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MODERN HINDI LITERATURE

[A CRITICAL ANALYSIS]

By

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TO
S. S.
IN TOKEN OF
AFFECTION AND ESTEEM

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The system followed in the transliteration of Sanskrit words and Hindi words of Sanskrit origin, which have retained their original form is that approved by the Royal Asiatic Society. The final short 'a' in Hindi is not pronounced, but it is given for the accuracy of the form of the word. Some current words are transliterated as they are spoken in the province. Many conventional words and proper names are spelt in the popular manner.

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INTRODUCTION

In the present volume I have attempted to survey the various tendencies of modern Hindi literature of the last fifty years, and in order to form a proper perspective of them, I have written a chapter on the background, describing the cultural and social changes which have taken place in the life of the people. The sociological interpretation and psychological treatment of literature are gradually being employed by the modern critic on account of the new approach to the study of literature. I have tried to bring order out of chaos by stressing on some of the representative tendencies in the realm of poetry, drama, novel, and the short story. The biography, the essay, and a few other forms of literature have been excluded, partly because they are not fully developed to claim a place in this book and partly because they do not reflect the representative tendencies. Some of the authors and their books have also been left out on this ground. I do not thereby mean to cast any reflection on their eminence or on the merit of their works. Their mention will find a proper place in a history of literature and not in a book of this nature. The translations and the scientific literature have not been treated because they are not original and creative art. Again the tendencies which have been

surveyed one after the other do not follow in a chronological order as they are given in the book, but sometimes they are overlapping in the sequence of time. They are given in a historical order for the sake of convenience, emphasis, and clarification.

In the realm of poetry only four main tendencies have been considered at some length. As nationalism, mysticism, and vaiṣṇavism have been expressed in earlier literature, I have traced their background to form a proper link with these tendencies of the previous periods. In the agricultural phase of civilisation, Hindi poetry mostly centred round the personalities of princes and princesses, their victories and romance. The Heroic Poetry contributed to the regeneration of the people by arousing martial sentiments among them. It was also inevitable to stem the tide of foreign invasions. Nationalism has assumed many phases and is an old tendency in poetry. The revival of Aryan culture was the first phase of this new force of tremendous energy. The Neo-Hinduism laid stress on action as the only means to save India. Bhāratendu (H.C.) in his pragmatic appeal aroused the people by writing patriotic songs. As an ardent social reformer, he wrote in favour of sea voyage, widow marriage, and education of girls. Gupta (M.S.), the apostle of protestant Hinduism in poetry, represents the second phase of nationalism. His 'Bhārata Bhārati' was a land-mark in the history of cultural revival and nationalism. Although the book is a specimen of 'kettle-drum poetry', it was enthusiasti-

cally welcomed by the readers. Nineteen twenty-one saw the birth of a new nationalism which was a strange mixture of religion and patriotism. A group of poets popularised the new movement. Tripāṭhī (R. N.) wrote stories in verse to infuse life into the hearts of the people. His poems were inspired by the non-violent concept of nationalism adopted by the Indian National Congress.

Mysticism which is another dominant tendency in modern Hindi poetry was expressed as early as the fifteenth century. Kabīr was a powerful personality who revived it as a reaction against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult. It was also meant to bring about a cultural synthesis between the two warring communities, by stressing on their common and essential articles of faith. Jayāsī reinforced this tendency by striking a softer and a more delicate note in his poetry to achieve the same object. Rabindra Nath Tagore is the modern mystic poet who has exercised a far-reaching influence on contemporary Hindi poets. Prasāda (J. S.) who is the pioneer of mysticism in modern Hindi poetry has voiced his protest against the mechanistic materialism of the age. His art is inwardly mystical and philosophical. 'Kāmāyanī' is the consummation of his mystical approach to the problems of life. Panta is essentially a nature-mystic on account of his early predilections for mountains, rivers, woods, clouds, and other objects of nature. Nirālā who has deeply imbibed the spirit of 'vedānta' and religious mysticism has endeavoured to discover the ultimate power in the objects of nature. Mahādevī

Varmā avoids the every-day reality to find a higher reality in the midst of natural environment. Her mysticism combines primitivism with romantic imagination to produce a vital and purposive creed. All these mystic poets reveal a belief in intuition and revelation as the basis of higher wisdom or higher reality. They also believe in a unity beneath a diversity of life. This attitude is the direct outcome of the nature of mystical experience.

In addition to nationalism and mysticism, vaiṣṇavism has been a significant tendency in poetry. The vaiṣṇava revival preserved the integrity of society and its culture. Tulsīdāsa by embodying the story of the great personage, created among the people a living sense of homogeneity of cultural life. Kṛṣṇa also became a lover to the devotees who began to pine for him with the undying passion of a bride. Mīrā Bāī like a maniac danced and sang in ecstasy as she rushed to meet the Lord with open arms. Her words laid bare to the dreamer the pathos of ages and dawned upon him the highest form of love. Sūrdās sang the Lord's glory in musical verses of immortal beauty. Bhāratendu (H. C.) revived the poetry of vaiṣṇava writers and wrote songs, anticipating thereby the lyrical tendency in modern Hindi poetry. The human note came to dominate the religious and the spiritual was intimately woven with the human.

A note of despair is perhaps inevitable in the poetry of a race whose civilisation is burdened with the weight of ages. Pessimism as the end of life is a new tendency

in Hindi poetry. In the past, the disappointment in life was accepted either as the stroke of fate or sublimated into the joy of a religious mystic. In the modern age the depressing socio-economic environment has led to this new note in poetry. Cakorī, Tārā, Mahādevī, Hṛdayeśa have contributed their share to the new tendency. In addition to the analysis of these tendencies I have discussed at some length the new experiments which have been tried in verse and the old forms of verse which have been modified to satisfy the poet's claim to be a free artist, to be guided by his own poetic conscience rather than by the rigid and artificial mould in which all thoughts and passions had to be expressed.

In drama there have been three main tendencies Romanticism, Idealistic Reaction, and Realism. In the beginning of Renaissance in literature the writers were stirred by Western romantic poets and dramatists. Attempts have been made at original plays with themes from mythology far removed from the exigencies of real life. Romanticism became a definite tendency for three main reasons—(i) a yearning for the remote past as a purely cultural revival; (ii) a reactionary force symbolising the spirit of protest and revenge against the domination of Western civilisation; (iii) the psychology of escape from the present-day life. The Idealistic Reaction has assumed two chief phases of expression in drama. A reaction against the material civilisation of the West which took the crude form of farces and satires. The misrepresentation of Western civilisation

and the exaltation of Indian culture were a negative reaction which did not satisfy the writers. They looked back to the past to derive inspiration for a fresh outlook on life. This was the second phase of this reaction.

(i) The revivalist movement was also the outcome of a desire to pick up the lost thread of cultural development. (ii) There was a growing dissatisfaction with mythological tales farther away from real life than themes from history. (iii) The new men who wanted to interpret life in history catered to the increasing demand for nationalism in the country.

The documentation of historical events is less real than the actual observations of contemporary life. The writers have turned their attention to a world susceptible of a realistic treatment. A spirit of enquiry has compelled them to analyse the existing social order. It has led to the birth of realism in drama. The dramatic literature covering all these phases and varieties is not of a high artistic order. The want of a regular stage, the growing popularity of the cinema, the new vogue of broadcasting plays, and the absence of a great writer are some of the chief reasons for the poverty of great productions. In order to complete the picture I have added a chapter on the modern dramatic technique which has been fashioned by three main influences. (i) The dramatic theory and practice of the classical drama. (ii) The crude technique of medieval performances in villages. (iii) The Western influence. In this chapter I have discussed the characterisation in my-

thological, historical, and realistic plays; the use of the 'aside' and the 'soliloquy,' and their gradual disappearance in the realistic plays; the introduction of 'setting' in the last phase of dramatic literature; and the importance of songs and music in the mythological, historical and social plays.

The novel as a form of literature is almost wholly a foreign product. In the earliest stage of its growth the tendency in fiction has been chiefly romantic in content. Khatrī wrote the first serial romantic novel in which the hero possesses all the characteristics of a romantic lover. The ingenuity of the writer lies in devising complicated situations, which compels the reader into a mood of wonder and admiration. The historical phase in fiction is not so rich in variety and content as in drama. It is less significant as a continuous tendency from romantic to realistic fiction. The psychological basis of this phase are similar to those in drama. The Rājputa period has afforded the greatest satisfaction to the writers of the historical novel. Varmā (V. L.) possesses to some degree the gift of an essentially historical imagination. He goes beyond the surface of mere details and endeavours to reach the heart of the age of chivalry and makes it like again in its glory.

The realistic fiction generally portrays the new middle class with all its features. The members of this class enjoy greater individual liberty in social and religious matters. Nationalism is a dominant note of their life. They are more morally earnest about life and they lay

stress on a life of action. Their outlook on life is generally influenced by the nineteenth century rationalistic and positivistic philosophy. Compromise and reform are the essential characteristics of their life. As the general influences of the modern age tend towards pragmatism and a search for truth, realism has become a dominant tendency in prose literature. Realism is also a conscious reaction to the romantic and historical tendency in fiction. Premchand and his contemporaries who belong to the new social group espouse a particular standard of morals and use the novel to express their social purpose and social criticism. I have devoted sufficient space to the study of characterisation, plot-construction, dialogue, and social purpose in his novels. In addition to this I have discussed the characteristics of other novelists who belong to his school.

In the short story which as a distinct form is only of recent growth, there is only one representative tendency i.e., Realism; but the short story is remarkable for its amazing variety. The rush of modern life, the enormous development of the periodical literature, the newness of the literary form, and its claim to replace the novel have made it greatly popular. It has a great future because Indian social life with all its restrictions of social intercourse and conflict is more easily represented on a shortened canvas. It has been thus seen how gradually literature in all its forms has been developing the various tendencies towards realism which has established itself as the enduring phase of Hindi literature.

In the interpretation of the various phases through which literature has passed I have taken great help from eminent critics and writers. I am grateful to each one of them. I have acknowledged this debt of gratitude in the copious foot-notes at the end of every page. Mr. D. R. Malhotra, M.A. deserves my thanks for the valuable suggestions for a chapter on Premchand and Pandit Dina Nath Raina for going through the proofs and for preparing the Index. The Minerva Book Shop, my publishers, have been of a very great help to me in the publication of this book. The Allahabad Law Journal Press Ltd., the printers, have been very helpful in making the get-up of the book neat and its print accurate.

In the end I must express my deep debt of gratitude to Shrimati Premvati Thapar, M.A. (Cantab) without whose help and encouragement I could not have completed this book. She has provided me with an opportunity for pursuing my literary activities for such work in the face of cold and depressing atmosphere outside the academic life of the college.

POETRY

Background

Vaiṣṇavism

Mysticism

Nationalism

Pessimism

Experiments in verse

BACKGROUND

1. In order to form a proper perspective of the tendencies in modern Hindi poetry, it is necessary to consider at some length the cultural and social changes which have taken place in the life of the people and to link them with tendencies of the previous periods; for it is difficult to isolate literature from the rest of the historical process and social environment. A poet's images or a novelist's characters are not created out of pure mind-stuff, but they are suggested to him by the world in which he lives. The interpretation of poetry in *vacuo* apart from the conditions in which it takes its rise has been a salutary tendency represented by the meta-physical school of criticism; but the cultural milieu of the age determines the nature and function of poetry and literature. An excursion into cultural changes, therefore, is inevitable for providing a background to the understanding of tendencies which are struggling for expression in the realm of modern poetry.

2. Indian culture and civilisation has been the by-product of the people's adjustment to their mode of earning livelihood, namely agriculture. As long as hunting and nomadism remained the chief mode of earning livelihood amongst men, the idea of property or the urge to remain tied to a particular piece of land for months

and years did not arise in the minds of men. The discovery of agriculture however profoundly changed the situation. In order to gain the fruit of his labour, man had to wait at a particular place and thus the idea of *time and property* dawned upon him. The operations of agriculture brought stability in men, better arrangements had to be made for defence. The necessity of state arose with the primary functions of defence. In the agricultural community the division of labour chiefly worked up in (1) the exploiting of land which fell into the hands of the masses. It was ensured through the institution of the family. (2) The defence was ensured through the state which was primarily *militaristic*. As the latter protected the lives and hearths of the people, they were honoured and respected and were glorified into heroes of the community. While the masses of the people had to labour hard to produce the agricultural goods, their æsthetic impulses impressed themselves in folk-songs and folk-lore. The soldiers, on the other hand, had more leisure at their disposal except during conflicts among the feudal chiefs. The military class could patronize learning and art. No wonder then that early Hindi poetry centred round the personalities of the kings and queens; their victories and conquests; their love and romance.

3. The Heroic School of poetry (Vīrgāthā) is the earliest specimen of Hindi poetry which mirrors the agricultural phase of Indian life. 'Khumān Rāso', 'Prithivirāj Rāso', 'Ālhākhaṇḍ', 'Viśaldev Rāso', 'Hamīr Rāso'

and other minor productions wheel round the characters of kings and queens, their victories and defeats, their love and romance. They also brim with heroic sentiments which vitalised the life of the people in a period of conflict with foreign invaders. In an atmosphere of religious, social and political decadence and disintegration, the poets rose above their environments and held out to those around them ideals contributing to the regeneration of the people. In the capacity of court poets, they idealised and glorified their lords by chronicling their real and fictitious heroic deeds coupled with their love and romance. In the ninth and tenth century the conflict between the Indian chiefs and Muslim invaders grew and spread and it continued to the end of the thirteenth century.¹ In this atmosphere of war, the birth of poetry characterised by heroic and nationalistic sentiments was inevitable to stem the tide of foreign invasions. Thus nationalism in a communal form became an established tendency in Hindi poetry.

4. In the reign of Aurangzeb it assumed a different form which was the second cycle of heroic and nationalistic tendency. The stern religious policy of the Emperor, helped by other co-operating factors, created a stir among the Hindu public which had been fed on devotional and erotic poetry for a number of centuries. When their religious susceptibilities were wounded, they could not tolerate it. Guru Gobind Singh, Shivājee,

¹ Ayodhya Singh Upadhyaya's "The Origin and Growth of the Hindi Language and its Literature." pp. 110 to 115.

Chhatrasāl in various parts of the country rose in revolt against religious tyranny practised by the Emperor. Shivājee found a court poet who voiced the nationalistic sentiments of the people. Bhūṣaṇa who was the representative poet of Hindu nationalism wrote inspiring verses even in an age of 'Rīti' poetry which was buried under the weight of exaggerations, conventional metaphors, and artificial similes.² In the contemporary poetry of the age, the lover and his beloved were conventional types and the range of poetry was confined to the description of a woman's limbs and domestic sentiments. The poets generally could not rise above their environments and hold out to those around them ideals contributing to the social regeneration of the people. They depended for their livelihood and guidance on the richer classes and nobles. As this patronage depended on the whims and idiosyncrasies of those who offered it, the poets could rarely take an independent attitude in literature. They were also fed on the literary ideals of Sanskrit prosody preceding their age or contemporary with them. It was their ambition to imitate it in almost every little detail. It is natural that with such a mental background to their literary life they hardly felt the necessity of shaking off their prejudices and pursue a new line in the realm of poetry. They did not listen to the dictates of their own heart, but they slavishly went out to the Sanskrit poets for guidance as to what they should

² "Shayām Sundar Dās's "Hindi Bhāṣā Aura Sāhitya kā Itihāsa." pp. 304 to 319.

feel and how they should give expression to it. They pursued this ideal with such a perseverance and zeal that they have left a strong legacy behind them. Some of the lyrists of the present age have not been able to give up the traditions established by these poets.³ The background of "Erotic poetry" with its emphasis on form rather than on spirit, its limited range of subjects and metres, its artificial conception of love, its conventional expression of feelings and emotions was not suited to the production of creative poetry. It was a period of ennui or decadence in Hindi poetry, which having already exhausted all its vigour in the "bhakti" age, stood in need of rejuvenation, if it were to have a fresh and renewed lease of life.

5. Bhūṣaṇa in this lifeless atmosphere of poetry wrote heroic verses eulogising the service and sacrifice of Shivājee who offered him patronage in his court.⁴ He glorified his victories and idealised him not merely as an individual but as a representative of the Hindu community. He deplored the disruptive tendencies which disintegrated the solidarity of this community and became a national poet, but his was not a cosmopolitan nationalism. He indulged in bitter remarks against Mohammedans whom he treated as foreigners.⁵

³ Article No. 13.

⁴ 'Śivarāja Bhūṣaṇa' which is a collection of his verses written in a variety of measures. Also 'Bhūṣaṇa Granthāvalī' (Hindi Bhavan Publication, 1937) pp. 10, 11, 12.

⁵ Read 'Śiva Bāvanī' —a collection of fifty-two verses (verses No. 12, 13, 30).

Another feature of his heroic poetry is that he drew his inspiration from historical facts and data. He was faithful to the events in history.⁶ In the rigid framework of the Rīti school of poetry which dominated the poetry of the period, Bhūṣaṇa was able to depart from the tradition of expressing erotic sentiments and infused his poetry with inspiring words, completing thus the second cycle of nationalism with its peculiar characteristics.

6. Mysticism, another tendency in Hindi poetry was expressed as early as the fifteenth century.⁷ In the history of Indian mysticism, Kabīr was a powerful personality who revived this tendency as a reaction against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult. The revival of mysticism was in part an assertion of the demands of the heart against the dry intellectualism of the 'vedānta' philosophy and the exaggerated monism which that philosophy proclaimed. Kabīr was a man of wide religious culture and full of missionary enthusiasm. He was deeply influenced by the great Persian mystics.⁸ 'Attāra, Sa'di, Rūmi, Hāfiz were exercising a powerful influence on the religious thought of India. Kabīr dreamed of reconciling this intense and personal Persian mysticism with the traditional mysticism of the Upaniṣadas.⁹

⁶ 'Bhūṣaṇa Granthāvalī' from page 20 to 45.

⁷ Introduction: Tagore's 'One Hundred Poems of Kabīr' pp. 1, 2, 3.

⁸ Barthival's 'Nirguṇa School of Hindi Poetry' pp. 15, 18.

⁹ Ibid.

“The poetry of mysticism might be expressed as a temperamental reaction to the vision of reality and also as a form of prophecy. As it is the special vocation of the mystical consciousness to mediate between the temporal and the spiritual world, so the artistic expression of this consciousness has also a double character. It is love poetry, but love poetry which is often written with a missionary intention. Kabīr’s songs are of this kind: outbursts of rapture and of charity. As they have been written in popular Hindi, they were addressed to the people rather than to the professionally religious class. A constant employment in them of the imagery drawn from the common life makes these songs universal in their appeal. It is by the simplest metaphors, by appeals to needs, passions, relations, which all men understand that he drives home his intense conviction in the mystical experience of life. The bridegroom and the bride, the “guru” and disciple, the pilgrim, the farmer, the migrant bird link the ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ worlds. When the mystic has achieved the theopathic state, all aspects of the universe are equal, sacramental declarations of the ultimate reality. Kabīr ‘melts and merges’ into a unity by ascending to a height of spiritual intuition where there is no room for incompatible concepts either of religion or of philosophy.”¹⁰ His songs illustrate all the fluctuations of the mystic’s emotions, the ecstasy, the despair, the still beatitude, the eager

¹⁰ Tagore’s “One hundred Poems of Kabīr” (Introduction pp. 19,20).

self-devotion, the flashes of wide illumination, the moments of intimate love,

“Oh Friend: this body is His lyre: He tightens its strings and draws from it the melody of Brahma. If the strings snap and the keys slacken, then to dust must this instrument of dust return; Kabīr says: “None but Brahma can evoke its melodies.”¹¹

In a mood of rapture he says, “Dance, my heart: dance to-day with joy. The strains of love fill the days and the nights with music, and the world is listening to its melodies: Life and death dance to the rhythm of this music, mad with joy. The hills and the sea and the earth dance. The world of man dances in laughter and tears. Why put on the robe of the monk and live aloof from the world in lovely pride? Behold: my heart dances in the delight of a hundred arts; and the Creator is well pleased¹².....

On this tree is a bird; it dances in the joy of life. None knows where it is; and who knows what the burden of its music may be? Where the branches throw a deep shade, there does it have its nest; and it comes in the evening and flies away in the morning, and says not a word of that which it means. None tell me of this bird that sings within me. It is neither coloured nor colourless; it has neither form nor outline; it sits in the shadow of love.

¹¹ “One Hundred Poems of Kabīr” Poem No. 39. The book is an authentic translation of his verses.

¹² Ibid, poem No. 32.

It dwells within the Unattainable, the Infinite, and the Eternal; and no one marks when it comes and goes. Kabīr says, "O brother Sadhu: deep is the mystery. Let men seek to know where rests that bird."¹³

7. In the sixteenth century, Malik Mohammad Jayāsī who was also profoundly influenced by 'sūfī' mysticism reinforced this tendency in Hindi poetry. His 'Padmāvata' which embodies a love story expressed his faith in the highest value of love for the realisation of ultimate reality. God to him was a symbol of love, disguised as a woman. Man was her lover, yearning to obtain her. It was different from the Indian conception of the æsthetic ideal which always has been portrayed as a man and the 'bhaktas' as his 'gopis'.¹⁴ When Kabīr proved to be a rugged and rustic poet while bringing out the cultural synthesis between the Hindus and Mohammedans, by stressing on the oneness of God and the futility of castes and creeds, Jāyasī struck a softer and more delicate note to achieve the same object. He adopted the Hindu story of love and stamped it with 'sūfī' mysticism, thus fulfilling the void left by his predecessor in expressing the unity of life through love.¹⁵

8. Rabindra Nath Tagore who is the modern exponent of Indian mysticism and symbolism has a far-reaching influence on modern Hindi poets who have continued this tendency in literature. His 'Gitanjali'

¹³ "One Hundred Poems of Kabīr" poem No. 30.

¹⁴ Ram Kumar Varma's "Kabīr kā Rahasyavāda" p. 39.

¹⁵ Ram Chandra's "Hindi Sāhitya kā Itihās" pp. 103, 104.

alone which is steeped in sound and sight and colour and is vitalised by a deep mystical experience has changed the direction of poetic expression by opening new vistas of experience to the poets of other vernaculars.¹⁶ The book of songs brings the reader very close to a religious experience which is universal, yet intensely individual. The mystic poet of Nature by introducing rain and cloud; wind and the rising river, boatmen, lamps, temples and gongs, flutes and *viṇās*, birds flying home at dusk, tired travellers, flowers opening and falling, showers, and vessels has given a new tone to the poetry of mysticism. Prasāda, Nirālā, Panta and Mahādevī in their individual manner have written mystical verses after the new models.¹⁷ A few songs from 'Gitanjali' will illustrate the new note which has been introduced by him. Kabīr is more rugged in his expression and therefore more direct; Tagore more musical and æsthetic and therefore less didactic and zealous than he. Tagore sings:—

“Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.
This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again,
and fillest it ever with fresh life. This little flute
of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and
hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.
At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart
loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance
ineffable. Thy infinite gifts come to me only on

¹⁶ Articles No. 22, 24.

¹⁷ Articles No. 22, 23, 24, 25.

these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.”¹⁸

“Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not: I feel lest it droop and drop into the dust. It may not find a place in thy garland, but honour it with a touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it. I fear lest the day end before I am aware, and the time of offering go by. Though its colour be not deep and its smell be faint, use it while there is time.”¹⁹

9. In addition to nationalism and mysticism, Vaiṣṇavism has been a powerful and significant tendency in this period of storm and stress. When the Brahmans, found the fanatical foreigner devastating their land, demolishing the most sacred shrines of their faith destroying their dharma and the social structure which they believed to be eternal, they developed a surprising adaptability. They delivered to the masses through the medium of dialects, the message of Vaiṣṇavism and purāṇās and revived the past. The Vaiṣṇava revival preserved society and culture, and directed literary energy into the channel of the ‘deśabhāṣā’. It spread over the whole country, and opened up prospects for all. Poets received fresh inspiration; paurāṇikas, a new vocation; philosophers, a new orientation. To the village saint, it gave something to love for, and it brought to the ordinary people ‘bhakti’, worship full of joy and song, dance and prayer. Every province began to work out

¹⁸ ‘Gitanjali.’ Verse No. 1.

¹⁹ Ibid. Verse No. 6.

its own salvation. Every language developed and its literature assumed distinctive character.²⁰

10. In the fourteenth century Ramānandā who was an uncompromising advocate of purity of heart spread the worship of Rāma, the high-souled hero of 'Ramāyaṇa' and an avatāra of Viṣṇu. He protested against rituals, inequalities of caste, and stood for God, humility and equality of men. Kabīr, a spinner; Raidās, a tanner; Sen, a barber; Sadan, a butcher became his disciples who wielded a great liberalising influence over their age. The orthodox people were shaken out of their narrow groove and were compelled to admire the idealism for which Rāma stood. Tulsīdās later on embodied the story of this great epic personage in 'Rāma-caritāmanasa' which judged alone by its popularity among the people of its province created in them a living sense of homogeneity and continuity of cultural life. In the face of foreign rulers it preserved the integrity of society and resisted the proselytising vigour of the foreigner²¹

11. The bhakti movement captured the religious thought and sentiment of the age. Kṛṣṇa also became a living lover to the devotees who began to pine for him with the undying passion of a bride. Mīrā Bāī said,

"Girdhara Gopāla is mine, and none else. I have left mother, father, and brother; in company of saints, I have lost all sense of shame. I run to

²⁰ Munshi's 'Gujrāt and its Literature' p. 114.

²¹ Ibid, p. 115.

welcome saints; I weep looking at the world. I have reared an immortal creeper of *bhakti*, watering it with tears of love.....”²²

Again she says,

“O Friend, I am mad with love; none knows my anguish. There, on the point of the pikes lies my bed, how can I sleep: The bed of the Dear One is spread in heaven, how can I meet Him. Only he who has had a wound can know the plight of the wounded, or else he who has dealt the blow. Only a jeweller can know the secrets of a jeweller or else the jewel itself. Smitten with pain I roam about the forests, physician I have found none. The pain of *Mirā* will vanish, O Lord, when you act the physician.”²³

Her longing is acute when she sings:—“O Friend, all the world sleeps: I, the separate one, sit awake. There is one like me who, sitting in her palace of pleasure strings together a necklace of pearl; of yet another I know who weaves a garland of tears. The whole night I pass counting the stars; when shall the hour of joy arrive? The Lord of *Mirā* is *Girdhar Nagar*; it is by meeting the Lord that from anguish she shall be relieved.”²⁴

In the lanes of *Brindaban* how like a maniac this beautiful devotee rushed here, danced there in ecstasy,

²² Munshi's “*Gujrāt and its Literature*” p. 136.

²³ Bankey Behari's “*The Story of Mirā Bāī*” p. 51.

²⁴ K. M. Munshi's “*Gujrāt and its Literature*” p. 135.

as she went to meet the Lord with open arms. Her words laid bare to the dreamer the pathos of ages and dawned on him the highest form of love. The music of her songs thrilled the heart. It was steeped in mystic lore and perfect in its rhythm and symphony. Mīrā Bāī showed that there was no defeat and disappointment for an aspirant, when she, descended from a noble and conservative family, could row her boat safely through the troubled waters and conventions of the world, unchilled and unruffled by adverse winds, regardless of the sarcasms of the world, and in the teeth of great persecutions. She was thus a true 'bhakta'.

12. Another school of 'bhakti' arose. Vallabhacārya travelled all over India, preaching his cult in the sixteenth century. His aim was to found a compact sect on the basis of 'bhakti'. In practice it was carried by the initiate who had to take his vow of "dedicating to the Lord his body, organs of senses, soul and heart with all its activities; and also his wife, house, family, wealth and self." The 'acarya' was to be considered a husband of many wives and the centre of rāsālīlā, and one whose principal function, was to dance the rāsālīlā. The rāsa dance, satisfying the æsthetic needs of the people became a popular ceremony. The religious head acted the role of Kṛṣṇa on earth and women devotees became his 'gopis'. Bhakti in its manifold forms thus swayed the life of the masses. In 'Bhāgavata' which is the source of inspiration of bhakti cult, this pure bhakti is beautifully expressed in the following words:—

“As the wingless nestlings wait for the mother, as the hungry calves long to be suckled, as the love-lorn damsel waits for her lover, so, lotus-eyed; my soul yearn for thee.”²⁵

Hindi poetry thus before the modern age was dominated by a religious motif. Most of it directly sprang from the ‘bhakti’ movement in one or other of its aspects, and a great deal of the rest of it was concerned with the art of poetry; and even in these works the illustrative verses, which form the greater part of them, were often connected with the various religious movements. The Heroic Poetry, even though it was secular in character was not completely free from, religious interest. After the ‘bhakti’ age, poetry became self-conscious from about the middle of sixteenth century. It was considered a mark of a writer’s ability if his words were capable of more than one meaning. The ingenuity of phrase, whether by way of double entendre, or alliteration, or any other literary device was greatly admired. Conventionality in the use of metaphors was another feature of Erotic Poetry.²⁶

“The separation of the chakwa bird from its male at night; the eager waiting of the chatak bird, who is supposed to drink only rain drops, for the beginning of the rainy season; the chakor bird, that is never happy except when grazing on the moon; the swan that knows how to separate milk from the

²⁵ ‘Bhagavata’ Vol. II 26.

²⁶ Article No. 4.

water with which it has been mixed—these and many other stock metaphors continually recurred in poetry.”²⁷

Another feature which is noticable is the limitation of the range of subject matter. In addition to the stories of epic heroes who, dominated the literature of the ‘bhakti’ age, the poets were occupied with describing the value of the guru, the evils of transmigration, the deception of māyā, the transitoriness of the world. In erotic poetry of an unhealthy type love was generally connected with the courtesan.²⁸

²⁷ Keay’s, F.E. “History of Hindi Literature” p. 92.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 93.

VAIṢṆAVISM

13. In poetry the immediate reaction against Westernism and the lifeless 'Erotic Poetry' of the preceding era resulted in a revival of the past. It was in the direction of romance. The æsthetic revival, therefore, turned to the past ages in their religious and devotional poetry. Bhāratendu Hariscandra revived the poetry of Vaiṣṇava writers who once dominated not only the poetry of Hindi language but also of other Indian languages.¹ He was inspired by them to write lyrical songs in his individual manner, anticipating thus the lyrical tendency 'with its hopes and fears; its loves and regrets; its joys and sorrows; its ideas and ideals in a mood of feminine abandonment.' The human note came to dominate the religious; the spiritual was intimately associated with the human; the ordinary sentiments in men were set against a halo of romance and idealism. The revival of the cult of vaiṣṇavism therefore was another expression of romanticism in poetry. Vaiṣṇavism idealised the instinctive and non-rational powers of man; it exalted the æsthetic ideals against the purely ethical and rigid ideals upheld by the people.²

¹ Articles No. 9, 11, 12.

² Rāma Cult in Shayām Sunder Das's 'History of Hindi Language and Literature.'

In this respect the new tendency was a revolt against the wooden, formal, and classical conventions of Erotic Poetry.³ "The strangeness which is an essential element of romantic art was attained by the remoteness of time, as the popularity of vaiṣṇavism can be traced to a period as early as the fourteenth century. In the fourteenth century the classics and philosophies receded into the background. The 'purāṇas' with their richness did not meet the requirements of the people. And the cult of 'bhakti' became the most potent factor..... stimulating an intensely devotional attitude towards the gods."⁴

14. Kṛṣṇa was the first to become the centre of a great devotional impulse. It is owing to this impulse that he is the greatest among the epic heroes. He has fired the imagination of almost every Indian poet. The hero of mythology has continued to hold this supreme position and the 'bhakti' impulse has spread in his name. In the tenth century decadent Buddhism preached illicit love and complete bodily and mental surrender to the teacher as the only way to emancipation.⁵ The Rādhā Kṛṣṇa romance had already obtained a hold over the popular mind through folk-songs and festivals. It gave a greater impetus to the 'bhakti' cult. Jayadeva in the twelfth century wrote highly literary,

³ Article No. 4.

⁴ K. M. Munshi's "Gujrāt and its Literature" p. 125.

⁵ Ibid, p. 128.

artistic and sensuous poems in praise of Kṛṣṇa who became the emotional or the æsthetic ideal of the people. 'Gītagovinda' with its rhythmic language and sentimental graces caught the imagination of devotees of the age. The book was recognised as a classical model within a century of its composition. Caṇḍīdāsa afterwards chanted his love-lyrics in the name of his lord. Mīrābāī continued the 'bhakti' impulse by writing a large number of 'padas' full of passion, grace, delicacy, melody, and exquisite longing which seizes all hearts and penetrates all souls.⁶ To love Kṛṣṇa with the undying passion of a bride became a national religion. The legacy of rich and varied diction of great power and beauty which the devotional poets have left has exercised a deep influence on modern Hindi poetry. The 'padas' of the 'bhakti' poets have moulded the language of the verse-form of the succeeding poets.

15. Bhāratendu is almost the last important Hindi poet who has continued the vaiṣṇava traditions in poetry. He has poured upon the literary world about fifteen hundred⁷ devotional, and love songs in a variety of measures such as 'khematā', 'Kāfī', 'sorathā', 'dādarā', 'pīlū', 'ṭhumarī', 'hindolā', 'pūrvī', 'khyāl', 'vihāga', 'kalyāṇa'. A majority of them describes the pranks of Kṛṣṇa and his gopīs and the love between them. In 'Bhakta Sarvasva' (1870) which has been written to please the 'bhaktas' he has written verses describing

⁶ Article No. 11.

⁷ Braj Ratan Dās, 'Bhāratendu Hariścandra' p. 240.

the many signs of the lord.⁸ *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, admittedly is the source of his inspiration.⁹ In 'Prema Malikā' (1871) the childhood of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa has been beautifully described by him. The Lord leaves his birthplace. The 'gopīs' yearn for him. These yearnings have been a favourite theme not only with him but also with many other Hindi poets. Bhāratendu has composed a number of stanzas to express these longings of 'gopīs.' A few songs have been composed to describe the sermons delivered to the 'gopīs' through Ūddhava by the Lord for their peace of mind in his separation.¹⁰ The book is full of devotional songs, expressing 'līlā' of the Lord and sentiments of helplessness on the part of the votary. Helplessness is an essential trait of a 'bhakta's' character.¹¹ The 'rāgas' have been employed to sing these sentiments, as vaiṣṇava poetry is essentially musical in character, and the 'padas' are always to be sung with the help of musical instruments. In such 'padas' the love of the Lord for its own sake without any ulterior gain has been advocated by the poet.¹² 'Prema Sarovara' (1873) embodies his thirst for divine love without which the world is empty.¹³ In fourteen couplets the difficulty of the love-path is expressed, in another seven the beauty

⁸ The verses describe in detail the characteristics of the lord. The 'bhakta' sings them in his glory.

⁹ 'Bhāratendu Granthāvalī' p. 3.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 44, Also verses 62, 64, 68.

¹¹ 'Prema Malikā' verses 40, 69, etc.

¹² 'Prema Malikā' verses 38, 46.

¹³ Verse 24.

of the lake is described. Seven more exalt the grandeur of love. A few more enumerate those objects which lack in love. The last four couplets describe the characteristics of true love. In 'Prema Mādhurī' (1875), the poet identifies himself with his Lord, believing that life without him cannot exist.¹⁴ The poet also describes how the woman wishes to devour her whole lover. She is jealous of any other rival. She becomes mad without the love of her lord.¹⁵ The book also describes the pangs born of separation in love.¹⁶

Bhāratendu has intermingled the spiritual and divine love with its human aspect. In 'Prema Phulawārī' he has described love as a purifying sentiment.¹⁷ 'Prema Pratāpa' (1877) deals with disappointment born of frustrated love. 'Prema Āśru Varṣaṇa' expresses love in the rains. All the forty-six 'padas' in it describe the joy of the season. The swinging in 'hindolā', the hide and seek in the wet bowers and the love by talk, while enjoying the beautiful scenes after the shower constitute the theme of the book. In 'Prema Taraṅga' (1877) the human note has been introduced by bringing love to the earthly plane; so much so that the poet describes the peculiar experience of disillusionment in love.¹⁸ The vaiṣṇava poet becomes a poet of love in its human form. The intensity of love is the consistent theme

¹⁴ 'Prema Mādhurī' verse 3.

¹⁵ Verses 74, 129.

¹⁶ Verses 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87.

¹⁷ 'Prema Phulawārī' verses 17, 76, 77, 80.

¹⁸ Verses 81—1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.

of 'Prema Sarovara' (1873) without which life is colourless, empty and meaningless.¹⁹

Sūrdās with his greater depth and intensity has exercised a deep influence on the devotional poetry of Bhārtendu who has drawn not only from the content of his 'Sūrsāgara' but also from his rich and varied diction of great power and beauty.²⁰ In addition to this influence, the Western impact awakened his imagination and he attempted to depart from the lifeless literary traditions of the preceding age. He made an experiment, and like all other experiments it only half succeeded. His language is too rhetorical to permit of that lingering touch which makes for great poetry. In spite of it, he bears the impress of 'bhakti' impulse to a considerable extent. As his personal life was one of emotional frustration,²¹ he could not soar with the thrilling ecstasy of a vaiṣṇava who sees everything in the glowing light of universal love.

16. 'Priya-Pravāsa' (1909-1913) is the latest attempt at vaiṣṇava poetry. Lord Kṛṣṇa's journey to Mathurā forms the theme of the epic poem which has been written in 'Khariboli', the language of modern poetry and prose. His 'līlās' of childhood are also portrayed along with the main theme. The grief of the mother has been pathetically described by the poet who does not claim any originality in the description of 'līlās' which have

¹⁹ Verses 2, 4, 6, 24.

²⁰ Vide Munshi (K. M): Gujrat and its Literature p. 135.

²¹ Braj Ratan Dās "Bhārtendu Hariścandra" p. 127.

been more artistically dealt with by other poets. It is only in the character of the Lord that the poet has affected a change.²² As he has read with advantage the epics of other languages, he has followed their ideal by stressing the human side of mythological heroes instead of indulging in their supernatural exploits.²³ Michael Madhusudana's 'Meghanāda-Badha' is cited as an ideal epic to be imitated by him.²⁴ In this epic, Rāma has been shorn of his traditional divinity and is reduced to the level of a man. The Bengali poet has given a human interpretation of mythological characters and their motives to satisfy the demand for a greater realistic treatment of the traditional epics. "Rāvaṇa in this epic has none of the viciousness purposely ascribed to him.....He is an affectionate father, a true king, a great warrior swayed by passions. He was above all a man rather than a hero of the epic age. Meghanāda is a dutiful son, a loving husband, and a noble patriot."²⁵ Michael has thus reshuffled the old values by laying greater emphasis upon the human side of character. As the Bengali poet was born in an age of glorified humanity; there was a great protest and indignation against his modern version of the epic.

17. Pandit Ayodhya Singh Upadhaya, the writer of the present epic has only brought the gods from

²² Introduction p. 29, 30.

²³ Introduction p. 29.

²⁴ Introduction p. 5.

²⁵ "Western Influence On Nineteenth Century Bengali Poetry" pp. 26, 15.

their Olympic heights and escaped the venom of public criticism. Kṛṣṇa is no longer a god working miracles, but a man who joys or weeps like mortals. His mother too has a feeling heart, capable of deep grief, recalling the unhappy days of her life under the stress of a painful separation from her son. The poet has joined her yearnings for a close association with Nature which has been painted in equally grey colours. Her familiar motherly impulses have been artistically thrown against the background of Nature which answers to the pensive mood of the Lord's mother.²⁶

'Priya-Pravāsa' is not an epic in the Homeric sense; for it does not possess the characteristics of an epic in which "the heroes, even if they can be identified as historical, may retain in epic, nothing of their historical character, except such qualities as fit them for great actions." This 'Mahākāvya' does not portray any of the great actions with which the name of the Lord is generally associated; but it describes the grief of the people who have been wrenched from him. It is, therefore, a long poem between the epic and the romance. The reasons for it are quite strong. The epic form of poetry is an anachronism in a period dominated by a lyrical tendency.²⁷ The growing power of the utilitarian theory is less favourable to the acceptance of voluminous epics. The influence of rationalism has made men more posi-

²⁶ Cantoe *ii*, verses No. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

²⁷ Das Gupta's (H.M.) "Western Influence on Nineteenth Century Bengali Poetry" pp. XXXII, XXXIII.

vistic in thought and less heroic in the epic sense. The emotional outlook does not permit that dramatic detachment that is essential to the writers of epics. The 'Bengali Epics' which succeeded merely in dressing up ideas and sentiments have inspired him and other poets to write such long epic-romances.²⁸ A note of lyrical pathos runs throughout this composition. The epic poet has revived the story of a great personage on account of his great interest in India's past.

In the choice of metres, the writer has decided to employ the classical measures which are more suitable in an epic of the present type. It is a tradition which has been successfully practised in classical and Bengali epics. In defence of his choice he has written a long introduction, justifying the use of sanskrit metres, such as 'Mandākrāntā', Sikharīṇī, Malīnī, 'Druta-vilambita', 'Śārdūla Vikṛīḍita', 'Vasantatilaka' and other measures, and also the employment of 'sanskrit diction' as opposed to the spoken language of the people, for "it will be better appreciated in other provinces which have strong sanskritic traditions."²⁹ Instead of making the epic more comprehensible to the people of other provinces, he has made it stiff for the people of his own province.

²⁸ 'Priya Pravāsa' (Introduction) p. 5.

²⁹ "Priya Privāsa" p. 9.

MYSTICISM

18. Vaiṣṇavism which idealises a complete surrender to the æsthetic ideal continued only the past traditions which had been deeply rooted in the soil; but the modern age was growing too complex to be satisfied with poetry of a purely emotional nature. The socio-economic environment became complicated and dark with the development of machinery, the growth of cities, and the depopulation of the countryside. New social forces came into being; new problems arose. In this age of emotional frustration, Prasāda and other poets were driven to mysticism as an escape from the hard reality. They discovered that the ideals did not correspond to realities. They stressed and are stressing on the idealisation of the past and love of nature. Panta is responsible to some extent for the growing tendency to describe human emotions in isolation, away from cities and civilisation, against a background of hills and clouds.¹ As a consequence of this attitude there has been an increase in the imaginative content of his poetry. Prasāda who is the pioneer of mysticism in modern Hindi poetry has made his protest against the mechanistic materialism of the age.² He retired into

¹ Article No. 22.

² Article No. 19.

himself to work his ideas in a series of mystical utterances. Kāmāyanī (1937) embodies his mystical approach to the origin and growth of life with its manifold problems.³ Mahādevī Varmā also avoids everyday reality to find a higher reality in the midst of natural environment.⁴ She turns her back on the objects of this world in order to come back to them with a means of interpreting human life. Her mysticism combines primitivism with romantic imagination to produce a vital and purposive creed. An important aspect of the movement of mysticism is "the renascence of wonder." The mystic poets are zealous to be caught in an ecstasy of astonishment. They seek new worlds of experience; and for this purpose they search for the unknown and the mysterious and also desire to invest the ordinary objects with a mystical significance. In modern Hindi poetry the poets have endeavoured to interpret life in terms of the infinite, the invisible, and the eternal; but they have been lost in the captivating beauty of nature, catching an occasional glimpse of the ultimate reality.

19. Prasāda who is the pioneer of the new tendency, symbolises the protest against the gross materialism of the age. 'In 'Kānana Kusama' which is one of his earliest attempts at poetry, he stresses on the beauties of nature for those men who have no leisure to enjoy the reddening of the rose, the charm of spring, the buz-

³ Article No. 20.

⁴ Article No. 25.

zing of bees, and the blowing of the breeze.⁵ It is a significant revolt against the dry protestantism of the period. Āryasamāja and other protestant religious movements had sucked the age dry of all the æsthetic sentiments of life. Prasāda felt as early as 1913 that the head was getting full and the heart was becoming empty. In 'Kānana kusumā', 'Premapathika', 'Karuṇālaya', and 'Jharṇā', he has voiced the same protest in one form or another against this tendency. He pleads for a return to the objects of nature. In 'Karuṇālaya' (1913) he asks man to stare at the moon. Nature is his companion; the breeze is favourable; the boat should not be steered in hot haste.⁶ In all these raw attempts he takes delight in flowers, streams, creepers. 'Jharṇā', which is another important collection of poems describes the torrents of his youth.⁷ It is the adolescence of his poetry characterised by storm and stress. In 'Viṣāda' which is one of the poems included in this book, he expresses the restlessness of his youth.⁸

20. The 'storm and stress' bursts out in his next poem, 'Ānsu' (Tears) a significant title of the poetical composition which expresses his mood of despair. Prasāda does not lose himself in lamentation; but emerges out of this slough of despondency. 'Ānsu' therefore exercises a cathartic effect on the mind of the

⁵ 'Kānana Kusuma' pp. 10, 11.

⁶ 'Karuṇālaya' (A poetic Drama).

⁷ Kiraṇa (A Poem) in Karuṇālaya.

⁸ 'Viṣāda (A Poem) in Karuṇālaya.

poet.⁹ In his later production, love which purifies life is the chief theme of his poetry. Nature serves only a background to love. God who is the symbol of this eternal passion, plays with buds in the form of breeze, enjoys honey in the guise of bees. Birds sing of this love in their carols; creepers grow to embrace the lover. In this way, he reads human emotions into the objects of Nature.¹⁰ In his treatment of her he is always subjective. She varies with the mood of each person. On such occasions, the landscape is only a projection of the poet's mood which is generally gay. Prasāda observes the objects of Nature in their minute details; but he seldom achieves more than a catalogue of pictures which are seldom lifted and organised into a lyrical unity.¹¹ In 'Lahara' (waves) which is his mature production, he strikes a human note in the midst of natural environment and achieves thereby a unity and structure which is wanting in his early lyrics.¹² *Kāmāyaṇī*¹³ is the consummation of his poetical genius. The epic-poem is based on a philosophical and mystical approach to life. The poet has accepted the reality of human existence and tried to disentangle its intricate problems. He does not exclude man and woman, the conflict of

⁹ Rāma Nath's "Kavi Prasāda Ki Kāvya Dhārā" pp. 80, 100.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 106.

¹¹ "Prema Pathika" (1915).

¹² "Lahara" pp. 44—45, 40—41, 27, 37.

¹³ 1937. The book is a landmark in the history of Modern Hindi poetry. It has not been exhaustively treated in the present survey because it is beyond the scope of the thesis.

the individual with the society, and the various aspects of civilisation. The conflict and disharmony in life is due to the maladjustments of its different elements. Harmony can be restored by developing an outlook of 'balance' and 'non-attachment' to life. The entire play, then, of the universe will be transformed into bliss and joy for man. It is not merely the non-attachment of the Gītā, but it is the expression of a germinal Upanishidic idea that the world is born of bliss and it will end in bliss. Prasāda has worked out this sublime view of life in the form of a story which forms the skeleton of his epic-poem.

Manu is the hero of the epic. He battles against the odds and ends of life, rides, falls, and rides again; till he experiences the truth of life. In the end, his conflicts are resolved and his life's journey ends in bliss. The river's noise ceases when it joins the calm sea. It is this longing of the human spirit for the eternal spirit that forms the content of this epic-poem and all other poems of a mystical nature. Kamāyanī has been divided into fifteen chapters, each symbolising the process of human experience:—(1) anxiety, (2) hope, (3) faith, (4) sex, (5) passion, (6) bashfulness, (7) action, (8) jealousy, (9) egoism, (10) dream, (11) conflict, (12) despair, (13) glimpse, (14) mystery, (15) bliss,¹⁴

21. Prasād's art is inwardly philosophical and mystical. According to him, life is not a mass of con-

¹⁴ Cf. "Prabodha Candrodāya".

traditions, conflicts, abstractions, and logical concepts; but it is a flowing stream of bliss and consciousness. Egoism solidifies this fluid of life.¹⁵ A human being's life consists of one long effort to affirm his individuality against this stream of joy and bliss. Prasāda concludes his problem by destroying this process of solidification to which man subjects his life. It is a return to what is pure and spontaneous. The author has realised deeply the joy of this mystic experience. The poem marks a landmark in the history of modern Hindi poetry, especially in the tendency of mysticism.

22. Pant (Sumitrānandan) is said to be an important poet among those who have expressed and continued the movement of mysticism which is an off-shoot of the lyrical tendency in modern Hindi poetry. Rabin-dra Nath Tagore with his religious symbolism and mysticism has exercised a significant influence on his poetry. He is essentially a nature-mystic on account of his early predilections for mountains, rivers, woods, clouds, and other objects of nature like his teacher; but his lyrics lack that fire. He is seldom in it. A peculiar restraint, a lack of abandon, spoils the lyrical quality of his poems. He is lost in an obscure imagery, partly due to the mystic content of his poems and partly due to the stiffness, ornateness, and verbosity of his language.¹⁶ Many of

¹⁵ Kāmāyanī 9th Sarga.

¹⁶ "Privartana" (A poem) in 'pallava'. The poem is regarded by many as one of his best creations. Also "Eka Tārā", (A poem) another typical illustration.

his poems are supposed to be love pieces; but love is a literary passion with him with hardly a trace of deep feeling or a hint of real experience in it. *The poems are monotonously* packed with garlands, flowers, dawn, music, stringed instruments, chords, clouds, and rays.¹⁷ The expression of monotony comes from oneness of mood. Gitanjali also suffers from this flaw of monotony, but it is vitalised by a deep religious experience which is generally lacking in Pant's poems. "Vīṇā" (1927) brings the poet into a closer touch with the natural world of sound, sight and colour. The mood of the book is grey, its pictures mournful; but they are rarely touched by joy.

23. Pant is chiefly an artist working at his art. He consciously and persistently refines it and elaborates it. His mystic poems are not as valuable as his nature poems. Here he is lost in the pursuit of beauty which manifests itself, in the objects of nature. 'Bādala', 'Chāyā', 'Nārī-rūpa', 'Jīvana Yāna', are some of the poems which illustrate his endless zeal for beautiful forms. He is essentially a poet of the senses, especially of the eye and the ear. An attitude of sensuous enjoyment brings along with it its own sadness. Sadness is inevitable, because the poet soon realises that beauty is fleeting and transitory.¹⁸ So there is generally a shadow

¹⁷ "Vīṇā" poems 'Mile Tuma Rakā Pati Me Āja', 'Tuhina Bindu,' 'Bankara Sundar,' etc.

¹⁸ 'Ānsu' (A poem) "Ucchavāsa" (A poem), Also 'Gunjana', a collection of poems, which invariably express sadness in life.

of melancholy hanging over his poetry; but pessimism as a distinct tendency in modern Hindi poetry has been surveyed in a separate chapter.¹⁹

In his choice of phrase and metaphor, Pant is always inspired by the same search after beauty. In fact he has dedicated his life to the realisation of beauty of verse, of flowers, of streams, of mountains, of women. His choice of word and phrase is governed much less by his desire to express ideas than by a longing to make his poem as rich as possible in sound and colour. In 'Pallava' (1918-1925) he always chooses richer, more luxurious, more romantic, more melodious words.²⁰ What he does is poetical decoration. In a limited sense, 'a thing of beauty is joy for ever' is true not only of his poetry but also of his diction and language. He has written a lengthy treatise on the language of poetry. He says, "We do not require a tongue but a language of the country."²¹ It will not be the language of books but that of men. It is ridiculous and disgraceful to think in one language and express in another.²² The language of the heart should be the language of expression. Accordingly, 'Brajbhāṣā' does not suit the creative genius of the age. It is an old and torn garment. The soul chokes in the narrow alley of this language. Hindustani or the modern language, on the other hand, is full of

¹⁹ Articles 36, 39.

²⁰ 'Bālpana'. 'Nārī-Rūpa', (Poem).

²¹ Introduction to "Pallava" p. 17.

²² Ibid, p. 17.

freshness, profusion and vigour. It has grown and spread in a short span of thirty years.”²³ After having carefully selected ‘khaṛibolī’ as the medium of his poetry, he elucidates how the diction of poetry should be fluid and soft.²⁴ The ruggedness and harshness of sound have to be meticulously excluded from the language of poetry.

24. Nirālā²⁵ is deeply read in ancient philosophy and religion. Bengal where he was born and educated has exercised a lasting influence on his life and works. As a young student, he imbibed the spirit of ‘vedānta’ and religious mysticism by studying the doctrines of two great religious thinkers of the nineteenth century,²⁶ Ramkrishan Paramhansa and Vivekanand, who took the religious world by surprise inspired him and many others including sceptics, agnostics, positivists, and monotheists.²⁷ Nirālā was captivated by the “poor illiterate, shrunken, unpolished, diseased, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee” who was a revivalist, of the ‘śākta cult’ in its essential mystical beauty. “God and soul are organically one; the soul is always longing to be absorbed in the ultimate reality; ignorance on its part stands in the way of realising the end.” These basic doctrines of ‘vedānta’ have been beautifully expressed in his poems, ‘Tū Aur Maī’ is an admirable poem which

²³ Introduction to “Pallava” p. 17.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁵ Sūryakānta Tripāthī, Born, 1896.

²⁶ ‘Ādhunika Kāvya Vimarśa” pp. 155-157.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 155.

expresses the fundamental unity between God and soul. Nirālā has written a number of poems in which he has struck the mystical note by endeavouring to discover the ultimate power in the objects of Nature, sustained by it. In 'Jalada Ke Prati', 'Vāsantī', 'Sandhyā-Sundarī', 'Vasanta-Samīra', he is a nature-mystic contributing to the mystical current of thought in Hindi lyrical poetry.²⁸ Everything according to him manifests that ultimate reality.

Nirālā has also written a number of pure-songs which have been collected in a book (Gītikā).²⁹ These short lyrics express a variety of impulses, moods, and sentiments. They describe man's infinite longing to break the chains of bondage, his hunger for love and sympathy, and his desire for capacity to endure the hardships of life.³⁰ Some of them portray the full-blooded youth lost in the frivolities of life.

25. Mahādevī Varmā has made a distinct contribution to the poetry of mysticism. She has embodied a pessimistic view of life from her early childhood as a result of her interest in and keen study of Buddhism which lays a great stress on the suffering and pain of life.³¹ According to her, suffering has the potentiality to knit the whole universe into a single unit. It has a chastening influence on the life of man who wishes to enjoy

²⁸ 'Primala' a collection of 78 poems.

²⁹ His later production.

³⁰ Poems "Sakhī Basanta Āyā" "Priya Yāminī Jāgī" etc.

³¹ "Our Word" to "Raśmī" p. 6.

happiness all by himself, but wants to share suffering with others.³² Man to her is living poetry. He lives in this world, but he creates a better and a more beautiful world in his heart.³³ The animate and the inanimate are always in deep embrace. His external world is finite, but his internal world is limitless. As man's life freely moves in a circle, he creates for himself many bondages from which he struggles for freedom.³⁴ It is this desire for freedom which is at the basis of mysticism in her poetry.

In *Nihāra* (1929) which is her earliest production, she has expressed the loneliness and emptiness of life. The lyrics are invariably full of that disillusioning experience which is inevitable in the adolescence of a person who hungers for love and sympathy. In a state of emotional frustration, Mahādevī yearns for the ultimate ideal as the only solace of her life. In *Merā Rājya*³⁵ she says, "I am a mad queen of my utter loneliness. I revel in burning the lamp of my life." "It is not the previous vibration. It is not the old intoxicating music. O traveller, come in spite of it and listen to the woeful song of the broken reed."³⁶ "I love those flowers that fade; I love those lamps which are shattered," is the substance of another poem. In the end she wishes to retain her right of being extinguished in the world. 'Sūnāpana'

³² "Our Word" to "Raśmī", p. 7.

³³ Introduction to *Raśmī*, p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4.

³⁵ *Nihāra*, p. 17.

³⁶ *Nihāra*, p. 6.

(Loneliness) is a beautiful expression of this mood of loneliness.³⁷ 'Murjhāyā-Phūla' (Withered-Flower) describes how the flower was once a young bud, how it was caressed into a flower by the gentle blowing of the breezes and how it lay withered in the end. The poet ends her song saying that it is 'the way of all flesh.'³⁸ In all the forty-seven lyrics, she sings of pain, loneliness, emptiness, and futility of life; but at the same time she clings to hope which lurks in her breast. The hope is yet indistinct and vague like a tiny flame which is temporarily blown out by the slightest puff of misery.

'Raśmi' (Ray) is a clear expression of hope and faith in the midst of pain. In 'Āśā' (Hope) she says that the finite will be united into the infinite. The union will produce such a music that it will flood the entire universe. On the sea of suffering many bubbles of happiness will appear.³⁹ In 'Pahicāna' (Recognition) man has been described as a mystery. He cannot know whence he comes and where he goes. Nobody can answer the 'ultimate questionings of life.' In the span of eternity, life is in a continuous state of flux. As a bubble does not know the history of its creation and that of the sea, so does man confess his ignorance about his origin with a feeling of wonder.⁴⁰ 'Nibhrta Milana' (Silent Meeting) describes how life emerges out of non-

³⁷ Nihāra, p. 21.

³⁸ Nihāra, p. 51.

³⁹ Raśmi, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Raśmi, p. 42.

life. As a spark touches a lamp and infuses life into it, so a mysterious force infuses consciousness into the dead objects. In 'Memory' she appears to be inspired by Wordsworth's Ode to 'Intimations of Immortality'. She says that man occasionally experiences that he has missed a fond thing. The memory of the unknown makes him sad. He feels the want of it. The recollection of it becomes unbearable.⁴¹ When man understands this universe, he experiences a feeling of pain in his heart. It colours his view of the whole universe. When he listens to the music of his own heart, he discovers that harmony in the entire universe. His heart overbrims with love and the whole world is mad with this passion. In 'Raśmi' she has thus emerged out of a mood of despondency of the previous book.

'Nīrajā' (1934) expresses her ultimate hope in life. She is not weighed down by the burden of defeated hopes. Her mind does not lose its moorings and its sense of direction. Her head may bleed, but she is not overwhelmed by the intensity of suffering which is the spiritual test of life. She finds joy in the purifying process of pain,⁴² but in her previous lyrics she is essentially a poet of suffering and sorrow, revealing the anguish that is implicit in life. The theme of her poetry is the pathos of man's struggles, the bitterness of life submerged in the shadows and the waste and loneliness of human existence. In spite of it, her poems do not merely

⁴¹ Raśmi, p. 69.

⁴² Lyrics No. 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 20.

express the cry of despair and the shout of hope, but they are invariably dominated by an intense longing for the spiritual ideal which is the basis of mysticism in all religions. Mahādevī, thus, has contributed to the movement of mysticism in modern Hindi poetry, making it richer in content and variety.

26. Mohanlāl Mahto (born 1902) is a minor poet of mysticism. He has contributed a number of lyrics which bear the impress of this movement. In 'Māyā' the poet expresses the universal presence of reality and he yearns to be in tune with it. The sustainer is the dweller of unknown land. The river of life longs to join the limitless sea.⁴³ All the elements of this universe are vibrating to the tune of the universal.⁴⁴ The votary anxiously waits for his Lord to come. He is seated in his shattered cottage, trying to save the lamp of his life from being blown out by the storm.⁴⁵ God fills this vessel of life to empty it. He alone upholds life.⁴⁶ The ideal of life is to be in perfect harmony with the universe.⁴⁷ Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate reality; Rādhā is the ultimate ideal of man; love is the ultimate bond which unites them.⁴⁸

Rabindra Nath Tagore has obviously inspired these sentiments which are an echo of his songs. Mahto

⁴³ 'Eka Tārā' p. 17.

⁴⁴ 'Nirmālya' p. 23.

⁴⁵ 'Eka Tārā' p. 46.

⁴⁶ 'Nirmālya' p. 48.

⁴⁷ 'Nirmālya' p. 79 last stanza.

⁴⁸ 'Nirmālya' p. 92 (Abhilāṣā, A poem).

recognises Tagore as his teacher and attempts to write lyrics on his model. (See Introduction). Gitanjali and other poems vitalised by a deep religious experience have inspired the poet to write these lyrics which bespeak of the ultimate reality. The singleness of theme in them produces an impression of monotony. The lyrics suffer from other obvious flaws. It is not merely the repetition of words, but also the repetition of one note and of one mood, till the mind is jaded as by a copper-smith. In 'Nirmālya'⁴⁹ and Ektārā⁵⁰ there is very little interpretation of Nature; but there is some interpretation of sorrow. It is the latter gift which makes his poetry valuable in the domain of mysticism. Mahto has attempted a few poems in 'verse-libre'.⁵¹ They are highly classical in diction and stiff in language. 'Raja-kaṇa', one of them possess a rhythm which is fresh in modern Hindi poetry.

27. All these mystic poets reveal a few fundamental characteristics which are common in their poetry. The belief in insight and revelation as against discursive analytic knowledge is very significant. As poets they are capable of absorption in an inward passion and they claim to have experienced the strange feeling of unreality in common objects and to have realised a higher reality. In utter loneliness their soul brings forth out of its own

⁴⁹ 1025.

⁵⁰ 1931.

⁵¹ 'Taranga' (A poem in 'Nirmālya')

'Tārī' (A poem in 'Nirmālya')

depths experiences of joy and ecstasy. The doubt concerning common knowledge prepares the way for receiving higher wisdom. Their mystic insight begins with the sense of a mystery unveiled, a hidden wisdom suddenly come to light. In such moments of insights, they catch glimpses of a reality behind the world of appearance and which is utterly different from it. This reality is regarded with an admiration often amounting to worship, it is felt to be always and everywhere in the objects of nature; it is thinly veiled by the senses; it is ready to shine in its great glory for the receptive mind. The poets have sought this glory. And the haunting beauty they have pursued is the faint reflection of its sun.

28. The second characteristic of their mysticism and of all mysticism is a firm belief in unity beneath diversity and pain; good and evil are essentially one. As a consequence of this attitude there is acceptance of joy and surrender to the ultimate reality. This attitude is a direct outcome of the nature of mystical experience and with its sense of unity is associated a feeling of infinite peace. Prasāda who is the best representative of mysticism in poetry has expressed the mystical approach to life by stressing on the value of insight or intuition and by discovering the fundamental unity beneath all diversity, which is all bliss.⁵² Other poets who belong to this school of poetry have also partially expressed this truth in their poems.

⁵² Article No. 21.

NATIONALISM*

29. Nationalism has been a dominant tendency of modern Hindi poetry. It began with the year 1884, a year of landmark in the political history of this country. The Indian National Congress met for the first time to voice the national consciousness of the people. The period after 1884 saw the growth of a progressive urge for united political action. The Aryan culture which was intimately associated with nationalism reasserted itself in the minds of the people. The revival of Aryan culture was inevitably the first phase of this new force of tremendous energy which vitalised all forms of literature. Swami Dayanand preached protestant Hinduism with a nationalistic bias by starting a crusade against the idolatry of 'the purāṇas' and by advocating a return to the fountain of oriental faith. In Bengal, Swami Vivekananda expounded a Neo-Hinduism which laid stress on action as the only means to save India. In Maharashtra, Lokmanya Tilak saved orthodoxy by an aggressive national programme. Hinduism began to shake off its narrow sectarianism. A wave of nationalism swept over the whole country. It was accompanied by an urge for political action.

* The first two phrases of this tendency have been discussed in articles No. 3, 4, 5.

30. In the name of India's glorious past, dark present, and rosy future, the Hindi poets in their pragmatic appeal began to rouse the people from their slumber by writing patriotic songs. Bhāratendu Hariścandra first of all described, in the form of a play interspersed with verses, the sad plight of this country,¹ and revolted against the superstitions eating into the vitals of society.² An ardent social reformer as he was, he wrote with fervour in favour of sea-voyage, widow marriage, and education of girls.³ As a proof of his practical sympathy, he used to present 'sarees' at his own expense to the successful girl students in examinations.⁴ He revolted against child marriage, polygamy, and other conservative social institutions which retarded the growth of national solidarity. Bhāratendu's nationalism was closely associated with unstinted loyalty to the government. He did not divorce one from the other. In 1877 he gave expression to them in the same breath.⁵

31. After this patriotism became a definite motif of poetry. Badrī Nārāyaṇa in 1906 wrote a poem, glorifying the past of the country.⁶ Pratāpa Nārāyaṇa Miśra described the appalling poverty of the people to make them conscious of it.⁷ Mahāvīra Prasāda gathered

¹ 'Kavitā Kaumudī Part II p. 19.

² Ibid, p. 20.

³ Dās (B.R.) 'Bhāratendu Hariścandra' pp. 21, 25.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 91, 92.

⁵ 'Bhāratendu Granthāvalī', Part II, p. 797.

⁶ 'Kavitā Kaumudī' II p. 47 (Bhārata Vandanā A poem).

⁷ 'Kavitā Kaumudī' II, p. 63 ('Krandana', A poem).

the scattered literary talent and organised it for expressing the new urge which dominated the people. The problem of the medium of poetry had to be faced with all its complexities. India has been known for a babel of tongues. The growing political unity in the country demanded a common medium of expression. Dvivedī strove with success to give a literary shape and form to this language. 'Saraswatī' the celebrated monthly magazine, which he edited for a period of twenty years advocated and popularised the cause of the new medium of verse.⁸ Śrīdhara Pāṭhaka was one of those who were swayed by the nationalistic impulse and who employed the new language to express it. His 'Bhārata Gīta' became an accepted tendency in poetry. Pāṭhaka was chiefly a nature poet and a successful translator of verse into verse; but he wrote a number of patriotic songs. In one of them he describes that a country where people do not enjoy their rights is fit to be called a hell.⁹ In 'Bhārata Sūta' he exhorts young men who are the hope of their country to march on the road to progress.¹⁰ In another stanza he has cast a slur on the municipal department for neglect of duty.¹¹ In all such patriotic and pseudo-patriotic songs the language is a delicious mixture of both the old and new medium of verse. They do not possess much literary value; but

⁸ 'Ādhunika Kāvya Vimarṣa' pp. 17, 18 of the Introduction.

⁹ 'Kavitā Kaumudī' II, p. 120.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 124.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 126.

they are significant in illustrating the nationalistic tendency which dominated modern Hindi poetry.

32. 'Bhārata-Bhārati' (1913) was a landmark in the history of nationalism. Maithilīśaraṇa Gupta, the apostle of protestant Hinduism in poetry described in his book the height reached by Indian ancestors in arts, sciences, architecture, sculpture, poetry, drama, spiritual lore and physical culture. According to him the past was the golden period in the history of this country. 'Bhārata-Bhārati' which has been divided into three sections describes the past, the present, and the future. In the section dealing with the present he has portrayed the poverty, famine, cow slaughter, diseases, slow trade, ignorance, untouchability and other ills which the country suffers from. In the third section he has sounded the clarion call to rouse the people from their indolence and to restore the country to her former glory. The book is a severe indictment of the present lot; so much so that it loses its artistic value and degenerates into cheap propaganda. It was enthusiastically welcomed by the public who were captivated by the pseudo-nationalistic movement. The verses in the book are a specimen of 'kettledrum' poetry, the ethical urge of which has been lost on the modern reader who is bound to throw the 'clap-trap' of these verses to oblivion as they lack the eternal elements of poetry. 'Sva-deśa Saṅgīta' (1925) is a collection of sixty-five songs brimming with similar sentiments. Gupta in the present selection has transgressed the narrow limit of protes-

tant Hinduism in some of the lyrics.¹² In fact a widening of the sectarian attitude towards people of other religions inhabiting this land has happened in life and poetry. Bhāratendu Hariścandra was definitely antagonistic towards the muslims.¹³ Gupta chiefly confined himself to Hindu nationalism. It was a vague but a countrywide idealism sought to bring together the various groups among the Hindus for a united political action. Mahatma Gandhi at this time became "a symbolic expression of the confused desires of the people." Gupta has expressed these desires in some of the lyrics dealing with a variety of subjects which range from 'lingua-franca' to the national flag.¹⁴ He has written poems on subjects which concern only his religion and which were interpreted for Indian nationalism.¹⁵ A few lyrics describe the social evils such as marriage of young girls with old people, untouchability, and 'brahmacary-āśrama'.¹⁶ The exterior of the poet is reflected in his love for ancient culture, in his sincere regret for meaningless superstitious and conservative social institutions and in his desire for progressive Hinduism and therefore of nationalism. The inner man is a grave moralist who has rediscovered the epic legends in a new light.¹⁷

¹² Poems "Bhārata Varṣa", "Merā Deśa, 'Bhārata kī Jaya', 'Bhārat kā Jhandā'.

¹³ Braj Ratan Dās, 'Bhāratendu Hariścandra, p. 162.

¹⁴ 'Svadesa Sangita' poems quoted in article 32.

¹⁵ Ibid Poems 'Holī' Rāma Navamī', 'Vijaya Dasmī' pp. 64, 65,
68—

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 30, 49, 108

¹⁷ Appendix A.

33. "Nineteen-twenty-one and round about it was an extraordinary period for the country. There was a strange mixture of nationalism and religion and mysticism. Mahātmā Gandhi seemed to cast a spell on all classes and groups of people and drew them into one motley crowd struggling in one direction."¹⁸ The literature of this period began to reflect the nationalistic aspirations of the people. 'Pratāpa' a Hindi daily, began to publish such poems which expressed patriotic sentiments. The 'Pratāpa School' of poetry encouraged the use of new metres and newer ideas tinged with nationalism.¹⁹ Mākhanlāl Caturvedī of the new school contributed poems characterised by a spirit of heroism and bravery. In 'Balīdana' (Sacrifice) he has idealised the life of action and sacrifice. In 'Sipāhī' (Soldier) he has extolled the services of a soldier who fights for his country. 'Marāṇa Tyohāra' (Death Anniversary) idealises death suffered at the altar of motherland. In 'Puṣpa Kī Abhilāṣā' (A Flower's Desire) the poet describes the yearning of a flower who wishes to be trampled over by the feet of those who sacrifice their life for their motherland. Caturvedī has drawn a heart-rending picture of the country's poverty and misery and he thus wins the reader's sympathy for it. His appeal to the reader is seldom obvious or direct; but it is invariably suggestive. It is a significant departure from the previous nationalistic poetry which is cheap and direct

¹⁸ (J.L.) Nehru's 'Autobiography' p. 75.

¹⁹ 'Ādhunika Kāvya Vimarṣa' p. 23 of the Introduction.

in its appeal, and which therefore degenerates into 'clap-trap' of verses.²⁰

34. Siyārāmśaraṇa Gupta is another important poet of this school which popularised patriotic poems. His 'Maurya Vijaya' (Maurya Victory) is brimming with heroic sentiments. It describes the fight between Candragupta Maurya and the Greek invader. 'Anātha' (Orphan) is a pathetic cry of a poverty-stricken orphan. The poet has feelingly portrayed the lot of the orphan. In 'Ātmosarga' (Self Sacrifice) he has immortalised the sacrifice of a great patriot, Gaṇeśa Śankara Vidyārthī, who died a martyr in a communal riot at Cawnpore while saving the lives of its victims. 'A Flower's Desire' relates the story of an untouchable's yearning for a glimpse of the god in a temple.²¹ Gupta (S.R.) has written a few poems on the problems of peasants.²² He has thus touched the contemporary problems in poems characterised by a nationalistic bias. His method in such poems is narrative rather than descriptive. He has chosen stories to illustrate his themes. Balakṛṣṇa Śarmā has made a vigorous plea for a reshuffling of values which would ring out the old and ring in the new. 'Viplava Gāyana' (A Revolutionary Song) is a powerful and forceful description of this revolution. His 'Parā-jaya Gita' (A song of defeat) is brimming with vitality and fervour. No poet has sung more thrillingly the

²⁰ Articles No. 31, 32.

²¹ 'Ādhunika Kāvya Vimarśa' p. 37.

²² "Durvādala".

joy of change in life than he. He is always for destroying the old order.

35. These poets were inwardly inspired by the congress ideology of non-violence. Gaṇeśa Śankra Vidyārthī, the selfless patriot was responsible for encouraging the young patriot—poets who not only wrote poems but also participated in the activities of the Congress.²³ It was a period of storm and stress. The exhilaration of action held the people in its grip. Everybody grew eloquent about 'Swaraj' and he struggled for it in his own way. It filled the people with confidence. "A demoralised, backward, and broken up people suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their heads in pride." The national poets sung the people to action. They inspired them with new hopes and new desires.

36. Rāma Nareśa Tripāthī wrote stories in verse to infuse life into the hearts of the people. His long poems were obviously inspired by the non-violent creed adopted by the Congress. In spite of its negative name, it was a dynamic method for winning Swaraj. It was not a coward's refuge from action, but the brave man's defiance of evil and national subjection. Mahātmā Gandhi pleaded for the adoption of the non-violent creed and the ancient law of self-sacrifice. Tripāthī has imbibed the message of the apostle and he glorified, and idealised it in his poems.

'Milana' (1917) narrates the story of a young man

²³ 'Ādhunika Kāvya Vimarśa,' p. 37. Mahātmā Gandhi on his death said, "He lives to-day in a much more truer form."

and a girl who fought for the freedom of their country. The father of the boy disappeared, having left the message of sacrifice for his son. He was himself a victim of injustice inflicted on him by the government of the country. The boy and the girl were separated from each other by the expanse of the river which threatened their existence. A sage saved them from being drowned in the stream. He inspired the young boy to service for his country. The girl was also compelled to this ideal of service by the pathetic sight of a poverty-stricken peasant who was also a victim of social oppression and political injustice. Vijayā, the girl realised that service was the only ideal which could afford peace to the human soul. They fought against the tyrants and won the battle. The couple met in the end.

In 'Pathika' (1920) the poet has portrayed the conflict between love and service. Service triumphed over love. Pathika who was the apostle of non-violence dedicated his life to the service of his country. He roamed in the countryside and found hunger and appalling poverty among the peasants. He concluded that the indifference of the king was responsible for demoralising the bold peasantry of the country. He was arrested for spreading discontent among the people and sentenced to death in a court of law. His wife came to know of it. She came and drank the cup of poison meant for him. The mass of spectators was amazed at the sacrifice of that woman. The agents of the king arrived and ordered his son to be beheaded in his pre-

sence. He remained non-violent and asked the people to keep peaceful, for forgiveness was more manly than punishment.

“Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will. I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit is dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law, to the strength of the spirit.”²⁴

It is this strength of the spirit which was extolled by them. His son was killed, his wife died, he was executed in the end. His spirit spread among the masses.

‘Svapna’ (1928) is the latest attempt of the poet to arouse this idealistic spirit of nationalism by writing this story poem. The theme begins with the same conflict between love and service. In the autobiographical vein, the poet describes how he was engrossed in the joys of domestic life, how the truth of service and sacrifice dawned upon him, and how he made up his mind to dedicate his life after great hesitation and thought. The country was invaded by foreigners. Men joined the army to resist the attack. Mothers sent their sons with joy to the battlefield. The wife of the hero felt

²⁴ Mahātma Gandhi’s proverbial utterance on the doctrine of non-violence.

small before other women. She put on a male attire, joined the forces, and inspired her husband to fight for his country. Her husband won. He was installed on the throne. He learnt with an agreeable surprise that the 'young man' who inspired him was no other but his wife. In all these poems the period of non-violent struggle has been reflected in all its aspects. Nationalism therefore has assumed three phases of expression in Hindi poetry. Bhāratendu Hariścandra began with aggressive Hinduism which was the first phase of nationalism,²⁵ till it was changed into an æsthetic revival of Aryan culture. In this second phase it idealised the service of the country in a vague manner and became less crude in its expression.²⁶ In the last phase the service of motherland was to be achieved through a non-violent creed. Nationalism thus in the third phase became cosmopolitan in expression and non-violent in technique.

²⁵ Article No. 30.

²⁶ Article No. 32.

PESSIMISM

36 (i). A note of delicious melancholy and despair is perhaps inevitable in the poetry of a race whose civilisation is burdened with the weight of ages;¹ but the disappointment in life and frustration in love were either accepted as the strokes of 'Karama' or resolved into the joy of a vaiṣṇava who transformed everything into the light of universal love.² The vaiṣṇava discovered a purpose and meaning in the disappointments of life. He would surrender his everything to his Lord. Religion thus afforded a great consolation to the disappointed man. In the modern age, especially after the Great War the religious appeal has weakened; the popularity of the cinema with themes of frustrated love has deepened the feeling of despair.³ The monogamic tradition in married life has been still more idealised on account of Christian influence; the education of women has raised them to the status of equal partnership with men,⁴ but the rigid caste barriers with little room for individual rights, still continue to thwart the consummation of love. The contemporary socio-economic environment also

¹ Underwood's 'Contemporary Thought of India' p. 157.

² Article No. 13.

³ 'Deva Dāsa', 'Abhāgin' etc.

⁴ Article No. 47.

cramps the individual and cripples the full growth of his personality. All these factors with the added influence of English and Urdu poetry and Western education have contributed to the movement of lyricism and a note of despair in it.⁵ A keen sense of the futility of life has been a predominant note of Indian life,⁶ but despair and bewilderment as the end of life were comparatively at abeyance in classical literature. Tragedy as a form of literature was strictly forbidden by the writers of ancient dramaturgy.⁷ As Dr. S. K. De clearly points out:—

“The Hindu’s deep-rooted pessimism with regard to this world and unlimited optimism with regard to the next had produced a stoical resignation, an epicurean indifference and a mystical hope and faith which paralysed the personal and suppressed the growth of external life, and replaced originality by submission.⁸

37. In ‘Sikara’ (1934), Tārā Pāṇḍe has contributed some stanzas of distinct literary merit to the lyrical poetry of despair and disillusionment. In the period of despair the gospel of death in her poetry can be attributed to the death of her mother at the age of two and a half; to her early marriage at the age of fourteen, and also to

⁵ ‘Madhubālā’, ‘Madhuśālā’, ‘Kasaka’. These books of poems strike a new note in poetry. They have been obviously influenced by pessimism of English poetry, and the despair of Omar Khayyam School of Poetry.

⁶ Cf. The Doctrine of ‘Māyā’.

⁷ R. K. Yajnik’s ‘Indian Theatre’ pp. 22, 23.

⁸ S. K. De’s ‘Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century’ p. 446.

her continued illness which have determined her attitude to life⁹ It is her personal grief which she has voiced in stanzas of genuine bitter experience scattered throughout the book. The poems are not sustained lyrical attempts, but they are occasional outbursts of the futility, insignificance, and worthlessness of life which have been expressed in these stanzas.¹⁰

- (i) "I am a bud which has withered or a creeper which has been blasted. My poetry is an expression of grief of a suffering heart."
- (ii) "My life is a bubble which can burst in no time. Who will tell me than the mystery of this life?"
- (iii) "Oh tears, you come in moments of grief and also in those of joy. You become one with the suffering of others. You are my true companion."
- (iv) "The tender petal of my life is going to wither before it has blossomed. I am a bud without any fragrance."
- (v) "I have no yearning for life. All my desires have but gone in vain. I have known the world which is an illusion. I become mad for it. You can know me for a queen of the dreamland. My companion is despair. I roam with her in madness."
- (vi) "Why do you mock at the flower? It is a laughter which is grotesque. I see in the

⁹ Introduction to 'Sikara' pp. 2, 3.

¹⁰ 'Sikara' pages 6, 26, 40, 65, 77, 79, 91.

flowers the destiny of man."

- (vii) "I have to say the story of life in this tiny world of mine. I have to pause here and leave it, for I have nothing to do in this world."

The woman-poet has thus uttered sentiments of despair and futility which has become a significant note of modern Hindi poetry.

38. In 'Kiñjalka' (1933) Cakori (Rāmeśvarī Devī) has written a few sustained lyrical poems of rare beauty and charm. In these lyrics which are pure and simple, she pours forth her woes and disappointments. In 'Eka Ghūñta', (A Single Draught) a remarkable piece of sustained lyricism, she compares herself to a young girl, standing by the beach of a wide sea with nobody by her side to fulfil the longings of her youth. She entertains them, nurses them, and matures them to be ultimately disillusioned of them. In the end she yearns for a devastation of her desires and also of the whole world. In 'Pratirodha' (Persistence) she identifies herself with a broken musical instrument. She is disillusioned of life and of love which are brief and transitory. It is a piercing cry of despair. In Keat's 'Ode to the Nightingale' a similar note of futility has been sounded by the poet.¹¹ In the end, Cakori longs to be carried away by the current of the stream which would survive to relate the story of her woes and disappointments. In 'Śranta' (Tired) a complete shattering of all hopes has been por-

¹¹ "The Nightingale" Stanza 2.

trayed by her. The cup of despair is full to the brim. She has seldom tasted the joy of life, she has experienced only the pain of it. As her poetical career was nipped in the bud by her premature death at a very tender age, she could not realise the possibilities of her rare talent. In spite of the dark clouds, there is a faint silver lining scattered in her poems where she vaguely yearns for joy and happiness.¹² The Shelleyan rapidity of imagination and intensity of emotions are generally present in her lyrics.¹³ The soul of the poet is spontaneously lyrical. Her love lyrics are purely personal cries of something hopelessly gone. A delicious sadness therefore emanates from these songs which are the very utterance of a wounded heart.

39. Hṛdayeśa is essentially a poet of melancholy and despair. His poetry is a glimpse of the pessimism of an age, suspended in uncertainty between a world which has almost passed out of existence and one which is not yet formed. A pensive melancholy therefore colours almost all his poems. In 'Viṣāda' (Despair) it is clearly perceptible. The poet says that woods blossom forth with spring; but the buds of his heart lie withered. The rains wet the desert; but his heart remains dry. The cuckoos fill the orchards with their songs; but his soul does not resound with music. In this vein he expresses the loneliness of his life which is full of despair.

¹² 'Kiñjalka' p. 17.

¹³ Ibid 'Anurodha' p. 18, 'Dāmini' pp. 44, 45, etc.

'Kasaka' (1934) contains as many as five poems which have been written on the subject of tears.¹⁴ The tears are the only solace of a man's life. In a life of disappointment they are a shade to the afflicted heart. When man's life is enveloped with darkness and despair, when all his efforts liquidate, when helplessness surrounds him, when he is kicked from all sides; tears give peace to his soul.¹⁵ They are the hope of the hopeless, the shelter of the helpless, and the song of the mute.¹⁶ In 'Karuṇa Kahānī' he describes the mutability of life. He is painfully disillusioned of life's eternal nature. The flowers bloom to fade. Life is ultimately to die. Its history can be summed up in one word—disappointment or pains. It is invariably the theme of every poem. It is a momentous experience to him as to many of his generation that the glory of life has disappeared, leaving behind an emptiness, a scar, a sense of loss, which is revealed in their poetry. As a consequence of this deep melancholy, he has sung the praise of wine which is a symbol of forgetfulness. The Omar Khayam note has been sounded by him. 'Sāki' and 'Surā Sundarī'¹⁷ express the transitoriness and brevity of life and advocate the way of an epicure. In spite of their apparent gaiety they are essentially pessimistic in their innermost depth. Hṛdayeśa thus continues the pessimistic tendency in his

¹⁴ Poems—'Āsu', 'Ronā', 'Pralaya Rudana'.

¹⁵ 'Kasaka' pp. 117, 120.

¹⁶ 'Kasaka' pp. 117-120.

¹⁷ 'Kasaka' pages 58, 60. The 'Madhuśālā school of poetry is a new note in Hindi Literature.

sustained lyrics which possess a remarkable fluidity of expression, melody of verse, intensity of anguish, rapidity of imagination, and sincerity of passion. He is one of the forerunners of what is going to prove to be a popular movement in the province of feeling as well as of letters. Pessimism is destined to colour the outlook of the people in the first half of the century on account of the depressing social situation and economic environment.

EXPERIMENTS IN VERSE

40. In Modern Hindi poetry new experiments in verse have been tried and the old forms of verse modified to satisfy the poet's claim to be a free artist, to be guided by his own poetic conscience rather than by the rigid and artificial mould in which all thoughts and passions had to be expressed in Erotic Poetry,¹ which was more than ever bound by the rules of prosody.² The rigour with which these rules were practised made it lifeless. Bhāratendu Harisacandra, who wrote devotional poetry, essentially musical in character, did a little to free it from the rigid conventions of prosody.³ Prasāda, Pant, and Nirālā have flirted with the new forms of verse. They have felt that the fixed number of 'varṇas' and 'mātrās' in a verse bound the poet who could not give free expression to his more valuable feelings and emotions.⁴ It should be possible for him to create new rhythms which should be in harmony with his emotions. The new measures including the 'verse-libre' with their recurring rhythm create an expectation which is more valuable than the mechanical music created by the conventional rhyme and metres. The

¹ Article No. 3.

² F. E. Keay 'A History of Hindi Literature', pp. 91, 92, 93.

³ Braj Ratan Dās: 'Bhāratendu Hariścandra' p. 212.

⁴ Article No. 23.

rhythm inherent in emotions anticipates the following emotions. The free verse thus can create a new beauty in the expression of emotions. In 'blank verse' also the line does not remain the unit of the verse. The emotion or feeling is not necessarily expressed in a single line which forms the unit, but it is made to run to the following lines. The 'run on line' in 'blank verse' has freed the verse from the rigidity of verse.

41. The Brajbhāṣā poets have employed the 'savayyā' and 'kavitta' in their various forms. The 'savayyā' with its manifold variety has enjoyed greater popularity with them. Keśava has employed 'savayyā' in a modified form which he has christened as 'vijaya.' His 'Candrakalā' profusely illustrates the 'madirā', 'kirita', 'sundarī,' and 'malatī' forms of 'savayyā'. The same applies to 'lavanī' form of verse.⁵ 'Arlila' has also been flexibly used by different poets. Keśava shows that it has 16 mātrās with two short vowels at the end.⁶ According to Bhānū, it consists of 15 mātrās with two short vowels at the end. Rūpanārayaṇa Pāndeya has made it of 21 mātrās.⁷ In this way the rigidity of verses has been made elastic by the modified forms of different poets. They have interpreted and used them to suit their own convenience. 'Taṭaṅka' has been similarly modified by the modern Hindi poets who have made frequent use of it. Panta, Jaya Śankara Prasāda, Rama-

⁵ Upadhyaya's (A) 'Navina Pingala' pp. 7, 9.

⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

⁷ (A) 'Navina Pingala' p. 10.

candra Śukla have illustrated by their use that the verse can considerably be made flexible to suit their individual genius; but its original character has been retained by them.⁸ Prasāda and Panta have also created new forms of verse which do not bear resemblance to the old forms of prosody. 'Ānsu' and 'Granthi' which have been successfully employed to express their emotions illustrate how the variety of verse is a significant feature of modern Hindi poetry.⁹

42. Panta has written a comprehensive chapter on the deep relation of metre with poetry. 'Poetry,' he says, 'is the music of our life; metre the vibration of our soul. The tendency of poetry is to ultimately lose itself in music.'¹⁰ In Sanskrit poetry the rhythm depends on the profusion of compound words and their conjugations. Each word is closely related to the succeeding and following word.¹¹ When a word is spoken the whole sentence is out. In Hindi poetry the music drips like rain, flows, bubbles, and dances in a stream.¹² It is true of his own verse. "The Bengali metres," he says, "do not suit the Hindi language. In Bengali the music is unrestrained, the accent is permissible. The words swell like sponge. When they are spoken they become fluid, round, and soft. Rabindra Nath Tagore has succeeded in making the language

⁸ (A) 'Navina Pingala' p. 24.

⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

¹⁰ Introduction to 'Pallava' p. 31.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 32.

¹² Ibid, p. 33.

flexible and rich in sound." In Brajbhāṣā, 'savayyā' and 'kavitta' have been employed as popular forms of verse. Tulsīdāsa has employed the 'Caupai' and 'dohā' with such perfection and maturity that the succeeding poets would neither imitate them nor improve upon them. The 'savayyā' and 'kavitta' are comparatively easier of use than other forms of verse. Pantu feels that they do not suit the modern genius. In 'savayyā' the repetition of certain words produces rigidity and monotony. The rhythm which falls frequently on the long vowel succeeding the two short consonants becomes artificial and rigid. It loses its variety, freedom and 'romance.'¹³ The 'kavitta' is quite alien to Hindi poetry. The colloquial nature of this form of verse can be attributed to its use by bards who sang the praise of kings and nobles.¹⁴ In the opinion of the poet who has made a careful study of different forms of verse, the language of old poetry depended for its rhythm on words. The growth of spontaneous music was thus arrested and compensation made by a profusion of metaphors. The 'kavitta' had to be adorned by similes to make it a suitable vehicle for poetic sentiments.

43. Pantu has weighed the pros and cons of different forms of verse and sealed his choice on classical metres to express his emotions. According to him the 'vāitalya' is suitable for expressing pathetic sentiments. The helplessness, restlessness, and timidity of the person

¹³ Introduction to Pallava, p. 37.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 38.

can be artistically conveyed by 'vaitalya' which chokes the throat with emotions. 'Mālinī' is also suited to the expression of such sentiments.¹⁵ Among the various metres current in modern Hindi poetry are 'piyūṣa' 'varṇa', 'rūpamāla' and 'sākhi' which are similarly fit for the expression of pathos. The "rūpamāla" possesses the slow, gradual, and listless movement of a tired peasant. Pantu has referred to the use of free verse which is marked by a freedom of sense and sound. The Bengali verse with its greater freedom and less rigidity has given a great impetus to the evolution of this new form of verse in Hindi poetry, but apparently he does not encourage it in practice.

44. Nirālā¹⁶ has made a distinct contribution to the technique of verse in modern Hindi poetry. In the face of opposition he has successfully experimented with 'verse libre'. He rigorously justifies his stand for discovering the potentialities of the new forms of modern verse by saying, "Poetry can also become free like man. Man's salvation lies in his freedom from action, poetry's in its freedom from the shackles of verse..... Free verse can never harm literature. On the other hand, it creates life which can infuse literature with a new spirit."¹⁷ "Jūhī kī Kali"¹⁸ is his representative attempt at verse libre which possesses its own rhythm. It is

¹⁵ Introduction to Pallava, p. 45.

¹⁶ Sūrya Kānta Tripathī.

¹⁷ 'Adhunika Kāvya Vimarṣa' p. 164 or Introduction to 'Primala.'

¹⁸ Article 45.

only less free than either blank verse and other forms of verse in poetry. The poem describes the yearnings of a closed bud, waiting for the breeze to play with her. He comes and plays with her, and fulfils her desire. The popularity of the poem should not depend only on its being attempted in free verse, but also on the erotic experience narrated in a suggestive and artistic manner. 'Jūhī kī Kalī' is not a solitary poem written in free verse. 'Anāmikā', and 'Primala', his works, contain a number of poems which have been moulded into the new form with considerable flow in their movement.¹⁹ Nirālā has confirmed the new tendency in Hindi poetry of trying new experiments in verse to suit the creative genius of modern poets. He has been obviously guided by the Bengali poetry of which he possesses an adequate knowledge²⁰ and in which the new experiments in verse have been successfully attempted. 'Jūhī kī kalī' has been translated to illustrate his attempt at 'verse libre'.

45. THE JUHI BLOSSOM²¹

Away in the wild forest
 She slept on a creeper
 Full of the bashfulness of a new bride
 Lost in dreams of love
 The spotless soft-skinned Juhi Blossom

¹⁹ 'Badal ka Rāga', 'Jagarāṇa' etc.

²⁰ 'Ādhunika Kāvya Vimarśa' p. 166.

²¹ Translated for me by Mr. Dayā Krishna Malhotra, Mohindra College, Patiala.

Lazily sprawling among the leaves
And a vernal night:
The wind roamed in far-off lands
Leaving her stricken with love.
The winds—his name is Malaya Breeze.
He thought of the joyful meetings after separations
He remembered the sweet slender body of his beloved.
He remembered, too, the moonlit midnight.
Enough.
At once he crossed the orchards, lakes and rivers.
He swept through the dense hill forests
He passed over the sweet creeper bowers;
And came down to sport with full-blown bud.
She was asleep
And marked not the approach of her lover
The lover kissed her cheeks
The creeper trembled in a wide swing
Still she woke not
Nor begged mercy.
Her big dilated eyes were overpowered
By sleep's magic wand.
Was she intoxicated?
With the wine of youth?
Perhaps.
The pitiless lover waxed stormy
Now with passionate gusts shook severely
Her beautiful slender frame.
He rioted with her white round cheeks
Till she was startled out of sleep

And cast about her puzzled smile
Then she called him to her bed.
They played
And she bloomed forth.

46. The twentieth century is an age of novelties, it is no less true of literature in general and modern Hindi poetry in particular. In this age of experimentation new thoughts, new emotions, and new ideas are coming into life demanding expression. Since the needs and attitudes of the age have changed, their instruments of expression must change. As a consequence of this demand, new measures have been adopted and created to satisfy the genuine desire for a better vehicle of expression and also to gratify the curiosity for something novel in poetry. The success or failure of such experiments has depended on the individual poet. Prasāda, Panta, and Nirālā have a firmer grasp over the sense of rhythm and music than many amateurs,²² who are delightfully complacent for having handled the new forms of verse.

²² Agyeya, Miśra (L.N.) etc.

DRAMA

Romantic Tendency.

Idealistic Reaction.

(Farces and Satires).

Idealistic Reaction.

(Historical Phase).

Realistic Tendency.

Dramatic Technique.

THE ROMANTIC TENDENCY

47. In the period under discussion, contact with the West created new forces in all spheres of life. It gave birth to the spirit of renaissance in literature, to a new language, and to a literary technique and tradition based on romanticism which dominated English literature in the first half of the nineteenth century. As a result of a comprehensive scheme of education in the English language, Indian students had to acquaint themselves not merely with the works of romantic poets but also with the writers of various social, political, religious, literary, intellectual or æsthetic movements on the continent. "In every town, university men as pleaders, teachers, or officials became agents for distributing progressive ideas, and set the tone of social and moral life. Western culture came to be recognised as the necessary equipment for securing progress, railways, newspapers, and civic and political life began to destroy old barriers and prejudices. The uplift of women became an accepted fundamental of the new outlook. The education of girls, though resisted by a few, was favoured by many among the educated."¹

48. In the realm of drama these university men and others were fascinated by the study of Shakespeare

¹ Munshi's (K. M.) 'Gujrāt and its Literature' p. 253.

who exercised a great influence on the technique and content of Indian drama. About ten versions of his comedies and tragedies which have a close affinity with the traditions of classical drama appeared in the Hindi language.² At the beginning of Renaissance the writers who were stirred by the imaginative drama translated some of the Sanskrit plays characterised by a romantic spirit.³ Attempts have also been made at original plays with themes from mythology.⁴ They also indicate the romantic tendency in dramatic literature. The strangeness which is an essential element of romantic art is achieved by selecting mythological themes far away from the exigencies of real life. And this sense of remoteness which is an indispensable element of romantic art can be the remoteness of time, place, or culture. Romanticism is also a 'cult of the past'. It became a definite tendency in drama for three main reasons. The yearning for the remote past as a purely cultural revival is an important factor in the growth of romantic tendency in Hindi literature, especially in Hindi drama. It is also a reactionary force, symbolising the spirit of protest and revenge against the domination of Western civilisation. Another basis for the expression of romantic tendency in drama is the psychology of escape from the present-day life.

49. In the representation of mythological charac-

² (N. K.) Yājñik's 'Indian Theatre' Appendix C.

³ Raja Lakṣmaṇa Singh's 'Śakuntalā'.

⁴ Articles No. 50, 51, 52, 54.

ters the human element has been stressed,⁵ but the characters still retain the qualities of romantic art marked by a lack of coherence and profusion of poetic sentiments resulting in melodramatic and sentimental effects.⁶ As drama cannot exist in health without a serious representation of human character, a greater emphasis is bound to be laid on those mythological characters who can be shorn of some of their exaggerations; but there is a limit to this process. The writers therefore have turned to history for a more serious representation of human character to satisfy their craving for the past. The romantic tendency thus persists in the historical phase of Hindi drama characterised by a heroic conception of life.⁷ It gratifies the imagination; it satisfies the human desire for heroic action and character; and it invests its substance with a glamour of the past. In spite of the numerous varieties of romanticism, "It tends, in the main, to be idealistic, optimistic, and liberal. It sees life in general as glamorous, exciting and admirable. Whether it emphasises or ignores the conflict between good and evil in the universe, it feels that the conflict is an enthralling one, and that there is a possibility of an admirable and happy destiny for mankind. To the romantic, man is a complex being with great powers in the direction of either good or evil; at his worst, he is neither ignoble nor petty; at his best, he is

⁵ Article No. 52.

⁶ Articles No. 50, 54.

⁷ Article No. 64.

heroic and inspiring.”⁸

50. ‘Satya Hariścandra’ (1875) is the first original attempt at mythological drama. Hariścandra (Babu), the acknowledged father of modern Hindi drama has portrayed in this play the eternal conflict between the ideal of truth and the attempt to overthrow it. Hariścandra, the hero of the play, is a mythological king who represents the ideal of truth. In order to uphold it, he has to forsake his all and undergo a life of privation; through which he comes out chastened and morally triumphant. Viśvāmitra, another mythological character, in the play, is responsible for the king’s ordeal. The characters are not invested with any human motive; but they symbolise the ideal of truth on the one hand and the attempt to frustrate it on the other. It is an eternal war between the angel and the devil. The devil in this case is the angel in disguise. (Viśvāmitra). The dramatic rendering of this ethical theme has been prompted by a desire to eschew the erotic element from the story and to provide the young readers with a theme which can improve their morals.⁹ Its construction is loose, characterisation meagre, and the theme thin in its execution; but the play significantly represents the romantic tendency in drama as illustrated in its poetical description of rivers, women, and palaces. The shower of flowers from the heaven and the floating of aerial

⁸ Bentley’s ‘The Art of Drama’, p. 143.

⁹ Foreword to the play.

chariots thrill the imagination and invest the play with a spirit of romance.

51. 'Candrāvalī' (1876) is another attempt at mythological drama by the same author who, in the garb of a woman, pines for the love of his Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the romantic character in mythology, is the object of his love. The Lord represents for him the ultimate principle of spiritual love which sustains the universe and upholds it. Candrāvalī, the heroine, symbolises the eternal yearning of man to realise this ideal. She represents 'the devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow.' Although a sublime principle forms the theme of the play, yet it is far from success as a piece of dramatic literature. The inordinate length of speeches, extending to as many as six hundred words, destroys the dramatic illusion.¹⁰

The play-wright, in the production of these and other plays has followed neither the classical canons of dramaturgy nor the principles of Western dramatic technique.¹¹ He has employed any combination of different techniques which have taken his fancy. And this haphazard combination of classical, 'Pārsī' and 'Bengālī' features of drama has resulted in inorganic construction, incoherent characterisation, disharmony, and cheap entertainment. In spite of these flaws, he remains the pioneer of the romantic tendency in modern Hindi drama.

¹⁰ Act III.

¹¹ Śyām Sundra Dās's 'Bhāratendu Nātakāvalī' p. 70.

52. 'Añjanā' (1923) marks a definite advance over the previous mythological plays on account of a greater stress which has been laid on the human motivation of characters and incidents. Añjanā, the female character, represents the ideal of chastity, service, and sacrifice in the play. Her husband has gone to war for a period of twelve years. In the meanwhile, he pays a flying visit to his wife and stays with her for a few days without informing the other members of the family. It complicates the situation and her chastity is challenged by the elderly ladies in the family. She is exiled and the remaining part of the story relates her subsequent sufferings in banishment and the ultimate vindication of her honour.

Another minor theme relating the story of a revengeful woman, who, in spite of her mother's resistance wants to marry a husband of her choice has been introduced to complicate the course of events. Pavana, the hero, is torn between two loyalties—to marry this passionate and assertive woman who loves him or to marry the woman of his parent's choice. He is married to the latter. It provokes the former woman to wreak vengeance on her rival. In the end of the play she is dispensed with by the writer and the whole piece ends with the ringing of joyous bells.

53. "Añjanā" is a definite advance on other mythological plays. In the first place the playwright has consciously omitted the convention of introducing 'couplets' which were being frequently employed in the

plays to create a theatrical effect.¹² The Alfred Theatrical Company, enjoying the great popularity among the audience, was catering to the taste of the age, by employing such couplets. Sudarśana, the author of this play, felt the deadening influence of this convention and did away with it to a great extent. He also claims to have introduced human motivation in the tale of mythology.¹³ The Bengali and foreign drama have been responsible for this greater emphasis on human motivation in mythological incidents and characters. Dvijendralāl Roy, the Bengali playwright, set a standard to the dramatists of other languages and thus exercised a great influence on their dramatic technique.¹⁴ As a consequence of this influence, the play is singularly free from extravagant elements, with the exception of a few coincidences relating to Añjanā's arrival to save her 'rival' and her husband from suicide,¹⁵ Although the author deplors the tendency of writing the dialogue in 'couplets' and of introducing songs at inopportune places; yet at a few places the rhyming and alliterative dialogue has been employed to create a rhetorical effect in the play.¹⁶ It has remained an indispensable device to satisfy the groundling's love for the spectacular and rhetorical. In spite of a few flaws, the writer has anticipated the realistic tendency in drama.

¹² 'Vīra Abhimanyū', 'Bhīṣma Pratigya', 'Indra Sabhā' etc.

¹³ Introduction to the Play, p. 3.

¹⁴ Introduction, p. 6.

¹⁵ The Play, pp. 154, 168.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 63, 69.

54. 'Varamālā' (The Wedding Garland) is another attempt at mythological drama. The theme of this play has been taken from a 'purāṇa' where it occurs in the form of an episode. It deals with the heroine's sudden change of love into hatred and hatred into love. This fact has been poetically executed in the play which can successfully be represented on the stage. The stage success of this play can be attributed to the writer's knowledge of stage-craft, which he acquired as a dramatic writer of a theatrical company.¹⁷

55. "Prāṇesvarī" (1931) is a solitary instance of the musical comedy which represents the romantic tendency in drama. It possesses the essential characteristics of romantic literature. The story is set in a fanciful realm, built upon highly improbable situations.¹⁸ The play belongs to the 'literature of escape.' In this respect the musical comedy continues the traditions of mythological drama. The atmosphere is adroitly created by love songs. The audience, being enraptured by the melodious music, does not notice the improbability of the story; as for instance the epileptic fits in the present play. The play tells the love-story in an atmosphere of music. As Jack must love his Jill, Madana loves Mālātī. She has invited a business magnate to a musical performance arranged by her father and is definite about his joining the function. The whole story revolves around her bet that he must come. To complicate the plot he does

¹⁷ Foreword to the Play, p. 6.

¹⁸ The Play, pp. 26, 28, 30.

not arrive in time, and his part is impersonated by another character who betrays his real person and creates many humorous situations. When his wife arrives on the stage, the situation become still more comic. In a fit of epilepsy, she embraces Mālātī's lover, thereby causing misunderstanding between them. The fit is repeated in the presence of the girl who is thus convinced of his fidelity and the lovers, as usual, are united in the end.

56. 'Kāmanā' (1927) is a symbolic play. Symbolism of which this play is a solitary example is also a variety of romantic art. The ethical significance of this play gives it a definite tone by offering a positive comment on the meaning of human destiny; and the futility of civilisation.¹⁹ In this respect, it differs from romanticism which merely creates a glamorous picture but does not generally build up a specific indication of the intellectual, emotional or ethical significance of the work of art. 'Kāmanā,' despite this, is a continuation of the romantic tendency. It is also a manifestation of the historical phase of drama and the phase of dramatic satires and farces.²⁰

The theme describes a young man who goes into a primitive floral island to spread civilisation among the ignorant and unsophisticated dwellers of the island. They are drilled into the ways of modern civilization. Wine and gold are the invincible weapons which he em-

¹⁹ Cf. 'Kāmāyanī' Article No. 20.

²⁰ Articles No. 58, 64.

ploys in 'civilising' them. In course of time they acquire a sense of sin, jealousy, property, power and marriage which were unknown to them before the process of civilisation began. In this play, Prasāda has cast a satire on modern civilisation. He has spun an intricate plot which is full of suspense upto its end. The idyllic atmosphere on the island has been created by the introduction of enchanting music, free love, flowers, rivers, and the artless poetical conversation of simple girls who do not know the conventional ways of life.²¹ It is a race of people who are free from the conflicts of life.²² They have descended from the heavens and the stars.²³ The process of civilisation brings along with it the trailing cloud of misery, poverty, class consciousness, and military subjugation. In the end of the play, a note of disillusionment is rung by the Queen of the island who parts with her crown which has been a symbol of power and therefore of 'barbarism'. The whole theme is thus lifted to a cosmic height by a character who sums up the struggle of the islanders as a colossal illusion in the scheme of the universe.²⁴

57. All the characters in the play are symbolic. Vilāsa stands for the epicurian way of life, Viveka is the wisdom of ages, Santoṣa is the symbol of contentment, Kāmanā is the will to live, Karuṇā brings in

²¹ 'Kāmanā' p. 27.

²² Ibid. p. 17.

²³ Ibid. p. 15.

²⁴ Viveka (wisdom).

a note of suffering, and Līlā represents the sportive and playful spirit in man. The symbolic drama is the expression of the literary movement which was started by Rabindra Nath Tagore in Bengali literature. "The Bengali Symbolist Movement takes us back to the whole metaphysical system of Hindu religion and æsthetics which was in existence thousands of years ago.²⁵ The movement takes its origin in Vaiṣṇava cult of æstheticism and romanticism which perhaps is the strongest tradition in Bengali art and literature." 'Kāmanā' seems to have been inspired by the symbolic dramas in Bengali literature which took the Indian public by storm.

²⁵ Cf. 'Prabodha Candrodāya' in Sanskrit.

THE IDEALISTIC REACTION

FARCES AND SATIRES

58. The impact with the West had a far-reaching influence on the life and literature of this country. It gave birth to two simultaneous movements: a revolt against the institutions of the old social order and a reaction against the Western mode of life which began to permeate the life of the people. The clash between the two civilisations provided rich material for the production of dramatic literature. The 'idealistic reaction' has assumed three phases of expression, overlapping one another. In the first phase there was reaction against the material civilisation of the West and its social institutions. It was a natural tendency based on the fear of a new culture which began to make its presence felt through educated persons of the country,¹ but the wholesale indictment of Western life did not attract a large number of literary minds. As this reaction expressed itself chiefly in farce and melodrama, its influence spread only among the mass of average minds. Men of æsthetic tastes found it hard to appreciate the inartistic features of these two forms of drama with their inconsistent characterisation, episodic plot, and an exaggerated portrayal of life,

¹ Article No. 47.

resulting in cheap entertainment.

59. In 1873, Hariścandra (Babu) set the ball rolling by writing his first farce at the age of twenty-three. In “Vaidikī himsā, himsā na bhavatī” he has ridiculed those ‘progressive persons’ who take meat and wine and advocate the cause of widow remarriage. At one place he remarks that a person who has a nodding acquaintance of the English language and has married a Muslim wife considers himself a ‘free’ person.² Some of the critics have pointed out that this remark was prompted by a desire to wreak personal vengeance on one of his opponents.³ It is however a clear indication of the spirit of the age.

60. In “Bhārat-Durdaśā” (1880) which is his next important farce, he has presented a very gloomy picture of this country. In the fourth act he enumerates, in the form of symbolic characters, all the ills which the country suffers from. Among them are disease, indolence, wine-habit, ignorance and poverty. The play of 37 ordinary printed pages has been divided into as many as ten acts. Some of the dull speeches extend to a more than a page and a half.⁴ A few versified harangues have been inserted for purpose of recitation and of reformation of the audience.⁵ “Andhera Nagari” is another farce of minor importance. In this play the character of

² ‘Bhāratendu Nātakāvalī’ p. 51.

³ Ibid, p. 51.

⁴ ‘Bhāratendu Nātakāvalī’ p. 611-612. One speech extends to a page and a half. The examples can be multiplied.

⁵ ‘Bhāratendu Nātakāvalī’ pp. 612, 614, 617, 619.

the king is not merely inconsistent but also highly improbable. The play is interspersed with ethical reflections and general comments on the sad plight of the country. Hariścandra who released new forces in almost every domain of modern Hindi literature (poetry, drama, prose) was also a pioneer in expressing the idealistic reaction in dramatic literature. His farces do not possess any artistic or literary merit even as farces; but they are significant for purposes of critical research and historical investigation.

61. Bhaṭṭa (Badarīnātha) is another important writer who has continued this tendency of idealistic reaction in his satirical farces. In "Vivāha-Vigyāpana" (1927) he narrates the story of a widower who resorts to advertisement for his second marriage. The wording of the advertisement and the manipulation of the situations in the play are such that they are bound to provoke fun and laughter in the groundlings. The climax of this cheap fun is reached, when the letter containing the matrimonial proposal is beaten with a shoe. In the end the proposed couple is duly married; but the 'lady-love' turns out to be an old woman; sans teeth, sans nose, sans youth, and sans beauty. All these were artificial and made up; but then it was too late. The curtain falls with the remark that 'wiving and hanging go by destiny'. In this play the writer has indirectly cast a slur on the Western ideal of artificial make-up and form.

62. "Miss American" (1929) is another important farce of Bhaṭṭa in which he has attempted to ridicule

the West and its civilisation. The American characters represent Westernism in this play. They do not stand by anything in life, except money which is their religion.⁶ Their daughter may marry any person, provided it brings them money. The American parents as portrayed in the farce do not understand the spiritual culture of the East. They are blinded by a veil of gross materialism.⁷ At the same time they suffer from a colour prejudice.⁸ Bohārīlāl, who represents the civilisation of the East does not like his own society. In Hindu society women do not enjoy any status.⁹ Again the Hindus are Jews and a community of liars.¹⁰ Incidentally Bohārīlāl is a poet and he offers his 'valuable' opinions on the art and function of poetry. Vulgarità to him is the soul of poetry.¹¹ The Hindi poets are dull in their works for want of obscenity.¹² Bhaṭṭa is perhaps satirising the tendency in the Erotic school of poetry for the deep delight which its writers took in the unæsthetic expression of beauty.¹³ As the play is a farce, the writer has not cared to introduce a logical sequence of events which is not essential to a farce, where the plot is episodic in construction, characterisation inconsistent in development, and portrayal of life invariably dishonest and

⁶ 'Miss American' p. 104.

⁷ Ibid. p. 68.

⁸ Ibid. p. 100.

⁹ Ibid. p. 25.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 74.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 44.

¹² Ibid. p. 45.

¹³ Article No. 12.

improbable. As a consequence of these features of the farce, he has introduced a hunting scene in a jungle, and a court scene in the first act which have little bearing on the main theme. A notable feature of the farce is that the writer has considerably cut down the number of characters. Only five male and three female characters of significance are introduced in the play.

63. "Sāhitya kā Sapūta" is another important farce of this cycle, representing the first phase of the idealistic reaction. 'Śrīvāstava (G.P.) has made an attempt to satirise the conservative tendencies in language, humour, and poetry from the modern standpoint. A love-theme has been introduced to add colour and variety to the play. Saṃsārī represents the modern tendency in literature; Sāhityānanda stands for the old pedants in literature. He has a daughter to marry. Saṃsārī loves her. As usual, there are obstacles in the way. In the course of overcoming these obstacles, the author provides many comic and farcical situations, arising out of physical maladjustments.¹⁴ It fulfils the highest aim of farce.

In all these farces there is little demand for thought to appreciate them. They depend for their humorous effects upon the exaggeration of a few simple character traits and upon action which is frequently, though not always, physically violent. They make no pretence to depict reality, and constantly resort to gross improba-

¹⁴ 'Sāhitya kā Sapūta' pages 3, 32, 35, 38.

bilities in action and characterisation. In spite of it, the very simple appeal of the farce has made it a popular form of dramatic literature for a certain section of the audience. In Hindi drama this form has been consciously employed by the writers to ridicule Western civilisation and exalt indigenous culture in an inartistic manner.

THE IDEALISTIC REACTION—(*Contd.*)

THE HISTORICAL PHASE

64. The misrepresentation of Western culture and the exaltation of Indian civilisation was a negative reaction which did not satisfy the writers. They looked back to their past to derive inspiration for a fresh outlook on life. "The past is not only felt as a period apart, it stands in direct conflict with the present, as a reactionary force, symbolising the spirit of protest and revenge. When the age is one of wounded sensibility, with all the vitality of life on the ebb, the soul must turn towards the past, in order to find the contentment so necessary to the cravings of its emotional nature. And of all the varied periods which such a past has to offer that which affords the greatest satisfaction will be the first to be explored."¹ Apart from this psychological reason of escape from the hard and depressing facts of contemporary life which can be attributed to a clash against the civilisation better fitted for the struggle of existence, the revivalist movement, was also the outcome of a desire to pick up the lost thread of cultural development which had been arrested for many centuries. Yet another reason for the

¹ Legouis and Cazaimian's 'History of English Literature' p. 940.

idealistic reaction expressing itself in historical drama was the growing dissatisfaction with mythological tales farther away from real life than themes from history. In addition to these bases of historical drama, there is another strong reason for its popularity. The country was pulsating with nationalistic ideas.² The new men who wanted to interpret life in history felt the pulse of the age and ransacked ancient history in search for suitable themes for their plays.

65. Dvijendralāl Roy, the Bengālī dramatist, whose works have been translated into four Indian languages, was the leader of the new movement. "He was deeply stirred by the national movement, and for a time almost completely threw himself into it; but at heart he was too genuine a realist to be overcome by it. He was mentally so constituted, that he could not for a moment lose his own individuality and so he escaped from becoming a bigoted patriot or a fanatical demagogue."³ Although his plays in Hindi are mere translations and therefore beyond the scope of the present survey, yet they have exercised such a deep influence on the Hindi dramatists that they deserve a close study for forming a proper perspective of the historical tendency in Hindi drama. He is practically known as a Hindi writer. Almost all his important plays have been translated into Hindi and he is extremely popular with Hindi playwrights.⁴

² Article No. 29.

³ Guha Thakurta's 'Bengali Drama' pp. 157, 158.

⁴ Article No. 53.

Roy, who was deeply influenced by Shakespeare,⁵ started a significant cycle in drama with history as its central idea. He tried to awaken a sense of life in man as the latter appeared in history. In one aspect the historical movement was a continuation of the romantic tendency, with its characters emerging out of the vistas of the past. Roy selected the Ancient and the Mughal periods of history to represent the spirit of their respective ages, by creating ideal characters who could inspire the audience with new life.⁶

66. 'Rāṇā Pratāpa,' a theme which has been dramatised by another dramatist,⁷ is his first attempt at historical drama. In this play, the writer is not "so much interested in the objective facts of history as in the characters of the period with which he deals. At the same time his interest is not merely psychological. He does not so much aim at tracing the development of the hero's personality, but rather represents him to his contemporaries as an ideal for the present day. The play is a mirror of contemporary life, in which the hopes and aspirations of the politically conscious section of the people are reflected."⁸ In "Durgādāsa" and "Mevāra Pātana" he has also idealised the heroic characters of history and translated its spirit in terms of the present situation. In "Nurjahān" he made the first attempt at

⁵ R. K. Yajnik's 'The Indian Theatre' pp. 224-229.

⁶ Guha Thakurta 'The Bengali Drama' p. 159.

⁷ Article No. 76. By Jagan Nath Prasāda Malind.

⁸ Thakurta's 'Bengali Drama' p. 159.

character portraiture by subordinating the incidents to the psychological analysis of the heroine's character. "In the play she appears like an elemental spirit, reveling in her reckless passion, and crushing everything that obstructs her insatiable ambition for power. As an act of self-revenge she is prepared to wreck the whole empire. In her mechanisations she is pitiless and ruthless, yet she is not without a touch of the grandeur of a heroine. In the end when she is defeated and disgraced, she succumbs to the elemental call of motherhood."⁹ The writer has thus penetrated into the half-lights and half-shades of a human heart and ended the play with a human note.

67. "Shāhjahān" is the finest product of his mature art for its psychological portraiture of historical characters, its faithful representation of the facts of history, and its artistic structure which lends itself to a successful presentation on the stage. Shāhjahān is torn between two conflicting forces; the tender emotions of a father's heart and the feelings of pride and justice. In the psychological language, the writer has artistically portrayed the eternal Oedipus situation. In his helplessness the brave old father, like a caged lion, groans and growls and raves in "madness". In "Candragupta" Roy has depicted the character of an empire builder. Cāṇakya, like a superman, does not spare anybody, including his own person. In spite of the ruthlessness of his own

⁹ Thakurta's 'Bengali Drama' p. 162. Also R. K. Yajnik's 'The Indian Theatre' p. 228.

indomitable will to power, he has shown himself capable of deep emotions, when justice has deprived him of his daughter. In this conflict, the human note is struck by the dramatist who started by idealising his characters of past history to arouse national consciousness in the country; but began to subordinate incidents to the study of character and thus revealed the spiritual continuity of history.

68. When his dramas were read in the original and translated into other languages, they created a stir among the contemporary and succeeding dramatists.¹⁰ Ancient periods of history began to be searched and ransacked for suitable themes. In the chronological order, Hari-ścandra (Babu) attempted the first historical drama *Nildevī* in the year 1881. While expressing the aim of writing this play, he writes in a lengthy preface to it. "It is the Christmas day. All the Christians are full of joy, but I am in grief. It is jealousy from which I am not free. When I see European women in their complete make-up, strutting on the road by their husbands' side; I am reminded of the simple, unfortunate, women of my country. And this is the cause of my grief. No body should apprehend that I want our women to forsake their bashfulness and to walk hand-in-hand with their husbands. It is my desire that they should come out of their indolence on the road to progress by following Western women in their wisdom, education,

¹⁰ Article No. 53.

self-respect, and patriotism. It is our belief that our women were not in this deplorable state from eternity. To dispel any doubt about it, the play has been written and dedicated to the readers.”¹¹ The claim is big, but the work falls short of its claim. In the story Abdulsharīf Khān defeats his opponent and arrests him. Nīldevī, the wife of the defeated prince, penetrates into the enemy’s camp in the guise of a dancing girl. Abdulsharīf Khān, the Muslim chief, is infatuated by her beauty and art. While he is in a state of intoxication, she ends him to save her honour. The play is obviously scattered with patriotic sentiments.¹² But the theme which pivots on revenge does not satisfy the aim outlined by the author in the Preface.

69. In 1921 Jaya Śankara Prasāda entered the field. He was so much involved in the maze of historical facts that he was lost in them. A careful study of his plays will reveal that he has always subordinated characters to incidents in the plays. In his enthusiasm to uphold the objective facts of history which he reproduces in an embarrassing detail he has sacrificed the more valuable features of plot-construction, characterisation, and naturalness of dialogue. Into the midst of historical facts he introduces long declamatory speeches which really express his own views. The writer does not possess even in an ordinary degree a sense for the dramatic situation which should lead them to a denoue-

¹¹ Preface to ‘Nīldevī’.

¹² ‘Bhāratendu Nātakāvali’ pp. 661, 662, 669, etc.

ment, having the characteristics of clarity, plausibility, and interest.

70. 'Viśākha' is one of his early attempts at historical drama. The theme has been 'carefully' selected from the decadent period of Buddhistic history.¹³ In the beginning of the play the hero who has been educated in an atmosphere of high social ideals, seizes an opportunity to offer his services to a starving girl who has been imprisoned for trespassing the field of a haughty 'Bhikṣu'. Viśākha approaches the king to report against this proud monk. The king verifies the information and frees the girl. The Bhikṣu's 'vihāra' is ordered to be burnt. In course of time, Viśākha develops a love for the girl, who finds it difficult to be 'weaned' from her father. She at last surrenders to his love when he threatens suicide. After having conquered her, he loses interest in her and engages himself in social work; but the girl tenaciously clings to him. In the meanwhile, the king takes a fancy to her; but she repulses his love. To save her honour she wishes to elope with her lover. The king sends his court-jester to abduct the girl for the satisfaction of his lust. The poor jester loses his life at the hands of the hero. It is curious to find that just after having murdered the jester, the hero begins to recite couplets which jar upon the ears of the reader. The heroine's aunt musters courage to publicly accuse the king of an attempt to rape the girl. The public insists

¹³ Introduction to the Play.

that the sentence should be commuted. In a scuffle the king is hurt. He begs pardon of the hero and the heroine to the surprise of the audience. What a reformation and transformation of the king's character!

The theme has been taken from 'Rājatraṅgiṇī' which is an important book of historical significance.¹⁴ The character of the 'sādhu' in the play represents the spirit of idealism which is the rich heritage of this country. Again, the author does not pretend to preach a sermon from the pulpit, although in the play the king is made to succumb to reformation at the cost of his honour and dignity and also at the expense of realism. At every step in the play a song is provided for the entertainment of the audience. The language is stiff and ornate and it therefore mars the realistic effect of the dialogue. As a pedant, a purist, and a classical scholar, the author does not encourage the colloquial and therefore the vulgar expression to destroy the chastity of his style. Another serious flaw of plot-construction has crept into the play. The play can be divided into two parts having little organic relation between them. In the first part the climax is reached by the consummation of marriage between the hero and the heroine. It is again threatened by the king's interference which serves as an anti-climax to the first part.

71. In "Candragupta", the playwright has depicted the rise and growth of the 'Maurya' dynasty. The

¹⁴ Introduction to the Play.

execution of the theme is far from an artistic success. Dvijendralāl Roy has treated the same theme with great literary skill. He has chosen only eleven characters from the records of history to suit his artistic ends.¹⁵ Prasāda in the present play has culled as many as thirty characters, male and female, in order to become comprehensive in historical details. The play succeeds as an objective treatment of historical facts; but has not much value as a piece of dramatic literature. The whole gamut of characters is lost in the crowd of people in the play. Cāṇakya is the only character which has been developed to a small extent. He is the conventional empire builder who does not spare any person in realising the ultimate ideal of imposing a crushing defeat on his enemies. He resorts to a variety of means for tricking his opponents. In the art of diplomacy nobody can match him.

72. In the next important play 'Nāgayagya' (1926), the author has selected an obscure historical theme to justify his literary ideal of presenting the unknown periods of Indian history. The Aryans and Nāgas are at war. The Aryan king has committed a crime by accidentally murdering a Brahman boy. In order to expiate for the sin, he orders a 'yagya' to be performed. In a conflict with the Nāgas, he orders their massacre. In the end of the play, a plea for a cultural synthesis between the two warring races is voiced by the wife of a

¹⁵ Article No. 67.

‘sādhu’. As usual, the characters in the play are wooden and flat. They are so hopelessly confused that it is difficult to recognise them. The language is laboured and artificial. It does not possess the ease and flow of dramatic dialogue. The author appears to have laboured a good deal in putting the stiff dialogue in the mouth of his stammering characters. The play has been haphazardly divided into acts and scenes which mostly stand isolated from one another. They are series of static pictures which reduce the play to a melodrama.

73. “Karbālā” (1924) is a maiden and solitary attempt of Premchand at historial drama. The significance of this play is twofold; it represents the spirit of the age and it also shows the perpetual struggle between the life of spirit and that of the flesh. Hussain stands for the higher ideal of sacrifice and truth; Yazid symbolises the baser life of lust for power and wealth. The execution of the theme, which has been selected from the memorable historical battle (Karbālā) falls short of its greatness. The dramatist who has been indirectly influenced by Shakespearean tragedies¹⁶ has missed the essential quality of his tragic characters who always must end by a flaw in their character. Hussain does excite a feeling of admiration by his heroic struggle; but he does not excite a feeling of pity for want of a human weakness in him. He is not essentially a tragic character. The play is therefore a tragedy of idealism

¹⁶ Introduction to the Play.

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rather than a tragedy of character. In the story, there is little development of characters who represent different types in life. The minor characters in the play flit like mushrooms on the stage. The introduction of female characters is forbidden on religious grounds.¹⁷ The Muslim community would have strongly objected to the inclusion of female characters in a drama of religious importance. As the writer has no knowledge of the dramatic technique and stage-craft,¹⁸ the play remains a reading play. Premchand whose genius is essentially epic even in his novels, finds it difficult to present his theme on a small canvas. He does not make use of the impressionistic methods with its growing emphasis on situations rather than on a mere sequence of events. The play has been divided into five acts which are further divided into forty-three scenes of considerable length. It would not take less than six hours to perform it on the stage, which would exhaust the patience of the audience. In addition to the inordinate length of the play, the battle scenes consisting of huge armies, camels, and tents make it impossible for stage action.

74. In "Durgāvati" (1925), the character of a widow queen has been portrayed to describe her administrative capacity, her shrewd mind, her courage of heart, and her skill in the use of arms. In a conflict with the Emperor (Akbar), she impresses him with these qualities. In spite of the defeat, she does not lose courage; but

¹⁷ Introduction to the Play.

¹⁸ Appendix B, Letter No. 1 (5).

fight till she is killed by her own man who has turned a traitor. At the fall of the curtain she ascends to heaven. In a review attached to the play, it has been remarked that the portrayal of this brave woman is in tune with the national movement pulsating the life of the country. The patriotic sentiments expressed in the play arouse the national spirit of the audience.¹⁹ In this respect it forms an integral part of the historical cycle which was started to express the 'idealistic reaction' in literature. Although the theme has been selected from history, yet the play as such is lacking in adequate historical setting and background. The writer has inserted as many as ninety passages, each consisting of many couplets with a view to create a rhetorical effect on the stage.²⁰

75. In "Utsarga" (Sacrifice), the sacrifice of a brave Rajput princess who penetrated the enemies' camp in the guise of a songstress has been described. Her sacrifice consists in her voluntary death which is caused by her ascending the funeral pyre after she has been defeated. In the thick of the battle, Akhila, a character in the play inspires her lord with the ideals of bravery and courage.²¹ The proverbial heroism of the Rajput community is the chief motive in the selection of this theme. The historical research by chroniclers such as Colonel Todd, Grant Duff and others has often

¹⁹ The Review, p. 9.

²⁰ The Urdu stage is responsible for this element. Vide N. K. Jainik's 'The Indian Theatre' pp. 107-108.

²¹ 'Utsarga' p. 26.

provided material for historical productions.²²

76. Jagannāth Prasāda is the next dramatist who has written a successful historical play. "Pratāpa-pratigya" describes the well-known episode from the Mughal period. In the reign of Akbar, the Rajputs rise in revolt against him, but they are a house divided against itself. Pratāpa who has been entrusted with the honour of his motherland symbolises the spirit of patriotism in the play.²³ The crown to him is a symbol of duty and a bed of thorns. In a combat with his powerful opponent, he loses everything till he is reduced to dire poverty.²⁴ His life has been represented as one long-drawn out tale of suffering. He breaks; but he does not bend²⁵—a true hero who flings away everything for his ideal.

Akbar who is a foreigner to this land has been painted in varied colours. He is not only represented as a weaver who would spin the whole people into one web and thus achieve a cultural synthesis of the two races,²⁶ but also as a diplomat who knows that battles are not always won by bravery alone. He must divide and rule.²⁷ The minor characters are also persons of blood and flesh; they grow and breathe in the play. Śākta who turned a renegade to his brother and joined

²² 'The Indian Theatre' p. 94.

²³ 'Pratāpa Pratigya' p. 62.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 65.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 79.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 28.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 38.

the hostile camp falls a victim to a feeling of remorse. He touches some tender chords of the audience when he utters the universal truth that a man will always remain misunderstood for his motives in life. Amar Singh, the heir-apparent, realises the emptiness of his life after having fought and lost the battle. He is deeply impressed by the horrors of war and finds an escape into pacifism. The theme has been selected with a purpose. It helps to arouse the national consciousness of the people by voicing the democratic sentiments and ideals of the modern age.²⁸ The soliloquies, which have been written at a high poetical pitch, possess the potentialities of emotional stresses and strains, of intellectual elevation and æsthetic appeal.²⁹ The language is rich in metaphors and similes.³⁰ The whole piece lends itself to a successful representation on the stage.

77. 'Sindha-patana' or 'Dāhara' (1933) is the last play of the historical cycle. Bhaṭṭa (Udaya Sankara) has selected his theme with a view to revive the spirit of ancient culture.³¹ He has analysed the causes of the fall of a province at the hands of foreign invaders. The conflict of the Hindu rulers of Sindh with foreigners has been depicted and the causes of their fall attributed to mutiny in their own ranks. The Hindu generals are also prompted by individual ambitions rather than

²⁸ 'Pratāpa Pratigya' pp. 2, 39.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 43.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 6.

³¹ 'Dāhara' pp. 36, 38.

inspired by national aspirations.³² Buddhism is shown as responsible for creating a spirit of decadent pacifism and spiritual indolence.³³ The Brahmans suppress the people of the lower classes who are naturally the backbone of the nation. They revolt against the supremacy of the higher classes and join hands with the foreigners.³⁴ The foreigners have to retreat in the beginning; but in the end they are able to overpower the people of this province, who are a pack of traitors.³⁵ The writer has introduced a few patriotic songs, inspiring the audience to die for their motherland. A notable feature of this play is that it is claimed to be the first tragedy in the domain of Hindi drama.³⁶ In spite of the classical traditions which forbid the writing of a tragedy, the author has deliberately violated them and selected a theme suitable for this form of drama. It is a claim which is not entirely correct.³⁷

³² 'Dāhara' pp. 31, 123.

³³ Ibid. pp. 15, 78, 79.

³⁴ Ibid. pp. 67-69.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 144.

³⁶ Introduction.

³⁷ Article 68. 'Nīladevī (1881) is tragic in a crude form.

THE REALISTIC TENDENCY

78. The documentation of historical events is inherently less real than the actual observation of contemporary life. The dramatist gradually have ceased to deal with historical subjects and have turned their attention to a world susceptible of realistic treatment. The contact with Western culture has led the writers to a critical attitude towards the old social order. The spirit of enquiry has compelled them to analyse the existing institutions of society. A comprehensive analysis of the causes and characteristics which have led to the birth of realism has been attempted in another chapter.¹

79. Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Miśra is practically the first Hindi dramatist who studies man in the new social conditions and analyses the fresh problems of the day. It is obvious from the prefaces to his problem-plays that he has been inspired by continental and British dramatists. Ibsen and Shaw have considerably influenced his mode of art.² A reaction against the romantic idealism of the nineteenth century and a revolt against historical drama which does not solve the problems of the day characterise his dramatic productions.³ In spite of his professed

¹ Articles 98-100.

² Introduction to 'Sanyāsī' pp. 2, 3, 7. Also 'Mukti Kā Rahasya' pp. 1, 6.

³ 'Sanyāsī' pp. 2, 3, 7. Also, preface to 'Rākaṣasā kā Mandira'.

intellectualism, he essentially continues the idealistic reaction against Western materialism. The idealism of the East has a great fascination for the author.

80. 'Sanyāsi' (1929) is his first play in which two parallel conflicts are separately shown. Māl̥tī, a girl student, who falls in love with her young class-mate strikes the major key in the play. To complete the 'sexual triangle', her professor develops a weakness for her; outwits the boy; and marries the girl. The disappointed young man becomes a 'sanyāsi'. Hence the title of the play. Another interesting problem is created by an oldish professor who marries a very young girl. An earnest effort for overcoming marital maladjustment is displayed by either party; but the attempt ends in smoke. In the meanwhile, the young girl attaches herself to an editor who is her husband's friend. One day the unfortunate girl is staggered to find that the editor dies of consumption in a jail. This conflict is abruptly given up in pursuit of the major theme of the play.

Māl̥tī and Kirāṇa, the female characters in the play are very bold towards men. Perhaps they resemble the Shavian women, representing the 'life-force' in their persons by hunting after men. But such bold girls are rarely to be found in Hindu society which has so far known and idealised shy and bashful specimens of female humanity, especially in extra-marital relations. The other characters are intended to represent certain ideas. The old professor is a sample of the old social

order; the disappointed young man is a satire on romantic love; and the two girls are the typical product of modern age characterising personal liberty in marriage and sex.

The dialogue is notably simple and terse. It is seldom poetical, rhetorical, or literary. It is talk, broken and fragmentary as in real life. At moments the sentences are so broken that they jar on the ears.⁴ Although with a slow development of realism in the drama, the prose dialogue has approached closer and closer to the style of real conversation; yet the accurate reproduction of conversation runs the considerable risk of boring the audience. The dramatist tires out his audience for the sake of being linguistically precise. In his enthusiasm for realism or more correctly naturalism, he has avoided the frequent use of asides, soliloquies and impassioned harangues which have been a common feature of drama. In a simple language he has also scattered very brilliant and deep reflections on life in the play.⁵

81. 'Rākṣasa kā Mandira' which does not bear any date of publication appears to be his next play. Asagarī, a concubine, is the pivot of interest in the first half of the play. She is the keep of a lawyer who stands for a life of prudery and sham respectability. The wayward woman also entraps the son of the lawyer. The banishment of the son by the father and the attempt of the father at suicide are extravagant notes in the play. The woman ensnares another victim in her net. Muni-

⁴ 'Sanyāsī' pp. 52, 73, 145.

⁵ 'Sanyāsī' pp. 47, 55, 71, 75, 77, 90, 93, 94, 105, 148.

śvara who is already married takes a fancy to her. When they make love to each other, his wife appears on the scene to intensify the piquancy of the delicate situation. When he is reminded of the sacred vow of monogamy he ridicules it. He is a nihilist, out to destroy every sacred institution of the society. Bazrov⁶ is another well-known character of a similar type in literature. The latter half of the play is a series of episodes which are meant to create thrills. The curtain drops upon many a disillusioned soul who has been seeking to snatch a few episodes of happiness in this general drama of pain.

82. 'Muktī kā Rahasya' (The Secret of Salvation, 1932) is his latest drama in which he has led a revolt against the 'sacred' institutions of society. In the introduction to this play, he has definitely stated that the function of art, especially of drama is social reform.⁷ The theme of the play is the 'eternal triangle' of sex. Āśā is torn between the love of two men. She lives in the house of a widower whom she loves. The illegitimate relation between them gives rise to a public scandal. The plot is further complicated by her conspiracy with a doctor to murder the previous wife of the widower. To expiate her past sin Āśā makes a futile attempt to commit suicide. She confesses, later on, her love for the doctor. In a fit of brutal frankness, she divulges the secret of her love to the widower who retires in favour of the doctor. He decides to live alone as all gods do.

⁶ In Ivan Turgenev's 'Fathers and Children'.

⁷ Introduction p. 6.

It is a secret of their salvation. It might bring about his salvation. Sharma who is the protagonist of the play in a fit of sentimentalism is ready to part with money which is a hindrance to the ideals of socialism. He is extremely cold to women, a robot existing to uphold a few principles of life. He is a person who is sincere to a fault. In this play too, the author has not introduced any song to entertain the audience. As he is out for realism, he has discarded the Shakespearean technique employed by his predecessors.⁸ As exits and entrances are not manipulated in real life, he has dispensed with the scenic construction of the play.

83. In these plays and others, Miśra is a dramatic satirist who claims to draw a faithful picture of contemporary life. An analysis of his plays has shown that he does not paint life as it is; nor as it ought to be. He is, therefore, neither a naturalist, nor an idealist; yet he has affinities with both of them. He observes the world of actuality like the naturalists, and dreams of a better world like the idealist; but instead of insisting on either of these phases, he creates with a definite purpose an exaggeration of life. In his attempt to exaggerate life, he creates type figures who are frequently inconsistent and are invariably dominated by the plot. It is almost inevitable for introducing thrills into his plays. In spite of these technical flaws, the credit of looking squarely at the social problems and of expressing opinions on them

⁸ Dvijendralāl Roy.

belongs to him. No other Hindi play-wright has shown so much of courage in leading a tirade against the false ideals of duty, marriage, monogamy, and romantic love. Shaw who put an end to the epoch of short-sighted optimism and exposed the snobbery and hypocrisy of the pseudo-respectable classes has exerted a profound influence on him and other young Indian play-wrights.⁹

84. 'Samāja' (Society 1930), one of the few social plays is a campaign, without any artistic claims, against the evil of untouchability. Viśuddhānanda represents the radical class, Dhanadās stands for the conservative mass in society. In the beginning of the first scene, these opposite tendencies are expressed in a trenchant dialogue "In God's eyes all are equal" is the chief argument advocated by the social reformer.¹⁰ "To break the social order sanctioned by divinity is a sin" is the counter-argument asserted by the reactionary.¹¹ Gyān Śāṅkara who has taken a vow of celibacy and who, later on, begins to love an "untouchable" girl is another social reformer who attributes the rigidity of the Hindu social order to the 'high priests.'¹² To this main theme have been tagged some of the minor social problems of child marriage,¹³ intercaste marriage,¹⁴ the institution of beg-

⁹ 'The Indian Theatre' p. 234.

¹⁰ 'Samāja' p. 3.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 3.

¹² Ibid. p. 9.

¹³ Ibid. p. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 73.

gary¹⁵ and the problem of the new bourgeoisie class aiming at prudery and a blind imitation of Western manners.¹⁶

The characters in the play are either one-dimensional or two-dimensional; Viśuddhānanda is a typical social reformer who is wedded to his cause; Gyān Śaṅkara belongs to the same type of men; but the human side is shown by his response to the love of the untouchable girl. Yār Ali, the epicure, is the villain of the play. The construction of the plot is immature. When the characters enter on the stage, they are neither introduced by the stage-directions, nor is their identity revealed in the course of the dialogues. The fourth scene of the first act, relating the woes of a poor beggar from his own mouth appears to be undramatic and bathetic. In the end, all the lost persons are collected at one place to make the play melodramatic. In a foreword to this play, P. Sheshadari explains the reasons for the inartistic end of the play in the following words. "If the author is still somewhat under the glamour of romance and the incidents in his play shape themselves in the end in a manner convenient to the artist and not as they generally turn out in the real world, it must be remembered that he is still young and he has not yet had opportunities of delving into the profundities of life."¹⁷ This lack of maturity of the author has also led him to regard untouch-

¹⁵ 'Samāja' p. 110.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 20.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

ability as merely a social problem, having little relation to the economic order which is the real cause of this problem. It also explains his humanitarian attitude to the problem. The attitude is the direct outcome of the idealistic view of life sponsored by Mahātmā Gandhi and his followers.

THE DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

85. The modern dramatic technique has been fashioned by three main influences. (1) The dramatic theory and practice of the classical drama. (2) The technique of the medieval performances in villages. (3) The Western influence. In the mythological plays a stress on the human motivation of characters is laid.¹ It is a step towards the realistic portrayal of the dramatic personage. In historical drama a greater emphasis is generally laid on the national traits of human character ideally conceived to inspire the audience with courage and bravery.² In the realistic plays the characters have comparatively an individual existence; but they have a tendency to revert to the category of social types.³ "In fact such a complete severance of type and individual is incredible. It can only happen on a logical plane; but not on the artistic and practical plane. In actual life, every living organism is an individual, no matter how completely his individual nature may be submerged beneath the characteristics of the class or type to which he belongs."⁴ In romantic drama the meagre characterisation is generally achieved by appearance where the

¹ Article No. 49.

² Article No. 64.

³ Articles No. 79, 84.

⁴ Bentley and Millett's 'The Art of Drama' p. 202.

size, the details of feature, and the manner of clothes are immediately recognised by the spectators.⁵ In the historical plays it is achieved by soliloquies,⁶ action, and opinion of other characters. It is the only realistic drama in which the speech is the chief means of achieving characterisation.⁷

86. In the selection of characters the passion for the representation of a chaste wife passing successfully through the ordeal of manifold trials has been an important feature of the numerous medieval romances and mythological plays.⁸ The choice of devotional characters who suffer untold miseries and who triumph over sorrows in the end has also been an important feature of some of the minor devotional plays which have not been analysed in the present survey.⁹ The Indian audience has been seeking satisfaction in witnessing times without number the picturesque vicissitudes of devotees who suffer such miseries at the hands of tyrants. In the medieval performances characters were also selected to inspire the spirit of heroism among the audience. This tendency persists in the historical plays. In the realistic plays an earnest attempt has been made to portray those men and women who actually people the streets.

87. The 'aside' which has been inherited from

⁵ Article No. 54, 'Varamalā'.

⁶ Article No. 76.

⁷ Article No. 83.

⁸ Article No. 52. 'Anjanā'.

⁹ Prahlāda, Sūr Dās, Chandra-hāsa.

the classical and medieval drama, forming an important part in the history of comedy and farce for emphasising the element of incongruity has been totally abandoned in the realistic plays.¹⁰ The 'soliloquy' which has been frequently employed for the revelation of characters has also fallen into disrepute. The Western influence is responsible for the infrequent occurrence of the aside and soliloquy in the realistic drama. With the gradual coming of realism, the function of the dialogue has become more and more utilitarian, resembling the every day speech selected for the furtherance of the plot and the development of the character.¹¹ The setting in the plays is gradually becoming natural. In mythological drama there is little geographical obligation;¹² whereas the setting in the realistic plays is comparatively localised. The songs which formed an integral part of the classical drama and medieval performances have been very popular in all the phases of Hindi drama; except in Miśra's plays from which they have been eschewed much against the popular demand for music. The scenic basis of dividing the play has also been given up in the realistic drama.¹³ As a result of the Western influence which was assimilated first by the Bengali dramatists, the modern technique of the Hindi drama has been entirely fashioned after Western models, retaining only a few characteristics

¹⁰ Article No. 83.

¹¹ Article No. 80.

¹² 'Varamālā', 'Satya Harischandra'.

¹³ Article No. 82.

of the village and classical drama.¹⁴ Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Shaw have largely contributed to the evolution of the technique of Modern Hindi drama.

¹⁴ 'The Indian Theatre' p. 66.

NOVEL

Romantic Tendency.

Historical Phase.

Realistic Tendency.

Realistic Tendency—(*Contd.*).
(Minor Novelists).

THE ROMANTIC TENDENCY

88. The Novel as a form of literature is almost wholly a foreign product. It is, indeed, true that the talent for story writing was not wanting in ancient literature ; but the Hindu writers never developed the art of the novel as it is understood to-day. The Hindu genius is essentially imaginative and mystical and its artistic energy almost invariably expressed itself in fables, fairy tales, and other types of legends which were totally divorced from real life. These stories were essentially episodes with no unity either of plot or atmosphere¹.

89. It is an interesting fact that the first Hindi novel should be realistic in its treatment, though the main tendency of the time was romantic.² “Prikṣā-guru” stands isolated from the romantic tendency in fiction characterised by adventures in love and romance. It portrays the life of merchants and traders of its age. Śrīnivāsdāsa, its author, who was born in a merchant family represents the typical attitude of the middle class towards life and its problems. The utilitarian outlook which is characteristic of the class has been expressed in quotations at the head of each chapter, des-

¹ Article No. 128.

² Article No. 90.

cribing wise platitudes of life. Each chapter of the novel begins with such maxims. Also the industrialisation of the country³, the exploitation of its natural resources,⁴ and the organisation of the economic life of the country are portrayed by the middle-class mind of the characters who see everything as a means for self-preservation, and as a possibility of rendering life pleasant.⁵ Each chapter is a sermon on some aspect of the middle-class life. In conversation the ideal friendship between two males, the sensual life of the rich, the nature of good and evil, the necessity of shrewdness in life, the knowledge of municipal administration, the etiquettes of a gentleman, the grounds for revenge, and the meta-physical aspect of pain and pleasure are discussed with restraint and precision by a character who is a typical product of the new class which was coming into power as a result of Western contact. The story describes a rift which has taken place between two friends who are ultimately reconciled to each other. The characterisation in the novel is meagre and done at a single breath. The characters do not grow in the course of the novel. The dialogue has been written in a simple language in order to retain the natural tone of conversation. The writer has written, in the introduction to the novel, two paragraphs for the benefit of readers on the marks of punctuation which he has employed in the novel.⁶

³ The Novel p. 12.

⁴ Ibid. p. 52.

⁵ Ibid. p. 133.

⁶ Introduction p. 3.

90. In the earliest stage of growth, the tendency in fiction has been chiefly romantic in its content. Devakīnandana Khatri was one of the earliest novelists, who set the ball rolling by writing the serial romantic novel. In "Candrakāntā" (1891) which runs into as many as twenty-eight parts, the author describes how a romantic prince falls in love with a beautiful princess and how obstacles are placed in the way of their love which eventually result in their marriage. The prince possesses all the characteristics of a romantic lover; e.g., a burning and passionate longing for the princess, a sensuous fascination for her beauty, bitter jealousy, self-denial and nightly loiterings before the beloved's house. The reason for this manifestation of love is simple. In the nineteenth century and even before it, marriage was not a personal but a family affair. The choice of the mate lay entirely in the hands of the parents, especially the father who generally decided in favour of the rich suitor, belonging to the same caste. In an age of sexual repression the nature of love was bound to be romantic.

91. In order to win the princess, the romantic lover employs the services of his clever detectives whose plots are sabotaged by counterplots and whose tricks are met by counter-tricks. The mistaken identities, the eating of medicinal herbs which cause swoon, the smoking of intoxicating tobacco, and the smelling of narcotic lavender are some of the common tricks which tax the reader's patience by their frequent repetition.

The intrigues and counter-intrigues follow in such quick succession that they almost take away the breath of the reader. The ingenuity of the writer in devising complicated situations compels the reader into a mood of wonder and admiration. Candrakāntā, the heroine, is made to disappear for presenting further difficulties of her restoration. The locks are complicated, the doors magical, and the chambers mysterious. All these elements combine to create a world of miracles and romance with little human interest. In such novels of romance there is slight characterisation. The characterisation is an important feature only of the realistic novel. In this novel, the predominance of plot appealed to countless readers. It was acclaimed by its readers with unbounded enthusiasm. Many millions of illiterate persons learnt the alphabet to read it. It is the only novel which enjoys the privilege of running into as many as twenty impressions.

In the following words the author has expressed the aim of writing this serial novel, "In many Hindi novels of to-day the diplomatic ways of royal princesses have been described ; but the institution of clever confidants who are versatile has not been described. They know how to sing, play, run, wield weapons, act as detectives, and prepare intoxicating drugs. In a battle between princes these persons end quarrels with their sheer cleverness and without a drop of blood. They are highly esteemed for their art and skill.....In Hindi literature the portrayal of such detectives has not met my eyes. If readers

were to enjoy this treat, they will also profit by it. To the reader of such books the greatest advantage will be that he will never be tricked or duped. I have penned this novel with these aims in view.”⁷

92. In this age of thrillers and detective novels, characterising the romantic tendency in a crude form ; Khatrī has played an important role by satisfying the reader's craving for sensation and adventure. In “Bhūt Nāth” which is another serial novel, running into twenty parts, he has continued the sensational and thrilling exploits of the brave detectives of his previous novel. In the end of this novel the opponents of the hero had to eat humble pie by declaring themselves dead. “Narendra Mohinī” by the same author is a departure from the main type of his fiction abounding in the exploits of detectives. In this novel he has depicted the relentlessly revengful character of a woman dissipated in love ; the sacrifice of a friend for his friend ; the love of a brother for his brother, and the luck of characters on whom fortune smiles. The treatment of the novel is obviously didactic. “Kusuma Kumārī” is another attempt on a similar line. In this novel he has contrasted the opposite characters from a cheap ethical point of view. The faithful friend serves as a foil to a treacherous person, the men of goodwill to persons grossly selfish and clever. The mean character ultimately suffers when Nemesis comes full circle. The ideal character of a

⁷ Introduction pp. 1, 2.

chaste wife who endeavours to save the life of her husband serves as a beaconlight to those women who have always upheld this ideal of chastity. In "Virendravīra" (three parts) the writer has narrated the downfall of a faithless officer of the King. The officer murders his master along with his relatives and ascends the throne. "Poetic justice" is an important fact in the novel. In "Kājar Kī Koṭharī" the author has described the treacherous ways of prostitutes who cast their net very wide to catch their prey. It is an early novel dealing with the life of prostitutes who have been contemptuously treated by the author. In this age of prudery and artificial morality, public women have always been treated with undisguised disdain. In "Sevāsadana"⁸ which deals with the life of a girl driven to this profession of prostitution, another writer who possesses a liberal spirit does not look upon her with sneer, but with pity. In "Mā"⁹ which also deals with a similar theme, prostitution has been more or less treated as a product of the social environment and economic order. This novel is by a different author. It has been exhaustively discussed in a later article. "Sevāsadana" and "Mā" mark a liberal outlook on the problem of prostitution or the product of modern thought which is neither so narrow nor so conventional as the 19th century thought.

⁸ Article No. 103.

⁹ Article No. 119.

THE HISTORICAL PHASE

93. The historical phase in fiction is not so rich in variety and content, as in drama.¹ It is less significant as a continuous tendency from romantic to realistic fiction. It serves as a gap between the realistic and romantic fiction. The psychological bases of this phase are similar to those in drama.² The Rajput period of history has obviously given the greatest satisfaction to the writers of the historical novel. "Gaṛhakunḍār" (1929) is an important historical novel. In the preface, the writer has given a bare outline of the theme in its historical setting. In 1192 "Kunḍār" fort which forms the background of the novel proved impregnable to the assaults of foreign invaders. The "Khangār" princes became the owners of this historical fort, and they collected tributes from the neighbouring 'sardārs' who were semi-independent. In the opinion of the author, the "Bundhels" have made tremendous sacrifices to retain their independence and save the ancient culture from a complete devastation.³ To revive the history of this brave people, this particular theme has been selected with a searching eye on historical data and sources.

¹ Article No. 64, etc.

² Article No. 64.

³ Introduction.

The writer has personally visited the various places of historical importance in the novel.⁴ At present they are lying in a dilapidated condition in the woods. He has also heard from the lips of an old native the story of conflict between the two clans.⁵ He has endeavoured to arouse the patriotic sentiments of readers by imposing a crushing defeat on foreign invaders,⁶ by showing a generous treatment of the vanquished by the victors, and by portraying women participating in the battle.⁷ The Rajputs represent the spirit of bravery and sacrifice in the annals of Indian history.

94. The theme refers to the supreme heroism and daring of this tribe. Hurmatsingh, the owner of the fort, has a son to marry. Sohan Lāl who is one of his 'sardārs' and who has a daughter of marriageable age comes to him for help. The help can be given only on the condition of a matrimonial alliance which is an eye-sore to the father of the girl for reasons of his belonging to a higher caste.⁸ "The Bundhels" are worried to death by their powerful opponents; they think of an underhand trick to smother their enemies. The alliance is agreed to by them. A few days before the marriage ceremony, a wet feast is arranged in honour of the bridegroom. The "Khangars" who have a human weakness

⁴ Introduction.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Novel p. 44.

⁷ Ibid. p. 38.

⁸ Ibid. p. 16.

for wine go tipsy and are destroyed on the spot.

Into this historical theme the writer has weaved three webs of romance ; and out of these romances only one of them ends in success. The Nāga-Hemvatī romance, which is the predominating episode in the story, has been frustrated by rigid restrictions of caste. It is an indirect satire on the Hindu social order.⁹ The Agnidatta-Mānvatī love is smothered by the parents of the girl who is betrothed to a person other than her lover.¹⁰ In the end Agnidatta, who is desperately disappointed in love turns neurotic and changes his coat in the battle which ensues between the two opposing camps. The Divākara-Tārā episode is the only successful love-adventure in the novel. As usual, obstacles are placed in their way ; but they overcome them to be united in the end.

95. 'Kuṇḍār' the fort, is the chief protagonist governing the destinies of men and women in the novel. The ancient traditions, which are intimately associated with the fort inspire the characters to deeds of bravery and heroism. If the fort is the hope of their rise, it is also the despair of their fall. Joseph Conrad has similarly made use of the sea which brings out the best in man.¹¹ The fort thus forms an artistic background of the novel against which the characters are thrown to test their strength and bravery.

⁹ The Novel p. 65.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 231.

¹¹ 'Typhoon', 'Youth', 'Heart of Darkness', etc.

Nāga and Agnidatta, the two main characters have been described in simple strokes in two pages and illustrated by the subsequent pages of the novel.¹² Nāga is rude, brave, proud, cruel, and generous. Agnidatta is curt, secretive, proud, and a man of determination possessing radical views on social problems. A modern note is struck in the story, when the author represents him differing from his father in holding liberal views on the problems of caste and untouchability.¹³ The female characters who have not been individualised are shown as 'nature women' whose whole attention is instinctively focussed on the mate. They seem to be content with the role of fulfilling the biological function. They have not evolved towards a greater consciousness through a development of their personality. In short, they are not individual women but a means to a biological end.¹⁴ It is only in the realistic fiction that women have attained the status of individual persons.¹⁵

At times, the analysis of these characters probes to the depths, but Varmā is not preoccupied with the psychology that penetrates ; he does not seek for complicated tangles of the soul. As a rule, he sums up at one stroke the personality which interests him, grasps it with a vigorous hold, and draws its physiognomy with a broad and firm touch, and having once animated

¹² The Novel pp. 13, 14, 138.

¹³ Ibid p. 138.

¹⁴ Tārā, Mānvati, Hemvati.

¹⁵ Article No. 121.

it, he leaves it to give life to the very end. In this way, his characters do not change. As a revivalist of the past, he possesses to some degree the gift of an essentially historical imagination. He does not revel in ancient records to produce a work full of uninteresting details. He goes beyond the surface of mere details, endeavours to reach the very heart of the age of chivalry and makes it live again in its glory. He has a perception that the past is not something distinct from the present, but of a piece with it. His men and women, who do not belong to a very distant past, people the streets of the present only in a different dress.

96. 'Kena' (1930) is another novel, belonging to the historical phase of fiction.¹⁶ Kena is the name of a river which still cuts across the mountain and flows into the valley to remind the neighbouring villages of the pathetic tale of a couple. The river forms the background of the tragic drama which was enacted on its banks. In an appendix to the novel, the author cites the historical source from which he has taken the outlines of the theme. In about 1927 he read in a district gazetteer the origin of the name of the river.

"An Ahir girl fell in love with a 'Kūrmī' boy. The father of the girl suspected their secret love, killed the boy, and buried his dead body in the dam of the river. When the girl came to know of it, he pleaded innocence and she prayed for the sight of her lover's dead body.

¹⁶ By Kṛṣṇa Gupta.

God heard her prayer, the river swelled, the dam burst, his dead body became visible, and the girl allowed herself to be carried away by the current of the stream. And thus Karaṇavatī, the original name was changed into Kanyā (girl) which again was changed into Kena.

The author has departed from the actual historical version to animate the theme with motivation and characterisation. The difference of caste and the tribal jealousy are described as powerful obstacles in the way of lovers. A soldier is introduced as a rival of the hero to complete the 'eternal triangle'. The parents decide to marry her to a third person. In the original story it is stated that it is the father who kills him. In the novelist's version, the brother is substituted for the father. Jamna, the girl, puts on a male attire and plunges into the river; and this device removes the supernatural element in the original story. The novel has been included in the phase of historical fiction for its pseudo-historical theme; the writer has neither recreated the spirit of the time nor painted the local atmosphere. He appears to be lacking in historical imagination.

97. "Khavāsa kā Vivāha" (1932). In this novel, Saṅyogitā is to be given away in marriage. The girl shall choose her husband from among the princes who have been invited to a 'Yagya' arranged on a huge scale. Prithivīrāj, the protagonist of the novel, has been intentionally insulted by the father of the girl. Saṅyogitā, who is fixated on the Prince chooses him as her husband in his absence, not once but thrice in the assembly of

other princes. The subsequent story relates the fight which ensued between the rival camps. Prithivīrāj defeats his enemy and wins the bride.

The whole composition is faithfully based on the original epic¹⁷ from which the theme has been taken. In his fidelity to the source which is primarily narrative and descriptive in its treatment, the novelist has lost sight of his aim and made a prose version of the epic. The poetic theme as such is incapable of a suitable and comprehensive treatment in the form of a novel ; but to complete the ordinary length of the novel, the writer has stuffed it with poetic description of men, women and towns with elaborate narratives of many fights and battles. Cand, the court poet in the original epic, accompanies the hero to prolong the length of the story by his description of things and persons that fall in their march to the town. It is a crude device of padding the novel with irrelevant matter. At places the reader is reminded of India's glorious past to arouse in him sentiments of patriotism and nationalism.

¹⁷ 'Prithivīrāj Rāso'.

THE REALISTIC TENDENCY

98. The new order has slowly but surely exercised a deep and wide influence on the life of the country-people who are ridden with the rigidity of caste. In an average village the population chiefly consists of (1) the priest class, (2) the petty merchants and traders (3) the agriculturists or Zamindars (4) and the landless labourers. Some members of a caste received education, or by change of occupation acquired better economic advantages. As new avenues were opened in the towns as a consequence of the new order, these people migrated to the towns and almost severed their relations with the members of their caste living in the villages. They began to show that they were 'brand-new' people in a brand-new house. "Everything about this class was new. All their furniture was comparatively new, all their friends were new, all their servants new, all their plates were new, their religion was new, their moral code was new, their women were new, they themselves were new." The opening of new schools, the establishment of three universities, by the middle of the nineteenth century,¹ began to effect a silent revolution in the character of the new middle-class. The development of railways made

¹ Bombay, Madras, Calcutta 1857.

it easy to send boys and even girls to distant establishments where they could be herded together and standardised according to the new patterns.

99. The middle-class began to enjoy greater individual liberty in social matters. The sub-castes began to fuse ; interclass marriages took place, though they were by no means common ; the age for marriage rose ; restriction on interdining disappeared ; the old gods and goddesses fell into disrepute ; a new puritanical moral code was evolved ; and nationalism and patriotism became their religion.

The whole training and circumstances of the middle-class were calculated to create and foster the habit of concentration. The stress of keen competition, fierce beyond all precedent, kept its nose to the grindstone. Work became worship.² A greater emphasis came to be laid on 'Karma' (action). Ārya Samāj preached it. Mahātmā Gandhi extolled the value of action in life. The cult of work generally got detached from its religious moorings and became a gospel truth.³ And herein the middle-class differed from those landed gentlemen (zamindars) whose rents lifted them above all anxiety for the future.⁴ The middle-class was anxiously and earnestly moral. The new protestant class believed that virtue was useful. More important than the truth

² Appendix B Letter 2, 6.

³ Mahātmā Gandhi still interprets it in the light of religion.

⁴ The landlords of United Provinces, Central Provinces and Behar.

was the purity of heart, the chastity of women,⁵ and the respectability of family life. It was a seriousness too often impervious to humour. It hardened into a spiritual pride. The marriage became still more religious in its purpose. The bond between husband and wife was sacred, rising above fleshly passion as the flower rises above the manured earth in which it strikes its roots.⁶ The people believed that passions ought to be under control, and self-sacrifice was better than self-indulgence. In matters of religion there was not the sustained white heat of passion that was burnt during the great ages of 'bhakti'. The middle-class way was to examine the old bottles and patch them up wherever required. The new morality and religion were a discipline of rules, imposed from the outside, and did not well up spontaneously from the depths of the soul. As the middle-class felt the weakness of the basis of its superiority, which was wealth, they began to seek restlessly compensations for it. They built religious places of worship, donated for schools and colleges, aided the philanthropic projects, and protected art and culture.

They also pinned their faith in reason and science. The doctrine of utility began to exercise a much wider influence on public opinion, politics and the national life of the people, which began to be controlled by the

⁵ Appendix B Letter 2, (6).

⁶ All the divorce bills have met a tragic fate in the Provincial Assemblies on account of this attitude. Also Appendix B Letter 1 (9)

new class. The rationalistic and positivistic outlook widened the gulf between science and traditional theology. In this trial the faith of many was shaken, but there was always a compromise—an essential characteristic of middle-class psychology. The Ārya Samāj, the Brāhmo Samāj, the Prārthnā Samāj were the outcome of the liberal movements started in the West, which were filtered to the Indian soil through the process of Western education.

100. As a consequence of the scientific outlook realism became a dominant tendency in literature, especially in the realm of drama, novel, and the short story. The general influences of the age tended to favour the taste and search for truth in art. The example of science and the prestige of a rational philosophy gave a more methodical character to the current conception of truth. Realism was also a conscious reaction to romanticism. The realist objects to the limitations on subject-matter imposed by the romantic point of view. He objects to the amount of idealisation inherent in the process of investing the chosen subject-matter with glamour.* It was only a negative reaction to the romantic and historical tendency in fiction.

101. On the positive side, the new scientific and utilitarian outlook with its emphasis on truth and fact has given birth to literary realism which is a dominant tendency of the period. "Realism apes the impartiality

* Millett and Bentley's 'The Art of the Drama' p. 146.

and impersonality of the scientist, it imitates the scientist's freedom and prejudice, his lack of conventional, intellectual or moral inhibitions. Its aim, at its clearest, is to represent life as nearly as the scientist sees it. To the realist, as to the scientist not only the universe but man also is a mechanism; his personality, an inevitable product of the forces of heredity and environment; his physique, a psychophysical organism; and his conduct, not the product of character and free-will but of chemical and physical processes over which he has no control. The realist who follows his theory to its logical conclusion does not concern himself with morality. His rendition of life has the objectivity of science. But there are varieties of realists. The right-wing realist, who grasps only partially the implications of the scientific point of view is likely to share a sentimentalist's view of human character to judge their behaviour in accordance with the morals of his own social group.⁷

102. Premchand and his contemporaries who belong to the new social group espouse a particular standard of morals and use the novel to express their social purpose and social criticism. In the realitic field these social novelists, while employing the new technique and sharing some of the views of the objective realist, have brought contemporary life to the bar of their moral and social judgment. In doing so, they have departed much from the ideals of objective realism.

⁷ Bentley and Millett's 'The Art of Drama' pp. 146, 147.

Premchand who is the pioneer of the realistic fiction represents the idealistic reaction by the spirit which animates his works. The central appeal of his novels is predominantly social.⁸ He is the first novelist who has treated the peasants and the lower middle-classes in an earnest and sincere way.⁹ He studies them not as a detached superior observer ; but as one of them. A sympathy thus impregnates his study. In the inner realms of his realism there is an anguish of soul-debasing poverty of the peasants. It turns his works into a gospel of humanitarian love for the poor and suffering humanity. At every turn in the novels, he offers a sentimental comment in favour of the victims of social injustice and oppression. His art has a deep human quality. As his chief instrument is tears, he belongs to the line of sentimental realists.

103. "Sevāsadana" (1914) is his first novel with vivid character studies and interesting side-lights thrown on the problems of the social and domestic life. It relates the sufferings of a middle-class girl who is married to a cold, stingy, and jealous husband. In a fit of jealousy and suspicion he turns her out on a flimsy pretext of her coming late one night. The tiny boat is thrown adrift on the stormy sea. The Hindu society has no place for a 'forsaken' girl. Sumana is compelled to join the 'glorious' sisterhood of prostitutes. Sadan, another character in the novel, who is in search of sexual

⁸ Articles No. 104, 107, 108.

⁹ Article No. 115.

adventures appears on the stage. Sumana develops a liking for him ; but she is not completely reconciled to the new ways of a public woman. A terrible conflict between a life of sin and that of chastity gnaws her heart. Gajādhara, the husband of the girl, becomes a "sādhu", knowing that his wife has adopted the life of a prostitute. He refuses to persuade her to abandon her new mode of life. It is the weakest link in the chain of events in the novel. To compensate for the ill-treatment of his wife whose happiness has been ruined by him, he promises to arrange for a thousand rupees for the marriage of his wife's sister. Sadan is going to marry this girl, but the marriage ends in smoke on account of the ignoble profession of the bride's sister.

The girl's father who has been kept in the background for a pretty long time, cannot show his face to the world. He begins to entertain suicidal thoughts. When he has decided to end his life on a river bank, his son-in-law suddenly appears to save him and to confess his guilt before him.¹⁰ Kusama, the heroine, also finds an occasion to attempt suicide; but the guilty husband arrives to frustrate her attempt. It is another improbable coincidence in the construction of the plot.¹¹ The meeting between the guilty husband and the wronged wife has not been described with much psychological insight.

In the course of the novel, many earnest attempts are made at social reform by purging the town of pros-

¹⁰ 'Sevāsādana' p. 246.

¹¹ Ibid. 276.

titutes; but vested interests stand in the way of this 'purification campaign'. Bīṭṭhaldās is the typical social reformer who has taken upon himself the burden of the society. Padma is another puritanical character who wishes to rid marriage of its evil customs. In the end of the novel a general reformation of the prostitutes has been brought about by a magic wand. Kusama has been appointed a Superintendent of a Rescue Home which has been started to harbour such unfortunate women¹²

104. All the important characters in the novel belong to the middle-class, characterised by a puritanical outlook on life. The father has all the virtues and vices of this class. He is honest and truthful. He suffers from pangs of conscience when he is compelled by adverse financial circumstances to accept bribe, for which he is sentenced to five years imprisonment. In the court, he confessed his guilt and naively believes in the doctrines of retribution.¹³ Sumana, the heroine of the novel, is a vivacious girl. She is married to a comparatively ordinary person who is cold, jealous, and suspicious of her charm and vivacity. At a place the writer has painted a wonderfully realistic picture of the married couple, balancing the annual budget by affecting economy in the household expenditure. It is an observation which can be verified in many middle-class homes.

The plot of the novel is full of coincidences. The

¹² Ibid. p. 347.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 176, 178.

sudden appearances of the 'sādhū' at the time of suicides are highly improbable, the frequency of coincidences in a work of fiction is apt to create the impression that the movement of the plot is being deliberately manipulated to bring out a preconceived end. The novels of Thomas Hardy, especially his earlier ones, suffer from a similar fatal defect.*

The social purpose of the novel is quite transparent. The age-old institution of prostitution has been ruthlessly assaulted from a moral and sentimental standpoint. In the opinion of the author who comes of a lower middle-class and who has acquired a puritanical outlook of his class; the causes leading to this evil are not deeply rooted in human nature but are the offspring of the social system; and given understanding and sympathy women can be saved from a life of sin and shame. The fundamental polygamous nature of man, of which prostitution is the product is completely ignored by him. His is a feeble analysis of this social evil, and the remedy suggested by him is equally temporary. If one prostitute is saved from the pit, their class still continues to thrive in all cities.

105. In "Raṅga-Bhūmi" (1925) which is considered to be his masterpiece, there are three social groups. Sūrdās, the blind beggar, represents the poor people in the novel. He owns a piece of land which becomes a bone of contention between the two parties; the villagers

* Viz. 'Trumpet Major', 'The Woodlanders', 'A Pair of Blue Eyes', 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'.

who use it for grazing their cattle, the Christian who wish to erect a leather factory on the suitable site. For Sūrdās it is a problem; should he sell it or retain it for the common good of the poor people ? . . The 'Sūrdās' theme which describes the struggles of the blind hero is desperately realistic in its treatment; but the hero has been painted as faultlessly ideal and noble from the beginning to the end,¹⁴ without showing any psychological transformation of his character. He has been lifted to the moral heights of great prophets; but he still remains a beggar. It is the writer's enthusiasm for pure idealism which is responsible for this fundamental flaw in his conception of heroes. In a letter which he wrote to me, he says, "I have in each of my novels an ideal character with human failings as well as virtues; but essentially ideal. In "Raṅga-Bhūmi" there is Sūrdās.....".¹⁵ In this actual creation of the character, he forgets the dark side of human nature and presents only the bright aspect of it, defeating thereby the very aim of realistic art. Whenever there is a temptation in the beggar's way, he is bound to overcome it without much mental struggle which is so necessary in such ordeals. Only on one important occasion when he realises his helplessness in the wide world, does he think of selling his land for personal ends. He is otherwise a 'sublimated' soul which has attained 'moral deliverance.' At last his piece of land is forcibly sold out by a government official. The

¹⁴ 'Raṅga-Bhūmi' pp. 187, 212, 230, 597, 887.

¹⁵ Appendix B Letter 1 (2).

blind beggar sings out his wounded heart in his rounds of the village, exciting thereby the pity of a Christian girl who awakens to his suffering.

Sophia, the Christian girl, is the prominent character of the second social group in the novel. She is no less a psychological improbability than the character of the blind beggar. In the beginning of the story she has been described as a religious rebel who refuses to attend the church and to have blind faith in all the doctrines of Christianity.¹⁶ And for this difference of opinion the mother of the girl has turned against her. As usual, Premchand resorts to a sensational and melodramatic device of getting rid of a character in the story. In order that Sophia should leave the home, a house is set on fire. She renders help with her tender body which is bruised in her attempts to put out the fire. After the incident she is harboured in a Hindu family which constitutes the third social group in the novel. It seems so improbable that the parents of the girl should not search for her or make any efforts to trace her.

In the Hindu family, Vinaya, a young man, leads an ascetic life according to the ancient ideals of life. A strange note is struck, when a 'platonic' love develops between Sophia and the young man. Instead of becoming her lover, he turns a votary of the girl. Vinaya who represents the author's ideal, of a 'non-violent non-co-operator' and agitator against an established

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 46, 48.

Government leaves the girl behind him to render social service to the victims of oppression. In his attempt to help the people he is arrested in a jungle on a charge of dacoity. It is an uncalled for event in the story. Perhaps the writer has inserted this episode to give a nodding acquaintance of jail life. It was a necessary asset for leadership in the non-co-operation movement which forms the background of the novel. Sophia, who feels crestfallen at his departure starts on another voyage to meet him. After many improbable adventures which include her flirtations with the political agent and the stopping of railway trains to see her lover, she meets him in the end. In a political riot he is killed. She also jumps into the river. Death and suicide are the writer's chief devices for disposing of his characters whom he can neither control nor dispense with in other ways.

106. In this novel the writer has employed the early nineteenth century technique of the double or treble plot. The three parallel series of adventures, in which three separate groups of people are concerned, have no deep organic connection or link among them. The 'Sūrdās' theme has no other point of contact with the other two themes, except the keenly-contested piece of land. In fact, the blind beggar's story stands isolated and segregated from the other two which also touch each other only on the surface. The old convention of employing the double or treble plot persists in the writer, checking the progress of each series of

events and detracting the reader's attention. The artificial trick of keeping three stories going like a juggler's balls is entirely different from the attempt to follow the interwoven movements of typical social groups. In this case the separate groups impersonate the protagonist of the tale ; and their fates are closely interwoven.

107. In "Premāśrama" which is another important novel, a strife between two classes of society is depicted on a large canvas. The scene of the action is laid in a village. Gyan Shankar is the representative of the landlords ; Prem Shankar, his real brother, is the spokesman of the peasants. The theme of the novel has been lifted to a conflict of classes from a clash of individuals. The appalling poverty of the peasants has been depicted with a cruel insight.¹⁷ Manohar, who represents the peasants, does not yield to the threats of red-tapes and petty officials.¹⁸ In portraying the life and problems of the villagers, Premchand has shown his intimate knowledge of the petty officials, of the institution of 'forced labour' (begār) and of the helplessness of the poor villagers against the spread of an epidemic in the area.¹⁹

Another thread relating to the disruption of a middle-class family of 'zamindars' is introduced along with the story of peasants. An uncle, an old fossil,

¹⁷ 'Premāśrama' p. 68.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 73.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 140, 235, 277, 279.

happens to be the head of the middle-class family. Gyan Shankar, his nephew, out of jealousy spends as much as his uncle in the joint family system.²⁰ The rivalries in the family lead to a partitioning of the property. Gyan Shankar's brother has gone abroad; and he hears from him that he would come back. It disturbs his plans of swallowing the entire property; especially when his brother must have been influenced by the Western outlook on life. Prem Shankar, during his stay abroad, has specialised in agriculture, and he wishes to start an experiment on a farm. (Hence the title of the novel). In spite of his being outcasted from the society and separated from his wife, he whole-heartedly devotes himself to social reform. The end of the novel rather takes the reader's credulity. The sudden transformation of the character to a religious life, the religiously precocious behaviour of his son who has become a mendicant, the sudden suicide of his wife at the adoption of their son by an issueless rich widow; and the beheading of his son by the second son in the hope that he would be able to revive him by occult powers are some of the instances which have marred the realistic nature of the novel.

108. Gyan Shankar is a typical character of the middle-class. He is a subtle and real portrait in the novel. An inherent contradiction between his intellectual convictions and his conservative emotional

²⁰ 'Prēmāśrama' p. 29.

behaviour presents a human contrast to the ideally wooden character of his brother. As a victim of 'inferiority complex', he has to lift his toe to meet his superiors on an equal footing.²¹ To assert himself he writes social satires which create a stir in the town.²² It is the real portrait of a person who is swayed by jealousy, hatred, love, and generosity. Without realising his limitations, he wishes to ascend the endless ladder of ambition ; so much so that he poisons the ears of ladies against his brother by spreading false stories about him. At his instance, his brother is arrested by the police.²³

109. Among the female characters in the novel, Vidyā is broad-minded,²⁴ sympathetic,²⁵ shrewd, and well-versed in the ways of life;²⁶ The Hindu woman who represents the protestant middle-class view of life marked by an utilitarian and rationalistic and monogamic outlook cannot bear the extra-marital relations of her husband and the adoption of her son by a rich widow. Śraddhā, Prem Shankar's wife, is an old-fangled orthodox lady who is not properly adjusted to her liberal husband. She had led a life of patient and silent suffering sacrificing her joy at the altar of chastity. Gāyatri, the condemned widow, is the most baffling character in the novel. She is a

²¹ 'Premāśrama' p. 150.

²² Ibid. p. 153.

²³ Ibid. p. 320.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 37.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 119.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 221.

neurotic who has neither been able to gratify her sexual desires nor to sublimate them.²⁷ She flirts with the hero ; but suffers from a sense of sin and remorse. She tries to be charitable and religious ; but this life does not satisfy her. To fulfil her yearning for an issue, she adopts a child at the cost of his mother's life. In the end, she dies an obscure death which is simply announced by the writer.

110. 'Kāyākalpa' is another stout volume of fiction which is a strange combination of real and supernatural elements. In Jagdishpur, a village, the drama of life is staged. Chakradhar, the apostle of love and non-violence, is the conventional hero. He belongs to the lower middle-class of which the author has an intimate knowledge. While coaching the daughter of a rich landlord, intimacy develops between the two which soon matures into love. The girl is married not to him but to a rich person with already three living wives. Chakradhar is married to a girl who was lost by the parents at a fair and brought up by a social reformer. It is a world of marital misfits. The congress leader is not properly reconciled to his wife. He loves his mother more than his wife. In the non-co-operation movement which forms the background of the novel, he frequently comes into conflict with the authorities.

The introduction of the supernatural element relating to the story of a woman who knows how to stay

²⁷ 'Premāśrama' pp. 107, 117.

ever young by taking a dose of medicine, and the life of a prince who undergoes successive transformations of his body digresses from the main theme. The construction of the plot has become melodramatic and the characterisation improbable on account of this supernatural theme. The purpose does not remain entirely social, the novel deals with the social and political unrest of 1921 and the revolt against the institution of polygamy as practised by the rich people.

III. "Karma Bhūmi" (1932) portrays life as action. Amarkānt is the conventional hero who represents the author's conception of the typical protagonist. While a student, he is married to a wrong woman.²⁸ As an escape from his dull married life, he joins the Congress movement to free his country from foreign yoke. Sukhdā, his wife, dissuades him from participation in the national movement and disarms him by her trenchant arguments.²⁹ His wooden idealism is lifeless. A strange episode storying a revengeful assault on military soldiers by a 'beggar woman' whose modesty has been outraged by them is introduced to provide an opportunity for the hero to render help to her. A public trial is conducted; she is honourably discharged.

Amarkānt is attached to a Muslim girl. She refuses to marry the man to whom she has been engaged. The son comes into conflict with his father and rents a se-

²⁸ 'Karma Bhūmi' p. 10.

²⁹ Ibid p. 63.

parate house. Somehow he quits the house to tour in the villages where he discovers appalling poverty. He builds a hut, conducts a night school for the benefit of villagers, and brings about reform among them. It so happens that the beggar girl also comes to stay in the same village. She is his third love. In a dull manner she relates the story of her past life. Sukhdā, the wife of the hero, engrosses herself in social work.³⁰

Amarkānt is arrested for spreading discontent against the Government established by law and order. His wife too is locked up behind the bars. A woman, who is maltreated in the prison-land turns out to be the same beggar woman. A gross inequality of life is shown in the prison where there is one law for the rich and another for the poor³¹; as in Galsworthy's 'Silver Box'. A peep into the hardships of prison life is also given by the author with his usual deep insight. When the curtain is about to drop, the story becomes still more improbable and melodramatic. The author picks up all the lost threads by collecting all the characters—the hero, his wife, the muslim girl, the beggar woman at one place, the Jail. The hero is reconciled to his father. The couple is properly adjusted, the muslim girl gives up her claims upon him and treats him as her brother. Divorce has thus been avoided. Premchand has a strong prejudice against the institution of

³⁰ 'Karma Bhūmi' p. 225.

³¹ Ibid. p. 153.

divorce. He writes, "Divorce is common among the proletariat. It is only among the so-called higher classes where this problem has assumed a serious shape. Marriage even at his best is a sort of compromise and surrender. If a couple mean to be happy, they must be ready to make allowances. While there are people who can never be happy even under the best of circumstances. In Europe and America divorces are not uncommon, in spite of all courtship and free intercourse. One of the couple must be ready to bend, male or female, does not matter. I refuse that only males are to blame. There are cases where ladies create trouble, fancy grievances. When it is not certainty that divorce will cure our nuptial evils, I do not want to fasten it on society. Of course there are cases when a divorce becomes a necessity. But 'misfit' is nothing in my opinion but fastidiousness. Divorce without any provision for the poor wife! This demand is only made by morbid individualism....."³².

112. "Gabana" (1931) is a maturer and more realistic attempt to relate the story of a young husband who buys for his newly married wife a costly necklace and is involved in debt without her knowledge. He is forced to commit forgery to get rid of this debt. As he is a victim of middle-class respectability and his own egoism, he does not disclose the secret of his debt and forgery to his wife who could have easily saved

³² Appendix B Letter 1 (9).

the situation by returning the fatal ornament. An escape from his home is the only alternative left for him. In his wanderings he falls in love with a prostitute. His wife who represents the spirit of sacrifice and the ideal of Indian womanhood is washed out in his separation. The prostitute, when she comes to know of it, restores him to his wife and allows herself to be washed away by a stream. It is a bold stroke of sacrifice on the part of a prostitute. The theme thus, includes the transformation of a 'public woman'. A minor theme portrays the suffering of a young widow who was married to an old and prosperous lawyer. She is a great friend of the hero's wife and helps her in her misery. Her own lot is equally miserable ; but she quits the world by committing suicide. It is the author's universal device to get rid of characters whom he cannot otherwise dispense with.

113. Rāmākānt, the hero, is a significant departure from his conception of heroes in the previous novels.³³ He is not represented as a caricatural simplification of idealistic features which do not undergo a change. He is not of one piece, entirely good or entirely bad ; but a creature of circumstances, education, and a development of events. A chicken-hearted young man belonging to the lower middle-class, and a victim of 'inferiority complex', he tries to cover his poverty and shield his egoism by telling lies which do not carry him

³³ Appendix B Letter 1 (2).

very far. At last he is caught in his own web ; but he deserves sympathy for his weaknesses which are essentially human. He is not so much patterned and grouped by the author into a melodramatic plot which is less abundant in the present novel. Premchand has matured his experience of life and mastered the realistic technique of constructive arrangement. As before he does not obviously create events which might astound the reader or play upon his emotions. The theatrical instinct is less marked in this novel. In his last novel, 'Godān' (1936) he has achieved such a remarkable control over this instinct that there are very few notes which might jar on the ears of the sensitive reader. As this book is beyond the scope of the present inquiry it is not desirable to discuss how this great novel has been shorn of all extravagant notes which are to be found in his previous novels. 'Godān' glows in its mellow maturity and makes a definite advance in the realistic tendency in fiction.

114. The novels of Premchand, judged by Western standards undoubtedly suffer from serious artistic flaws. The defective technique and melodramatic denouements have been referred to in his novels.³⁴ No one can read them without being irritated, occasionally exasperated by his crude humour, strange coincidences, improbable situations ; yet these blemishes are easily explained. Premchand, it must be remembered inherited no

³⁴ Article No. 104, 106, 110, 111.

tradition ; he had to create his own technique. In his early youth he had nourished his appetite on the novels of Devikī Nandan Khatri and others.³⁵ It is no wonder then that he could not shake off the crude devices of his predecessors. Thomas Hardy presents a striking resemblance to him in his artistic development. Hardy also could never completely throw off the influence of Wilkie Collins even in his best works. As his faculties matured, he employed these devices less and less ; but his critics have rightly complained that Hardy's art is not completely satisfying, that the frequency of chances, coincidences, and melodromatic interludes considerably detract from his art. Premchand's art grew mature as he grew in years. And he would have revealed artistic maturity of an exceptionally high order, had gods been kinder to him and given him a few more years to live. What he might have been able to achieve he gave a glimpse—only a glimpse—in his last novel. ('Godān'). It is an irony of fate that he died at a moment when his literary apprenticeship had ended, when he had attained to full maturity.

115. Premchand is at his greatest when he is dealing with the lower middle-class and the peasants. He can claim to rank with Reymont³⁶ in the vivid and sympathetic study of the life of peasants. The background of his best novels is the life of peasants. He has

³⁵ In 'Kafan' (1937) read 'Merā Jīvana'.

³⁶ 'The Peasants' for which he was awarded the Noble Prize in Literature.

painted for us with superb skill their life—their stoic indifference to suffering, their generosity, nobility, their meanness, imbecility, cruelty and lust.....The rest of his novels are a study in contemporary middle-class life. He knew this class more intimately even than he knew the peasants. He himself belonged to this class.

Premchand portrays characters, not character, except in his last novel.³⁷ He has created several characters, but hardly a character. His fundamental aim is not characterisation, but essentially reformation. His interest is centred in a moral or a social problem, not in the subtleties and contradictions of psychology. The range is undoubtedly wide; but Premchand is seldom successful with his upper middle-class and aristocracy.³⁸ His aristocracy is effete, destitute, subservient to authority, lacking in all elements which go to make up character.³⁹ The main reason why he could not, in spite of his undoubted talents, create an immortal character, lies in his wrong conception of the function of art. The streak of idealism in him led him into making a hero who is deeply, too deeply, inspired by ideals to be genuinely human and he has created other secondary characters around him to bring out his idealism.⁴⁰ The result is disaster. His heroes are more angelic than

³⁷ The character of Horri and his wife.

³⁸ The philosopher's group in the last novel.

³⁹ The Landlords.

⁴⁰ Appendix B Letter 1 (2).

human. They spurn human weaknesses like love. They are all consecrated souls ; their one aim in life is to serve with single-minded devotion the cause of the poor. He has created neither loveable heroes nor delightful rogues and scoundrels. He makes his heroes behave in an ideal way, without realising the limitations of human nature, without penetrating into the half-shades and half-lights of a human heart.

The dialogue of middle-class characters is not individual and characteristic of them. Its real nature is destroyed by its many-paged length. It is generally clogged by explanatory purpose. There is little wit, humour, or brightness in it. The nineteenth century technique of the novel is employed by him in which the talk is careful, strained, and laborious. It is generally given to argument and sermonette. In a technical discussion, explanation, or argument, a long speech can be tolerated ; but in a novel it is either entirely omitted or hastily skimmed over. In these novels the dialogue is generally flat, extensive and dead. The dialogue of middle-class characters presents a refreshing contrast to the dialect of peasants and villagers. It is sparingly employed to suggest the tone of their speech.⁴¹

116. Premchand is almost a socialist, but his socialism is reared on the bedrock, partly of a genuine intellectual conviction and mostly of a sensitive high-strung emotional temperament. His novels are virtually

⁴¹ In 'Godān', 'Rañgbhūmi,' 'Premāśrama'.

a crusade against all forms of bourgeois exploitation of the peasants and labourers. The reprehensible practices of the Indian barbasses, the inhuman oppression of the landlords, the vicious system of land revenue—all these have been mercilessly satirised and exposed.⁴² The author feels the woes of the peasants so acutely that he seems to tremble at the injustices of the rich. He hates suffering and cruelty. He has in the widest measure what Santayana calls charity with reference to Charles Dickens. He denounces injustice with all the forensic eloquence of a prophet. This partiality for the poor and the weak lend all his novels a high emotional tone. As he has seen the stark realities, the iron has entered his soul. He paints his exploiters in the darkest possible colours. He fails to realise that most people are neither cruel nor exploiters by intention; but they are bound down by the system. It is a standing complaint against him that he has never been able to do full justice to the upper-middle-class. The fact is that he is too good a propagandist to retain the rigidity of artistic treatment.

117. Premchand's socialism is based on a deep respect for human personality. He believes in equal opportunities for all.⁴³ This ideal of equality is reiterated very frequently in all his novels. He has not generally painted the industrial world; but in a few

⁴² Article No. 107.

⁴³ Appendix B Letter No. 1 (8).

places⁴⁴ he has helped to ridicule the capitalists who make millions; but he has abjured the ideology of a proletarian revolution. He is an evolutionary socialist. He seems to be a follower of the Gandhian strategy of moral pressure through suffering and non-violence of the brave. In a letter Premchand writes, "My ideal society is one giving equal opportunities to all. How that stage is to be reached except by evolution..... What fate a revolution may lead us to is doubtful. It may lead us to worse forms of dictatorship, denying all personal liberty. I do want to overhaul but not destroy. If I had some prescience and knew that destruction would lead us to heaven, I would not mind destroying even."⁴⁵ It is the voice of a democrat. He has the horror of the revolution because of the fear in the light of Russian and Italian dictatorships—what form dictatorship may take. It is this haunting fear that leads many confirmed socialists prefer the path of constitutional, peaceful evolution to a proletarian revolution.

118. Premchand is an optimist. His optimism is too facile to carry conviction. All his novels deal with vital social and economic problems; yet except in few cases he has failed to realise the complexity of the problems.⁴⁶ The institution of prostitution is an instance. Many have no doubt taken to this ignoble

⁴⁴ The Christians in 'Raṅgbhūmi', although they are petty merchants.

⁴⁵ Appendix B Letter 1 (8).

⁴⁶ Article No. 104.

profession under the stress of economic circumstances, but very few people will agree that poverty constitutes the basic cause of this inglorious profession. Marriage is another. One seeks in vain for that lofty conception of marriage which finds its expression in the celebrated pamphlet written by Milton. Premchand does not favour divorce on grounds which seem rather unusual in a man whose respect for human personality is too deep-rooted to be doubted. In fact he possesses all the virtues and vices of a pioneer in the realm of fiction. He had borrowed the technique from Western writers in an abstract form and he had to give it a concrete shape and form. In the absence of competition among rival writers of his age, he had to work under serious limitations. Hence his weaknesses.

THE REALISTIC TENDENCY (*Contd.*)

MINOR NOVELISTS

119. Premchand is the pioneer of the realistic tendency in fiction. Kauśika (V. N.) and others have continued this tendency in their novels and improved upon its technique and expression. 'Mā' (mother) which is one of his mature creations in the realm of realistic fiction does not contain a single extravagant note which might destroy the illusion of reality. The theme deals with the life of an adopted child who is apt to be 'spoiled'. In the company of his friends he begins to visit the houses of public women. His brother comes to know of his new habit. In a puritanical fit he decides to reform him. He is immediately married to a girl who fascinates him for a few days. The old habit of visiting the prostitutes still persists in him. At last he feels weary of this habit and stops his visits. The inevitable happy end of the story is marred by a sad episode. One of his friend's wife sickens and dies on account of her joyless domestic life. The story portrays the life and problems of two middle-class families. The demand for a male child, the absolute authority of the husband in the family, the defective laws of inheritance regarding a widows' right

to her late husband's property, the puritanical attitude towards social problems, a great emphasis on the value of sexual purity in marital relations, an undying faith in fate (Karma) are some of the middle-class values which have been realistically depicted in the novel without any moral indignation or bitter satire. He has given a stark and pitiless picture of the prostitute's way of life. He omits nothing of the abominations of the oldest profession in the world. His writing is more scathing than all the moral indignation of other novelists who have dealt with a similar theme. In "Sevāsadana" Premchand has confined the story to a solitary girl who was forced by circumstances to adopt this ignoble way of life. She ultimately gave up the immoral profession to which she was not completely reconciled. In 'Mā' greater stress is laid on social and economic environments which determine the course of a prostitute's life. There are no serious attempts at social reform; but the evil has been relentlessly brought to the notice of the readers. One man is 'reformed'; but the public women continue to 'flourish' in the same brothels. Kauśika has the firm grasp of a 'naturalist' who is interested more in the portrayal of life than in its reformation. Premchand is a 'micawberist' who flies from reality. Prostitution is perhaps the outcome of man's polygamous instinct and rigid monogamous social laws. It requires a deeper analysis and a more delicate handling of the social problem than is attempted by Premchand.

The construction of the plot in this novel is striking-

ly simple and neat ; the narrative seldom flags. Its interest is maintained at a constant pitch by the highly individualised, terse, purposive, simple, and crisp dialogue. It is not so individualised that one can recognise every character by the peculiar intonations and rhythm of his speech as easily as one can recognise the voice of one's friend ; but it presents a refreshing contrast to the laborious and tedious dialogue employed by other novelists.

120. "Vidā" (Parting) is another solitary realistic attempt by a different novelist.¹ The novel is a deep analysis of the life of a newly married couple. They find it difficult to adjust themselves to the new situation for psychological reasons. The young man is 'fixated' upon his mother. His ideal of a woman is his mother to which his wife does not conform. 'The son of his mother' regards her as a 'sinister' agent in disturbing his love for his old mother.² The girl, on the other hand, is attached to her father.³ After a serious quarrel with her husband and his mother, she comes back to her father's house. The professor blames the Western ideas for this spirit of independence among women ; but he does not discover the complex of his own mind.⁴ Nevertheless, he still loves her with all her weaknesses.⁵

¹ Pratāpa Nārāyaṇa Śrīvāstava.

² 'Vidā' pp. 28, 35, 37, 38, 50.

³ Ibid. pp. 54, 56.

⁴ Ibid. p. 66.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 66, 67.

She wavers between her husband and her father. The 'fixation' on either side gradually wears off in course of time. They are reconciled to each other after involving the happiness of another girl, Capalā, who fell in love with the professor. She makes a sad exit at the end of the novel, hence the title.

Śrīvāstava has restricted the theme to a single social group, the upper and intellectual middle-class constituted by civil service officers, professors, government title holders and other highly educated persons. In confining the theme to a single social group, he has achieved an organic unity which is a definite advance on the technique of Premchand who generally employs the double or treble plot.⁶ The construction of the plot in this novel is without many flaws, except for a solitary crude episode which has been introduced to get rid of the villain. Varmā, the civil service officer, who has been sowing wild oats in a Western land is dogged by his rejected lady who brings about his death. The villain, thus, is disposed of by her. He complicates the story by falling in love with the professor's wife who does not respond to his advances. Kumudini, on the other hand, grows jealous of her new rival and resolves to snatch her husband from the clutches of this woman.⁷ It is a fine stroke of feminine jealousy in the story.

121. The psychological imagination of the writer

⁶ Article No. 106.

⁷ 'Vidā' p. 308.

is much better suited to the creation of female rather than male characters. The female members in the novel arrange themselves into two groups. Capalā and Kumudinī are self-conscious natures chiefly interested in their own vanity. Lajjā belongs to the opposite group which is characterised by humility, patience, and simplicity. Kumudinī is assertive, vain, and a girl child in her emotional development. Capalā is a sophisticated and mature personality who is capable of understanding and appreciating the viewpoint of other persons. Varmā is the villain of the piece. There is no redeeming feature about his character. He is portrayed as a cunning, intriguing, selfish man to whom all the problems of life resolve themselves into a single theme; how far they can serve his ends. Professor Nirmala Chandra, a brilliant product of the university, well-versed in both the Eastern and Western philosophy, is yet inexperienced in the ways of love. He is deeply in love with his mother and he does not brook any insult or threat of insult to her.

122. "Canda Husīno ke Khatūta" (1927) by Ugra (B. S.) is an experiment in the epistolary method of narration. There are generally three methods of bringing the characters on and off the steps. Daniel Defoe found the solution in the autobiographical method of narration in the first person singular.⁸ He made his hero tell the story of his adventures, and made every effort to give the narrative

⁸ 'Robinson Crusoe'.

a ring of truth; to make versimilitude doubly certain he borrowed facts and documents from historical reality. In Hindi fiction Dhaniram Prem also has made use of this device with some success.⁹ After Defoe, Richardson invented the epistolary novel, in which a series of letters enabled him plausibly to express the psychological workings of several characters.¹⁰ Ugra, in the form of seven letters has narrated a love-adventure of a young man and a girl belonging to the two warring communities of this land in the present novel. The writer has tried to strike a synthesis of the two opposing 'cultures' in the year of communal rivalry and tension (1927) by making love triumph over religion, caste, creed, and colour. The romance ends in smoke on account of the hero's death brought about by his Muslim rival. The introduction of the rival completes the eternal triangle. It also avoids the joyous ringing of the wedding bells which would have sounded improbable in the present awkward situation for the father and brother of the girl, who were deadly opposed to this marriage on account of communal and religious considerations. The characterisation is meagre; but the novel is important in this survey for its method of narration. It is the solitary instance in Hindi literature, in which the theme has been developed exclusively through epistolary correspondence. Ugra has

⁹ Article No. 136.

¹⁰ 'Pamela'.

chosen a potential theme of communal tension and conflict; but the treatment is far from deep.

123. "Dehlī kā Dalāl" (1927) is another novel by the same author. A scandalous group of society, marketing in immoral traffic of women who are subjected to rape, molestation,¹¹ and prostitution¹² and who are treated as chattels, has been portrayed in this novel. It is an indictment of those hooligans, 'sādhus', and 'fakīrs' who abduct innocent women from holy places and public fairs and treat them as means of gratifying their lust without any sense of shame or humanity. A nude picture of their atrocities has been penned in this novel to arouse moral indignation of the public; although the author claims that, "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are either well-written or badly written. That is all."¹³ In spite of the claim of its 'non-moral' nature, the purpose has been definitely made moral, when a didactic speech condemning the social evil is delivered from the mouth of a judge. He tries a case against the hooligans who have abducted and sold twenty-five hundred young girls. It ill becomes a session judge to remark in a court of law, "The social evil is a black spot on the fair name of this country which is known for its idealism, character, celibacy, and chastity. I am shocked to remember the episodes and its evil consequences in society. All those reformers who shout

¹¹ The Novel p. 59.

¹² Ibid. p. 197.

¹³ Preface.

from the house-tops would have immortalised their services, if they had paid heed to this evil.”¹⁴ The remedy for this evil suggested in the novel is equally sentimental. The town is rid of the kidnappers.

The author has adopted the ‘modern’ manner of choosing a single group of society and laid bare the evils which infest it. The characters are merely types. Abdulla and Santoo are ring-leaders of the abductors of women; Bhūdeva is a typical social reformer who rescues a young woman from the dirty pit. The style is crisp, epigrammatic, and voluptuous in describing the beauty of women and experiences of sexual life. At a few places the illusion of reality has been destroyed by directly addressing the reader.¹⁵ The introduction of characters has been attained by single strides which retard the gradual and natural growth of characters in the course of events.

124. “Badhuā kī Betī” is a severe tirade against the evil of ‘untouchability’ which has a religious sanction behind it. The life and problems of this social group, which is at the lowest rung of the ladder of the society have been expressed with a realistic force. It aims at social regeneration which can be brought about by a humanitarian attitude towards their poverty, superstitions, and other evils. The social purpose dominates the theme; but the novelist has portrayed the character of a beautiful untouchable girl who has been brought up

¹⁴ The Novel.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 19.

by a Christian missionary after her father's imprisonment. The girl grows out to be passionately beautiful, falls an innocent prey to a high-caste Hindu with a view to marry him; but he discards her after satisfying his lust. The wounded deer returns to her father's house to find him in delirium. After his death, the girl is packed 'home' along with the missionary to wreak vengeance on a young man by first entrapping him and then rejecting his love. The supernatural character of the 'sādhū', who acts as a guardian angel to the untouchables; by administering to their wants, by fighting for their rights, and by curing their disease by occult powers mars the effect of probability, and disturbs the impression of unity in the novel. The episode of the judge who renounces his property in favour of the untouchable girl does not fit in with the theme. The realistic and bold treatment of sex is a novel feature of the story.

125. "Hṛdaya kī Parakha" (1932) relates the story of a child who lost her parents. She was brought up by her uncle who passed her on to his issueless master for adoption. In the subsequent part of the story her identity is lost and then gained. The theme is not capable of any deep analysis; but even in its present treatment the motivation is feeble, the presentation crude, and the situations elude the realistic grasp of a great novelist. The sentimental characters are persons of strong emotions and they frequently burst into sobs. The entire composition smacks of a sentimental effervescence in a cup which overflows and spoils the table.

It belongs to the cheap type of sentimental literature characterised by tears and sobs which are indulged in to excite pity and love in the chicken-hearted reader.

126. "Hṛdaya kī Pyāsa" (1932) primarily belongs to the class of domestic fiction. Sastri, its author, holds a firm grasp of the immediate reality of life. He does not transcend in this novel the ordinary domestic problems of marital maladjustment in a family. Praviṇa is wedded to a plain-looking woman, he hungers therefore for beautiful girls. The easy prey which falls to him is his friend's wife. She is suspected of foul play with his friend. He is insulted by him. He cannot bear it. To avenge this insult he resolves to snatch his beautiful wife, and thus kill two birds with one stone. They are caught by the husband in a close embrace. In a rigidly monogamic society the punishment for extra-marital relations is suicide or murder. She swallows a dose of opium; but survives it. He has no other course except to become a brother to her. The story is rounded off with the ringing of joyous bells when both the husbands are reconciled to their wives—Praviṇa through her selfless sacrifice; and his friend for Praviṇa's brotherly attitude towards his wife.

Sukhadā, the plain-woman, forms the pivot of the novel. A typical Hindu woman who has been idealised for her constant devotion to her 'wayward' husband represents the beauty of the spirit. The writer who has been obviously inspired by the middle-class ideal of chastity does not miss an opportunity of directly address-

ing the reader and hammering upon him the importance of this ideal in married life. "In Hindu society the basis of marriage is not passion but love."¹⁶ To exalt this ideal he has overlooked the necessity of divorce in such an acute marital misfit. He has thus justified the middle-class bias for reform. In the novel there is a subtle treatment of the passion of jealousy which is born of an inferiority feeling and possessive instinct in the men characters.¹⁷ Praviṇa nurses a grudge against the whole world. The frequency of weeping and sobbing which was observed in abundance in his previous novels¹⁸ has been considerably lessened; maturing thus the author's realistic approach to the situations in life.

127. In "Apsarā" (1931), Nirālā, the author, has tried to portray the character of a young girl born of a wayward woman.¹⁹ She is young, full-blooded, passionate, and lives all her feeling and instincts entirely uncensored. Her tempestuous moods lure and hold the men. Rāj-kumār who rescued her from molestation is her first victim. Hamilton, the Superintendent of Police, is the second victim. They never know whether they will be received with passionate embraces or with a stiletto. Such a woman lives as she feels, without calculating the consequences. She personifies "nature red in tooth and claw." Kipling's line, "the female of the species

¹⁶ The Novel, p. 21.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 27.

¹⁸ 'Hṛdaya kī Parkha'.

¹⁹ 'Apsarā' p. 3.

is more deadly than the male” characterises her. She is a flame swarmed by moths who burn their wings.²⁰

The writer travels on ‘the open road’ of portraying a new type of character in fiction; but he follows the beaten track by gradually transforming and reforming this woman. She becomes a votary in a temple and chants songs of devotion instead of love and passion. Religion triumphs over humanity. The novel is an attempt at psychological portraiture and analytical treatment of character. Nirālā’s is the only raw and genuine attempt at an analytical type of character. It would have been a success, but for the anticlimax which results from the middle-class prejudice for reform.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 113.

THE SHORT STORY

The Realistic Tendency



THE REALISTIC TENDENCY

128. The short story as a distinct literary form is only of recent growth, though literatures of the ancient world are rich in tales bewildering in their variety of form and substance. In the East, where the idea of the short story and of the novel as we understand it to-day¹ never existed, the short story is of great antiquity as a fable, allegory, or romance. The Upaniṣads make frequent use of allegorical tales to point a moral or to make a nice point of metaphysics clear to the understanding of the layman. The old epics begin their career full of promise, narrating the brave tales of former days in a fluent and lively style. "The tale passed from the hands of the bards into the control of pandits, and the pandits after their usual manner, stuffed into the old epic frame-work enormous masses of heterogeneous sermons of religion, philosophy, and polity, which, though valuable as documents of the ideas of early times, are for the most part utterly incongruous with the central themes."² The 'Panca-tantra' is an inexhaustible storehouse of inter-linked stories that aim at a realistic treatment of human nature through the medium of conventional beast-lore. The 'Hitopadeśa', likewise, seeks

¹ 'Romantic Tendency'. Article 88.

² Dr. Barnett's (L. D.) 'Hitopadeśa' Introduction, p. 5.

to amuse by wit and humour and to teach with garnered wisdom. In both these purposes it is singularly successful. It has probably trained no statesman, but it has made countless readers familiar with the principles of Indian statecraft, besides entertaining them with its stories and instructing them with its lessons of everyday morality. Its tales are narrated perfectly in a simple, limpid prose, with the utmost economy of words, in which every word tells.”³ The animals in the fables act, talk and mimic the world of mankind in its “splendours and ambitions, its ranks and conventions, its follies and sorrows” and by their faithful imitation they cast a genial satire on man. Dr. Barnett thinks that the Indian has been in close touch with the animal creation. He has been constantly seeing around him his brothers and sisters in fur and feather. Also he has been frequently told that the souls of these animals are in their present bodies because of their deeds in previous births. “This teaching has sunk deep into his heart and has given him a fellow-feeling with the animal world and a keen interest in it.”⁴ Another reason why this wisdom has been put into the mouth of animals is that an educated Indian has been by nature a sceptic. He wishes to show by putting wisdom into the mouth of animals ‘what fools these mortals be.’ In ‘Kādambarī’ and other books the writers spin out their stories into inordinate lengths by poetic descriptions, beautiful in themselves, but

³ Dr. Barnett’s (L. D.) ‘Hitopadeśa’ Introduction, p. 13.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 7, 8.

only remotely connected with the plot. They do not study an economy of words and make very little use of dialogue as a means of character revelation.

The tone of all these stories is moral.⁵ An Indian, sententious by nature, has always been fond of the story with a moral. The 'moral' tone persists even in the modern short story. In the days of hoary antiquity the "farmers gossiping together in the village panch at evening time; the friars of low degree beguiling the tedium of the rainy season with tales; the travelling traders in the caravan-sarai—these and their like are the sort who nurtured the folk-tale."⁶ The tale was simple in construction and singular in variety.

129. The short story to-day is remarkable for its variety. In Modern Hindi literature it has firmly established itself. Its immense vogue is the result of many co-operating causes; among them, the rush of modern life which has made men impatient of long tales or novels, the enormous development of the magazine,⁷ the newness of the literary form which the writers are zealous to experiment with,⁸ and its claim to displace the novel. Many writers essay the short story to work off an occasional mood. All knowledge and life have become its province. It is developing a high and a deli-

⁵ Article No. 134.

⁶ Dr. Barnett's (L. D.) 'Hitopadeśa' Introduction, p. 9.

⁷ 'Saraswatī' 'Mādhurī 'chand', 'Sudhā', 'Bhāratī', 'Viśāla Bhārat', 'Viśvā Mitra', 'Hans' etc.

⁸ Article No. 46.

cate standard of technical perfection based on the models of short stories in Western literature.⁹ It has a great future because Indian social life with all its unnecessary restrictions of social intercourse is more easily represented on a shortened canvas. The material for great novels of real Indian life is scanty, but writers can peep enough behind the veil of life to guarantee a successful round of short stories. And there is an abundance of them.

130. Premchand alone has written about 250 short stories¹⁰ on a variety of social themes. In his comparatively early productions he has concentrated on a series of events and episodes which dominate and overwhelm the ideas in his stories. Their immense popularity among the heterogeneous mass of readers without any background for the appreciation of this new form of fiction, depends on the predominance of the plot over the idea and the character; and also by the bourgeoisie outlook on life characterised by the doctrine of retribution and poetic justice which are an organic part of middle-class mind. In "Mātā kā Hṛdaya" (A Mother's Heart), he describes the resolution of a mother to avenge her son's wrong; but her determination evaporates when she has to murder a child whose parents were responsible for the wrong done to her son. In spite of the story being a 'character-story' the arrangement of the feast and her subsequent employment as a maid-servant in the house of the officer are episodes which

⁹ Article No. 133.

¹⁰ Appendix B Letter 1 (3).

dominate the character of the mother. The event describing the death of the child is added to bring tears into her eyes.

“Narka kâ Mārga” is a graphic account of a wife disappointed in her cold husband who has renounced the world and lives a life of religious devotion. After his death she grows weary of her ‘sexless’ and empty life and adopts the way of prostitutes. As usual she attributes her suffering to her sins in the previous birth, according to the doctrine of retribution which she inherits through religious tradition. It is a realistic delineation of character which is seldom overwhelmed by the few events in the short story. In “Svarga kī Devī,” a wife reforms her husband by her patience and service. It is a popular theme of many other stories. Many extraneous events have been mixed up in this story and they obscure the character of the wife and have no direct bearing on the main theme. In the first part which is separated by a gap of five years, the erring husband attempts to pick up a quarrel with his mother for maltreating his wife, whose misery is accounted for by her deeds in the previous birth. In order to describe her suffering the subsequent accidental deaths of the father and her children by cholera are the usual melodramatic episodes. They destroy the attempt at characterisation, which appears to be the aim of the short story.

In “Satyāgraha” (Truthful Resistance) a typical “pandit” who resorts to religious stunts to dupe the ignorant masses has been portrayed. The strike is not

a suitable device to characterise the traits of this social type. Again the grotesque and bizarre elements detract from the artistic aim of the story. In "Divālā" (Liquidation) the transformation in the character of a land-lord has been affected by the ruthless poverty and heart-rending misery of the masses. The pity of the land-lord has been excited by the suicide of an insolvent who was once his friend. The character is idealised by a crude manipulation of the plot. In "Nairāśya Līlā" a protest is lodged against child marriage which leads to widowhood and a crippling of personality. The character of the child-widow predominates over the idea of the story.

131. In the second class of his stories where the idea predominates over the character and situation, the motive is frequently social. In "Strī Aur Puruṣa" a man of aesthetic temperament has been married to a plain girl who wins him by her service and sacrifice. "The beauty of the soul is more valuable than the beauty of the flesh." This sublime idea has been expressed in a crude, jerky, and sensational way which shocks the aesthetic sense of the reader. The illness is a cheap device to bring home this truth to the man. The suffering of the aesthete has been attributed to his sins. "Nairāśya" (Despair) is a departure from the usual note of retribution and poetic justice in his stories. The story describes the collapse of a luckless wife who successively gives birth to daughters in the patriarchal social order where the male child is more welcome than a female child.

In "Uddhāra" (Reformation) a protest has been lodged against the system of dowry which weighs heavily on the parents of a girl. They are prepared to give her to a consumptive in marriage. The boy disappears before the marriage ceremony and commits suicide. The writer harangues his readers on this social evil in two pages. In "Gṛhadāha" a whole family is practically ruined by the jealousy of a step-mother who wants to exact the entire love of her son. The son is attached to his step-brother. Indirectly the story has been penned to protest against the second marriage of a widower who has already got children by his first wife. The weary life of the first son threatens to dominate the main idea. In fact the story describes the Oedipus situation, the character, and the second marriage against which a protest is lodged. The idea, the situation, and the character have been made equally important by an endeavour to render them in their fullness, betraying thus the aim of the short story. In "Sānti," a bourgeoisie husband initiates his wife to the Western ways of life, in spite of resistance from his mother. The attempt results in arrogance and vanity, displacing service and sacrifice from her life. It is not the assimilation of Western culture, but an aping of Western manners. The story represents the idealistic reaction against Westernism. The character of the wife after which the name of the story goes has been drawn with precision.

132. In his stories of situations the writer hunts

for arbitrary combinations of events so that they do not possess the warm flavour of a fruit ripened in the sun ; but the inspidity of one forced in a hot-house. "Śūdrā" narrates the hardships of a low class widow who has a beautiful daughter. To relate them, the writer has resorted to the inclusion of blind chances which turn out in favour of the widow. It is a simple tale or narrative without a proper stress on the unity of the situation. In "Ādhāra," there are two events ; one relating to the death of an altruistic peasant, the other describing the refusal of his widow to marry his brother at the eleventh hour. They have been presented without a dominating motive to create the impression of unity of situation. "A fundamental idea, or a single situation, or a character is an absolute requisite for the modern short story."¹¹ In spite of this rigid dictum, the story-writer, who has been influenced by the discursive technique of Rabindra Nath Tagore,¹² imitates his manner of gathering a few events ; but misses the aesthetic unity of impression. "Rabindra Nath's power seems to lie in his amazing vitality of imagination and his remarkable ability to create an atmosphere which grows upon the mind."¹³ In Premchand the creation of the atmosphere which gives a unity of tone to the short story is lacking.

In "Nirvāsana" (Exile) a wife is lost in a fair.

¹¹ Albright (E. M.) ; 'The Short Story' p. 5.

¹² Appendix B Letter 1 (4).

¹³ Guha Thakurta 'The Bengali Drama.' His Dramatic Art.

After a week, she arrives at her house to relate the story of her adventure to her husband who is not satisfied with her version. While suspecting her chastity, he turns her out of the house. The wife submits to his will without much protest. The whole situation is rendered grotesque by the banishment. In "Kauśala," a husband steals the necklace which his wife borrows to satisfy her sense of vanity. What is a joke in the beginning becomes a serious thing in the end. The story does not possess the heightening of the dramatic effect which is essential to the situation story. In "Durgā kā Mandir" a psychological situation has been portrayed to describe the conflict of an honest person, when he is forced to help his friend with money which he has discovered in a garden. The delay in restoring the bag of money to the police pricks his conscience. In "Decree Money", a conflict of loyalties between friendship and truth has been portrayed. The temporary betrayal of a friend has been compensated for by a monetary help at the close of the story. To uphold the idealistic way of life, the writer has sacrificed the human side of character by superficially describing the crisis in his life.

In all these stories comprising the first phase of his literary production, Premchand has adopted the manner of giving himself the full liberty to interpose remarks in the course of the story, to comment on its progress, character and life in general. In doing this he has established a precedent for didactic and

sentimental interruptions in the narrative, which destroy the illusion of reality and the unity of impression; but he caters to the taste of the crude mass of readers.

133. In the later phase of his story writing, Premchand has considerably modified the technique and changed the aim of the short story. In a comprehensive Introduction to the first part of "Mānasarovara," he explains the function of this new form of literature. In the evolution of the short story many changes have taken place in its technique which has been entirely modified.¹⁴ It delineates the struggle in contemporary life.¹⁵ The best short story is based on a psychological truth.¹⁶ Of character and situation one must predominate over the other. The character-story is superior to the story of the situation. As there is not copious scope for the full development of character, the aim of the short story writer should be to limit its scope to a section of character in its change rather than in its complete growth.¹⁷ On account of the Western influence, the short story has approached the pattern of life. Now there is no scope for describing a series of events which mar the unity of impression which is essential to a short story. To achieve this effect, there is less of comment and more of suggestion from the author's pen.¹⁸ The modern short story is not grounded on a series of episodes; but on a deep psychological experience.

¹⁴ 'Mānasarovara' Introduction, p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 6.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 8.

In the light of these aims which have been fashioned after Western models, the writer begins his new phase of story-writing in which he has achieved considerable success. In "Īdagāha," the writer has shown the contrast between the sad plight of an orphan boy and the vivacity of his fortunate companions on the day of the national festival. At every step, Hamīd feels the shortness of his purse; a psychological note has been struck by the precocious part which the little boy plays to remind his grandmother of her dead husband. In "Mā" (Mother) which expresses the proverbial love of the mother, the writer employs his earlier technique with a few modifications, consisting of scattered psychological touches; whereas the structure of the edifice remains the same. "Sānti" is the story of 'marital maladjustment' which leads to the suicide of the wife. The husband elopes with an actress; the wife ends her life out of mental anguish. It is an uncommon end as generally his stories conclude with a chorus of joy. "Gharjamāi" is a searching analysis of a character who, after his father's death lives with his mother-in-law; and on being maltreated by her returns home to live with his step-mother. His wife, who is not weaned from her father, does not accompany him. The story is an important departure from his early technique. The incidents are subordinated to the delineation of the character.

In "Pūsa kī Rāta" (A Winter Night) the appalling poverty of peasants and their inability to pay off their

debts forms the theme of the story. A peasant shivers in a winter night for want of a blanket which he cannot afford to buy. The freezing cold disables him from moving about on the farm, so that the whole of it is ravaged by wild cows. In this story, the writer has achieved that effect of compactness and instantaneity which is rarely to be found in the works of the great short story writers of the world. In Guy de Maupassant this conciseness has been frequently attained by observing a traditional unity of time and vision. The duration of time in the present story has been limited to one night. "Dhikkāra" (Reproach) is the tragedy of an orphan widow who commits suicide from a sense of shame and disgust, for she has no place in life. "Kāyara" (Coward) describes the story of a "coward" who is responsible for the tragedy of a girl student. After much hesitation, the girl has decided to marry the boy who gives her a slip at the threat of his parents. They are opposed to his marriage with a girl of a different caste. The girl sings a 'swan song' and ends her life. The character of the boy has been delineated with searching realism. In "Ghāsavāli" (The Grass Mower) Mulia is a beauty among the cobblers for which she is harassed and humiliated by a young man of the village. On the next day she is accidentally found mowing grass in the field of the same person. In an apprehensive mood, she appeals to his nobler sentiments; and it leads to the sublimation of the sexual desire.

134. In the short stories of Sudarshan there

is a definite ethical outlook which attaches greater importance to the standards of external conduct than to those of the conscience. The essential ethical problem of the writer is always the problem of the human action (Karma) which can be traced to a deep religious faith in the doctrine of retribution. The preponderance of coincidences in the stories is the inevitable outcome of a fatalistic outlook which is based on the idea of an external agency governing the conduct of men and women. All the stories analysed below show this tendency and illustrate the dominant idea contained in each one of them.

In "Pratikāra" (Revenge) a retribution befalling a young and gay student who marries, by choice, the daughter of his professor, but begins to love another girl is illustrated by a disjointed chain of mishaps. The height of improbability is reached, when the husband and wife ultimately meet in a jungle. In "A Little Lie" again, the idea of retribution has been worked out by relating a series of mishaps which befall a doctor for telling a lie. All the absurd mishaps are attributed to a single innocent lie which he is alleged to have told by sending a false telegram.

"Nyāya kī Parakha" (The Test of Justice). In two separate episodes the writer has illustrated the sense of justice of a scrupulously honest judge who operates like a machine in the judicial seat. In a case of murder against his own son, he holds even the scales of justice. In his enthusiasm to idealise the character

of the judge, the story writer does not appreciate the conflicts of a human heart; nor does he care to know that according to the Indian Penal Code the father cannot try his own son. "Pāpa kī kamāi" (The Ill-gotten Wealth) is a story of accidents and supernatural forces shaping the end of a "sinner" who has accumulated ill-gotten wealth, in spite of his friend's warning to the contrary. The accidental death of an innocent victim who was fleeced by the sinner recoils on him. He is dismissed from his job for negligence of work and dies of an accident. In "Svapna" (A Dream) a fantastic dream of a dead wife has been described to bring forth the idea of retribution, when the husband has married another woman in his affluence. The artistic device of employing the irony of circumstance to heighten the tragic effect has been cheaply repeated by the author. In "Andhakāra" (Darkness) by a series of incredible coincidences (deaths) the writer has satirised the social prejudice for male children in a patriarchal society. In "Nairāsyā" (Despair), Premchand has dealt with a similar theme. "Baiju Bābu" describes the intoxicating power of music on men, animals and plants. The leaves of the trees never stirred, when the instrument was played by the master-musician, who himself was completely lost in the melody. In an ornate style the writer has lost his usual crispness of utterance. In moments of crises he makes the characters talk at length and does not take full account of the psychological truth that intense emotions cannot be expressed by long speeches.

In his art, Sudarshan is not only offensively didactic, but his view of morality is so primitive that he emphasises the rewards of a 'moral' life in worldly advantages, and the punishment in a lack of them in physical pain. All his stories are sincerely designed to promote the cause of virtue and to expose some of the most glaring evils which infest the society. As a contrast to this, Premchand declares the dividends of virtue in the increased greatness of character.

135. In 'Citraśālā'¹⁹ the stories are snapshots of middle-class life of which the writer has a firm grasp. Kauśika has portrayed the type as well as the developing character in a crisis. The personages have been presented in changing lights to permit the illusion of reality. The growing demand of realism in the realm of Hindi literature is responsible for a lack of complete portrayal of characters, a loss of that intangible atmosphere of romance which have dominated the stories of Premchand and Jaya Śankara Prasāda.²⁰ Another characteristic which makes his stories more realistic in their treatment is his device of introducing a proper setting, the function of which is to furnish the conditions of time and place. The function of dialogue in his short stories is strictly utilitarian. The dialogue is characteristic of economy and brevity. It has been cut,

¹⁹ By Kauśika (V. N.).

²⁰ Prasāda's stories have not been dealt with in the present work. Only representative authors to indicate the realistic tendency in the realm of the short story have been included.

pruned, and trimmed ; till it becomes a strong current for carrying the characters and the plot to their inevitable goal. The third person narrative is the predominant form of his fiction ; but the unity of impression which permits little comment in a short story has been occasionally sacrificed when the author jumps into the midst of the scene to manage his stage. Such behaviour not only distracts the attention of a person outside the story ; but it also destroys the illusion of reality. The mechanism of his plot is simple and natural without any attempt at surprise. The singleness of plot achieves a unity of impression which is lacking in stories of complex plots involving digressions. Kauśika has achieved simplicity, unity, brevity, and suggestive force in the realm of the short story of the modern type.

In 'Namaka Halāla' the writer has described the character of a proud and faithful 'munīm' who saves the firm of his late master from liquidation by consigning the 'hunḍī' (pronote) to fire; postponing thus the payment to a convenient date. The son of his late master admits with folded hands the fidelity of the old man. 'Nastika Professor', (The Atheist Professor), is a product of the nineteenth century rationalism. He is married to a woman of deep religious faith in the intelligent creator. She represents the ancient traditions of the race. Their son seriously falls ill. On the recovery of the son from the serious illness, the professor becomes a theist. It appears to be a superficial device for a conversion of faith. The story illustrates

the change of character in a crisis which is illness of the son in this case.

‘Nara Paśu’ (Man-Beast) is the character-sketch of a professor belonging to a middle-class family. In a fit of anger he thrashes his wife for coming late. On the next day he gives a talk, advocating the equality of sexes. He reveals thus the inherent contradiction between his intellectual beliefs and emotional behaviour. He himself comes late on a different occasion and rebukes his wife for having gone to bed. His wife dies of illness. It is a great relief to him. Her death is interpreted in the press as a heart-rending shock to the professor who dearly loved his wife. The character of the ‘sadist’ professor has been portrayed with simple artistic strokes of irony. The story is also an illustration of middle-class prudery and hypocrisy which is characterised by the professor who is a type figure.

‘Sāhitya Seva’ (Service of Literature) portrays an ordinary type of a struggling literary hack who writes plays which nobody is prepared to publish. When he is completely frustrated in his attempts, his wife encourages him to make the last attempt which proves a success on the stage. He is honoured with a cash prize and a letter of appointment as a dramatic writer. ‘Bagalā Bhagata’ (A Hypocrite) is the portrait of a lawyer who robs his clients of their money and parades himself as an honest public worker. He is a double-faced python typical of the middle-class.

‘Karuṇā kī Mūrti’ (Idol of Compassion) gives a

pathetic account of a young widow who is yet to discover the consequences of widowhood. At every step she is made to feel that she is a widow who is not specially entitled to the status enjoyed by other women in the house. When she is spurned from all quarters, death is the only escape for her. Nobody sheds a tear at her death which becomes still more pathetic. 'Pagalī' (Mad) describes the story of an untouchable girl who pulled the fan in the house of an aristocratic lady. The poor girl was taught to read and write by a sympathetic young man in the house. Once she examined her poor plight by 'stripping herself naked' and was staggered to find herself so base that she went mad. 'Patni' (Wife) is the portrait-sketch of a 'modern wife'. She does not acquiesce at the foibles of her husband who is a libertine. She files a suit against him for the partitioning of property. The husband loses the case and begs the pardon of his wife, who succumbs to his entreaties like a true Indian woman. The modern wife represents a departure from the conventional wife who always submits to her Lord's word as law. 'Vidhavā' (Widow) is another attempt at portraiture of a widow. Raghu-vīra would marry only a widow. His friend who has been insisting on his marriage falls ill and dies, wishing the marriage of his widowed wife with Raghu-vīra who had been asked to marry her. He goes back on his word and continues to live the life of a bachelor. The story provides a situation which brings out the conflict between his intellectual belief and emotional

behaviour. The title of the story is rather misleading. 'Mātā kā Hṛdaya' (A Mother's Heart) describes the eternal Oedipus situation which arises after the marriage of a 'mother's son'. He is snatched from his fond mother by his wife. The mother is gradually reconciled to the new situation after nursing him through his illness.

136. Dhanīrām Prem is another important writer in the realm of the short story. He has invariably employed the autobiographical technique which restricts the range, while it heightens the vividness of his stories. The character in such stories is sure to emerge successfully from the most unpromising situations and the reader has greater curiosity than suspense. His stories therefore read like long letters from one character. In 'Dila kī Āga' (a novel)²¹ the problem has been comparatively solved by relating the story through the mouths of more than one character. In 'Canda Husīno ke Khatūta'²² which is composed of a series of letters and where the autobiographical technique has been employed, the validity of direct knowledge is gained with the advantages of varied company. As the first person narrative is pre-eminently awkward, Prem who uses it gives the impression that he is continually blundering in front of his camera; so that the result is a patchy story marred here and there by a grotesque enlargement of his own anatomy. He makes the first person narrator egotistic by making him speak.

²¹ Not discussed in the present survey.

²² Article No. 122.

Another characteristic of his stories is the element of pathos which has been introduced to gain that unity of impression which is essential to a short story. The stories with social themes brim with the pathetic sentiment which has been created with the sufferings of the widow, the prostitute, and the untouchable girl. In case of the untouchable girl the pathos gives rise to indignation when the girl is dragged out of the temple. Prem is a victim of the sentimental tendency in realism which has dominated modern Hindi fiction.²³ It is on account of this sentimentality that the prostitute, the brazen courtesan, and the wayward woman have become the object of pity and compassion, however reprehensible their behaviour may be in life. At least they have a good heart.

The vivacity of dialogue is another feature of his stories. The writer has employed a dialogue which is not entirely utilitarian in its function. It is therefore characterised by its comparative lack of direction, but it is extensively used by him. The extensive use of it is distinctly a modern tendency. Prem has made the most striking departure from the practice of other short story writers. Premchand, Prasāda, and Kauśika—all use dialogue; but they keep it strictly subordinate to the action or the character. Dhanirām Prem has tried a novel experiment by writing the dialogue-story which is becoming fashionable in Hindi fiction. The

²³ Article No. 102.

characters reveal themselves and carry the burden of the plot mostly by means of conversation which argues skill and cleverness on the author's part.

137. 'Mātr Mandira' (A Mother's Temple) is a keen analysis of a widow's heart, her empty life, her longing to marry again, her mating which leads to the birth of a child and the refusal of her 'lover' to marry her for want of courage and presence of rigid social restrictions. It becomes a vigorously moving story when she resolves to end her life ; but ultimately finds solace under the warm wings of a Muslim lady. To avenge her past wrongs inflicted on her by the society, she gets converted. After this, the story becomes melodramatic, when her grown up son resolves to wreak vengeance on a Hindu on the day of communal riots. And of all persons he tries to kill, he murders his father. The story ends with a didactic note on religious conversion. "Veśyā kā Hṛdaya" (A Prostitute's Heart) relates the story of a prostitute who has a tale of woe behind her and who is not supposed to have a feeling heart. She comes to the succour of an untouchable child who has been thrown into the gutter by a caste Hindu. This melts the heart of a religious votary who feels drawn to the 'fallen' woman, but he cannot marry her. In employing the 'auto' technique, the writer has unconsciously introduced his mature person into the narrative of a comparatively raw youth who happens to be the protagonist of the story. In ripeness of wisdom and restraint of emotions towards a woman, he does

not bear the usual marks of a young man. In 'Achhūta' (Untouchable) a young professional singer who sings songs of love and equality is offered a bunch of flowers by an untouchable girl who is moved by his songs. At first he rejects the offer; but he suffers from a feeling of remorse and sympathises with her. Afterwards he sees the same girl being dragged out of a temple which she wanted to enter for worshipping the gods. He is touched by her plight. To give a practical shape to his lip sympathy, he engages her services in his house, in face of hue and cry raised by the high-caste people. When he is outcasted by them, he proposes to marry the girl; thus fulfilling the didactic purpose of the story, which is a reformatory piece of composition written for the uplift of untouchables. 'Prema' (Love) is a dissertation on true love. The girl relates the tale of her first poor lover, her subsequent marriage to a rich person; and the final help rendered to her by her previous lover in a moment of crisis. The writer has depicted the common conflict between marriage by love and marriage by gold. 'Muskāna' relates the problem of a college student who is ever haunted by the memory of sweet smiles of his wife, while pursuing his course of studies at college. In the end, his wife dies to make the story sensational which is typical of a magazine story. 'Jalā Bhunā' (a Tortured Soul) is lively satire on romantic lovers who persist in their endeavour to win their lady-love. In spite of the hardships and the slips which create humorous situations in the story, the 'constant lover'

pursues her till she is married to another man. In the midst of funny episodes the writer has depicted the character of a typically romantic lover who is ever disappointed in his efforts. In the Hindu family romance has been of recent growth ; because marriage has been a family matter under the direct control of parents. The romantic love can only develop when both sexes may choose according to their desires. It is only among young men that the element of choice has been allowed ; but the choice of the mate for girls still lies in the hands of the parents.

Śrīvāstava (P. N.) who belongs to the school of sentimental realism has written a few short stories, in which the characters have been invested with a roseate light. The characters are not the grandiose heroes and heroines of romance, but figures of common life. 'Asīrvāda' (Blessings) is the sentimental tale of a beggar-woman who was once rescued by a married man from molestation. She disappeared and reappeared to embarrass the wife of the married man who had taken a fancy to her. The beggar woman turns out to be her play-mate. She blesses her child. The guileless conversation of the child in the story is a digression from the main theme. The author, in order to idealise the poor woman, bubbles with sentiments. 'Tiyā kī Sārī (A Sārī) relates the pathetic tale of an ailing daughter who longs to wear a new 'sārī' on the day of the fair (Tiyā) ; but she is denied the pleasure of wearing the silken 'sārī' on account of her poverty due to her

father's imprisonment. The story is reduced to a sentimental and farcical piece, when her father arrives to find her no more. The illness of the daughter, the helplessness of the mother, the imprisonment of the father, and finally the death of the girl have co-operated to reduce the story to the level of cheap sentimentalism. 'Sesha Sambala' is the story of the widow who fights her natural impulses but in a fit of passion she suffers the 'inevitable fall' by netting her late husband's cold friend to whom she was entrusted at the death of her husband. The portrait of her husband reminds her of the promise of chastity she made to him. And she is reformed. The pros and cons of widow marriage are given at length ; the customs of foreign lands in favour of widow marriage are described in profusion. In 'Mithi Muskāna' (Sweet Smile) a married man falls a victim to the charms of a courtesan who shocks him, when he demands love from her. After a few romantic adventures, he is reconciled to his wife. 'Lālasā' (Yearning) provides an eternal triangle. Suhāsinī, a woman, is sandwiched between two lovers who are friends. Each believes that the woman loves him, till one of them finds his rival friend in the arms of the woman. He shoots them dead, writes a letter of confession and commits suicide. Suhāsinī is essentially a 'man hater' belonging to the class of 'light women' who catch many victims in their net just for a whim.

APPENDIX A

‘Sāketa’ (1931)

‘Sāketa’, written by Gupta (M. S.), after the name of the capital city, is a comparatively successful attempt of the ‘epic tendency’ in modern Hindi poetry. It relates the old tale of ‘Ramāyaṇa’ rewritten in the modern language. The coronation ceremony, the disruption of it by the evil genius in the story, the order for exile, the leave-taking, the life in the forest, the grief-stricken people of the city, the agony of the old father, the lamentations of the mothers, the refusal of Bharata to accept the crown, are in accordance with the story in the original epic. A great emphasis has been laid on the traditional notion of the moral government of the universe. The ethical note is as strong as it is in the original epic. At one place evil is shown to triumph over virtue (p. 234); but it is ultimately attributed to the mysterious fate shadowing man at every step of his life. Bhāvi in the epic is nothing but the dark figure of destiny governing the lot of men and women in the tale.

It is only in the ninth canto that the author has departed from the original version. The outburst of emotions and sentiments shows that the poet has not been able to escape the predominant influence of lyricism even in an epic. The lyrical cry which has been

meticulously excluded in the preceding and following cantos of epic dignity is an external growth. Urmilā's expressions of sorrow in separation from her husband, written, in lyrical verses at a high poetical pitch (pp. 274, 278, 282, 292, 300) are not in unison with the classical note of restraint maintained throughout the composition. In this canto action is meagre and the description of Nature looms large. Dasaratha's character has also been made more pathetic by introducing verses of a lyrical quality in the epic. Mahātamā Gandhi has seriously objected to this 'flaw' which he has discovered in it. He says, "I may say one more thing—I do not like the pathetic cries of the old but heroic man in the modern age of heroism. It also hurts the devotional sense. Those who regard the joys of this world as transitory cannot regard pain born of death or separation as unbearable. A temporary mood is probable, but we can never hope to hear pathetic cries from such people." He has thus criticised the same lack of epic restraint in his characteristic way. The reasons for this literary flaw have been discussed in article number 17.

APPENDIX B

Letter No. 1

DHANPAT RAI, B.A.
(*alias* PREMCHAND).

168 Saraswati Sadan, Dadar
Bombay, 14. 26 Dec. 1934

Dear Mr. Indar Nath,

Glad to receive your letter of the 16th. The answers to your questions are herewith attempted in their order.

(1) 'Raṅg Bhūmī' is in my opinion, the best of my works.

(2) I have in each of my novels an ideal character, with human failings as well as virtue, but essentially ideal. In 'Premāsrama' there is Gayānshankar, in 'Rangbhumi' there is 'Sūrdās'. Similarly in 'Kāyākalpa' there is Cakardhar, in 'Karmabhumi' there is Amarkant.

(3) The total number of my short stories reaches an approximate figure of 250 (stories). Unpublished stories I have got none.

(4) Yes, I have been influenced by Tolstoy, Victor Hugo, and Romain Rolland. As regards short stories I was inspired originally by Dr. Rabindra Nath. Since I have evolved my own style.

(5) I never seriously attempted drama. I have conceived of one or two plots which I thought might be better utilised in a drama. Drama loses its importance when not staged. India has not got a stage, particularly Hindi and Urdu. What passes for a stage is the effete Parsi Stage, for which I have a horror. Then I never came in touch with drama technique and stage craft. So my dramas were only meant as reading dramas. Why should I not stick to my novel where I had greater scope to reveal my characters, than I can possibly have in a drama. This is why I have preferred novel as a vehicle of my thought. I still hope to write one or two dramas. As far as financial success, this commodity is rare in Hindi or Urdu. You may get notorious, but by no means financially independent. Our people have not the weakness of buying books. It is apathy, dull-headedness, and intellectual lethargy.

(6) Cinema is no place for a literary person. I came in this line as it offered some chances of getting independent financially but now I see I was under a delusion and am going back to my literature. In fact I have never ceased contributing to literary work, which I regard as the aim of my life. Cinema is only what pleaderships might have meant for me, only healthier.

(7) I have never been to jail. I am not a man of action. My writings have several times offended power, one or two of my books were proscribed.

(8) I believe in social evolution, our object being to educate public opinion. Revolution is the failure of

saner methods. My ideal society is one giving equal opportunities to all. How that stage is to be reached except by evolution. It is the people's character that is the deciding factor. No social system can flourish, unless we are individually uplifted. What fate a revolution may lead us to is doubtful. It may lead us to worse forms of dictatorship, denying all personal liberty. I do want to overhaul, but not destroy. If I had some prescience and knew that destruction would lead us to heaven I would not mind destroying even.

(9) Divorce is common among the proletariat. It is only in so-called higher classes where this problem has assumed a serious shape. Marriage even at its best is a sort of compromise and surrender. If a couple mean to be happy, they must be ready to make allowances. While there are people who can never be happy even under the best of circumstances. In Europe and America divorces are not uncommon, in spite of all courtship and free intercourse. One of the couple must be ready to bend, male or female, does not matter. I refuse that only males are to be blamed. There are cases where ladies create trouble, fancy grievances. When it is not a certainty that divorce will cure our nuptial evils, I don't want to fasten this on society. Of course there are cases when a divorce becomes a necessity. But 'misfit' is in my opinion nothing but fastidiousness. Divorce without any provision for the poor wife. This demand is only made by morbid individualism. There is no place for it in a society based on equality.

(10) Formerly I believed in a supreme deity, not as a result of thinking, but simply as a traditional belief. That belief is being shattered. Of course there is some hand behind universe, but I don't think it has anything to do with human affairs, just as it has nothing to do with the affairs of ants or flies, or mosquitoes. The importance which we have given to our own selves has no justification.

I hope that will be sufficient for the present. Not being an English scholar, I may have failed to express what I wished to say, but I can't help it.

Yours truly
(Sd.) P. CHAND

Letter No. 2

Bombay, III, Esplanade Road
Benares 'Hans' Office

7-9-1935

My dear Indar Nath Ji,

Now I must answer your queries.

(1) My impressions of my home as a child are just the ordinary, neither very happy nor very depressing. I lost my mother while I was eight. Previous to that my recollections are very hazy, watching my languishing mother who was just as affectionate, and when occasion arose, just as stern as all good mothers are.

(2) I started writing in Urdu weeklies, then monthlies. Writing to me was simply a hobby. I never dreamt that ultimately I shall be an author. I was a government servant and wrote in my leisure hours. For novels I had an insatiable hunger, devouring whatever came in my way, without any judicious or critical selection. My first article was printed in 1901, and the first book in 1903. The writings brought nothing except satisfaction of vanity. At first I wrote of contemporary events, then character sketches of our present and past heroes. In 1907 I began to write short stories in Urdu and encouraged by success continued. In 1914 my stories were translated by others and appeared in Hindi magazines. Then I took up Hindi and began to write in *Saraswatī* then my 'Sevasadan' appeared and I gave up my job and launched on my literary independent career.

(3) No, I have had no love affair. Life was so engrossing and bread winning was such a tough job that it left no scope for romances. They were some petty affairs of a very universal type and I cannot call them love affairs.

(4) My ideal of a woman is sacrifice, service, purity, all rolled into one. Sacrifice without end, service always ungrudging and purity to that of Caesar's wife beyond reproach.

(5) My married life has nothing of romance. It is just the common type. My first wife died in 1904. She was an unfortunate woman, not at all good looking,

and although not satisfied with her I pulled on uncomplainingly just all traditional husbands are. When she died I married a 'Bal Vidhwa' and am fairly happy with her. She has picked up some literary taste and sometimes writes stories. She is a fearless, bold, uncompromising, sincere lady, amenable to a fault and awfully impulsive. She joined the N. Coop. movement and went to jail. I am happy with her, not claiming what she cannot give. You cannot bend her, though she might break.

(6) Well, life has been always to me work, work, work. Even when I was in government service I devoted my whole time to literary pursuits. I find pleasure in work. There are moments of depression when money trouble stares, otherwise I am quite satisfied with my lot, got more than I deserve. Financially I am a failure, do not know business and am never above wants. I was never a journalist but circumstances forced me to become one and I have lost in journalism almost all I earned in letters, not much after all.

(7) Plots I always weave with a view to bring out what is beautiful and manly in human characters. It is a complicated process, sometimes inspired by a person, or by an incident or by a dream, but I must have some psychological basis for my story. I am always open to suggestions by friends.

(8) The majority of my characters are drawn from real life though they are sufficiently veiled. Unless a character has some basis in reality, it is shadowy, uncer-

tain, and unconvincing.

(9) I am a believer in regular work like Romain Rolland.

(10) Yes, my 'Godan' is shortly going to the press. This is approximately 600 pages.

Yours truly
(Sd.) P. CHAND

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