The Interface Between Literature and Ideology in Post-Independence India: Hindi Progressive Novels of the 1950s

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Abstract

This thesis studies Hindi Progressive novels of the 1950s and explores different ways of how literature reflects and/or produces a set of recognized ideas or principles that constitute 'progressivism' in the context of Hindi literature. Though the All-India Progressive Writers' Association almost ceased working in the 1950s, Progressive writers continued to produce Hindi novels that conveyed progressive messages. The ideological orientation of these novels incurred the accusation that Progressive novels are but political propaganda and are, therefore, of little literary value. This thesis, instead, considers this corpus in a more positive and fruitful way by drawing upon Susan R. Suleiman's definition and formulation of the 'ideological novel' (*roman à thèse*) as a generic paradigm and on specific narratological techniques, in order to critically examine both the ideological and aesthetic elements in Progressive novels.

This thesis examines seven Hindi Progressive novels of the 1950s written by established writers like Nagarjun and Yashpal, and by younger generation writers including Amrit Rai, Rangey Raghav and Bhairavprasad Gupta. It explores how the novels narrate the topics of becoming progressive, fighting for progressive values, the critique of the Congress regime, and approaching the people. *Bīj*, *Balchanmā* and *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* are Progressive *Bildungsromans,* in which a diverse typology of potentially progressive individuals (young students, agricultural labourers and even landlords) become politically awakened through what Suleiman calls the 'structure of apprenticeship'. I then draw upon Suleiman's 'structure of confrontation' to discuss how *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* stages confrontations between landlords and zamindars, secularists and communalists, and offers imaginary resolutions to these conflicts. *Hāthī ke Dānt* and *Jhūṭhā Sach* generate a narrative critique of the post-independent Congress politics through their narrators and character-system. Finally, the thesis focuses on *Huzūr* and *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* to explore how Progressive writers experiment with shifts in narrative perspectives to clarify their position vis-à-vis the oppressed people.

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Contents

Notes on Translation and Transliteration

All translations from Hindi are my own, unless otherwise stated. For the transliteration of the nagari script, I have followed the system used in R.S. McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*. The full system is listed below.

अ a आ ā इ i ई ī उ u ऊ ū ऋ ṛ

ए e ऐ ai ओ o औ au

क k क़ q ख kh ख़ kh ग g ग़ gh घ gh ङ ṅ

च c छ ch ज j ज़ z झ jh ञ ñ

ट ṭ ठ ṭh ड ḍ ड़ ṛ ढ ḍh ढ़ ṛh ण ṇ

त t थ th द d ध dh न n

प p फ ph फ़ f ब b भ bh म m

य y र r ल l व v

श ś ष ṣ स s

ह h

ँ ṁ (for chandrabindu nasalization)

ं ṃ for anusvara

Introduction

> What I mean by *progress*, is the condition which produces in us the *resolve and energy to act*, that which makes us realize the unhappy state we are in, the internal and external causes which have brought us to this wretched and lifeless state, and that which makes us strive to remove them. … The only literature that will pass our test is a literature which instils in us *dynamism* and *restlessness*.[1] – Premchand

> The literary text is not the 'expression' of ideology, nor is ideology the 'expression' of social class. The text, rather, is a certain *production* of ideology.[2] – Terry Eagleton

In April 1936, the first All-India Progressive Writers' Association (hereafter AIPWA) conference marked the institutional beginning of Progressive literature. Its main aim, assumed in the milestone presidential address delivered by the towering Hindi litterateur Premchand, is to serve the society. To be more precise, it should convey a social message, make readers socially conscious and empower them to take action to change the present society. After six all-India conferences in the following two decades,

[1] Premchand, 'The Aim of Literature' ('Sāhitya kā uddeśya'), 1936, translated by Francesca Orsini, in *The Oxford India Premchand*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, Appendix. Italics are mine.
[2] Terry Eagleton, 'Towards a Science of the Text', in *Criticism & Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*, London: Verso, 1976, p. 64. Italics are original.

the AIPWA almost ceased working by the early 1950s and several of its prominent writers either were expelled or left the association, due to both the partition and the ideological disputes within the association.[3] In spite of this, Progressive literature continues and the number of Hindi Progressive novels, in particular, increased significantly.[4] Here, I use 'Progressive novels' with the capital letter P not in the broad sense in which we can say that any representation of social backwardness and political subordination, of social reform and nationalist urge, expresses progressive ideas, but in a more narrow sense in which Progressive novels refer explicitly to the work written by those writers who actively engaged themselves in the AIPWA, as shown later in this section. This thesis focuses on Hindi Progressive novels of the 1950s and explores how the novels reflect, express and produce progressive ideas even after the association had been defunct. This study helps re-evaluate the Progressive literature which has been unfairly neglected and denounced, reconsiders the relationship between Progressive literature and its institution, and finally reflects on a general issue of the relationship between literature and ideology.

Literature Review and Research Questions

My study emerges out of three broad questions. The first is about the absence of Hindi

[3] See for example, Karnasingh Chauhan, *Pragativādī Āndolan kā Ālekhātmak Itihās*, Dillī: Nehā Prakāśan, 1985; Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism: The Progressive Writers' Movement in South Asia, 1932-56*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2009; Carlo Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970: The Progressive Episode*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017; Rakhshanda Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change: A Literary History of the Progressive Writers' Movement in Urdu*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[4] Roughly, there are approximately five or six Hindi Progressive novels (written by activist-writers of the PWA) in the 1940s, including *Viṣāṭh Maṭh* (1943) and *Gharauṃde* (1946) by Rangey Raghav, *Śole* (1946) and *Maśāl* (1948) by Bhairavprasad Gupta, *Ratināth kī Chāchī* (1948) by Nagarjun, and *Manuṣya ke Rūp* (1949) by Yashpal. The number increased to at least 20 in the 1950s. See Gopal Rai, *Hindī Upanyās kā Itīhās*, Naī Dillī: Rājkamal Prakāśan, 2005, pp. 196-242.

Progressive literature of the 1950s from literary histories. While the Progressive literature of the 1930s and 1940s has been largely recognized as a new trend of social realism following *Chāyāvād*, a literary trend that stresses the individual sensibility, its continuation in the post-independent period is oddly absent.[5] Rather, post-independent literary histories and studies of post-independent Hindi literature have mainly focused on the parallel trends, such as regionalist (*āṁchalik*) literature[6] or modernity and alienation in the New Short Story (*Nayī Kahānī*),[7] creating the impression that Hindi Progressive literature petered out or became historically insignificant. By contrast, recent monographs by Rakshanda Jalil (2014) and Carlo Coppola (2017) focus on Progressive literature in Urdu between the 1930s to 1950s, and in Coppola's case to the 1970s.[8] Priyamvada Gopal's study (2005) accentuates a gender perspective, showing how politics of body, sexuality and feminism in Urdu short stories produce literary radicalism of Progressive writers and association.[9] By contrast, very little research has been done on Hindi Progressive writings. This begs the questions: what happened to the once flourishing Hindi Progressive literature, and how did it develop in the 1950s?

The second question relates to how Progressive literature is discussed. Progressive

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[5] Many Hindi literary histories, either by contemporaneous scholars, such as Hazariprasad Dvivedi's *Hindī Sāhitya: Uskā Udbhav aur Vikās* (Dillī: Attarchanda Kapūr eṇḍa Sanza, 1955), or later critics, such as Nagendra's *Hindī Sāhitya kā Itihās* (Dillī: Mayūr Paperbacks, 2007), and Bacchan Singh's *Ādhunik Hindī Sāhitya kā Itihās* (Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 2010), discuss pre-indepedence Progressive literature.

[6] Some articles focus on the language and form in Phanishwarnath Renu's *Mailā Āṁchal*, 1954), such as Kathryn Hansen's 'Renu's Regionalism: Language and Form' (in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1981, pp. 273-294) explores the innovations of a regional but mixed language and song texts interspersed with narrative in the novel. Some concentrate on the reconstruction of the region in a way Renu represented from a perspective of culture study, such as Sadan Jha's 'Visualising a Region: Phaniswarnath Renu and the archive of the 'regional-rural' in the 1950s' (in *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, Vol. 49, 2012, pp. 1-35).

[7] See Gordon Roadarmel's 'The Theme of Alienation in the Modern Hindi Short Story', Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1969; Annie Montaut's 'The Poetics and Stylistics of Nirmal Verma', Summerhill, Shimla IIAS, 2012, pp. 9-27.

[8] Coppola's *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970*, published on the basis of his Ph. D. thesis completed in 1975, centres poetry by exploring in depth five Urdu poets, while Jalil's book involves prose chronologically.

[9] Priyamvada Gopal, *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence*, Oxon: Routledge, 2005.

writers in the post-independent period include both well-established names like Yashpal (1903-1976) and Nagarjun (1911-1998), and younger authors like Bhairavprasad Gupta (1918-1990), Amrit Rai (1921-1996) and Rangey Raghav (1923-1962). All of them published major literary works in the 1950s, yet so far all the academic attention has concentrated on the diatribes within the AIPWA, and on how the Communist Party of India (CPI) marginalized or expelled non-hardline members. Sudhi Pradhan's three volumes of archival documents from 1936 to 1964 (published in 1979, 1982, 1985) include manifestoes and speeches of leading Progressive writer-critics.[10] Talat Ahmad's study in English (2009) and Hindi scholarship by Karnasingh Chauhan (1985) and Rekha Avasthi (2012) focus on the institutional history of the AIPWA and on the ideological disputes on issues like the national language, political alignments, literary aesthetics, and so on.[11] Chauhan in particular offers insights into the dynamics and tensions within the association, suggesting that upon independence, some Progressive writers failed to resist the temptation of high positions or honours awarded by the government, left the PWA, and accused their former colleagues of being 'parochialist' (*sankīrṇatāvādī*), 'CPI hangers-on' (*kamyunisṭa pārṭī kā pichalaggū*) and 'Soviet devotees' (*soviyat bhakta*).[12] Gradually, two groups formed within the association: the

[10] Sudhi Pradhan, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India, Volume I: Chronicles and Documents (1936-1947)*, Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1979; *Marxist Cultural Movement in India, Volume II: Chronicles and Documents (1947-1958)*, Calcutta: Navana, 1982; and *Marxist Cultural Movement in India, Volume III: Chronicles and Documents (1943-1964)*, Calcutta: Pustak Bipani, 1985. The first and half of the third volumes contain the documents related to the PWA, while the second and another half of the third volumes include those of the Indian People's Theatre Association.

[11] Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*; Chauhan, *Hindī meṁ Pragativādī Āndolan kā Ālekhātmak Itihās*; and Rekha Avasthi, *Pragativād aur Samānāntar Sāhitya: San 36 se San 51 tak ke Sāhitya kā Dvandvātmak Viśleṣaṇ*, Naī Dillī: Rājkamal Prakāśan, 2012. See also Namwar Singh, 'Pragativād', in his *Ādhunik Sāhitya kī Pravṛttiyaṁ*, 2001. Singh also acknowledges the split among Progressive writers, 'This disillusionment [of independence] produced much bitterness which resulted in the fact that many writers deviated from the original way. By contrast, some writers remained firm in confronting these issues with courage.' (p. 70)

[12] Chauhan, *Hindī meṁ Pragativādī Āndolan kā Ālekhātmak Itihās*, p. 121.

moderate Progressives led by Shivdan Singh Chauhan, Amrit Rai, Ram Gopal Singh and Rangey Raghav, believed it necessary to transform the PWA into a wider platform and end CPI control. The radical group, led by hard-liner Ramvilas Sharma, insisted that the CPI guide the PWA. According to Chauhan, Sharma was criticized for being 'narrow-minded' and 'dogmatic' by his opponents.[13] However, beyond a full chronicle of these debates, Chauhan does not analyse the fundamental reasons for the divergence. By reading Progressive writers in the framework of the association and its debates, scholarship ends up focusing more on the association rather than on the literary works. But can we—and this is my second question—write a history of Progressive writers focusing not on the association but rather on their literary works?

My third question regards the accusation of ideological literature as propaganda. Hindi Progressive literature was harshly denounced at the time for being a tool of Communist propaganda and thereby lacking literary quality. According to contemporary writer and critic Dharmavir Bharati,

> Hindi Progressive writers did not attempt to grasp the artistic elements of literature at all, the only thing they did was to reject *Chāyāvād*. … There is no originality and creativity in their techniques. … Due to their narrow minds and artlessness, there is neither progress in today's Indian Progressive literature, nor literariness.[14]

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[13] Ibid., pp. 139-140.

[14] Dharmavir Bharati, *Pragativād: Ek Samīkṣā*, Prayāg: Sāhitya Bhavan Limiṭeḍ, 1949, pp. 127-132. The original texts read: 'हिंदी के प्रगतिवादी लेखकों ने सिवा छायावाद के विरुद्ध लेख लिखने के, कला के तत्व को समझने का ज़रा भी प्रयास नहीं किया, टेकनीक को सम्हाले की समझदारी नहीं दिखाई। ... हिंदी प्रगतिवादी लेखक की टेकनीक में न मौलिकता है न नवीनता। …

Admittedly, some Progressive novels overemphasized ideological message at the expense of aesthetic elements. For example, Rangey Raghav's novel *Sīdhā Sādhā Rāstā* (*A Straight and Simple Path*, 1955) was written as a polemical refutation of Bhagavaticharan Varma's novel *Ṭeḍhe Meḍhe Rāste* (*Twisted Paths*, 1946). Like Varma's, Raghav's novel also deals with the conflicts between four ideological forces: Marxism, Gandhism, revolutionary terrorism and feudal authoritarianism. Only, not unexpectedly, it is Marxism that provides the key to the Indian future. Yogendra Malik argues that its characters are but tools for the author's ideological propaganda.[15]

Nevertheless, the criticism of the absence of literary techniques in Progressive literature seems too sweeping. For example, Amrit Rai uses a funny metaphor in his short story *Andhī Lālaṭen* (*Blind Lanterns*), satirizing the new government as 'a tortoise who hides in its shell with a photo of Mahatma Gandhi on its back.'[16] For the young Progressive, dissatisfied with the slow pace of social, economic and political reforms like land reform, the Congress government is only resting on the charismatic legacy of predecessors like Mahatma Gandhi. The metaphor is not only imaginatively appealing, but also profoundly suggestive. Although there are several books in Hindi on Progressive literary writings, they are almost descriptive introductions of biographies, plots and characters, rather than critical literary analysis.[17]

दृष्टिकोण ही संकीर्णता और कलात्मकता की उपेक्षा के कारण भारतीय प्रगतिवादी साहित्य में आज न तो प्रगति है न साहित्यिकता!'

[15] Yogendra K. Malik, 'Contemporary Political Novels in Hindi: An Interpretation', in *Politics and the Novel in India*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, p. 19.

[16] Amrit Rai, 'Andhī Lālaṭen', in Dhananjay Varma, ed., *Hindī kī Pragatiśīl Kahāniyaṁ*, Dillī: Rādhākṛṣṇa, 1986, p. 137. एक कछुआ, जो ज़रा-सा भी खटका होने पर अपनी काठी में छुप जाता है, जिसपर गांधी महात्मा की फ़ोटू चिपकी है।

[17] See for example, Prabhashchandra Sharma Mehta, *Pragativād aur Hindī Upanyās: San1936 se san 1960 tak*, Dehrādūn: Sāhitya Sadan, 1967; Badri Prasad, *Pragativādī Hindī Upanyās (Ālochanā)*, Dillī: Om Prakāśan, 1987; Babita Jaysaval, *Pragativādī Hindī Upanyās*, Naī Dillī: Swarāj Prakāśan, 2013.

In contrast, this study asks how Progressive novels reflect and/or produce progressive ideas and provide literary solutions to real problems; what literary formal strategies they employ to serve the ideological ends; and finally, what exactly progressivism means in Progressive novels.

The novel's distinction as a genre is its narrative length and complexity that involves multiple characters and a series of events related to them, and therefore the novel provides a sizeable space which accommodates diversified voices and ideas. As Mikhail M. Bakhtin defines, 'the novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types, and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions.'[18] It is because the novel is best fit for showcasing the ideology that this thesis focuses on novels instead of other genres like short stories and poetry. This study does not seek to offer a definitive answer to the broad question of what Progressive literature is. To do so would be to fall into the same debates over the alignment with party politics that continually inhibit discussions of content and form of Progressive literature. My study, instead, considers how Progressive writers express their progressivism in their novels. A close analysis of literary texts proves to be a fruitful way of reading ideological Progressive literature. By examining seven novels by five Hindi Progressive writers, including *Bīj* (*The Seed*, 1952) and *Hāthī ke Dānt* (*Elephant's Tusks*, 1956) by Amrit Rai, *Balchanmā* (*Balchanma*, 1952) by Nagarjun,

[18] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017 (1981), p. 263.

Huzūr (*Your Highness*, 1952) and *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* (*Till When Should I Cry Out*, 1957) by Rangey Ranghav, *Jhūṭhā Sach* (*False Truth*, 1958-1960) by Yashpal, and *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* (*The Altar of Goddess Sati*, 1959) by Bhairavprasad Gupta, this study argues that the progressivism produced by the novels reflects but moves beyond what is represented in the manifestoes. The diverse literary strategies the novels employ, including narrative structure, characters and narrators, clarify progressive stances around socio-political issues and individual dilemmas.

Before specifying my research methods and justifying my selection of the novels in the following chapters, it is necessary to elucidate the progressivism of Progressive literature in a larger historical and ideological context. Given the complex relationship between literature and politics, the literary ideology is so closely intertwined with the political one that we cannot read literature without taking into consideration its socio-political engagement, as the nationalist and Gandhian reformist literature of early decades of the twentieth century show. The following sections thus illustrate the shifts, developments, and tensions in the notion of progressivism, profile Hindi Progressive writers who came from different backgrounds, and examine the entanglement of their multiform progressive thoughts as well as the changing concept of progressivism within the broader ideological network of the 1950s.

What is Progressivism?

Studies to date explain progressivism in the framework of Soviet socialist realism, for the reason that most of the precursors of the AIPWA were communists and were aware

of recent developments in the Soviet Union – the founding of Writers' Union in 1932 and socialist realism being pronounced the official artistic doctrine of the regime.[19] Andrei Zhdanov, convenor of the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, defined socialist realism in the following terms: 'art should depict life truthfully, in the revolutionary development of reality; it should combine the ideological remoulding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism.'[20] Scholars employ this definition when discussing Indian Progressive literature and consider Indian progressivism an equivalent of Soviet socialist realism.[21] Indeed, AIPWA pioneers had drawn upon Soviet socialist realism, such as Hindi critic Shivdan Singh Chauhan's essay discussed below, and the AIPWA manifestoes and Progressive literature share similarities with that of socialist realism. As the following chapters will show, Progressive novels represent class struggles (such as agricultural labourers vs landlords in *Balchanmā* in chapter 1), dichotomization between progressive and reactionary forces (such as secularists vs communalists in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* in chapter 2), and serve educational function exemplified in the case of *Bīj* (positive and negative apprenticeship in chapter 1). These similar features testify to the strong influence of the Soviet notion of literature on Indian progressivism.

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[19] For how early Progressives were either communists themselves or closed linked with communists, see the biographical study in Coppola, *Urdu Poetry 1935-1970*, and the intelligence reports cited in Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change*, pp. 190-210.

[20] Andrei A. Zhdanov, 'Soviet Literature: The Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature', 1934, in *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934*, eds., Maxim Gorky *et al*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977, pp. 15-26.

[21] For example, Coppola suggests that progressivism is the socialist realism of India, see Coppola, *Urdu Poetry 1935-1970*, p. 79. See also Malik, 'Contemporary Political Novels in Hindi', pp. 17-19, and Ann Lowry Weir, 'Socialist Realism and South Asian Literature', *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1992, pp. 135-148. Malik categorizes Hindi Progressive writers Yashpal, Amrit Rai, Nagarjun, Rangey Raghav, and Bhairavprasad Gupta as Marxist novelists who were committed to the concept of 'socialist realism'. He believes that most of these novelists rarely deviated from the guidelines set either by the Communist Party leadership or Marxist literary critics. As a result, they propagate the ideological precepts of communism. Weir points out the difference between India and the Soviet Union, underlining the shackles of colonialism, caste and communalism as subjects of socialist realist literature in the Indian context, but his argument is still within the framework of socialist realism.

However, Indian progressivism differs substantially from Soviet socialist realism in many aspects. The first difference is on the institutional and structural level. According to Katerina Clark, Soviet socialist realism became nationally institutionalized method declared by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and coercively imposed upon all writers.[22] It is thus, as she argues, 'essentially a name applied to Soviet culture's literary system rather than to a way of writing that is particularly "socialist" or "realist"'.[23] By contrast, the CPI is not a ruling party in India, far from being a mandatory rule imposed upon writers, and progressivism in India is initially a literary view put forward by a voluntary group of writers, including both communists and non-communists. As a result, the scope of Progressive literature goes far beyond party policies and addresses a wide range of issues.

The second difference lies at the level of narrative and stance. As Clark suggests, a dichotomy of epic and novel, of 'what is' and 'what ought to be', lies at the heart of Soviet socialist realism.[24] It employs factual events and historical process but subordinates them to epic legend. For example, in the prototypical structure of the Soviet novel, the legendary hero best demonstrates this feature. His journey starts from a place he had visited or lived in, but which was now changed, and he sets about the task of fulfilling a state-given plan, making schemes and mobilizing the people to work together. After overcoming various obstacles, completes the task, transcends his selfish impulses, and acquires an extrapersonal identity.[25] The hero thus undergoes an

[22] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 27-30.
[23] Ibid., p. 9.
[24] Ibid., p. 37.
[25] See ibid., appendix A: The Master Plot as Exemplified in the Production Novel and Other Basic Types of Novel of the Stalin Era, pp. 255-260.

ascension from reality to a mythical realm, and the Soviet novel 'serve as the official repository of state myths'.[26] By contrast, rather than mythopoetic with emphasis on legendary heroes, Hindi Progressives adopted a critical stance and deconstruct the state legend, whether of the British Raj or the post-independence Congress regime, as chapter 2 will show. Rather than endorsing the official stand, it urged people to question the status quo and reveal the real problems in the country. Even in novels like Amrit Rai's *Bīj* and Nagarjun's *Balchanmā*, which foreground the maturation of progressive characters (see chapter 1), the protagonists, who also take up tasks, surmount difficulties, and finally accomplish their tasks and progress on the ideological level, never become legendary men or epic superheroes, remaining instead in the realistic domain. If Soviet socialist realism formulates a national mythology, progressivism in India attempts to provide, at best, an imaginary resolution to real political and social problems, to use Fredric Jameson's term, a political reading of real contradictions.[27]

If progressivism is not the Indian equivalent of Soviet socialist realism, then how are we to understand it? The first manifesto of the AIPWA was still be read as the best document to understand the essence of Indian progressivism in its own terms. It is well written and structured around three issues: historical view, literary notion, and the tasks of the association.[28] The first two issues reveal the Progressives' ideas of history and literature, and thus deserve a closer reading.

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[26] Ibid., p. xii.

[27] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 57.

[28] All references to the manifesto are taken from the version published in the *Left Review*. This choice is made mainly due to its originality, and even though the *Left Review* version has proved to be the most 'radical' among the three versions and is written in a foreign country, it still finds resonance with the Hindi intelligentsia. For a comparison of three versions, see Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970*, pp. 80-86, 151-155.

The opening lines of the manifesto showcase a linear course of history. 'Old … social and political institutions' are presented as 'being challenged' and 'spiritual reaction [in the past]' is 'moribund and doomed to ultimate decay', 'the present' instead is characterized as fraught with turmoil and conflict, and the country as 'being on the path of construction and progress'.[29] The negation of the past, dissatisfaction with the present, and expectation of a future under construction indicate an evolutionary conception of history that chimes with Marxist historical materialism. Both perceive an ever-progressing course of history. It is noteworthy that the conception of history expressed in the manifesto does not stress the decisive role of economics, the main feature that distinguishes Marxist historical materialism. As the novels will show, not all predicament of the ordinary people is led by economic oppression, but is a result of a combination of problems, such as political dominance, caste hierarchy, and so like.

The prioritization of this progressive view of history lays the foundation for a critical examination of Indian literature, which is the second issue addressed in the manifesto. Just as negative expressions are employed to describe the past two centuries as 'one of the most unhappy periods of our history, a period of disintegrating feudalism and of acute misery and degradation of the Indian people as a whole',[30] derogatory terms are used to criticize the literature produced during this period, most probably alluding to *bhaktikāl* and *rītikāl* (devotional and mannerist literary trends), 'it has produced a rigid formalism and a banal and perverse ideology. … the mystical devotional obsession of our literature, its furtive and sentimental attitude towards sex,

[29] Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970*, p. 151.
[30] Ibid., p. 152.

its emotional exhibitionism and its almost total lack of rationality'.[31] In contrast to this formalistic and irrational literature, the new literature envisaged in the manifesto should register actualities and be accessible to the people. Moreover, the new literature is to become an instrument to 'help us to understand these problems [hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation] and through such understanding help us act.'[32]

Two peculiar features of progressivism emerge in this definition of a new literature. The first one is class consciousness. The manifesto juxtaposes 'the people' (*jantā* in the Hindi version, *Haṃs*) with 'priestly, academic and non-progressive classes' (*pujāriyoṁ paṇḍitoṁ aur apragatiśīl vargoṁ*) to illustrate a division within the population based on social class, albeit defined in approximate terms. Literature is to be rescued from the hands of the latter and brought into close touch with the former. This binary reveals a consciousness of class struggle, an important component of the Marxist ideology. The second feature is the concern with 'action'. Progressivism is not satisfied with depicting actualities and sympathizing with the wretched, but seeks to motivate readers to take action (*kriyātmak śakti āeṁgī*). Both class consciousness and an appeal to action are to be found in later Hindi Progressive novels, for example, Amrit Rai's *Bīj* and Bhairavprasad Gupta's *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, Rangey Raghav's *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, and so like. They are interwoven within narrative structures to help explain and solve problems like inequality, communal conflicts, caste discrimination, and so forth. Thus, progressivism can be defined as a new realistic literary vision characterized by its

[31] Ibid., p. 152.
[32] Ibid., p. 153.

orientation towards the common people, imbued with class consciousness and a spirit of action based on an evolutionary conception of history.

The third part of the manifesto, devoted to the resolutions of the PWA, showcases its appeal to a broad audience. For example, 'to further the cause of Indian freedom' and 'to strive for a common language and a common script' were popular nationalist issues. The fact that Lucknow Declaration version (1936) omitted the section on 'the acceptance of Hindustani and the Roman script' which the earlier *Left Review* version publicized, made the progressive agenda more acceptable to those nationalists who upheld Hindi in Devanagari.[33] The resolution 'to further cause of social regeneration' was also a general call shared by social reformists, socialists, and wider Congress-left. Other resolutions, such as that to 'cooperate with literary organisations', 'protect the interest of authors', and 'fight for the right of free expression', addressed common concerns of writers.

The preoccupation with literary issues and the absence of any mention of political party in the manifesto aptly show that the AIPWA is far from blindly following one particular political ideology or public assertion. It encompasses an evolutionary conception of history, call for social reform, an idea of 'useful' new literature, and writers' shared concerns. Such an inclusiveness at this stage made the manifesto appealing to many Hindi intellectuals, despite the fact that the manifesto was first formulated by a small group of writers, Urdu and Bengali literati in particular.[34] Hindi

[33] On Hindi Progressives' debates on the language issue, see Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, Chapter 5: 'The Fate of Hindustani'.
[34] For example, Urdu writers Sajjad Zaheer (1905–1973) who was one of the major founders of the AIPWA, and Ahmed Ali (1908–1994) who was a close fellow of Zaheer; and Bengali pioneer Hirendranath Mukherjee who was an Oxford-educated communist and organized a group of Bengali writers for the association.

writers and critics from varied political or public backgrounds – communist, revolutionary, socialist, and others – joined the AIPWA, and they formed different ideological camps within the association.

Who were the Hindi Progressives?

It was only after the PWA's first meeting in 1936 that Hindi literati started to engage with the progressive literary agenda. The fact that Premchand, the towering figure of modern Hindi literature, offered vigorous support and delivered a milestone presidential address at the meeting easily leaves an impression of his being the first influential Hindi Progressive writer.[35] Yet, his deteriorating health and death just six months later left him little time and energy to exert further impact on Hindi Progressive literature. Moreover, instead of being a representative of the Hindi community, he was more of a literary icon for the whole of north India.[36] Apart from Premchand, a few

[35] Premchand had corresponded with Sajjad Zaheer, a key founder of the PWA, since 1935, and published a modified version of the London manifesto in his literary journal *Haṃs* (October 1935). After Zaheer's request that he preside over the first meeting, Premchand initially refused: 'I do not deserve the Chair. I say this not out of modesty but out of a consciousness of my weakness. Mr Kanhaiyalal Munshi would be a better choice, or Dr Zakir Hussain. If Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were not so busy, he would have been most appropriate. … Do try Pandit Amarnath Jha. He is interested in Urdu literature' (Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light: A History of the Movement for Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, a translation of *Roshnai*, translated by Amina Azfar, 2006, Karachi: Oxford University Press, p. 51). It seems that, for Premchand, the meeting was going to one of Urdu writers. The names he suggests were leaders in national politics and education, and he emphasizes Amarnath Jha's interest in Urdu. However, after Zaheer refused his recommendations and insisted on his presidency, Premchand relented and prepared a presidential speech.

[36] Amrit Rai, Premchand's son, recalled that the address was written in Urdu, a 'highly refined and pure Urdu steeped in Persian' which 'hardly any non-Urdu speakers could have followed' (Rai, *Premchand: His Life and Times*, translated by Harish Trivedi, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 347–348). Again, this indicates that Premchand considered that the meeting would purely be for Urdu writers. Coppola even doubts that Premchand's speech was not in fact ghost-written, and gives reasons why: Premchand was not feeling well at the time; he requested Zaheer to indicate which issues were to be discussed; his address, titled 'Adab ki Gharz-o-ghayat' (The Purpose and Purview of Literature) bears a startling resemblance to Akhtar Husain Raipuri's landmark essay, 'Adab aur Zindagi' (Literature and Life), published in July 1935 in *Urdū*, Hyderabad, nine months before the first AIPWA meeting. See Carlo Coppola, 'Premchand's Address to the First Meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers Association: Some Speculations: A Case of Ghostwriting?', *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 21, 2, 1986, pp. 21–39, and by the same author, *Urdu Poetry 1935–1970*, pp. 118–130 for Husain's essay and pp. 135–142 for Premchand's speech and a comparative analysis. Since Premchand was a prestigious and socially conscious writer in both Hindi and Urdu, he was probably chosen by the Urdu pioneers as a symbol of Hindi–Urdu unity, rather than as a Hindi representative.

Hindi literati also pledged support to the progressive project at the preparatory phase, though such support was largely 'lip service'.[37] Gradually, more Hindi poets, writers, and critics started involving themselves in this progressive literary trend, both within the PWA and beyond. Since 1943-1944 in particular, the PWA expanded substantially in the Hindi belt, with at least ten Hindi branches set up in UP, Bihar, Central Provinces, and Rajasthan, and over twenty recorded meetings and symposiums organised.[38] These Hindi Progressives came from different ideological backgrounds and included communists, revolutionaries, and socialists. They formed a literary 'united front' at the service of progressivism. Writers not closely associated with the PWA launched journals spreading progressive ideas, like *Rūpābh* (ed. Sumitranandan Pant), *Saṅgharṣ* (ed. Narottam Nagar), *Chakallas* (ed. Amritlal Nagar), and *Vīplav* (ed. Yashpal).

As in Calcutta, Hyderabad, Amritsar, Lahore, and Aligarh, in the Hindi belt, too, it was communists who lent primary support to Progressivism and took on administrative tasks.[39] One such Communist PWA activist was Shivdan Singh Chauhan (1918–2000), who is recognized as Hindi's first Progressive critic.[40] As an undergraduate in the English department in Allahabad University, he read Marxism and literature together with two founding members of the PWA, Sajjad Zaheer and K. M.

[37] For example, Sumitranandan Pant, Nirala, and members of Allahabad University such as Amarnath Jha (vice chancellor), Tara Chand (history professor), and Shivdan Singh Chauhan and Narendra Sharma (students in the English department). On Pant and Nirala, see Rai, *Premchand*, 1991, p. 340; and Chauhan, *Hindī meṁ Pragativādī Andolan kā Ālekhātmak Itihās*, 1985, p. 26. For the others, see Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970*, pp. 131, and Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change*, pp. 219-220.

[38] Branches were set up in Benares, Patna, Gaya, Ranchi, Indore, Gwalior, Ujjan, Jabalpur, and Jaipur, among others. For more details, see Chauhan, *Hindī meṁ Pragativādī Āndolan*, pp. 62-69.

[39] Early supporters and mobilizers in these areas, namely Hirendranath Mukherjee in Calcutta, Sibte Hasan in Hyderabad, Rashid Jahan and Mahmuduzzafar in Amritsar and Lahore, and Dr K.M. Ashraf in Aligarh as well as Zaheer as a general coordinator, were all communists.

[40] The ground-breaking role of Shivdan Singh Chauhan is acknowledged by several notable Hindi critics, such as Namwar Singh, Manager Pandey, Purushottam Agrawal, etc., see their articles compiled in Amarendra Tripathi, ed., *Śivadān Siṃh Chauhān: Hindī ke Pahle Pragatiśīl Ālochak*, Naī Dillī: Anāmikā, 2014.

Ashraf, who were also CPI members.[41] Chauhan soon emerged as an influential Marxist critic and an active member of the PWA, and helped spread progressivism in the Hindi belt. In 1937, he launched the first progressive monthly in Allahabad, *Prabhā* (literally, 'light').[42] In the same year, he was elected joint secretary of the PWA's Allahabad branch along with historian and freedom fighter Dr Vishambhar Pandey. A year later, he became president of the Hindi PWA. Prakash Chandra Gupta, an English lecturer at St John's College in Agra, who established the PWA's Agra branch in 1938 (or 1939), was inspired by Chauhan's essays.[43] With time, Chauhan got appointed as chief editor, together with Zaheer, of *Nayā Hindustān* (*New Hindustan*), the first Hindi weekly of the CPI's Allahabad branch, and by the end of 1940 Chauhan became editor *Haṃs*, which at the time was the mouthpiece of the PWA.[44]

Among the many speeches and essays of this young and energetic critic, the speech entitled 'The Need for Progressive Literature in India' ('Bhārat meṁ pragatiśīl sāhitya kī āvaśyakatā') deserves particular attention. It was delivered at the Hindustani Writers' Meeting (Hindustānī Lekhak Sammelan) organized by the PWA's Allahabad branch in September 1936.[45] While Premchand's address at the earlier AIPWA conference was

[41] Chauhan became interested in politics and literature in 1933-1934 while studying at Ewing Christian College in Allahabad, where he read books about Russian revolutionaries like Prince Alexander Kropotkin (1842–1921), and attended discussions on socialism. As an undergraduate at Allahabad University, he became a convenor of the Allahabad Students' Association and a founding member of the All-India Students' Federation (AISF), established in Lucknow in August 1936. Although there is no evidence that the AISF was a students' front organization for the CPI, there are indications that a substantial percentage of the federation was communist, or at least pro-Soviet. See Shivdan Singh Chauhan, 'Siṃhāvalokan' (1986), in Amarendra Tripathi, ed., *Bhārat meṁ Pragatiśīl Sāhitya kī Āvaśyakatā*, Naī Dillī: Anāmikā, 2013, pp. 288-291. On the AISF, see Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959, pp. 396-397.

[42] Not to be confused with the journal by the same name launched in 1913 in Khandwa, Central Provinces. Chauhan's *Prabhā* was short-lived, lasting no more than a year.

[43] Chauhan, 'Siṃhāvalokan', p. 289.

[44] Ibid., pp. 289-90.

[45] Chauhan's speech was published later in the March 1937 issue of *Viśāl Bhārat*, which was hardly a leftist journal; for information of *Viśāl Bhārat*, see Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 390. For the details of the meeting, see Chauhan, 'Siṃhāvalokan', p. 288. The meeting included both Urdu and Hindi writers, but strangely it is not mentioned in any work on Progressive literature, including Zaheer's memoir *The Light*, Coppola's and Jalil's

more of an impassioned call to arms, Chauhan's speech was the first piece of literary criticism made in the spirit of progressivism as proclaimed in the manifesto, and presented a more detailed and clearer picture of 'progressivism'. Moreover, it is this speech that marked his rise as the '*Bhagīrath* of Marxist criticism'[46] and the new star of the PWA.

Following similar pattern to that of the manifesto, Chauhan began the speech by examining the current socio-economic context in broad terms. Society is an arena where two trends, namely the reactionary and the progressive, continuously grapple with each other, he argued. Progressives should not only destroy the old economic, religious, philosophical, and literary structures but, more importantly, should construct a new society and a new literature.[47] According to him, literature 'like human beings, is a social entity. It cannot be detached from society and it cannot be honoured above society.'[48] Hence, Progressive literature should both describe social reality and change the society. Instead of being 'art for art's sake', Progressive literature should be 'art to change the world' (*kalā saṃsār ko badalne ke liye*).[49]

When it comes to a concrete definition of progressivism, Chauhan, resorts to the Soviet literary doctrine of socialist realism:

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monographs on the Urdu progressive movement, and Avasthi's and K. Chauhan's histories of the Progressive movement in Hindi. After the Lucknow meeting, the first conference was held in Allahabad in 1937. Chauhan attended it, too.

[45] Chauhan, 'Bhārat meṁ pragatiśīl sāhitya kī āvaśyakatā' (1937), in Tripathi, ed., *Bhārat meṁ Pragatiśīl Sāhitya kī Āvaśyakatā*, pp. 17–18.

[46] Manager Pandey, 'Hindī kī Mārksavādī Ālochanā ke Bhagīrath', in Tripathi, ed., *Śivadān Siṃh Chauhān*, p. 176. Just as Indian mythological King Bhagirath brought the Ganges down from heaven to earth, so Chauhan imbibed Marxist criticism and paved the way for Hindi leftist literary criticism.

[47] Chauhan, 'Bhārat meṁ pragatiśīl sāhitya kī āvaśyakatā', pp. 17-18.

[48] Ibid., p. 18. मनुष्य की तरह साहित्य भी एक सामाजिक वस्तु है। समाज से साहित्य को न तो अलग ही किया जा सकता है और न उसे समाज से अधिक प्रतिष्ठा ही दी जा सकती है।

[49] Ibid., p. 41. In the revised edition Chauhan replaces 'world' with 'society'.

> It [socialist realism] is firmly against imperialism and against all those who are in favour of imperialism, such as monasticism (*mahantavād*), feudalism, and capitalism. … It is the literature of contemporary workers, farmers, and lower-class traders, a literature which tries to strengthen their inner unity through historical and scientific investigation. … It acknowledges the social role of human beings, and pays attention to and irrigates the sprouting seedling of revolution. If literature does this, it will be 'communist realistic' [socialist realistic], it will be progressive.[50]

Not surprisingly, as a CPI PWA member well read on Marxism and recent developments in the Soviet Union, Chauhan embraced the Soviet description of the 'new literature' for a 'new society', i.e. the socialist realism of Soviet Union, and understood it as *the* core of the new Progressive literature. At that stage, Chauhan would have no idea how it would later become a rigidly defined 'superstructure' in the Soviet Union as mentioned above.

Having defined progressivism as socialist realism, Chauhan further used this understanding of literature as a yardstick to evaluate Hindi literature. Unlike the PWA manifesto, Chauhan did not restrict his criticism to the vaguely defined 'old literature', but targeted three influential types of literature of his time as 'reactionary' literature.

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[50] Ibid., pp. 38-40. वह साम्राज्यवाद-विरोध, साम्राज्यशाही के हितेच्छुक महंतवाद, सामंतवाद और पूँजीवाद सभी का कट्टर विरोधी होता है। ... वह वर्तमानक़ालीन मज़दूर-किसान अरु निम्नश्रेणी के टुटपुँजियों का साहित्य होता है, जिसमें ऐतिहासिक एवं वैज्ञानिक शोध द्वारा उनकी आतंरिक एकता को दृढ़ करने की कोशिश की जाती है। … वह मनुष्य को उसकी सामाजिक अवस्था में स्वीकार करता है, क्रांति की उगती पौध को देखता है और उसे सींचता है। अगर साहित्य यह करता है, तो वह "साम्यवादी यथार्थवादी" है, प्रगतिशील है।

First, he criticized *Chāyāvād* for restricting literature to an exclusively individual domain and failing to represent the dynamics of social reality. According to Chauhan, *Chāyāvādī* poets 'could not see reality; they wished to flee from it. Since their imagination had withered and they had not yet seen the rise of new forces, they took refuge in mysticism and started to shed pessimistic tears. The damage caused to Hindi literature by the trend of *Chāyāvād* is perhaps greater than that caused to India by the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League.'[51] Secondly, Chauhan criticized nationalist poetry for eulogizing the 'glorious Hindu past' and even the colonialism. He particularly attacked Maithilisharan Gupta's *Bhārat-bhārtī*, the magnum opus of nationalist reformers, as a reactionary work. According to Chauhan, literature which showcases a glorious past 'does nothing more than draw a veil over inability, fallen situation and cowardice of the present times.'[52] Thirdly, Chauhan criticized Gandhian idealist realism and termed it 'capitalist realism' (*pūṁjīvādī yathārthavād*). According to Chauhan, Premchand, one of the literary icons of his time, represented such a trend. Chauhan recognized the merits of realistic representation in Premchand's novels but denounced the way Premchand solved idealistically the problems and the lack of historical-economic analysis of the contradictions.[53] Yet, Chauhan does not clarify

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[51] Ibid., pp. 36-37. जो वास्तविकता को नहीं देख सके, वे उससे दूर भागना चाहते थे, अथवा जिनकी कल्पना-शक्ति ही मुरझा गई थी और जो नई शक्तियों का उठना देख-समझ न पाए, वे रहस्यवाद का दामन पकड़कर अपने निराशावादी आँसू बहाने लगे। ... इस छायावाद की धारा ने हिंदी के साहित्य को जितना धक्का पहुँचाया, उतना शायद ही हिंदू महासभा या मुस्लिम लीग ने भारत को पहुँचाया हो।

[52] Ibid., p. 34. इस प्रकार के साहित्य से वर्तमानकालीन अयोग्यता, पतितावस्था और कायरता पर सिर्फ़ परदा पड़ता था।

[53] Chauhan targeted Premchand's novels *Sevāsadan* (*The House of Service*) and *Premāśram* (*The Abode of Love*): Munshi ji represents reality truthfully, but he fails to explain how the situation came to take shape. … He builds a 'house of service' for the thousand-year-long deprived, downtrodden women, and an 'abode of love' for farmers gripped by fear of debt and by bureaucracy. … He is moderate, benevolent, and reformist. He progressed in drawing a realistic picture through his artist excellence, but the 'resolution' he put forward cannot be considered progressive. Ibid., p. 32. मुंशी जी वास्तविक दशा का वर्णन तो सही-सही करते हैं, लेकिन वह वास्तविक दशा किन कारणों से उत्पन्न हुई, यह वे ठीक नहीं बता पाते। ... हज़ारों वर्षों से अधिकारच्युत, पददलित, अत्याचार-पीड़ित स्त्रियों के लिए सेवा-सदन और क़र्ज़ एंड नौकरशाही के आतंक में रहने वाले किसानों ले लिए प्रेमाश्रम खोल कर वे संतुष्ट हैं। ... वे उदाराशय, परोपकारी और सुधारवादी हैं। अपनी कला

what a better, ‘progressive’ resolution should be. Just as capitalism is to be replaced by socialism in the conception of historical materialism, ‘capitalist realism’ is destined to be replaced by ‘socialist realism’, as Chauhan terms progressivism.

Chauhan’s ‘socialist realist’ definition of progressivism and his critical study of prevalent literary trends of his time forged a new vision of Progressive literature. Though it definitely carried on the manifesto’s spirit of creating a ‘new literature’, it showed a particular overt commitment to Marxism and to Soviet socialist realism.

It is true that the CPI members provided the ‘infrastructure’ in the literary sphere by actively organizing literary events, editing journals, etc., yet this does not mean that the party established hegemony over literary activities at this stage. Nevertheless, the 1940s witnessed the increasing politicization of the PWA, which can be seen from three aspects: the CPI’s intensifying intervention in guiding literary production, the PWA’s correspondence to the Party policies, and the leading positions that CPI literati gradually acquired. It is during this period that the concept of progressivism in the manifestoes changed, triggering off the dispute and split within the association.

One important indicator of the CPI’s more visible impact on the PWA is that the CPI politicians started to attend AIPWA conferences and deliver presidential speeches. In 1943, S.A. Dange (1899-1991), the CPI leader, delivered his presidential speech titled ‘People’s Life and Literature’ (Jan Jīvan aur Sāhitya) to the fourth AIPWA conference. In this speech, Dange reasserted the CPI’s anti-fascist and pro-Soviet stance:

की श्रेष्ठता के कारण उन्होंने तत्कालीन वास्तविकता का चित्र अत्यंत प्रगतिशील किया है, लेकिन जो “हल” वे अपने सामने रखते हैं, उसे हम प्रगतिशील नहीं कह सकते।

> Can we remain neutral and not be against fascism and belie our whole past, our greatest of poets, our whole national and patriotic leadership? We cannot. … We chose to side against fascism and for the liberation of all nations and people of the world. ... If you believe that the victory of the nations led by Soviet Union is no concern of yours, you are not paving the way for freedom from your national enslaver.

He continued with an appreciation of working-class art by citing a Marathi ballad of Stalingrad:

> Most inspiring playlets, poems and stories are coming from the writers of the working class. The heroic pawada (Marathi ballad) that vanished in the 16th century has suddenly found its life in a worker poet in the ballad of Stalingrad. Stalingrad belongs to the life and blood of our working class. Hence it could inspire real poetry in a child of that class.[54]

Such political expressions recur in the manifesto adopted at this conference. The manifesto states:

> [Progressive writers] have conceived of Indian freedom as an integral part of world freedom, and while proclaiming the inalienable right of our people to be free from

[54] 'Fourth All-India Progressive Writers' Conference', in Pradhan, ed., *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, 1979, pp. 118-119.

> all forms of imperialist domination, have taken their stand against fascism – which is nothing but the most violent phase of the imperialist system. … [The] Soviet example tells us how revolution gives men the chance of bringing dignity and civilisation into the common possession.

Corresponding to Dange's celebration of working-class art, one of the new tasks the 1943 manifesto set forward was to 'organize literary and cultural circles among workers and peasants and to link up the PWA with folk literature and art'.[55] Such politicization of the PWA manifesto increased in the late 1940s. As Coppola has shown, the lengthy manifesto adopted at the fifth AIPWA meeting convened in May 1949 reflected the radical Ranadive Doctrine of the CPI, which considered India's participation in the Commonwealth as a compromise with imperialist forces and outlined a clear-cut class division between feudal reactionaries in collusion with American, British and Indian capitalists, and progressive forces who were in solidarity with the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence.[56] Here, 'progressive forces' was no more a literary concept defined by the Indian context, as it used to be earlier, but became synonymous with the 'socialist camp' in the context of Cold-War political rhetoric.

Moreover, the PWA also started to organize activities that follow the CPI's policies. During World War II, as the CPI's position shifted from 'anti-imperialist' to 'people's war' after the Nazi's attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, the PWA also held many

[55] 'Manifesto of the Progressive Writers' Association (Adopted at the Fourth All-India Conference held in Bombay in May 1943)', in ibid., pp. 348-351.
[56] For the total manifesto adopted at the fifth conference and Coppola's analysis of it, see Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970*, pp. 235-242.

meetings under the motif of 'anti-fascism'. For example, organizers of the Central Indian Progressive Writers' Conference in 1944 urged writers '[to] inspire our compatriots to struggle against fascism like other companions [writers in Russia and China] in the world'.[57] It is noteworthy that it remains ambiguous as to whether the stance of 'anti-fascism' indicates 'anti-British' or not; but at that historical moment, the PWA and most Progressive writers did not publicly decry the CPI's wartime support of the British, which Congressmen and Congress Socialists condemned as a kind of 'betrayal'.[58]

Hindi Progressive writers were also involved in the relief efforts for the Bengal Famine of 1942-43, for which Communist activists organized public rallies demanding controlled food prices and communist women were at the forefront of famine relief efforts.[59] Amrit Rai, who joined the CPI in 1942 and actively engaged himself with the association, and Nirala, Mahadevi Varma, Maithilisharan Gupta, and many other Hindi poets, who supported the PWA enterprise despite of being Communists, published a poetry collection entitled *The Image of Bengal* (*Baṅga Darśan*, 1943), to raise funds for the people suffering from famine.[60] Rangey Raghav, then a young writer who acquired MA from Agra University and read plenty of Marxist works, joined a medical team appointed to provide care in the Bengal area as a reporter.

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[57] Quoted in Chauhan, *Hindī meṁ Pragativādī Āndolan kā Ālekhātmak Itihās*, p. 63

[58] On the Congress Party's and the CSP's opposing attitude towards the CPI's support of the British, see Shankar, *Socialist Trends in Indian National Movement*, Chapter VI: 'War-Time Strategy'.

[59] On communist women's relief activities and the Indian People's Theatre Association's cultural performance which aimed to raise funds to tackle the famine, see Loomba, *Revolutionary Desire*, Chapter 5: 'The Dance of Hunger'.

[60] Many other works included poems by Narendra Sharma, Ramvilas Sharma, and Shivmangal Singh Suman, and stories such as 'Khaṭak' (Upendranath Ashk), 'Mahādān' (Yashpal), and 'Kulīn' (Vishnu Prabhakar). See Chauhan, *Hindī meṁ Pragativādī Āndolan kā Ālekhātmak Itihās*, pp. 75-79.

It is due to this CPI's guiding role that Hindi CPI writers started to play a more and more active role within the association. Compared with the earlier period when Shivdan Singh Chauhan was probably the only active Hindi PWA activist, the 1940s saw more and more Hindi writers appointed to administrative positions within the PWA. For example, Amrit Rai, Premchand's son, who read Marxist works intensively in 1937-1938, became a Communist soon after obtaining his MA from Allahabad University in 1942; in 1944 he became the editor of *Haṃs*, the mouthpiece of the PWA, and the director of the Benares PWA branch in 1949.[61] Bhairavprasad Gupta, who initially followed Gandhi but joined the CPI in 1948 after becoming disillusioned with the ruling Congress, led strikes in Kanpur factories in 1948-1949 and became secretary of the UP PWA branch in 1949.[62] Ramvilas Sharma (1912-2000)，who had joined the CPI in 1943, was elected general secretary of the AIPWA at the fifth conference of the association in 1949.[63] This was the first and only time that a Hindi literato reached the top position within the PWA.[64] This group of CPI Hindi Progressive writers and critics, including Ramvilas Sharma, Shivdan Singh Chauhan, Amrit Rai, and Bhairavprasad

[61] Amrit Rai recalled that he became interested in Marxism from 1938. 'At that time, I fell in love with Marxism. I began to read many tomes and what a romance!' तब में मार्क्सिज़्म से प्यार करने लगा। मोटी-मोटी किताबें-पोथियाँ पढ़ने लगा तो कहाँ का रोमांस और कहाँ का क्या! See Girija Kumar Mathur, *Ek Antaraṅg Bātchīt Amṛt se*, Jabalpur: Jigñāsā Prakāśan, 1994, p. 24. On Amrit Rai's involvement, see *UP Pragatiśīl Lekhak Sammelan (23, 24, 25 April 1949, Vivaraṇ aur Prastāv): Ghoṣaṇā-patra*, P.C. Joshi Archives in Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1949/20, CPI 173. In the same Provincial Progressive Writers' Association Working Committee, Prakashchandra Gupta was appointed director of Allahabad and Ramvilas Sharma director of Agra.

[62] See Rajendramohan Agraval, 'Sañgharṣaśīl Jīvan kā nām: Bhairavaprasād Gupta', in Vidhyadhar Shukla ed., *Bhairavaprasād Gupta: Vyakti aur Rachnākār*, Ilāhābād: Prabhā Prakāśan, 1984, p. 61. Gupta was at some time elected general secretary of the Gwalior Kisan Sabha.

[63] When Ramvilas Sharma was an undergraduate at Lucknow University during the years of 1930-1933, he lived in a colony where many workers lived and read books on Russian revolutionaries and socialism. After acquiring the PhD in English from Lucknow University in 1940, he started his literary career publishing poems, short stories, and essays in various progressive journals such as *Haṃs*, *Viplav*, *Rūpābh*, *Saṅgharṣ*, and *Chakallas*, and thus established a relationship with Progressive advocates like Yashpal, Nirala, Narottam Nagar, and others; see Ramvilas Sharma, *Apne Dhartī, Apne Log*, Vol. 1, Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 1994.

[64] This happened partly due to the absence of many senior Urdu Communist writers of the PWA, who were dispatched to Pakistan after partition, and partly Sharma's growing political influence within the CPI.

Gupta, became an influential and powerful bloc within the PWA.[65]

The increasing politicization of the PWA in the 1940s undoubtedly led to the emergence of a group of 'hardliners' within the association who closely aligned themselves with the CPI. Ramvilas Sharma was one such 'hardliner', especially after he was elected general secretary of the AIPWA in 1949. Sharma insisted that in order to be 'Progressive', the PWA had to be guided by a proletarian political party, namely the CPI. His position drew stringent criticism from fellow PWA writers such as Shivdan Singh Chauhan, Amrit Rai, and Rangey Raghav, among others, who wanted an independent literary organization free from political control. It is due to this dispute that Sharma was described as 'narrow-minded' (*sankīrṇatāvādī*) and 'vulgar-sociologist' (*kutsit samājaśastriy*), while Sharma himself called the others 'renunciatory' (*visarjanavādī*, from the ritual act of *visarjan* or consigning something to a river or the sea). Moreover, Sharma categorised writers according to how they evaluated independence, which he considered the fundamental issue, while the others advocated the establishment of a 'united front' of writers bringing together writers sharing common concerns over issues of peace, and how to serve people.[66]

The dispute within the association, which became increasingly acute in the 1950s, has important implications. First of all, it shows the divisions within the PWA, one of the main reasons of the PWA's decline after independence. Second, the control the CPI asserted on the association proved unsuccessful, and even within the group of CPI

[65] They were soon called together to hold 'CPI writers' meetings, which started in 1946 and continued until 1949 whereupon they were joined by Urdu party writers. See Ramvilas Sharma, 'Kamyunisṭ Pārṭī aur Pragatiśil Lekhak Sañgh', in Sharma, *Mārksavād aur Pragatiśīl Sāhitya*, Nayī Dillī: Vāṇī Prakāśan, 2008, pp. 394-412.
[66] On these debates, see Sharma, 'Rāṣṭriy svādhīnatā aur pragatiśīl sāhitya'; Chauhan, *Hindī meṁ Pragativādī Andolan kā Ālekhātmak Itihās*, pp. 128-139.

literati oppositional views emerged. In fact, anti-Party sentiments had emerged earlier because of the CPI's pro-British policy during World War II. While the pro-working class/peasants standce could more or less be accepted by both CPI and non-CPI writers alike within the PWA, the call to cooperate with the colonial government in order to fight fascism and the political rhetoric eulogizing the Soviet Union as the only role model went against the anti-colonial and cultural nationalist sentiments shared by many PWA writers. For example, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, an active Progressive writer in the earlier period, lamented, in his poem 'Dillī aur Māsko' (Delhi and Moscow, 1945), the subordination of the nationalist movement to an internationalist political ideal.[67] Years later, even the hardliner Ramvilas Sharma admitted that the CPI had made a mistake that undermined the AIPWA.[68] These facts disprove Agyeya's accusation that the PWA was a purely communist organisation ('it is a scheme of communist literature association. The aim of that association will be the demonstration of the communist doctrine').[69] The dispute could also be read as showcasing vigour among Progressive writers in voicing their own independent ideas and therefore demonstrating that the PWA was more a voluntary association than a mandatory one like that of the Soviet Union. Though the PWA and its brand of progressivism became more left-leaning, the

[67] Dinkar contrasts the different attitudes towards the warriors in Moscow and in Delhi: 'while eulogizing the heroes in Moscow, people hesitated to see the ensanguined warriors in Delhi' (जहाँ मासको के रणधीरों के गुण गाये जाते, दिल्ली के रुधिराक्त वीर को देख लोग सकुचाते।).

[68] See Sharma, *Pragatiśīl Sāhitya kī Samasyāeṁ*, p. 147. He says: 'a kind of division had emerged within the PWA at that time. In the united front of writers who had a national democratic consciousness, established together with communists, members of the Communist Party became separate because they showed indifference to the imperialist rule during the World War II and merely focused on anti-fascism alone.'उस अवधि में प्रगतिशील लेखक संघ में एक तरह से बिखराव शूरू हो गया था। कम्युनिस्टों के साथ जिन राष्ट्रीय जनवादी चेतन से सम्पन्न लेखकों का संयुक्त मोर्चा बनाया गया था, उनके बीच कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के सदस्य अकेले पड़ गए चूँकि वे दूसरे महायुद्ध के समय साम्रज्यवादी शासन के प्रति उपेक्षा का भाव रखते थे और एकांगी ढंग से केवल फासीवाद विरोधी संग्राम पर ज़ोर देते थे।

[69] *Viśāl Bhārat*, December 1938, quoted in Avasthi, *Pragativād aur Samānāntar Sāhitya*, pp. 47-8.

PWA never avowedly became a cultural front of the CPI and maintained its literary autonomy at all times. It is such autonomy that allowed it to accommodate contemporary writers who did not wholly align themselves with the CPI and communist ideology. These writers can be roughly divided into anti-British revolutionaries like Yashpal, socialists (including Congress Socialist Party writers like Narottam Nagar and Kisan Sabha socialists like Nagarjun, who was also a communist), and those who did not align themselves with any political parties, like Rangey Raghav and some former Chayavadi writers. Together with the CPI writers, they endeavoured to carve out an independent space for Progressive literature.

Progressivism appealed to the revolutionaries due to its anti-imperialist vision and democratic inclination, which revolutionaries shared with communists and others. One of the most influential revolutionary organizations in India at the time, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA), upheld Marxist ideology and struggled to defend the interests of peasants and workers. Theirs was a voluntary stance without direct interference from either the CPI or the Comintern, and it led many early revolutionaries to cooperate with the communists after the HSRA disbanded in July 1933.[70] Yashpal, born in 1903 and an HSRA member in Punjab in the 1930s who later became a Progressive novelist, was one such figure. Though Yashpal himself never became a CPI member and came out of prison when Congress formed its first provincial government

[70] The ideological affinity between revolutionaries and communists can be found in Corinne Friend, *Yashpal Looks Back: Selections from an Autobiography*, Ghaziabad: Vikas Publishing House, 1981, pp. 27–28, and Yashpal, *Siṃhāvlokan*, Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 2017 (1955). Many revolutionaries became the CPI members: for example, Kalpana Dutt of the Chittagong group, Latika Sen of Shree Sangha and Suhasini Ganguly and Kamala Mukherjee of Jugantar were among the women who joined the CPI in Bengal. On these revolutionary-turned-CPI members, see Ania Loomba, *Revolutionary Desires: Women, Communism, and Feminism in India*, New York: Routledge, 2019, pp. 107, 112-113.

in 1937, he trusted the Communist Party and considered it the only practical alternative to both Congress and revolutionary organizations like the HSRA.[71] Such a political stance was also reflected in his literary writings. His own journal *Viplav* (*Uprising*), launched in Lucknow in 1938 after his release from jail, and his novels about prison experiences and revolutionary comrades, overtly carry such political messages.[72] Though not a mouthpiece of the PWA, *Viplav* did indeed become a platform for a new 'people's literature', according to Ramvilas Sharma.[73] In the editorial of the first issue of *Viplav*, Yashpal highlighted the power of the oppressed to pave the way for Indian national freedom:

> Viplav is the source of living strength for human beings and society. Viplav is a process by which people move through various stages, one after the other, in the development of society. … Oh, the fire of Viplav! Oh, rise, dalit and oppressed people. Warm up the lifeless and cold blood of our country. India is waiting for you, pull it out of the mud of oppression, bring it onto the plain of equality and peace, and open a way for the development of human beings.[74]

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[71] Friend, *Yashpal Looks Back*, p. 96.

[72] Yashpal together with Chandarshekhar Azad attempted to bomb Viceroy Lord Irwin's special train en route to Delhi in 23 December 1929. Azad was later shot dead by police in February 1931 and Yashpal sentenced to fourteen years in prison. He was released in 1938, due, according to Nikhil Govind, to his poor health and the indefatigable efforts of his wife Prakashvati. See Nikhil Govind, *Between Love and Freedom: The Revolutionary in the Hindi Novel*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2014, Chapter 5: 'Yashpal's Novels: Revolutionaries, Social Relations, and the Reconsolidation of the Realist Narrative', pp. 135–136. For Yashpal's own introduction of his novels *Dādā Kāmareḍ* (1941) and *Deśadrohī* (1943), see Yashpal, *Siṃhāvalokan*, pp. 509-512. For an analysis of the two novels, see Govind, *Between Love and Freedom*, pp. 141–157.

[73] Ramvilas Sharma, *Saṃskṛti aur Sāhitya*, p. 12, quoted in Madhuresh, 'Premchand kī Paramparā aur Yaśapāl,' in Madhuresh, ed., *Krāntikārī Yaśapāl: Ek Samarpit Vyaktitva*, Īlahābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 1979, p. 217.

[74] Quoted in Prabodh Kumar Majumdar, 'Yaśapāl: Sampādak aur patrakār', in Madhuresh, ed., *Krāntikārī Yaśapāl* p. 285. Here, Yashpal used the word 'dalit' to refer to either Dalits or generally oppressed.

Yashpal considered the literary representation of the people, and of the lower classes in particular, as a kind of progress. 'If the lower class endeavour to become human beings and to acquire the right of self-determination is a kind of progress,' he continued, 'for literature to change in order to express the experience of untarnished part of society is also progress.'[75] Together with other revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Yashpal was disillusioned with Gandhi and the Congress despite their shared goal of independence. Yashpal toured villages for several months explaining the importance of freedom but was left discouraged and disappointed because, as he later put it, 'the promise or even fulfilment of independence was meaningless to the villagers as long as there was no programme in the Congress which addressed their needs.'[76] Yashpal, a former revolutionary turned Progressive writer and he contributed significantly to the development of Hindi Progressive literature well into the 1950s (see chapter 3).

The second group of non-CPI Progressives consisted of socialists, an umbrella category including members and sympathizers of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), formed in 1934 as the left wing of the Indian National Congress, and Kisan Sabha activists like Rahul Sankrityatan and Nagarjun, who became actively engaged in the PWA.[77] Like revolutionary writers like Yashpal, some socialists also started journals

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[75] Yashpal, 'Pragativād hi kyoṁ?', April-May, *Haṃs*, 1943, in Yashpal, *Yathārthavād aur uskī samasyāeṁ*, Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 2015, p. 25. यदि निम्न वर्ग का मनुष्य बनने का, आत्मनिर्णय का अधिकार पाने का प्रयत्न प्रगति है तो साहित्य का समाज के इस विशद अंग की अनुभूति को प्रकट करने के लिए रूप बदलना भी प्रगति है।

[76] Friend, *Yashpal Looks Back*, p. 17. Yashpal was particularly disappointed about Gandhi's non-violence principle in Chauri-Chaura event in the 1920s; see Kamla Prasad, *Yaśapāl*, Nayī Dillī: Sāhitya Akādemī, 1996, p. 7. For Bhagat Singh, see Kama Maclean, *A Revolutionary History of Interwar India: Violence, Image, Voice and Text*, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p. 6.

[77] The Congress Socialist Party included Marxists such as Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan, Gandhians and anti-Marxists like Achyut Patwardhan and Rammanohar Lohia, and 'Vedantists' like Sampurnanand. In January 1936 the CSP national executive adopted a resolution to admit communists, who followed the calls of the Comintern Seventh Congress to rally behind members of the Indian Congress left to fight its ring-wing leadership. Thus formed a communist-socialist alliance within the CSP. For the ideological variety within the CSP, see Girja Shankar, *Socialist Trends in Indian National Movement: Being a Study of the Congress Socialist Party*, Meerut: Twenty-First Century Publishers, 1987, pp. 86-102. After the 1940s, as Taylor Sherman suggests, there were three

to spread leftist views. The CSP leader Narendra Dev (1889–1956) founded the weekly *Saṅgharṣ* (*Struggles*) in Lucknow in 1937. Ramvriksha Sharma 'Benipuri' (1902–1968), a founding member of the Bihar Socialist Party (1929) and activist in the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, launched the weekly *Jantā* (*People*) in 1937. Among the writers who wrote for *Jantā* were Ramdhari Singh Dinkar (1908–1974), one of the most influential nationalist Hindi poets, and Rahul Sankrityanyan (1893–1963), the Kisan Sabha activist turned scholar of Buddhism and communist. Narottam Nagar, a former editor of *Saṅgharṣ*, launched the weekly *Chakallas* (lit. quarrels, disputes) in Lucknow in 1938 together with Amritlal Nagar (1916–1990). *Chakallas* published satire and comic pieces mocking 'reactionary' Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and anti-progressive figures like Banarasidas Chaturvedi (1892–1985, himself editor of *Vīśāl Bhārat,* Calcutta). While a few socialists dissociated themselves from the PWA, either because of the CPI's support for the British during World War II (Dinkar) or over its indifference to the issue of Hindi in Nagari script as the national language (Sankrityayan), Nagarjun, a Kisan Sabha activist and communist, remained active engagement in the association into the 1950s. Nagarjun became acquainted with socialism through the writings of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin in the 1930s, while he was studying Buddhism in Sri Lanka and became a close associate of Swami Sahajanand Sarasvati (1889–1950), president of the All-India Kisan Sabha. Following Sahajanand Sarasvati and Rahul Sankrityayan, Nagarjun became an active figure in politics by

strands of Indian socialists: the Congress Left, opposition Socialists who aligned themselves with the Socialist Party, and Gandhian socialists who embraced *sarvodaya*. For the range of socialists from different backgrounds and the variety of understandings of 'socialism', see Taylor Sherman, '"A New Type of Revolution": Socialist Thought in India, 1940s-1960s', *Postcolonial Studies*, 2018, pp. 1-20; and by the same author, *Nehru's India: A History in Seven Myths*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming.

launching and participating in peasant movements in Bihar, and was jailed between 1939 and 1942. About two years after his release, Nagarjun attended the Bihar Provincial PWA Conference in 1944, and after that became a leading Hindi Progressive writer. Just as Yashpal joined the PWA on the basis of a common vision, it is likely that Nagarjun also became a Progressive because both the Kisan Sabha and communists sought to eliminate rural inequality and empower the peasants. As we shall see in chapter 1, his novel *Balchanmā* features an agricultural labourer as protagonist and highlights the awakening of his political consciousness and rebellious spirit.

The last group consisted of those who did not align themselves with any political parties or ideology but championed progressive ideas of equality, with a focus on ordinary, especially marginalized communities. The former *Chayavadi* poets were among this group, for they wanted to create a 'new literature' based on social reality instead of mysticism (*rahasyavād*) appealing. Nirala (1896–1961), for example, inspired by the Russian Revolution, believed that independence and an equal society could be acquired through revolution, and in his poems paid much attention to oppressed figures like beggars, farmers, and all feature labourers.[78] Another *Chayavadi*, Sumitranandan Pant (1900–1977), launched *Rūpābh* in Kalakankar, UP in July 1938. This journal explicitly supported the realistic orientation of Progressive literature, and Pant himself expressed his progressive inclinations in his memoir: 'Our society is decaying due to its conventions. Our aim is not to erect support for a building

[78] For Nirala's appreciation for the Russian Revolution, see Ramvilas Sharma, *Nirālā kī Sāhitya Sādhanā*, Dillī: Rājkamal Prakāśan, Vol. 1, 1971 (1969), pp. 92-93, for his literary representation of social reality, see ibid., Vol. 2, 1972, pp. 120-129.

[traditional society] that will inevitably fall. Our wish is to realize a new one which has already emerged. This new society, nourished by scientific ideas and models, aims to bring benefit to innumerable people.'[79] Pant's uncompromising critique of current and past 'decaying' literature, recognition of literature's social nature, and commitment to establishing a new literature for a new society are similar to Chauhan's.[80] While these poets parted from the PWA in the late 1940s, others such Rangey Raghav remained associated well into the 1950s. Influenced by Prakashchandra Gupta, an English professor who taught him in Agra University in the 1940s, Raghav became acquainted with Marxist ideology and focused on social reform and the plight of ordinary people. As we shall see in chapter 4, both his novels *Huzūr* and *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* represent subordinate communities facing either colonial, political, gender, or caste oppression.

Combined, CPI PWA activists like Shivadan Singh Chauhan, Ramvilas Sharma, Amrit Rai, and Bhairavprasad Gupta, former revolutionaries like Yashpal, socialists like Nagarjun, and non-party aligned literati like Rangey Raghav constituted the wide spectrum of Hindi Progressives of the 1950s. Despite the strong interference of the CPI in the running of the PWA in the 1940s, such a diversity of ideologies produced manifold articulations of progressivism and defended progressivism against its essentialist reduction to a single communist or Marxist ideology. Progressivism does not exist in a literary vacuum, nor is it separate from the field of politics. How do we

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[79] *Rūpābh*, Vol. 1, 1938, quoted in Ramvilas Sharma, 'Rāṣṭrīy svādhīnatā aur pragatiśīl sāhitya' (1951), in *Pragatiśīl Sāhitya kī Samasyāeṁ*, Nayī Dillī: Vāṇī Prakāśan, 2014, pp. 158-159. हमारा समाज अपनी ही रूढ़िकीतियों के भार से जर्जर हो रहा है। हमारा उद्देश्य इस इमारत में थूनियाँ लगाने का कदापि नहीं जिसका कि गिरना अवश्यम्भावी है। हम तो चाहते हैं उस नवीन के निर्णय में सहायक होना जिसका प्रादुर्भाव हो चुका है। वह नवीन समाज वैज्ञानिक विचारों और आदर्शों से पुष्टि पाता हुआ असंख्य जनता के कल्याण को ही अपना ध्येय मानता है।

[80] Due to its support for the progressive movement and its attempts to bring novelty to literature, *Rūpābh* became popular among the educated younger generation. See Avasthi, *Pragativād aur Samānāntar Sāhitya*, p. 50.

then understand Progressivism in the 1950s India, and how does Progressivism link to the broader historical, political and ideological context?

Progressivism in 1950s Nehruvian India

The decade of the 1950s' India was a tapestry interwoven with colourful 'ideological fragments', to use Christopher A. Bayly's term.[81] These included statist developmentalism, Gandhian *Sarvodaya* (lit. uplift of all, a strand of socialism according to Taylor Sherman), the Socialist Party's socialism, the CPI's communism, Ambedkar's immediate concern for Dalits, and so forth.[82] Together, these ideological fragments formed a contested terrain, and Hindi Progressivism was in dialogue with each of them to different degrees. For instance, the Progressives' emphasis on class consciousness (in their manifestoes and in the novels examined in chapters 1 and 2), the PWA's relations with the CPI, and the influential group of communist writers within the association all help correlate Progressivism with communism. The concern for the oppressed people and particularly the lower castes (chapter 4) connect Progressivism with Rammanohar Lohia's socialism and Ambedkarism, while the appeal for social equality and emphasis on non-violence (chapter 2) shows Progressivism's affinity with Gandhian thought. It is worth pointing out that Progressivism does not simply equate with socialism: Indian socialism in the 1950s strived 'for the all-round development of

[81] In fact, Bayly draws upon political scientist Raymon Geuss's expression 'an amalgam of historically contingent fragments' to describe the ideas of Nehru and his closest circle in the early period of independent India. See C. A. Bayly, 'The Ends of Liberalism and the Political Thought of Nehru's India', *Modern Intellectual History*, 12, 3, 2015, pp. 605-626. Here I choose to use 'fragments' to point out the diversity and complexity of ideological strands in 1950s India.

[82] For an overall assessment of the ideologies of Nehru's government, see Bayly, 'The Ends of Liberalism and the Political Thought of Nehru's India'; for socialism(s) in independent India, see Sherman, '"A New Type of Revolution"'; and by the same author, 'A Gandhian answer to the threat of communism? Sarvodaya and postcolonial nationalism in India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 53, 2, 2016, pp. 1-22.

the individual' against the collective and for a spiritual progress and salvation rather than materialism,[83] whereas Progressivism sought to integrate individual development with a secular collective community (chapter 1). Therefore, the Progressivism that we encounter in the manifestoes and see articulated in the novels is entangled with ideologies in the broader political context, forming an 'amalgam of different ideological fragments' rather than a singular ideologeme.

Being an 'amalgam' does not mean that Hindi Progressivism is a hodgepodge without any distinguishing characteristics. One of its main features is the scepticism towards the new ruling bloc and its ideas, thus producing a counter-discourse against the official rhetoric. Comparisons in three aspects are very much in evidence for the antithetical stances of Progressivism: the attitudes towards the new nation-state, the (re)production of 'diversity' which is an apparently uncontroversial concept that conventionally defines and explains Indian culture and society, and finally the (absent) presence of industrial modernity, one of the most vital aims of the developing scheme in the independent India.

India's independence carried different meanings in official and Progressive discourses. For the first prime minister Nehru, independence meant a new beginning and a departure from the colonial past; as he announced in the broadcast on the eve of independence, '[a] moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance'; he also envisaged the connections with other post-colonial nations as

[83] Sherman, '"A New Type of Revolution"', pp. 5-6, 13-14.

a *new* 'spirit of Asia'.[84] The Film Divisions' documentaries of the 1950s showed such newness by representing fresh images of the new state and erasing colonial elements.[85] The first Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 1951, also served to establish, suggests S. Roy, 'a *new* ritual idiom of identity and authority for the *new* polity.'[86]

By contrast, Progressive writers explicitly expressed their disillusionment with independence and accentuated the continuity between the colonial and post-colonial periods, in lieu of the excitement and extolment of the new state. Such 'progressive' attitudes can be found in speeches, editorials, and literary works, which correspond to a great extent to the CPI's critical viewpoint.[87] In his presidential speech at the AIPWA Hindi conference in September 1947, Rahul Sankrityayan dismissed independence as a mere transition of power: 'nowadays our country is facing many problems after the transition of power: issues of literacy, industrialization, how to educate people in the light of modern scientific developments, and agricultural production to meet the need of the population.' He continued to appeal to Progressive writers to open the doors of progress and contribute to an independent and blessed India.[88] Similarly, Amrit Rai denounced independence in his editorial 'Independence Day and Hindi writers'

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[84] Bayly, 'The Ends of Liberalism and the Political Thought of Nehru's India', p. 616; emphasis mine.

[85] As Srirupa Roy argues in her study of the discursive affirmation of the independent nation-state, 'the diversion of the Film Division's focus from the colonial and anticolonial part speaks of the preoccupation with newness and the faith in the redemptive possibilities that structured the national imagination of Nehruvian India'; Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 50. For development documentaries, see also Peter Sutoris, *Visions of Development: Films Division of India and the Imagination of Progress, 1948-75*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

[86] Roy, *Beyond Belief*, p. 75; emphases mine.

[87] Although the radical and moderate wings within the CPI conflicted with each other on whether to cooperate with the ruling Congress, both viewed independence in 1947 as a 'false freedom' because, according to them, the lives of common people, peasants and workers in particular, did not change even a little bit.

[88] Quoted ibid., p. 107. सत्ता के हस्तातरण के बाद आज हमारे देश के सामने अनेकों समस्याएँ हैं -- साक्षरता की समस्या, देश के औद्योगीकरण की समस्या, आधुनिक वैज्ञानिक विकास के प्रकाश में लोगों को शिक्षित करने की समस्या, देश की जनसंख्या के अनुपात में कृषिउत्पादन बढ़ाने की समस्या … वे आगे आएँ और प्रगतिवाद आंदोलन में शामिल होकर बहुमुखी प्रगति के दरवाज़े खोलें एक स्वतंत्र और एक खुशहाल भारत के निर्माण में योग दे।

(Svādhīnatā Divas aur Hindī Sāhityakār) in *Haṃs* in 1947: 'It is to be stressed that the "freedom" we acquired on 15 August is not the freedom for which we have struggled for so many years, and for which our numerous martyrs sacrificed their lives.'[89] It is evident here that for Progressive writers, the true independence is yet to come and requires subsequent struggles. The literary narratives in the novels examined in the following chapters span across the pre-and post-independent periods (*Balchanmā*, set in the colonial period alone, is the exception), and reduce independence to a background voice (such as in *Bīj* and in *Jhūṭhā Sach*). Some compare the lifestyle before and after independence, showing that the lives of ordinary people and communities had not really changed after independence, in fact had become worse than in the colonial period (see *Satī Maiyā ka Chaurā* and *Huzūr*). Progressives were thus critical of the state apparatus and politicians, responsible for the false independence. Hindi Progressive fiction provides many negative, sometimes villainous images of Congressmen and their close circles, such as the abovementioned metaphor of the tortoise with Gandhi's picture on its back; Congressmen appear, 'Nehru' self-centred, 'Gandhi' inaccessible and God-like, policemen are violent, bureaucrats are alcoholics, and so on.

A key element of Nehruvian ideology was the notion of 'unity in diversity'. As Roy's study shows, official practices produced a particular imagination of India as naturally diverse but united, accommodating different communities on the occasion of cultural performances and commemorative rituals, such as the Republic Day

[89] Editorial in *Haṃs*, August 1947, p. 822. यह बात ज़ोर देकर कहने की है कि पंद्रह तारीख़ को हमें जो "आज़ादी" मिली है वह वही आज़ादी नहीं है जिसके लिए हमने इतने बरसों तक संघर्ष किया है, जिसके लिए हमारे असंख्य शहीदों ने अपने प्राणों का उत्सर्ग किया।

celebrations.[90] On such occasions, the state acted as the guardian and protector of minority groups and of those contributing to nation-building, and individuals from diverse regions and communities are, in turn, presented as delighted and united in celebrating the founding of the new nation. Such a harmonious unity glosses over the considerable difference in class, caste, religion, region, and party alignment, and whitewashes the conflicts between varied groups and communities, reducing cultural diversity to ornaments embellishing the mono-statist ideology. In contrast to this 'institution of diversity', to use Roy's term, Progressive writers represent an 'autonomy of diversity', freeing diversity from the state-imposed unity. This autonomous diversity foregrounds the distinguishing features of characters, such as their political alignment with either the Congress, the CPI, or Kisan Sabha socialism; their class positions as agricultural labourers or zamindars; and their religious affiliation and caste. More significantly, this autonomy of diversity exposes tensions and conflicts covered up by the image of harmonious unity: these include conflicts between progressive characters and the state apparatus, secularists and communalists, untouchables and upper castes, and so forth. Unlike the centripetal tendency of the 'unity in diversity' paradigm, the diversity reproduced by the Progressive novels empowers heterogeneous individuals and communities to voice and struggle.

A third important aspect of Nehruvian ideology was state development. Command economy, planned development, and modern industrialization took material form as dams, steel plants, and agricultural equipment, ubiquitous in the documentaries of the

[90] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

1950s.[91] Some of these films even created a stark contrast between the lifestyles 'before and after the dam' in tribal areas, stigmatizing Adivasis as backward and uncivilized obstacles to state reforms.[92] These grand developmental motifs are barely present in Hindi Progressive novels, while Adivasis emerge as skilful and active labourers (see chapter 4). Such absence indicates that Progressivism did not buy into the statist narrative of developmentalism.

How the meaning of the term 'progress' for Hindi Progressivism contrasts sharply with that of the state can be easily understood in relation to peasantry. In state discourse, progressive farmers in the 1950s, according to Benjamin Siegel's study, were those who won the crop competitions initiated by the state to promote food grain production; after acquiring large holdings, surplus capital, and privileged access to credit, labour and machinery as rewards, they became the rural elite and an interest group with political clout.[93] 'Progress' here means the promotion of agricultural technologies, the increase of agricultural productivity, and a vision of economic self-reliance, widening the 'chasm between subsistence farmers and capitalist agriculturalists' and at odds with egalitarian aims.[94] The 'progress' of Hindi Progressivism, instead, strives for equality between farmers and landlords, and accordingly progressive farmers are those politically awakened fighters who take action and struggle against zamindars'

[91] See Sutoris, *Visions of Development*, particularly chapter 5 'Our Industrial Age: Planning, Industrialisation and Large Dams'; Roy, *Beyond Belief*, particularly chapter 1 'Moving Pictures: The Films Division of India and the Visual Practices of the Nation State'. According to *Films Division Catalogue of Films*, 38 percent of the documentaries produced by 1972 were on development and planning, which occupied the largest portion among all categories including art and culture, citizenship and reform, defence and international scene, and biographical documentaries, children's films, geography and travel, and experimental films; see Roy, *Beyond Belief*, p. 43.
[92] Sutoris, *Visions of Development*, pp. 110-111.
[93] Benjamin Siegel, 'Modernizing Peasants and "Master Farmers": Progressive Agriculture in Early Independent India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2017, pp. 65-75.
[94] Ibid., p. 66.

oppression (see *Balchanmā* in chapter 1). It has nothing to do with the modern technologies and economic accumulation of state discourse, but is concerned with the interests of the peasantry who are oppressed and/or unfairly treated.

These basic differences between official and Progressive discourses clearly show how Progressivism helps create a counter-discourse, and Progressive texts invoked a counter-public. While the new nation-state, the notion of unity of diversity, and the dominance of developmentalism consolidated state authority in postcolonial India, Progressive writings challenged what Ayesha Jalal terms 'authoritarian democracy'.[95] Literary progressivism championed a set of values concerning class, caste, gender, and religion. These included a critical stance towards independence and the Congress-led ruling bloc; a positive emphasis on active struggles against reactionary forces, whether of villainous landlords or devious Congressmen; they also included social and gender justice, solidarity with oppressed people either of low class or low caste, and vigilance and struggle against communalism. As the literary analysis in the following chapters show, Progressive novels offer creative, detailed, and diversified representations and articulations of these progressive ideas.

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The relationship between ideology and literature, a broad concern of the thesis, has been a major focus for literary critics. Marxist literary critics in particular have contributed systematic reflections on literature in terms of ideology. An important

[95] See Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

pioneer, György Lukács, explored literary aesthetics and criticism from the perspective of the relationship between aesthetic forms and ideology; he claimed that 'the true bearer of ideology of art are the very forms, rather than abstractable content, of the work itself.'[96] While acknowledging the ideological nature of literary forms, Lukács advanced Lenin's theory of reflection, arguing that 'no writer and no work can do more than give us a reflection of the world in a mirror which is worthy of reflecting all the world's rays.'[97] By contrast, Louis Pierre Althusser proposed a more complex relationship between art and ideology, suggesting that art is 'held in the very ideology' which it makes us to 'see', to 'perceive' and to 'feel'.[98]

Unlike Lukács and Althusser's theories, which distance art from ideology, Terry Eagleton contends that art *is* a form ideology. Eagleton emphasizes the literary mode of production and argues that 'the literary text is not the "expression" of ideology, nor is ideology the "expression" of social class. The text, rather, is a certain *production* of ideology.'[99] Through the 'working' of aesthetic ideology, a complex formation including literary traditions, genres, devices and discourses, the text, according to Eagleton, operates on the 'pre-textual ideology', materials that come into texts and are ready for processing. What is finally produced is the 'ideology of text', an ideology that has no pre-existence but is identical with the text itself.[100] Eagleton's theory of texts as

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[96] Quoted in Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, London: Routledge, pp. 11-12.
[97] György Lukács, *Soul & Form* (1893), translated by Anna Bostock, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 410. For Lukács's reflectionism, see also his *The Theory of the Novel: A historical-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature* (1920), translated by Anna Bostock, Kent: Whitstable Litho Printers Ltd., 1971.
[98] Louis Althusser, 'A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971, p. 223. Following Althusser's school, Pierre Macherey points out that the absence in texts also has a relationship with the ideology from which it is born; see his *A Theory of Literary Production*, translated by Geoffrey Wall, London: Routledge, 1978.
[99] Eagleton, 'Towards a Science of the Text', in his *Criticism & Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*, London: Verso, 1976, p. 64.
[100] Ibid., pp. 80-81. For 'aesthetic ideology', see ibid., p. 61.

producing ideology deconstructs both reflection theory and the dichotomy between texts and ideology, forms and contents, thereby maintaining the autonomy of literary texts. This does not mean that texts are produced without ideology, but they 'process' ideology into 'an analogue of knowledge' through their narrative strategies.[101] Eagleton's theory supports one of the main arguments of this thesis that Hindi Progressive literature is no mere reflection of pre-textual ideologies, whether communist, Marxist, socialist, or even the Progressivism expressed in the manifestoes, but it produces a textual progressive ideology analogous to, yet different from, those ideologies. It is because of this stress on the autonomy of texts that my study explores Progressive literature with emphasis on textual analysis rather than on writers' lives or the association.

If this literary production of ideology indeed occupies an independent space but is inextricably linked with para-literary elements, how should we interpret it? Fredric Jameson's theory of 'political unconscious' helps us elucidate the relevance of literary production to the real world. According to Jameson, '[i]t is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity.'[102] Narrative is not a simplistic configuration of words, 'the prison house of language' in the Fredric Jameson's sense,[103] but is endowed

[101] Ibid., p. 85.
[102] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 20. In his study, Jameson does not define 'the political unconscious' precisely; instead, he formulates how history comes to our mind through the unconsciousness: history is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious; ibid., p. 35.
[103] Jameson uses this term to critically analyse formalism, arguing that we should set our mind free from the prison of language, forms, and symbols, and develop a new kind of hermeneutics which 'reconciles the twin, apparently

with a specific ideology by the political unconscious, which Jameson calls 'the ideology of form'. That ideology of form, a close parallel to Eagleton's aesthetic ideology, is an important concept that I will recall time and again in my textual analysis. It is the symbolic messages carried by the ideological sign systems that become accessible to readers and become relevant to the society, i.e., 'inventing imaginary or formal "solutions" to unresolvable social contradictions.' [104] Drawing on Jameson's interpretation, I argue that the Hindi textual Progressivism narrativized through the political unconscious imagined solutions to the insurmountable tensions of politics, caste, class, and gender in India by employing specific narrative techniques. For example, the integrity of the female character Tara in *Jhūṭhā Sach* can be read as a symbolic channel between the poor and the bureaucracy, a critique of Congress politicians, and a way to transcend patriarchal hierarchy (chapter 3); the untouchable narrator in *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* is a symbolic medium between the low castes and the elite and a subject empowered to fight against the caste system. While Hindi Progressive novels often imagine struggles as the imaginary solutions, they also question such solutions, since they often end with failure or an impossible predicament, as the chapters in this thesis show.

On the narratological level which serves a vital medium in the literary production, Susan Rubin Suleiman's analysis of the ideological novel or *roman à thèse* proffers a useful framework to explore how novels employ formal techniques to express and

incommensurable, demands of synchronic analysis and historical awareness, of structure and self-consciousness, language and history'. See Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 216.

[104] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 79.

produce an ideological message.[105] Suleiman does not consider the novels that she studies (Bourget's *L'Etape*, Malraux's *L'Espoir*, Sartre's *L'Enfance d'un chef*, etc.) as 'ideological' in the broader sense that, 'we can say that any representation of human reality depends on, and in some way expresses, a more or less consciously defined ideology.' Rather, she restricts the term 'ideology' more narrowly to 'a recognised body of doctrine or system of ideas.'[106] Like Marxist literary critics, Suleiman also highlight that the *roman à thèse* is an integration of ideological messages and fictional strategies.[107] The *roman à thèse* is a genre with a clear ideological/doctrinaire message that seeks to convince the readers of the 'correctness' of a particular way of interpreting the world, as she defines: 'a *roman à thèse* is a novel written in the *realistic mode* (that is, based on an aesthetic of verisimilitude and representation), which signals itself to the reader as *primarily didactic in intent*, seeking to *demonstrate the validity of a* political, philosophical, or religious *doctrine*.'[108] For this reason, her approach fits Hindi Progressive novels remarkably well.

This definition, which implies no value judgement as to the quality of the individual work, foregrounds three crucial elements. The first is realism: defining the

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[105] The term *roman à thèse* has gone from condemnation and contempt to critical definition and analysis. When the term emerged in nineteenth century France, it was used to stigmatise novels considered too close to propaganda and lacking artistic validity. In 1907, Paul Bourget, himself considered a *roman à thèse* writer, denounced the term but acknowledged the novel of ideas as a legitimate and necessary genre. Admittedly, there have been remarkable studies on individual writers and their novels, but these studies focus more on either thematic aspects or ideological content, rather than on the formal characteristics of these novels. Suleiman's book studies *roman à thèse* from a formal generic perspective, analysing its narrative structure and themes. The *roman à thèse*, Suleiman suggests, flourishes in political contexts and historical moments which see sharp social and ideological conflicts, and is more likely to exist in cultural traditions that foster the involvement of writers in social and intellectual debates or problems. For this reason, the social, political, and literary climate of tensions in India provided a fertile ground for the seed of the *roman à thèse* to germinate.

[106] Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 1.

[107] She contends that the *roman à these* is both overtly ideological and fictional, and its problematic mode of existence is due precisely to the combination of – or more precisely, to the friction between – these two modes of discourse; ibid., p. 2.

[108] Ibid., p. 7. The italics are mine.

roman à thèse as a type of realist novel helps distinguish it from novels which are also didactic and persuasive but have non-realist narratives, such as utopias. Fictional characters in *roman à thèse* are presented as 'real' in the real society. Second, the *roman à thèse* is primarily didactic, and seeks to demonstrate the validity of some doctrine, the third element. Following the identifiable modal traits, Suleiman considers two main narrative structures of *roman à thèse*: the '*structure of apprenticeship*' and the '*structure of confrontation*'. In the structure of apprenticeship, positive characters or 'apprentices' acquire knowledge or enlightenment by surmounting a series of 'trials'; negative characters, by contrast, cannot attain the truth due to their failure in overcoming the obstacles. The (non-)actions taken during this process function both as proof and tests of the values, whether positive or negative. In the structure of confrontation, a clearly collective hero sets out to fight for one or more specific values, such as truth, justice, freedom, either in physical, legal, parliamentary or ethical conflicts. Both structures convey a doctrine of system of ideas in an insistent, consistent, and unambiguous manner, which is also one of identifiable traits of *roman à thèse*. For this reason, Suleiman calls the *roman à thèse* an 'authoritarian genre': it appeals to the need for certainty, stability, and unity, and affirms absolute truths, absolute values.

The 'authoritarianism' of the *roman à thèse* transmits unambiguous values to the reader, the process which establishes a bridge between the fictional and real worlds. Suleiman proposes three further criteria for the genre: 'the presence of an unambiguous, dualistic *system of values*, the presence (even if it is only implied, not stated) of a *rule*

of action addressed to the reader, and the presence of a *doctrinal intertext*.'[109] Thus, she argues that the *roman à thèse* combines two characteristics belonging to different genres: one is *verisimilitude* of realism, an intersection between the matter in the fiction and the historical-cultural reality of the reader; the other is the didacticism of allegory and exemplary narratives, an intersection between the interpretation of the fiction and the real world of the reader.[110] The need to provide clear examples produces a polarised system of positive and negative values and characters, whose fate is explained in the light of the doctrine (which is present, implicitly or explicitly, as an intertext). Their example and fate urge the reader to act in a certain way for her own good. In the structure of apprenticeship, the reader is either persuaded to follow the protagonist's journey in the right direction, or receives confirmation that s/he was right at the start. After persuasion or confirmation, the reader can identify with the protagonist and, indeed, can often see him/herself as an extension or continuation of the hero/ine. In the structure of confrontation, the reader is 'co-opted' from the start into the ranks of hero, because s/he is immediately placed in the position of someone who shares the hero's values and desires his or her victory. The reader's adherence to the right values is strengthened by the adversary conflicts developed in the course of the novel.

Suleiman's theory allows us to explore how the ideological Progressive novels produce unambiguous values and therefore convey a lucid rule of action through formal strategies, particularly the narrative structure. The first two chapters of my thesis will respectively engage with Suleiman's structures of apprenticeship and confrontation in

[109] Ibid., p. 56. The italics are mine.
[110] Ibid., p. 146.

a flexible way to examine the narrative of progressive *Bildungs* and conflicts. Some novels, like *Bīj*, realize the archetype of Suleiman's structures, while others orchestrate actantial elements with a varied design. The structural variations not only provide different symbolic meanings of developments and conflicts in the context of the 1950s India, but also foster a better understanding of the dynamics of this generic framework.

While Suleiman proposes a description of the genre without value judgement, contributing to an objective, neutral analysis of formal strategies,[111] she downplays the ideological attribute of the form, a very important claim of Marxist critics Eagleton and Jameson. In this respect, Suleiman's approach to the ideological novel is a rather non-ideological and somewhat paradoxical. She endeavours to delineate a boundary between ideology and fiction, consequently excluding the ideology that prevails over formal elements. For example, her analysis suggests a symbiotic relationship between the structures of apprenticeship and confrontation in French *roman à thèse*, but fails to elaborate the ideological link between them, which my study of Hindi Progressive novels clarifies in the first two chapters. Apart from the two structures, the Progressive novels employ other formal strategies as well, such as the distribution of characters in the narrative space and the adoption of diverse narrators. As we shall see in the third and fourth chapters, these techniques are not purely formal but are ideologically loaded, producing a critique of the Congress rule and imagining the empowerment of the oppressed people. Hence, I employ a combination of narratological terms – such as omniscient and non-human narrators, focalization, perspective, role of space and time,

[111] Ibid., p. 101.

minor characters and character system – to illuminate how the texts formally carry and produce progressive ideology. In this way, my study argues that Progressive novels present an integral whole in which ideology and form have their own stake but are interlocked, which is the core of the interface of ideology and literature.

Chapter Outline

Throughout this thesis, I navigate between the rhetoric of socio-political concerns expressed in the manifestoes and close readings of Hindi Progressive novels. I put into conversation two bodies of discourse in an attempt to show how novels define and promote an aesthetic progressivism. When progressivism as an abstract concept takes incarnation in a fictional text, the foremost question that comes to mind is what kinds of individuals can embody progressivism, or in other words, who can be progressive? Obviously, one is not progressive by birth but becomes so through tutelage and a learning process. In chapter 1, entitled 'Becoming Progressive: The Structure of Apprenticeship', I examine who the imagined progressives are and how they get tested, challenged, and mature. Drawing on Suleiman's structure of apprenticeship, I argue that Progressive novels construct a counter-narrative of *Bildung* into maturity for the potential progressives against the prevalent social norms. Three Hindi novels – *Bīj* (Amrit Rai), *Balchanmā* (Nagarjun), and *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* (Bhairavprasad Gupta) – present respectively three different pathways of development towards maturity for the subjects belonging to different social positions. While *Bīj* showcases a linear development of an urban educated couple in the archetypal structure of apprenticeship,

Balchanmā and *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* construct, by modifying the structure, how an illiterate agricultural labourer matures in the absence of a strong helper and how a landlord transforms in a complex and chequered way. The juxtaposition of three novels in this chapter aims to reveal the diverse possible routes for becoming progressive on one hand, and on the other hand the formal variations in each structure thereby contribute to our understanding of Suleiman's formulation and to the *Bildungsroman* as a genre.

In the process of progressive development, struggles are not only a crucial means to but also a result of maturation. This is a feature distinguishing Hindi Progressive novel from other *Bildungsromans*, whether European, Soviet or Chinese, which often conclude with a harmonious integration into the dominant mainstream culture. Hence, I explore the ubiquitous confrontations in the Progressive novels in chapter 2 'The Fight for Progressive Values: The Structure of Confrontation'. Compared with other novels that address conflicts briefly, such as the one between the police and the common people (in *Bīj*), *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* provides a few elaborate confrontational episodes which dot in the narrative and indeed give it its title, while most of the novel focuses on protagonist Manne's development. Drawing upon Suleiman's structure of confrontation, the chapter returns to *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* to analyse two major sets of confrontations – between tenant farmers and zamindars, and between secularists and communalists – in an effort to see how Progressive novels frame confrontations between progressive and reactionary forces. I argue that the novel provides a Marxist interpretation and imaginary solution to economic exploitation and communalism through a series of

confrontations. More significantly, and this is the distinctiveness of the confrontational episode in this novel, the triumph of the progressive heroic groups at the end signifies the victory, or at least the Progressives' longing for victory, of progressive values over the reactionary forces.

One of the main reactionary forces to confront in the political milieu of the 1950s is indeed the Congress ruling bloc. How do Progressive novels tackle contemporary Congress politics, and what kind of discourse do literary narratives produce? Chapter 3, entitled 'Narrative Critiques of the Congress Rule', seeks to answer these questions. *Hāthī ke Dānt* (by Amrit Rai) and *Jhūṭhā Sach* (by Yashpal), the two novels analysed in this chapter, present how Congress politics operates at the local, provincial and national levels through different literary strategies. The former adopts a strong omniscient narrator, producing sketchy, flattened caricatures of hypocritical and oppressively dominant local Congressmen. Taking into consideration the privileged authority and dominant presence of the omniscient narrator's 'telling' rather than 'showing', I argue that the novel produces an authoritarian, rather than authoritative, critique of the Congress local politics. By contrast, in *Jhūṭhā Sach* the narrator is less visible, and the novel foregrounds the defects of the Congress regime through its closely-knit storyline and systematically-organized character distribution, which juxtaposes the female and male co-protagonists and flattens minor characters. While the two novels do not employ archetypical structures of apprenticeship and confrontation, they produce a clear ideological message – a forceful narrative critique of the Congress regime by centring on, and this is the importance of the chapter,

flattening Congress characters as villains.

However, is Progressivism a discursive instrument employed only in the elite-dominated sphere of party politics? Certainly not. In writing about the lives of ordinary people, Progressive novels attempt to establish a people-centric perspective. In response to 'who are the people and how does Progressive literature represent them', chapter 4 'Approaching the People: Shifting to Subaltern Perspectives' examines in-depth two Hindi novels by Rangey Raghav, *Huzūr* and *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*: the former presents fragmentary episodes of subaltern humans through a dog narrator, while the latter focuses on the untouchable community of the *Nat*. By exploring the shift in narrative perspectives respectively from a privileged pet to a declassed stray dog, and from an upper caste, middle class narrator to the untouchable, I argue that the two novels formally approach the people and make the people's voice heard, thus endeavouring to produce a literature from below. They also mark a transition of perspective that expands the scope of the Progressive notion of the people.

In sum, this thesis offers a close reading of a diverse body of Hindi Progressive novels that foreground a range of aesthetic literary strategies. It shows the creative imagination of Hindi Progressive literature concerning social, political and individual issues in the 1950s when the association had become defunct, and reconceptualizes progressivism in literature. It asserts the critical necessity of exploring the diversity of voices in the novels to fully understand Progressive literature.

Chapter 1

Becoming Progressive: The Structure of Apprenticeship

Imaging how one becomes a progressive and matures by facing challenges and crises is one of the effective fashions in which novels embody the abstract concept of Progressivism. Because Progressivism is a counter-statist discourse, as mentioned in the Introduction, Progressive novels on individual development are necessarily different from the mainstream narratives of 1950s' India. The ideal citizen in the statist discourse of the Nehruvian era was characterized by his or her ability to comply with the instructions of the state and serve nation-building projects. Frequently, he/she was an 'infantile citizen' who needs state tutelage and protection and realizes his/her citizenship by acquiring skills for the sake of state development, like the master farmers of agricultural progress mentioned in the Introduction.[1] Even those who originally criticize development projects acknowledge the fallacy of their criticism, alter their views and turn into participants in the projects, as the caricatures in *Mr Critic* show, a film produced by Films Division in 1954.[2] The representation of these ideals as apolitical, extrapolitical and antipolitical[3] indicates the belief in developmentalism, Nehruvian statism, and industrial modernity, while airbrushing tensions and conflicts

[1] Many documentaries produced by Films Division represent ideal figures of the Nehruvian India, such as farmers using new water pumps in *Partners for Plenty* (1955); women in salwar kameezes adeptly handling test tubes in *The Black Gold* (1965), and engineers engaged in dexterous labours of flood control along the embankment of a rapidly rising river in *Fight the Floods* (1955); see Roy, *Beyond Belief*, p. 47.
[2] Sutoris, *Visions of Development*, p. 104.
[3] Roy, *Beyond Belief*, p. 64.

of class, caste, gender, religion, party alignment, and so forth. By contrast, the Hindi Progressive novels of the 1950s totally ignore state development projects, which do not feature in the trajectories of protagonists. Their ideal progressives are, instead, those who become politically awakened by embracing political ideologies – whether communist, socialist, or a mixture of them, and act them out in a fight against inequality. While the statist discourse strengthens the sovereignty of the nation-state by portraying nation-builders and dismissing criticism, Progressive narratives challenge the state-apparatus by representing figures of struggle and targeting the ruling bloc for criticism. Within the milieu of state planning and development of the early independent India, this chapter argues, Progressive literature produces a counternarrative of individual development which depends on political mentors and the self instead of state authority, and which is achieved by resistant actions instead of engagement with state planning.

I call such a narrative pattern the Progressive *Bildungsroman:* its main elements include a young hero, his/her transformation by internalizing leftist ideologies, and a course of action undertaken for the purpose of opposing prevalent social norms and creating a new lifestyle. These defining features give the Progressive *Bildungsroman* a distinct position if we compare it to the other subgenres of the *Bildungsroman*. Franco Moretti, taking the example of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* in his seminal study *The Way of the World*, suggests that the classical European *Bildungsroman* succeeds in representing a fusion of internal impulses and external compulsion, creating a new unity in which the former is no longer distinguishable from the latter.[4] Such a synthetic form,

[4] Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, London: Verso, 2000 (1987), p. 16.

argues Moretti, 'offered one of the most harmonious solutions to a dilemma conterminous with modern bourgeois civilization: the conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demands of socialization.'[5] In socialist *Bildungsroman*, a distinct subgenre which flourished in the twentieth-century Soviet and Chinese socialist realist literature, protagonists mature either by internalizing the revolutionary or communist spirit and acting it out in socio-political struggles or by accepting the socialist norms as indispensable requirements for individual growth. Such novels build up the narrative until it often neatly ends in the protagonist acquiring either a political identity, very often, the party membership, or fully-conscious citizenship in the newly-established socialist nation.[6] Furthermore, such individual developing process is shown to correspond to the broader domains of collective, national history and communism. A successful transformation of individuals into qualified socialists/communists marks the triumph of the Communist revolution or post-war socialist reconstruction, and therefore highlights the unchallenged leadership of the Communist Party.[7] In this perspective, these socialist *Bildungsromans* produce a literary rhetoric of communist politics. Both the classical European *Bildungsroman* and

[5] Ibid., p. 15.

[6] For example, *The Song of Youth* (written by Yang Mo, 1958), a Chinese novel which can be read as a standard text for the socialist *Bildungsroman*, represents how a female intellectual youth, who originally belongs to bourgeois class, grows into a qualified Communist revolutionary. On the study of this novel and other Chinese *Bildungsroman*, see Mingwei Song, *Young China: National Rejuvenation and the Bildungsroman, 1900-1959*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015, particularly Chapter seven, 'The Taming of the Young: the Socialist *Bildungsroman*'. Protagonists in Soviet literature, for example, Gleb in *Cement* (F. Gladkov, 1925), the prototypical socialist realist novel, develops from a revolutionary to a fully formed Soviet citizen through overcoming the obstacles of rebuilding a dilapidated cement factory. On Soviet socialist *Bildungsroman*, see Clark, *The Soviet Novel*.

[7] In *The Song of Youth*, the linear development of the protagonist from struggling against the feudal family for personal freedom, to acquiring the consciousness of the collective's interests, and finally devoting to communist revolution, corresponds to the crucial steps of China's revolution. In this sense, the novel concludes, argues Song, 'a *Bildungsroman* with cruelest but also the most awe-inspiring, sublime imagery- youth glorified at at its elimination, but given an eternal, symbolic life in the grandiose picture of History' (Song, *Young China*, pp. 301-312). Similarly, the positive heroes in the Soviet socialist novels are, suggests Clark, 'emblems of Bolshevik virtue', and their life is patterned to 'show the forward movement of history' (Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 46-56).

the socialist Soviet/Chinese one narrate the integration of individual development into the dominant social culture –modern bourgeois culture or national communist enterprise respectively. By contrast, the Hindi Progressive *Bildungsroman* imagines individual growth as a challenge to dominant middle-class, upper-caste social norms and an attempt to find a way out of them.

This chapter examines three Hindi Progressive *Bildungsromans – Bīj* (*The Seed*, 1952, Amrit Rai), *Balchanmā* (*Balchanma*, 1952, Nagarjun), and *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* (*The Altar of Goddess Sati*, 1959, Bhairavprasad Gupta). *Bīj* represents how two college students, featured as progressive protagonists, transform into a companionate and socially conscious couple under the guidance of their communist mentors and by overcoming obstacles *vis-à-vis* work, family, and politics, and between themselves. *Balchanmā* focuses on an illiterate agricultural labourer who undergoes a self-motivated awakening and matures to be an activist against zamindars. The last novel *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* plots the developing but conflictual self of the landlord protagonist, an unlikely progressive, before he is enlightened by his communist friend. The three novels, I argue, imagine ideal progressives who are characterized by the ability to learn and internalize leftist ideologies under other people's guidance or through self-reliance, and to actively confront the state, the ruling class, and social norms. It is this political awakening and resistance that marks their progressivism.

At the same time, the three novels produce three different pathways of development towards maturity for subjects who belong to different social positions. This helps readers understand who *can* be imagined as potential progressive subjects

and how they *become* progressive respectively. The diverse *Bildungs* foster a greater understanding of Suleiman's formulation of 'the structure of apprenticeship', one of the main structural models of *roman à these,* already outlined in the Introduction. As we saw, Suleiman offers two syntagmatic variants of the structure: positive and negative apprenticeship. According to her scheme, positive characters or 'apprentices' acquire knowledge or enlightenment by surmounting a series of 'trials'; negative characters, by contrast, cannot attain the truth due to their failure in overcoming obstacles. The outcome of the protagonist's trials is determined by the particular actantial configuration within the novel, i.e., the paradigmatic system of characters which includes the hero, donor, helper and opponent.[8] A hero backed by a strong donor, who is always a paternal figure, and/or a helper who facilitates the hero's progress toward the right doctrine, will overcome the trials and accomplish a positive exemplary apprenticeship. A hero lacking such support or hindered by an opponent will fail to pass the test and will accomplish a negative exemplary apprenticeship.[9] Whether positive or negative, Suleiman argues, the apprenticeship story serves its demonstrative, didactic purpose through the reader's virtual identification with the protagonist. The reader is incited to either follow the positive protagonist in the right direction, or reject the wrong path of the negative apprenticeship.

Suleiman's structure of apprenticeship provides a model for narratological

[8] According to Suleiman, the term 'actantial' comes from A.J. Greimas' theory of 'actants'. See footnote 6, in Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 266. In Greimas' schema, there are six actants who define the principal spheres of action of any story: the subject or protagonist; the object, or what is desired, valued, sought by the subject; the receiver, who is to benefit from the object; the donor, who facilitates the communication of the object to the receiver; the helper, who helps the subject in his action for obtaining the object; and the opponent, who hinders or tries to hinder the subject's action.

[9] Ibid., pp. 79-84.

analyses of the three Hindi novels examined in this chapter. Nevertheless, their flexible and effective use of this structure illustrates the specific *Bildung* of different individuals. Different configurations of actants and shifts between positive and negative structures help produce three different routes of apprenticeship – the 'communist-inspired apprenticeship' of the urban middle class in *Bīj*; the 'organic transformation' of the agricultural labourer in *Balchanmā*; and the 'spiral' development of the landlord in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*. In what follows, I first devote more attention to a systematic analysis of *Bīj* in order to lay out the different elements of the Hindi Progressive *Bildungsroman*, while my readings of *Balchanmā* and *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* afterwards will focus on how they produce different modes of individual developments with adaptations of the structure. These multiple *Bildungs* of individuals from varied social positions generate forceful voices of how to create a new and independent life, reinforcing the anti-statist narrative of the 1950s.

1.1 *Bīj*: Communist-inspired apprenticeship

Bīj at first does not look like a Progressive novel at all, concerned as it is with the workings of a couple and with little political action for most of its long plot. However, as this section shows, it is the representation of a couple's development that expands the scope of the Progressive *Bildung* into the domestic sphere. The novel's emphasis on the leadership role of the communist characters, who inspire and guide the couple towards self-transformation, corresponds to Amrit Rai's political alignment. As early as 1938 and 1939, while an undergraduate studying at Allahabad University, Rai was

exposed to the CPI, which was then illegal. Upon acquiring MA degree from the same university in 1942, Rai came to Banaras and became a Communist in 1943, wholeheartedly devoted himself to Party work till the early 1950s.[10] Forty years later, when *Bīj* was reprinted, Rai defended the novel's ideological commitment to socialism.[11] However, this does not mean that Rai subordinates himself and his literary writings to party politics, and he defends the autonomy of literature from para-literary elements by contending that 'artists are not slaves of any circumstances despite the fact that they always have effect on artists. Indeed, artists have their own specific independence.'[12] As we shall see, socio-political events like independence, attacks on communists, and strikes of sweepers remain on the background in *Bīj*, and the Party organ is totally absent. Instead, the novel focuses on a couple and their gradual transformation into progressives who embrace the revolutionary spirit and resist and overcome social pressures through mutual love and support. Thus, the novel is ideological, but not partisan.

The 350-page story, set mostly in Allahabad from 1942 to the years immediately after independence, can be roughly divided into three parts, which chart the transformation of co-protagonists into a progressive couple. The first part (chapters 1

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[10] See Amrit Rai, *Vichāradhārā aur Sāhitya*, Ilāhābād: Haṃs Prakāśan, 1984, p. 19; see also Girija Kumar Mathur, *Ek Antaraṅg Bātchīt Amṛt se*, pp. 59,

[11] Here, Rai used socialism in a general sense, including communism and leftist ideologies in socialist countries, rather than a specific type among many socialisms in India, for example, Gandhi's Sarvodaya, Lohia's socialism, etc. In the preface of a new, 1994 edition of *Bīj*, Rai acknowledged: 'I do not consider what happened in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe or other socialist countries in the past few years, which has made the socialist ideology sleep forever, as the final defeat of the socialist ideology. I believe that socialist ideology, even today, is as spirited and active as it was. … Thus, I decided to publish the novel in its original version'. The original text reads: मैं ऐसा नहीं मानता कि पिछले कुछ वर्षों में सोवियत संघ और पूर्वी योरप या अन्य कुछ समाजवादी देशों में जो कुछ हुआ है वह समाजवादी विचारधारा की अंतिम पराजय है जिसने उसे हमेशा-हमेशा के लिए सुला दिया है। मैं मानता हूँ कि समाजवादी विचारधारा आज भी उतनी ही सजीव और सक्रिय है जितनी कभी थी। … अतः मैंने यही निश्चय किया कि पुस्तक बिलकुल अपने मूल रूप में निकलनी चाहिए। Amrit Rai, *Bīj*, Ilāhābād: Haṃs Prakāśan, 1994 (1952), p. 6.

[12] Rai, *Nayī Samīkṣā*, Ilāhābād: Haṃs Prakāśan, n.d., p. 10.

to 11) tells how a young student freedom fighter, named Satyavan or Satya, becomes a communist after being inspired by communist Virendra and wins the heart of Usha, an educated middle-class college student. As the narrative proceeds through the second part (chapters 12 to 23), Satya, as a husband, manages to cope with the obstacles he encounters in family affairs with the help of party cadre Amulya's father Praphulla, an early freedom fighter. The last part (chapters 24 to 42) witnesses the transformation of Usha into a companionate wife and socially conscious teacher of the untouchable children, under the direct instruction of Satya. In contrast to Satya and Usha who accomplish successful transformation, Satya's friend Rajeshvari or Raj does not achieve any development and fails to find her position in society.

Through the narrative structure of apprenticeship centred around two positive apprentices – Satya and his wife Usha – and one negative apprentice Raj, I argue, *Bīj* demonstrates communist ideologies, in particular, the Leninist idea that the Communist Party should act as the 'vanguard of the proletariat' in the struggle towards a communist society.[13] The set of communist role models as mentors and the emphasis on their crucial intervention in the protagonists' development contribute to a type of 'communist-inspired' apprenticeship. The juxtaposition of successful and unsuccessful models of apprenticeship establishes an unambiguous and dualistic system of values

[13] Vanguardism, a communist concept rooted in Marx and Lenin's theory and acted out in the Russian Revolution, emphasizes that the communist party plays a leading role in revolutionary movement. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx emphasized the uniqueness of the communists as 'the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country'. Lenin institutionalised this idea in the democratic-centralist communist party, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks). Consequently, the Russian Revolution in 1917 resulted in a dictatorship, not of the majority of proletarians, but of a party of 'professional revolutionaries' who claimed to represent proletarian interests and act on behalf of them as 'the vanguard of the proletariat'. Lenin conceived the vanguard as a highly disciplined, centralised party that would work unremittingly to suffuse the proletariat with Socialist consciousness and serve as mentor, leader and guide, constantly showing the proletariat where its true class interests lie. See Leninist vanguardism in V.I. Lenin's political pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* (first published in Germany in 1902), tr. J. Fineberg and G. Hanna, 1988.

that highlight the validity of that ideology in both public and private spheres. Since the communist elements function as sources or 'seeds' (*bīj* in the title) that inspire positive apprentices to overcome their 'trials' in both domestic and public life, I first discuss the role of communist images and characters before moving to explore the process of apprentices' transformation.

1.1.1 Sources of enlightenment: an ideal society and role models

The development of the positive protagonists in *Bīj* is no sudden spontaneous enlightenment but a gradual progress motivated by external agents. As discussed above, the communist ideas that the progressive protagonists in Hindi novels are to internalize set them on a collision course with the mainstream middle-class, upper-caste values and norms of post-independent Indian society. Therefore, unlike their Soviet and Chinese counterparts, Hindi Progressive novels need to reserve separate narrative spaces or niches to represent these ideas. Moreover, such representation needs to be compelling enough to convince people of the superiority of communism over prevailing ideas. In the novel of *Bīj*, it is a romantic imagination of what life is like in the Soviet Union and a set of flawless role models that function to demonstrate the communist ideal and that initiate a chain of enlightenment that reaches many characters via multiple apprenticeships.

A photo exhibition first arouses the romantic imagination about socialist/communist Soviet society. In the middle of October 1943, five months after he is released from jail and has thrown himself into communist activism, Satya is asked to

help organize a week-long Soviet photo exhibition. In his diary notes, Satya calls the Soviet Union the new sun (*nayā sūraj*) and shining truth (*jyotiṣka satya*).[14] These metaphors grant the Soviet Union a superior vanguard position as he seeks to break with everything conservative and lead the fight for independence. Nor is Satya the only character touched by the image of the Soviet Union the exhibition project. Usha, a middle-class college student whose political consciousness is yet to awaken, is also enchanted by the new world visualized in the Soviet photographs. In her diary, she praises the Soviet Union as a new world which has developed dramatically in just a few years, a world in which flower-like children play joyously and women are free to work in schools, hospitals, factories, the army and government. Usha compares it to India, where young children are weaklings in their mothers' arms and many women are illiterate and suffer from gender inequality.[15] The metaphoric expressions in both Satya and Usha's diary convey a romantic yearning of middle class college students for the ideal Soviet society. The form of a diary, which is 'imagined as a receptacle for private convictions expressed in spontaneous and uncoerced fashion',[16] shows that Satya and Usha have already willingly accepted the Soviet Union as an ideal society and a model.

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[14] Rai, *Bīj*, p. 74.

[15] Ibid., p. 96. This new world has progressed so much in a few years. If a country is not really free, such flower-like children cannot be seen anywhere, neither playing in the nursery nor in the playgrounds, nor sitting, reading, drawing. … And look, women – even those in Asian democracies who were bound by previous conventions – have progressed and begun to work in factories, to look after children in nurseries, to teach in colleges, become doctors, and have even joined the army – there is no blockage at all, all the roads are open to them. What's more, they also take charge of governance. कितनी उन्नति कर ली है इस नयी दुनिया ने, इतने थोड़े से बरसों में। कोई देश अगर सचमुच आज़ाद न हो तो उसमें कहीं ऐसे फूल से बच्चे हो सकते हैं, कहीं नर्सरी में कहीं मैदानों में खेल रहे हैं, कहीं बैठे पढ़ रहे हैं, आड़ी-तिरछी रेखाएँ खींचकर तस्वीर बना रहे हैं। ... और उधर देखिये स्त्रियों ने, एशियाई जनतंत्रों तक की स्त्रियों ने जो पहले परंजे में बंद रही आती थीं, कितनी उन्नति कर ली है, कारख़ानों में काम करती हैं, बच्चों की नर्सरी की देख-भाल करती हैं, कालेजों में पढ़ाती हैं, डाक्टर बनती हैं, यहाँ तक कि सेना में भी भरती होती हैं – कहीं कोई रोक-टोक नहीं है, सारे रास्ते उसके लिए खुले हुए हैं। इतना ही नहीं शासन का काम-काज भी चलाती हैं।

[16] Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 3.

To reiterate the profound impact of the perfect Soviet society makes on them, the novel further uses the technique of 'repetitive frequency',[17] i.e. narrating what happens once multiple times, one of the redundancies that Suleiman views as typical of ideological novels.[18] So Usha's father, an elderly congressman, is also deeply moved by the photographs when he attends the exhibition with Usha, and exclaims: 'I have embraced the dazzling daylight after coming out of the dark well'.[19] Satya repeats and amplifies the effect through his comment: 'there seemed to be something breaking down within Usha's father. It felt as if his entire body had gone into twisting spasms. … The old world was dying in his heart'.[20] Usha's father is 'enlightened' by the Russian Revolution and will now hold a sympathetic, appreciative attitude towards Indian revolutionaries. With the 'death' of the colonized nation and backward society, he also can see the new shining world.

Although the actual description of the exhibition is short and the Soviet Union is directly mentioned only once more in the novel,[21] 'repetitive frequency' or the repeated mention of the exhibition through different focalizers – Satya's general appreciation, Usha's concern for children and women, and her father's empathy with revolutionaries

[17] According to Genette, repeating frequency is one type of narrative frequency which is defined as the relations of frequency/repetition between narrative and the diegesis. Genette reduces this to four virtual types: narrating once what happened once, narrating n times what happened n times, narrating n times what happened once and narrating one time what happened n times. See Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, tr. Lewin, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983, pp. 113-117.

[18] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 159.

[19] Rai, *Bīj*, p. 76. उषा के पिता जी ने कहा - मैं अभी अंधेरे कुएँ से निकलकर दिन की रोशनी में आया हूँ। मेरे आँखें चौंधिया रही हैं।

[20] Ibid., p. 77. उषा के पिता जी को देखकर लगता था जैसे उनके अंदर, बड़ी ऐंठन के साथ बड़ी मरोड़ के साथ कुछ टूट रहा हो, ... उनके भीतर पुरानी दुनिया मर रही थी।

[21] The other occurrence is when the editor of the newspaper Satya works for accuses Satya of printing prominently (*moṭī moṭī surkhī*) a positive report about how the Soviet Union has cut the price of goods three times and significantly increased the purchasing power of its people, thus disobeying the order that the Soviet news should be reported as little as possible. Ibid., pp. 314-315. Though the information is not given in any detail, we get a positive image of the Soviet Union and a criticism of anti-Soviet censorship.

– forcefully imposes the positive Soviet image on the fictional characters, as well as on readers. And the Soviet Union, either in the exhibition or in the news, symbolizes communism.

Apart from this imagination about Soviet society as an ideal setting the goals for communists everywhere, the novel also shows how Indian communists like Virendra, Amulya and Parvati Krishnamurti take action under the doctrine of communism in pursuit of the communist ideal. Their divine names metonymically evoke a set of characteristics of human communists: Virendra means god of heroes, Amulya invaluable and Parvati goddess of the mountain. Their actions illustrate these signifiers. Virendra is the first communist character we encounter in the novel. He is a political prisoner in jail where Satya first meets him in chapter 4. Satya witnesses how Virendra helps his fellow prisoners overcome their difficult time in jail and fights against the jailers, fiercely and unyieldingly.[22] Virendra's behaviour in prison exerts a profound impact on Satya, as the narrator tells using the metaphor of the 'seed': 'The importance of Virendra's daily behaviour for Satya was the same as the importance of clearing the thick undergrowth thoroughly and ploughing for sowing seeds in a field'.[23] Virendra is eventually released after independence, when he is diagnosed with tuberculosis. When Satya visits him in chapter 26, Virendra says: 'a communist does not die easily (*āsānī se nahīṁ martā kamyunisṭ*)'.[24] This sentence in the present tense is more of a communist slogan than to be taken literally – after all, Virendra will die. But when his

[22] Rai, *Bīj*, p. 30.

[23] Ibid., p. 31. जो अहमियत खेत में बीज डालने के पहले तमाम झाड़-झंखाड़ साफ़ करने की होती है और ज़मीन को ठीक करने की, उसे गोड़ने की, उसमें हाल चलाने की होती है, वही अहमियत सत्य के लिए वीरेंद्र के दैनिक आचरण की थी।

[24] Ibid., p. 266.

tuberculosis can only be cured by removing a part of his lung, a strong-minded Virendra successfully overcomes his fear and recovers. Despite the limited space – only 12 pages – assigned to him in the whole narrative, Virendra stands out as an ideal figure who is willing to help others at all times, a figure strong-minded enough to fight a deadly disease, and a firm believer in communism.

Amulya is another model, a patriotic communist. His characterization reflects the novel's effort to reconcile communist universalism with patriotic nationalism. Amulya has a large collection of books, with communist books and pamphlets in Russian and Chinese languages among them, implying the cadre's global vision. It is Amulya who, in chapter 6, asks Satya to organize a cultural programme to raise money for the victims of the Bengal Famine of 1943, which in real history helped the Communist Party win back popularity after facing strong criticism for not joining the 1942 'Quit India' movement. In a speech delivered at the dawn of independence, Amulya calls the Mountbatten Plan 'a heart-breaking (*manbāṇṭan*)' colonialist conspiracy and praises the brave 'revolutionary people' (*inkalābī jantā*) who 'soaked the clothes of the goddess of freedom with their own warm fresh blood and adorned her forehead with a blood-red *tilak* of triumph, how they drenched the road towards freedom with blood'.[25] Amulya's speech reads strongly spirited with repetitive rhetoric of blood, reinforcing his revolutionary nationalism. In the end, Amulya's patriotism even moves his father

[25] Ibid., pp. 184-185. माउंटबैटेन योजना वाक़ई मनबाँटन योजना है – ब्रिटिश साम्राज्य की आख़िरी साज़िश हिंदुस्तानी में अपने पैर टिकाये रखने की। ... और दोस्तो, यही इस बार हो रहा है। हिंदुस्तानी इस वक़्त बग़ावत की लहरों पर खेल रहा है। यह तूफ़ानों का युग है। हमारे इस अग्नियुग की कहानी हमारी अगली पीढ़ियाँ गर्व के साथ सुनाएँगी। भविष्य बतलाएगा कि कैसे हिन्दोस्तान की इंक़लाबी जनता ने सर पर कफ़न बाँध कर अपनी आज़ादी की लड़ाई लड़ी, कैसे उसने अपने गर्म ताज़े जवान ख़ून से अपनी स्वाधीनता देवी की चूनर को लाल किया, उसके माथे पर रक्त-कुंकुम का जयतिलक लगाया, अपनी आज़ादी की राह को अपने ख़ून से नहलाया, किस बेमिसाल बहादुरी से ब्रिटिश गोलियों और संगीनों के सामने अपने सीने ताने।

Praphulla, who in his early years (probably during the 1920s and 1930s) had taken active part in the anti-colonial movement and now teaches maths in a government middle school. In his words, Amulya's patriotism is not limited to the geographical unit called *Hind* but 'means a love of the land, love for its residents, love for its fruits of all kinds'.[26] Here, Praphulla's endorsement of his communist son's patriotism constructs a symbolic lineage between anti-colonial freedom fighters and communists.

The third model communist, Parvati Krishnamurti, never even appears directly in the novel. Her story is told by another girl Pramila, who views Parvati as a seed-sower and jewel (*ratna*) among communists.[27] Parvati is an M.A. student who takes an active part in public activities like debates, dramas and strikes, spending most of her time amongst peasants and envisioning each village as a future stronghold of communism. Satya meets Pramila when he visits Virendra, and hears Parvati's story from her. Pramila tells Satya, here the intradiegetic narratee who represents the reader, how Parvati saved her from sorrow after her boyfriend abandoned her and persuaded her to work towards the ideal of a classless society. Parvati told Pramila that working amongst peasants is the way to lead a meaningful life, and 'you must become completely like them and be with them all the time'.[28] This use of imperative mode is typical of addressing a rule of action, as Suleiman explains that one of the story's aims is to influence the receiver's (apprentice's) actions or attitudes in a particular way'.[29]

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[26] Ibid., pp. 297-298. वह गहरा था इसीलिए ज़बान पर कम और अमल में ज़्यादा दिखायी देता था। उसका देशप्रेम 'हिंद' नाम की किसी भौगोलिक इकाई तक सीमित नहीं था। उसके लिए देशप्रेम का मतलब था यहाँ की मिट्टी से प्यार, यहाँ के रहने वालों से प्यार, यहाँ के फल-फूल से प्यार। उसका प्यार सच्चा था इसीलिए उसने अपने सिर के ख़ून से अपने देश की मिट्टी को सींचा।

[27] Ibid., p. 265.

[28] Ibid., किसानों में काम करना है तो बिलकुल उन्हीं के जैसे हो जाओ, चौबीस घंटा उन्हीं के बीच रहो।

[29] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, 1983, p. 46.

Pramila is convinced, and Satya, who hears the story, is also impressed, and so is Usha, to whom he retells the story—another case of 'repetitive frequency'. Parvati shares many similarities with male communist characters: instead of harbouring romantic desires or wishing for family life, she is totally committed to politics and the pursuit of a classless society. This appears quite unrealistic, as Ania Loomba, who has studied the lives and subjectivities of communist women from the late 1920s to the 1960s, argues, 'unlike Parvati in *Beej,* most [communist women] were not able to seamlessly knit together their commitment to India's freedom, to a classless society, and to gender equality'.[30] Such a characterization, centred on her identity as a communist rather than a gendered subject, downplays feminist discourse. Though Parvati is sensitive to women's predicament, she believes that women's oppression will be resolved after the establishment of a classless society. That's why she counsels Pramila that women should fight for 'a classless society in which all will be equal, and first of all men and women will be equal'.[31] Pramila's degendered persuasion subordinates gender to communist politics, showing again that communist ideology is the foremost important.

Both the image of Soviet society and these Indian model communists are presented as flawless. The characters are largely depersonalized and symbolic, their depiction is in large measure a function of their political role rather than individual identity. Virendra embodies strong will and firm commitment to communism, Amulya epitomizes revolutionary passion, and Parvati symbolizes renouncement of individual self and family. In this respect, they follow the model of Pavel in Gorky's *Mother*,

[30] Loomba, *Revolutionary Desires*, p. 2.
[31] Rai, *Bīj*, pp. 262-263. वह वर्गहीन समाज, जिसमें सब बराबर होंगे और सबसे पहले स्त्री और पुरुष बराबर होंगे।

whose representation is also 'highly formalized'.[32] It is their 'formalized' features, their qualities of courage, dedication and self-abnegation, in fact, that unambiguously demonstrate their sublime communist spirit.

Admittedly, such flattened literary representation pulls the narrative in the direction of propaganda. But in terms of narrative structure, these idealised 'minor characters' are essential for the protagonists to overcome their trials and move further. As Alex Woloch points out, 'in the bildungsroman [apprenticeship], the hero's progress is facilitated through a series of interactions with delimited minor characters. Each encounter has a particular psychological function within the interior development of the young protagonist'.[33] In fact, 'the peripheral representations of these minor characters is a symbolic field that elaborates and nuances the core, the central condition of the protagonist'.[34] The whole narrative in *Bīj* devotes no more than six chapters to these ideal communist characters. Yet, they act as literary projections of Leninist vanguardism, such as Virendra's influence upon Satya, Parvati's upon Pramila mentioned above. The role of ideological vanguard and that of a mentor in apprenticeship neatly converge in these characters. Through a series of interactions, they act as catalysers and mentors to Satya and Usha, inspiring these 'apprentices' at critical junctures in their lives and pushing them to acquire knowledge and truth, thereby facilitating their transformation into better selves, as the next part shows.

[32] For the analysis on Pavel and the novel *Mother*, see Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 52-64.
[33] Alex Woloch, *The One vs The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 29.
[34] Ibid., p. 18.

1.1.2 Co-protagonists as apprentices: the growth of Satya and Usha

Within the character system of the novel, the co-protagonists Satya and Usha occupy much more space than any other. In fact, after Satya and Usha have a love marriage in chapter 11, the narrative mainly focuses on the 'trials' they encounter and surmount. By then, Satya has already embraced communism and become an active party cadre. Therefore, unlike the protagonists of Soviet and Chinese socialist *Bildungsroman*, the acquisition of Marxism and party membership marks not the end but the beginning of Satya's growth in *Bīj*. Yet apart from sporadic and vague references to his party work, like organizing cultural programmes, the novel focuses more on how he and Usha overcome difficulties in the domestic sphere rather than public life. Modern companionate marriage had become 'a problematic, even if desirable, notion in the novels' from the 1930s, for example, in Amrit Rai's father Premchand's novel *Karmabhūmi*.[35] Yet that the first and much-awaited novel by the leading Progressive Rai should centre mostly on domestic tensions appears surprising at first. As I show, marital and family tensions raise issues of values and practice, of life's direction, of tough adjustments to the frugal lifestyle of the Party activist that are in fact at the core of 'becoming a Progressive', as Ania Loomba has also shown. These seemingly trivial trials are painful and threaten to overwhelm Satya and Usha, their marriage, and their experiments with charting a different life. It is at such critical junctures that their encounters with the (pro-)communist mentors help them overcome the trial and move

[35] Vasudha Dalmia, *Fiction as History: The Novel and the City in Modern North India*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2017, p. 172; see Chapter 3 for an analysis on *Karmabhūmi*.

further on.[36]

After their marriage, the first problem confronting Satya is the fractious relationship between Usha and his old-fashioned mother, who still believes the sole responsibility of a daughter-in-law to be domestic chores rather than 'useless' (*khāk*) public activities. For instance, she constantly complains about Usha's unpalatable cooking:

> Amma was always deliberately picky of Usha's cooking - either the *dal* remained raw or was too thick like *halva*, or it was too salty, or it was just plain tasteless, the *roti* was either undercooked or overdone, and the rice was always half-cooked. … [Amma] would say: 'I cannot even enjoy two meals a day. Girls must learn to be good cooks. I do not know what useless things they would rather spend their time learning these days'.[37]

By contrast, Usha insists that educated women cannot be entirely absorbed by domestic chores (*caubīsoṁ ghaṇṭā cūlhe ke pās baiṭhe*).[38] Gradually, but inevitably, tension mounts. Satya cannot remain unaffected by the complaints and quarrels, which he considers the curses (*abhiśap*) of his life. After much-anguished soul-searching, he decides to move out of the joint family and rent a small house for his nuclear family.

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[36] Compared to the weakness of other aesthetic elements, such as the plain language, the undetailed description of psychological transformation, the narrative structure features prominently in *Bīj*. Therefore, my analysis focus on how the actants in the structure help realize the couple's transformation.

[37] Rai, *Bīj*, p. 136. उषा के हाथ के खाने में अम्मा के दोष ही दोष दिखलायी देता, कभी दाल कच्ची रह जाती तो कभी एकदम हलुआ हो जाती, दाल में कभी नमक ही न मालूम होता तो कभी इतना नमक हो जाता कि दाल मुँह में न दी जाती, रोटी कभी सेवर रह जाती तो कभी जल जाती, चावल में कनी तो जैसे सदा ही रह जाती। ... कहतीं– दो जून रोटी-दाल का भी सहारा नहीं। पता नहीं आजकल की लड़कियाँ क्या ख़ाक पढ़ती-लिखती हैं जब कि उन्हें खाना पकाने का भी एक मामूली सा सहूर नहीं।

[38] Ibid., p. 136.

For Satya mutual respect and understanding are the most crucial things in a relationship. Although it means inviting grave social censure and he does so with a heavy heart, he thinks that the relationship of mother and daughter-in-law can improve only once they move out: 'After all, it was everyone's wish that the wounds that had been rubbed and scratched would heal, and new skin would grow in its place. But how was this possible while living together? … Now, this had become possible after living separately'.[39] Comparing 'normal' family tensions to a wound and the beneficial change of a family set-up to wound-healing, Satya reframes the social taboo of 'splitting the heart'.

Yet the joint family is not the only 'trial' confronting Satya and Usha. The biggest challenge for them is how to maintain a healthy relationship with each other. Disagreements appear at the very beginning of their marital life. Satya finds an editing job in a newspaper office, a post he must finish at night. Besides, Satya often takes part in party activities. Satya's heavy workload occupies most of his time, prompting Usha's complaint about his indifference and inconsiderateness. What's more, after Usha gets acquainted with a wealthy couple Sahni and Damyanti, she starts to envy their comfortable life without worrying about daily expenses (*khān-pān*): 'Sahni Saheb's house was dancing in front of [Usha's] eyes, … as was the way of organizing the home. … The servant learns everything, knows everything, and all the work is done as instructed. … Look, how luxurious the decorations in his dining room! What nice furniture, what beautiful cushions on the sofa, what a sumptuous carpet!'[40] Satya, who

[39] Ibid., p.148. आख़िर दिली ख़्वाहिश तो सबकी यही थी कि रोज़-रोज़ के रगड़ खाने और छिलने से जो घाव हो गया है, वह पुर जाय और उसकी जगह नयी खाल आ जाय। मगर साथ-साथ रहते हुए यह भला कैसे मुमकिन था। … अब अलग रहते हुए यह चीज़ मुमकिन हो गयी थी।

[40] Ibid., pp. 166-167. साहनी साहब का घर उसकी आँखों में नाच रहा था, … और नाच रही थी उस घर की व्यवस्था। ... नौकर

thinks that the problem is that Usha confines herself to domestic matters taking no interest in the outside world, tries to direct her aspirations away from middle-class wealth and towards the 'plain living and high thinking' of an activist family:

> Don't compare yourself to Damyanti and Sahni. … Sahni Saheb is a wealthy man, and it is easy for him to get all the comforts. But we are not in the same situation. What can we do with one hundred and forty rupees while everything is so expensive? … Therefore, comparing ourselves to the people of their stature is nothing more than making ourselves crazy. … You should look at Amulya's family, they are also leading a life of difficulties and inconveniences.[41]

Yet Usha is unconvinced, and to Satya's perplexity and dismay, she takes the traditional step of sulking and stops talking to him. Here, the wealthy couple Sahni and Damyanti function as opponents in Usha's apprenticeship for they hinder Usha to accept the activist's plain lifestyle. At the end of his wits, Satya finally turns towards Praphulla for advice. Praphulla speaks of his own, similar experience and advises Satya to be patient in balancing between work and family life: '[Even] under the impact of your idealism, don't forget this! Usha's desire is the primitive desire of humankind, based on which

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भी सब सिखे-सिखाए हैं, सारा काम जानते हैं। ... सारा काम इशारों से होता है। ... देखो न उसका ड्राइंगरूम कितनी ख़ूबसूरत से सज़ा हुआ था। कैसा अच्छा फ़र्नीचर, सोफ़ों का कुशन कितना अच्छा था और क़ालीन!

[41] Ibid., p. 202. तुम अपने दिल में भी अपना मिलान दमयंती और साहनी साहब से करना छोड़ दो। ... साहनी साहब पैसे वाले आदमी हैं। उनके लिए आराम के सारे साधन जुटा लेना आसान बात है। मगर हमारी तो वह स्थिति नहीं। एक सौ चालीस रुपए में हम लोग आख़िर कितना क्या कर सकते हैं जब कि हर चीज़ इतनी महँगी हैं? ... इसलिए उनके मानदंड से अपने आपको तौलना अपने को पागल बना लेने के सिवा और कुछ नहीं। ... तुम्हें देखना चाहिए अमूल्य के घर की ओर। वे भी कितने कष्टों और असुविधाओं में ज़िंदगी गुज़ारा रहे हैं।

society has progressed and will keep progressing – it is all about striking a balance'.[42] In other words, rather than condemning Usha for not sharing his idea of a model lifestyle, it is Satya who has to compromise and change his tack. He starts coming home earlier and going out regularly for walks with Usha. As a result, the relationship between them improves significantly, and they become soulmates with mutual love and understanding.

After hearing Pramila's story, Satya's words, and witnessing Amulya's suffering in jail and his family's courage as mentioned above,[43] Usha herself is inspired. She changes her attitude towards the wealthy couple, Sahni and Damyanti and becomes critical, saying that their splendid bungalow is built upon the suffering of the poor.[44] Moreover, she realizes her responsibility in sharing the burden of the family. After the editor-in-chief sacks Satya for his pro-Soviet article, Usha decides to look for a job as a teacher and becomes a companion, a *sahcharī*, to her husband. They become a perfect couple, defined in the novel as follows:

> Mutual love can stay evergreen as long as it gets filled with ever new sap and fragrance, when a woman is man's companion in the life-struggle, fights together, dies together and is merged into a single whole; when she is not

[42] Ibid., p. 206. तुम अपने तरुण आदर्शवाद की झोंक में यह न भूलो कि उषा की ओर से जो आकांक्षा आ रही है वह मनुष्य जाति की आदिम वासना है, उसी के बल पर समाज आज तक यह तरक़्क़ी कर सका है और आगे भी करेगा – सारी बात अनुपात बिठालने की है।

[43] Amulya and his parents' encouragement to Satya and Usha can be thought in the manner of a 'communist commune', a communal living arrangement set up in many places in the 1940s and 1950s India. See Loomba, *Revolutionary Desires*, p. 120.

[44] Ibid., pp. 334-335. साहनी साहब के आलीशान बंगले की नींव में न जाने कितने ग़रीबों की लाशें होंगी, न जाने कितनों को रौंदकर यह इमारत खड़ी हुई होगी।

> imprisoned in a cellar but her talents are set free, even to earn money, so that she too can have an independent existence and she knows that she is not dependent on anyone.[45]

This would be a liberal ideal of two independent individuals, were it not for the fact that their strength as a couple is in the service of constructing an ideal society.

In narratological terms, we have two linked sets of apprenticeships: Praphulla-Satya, and Satya-Usha. While in the first stance, Praphulla functions as Satya's 'helper', a character which facilitates the protagonist/apprentice's progress toward the right way, once Satya is 'grown-up' he becomes Usha's 'helper' in overcoming class envy and gendered self-isolation. What enables Praphulla and Satya to apprentice the other is not merely seniority or experience but more particularly their ability to harmonize public and private life while upholding political commitments. The helper/mentor, however, does not merely pass down his power to the apprentice, who passively receives it. Instead, the apprentice, as an active agent, attains self-realization through 'criticism and self-criticism': first, the helper criticizes the apprentice and shares his experience, and then the apprentice undergoes self-criticism and puts the new elevated understanding into action. 'Criticism and self-criticism' are one of the primary organizational techniques employed by Leninist parties,[46] familiar to any communist party member.

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[45] Ibid., p. 216. आपस का प्यार सदाबहार तब रह सकता है जब उसमें हरदम नया रस-गंध नया पराग भरता रहे, स्त्री जीवन-संग्राम में पुरुष की सहयोद्धा हो, साथ लड़े, साथ मरे और एक दूसरे से अंश लेकर दोनों का व्यक्तित्व बने, स्त्री को घर के तहख़ाने में बंदी न किया जाय, उसकी प्रतिभाओँ को मुक्त किया जाय, अर्थोपार्जन के लिए भी, ताकि उसका भी स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व हो और वह जाने कि वह किसी की आश्रिता नहीं है।

[46] For 'criticism and self-criticism', see Lowell Dittmer, 'The Structural Evolution of Criticism and Self-Criticism', *China Quarterly*, 1973, pp. 708-729; and Klaus-Georg Riegel, 'Rituals of Confession within Communities of Virtuosi: An Interpretation of the Stalinist Criticism and Self-criticism in the Perspective of Max Weber's Sociology of Religion', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 1, N0. 3, 2000, pp. 16-42.

What is noteworthy here is how the novel applies this political technique to solving a contradiction between political and family life, one of the difficult problems besetting communist families in real life.[47] *Bīj* imagines an ideal solution to the question – a good communist can apply the technique of 'criticism and self-criticism' to change their family life, after which they will further change the world.[48] To use Fredric Jameson's words, the novel provides an imaginary resolution of the fissures between political and personal life.[49]

The emphasis on the woman's role in a couple in the passage above indicates that female *Bildung* is crucial in the making of a model couple who will support each other both physically and mentally. The narrative pays much attention to Usha's inner mindset in the process of transformation – she writes about the inspiration provided by the Soviet exhibition in her diary, she complains to herself about her workaholic husband, and then the growing sensibility of sharing burdens with him. Usha's travails mirror to an extent the 'difficulties and the lack of fit between personal and political worlds' expressed by Ushabai Dange in her memoir *Pan Aikta Kaun* (*Who Listens to Me*).[50] Yet unlike Ushabai's 'thwarted craving for greater companionship', in *Bīj* Usha successfully builds up a companionate relation with Satya. But this personal fulfilment is the prelude to a further transformation into a political activist. Not only does she criticize and reject a bourgeois lifestyle, she volunteers as to teach untouchables and becomes a leader in a strike of municipal cleaners at the end of the novel. This ending

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[47] Loomba, *Revolutionary Desires*, Chapters three and four.
[48] 'How will you change the world when you cannot change your family?', in Rai, *Bīj*, p. 139. आप दुनिया को क्या ख़ाक बदलेंगे जब ख़ुद अपने घर को बदलने की सकत आप में नहीं हैं?
[49] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 57.
[50] See ibid., pp. 156-180.

can be read as a subordination of her gendered self to the collective and of gender to communism, and as the fulfilment of the personal in the public. In positive terms, it models how communist political consciousness makes its way successfully into personal life, and helps build a harmonious family. The family-centred narrative therefore ends up demonstrating the validity of communist ideology, the major aim of the novel.

In contrast to Usha, Raj – another female character who at the beginning of *Bīj* appears full of life, strength, and potential – remains inactive and, consequently, fails to build positive relationships or find her place in life. She emerges as an educated and potentially independent woman who has moved out of an unhappy arranged marriage, but she becomes deeply stuck in sentimental love with Satya (who loves Usha) first and then with Mahendra, a handsome, but rakish libertine who had affairs with five women. After Mahendra relentlessly asks the pregnant Raj to end her pregnancy through abortion, Raj commits suicide. Why such a lively and sympathetic character as Raj should fail to find her way and in fact meet a tragic end appears puzzling at first. But it is not difficult to explain Raj's tragedy if we compare her apprenticeship to Usha's. Usha's positive apprenticeship is accomplished thanks to the support and encouragement of other characters such as communists (Amulya and Satya), freedom fighter (Praphulla), and her self-consciousness. By contrast, the absence of such support and her own reluctance to be inspired by mentors, turns Raj into an example of negative apprenticeship. As Suleiman puts it, a 'negative exemplary subject never attains political or ideological consciousness and her life consequently unfolds without her

being aware of where it is going'.[51] Right at the start of the novel, Raj is emotionally untouched and even critical of the photographs at the Soviet exhibition as 'Russian propaganda' (*rūsī pracār*).[52] She is not converted by any doctrine or ideas, and although opportunities present themselves through Satya's example and persuasion, these are ineffectual in driving Raj to action.

This polarised characterization is, according to Suleiman, central to the narrative structure of apprenticeship. She categories two types of apprenticeship: positive and negative: 'A positive exemplary apprenticeship leads the hero to the values propounded by the doctrine that founds the novel; a negative exemplary apprenticeship leads him to opposite values, or simply to a space where the positive values are not recognized as such'.[53] The juxtaposition of positive and negative apprenticeship reinforces the novel's demonstrative and didactic effect. Those who adhere to progressive ideas and (implicitly, for most of the novel) communist doctrine are transformed into active agents and struggle for a new life, while those who do not embrace leftist ideas fail to progress. The contrasting narrative structure also produces a rule of action addressed to the reader. Satya and Usha's evolution toward an active and progressive position incites the reader to follow in this right direction, whereas Raj's inaction and tragic end serve as a lesson for readers, who can contemplate the wrong path without actually having to take it.

In sum, *Bīj* produces a mode of communist-inspired apprenticeship of a couple.

[51] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 88.
[52] Rai, *Bīj*, p. 89.
[53] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 67.

The utopian imagination of Soviet society and flawless communist characters function as seeds of inspiration that inaugurate protagonists' transformation. The co-protagonists Satya and Usha grow to be a progressive couple who champion the plain lifestyle and make efforts in pursuit of an ideal society. That the communist mentors effectually guide apprentices to surmount trials in family convinces readers of the validity of communist political consciousness in successfully building a harmonious, companionate marital life. Unlike the Leninist vanguard which leads the proletariat, the vanguard in the novel work to suffuse educated middle-class with the communist consciousness. The scant portrayal of workers (sweepers only fleetingly appear at the end of the story) probably results from Rai's personal experiences and his writing principle. Born into a middle-class family and brought up in cities like Varanasi, Lucknow, and Allahabad, Rai was not directly connected to the workers' struggle or peasants' resistance as a trade unionist or activist, a fact he acknowledged in his memoir:

> One thing that I never permitted myself to do was to write about something that was not in some way, a part of my own experience. For example, I would not write about workers and peasants because they are the revolutionary classes and a writer committed to the revolutionary cause should write about them and for them.[54]

In this novel, *bīj*, the seed, is sown by communist mentors, and it takes root, germinates

[54] Amrit Rai, 'My Father's Son', in Satchidanandan, ed., *Authors Speak*, New Delhi: Sahitya Academi, 2006, p. 17.

and bears fruits in a couple's mind. Yet, are educated urbanite the only potential apprentices? Is the communist vanguard an indispensable element in the making of the Progressive *Bildung*? Nagarjun's novel *Balchanmā*, centring on an illiterate agricultural labourer, provides quite a different kind of Progressive apprenticeship, as the next section shows.

1.2 *Balchanmā*: An organic apprenticeship

Compared to Amrit Rai, Nagarjun's ideological message and narrative focus differ radically, partly due to their different individual experiences. Born in Satlakha Village within Madhubani District in Bihar and educated by Sanskrit pandits first in Mithilanchal and then in Kashi, Nagarjun relived rural life in his novels.[55] While Nagarjun joined the CPI in 1946, a few years after his return to India from Sri Lanka where he started reading and became inspired by the writings of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, he did not engage enthusiastically with the Party work but remained as a 'lukewarm' (*ḍhīlā*) member, in his own words.[56] Instead, Nagarjun was actively involved in the 1930s in the peasants' movement in Bihar led by the Kisan Sabha under the guidance of Swami Sahajanand, and therefore witnessed the plight of peasants and their struggles against landlords. For him, it is this link with the land (*zamīn*) that marks progressiveness (*pragatiśīltā*).[57] Unlike Amrit Rai's emphasis on the vanguardism of

[55] Most of Nagarjun's novels are set in Mithilanchal, such as *Ratināth kī Chāchā* (1948) with a focus on widow marriage, *Balchanmā* (1952) on agricultural labourers, *Bābā Baṭesarnāth* (1954) on history of a village, *Varuṇ ke Beṭe* (1957) on the plight of fishermen, etc; see Gopal Ray, *Hindī Upanyās kā Itihās*, Naī Dillī: Rajkamal Prakāśan, 2014 (2005), pp. 216-220.

[56] Nāgārjun, 'Bātacīt-Navanbar, 1979: Do Vijaybahādur Siṃh se Bātacīt', in *Mere Sākṣātkār: Nāgārjun*, Dillī: Kitābghar Prakāśan, 2010, p. 111.

[57] Nagarjun has emphasized this point repeatedly, for example, in his interview by Vimal, Harsh, and Vidyadhar Shukla in 1968, and his conversation with Dr. Vijaybahadur Singh in 1979, see ibid., pp. 77, 113.

Communists who invariably belong to middle class, Nagarjun underscores the leadership of the oppressed class (*śoṣit varga*).[58] This is the ideological message that his novel *Balchanmā* (1952) conveys through the maturation of the eponymous protagonist, an agricultural labourer, within a context of peasants' struggle.

On the level of narrative structure, *Balchanmā* (1952) constructs a different mode of apprenticeship by exploiting the form of the fictional autobiography. It adopts as its first-person protagonist narrator a bound agricultural labour-servant named Balchanma, who tells his own life story, which is basically a story of political self-awakening. The first-person narrative in this 'quasi-autobiographical fiction' (Monika Fludernik's term) engages in a pretence of authentic autobiography, a genre which foregrounds narrative authenticity and subjectivity. As M. Fludernik explains the trustworthy testimonies of the first-person narrator, 'the authenticity of first-person report merely strengthens the realism of the realist novel from a subjective perspective, which, precisely on account of its subjectivity, provides all the more valid evidence of truth for the reader, who appears to have immediate access to an allegedly objective reality'.[59] Admittedly, similar to the structure of *Bīj*, the emergence of mentor-like characters, particularly Gandhian and local Congress leader Phul Babu, and Gandhian-turned socialist and the Kisan Sabha leader Radha Babu, marks the beginning and turning points in the development of apprentice-like Balchanma's political awareness. However, instead of reinforcing the indoctrination from mentors, *Balchanmā* highlights the protagonist's

[58] Nagarjun contended that 'Now leftist parties are led by middle class, but they will be truly leftist as long as they are led by the oppressed class themselves (अभी तो वामपंथी पार्टियों में मध्यवर्गीय नेतृत्व हैं, लेकिन शोषित वर्ग जब खुद ही उसका नेतृत्व करेगा, तभी वह ज़्यादा सही वामपंथी होगा।).' Nagarjun, 'Balchanmā to Kahin Pañch Banā Baiṭhā Hogā', in ibid., p. 105.

[59] Monika Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' narratology*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 138.

subjective initiative by accentuating his personal experiences and observations. In this respect, first-person narration produces a gradual organic type of apprenticeship.

Apart from the first-person perspective, the language style of the novel also provides an appropriate lens through which to view the protagonist's organic development. Bakhtin, in his essay 'Discourse in the novel', conducts a formal and ideological approach to the analysis of verbal art in the novel, and suggests that different registers of language represent distinct points of views on the world. The literary language, argues Bakhtin, is not truly unitary but stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system, that is, in the forms that carry its meanings.[60] Significantly, these expressive meanings are not unconscious but are instead expressed via an active literary, linguistic consciousness. Bakhtin explains how this consciousness works when surrounded by heteroglossia: 'consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia, it must move and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a "language"'.[61] Such a consciousness determines the language features of a novel. In reverse, language registers and styles indicate the author's writing ideology. Within the heteroglossic linguistic system, the existence of distinct world views is not characterized by neutrality but showcased with a specific preference. As Bakhtin points out, 'the language of the prose writer deploys itself according to degrees of greater or lesser proximity to the author and to his ultimate semantic instantiation. … Therefore, the stratification of language … becomes a unique

[60] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 288.
[61] Ibid., p. 295.

artistic system, which orchestrates the intentional theme of the author'.[62] In *Balchanmā*, a novel largely set in a village in the Darbhanga district of Mithila, north Bihar, Nagarjun incorporates a diversity of language and verbal-ideological systems into the novel: in terms of class groups, it includes the language of landlords and peasants; in terms of politics, the language of Gandhism and the Kisan Sabha socialism. The 'linguistic stratification' carries a class and political preference. The employment of simplified, non-standardized Hindustani and few English words signifies a stance with low-class labourer. On the other hand, the inflections in political glossaries imply alignment with revolutionary socialism. In this way, language registers signify Balchanma's gradual development: from unconsciously appreciating labourers and resisting against landlords, to politically awakening inspired by Gandhian egalitarianism; from being disillusioned with corrupt Congress politics to embracing and acting out the Kisan Sabha socialism.

1.2.1 A positive labourer in spontaneous solidarity with lower-class

Before showing Balchanma's political awakening process, the novel represents his spontaneous sentiments, including appreciation of labour/labourers and resistance against the oppressive landlords. Such a priority of Balchanma's natural views marks the beginning point of his organic growing-up. Balchanma, unlike the stereotype of agricultural labourers characterized as abject and pitiful, engages more positively with

[62] Ibid., p. 299.

manual labour, even though it remains exploitative.[63] He appears as a 14-year-old[64] carefree worker rather than a bitter, long-suffering employee. When, for the first time, Balchanma is asked to herd buffalo in the early morning, he soon overcomes his sleepiness and enjoys grazing together with other herders. More notable are his depictions of farming activities, which are scattered across in three chapters (out of eight in total). All three sections overflow with joyfulness and vigour from Balchanma's point of view:

> To be honest, I was longing for farming (*khet meṁ kām*). If I plant rice seedlings in the field (*khet*) with a towel wrapped around [my] waist or merely a loin-cloth tied on, [I become] intoxicated as if I had drunk two bottles of liquor. It feels like there is nothing else in the world, only me and the field (*khet*), only my hands and the young, green, healthy, charming rice seedlings. … At the moment of planting seedlings in the irrigated plough, the sounds of '*chup-chup*' and '*sup-sup*' pop out, which to our ears sound much sweeter than the melody of Suraiya, the famous singer in our district. … Likewise, at the moment of harvesting, no tunes can compare with the '*khap-khap*' sound of the sickles.[65]

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[63] Since the 1920s, Hindi writers often characterized agricultural labourers as socially oppressed and economically exploited subjects. Premchand's crowning novel *Godān* (1936) portrayed Hori, the protagonist, as an abject, pitiful and self-sacrificing tenant farmer struggling with debt and social obligations.

[64] Balchanma's age differs in two versions of the novel. I use the copy published by Vāṇī Prakāśan in 1989. In the copy published by Kitāb Mahal, Ilāhābād, in 1952, the story starts when Balchanma is 12.

[65] Nagarjun, *Balchanmā*, Naī Dillī: Vāṇī Prakāśan, 1989 (1952), pp. 98-99. खेत में काम करने के लिए सच पूछो तो मेरा मन तरसता रहता था। कमर में अँगोछा लपेटकर या फिर लंगोट ही कसकर जब मैं खेत में धान रोपने उतरता हूँ तो दो बोतल दारू का नशा सिर पर सवार हो जाता है। लगता है ऐसा कि संसार में कुछ नहीं है। मैं हूँ और खेत है। मेरे हाथ हैं और धान के छोटे-छोटे, हरे-हरे, भले-भले मनमोहक पौधे हैं। … पनियाये हुए चास में धान की पौधे रोपते समय छुप-छुप, सुप-सुप आवाज़ उठती रहती है। यह आवाज़ इन कानों के लिए सुरैया के तान से भी मीठी है। हमारे जिला-जबार में नामी-नामी गवैया हैं। … इसी तरह धान काटते बखत हँसिया से जो खप-खप की आवाज़ आती है, अपने कानों को उसके आगे बाक़ी सारा तान-तमूड़ा बेकार लगता है।

The onomatopoetic phrases in the passage translate the humdrum manual work into absorbing melodies. In this way, the field becomes an exhilarating site of rhythms rather than a monotonous 'labour camp'. Such a romanticized image can be read as a literary representation of the Marxist exaltation of labour, suggesting a beautification and aestheticization of the working process. The sense of pleasure in farming, particularly during harvest time, is felt not merely by Balchanma but by all the villagers. According to Balchanma's observation: 'People enjoyed endless happiness. All of them were beaming, with smiles on their faces and success in their eyes. Those who harvested crops were cheerful, and even those who did not were also glad. … All the faces glowed with hope'.[66] The mood of cheerfulness and optimism towards agricultural activities prevails in the novel, despite the desperate conditions in which poor peasants survive.

More generally in the novel labourers are characterized as skilful, diligent, and devoted, rather than weak, lazy or clumsy rustics. Saburi Mandal, an experienced herder in the senior master's home, makes a brief but remarkable appearance in the novel that highlights his proficiency in taking care of buffaloes. 'No one has ever seen the gummy matter in his buffaloes' eyes. He drives them to the pond and bathes them every three days. He uses a soft Dub-made *nūḍi* to carefully rub their back, belly, haunch, thigh, neck, head and feet. In this way, he keeps his buffaloes clean'.[67] He also teaches

[66] Ibid., pp. 116-117. लोगों की खुशी का न ओर था न छोर। सभी के मुँह पर मुस्कान, सभी की आँखों में कामयाबी की झलक। जिनकी अपनी फसलें थीं वे भी खुश थे, जिनकी नहीं थीं, वे भी खुश थे। ... सभी के चेहरों पर आशा की रौनक थी।

[67] Ibid., p. 11. उसकी भैंस की आँखों में कभी किसी ने कीचड़ नहीं देखा। हर तीसरे दिन वह उसे तालाब में ले जाकर नहलाता, मुलायम दूबों की नूड़ी से भैंस की पीठ, पेट, पुट्ठे, जाँच, गर्दन, माथ और पैर को भली भाँति रगड़ता। इस तरह अपनी भैंस को वह साफ़-सुथरा रखता।

Balchanma how to protect buffaloes from several kinds of insects and how to keep the stalls clean and dry. Like Balchanma's intimacy with the field, Saburi treats his buffaloes like 'blood brothers' (*sagī santān*).[68] Both young Balchanma or Saburi from an earlier generation are agricultural labourers who perform their tasks like specialists with effort and devotion. It is Balchanma's internal feelings and reflections in his first-person narration that beautify labour as an enjoyable and promising activity.

The narrator Balchanma's language does not only signify an appreciation of labour and labourers but more notably, establishes solidarity with the lower-class/caste villagers. In an interview with Dr R. Rangra, Nagarjun emphasizes the concept of 'ground-base' among regional features: 'I consider the regional atmosphere behind the language, which I call the "atmosphere of the land" to be very important. It's the same when writing in Hindi if you write for peasants, workers, you must make your language easy because the language should be understood by them, the ideas conveyed should be intelligible to them, you must speak in their speeches'.[69] This view of 'land' is a crucial concept that shows Nagarjun's attachment to the ground. Instead of associating himself with rural culture in a lofty manner, Nagarjun stands in a position closely linked with the ground. His literary diction of 'land' in *Balchanmā* further illustrates his ground-based voice. The two words for land, *zamīn* and *khet*, are much more frequently used than the Sanskrit *dharatī*, which appears only once. They saturate the 'land' with a concrete meaning, unlike the religious and mythological overtones of words like

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Nagarjun, 'Balchanmā to Kahīṁ Pañca Banā Baiṭhā Hogā: Do. Raṇavīr Rāṅgrā se Bātacīt', in *Mere Sākṣatkār*, Nayī Dillī: Kitābaghar, 1994, p. 46. भाषा के पीछे जो आँचलिकता का माहौल रहता है, जिसे मैं धरती का माहौल कहता हूँ, इसका बहुत बड़ा महत्त्व होता है। हिंदी में भी अगर किसानों के लिए, मज़दूरों के लिए लिखते हैं तो भाषा को आसान करना पड़ता है, क्योंकि उनको समझाना है, अपनी बात को उन तक पहुँचाना है, उनकी ओर से कहना है।

dharatī and *bhūmī* which often appear in *Mailā Āṁchal*, a widely appreciated regional novel claimed as the cornerstone of regionalist literature. While *dharatī* and *bhūmī* convey Renu's reverence for the land,[70] Nagarjun's *zamīn* and *khet* carry a sense of intimacy and solidarity with its labourers. Throughout the whole narrative, the narrator in *Balchanmā*, an illiterate agricultural peasant, is not compelled to speak a literary or even standardized language, the way in which some upper-class/caste writers believe dignifies the lower class/caste. The language of narration remains simplified, sometimes unpolished, following the speech of the eponymous hero and other labourer characters. Although Balchanma has acquired *kāhe-kuhe*,[71] the spoken language of the Hindi region, the narrative is still interspersed with the village speech in a register full of *arddha-tatsamas* (corrupted Sanskrit), Urdu, and English words. Some examples include Sanskrit words like *girahath* (*gṛhastha*), *parānī* (prāṇī), *sarādh* (*śrāddha*), *santokh* (*santoṣ*), and *dacchin* (*dakṣiṇ*); Urdu words such as *mazūr* (*mazadūr*), *zāstī* (*zyādā*), *okālat* (*vakālat*), *gumastā* (*gumāśtā*), and *sapetā* (*safed*); English words like *isaṭisan/ṭīsan* (station), *lāṭaphāram* (platform), *apasar* (officer), *bholanṭiyar* (volunteer), *ekamaṇṭ* (accountant), and so on.[72] Despite Balchanma's short visit to Patna (in chapter 2), this rustic language style predominates throughout the narrative. It continually draws the reader into the village and to the position where Balchanma stands. It does not mean to degrade the ignorant peasant and servant, but rather it builds up a respect and trust in their distinct culture and indicates the protagonist/narrator's

[70] See Hansan, 'Renu's Regionalism', p. 275.
[71] Nagarjun, *Balchanmā*, p. 38.
[72] These misspellings are similar to those in *Mailā Āṁcal*, see Hansen, 'Renu's Regionalism', pp. 276–277. According to Hansen, these words are written in a form that matches their pronunciation in the eastern Hindi region.

solidarity with the lower-class people.

The favourable picture of village life and positive portrayal of peasants, however, does not mean that the labourers live in an ideal Gandhian 'self-sufficient' village. The harmony in their lives mentioned above is spatially and temporally limited to their working in the field or pond, places that are away from masters' homes. Moreover, this harmony only appears with the absence of master characters. Balchanma wishes that 'were these fields, these ploughs our own property, the sounds of '*chup-chup*', '*khap-khap*' would be hundreds of times sweeter'.[73] In other words, the presence of masters interrupts the labourers' happiness and reveals the other side of the rural world – the paternalistic relationship between zamindars and servants.

Except during the relatively free time when farming in the field, Balchanma lives through relentless physical and verbal humiliation while working as a servant in his master's home. The novel's adoption of Balchanma's perspective, i.e., the point of view of the oppressed class, to narrate his master's vicious act, brings to the fore the suffering subject and focuses on the humiliated body to reveal the oppressor's brutality. Such a perspective reinforces the division between the oppressor and oppressed and, at the same time, discloses Balchanma's hidden resentment and anger towards discrimination and oppression.

Balchanma's retrospective narration of his life in the master's home covers a variety of oppressions, as he recounts, including 'abusing, beating, scolding, cursing

[73] Nagarjun, *Balchanmā*, p. 99. अगर ये खेत, ये चास अपनी ही मिलकियत के होते तो फिर छुप-छुप, खप-खप की आवाज सौ गुनी मीठी लगती।

and insulting'.[74] The narrative steers clear of a general description of oppression and focuses on a detailed account of each humiliating moment. His earliest memory is of his father tied to a pillar in the master's house being beaten blue for having stolen two mangoes. As Balchanma witnesses, 'the thigh, hip, back, arms – every part [of his father's body] was marked with signs of the bamboo's green sprouts. The wound had already made his skin flayed here and there'.[75] Although the text does not represent the actual process of beating, its description of the tortured body in minute detail reveals the persecutor's brutality. While Balchanma bursts into tears at this horrible scene that he has never seen before, he soon grows accustomed to the master's beatings after he experiences them himself several times. He even considers it with a satiric tone as 'worship of the back with a stinging cord, a bamboo strip, a long wooden pole and then shoes'.[76] The naming of the different implements used in the beatings again signals the oppressor's 'effort' in violence. If the physical attack is a punishment for improper behaviour, verbal abuse is a more usual act which Balchanma gets accustomed to within just a few days. Balchanma's narration showcases the frequency and diversity of the cursing and name-calling. '*Gadahā*, *suar*, *kuttā*, *ullū*, … what else did she [the master's wife] not use to call me?'[77] 'Nobody in master's family called out to me without abusive words. In each case, [they called me] *sālā*, not to mention *sasur*, *pājī* and *namakaharām*'.[78] Balchanma's enumeration of the epithets used indicates that abuse

[74] Ibid., p. 32. गालियाँ, पिटाई, तिरस्कार, अपमान, दुतकार और फटकार

[75] Ibid., p. 5. जाँघ, चूतर, पीठ और बाँह -- सभी पर बाँस की हरी कैली के निशान उभर आये हैं। चोट से कहीं-कहीं खाल उधड़ गई है।

[76] Ibid., p. 30. काँटे वाली डोरी और बाँस या लग्गा भी, फिर जूतों से पीठ की पूजा करते।

[77] Ibid., p. 9. गदहा, सुअर, कुत्ता, उल्लू ... क्या नहीं खटी थी वह मुझे।

[78] Ibid., p. 31. मलिकान में कोई ऐसा नहीं था जो बिना गाली दिए मुझे सम्बोधित न करत हो। बात-बात में साला। बात-बात में ससुर, पाजी और नमकहराम का तो कहना ही क्या।

and humiliation were everyday events, and on the other hand, emphases his undaunted spirit as he makes comparative light of the abuse. The wealth of details, either in terms of his father's severely injured body, or the tools of torture and abuse, intensifies the brutality of the oppressors and the predicament of the oppressed.

Facing these constant and continuous insults and assaults, Balchanma remains silent, but his narrative brings to light his hidden antipathy towards his oppressors. The narrator uses the perspective of 'experiencing self' to present what he is experiencing and what emotion is evoked at that moment. The displacement to 'experiencing self' from 'narrating self' contributes to the disclosure of Balchanma's instant mental reactions. For example, having carried the master's luggage on his head to the railway station five miles away, the master throws two *paise* at the exhausted Balchanma and tells him to get home within an hour. Balchanma recalls his mindset before picking up the money: 'I wish that I could go without those *paise* left on that platform'.[79] Even as a piece of fleeting thought, this shows Balchanma's unwillingness to accept the master's lordly, overbearing manners. Balchanma's narration also reveals his hidden hatred towards the *malikāin* and her favoured women servants who together command him about through incessant orders. 'Every hair [on my skin] swears at the *malikāin* when I clean the ox-stall'. 'She [a woman servant] has become something like *harāmajādī suar* herself, she cannot even walk but gives orders to me'.[80] This cursing, though not made in public, can still be read as a way of fighting back and conveys

[79] Ibid., p. 12. मन करता कि उन पैसों को वहीं पलेटफारम पर ही छोड़कर चल दूँ।

[80] Ibid., pp. 24, 25. बैलों की जगह साफ करते समय मेरा रोआँ-रोआँ मलिकाइन को गालियाँ देता।' 'खुद हरामजादी सुअर की तरह मोटी हो गई है, चला तक नहीं जाता और मुझ पर हुकुम चलाती है।

Balchanma's resistant spirit. The use of the present tense demonstrates that this resistance grows within the younger Balchanma, rather than the mature narrator.

Both the solidarity with labourers and resistance against the oppressive landlords are revealed as spontaneous sentiments in Balchanma's inner world. They are not inspired by any external mentors but display automatically and naturally through Balchanma's narrative. While neither of these spontaneous feelings has triggered any actual protest or revolt, they foreshadow Balchanma's political development in the following chapters.

1.2.2 Political awakening and conversion

The bulk of the novel, from chapter 2 to the end, traces Balchanma's growing political awareness, in the years of the civil disobedience movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 up to the formation of the first Congress provincial government in 1937. Balchanma moves between village, city and ashrams in a voyage of discovery in which he continuously encounters characters who espouse specific political ideologies, including Gandhian and local Congress leader Phul Babu (in Chapters 2, 4, and 7), Gandhian-turned-socialist and the Kisan Sabha leader Radha Babu (4, 5, 7, and 8), and several comrades (7 and 8). Balchanma is inspired by these mentors, but his own observation and experiences are decisive to the turning points of his development.

Balchanma's first political awakening is linked with Gandhi's egalitarianism. In contrast to the oppressive master and *malikāin* in the village, Phul Babu, Balchanma's new master, who has been touched by Gandhism, makes Balchanma a 'mankind' (*ādmī*)

after buying him new clothes and getting him a haircut. In the new house, Balchanma, though a servant, can take fresh food and earn an extra two rupees every day. He becomes grateful and content with the new master and regards him as a 'god': 'Phul Babu was really a god in those days. I say that not because he didn't slap me or abuse me, but because his nature was thousands of times better than those upper castes'.[81] Apart from Phul Babu's personal merits, Balchanma is also impressed by the fairer society in the ashram where Phul Babu lives. For example, he comments, 'there is no leftover on anybody's leaf-plates. Everyone wrapped up their plates before standing up and threw them in a big basket. No particular place was set for washing hands and mouths, only an open field'.[82] Balchanma's sensibility toward the principles of 'no leftovers', 'self-service', and 'eating together' mark the emergence of his egalitarian outlook.

While inspired by these practices of non-discrimination, Balchanma remains indifferent towards 'Gandhi' and the Gandhi-led 'home rule' nationalist movement. 'Gandhi' makes a voiceless appearance in his visit to Madhubani in Chapter 7. In fact, 'Gandhi' must have delivered a speech, but for Balchanma and his fellow villagers, '*Mahatamā* was sitting cross-legged, and we could not hear even a word of his speech. What we could see was that Gandhi seemed explaining something with raising his right hand times and times again'.[83] Symbolically, the inaudible speech suggests that

[81] Ibid., p. 47. फूल बाबू उन दिनों तो देवता ही थे। इसलिए नहीं कहता हूँ कि मुझे कभी एक थप्पड़ नहीं मारा, ना कभी एक बात ही कही, कहता हूँ इसलिए कि उनका सुभाव बड़ी जात वालों के सुभाव से लाख गुना अच्छा लगा था।

[82] Ibid., p. 82. देखा, किसी ने पत्तल में जूठा नही छोड़ा है। उठते समय पत्तल को लपेटकर सब बाहर निकले और उसे एक बड़ी टोकरी में डाल दिया। हाथ-मुँह धोने के लिए कोई खास जगह नहीं थी, खुला मैदान था।

[83] Ibid., p. 142. पल्थी लगाये बैठे थे महतमा, उनकी बोली हमारे कानों तक नहीं पहुँच रही थी। हाँ, दाहिना हाथ उठा-उठाकर बार-बार कुछ समझा रहे थे, यह साफ लौक रहा था।

Gandhi/Gandhism is far from the rural masses, and Gandhi remains as a godly man whose 'darshan' is more a matter of religious merit. Balchanma's comment upon the 'darshan' of Gandhi produces a different discourse on Gandhi and Gandhian creed from that in nationalist writings. Instead of being omnipotent in the nationalist mythopoetic construction, as shown in historian Shahid Amin's study, the 'Gandhi' in *Balchanmā* fails to acquire a strong belief from peasants.[84]

It is necessary to note that Balchanma sets political terms related to Gandhism as misspellings, despite the fact he knows their correct pronunciation. Even after Phul Babu tells him that the man in the picture on the wall is '*Mahātmā Gandhī*', Balchanma repeats it in the next line as '*Mahatamā*'.[85] This incorrect form remains unchanged throughout the novel. A similar issue emerges when dealing with the word 'ashram'. The ashram is spoken as *āśram* in Phul Babu's speech but rendered as *āsaram* in Balchanma's voice. The contrast between the standard forms and Balchanma's non-standardized pronunciation shows a distance between Gandhism and poor labourers.

Balchanma's observation of the non-violent movement betrays a more satirical attitude. After Phul Babu is jailed for participating in the Salt Satyagraha, Balchanma feels confused about the meaning of making salt: 'A group of five to ten people in *kurtā*, *dhotī*, *ṭopī* and garlands around the neck, like goats offered in sacrifice, went to make salt. To me, those *babus* acted as if in a play. Has anybody achieved home-rule

[84] For the ways in which nationalist writings construct the image of Gandhi as someone who holds occult powers and receives a wide popularity among devoted peasants, see Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-2', in *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed., Ranajit Guha, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 1-61.
[85] Nagarjun, *Balchanmā*, p. 78.

anywhere in this way?'[86] The bantering tone reveals his suspicion towards such a self-sacrificing but ineffective way of political action. Later, Balchanma's own failure to obtain Phul Babu's help in solving the fabricated case disappoints him. He reflects: 'What deceit! In just one moment, I was utterly disillusioned. Obviously, it showed that the babu-bhaiya only supported us when it was in their interests … He may had been a *sorājī*, but he was after all a babu-bhaiya! What did he know about the poor man's trouble!'[87]

The disappointment sets a new stage in Balchanma's political consciousness concerning class divisions: babu bhaiyas cannot be readily trusted because they only act in their interests. After discovering that local congressmen, including Phul Babu as a provincial leader, embezzle the relief fund set up for the earthquake, Balchanma is further disillusioned and develops a clearer idea of class exploitation. 'I began to think about the Congress. When they achieve self-rule, babu bhaiyas will share the spoils (*dahī* and *machlī*) among themselves. Those who have already become masters will squander wealth in the future. What is left for us will be only dregs'.[88] Balchanma realizes that the Congress and babu bhaiyas masters are class allies and that together they bleed workers dry. Through his double disillusionment, Balchanma becomes critical of the selfish and corrupt so-called *sorājī*, the Congress freedom fighters. At the same time, a revolutionary consciousness already starts emerging in his mind.

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[86] Ibid., p. 54. यह जो दस-दस, पाँच-पाँच आदमी कुर्ता, धोती, टोपी पहनकर गले में माला डाले चढ़उआ बकरे की तरह नमक बनाने जाते थे, सो मुझे बाबू लोगों का एक खिलवाड़ ही लगता था। ऐसे भी कहीं किसी को स्वराज मिला है?

[87] Ibid., p. 85. कैसे धोखे में मैं पड़ा हुआ था। मेरा सारा मोह क्षण-भर में फट गया। साफ-साफ दिखने लगा कि बाबू-भैया लोग वहीं तक हमारा पछ लेंगे जहाँ तक उनका अपना मतलब रहेगा। ... सोराजी हो गये थे तो क्या, थे तो आख़िर बाबू-भैया ही न! गरीब-गुरबा का दुःख ये लोग क्या जानें!

[88] Ibid., p. 140. कांग्रेस के बारे में सोचने लगा कि स्वराज मिलने पर बाबू-भैया लोग आपस में ही दही-मछली बाँट लेंगे, जो लोग आज मालिक बने बैठे हैं आगे भी तर माल वही उड़ावेंगे। हम लोगों के हिस्से सीठी ही सीठी पड़ेंगी।

Immediately after Phul Babu refuses his request, 'an idea was settled in my mind at that moment, that just as babu-bhaiyas are united and make an outcry to fight against the British for self-rule, labourers, workers and servants should struggle for their rights against babu-bhaiyas'.[89] This reflection represents Balchanma's initial awareness of 'collective resistance' as a way of defending one's rights. The struggling spirit leads, naturally enough, to the adoption of socialism, and more importantly, signals Balchanma's subjective initiative in his political development.

Parallel with his critical reflection on and dissociation with Phul Babu and his fellow congressmen, Balchanma begins to associate with Gandhian-turned-socialist Radha Babu and the Kisan Sabha's activists who lead a movement against the eviction of tenants from *bakasht* lands by zamindaris in the novel.[90] The idea of the redistribution of land, first explained by Radha Babu and his followers, resonates in Balchanma's mind. He agrees with the concept of 'distribution according to work' by saying that 'what socialists say is correct that land belongs to those who have plough, factories belong to those who master skills and take part [in labour]'.[91] Based on such an egalitarian idea, Balchanma is willing to become a volunteer for a big meeting

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[89] Ibid., p. 85. उस बखत मेरे मन यह बात बैठ गयी कि जैसे अंग्रेज बहादुर से सोराज लेने के लिए बाबू-भैया लोग एक हो रहे हैं, हल्ला-गुल्ला और झगड़ा-झंझट मचा रहे हैं उसी तरह जन-बनिहार, कुली-मज़दूर और बहिया-खवास लोगों को अपने हक के लिए बाबू-भैया से लड़ना पड़ेगा।

[90] This is one of demands of the peasantry issued by the Kisan Sabha, established in November 1929. The narrative of the Kisan Sabha focuses on its radicals demands, such as struggles against landlords and call for the abolition of zamindari, rather than its moderate ones like rent reduction and debt moratorium. This preference brings about the contrast between the Kisan Sabha and Congress politics, despite the fact that the Kisan Sabha was initially responsible for building a rural base for the Congress and contributed significantly to the Congress' overwhelming victory in the 1937 election. The fictional character Radha Babu resembles, to some extent, the real-life case of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, a grassroots politician with whom Nagarjun kept in close contact. Radha Babu's conversion from Gandhian congressman to socialist echoes Sahajanand's transformation from a devoted follower of Gandhuito becoming disillusioned with Gandhi's pro-propertied attitudes and the hypocritical, self-proclaimed 'freedom fighters'. For more information of the Kisan Sabha, its leadership, and its movement, see Lata Singh, 'The Bihar Kisan Sabha Movement: 1933-1939', *Social Scientist,* Vol. 20, 1992, pp. 21-33, and Arvind N. Das, 'Peasants and Peasant Organisations: The Kisan Sabha in Bihar', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 9:3, 2008, pp. 40–87.

[91] Nagarjun, *Balchanmā*, p. 141. ठीक तो कहते हैं सोसलिस्ट भाई, जिसका हर-फार उसकी धरती! जिसकी हुनर और जिसका हाथ उसी का कल-कारखाना!

organized by the Kisan Sabha and the socialists to resist the unfair takeovers of land by the zamindars. In this way, he becomes a 'comrade' to other volunteers, which he terms in his own words as 'companions of struggle. Two soldiers on the same front call each other "comrade". For us, poor people who fight for our own rights, no word is more affectionate than "comrade"'. [92] Compared to the unclear representation of the gathering where Gandhi is present, the Kisan Sabha's meeting is depicted with utmost care. Instead of Gandhi's unheard address, the speeches by the Kisan Sabha leaders are given in full in the pages of *Balchanmā*. This indicates Balchanma's acceptance of their contents, including the slogans and a three-point guideline: 'organize yourself to be united, do not give up your land and stay away from the law courts'.[93] Moreover, compared to the misspellings in words related to Gandhian thought, words associated with leftist ideology are written in correct forms whenever they appear. Socialist is spelt as *sosalisṭa*, comrade as *kāmareḍ*, revolution as *krānti*. The common non-standardized alterations, such as breaks in conjunct consonants, vowel shortenings, are invisible in these three words. It suggests that the Kisan Sabha ideology is easily accessible to the exploited poor people and that Balchanma accepts the socialist and revolutionary ideas.

Soon after the meeting, Balchanma becomes a member of the Kisan Sabha and mobilizes other peasants to take part in the association. Inevitably, he becomes the target of zamindars' violence. One night, he is attacked while asleep, and his last thought is an explicit call to socialism: 'To whom does the land belong? Those who

[92] Ibid., p. 148. कामरेड का मतलब है लड़ाई का साथी। एक ही मोर्चे के दो फौजी जवान एक-दूसरे को कामरेड कहकर बुलाते हैं। अपने हक़ के लिए लड़ने वाले हम ग़रीबों के लिए कामरेड से जास्ती प्यारा कोई लबज है नहीं।

[93] Ibid., p. 151. संगठित होकर एक हो जाइए, जान जाये तो जाये मगर ज़मीन नहीं छोड़िये और अदालत-कचहरी के इर्द-गिर्द कभी मत जाइए।

plough and sow. The independence of peasants will not come down from above, it will only appear from below'.[94] Until the end, Balchanma's language is largely occupied by socialist ideology. He uses his own words to show that he has grown to be a committed peasant revolutionary. Balchanma does possibly not die – the text is ambiguous and says that he 'fell down' rather than 'die'. The narrator, insofar as he narrates a fictional tale until its end, never dies in front of the reader. The indeterminacy of Balchanma's fate seems to echo his last thought, i.e., that the peasants' fate cannot be determined by others but only by themselves in a struggle from below.

Balchanmā narrates the development of an illiterate agricultural labourer into a champion of Kisan Sabha socialism. His political odyssey in search of the right thesis is what finally helps him fight against oppression. The narrative structure of the novel echoes Suleiman's structure of apprenticeship, but instead of showing how mentors function as role models in guiding apprentice towards truth, as was the case in *Bīj*, *Balchanmā* emphasizes the process of how an apprentice internalizes and acts out a political ideology, and it does so by employing the first-person perspective and manipulating heteroglossic language registers. While this narrative strategy downplays the role of mentors, it accentuates the apprentice's active subjectivity. In this respect, *Balchanmā* establishes a new, progressive generation of agricultural labourers who will no longer endure oppression in silence but actively set out to achieve a way out.[95]

[94] Ibid., p. 172. धरती किसकी? जोते-बोये उसकी! किसान की आज़ादी आसमान से उतरकर नहीं आयेगी, वह परगट होगी नीचे।
[95] Balchanma's mother together with other rural servants in *Balchanmā*, who are present very briefly, marks the elder generation of agricultural labours who are beholden to their masters and carry lots of burdens without active resistance. For example, Balchanma's mother is trapped in the brutal cycle of rural debt after her husband passes away. Her only reaction against the oppression is, in Balchanma's view, nothing more than 'sitting in the streets and crying in sorrow.' Ibid., p. 5. माँ रास्ते पर बैठी हाय-हाय करके रो रही है।

Taking into consideration Balchanma's low caste (*ahīr*) birth, this novel pioneers the life experience and political awakening of underprivileged caste subjects which Dalit literature would further carry forward decades later. Yet, how the novel manages the relationship between caste and class remains a question, as I shall discuss more in Chapter 4.

Socialist political discourse often describes agricultural labourers as the exploited while labelling feudal landlords as reactionary exploiters, as *Balchanmā* shows. However, this does not mean that all landlords portrayed in Progressive novels are necessarily villains who are incapable of becoming positive apprentices. As I discuss next, Bhairavprasad Gupta's novel *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* imagines how a landlord can transform into a progressive subject.

1.3 'Spiral development' in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*

The third novel under examination is *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, written by Bhairavprasad Gupta and published in 1959. Unlike the college students in *Bīj* and the agricultural labourer in *Balchanmā*, the progressive apprentice in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* is a landlord, a character usually portrayed as a villain or a reactionary by Communist writers, like the landlords in Nagarjun's *Balchanmā* and Amrit Rai's *Hathī ke Dānt* (chapter 3), and in many Chinese novels as well. Why then does *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* of Bhairavprasad Gupta, a staunch CPI member from 1948 till the Communist Party split,[96] feature such an unlikely progressive protagonist? The answer lies in the context

[96] Bhairavprasad Gupta (1918-) acquired BA in 1939 from Allahabad University where Shivdan Singh Chauhan was his classmate. At first, he followed Gandhi and was appointed as a Hindi teacher in Madras to propagate Hindi

of communal conflicts which haunted the United Provinces, and particularly the Bhojpuri-speaking area to which Gupta's birthplace Ballia district belongs. Consisting about 93% Hindus and nearly 7% Muslims, Ballia district was considered by the colonial histography a place of severe communal violence since its occurrence in the nineteenth century.[97] Without treading too much on ground already covered by others, particularly Gyanendra Pandey's insightful research on the construction of the concept of communalism,[98] I emphasize that Gupta's novel, published decades before, already grappled with communalism and provided an imaginary resolution to it. I will elaborate on the confrontations in the novel in the next chapter. This section explores the *Bildung* of the landlord protagonist into a champion of class consciousness, which the novel argues is part of that resolution to communalism.

The novel traces the prolonged apprenticeship of Muslim protagonist Manne among rapidly changing circumstances within his family, at school and in the broader socio-political sphere in a village in northern India from the years of civil disobedience movement up to the first decade after independence. He is born in a zamindar family – a class identity which is supposed to be exploitative and reactionary in leftist ideology. By featuring an unlikely progressive protagonist, this novel contributes to the diversity

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as the national language before 1942. He then established a connection with the leaders of workers' movement in Ballia and Kanpur after he returned from Madras, according to which he wrote the novel *Maśāl* (1948). He joined the CPI in 1948 after the Gandhi's assassination and the radical wing – the CPM, after the CPI split in 1964. By contrast, many Hindi Progressive writers left the CPI in the 1950s and 1960s, some due to the Hungarian Uprising after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union the in 1956 (Amrit Rai), and some due to the Sino-Indian boundary conflict in 1962 (Nagarjun). For Bhairavprasad Gupta's biographical information, see Do Rajendra Mohan Agraval, 'Sañgharṣaśīl Jīvan kā Nām: Bhairavaprasād Gupta'; and Madhureś, *Bhairav Prasād Gupta*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2000, chapter 1 'Jīvan-vṛtta, vyaktitva aur racanā-samay', pp. 7-19.

[97] For the people and communal conflicts of Ballia, see *Imperial Gazetteers of India: United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1908, pp.189-190; see also Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, passim.

[98] Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*.

of apprentices in Hindi Progressive *Bildungsroman* and, crucial for the purpose of this section, imagines how a class alien may grow into a progressive and take action heeding to communist instruction.

Before developing into a politically conscious progressive fighting for the cause of equality and freedom, much like the protagonists Satya and Usha in *Bīj* and the eponymous hero in *Balchanmā*, Manne experiences a somewhat sprawling, checkered journey. The novel traces Manne's development through multiple identities – college student, zamindar after his father's premature death, husband, inspector of sugarcane factories, owner of textile machines, and so forth. Such diversified identities and his frequent moral 'lapses' and periods of despondency bring about a more complicated, 'roundabout' route in his development.

This roundabout evolution, with many setbacks, lulls, and moments of repentance and regret, can be read in a broader term as a literary manifestation of the Marxist view of 'spiral development'. As Lenin had pointed out when analyzing Hegelian dialectics, 'Human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral. Any fragment, segment, section of this curve can be transformed (transformed one-sidedly) into an independent, complete, straight line'.[99] Essential to this law of spiral development are the contradictory parts that end up forming a single whole.[100] The process of how individuals transform by overcoming tensions and fissures of the conflicting factors can be found in Jochen

[99] V. I. Lenin, 'On the Question of Dialectics', in *Lenin's Collected Works*, 4th edition, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976 (1915), Vol. 38, p. 360.
[100] See Lenin, 'On the Question of Dialectics' and also 'Karl Marx: A Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism', *Lenin's Collected Works*, 4th edition, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974 (1914), Vol. 21, pp. 43-91.

Hellbeck's brilliant study of the Soviet diaries. Many Stalin-era diarists, as Hellbeck shows, were preoccupied with finding out who they were in essence and how they could transform themselves. By employing 'diaristic self-interrogation', they established a variety of dichotomies to describe the composition of their self and the mechanisms of self-transformation in which they saw themselves engaged. Among others, the binary of 'ideology' and 'psychology', or 'consciousness' and 'spontaneousness', is crucial to the transformation of 'problematic self'. Hellbeck illustrates that 'psychology invariably had a negative ring. It was a lowly, chaotic, and dangerous force operating in the dark recesses of spirit and body, a force that diarists occasionally admitted to harbouring in themselves. Ideology, by contrast, was attained through a person's conscious struggle against psychology'.[101] As his case study shows, a *kulak*'s son and an intellectual are tormented by the inherited and ingrained *kulak*/petit-bourgeois psyche. Still, they effectively master psychology by joint powers of the rational mind and the will. As soon as they rendered psychology transparent and rational, it ceased to be psychology, rising to the level of pure ideology.[102] Despite that these Soviet diaries showcase a complex, struggling process of transformation, they construct a 'socialist subjectivity' in conformity with the social whole and particularly with the historical progress of the revolution. In *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, Manne is such a protagonist who has to cope with his problematic self. He has a social conscience towards peasants, but he is born to the feudal zamindar and has to carry out duties of zamindari. He is exposed to revolutionary spirit and collectivism in college but develops an attraction towards

[101] Hellbeck, *Revolutionary on My Mind*, p. 68.
[102] Ibid., p. 69.

bourgeois individualism when he wants to jettison his family and his responsibilities to the land and become an educated professional. His struggles against his feudal and bourgeois essence are thus important stages in his complex developing process from 'negative' psychology to 'positive' ideology. It is this spiral struggling process of transformation that constructs Manne's pro-leftist/communist subjectivity against the oppression in the name of religion.

By employing a composite, two-fold narrative structure of apprenticeship with an emphasis on the conflictual psychology, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, I argue, produces a spiral mode of development. In what follows, Manne's upward growing follows what Suleiman calls the positive exemplary structure sequenced as 'ignorance of truth – trials surmounted – action/new life', while his downward step corresponds to the negative version as 'ignorance of truth – trials not surmounted – no new life'. The alternation of positive and negative models contributes to Manne's curve development in a formal way. The following part examines how each factor (donor, helper, opponent) exerts influence on Manne's navigating through feudal zamindari psychology, bourgeois individualism, and finally towards communist collectivism, with foci on Manne's mental shifts, tone in speech, and physical movements.

1.3.1 Upward growing-up with the help of father

From a very young age, Manne has unconsciously acquired a non-sectarian mind of Hindu-Muslim community through his father Abba and thereupon shows potential for upward development. His father dominates Manne's retrospective memory in the first

chapter and serves as the first and crucial donor of Manne's development. Abba, as a prestigious Muslim local zamindar, behaves neither as a religious bigot nor as a class oppressor. Out of a high expectation that his son will become an erudite and multilingual scholar, Abba enrolls Manne into a *Hindi* primary school regardless of the opposition from fellow Muslims.[103] He allows Manne to enter his Hindu friend Munni's home at a time whereas Munni's father, a conservative Hindu, forbids Munni to visit a Muslim family.[104] Influenced by Abba, Manne grows to imbibe the principle of indiscrimination, which is particularly notable in his attitude towards language. He actively participates in the Hindi class and becomes proficient in formal, Sanskritized Hindi. For example, he complains with a middle-school teacher by using a set of Sanskritized words, '*Paṇḍit jī, vidyārthī apnā mūlyavān samay vyarth vyatīt kar rahe haiṁ*!' (Pandit ji, students are wasting their precious time in vain!).[105] For Manne, each language is equally important, as he himself acknowledges, 'I respect every language just like my mother tongue'.[106]

In addition to a secular world view, Manne is also exposed to his father's benevolence concerning the lower castes. The eighth-grade Manne hears a story of how his father helps a *chamar* girl successfully report her rape case to the police and regain dignity for herself. Abba's kind-heartedness towards peasants, who mostly belong to the lower castes, *koiri*, *bhar*, and *chamar*, though not directly described, can be inferred from their positive reactions to him: 'All [the peasants] was gushing out about

[103] Bhairavaprasad Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 2014 (1959), pp. 12–13.
[104] Ibid., p. 25.
[105] Ibid., p. 44.
[106] Ibid., p. 5. मैं तो हर ज़बान की इज़्ज़त अपनी ज़बान ही की तरह करता हूँ।

appreciation of Miyan [Abba] and all were grieving [Abba's death]'.[107] Admittedly, the narrative does not clearly showcase whether the *chamar* girl was 'kept' by Abba and how they develop a close, affectionate relationship, nor delineating how Abba runs the zamindari. However, such ambiguity about Abba's other traits of personality, in turn, gives prominence to his benignity.

Abba acts as a donor who passes down his non-sectarian mind and helps Manne to surmount trials both in his studies and friendships. Abba's sudden death when Manne is the eighth grade paralyzes him with panic and impotence, and this proves the active and constructive role that the father's in the child's life. The departure of the paternal donor stops Manne's apprenticeship. Manne considers himself helplessly standing on a slippery ladder in social and personal terms, and says to himself:

> we are certainly up and down on a ladder, but it is quite slippery. It is difficult to climb up but easy to slip down. Those who made me stand stable on the ladder by holding my hand no longer support me now. I don't know where I will fall. I have no strength, but I do have a desire not to fall.[108]

The narrative pauses to focus instead on Manne's psychology, marking his problematic mental condition of bewilderment and contradiction. The metaphor of the 'ladder' in which Manne is trapped aptly indicates the potential bi-directional movement of

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[107] Ibid., p. 68. मियाँ की प्रशंसा में सबके मुँह से शब्द झर रहे थे। सभी दुखी थे।

[108] Ibid., p. 55. एक सीढ़ी ऊपर-नीचे हम ज़रूर हैं, लेकिन सीढ़ियों पर रपटन बहुत है। ऊपर चढ़ना बहुत कठिन है, नीचे फिसलना बहुत आसान। जिन लोगों ने मेरा हाथ पकड़कर इस सीढ़ी पर ला खड़ा किया है, आज उनका सहारा मुझे न रहे, तो पता नहीं, फिर कहाँ जा गिरूँ। अभी मेरी अपनी कोई ताक़त नहीं, लेकिन यह चाह ज़रूर है कि मैं गिरूँ नहीं।

individuals during their process development. Moreover, calling the ladder 'slippery' forecasts the setbacks that will soon follow.

Abba's death bequeaths upon Manne the status of a zamindar, a position which Manne is yet conscious of and initially resists. Since the zamindar class is reactionary in leftist ideology, Abba arguably acts, in Suleiman's terms, as a 'pseudo-donor', 'who occupying the structural position of a donor, plays, according to the work's ideological super-system, the role of an opponent'.[109] Despite his ongoing education, financially secured by his father, and the liberal views inherited from his father, Manne gets lost due to his new identity. It is this class identity that counts and leads to Manne's regression in the next stage.

1.3.2 Downward steps: the problematic self

The first step in his regression takes place when Manne acts as a zamindar. After the custodian Babu Sahab, a good friend of Manne's father, harshly denounces the tenant Jamuna (also Jamunva) for failing to pay his tax on time, Manne angrily bursts out, 'How dare! If I do not make dogs tear his body to pieces, I am not the son of my father'.[110] The sudden and uncharacteristic rudeness in his tone of speech reveals a different side to Manne from what we have seen so far, as a brilliant student who was always polite and reasonable. It is also the first time that Manne is clearly identified as a zamindar; in the words of Birala, the longstanding servant of the family, 'no matter

[109] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 81.
[110] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 101. उसकी ऐसी हिम्मत! कुत्तों से उसकी बोटी-बोटी न नुचवा दी तो मैं अपने बाप का बेटा नहीं।

how noble a zamindar is, he is a zamindar after all! […] His blood is filled with poison: who knows when and who he will bite'.[111] While Manne's image deteriorates in his servant's view, he experiences a mental struggle, demonstrating his hesitation as to whether he should stand alongside Babu Sahab or Jamuna:

> Manne's mind was fouled bitter. An insult against Babu Sahab, he thought, against himself. If people like Jamunva started behaving like this, how could other tenants be relied on? … No, this issue should be dealt with severely. … If Babu's reputation was destroyed, if he abandoned everything and went away, what would become of Manne?
>
> Manne's inner soul (*antarātmā*) ironically burst out laughing. *I am a zamindar! A master! A king! ... and Jamunva a tenant, a slave, an ordinary person!*
>
> But why had submissive Jamunva, who till yesterday was a loyal tenant, about whom Abba had written that he should be regarded as one of one's own, committed such an insult? … Manne felt like he was standing in the witness box as a human being and Jamunva was asking this question with his finger pointed at him. … Manne's mind started whirling, his moral sense trembled, his principles wavered, his humanism cowered.[112]

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[111] Ibid., p. 102. जिमीदार चाहे जितना भी सरीफ हो, वह जिमीदार ही है। ... उसके ख़ून ही में ज़हर भरा होता है। कब किसको डस ले, का कहा जा सकता है।

[112] Ibid., pp. 122–124. मन्ने का दिमाग़ ख़राब हो गया था। बाबू साहब का अपमान, ख़ुद उसका अपमान … जमुनवा-जैसा आदमी ही ऐसा करने लगे, तो फिर दूसरे असामियों का क्या ठिकाना? नहीं, इस मामले को सख़्ती से निपटाना ही होगा। ... अगर वे सच ही बिगड़ गये और सब-कुछ छोड़कर चले गए, तो मेरा क्या बनेगा? मन्ने की अंतरात्मा व्यंग से हंस पड़ी, वह ज़मींदार है! मालिक है! राजा है! ... और जमुनवा असामी है, ग़ुलाम है, प्रजा है! … लेकिन निरीह जमुनवा ने, जो कल तक तुम्हारा वफ़ादार असामी था,

The narrative pauses to focalize the inner world of Manne: the conflict between his inherited zamindar psyche and rational logic exemplify Manne's conflicted self, which constitutes an important chain in his spiral development. Manne is trapped in the internal state of mind of 'Hamletism', which, as psychoanalyst Wulf Sachs explains, is a 'universal phenomenon symbolizing indecision and hesitancy when action is required'.[113] In his Hamletism, Manne continuously and frequently interrogates himself about 'who I am/will be' and 'what should I do'. Manne undergoes a threefold psychological process: first, the urge to maintain his dignity as a zamindar by severely punishing a peasant who has allegedly misbehaved; his sarcasm towards the zamindari and the dominance of social class; and his reflection on the peasants' loyalty and predicament. The zamindari psyche inside Manne threatens to engulf his rational worldview but is then challenged by the latter. Such tumultuous changes in his mind convince us that he is not by nature a brutal and 'poisonous' zamindar but one who possesses morality and humanism. Although he eventually beats Jamuna under Babu's insistence, Manne feels like 'a deer trapped in a forest fire with no way out'.[114] He regrets his action immediately after finding out that Jamuna did not pay the rent on time because his child had died on the day it was due. The narration reflects on Manne's regret and foreshadows his fate with penetrating insight:

जिसके बारे में अब्बा लिख गए हैं कि उसे अपना आदमी समझा जाय, यह अपराध क्यों किया? ... मन्ने को लगा कि उसका इंसान कटहरे में खड़ा है और जमुनवा उसकी ओर अंगुली उठाकर यह सवाल कर रहा है। ... उसका दिमाग चकरा उठा। उसकी नैतिकता थर्रा उठी। उसके सिद्धांत काँप उठे। उसकी इंसानियत सहम गयी। The italic are mine.

[113] Wulf Sachs, *Black Anger*, Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1947, p. 176, quoted in Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, eds., *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 10.

[114] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 128. जंगल की आग में घिरे एक हिरन की तरह उसकी हालत हो रही थी, कहीं कोई रास्ता दिखाई न पड़ता था।

> The fire of remorse beset Manne. It was a guilt nothing could atone for. Jamuna, and Kailaisia, and Abba would forever stand like a minaret reminding Manne of his dreadful offences, and Manne would never be able to meet their eyes for shame. His heart would be pierced by thorns all his life.[115]

Manne moves downward in a moral sense as he violently attacked a peasant with whom Abba has managed to keep harmonious, if paternalistic, relationship. Babu Saheb plays a paradoxical role in the stage of Manne's development. At first, Babu Saheb functions as a helper: he appears like a saviour and surrogate father to Manne and helps him deal with domestic chores and zamindari. However, Babu Saheb is more feudal and less liberal than Abba, as a result, he instigates the conflict between Manne and servants. In this respect, Babu Saheb acts more as an opponent. The absence of a donor/helper, the presence of a pseudo-donor (Manne's father) and an opponent (Babu Saheb), and Manne's problematic psychology of being a zamindar, all together construct Manne's negative structure of apprenticeship. Though Manne's remorse cannot change the result, it reveals his conscience, even if, at the same time, that conscience is shown to be helpless in the face of its own injustice.

If Manne's first step in the downward spiral is, to some extent, forced upon him, his second is one he commits consciously. It is through an act of sheer will that Manne

[115] Ibid., p. 139. मन्ने पश्चात्ताप की अग्नि में जल रहा था। ये ऐसे अपराध थे, जिनका कोई प्रायश्चित नहीं। उसके घोर अपराधों की स्मारक-स्वरूप जमुनवा और कैलसिया और अब्बा मीनार की तरह हमेशा उसके सामने खड़े रहेंगे और शर्म के मारे उसकी आँखें कभी भी उनकी ओर नहीं उठेंगी। जीवन-भर उसके दिल में काँटे चुभते रहेंगे।

further regresses and becomes a corrupt member of the exploitative bourgeois class. After his marriage, Manne increasingly feels the burden of an expanding family: he and his wife are joined in the household by an elder sister who is widowed and her children. Although Babu Sahab assures Manne that Abba had set aside a portion of the rent income to pay for his higher education, economic pressure eventually forces Manne to quit his master's degree at Calcutta University[116] and return to the village. After arriving back home, Manne finds a job as a temporary inspector of five sugar cane mills. His job involves checking whether the weight of the sugar sold by peasants is accurate and whether they are paid a fair price. The 'rule' (*dastūr*), apparently set by managers of the mills, that an inspector should take a bribe of 100 Rupees and a sack of sugar from each mill every month, immediately provokes mixed feelings in Manne – 'delight (*harṣa*), astonishment (*vismay*) and fear (*bhay*)'.[117] He is again caught up in Hamletism, indecisive in the face of rich but tainted profits on the one hand, and lofty but financially unproductive morality on the other hand. As night approaches, he cannot fall asleep but contemplates his sleeping arrangements with repetitive physical motions, which betrays his mental indecision over the matter of accepting the bribe:

> Manne sat on the bed, glancing at his tiny bedding and suitcase leaning against the wall on the ground. He suddenly felt that they were exactly like orphans in this room, looking pitifully at him. He thought he should get up and run away

[116] Manne's life is more churning and spiral in Calcutta: he wants to enjoy a quiet, pure educational experience, but he is constantly disturbed by his wife and her joint family. Manne finds himself increasingly burdened with household chores and financial crisis. As a result, he quits his postgraduate study and returns to the village.
[117] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 302.

from this place with his bedding and suitcase.

He got up and put his head out of the door. It was dead still and profoundly dark all around. … He felt a strong, chilling wind. … Why had he become worried like a child? Will my soul be spoiled by living in this quarter and sleeping on this bed? He thought.

Once again, he sat on the bed, glanced at his bedding and suitcase. Why not sleep with my own bedding on the floor? As soon as he saw the sheet on the bed and touched it with his hands, he changed his mind. How could my own bedding compare to this? … He was both physically and mentally exhausted and in desperate need of a soft, warm bed. A thought popped into his mind. Only a complete fool would sleep on his own bedding on the floor rather than on this exquisite bed.

He lay down, and as soon as he dragged the velvety quilt from the foot of the bed, he once again glimpsed at his own bedding on the floor. In the bundle was the quilt which had kept him warm for several winters. At that moment, he saw the quilt on the floor shivering and accusing him, 'you must have become a big man if you abandon like this the companion who helped you through so many winters and difficult times'.[118]

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[118] Ibid., pp. 303-304. मन्ने पलंग पर बैठा, तो उसकी दृष्टि सामने दीवार से सटाकर फ़र्श पर रखे अपने छोटे-से बिस्तर और सूटकेस पर पड़ी और सहसा ही उसे लगा कि इस कमरे में वे बिल्कुल अनाथ-से पड़े हैं और उसकी ओर दयनीय दृष्टि से देख रहे हैं। मन्ने के मन में आया कि वह उस पलंग से उतर जाय और अपना बिस्तर-सूटकेस उठाकर वहाँ से भाग खड़ा हो।
वह पलंग से उतरकर, दरवाज़े पर आ बाहर झाँकने लगा। चारों ओर सन्नाटा और गहरा अंधकार छाया था। ... हवा बेहद ठंडी थी। ... मन्ने को अचानक ही लगा कि बच्चों की तरह वह क्यों परेशान हो रहा है। इस क्वार्टर में रहने और इस पलंग पर सोने से ही क्या उसकी आत्मा दूषित हो जायगी?
वह फिर पलंग पर आकर बैठा, तो उसकी दृष्टि फिर बिस्तर-सूटकेस पर पड़ गयी और उसके जी में आया कि क्यों ने वह अपना ही बिस्तर फ़र्श पर बिछाकर सो जाय। और यों ही उसने पलंग के बिस्तर को देखा और उसे हाथ से सहलाने लगा। उसके मुक़ाबिले में उसकी दरी-चादर क्या थी? ... वह दिल-दिमाग़ और शरीर से बेहद थका था, उसे इस समय सच ही नर्म-गर्म बिस्तर की ज़रूरत थी।

This lengthy and repetitive description reveals Manne's pendulum-like psychological ambivalence and moral dilemma. The recurrent and simple image of the bedding carries a symbolic meaning, and Manne's self-interrogation marks the downward spiral trajectory of his moral and ideological degradation. The bed with the soft sheet and velvety quilt implies bourgeois comfort, while Manne's own austere mat, bedding and suitcase suggest the spartan lifestyle of the peasant. Manne initially refuses to be tempted by the ease of sleeping in the bed, but his will breaks, just as in the face of the financial struggle that engulfs him in Calcutta, he fails to resist the temptations of a rentier life back home in his village.

The dynamics of Manne's physical movements in the narrative, drawing nearer to the luxurious bed and further away from his own simple bedding, implies his gradual submission to the bourgeois life and its exploitative value system which privileges individual interest over fairness and solidarity towards manual labour. He later decides to accept the bribes and, despite the ambivalence he shows in the passage above, seems to show little or no regret in doing so. With this, Manne turns into what Suleiman calls an 'adversary' who stands in complete opposition to the peasants and workers. In this negative structure of apprenticeship, Manne's inner psychology, rather than any external elements, primarily functions as the opponent, indicating that Manne has

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और उसके ख़याल में आप ही यह बात आयी कि इस पलंग और उम्दा बिस्तर के रहते फ़र्श पर दरी-चादर बिछाकर सोना केवल मूर्खता है।

वह लेट गया और मख़मली लेहाफ़ पैताने से खींचने ही वाला था कि आप ही फिर उसकी निगाह अपने बिस्तर पर जा पड़ी। उस बिस्तर में भी एक रज़ाई है, जो चार जाड़ों से उसकी रक्षा करती आयी है और इस समय उसे लगा कि वह रज़ाई स्वयं दरी-चादर के अंदर ठिठुर रही है और सिसक-सिसककर कह रही है कि, तुम बड़े आदमी हो गये हो तो क्या इसका यह मतलब है कि अपने दुर्दिन के साथी को यों जाड़े-पाले में छोड़ दो?

accepted the bourgeois life and the strong consciousness attendant with it.

Two steps in Manne's downward growing—from liberal-minded student to brutal zamindar, and from penitent zamindar to impenitent bourgeois—illustrate the crucial role played by his inherent class identity in his development. While the secular and egalitarian ideas seem to be progressive, it proves ineffectual when facing life trials. As the identity of zamindar/bourgeois emerges, these progressive views are almost engulfed by the reactionary ideology ingrained in the class. Why does the class identity exert such a profound influence on individual growth? For one thing, within the Marxist-Leninist framework, the bourgeois character is weak and unprincipled, as Hellbeck observes in the context of the bourgeoisie in Russia: 'they [bourgeois] lacked the willpower to master their instinctual craving for self-gratification and were unable to discern the ploys of enemies who manipulated them at will'.[119] This comment fits Manne squarely. He fails to figure out or resist Babu Saheb and the mill manager, who serve as catalysts in Manne's regressions. But lack of willpower and a failure to discern the intentions of enemies are not the only faults of the bourgeoisie: another is the espousal of individualist, self-seeking values, which 'prevent them from appreciating the collective power and historic might of the working class'.[120] Manne's sense of dignity and his responsibility towards his family affairs are presented as individualistic factors in the novel which dissociate him from his life and studies in Calcutta, an urban area where revolutionary ideology prevails in the novel, and drive him into the opposite camp to peasants and workers. Having reached such depths of moral degradation,

[119] Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, p. 25.
[120] Ibid, p. 133.

Manne does not yet become a villain. How is Manne rescued from this spiral of regression, and how does he triumph over his feudal and bourgeois psychology?

1.3.3 Becoming a progressive: towards communist collectivism

Though as a zamindar, Manne is not presented as irredeemable, as some of the villainous zamindar characters in other progressive novels, like Paraduman Singh in *Hāthī ke Dānt* (see Chapter 3). His strong education, the influence of his father, and his openness towards revolutionary thought,[121] even the ambivalence he shows in regression, all offer potential for progress. These clues remain as indicators only, insufficient on their own to confront the weakness and unprincipledness of bourgeois identity. A remarkable feature in the above narratives of regression is the absence of a 'helper' who can facilitate progress toward the right doctrine and the resultant lack of 'helping elements', the good qualities of the helper including 'his intelligence, his powers of observation and interpretation, his desire for the quest, etc.'.[122] By contrast, in the latter part of the third chapter and the fourth, Munni, Manne's childhood friend and the only communist character of the novel, makes frequent appearances and functions as a 'mentor' to steer Manne towards a collective movement. Munni's guidance is realized through three phases: criticizing Manne's weaknesses, indoctrinating class consciousness, and setting an example of practical action.

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[121] Manne's acquaintance and association with revolutionary thought is limited but noteworthy. Two examples bear mentioning. When the canteen manager at his university offers to introduce him to some famous revolutionaries, Manne reacts positively with, 'Sure, sure, Manager Sahab! I will be very glad to meet them!' Secondly, Manne himself chooses Calcutta to do his master's degree because it is a revolutionary-inspiring area (*krātikāriyoṅ ke romañchak pradeś*). See Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, pp. 78, 241.

[122] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 83.

Munni's critique makes Manne for the first time face his weaknesses. When Manne repeats over and over the word 'but' (*lekin*) to express his helplessness *vis-à-vis* the economic burden and family responsibility he faces and to rationalize his disassociation from public life, Munni points out his individualism and escapism.

> The *lekin* mirrors your weakness! … You have to cross the limits of such *agar-agar*, *lekin-parantu*, to see the power you have over your personality. … Are you a human being or a hanger-on of others? Ah, show your lustre in any direction. If you don't take part in politics, nor serve for the nation, nor become a scholar, nor voice against the conservative ideas of our society, what is the point of making you literate and skilled? If you think that doing so requires ideal circumstances or that you won't devote yourself until such circumstances form, this is just a foolish idea. Those circumstances will never come.[123]

This vocal condemnation functions to dismantle Manne's bourgeois self-pitying and enlighten him to realize his value as a social being in a broader political and national platform. Although there is no explicit focus in this passage on communism, nor any mention of the ideal communist society (for example, the Soviet exhibition in *Bīj*),

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[123] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 339. यही लेकिन तो तुम्हारी कमज़ोरी का आईना है! ... इस अगर-मगर, लेकिन-परंतु की सीमा को कहीं भी तो तुम लाँघते और अपने व्यक्तित्व की शक्ति दिखाते। ... तुम आदमी हो कि आदमी की पूँछ? अरे, किसी भी दिशा में तो तुम अपना जलवा दिखाओ। राजनीति में तुम नहीं आओगे, मुल्क की ख़िदमत तुम नहीं करोगे, अदीब तुम नहीं बनोगे, समाज के दकियानूसी ख़यालों के ख़िलाफ़ आवाज़ तुम नहीं उठाओगे, तो इतना पढ़-लिखकर, इतने योग्य होकर तुम करोगे क्या? अगर तुम्हारा यह ख़याल है कि यह-सब करने के लिए आदर्श परिस्थिति की ज़रूरत है और तुम उसका निर्माण करके ही इस-सब में कूदोगे, तो यह सिर्फ़ तुम्हारी खामखयाली है। वह आदर्श परिस्थिति कभी आनेवाली नहीं।

Munni's stance here demonstrates the communist understanding of individualism and collectivism: 'every person will feel pain, will feel burdened, if his personal interests in any way contradict the interests of the collective'.[124] Munni's critique, therefore, centers on Manne's crucial weakness in his burdensome condition. Elsewhere in dialogue with Munni, Manne is informed of Munni's continuous and active involvement in the nationalist movement, i.e., the Satyagrah and the Quit India. Listening to Munni's experience and critique, Manne feels 'a void in his life'[125] and becomes 'ashamed, speechless, lowering his head'.[126] Soon after, Manne begins to care about local politics and even voices critically towards the Congress, as shown in his comment on the panchayat and the local Congress, 'In my view, the panchayat is just a scheme for organizing congressmen in the village and consolidating their power'.[127] Such a rapid change and Manne's growth into a sympathizer of the Communist Party (though expressed abruptly) testifies to the validity of Munni's criticism.

For the 'awakened' Manne, Munni's constant preaching of the communist ideology, particularly the notion of class consciousness, provides a guiding principle in how to take part in the public life. When Manne is worried about that his Muslim identity as a minority in the village would render him unable to take up the challenge from the Hindu majority, Munni expounds the Marxist idea of class struggle as a possible solution:

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[124] Quoted in Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, p. 113.
[125] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 340. उसे लग रहा था कि सच ही वह शून्य हो गया।
[126] Ibid., p. 345. मन्ने का सिर आप ही शर्म से झुक गया।
[127] Ibid., p. 357. गाँव में कांग्रेस को संगठित करने और उसकी शक्ति बढ़ाने की यह एक योजना है।

> There is only one solution to this [the communal conflict], that is to make people aware of class consciousness and to bring the fight for people's freedom to the level of class struggle. As soon as class consciousness emerges in the mind of Muslims and Hindus, they will no longer be inflamed with religious feeling by any feudal lord or capitalist. Class consciousness will knock down the wall between religions forever. … Have you ever heard about any riot between the conscious Hindu and Muslim workers in a mill? … Despite being a Muslim, if you can do something for the people, spread the consciousness among the people, the people will support you and protect you from the Mahajan's communalism.[128]

Compared to the detailed description of Manne's mentality of indecision and hesitation in the previous stage, Munni's sermonic criticism, which sounds dogmatic, occupies a large portion of narrative space while Manne's mental shift to awakening seems rather absent. The emphasis on the character Munni here reinforces the guiding role of him, and more significantly, of class consciousness.

Munni's propagandist instruction, though not receiving an immediate agreement from Manne, nevertheless takes root in his mind and sprouts in time. The delay is reasonable since this is Manne's first contact with the concept of class consciousness.

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[128] Ibid., p. 388. इसका इलाज केवल एक है, और वह है जनता में वर्ग-चेतना पैदा करना, जनता की मुक्ति की लड़ाई को वर्ग-संघर्ष के स्तर पर ले आना। मुस्लिम जनता और हिंदू जनता में जैसे ही वर्ग-चेतना का प्रादुर्भाव होगा, उन्हें धर्म के नाम पर कोई सामंत या पूँजीपति भड़का नहीं सकेगा। वर्ग-चेतना धर्मों की दीवार को हमेशा के लिए गिरा देगी। ... क्या तुमने कभी यह सुना है कि किसी मिल के सचेत हिंदू-मुसलमान मज़दूरों के बीच कभी कोई दंगा हुआ है? ...अगर तुम जनता के लिए कुछ करोगे, जनता में चेतना का संचार करोगे, तो तुम्हारे मुसलमान होने के बावजूद, जनता तुम्हारा साथ देगी, महाजनों की सांप्रदायिकता से तुम्हारी रक्षा करेगी!

This principle of 'serving the people' alone does not come to effect until it is actualized in Munni's actions. In order to make education accessible to the children in village, Munni plans to set up a school there. The construction work cannot be accomplished without villagers' voluntary contributions: the majority of villagers including Hindu and Muslim, offers materials like bricks, palm tree trunks, reeds' leaves, bamboos, etc. and their own labour to the school building. Manne participates actively in the process and witnesses how Munni encourages and unites villagers to undertake a cause beneficiary to all. It is the practical action that facilitates the doctrine of serving the people to grow in Manne's mind (*use janatā kī śakti kā gyān ho gayā thā*).[129] He starts to believe in the people's strength and works for the public as the minister of the school's education committee. Manne also begins to understand the ideology of class struggle after experiencing the dispute on the altar of Goddess Sati (*Satī Maiyā kā chaurā*). In the name of protecting this religious site, a group of Hindu communalists try to seize a piece of land adjacent to the altar, which belongs to a Muslim peasant's family. This event sparks something of an epiphany in Manne:

> God knows how such intense devotion for Sati Maiya has emerged all of a sudden! … For what reason on earth? It is a conspiracy, a big trick, an arrant lie, a complete deception to defeat me and to appropriate our school. Do not make peasants and workers fall into the trap…
>
> Manne lowers his head as if [he is standing] before Munni. Today, Manne, for

[129] Ibid., p. 397.

the first time, acknowledges that what Munni had said is correct – the only solution to communalism is class consciousness.[130]

Again, the narrative stops for some time to focus on Manne's changed mentality. The choice of succinct expressions such as 'conspiracy', 'trick', 'lie', 'a complete deception' contrast with the lengthy description quoted above, indicating that Manne is casting off his conflicted self and is acquiring a clearer class consciousness. The novel imagines Manne a Muslim secularist who becomes awakened to understand communalism in terms of class consciousness. It is Manne's secularism that averts communal violence which is often triggered by religious bigotry. At the end of the novel, Manne, together with Muslim peasants and low caste Hindu labourers, struggles against the Hindu communalists, and becomes the victory of this confrontation, as we shall discuss in detail in the following chapter. Here, what we need to focus on is that Manne accomplishes a positive apprenticeship and eventually finds the right thesis with Munni's help. The result that Manne overcomes his own atomized existence and aligns himself with the public life, with the collective movement fighting for peasants' rights in particular, testifies to the effectiveness of Munni's role as a 'mentor'. Through this positive structure of apprenticeship, the novel realizes its didactic purpose that class consciousness can solve communal conflicts and communist collectivism can defeat bourgeois individualism.

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[130] Ibid., pp. 434–435. सती मैया के लिए अचानक यह भक्ति जाने कहाँ से उमड़ आयी है! ... आख़िर यह सब किसलिये? एक मुझे गिराने लिए, हमारे स्कूल को हथियाने के लिए इतनी बड़ी-बड़ी चालें, इतने सफ़ेद झूठ, इतना बड़ा जाल है षड्यंत्र! कहीं इस जाल में यहाँ के किसान-मजूर आ जाते। ... और मन्ने का सिर जैसे मुन्नी के आगे झुक गया। आज पहली बार मन्ने ने माना कि मुन्नी ने सच ही कहा था, साम्प्रदायिकता का इलाज केवल वर्ग-चेतना है!

Manne's spiral development realized in both positive and negative structures of apprenticeship is an extraordinary case that displays how a landlord copes with the twists and turns in the struggle between problematic psychology and coming-into-being progressive consciousness. His political awakening and resistant action in the end enable a class alien to constitute an important category of the diverse progressives. While the success of progression in the end manifests the communist doctrine as the truth, the curved route of Manne's development probably more strongly indicates the winding path of the landlord's transformation.

1.4 Conclusion

Hindi Progressive *Bildungsroman* construct individual transformation through political awakening into progressive subjects who actively challenge the conventional social norms and combat reactionary forces, in an effort to create a new life in accordance with the 'truth'. The three novels in this chapter answer the following questions - Who can be progressive? How can someone become progressive? What does it mean for an individual to be progressive?

The progressives imagined in the Progressive novels constitute an inclusive group of individuals – well-educated urbanites, illiterate villagers, and feudal landlords. The flexible and effective applications of the 'structure of apprenticeship' with varied configuration of actants expand our understanding of Suleiman's formulation on one hand, and on the other hand, help produce three different types of progressive development. Except for the landless labourer Balchanma, none of the other positive

apprentices/protagonists belongs to the proletariat in a narrow sense. It is only their willingness to learn and internalize political ideologies, of either communism or socialism, rather than their class status, that triggers their *Bildung*. What distinguishes the negative apprentice of Raj in *Bīj* from those of Satya and Usha is not her class status but her indifference to the Soviet photo exhibition, a source of communist inspiration in the novel. However, Balchanma does still subtly differ from the petty bourgeoisie and landlord protagonists in *Bīj* and *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*. As I have discussed, Balchanma's *Bildung* is much more self-motivated than that of other apprentices, whose *Bildung* relies more or less on the helping role of communist vanguard-mentors. This formal difference, which endows the landless-labourer protagonist with more subjective initiative, generates a literary representation of the classical Marxist proposition of the proletariat's very revolutionary nature.

If compared to the mainstream official narrative in which individuals become progressive through their engagement with state development project, Hindi Progressive novels produce a distinct 'progress' marked by the individuals' struggle against prevalent social norms and integrating their personal growth into a new, progressive set of principles. The total absence of state project in the novels and the dominant presence of characters and events with oppositional ideologies testify to this sharp contrast. All three novels agree on the necessity of direct exposure to leftist ideologies, which are vocalized by characters, visualized in photographs, or carried out through practical actions. These representations of political ideology may read propagandist and doctrinaire, but they function effectively as 'helpers' in facilitating

the protagonists' consciousness awakening and action-taking. In turn, the protagonists' accomplishment of apprenticeship testifies to the validity of leftist ideology. In terms of ideological affirmation, then, Hindi Progressive novels of transformation resemble the Soviet and Chinese ones.

The decisive role of leftist ideology as true knowledge in the making of progressives does not mean that the Progressive literature serves for party politics. The political parties – whether the CPI or the Socialist Party – do not actually feature in these novels, and very few characters grow to be party members or dedicates themselves to the communist enterprise. Unlike their Soviet and Chinese counterparts, the Hindi Progressive *Bildungsroman* concludes in a somewhat dim light rather than foreshadowing a bright future. At the end of the novels, Usha, Balchanma and Manne are attacked and injured by reactionary forces – either policemen or communalists. While their success in overcoming their trials demonstrates the effectiveness of leftist ideology, the endings weaken the validity of the thesis to some extent. Such a paradoxical representation can be read either as the Progressive writers' ambiguity about the future of struggles, or as their negative judgement on their circumstances. The endings distinguish Hindi Progressive *Bildungsroman* from socialist realist ones, whose protagonists become qualified communist party members, conscious communist social citizens, or martyrdom in the revolution. This distinct feature makes the Hindi Progressive *Bildungsroman* a distinct variant of the subgenre.

After all, what does it mean for an individual to be progressive? In other words, what progressive values do these apprentices strive for? This is a question to which the

grandiose manifestos provide no direct answer. The novels, instead, illustrate 'progressivism in everyday life practice' through the characters' trajectories. Apart from what we may expect, such as active participation in formal party life, mass contact and mobilization, and a struggle against the corrupted state apparatus, zamindari and communal politics, what is special about the Progressive *Bildungsroman* is that they envisage a new progressive family and community lifestyle, which Ania Loomba has illuminated in her recent book *Revolutionary Desires* as an important aspect for understanding the private sphere of communist activists. As we have seen in the novels, the frank criticism of progressive helpers and the apprentices' deep retrospection and transformation build fraternal friendship and companionate and loving husband-wife relationships. This focus on the family and on individual relationships does not address to the question of proletariat revolution but speaks to a dilemma these novels share with modernist novels – if the traditional family system and community no longer suit modern circumstances, what are the alternatives? The Progressives' answer may seem too idealistic or assertive, their quests are nevertheless an integral part of the writers' experiment with modernity. The narrative move from the public to the private sphere is also a contribution of literature in writing about progressivism beyond the manifestoes.

The tensions between Progressivism and mainstream postcolonial society compel the Progressive novels to imagine a set of values that counter prevalent norms; this means that a progressive is destined to struggle against the mainstream. Therefore, among the many trials presented by the novels examined in this chapter, including those related to intimate relationships and family life, there is a particularly necessary

category of trial, that is, a confrontation with the establishment, which includes reactionary ideas and their manifestation in institutions. In this way, progressive ideology establishes an ideological link between the structure of apprenticeship and the structure of confrontation – apprenticeship is necessarily to be prepared for and succeed in confrontations, as the following chapter shows. Compared to the symbiotic relationship suggested by Suleiman, Hindi Progressive novels offer an ideologically clearer explanation of the relationship between the two narrative structures.

Chapter 2

The Fight for Progressive Values: The Structure of Confrontation

> We will *oppose* all those traces which are taking us towards helplessness, lassitude, and superstition. We *accept* as means of change and progress all those forces which bring out our critical faculties and which test custom and institutions the touchstone of reason.[1]
>
> — 1936 Lucknow Declaration

> Hatred towards the creative power of people, racism and chauvinism, cast[e]ism and communalism are all *opposed* to the healthy traditions of our people. … We *want* the unity of all Indian writers for the service of the people. We *want* them to help our people's struggle for a happy and rich life, through their creative endeavour.[2]
>
> — 1953 Manifesto

What are progressive values? The PWA's manifestoes do not define them directly but in contrast to reactionary tendencies, as two excerpts above show. According to the Progressive discourse, the term 'reactionary' is not a definite concept but covers a wide range of ideologies according to different historical and political circumstances. These include colonialism and imperialism under the British Raj (mentioned in 1936 and 1938

[1] The 1936's Declaration of the PWA was the major document emerging from the first conference held in Lucknow, quoted in Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970*, pp. 151-154. Italics are mine.
[2] Quoted ibid., p. 247. Italics are mine.

manifestoes) and capitalism under Congress after independence (in the 1949 and 1953 manifestoes).[3] Besides, 'reactionary' may refer to long-standing class oppression, casteism, and communalism. Accordingly, progressive values as stated in the manifestoes encompass a wide span of 'anti-reactionary' ideas, including Indian nationalism, anti-capitalism, anti-communalism, and whatever values serve the interests of the working class, peasants, and low-castes, such as struggling for freedom under the leadership of the working class, free expression of democratic ideas, humanitarianism which opposes war and exploitation, and so forth. The juxtaposition between reactionary trends and progressive urge in the manifestoes foregrounds the confrontational nature of their relationship, which is true in the historical context. To fight against reactionaries is a consistent call of the PWA, as manifestoes state repeatedly. Yet, it is not the utmost goal, but a step forward and an inevitable path towards the development and the eventual victory of the progressive. Within such framework, this chapter asks: how do Hindi Progressive novels frame confrontations between opposing groups; how do they demonstrate the validity of progressive values through such confrontations; and finally, what is the relationship between the formal structure of confrontation and progressive ideology?

This chapter examines the narrative structure of confrontation through another close reading of Bhairavprasad Gupta's novel *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* (*The Altar of Sati*

[3] In the 1936 Lucknow Declaration, one of the PWA's aims was 'to strive for the freedom of our countrymen' (quoted ibid., p. 153). After independence, the PWA turned its criticism to the Congress rule and considered it as the reactionary force, as the 1949 manifesto stated 'the people of India are being tyrannized by the capitalist class and its government. … The Congress government, on the one hand, tried to protect the interest of these looters; on the other hands, it joins with the British and American imperialists and tries to establish a military center in this country against the democratic forces and tries to strengthen the chains of the Commonwealth' (quoted ibid., p. 236).

Maiya, 1959).[4] While most of the novel, as we saw in the previous chapter, focuses on protagonist Manne's spiral development, a few confrontational episodes dot the narrative, and indeed give it its title. Instead of tracing their occurrence along narrative time, I categorize confrontational episodes into two types according to the different opposing groups. The first series of conflicts is between tenant farmers and zamindars, which takes the form of a long historical digression lasting over 40 pages. Ramjiyavan Munshiji, who served as munshi under Manne's grandfather and is a kind of father-figure for Manne, tells Manne how peasants of past generations struggled against the zamindars. This historical flashback, emerging when Manne becomes paralyzed after his father's sudden death, has three important connotations. Present in the process of Manne's development, it demonstrates the strength of class-unity and establishes a model of united group for Manne to imitate years later. It also produces a narrative of the village history characterized by tenant farmers' struggles, and finally provides clues as to the emergence of communal conflicts, the second type of confrontation. Communal tensions emerge right at the beginning of the novel, when Manne is at school: prompted by his father, who is keen that he should be versed in Hindi and Sanskrit as well as Urdu and Farsi, Manne, as a Muslim student, insists on using Hindi in the primary school exams, which causes resentment among Hindu and Muslim teachers; years later, in college Manne is keen to participate in the Hindi Debate Competition,

[4] My choice of *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* as the case study in this chapter does not mean that there are no conflicts in the apprenticeship represented in *Bīj* and *Balchanmā*. It is in fact after the struggles against the traditional family norms and her own desire of comfort lifestyle that Usha matures, but the narrative of *Bīj* accentuates her development with a watered-down account of the conflict itself. Similarly, *Balchanmā* concludes with the eponymous protagonist's being knocked down when he is just prepared to fight with a stick. By contrast, *Satī Maiyā ka Chaurā* exhibits a series of confrontations in the village and Manne's engagement with the communal conflicts, producing a detailed imagination of practical fights against the reactionary forces.

which again touches off communal sentiments from Hindi/Sanskrit and Urdu/Farsi departments. After these two instances, the plotline concerning communal tensions is 'dropped' for a large part of the novel, which instead focuses on the hero's slow development. Only after Manne has acquired self-awareness and has learnt to subordinate his individual and family interests to the broader collective interests of the village, under the guidance of his old friend and communist guide Munni, the narrative returns to focus on the communal conflicts happening in the early years of independence. When some Hindu villagers start to demolish the outer walls of a Muslim Julaha's house in order to expand the adjacent Hindu religious *chaura* or platform on which Hindu goddess Sati Maiya is worshipped, tensions quickly arise. The confrontation is not exclusively between Hindu and Muslim but rather between communalists and secularists comprising individuals belonging to different social positions, as I shall discuss in some detail.

At the structural level, the narrative of confrontations in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* fits what Suleiman calls 'confrontational type of stories'. According to her definition, '[a] story of this type is always, … that of a "struggle between heaven and hell"', in which the *roman à thèse* 'assumes this Manichean view and prides itself in it'.[5] As mentioned in the Introduction, major actants in the structure of confrontation are subjects/heroes and helpers who facilitate heroes to win on the positive side, while on the negative side include opponents who are set against heroes and anti-helpers who aid opponents to trigger conflicts and defeat heroes. Its basic sequence – a conflictual engagement, a

[5] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 101.

progression, and an outcome of the conflict – that is by no means unique to the *roman à these,* for any narrative of conflict follows this structure at least in part. The particularity of the *roman à these* lies 'not in a particular narrative structure', Suleiman argues, 'but in the contents with which the structure is invested and in the mode of discourse that appropriates it'.[6] Two factors in the structure are determining in constructing a mode of discourse and therefore conveying an ideological message. The first factor are the values that the hero fights for. As Suleiman puts it, the hero fights 'for transcendental and absolute values', whether 'truth, justice, freedom, or his fatherland', rather than for his own advancement or glory.[7] In *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, tenant farmers fight for justice and freedom against the zamindars' oppression, and Manne and his companions fight for the common good and for mutual respect among religious communities. The values championed in the two confrontations constitute what counts as 'progressive', while those opposed are 'reactionary'. The second factor that characterizes confrontation in an ideological novel concerns the character of the 'antagonistic hero'. Unlike the hero in the structure of apprenticeship who acquires consciousness and a new life by transforming his way of seeing and acting in the world, the antagonistic hero in the story of confrontation *is* already conscious of the values that are defined as good and *is* ready to fight for them, and his adherence to those values does not change in the course of the battle.[8] Moreover, the hero is not representative of himself, but of a group that fights for the triumph of those values. As Suleiman suggests,

[6] Ibid., p. 102
[7] Ibid., p. 103.
[8] Ibid., p. 106.

'the antagonistic hero is barely an individual, his individual destiny tends to merge with a collective one: it is as the representative and spokesman of a group that the hero elicits our interests'.[9] In the novel, Manne and tenant farmers serve as antagonistic heroes and heroic groups respectively. While Manne undergoes a sprawling journey of interior mental struggle with his class identity as a zamindar, his non-sectarian view towards religious communities – his secularism – is established from the very beginning of the narrative and never changes, as I mentioned in chapter 1. Likewise, tenant farmers in the village champion the values of equality and freedom from the very beginning of their appearance in the novel, as we shall see. The unchanging adherence of the heroic groups to the progressive values during the confrontations reinforces the unambiguity of those values, conveying a clear message to the reader.

What is then the specific discourse of anti-communalism that such structural traits and the juxtaposition of the two types of confrontations help construct? The imaginary involvement of class, caste, and religion in the so-called communal conflicts in the novel reminds us of Gyanendra Pandey's seminal work on the communal riots in the Bhojpuri-speaking area, the area where the author Bhairavaprasad Gupta was born.[10] Pandey's research on the social, economic, and political issues underlying Hindu and

[9] Ibid., p. 107.

[10] Bhairavaprasad Gupta was born in 1918 in Sivankalan Village, Ballia District, one of the important heartlands of Bhojpuri areas. He had been living in Ballia till high school before he was enrolled in Ewing Christian College in Allahabad around 1935. After a short span of propagating Hindi in Madras from 1937 to 1942, Gupta returned Ballia. Out of the fear that Gupta might be arrested since his elder brother had already been arrested due to the participation in the Quit-India movement, his mother did not let him step into the house. Soon later, he moved to Kanpur, and subsequently travelled to Allahabad and Delhi; see Do Rajendra Mohan Agraval, 'Saṅgharṣaśīl Jīvan ka Nām: Bhairavaprasād Gupta', pp. 55-64; and Madhureś, *Bhairav Prasād Gupta*, chapter 1 'Jīvan-vṛtta, vyaktitva aur racanā-samay', pp. 7-19. Unfortunately, no collected works of Gupta have been published, or even complied, and thus, many detailed information of Gupta's life and his thoughts on specific issues have not been found, such as what kind of activities did he organize or participate in Ballia, how did he view Hindu-Muslim relations, etc. These questions deserve separate research since they would contribute to our understanding of how Hindi intellectuals, particularly those Hindus, engaged themselves with the issue of secularism and communalism.

Muslim struggles in the colonial period provides a parallel context for the novel. More significantly, his reflection on colonial historiography helps us situate Hindi Progressive writings on communalism. In the service of colonial 'law and order, colonial historiography constructs, Pandey argues, the local people as essentially religious, irrational and fanatic. Communalism, in this view, is a colonial construction that requires critical reconsideration.[11] *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, published almost four decades before, presents the 'real' history of the village with tenant farmers as the principal subjects and their struggles against zamindars as the major events, as the first section of this chapter shows.[12] The brief narrative sequence of the colonial takeover before the communal violence implies that colonialism has played a role in the emergence and growth of communalism. The novel does not only deconstruct the essentialist colonial view of Hindus and Muslims but also offers a Marxist interpretation of communalism by foregrounding the class, individual interests, and political manipulation as triggers of communal tensions, as I discuss in the second section.[13] To fight against reactionary forces, the novel imagines two 'heroic united fronts' – a heroic group led by tenant farmers with the support and assistance of low-caste cattle herders or Ahirs, merchants or Mahajans, and Munshis as helpers, and a united front of secularists comprising *ashraf* Muslims like Manne, *ajlaf* or lower-caste Muslims like the local weavers or Julahas, low-caste Hindu agriculturalists including

[11] Pandey, p. 117.
[12] The way of narrativizing the history of the village resembles the narrative in *Waqeat-o-Hadesat: Qasba Mubarakpur*, a historical memory by a local zamindar Sheikh Muhammad Ali Hasan published in 1880s, which Pandey employs as an alternative to the colonial histography; ibid., particularly chapter 4 'Community as History'; for comparisons see 2.1 here.
[13] The Marxist view is also criticized by Pandey for its attempted reduction of communalism to the play of self-interest and faction; ibid., pp. 13-15.

bhar, *koiri*, etc., and communists. Such 'imagined communities' can be read as narrative solutions to the problems of class exploitation and communal divisions as well as a declaration of intent by Progressives to tackle such divisions. Above all, the chapter emphasizes again that the structure of confrontation itself carries ideological relevance to Progressivism: the confrontation serves not only a pathway to become progressive, but it *is* an integral part of Progressivism.

2.1 Tenant farmers vs zamindars

The predicament of peasants caused by their subjection to zamindars became a theme in Hindi literature in the early twentieth century and flourished well into the post-independence period. Early works emphasised their suffering and characterized the peasants as pitiful and abject subjects, victims of exploitation who were too weak to fight against zamindars. For example, in Premchand' short story 'Qurbani' (The Sacrifice), the protagonist Girdhari ends up jumping into a well in despair after he is evicted from his land because he cannot afford the increasing rates of rent and has to sell his beloved oxen.[14] As Francesca Orsini rightly argues, writers in the 1920s 'take on the persona of "dejected peasants" crying out for sympathy and recognition to educated urban readers'.[15] In the late 1920s and 1930s, campaigns against rural debt, the spread of socialism and Kisan Sabha activities made peasants into a 'counter public', and 'earlier attitudes of unthreatening sympathy were replaced by powerful narrative

[14] 'Qurbani' was published in the 1910s (I cannot find the exact publishing year of the short story). See Madan Gopal, *Munshi Premchand: A Literary Biography*, Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1964, p. 135. For the plot of the short story, see Premchand, 'Qurbani' (The Sacrifice), in M. Asaduddin ed., *The Completed Short Stories*, India: Penguin Random House, 2017.
[15] Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 327.

of oppression, struggle and political awareness'.[16] In Nagarjun's novel *Balchanmā*, as we noted, the eponymous protagonist, an agricultural labourer, adopts Kisan Sabha socialist ideas of fighting together to defend the peasants' right to the land they till. However, Balchanma does not enter into a confrontation with the zamindars either verbally nor physically, ending up being knocked down by the police before he could fight back.

In contrast, in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* tenant farmers emerge as resistant heroes in the stories narrated by the elder Munshiji. When Sugandhray, a local zamindar of the 1840s roughly and the first reactionary opponent with whom Munshiji's story starts, comes to the village and announces a one-and-a-half increase in land revenue, all the villagers are riled: 'After he [Sugandhray] left, the villagers gathered again. From all around came a consistent voice – it was complete injustice, tyranny! We shall not bear it! We must do something'.[17] This is a brief description of the villagers' reaction, but it indicates that the villagers invariably resist injustice and form a collective prepared to fight, as the terms 'gathered' (*ikaṭṭhe)*, 'consistent voice from all around' (*chāron or āvāz*), and 'we' (*ham*) indicate. While the villagers are thinking about what to do, a young tenant farmer named Gulam Haider bursts out: 'To reject the order of Sugandhray… Yes, to fight! There is no alternative but to fight against injustice and tyranny.'[18] The cry of 'injustice' (*gairinsāfī*) uttered by Gulam repeats the one uttered

[16] Ibid., p. 340.

[17] Bhairavaprasad Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 2014 (1959), p. 151. The original text reads: 'वह चला गया, तो लोग फिर इकट्ठे हुए। चारों ओर आवाज़ उठ रही थी कि यह तो सरासर ग़ैरइन्साफ़ी है, जुल्म है! हमें योंही इसे बरदाश्त नहीं कर लेना चाहिए! कुछ-न-कुछ ज़रूर करना चाहिए।'

[18] Ibid. 'सुगंधराय का हुक्म मानने से इनकार कर दिया जाय! … हाँ लड़ाई! जुल्म और ग़ैरइन्साफ़ी के ख़िलाफ़ लड़ने के सिवा कोई चार नहीं!'

by the villagers, reinforcing the idea that injustice is their common enemy. From the very beginning, Gulam and other villagers are characterized as vocal, resistant, committed, and united. This rebellious spirit carries across generations: twenty years later, Gulam's son Lutfehaq also emerges as a fighter. After learning that the new zamindar, Qazi Qayamulhaq, has tied up a villager for not surrendering enough sugar, Lutfehaq shouts boldly: 'We should fight against the Qazi, liberate the village, and accomplish the unfinished task of our martyrs'.[19] The terms used are revealing, for they identify collective resistance to surplus extraction with the values of freedom and sacrifice. Gulam and Lutfehaq, who are the antagonistic heroes in their confrontations, embody the value of fighting for justice and freedom.

While farmer heroes like Gulam and Lutfehaq stand out in the crowd of villagers due to their inspiring speech, they merge into the collective heroic group. As Suleiman suggested, it is 'as the representative and spokesman of a group that the hero elicits out interest'.[20] Nor does Gulam, though born into a tenant's family, restrict his fight to the tenant farmers alone: he sees himself as a member or, more exactly, an entitled spokesman of the whole village and appeals for 'the unity of the village' (*gāṁv kā ekā*).[21] Such self-identification minimizes his individuality and integrates him with the village community as a whole, of which he becomes a representative. As Munshiji says, inspired by Gulam's call, villagers (*gāṁv ke log*) reached an agreement that nobody would pay excessive land revenue, which is the resolution they implement. Here, the

[19] Ibid., p. 166. 'क़ाज़ी से लड़ेंगे और गाँव को आज़ाद करके शहीदों का अधूरा काम पूरा करेंगे!'
[20] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 106.
[21] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 151.

interest of the land-revenue paying tenant farmers is portrayed as synonymous with that of the villagers as a collective body. While the formulation downplays the diversity of villagers who probably have different interests, it presents the whole village as unanimous in their fight against the zamindar's extortion.

Such unity leads to the formation of a united front (*morchā*) – another key term – in preparation for the physical confrontation that will likely ensue. In the first conflict, the united front consists of Gulam as the peasant leader (*rahanumā*), his fellow young villagers, a group of Ahirs from a nearby settlement who arm themselves with *lāṭhīs* and guard the border of the village, and a wealthy Mahajan merchant, Narayan Bhagat, who owns sugar mills but supports the fighters. Similar united fronts spring up in the second and third conflicts, as shown in the tables below. Members of these fronts explicitly express their determination to fight, for instance, Narayan Bhagat passionately vows, 'I will provide as much money as needed'.[22] Although he is absent from the battlefield, his financial support shows his alignment with the heroic fighters. Gulam makes even more dramatic appeals to his fellow fighters, 'to be prepared for any sacrifice needed. We believe that the final victory belongs to us, and it is not impossible that we will become the masters of our own village someday'.[23] Unlike the pitiful and passive 'sacrifice' of the tenant in Premchand's short story 'Qurbani', the 'sacrifice' here betrays a positive heroic martyrdom.

The village's united front as we saw embraces diverse groups: both Muslims and

[22] Ibid., p. 152. गाँव के सबसे बड़े महाजन नरायन भगत ने ऐलान किया, इस मामले में जितने धन की ज़रूरत पड़ेगी, हम देंगे!
[23] Ibid., pp. 151-52. 'गाँव इसके लिए जो भी क़ुर्बानी दरकार हो, देने के लिए तैयार हो, तो हम समझते हैं कि आख़िरी फ़तह हमारी होगी और यह भी ग़ैरमुमकिन नहीं कि एक दिन हम अपने गाँव के मालिक बन जाएँ।'

Hindus in religious terms, Ahirs and Mahajans in caste terms, and tenant farmers and petty bourgeois (mill owners) in class terms. Integrating distinct social groups into a single unity underplays the complexities of reality, as Suleiman argues that the confrontation in the novel most obviously simplifies contemporary history in the way it 'fills in' the actantial configuration, i.e., the set of characters.[24] In constructing such a united front, the novel subordinates two important social categories, religion and caste, to class, the socio-economic category endorsed by Marxist dialectical materialism. In fact, the narrator does not specify the caste of the tenant farmers, who form the majority of the united front in the village; instead, it includes Muslim and Hindu tenant farmers, Ahirs, Mahajans into a group which can be characterized as the oppressed class. It even minimizes potential internal class strife by harmonizing the relationship between tenant farmers and the petty bourgeois. Such a consolidated front crossing the religious, caste and class boundaries seems unlikely and unconvincing. Yet, the creation of this configuration under the structure of confrontation accentuates the overwhelming necessity of struggling against feudal landlords, and the tensions between class rather than the ones between religious communities.

Table 1: First conflict, pp. 150-159

	Heroic group			Opponent
	Gulam Haider	Ahirs	Narayan Bhagat	Sugandhray
Religion	Mixed			Hindu

[24] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 114.

Identity/ Occupation	Tenant peasant	Agricultural labourers	Sugar mill owner	Zamindar, governor
Caste		OBC	Upper caste	Upper caste
Cause	The governor raises the land revenue (*lagān*).			
Result	The heroic group is defeated in the violent conflict.			

Table 2: Second conflict (close to the same period as the first conflict), pp. 159-164

	Heroic group			Opponent
	Gulam Haider	Ahirs	Narayan Bhagat	Khadimulhaq
Religion	Mixed			Muslim
Identity/ Occupation	Tenant peasant	Agricultural labourers	Sugar mill owner	Zamindar, governor
Caste		OBC	Upper caste	Qazi
Cause	The heroic group fights for ownership of the village.			
Result	The heroic group is defeated and the leader Gulam dies.			

Table 3: Third conflict (second generation, twenty years after first and second conflicts), pp. 165-169

	Heroic group			Opponent
	Lutfehaq	Devi Bhagat	Ramjiyavan Lal	Qayamulhaq
Religion	Mixed			Muslim
Identity/	Tenant peasant	Sugar mill owner	Munshi	Zamindar,

Occupation				governor
Caste		Upper caste	Upper caste	Qazi
Cause	The governor commands that on the morning of *Īd* all should offer milk and each sugar mill should offer 20 *sers* of sugar and 10 rupees.			
Result	The heroic group wins via a lawsuit			

On the other side of the confrontation are the zamindars. In contrast to the resistant tenant farmers who embody positive values, the zamindar characters embody negative values like injustice and exploitation, including sexual exploitation. Munshiji's story presents all three zamindars as oppressive villains without any redeeming feature. Sugandhray is briefly characterised as a 'despotic and cruel zamindar' (*jābir aur jālim zamīndār*).[25] Qazi Khadimulhaq, his successor, 'manages the zamindari with command and with arbitrary and strong force' (*baḍe rob, dabangaī aur tākat se zamindarī chalāte*).[26] His son Qazi Qayamulhaq appears even more exploitative.[27] While the narration flattens these zamindar characters with simple tones of disapproving, it helps create an unambiguous critique of the opponents, just like minor characters Congressmen and bureaucrats in *Jhūṭhā Sach* show (see Chapter 3).

The positive outcome of the confrontations demonstrates the validity of the mode of struggle. Although the first and second conflicts end with the heroic group defeated and, respectively, seven and twenty-seven young villagers dead, the loss does not mean

[25] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 150.
[26] Ibid., p. 160.
[27] Ibid., p. 165.

a failure for the villagers as a collective, nor a collapse of the progressive values they embody. As Suleiman suggests, 'if the hero is defeated, he can nevertheless claim a spiritual or moral victory, *since he is right*. His defeat can mean only a delayed triumph'.[28] In the third conflict, the hero casts aside violent struggles, which have cost many lives, and resorts to legal support. With the help of Munshiji, who is the registrar of the village's land records, the villagers charge Qazi of murder and of illegal purchase of the village. After a three-year-long court case, the villagers eventually win the case, and Lutfehaq is elected village headman (*nambardār*). This success brings hope and a bright future to villagers, as Suleiman points out 'the concluding victory functions *on the level of the fiction* as the forerunner of a definitive victory.'[29] Both the provisional 'delayed triumph' and the final 'definitive victory' validate the formation of the heroic united front, and the final outcome thus testifies to the correctness of the progressive values championed by the united front.

The contrast between the presence of deaths in the first two physical struggles and the absence of casualties in the last one may indicate a priority of non-violence over violence.[30] Yet, the legal redressal sounds quite unrealistic if we consider how impossible it would be for peasants to benefit from the colonial and even post-colonial capitalist and elitist law and order. The narrative choice of Munshiji as a medium between tenant farmers and lawyers seems to resolve the contradiction. When Munshiji seeks help from the most famous barrister in town, he shows evidence of the Qazi's

[28] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 112. Italics are original.
[29] Ibid., p. 113. Italics are original.
[30] The author Bhairavprasad Gupta was a Gandhian in the 1930s. Following Mahatma Gandhi's call of propagating Devanagari Hindi, Gupta taught Hindi in Madras during 1939-1942. After returning to Kanpur in 1942, Gupta developed a close contact with Arjun Aroda, the local leader of the workers' union, and joined the CPI in 1948.

cruelty in a poem that he composes.[31] Impressed by the poem, the barrister acknowledges Munshiji's idea: '*Vah-vah!* What a brain you have, Munshiji! I lower my head before you. In your artistic manner, you put no word wrong, and what harsh meaning you have drawn out of it. You will definitely win the case'.[32] While the adoption of a lawsuit can be also read as an imaginary solution to the zamindar-peasant contradiction, Munshiji's gaining support by virtue of a poem reads too emotive to be convincing. Nevertheless, the implication of such expression lies in, I would suggest, the wider range of individuals who accept confrontational structure of zamindars and tenant farmers, and acknowledge the correctness of fighting against the oppression.

The series of confrontations between tenant farmers and zamindars involves two modes of antagonism. The first mode is antagonism between the economic exploiter and exploited. The foregrounding of economic factors as the trigger of the conflicts – the increase in revenue and other forms of extraction – indicates that the confrontations are framed in Marxist terms as class struggles. The second mode of antagonism, which develops from the first one, is between the ruling and the ruled. In the second and third conflicts, what the villagers reject is not merely the increase in extraction, but more

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[31] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 168. The poem is about Qazi's assault on women:
Baburan, the daughter of Ghuran,
Bibi Sema, the daughter of Baburan,
Beaten, tormented,
Dragged from lane to lane,
Who knows where to be taken then,
Discarded.
घूरन की बेटी बबूरन,
बबूरन की बेटी बीबी सेमा,
मारिन हैं, काटिन हैं,
गली-गली घसीटिन हैं,
फिर जाने कहाँ ले जाके,
फेंक दिहिन हैं

[32] Ibid. 'वाह-वाह! क्या दिमाग़ पाया है आपने, मुंशीजी! हम आपके सामने अपना सिर झुकाते हैं! लटके में आपने एक बात भी झूठ नहीं कही है, फिर भी क्या संगीन मतलब निकाला है आपने! आप लोग ज़रूर जीत जाएँगे!'

importantly the zamindars' ownership of the village. As Gulam explains to villagers, 'The characteristic of our fight now has changed. It is no longer about the rate of revenue, but about the question: does the village belong to us or to any zamindar?'[33] Excited by Gulam's words, the villagers cry out: 'No, no. We will not have our village occupied by anyone else, even if we have to die for it'.[34] After the victory of the villagers over the zamindars in the end, Munshiji says: 'the village became free' (*gāṁv āzād huā*).[35] The call for self-ownership of the village and the expression '*āzād huā*' resonate with the Indian nationalist call for self-determination and independence from colonialism, but also underscore the economic self-determination that is the part of the political movement and that Progressives believed Congress had evaded after independence.

The three sets of conflicts between tenant farmers and zamindars may read redundant in terms of actants and confrontation, but what is the significance of such repetition? First of all, it indicates an endless potential of confrontations. It is such continuous struggles that lead to the triumph against the reactionaries and thus reinforce the confrontational nature of progressivism. Secondly, the threefold repetition of the same kind of heroes and opponents magnifies their exclusive features: tenant farmers all resist and are courageous, zamindars are all exploitative and cruel. As Suleiman argues, 'any text that aims at optimum communication or at a maximal reduction of ambiguity will tend to be heavily redundant, thus eliminating the interference of

[33] Ibid., p. 160. 'अब हमारी लड़ाई की नवइय्यत बदल गयी है। अब सवाल लगान की दर का नहीं, सवाल यह है कि यह गाँव हमारा है या किसी ज़मींदार का?'
[34] Ibid. 'नहीं-नहीं! हम गाँव पर अब किसी का क़ब्ज़ा नहीं होने देगे, भले ही इसकमे लिए हमेंअपनी जान देनम इडेनि पड़े।'
[35] Ibid., p. 169.

"noise"'.[36] Such unambiguous antagonism contributes to a simple, clear-cut division between farmers and zamindars in terms of class interests. Thirdly, the twenty-year narrative span of three conflicts constructs a village history characterized by struggle, with farmers as subjects. Like Sheikh Muhammad Ali Hasan's *Waqeat-o-Hadesat*, a historical memoir written from the perspective of a local zamindar, the retrospective account of the village narrated from the perspective of the local Munshi in the novel, too, constructs an alternative to colonial histography. Nevertheless, unlike the pride and unity of the Muslim zamindar community highlighted in *Waqeat-o-Hadesat*,[37] what *Satī Maiyā ka Chaurā* establishes is the solidarity and strength of the heroic group led by tenant farmers against the zamindars. Therefore, the novel builds up a confrontational historical narrative of the village by identifying farmers as the subjects who defend their own land and freedom, while zamindars are the reactionary threatening and oppressing the community.

While such a simplistic polarization foregrounds class identity on the basis of occupation, it dilutes, for example, other divisions such as caste or religion. In fact, villagers do not identify themselves as Hindu or Muslim, nor are they labelled as such by others. This does not mean that the novel pays no attention to the villagers' religious identity. Instead, it sets up communal harmony by amalgamating elements of different religious groups: the heroic fighters cry 'Jai Ali' and 'Jai Mahavirji' during the battle, and Hindu and Muslim martyrs are remembered in one place with tombs or cenotaphs.[38]

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[36] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 154.
[37] Pandey, pp. 127, 132.
[38] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, pp. 153-154.

Such literary articulation of peaceful co-existence of religious communities resembles the short stories of pre-independence period, such as Premchand's 'Muktidhan' (The Price of Freedom) and Ugra's 'Īśvardrohī' (Apostate).[39] In *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, the religious coexistence (or Ganga-Jamuni culture) is presented as a short-lived 'pleasant dream' (*hasīn khwāb*)[40], to use Munshiji's expression, and is challenged in the post-independence years as the local Muslim zamindar is weakened by the new political dispensation.[41] But if communal tension is not inherent in the village, when and where does it originate, and for which reason? We shall answer these questions by examining the communal confrontations in the next section.

2.2 Communalists vs secularists

> At that time, the happiness in the village was beyond description. It was as if Id and Holi had fallen on the same day and all Hindus and Muslims got together and celebrated the festivals. Flowers were offered to the graves of the martyrs.[42]

Now if a Hindu inadvertently throws colour on a Muslim at Holi, a riot will

[39] In Premchand's 'Muktidhan', the benevolent Hindu gentleman forgives the entire amount of money that the impoverished Muslim farmer borrows for taking his mother to pilgrimage, treating her illness, and performing the funeral rite. In Ugra's 'Īśvardrohī', a young Muslim woman who begs on the streets receives help from a Hindu family. For the analysis of how these Hindi short stories articulate the communal harmony, see David Lunn, 'Looking for common ground: aspects of cultural production in Hindi/Urdu, 1900-1947', Ph. D. thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2012, Chapter 3, 'Telling tales of tolerance: Aspects of Humanism in Hindi and Urdu Short Stories', pp. 188-255.

[40] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 169.

[41] Readers are not told that Manne is directly hit by the Zamindari Abolition Act after independence, but he is indeed weakened and threatened by the right-wing Hindu communalists.

[42] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 169. उस वक्त गाँव में जो ख़ुशी का आलम था, वह बयान के बाहर है। एक ही दिन जैसे ईद और होली का त्योहार आन पड़ा हो और सब हिंदू-मुसलमान मिलकर एक साथ मना रहे हों, ऐसा नज़्ज़रा था। शहीदों के मज़ारों पर फूल चढ़ाए गए।

occur; if a Muslim embraces a Hindu at Id, who knows whether he will thrust a dagger into the other's heart.[43]

This is Ramjiyavan Munshiji — 'the only witness of the village's history' (*vāhid is gāṁv kī tavārikh kā gavāh*)—lamenting how communal relations between Hindus and Muslims in the village have deteriorated.[44] When Lutfehaq's son takes over the zamindari after his father's untimely death, communal tensions emerge, referred to in the second epigraph. Whereas tenant-zamindar tensions dominate the history of intra-village struggles in pre-colonial times, in the novel communal antagonism begins in colonial times and intensifies in the post-colonial period. Compared to Premchand's short stories which imagine tolerance and forgiveness as the solution of alleviating communal hatred,[45] *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* provides a more radical alternative, that is, to robustly confront and overcome the communal tension. Thus, I argue, the novel employs the structure of confrontation as an imaginary strategy that the antagonistic heroic group can and should adopt in order to combat communal conflicts.

Before moving to the textual analysis, we need to briefly review the concept of communalism.[46] Communalism, in its common usage in India, refers to mutual

[43] Ibid., p. 175. आज होली पर भूले से कोई हिंदू किसी मूसलमान पर रंग डाल दे, तो बलवा हो जाय; ईद पर आज भले कोई मुसलमान हिंदू के गले मिले, तो कौन जाने वह छुरा कलेजे में घुसेड़ दे।

[44] Ibid.

[45] For example, Premchand's short story 'Mandir aur Masjid' (1924), portrays a benevolent Muslim taluqdar Chaudhari Itarat 'Ali who is anti-communal (*dhārmik sankīrṇtā kahīṃ chū tak nahīṃ gayī*). He forgives his Hindu *chaprasi* Bhajan Singh for wrongly kills Ali's son-in-law who takes part in the riot happening in a Mandir, and forgives Bhajan again till the end of the story for his participating in the riot in a Masjid. A similar narrative of forgiving the member of another religious community can be found in Premchand short story 'Kṣamā/Afū', see Lunn, Chapter 3, 'Telling tales of tolerance', 2012, pp. 205-210.

[46] For the history of the concept of 'communalism', I draw heavily upon Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990. For the Marxist writing of communalism, see Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1984.

suspicion and antagonism between different religious communities. British colonialists, who took religion to be the primary marker of identity in Indian society (alongside caste) and viewed the 'coming of Islam' in India as a brutal conquest, contended that communalism was a given and endemic feature of Indian society and believed the religious bigotry was a basic fact in India.[47] By contrast, some Indian nationalists and Marxists considered it a problem of a colonial origin and an outcome of social, economic, and political inequalities.[48] Marxist historian Bipan Chandra, for example, conceptualized communalism as one of 'the by-products of colonialism' and argued that communal antagonism 'responded to and expressed the social urges and served the social needs and purposes of certain contemporary social groups, strata or classes.[49] Decades before Chandra's study, Progressive writers had presented a similar argument on communalism. In a statement on communal disturbances in Calcutta, 1946, they accused British imperialism as 'the arch incendiary' and 'the arch criminal' responsible for the holocaust by saying that 'British imperialism encouraged, fostered and developed communalism and used it as its political allies'.[50] What was the most alarming, they added, was the fact that 'leaders of our main political parties [the Congress and Muslim League] are preparing to carry out this fratricidal policy'.[51] While Progressives do not analyse in details the economic, social, and political elements in triggering and instigating the disturbance, their criticisms of the colonial

[47] See Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, pp. 9-10.
[48] Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia, and Bipan Chandra's *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History* (1969) was a milestone work in this regard. Bipan Chandra's monograph *Communalism in Modern India*, published decades later, provides more informative and detailed account along the same lines. For this reason, the analysis below quotes mainly from Chandra's statement.
[49] Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, 1984, p. 9.
[50] Sudhi Pradhan, *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, 1979, p. 338.
[51] Ibid., pp. 338-339.

construction and of the domestic political manoeuvring echo nationalist and Marxist ideas.

Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā provides a similar Marxist-nationalist reading of communalism, slotting characters of different religions, social classes, and political parties into two opposing sides and pitching them against each other in a structure of confrontation. In what follows, I first examine the constitution of the opponent group of 'communalists', in order to explore how the narrative imagines the origins of communal conflicts. Instead of simply reducing characters to the religious categories of Hindu and Muslim, however, the novel fleshes them out with other aspects of class, occupation, and political alignment. Such layered characterization not only challenges an essentialized understanding of religious identity but also produces an interpretation of communal conflicts in terms of class, social and political interests. I then turn to explore the 'antagonist hero and heroic group' which include Manne, communist Munni and low caste villagers. I call them 'secularists' because they appear immune to the temptations of communalism, and their stance remains unchanged since the communal tensions emerge. The construction of such an imagined community of resistant heroes is the novel's literary solution to communalism.

The novel portrays three types of communalist opponents. The first type are the zamindars who collaborate with the British colonialists. In Munshiji's retrospective narration, it was the zamindar Abdulhaq who, with the help of his close friend Sirajuddin Jubli who was born into a distinguished local family and became a diwan of Pindara Nawab, first creates communal divisions among villagers, which replace pre-

existing class antagonism:

> Those two wretched men together sowed the seed of communalism (*firqāparastī*). They separated the Muslims and taught them (lit. gave them a prescription, *nuskhā*) that the Muslim nation (*qaum*) is the ruling nation (*qaum*) who has authority over the village, whereas the Hindus are their subjects (*riyāyā*) and they should behave as such! … After that, Abdulhaq even ordered many Hindus who dared sit on charpoys, did not salute, and did not get out of his way to be beaten.[52]

The narrator introduces the first communalists in the village with a negative description by using the words like '*kamabakhta*' (lit. wretched). Abdulhaq and Sirajuddin are the first powerful men who divide the village into distinct religious communities and by riding roughshod over Hindus makes them the 'opponents' in the confrontation. Instead of showing the scene how they behave, the narrator summarizes their abhorrent practices of separating Hindu and Muslims. Such a summary indicates that fissures between religious communities have already been common and prevailing, rather than something accidental happening only once. But how do they become suddenly communal when no one in the history of the village had been so before, and where does the 'seed of communalism' come from? The narrative explains it through a brief

[52] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 170. इन दो कमबख्तों ने मिलकर फ़िरक़ापरस्ती का बीज गाँव में बो दिया। मुसलमानों को उन्होंने अलग कर लिया और उन्हें यह नुस्ख़ा पिलाया कि मुसलमानों की क़ौम हुक्मराँ क़ौम है, गाँव पर उनकी अमलदारी है, हिंदू उनकी रियाया हैं और उनके साथ उन्हें रियाया का ही बर्ताव करना चाहिए। … और फिर वह भी वक्त आया, जब चारपाई पर बैठने या सलाम न करने या रास्ते से न हटने पर अब्दुलहक़ ने कितने ही हिंदुओं को पिटवाया।

historical reference — 'the control of British rule had tightened', before adding that Abdulhaq and Sirajuddin 'also did something else which damaged the unity in the village, split Hindus and Muslims, and created communal disturbance between them. They started to treat Muslims as their own and Hindus as enemies'.[53] Though the novel does not expand further on the role played by the colonizers in this conflict, the presence of the British followed immediately by the local zamindars' reaction indicates that it is under the influence of British rule that the communal tension emerges and categories of Hindu and Muslim take shape. Thus, the British act as 'anti-helpers', aiding the front of the opponents, fuelling, in the novel, the communal feeling of the zamindars. This narrative sequence, which prefaces British rule to Hindu-Muslim divisions in the village, echoes the understanding that communalism is a problem of colonial origin. To quote Bipan Chandra again:

> Communalism was not a remnant of the past … Communalism was a modern phenomenon that arose as a result of British colonial impact. … Communalism was a modern ideology that used the popular traditional consciousness of Hindus and Muslims forming separate groups for religious, marriage and inter-dining purposes in its effort to base modern politics of popular sovereignty on a religious identity.[54]

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[53] Ibid. अंग्रेज़ी हुकूमत का शिकंजा अब कसने लगा था… ऊपर से उन्होंने एक और भी काम किया, जिससे गाँव का एका टूट गया, हिंदू-मुसलमान अलग-अलग हो गए और फ़िरकेवाराना खानाजंगियाँ शुरू हो गयीं। उन्होंने मुसलमानों के साथ अपनों-सा और हिन्दुओं के साथ दुश्मनों-सा व्यवहार करना शुरू कर दिया।

[54] Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, pp. 6–8.

Yet Abdulhaq and Sirajuddin act more as zamindars extorting economic surplus and labour from tenant farmers rather than Muslims treading over Hindus. Abdulhaq raises land revenue tenfold; after taking over Abdulhaq's zamindari, Sirajuddin not only orders the same amount of land revenue to be collected but, even more relentlessly, demands that every year each Hindu family offer eight *annas*, and every sugar factory ten rupees, one *anna* per bag of raw sugar, and one rupee per pack of sugar exported from the village. When a sugar factory owner refuses to pay the additional levy, Sirajuddin orders his Hindu workers to be attacked. Sirajuddin justifies his brutal order by saying that, 'without collecting tax, we cannot earn a living'.[55] Clearly, the novel represents the conflict as the one between the exploitative zamindar and the exploited tenants and workers. Only, the former happens to be Muslims while the latter are Hindus. Thus, a class-conflict triggered by economic interests takes on a communal guise.

The second type of communalists are the educated middle class, exemplified by Manne's teachers. Though Manne is a Muslim whose mother tongue is Urdu, his father decides to enrol him in the local Hindu primary school for he expects Manne to learn as many languages as he can so that he can grow to be a real person (*sacchā insān*) by studying the literatures in those languages.[56] Under Panditji's special instruction, Manne becomes proficient in Hindi and Sanskrit, together with Urdu and Persian and English. When Manne decides to sit the Hindi exam, the teachers in both Islamiya and

[55] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 177. 'टैक्स लिए बिना हम नहीं रहेंगे।'

[56] Ibid., p. 13. 'मैं ज़बान को सबसे ज़्यादा अहमियत्त देता हूँ, क्योंकि अच्छी तरह ज़बान जाने बग़ैर कोई आदमी अदब का मुताला नहीं कर सकता और बग़ैर अदब के मुताले के कोई आदमी सच्चा इन्सान नहीं बन सकता।'

Hindu schools protest, and communal tension arises:

> The masters from the Islamiya School and the assistants from the [Hindu] Primary School joined together on this issue. The assistants were jealous of Panditji since his salary had increased to fifteen rupees. They spread rumours in the village that Panditji had set up a Muslim boy, Manne, to confront a Hindu boy, Munni. At the same time, the masters of the Islamiya School said that Manne would definitely become a *kafir*.[57]

The passage showcases a clear process of creating communal tensions: due to their envy towards their colleague's higher salary, Muslim and Hindu teachers spread rumours that convey a communalist message. There is not even a friction between Muslim and Hindu teachers; they instead join hands to oppose Manne's learning Hindi and Sanskrit. Thus, it is an unverified rumour and, fundamentally, economic interest that trigger communal sentiments. A similar event occurs when Manne prepares to take part in a Hindi debate competition in college. Professors from the Hindi and Sanskrit departments, who are appointed to set the topic of debate and judge the winner, decide that the topic will not be given in advance, though in fact the Hindu contestants are informed so that they can secretly prepare. Such an unfair settlement is due to their fear that 'this bold boy may

[57] Ibid., p.15. इस काम के लिए इस्लामिया स्कूल के मास्टरों और प्राइमरी स्कूल के नायबों में संधि हो गयी। नयाब बड़े पंडितजी से उसी दिन से खार खाये हुए थे, जब से उनकी आमदनी पंद्रह रुपए बढ़ गयी थी। उन्होंने गाँव में यह प्रचार किया कि हिंदू लड़के, मुन्नी, के मुक़ाबिले में पंडितजी ने मुसलमान लड़के मन्ने, को खड़ा कर दिया है और इस्लामिया स्कूल के मास्टरों ने यह कि मन्ने तो अब ज़रूर काफ़िर हो जायगा।

shame their departments'.[58] Simultaneously, the professors from the Urdu-Persian department consider Manne' s participation an opportunity to score a victory against their Hindi colleagues and increase their status in college. Once they discover that Manne hesitates, they encourage him:

> Now that you have taken this step, don't retreat. If you retreat, you will not only disgrace yourself but our department too. … It seems that we are the natural enemies of the Hindi-Sanskrit department. They were always prepared to plague us like a crude step wife. The principal often takes their side and provides them with conveniences more than us.[59]

Here, the persuasion attempts to establish two identities belonging to two departments, but links them with the dignity of religious communities. A mere student debate thus transforms into a rivalry between Hindu and Muslim professors who fight as two communal groups, ostensibly for their community's prestige, but 'in reality' to score a victory against the other faction and improve their position in the college. Their ideas are essentially communal, and therefore contradict the ideal of communal harmony that Manne's father and Manne himself embody.

Both incidents, which take place in Manne's school years, illustrate how the

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[58] Ibid., 'कहीं सचमुच यह दुस्साहसी लड़का उनके विभागों को नीचा न दिखा दे।'

[59] Ibid., p. 5. 'अब क़दम उठाया है तो पीछे न हटिये। बात इतनी आगे बढ़ गयी है कि अब आप पीछे हटेंगे तो सिर्फ़ आप की किरकिरी न होगी, हमारे डिपार्टमेंट का भी बदनामी होग। … हिंदी-संस्कृत डिपार्टमेंट की तो जैसे हमसे पैदाइशी दुश्मनी है। एक दबंग सौत की तरह ये हमारी छाती पर मूँग दलने के लिए हमेशा तैयार बैठे रहते हैं। पिंसिपल हमेशा इनकी तरफ़दारी करता है, उन्हें हमसे कहीं ज़्यादा सहूलियतें देता है।'

educated middle class or lower-middle classes use communalism as a means to protect selfish interests. This again echoes the analysis of the social roots of communalism by Indian Marxist-nationalist historians. As Chandra suggests, 'the communal question was a petty bourgeois question *par excellence*. … [W]hile communalism was able to draw supporters from all classes of people, its main social base was to be found in the middle classes or the petty bourgeoisie'.[60] In his view, the middle class in India had suffered economic stagnation and had to compete with each other for scarce opportunities and resources.[61] Whenever a petty bourgeois individual finds his position insecure and endangered, with the road to recovery blocked, he starts looking for some group which can be declared hostile to his position and held responsible for his own precarious situation. Thus, for Bipan Chandra, communalism is 'the consequence of the individuals of the middle classes competing among themselves in a tight economic situation and forming "sections" and "groups" to enhance their capacity to do so successfully or to improve their chances in the competition'.[62] As two examples in the novel reveal, communalism becomes a disguise for the social class identity of the petty bourgeoisie and their real pursuit of non-religious interests, such as higher income and social status.

The third type of communalist 'opponents' are those Hindus who, after independence, align themselves with the local Congressmen and Jan Sanghis, who in

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[60] Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, 1984, p. 41.

[61] According to Chandra, 'throughout the twentieth century, in the absence of the development of modern industries and modern social and cultural services, … and because of shrinking governmental expenditure, there existed extremely poor and worsening economic opportunities and increasing unemployment, especially for the educated middle and lower middle class. … This aspect was further heightened during the years of Depression and recession from 1929 to 1941 and the years after World War II'. Ibid., pp. 34–35.

[62] Ibid., p. 45.

the novel are shown to cooperate with each other. In the last chapter of the novel, after a Hindu villager named Kailash, an activist of the Arya Yuva Sabha, a Hindu association, is defeated in the Gram Sabhapati (village council's headship) election, he vents his anger on Muslims. Together with a group of Hindu villagers, he starts demolishing the outer walls of a Muslim house with the excuse that they impede access to the adjacent Hindu religious site Sati Maiya's *chaura*. This act provokes controversy in the village, and a group consisting of trader-moneylenders (*mahajans*) who have joined the local Congress after independence, and volunteers (*swayamsevaks*) of the Hindu right-wing party Jan Sangh, gather in the village in support of these Hindus, armed with lathis. Such action does not mean that they are particularly devout. As the narrator observes, till then Sati Maiya's *chaura*

> had turned black after being exposed to much rain, sunshine and cold. In the rainy season, it was covered with moss, overgrown with weeds, and black water flew from above. In the summer, many black scabs cascaded from above. When you passed by, it smelled as if the ashes of firewoods were steaming while being dried in the sun after getting rotted.[63]

The *chaura*'s decay indicates that it had not receive care from its Hindu devotees till

[63] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 184. जाने कितनी वर्षा, धूप और ठंड खाकर यह चौरा काला हो गया था। बरसात में इस पर काई जम जाती और छोटी-छोटी घासें उग आतीं और इस पर से काला-काला पानी बहा करता। गर्मी में इस पर से काले-काले पपड़े उभरकर झरते और इसके पास से गुजरने पर एक ऐसी गंध आती, जैसे लकड़ी की राख सड़-गलकर धूप पड़ने पर बफारा छोड़ती हो।

then. Passers-by did not even turn their eyes to the deserted *chaura* (*paritykta chaurā*). But on the day the local inspector (daroga) comes to investigate the dispute, it is suddenly 'rejuvenated': it is whitewashed (*safedī*), with flags (*jhañḍā-patākā*) and many religious offerings (*chaḍhāvā*).[64] This sudden change in appearance reveals that the *chaura* does not matter in the Hindus spiritual life but only as an instrument of confrontation with the local Muslims and to serve a political goal. The local ruling Congress Party is trying to drive local Muslims away and to take over the newly-built school which is under Manne's supervision in order to garner votes among students and teachers before the second general election. As Bipan Chandra would put it, communalism becomes effective in the political sphere: 'the use of religious grouping or identity for forming political communities or as the basis for political formation and action was a new feature of Indian political and social development'.[65] Like the colonizers, the Congress in the post-independence India manipulates religious identity in order to strengthen its rule. Thus, religious identity and communal tensions mask the real purpose of winning elections and expanding one's power.

The novel, thus, subordinates the religious identities of three types of communalist opponents to their social and political identities in order to explains how communal tensions emerge. Such a representation of origins indicates that communalism is not a product of different religious communities per se, but of economic inequality and political manoeuvring, manipulated by the ruling class and the bourgeoisie. In this way,

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[64] Ibid., p. 431.

[65] Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, p. 167.

the novel presents communalism as 'false consciousness', to use Chandra's term.[66]

On the heroic side of the communal confrontation, the novel presents Manne, the mostly bumbling protagonist we encountered in Chapter 1, as the 'antagonistic hero' and an inborn secularist. As we mentioned, Manne embodies communal harmony through his proficiency in both Hindi and Urdu and his equal esteem of both languages. When he encounters his school teachers and college professors who stoke communal sentiments, Manne disagrees but quits the Hindi debate competition in college. His decision leaves the confrontation suspended and indicates that Manne is still not ready, or has not found the right way, to cope with communal pressures.

But his older hesitant approach changes into a more robust and radical defence of secularism when Manne confronts the Hindu communalist group over the *chaura* dispute. The plot revolving around the *chaura* appears only at the beginning of the third chapter, most of which instead focuses more on Manne's spiral development, but it resurfaces and dominates in the fourth, the last chapter. It is probably due to Manne's spiral development that the *chaura*-related narrative comes up only at the very end of the novel though it is the title. The immediate link between Manne's apprenticeship and confrontation reveals a definitive relationship between the two narrative structures: the structure of apprenticeship *serves for* the structure of confrontation that ensues.

By the time when the *chaura* dispute happens, Manne has realized that the Hindu communalists' attempts are not aimed at religious superiority, but at the political

[66] Ibid., pp. 22-23. 'Communalism was the false consciousness of the historical process of the last 150 years, because, objectively, no real conflict between the interests of Hindus and Muslims existed. It was not religious differentiation that led to communalism but communal politics and ideological practices which transformed religious differentiation into communal cleavage'.

influence he has. As Manne himself realizes, 'They do all this in order to defeat me. What big deceit in order to seize the control of our school. What a rampant lie, what a big trap and conspiracy'.[67] Here, the use of three parallel sentence structures in a firm, critical tone contrasts sharply with Manne's hesitant mentality mentioned above and in the previous chapter, implying Manne's solid commitment to confront the Hindu communalists. More importantly, he has embraced the notion of class consciousness thanks to his communist friend Munni's help, and has come to believe in the people's collective strength and class struggle. As Manne interior monologue shows,

> Today, Manne, for the first time, acknowledges that what Munni had said is correct – the only solution to communalism is class consciousness! … We are now living in a secular (*dharma-nirapekṣha*) nation! How I wish that legislation-makers might see today's scene! What is the use of making legislation and laws? … They are all of no use at all! Only class consciousness matters, only class consciousness! … The only remedy to this disease is class consciousness! … Class struggle! … Revolution![68]

This is the first time that Manne's speech (though psychological) is imbued with a leftist hue, signalled by the radical words of 'class consciousness' (*varga-chetnā*), 'class

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[67] Ibid., p. 435. मुझे गिराने के लिए, हमारे स्कूल को हथियाने के लिए इतनी बड़ी-बड़ी चालें, इतने सफ़ेद झूठ, इतना बड़ा जाल और षड्यंत्र!

[68] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 435. आज पहली बार मन्ने ने माना कि मुन्नी ने सच ही कहा था, साम्प्रदायिकता का इलाज केवल वर्ग-चेतना है! … हम आज एक धर्म-निरपेक्ष राज्य में रह रहे हैं! काश, विधान बनानेवाले आज का यह दृश्य देखते! विधान-क़ानून बना लेने से ही क्या होता है? … इस-सब से कुछ नहीं होने का! केवल वर्ग-चेतना, वर्ग-चेतना!... इस मर्ज़ का एक यही वाहिद इलाज है, वर्ग-चेतना! … वर्ग-संघर्ष! … क्रांति!

struggle' (*varga-sangharṣa*), and 'revolution' (*krāntī*), which are indicative of communist politics. Thus, the *chaura* functions like a touchstone by which Manne's acquiring and acting out leftist ideology – particularly an understanding of communalism in terms of class struggle – is judged and assessed.

Manne is not the only hero who opposes the Hindu communalist group mentioned above, but he leads a 'heroic group' which includes *ajlaf* (Julaha), low castes, one of whom is the head of the village council (*panchayat*), with communist Munni acting as helper. Julaha Rahman, the immediate victim, the outer walls of whose house are being demolished and wall-bricks are being used to expand the *chaura* by the Hindu communalist villagers, appears as an irritated figure who comes to ask for help from Manne. 'What does Hindu-Muslim has to do with me? … I am only a poor person (*dīnvālā*). What I do are two kinds of things only – worshipping Allah and doing cloth's business. … Should I endure the Hindu's injustice silently?'[69] While Rahman does not intend to involve himself into communal hatred and wishes to resist it, his understanding of the attack on him as 'the Hindu's injustice' mistakes all Hindus for Hindu communalists, thus making him a victim of communalist mentality. By contrast, Manne considers the *chaura* dispute, instead of a conflict between Hindu and Muslim, a confrontation between communalists and secularists. He suggests Rahman to trust and resort to the *panchayat* which consists of low-caste Hindus. By that time, a solidarity has already formed among the poor, whether he is Hindu or Muslim.

[69] Ibid., p. 186. 'मुझे हिंदू-मुसलानों से क्या लेना है? … मैं दीनवाला आदमी हूँ, ख़ुदा की इबादत और अपना छोटा-मोटा कपड़े का रोज़गार, बस, यही दो काम हैं मेरे। … हिंदुओं की ग़ैरइंसाफ़ी चुपचाप सह लूँ?'

According to the narrator, a *koiri* is elected head of the *panjayat* because 'the class-consciousness among peasants, workers and the poor is dawning. … They cannot trust anyone more than a poor villager like themselves, and they often say that only the poor can understand the poor, how can *babu log* understand them?'[70] The description here is infused with leftist ideology again, but with a simplistic division between the poor and the wealthy. Though readers are not told how the poor acquire and whether they act out class consciousness, the narrative serves to create a solidary group of the poor in the village. Having known about the dispute, the *panjayat* decides, instead of taking a communal side, to convene a meeting in order to maintain the communal harmony, as Jalesar Koiri of the *panjayat* suggests, 'how will disputes and conflicts benefit? It would be good if two sides reach, more or less, an agreement'.[71] Thus, the novel imagines a united community which shares a common aim of fighting against communal hatred for the communal peace in the village.

The narrative focalizes the *panjayat* meeting where communalists and secularists confront with each other, showing how the communal tension escalates. The Hindu communalists state the reason of expanding the *chaura* from the Hindu religious perspective. For example, Harkhdev considers it 'a turf war' between Hindu and Muslims by saying that 'There are four Masjid in the village, but we do not ever say to

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[70] Ibid., p. 190. किसानों, मज़दूरों और ग़रीबों में वर्ग-चेतना की किरण फूट रही है।… वे अपनी ही तरह के एक गरीब-गंवार आदमी में उससे कहीं अधिक विश्वास करते और बराबर कहते हैं कि गरीब का दुःख गरीब ही समझ सकता है, बाबू लोग क्या समझेंगे? The *koiri* villager wins 1522 votes out of 1654 which consists of 1456 Hindu votes and 198 Muslim ones.

[71] Ibid., p. 448. 'लड़ाई-झगड़ा बढ़ाने से का फ़ायदा? दोनों फरिकेन में कुछ घट-बढ़कर समझौता हो जाय, तो अच्छा।' Other members of the *panjayat* also champion the idea of communal harmony through negotiation rather than communal hatred and conflicts. Jidhan Chamar, for example, says, 'It will be good if two sides conclude an agreement by mutual concessions. After all, we are living in the same village, how does quarrels benefit?' Ibid. 'यही अच्छा होगा कि कुछ आगे-पीछे हटकर दोनों फरिकेन आपस में कोई समझौता कर लें। आख़िर इसी गाँव में सबको रहना है, झगड़ा बढ़ाने से का फ़ायदा?'

demolish any one of them. We have just built an ordinary platform of Sati Maiya, but costing these people [Muslims] sleepless nights'.[72] On the contrary, the *panjayat*, Manne and Rahman defend from a non-communalist view, deeming it an issue of how to strike a balance between Rahman's yard, the *chaura*, and the road in between.[73] When a member of the *panjayat* suggests to take some area from the *chaura* in order to widen the access to it, the conflict mounts. The Hindu communalists view such an act as disgracing the Hindu goddess and condemn the low-caste agriculturalist *panjayati* with a strong communalist tone, 'as a Hindu, how can you say that?'[74] While the Hindu communalists do not budge an inch on the issue, the *panjayat* concludes a solution nevertheless: to pave a five-*hāth* (the forearm's measure of length) road in between, one *hāth* from Rahman's courtyard and four *hāth* Sati Maiya's *chaura*.

The narrative does not stop at such an oral resolution, but proceeds to reveal how the *panjayat* and its supporters act the resolution out. When the head of the *panjayat* is content to have reached a solution by saying 'our work was to make decision and we have done that',[75] the communist character Munni emerges and plays a vital role in inspiring him to take action. Upon being asked how to implement the decision, Munni suggests to take advantage of the people's strength. 'Who has more strength than the people who have elected this *panjayat*? Please implement your resolution with the help of the village. … Call on all villagers to gather at the Sati Maiya's *chaura* and seek help

[72] Ibid., p. 449. 'गाँव में चार-चार मसजिदें हैं, हम तो नहीं कहते कि किसी को गिरा दो। और हमने एक मामूली-सी सती मैया का चबूतरा बनाया, तो इन लोगों की रात की नींद हराम हो गयी।'

[73] Ibid., p. 450. 'हमारे सामने हिंदू-मुसलमान का कोई सवाल नहीं, न मंदिर-मसजिद का है, सवाल उन्हीं तीन चीजों का है, जिनका हमने अभी-अभी जिकर किया है, याने चबूतरा, रास्ता और रहमान का सहन।'

[74] Ibid. 'हिंदू होकर तुम ऐसा कहते हो?'

[75] Ibid., p. 452. 'हमारा काम फ़ैसला देना था, दे दिया।'

for implementing the *panjayat*'s resolution. I believe that all the people will come and do the right thing themselves according to the resolution'.[76] Following Munni's instruction, the head of the *panjayat* leads a group of villagers, particularly low caste agriculturalists such as *chamars, bhats*, *ahirs*, and *koiris*, to march towards Sati Maiya's *chaura* chanting 'Hail to Sati Maiya'. In other words, this group resists the communalists but is not hostile to Sati Maiya—in fact, they are the real devotees. When they prepare to dismantle the four-*hāth* length of the *chaura*, their slogan changes to 'Long Live *satt*', or 'Long Live the truth'. As the narrator puts it, 'the crowd began to shout in the triumph of truth (*satta*, *satya*), which drowned the cry "Hail to Sati Maiya", as if they had acquired *satya* via Sati Maiya'.[77] The change in slogans indicates that true devotion to Sati Maiya leads to truth, or that truth is the final, and higher value compared to goddess worship. It is the 'truth' of anti-communalism, in other words, the 'truth' of fighting against oppression masking behind communalism.

That this resolution is put into action marks the victory of the heroic group against the Hindu communalist group, and the shift between slogans demonstrates the triumph of secular values such as truth and justice over communal hatred. Admittedly, though the heroic group includes individuals from quite diverse caste, religious, and social-economic positions, they have no divergences or contradictions between them. This is a quite simplistic imagination, since in fact there was a complex relationship between

[76] Ibid., p. 453. जिस जनता ने यह पंचायत चुनी है, उसकी ताक़त से बढ़कर कौन ताक़त है? आप लोग गाँव की सहायता से अपना फ़ैसला लागू कराइये। … पूरे गाँव को सती मैया के चौरे के पास इकट्ठा कीजिए और सबसे पंचायत का फ़ैसला लागू कराने के लिए सहायता माँगिए। मुझे विश्वास है कि सब लोग ख़ुद ही मिलकर अपने हाथ से फ़ैसले के मुताबिक़ सब ठीक कर देंगे।

[77] Gupta, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, p. 470. 'सती मैया की जय से ऊपर उठकर भीड़ सत्त की, सत्य की जय-जयकार करने लगी, जैसे सती मैया के माध्यम से ही उसने सत्य को पा लिया हो।'

the Hindu communalists with for example, the low castes.[78] However, as Suleiman suggests, this simplification is key to the structure of confrontation because it 'masks contradictions, … and prevents certain questions from being asked'. In this way, it arguably 'polarizes historical reality, reducing its complexities to simple dichotomies', for the sake of demonstrating the validity of positive values.[79] In the novel, the absence of differences within the heroic group in turn ensures solidarity and creates a simple and monolithic division between communalists and secularists, right-wing alliances and anti-right-wing front. The heroic group of non-communalists is an imagined community that the novel constructs as a literary solution to the problem of communalism as a political force at the local level and in the local state. The structure of confrontation in itself demonstrates the validity of the value of anti-communalism.

2.3 Conclusion

The progressivism we encountered in this chapter is an ideology in fluidity. It changes from anti-economic exploitation and strive for freedom in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, to secularism in the post-independent era. Each sense of progressivism is produced by the structure of confrontation in which the heroes and heroic groups embody progressive values and their conclusive victories – over landlords and the communalists respectively – demonstrate the validity of those values. Therefore, the confrontations between heroes and opponents are actually confrontations between the

[78] In the 1890s and the 1910s, the low castes, including Koiris, Kurmis and Ahirs, had teamed up with the upper castes of Brahmans, Bhumihars and Rajputs in the agitation to end cow-sacrifices, because they wished to have a more respectable status; see Pandey, pp. 200-201.
[79] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, pp. 117-118.

antagonistic values. The structure itself is of vital relevance to progressivism: it is not only a purely formal feature, but functions as an aesthetic ideology, to use Eagleton's term. It is through this ideological structure that the novel produces a textual progressivism characterized by confrontations, and the repetitive use of the structure indicates that the confrontation as progressivism is continuous, even endless. This is also how the literary production moves beyond the manifestoes which dwell mainly on abstract concepts.

Two types of confrontations in the novel deconstruct the narrative of a harmonious village which is dominantly present in the official rhetoric, but accentuate a conflict-marked account. The long-term focalization of the village witnesses a shift of major contradictions of the plight in village – from class conflicts to communal tensions, and it is such transition that confirms the colonial rule as the historical origin of communalism. In constructing an interpretation of communalism, the novel imagines the desire of economic and social position, of political influence as external triggers of the series of communal tensions. In this way, the novel forms a Marxist formulation of communalism: while the view proves reductive and simplistic, it challenges the essentialist colonial histography at least.

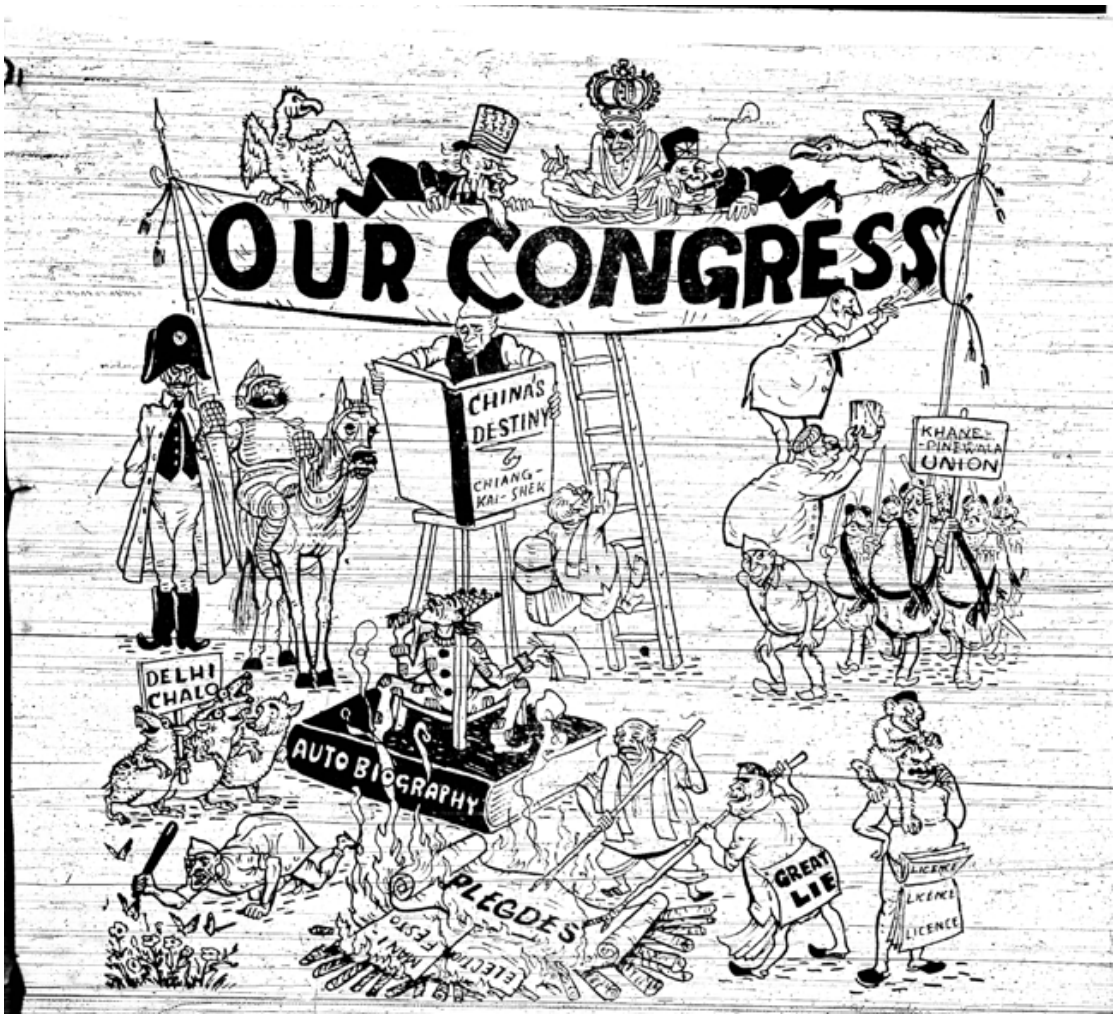
To resolve these contradictions, the novel provides two kinds of imaginary united fronts as solutions: one is led by the resistant tenant farmers, and the other is by the secular zamindar Manne. As we have seen, the narrative subordinates the religion and caste to class in the former front, interpreting the various conflicts as nothing but different manifestations of class struggle. In the case of communal tensions, the novel

creates an even more diverse heroic group crossing religion, caste and class, but characterizes them as secularists. The process of unity-formation reads quite unrealistic and not as convincing as the author might have envisaged. It is still puzzling how the values of anti-zamindar and anti-communalism succeed all of a sudden in integrating such heterogeneous groups – Hindus of different castes and Muslim of both high and low birth – into a united front. Such unlikeliness reveals, I would argue, either the Progressives' too idealistic wish of a harmonious unity in the village, or the Progressives' failure in finding an even 'imaginary' solution to the problem such as communal conflict, which have haunted and still haunts India.

If we dwell on the confrontations in the socio-political context of the 1950s, the major enemy for Progressives turns out to be the Congress regime due to the Progressives' disillusionment with independence and their critical attitudes towards the new ruling class, as we have mentioned. While part of the story in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* is set in the early-independent period, it glosses over the Congress rule, leaving a vague impression that the local Congressmen are communalists. How does the Congress Party and Congressmen feature in the Progressive novels, and how does the narrative produce disillusionment and criticism of them? These are the questions which I discuss further in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Narrative Critiques of the Congress Rule



Source: Cover image, *Cross Roads*, Vol. 1, No. 7, 10 June 1949.

Under the eye-catching banner 'OUR CONGRESS', this lively cartoon spreads out a multifocal picture of the Congress regime in the aftermath of Indian independence. In the upper fold, a crowned Mahatma Gandhi smirking behind dark glasses signifies the direct inheritance of the throne from British colonial rule to the Congress Raj. That Gandhi is perched atop a banner together with British and American caricatures and

two vultures suggests his (or the Congress') alliance with imperialist and capitalist forces. Immediately beneath the banner, a shifty-looking Nehru sits on a high-legged stool propped up by his thick autobiography. The striking contrast in proportion between the Nehru's diminutive figure and the over-sized book *China's Destiny* by Chiang Kai-shek he is reading suggests that Nehru is engulfed in its anti-communist view.[1] Parallel with Nehru on the right, three figures have formed a human ladder in a concerted effort to finish painting the banner slogan—referring perhaps to the three-layered Congress party system, composed of central, provincial, and local structures. The lower part of the cartoon depicts all kinds of activities. Potential chaos is represented by a group of four rats entering Delhi. The politicians' broken promises are epitomised by two scenes: in one, two men (one with a bag emblazoned with 'GREAT LIE') are burning election manifestoes and pledges on a pyre, in the other the Licence Raj is represented by a Goblin-like monster with agent selling licences.[2] The diverse characters and vignettes—with roughly balanced spatial distribution, including but not limited to renowned Congress leaders—present a microcosm of the Congress regime.

This satirical depiction of the Congress rule as reactionary, greedily opportunistic,

[1] *China's Destiny*, written by Chiang Kai-shek, the director-general of the Kuomintang, first published in 1943, reviews China's history of humiliation since the Opium War, reaching the conclusion that only the nationalist Kuomintang could bring independence and prosperity to China. Chiang Kai-shek also criticizes both the liberals and communists of ruining Chinese culture, which further harms China's independence. The portrayal of Nehru's reading the book thus could imply that Nehru shares similar anti-communist sentiments with Chiang Kai-shek. Since the Chiang Kai-shek was no longer in power by the time when the cartoon was published, the caricature indicates that Nehru is choosing the wrong side. See Chiang Kai-Shek, *China's Destiny*, translated by Wang Chung-hui, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.

[2] The License Raj—a phrase coined by C. Rajagopalachari and a product of the state-directed economic development planning of the Nehru government—was a system of licenses and regulations required to set up and run a business in India. Under this system, the distribution of licenses was controlled by bureaucrats. The License Raj has often been criticized as contributing to public corruption in India. For example, Srinivasan argues that such a 'discretionary regulatory system in the name of planning for national development instead became a cancer in the body politic'. See T. N. Srinivasan, 'Reform of Industrial and Trade Policies', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 37, 1991, pp. 2143-2145.

corrupt, chaotic, and aligned with anti-communist imperialist powers, published in *Cross Roads*, a left-leaning weekly started by Romesh Thapar in Bombay in 1949, was to become one of major themes in Hindi Progressive novels. As we have mentioned in the Introduction, the Progressives engaged with Congress politics in a critical way – expressing their disillusionment of independence, or dismissing the developing projects implemented by the government, but they seldom target directly at specific politicians. Taking the cartoon as a point of departure, this chapter analyses how Hindi Progressive novels of the 1950s tackle contemporary Congress politics. Which aspects of the Congress regime do the novels engage with? Do they mirror the satirical aims of this cartoon? And which literary strategies do they use to critique Congress politics?

Before examining the novels, in order to find out how the novels address to related political issues we need to recall briefly how the Congress regime functioned. As mentioned in the Introduction, the Congress exercised control over society through what political scientist Sudipta Kaviraj terms 'the ruling coalition' or 'ruling bloc' between three dominant social groups – the bourgeoisie, the landed elites, and bureaucratic managerial elites.[3] He argues that for the Congress to mobilize the levers of power in the countryside, dependence on rural magnates was unavoidable.[4] Already before independence, the Congress had turned from an anticolonial movement into a ruling party when it briefly formed regional governments after the 1935 elections

[3] As Kaviraj suggests, 'this class was, even before independence, the repository of the bourgeoisie's political intelligence, working out a "theory" of development for Indian capitalism, often "correcting" more intensely selfish objectives of the monopoly elements by giving them a more reformist and universal form'. Sudipta Kaviraj, 'A Critique of the Passive Revolution', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 23, No. 45/47, 1988, p. 2431.

[4] Ibid., p. 2433. Paul Brass has also made a similar argument that party organization at the district level was often dominated by notables who themselves belonged to the dominant landed elite or maintained strong relations with them, see Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 (1990), pp. 74, 143.

(1937-1939). This was also the time when many landowners joined the party and became frontline candidates.[5] While the Congress rhetoric became significantly more socialist/left-leaning, the right-wing of traditionalists within the party effectively took control at the regional level.[6] Another important group within the ruling bloc was the bureaucratic apparatus. This was largely a British legacy and entertained a 'purely instrumental coalitional relation' with the power of the bourgeoisie.[7] The bureaucracy also became increasingly politicized, with some bureaucrats subordinated and personally loyal to patron-like politicians.[8] In addition to these three groups, the Indian police was also a powerful force which both served and benefitted from this coalition of interests. Violent attacks on unarmed demonstrators, still commonplace in India today, showed that the police hardly worked impartially in the new democratic and political order.[9]

The novels under study in this chapter, I argue, thematize Congress politics by charting how the ruling bloc operates and produce narrative critiques through formal strategies – specifically the employment of an omniscient narrator and a carefully apportioned character system. While Congress politics and its critiques are more or less ubiquitous in Progressive writings,[10] this chapter focuses on two novels – *Hāthī ke*

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[5] See Vinita Damodaran, *Broken Promises: Popular Protest, Indian Nationalism, and the Congress Party in Bihar, 1935-1946*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993.

[6] In Bihar, peasant activism with the Kisan Sabha (1928) had challenged the nationalist notion of 'rural harmony'; in the 1930s, its leader, Swami Sahajanand Sarasvati, found himself silenced and excluded and criticized what he called the 'taint of unanimity' within the party. See Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 339. This is the trajectory thematized in Nagarjun's novel *Balchanmā*, who started his political activism with the Kisan Sabha, see chapter 1 here. The local Congressmen's alliance with the Jan Sanghi finds a brief literary expression in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*, see chapter 2 here.

[7] Kaviraj, 'A Critique of the Passive Revolution', p. 2433.

[8] Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, pp. 55–56.

[9] Ibid., pp. 57–60. In Progressive novels, violent attacks by the police appear quite often. For example, as we have shown, Amulya, Usha and strikers in *Bīj*, and Balchanma in *Balchanmā* are all heavily beaten by the police.

[10] For example, the corrupt provincial congressman Phul Babu in *Balchanmā*, violent attacks by the police in *Bīj* as we have mentioned in Chapter 1. Besides, the criticism of the Congress' corruption, nepotism, jobbery, autocracy,

Dānt (*Elephant's Tusks*, 1956, Amrit Rai) and *Jhūṭhā Sach* (*False Truth*, 1958-1960, Yashpal), because they both centre on Congress characters and reveal how the Congress regime operates in detail.

I first look at *Hāthī ke Dānt* as a critique of the local ruling bloc. Published four years later in 1956, it is a far cry from Amrit Rai's first novel *Bīj* which underscores a positive development of progressive figures and which is saturated with the activeness of fight. By contrast, *Hāthī ke Dānt* focuses on villains – corrupted local Congressmen in particular, which is based on Rai's own observation in the Legislative Assembly in Madhya Pradesh according to his memoir.[11] Set in a fictional village named Sengaramau from 1937 to approximately 1953, *Hāthī ke Dānt* presents two villainous major characters – the zamindar-turned-Congress MLA Parduman Singh and the rich farmer-turned-Congress activist Rambihari Chaturvedi. The novel, though weak on plot, caricaturizes lecherous, hypocritical, greedy, and oppressively dominant local Congressmen with a strong critical voice of the omniscient narrator—perhaps the most notable narratological feature of the novel. Taking into consideration the privileged authority and dominant presence of the omniscient narrator's 'telling' rather than 'showing', I argue that the novel produces an authoritarian, rather than authoritative, critique of the Congress local politics.

By contrast, *Jhūṭhā Sach* I turn to next, in which the narrator is less visible,

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and so forth, was common among the CPI mouthpieces such as *New Age* and *People's War*, and non-party organ progressive weeklies such as *Cross Roads*.

[11] Girija Kumar Muthur, *Ek Antarang Bātachīt Amrit se*, pp. 70-71. There are neither communist characters nor any eulogy of the communist ideology in *Hāthī ke Dānt*. One possible reason for that might be Amrit Rai's disappointment with the Communist Party due to the Hungary Event. As a result, he left the CPI. This information is indebted to Amrit's son Alok Rai, with whom I interviewed in January, 2018.

foregrounds the defects of the Congress regime through its closely-knit storyline and systematically organized character distribution. Drawing on Alex Woloch's theory of character system, and particularly his arguments about co-protagonists and minor characters, I argue that *Jhūṭhā Sach* generates a critical discourse on the Congress system from provincial to national levels by, first, starkly juxtaposing and contrasting a pair of sibling-protagonists – corrupt Congress politician Puri and non-partisan public servant of integrity Tara and, secondly, by featuring a host of politically powerful but 'flat' minor characters – top bureaucrats and politicians. Together, these two novels criticize, as the cartoon does, the Congress regime of corruption and unaccountability and betray a sense of disillusionment with independence.

3.1 *Hāthī ke Dānt*: An authoritarian critique

The title of the novel immediately appeals for its use of a Hindi idiom – *hāthī ke dānt, dikhāne ke aur khāne ke aur* (lit. elephants have two sets of teeth, one is tusks for showing and the other one for eating), which implies the difference between external appearance and hidden purpose. It reveals a pungent satire of the Congressmen as double-faced, hypocritical politicians, whose real nature is often disguised by their deceptively democratic form. However, due to its weakly-connected storyline and lack of overall design, the plot of the novel is, granted, not as engrossing as the title promises. What the novel provides us, and this is what I focus on instead, is a collection of sketches representing typical figures and scenes related to Congress politics. This collection can be roughly divided into two sets – one centred on zamindar-turned-MLA

Parduman Singh and his 'ruling bloc' (chapters 1-6, 8, 15-18), while the other on the Brahmin-turned-local Congressmen Rambihari Chaturvedi and his collaborators (chapters 7, 9, 11, 12, 14). Yet, their centrality to the narrative/sketches does not make them 'round', to use E.M. Forster's terminology.[12] They are instead flat characters, one-dimensional villains who have no redeeming features and who do not undergo any change in the course of the work. Reading their flatness in a positive way, I argue that it is such single but repetitive flatness that clarifies and intensifies the villainousness of the Congressmen.

In shaping their flatness, the strong voice of the omniscient narrator plays an important role. Omniscience, as narratologist Wayne Booth defines it, 'is a complete privilege to know what could not be learned by strictly natural means or limited to realistic version and inference'.[13] Its privilege includes three aspects: firstly, the omniscient narrator is capable not only of observing every character and every event from any perspective across time and space, but also of entering the consciousness and thoughts of individual characters. Secondly, the narrator has the right to choose what to tell. The narrator functions, Susan Rubin Suleiman suggests, 'not only as "author" but also "authority", to the extent that he figures as the source of the story he is telling'.[14] Thirdly, the narrator has the privilege to interpret or comment. In other words, the narrator becomes the authoritative interpreter of meaning, and this meaning is, in realist fiction, invariably linked to our non-fictional world.[15] In *Hāthī ke Dānt*, the omniscient

[12] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, New York: Rosetta Books LLC, 2002 (1927), pp. 48-55.
[13] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 160.
[14] Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions*, p. 72.
[15] Ibid.

narrator not only exercises his privileged authority by observing the events from above, but intrudes into and occupies a great portion of the 'character zones' to tell, rather than show, the characters' behaviour and thoughts.[16] In this sense, the omniscient narrator in the novel functions as an openly 'dictatorial' narrator, enforcing readers' strict obedience to his authority at the expense of readers' freedom of alternative interpretations. Besides, the blurring of boundaries between the fictional and non-fictional worlds makes readers accept as 'true' not only what the narrator tells them about events and circumstances, but also what he says in the way of judgement and interpretation. Therefore, I argue that the novel produces not a simply authoritative, but an authoritarian judgement and critique of Congress politics. In what follows, I first focus on how the narrator draws unambiguous sketches of Congress villains through his dominant summaries and descriptions of characters' inner thoughts and exterior acts, before moving to show how the narrator generalizes about Congress politics as a whole on the basis of his observation of individual cases.

3.1.1 Unambiguous sketches of the Congress villain

In *Hāthī ke Dānt*, the narrator offers a running interpretation and critical judgement of Congress characters. Through excessive and redundant commentaries, he flattens Congressmen into caricature villains. Parduman Singh, the fifty-year-old widower and zamindar turned Congress MLA, is the first and repeatedly portrayed as a licentious

[16] Character zone, a term proposed by M.M. Bakhtin, refers to the field of action for a character's voice. According to Bakhtin, a character in a novel always has a zone of his own, his own sphere of influence on the authorial context surrounding him, which encroaches in one way or another upon the author's voice. See Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', pp. 315-320. Here in *Hāthī ke Dānt*, characters voice in a very limited way, whereas the narrator's voice 'encroaches' the zone of characters.

villain. As the narrator introduces:

> It is true that there were some moments in Parduman Singh's life when loneliness bothered him. But that were short, fleeting moments, because his life was far from unoccupied. Who would call a house forlorn to which new travellers came every night?[17]

This summative assessment comes right at the beginning of the novel, even before the events related to Parduman are introduced. The passage reads as a voice-over, focalizing the figure who is just walking onto the narrative stage. The narrator's 'telling' pre-empts the readers' potential to form their own ideas and thus forces them to accept the narrator's presumption. The 'travellers' in the passage are the women Parduman entices and sexually exploits on a regular basis. This presumed villainousness further proves when the narrator enters Parduman Singh's 'character zone'. For example, when Parduman recalls how he rides a horse, the image of the horse is replaced with Champa, a beautiful, young bride in the village whom Parduman seduces, as the narrator exposes his inner thoughts:

> He was most surprised when he realised, as in a flash of lightning, that in the whole episode with *chabīlī* [his horse] what was before his mind's eye was not

[17] Amrit Rai, *Hāthī ke Dāṁt*, Ilāhābād: Haṃs Prakāśan, 1997 (1956), p. 10. यह ठीक है कि ठाकुर परदुमन सिंह के जीवन में भी ऐसी घड़ियाँ आती थीं जब उन्हें अपना सूनापन खलता था लेकिन वह कुछ घड़ियों के लिए ही क्योंकि, सच बात है, उनका जीवन कुछ वैसा सूना न था। उस सराय को सूनी कौन कहेगा जिसमें हर रात नए बटोही आते हों।

> *chabīlī* at all but that untouched shape, that single, plump female body filled with the scent of youth …[18]

The comparison that the narrator draws between the horse Parduman used to ride and the female body indicates that for Parduman women are as docile as horses. The word '*chabīlī*' itself intentionally blurs the boundary between the two – it is the horse's name but it literally means a beautiful woman. The choice of such erotic metaphors and descriptions of women's body reinforces the notion of Parduman's concupiscence. Following Champa, the omniscient perspective continues to enter Parduman's house, another space of his character zone. Having succumbed to the temptation of numerous and valuable jewels given by Parduman, Champa, whose husband is a poor, local sub-collector of revenue (*tahsīldār*) and who is envious of the lifestyle of her wealthy sister, enters Parduman's house. After a detailed description of the extravagant furnishings and decorations in the house which reflects Parduman lavish tastes as a feudal lord, the narrative lingers on the pictures of beautiful women, hunting trophies and weapons hanging on the wall, all items which symbolize Parduman's victory over women and animals.

> It was as if his hunting trophies—the many antelopes, deer, lions, leopards, wild buffalos—were looking with their glazed eyes at this new trophy standing

[18] Ibid., pp. 12–13. उन्हें सबसे बड़ी हैरानी तो उस वक़्त हुई जब एकाएक कौंधे की लपक की तरह उन पर यह बात प्रकट हुई कि छबीली के उस पूरे प्रसंग में उनके मन की आँखों के सामने छबीली कहीं न थी, थी बस वह अछूती रूपयष्टि, वह एक अकेली ... वह स्वस्थ, यौवनगंध पूरित, मांसल नारी-देह…।

before them, trying to tell her, 'Don't be frightened, you, too, will have a place next to us one day, one day you will be chosen as a prized trophy and hung on the wall just like us'.[19]

Again, it is the narrator who brings the readers to Parduman's trophies and gives voice to the trophies, while Champa surveys the walls in silence. From the perspective of these trophies, Champa is no more than a new *śikār* (victim or prey), and her destiny is certain to be the same as theirs. The focalization of Parduman's inner world and of the trophies reveals and intensifies Parduman's powerful control over, and objectification of, women—who are, like his trophies, prized possessions. As if this alone were not enough to capture Parduman's peculiar villainy, the narrator also tells that he has seduced scores of adolescent girls by luring them with dreams of becoming actresses in a film company he is apparently going to set up. This commentary reads redundant, but it is this redundancy that achieves the narrative aim of flattening Parduman Singh into a one-dimensional and unappealing figure. The whole process of omniscient narration, including summary from the beginning, exposure of inner thoughts, observation of the trophies, and description of events, occupies a very large proportion of the narrative space while encroaching the character zone, producing an unambiguous sketch of the villain Parduman.

Similarly, Rambihari Chaturvedi, a Brahmin who is a local Congress activist, is

[19] Ibid., p. 22. उनके शिकार के मार्के—बहुत से हिरन, सांभर, शेर, चीते, जंगली भैंसे जो अपनी पथरायी आँखों ने इस नए शिकार को देख रहे थे, जैसे कहना चाह रहे हों कि घबराओ नहीं, एक दिन तुमको भी हमारी बग़ल में जगह मिलेगी। एक दिन हमारी ही तरह तुम भी दीवार पर चुनी जाओगी।

flattened into a caricature of the hypocritical and corrupt politician by the narrator. As with Parduman, the narrator proffers a commentary on Rambihari's character before describing particular events. He does so with searing irony:

> He knew well how to earn money, how to do business in the modern way. … His plain appearance provided a pretty good shield for his inner deceit. … Whatever he did was out of his pure view of *deś sevā* (service to the nation).[20]

Straight after this comment, the narrator enumerates all the public institutions that Rambihari has established: Gandhi Women Shelter (*Gāndhī-Vanitā-Viśrām*), Jawahar Orphanage (*Jawāhar Anāthālay*), The Society for Hind Service (*Hind Sevak Samāj*), Harijan Friends' Association (*Harijan Mitra Saṅgh*), The Society for Forest Festivals (*Van Mahotsav Samiti*), The Society for Protecting Cows (*Go-Pālan Samiti*), and The Society for Whole World Culture (*Akhil Viśva Saṃskrit Samāj*). The enumeration of so many institutions magnifies what Rambihari has done to the service of the nation, that is, to the service of self-interest. These institutions are either named after Congress leaders or impossibly grand. Ostensibly, Rambihari seems to devote himself to serving for the nation in many ways, but his hidden purpose is completely opposite. Over five pages, the narrator exposes in detail what Rambihari's pure *deś sevā* consists of in each institution; that is, how he works exclusively for his own benefit. For example,

[20] Ibid., p. 51. रुपया कमाने के, आधुनिक दूकानदारी के तौर-तरीक़े ख़ूब आते थे। … उनका सादा बहिरंग उनके आंतरिक छलछंद के लिए बड़े सुंदर आवरण का काम करता था। वे जो कुछ करते थे, विशुद्ध देशसेवा के विचार से।

'Deprived of the right to study or learn useful skills, the children of Jawahar Orphanage had become servants to his family'.[21] Worse still, as head of the Justice Panchayat (*Nyāy Pañchāyat*) of the village, Rambihari also extorts money, land, or real estate from those who are trapped in disputes and seek his help. He also serves as the president of the rural district (*grām janapad*) and pockets up to 90 per cent of governmental funds. The more titles he acquires, the more corrupt he becomes. In listing Rambihari's accumulations and abuses of power, the narrator presents us with an archetypical character in a strong manner: Rambihari is the stock character of the corrupt politician.

Apart from portraying and commenting on individual politicians, the omniscient narrator presents the 'ruling bloc' of the local Congress regime through revealing hidden illegal transactions between Congressmen and their allies, including the local police chief Nazir Miyan and the mine owner Hiraji. The narrator introduces these two characters through their relationship with Congressmen: Nazir eats rotis first bitten by Parduman (*dāntakāṭī roṭī*); Hiraji considers Rambihari his 'supreme friend' (*param mitra*).[22] Nazir appears only twice in the novel, and both times with Parduman, acting as an accomplice to Parduman's murder of Champa's husband by providing fake evidence that protects him. When a group of villagers led by Ramsingh, a young man from the opposition party, demonstrate in front of Parduman's house to voice their anger about the murder, Nazir violently suppresses them. In turn, Nazir blackmails Parduman into giving him thousands of rupees to cover up the crime, and at his insistence Champa

[21] Ibid., pp. 53–54. जवाहर अनाथालय के छोकरे पढ़ने-लिखने या कोई उपयोगी उद्योग-धंधा सीखने से दूर उनके घर के टहलुए बनकर रह गये थे।
[22] Ibid., pp. 38, 84.

becomes shared property between the two men. Similarly, Hiraji asks Rambihari to help stop the flood of negative reports about an accident at his mine that caused the death of twelve miners and injuries of thirty more. Naturally, Rambihari profits financially from doing so. These two sets of collaborators exemplify the structural collusion between the Congress and the police, between the Congress and businessman. The four characters collude with one another to protect their interests and exploit the powerless and marginalized. Women, protestors, the dead and injured workers, all are shown to be directly victims of this 'ruling bloc'.

In depicting this varied cast of elite figures, the narrator draws flat character sketches of villains, all of whom nevertheless occupy dominant positions in the novel. Each villain is depicted as a completely devious character without any redeeming feature. Readers are, for the most of time, 'told' by the narrator how bad the villains are and how they form a ruling bloc to oppress the common people. Such unambiguous sketches of villainousness invite readers to contemplate the dark side of Congress politics. Besides, readers are further guided by the narrator to see how he comments on Congress politics as a whole, as the next section shows.

3.1.2 Generalization of Congress politics

The omniscient narrator develops a general interpretation of Congress politics as a whole by extending his commentary to Congressmen as a collective. After describing Parduman Singh's seductions of young women who dream of becoming film stars, the narrator turns to an ironic sweep at what *deś sevā* means:

> Finally, no notable *deś sevā* was not possible by making films—but is that the only [form of] *deś sevā*? If the amorous impulse of the *deś sevī* is fulfilled, is this not *deś sevā*? Does *deśasevā* merely mean service to the nation? What about service to *deś sevī*?[23]

This gloss takes the form of generalization. The interpreter (the narrator) delinks the seduction of women to *deś sevā*, but ironically asks if the women's serving of the *deś sevī*, the nation-servant i.e., the Congressman, cannot be considered a form of service to the nation. Through this rhetorical question, the narrator explicitly critiques the discourse of *deś sevā* by pointing out how the rhetoric diverges from the practice. The sequence of rhetorical questions in this passage functions to distance the reader to rethink *deś sevā* in the non-fictional world.

Similar generalization also emerges after the sketch of Rambihari and his *deś sevā* (see 3.1.1), the narrator lists different methods of bribery:

> There is not only one way of taking bribes. … For example, some [do it] ostentatiously and some secretly. The ostentatious ones have the nature of lions, the secret ones of jackals. Lions have a greater appetite, but no matter how hungry they are, they will not eat grass. Similarly, those who are lion-like do

[23] Ibid., p. 45. निदान, फ़िल्मों के माध्यम से तो कोई वैसी उल्लेखनीय देशसेवा न हो सकी, पर क्या वही अकेली देशसेवा है? एक देशसेवी के हृदय में जिस प्रकार सरसता का संचार हुआ, उसको जो सुख पहुँचा, वह क्या देशसेवा नहीं? क्या देश की सेवा ही देशसेवा कहलाएगी? और देशसेवी की सेवा?

not lower their standard. Jackals have no standard: they will gladly accept everything, whether deserving or not, no matter where they find it.[24]

The metaphors of the lion and jackal used in this passage vividly demonstrate the overt and covert manoeuvres of corruption. Rambihari's behaviour mirrors the way of the jackals. The opening sentence, 'There is not only one way of taking bribes', suggests that Rambihari is not an exception and that many a Congressman is corrupt, either in the manner of lions or of jackals. This structure of discourse, unfolding from a particular figure (Rambihari) to a general group (Congressmen), articulates the narrator's critique of corruption and reveals the hidden 'truth' that Congressmen as well as the system of Congress rule in India is corrupted as a whole. The narrative commentary that precedes or follows each event in the plot serves as an interpretative and critical framework from which judgement is passed of every action that unfolds, as we saw in the definition of *deś sevā* and the discussion of bribery.

In *Hāthī ke Dānt,* it is not only the narrators, but also two minor characters—Azadji and Ramsingh—who vehemently criticize Congress politics. Their criticism—one from the point of view of an elder Congress member, the other from the opposition—functions to support the narrator's interpretation and therefore intensifies the critique of the Congress rule.

[24] Ibid., p. 59. पैसे खाने का कोई एक ढंग नहीं है। ... मिसाल के लिए कोई डंके की चोट पर खाता है, कोई टट्टी की आड़ में। डंके की चोट पर खानेवाले सिंह-प्रकृति के होते हैं। उसी प्रकार टट्टी की आड़ में खानेवाले शृगाल-प्रकृति के होते हैं। सिंह-प्रकृतिवालों की भूख बड़ी होती है, लेकिन जिस तरह शेर कितना ही भूखा क्यों न हो मगर कभी घास नहीं खा सकता उसी तरह भूख बड़ी होते हुए भी वे लोग कभी अपने स्टैंडर्ड से नीचे नहीं गिरते। शृगाल का अपना कोई स्टैंडर्ड नहीं होता। ग्राह्य-अग्राह्य जो कुछ जहाँ से भी मिल रहा तब उसे सहर्ष स्वीकार है।

Azadji's critique can be read as authentic and reliable since he is presented as an old Congress activist who fought for independence from the 1920s onwards, and more importantly, a *tattvajñānī* (one who knows the real nature of things) with complete knowledge of the past, present, and future of each MLA. Upon his release after serving fourteen years in prison since the 1930s, he becomes mad. He wanders around like a *sadhu* carrying a big sack containing a trumpet and hundreds of copies of his book *Exposing Congress* (*Congress kā Bhaṇḍāphoḍ*). Having been a devoted Congress activist before independence, Azadji has turned against the party and openly criticizes it:

> Standing on his old stool, Azadji angrily exposes with abusive words the dishonesty, bribe taking, and nepotism of the Congress regime. He states in public secret information about his former companions who are now sitting on the throne—their triviality, their greed, and their pugnacity.[25]

Azadji's *tattvajñānī* quality is similar to the narrator's omniscience, and thus his words carry authority, despite the fact that he is a madman and his words are summarized by the narrator instead of being represented directly. Ironically, of the Congressmen depicted in the novel, it is only the madman who tells the truth. The contrast between the 'mad' freedom fighter and the 'sane' ruling Congressmen provokes doubt about

[25] Ibid., p. 97. आज़ादजी अपने पुराने अभ्यास की पीठिका पर खड़े होकर ख़ूब गर्जन-तर्जन के साथ, मोटी-मोटी गालियों का पुट देकर कांग्रस राज की बेईमानी, घूसखोरी, कुनबा-परवरी की बखिया उधेड़ते, राजगद्दी पर बैठे हुए अपने पुराने साथियों के बारे में न जाने कहाँ-कहाँ की नामालूम बातें डंके की चोट पर लोगों को बतलाते—उनका छोटापन, उनका घमंड, उनकी लालच, उनकी दग़ाबाज़ी।

precisely who are the just rulers and who are the madmen.

If Azadji's is a critical voice from within Congress, Ramsingh's statement in the Legislative Assembly represents the ideas of the (unnamed) opposition party. What is remarkable in his statement is the repeated emphasis on 'people's rule' (*janatā rāj*):

> I ask those who keep mentioning Bapu's [Gandhi's] name twenty-four hours a day: when did Bapu say that he will fill the police's belly by killing the starving? … People's rule! People's rule! People's rule, but only till the people are like sheep. And as soon as the people dare make a move, the regime's guards take up their rifles.[26]

While Azadji and the omniscient narrator express the villainy of the Congress, Ramsingh focuses on the lives of those oppressed under its rule. His pro-people stance from the opposition party taken together with Azadji's 'old Congressman' point of view and the narrator's omniscience form a multi-perspective criticism that imprints Congress politics with an intensified negative meaning. The shift in focus from a particular figure to a general phenomenon is the principal narrative strategy used to 'expose' and critique the immorality and corruption of Congress politics.

In sum, *Hāthī ke Dānt* offers a relentless, comprehensive, and authoritarian critique of the local Congress regime through the vocal omniscient narrator, at the cost

[26] Ibid., p. 79–80. वह लोग सबह-शाम, दिन-रात, चौबीसी घंटे बापू का नाम लेते हैं पर मैं उनसे पूछता हूँ बापू ने कब यह कहा है कि वह देश को भूखों मारकर पुलिस का पेट भरें? …जनता राज! जनता राज! जनता राज तभी तक जब तक जनता भेड़ है और इधर जनता में ज़रा सी जुंबिश हुई उधर हुकूमत के बरकंदाज़ों ने अपनी राइफ़लें संभाल लीं।

of a rich plot and complex characterization, however. By contrast, *Jhūṭhā Sach*, Yashpal's two-volume masterpiece, arranges a multitude of differentiated characters into a unified narrative structure and produces a critique of the Congress, particularly its national and provincial leadership, as the next part of the chapter shows.

3.2 *Jhūṭhā Sach*: A critique via character-system

Jhūṭhā Sach, two-volume masterpiece of Yashpal, published in 1958 and 1960, represents a panoramic picture of and thereupon produces a critical view of the Congress rule through a multitude of characters. Such a literary critique corresponds to Yashpal's acute observation and insight of Congress politics in real life. A former revolutionary and disappointed with Gandhian non-violence, as mentioned in the Introduction, Yashpal was a vocal critic of Congress politics, and particularly of the post-independent Congress regime. He harshly denounced the Congress government as capitalist, as in this 1949 editorial in *Viplav*: 'The strikes by railway workers starting on March 9, 1949 was just an excuse. The Congress government, like the Fascists, has started to attack all democratic (*janavādī*) forces. All the worker peasant activists have been arrested. Even the female activists in the student movement have not been spared. Members of cultural associations and of the People's Theatre Association were also forced into jail.'[27] Yashpal's *Viplav* was itself shut down in 1949.

Along the similar critical line, Yashpal's novel *Jhūṭhā Sach* narrativizes Congress

[27] Editorial, *Viplav*, 1949, March-April, quoted in Prasad, *Yaśapāl*, p. 14. The original Hindi text reads: '९ मार्च, १९४९ से शुरू होने वाली रेल मज़दूरों की हड़ताल का बहाना था कांग्रस सरकार ने सभी जनवादी शक्तियों पर फ़ासिस्टी हमला शुरू कर दिया। सारे देश में मज़दूर-किसान कार्यकर्त्ता गिरफ़्तार कर लिए गए। विद्यार्थी आंदोलन की कार्यकर्त्रियों को भी नहीं छोड़ा गया। सांस्कृतिक संस्थाओं, जननाट्य संघ आदि के सदस्य भी जेलों में ठूँस दिए गए।'

politics and foregrounds its defects by characterizing corrupted ruling bloc. The storyline revolves around two siblings, Jaydev Puri and Tara, who grow up in a *mohalla* in old Lahore, and narrates their dramatic vicissitudes—they lose and find love, family, and power in public life—against the backdrop of partition violence, independence, and the first decade of Congress rule in the independent India. In the second part of the novel, both become engaged with the Congress government: Puri becomes a Congress Member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Jalandhar, while Tara becomes a bureaucrat in a central ministry. Through interactions with these two mobile protagonists, many more characters are drawn into the novel, including Congressmen from central to provincial levels, bureaucrats, communists and their sympathizers, destitute peasants and refugees, and so forth. These minor characters play a role in shaping the protagonists but also, and this is crucial for the purpose of this part, they represent a microcosm of the Congress regime.

Studies of Yashpal's novel to date have noted the predominance of characters – protagonists as well as minor characters, considering them as representing social and political reality. Rotem Geva, for example, has argued that the realistic portrayal of multiple characters, including their dialogues, clothing styles, and body language, amounts to an ambitious attempt to encompass social reality and therefore contributes to the novel's most prominent feature—its historicity.[28] Other scholars have also explored the city spaces in the novel. For example, Vasudha Dalmia has argued that

[28] See Rotem Geva, '"False Truth": Disillusionment and Hope in the Decade after Independence', in Gyan Prakash, Michael Lattan, and Nikhil Menon, eds., *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia*, London: Bloomsbury, 2018, pp. 11–29.

space is an important element in characterization, from the old *gali* houses to the modern apartments in Lahore or the *kothis* in Civil Lines and New Delhi: the mobility or lack of mobility of characters across these spaces indicates whether or not they can break through social barriers.[29] These studies deal with characters individually. But how are various characters organized within the narrative totality of the novel? How does the arrangement of characters build a thematic and ideological architecture? And how much access are readers given to different characters, their speech, actions, or thought?

Alex Woloch's concepts of 'character-space' and 'character-system' can be usefully employed as a framework for interpreting the characterization and its significance in *Jhūṭhā Sach*. According to Woloch, character-space is the 'particular and charged encounter between an individual human personality and a determined space and position within the narrative as a whole', while character-system is the 'arrangement of multiple and differentiated character-spaces – differentiated configurations and manipulations of the human figure – into a unified narrative structure'.[30] The two concepts are in a dialectical relationship with each other: on the one hand, each character-space is an independent, uniquely delineated narrative space in which a certain character's inner thoughts or external actions are framed. On the other hand, character-spaces are interdependent and added together to constitute the novel's character-system, and within this system different character-spaces are given different degrees of attention—what Woloch calls the novel's 'distributional matrix'. In

[29] See Vasudha Dalmia, 'Lahore, Delhi, and the Bitter Truth of Independence', in *Fiction as History*, pp. 203–252.
[30] Woloch, *The One vs. The Many*, p. 14.

the character system of *Jhūṭhā Sach*, the siblings Puri and Tara are distributed almost the same degree of narrative space and attention. Due to 'their competitive jostling for position within the narrative totality', they become what Woloch defines the 'competing co-protagonists', like Rastignac and Goriot in *Le Père Goriot*.[31] Apart from the protagonists who receive a larger share of narrative space, minor characters, according to Woloch, are often given very limited attention and narrative space. He re-evaluates minor characters, arguing that they are memorable, and they play a disproportionate role in the narrative compared to their 'narrative space'. Minor characters are often flattened, distorted, 'reduced to a functional reference' and 'squared to the sharp edge'.[32] Therefore, the flattened identities of potentially rounded characters shape the subordinate narrative positions of minor characters. The claim of minor characters on the reader's attention is also of sociopolitical significance. Woloch argues that the proliferation of minor characters in many nineteenth-century novels is to be linked to the democratic impulse of nineteenth-century politics.[33] In *Jhūṭhā Sach*, as I show, a host of bureaucrats and politicians as minor characters are flattened into corrupt, irresponsible figures, the significance of which lies in the critical assessment of Congress politics.

Through its arrangement of multiple and differentiated character-spaces into a unified narrative structure, I argue, *Jhūṭhā Sach* generates a critical discourse on Congress politics in two ways. The first way I examine is the juxtaposition between

[31] For Woloch's analysis of characterization in *Le Père Goriot*, see ibid., pp. 244-271.
[32] Ibid., pp. 20–24.
[33] Ibid., p. 31.

Puri and Tara as competing co-protagonists. This competition relates to two aspects – on the narrative level, the even distribution of narrative space between Puri and Tara makes them evenly matched competitors; and on the story level, their very different connection to the Congress regime and opposite attitudes towards it, and their contrasting ends in public and private life show a marked contrast in values. It is their contrasting value systems that link the two independent character-spaces into a unified system. In other words, only by reading the two protagonists together does the protagonist-system produce a double effect of appreciation and criticism: whereas Tara epitomizes non-partisan public servants of great integrity who are accountable to the people, Puri exemplifies corrupt Congress politicians who only pledge loyalty to their powerful patrons.

The second way of conveying a critical message of Congress politics is through minor characters. In the novel, minor characters—top bureaucrats, national and provincial Congress leaders—who together make up two-thirds of the Congress system, are allotted much less narrative space despite being politically more powerful. Such uneven distribution of narrative space, more precisely, narrative marginalization of the political powerful is a literary strategy for the political powerless, such as Progressives, and Tara in the novel, to voice their criticism. Thus, I explore in the second section how these marginal, limited narrative spaces flatten the minor characters into fragmented caricatures, through which the defects of the Congress regime are presented in a starker fashion.

3.2.1 Puri and Tara as competing co-protagonists

Puri and Tara are the two competing protagonists of *Jhūṭhā Sach* around whom the novel unfolds in a series of parallel events. This arrangement—with two protagonists jostling for narrative spaces and readers' attention—itself brings about a competing relationship between them within the narrative totality. According to Woloch, the competition between alternative character centres 'comes prior to thematic interpretation: not merely an aspect of critical analysis, it helps condition the ground for analysis'.[34] In the following discussion, rather than only regarding Puri and Tara as separate protagonists, I consider their relative centrality of the competition as a component of the novel's character-system.

Within the overall narrative of the novel, the distribution of narrative spaces between Puri and Tara is quite balanced, roughly 23 chapters revolving around Puri and 22 chapters around Tara. By distributing symmetrical degree of spaces and readers' attention to co-protagonists, the novel highlights their commonalities but even more their growing differences, and shows their respective, shifting positions within the sociopolitical framework. In the first thirteen chapters of the first part, the pre-partition period in Lahore, Puri and Tara appear almost together, intertwined in shared spaces—in the streets where protests against the impending partition take place, at friends' homes and mostly in their own home, a set of rooms in a house in the old city. Shared spaces indicate their common interests and views in this early period.

Born into an urban lower-middle class family, Puri and Tara have many values in

[34] Woloch, *The One vs. The Many*, p. 244.

common. Firstly, they both prioritize education and insist on seeking opportunities to further their education. Tara believes that education is much more important than marriage. Indeed, she asserts this several times at home to her mother: 'I won't get married. I'm going to study up to MA level'.[35] Puri, who cannot continue his studies because of his arrest in 1945, endeavours to support Tara's education, and it is with his encouragement and financial support that Tara enrols at Dayal Singh College.[36] When elder family members urge Tara to drop out and marry the well-off but uncouth Somraj as soon as possible, at first Puri indignantly rejects the idea (in chapter 4): 'If her life is a burden to you, I can take responsibility for my sister. What a difference between the girl who is going to pass in first division and someone [Somraj] who cheats at exams'.[37] Yet after losing his job, Puri withdraws his support for Tara's fight against this arranged marriage.

Secondly, it is through education that Puri and Tara gain access to public life. Puri, a talented and politically active young writer, is employed as a reporter for the pro-Congress Urdu daily, *Pairokar* (The Follower). After being dismissed for holding the Congress partly responsible for the prevailing communal violence, Puri actively participates in the anti-communal protests and demonstrations. Like her brother, Tara is also politically aware and engages in public activities—with the Communist Student Federation of India —such as political debates in college. Yet, she acts mostly as a

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[35] Yashpal, *Jhūṭhā Sach: Vatan aur Deś*, Lucknow: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 2014 (1958), p. 12. 'मैं तो ब्याह नहीं करूँगी, एम. ए. तक पढ़ूँगी।'

[36] Ibid., pp. 9-13.

[37] Ibid., p. 41. 'तुम्हें उसकी ज़िंदगी भारी हो रही है तो मैं बहिन का बोझ उठा सकता हूँ। कहाँ फ़र्स्ट डिवीज़न में पास होने वाली लड़की, कहाँ इम्तहान में नक़ल करने वाला।' Similarly, Puri backs Tara up again in chapter eight: 'she has prepared for the examination; now that only a few days are left, let her sit the exam. The marriage can take place after that' (इसने इम्तहान की तैयारी की है, अब दिन ही कितने हैं। इम्तहान दे लेने दीजिए, ब्याह ठहर कर हो जाएगा।), p. 118.

listener who seldom expresses her own political ideas.

Thirdly, both Puri and Tara defend love marriage against arranged marriage. Puri directly refuses to marry an unknown girl recommended by his uncle: 'I can't marry someone just to get property! ... I don't know her… what does she look like, what is her nature?'[38] More audacious than Puri, Tara tries to cross the religious divide between Hindu and Muslim and proposes to elope with Asad, a master student at a Christian College, a Muslim, and a communist.

However, it is Tara's pursuit of love that causes the first rupture in her relationship with Puri, revealing his patriarchal double standards. Puri is pursuing his own romantic relationship with Kanak, a wealthy young woman whom he tutors. But once he finds out about Tara's attachment to Asad, Puri harshly rebukes her that 'you are playing with love and marriage. What you want is flirtation, not marriage!'[39] After he considers Tara's love with Asad harmful to the family honour, Puri withdraws all his support for Tara's resistance against the arranged match with Somraj. Shocked by Puri's unexpected change of heart and accusation, Tara resists with silence and tries to kill herself by repeatedly bashing her head against the corner post of her bed. In Puri's view, Tara's silence is 'an insulting defiance and refusal to accept his authority'.[40] Thereafter, Puri fully endorses patriarchal views, even in his own relationships. He unfavourably compares his companionate relationship with educated and headstrong Kanak to the adoring and unquestioning devotion he gets from his lover, his tutee Urmila. As the

[38] Ibid., p. 81. 'मुझे ब्याह मकान-जायदाद से तो नहीं करना। … मैं लड़की को जानता-बूझता नहीं, जाने कौन है, कैसी है?'
[39] Ibid., p. 191. 'तुम प्रेम और विवाह को लेकर खेलना चाहती हो। तुम उच्छृंखलता चाहती हो, विवाह नहीं।'
[40] Ibid. पुरी को तारा के इस मौन में भी अपने अधिकार और सामर्थ्य की अवज्ञा जान पड़ी।

narrator states, Puri is filled with smug self-satisfaction that two women have surrendered to him in quick succession.[41] His desire to control women is the main reason why Kanak eventually divorces him in the second part of the novel. Puri, then, opposes arranged marriage when it threatens his individual rights but does not oppose patriarchy itself.

By contrast, Tara wishes to extricate herself from a patriarchal system in which her father, brother, and later her husband Somraj all claim control over her. Tara's very mobility in the narrative marks her gradual, difficult escape from patriarchal control: first from her own family to her husband's, and then from her husband's to the refugee camps. Once she leaves her husband's house after a wedding night marked by violence, Tara cuts off all contacts with her family and restarts life on her own, becoming the head of a female-only household with two other women refugees in Delhi. When asked by refugees about her family, she replies, 'there is no need to inform anyone of where I am. Just give me something to do, here or anywhere else. I'll live by myself'.[42] She becomes self-reliant and for a long time restrains her romantic desires. It is only at the end of the novel that she marries Dr Prannath, an ideal companionate husband. Puri instead ends up in a common law marriage with Kanak and also loses Urmila. Although Puri and Tara pursue love relationships from the start, they end up in very different situations. This contrast is inseparable from their positions in relation to the patriarchal

[41] Yashpal, *Jhūṭhā Sach: Deś kā Bhaviṣya*, Īlāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 2014 (1960), p. 245. पुरी एक के पश्चात दूसरा समर्पण जीत लेने का गर्व अनुभव करता। वह कनक और उर्मिला की तुलना करने लगता। ... कनक समान साथी थी। और उर्मिला नितांत समर्पित प्रिया।

[42] Ibid., p. 113. 'मुझे किसी को ख़बर देने की ज़रूरत नहीं है। आप मुझे यहाँ ही या किसी दूसरी जगह कोई भी काम दीजिए। अपना निर्वाह कर लूँगी।'

system: Puri is part of it, Tara attempts to challenge it.

Such difference in where Puri and Tara come to stand is remarkable not only in the context of the patriarchal family, but more significantly in public life under the Congress regime. As the narrative proceeds when the partition and independence take place, Puri and Tara part ways and resettle in independent city spaces—Puri mostly in Jalandhar and Tara in Delhi. The separate city spaces indicate their different ways of lifestyle after independence. Even the organization of chapters erects a boundary between Puri and Tara: particularly in the second part of the novel, chapters alternate focus on one of the two protagonists without mentioning the other. Their competition is not only explicitly present in the narrative structure, but also in the contradictory values they embrace. The narrative revolving around Puri and Tara in the post-independence India shows their different positions and engagement with the Congress system: Puri joins the Congress party and is elected MLA while Tara becomes a politically aware but non-aligned civil servant. Their different interactions with the powerful and the powerless provide a contrast between two pathways to public life that the Congress system offered. It is such a contrast that links the two independent character-spaces together.

The relationship between Puri and his patron Vishwanath Sood marks Puri's gradual subservience to party politics. Sood, a former inmate of Puri's in jail and an influential local Congress leader in Jalandhar after independence, is one of the Congress minor characters who plays a disproportionate role compared to his narrative space, but also who gets flattened into a caricature, see 3.2.2 below. In the beginning of the second

part of the novel, Puri, now a refugee, is portrayed as a 'servant' (*naukar*) at a *dhaba*, who is trying to eke out a living. Despite his poverty and homelessness, Puri shows his stoic adaptability at this time of socio-economic decline. As the narrator tells, when Puri delivers a *thali*, he calls out, 'Ji, here is the *thali* from the *dhaba*', 'as if acting out the role of an unashamed servant on stage, but this was no play-acting. His tone of voice, manner, and behaviour had changed to suit the work and the situation'.[43] The person who has demanded the *thali* is none other but Sood. After he finds out that Puri cannot find his family members and has no money left after crossing the border, Sood rushes in to help lift him out of destitution by making him the manager of the Kamal Press, a Muslim evacuee's property. Sood seems to become Puri's 'helper' (to use Suleiman's term) in the process of steering him out of plight and encouraging him to accept the industrial manual labour which he felt disgusted as a white-collar. While at the same time, it is this taking over of evacuee property a first step for Puri into moral corruption. While working at *Pairokar* in Lahore, Puri had struggled with industrial toil: 'the noise of the machines, the all-pervasive grime that soiled [his hands and clothes] when he touched it, the ink, the kerosene, the smell of glue, it all nauseated him'.[44] But now, a mere three months of working the printing machines at Kamal Press, Puri becomes 'so absorbed in the running of machines that even a bit of interruption would give him a feeling of loss'.[45] The noise of the machines becomes comforting: 'It sounded like

[43] Ibid., p. 12. ढाबे से थाली लाया हूँ जी!' पुरी ने ऐसे पुकारा मानो वह रंगमंच पर निस्संकोच नौकर का अभिनय कर रहा हो परंतु वह अभिनय नहीं कर रहा था। उसका स्वर और व्यवहार काम और स्थिति के अनुकूल हो गया था।

[44] Ibid., p. 30. वहाँ प्रेस की मशीनों का शोर, किसी भी चीज़ की स्पर्श से कालिख लग जाना, स्याही, मिट्टी के तेल और सरेश की गंध उसे बहुत अरुचिकर लगती थी।

[45] Ibid., p. 47. उसे मशीनों की गति से इतना मोह हो गया था कि उस में ज़रा भी व्यवधान आने से उसे हानि की पीड़ा अनुभव होने लगती थी।

melodious and inspiring music to him and gave him a sense of power and achievement'.[46] The contrast indicates that this is not so much acceptance of labour but a first habitation of Puri's new capitalist persona. Puri starts to behave 'like a capitalist', thinking how to get the most out of every *paisa* spent. The more Puri earns, the more grateful he is to Sood, and thus the more submissive he becomes to Sood's political manoeuvring. He soon becomes a Sood loyalist and uses his newspaper *Nāzir* (*The Spectator*) to support Sood's political agenda. Even Puri's private life is at the mercy of Sood, who intervenes in Puri's entanglement with Urmila and Kanak to protect his own reputation. In a dialogue between these four figures that spans four pages, the speech of Sood, the only one outside the love triangle, is afforded most narrative space, and its tone is aggressive and imperious:

> 'What are you playing at? You will blacken your name, and mine too.' … Puri wanted to explain, but Sood cut him short and scolded him even more harshly: 'Will such behaviour shine a light on, what's-its-name, Congress? … You will destroy your name, mine, and the good name of the Congress party. … This must be settled.'[47]

In the face of Sood's reprimands, Puri reacts 'like a machine' (*yantravat ho gayā*)

[46] Ibid., p. 48. मशीनों का गर्जन उसे मधुर और उत्साहवर्धक संगीत जान पड़ता था। उस से अपनी शक्ति आर सामर्थ्य की अनुभूति होती थी।

[47] Ibid., pp. 303–304. यह क्या तमाशा है? अपना मुँह काला करा रहे हो, हमारा भी कराओगे। … पुरी ने कहना चाहा। सूद जी ने और भी डाँट कर टोक दिया। क्या नाम कांग्रेस को तुम बड़े चाँद लगाओगे! … यह करम करके ख़ुद बदनाम होगे, हमें बदनाम करोगे, कांग्रेस को बदनाम करोगे। … यह फ़ैसला करना होगा।

and follows his instruction to marry Kanak and send Urmila away to a nursing hospital.

While being a submissive subordinate in the face of the powerful, Puri in turn becomes an oppressive leader with the powerless. With Sood's endorsement, he is elected to the Assembly in Mukerian, a district in eastern Punjab. His electoral success is ascribed to the local peasants' trust in his campaign promise that the Congress government will allot land to every family. Yet the policy of land distribution adopted after the election does not match Puri's campaign promise—only those who have proof of ownership of land and property left behind in western Punjab can be allotted land on a permanent basis, while those who were landless before the partition remain landless. This policy shift angers the landless farmers. One of them, Bela Singh, cannot provide papers for the land he used to cultivate as a tenant farmer in a district now in Pakistan. As a result, the plot of land he now has in India is to be expropriated by the authorities. He, his wife, and his children burst into Puri's house, hoping that Puri will fight for justice on their behalf. To their disappointment, Puri offers no help, nor does he show any sympathy. Instead, he shirks his public duty by refusing to appeal to the authorities. He ruthlessly tells Bela: 'I can't change the law. If your complaint is that you didn't receive justice, appeal to the law court', adding 'It was the police that threw you out, so go and stage your protest at their doorstep'.[48] The Singh family stage a protest sit-in (*satyagraha*) on his front veranda while Puri remains locked in his living room. After two hours, Puri can no longer tolerate being made an object of ridicule (*tamāśā*) and calls the police. Finally, the '*tamāśā*' ends with two constables seizing Singh and

[48] Ibid., pp. 541–542. मैं क़ानून को नहीं बदल सकता है। तुम्हें शिकायत है कि इंसाफ़ नहीं हुआ तो अदालत में अपील करो। … ज़मीन से तुम्हें पुलिस ने हटाया है, तुम पुलिस के दरवाज़े पर जाकर धरना दो।

forcibly removing him from Puri's property. Thus, to tackle issues raised by the powerless, Puri resorts to violence and suppression rather than offering help and challenging the Congress policy.

Such representation of a coalitional ruling structure – Congress politicians, the police, and landed elites – echoes Yashpal's criticism of the Congress as the reactionary ruling class alliance against the common people. In his article 'The Form of Ramrajya', published the same year the act was passed, Yashpal exposes the hypocrisy of the zamindari abolition act in continuing to serve landlords' interests:

> They [the government], in order to improve the condition of peasants, acted out a drama of abolishing zamindari. As a consequence, landless peasants neither acquired any land, nor set up any collective farms; instead, the landed class and landowners became the peasant class and supported private ownership of the means of production. … The abolition of zamindari did not decrease but increased the number of unemployed or landless peasants. As soon as they saw the [future consequence of the] abolition of zamindari, zamindars swallowed more and more land into their community (*jāt*) by expropriating peasants.[49]

Yashpal's critique identifies tensions between the peasants and the government-

[49] Yashpal, 'Rāmrājya kā Rūp' (1951), in Yaśapāl ke Nibandh, Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī, 2009, pp. 119–120. देश के किसानों की अवस्था सुधारने के लिए उन्होंने ज़मींदारी उन्मूलन का जो नाटक किया उसका परिणाम भूमिहीन किसानों को भूमि मिलना या सामूहिक कृषि क्षेत्रों की स्थापना न होकर ऐसे भूमिधर या भूमिपति किसानों की श्रे णी बन जाना हुआ जो भविष्य में उत्पादन के साधनों का व्यक्तिगत स्वामित्व की प्रणाली के समर्थक रहें। … जमींदारी प्रथा उन्मूलन का प्रभाव किसानों की बेकारी या भूमिहीन किसानों की संख्या घटाना नहीं बल्कि उनकी संख्या बढ़ाना ही हुआ। जमींदारी प्रथा के उन्मूलन की सम्भावना देखते ही जमींदारों ने किसानों को बेदखल कर अधिक से अधिक भूमि को निजी जाट की भूमि में मिला लिया।

zamindar coalition. Thanks to this coalition, peasants have become even more exploited and their plight has worsened, which is exactly what Bela Singh in the novel confronts.

In an equal distribution of narrative space with that of Puri's rise as a local Congress leader, Tara also begins to emerge on the public stage. It is more challenging for Tara as a female than for Puri to enter public spheres, particularly the political arena, because the Congress regime itself can be read as another form of patriarchal power system. Vijay Agnew, who studied the career of leading women figures in Indian politics, argues that women's appointment in political bodies is always a token made in consideration of their sex rather than ability.[50] This is what the novel represents to some extent, for example, when Congressman Prasadji meets Tara for the first time, they consider Tara as an attractive young lady instead of a capable volunteer worker (see below). Having analysed women delegates in the Congress annual All Indian Congress Committee (AICC) meetings during the 1920s-1940s, Agnew suggests that women's success in politics was a unique phenomenon instead of representative of trend in society because the elite women share common characteristics of wealth, education, power and status.[51] In the second part of the novel, by contrast, Tara is, though educated, a poor, powerless refugee when she starts working in the public in the second part of the novel. In this sense, the novel features Tara as an imaginary model who succeeds in the political body without relying on family patronage or wealth. Though she accepts help from 'bigshots', Tara, unlike Puri who falls into the grip of party power,

[50] Vijay Agnew, *Elite Women in the Indian Nationalist Movement 1919-1947*, Ph. D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1976, p. 142.

[51] See ibid., chapter IV, 'Women in Congress', pp. 130-172.

stands up for herself vis-à-vis powerful politicians and bureaucrats and maintains an independent selfhood, which, again, indicates her attempt to challenge the patriarchal power system.

Tara meets Prasadji, a vice president of the Relief Committee and a Congressman, when she is in a refugee camp in Delhi and states her wish to find a job (chapter 3 of part 2). To recommend her for job opportunities, Prasadji takes her for a car ride from the refugee camp to Connaught Place, the modern commercial centre of New Delhi. In their interactions during the journey, Prasadji tries repeatedly to flirt with Tara, but Tara rejects both tacitly and explicitly. When he comments that 'You [Punjabi women] are quite adventurous. Many Punjabi girls have done well in the film line', Tara responds with only a faint smile and finds his remark not in keeping with his position.[52] Moreover, when he attempts to flirt with her in his office at Connaught Place she rejects him directly:

> Prasadji was sitting on the wide arm of the chair [in which Tara is seated], smiling as he caressed Tara's hair:
>
> 'You've slept in the chair, why not lay on the *takht*?'
>
> Then, he caressed Tara's cheek. Tara pushed his hand aside and stood up.
>
> 'I want to leave now. I have to finish my work at the camp.'
>
> 'Arrey, what's the hurry? The car will be here in another fifteen or twenty minutes. Sit down.'

[52] Yashpal, *Jhūṭhā Sach: Deś kā Bhaviṣya*, p. 163. तारा को प्रसाद जी की मुस्कान और बातें उसकी स्थिति की अनुकूल गंभीर नहीं लगी। हामी न भर सकी परंतु विनय प्रकट करना आवश्यक था। उसने मुस्कान में होंठ हिला दिए।

'No, sir. I'd like to go. I don't want to trouble you anymore. Just tell me the way back. I am going.'

She refused to sit down.[53]

Tara politely but determinedly rejects Prasadji's repeated advances with unambiguous replies. The tone of her voice and the space in which the exchange takes place (Prasadji's office) indicate that Tara is courageous enough not to silently obey the instructions of a powerful Congressman who holds the key to her destiny.

Such courage is even more conspicuous when Tara, employed as a governess by a wealthy Agrawala family, voices her opinion on political issues in front of several secretaries of central ministries who gather at the house of her employer. The gathering is held on 18 January 1948, when Gandhi breaks his fast after representatives of Delhi's Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims sign a joint declaration to renounce violence and end communal strife. In their debate about the political impact of Gandhi's creed of non-violence, some, including Dr Shyama (vice president of Refugee Relief Committee) and Mr Dey (deputy secretary of public works), appreciate Gandhi's fast as a model of great international significance, while others, particularly Mr Rawat, the secretary of the Home Ministry, criticize it as a historical blunder and a sign of the government's weakness. Tara acts a silent witness for most of the conversation until, perturbed by the exchange, she expresses her doubts in front of these 'bigwigs':

[53] Ibid., p. 168. प्रसादजी उस की सोफ़ा कुर्सी की चौड़ी बाँह पर बैठ कर उसके केश सहलाते हुए मुस्करा रहे थे - 'कुर्सी पर ही सो गयीं। तख़्त पर नहीं लेटी?' उन्होंने तारा के गाल पर थपथपा दिया। तारा प्रसाद जी का हाथ हटा कर खड़ी हो गयी- 'मैं अब जाना चाहती हूँ। कैम्प में मुझे लिस्टें पूरी करनी हैं।' 'अरे जल्दी क्या है, हम छोड़ आएँगे। पंद्रह-बीस मिनट में गाड़ी आ जाएगी, बैठो तो।' 'जी नहीं, मैं चली जाऊँगी। आप क्यों कष्ट करेंगे। रास्ता बता दीजिए, मैं चली जाऊँगी।' तारा फिर बैठी नहीं।

> ‘Excuse me, but may I ask you something? ... In your view, the success of Gandhiji’s fast against the decision of the government can encourage others to follow his example and protest in similar ways against other decisions of the government. And that would create problems for the administration. … That may be so, but is it not better for the government itself that such protests are by peaceful means like fasting, rather than by bombs, guns, swords, and rioting?’[54]

This is one of the few, but the longest expression of Tara towards a political issue. If compared with the submissive tone of Puri’s pointless speech to Sood, the logic and impartiality of Tara’s statement, and the serious, confident but polite tone of her speech, suggests her independence without relying on the bigwigs or aligning herself to any political parties. The disparity in status – amid this group of influential government officials and businessmen, Tara is the weakest in terms of social status and political power – makes her independence even more visible. While Dr Shyama and Dey praise the symbolic significance of Gandhi’s fast, Tara values its pragmatic one. It is this independence and self-determination that safeguards Tara from the control of the powerful and later leads her to become a non-partisan civil servant in the government.

After entering the civil service, and subsequently being promoted to undersecretary and appointed director of the Women Welfare Centres, Tara does not

[54] Ibid., pp. 222–223. क्षमा कीजिए, मैं एक बात पूछ सकती हूँ? आप का विचार है कि सरकारी निर्णय की विरोध में गांधी जी के अनशन की सफलता का उदाहरण लोगों को उसी ढंग से शासन का विरोध करने के लिए उत्साहित कर सकता है। इस से शासन के सामने कठनाइयाँ आएँगी। … ऐसा सम्भव है, परंतु क्या सरकार का विरोध बम, बंदूक़ तलवार या दंगे से किया जाने की अपेक्षा शांति पूर्वक अनशन से किया जाना स्वयं सरकार के लिए भी अच्छा नहीं है?

become a domineering boss but rather tries to benefit the powerless and treat them with respect and dignity. When working in the office dealing with applications for loans and grants for self-help schemes for women, she warmly welcomes an old refugee woman, something conveyed in the narrative by her physical movements:

> Tara pushed back her chair, went round and held her [the refugee woman's] arms, … and guided her to a chair. … On being gently encouraged into the chair, she [the woman] sat with her knees drawn up. Tara listened to her story perched on the desk, with her hand on the woman's shoulder.[55]

Again, we should read this description of movements in comparison with Puri's display of tough indifference towards landless Bela Singh, mentioned above. Their exchange turns into a deadlock, with the two parties sitting for two hours in separate spaces. By contrast, as this passage shows, Tara shares the same space and listens attentively to the woman refugee. Her behaviour—holding the woman's arms, guiding her to a chair, listening to her story—displays her empathy with the powerless and those who seek help from the government. The old woman pleads with Tara to be allotted a sewing machine: she had applied for one but failed to receive it since she had not bribed the inspector. Tara pushes two folded ten-rupee notes into the old woman's palm and consoles her: 'Come back if you need any help. I hope you will have your machine by

[55] Ibid., p. 334. तारा कुर्सी पीछे धकेल कर उठ गयी और आगे बढ़ कर बुढ़िया की बाँह पकड़ ली। उसने बुढ़िया को बाँहों से ऊपर खींच कर उठाया और कुर्सी पर बैठाने लगी। कुर्सी पर ज़बरन बैठा दी जाने पर बुढ़िया पाँव कुर्सी पर समेट कर उकड़ूँ बैठ गयी। तारा स्वयं मेज पर बैठ कर उसके कंधे पर हाथ रखे उस की बात सुनने लगी।

the first week of next month.'[56] Rejecting partisan politics, even after having being elected to a position of influence in public life Tara aligns herself with the poor woman. Her principles apply to her private life too. When someone suggests that she buy a car befitting her high office, Tara refuses:

> 'Why are you making a fool of me! I will be responsible for an organization that helps women who earn as little as twelve annas or one rupee a day. How can I go to inspect them in a motor car?'[57]

Tara's characterization models a bureaucrat/bureaucracy who is aligned with the poor and powerless it serves. Yet, we need to recall here that Tara is now a high-ranking civil servant, no longer being an ordinary person at all. Some changes take place in her personal lifestyle, as the narrator tells, 'there had been a big change in her attire that she went to work wearing a shiny, white *sari* which was clean-washed by *dhobi*. Rather than queuing up for a bus, she preferred to taking a taxi for commuting'.[58] What's more, one year after being elected undersecretary, Tara buys herself a car finally with loans and all her savings. She takes great care of it as her most precious property, 'she hired a driver from the very start for fear that any damage would occur to her car. Tara even bought two books in order to know about the car and drive it properly'.[59] The new

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[56] Ibid., pp. 335–336. ज़रूरत हो तो मुझे बताना। आशा है, मशीन तहें अगले महिने के पहले हफ़्ते तक मिल जाएगी।

[57] Ibid., p. 436. आप लोग मुझे क्यों बेवकूफ बनाते हैं। मैं बारह आने रुपया रोज़ के लिए मेहनत करने वाली, असहाय स्त्रियों की सहायता के लिए बनायी गयी संस्थानों का प्रबंध करूँ और उन के बीच मोटर पर चढ़ कर जाऊँ?

[58] Ibid. पोशाक में इतना परिवर्तन ज़रूर हो गया था कि दफ़्तर जाते समय धोबी की धुली, झक सफ़ेद साड़ी पहननी थी और बस के लिए क्यू में खड़े रहना अच्छा नहीं लगता था। दफ़्तर आना -जाना प्रायः ही टैक्सी पर हो गया था।

[59] Ibid., p. 563. गाड़ी को कोई जरब या झटका ना आ जाए, इस विचार से उस ने आरम्भ में एक ड्राइवर रख लिया था परंतु गाड़ी को समझने और ठीक से चलाने की शिक्षा … तारा इस विषय की दो छोटी-छोटी पुस्तकें भी ख़रीद लायी थी।

dressing and the way of travelling either by taxi or by her own car indicate a middle-class elite lifestyle. However, the novel alleviates the potential contradiction between Tara's eliteness and her pro-people stance. In depicting how Tara uses her car, the novel foregrounds the car's companionate role to Tara. 'According to Tara's signals and touching, it [the car] could, embracing Tara, run at a dizzying speed in the sunshine and rain. All of its power depended on Tara's will and touching. Tara was sitting inside embraced by her car but the car was loved by Tara as her daughter. … The silent, but powerful car was Tara's intimate female companion when she felt dejected'.[60] The analogy represents the car as 'a friend in need', instead of an exterior indicator of Tara's social status. Thus, the narrative features a middle-class civil servant model whose elite lifestyle does no harm to her alignment with the poor.

The juxtaposition between Puri and Tara as co-protagonists reinforces their radically different positions towards and in the Congress regime. While Tara epitomizes the non-partisan, independent, and responsible public servant, Puri exemplifies the partisan and corrupt local Congressman. Their contrasting fates at the end of the novel— Tara is promoted to the position of ministerial undersecretary and marries a companionate husband, Puri is defeated in the 1957 legislative assembly election and fails in marriage — conveys a negative attitude towards Congress politicians.

[60] Ibid., p. 564. तारा के संकेतों और स्पर्शों से वह धूप में व वर्षा में तारा को गोद में लिए वायु-वेग से चल सकती थी। यह सब शक्ति तारा की इच्छा और स्पर्शों पर निर्भर करती थी। तारा अपनी गाड़ी की गोद में बैठती थी परंतु उसे बच्ची के समान प्यार करती थी। … तारा की मौन परंतु सशक्त गाड़ी ही उसकी गुप्त उदासी की साथिन थी।

3.2.2 Running the state: the 'powerful' minor characters

Throughout *Jhūṭhā Sach*, Puri and Tara are not only competing co-protagonists showcasing different approaches of engagement with the ruling government. They are also witnesses who observe the behaviour of influential minor figures around them. Many of these characters are Congressmen and civil servants. Puri moves across four cities in northern India, from pre-partition Lahore to Nainital, Lucknow and finally Jalandhar, and the scope of his observations covers state Congress politics in various cities. Tara, who settles in Delhi after independence, enjoys a privileged position from which to observe central politics—she encounters the nation's top leader Nehru and the secretaries of central departments like Mr Rawat, Mr Dey, and so forth. In this sense, through the mobile lenses of Puri and Tara, the novel creates a geographically extensive, systematic and multi-layered picture of the Congress rule. Although these political and bureaucratic figures are 'powerful' in terms of social status and political influence, they are minor characters who occupy a rather limited narrative space, marginal to that of the protagonists. However, they carry 'qualitative weight', as Woloch puts.[61] They are flattened to carry a specific symbolic meaning, which plays a significant role in the overall theme of the novel, that is, conveying the critique of Congress politics. This section examines three categories of minor characters, moving from the central to the state level: national leaders, elite civil servants, and state Congressmen.

National leaders

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of the Congress government after

[61] Woloch, *The One vs. The Many*, p. 22.

independence, is characterised in the novel as aloof from the masses by his character-space reduced into several fragments in the whole narrative and without effective interaction with that of the protagonists. He first enters into the narrative in a mediated way in chapter 16 of the first part, when a group of people are preparing to celebrate independence at a club in Nainital. The club, in which Puri gains access through Kanak, is an elite space where the Congressmen dressed in *khaddar* clothes and Gandhi-caps, and anglicized gentlemen in suits (such as lawyers, businessmen), gather frequently.[62] On the eve of independence, hundreds of men in white *khaddar* clothes and suits, women in shiny *sari* and Punjabi suits take part in the celebration party and enjoy a feast of various sweets, *puri-kachauri*, vegetables, *pakaude*, *rayte*, *pulav*, kebab, and meat. Among their chatter and laughter comes Nehru's speech on the Indian independence via radio broadcast. Of his 1,000-word-long historical speech, only the first few dozen words are quoted in the novel, including Nehru's announcement of independence and his urge to Indians to 'be more passionate, diligent and dedicated to work and fulfil their duties'.[63] Yet the speech does not resonate among these listeners but is instead immediately 'drowned out in the buzz of conversation in the club hall'.[64] This fleeting sound conveys two related indications: one is that the very important political event of independence, which is the main topic in political essays, is downplayed in the novel as a background voice. As the narrator comments, what the audience wishes to hear is only 'the stroke of twelve rings out' (*āzādī ghoṣañā karne*

[62] Yashpal, *Jhūṭhā Sach: Vatan aur Deś*, p. 279.
[63] The words are quoted in Hindi: 'हमारे लिए अब आराम और चैन का वक़्त नहीं आ गया है बल्कि हमें और भी ज़्यादा लगन और मेहनत से और त्याग से काम करने की, अपने वायदों को पूरा करने की कोशिश करनी होगी।' Ibid., p. 352.
[64] Ibid. क्लब के हाल में फिर लोगों की आपसी बातचीत की गमगहाहट भर गयी। पंडित नेहरू का भाषण भी उसमें डूब गया।

vālī ṭaṅkor) signifying the end of colonial rule.[65] That the 'buzz of conversation in the club hall' continues, almost uninterrupted, before and after the announcement indicates that independence hardly changes anything for them. The other meaning is that in the tiny character-space allotted to Nehru in this scene, the most powerful politician in India is flattened into a compressed voice merely announcing the apparent non-event of independence. The disembodied voice on the radio airwaves indicates in this instance the distance between Nehru and his audience, between the grand ambition of the national leader and the lived reality of the clubgoers, even though part of them are Congressmen.

In contrast to the club which is an elite space, the platform and streets outside the club form a popular space where hill-dwelling labourers (*kulī*) emerge. While the elites in neat attire celebrate with gourmandise, local villagers, in rags and ordinary white caps, celebrate with clapping, singing and dancing.[66] Despite the different ways of celebration, both elites and poor labourers view independence as a mere festival, which downplays the historic significance of the national freedom. Apart from contrasting clothing, another notable difference within and outside the club is whether or not Nehru's voice is present – readers are not told that local labourers hear the announcement. Such an absence indicates that the national leader's message is not yet accessible to local masses, thus enlarging the gap between Nehru and ordinary people.

This distance is hardly reduced when, in chapter 3 of part 2, Nehru appears among

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., p. 353. क्लब के बाहर फ़्लैट (मैदान) में देहाती पहाड़ी रिक्शा-कुलियों और बोझ ढोने वाले कुलियों की टोलियाँ चीथड़े पहने, परंतु सिर पर सफ़ेद टोपियाँ लगाए, ताली बजा-बजाकर, नाच-नाच कर गा रही थीं।

the refugees to inspect the camp in New Delhi where Tara lives. Again, the very limited narrative space allotted Nehru is taken by his speech, and this time his clothing too. He is described as 'a middle-aged man with a young man's look, dressed in an *achkan*, *churidar pajama* and a Gandhi cap. A half-opened rose was stuck in the second buttonhole of the *achkan*'.[67] Remarkably, his buttons, the most negligible items in his whole attire, jostle for the reader's attention in the ensuing interactions between Nehru and the refugees. An old man folds his hands and calls out: 'You evicted us from our brick houses and brought us here. Give us at least some simple rooms to live in. If you can't do that, why are you throwing us out of this place?' Rather than responding, Nehru 'stopped and pulled at a button of his *achkan*'.[68] A few minutes later, when he begins his address to the refugees, Nehru once again 'pulled at one of the buttons on his *achkan*'.[69] The frequent focalization on the buttons—three times within a single page—gives them a certain weight in the characterization of Nehru. This flattening of Nehru's appearance to his buttons can be read ironically: buttons—a minor item which has nothing to do with the rehabilitation of refugees nor with any political or social issues at large—becomes the narrative focus when representing India's most powerful politician. The buttons' irrelevancy implies the Nehru's detachment from and powerlessness to change the refugees' lives.

This point is further confirmed in Nehru's speech and the refugees' reaction to it. In the half-page-long address, Nehru does not propose any scheme or solution to the

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[67] Yashpal, *Jhūṭhā Sach: Deś kā Bhaviṣya*, p. 175. खद्दर की गांधी टोपी, अचकन, चूड़ीदार पायजामा पहने, चुस्त, छरहरा, जवाननुमा अधेड़ व्यक्ति चला आ रहा था। अचकन के दूसरे बटन में अधखिला लाल गुलाब लगा हुआ था।

[68] Ibid., p. 176. प्रधानमंत्री ठिठक कर अपनी अचकन का बटन खींचने लगे।

[69] Ibid. प्रधानमंत्री अपनी अचकन का बटन खींचते हुए बोले।

issue of rehabilitation but urges refugees not to think only about their personal problems and situations. As with his radio speech on independence, the address finds no positive reaction among its listeners. Tara, one of the few literate refugees, finds it uninspiring. When an illiterate fellow refugee asks her what Nehru had said, Tara does not know what to tell them and simply repeats the prime minister's words. In this way, the character-space of protagonist Tara further limits and marginalizes Nehru's character-space to simply a couple of words. Nehru claims to be the leader of the new nation, but the novel represents him via a distant voice on the radio, small items like buttons, and a high-sounding speech but that is incomprehensible for the baffled refugees. It is such narrative reduction of Nehru into a minor character that produces a critique of Nehru's detachment from the common people.

Elite civil servants

Elite civil servants, who are essential members of what political scientist Sudipta Kaviraj calls 'ruling bloc', appear as minor characters in *Jhūṭhā Sach* through Tara's observations and interactions with them. In other words, it is Tara and her character-space that make the elite civil servants flattened. As discussed earlier, it is the presence of these influential civil servants that helps reveal Tara's non-party aligned stance. At the same time, Tara's dominant position in the narrative space as a protagonist flattens the characterization of the other civil servants. Instead of being portrayed as professional officials in a formal scenario like the office, they first appear at the dinner at the wealthy merchant Agrawala's house, a private and informal scenario (see 3.2.1 on Tara). Viewed through Tara's eyes, much attention is paid to their lifestyles, drinking

alcohol and smoking pipes, cigars, and cigarettes, echoing popular depictions of British officials in India. Indeed, Tara views these indulgences as alien to ordinary Indian life and at odds with the clear-headed focus on serious political or social issues she expects of them. In such limited narrative space, attention is further diverted to the various types and brands of alcohol they consume as 'connoisseurs': sherry, port, Haig scotch, and Black&White blended whisky. Elements related to their professional lives only appear in fragments of political gossip about the Congress leaders. Tara's observations ring with a sense of moral indignation:

> [Tara's] thoughts drifted toward the behaviour and manners of these big shots. Whatever is considered so bad if ordinary people do it, these people do that without any sense of guilt, shame, or fear. They are not ashamed to drink alcohol or to talk nonsense and fall over in drunken stupor. They are a different type of people: they discuss politics and social problems after drinking. Maybe these acts are not that wicked for them.[70]

This passage stresses the cultural distance Tara feels between these civil servants and ordinary people: while the former is quite anglicised and is accustomed to drinking while discussing politics, the latter would feel guilty and ashamed of doing that. Such judgement from the point of view of a protagonist whose behaviour is linked to self-

[70] Ibid., pp. 225–226. ध्यान … बड़े लोगों के आचार-व्यवहार की ओर ही जा रहा था, साधारण लोगों में जो कुछ इतना बुरा समझा जाता है, उसे यह लोग अपराध, लज्जा और भय की भावना के बिना निःसंकोच करते हैं। शराब पीकर लज्जित नहीं होते, बेहोशी में बकते या गिरते पड़ते भी नहीं। दूसरे ही ढंग के लोग हैं। शराब पीकर राजनीति और सामाजिक समस्याओं पर तर्क करते हैं। शायद इनके लिए वे दुष्कर्म इतने भयंकर भी नहीं रह जाते।

determination and dignity, and who is aligned with ordinary people, further strengthens the novel's critique of the misconduct of civil servants in the newly independent India.

State congressmen

Sood, the state Congress leader and close associate of Puri already discussed above, is allotted relatively more narrative space than either Nehru or the top civil servants. However, since the novel presents Sood's career trajectory only as it intersects with Puri's, the narrative breaks down Sood's characterization in rather simplistic fragments. As Sood facilitates Puri's gradual involvement in Congress politics, the interactions between Sood and Puri serves to flatten Sood into a dictatorial Congress leader. We are introduced to Sood in chapter 1 of the second part after he is elected an MLA. Before entering the Assembly, he had been a '*fakil-vakil'* who selflessly served the people,[71] whereas now he has many servants looking after him. We already saw above Sood's imperious intervention in Puri's personal life. This uncompromising, dictatorial image is reaffirmed by the narrator's comment on Sood when he becomes a minister in the Congress government in Punjab:

> It was impossible for him to imagine the other side of an issue. As his power increased, so did his acrimonious behaviour and his authority. His roughness as a master and stubborn certainty in his own opinion turned into an obsession with defeating his opposition. This single-mindedness transformed into intolerance: what he wished to hear was always an echo of his own views.[72]

[71] Ibid., pp. 18–19.

[72] Ibid., p. 689. स्थिति के दूसरे पक्ष के लिए उन की कल्पना में स्थान ही नहीं था। उन की शक्ति असीम रूप से बढ़ जाने के कारण

Apart from the brief scenes he shares with Puri, Sood is also characterised from the points of view of other minor characters. For example, Nayyar, a lawyer and Kanak's brother-in-law, considers Sood a parasite preying on ordinary people. Sood asks all shops that receive the government wheat quota to make a donation of 1,000 rupees to the Congress election fund. The shop owners, in order to cover their losses, are forced to increase the price of wheat, and as a result, ordinary people have to pay more to get enough grain to survive. In his exchanges with Dr Prannath, the economic advisor to the Planning Commission who becomes Tara's husband, Nayyar depicts Sood as a political schemer. Dr Prannath and Sood profoundly disagree on the Congress government's Second Year Plan. Dr Prannath favours the plan to maximise national economic growth, nationalise and develop heavy industry, and follow the path to a 'socialistic pattern of society' which communists and socialists favour, Sood considers it an opportunity for communists and a threat to the stability of the Congress rule. When Sood discovers that Dr Prannath is married to Tara, who was married to Somraj before partition, he conspires with Puri and Somraj to stigmatise Dr Prannath by sending letters that prove that Tara is a bigamist to the special police. Taken together, Nayyar and Dr Prannath'a views of Sood and the latter's behaviour to Puri intensify Sood's villainy and portray him as a man who abuses his position in order to protect and enhance his political status.

उनके व्यवहार की तीव्रता और उस का प्रभाव बहुत बढ़ गया था। उनकी स्पष्टवादिता, हाकिमाना रूखापन और अपने पक्ष की दृढ़ता, विरोधी पक्ष को समाप्त कर देने की प्रवृत्ति बन गयी थी। विचारों की एकाग्रता ऐसी असहिष्णुता बन गयी थी कि केवल अपनी ही बात की प्रतिध्वनि सुनाना चाहते थे।

The significance of these minor characters in the novel lies in two aspects. One is their distortion and flatness – Nehru's buttons and speech, a non-event; the top servants' alcohol and gossip; and Sood's dictatorial order. These specific, often unfavourable and even despicable features of the Congress characters convey an unambiguously critical view of Congress politics. The other importance of the minor characters lies in their limited character-space related to the space of other characters in the character-system. We need to recall the cartoon reproduced at the beginning of this chapter. While it satirizes Congress politics, visually it is still 'Congress dominated' – with Gandhi and Nehru occupying the central space and other Congress villains scattered around. By contrast, the novel *Jhūṭhā Sach* builds a non-Congress dominated narrative which is marked by a balanced distribution of central space between Tara and Puri, and marginal spaces allotted to minor Congress characters. If the cartoon's Congress-centred representation corresponds to and reinforces the 'one-party dominance' in the actual political sphere, [73] the novel formally disempowers the Congress regime by unfavourably contrasting corrupt Congressmen represented by Puri to the non-partisan, responsible public servants epitomized by Tara, and by marginalizing the Congress characters, particularly the most powerful national leader. Such structural arrangement itself is an aesthetic ideology of the narrative critique of Congress politics.

3.3 Conclusion

[73] Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012 (1970), p. 162.

The two novels analysed in this chapter produce a narrative critique of Congress politics, which is an important part of the textual progressivism. Unlike the manifestoes and political essays which often use 'Congress/Congressmen' as a collective term and generalize typical features of their rule, the novels generate *literary* critiques by exemplifying specific characters who are invariably villains without redeeming features, including the lecherous and greedy rural power holders Parduman and Rambihari, the dictatorial provincial leader Sood, the submissive and corrupt Puri, and even 'Nehru' who keeps aloof from the masses. It is their villainousness that provokes readers' critical judgement of Congress politics. Moreover, in such literary modes of critique, the powerful, dominant Congress regime is formally disempowered by the vocal, authoritarian omniscient narrator and by the disproportional character-space distribution respectively. It is by the medium of the narrator's telling and the character-system that their flattened, distorted fragments in the limited zone or space become accessible to readers. In this sense, the Progressive novels generate a forceful criticism of the powerful Congress by the political powerless.

The question of how to tackle this hopeless, irredeemable political situation, then, comes to the fore. Here the novels do not provide a clear alternative. In *Hāthī ke Dānt*, the party in opposition is defeated by Parduman Singh. In *Jhūṭhā Sach*, the communist characters, though making more of an appearance, themselves attract critical judgement from the protagonist Tara and the narrator. In the first part of the novel, Tara's lover Asad, a young Muslim communist who actively champions Hindu-Muslim unity in pre-partition Lahore, abandons Tara because he, who obeys guidelines of the Communist

Party, subordinates romantic love to the communist enterprise. In the second part, his name appears only once in a newspaper Tara reads, which shows that he has married a Muslim woman. Asad's absence in the second part leaves the communist cause unclear, or at least inaccessible to readers. Other communist characters, particularly those who appear sporadically in the post-independence India, act more as enthusiastic propagandists rather than activists. They gather either at Mercy's, Tara's roommate for some time whose boyfriend is a communist, or in Dr Prannath's house, where they discuss the socialist model of economic development. What they do is nothing more than criticizing the Congress and debating issues related to workers and peasants. As the narrator comments, 'debates are simply debates, there is never any solution'.[74] In the novel, neither do these communists form an organized party organ, nor do they carry out any practical action. The fact that the novels fail to provide an imaginary alternative to the ruling party may imply the Progressives' sense of powerlessness towards the Congress regime.

However, *Jhūṭhā Sach* attempts to strike a balance between the disillusionment about party politics and the imagination of a bright future beyond party politics. Tara is an outcome of such imagination: she grows into a self-determined subject by overcoming trials *vis-à-vis* marriage, work, and her own inner self, while at the same time becoming a public servant of integrity who really serves ordinary people in the central government. Another significant element of Tara's characterization lies in her gender identity. Her access to the political sphere generates a female (not feminist)

[74] Yashpal, *Jhūṭhā Sach: Deś kā Bhaviṣya*, p. 651. बहस ही बहस, सुलझाव कोई नहीं।

perspective on the Congress regime. This is how the novel goes beyond progressives' political critique, which seldom points out the patriarchy within the Congress and falls short of providing such a gender perspective.

The fact that Tara matures into a member of the post-independence elite and that almost all Progressive writers were upper caste and middle class may raise a question: is Progressivism a purely discursive instrument to criticize Congress politics? Is it possible for progressivism to be presented or produced from a perspective from below? As the following chapter will discuss, Hindi Progressive novels also attempted to adopt a pro-people perspective to establish a people's literature, a concept that was repeatedly stressed in the manifestoes.

Chapter 4

Approaching the People: Shifting to Subaltern Perspectives

> From both the standpoint of *style and content* in their writing, there must be a depth which will seek to put an end to all those conservative trends that oppose *the interests of the common people* (*sādhāraṇ jantā ke hit*). No matter what obstacles we find in our path towards this end, it is but certain that the future of *people's literature* (*jantā ke sāhitya*) is bright.[1]
>
> —Manifesto, adopted by the 5th AIPWA conference, 1949

> We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic.
>
> —The Constitution of India, approved by the Constituent Assembly, 1949

According to the AIPWA's directive principles concerning the relationship between literature and the people, literature should not merely thematically 'register the actualities of life' of 'the people' and advocate their interests, but employ formal strategies to construct narratives that aesthetically represents 'the people' as well. However, this raises two crucial questions: who belongs to 'the people' who should be represented? What are these narrative strategies that Progressive novels deploy to

[1] *Naya Parcham* (New Banner), Progressive Writers' Conference Number, 1949, quoted in Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970*, p. 240. Italics are mine. For its Hindi translation see Avasthi, *Pragativād aur Samānāntar Sāhitya*, appendix XI, pp. 328-331.

represent 'the people' in an effort to accomplish such an aesthetic aim? These are the questions which form the basis of this chapter.

It is necessary to differentiate between the people as postcolonial citizens in the constitutional framework and the people within Progressive literature. In *The Constitution of India*, the people, '*log*' in Hindi, is a collective term which refers to those who inhabit the sovereign India and share equal status and opportunity, as the second epigraph shows. The notion of the people as the sovereigns of the new state has received much academic attention and developed more specific meanings. For example, Ornit Shani's study of the making of the universal franchise between 1947 and 1950 argues that the people became *voters* even before the Constitution was enacted, and this played a significant role in institutionalising democratic citizenship.[2] Along similar lines illuminating how the people contributed to shaping Indian democracy, Rohit De's research focuses on access to litigation by socially and economically marginalized groups in the independent India, challenging the established judicial narrative that places judges, lawyers, and politicians as the main actors.[3] While these works highlight the active involvement of the people in the state's institutional architecture, they also underscore the role of institutions in circumscribing the people – whether as voters or litigants. This involves exclusions[4] but also a static notion of the people since it is

[2] Ornit Shani, *How India Became Democratic: Citizenship and the Making of the Universal Franchise*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
[3] Rohit De, *A People's Constitution: The Everyday Life of Law in the Indian Republic*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. In De's book, the central actors are those who have received little attention as political actors in South Asian history, including prostitutes, Muslims butchers, Hindu refugees, Muslims who had been evicted from their homes, vegetable vendors, and even the occasional peasant rebel; ibid., p. 27.
[4] As Shani acknowledges, the people of the Frontier Tracts and the Tribal Area, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the state of Jammu and Kashmir, remained outside the purview of adult franchise. For the exclusions in the making of the universal franchise, see Shani, *How India Became Democratic*, chapter 6 'The Limits of Inclusion'. Such exclusions, she argues, produced an ill-defined predicament for the prospect of the people of the North-East and these territories to become Indians and part of India; ibid., p. 224.

subject to institutional arrangements, either of the electoral or the judicial system.

Hindi Progressive narratives, by contrast, establish a dynamic and inclusive notion of the people that differs from the state's institutional framework. The PWA did not categorically define the people. Its documents broadly conceive of 'the people', '*jantā*' in Hindi, as the oppressed victims of social and political injustice. From the first PWA conference in 1936, Premchand, its president, described the people as those 'oppressed, suffered or deprived' (*dalit, pīḍit, vañchit*),[5] a conception that covers a wide range of individuals and groups. Although the PWA became closely aligned with the CPI and embrace an almost-exclusively pro-proletariat stance in the 1940s (see Introduction), in the 1950s it modified those doctrinaire guidelines. The manifesto adopted at the sixth AIPWA conference held in 1953 describes 'the people' as the victims of 'hatred towards creative power, racism and chauvinism, casteism and communalism'.[6] The definition of the people has not only moved beyond the proletariat suffering economic exploitation, according to Marxist class analysis, but is also flexible enough to accommodate the potential 'victims' in different circumstances. Compared to the abstract individuals described in the manifestoes, though, the specific characters portrayed in the Progressive novels concretize and explore the meaning of the people.[7] As we have seen in the previous three chapters, young middle class couple Satya and

[5] The word *dalit* can be read in two ways, either as the Dalit, untouchable groups, or the oppressed in a general sense. See Premchand's presidential speech entitled 'The Aim of Literature' ('Sāhitya kā uddeśya') given at the first PWA conference. Sajjad Zaheer, the first secretary and core organizer of the Association, provides a similar explanation of who the people are: those who were exploited and oppressed, including the labourers, the peasants, and the middle classes, see Zaheer's memoir 'The Intellectual and Cultural Background', in Zaheer, *The Light*, p. 46.

[6] Quoted in Coppola, *Urdu Poetry 1935-1970*, p. 247.

[7] The portrayal of ordinary people is not an exclusive feature of Progressive literature. In Premchand's short stories and novels, for example, there are many characters who belong to the socially and economically marginalized groups, such as low castes, peasants, widows, etc.; see Premchand, *The Oxford India Premchand*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004. In this regards, Progressive literature inherits Premchand's literary legacy to a great extent.

Usha, agricultural labourer Balchanma, secular landlord Manne, and responsible and approachable civil servant Tara, provides a more precise profile of the people. Their shared quality of struggling becomes one of the major features of the people in Progressive discourse. In other words, the Progressive notion of the people covers those who are willing to struggle, regardless of caste, class, religion, and gender.

How to represent the people and 'bring art into the closest touch with the people'[8] is another important issue of Progressive literature. Most of the novels we have examined are narrated by the third-person perspective (Nagarjun's *Balchanmā* is an exception). Therefore, rather than producing 'people's literature', they produce 'literature in the name of the people' since they always have narrators as agents. This chapter makes a shift towards the writings of 'people's literature' by exploring in-depth two novels by Rangey Raghav, *Huzūr* (*Your Highness*, 1952) and *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* (*Till When Should I Cry Out*, 1957). Born into a priestly-landed family, Raghav grew up in the circle of Progressive writers in Agra and he switched his allegiance to social change and championing the oppressed.[9] He espoused a strong Marxist view of capitalist oppression while rejecting a doctrinaire class analysis.[10] It is this broad-minded Marxist humanism that probably inspired him to write about the oppressed,

[8] Amended Manifesto adopted by the 2nd AIPWA conference in 1938, quoted in Sudhi Pradhan, ed., *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, 1979, p. 21. For its Hindi translation see Avasthi, *Pragativād aur Samānāntar Sāhitya*, appendix VII, pp. 319-320.

[9] This circle of Progressive writers included active and established intellectuals such as Ramvilas Sharma and Prakashchandra Gupta, and young writers like Vishvambhar Nath Upadhyay, Ramgopal Singh Chauhan, Ghanshyam Asthana, Rajnath Sharma, etc.; see Madhuresh, *Mārksavādī Jīvan-Dṛṣṭi aur Rāṅgey Rāghav*, Dillī: Surbhi Prakāśan, 2014, pp. 31-32.

[10] In his remarks about how to evaluate ancient literature and culture, Raghav pointed out the one-sidedness of Marxist class analysis by saying 'Marxist critics are constrained within class struggle. But criticism cannot end as such. We have to consider the whole human beings.' (मार्क्सवादी आलोचक केवल वर्ग संघर्ष तक सीमित रह जाता है। किंतु आलोचना इतने में ही समाप्त नहीं हो जाती। हमें तो उस समग्र मानव को देखना है।) See Dr. Sulochna Rangey Raghav, ed., *Rāṅgey Rāghav Granthāvalī*, Vol. 10, Dillī: Rajpal &Sons, 1982, p. 166.

whether as victims of colonial and capitalist exploitation or as suffering from patriarchal and caste oppression. *Huzūr* is written as the autobiography of an Anglo-Indian dog who experiences great changes, from the comfortable life in a British colonial officer's house to the harshness of wandering the streets as a stray dog. The dog's mobility enables him to encounter a variety of human characters, and his narrative represents vignettes of various oppressed but struggling people. Unlike *Huzūr*'s non-human narrator, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* adopts a multiple first-person narration, at first that of a nameless secondary character before shifting to the main protagonist, Sukhram, who comes from the *Nat* community of performers. It is through Sukhram's story-telling that the novel presents scenes from life in untouchable communities, Sukhram's conflicted attitude towards his own untouchable identity, and the collective struggles of low castes and untouchables against upper-caste oppression. The two novels resonate with each other as literary representations of the people with shifting perspectives – the former shifts perspective from privileged to declassed, whereas the latter shifts from middle-class, upper-caste to untouchable – and this makes it productive to read them together. At the same time, the difference in setting (urban vs village), narrators (non-human vs human), and focalization (external vs internal) requires us to pay attention to their contrasting literary narratives.

The shift in perspectives, I argue, is a formal strategy that enabled Progressive literature to approach the people and to make the people's voice heard, thus producing a kind of literature from below. This strategy also provides a literary solution to the contradiction of subaltern representation, a significant question proposed and discussed

by Antonio Gramsci during the 1920s and 1930s.[11] Writing about the subaltern is a difficult task, according to Gramsci's analysis of the subaltern in south Italy, primarily because the subalterns do not consciously keep a documentary record of themselves: they have not 'attained a consciousness of the class per se and consequently do not even suspect that their history might possibly have nay importance or that it might be of any value to leave documentary evidence of it.'[12] As to existing accounts of the subalterns in historical records, Gramsci doubts their reliability because it was elite intellectuals and bureaucrats rather than the subaltern themselves who produced these descriptions and interpretations. Inspired by Gramsci's analysis and consistent with his approach of questioning the interpretation and the ideological and political intention of the authors (often of dominant classes), Spivak proposes the more radical argument that the subaltern cannot speak.[13] This does not suggest that the subordinated individuals or groups cannot speak, but that 'their speech acts are not heard or recognized within dominant political systems of representation.'[14] Gramsci's conception of the subaltern started to be read and rooted in India through the Subaltern Studies project led by Ranajit Guha since the mid-1970s. In the preface of the first volume of *Subaltern Studies*, Guha identifies Gramsci's 'six-point project' in his 'Notes on Italian History' as the inspiration behind the 'revisionist history' of South Asia.[15] The Subaltern Studies

[11] The protagonists of Raghav's novels – the dog and Sukhram the untouchable – as well as many minor characters the novels present can be read as subalterns, who are subordinated either to the authority of human masters or to colonial rule, patriarchal norms, or upper-caste domination, as we shall see. For the discussion of the concept of the subaltern, see Thomas James Langley, 'Victims of the Same Destiny': Italy in the Postcolonial, the Postcolonial in Italy, PhD thesis, Newcastle University, 2015; Marcus Green, 'Gramsci Cannot Speak: Presentations and Interpretations of Gramsci's Concept of the Subaltern', in *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 14, No. 13, 2002.
[12] Quoted in Green, 'Gramsci Cannot Speak', 2002, p. 11.
[13] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', 1988, in Rosalind C. Morris, ed., *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
[14] Stephen Morton, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 80.
[15] Ranajit Guha, 'Preface', in R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asia History and Society*, Delhi:

group proposed a new historiography by focusing on the subaltern domain of politics (peasantry in particular) and subaltern consciousness, and thus formed an intellectual front against the elitism of historiography. Raghav's novels under examination in this chapter – predating *Subaltern Studies* – show that Progressive literature has already deployed the formal shifts in perspectives to write about the subaltern life. Both novels produce a subaltern narrative by employing subaltern protagonists as story-tellers. Such a formal strategy highlights the subjectivity of the subaltern: they can speak for themselves and others, rather than being represented. The transition of perspective from 'elite' to subaltern in the novels, as I discuss in detail, helps articulate in literary terms the call to move close to the people.

In the following sections, I first examine the dog-narration in *Huzūr* and argue that the dog as a non-human narrator presents the fragmentary episodes of subaltern humans from a position of otherness. Such perspective produces a defamiliarizing effect and stimulates readers to reconsider the problems in human society. The shift of the narrator's position to being a stray dog intensifies his subalternity, but also enables him to move closer and witness more subalterns living under different sets of power relationship. In this way, the defamiliarizing and initially unsympathetic dog-narrator provides a comprehensive picture of how the subaltern people actually live in the colonial and post-colonial India. By contrast, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, to which I turn afterwards, focuses on one untouchable community, that of the Nat. Giving prominence to the Nat Sukhram as protagonist and as narrator can be read as a strategy to empower

Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. vii-viii. See also Neelam Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya, 'Introduction', in Srivastava and Bhattacharya, eds., *The Post-Colonial Gramsci*, Oxon: Routledge, 2012, pp. 1-16.

untouchables and make speak about their physical and mental struggles, their victories and their failures. Compared with other Progressive works such as Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* (1936), Nagarjun's novel *Balchanmā* (1952), and Krishan Chander's short story 'Kalu Bhangi' (1959), *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* not only acknowledges caste as the main factor of oppression but also presents both male and female untouchables as fighting against their upper caste oppressors. If *Huzūr* describes human subalterns from an outsider's view, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* establishes the untouchable as their own prolocutor.

4.1 Defamiliarized representation: The dog's narration in *Huzūr*

> It is indeed unfortunate that many generations of us have gone by but we haven't kept any description of them. Only those keep records who have some ambition to do so.[16]

These are the opening lines of Rangey Raghav's novel *Huzūr* (1952). The second line suggests that the 'we' are not humans but interact with them, so that humans could have recorded 'us' but have not done so. From the outset, the novel emphasizes the long-established but questionable dominance of human beings over other categories of beings, and their writings about others. The narrative then introduces readers to the narrator and protagonist, an Anglo-Indian dog named Jack. Born in 1931, Jack, whose

[16] Rangey Raghav, *Huzūr*, Bīkāner: Ālok Prakāśan, 1952, p. 1. दुर्भाग्य की बात ही है। हमारी भी संसार में अनेक पीढ़ियाँ बीत चुकी हैं, किंतु उनका हम लोगों ने कोई ब्यौरा नहीं रखा। रखा भी तो आदमी ने जिसको ब्यौरा रखने का कुछ वहम है।

ancestor accompanied the first British Governor of the Presidency of Fort William, Robert Clive (1725–1774), is initially brought up in the family of 'Captain Sahib', a British police superintendent working in India. After living comfortably in a British family for about six years, the dog is displaced and forced to lead a nomadic life. When his British owner leaves India before the 1937 provincial elections, the dog is given to a local loyalist landlord. Soon after the landlord becomes depressed and eventually dies, and the dog becomes ownerless. He momentarily follows a women sweeper (*mehtār*) and a Muslim moneylender (*seṭh*) but ends up as a stray dog at the time of independence. He wanders the streets, intruding into houses, and is driven away or hides in street corners. The narrative ends in 1951, when the old and starving stray dog comes to see a jail. What he observes is nothing but a change of scripts, as the last line of the novel writes: 'what was "Central Prison" in the British Raj now turned to be nothing more than "Kendrīy Kārāgār" in Hindi after independence.'[17] This sentence echoes the idea of 'false independence' (*jhūṭhī āzādī*), according to which independence meant that the power of the ruling class, despite being transferred to Indians, remained as strong, if not stronger, than in colonial times. The twenty-year biographical time of the dog marks the continuity between twenty momentous years of colonial and the first postcolonial decade, and more satirically, indicates the disillusionment with independence, a prevalent view among Progressives.

The dog's first-person narration of his peregrination makes *Huzūr* a picaresque

[17] Ibid., p. 121. पहले जो अंगरेज़ी जमाने में 'सेंट्रल प्रिज़न' था, अब वह आज़ादी के बाद हिंदी में 'केंद्रीय कारागार' हो गया था, और कुछ नहीं…

novel, characterized by the picaro as protagonist, and by implicit satire.[18] Compared to many picaresque narratives in which picaro protagonists succeed in their efforts to move up socially,[19] however, *Huzūr* follows the downward trajectory of the dog, from a privileged British-owned pet to a declassed homeless beggar in his twenty-year life span. It is this shift in position that expands the dog's range of movement and enables him to encounter a variety of people. The dog moves haphazardly between the homes of British and landlords, tourist resorts, an asylum (following the woman sweeper), villages (with the Muslim moneylender), and the streets. In each scene the dog-narrator foregrounds the contrasting social status and power relationships among individuals, including the British officer or local landlord and their servants, the madmen in asylum and the 'normal' men outside, dominant males and subordinated females, poverty-stricken ordinary people and well-off Congressmen in post-independent India, and so on.

In the following section, I examine how the dog's perspective serves to construct, to use Gramsci's term, 'fragmented and episodic' stories of various subaltern people.[20] First, by exploring the subalternity of the narrator-protagonist as a non-human, I argue that the dog speaks from a position not of commonality but of otherness: such otherness provokes defamiliarization and thus stimulates readers to notice those who cannot speak and challenges their ideas about what counts as 'normal'. The process of being

[18] For the definition and variants of the picaro and the picaresque genre in different western literatures, see J.A. Garrido Ardila, 'Origins and definition of the picaresque genre', in J.A. Garrido Ardila ed., *The Picaresque Novel in Western Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 1-23.
[19] Particularly in eighteenth-century English picaresque novels; see ibid., p. 15.
[20] Antonio Gramsci, 'Third Notebook', §14, in Joseph A. Buttigieg, ed. and tr., *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. II, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 21.

reduced to a stray dog intensifies the dog's subalternity, and crucially it allows him to move closer to more diversified subaltern groups. I then turn to his colourful encounters and experiences with different subaltern human beings, and argue that this series of vignettes allows a delineation of who the subaltern people are within different power relationships.

4.1.1 The dog's subalternity

The dog, as a non-human, is in a subaltern position by nature, a remarkable feature that makes *Huzūr* a distinct novel: the dog is always subject to the authority of human beings. In the first chapter, the narrator explicitly speaks about his 'dogness', saying that 'we have no dignity' and 'at the most, we dig a pit or follow [the master] through his smell. We cannot change the world, and so the human beings dominate us one [generation] after another.'[21] Though acting as the storyteller, Jack maintains his animal features: he is unable to converse with others, and every time he is abandoned, he instinctively seeks a new master. Such in-born animal attributes allow him to be outside human society and to speak from a position of otherness.

The otherness of the dog's perspective brings a defamiliarizing effect which estranges readers from the world with which they are already familiar and which they consider normal. The early Formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky coined the term 'defamiliarization' (*ostranenye*) to define the specificity of art:

[21] Raghav, *Huzūr*, p. 4.

> [A]rt exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the progress of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.[22]

Through its dog-narrator, *Huzūr* fulfils the purpose of literature as defined by Shklovsky, that is, of 'imparting the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known'. The dog defamiliarizes usual phenomena on the basis of his intrinsic dog-features. For example, he reacts differently to ordinary sounds in human society. The title 'Huzūr', literally means 'Your Highness', the first word the dog hears from Captain Sahib's Indian servants. It is invariably the first word that the servants or official messengers (*caprāsī*) utter in any response to the Captain, his wife and even his daughter Mary. This word is already familiar to many readers and provokes no particular reaction. Yet, when the dog incisively describes it as 'a loud voice resembling a loyal dog's barking' (*vafādār kutte kī tarah bhaunk uṭhī*),[23] the analogy ruthlessly reveals the sense of inferiority encapsulated in the word and in the tone in which it is uttered. The sound of footsteps is another example of Jack's special sensitivity. The dog hears either the Captain's 'knocking sound' (*khaṭ-khaṭ*) or the policeman's 'muffled

[22] Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' (1917), in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, tr. Lee T. Lemon and J. Reis, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, p. 12.
[23] Raghav, *Huzūr*, p. 25.

sound' (*dabāke calne kī āvāz*),[24] but never any sound from the barefooted servants. This acoustic presence and absence highlight the distinction between the powerful and the powerless, not just in their footwear but also in their social status. These specific animal traits remind readers of the otherness of the non-human narrator, which functions to defamiliarize readers' assumption about relationship between people.

At the same time, the anthropomorphic features of the dog-narrator invite readers to empathize with him and enter the defamiliarized world of the dog. Empathy is typically an important dimension of the readers' engagement with fictional characters.[25] According to Susan Feagin, 'simulation of another's psychological states occurs when we adopt the perspective of that individual by using our own mind to model the target's mental activities under certain conditions.'[26] In this novel, the dog is endowed with human emotional attributes. For example, he resents the local servants and *munshi* who wrong an innocent young washerman (*dhobī*) to simply flatter Captain Sahib; he feels 'emptiness' (*śunyatā*) while wandering on a dark road. Apart from these mental processes which an animal is not expected to experience, the dog-narrator is also endowed with human abilities to observe meticulously, pose questions and put forward his insightful interpretations. In this way, readers are invited to share the cognition and emotion of the dog. For example, when the dog runs into a lunatic asylum after becoming homeless, he describes his first impression of the asylum as 'a new world' (*naī duniyā*), an expression that equates the asylum with the world outside. In the

[24] Ibid., pp. 28, 16.
[25] Amy Coplan, 'Empathic Engagement with narrative fictions', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 2004, p. 146.
[26] Susan L. Feagin, *Reading with Feeling: The Aesthetics of Appreciation*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996, pp. 87–88.

following, the dog foregrounds the similarity between the inmates and the 'sane' outside. About a lawyer that he encounters, he says, 'I don't think the lawyer is mad at all. He speaks, eats and drinks normally and understands others well.'[27] The lawyer's only madness are his grandiloquent political soliloquies, which the dog records in a satirical tone: '[the lawyer mutters] *Sālā* Motilal Nehru! Huh! Tej Bahadur Sapru, I'll go to the Privy Council, Privy Council… That's it. That was his madness.'[28] For the dog, there is nothing abnormal about other inmates, either: 'some chattered, some sang and some said not a single a word.'[29] The dog immerses himself in thought and comes up with this idea: 'I think that the disordered mind comes to those stunted by the attacks of society. When after suffering repeated blows these wretched people become helpless, their brain gives way. Perhaps in a good society, much fewer people would have a mental disorder.'[30] The dog's reflection suggests that madness is a social product rather than merely a mental illness. Such social approach to how madness comes into being echoes Michel Foucault's view in *Madness and Civilization*.[31]

In the novel, the dog perceives—and invites readers to perceive—madness as a political or social product. Such perspective resembles that of 'Toba Tek Singh', one of

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[27] Raghav, *Huzūr*, p. 60. यह कोई पागल नहीं लगता था। ठीक बात करता था। समझदार था। खाता पीता था।

[28] Ibid. 'साला मोतीलाल नेहरू! हुँह। तेज बहादुर सप्रू! प्रिवी काउंसिल तक जाऊँगा, प्रिवी काउंसिल तक...' बस यही उसका पागलपन था। Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru were well-known Congress moderates and lawyers from Allahabad. Privy Council refers to Her Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, the formal body of advisers to the British crown.

[29] Ibid. 'कोई बकवास करता था। कोई गाता था। कोई बोलता ही न था।'

[30] Ibid., p. 61. मैं सोचता कि इस दुनिया में विकृत बुद्धि आते हैं, जिन्हें समाज के प्रहार कुंठित कर देते हैं। यह बिचारे सदमे उठा उठा कर जब लाचार हो जाते हैं तो इनका दिमाग़ राह दे जाता है। शायद अच्छे समाज में दिमाग़ की ख़राबी आदमी को कम से कम होगी।

[31] Foucault traces the formation and development of confinement and explains its role in the history of madness: As an economic measure and a social precaution, [confinement] had the value of inventiveness. But in the history of unreason, it marked a decisive event: the moment when madness was perceived on the social horizon of poverty, of incapacity for work, of inability to integrate with the group; the moment when madness began to rank among the problems of city. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, tr. Richard Howard, New York: Vintage Books, 1988, p. 64.

the most acclaimed partition short stories by Raghav's contemporary, Urdu progressive writer Saadat Hasan Manto. In the story, Manto questions partition and the madness it generates by portraying the inmates of a lunatic asylum in Lahore, who agitatedly await relocation to India, and who are saner than the so-called sane outside the asylum.[32] Just as the inmates' wonderings of why they are going to be sent to India and where their home is in Manto's story stimulate readers to reconsider partition, the dog's reflection and comments in *Huzūr* urge readers to question their 'normal' conception of a healthy society and madness. How can social pressures and blows affect the mental state of individuals? Is it possible that the lawyer is actually a normal man? What is the relationship between the lawyer and Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru? If 'Toba Tek Singh' can be read as a 'scathing comment on the absurdity of the division,'[33] the episode in the asylum in the dog-narration is indicative of the relationship between the celebrated and the anonymous and the pressure of social forces, as we shall discuss more in details in the following section.

Thus, the blending of the human and non-human traits within the dog-narrator facilitates both defamiliarization and empathy. As Bernaerts et al. argue, 'it is more accurate to conceive of [non-human narration] as a result of a *double dialectic* of empathy and defamiliarization, human and non-human experientiality.'[34] This process includes othering human society and inviting readers to become aware of those who

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[32] There have been plenty of discussions on Saadat Hasan Manto and his short story 'Toba Tek Singh'. See for example, Ayesha Jalal, *The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Work across the India-Pakistan Divide*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. The short story is translated from Urdu into English by Frances W. Pritchet, available from: http://www.comlubia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/to bateksingh/translation.html.

[33] Jalal, *The Pity of Partition*, p. 184.

[34] Lars Bernaerts, Marco Caracciolo, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, 'The Storied Lives of Non-Human Narrators', *Narrative,* Vol. 22, No. 1, 2014, p. 69. Emphasis is the original.

cannot speak, those one dominated by powerful elites, and to reconsider their familiar social order.

The subalternity of the dog-narrator does not only come from his non-humanness, but also his shift to a declassed stray dog. The dog is initially raised by a British family, and his narration shows the difference between his living condition and that of fellow dogs of Indian servants working for the British family. Whereas Jack sleeps on cushions made of silk and velvet (*reśamī aur makhmalī gadde*), the servants' dogs lie on the warm ashes of stoves (*bhaṭṭī kī garm rākh*); whereas Jack drinks milk, the Indian dogs eat leftovers (*jhūṭhan*). Such contrast seems to place Jack in a superior position over the local Indian dogs, but from the very beginning he does not identify himself as such: as he says, 'no species of dogs ever enslaved another species.'[35] Whether this is true or not, his assertion of equality among dogs indicates that he is a witness with an egalitarian point of view. Thus, the significance of this partly British dog-narrator does not lie in the fact that he adopts a superior perspective and in fact he does not, but rather that the dog can observe how the ruling British interact with the Indian subalterns, and can witness the continuity of subalternity from colonial to postcolonial India.

After his British and Indian owners leave or die, the dog becomes unsheltered and starving. Such a drop in position reduces him to a complete subaltern, not only as a dog dominated by humans, but also as a declassed poor who has lost all his power. Though the dog can hardly be read as a representative of subaltern human beings, his new position intensifies his subaltern perspective. It also enlarges his movement and vision

[35] Raghav, *Huzūr,* p. 20. कुत्तों की किसी जात ने कुत्तों की किसी दूसरी जात को ग़ुलाम बना कर नहीं रखा।

from which the novel represents a colourful, diversified collection of subaltern individuals.

4.1.2 Who are the subaltern people?

The dog's mobility over twenty years creates a substantial record of episodes about various subaltern individuals from different races, classes, religions and genders. Such diversity of subaltern groups echoes what G.C. Spivak terms 'situational'. She invests 'subaltern' with flexibility that accommodates a range of subordinate individuals and groups in different power relationships:

> I like the word 'subaltern' for one reason. It is truly situational. 'Subaltern' began as a description of a certain rank in the military. The word was used under censorship by Gramsci: he called Marxism 'monism', and was obliged to call the proletarian 'subaltern'. That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under a strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical rigor.[36]

In the novel, the dog-narration showcases four main kinds of 'situational' power relationships: racial, class, political, and gender. As already mentioned, thanks to his integration of human and non-human traits, the dog-narrator witnesses the relationship between the dominant and the subaltern from a position of otherness, and by

[36] Sarah Harasym, ed., *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak)*, New York and London: Routledge, 1990, p. 141.

commenting on his experiences he invites readers to empathize with him.

The first set of power relationship the dog witnesses is a racial one, between the colonial British master and Indian servants. When living in the house of the Captain Sahib, Jack observes how the British family and the water-carrier behave, 'The water-carrier carries two leather water bags; he is bending because of the burden loaded on [his back]. Mary sees him and calls him Alibaba. He bows to salute. … Sometimes I am astonished: how can these three persons have so much authority! Are *Hindustanis* lifeless?'[37] What the dog-narrator shows on the basis of his observation of everyday bodily comportment – the water-carrier's 'bending' and 'bowing' gestures – graphically highlights his subalternity. So does the name by which he is called: readers are not his real name, only the generic one born out of oriental fantasy, 'Alibaba'. The dog's subtle awareness of human behaviour sparks his curiosity and confusion about human society, as shown in his rhetorical question in the last line. It is the dog's questioning of how human beings behave that stimulates the readers' empathetic involvement with his perspective and invites them to consider the colonial physical and cultural dominance over Indians.

The dog's doubt about the servants' subaltern status continues after he is handed over to a local landlord named Hariprasad after the British family leave India. There the dog hears Hariprasad's two servants' complaint about not being paid, which reveals a power relationship in terms of class. The servants remain fatalists, though, and believe

[37] Raghav, *Huzūr*, p. 12. झुका हुआ, मशक के वज़न से लदा भिश्ती डबल में दो मशकें डालता। मेरी उसे देख कर अलीबाबा कहा करती। वह झुक कर सलाम करता। कभी कभी मुझे ताज्जुब होता कि यह तीन आदमी इतनी हुकमत कैसे करते हैं! क्या हिंदुस्तानियों में प्राण नहीं है?

that they must rely on the landlord. The dog asks himself: 'is there so much baseness (*jaghanya*) within these people? Is [their] life indeed so deformed?'[38] Again, the dog's human-like 'scepticism' invites the readers to share his point of view. Reflecting on an unfair but naturalized situation and asking the same question about why subalterns accept it twice – first in his British's home, then in Indian landlord's – is no mere repetition but reveals and defamiliarizes two sets of relationships of dominance and subalternity. Although the dog's questions remain unanswered, they indicate two possible reasons for the servant's subalternity. The first is the external oppression that the dog witnesses, for example Mary—a member of the colonial ruling class—bossing servants around. The second reason stems from servants' internal consciousness, the lack of class consciousness and self-recognition in lower-class people that the dog's question suggests.

The third kind of relationship is between those holding political power, particularly the Congressmen in post-independent period, and ordinary people. When the stray dog wanders randomly in the streets after independence, the narrative shows nothing more than fragmentary descriptions about the predicament of ordinary people. For example, a guru is anxious about employment, a lawyer is plagued by mental disorder, and a Hindu man mistakes the sounds of firecrackers for the outburst of communal riots.[39] Even the disempowered son of the landlord, the dog's former owner, dwells in a small, dilapidated house and can hardly survive. Upon noticing the dog, the

[38] Ibid., p. 44. 'क्या भीतर ही भीतर यह लोग इतने जघन्य थे? क्या जीवन सचमुच इतना विकृत था?'

[39] Ibid., pp. 109-111. We are not told who these ordinary people were before independence, but they are probably former sub-elites (as the occupations of guru and lawyer show) whose position has fallen with the end of colonial rule.

son shows no affection, but instead he drives the dog away and asks others to tear into pieces the cushion the dog used to lie on in order to make pillows.[40] The son's ruthless attitude towards the dog implies even his difficulty in eking a living. The narrator does not inform us to whom these people are subordinated or how they have become trapped in their predicaments, nor does the dog comment on them. Such pervasive plight across different social locations shows a picture of decay and despair. At the same time, the dog also witnesses some neatly dressed Congressmen driving the former British colonists to visit the Taj Mahal.[41] Such contrast – while ordinary people are caught in, the Congressmen are enjoying at the most famous tourist spot – indicates that ordinary people are politically powerless and have become subaltern in relation to their new political rulers. The portrayal of the entente of Congressmen and the British aptly reflects the idea of 'false independence', i.e. that independence was a triumph for the Congress Party and involved a transfer of power from the British to Congress leaders rather than real freedom and emancipation for common people. In essence, the relationship between ruling and ruled, dominant and subaltern remained the same.

The fourth dimension of subalternity the dog observes regards gender. The dog's perspective on subaltern women is, to some extent, similar to Spivak's. Spivak expands the definition of the subaltern to include even upper class and caste women. In her analysis of archival material on the Rani of Sirmur, Spivak explains that she was nominated as ruler 'because she is a king's wife and a weaker vessel.'[42] According to

[40] Ibid., p. 121. लड़के ने कहा: 'उधेड़ लो उसे। देखो तो कितने तकिये बन जाएँगे।'
[41] Ibid., p. 118.
[42] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives', *History and Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1985, p. 266.

Spivak, even the high-caste Rani is subject to the patriarchal system and the political dominance of the East India Company. In the novel, the dog narrator encounters various women from different social positions, including the moneylender's wife or *seṭhānī*, the unnamed sister of the intellectual Sukhram, and a prostitute living in a mountain area. They make up a broad and nuanced range of female subaltern subjects. The *seṭhānī*, who is left unnamed, is a pious woman. Even though she lives in affluence, she is obliged to serve the religious man Swami Brahmanand Advitiyanand: 'the *seṭhānī* fed him [Swami] every Sunday with her own hands. After the *seṭh* went out, she massaged his [Swami's] feet. At that time, Swami Ji's gaze would rise towards her.'[43] Here, the dog's narration can be read as a critique of gender exploitation, religious corruption, and gullible piety: the *seṭhānī*'s privileged social and economic position is thus subordinated to her gendered identity as a female disciple and the object of the Swami's lustful gaze. Another example is Sushma, a young woman from a middle-class family. When she tries to join the discussions between her brother Sukhram and his male friends, Sukhram scolds her: 'Go upstairs and set fire to the stove. Go! What's your business among men here?'[44] The scene shows how an educated young woman remains subjected to patriarchal norms. Her brother only sees her as a housework servant who cannot enter the circle of educated men. The situation of the prostitute is even more miserable. Neither does she have an identity tag like *seṭhānī* or a name like Sushma, she is only identified as 'goods' (*māl*)[45] to entertain men. The only description by the

[43] Raghav, *Huzūr*, pp. 63–64. सेठानी उन्हें हर इतवार को खिलातीं अपने हाथ से। और जब सेठ चला जाता तो उनके चरण दबातीं। उस समय स्वामीजी की नज़र ऊपर चढ़ने लगती थी।
[44] Ibid., p. 95. 'ऊपर जाकर चूल्हा फूँको। जाओ। यहाँ आदमियों में तुम्हारा क्या काम है?'
[45] Ibid., p. 52.

dog-narrator is 'the fear on her face' (*chehre par sahmā huā ḍar*).[46] In these three cases, women characters' speech act or any resistant reaction towards the men is absent, projecting women as mute victims of patriarchy.

The vignettes narrated by the dog consist of unconnected fragments concerning various people – Indians under British rule, servants in the service of landlords, political powerless individuals under the Congress regime, and women. Such literary representation answers the question of who the subaltern people are and resonates with Gramsci's observation that 'the history of the subaltern classes is necessarily fragmented and episodic.'[47] The dog's non-human attributes and observations defamiliarize readers from what they count as normal and bring them closer to the putative experience of 'what it is like' to be a dog and to be subaltern individuals in 1940s and 1950s India. Such defamiliarization destabilizes anthropocentric ideologies, in other words, the elite representation of the subaltern. In this sense, *Huzūr* constructs a kind of subaltern writing through the perspective of the subaltern dog.

The narration of Indian subalterns from the dog's perspective serves an ironic function, and irony is a generic feature of the picaresque novel. At the story level, the dog, as a character, can be read as a counterpart to the Indian subaltern because he shares a similar position to that of subaltern individuals and groups in society. Using a dog as a subaltern implies the 'dogness' of subaltern human groups. However, the dogs' subalternity cannot be identified with that of human beings because, in the dogs' world, a pack of dogs is not subject to any other, as he tells us with a sense of superiority, as

[46] Ibid., p. 53.
[47] Gramsci, 'Third Notebook', §14, quoted in Green, 'Gramsci Cannot Speak', p. 11.

already noted. Although in fact there is strong hierarchy among the male animals in nature, the dog embodies egalitarianism, or rather the novel projects an egalitarian point of view on the dog. He also differentiates the natural world from human society by saying:

> Our customs have come down to the present day following what nature has created. Human beings call them bad. But human beings forget one thing: that do not live in a society of our making. In our world, we have no obligations towards each other. … But human beings are much more intelligent than us, and they have changed the rules.[48]

The dog seems to appreciate human beings' competence and their ability to make the rules governing social organization. However, 'society' and 'obligation' have implications. 'Society' is an organized group with a hierarchy, and 'obligation' can be an oppressive duty. The dogs' inability to organize into a society turns out to be an advantage over humans. Dogs live in a classless world, whereas human beings have built a hierarchical society in which many subaltern groups are oppressed. This contrast brings about an ironic effect and highlights the unjust hierarchy of the human world.

At the level of discourse, the dog as a narrator is able to recount his own stories as well as those of the human beings he encounters. It is ironic that a dog, rather than other

[48] Raghav, *Huzūr*, p. 4. हमारे रिवाज अभी तक वही चले आ रहे हैं, जो क़ुदरत ने बना दिए हैं। बुरे वे हैं, यह आदमी कहता है। पर आदमी एक बात भूल जाता है कि हम समाज बना कर नहीं रहते। हमारे यहाँ एक दूसरे की ज़िम्मेदारी नहीं होती। … पर इंसान हमसे ज़्यादा समझदार है, उसने अपने नियम बदल लिए हैं।

human beings, traces the marginal and peripheral aspects of the subalterns' lives. In this sense, the dog-narration highlights Spivak's idea that 'the subaltern cannot speak'. The dog becomes the spokesman for subaltern human beings, and this is the significance of the novel: the dog-narration produces records of subaltern groups from a subaltern perspective.

Yet, there are two aspects that need critical assessment concerning the dog-narration. The first aspect is the fact that the dog does not write about the subaltern from a position of commonality or solidarity but of otherness. His narration stops at what he observes. He is not able to enter the inner world of the subaltern, and consequently fails to reveal their consciousness. The second aspect is that although the dog-narration accentuates 'the people' as figures of subalternity, its representation of subalterns is limited in gender, class and political terms and fails to address the caste issue. Rangey Raghav's other novel *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, which I examine next, compensates for these two deficiencies by employing an untouchable story-teller through whom the struggles and consciousness of untouchable subjects come to the fore within a Progressive framework.

4.2 Writing about the untouchable in *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*

Dalit activists have often accused Indian Marxists of foregrounding class as a determining factor when defining 'the people' at the expense of caste. According to Sharankumar Limbale, a Dalit writer and critic in Marathi and Hindi, for example, 'Indian Marxists do not seem to have made any contribution to the development of

Marxism by examining it in the context of the Hindu social system. Marxists did not pay any real attention to the issue of untouchability.'[49] There is no need to challenge this Dalit critique, since much scholarship on caste and communism has pointed out communists' inability to understand the autonomy of caste, and their own discriminatory, and at times antagonistic, attitude towards lower castes and Dalits.[50] Do Progressive literary works confirm this critique? How do they construct narratives of the Dalit?

Most literature centring Dalits written by the Progressives follows two main modes of storytelling. The first mode is a narrative which portrays untouchable characters sympathetically, exemplified by Krishan Chander's short story 'Kalu Bhangi' (1959).[51] Chander represented Kalu, a sweeper, as a wretched labourer and a mute victim who suffers beatings from his master. From the perspective of the narrator, the doctor's son (*chote sahib*), Kalu's life is too 'dull, flat, uninteresting and uneventful' to write about.[52] The second mode of narrative subordinates caste to class. Nagarjun's

[49] Sharankumar Limbale, *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations*, translated by Alok Mukherjee, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2004, pp. 61-62.

[50] For example, Anupama Rao argues that writings of the veteran Communist leader B.T. Ranadive, like those of Brahmin Marxists, stigmatize Dalit parties for being unable to organize general strikes like the Communist Party, and 'betray an inability to understand the autonomy of caste' (see Rao*, The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*, California: University of California Press, 2009, p. 332n75). Ania Loomba, in her study of communism and feminism, suggests that there existed a caste hierarchy among communists: 'while it is simply untrue that upper-class and upper-caste communists did not include tribal, poor peasant, and Dalit comrades in their ranks, as is often alleged today, it is a fact that there remained a distance between them' (see Loomba, *Revolutionary Desires*, pp. 205-206).

[51] Before the Progressive literature emerged, Premchand's works on untouchables showcase his sympathetic stance towards untouchables, for example, the abject and debased Ghisu and Madhva in the short story 'Kafan' (1936), and Surdas who suffers other forms of social oppression rather than that of the caste system in *Raṅgabhūmī* (1925). Many studies have examined Premchand's representation of untouchables and his reading of the caste issue, and the Dalit critique over the 'problematic' Premchand. See, for example, Geetanjali Pandey, *Between Two Worlds: An Intellectual Biography of Premchand*, Delhi: Manohar, 1989, pp. 112-124, Laura Brueck, *Writing Resistance: The Rhetorical Imagination of Hindi Dalit Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, chapter 2 'The Problem of Premchand', and Toral Jatin Gajarawala, *Untouchable Fictions: Literary Realism and The Crisis of Caste*, 2013, New York: Fordham University Press, chapter 1: The Dalit Limit Point: Realism, Representation and Crisis in Premchand.

[52] Krishan Chander, 'Kalu Bhangi', translated by Ralph Russell, in Ralph Russell, *Hidden in the Lute: An Anthology of Two Centuries of Urdu Literature*, Manchester, Carcanet Press, 1995, pp. 47-61.

novel *Balchanmā,* discussed in chapter 1, represents the protagonist as an agricultural labourer rather than an *Ahir.* Readers are informed of his caste identity in the first chapter, but it is never stressed again in the rest of the novel. Neither the oppression he suffers nor his organic political awakening into the Kisan Sabha activist are linked to Balchanma's caste identity but rather to the class oppression from landlords. The novel *Untouchable* (1935) by Mulk Raj Anand, a founding member of the PWA, is another typical example. The narrative introduces the caste of the protagonist Bakha through his occupation as a latrine sweeper and sanctifies his labour by metaphorizing it with natural elements. As the narrator describes: '[h]is capacity for active application to the task he had in hand seemed to flow like constant water from a natural spring. Each muscle of his body, hard as rock…, seemed to shine forth like glass. … He seemed as easy as wave sailing away on a deep-bedded river.'[53] According to Gajarawala's insightful analysis, such beautification of casteized labour 'harmonizes the working body with the elements of the natural world', echoing the Marxist tradition of glamorizing the working body, while it 'dissociates the repetitive motions of a manual and disgusting labor from the world of casteized work.'[54] In this sense, the novel detaches labour from its caste context and thereby becomes representative of the Marxist imperative to read caste in terms of class.[55] The significance of Premchand's, Krishan Chander's, Anand's and Nagarjun's work in making low caste and untouchable individuals/bodies objects of literary reflection cannot be overemphasized. However,

[53] Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, Essex: Hutchinson International Authors Limited, 1947(1935), p. 14.
[54] Gajarawala, *Untouchable Fictions*, p. 73.
[55] Ibid., p. 95.

these two modes of narrative – writing from a high-caste perspective or a Marxist point of view – fail to reveal the low caste and untouchable's consciousness and do not actually address caste oppression, which confirms the Dalit critique.

Rangey Raghav's most famous novel, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, represents untouchables differently. It transforms a mode of sympathy into one of solidarity by 'replacing a hegemonic space and time with a Dalit one', to use Gajarawala's terms.[56] In this novel, the literary space is the Nat's forest settlement outside the village of Vair in northern Rajasthan on the border with Agra, where the upper caste 'I', the first-person narrator enters in order to follow Sukhram, the Nat protagonist who treats and cures his foot abscess. The narrative time begins in 1949, when the narrator's first meeting with Sukhram takes place, and moves back following Sukhram's memory. As the autobiographical story of Sukhram shows, the novel alters the reading of caste in terms of class to one of caste identity. In what follows, I first examine the three roles that the narrator plays in the narrative. As a narrator, his comments directly and unambiguously convey a humanistic point of view towards the Nats. But rather than containing or assimilating Sukhram to this own world, the upper-caste listener and recorder of Sukhram's stories, the narrator's presence signifies the empowerment of the untouchable to voice their own stories, and the process by which the speech of the untouchable subaltern can come to be heard by the dominant elite. As an interloper in the untouchable community and a participant in Sukhram's story, this narrator breaks through the boundaries delineated by untouchability. His practice challenges the caste

[56] Ibid., p. 53.

system and dominant writings on the untouchable, I argue. I then focus on Sukhram's own stories, which can be divided into two parts: first the discovery of his identity, and second the Nats' collective struggles against caste oppression. The process by which Sukhram and his adopted British daughter identify themselves deconstructs caste as hereditary and occupational, and presents it instead as an identity determined by social status and power hierarchy. The collective struggles in which different oppressed groups participate construct a new kind of self-expression characterized by self-awareness and rebellion in order to overcome oppression. In this way, the novel is, I argue, a progressivist literary articulation of untouchability from a perspective that acknowledges the autonomy of caste as a factor of oppression.

4.2.1 The presence of the first-person narrator

The first-person narrator, active mostly in the first four chapters out of thirty-five in total, imposes his point of view towards Nats by prioritizing his perceptions. The narrator initially introduces Sukhram as a herbalist healer instead of labelling him as a Nat, the caste name, in the first page of the novel. Struck by Sukhram's 'magic' treatment, the narrator describes him as an astonishing person (*āścharyajanak vyakti*):

> He gathers and brings *rūkhaḍī* [a kind of herb] from the forest. He does not even explain anything about the herb to anybody but performs a kind of magic, sitting in front of me. Sometimes he puffs air into the herbs, sometimes he looks at the

sky with eager eyes, and sometimes he snaps his fingers to make sounds.[57]

Like Anand's *Untouchable*, the novel brings caste into the text through occupation. Instead of sanctifying manual labour through metaphorization though, this description of action enchants Sukhram. The fact that Sukhram's treatment cures the narrator's foot abscess without the narrator (and readers) understanding how, creates a mysterious and powerful image for Sukhram. After learning about the psychological struggle that Sukhram has experienced, however, the narrator immediately changes his point of view, something I examine in detail in the next section. The narrator underscores the *Nats*' humanity instead of their occupation by saying, in chapter 4: 'I had already recognized the original form of this human being. Undoubtedly, he was in a primitive state of confusion. Sukhram's life was a dilemma. … Those who are called lowly people are also basically human beings (*manuṣya*), and the permanence of their feelings lies in their humanity (*manuṣyatva*).'[58] For the narrator, it is now common humanity that matters in defining and demystifying Sukhram, and untouchables in general.

The narrator's changed perspective marks a reaction to colonial and nationalist discourse on the Nats, i.e., an untouchable community.[59] Colonial accounts produced a dominant narrative which presented Nats as criminals and Natnis as prostitutes,

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[57] Raghav, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, p. 5. वह जंगल से रूखड़ी तोड़कर लाता, किसी को उसके बारे में नहीं बताता, पर मेरे सामने बैठकर जादू-सा करता। कभी उसमें फूंक मारता, कभी आँखें फाड़कर आसमान की तरफ देखता और कभी झूमर-सी मारता हुआ चटाचट आवाज़ करके अपनी अंगुलियाँ चटकाता।

[58] Ibid., pp. 24-25. मैंने मनुष्य के उस मूलरूप को पहचान लिया था। यह निस्संदेह एक आदिम उलझन में है। सुखराम का जीवन एक द्वंद्व था। … ये नीचे कहे जाने वाले भी मूलतः मनुष्य है और उनके भावों का स्थायित्व उनके मनुष्यत्व में है। Although 'primitive' read very othering and hierarchical in evolutionary terms, it translates the Hindi word 'मूलरूप'.

[59] The point that the colonial and nationalist discourses share a common framework on the untouchable society and history has been made in studies on the Dalit, see, for example, Ramnarayan S. Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability: Chamars and Dalit History in North India*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011, and Anna Morcom, *Illicit Worlds of Indian Dance: Cultures of Exclusion*, London: Hurst & Company, 2013.

obscuring these conscious subjects as human beings.[60] Studies to-date have pointed out that this construct of 'criminal tribes' had little to do with factuality but was a product of colonial intellectual practice.[61] Although the Criminal Tribes Act (1871) was revised and eventually abolished after independence in 1952, the stigma of criminality remained.[62] In contrast, the novel does not introduce any Nat character as criminal or prostitute. Instead, Sukhram enters the narrative as a skilled healer and a man in pursuit of identity. Pyari, initially a nine-year-old girl and then Sukhram's first wife, appears as a companionate friend of Sukhram. When Sukhram loses his parents, Pyari quietly accompanies him. As Sukhram recalls, 'someone touched my head with her hand gently (*pyār se*). She was Isila's daughter. I laid my head on her shoulder and began to cry. She stroked my head again.'[63] Sukhram's sorrow and Pyari's affective act reveal what the narrator interprets as their humanity. Such humanist perspective echoes that of the author Rangey Raghav. To the Aryan/non-Aryan categorization, he prefers the collective term of human beings: 'in our country, who is Aryan, and who non-Aryan? We are all products of interdining (*antarbhukti*); we are Indians and human beings.'[64]

Having adopted this humanist perspective, the narrator explicitly contrasts his way

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[60] Crooke even states that the Nat includes tribes which 'are closely allied to the vagrant, criminal races, like the *Sansyas*, *Beriyas*, and *Haburas*'; Crook, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western India*, 1896, III, p. 59, quoted in Morcom, *Illicit Worlds of Indian Dance*, p. 66.

[61] See, for example, Anand Yang, 'Dangerous Castes and Tribes: The Criminal Tribes Act and the Magahiya Doms of Northeast India', in *Crime and Criminality in British India*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985, pp. 108-127; Sanjay Nigam, 'Disciplining and Policing the "Criminals by Birth": The Making of a Colonial Stereotype; The Criminal Tribes and Castes of North India', part 1, in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 27, No. 2, 1990, pp. 131-64; Meena Radhakrishna, *Dishonoured by History: 'Criminal Tribes' and British Colonial Policy*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001.

[62] Morcom, *Illicit Worlds of Indian Dance*, p. 37. For the continuity of the exclusion of Dalits from colonial to postcolonial India, see also Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability*, p. 3.

[63] Raghav, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, p. 17. मेरे सिर पर किसी ने प्यार से हाथ फेरा। वह इसीला की बेटी प्यारी थी। …मैं उसके कंधे पर सिर धरकर सिसकने लगा। उसने फिर मेरे सिर पर हाथ फिराया।

[64] Rangey Raghav, 'Dharma kī Mānavatāvādī Paramparā aur Vikās' (The Humanist Tradition and Development of Religion), in Dr. Sulochna Rangey Raghav ed., *Rāṅgey Rāghav Granthāvalī*, Vol. 10, p. 144.

of writing about untouchables with two other modes. The first mode that the narrator criticizes is that of self-centred narratives: '*they* haven't looked at the [untouchable's] life. *They* stick to their own *established conceptions*. What I see are webs spanned by spiders, with the bigger spider of arrogance who sits and spins at the centre of each web.'[65] Readers are not told who 'they' or these 'established conceptions' are. Yet, as the satirical metaphor of the spider suggests, such writers wallow in their own arrogance and self-centredness and lack observation of untouchables' life. The second mode that the narrator disagrees with is a sketchy approach. He uses the metaphor of dust to stress how even the motion of a negligible item carries significance:

> When I see dust rising, I want to also see how the force gives the gathered atoms to spread. My critics will feel confused because they have never observed dust deeply. They have noticed the motion, but haven't realized the beauty that is in each moment of that motion, which is the dynamism of a living spirit. They look at the result but do not wish to know about the means. … If we do not look at that, we will only call the fingers beautiful but will not taste the sweetness of the muscles, the blood, and the skin on these fingers, nor feel the affection of their touch, or understand the exhilaration of the whole existence via their heat, or experience the sense of the delight that comes from satisfaction.[66]

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[65] Raghav, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, p. 24. पर उन्होंने ज़िंदगी को नहीं देखा। वे अपनी दृढ़ धारणाएँ बनाए बैठे हैं। हर तरफ़ मुझे मकड़ी का सा जाला तना हुआ दिखाई दे रहा है। सबके बीच में अहंकार का मकड़ा बैठा हुआ ताना-बाना बुन रहा है। Italics are mine.

[66] Ibid., p. 66. मैं धूल को उड़ते देखकर उसकी उस शक्ति को भी देखना चाहता हूँ जिसने जमे हुए कणों को बिखर जाने की गति दी है। मेरे आलोचक उद्भ्रांत हो उठेंगे क्योंकि उन्होंने कभी गहराई से नहीं देखा। उन्होंने गति देखी है, किंतु गति के प्रतिक्षण के उस सौंदर्य को नहीं देखा जो गति कि गत्यात्मकता के प्राण हैं। वे अंत को देखते हैं, उस माध्यम को नहीं देखना चाहते। … यदि हम इसे नहीं देखते तो जड़वाद की हड्डियों की उँगलियों को ही हम सुंदर कहने लगेंगे, उन पर चढ़े माँस और रक्त तथा त्वचा की मधुरिमा को नहीं देख सकेंगे, उनके स्पर्श की स्निग्धता को नहीं जान सकेंगे और उनके ताप के माध्यम से समस्त सत्ता की महाप्राण ऊर्जस्वित परितृप्ति को

This highly metaphorical passage articulates the narrator's critique of superficial and rough sketches of untouchables, which fail to see beyond their appearance and apparent state and delve into their inner world or the forces that move them. Those writings depict the untouchable as lifeless beings like a pile of bones instead of living, breathing human beings of flesh and blood. The superficially realist and perfunctory literary writings in these two modes echo the argument by historian Ramnarayan Rawat, who explored the modern history of the Chamar community: 'The representation of the history and society of Chamars and other Dalit groups reflect the often unacknowledged agendas of caste and racial social privilege rather than the actual social experiences—both past and present—of those defined as "untouchables".'[67] Being aware and critical of these problems, the narrator carefully represents Sukhram and his 'actual social experiences' and becomes a kind of amanuensis for what Sukhram says about himself.[68] In this way, his narration avoids self-centeredness and produces a Nat narrative of Nats, he argues, instead of a casteist one. The narrator's explicit assertion of his perspective and method of writing about untouchables may be itself read as an imposition of his own categories, but it is a strategy to make his effort to present Sukhram's narrative and subjectivity in as much as possible in his own terms.

The first-person narrator plays another important role in the narrative, as a secondary character. He relates to and interacts with Nat characters in a non-

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नहीं समझ सकेंगे, उस तृप्ति के आनंद का आभास भी अनुभव नहीं कर सकेंगे।

[67] Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability*, p. 9.

[68] Raghav, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, p. 11. तथ्य उसी के दिए हुए हैं। मैंने उस चित्र को ज्यों का त्यों लिखा था।

discriminatory and egalitarian way. To paraphrase the relationship as it is introduced in the first chapter: the narrator is Sukhram's patient and is cured by his indigenous therapy. From then on, Sukhram and he become companions in storytelling. Establishing this mutual relation between the two characters without mentioning the narrator's caste draws the readers' attention to their similarity as human beings, rather than to their caste difference. As the narrative proceeds, the narrator's interactions with the Nats break social barriers between upper castes and untouchables. For example, after Chanda, Sukhram's adopted daughter, is badly beaten by the wife of a Thakur because she is dating the Thakur's son, Sukhram cradles his wounded daughter and carries her back to their tent. The narrator is deeply affected by the whole event and comes to Sukhram's dwelling afterwards: 'I wiped the blood on Chanda's face with my own handkerchief and unexpectedly kissed that cloth with my lips.'[69] This action by the upper-caste narrator is rather morbid and startling, but is meant to show his kindness towards the untouchable and the sorrow for her death. The narrator is the only upper-caste character who enters the untouchable settlement, and such behaviour challenges rigid caste segregation. The step crosses not only the spatial limit but, more significantly, the conceptual and mental barriers within the upper castes. The intimate contact with Chanda's blood undermines the so-called untouchability of the untouchable. In conversations, the narrator addresses Sukhram with *tum*, the second-person pronoun often used between friends, instead of *tū*, the disrespectful term commonly used by the upper castes with perceived social inferiors. Besides, the narrator also formulates

[69] Ibid., p. 345. मैं ने अपने रुमाल से उसके माथे का लहू पोंछा और अचानक ही वह कपड़ा मैंने होंठों से लगाकर चूम लिया।

requests as questions or proposals, rather than orders. These acts signify what Ambedkar terms as 'social endosmosis' in an ideal society. In his *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar envisages an ideal society which 'should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts.'[70] The narrator's actions channel communication with Nats, and in this way, suggest an end to the superiority of the upper caste and imaginarily challenge both untouchability and caste hierarchy.

4.2.2 Sukhram's storytelling: a discovery of caste identity and struggling consciousness

The bulk of the novel consists of the stories Sukhram remembers and retells. Unlike Bakha in *Untouchable* and Kalu in *Kalu Bhangi,* whose identification of themselves as sweepers remains unchanged throughout the narratives, Sukhram in *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* undergoes a psychological struggle about who he is. His process of subjectivation moves from a delusion of being a Thakur to disillusionment about that identity, and finally to constructing a self-assertive Nat identity. In this sense, the novel can be read as a discovery of identity. This discovery implies a critique of lower caste associations' attempt at self-improvement by arguing for higher caste status,[71] and instead suggests that it is better to embrace one's status of oppressed and fight with and for the people.

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[70] B.R. Ambedkar, 'Annihilation of Caste', in Valerian Rodrigues ed., *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 275.

[71] For example, Chamar and Jatav community in the Hindi belt have claimed Kshatriya status and emphasized their purity by embracing many of the caste Hindus'practices. See Ramnarayan S. Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability*, Chapter 4 'Struggle for Identities: Chamar Histories and Politics', and also Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Sanskritization vs. Ethnicization in India: Changing Identities and Caste Politics before Mandal', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 5, Modernizing Tradition in India, 2000.9-10, pp. 756-766.

Sukhram's journey of discovering identity starts and subsequently links closely with a symbolic image – the uncompleted fort (*adhūrā kilā*), which is located in the forest near where the Nats live. The uncompleted fort is the first Nat-related thing which Sukhram talks about to the narrator. According to Sukhram, the fort is uncompleted because its Raja was murdered by his sister-in-law, who wanted her own husband to take control of the princely state. Soon after the murder, the Raja's pregnant wife fled into the forest overnight. In order to protect her newly-born son, she entrusted him to the Nat community. The boy grew up with Nats, married a Natni, and the couple had a son – Sukhram. Sukhram, therefore, becomes a character of contradiction, half-Thakur by birth, but living in the Nat community. The image of the uncompleted fort then carries a symbolic meaning of 'uncompleted caste identity'.

After discovering his link with the fort Sukhram immediately identifies himself as a Thakur. When he is 12 years old, his father takes him into the forest, points to the 'uncompleted fort' and tells him that they are its real lords. The fort's initial presence provokes a strong reaction in the young Sukhram, and such unexpected news from his father immediately thrills him:

> The real lords of this uncompleted fort! It was as if something was stirring in my body. My blood began running to my head. I felt my temples become feverish. And before my eyes, a dream of rule rose high. Thick, tall and firm stone walls rose high out of the dust of the land; they were as huge as the

uncompleted fort.[72]

The fevered blood and temples reveal how excited Sukhram is about his imaginary identity as a Thakur. Dreaming about his high-caste, princely origin, Sukhram imagines the superiority, symbolized by the 'thick, tall and firm stone walls', over ordinary people, 'the dust of the land'. The shift in Hindi between tenses – present perfect to past perfect –indicates that Sukhram fantasizes about having found his 'lost' Thakur-identity. Soon after, he shouts out as if to publicize his 'honourable' identity: 'I am his son. I am a Thakur! I am a Thakur!'[73] This internal excitement and abrupt change reveal Sukhram's strong desire to be a Thakur, a figure of authority. Afterwards, Sukhram begins to dream about being a Thakur:

> If I am the lord, I will take the Nats to settle in the fort. Then Natnis will veil their faces, no more like this. Others will salute the Nats. … What was I thinking! Nat and salutation? I am a Thakur. They are all low people, criminals, thieves. They will not live there. … Raja! I had seen. He used to come and go in a big motor. He must have eaten *rotis* with brown sugar, because his cheeks used to flush a rose colour. What jewels he wore on his ears! How much staff clustered around him! How the policeman who arrests us bowed to salute him! … I want

[72] Raghav, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, p. 15. अधूरे किले के असली मालिक! मेरे शरीर में एक हलचल-सी हो गई। मेरा ख़ून मेरे सिर की तरफ़ दौड़ने लगा। मुझे लगा, मेरी कनपटियाँ बहुत गर्म हो गई हैं। और मेरे सामने हकूमत का ख़्वाब अब जीता-जागता खड़ा हो गया था, पत्थर की मोटी, ऊँची मज़बूत दीवारें धरती की धूल में से निकलकर बड़ी हो गई थीं, वैसी ही विशाल, जैसे सामने अधूरा किला खड़ा हुआ था।

[73] Ibid., p. 16.

to become a Raja. Ah, Sukhram, what are you thinking?[74]

This interior monologue showcases how Sukhram's attitudes towards Nats shift once he identifies himself as a Thakur. In his imagination, he initially acts as a generous lord who will give comfort to all the Nats. Then, the identity of the Thakur injects him with caste consciousness and distances him from his Nat companions. Apart from enjoying his presumed superiority, Sukhram also dreams of the Raja's extravagant lifestyle. This Thakur-related delusion provides Sukhram with a reasonable excuse for having two wives. After Sukhram's first wife Pyari is forced to sexually serve the policeman Rustamkhan who is a Thakur, and moves to his house, another Natni named Kajari comes into Sukhram's life. As he struggles to choose between the two women, the 'fort' flashes in his mind. He makes up his mind very quickly: 'Women! You are like slippers on my feet. Kajari and Pyari, both of you are mine.'[75] These illusory ideas drive Sukhram to dream of upper caste authority and a comfortable and prosperous life, and also imply a critique of the Thakur's privileges of superior status, wealth, and patriarchal exploitation of women. Although Sukhram seems to believe himself to be a Thakur, he never behaves like that.

Sukhram's delusion of being a Thakur stops at the imagination and collapses when he suffers and witnesses the Thakurs' oppressions. When he, a self-proclaimed Thakur,

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[74] Ibid., p. 22-23. जब मैं मालिक हो जाऊँगा, तब नटों को महल में बसा लूँगा। फिर नटनियाँ घूँघट करने लगेंगी, वे ऐसी नहीं रहेंगी। लोग नटों को जुहार करेंगे। ... यह मैं क्या सोच रहा था! नट और जुहार? ठाकुर तो मैं हूँ। ये सब कमीन हैं। ज़रायमपेशा हैं, चोर हैं। ये सबवहाँ नहीं रहेंगे। ... राजा! मैंने देखा था। वह बड़ी मोटर में चलता था। ज़रूर वह गुड़ से लगाकर रोज़ रोटी खाता होगा, तभी तो उसके गालों पर ऐसा गुलाबी रंग था। कानों में कैसे जवाहिर पहने थे। उसके आगे-पीछे कैसे अमले चलते थे। ये सिपाही जो हमें पकड़ते हैं, कैसे झुक-झुककर सलामी देते थे। ... मैं राजा बनना चाहता हूँ। अरे सुखराम! तू क्या सोच रहा है?

[75] Ibid., p. 68. औरत! तू मेरे पाँव की जूती है। कजरी और प्यारी, दोनों मेरी हैं।

tries to reason with Rustamkhan that his wife, a Thakurani in his imagination, should not serve another Thakur, Sukhram is beaten with shoes and is sent to the police on a trumped-up charge of stealing (chapter 5). When he explores the deserted fort looking for a treasure, he finds skulls and tattered clothes instead (chapter 12). These realities shake Sukhram's dream of being a Thakur. He becomes sad and disillusioned after he witnesses the suicide of Dhupo, a Chamar widow who was raped by two Thakurs and a Baniya. The image of that huge and firm fort now appears vague and dim: 'At the moment the uncompleted fort appeared all black…. Like a curtain of a past age, behind which numerous dramas on this earth played out.'[76] The metaphor of the 'curtain' probably hints at all the under-the-table shenanigans performed by Thakurs. The changed image of the uncompleted fort signals Sukhram's mental shift from embracing an upper-caste origin to criticizing upper caste oppressions. After Sukhram forsakes the imagined Thakur identity, the fort image fades away. He announces this change with an affirmed tone: 'I can never become the lord of this fort', 'From now on, I am not a Thakur. I am a Nat.'[77] These succinct sentences in direct speech convey an assured and definite sense of mental shift.

The shift from delusion to disillusionment, however, is not an easy and straightforward process, but rather a constant struggle with oneself. Sukhram never expresses how much perplexity the delusion causes, but his killing of his adopted daughter Chanda reveals that the delusion of identity is so painful that he does not want

[76] Ibid., p. 243. अधूरा क़िला अब काला-काला सा खड़ा था. ... इसी धरती पर हुए असंख्य नाटकों में से एक गत युग का पर्दा बना हुआ

[77] Ibid., pp. 323, 433.

anyone else to suffer the same fate. Chanda is born from Susan, the daughter of local colonial governor living in the 'Dak Bungalow' in the village,[78] who was raped by a British officer while she lived there. At that time, thanks to their skills of living in the forest, Sukhram and his second wife Kajari worked as the governor's personal servants. Worried about her reputation and that of her family, Chanda's mother entrusts Chanda to Sukhram and Kajari before leaving for Britain. Chanda herself becomes a character of contradiction, of British origin by birth, but growing up in the Nat community. After Chanda discovers her British origin through a letter sent by her grandfather to Sukhram, she becomes insane and falls into a similar delusion to Sukhram's, saying: 'I am English. I am not a Natni.'[79] Chanda, however, never frees herself from the delusion. To rescue Chanda from the potential dilemma between reality and illusory dreams, Sukhram kills her and then cries out, 'she will go nowhere else. … The one who has passed away is not Chanda … She is Thakurani … Thakurani…. I freed her (*āzād kar diyā*).'[80] For Sukhram, killing is a way to free Chanda from the dilemma generated by identifying herself with her British origin. Indeed, Sukhram has committed a crime and become a criminal, which corresponds to the colonial discourse. However, this case reveals that a Nat is not a criminal by birth but is forced to become one under the unbearable mental stress caused by the caste system.

Sukhram and Chanda's discovery of identity responds to the question of who Nats are. Their blood lineage – Sukhram is half-Thakur and Chanda is British by birth –

[78] It refers to the government building in British India, which provides accommodation for government officials.
[79] Ibid., p. 436. मैं अंग्रेज हूँ, मैं नटनी नहीं हूँ।
[80] Ibid., p. 437. यह कहीं नहीं जाएगी … वह जो चली गयी है, वह चंदा नहीं थी … ठाकुरानी थी … ठाकुरानी थी … मैंने उसे आज़ाद कर दिया।

deconstructs caste identity as hereditary. They *become* Nats only because they grow up in a Nat community. Chanda's case, repeating Sukhram's, reinforces the idea that caste identity is a product of social segregation regardless of even racial difference. In this sense, the narrative represents the Nats not as the impure untouchables as defined by Hindu society, but as 'broken men', to use Ambedkar's terminology. In *The Untouchables, Who were They and Why they became Untouchables?*, Ambedkar develops the argument that the untouchables were originally broken men. According to him, broken men come into being when 'a tribe instead of being completely annihilated was defeated and routed. In many cases a defeated tribe became broken into bits. As a consequence of this there always existed in Primitive times a floating population consisting of groups of Broken tribesmen roaming in all directions.'[81] Ambedkar continues to explain how broken men become untouchables: 'The Settled tribes founded the village and formed the village community and the Broken Men lived in separate quarters outside the village for the reason that they belonged to a different tribe and, therefore, to different blood.'[82] In the novel, Sukhram's grandmother and Chanda are 'broken people' who have lost protection from their 'tribes' and have come to the Nat community for a shelter. Their stories precisely echo Ambedkar's theory of the origin of the untouchables: it is because they live in the outskirts of the village that they are perceived as Nats by the 'settled tribes', in the novel the village consisting mainly of Thakurs.

[81] B.R. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables: Who Were They? and Why They Became Untouchables?*, New Delhi: Amrit Book Co., 1948, pp. 79-80.
[82] Ibid., p. 81.

After deconstructing caste identity as defined by the Hindu society, the narrative represents how Sukhram constructs his identity through his struggles for the untouchable as a group. When witnessing Dhupo, a Chamar widow, being beaten by Banke and Chakkan, two hangers-on of the policeman Rustamkhan, Sukhram is incensed and forces them to stop by tightly grasping Banke's hands. Soon after this incident, Banke and six accomplices surround Sukhram in order to take revenge. Sukhram does not hold back but fights against the gang of thugs with courage and skill:

> Sukhram was sweating all over. He was extraordinarily brisk. He jumped up like a tiger and kicked two of them in the stomach. Then he jumped up again and attacked the third on his head with a stick. As soon as the three men fell, the fourth attempted to attack Sukhram below the waist but Sukhram swiftly swirled the stick. The fourth fell. … Sukhram swirled the stick again and attacked Banke on the waist.[83]

This action scene centres on Sukhram and shows his victory over upper-caste men with his proficient fighting skills. His heroic behaviour receives appreciation from onlookers: an astonished Mali woman exclaims, 'My goodness! What a boy! I am going to devote myself to him. … What a man! He split the five wretches to pieces and rolled them into

[83] Raghav, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, p. 120. सुखराम पसीने में तर था। उसमें गजब की फुर्ती थी। वह बाघ की तरह उछलता था। और दो के पेट में लात मारते हुए उछल के जो उसने तीसरे के सिर को लाठी की चोट से फाड़ा … तीन के गिरते ही जो चार थे कमर के नीचे मारने की कोशिश करने लगे। तब सुखराम ने वेग से लाठी घुमाई। वह गिरा। … सुखराम ने लट्ठ घुमा के दिया तो बांके की कमर पर पड़ा।

a *papad*.'[84] The praise from a Mali indicates the possibility of solidarity among low castes and untouchables. Apart from this vocal appreciation, a united fight against caste Hindu proponents also manifests such low caste-untouchable alliance. When more armed accomplices of the defeated upper-caste men come to attack Sukhram, the Chamars, informed by the Mali and others of the plan, flock to the same place. Now Chamars are no longer Chamars, but Sukhram's comrades-in-arm. As the Mali shouts in delight: 'They have come! Sukhram's men have come. Sukhram's companions (*sāthī*) have come.'[85] Sukhram, outnumbered, is heavily injured, but the Chamars crowd around the armed thugs and beat them harshly. In the end Banke's accomplices flee covered all over in blood, and Banke falls unconscious – a collective of self-mobilized low castes and untouchables successfully overcomes the upper-caste oppression. Due to his bravery, Sukhram wins the respect and care of the collective, as the scene in which they escort the wounded Sukhram to home shows: 'The *khāṭ* [the bedstead on which Sukhram lies] was lifted. Fifty armed people [Chamars] were escorting the *khāṭ* from the front and behind. … The Mali woman turned to be a singer and started to chant Sukhram's great performance.'[86] From then on, Sukhram's feat becomes widespread among untouchable and low-caste communities, and they call him more a 'gold' (*sonā*), 'tiger' (*śer*), and 'hero' (*bīr*) rather than Nat.

The narrative of Sukhram's physical resistance constructs a new identity characterized by a revolutionary spirit and solidarity with other untouchables and low-

[84] Ibid. 'अरे वा! क्या मरद बच्चा है! बलिहारी जाऊँ। … हाय-हाय, कैसा मरद है! दईमारे पाँचों के ठट्ठ फाड़ के पापड़े बेल दिए।'
[85] Ibid., pp. 120-121. 'आ गये। सुखराम के आदमी आ गए। सुखराम के साथी आ गए।'
[86] Ibid., p. 122. खाट उठा ली गई। पचासों लट्ठ अब खाट के संग-संग आगे-पीछे चले। … मालिन अब नायिका हो गयी और उसने जो सुखराम के कमालों का वर्णन प्रारम्भ किया।

castes. This new self-expression transforms not only the way Sukhram views himself but also the way others view him. Even though Sukhram and other characters do not claim to be Dalits, and in fact the term 'Dalit' never appears in the novel, the essence of Sukhram's consciousness – self-identification and struggle against upper-caste oppression – is very similar to that of Dalit consciousness in Dalit literature.[87]

It is necessary to note that, in the above-mentioned conflicts, the trigger is the violence of upper-caste men against Dhupo, the Chamar widow. The questions then arise: is this gender or caste violence? How does a woman character react to the oppression? To the first question, the fact that violence against women is also upper-caste oppression of the untouchable reveals that gendered humiliation and caste oppression are intertwined. As Anupama Rao suggests, 'rape, the stripping and parading of women, and other forms of gendered humiliation reproduce upper-caste male privilege.'[88] To the second question, the Chamar widow in the novel also participates in the collective fight, though not playing a leading role. The representation of the untouchable women as active resistants varies from the stereotypes of mute and humble victims or passive women. In *Untouchable*, Bhaka's sister Sohini remains silent after being raped by Pundit Kali Nath, and Bhaka blames the sexual abuse on Sohini's sensuous attractiveness. Similarly, in Dalit literature, Laura Brueck notes, 'using a

[87] Many Dalit critics and writers have discussed the Dalit consciousness and viewed it as the most crucial element of the Dalit literature. For example, Sharankumar Limbale defines the Dalit consciousness as 'revolutionary mentality connected with struggle. It is a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognizing the human being as its focus. … Dalit consciousness is an important seed for Dalit literature, it is separate and distinct from the consciousness of other writers.' Limbale, *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*, p. 32.

[88] Rao, *The Caste Question*, p. 222. See also Vasanth Kannabiran and Kalpana Kannabiran, 'Caste and Gender: Understanding Dynamics of Power and Violence', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 37, 1991, pp. 2130- 2133, and Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, *Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste & Class in India*, London: Zed, 1985.

victimized woman as mute spectacle has been common in many male-authored narratives of sexual assault',[89] and served as 'a basic element in the operation of male caste hierarchies.'[90] The untouchable women in Sukhram's narrative behave differently, although both the narrator and protagonist of the novel are male. In the episodes involving humiliation and sexual assault, the narrative contributes little detail to the descriptions of brutal sexual violence and instead devotes most attention to the struggle of the women characters following the attacks. Sukhram's narrative realistically represents the victimization of untouchable women, with the difference that the female characters serve as symbols of strength and loci of resistance, subverting their normative roles as victims.

The Baniya Banke rapes Dhupo along with two Thakurs and views the rape as revenge on Sukhram, who had earlier defeated him (in chapter 23). There is no startling image of sexual atrocity committed against the untouchable woman. After three upper-caste men grasp her, the narrative focus turns to the surrounding environment:

> Darkness grew thicker and thicker. As if all the stars were trying to remove or cut off the thick layer, but failed. The wind began to whistle in the field, then whirled far away in the sky and uttered a pleading sound. Then, it began to cry as if calling out its kin. The land trembled. … No sound could be heard. Where there is a silence, time becomes eternal. … Why did nothing move, why did nothing wake up, why did everything become lifeless at that moment? Darkness

[89] Brueck, *Writing Resistance*, p. 169.
[90] Ibid., p. 154.

grew thicker and thicker, a darkness no one could cut through.[91]

Time stops at an invisible, soundless site in this passage. This standstill atmosphere does not diminish the atrocity, but rather reinforces the brutality of the sexual assault and the suffering Dhupo endures. The absence of any verbal and physical expressions highlights the 'unspeakable form of the humiliation'. Dhupo's emotion is displaced on the still sky, the stars, and the wind blowing. The thick darkness, the obscured stars, the lonely cry of the wind – all display the 'unspeakable' grief and pain of the raped victim.

While Dhupo's victimized status is contingent upon her position as a widow and as an untouchable woman, her transformation into an 'angry goddess' after her rape constructs a distinct social role that rewrites the stereotypical rape victim. Dhupo runs back to her settlement screaming and exploding in rage:

> Just like the stripped naked Draupadi who, one day, in a crowded meeting, with fearsome cries harshly cursed the masculinity of all the great men and vowed not to bind up her tousled hair until she had soaked it in the Kaurava's blood, Dhupo also vowed that she would cut Banke into pieces and throw the pieces away. … Just like the furious Chamunda, who in order to blow out the power of Raktabija, one day opened her mouth wide from the earth to the heaven and

[91] Raghav, *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, pp. 207-208. अंधियारा और घना हो गया और कोई भी तारा जैसे उसकी पर्तों को हटाने और काटने में असमर्थ हो गया। खेतों में हवा सनसनाने लगी। और दूर-दूर तक आकाश में भागती फिरती। याचना-सी कर उठती। और फिर जैसे आत्मीयता का चीत्कार करती हुई रोने लगी। खेत हिलते, और काँप उठते। ... कोई आवाज नहीं आती। और नीरवता जब स्थापित है तो समय अनंत हो गया है। ... कुछ क्यों नहीं चल उठता, कुछ क्यों नहीं जग उठता। सब आज चेतन की जगह जड़ क्यों हो गए हैं! ... और अँधेरा और गहरा हो गया है। उसकी गहराई नहीं कट सकती।

chewed him up, Dhupo also stood up to destroy Banke, root and branch. Just like Mata Vaidahi, who one day jumped into the flames after causing sin-filled Lanka to burn with cracking and roaring flames, Dhupo was also ready to jump into the fire.[92]

This passage shows the transformation of Dhupo's anger into courage by using the classical myths of the angry goddess. The repetition of the goddess trope (Chamunda and Vaidahi) further increases the intensity of Dhupo's strong emotions; in other words, they empower Dhupo to take action. Dhupo's exploding rage renders her from a silent victim to a subject who can publicize her shame. Standing amidst the crowd, she cries out the bitter truth: 'Banke and the other two men forced themselves on me in the field. My honour has been stolen. I kept struggling as long as I could, but the three of them…'[93] Such direct speech provokes a collective reaction amongst the untouchable women: 'women moved towards Dhupo like soldiers following their commander, ready to sacrifice their lives, come to the field with naked swords. They all pulled up the veil from their faces, like shrouds wrapped around their heads.' [94] The resistant consciousness, thus, does not merely exist in any particular individual or a raped victim's mind, but lives widely and takes deep root in the collective group of

[92] Ibid., p. 208. जिस प्रकार एक दिन भरी सभा में नंगी की जाने वाली द्रौपदी ने अपने दारुण स्वर से चीत्कार कर-करके समस्त महापुरुषों के पौरुष को धिक्कारकर प्रतिज्ञा की थी कि वह उस दिन ही खुले बालों को बांधेगी जिस दिन वह कौरवों के लहू से उन्हें भिगो लेगी, वैसे ही धूपो ने प्रतिज्ञा की कि वह बांके के बोटी-बोटी काटकर फेंक देगी। ... जैसे एक दिन रक्तबीज की सत्ता को निःशेष करने के लिए महाप्राचंड चामुण्डा ने पृथ्वी से आकाश तक मुख खोलकर उसको बार-बार चबा-चबाकर समाप्त कर दिया था, उसी तरह धूपो भी बांके को जड़-मूल से नष्ट करने के लिए उठ खड़ी हुई। जैसे पाप-भरी लंका को धू-धू करके जलवाने के बाद माता वैदही एक दिन स्वयं अग्नि में कूद पड़ी थीं, उसी तरह धूपो भी आग में कूदने के लिए तैयार हो गई।

[93] Ibid., p. 212.

[94] Ibid., p. 214. धूपो की ओर से स्त्रियों आगे बढ़ आई। जैसे अब सेनापति के बाद सैनिक नंगी तलवार लेकर जान देने को मैदान में आ गए थे और घूँघट क्या खोला था, जैसे सिर से उन्होंने कफ़न बाँध लिया था।

untouchable women.

Compared to Dhupo's verbal outburst, the physical struggles of the other female characters further demonstrate the strength and subjectivity of the untouchable women. Pyari and Kajari, Sukhram's wives, exact bloody revenge on Banke and Rustamkhan, who have sexually oppressed Dhupo and Pyari herself. In contrast to the absence of describing the rape itself, the process of the women's revenge is presented explicitly.

After the rape, Banke returns proudly and triumphantly to Rustamkhan's home. They delight in talking about their sensational pleasure with Dhupo, Pyari, and the desire of violating Kajari, too. Pyari and Kajari, sitting upstairs, overhear Banke and Rustamkhan's conversation. The two women's anger rises as they discover the accumulated atrocities, and they hatch a plan to kill the two upper-caste men. After Banke and Rustamkhan get completely drunk, Kajari goes downstairs and convinces Banke to go upstairs with her. As soon as Banke lies on the bed, Kajari swiftly attacks him:

> All of a sudden, Kajari swiftly pressed a pillow over his mouth and pressed it hard. Pyari saw Banke writhe and perhaps even flounce his arms, but soon he grew too weak. Then, Kajari pierced Banke repeatedly with the dagger glistening in her hand; three times she thrust the dagger into his heart, and then stabbed his belly twice. Once Banke appeared lifeless, Kajari stood up and spat on his face in disgust.[95]

[95] Ibid., pp. 227-228. हठात् कजरी ने फुरती से तकिया उसके मुँह पर रखा और ज़ोर से दबाया। प्यारी ने देखा, बाँके छटपटाया। उसने शायद हाथ भी चलाए। पर वह शिथिल था। तब कजरी के हाथ में कटार चमकी और उसने बाँके को बार-बार छुरी से गोद-गोद

This is one of the most graphic examples of revenge in the novel. In a similar incident in the following pages, Pyari kills Rustamkhan with a dagger with the help of Kajari. A series of violent physical acts protect the untouchable women's bodies from humiliation. After her revenge, Pyari says to Kajari: 'you have freed me.'[96] The success of their revenge is not limited to the 'freedom' of an individual body but opens up imaginative possibilities for the emancipation of untouchable women from oppression. The narrative imagines the untouchable women as both victims and empowered victors of gender and caste oppression. Though a work by a male writer, the novel develops expressive spaces where untouchable women can publicly voice resistance and exact revenge by themselves. These women-centred narratives arguably symbolize the attempt to represent the untouchable women's subjectivity.

Yet, do individual and collective struggles on the basis of caste identity and consciousness succeed? The endings of untouchable characters betray an uncertainty about the question. After killing Chanda, Sukhram ends up as a 'criminal' in jail which brings Nats back to the colonial discourse of 'criminal tribes'. His wives end up dying of illness, and the widow Dhupo commits suicide. Such tragic endings envisage a rather hopeless future for untouchables. The blend of encouraging struggles and frustrating endings indicates the progressive writers' uncertainty about the efficiency of the untouchables' resistance against oppression. In other words, a violent revenge does not

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के मारा और तीन बार मूठ तक उसके दिल में उसने छुरी घुसेड़ दी और फिर पेट में दो बार भुक-भुक की और जब बाँके बेजान-सा दिखाई दिया तो उठ खड़ी हुई और उसने घृणा से उसके मुँह पर थूका।

[96] Ibid., p. 233.

lead to a lasting victory over, or end to, caste oppression. In explaining how these untouchables can rescue themselves from the status-quo, the narrator declares at the end of the novel: 'They have the strength to endure pain. With such inexhaustible strength, they even do not consider pain as pain. But only when they know what *humanity* (*manuṣyatva*) is, *new human beings* (*nayā manuṣya*) will stand up.'[97] This humanistic framework resembles the narrator's conclusive appeal in 'Kalu Bhangi': 'I can fashion a new story, but not a *new man*. … Until all of us join hands to help one another, this task cannot be carried out.'[98] However, unlike the definite term 'the Dalit' in Dalit literature, the concept of 'new man' is too elusive to replace the colonial/nationalist social categories. Such appeal also implies that untouchables are less than fully human now and posits a normative humanity of which they are not – yet – part, and places the burden of discovering and realizing that humanity on them. In this sense, while the narrator's humanistic perspective helps him cross the social barriers of caste and untouchability, it still has its limits in providing an alternative to the caste system.

The significance of *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*, nevertheless, cannot be overemphasized. Neither does it steer clear of caste identity, nor does it simplistically reduce low castes and untouchables to peasants or labourers. It contributes to providing a progressivist reading of untouchables from the perspective of the untouchable themselves. The transition of perspectives from the upper caste narrator to the untouchable Sukhram as

[97] Ibid., p. 440. इनके पास दुःख सहने की ताक़त है। ऐसी अटूट ताक़त है कि ये दुःख को दुःख नहीं समझते। परंतु जिस दिन जान जाएँगे कि मनुष्यत्व क्या है, उस दिन नया मनुष्य उठ खड़ा होगा। Italics are mine.
[98] Chander, 'Kalu Bhangi', pp. 60-61.

a formal literary strategy empowers untouchables to speak and to be heard by the dominant caste elite. The representation of the oppressed as resistant and fighting back against their oppressors is not very different from a Marxist perspective, but the novel accentuates the caste identity and consciousness of the untouchable. This acknowledgement of the autonomy of caste makes the novel, I would suggest, a link between previous and contemporary Progressive works on untouchables and the Dalit literature that would emerge and flourish decades later.

4.3 Conclusion

The two Progressive novels by Rangey Raghav discussed in this chapter provide us with an embodied and diversified picture of 'the people'. They crystallize the abstract, vague conception of 'the people' mentioned in the manifestoes through their portrayals of specific characters and their struggles. The many varied figures signify that there is not *a people* as a whole, but *many individuals and groups* who occupy subaltern positions in different sets of power relationship – of race, class, gender, and caste. Indians under the colonial rule, servants of landlords, politically powerless ordinary people under the Congress regime, women trapped under patriarchal norms, and untouchables who suffer caste oppression are all parts of 'the real people'. Such a multi-dimensional representation does not only *reflect* the Progressive ideology of 'the people', but also *produces* who 'the real people' are. This is the significance of this chapter within the thesis: it produces a diversity of 'the people' and a plurality of progressive subjects who tackle not only anti-class exploitation, but also anti-

colonialism, anti-casteism, and anti-patriarchy.

In constructing a narrative of 'the people' aesthetically, what the two novels share in common is a transition of perspectives – respectively from a privileged pet to a declassed stray dog, and from an upper caste to an untouchable human being (*manuṣya*). Such a shift showcases Raghav's wish to approach and represent the real people as much as possible, and makes 'the people' the subject of the Progressive writings. More importantly, the shift enables Progressive literature to accommodate much more individuals into its scope of the people. In this regard, this formal strategy is ideological.

The style also echoes Gramsci's methodology of using the subalterns' own materials to write subaltern history, and provides an imaginary resolution to the contradiction that the subaltern cannot speak. However, the question of to what extent Progressive novels let the subaltern speak remains mute. The dog in *Huzūr* remains unchangeable as an animal, and it is the dog rather than human beings that narrate their stories. By contrast, in *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ* Sukhram is allowed to speak, but in a mediated way. It is effectively the upper-caste narrator who relays Sukhram's story to readers. The narrative, thus, becomes an intertwined mixture of the narrator's and Sukhram's words, tone of speech, and expressions of their inner worlds. In this respect, while the novels indeed empower subalterns to speak on the narratological level, they hardly empower the untouchable subaltern subject to overcome cultural hegemony.

The two novels differ from each other in the depth and breadth of the story. While the dog-narration delineates a panoramic but sketchy painting of various subalterns from a position of otherness, the untouchable's first-person story-telling offers a highly

psychological and eventful narrative which focuses on the untouchable themselves. The dog defamiliarizes what the readers count as normal, whereas Sukhram guides readers into an unknown space and an unfamiliar community. Both stimulate the readers to reconsider the social issues either of power relationships or of untouchability. Their mode of representation of the untouchables in particular cannot be overemphasized. It differs strikingly from the pitiful and silent untouchable of Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand and Krishan Chander, and also from the class-conscious low caste protagonist of Nagarjun. It is perhaps the most consistent attempt by a Progressive writer to embrace a subaltern untouchable perspective. This accentuation of caste identity positions the novel between Progressive literature and the Dalit literature, and highlights a connection between progressivism, Ambedkar's ideology and Dalit activism.

Conclusion

When I set out on the project, one of my primary research questions was: what is Progressive literature? The short answer to that question is that it is a literary trend formed and developed under the aegis of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA), which is also acknowledged and popularized by many writers and critics. However, the major defect of this definition is that it subordinates literature to the institution as a carrier of ideology. Now, at the end of my thesis, instead of defining it, I would rather emphasize the specific elements of Progressive literary texts to answer another question I raise in the Introduction, namely, how can we understand Progressive literature without overemphasizing the association? Prioritizing literary texts does not mean dismissing the role of association, of course. Instead, it means, as I have done in this thesis, identifying the narrative structures and patterns of these ideological novels, and comparing the novels' concerns, system of characters, and literary strategies with the guidelines set out by the manifestoes, in order to show how literature interacts with ideology.

In expressing progressive ideas through literary means, the novels employ a combination of generic features and narratological techniques. As ideological novels, they adopt two kinds narrative structures – what Susan Suleiman calls the structure of apprenticeship and the structure of confrontation, laying out possible paths for the characters (and, by extension, the readers) to become progressive and to fight for progressive values, at home and within society. Building on Suleiman's basic structure

of apprenticeship, I have argued in this thesis that Hindi Progressive novels develop two structural variations: one is what I call organic apprenticeship, which emphasizes the protagonists' growing self and political consciousness while downplaying the role of helpers; the other is what I call a spiral development, in which positive and negative apprenticeship alternate. The former structure produces a narrative that highlights the subjective initiative of the proletariat agricultural labourer in his development (as with Balchanma in Nagarjun's *Balchanmā*), while the latter reveals the difficulty in the self-transformation of landlords, a reactionary class (like Manne in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*). Compared with socialist realist novels in Soviet Russia (as studied by Katharina Clark) and China (as studied by Mingwei Song) Hindi Progressive *Bildungsromans* lessen the role of the Party and often end in rather dismal ways instead of happy endings. As a result, they form a variant of the genre of the *Bildungsroman*. Among the other narrative strategies that the novels employ, the adoption of different narrators produces different literary effects. Omniscient narrators (as in Yashpal's *Jhūṭhā Sach* and Amrit Rai's *Hāthī ke Dānt*) function as authoritative interpreters of political and social reality, and in particular as critical commentators of Congress rule. First-person low-caste/class and untouchable narrators (as in Nagarjun's *Balchanmā* and Rangey Raghav's *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ*) instead reveal the organic development of the political selves and their changing inner consciousness. Non-human narrators (like the dog in Rangey Raghav's *Huzūr)* defamiliarize readers from what they count as normality and stimulate them to reconsider the problems in human society. Apart from the narrators, repetitive narrative frequency (*Bīj*'s repetitive representations of the Soviet photo exhibition), different

registers of languages (*Balchanmā*'s mixture of dialect and standard Hindi), character distribution (*Jhūṭhā Sach*) are all narratological strategies that the Progressive novels use to serve their ideological ends.

These formal strategies are not purely formalistic, but themselves ideological. To be specific, the structures of apprenticeship and confrontation, the omniscient critique, the uneven distribution of narrative space to minor Congress characters, and shifts in narrative perspectives towards the people, are aesthetic ideologies, and thus constitute the aestheticism of Progressive literature. By the processing of these aesthetic ideologies, Progressive novel produce a textual progressivism which reflects and moves beyond the progressive values shown in the manifestoes.

Progressive novels reflect the progressive ideals expressed in the manifestoes by embodying those ideas in characters and their relationships. According to the manifestoes, progressivism is an orientation towards and for the common people, imbued with class consciousness and a spirit of action against regressive forces. In the two, parallel modes of apprenticeship in Amrit Rai's *Bīj*, discussed in Chapter 1, Usha embodies the progressive idea that one should identify with revolutionary communists against the comfort-seeking bourgeoisie and actively engage with social welfare for the oppressed; by contrast, the negative character Raj—who has the potential but fails to develop into a progressive in the end—reflects the need for direction and action. The confrontational episodes in *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* in Chapter 2 embody sets of antagonistic relations between the progressive and reactionary — resistant landless labourers vs tyrannical rulers, and the secular protagonist Manne vs the communalists,

consisting of upper-caste Hindu villagers, local Congressmen and Jan Sanghis. What is special about progressivism in the post-independent period is the idea of 'false independence' (*jhūṭhī āzādī*) and the very critical attitudes towards the ruling Congress Party. Most of the novels reflect, to a greater or lesser degree, this view: they invariably downplay or even neglect independence while accentuating the continuity of oppression and the more disempowered situation of the ordinary, as shown by the dog's changed position and the subaltern characters in the vignettes of Rangey Raghav's *Huzūr*. The most evident example of this aspect is Yashpal's *Jhūṭhā Sach,* which reduces independence to a fleeting radio message and produces a narrative critique of the Congress regime by juxtaposing responsible Tara with her corrupt Congressman brother, Puri, and flattening other minor Congress characters.

No mere reflection, though, the novels go beyond the manifestoes in several ways. First, the novels flesh out the abstract concepts by portraying often complex characters, thus giving diversified literary articulations to single terms like 'progressive' or 'reactionary'. For example, in the manifestoes the Congress appears as a collective term, allied with the capitalists and which progressives should oppose, while the novels portray many different Congressmen, from the local to the national level. They range from the lecherous and murderous Parduman Singh and corrupt Brahmin Rambihari in the village (*Hāthī ke Dānt*), to right-wing communalist local Congressmen (*Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā*), to Members of the Legislative Assemblies like Puri and Sood, who abuse power, to the national leader Nehru, who keeps aloof from the common people (*Jhūṭhā Sach*). Such varied characterization allows us to understand how different Congressmen

variously manipulate their power, providing a graphic account and a robust critique of the fledgling Congress regime at work. By adopting authoritarian omniscient narrators or portraying Congressmen as minor characters, the novels flatten these Congressmen to villains without redeeming features, imposing an impression that the Congress Party is the reactionary force. Yet, there are also 'good' Congressmen in the novels, such as Usha's father in *Bīj*, a veteran Congressman who is a loving father and is moved by the revolutionaries in the Soviet photo exhibition. Similarly, the three types of apprentices in the novels analysed in Chapter 1– urban educated young couple Satya and Usha, illiterate agricultural labourer Balchanma, and landlord Manne—expand our understanding of who is potentially progressive and how they become, while varied oppressed subalterns in Chapter 4 flesh out and crystallize the concept of 'the people'.

Second, while the manifestoes only offer guidelines for the public sphere, the narratives of the Hindi Progressive novels move into the private sphere. Apart from representing progressive protagonists as socially active, the novels also imagine a progressive family and community, a space which Ania Loomba has illuminated in her recent book *Revolutionary Desires* as an important aspect for understanding communism in India. For example, the novel *Bīj* envisages a companionate and loving husband-wife relationship, thanks to which the couple overcome the obstacles posed by conventional family norms and the imbalance between work, political commitment and private life, with the help of the mentors in the larger commune of communists and their families. Unlike the formation of the progressive couple within the commune, *Satī Maiyā kā Chaurā* creates an alternative lifestyle by imaging a united village community.

The protagonist Manne is a strikingly flawed character, particularly in his private sphere since he falls in love with his sister-in-law. Still, in the end he becomes a progressive in the sense that he rejects family ties for the ties of a local community consisting of communists, low caste Hindus and Muslims, who unite together to confront communalism. By emphasizing the family and community, Progressive literature moves beyond the concerns with 'big issues' expressed in the manifestoes.

Third, whereas the manifestoes collapse caste with class, and in fact most Progressive writers are upper-caste Hindus, Hindi Progressive novels acknowledge the autonomy of caste. The most remarkable example is Rangey Raghav's *Kab Tak Pukārūṁ,* which narrates the story of a member of the Nat community from his own perspective. Like Dalit literature, the novel deals with the identity and subjectivity of untouchable subjects and their struggles against upper caste oppression. Even though the novel cannot be evaluated as a Dalit literary work because of the absence of an Ambedkarite Dalit consciousness, it is indeed a step forward in the literary history on the writings about Dalits, for it foregrounds their rebellious spirit and identity consciousness.

Fourth, the patent absence of the Communist Party of India from the narratives is a striking difference between the novels and the manifestoes. While the manifestoes reflect the principles of the Party, and most of the PWA pioneers aligned themselves with the Party, particularly in the 1940s, the novels pay little attention to Party organization.[1] In fact, within the character system of the novels, communist characters

[1] Unlike Yashpal's novel *Gītā* (1946) which falls outside the remit of this thesis.

are often confined to the role of helpers in the protagonists' development or in the formation of a united front. From this narratological observation, we can interpret this particular—and consistent—narrative choice as a strategy to show that only communists can be the vanguard who leads the non-party individuals and activists to become truly progressive, and that individual communists can forge progressive alliances rather than waiting for the Party to step in to mobilize. But we can also read the communist whole-timer as a minor character as a recognition of just how few communists were on the ground in India at the time, unlike the Soviet Russia or China. Communists are even portrayed negatively, as subordinating love to party politics (Asad in *Jhūṭhā Sach*), or as enthusiastic propagandists who fail to undertake practical actions (Chaddha and his fellows in *Jhūṭhā Sach*). Such critical characterization probably betrays a sense of disappointment with the Party, or a healthy critique of it, at least in Yashpal's case.

Progressive literature therefore demonstrates literary autonomy in elaborating and interpreting progressive ideas without being necessarily subordinated to the manifestoes. Progressive literature is not only a product but also an important producer of progressive ideology, just like films and other media. The long-time upheld preconception that Progressive literature is simply Marxist or communist literature is thus a reductive view which subordinates literature to political ideology and oversimplifies literature as a kind of illustration. This study considers Progressive literature as an autonomous/independent agent, exposed to but not controlled by the PWA's ideology. As the four chapters have showcased, the Progressive literary world is

indeed a diversified one: it embraces many themes, including individuals' *Bildung*, critiques of the Congress regime, confrontations against regressive forces, and the oppressed people's subalternity. Progressive literature portrays a varied caleidoscope of figures, ranging from the urban educated to illiterate agricultural labourers and untouchables, from the politically powerful to the politically powerless, to politically non-aligned bureaucrats, and so forth. Such literary diversity envisions progressivism as a dynamic movement towards progressive views, ways of life, and relationships, sharpening one's understanding of the obstacles one will encounter because of one's class status, gender, caste identity, family ties, and lack of education. Hindi Progressive novels also foster an attitude of critique and of fighting against regressive forces for ideals of justice, truth and dignity, and provide a wealth of arguments and role models for the purpose. Thus, we can conclude that Progressive literature is ideological, and more significantly, it offers a two-way interactive process of literature and ideology: the ideologization of literature and the literarization of ideology.

The original contribution of my thesis is that it offers a comprehensive study of Hindi novels within the framework of progressivism, and shows how Progressive literature continued to be a very active force within Hindi literature even after the PWA declined. In fact, the Hindi Progressive novels analysed in this thesis were largely untouched by the demise of the Association. By exploring the interaction between the novels and ideology, the study has shown that the novels both contributed and went beyond the ideology of the PWA manifestoes. They modelled behaviour and provided an imagination of what it means to be progressive and to fight for progressive values

under the post-independent Congress rule.

This study of Hindi Progressive novelists and their works in the Indian context, where the Communist Party was not the ruling party, also expands our understanding of Progressive literature, since most studies have focused on literature in Communist regimes. It also expands and Suleiman's model of narrative structures of the ideological novels. As I was doing my PhD, Ania Loomba's book *Revolutionary Desires* comes out, which illuminates the trajectory and predicament of progressive women and draws on the example of Yashpal's wife Prakashvati Pal and on excerpts from Amrit Rai's novel *Bīj* (here in Chapter 1). Loomba's book clearly shows the need to explore the novels with a greater focus on female characters and to look for female Progressive writers.

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