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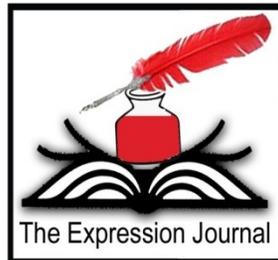


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**SEARCH FOR NEW CANON IN INDIAN WRITERS:
TAGORE, PREMCHAND, MULK RAJ ANAND AND PREM CHAND**

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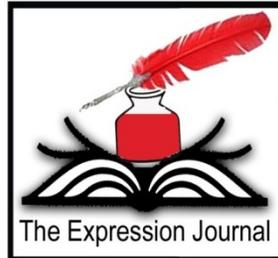
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Abstract

The term *literary canon* is the recognition of a body of essential and authoritative writings. It is constituted of a body of works that are highly valued by scholars and others because they have greater aesthetic value. Canon is not a body of writings that is 'correct', but it is a body of writings endorsed as most worth reading. This paper is a critical attempt to analyse the making of a new canon in Indian Writings of English through the works of Tagore, Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand and Prem Chand. Subsequent to years after 1835, English education strengthened the renaissance movement in India and gave rise to a rational and contemplative attitude among writers. Now Indian mind became more conscious of the flaws and evils that were prevalent in their own society and had nearly deprived it of its creative vigour and dynamism. The Indian canon laid its foundation amidst the Indian freedom movement and had little to do with what was happening in the European cultural-literary world.

Keywords

Canon, Hegemony, Identity, Tagore, Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Prem Chand.



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Faustus, these books, thy wit, and our experience,
Shall make all nations to canonize us.

Marlowe, Doctor Faustus I-i

The concept of a 'literary canon' outlines a long history of differing interpretations and debates. Wendell V. Harris in his review of *Canons and Consequences: Reflections on the Ethical Force of Imaginative Ideals, and: The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Literary Idea* discusses that in the early church the debate was "over the constitution of the New Testament and its relation to the Old". During medieval times the struggle was among "churchmen over the degree and mode of incorporating pagan writings into school curricula." In the late nineteenth century it jumped "over the inclusion of vernacular literature in the curricula of Oxford and Cambridge." And in the twentieth century the debate turned "over the inclusion of American literature into the English major, and a little later over the inclusion of contemporary literature in the university curriculum." Except "the formation of the Biblical canon", the primary question was to form an effective canon for school curriculum for a purpose. These purposes varied from "the transmission of the correct theological position" to "the production of Christian gentlemen", from "the training of the mental powers" to the ingraining "of a common cultural tradition", from "the provision of universally applicable examples and precepts to the widening of sympathy and understanding through vicarious experience" and "the critique of ideologies." However, there was a common understanding in all periods "that a properly constituted curriculum can indeed achieve those purposes."

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There have been different meanings of the term *Canon* but most of them relate to religion and legal authority. The word *Canon* is derived from a Greek noun κανών "kanon" meaning 'rod' or 'cane', and also 'rule' or 'measure'. As the words suggest, 'rod' or 'cane' came to apply something which is straight and 'rule' or 'measure' means a law or principle. Oxford dictionary describes the *Canon* as "a generally accepted rule, standard or principle by which something is judged." The American Heritage Dictionary offers various definitions of the term *Canon*. In Ecclesiastical terms, it is a "law or code of laws established by a church council" and "The books of the Bible officially accepted as Holy Scripture." But those which seem more applicable here are "the works of a writer that have been accepted as authentic" and "a basis for judgment; a standard or criterion" and also "A group of literary works that are generally accepted as representing a field."

The word *Canon* was first applied to the Scriptures. According to WebBible encyclopedia, these scriptures contained the principles of religious belief and their practice; and criteria of "doctrine and duty." A book that sought to be considered of canonical authority had to attain a right to stand with the books that include "a revelation of the Divine will". Only "the evidence of the inspired authorship of the book" could achieve that right for it and not any "ecclesiastical authority." The Christian associations possessed all such twenty-seven books that were written and formed one collection that came to be known as New Testament Canon. The term canon was used to denominate a body of religious Christian Laws in the Middle Ages. This meaning is still current. Slowly the term came to be applied to music, to denote a basic rule in musical composition, and to literature, to indicate a given set of ancient and modern 'classics'. There are other meanings of the term which need not interest us here. What interests us more is the understanding of the term 'Literary Canon' and its formation and transformation. Trevor Thornton Ross in his *The Making of the English Literary Canon: from the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century* says,

...the usage of "canon" as a term for a body of writings first developed in relation to the bible, in the fourth century C.E., as an attempt by Church authorities to distinguish "authentic" Scriptures from competing canons that mixed scriptural writings with apocrypha...Yet in its fourth-century usage, "canon" designated a catalogue of authors and not a rule or measure. It may therefore be useful to consider literary canons as lists as much as standards of excellence"

A work is canonized when it enters into the canon and such works or texts that are canonical are termed as literature. Hence canonization is a process by which a text or an author comes to be included in the literary hall of fame. Ross says, "Canons are similarly the products and signs of literate cultures, texts of texts in effect, and they are often advanced by authors eager to call attention to their profession." (Ross, 23) A canonized work acquires a status and certain obvious privileges for itself on officially getting included into the group of literary works that are studied and revered throughout the world. Belonging

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to the canon is a guarantee of high aesthetic quality and bestows social, political, and economic status.

The term *literary canon* is the recognition of a body of essential and authoritative writings. It is constituted of a body of works that are highly valued by scholars and others because they have greater aesthetic value. Canon is not a body of writings that is 'correct', but it is a body of writings endorsed as most worth reading. The process of making a canon has been an integral part of cultural and intellectual life in the First World. A *literary canon* may be composed of the works from the writers of a specific nation, a specific place, or a specific period of time or a specific movement. Normally, the works are organized by "period" such as the Neo-classical period from 1660 to 1785 in England. Thus, a literary canon is recognized as a collection of similar or related literary works that depict the cultural, political and social values of a society. Influential literary critics, scholars and teachers are the people who decide whether a work will be canonized or not. In fact it could be anyone whose views and judgments about a literary work are widely respected. Hence canonization of a work remains a subjective decision and there are no such inflexible rules and regulations for it. Literary canons change constantly because the process of canon formation is determined by cultural and historical changes. It has been commented by critics repeatedly that the works included in the canon reflected the prevalent ideological views of a given epoch. The greatness of a literary work was not constituted objectively but was socially constructed.

Canonical works are taught in the schools and universities as the core curriculum for literary study and hence they become institutionalized over time. Janet Maybin remarks, "The canon can either mean a broad literary intellectual heritage, including a wide range of fact and fiction, or can focus more narrowly on the poetry, fiction and drama which currently constitute the main genres within English literature." Western literary canon included the most established works of Greek and Latin writers including Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, the early thirteen century works of Chaucer, poetry by Edmund Spenser and John Milton, the Renaissance dramas of Marlowe and Shakespeare. It was then succeeded by the Romantic poetry of Wordsworth, Keats and others and the Victorian poems of Arnold and novels by Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Jane Austen and others. T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and William Golding represented the modern period. The canon expanded and American writers like Mark Twain and Hawthorne were added into it, followed by Walt Whitman and Ernest Hemingway. This is a canon well represented by such theoreticians as Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis.

In recent times western criticism has been less oriented towards value and more towards interpreting and analysing the connections between literary texts and society. It started mainly after the introduction of Cultural Studies. The categories of race, gender and class have established a paradigm to analyse both contemporary and past literature. The English literary canon has regularly undergone revision. There has been a lot of breaking

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up of the canon in the present times. It goes along the lines of race, gender, post-colonial nationhood, and the concerns of women, minorities, and Marxist liberals to the forefront of literary study. A re-examination of the European and American literary canons occurred in the 1980s. Scholars who were reluctant to accept changes and new ideas insisted that the classics of British and American literature should not be changed since they constitute the notion of tradition. They wanted to exclude the non-canonical works considering them marginal and not representing any notable literary achievement. On the other hand, the radical critics favoured replacing the classical canon with non-canonical works. However, the majority of critics unanimously advocated keeping the classics along with the inclusion of best literature written by women and minorities.

The ideas of western culture were transported to India along with the British imperialism and almost imposed on it through the 1835 English Education Act which continues to function and flourish even after the independence. The introduction of British education made deep intrusions into the Indian psyche exposing it to an altogether different mode of thinking, feeling and living. It is a fact of Indian history that its exposure to the western culture with its tradition of science, secularism, utilitarianism, and individualism was occasioned by the colonial domination. The projection of the western culture as an advanced culture was a subtle strategy on the part of the colonists to subvert the Indian culture and tradition.

When the crosscurrents of life brought the Indian and the English together, it was obvious that the two should have acted and interacted with each other. Starting with the economic and the political partnership between the two, the connection later spread to cultural and religious levels too. And out of this accident of history was born what we have today known by the name of the Indian-English novel. Many writers of the English novel in India freely imbibed European culture for a major part of their lives. It was natural that the products of the new education system should have been alienated and uprooted from their tradition. But it is interesting to note that in spite of this strong alien influence, they have not been finally and decisively alienated from India. Many of them even have a firsthand knowledge of Sanskrit literature, Hindu scriptures, mythology and folklore and they project this Hindu background quite palpably in their writings.

The present paper is an effort to study the Indian English literary canon since the beginning of the twentieth century. English education strengthened the renaissance movement in India and gave rise to a rational and contemplative attitude among writers. Now Indian mind became more conscious of the flaws and evils that were prevalent in their own society and had nearly deprived it of its creative vigour and dynamism. The Indian canon laid its foundation amidst the Indian freedom movement and had little to do with what was happening in the European cultural-literary world. The writers under study in this paper, Tagore, Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao belong to this period of Indian history. A distinct canon emerged in their works in the intricate process of the

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unfolding of the writer-society dialectic. They contributed towards the forging of a new radical canon in Indian writing. They vociferously articulated in their own individual ways the perspectives that emerged in the different phases of the freedom struggle and produced their own literary canon. The trend that they initiated and pioneered was never a part of the novel writing before and was tremendously followed by their contemporary writers of Indian languages. Other canons that came into existence after the independence and have been taken up in this paper for examination are Feminist canon and Dalit canon. This paper is confined only to these three canons.

The first part of the paper is an attempt to explain theoretically the formation of the Western and Indian literary canon in the context of certain specific developments in the society that in turn take place in the course of history. This paper would discuss in detail the factors that caused the shaping of English canon in general and canon followed by Indian writers in particular. It will also briefly outline the history of Indian English novel and throw light on the major novels that were written before the twentieth century.

The present paper attempts to explore the evolution of Canon in the writings of Tagore and Premchand. Tagore knew that India in early twentieth century was a British colony. A writer was required to keep in mind the socio-political situation and the cultural issues. He was not free to write according to his desire as his counterparts in England or Europe. He could not write tales of magic or romance like D.H Lawrence or Indian writers of nineteenth century. The environment was different and changing. Nationalism, women's role in changing society, modernism and struggle of colonial people against Imperialism was gaining momentum. New radical ideas were also tickling the minds of middle class and young educated people. Tagore symbolizes at the turn of the century a cultural temperament daring enough to investigate contentious issues at the same time evolving itself towards an enriched understanding of complex social scenario unfolding itself in various ways.

Premchand was a contemporary of Tagore, but younger by a score of years (1881-1935). The western education inspired young Indian educated middle class with national consciousness and reform of Hindu orthodoxy. Premchand was a sensitive soul and the changing Indian socio-political scene influenced his writing. Premchand was the first Hindi author to introduce realism in his writings. He pioneered the new form - fiction with a social purpose. He supplemented Gandhiji's work in the political and social fields by adopting his revolutionary ideas as themes for his literary writings. Hence, the second paper shall make an attempt to discover how their works were different in content from the novels of their predecessors. Tagore's *Gora* and *Home and the World* and Premchand's *Godan* are the novels under study in this paper.

The paper also examines the works of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao and try to establish that they further strengthened the trend initiated by Tagore and Premchand. Anand like Premchand was also a committed writer. His Marxian approach quite clearly

narrates the life of oppressed, poor, downtrodden masses of India, suffering inhuman exploitation in whole of the country as a class of people in spite of differences in languages and cultures. Anand's *Coolie* is the novel under study in this paper. The book is highly critical of British rule in India and India's caste system. The plot revolves around a 14 year old boy, Munoo, and his plight due to poverty and exploitation aided by the social and political structures in place. Raja Rao is another great writer of India who writes in English before and after freedom of India. Rao's works are the product of his deep meditation. His *Kanthapura* discusses this problem of Gandhism and common villagers' attitude to Gandhian way of National Movement.

An attempt has been made to look at the Indian female writers and tries to explore the problems and issues in evolving a feminist canon of Indian writers in English. Beginning with the feminist movement in the west this paper further discusses some of the early feminists of India and the major women writers who dug into the feminine psyche and brought to the surface the female world, their issues, fears, hopes, aspirations, perceptions and their speech and silences.

The arguments are followed by a conclusion that establishes that the authors under study have evolved canons in Indian writing in English. They developed their own literary canon and redefined boundaries to ideological and creative words. Their writings bear witness of their intellectual development and reflect a movement that was essentially humanist, nationalist and socialist. The post-colonial writings in India are indebted for its humanistic approach to these writers whose standards of literary expression were remarkably high. Later this canon became the bedrock upon which entire edifice of what is known as Indian literature would rest. The radical nature of the canon evolved by them caught the attention of Indian writers in English and other regional languages and from there emerged a number of female writers and Dalit writers who rejected all sorts of bondage and gave voice to their own traumas and tribulations and evolved their own canons.

From 1860 to till the end of the nineteenth century the novels were written by the writers of Bengal and Madras. These novels were written primarily on social and few on historical issues. From 1864 to 1900 the major novels that were published consists of Ram Krishna Punt's *The Bay of Bengal* (1866), Lal Behari Day's *Govinda Samanta* (1874), Raj Lakshmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Dutt's *Bianca* (1878), Anand Prasad Dutt's *The Indolence* (1878), Kali Krishna Lahiri's *Roshinara* (1881), Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *The Young Zamindar* (1883) and *Shunkur: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (1885), Trailokya Das's *Hirimba's Wedding* (1884), Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Bijoy Chand: An Indian Tale* (1888), Yogendra Nath Chattopadhyaya's *The Girl and Her Tutor* (1891), Krupabai Sathianandan's *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Child Wife* (1894) and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895), Khetrupal Chakravarti's *Sarala and Hingana* (1895), and Lt. Suresh Biswas: *His Life and Adventures* (1900).

The twentieth century had seen the emergence of more significant novelists and Romesh Chunder Dutt was one them. "He was perhaps advised by Bankim Chandra to write his novels in Bengali, but he translated two of these into English (*The Lake of Palms*, 1902, and *The Slave-Girl of Agra*, 1909). Three of his novels, *Todar Mull*, *Sivaji* and *Pratap Singh* have been translated into English by his son, Ajoy Dutt." *The Lake of Palms* depicts Bengali life in the nineteenth century and *The Slave Girl* is set in the Mughal times and portrays the life in seventeenth century Agra.

Other major novels of twentieth century till 1930 are: T. Ramakrishna Pillai's *Padmini* (1903) and *A Dive for Death* (1911), K.K. Sinha's *Sanjogita* or *The Princess of Aryavarta* (1903); L.B. Pal's *A Glimpse of Zanana Life in Bengal* (1904); Sarath Kumar Ghosh's *Verdict of the Gods* (1906) and *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909); A. Madhavaiah's *Thillai Govindan* (1916), *Satyananda* (1909), *Clarinda* (1915) *Nanda, the Pariah Who Overcame Caste* (1923) and *Lt. Panju-A Modern Indian* (1924) ; S.M. Mitra's *Hindupur: A Peep Behind the Indian Unrest: An Anglo Indian Romance* (1909); S.B. Banerjee's *The Adventures of Mrs. Russel* (1909).

Sardar Jogendra Singh, a Punjabi writer, wrote *Nur Jahan, The Romance of an Indian Queen* (1909), a historical novel *Nasrin, An Indian Medley* (1911), *Kamala* (1925) was a realistic novel and *Kamini* (1931), Bal Krishna's *The Love of Kusuma: An Eastern Love Story* (1910), M.M. Munshi's *Beauty and Joy* (1914), Srinivasa Rau's *Varanasi: The Portuguese Ambassador* (1914), T. K. Gopal Panikkar's *Storm and Sunshine* (1916), C. Parthasarthy's *The Wheel of Destiny* (1920), K.S. Venkataramani's *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927), V.V. Chintamani's *Vedantam: The Clash of Traditions* (1928), Chinna Durai's *J.Sugirtha:An Indian Novel* (1929), A.S.P. Ayyar's *Baladitya* (1929), Ram Narain's *The Tigress of the Harem* (1930).

Indian nationalism refers to the consciousness & expression of political, social, religious & ethnic influences that help mould Indian national consciousness. Indian nationalism describes the many underlying forces that moulded the Indian independence movement & strongly continue to influence the politics of India, as well as being the heart of many contrasting ideologies that have caused ethnic & religious conflict in Indian society. The term 'Indian Independence Movement' is diffused, incorporating various national and regional campaigns, agitations and efforts of both non-violent and militant philosophy and involved a wide spectrum of Indian political organizations, philosophies, and movements which had the common aim of ending the British colonial authority as well as other colonial administrations in the Indian subcontinent. The Indian Freedom Movement generated an immense energy. Indian writers strongly asserted the concerns of freedom, national identity, social equality and democracy. The impact of Western education also brought about a kind of national awareness which gradually became the militant nationalism of the novels. The Indian-English writer's pre-occupation with political issues and polemics coincided with an increase in national activities in India during the 1920s,

30s and 40s. The pre-independence novels outlined and advocated Indian aspirations for freedom and independence from the Raj. Literature changed in its contents in accordance with the change of emphasis on the particular aspect of nationalism. The novels of this period reflected the spirit of the age as well as inspired the people to march ahead on the path of freedom. The national movement and Indian English fiction marched hand in hand, seeking sustenance from each other.

Mahatma Gandhi can be rightly termed as the maker of modern India. The arrival of Gandhi on national scene during 1920's was the opening of new chapter of political movement and consciousness. Indians started to fight against the British Empire on the moral plane. The writers of different languages in those days were mostly the persons who had come directly under Gandhian influence or those who had even taken part in the freedom movements, or they were highly influenced by his ideals. Their writings were immensely burdened with Gandhian idealism, lifestyle, his teachings, and anti-colonial stands. The Gandhian impact on contemporary Indian literature has brought about results at various levels, and in various directions. Gandhiji gave new strength and new confidence to Indian languages that suffered contempt, neglect, indifference, and disgrace for a long time. Gandhiji insisted on high thinking and simple living which was reflected and highlighted by the literary English authors of the time, who in their novels and short stories, portrayed the real picture of the the-then society from various sides, thereby presenting the influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns, letting us a scope to probe how Gandhiji's ways of developmental communication created effects on human lives bringing a sea change in their thoughts, views and living.

The writers under study in this thesis, Tagore, Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, belong to this period of Indian history. A distinct canon emerged in their works in the intricate process of the unfolding of the writer-society dialectic. They contributed towards the forging of a new radical canon in Indian writing. In the coming chapters we will explore that how their writings, under specific historical, social, cultural and political conditions played a significant role in canon-making.

Rabindranath Tagore: Shaping the Canon

Rabindranath Tagore is a prominent figure, not only in the literature of Bengal but in the history of Indian English literature. He occupies a substantial place in the history of India with his receiving of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913. Tagore is one of the very first modern writers in India who started writing on the issues that had never been looked upon before. "Tagore bridged the gulf between the old world and the new, and in this way he came to be for us a symbol of real modernism in India" (Anand 81). He was "the inaugurator of the heightened consciousness of our age, even as he was its product" (Anand, Tagore-Reconciler of East and West 63). As a matter of fact Tagore was the only one writer whose writings had raised the questions that came to the surface in the late nineteenth century. Tagore was a prominent writer of decolonization. He had widely

written on the issues related to 'nation' and 'nationalism'. He presented new ways of coming to terms with reality and its resolution in common day to day life of society. He wrote both transcendent and social realism themes in Bengali which made his contributions to the Indian literary canon highly potent and extremely substantial. Tagore had been exposed to literature that many Indian writers had not experienced. He was a globalized artist because his works addressed the conditions of not only Indians but also of the people all over the world.

"Rabindranath's forerunners- Madhusudan, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim- had given Bengali poetry, prose and fiction a great start among the modern Indian languages. It was an atmosphere of expectancy, and Rabindranath readily breathed this air of infinite possibility" (Iyengar 100). Though Rabindranath hadn't had any proper schooling yet his works show an outstanding influence of great Eastern as well as Western culture. "Tagore was favourably placed to receive both the poetic and literary influence of the classical tradition and Western learning" (Anand, Tagore and Indian Renaissance 81). He had widely read the literature of West and "the English Romantics- Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth- and the great Victorians, Tennyson and Browning, exercised a potent influence on him, and he admired also Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne" (Iyengar 100). In a letter to Thomas Sturge Moore he wrote, "We look for your literature to bring to us the thundering life and blood of the West" (Tagore 1914). In the same letter he also acknowledged that their literature inspires us for the need of reality in life and art. He further wrote, "The untiring hold upon life which you never lose, the definiteness of your aims and the positive reliance you have upon things present before you, inspire us with a strong sense of reality which is so much needed both for the purposes of art and of life" This amalgamation of the East and the West shaped his thoughts which he exhibited in his works in a significant way.

Tagore discarded the conventional ways of expression in literature and gave way to radical themes. "His technique was modern, a great advance on that of the earlier master, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, whose pioneer work had made Bengali fiction come of age" (Mukerjee). He paid his attention to the issues that colonial India faced. Such issues had never captured any writer's interest before him. Mulk Raj Anand remarks:

He did not foreshadow the new India as Pushkin prophesied the Russian resurgence. But he was Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali, growing out of the renaissance inaugurated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and emerging from a decadent, ritual-ridden, revivalist society. His choices were different from those of his predecessors as also of his contemporaries in the West. He wrote from the exuberance of rhythmic impulses, after asking himself: 'Who am I? Where have I come from? And where am I going?' (Anand, Rabindranath Tagore in Retrospect 10)

Indian fiction before him was unelaborated and distant from the political happenings. They were devoid of broader issues of national as well as human life. The

major themes were position of women, marital maladjustment, plight of the peasants, social issues and decline of the old aristocracy. Early novelists “merely embellished the life of the feudal courts, giving delight and helping to pass the tedious hours.” (Anand, Tagore-Reconciler of East and West 63). The stories of mythical love, romanticism, nature and tales of Indian kings and their heroism and bravery filled the pages of early novels. But Tagore did not “content himself with writing panegyrics to the Indian princes or the English rulers of his time, but he encompassed the world from the vision of the poet seeking a certain harmony in the whole of human experience” (63). He depicted “the total image of life” (63) into his works. His novels are a deviation from the old technique. Dr. Srikumar Banerjee has pointed out:

It was Rabindranath who, on account of his extraordinary foresight and intuition had realised the utter inadequacy of romantic novels and had removed it from its soft marshy basis to place it on the solid and hard grounds of realism. He brought a change in the facts of Bengali novels and turned them from the quest after the unknown into a fine and romantic analysis of the daily life. (qtd. In Ghosh 95)

He deviated from the abstract morality and ethics and articulated his thoughts regarding the turmoil that enfolded India from the late nineteenth century onwards. “He cultivated the ‘enthusiasm for National Freedom’, which had not, then, quite inherited in our country” (Anand, Tagore-Reconciler of East and West 68). Dr. Radhakrishnan says that, “Tagore calls for a profound revolution in our modes of thought and behaviour” (xxiv). He wrote about the common individuals, their life and problems, their hopes and failures. The ordinary men and women were made decision makers. “In his novels, the main interest centres round the detailed analysis of the most commonplace incidents of ordinary life and their chief attraction lies in the subtle changes of emotion and the struggle between different instincts. For this reason, the originality of Rabindranath in the art of writing novels was first manifested in his introduction of realism.” (Ghosh 95)

The women characters were given equal importance to men in his novels. They were no longer submissive victims of male chauvinism and portrayed as emancipated women. Hiren Mukerjee remarks, “His themes were vital, having to do especially with the impact of the west on Indian life, and his individuals, in particular the women do not suffer from haziness on account of the type into which they are moulded” (81). Tagore made an incessant effort in his novels to dig out as much as he could of the truth of social life. His craft was meaningful and his humanism was always effulgent.

Premchand- A Humanist and Nationalist

The growth of Hindi literature had been a fundamental factor in modern Indian renaissance and Nationalism. The tradition of storytelling is as old as the Hindu scriptures but the Hindi fiction took its form in the last decades of the 19th century. Pandit Shraoba Ram Philauri’s *Bhagyavati* and Lala Sri Niwas Das’ *Pariksha –Guru* are considered to be the earliest novels in Hindi which were published in 1882. Many writers after these novels

came to the forefront and wrote social and historical novels and thenceforth the foundation for the growth of Hindi novel was laid. The Hindi novelists before Premchand were highly influenced by the reform movements of the nineteenth century. Daya Nand Saraswati established the Arya Samaj in 1875 that rigorously fought against the social evils like caste system, child marriage, idolatry etc. and favoured widow-remarriage. Many people became his followers because his thoughts were based on the Vedic literature and at the same time many opposed him as they feared his ideas were destructive for the conservative Hindu traditions, while there were also a few people who had faith in Sanatan Dharma but preferred some reforms. Arya Samaj and these three different attitudes related to it determined the first phase of Hindi fiction.

The novels of the pre-Premchand period that is generally considered to be from 1882-1918 are social, historical, detective and Tilismi in nature. Balkrishna Bhatt's *Nutan Brahamchari* (1886) is the story of a young man who changes the life of a dacoit. Mehta Lajja Ram Sharma's *Dhurta Rasik Lal* (1899) throws light on the evils of alcohol consumption in the society and his *Swatantra Ram and Partantra Laxmi* (1899) records the eastern and western cultural conflict. Radha Krishna Das' *Nissahaya Hindu* appeals for the banning of cow slaughter. Pandit Devi Prasad Sharma Upadhyay's *Sunder Sarojini* (1893) cites the exploitation of Indian labourers in foreign countries. Ayodhya Singh Upadhyay Hariaudh, who was a renowned Hindi poet, had written two novels. His first novel *Theth Hindi ka Thath* (1899) depicts the wickedness of poorly matched marriages. It is a story of Devnandan and Devbala who failed to marry each other due to the prevalent conservatism and orthodoxy in society. His second novel *Adhkhila Phool* (1907) portrays the profligacy of zamindars.

Kishori Lal Goswami was a major writer of the pre-Premchand period who wrote more than 65 social and historical novels. He is considered the first historical novelist of Hindi literature. He was a staunch supporter of Sanatan Dharma and represented the superiority of Hindu Dharma in his novels and opposed the teaching of western literature. His social novels portray the dominant evils in the then society like drinking, exploitation of widows, prostitution etc. His historical novels depicted the stories of Amar singh Rathore, Akbar, Baji Rao Peshwa etc. *Pranayani Parinaya* (1887), *Triveni* (1888), *Swargiya Kusum* (1889), *Lavanglata* (1890), *Lilavati* (1901), *Raj Kumari* (1902), *Tara Va Chatra Kul Kamalini* (1902), *Mallika Devi Va Bang Sarojini* (1905), *Chapla Va Navya Samaj Chitra* (1903), *Kanak Kusum* (1904), *Madhvi Madhav* (1916) are some of his most famous novels. Krishna Lal Verma's *Champa* (1916) and *Radha and Double Bibi* show a deep impact of Arya Samaj. These novels highlight the importance of female education and denounced the social evils.

Other than Goswami there were some other historical novelists who gave a considerable contribution to the genre. Ganga Prasad Gupta's *Nurjehan* (1902) and *Hammir* (1905) ; Jai Ram Das Gupta's *Kashmir Patan* (1907), *Nawabi Paristan* (1909), and *Malka*

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Chand Bibi (1909) ; Mathura Prasad Sharma's *Nurjehan Begam* (1905) ; Baldeo Prasad Mishra's *Anarkali* (1900), *Panipat* (1902), and *Prithvi Raj Chauhan* (1902); Brij Nandan Sahai's *Lal Chin* (1916); Mishra Bandhu's *Vir Mani* (1917) are significant historical novels of this period.

Apart from social and historical novels, the other forms that became highly popular amongst people were *Tilismi* and Detective novels. Devaki Nandan Khatri pioneered the form of *Tilismi* novels and Gopal Ram Gahmari got fame for his detective novels. The most important *Tilismi* novels by Khatri are: *Chandra Kanta* (1892), *Chandra Kanta Santati* (1896) and *Bhootnath* (1906) etc.

Thus, we find that Hindi fiction before Premchand was devoid of nationalistic feelings and did not depict the miserable plight of the common man in society. They did not give voice to the aspirations of people. In some novels, the love for the country was observed but the opposition to British rule was not there. Most of the writers had written about the social evils. They supported some of the reforms but within the boundaries of their orthodox views.

Premchand, a true representative of his epoch, was younger to Tagore by a score of twenty years. He had no intellectual background like his great contemporary Tagore. Arya Samaj and the national movement inspired him the most. Premchand was a young man fired by the idealism of questioning, rejection and change. He was a very sensitive soul whose writings were influenced by the changing Indian socio-political scene. The Indian society then was dominated by feudal organization, a developing capitalist organization and most importantly the slavery and exploitation by the British imperialistic rule. Premchand lived and wrote in this time when people were struggling with this threefold roll of feudalism, capitalism and colonialism. Premchand's entry, at this juncture, into Hindi fiction is, from political angle, of the same significance as that of Mahatma Gandhi's in the front rank of the Indian National Congress. His is one of the most powerful authentic accounts of National Movement. He depicted life of rural India's people, their aspirations, struggles, victories and defeats. He welcomed Gandhi's entrance not with curiosity or bewilderment but with joy and enthusiasm. The freedom movement gave birth to realism in Indian literature in general and Hindi literature in particular. Premchand and his other contemporary realistic writers raised their voice to oppose the feudalism, capitalism and imperialism. As we discussed above that Hindi Novel before Premchand was dominated by the tales of imagination, mystery and mythology. Now what goes to Premchand's credit is that he took out Hindi fiction from the world of fantasies and brought realism into the fictional world of the novels. Premchand was influenced by the European realistic novels. He gave Hindi fiction an entirely new dimension and used it as a vehicle for conveying people's struggle for independence and for a social life free of conventional prejudices. He gave voice to people's feelings on a higher plane in an artistic manner with an added newness and significance.

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Premchand has evolved the genre of the serious short story and the serious novel in both Urdu and Hindi language. He, like Tagore, single-handedly elevated fiction from a morass of directionless romantic histories to an upper level of realistic accounts. He has remained an unexcelled master of realistic short stories and novels in both languages.

Premchand was born a few years before the formation of Indian National Congress. The birth of Congress had been indirectly evident of the empowered sense of freedom in the country. And such an environment, quite obviously, left a deep impression on Premchand's psyche. The period of Premchand's literary maturity was the same when Swadeshi Movement in Bengal was on full swing. That movement was such a strong movement that it crossed the geographical boundaries of Bengal and reached the whole country and affected the sense and sensibility, at least, of educated masses, if not the whole population. While the congress had still been stuck in a quagmire of legislative doctrines, there were some other mediums as well in which country's sense of liberty was finding its way for expression. Such mediums are not always so powerful that could change the happenings, but they slowly and surely leave their imprints and give contribution in the making of history.

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