mulk Raj Anand was an Indian writer in English, notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. One of the pioneers of Indo-  
Anglian fiction, he, together with R. K. Narayan, Ahmad Ali and Raja Rao, was one of the first India-based writers in English to gain an international readership.

Born: December 12, 1905, Peshawar, Pakistan

Died: September 28, 2004, Pune

Awards: Padma Bhushan, Sahitya Akademi Award to English Language Writers

Education: University of Cambridge (1929), University College London, Khalsa College, Amritsar

Notable Works:

- *Untouchable* (1935).
- *Coolie* (1936).
- *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937).
- *The Village* (1939).
- *Across the Black Waters* (1939).
- *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942).

## Yashpal



Yashpal was a Hindi-language author who is often considered to be the most gifted since Premchand. A political commentator and a socialist who had a particular concern for the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged. He won the Hindi-language Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel, *Meri Teri Uski Baat* in 1976 and was also a recipient of the Padma Bhushan.

Born: December 3, 1903, Firozpur

Died: December 26, 1976, India

Awards: Sahitya Akademi Award to Hindi writers

Notable Works:

- *Dada Kamred* (1941).
- *Deshdrohi* (1943).
- *Divya* (1945).
- *Manushya Ke Roop* (1949).
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