INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to study the social and political thought of Premchand, a great Hindi writer of modern times. Premchand's works form a literary counterpart of the social and political awakening in India. It embodies the hopes and aspirations of Indian teeming millions for a better life. It expresses the Indian peasant with sympathy and understanding of his sufferings and poverty.

Premchand has written 11 novels (includes 1 incomplete), 3 plays, 254 short stories and other translations, editorials, essays etc. Through his journals he had contact with Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. He was one of the members of the Managing Committee of the Hindi Sahitya Parishad of which Ganeshji was the Chairman and among others were the prominent personalities like K.M. Munshi, Kaka Kalekhar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Purshotamdas Tandon. He became the first President of the Progressive Writer's Association that was established in 1935.

The circumstances in which Premchand was born and brought up were undergoing extreme social, intellectual, economical and political change. So also there was a literary change during the time. Brahmo Samaj and Raja Ram Mohen Roy, Arya Samaj and Swamy Dayanand Saraswati, Ram Krishna Paramhansa, Swamy Vivekanand supported and advocated radical changes in social and religious spheres. They insisted on the abolition
of child marriages and emancipation of hitherto untouchables. Such forces then brought about a great intellectual change in the society and ultimately a powerful consciousness for political independence became more and more stronger and stronger. This brought into existence the Indian National Congress during 1885. Such was the atmosphere when Premchand entered the literary platform. The advocated ideas and ideals of the time did not spare him and through his forceful literature Premchand gave them voice.

Premchand had given light to millions of hearts in all parts of India. The life of this great man of letters had given joy and happiness to countless people and carried on a ceaseless campaign for political freedom and social reforms and gave voice to the deaf and dumb and inhabitants of rural Indians.

It is against this background that an attempt is made with the available material to evaluate Premchand as a Social and Political Thinker.

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