Chapter-3
DYNAMICS OF PROGRESSIVE WRITERS’ MOVEMENT

Before the formal establishment of the Progressive Writers’ Association in 1936 at Lucknow, this movement had started in England. Some historians designate the broad spectrum of widespread political and social reform activities during the period from 1900 onwards as Progressive Movement. This movement was not confined to one city or country; it spread geographically to both Eastern and Western countries. In America the crusade of reform was felt in the farming communities of Iowa and Wisconsin, and at the great urban centres of New York, Cleveland, Chicago and San Francisco. Its presence was also felt both in the purely southern states like Georgia and in a widely different scenario obtaining in the states like Maine and California.\footnote{George E. Mowry, The Progressive Movement, 1900-1920: Recent Ideas and New Literature, American Historical Association, 1958, p.1.} Starting at local levels, the reform crusade made its way upward in the political structure and then finally to the level of the national government. The reform crusades led by different leaders at different places were all varied manifestations of the progressive impulse, which had asserted itself in different parts of the world. In America, this movement acquired a national character under the Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt.

Explaining the complex nature of the Progressive Movement, George E. Mowry has remarked, “The immediate ends of progressive movement were as varied as its centers of activities. In the cities, its proximate purposes were the overthrow of boss rule through the institution of such new political devices as the direct primary and non-partisan political ticket and such new schemes of city government as the city manager plan and the commission form. Its wider aims included the abolition of franchise politics, which under the corrupt bosses had resulted in inefficient, inadequate and costly city utilities, organized prostitution, a lawless liquor trade and general corruption and venality. But an even more comprehensive aim of the municipal movement was to make twentieth century American city a decent, healthy and enjoyable place in which to live. This meant abolition of slums and
tenements, the abatement of crime, juvenile delinquency and disease, the creation of parks, playgrounds and efficient social services."  

The progressive movement in U.S.A was not only concerned with democratic political devices but it was even more interested in economic and civic issues as the regulation of rail roads, the adjustment of tax system, conservation of natural resources and most significantly the protection of women and children both at home and at work. Aiding the historians more directly concerned on progressive politics were a number of scholars working in tangential but closely allied fields. Among the most important of such ancillary works were those produced in the area of what is known generally as intellectual history? 3

For the intellectual background of progressivism Morton G.White's *Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism* (New York, 1949) is a good reference reading. It attempts to trace the evolution of social thought in America through the examination of the ideas of such seminal minds as those of Justice Holmes, John Dewey and Charles Beard etc. The socialist movement was also a central force in some other books. Howard H Quint's, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of Modern Movement* (Columbia, 1953) carries the story only upto 1901 but is of interest to the students of progressivism because of its thesis that American socialism rose more in response to American conditions and thought than under the impact of European radical and Marxian doctrines. 4

In England, the Victorian era closes in 1900 nominally, actually it came to an end during the eighties. But this period, like American progressivism, saw a ferment of new ideas, gave birth to a fresh set of forces in literary life, as well as in social, political and economic fields. This period witnessed a reaction against many of the old Victorian ideals. The new movement had some resemblance with the Romantic revival that quickened peoples' sensibility at the close of 18th century. It was also affected by revolutionary ideas. It was democratic in its implications.

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2 Ibid., p.2.
3 Ibid., p.5.
4 Ibid., p.6.
The early twentieth century tendencies in literature have special characteristics. First, their reiteration of the old revolutionary formula which emphasized the individual. They drew attention to the importance of man as man, irrespective of class distinctions and its reading of "equality" and "fraternity" was a moral and sentimental one. But under these tendencies a new formula also emerged which emphasized collectivism instead of individualism. It was economic rather than moral or sentimental. It did not express itself in a humanitarian appeal to the influential classes to help their poorer brethren but hit them in a more radical way in aiming at the abolition of class distinction.6

Briefly the difference between old revolutionary formula and the new one is that the old was addressed to the community as a whole, while the new to the state as an organic and collective whole. This revolutionary gospel has not been confined to a few isolated figures in prose and poetry; but a compact body of writers drawn from the middle classes promulgates it. These writers dealt with the issues relating to socialism more systematically and logically and less sentimentally and didactically. These progressive thinkers put their major stress on equality, liberty and fraternity.

One of the features of the writings of Progressive Writers is the return of the fiction to a wide range of subjects, to a great number of personages and to actions, which involve whole families and generations. It became customary to group works into series, to follow out a destiny, a theme, through time and space.7

The other characteristic of modern progressive writings is the worship of power rather than of beauty. In its inception this characteristic was a wholesome reaction from the narrow ideal of beauty that marked Victorian ideals. Many of the Victorians imagined that beauty was something merely static. But as soon as it is, restricted, it tends to lose its primal inspiration and consequently its vital appeal weakens, artificiality creeps in to make it a source of enervation rather than a stimulus.8

But the new generation was to go further and it found an effective method to get involved in the movement that has been christened as Realism. This

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6 Ibid., p. 6.
new movement challenged the old moral and social values and older literary forms of describing beauty. Windows must be smashed when you want to let in fresh air. Idols have to be overturned when you want to revitalize reverence. So was the case with progressive literature. It went very fast and covered wide range of subjects. Not only the intellectuals’ restlessness of the time was enough in the context of progressive literature but also the worldwide phenomenon was going through a change.

The period of twenty-five years (1914-1939) between the outbreak of First World War and the beginning of the Second World War offered the safest possible contrast to the official serenity and complacency of the Victorian era. The First World War with its almost overwhelming anxieties, sacrifices and disasters came as a terrific shock to a society that had felt itself permanently freed from the barbarousness of wholesale destruction of life and devastation of property.9

The end of the First World War created as many problems as it solved. The crusading idealism of the war period gave way to nationalistic self-seeking and aggrandizement, The Peace Treaty signed at Versailles, while it brought to many small nations opportunities for political and self-determination hitherto denied to them, was so harshly punitive that it contained within itself, as it is now evident, the noxious germs of an even more frightful world disaster.10

At the end of a decade, the economic consequences of the First World War at last made themselves felt in the onset of an economic depression such as modern world has never experienced. The five years from 1922 – 1927 saw a retreat on almost all fronts. Industry entered a period of stagnation and even crisis;11 taxes increased in order partially to defray the enormous costs of the conflict, mounted to such a height that they not only bore heavily on the salaried professional classes but threatened to wipe out the estates of all, save the most favoured of the aristocracy. A large number of rare books appeared on the auction block and found their way across the Atlantic into the great public and private collections made by American millionaires. With the onset of the depression came new social burdens and

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10 Ibid., p.420.
responsibilities. The collapse of world economy increased the level of unemployment. Further tax burdens had to be imposed in order to maintain hundreds of thousands of families on a dole system that undermined their morale and created a permanent pauper class. As a result, the First World War created severe problems for the big empires.

The whole system, on which the empire had been haphazardly constructed, began to be challenged by new theories of the state and society, by Communism in Russia after 1917, by Fascism in Italy after 1922, and by Nazism in Germany after 1933. All these doctrines made inroads upon English intelligentsia and served further to impair national morale. The attempt of Hitler to create a new European order in which Germany, not England should dominate, brought about a resurgence of English patriotism, the repression of critical political elements within and growth of a sturdy and courageous determination to protect the empire and to put down Hitlerism. These developments, which were taking place in England, mobilized the intellectuals and scholars of colonial countries. They also adopted the progressive attitude.

The major dynamic behind the evolution of Progressive Writers’ Movement (PWM) was the impact of Marxist ideas. In 1875 the Manifesto of the Communist Party was published in London for the first time. Marx and Engels were commissioned by the Communist League to draw a theoretical as well as a practical programme of the party. Marx suggested that, in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and the social organization following it, have formed the basis upon which could be explained the whole political and intellectual history. The history of mankind had been a history of class struggle, conflicts between the exploiting and the exploited, and the ruling and the ruled; now a stage has been reached where the exploited and the oppressed class cannot attain the emancipation from the sway of the ruling or exploiting class and at the same time and once and for all emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction and class struggle.

12 Fred B. Millett, op. cit., p.421.
13 Ibid., p.421.
14 Syed Fazle Rab, Sociology of Literature: A Study of Urdu Novels, New Delhi, 1992, p. 94.
Marx was very much practical in approach and determined that all human activities are motivated and governed by the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. The societies differ from one another on the basis of their economic situation, and are governed by a super structure. Marx considered the ideas as the products of environment, and at the same time capable of bringing a change in social order, but they are passive accompaniment of economic activity. Awareness of Marxist ideas has the capacity to liberate millions of people and give them access to their culture. In the past, it gave them potentialities and a program for building up a society. It gave a technique, which is both a fighting technique and a scientific technique for establishing the society.

Marx rejected all the existing ideas regarding class differentiation in a society and formulated a dichotomous division of social classes viz. Bourgeois and Proletariat. By bourgeois, he meant the class of modern capitalist e.g. owner of means of production and employer of wage labour and by proletariate, the class of labourers who have no means of production of their own and are bound to sell the labour and constantly remain oppressed workers. The continuous exploitation of working class or labour by the capitalist or employer arouses an invisible wave of dissatisfaction among them. It takes step towards organizing trade unions. At times the conflict between both classes result in sporadic riots. Marx believed that the working class having similarity of interest all over the world would increase in strength and overthrows the domain of the bourgeois. These ideas were spreading throughout the world. Though socialism had emerged in Europe a century ago, but in India we were not acquainted with this before the First World War.

Though, the destiny of progressivism is undoubtedly linked with Marxism, but in India, the very idea of an united movement presupposes the presence of different forces, which were working at their own level and within their own sphere. Various Hindi Magazines like Stree Darpan cited, whose themes had been critically analysed by Kamlesh Mohan in Breaking Out of Invisibility started raising gender issues through articles written by women themselves from the beginning of twentieth century. Urdu journals like,

\[15 \text{Ibid., p. 99.}\]
Tahzib-un Niswan (1898)\textsuperscript{16}, Khatoon (1904),\textsuperscript{17} and Ismat (1908)\textsuperscript{18} also came on the scene. But Urdu journals were founded by men and favoured standardized domesticity. They stressed the need for women to be educated in order to improve their house-keeping and child-rearing skills and their role in enlightening the community.

Munshi Premchand was the first on the Indian literary scene, who focused on various social problems in his creative writings. His first book, a small collection of short stories entitled Soz-e-Watan in Urdu was published in 1908, which has patriotic colouring. Dubbing it as an inflammatory piece, the British burnt all available copies. His second novel Prema portrayed the unhappy lot of a Hindu widow in Urdu under the title, Hum-Khurma Hain Sawab (1906). In Pratigya, Premchand focused on man woman relations, problem of Hindu widow and found a new conscious woman in Sumitra.\textsuperscript{19} The name Premchand appeared on his first novel Seva Sadan in 1918.\textsuperscript{20} In this novel, Premchand focused on the tragic predicament under which the innocent wife was forced into prostitution.\textsuperscript{21} In his other novel, Nirmala (1927)\textsuperscript{22} Premchand portrayed a young woman who became a victim of rotten social institutions of dowry and unequal marriage with an old man. Premchand turned from writing in Urdu to Hindi due to dearth of Urdu Publishers. Until about 1916, Premchand’s stories were written first in Urdu but shared with Hindi.\textsuperscript{23} His various stories depict the trend that was followed by Progressive Writers. In his story Nai Bivi he portrayed the characters of elderly banya and his young wife, Asha and a young servant. The servant felt contempt for his old master. Motivated by sexual desire for the young wife and feeling sympathy with her plight, he makes advances to her.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{17} Ibid., P. 110.
\bibitem{18} Ibid., p. 133.
\bibitem{21} Nandini Nopany, (trans.) \textit{Twenty Four Stories by Premchand}, New Delhi, p-10.
\bibitem{22} Alok Rai (trans.) \textit{Nirmala, by Premchand}, New Delhi, 1999, p. x.
\bibitem{23} David Rubin, (trans.) \textit{Premchand: Deliverance And Other Stories}, New Delhi, 1988, pp. v-vi.
\bibitem{24} Ralph Russell, \textit{The Pursuit of Urdu Literature A Select Story}, New Delhi, 1992, p. 201.
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hardships of a widow and a mother of four sons. In *Second Marriage* and *The Actress*, Premchand focused on women's boldness in relation to their marital affairs. Premchand's numerous stories are women-oriented. His admiration and idealization of women is so pervasive that one finds women in almost every story. Mothers and daughters, wives and widows, whores and prostitutes, and sometimes-dreaded mother in law of Indian folklore represent his compassion of various societal issues in a pessimistic manner.\(^{25}\)

Let me briefly narrate the history of the spread of these socialist ideas in India. After 1920 some Indians migrated to Kabul and from there they reached near eastern Russia. When they came back, they imbibed socialist views, opines Mahmuduzzafar.\(^{26}\) These people sowed the seeds of socialism in India. These views spread so rapidly that the British had to recognize their presence and the suspicious persons were arrested under Kanpur Conspiracy Case\(^{27}\). Dange, and other big socialist leaders were arrested. The number of socialists and communists increased. They organized a political association of labourers and peasants with a view to motivating revolutionary movement in order to bring about a revolution in India. With large strikes the movement grew so rapidly that it occupied the ongoing session of trade union at Nagpur in 1929. Estimating the ill effects of rising socialism\(^{28}\), the British drafted Meerut Conspiracy Case when in 1929 in which 33 communists and socialists were held and tried for two years and jailed for 14 years. The British spent approximately Rs. 15 lakhs on curbing these ideas and giving severe punishment to violators with a hope that the harsh steps would create panic among the communists. But contrary to it, the prisoners clarified their aim more clearly and loudly. The youths in large number were adopting

\(^{25}\) David Rubin, (trans.) *Widows, Wives And Other Heroines: Twelve Stories by Premchand*, New Delhi, 2000, pp. IX-X.

\(^{26}\) Mahmuduzzafar, 'Seeds of Socialism In India', *Hindustan* (Urdu daily) March 26, 1939, p.15.

\(^{27}\) With the advance of new ideology of working class or Socialism, its ideas began to penetrate among youths and left sections. From 1924 onwards, a journal, *The Socialist* was appearing in Bombay under the editership of S.A Dange, who become Assistant Secretary and later President of Trade Union Congress. The Government lost no time to strike. In 1924, (under labour Govt. in England) the Kanpur trial was staged against four communist leaders, Dange, Shaukat Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmad and Das Gupta. All were sentenced for four years. The Kanpur Conspiracy Trial of 1924 showed the sharp look out of imperialism to stampout the first sign of revolutionary working class politics opines R. Palme Dutt.

communist views. The case was brought to Allahabad High Court. The court ordered that being a communist was not a crime but its propaganda was made illegal.  

In India, the Russian revolution had become a model to emulate for the workers and peasants. Its propaganda literature brought to India between 1925 and 1929 often hailed the achievements of Workers’ and Peasants’ Government in Russia. In the party’s training camps, workers were told to build a strong revolutionary party just as Bolsheviks did. By and large the Workers’ and the Peasants’ party leaders and communist party leaders whether in exile or in India acknowledged the leadership of the Soviet Communists in the international Communist movement and looked up to them for guidance in ideological as well as strategic matters.

The Russian legacy became an object of reverence in India. During the early years of 20th century, the prevailing situation in India was conducive for the intellectual cultural renewal. It means that the development of new thoughts and culture, which derived inspiration from all sources, was rooted in India’s own traditions and social realities. As a part of the process of intellectual renewal, one can also sense a reawakening of interest in Marxism among the Indian intelligentsia.

It is also important to note that Marxism, which was the product of an industrial society, underwent qualitative changes when it was transplanted into societies, which were industrially under developed. In Russia, Marxism turned into Stalinism and in China into Maoism. Some aspects of Stalinism represented a gross vulgarization of Marxism. The internal metamorphosis of Marxism brings out the significance of interaction between forms of consciousness and social existence. If Marxist theory becomes a force in bringing about a change in social conditions, it is also necessary that conditions of social existence should in certain respects be ripe and favourable for receiving Marxist theory.

In India Marxism first spread as a political programme contrary to the developed countries where it emerged as an intellectual force before it gathered strength as a political force. In India its emergence as a political

29 Mahmuduzzafar, op. cit., p. 15.
30 K.N. Pannikar, op. cit., p.84.
31 Ibid., p.180.
32 Ibid., p.181.
force preceded its emergence as an intellectual force. Indian Marxism was slow in responding to this intellectual challenge. Some peasant organizations emerged out of growing Indian left wing activities based on theory and practice of Marxian socialism, particularly the Bolshevik model.33

Perhaps the Communist Party’s foundation was laid at the Second Congress of the Communist International (Moscow, July-August 1920). M.N. Roy was the leading Indian Communist. During this period a number of intellectuals influenced by communism were engaged in different activities in forming a group of progressive writers all over the world. They were creating literature of Progressive nature.

In 1928, Jawaharlal Nehru visited Moscow. He was greatly influenced by October 1917 revolution and establishment of socialist society over there. After returning, Nehru started propagating the socialist ideals. Consequently, a progressive class emerged within the Congress. Their views influenced Congress; and as a result, it demanded complete freedom in its Lahore session 1929. Jawaharlal stressed the need for reaching the common man. He condemned the exploitation of labourers and peasants by the capitalists in India and abroad. Socialist movement was gaining momentum among the people in different ways. The formation of Progressive Writers’ Association was one of the products of these ideas. There were many more associations, which came into being such as Labour Party, Labour Union, Congress Socialist Party etc.34

Karl Marx also provided a more specific thesis concerning the relation of literature and society. According to Marx, the system of production in existence at a given time determines both the content and the style of the literature of a society.35 The inter-relation of literature and society was of value because it specified the particular aspect of a society and insisted on a continuous, dynamic interchange among all parts of that society. Many scholars representing a wide range of intellectual commitments to Marxist Sociology have adopted this point of view in studying literature and their views have been influential.36

33 Ibid., p.80.
34 Mahmuduzzafar, op cit., p. 15.
36 Ibid., pp.7-8.
Prior to the formal set up of Progressive Writers' Association of India in 1936, the group of progressive intellectuals was engaged in organising meetings at different places outside India, particularly in England. The Progressive Writers' Movement was a new and radical phenomenon in intellectual field, which was called a left-hand evolution by some writers. Even today, we can find such persons who either deny the existence of this movement or do not like it.37 Ali Sardar Jafri, a noted progressive writer wrote, "Recently a Hindustani poet had told a Pakistani newspaper, Akhtar Jahan (dated 14th May to 30th May, 1984) that actually the Progressive Writers' Movement was a propaganda platform of communism."38 But contrary to it, Swami Dev Mahanand, a great nationalist, considers this movement as a pioneer of new social revolution.

The Progressive Writers' Movement was the voice of most conscious group of intellectuals. Their writings or creations were the expression of truth and inner voice of creators. The Communist Party in France admitted a proposal in March, 1966 which raised the question; What a creator is? Whether we consider music, poetry, novel, drama, cinema, architecture, painting or sculpture, the creator? The creator is not just a manufacturer; he is not a mere arranger. In every work of art, there is a part, which is not reducible to a set of given data, and this part is the creative artist himself.39

In this connection, Ali Sardar Jafri remarked, "The movement was expression of conscious and unconscious wishes and aspirations of people in a particular period. These organized feelings rose out of changing moods of time. These feelings may be progressive, regressive or a combination of both. An organization provides an easy platform for the success of the movement, and creation becomes the total outcome of the movement. At time, creation and movement go side by side but it is not an easy task. In the words of Luis Ishtrago when you put ten frogs in one pan of a scale, four can jump out of second pan and two more can sit in the first one."40 So is the case with literary movements, because literary movements in contrast to political

38 Ibid., p.18.
39 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
movements, have slow effect. They are always thinly built. The Progressive Writers’ movement was also of the same nature.

The Progressive Writers associated themselves with the concerns of the growing numbers of labour class in cotton textile and jute industries. “By the end of First World War capitalism had started growing. In this period the level of investment in cotton textiles, produced mainly by nationalist capitalists, grew in relation to the level of investment in jute textiles where there was a great involvement of British Capital. As against the pre-war figure of 356, the total number of newly registered companies was 948 in 1919-20 and 1039 in 1920-21.”41 The condition of the large number of labourers employed in such companies stirred the socialist views. Intellectuals, writers and leaders came out highlighting their plight.

Fascism was also rising in those days and it was a setback to the freedom of expression of views by the writers. Therefore, for the freedom of thought, a proclamation was brought out under the leadership of Romain Rolland of France, who was a friend of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindra Nath Tagore. This proclamation was signed by Maxim Gorky, Henry Barhouse, Bertrand Russell, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Anand Coomar Swami etc. This was a step toward Progressive Writers’ Movement. In August 1921 an organization of workers was formed in Berlin under the presidency of Cleres Taxon. It also included personalities like George Bernard Shaw, Henry Barbouse, Martin R. Santaxo, A. France and many others.

In 1923, two workers of a mine in Rheinsch Westphalia area of West Germany brought forth an action-oriented commission against the dangers of First World War and fascism. Cleres Taxon and Henry Barbouse were deeply involved in this venture. In 1924, a Conference of the representatives of several anti-imperial organizations was held in Berlin. Consequently, an International Congress was organized at Brussels on 10th February 1927 with the object of making a platform against the colonial exploitation. Jawahararl Nehru, Barkatullah Khan and Virender Nath Chattopadhyay participated in this Congress.42 It was also attended by the British and the Chinese representatives. In 1931, this platform appealed to the intellectuals not to associate in the disruptive activities. In 1933, a Congress of anti fascist forces

was organized in Paris. Communists, socialists and democratic progressive thinkers attended it. Another International Congress was also held in Paris in 1935 against the impending dangers of war and fascism. 43

An International Conference of writers started functioning for the protection of culture; it was the forum of Progressive Writers. Maxim Gorky, E.M.Foster, Andre Malraux, Romain Rolland, Thomas Mann etc. were the members of this conference. Boris Pasternak from Soviet Union, representatives from Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, China, Japan, Iran, Turkey and Arab also gathered. From India Sajjad Zaheer and Mulk Raj Anand participated in this conference. They were the young writers in the meeting.44

Writing about the conference, Sajjad Zaheer remarked that the meeting, which was held at Balbalbe in Paris, had great historical significance in literary field. It was the first occasion when writers from every civilized country gathered at one place to discuss literature and realized the need to protect literature from old beliefs, conservatism and priestly clutches and to organise an organisation of progressive writers. It was the only way by which they could help the masses and make progress. They could encourage progressive writings and protect themselves from warlike situation.45

The gatherings and meetings of this International Conference were held for several days in Paris. Thousands of people attended the open gatherings. The hall, in which the meetings were organized, became overcrowded although the entry was made by ticket only. One of its most important features was that the majority of audience was from workers’ organizations. By their presence, perhaps, they wanted to show the specific and newly created relationship between writers and masses. In the capitalist era the intellectuals had gone away from the masses.46

In Urdu, the literature created during twenties and thirties, articulated the growing emotional bond between the writer and the oppressed section of society especially women. Besides, it demonstrated both the rising note of protest against the foreign yoke and anger with the internal social system based upon the convenience of the privileged. In 1932 an anthology of ten stories in Urdu entitled *Angare* was published from Lucknow.

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43 Ibid., p. 27.
44 Ibid., p. 27.
45 Ibid., p. 28.
46 Ibid., p. 28.
The Progressive Writers proved the potential of their pen by covering almost all social evils.

The publication of *Angare* became the opening salvo of the Urdu Progressive Writers’ Movement. In this, two stories *Dilli Ki Sair* (A Visit to Delhi) and *Purde Ke Pichhe* (Behind the veil) were contributed by Rashid Jahan, a doctor by profession; five stories were by Sajjad Zaheer (1905-1973), an Oxford student, a staunch communist and a force behind PWM and one by Mahmuduzzafar (1903-1956), who was also Oxford-educated and a well known journalist, two by Ahmad Ali (1910-1994), who is best known as the author of ‘Twilight in Delhi.’ The stories in this book were considered a challenge to conservative society and orthodox religious views. These authors, under the influence of communism set a new trend in literature which turned away from sentimental language, romantic expressions and capitalism. It addressed the problem of middle and lower class society of the oppressed labourer and women. In *Angare*, Sajjad Zaheer’s stories *Nind Nahin Aati* and *Jannat Ki Basarat* (Vision of Heaven) openly talked about sexual issues and thus gave a severe blow to the conservatives. The book created an uproar and the authors were identified as rebels. Listening to the outcry by religious leaders, the UP Government banned the book.

It is evident that the growth of Progressive ideas was multi-focal in different countries. In America, the progressivism was concerned with economic and civil issues while in Europe, it gave birth to new ideas in literary as well as social, political and economic fields. In Russia, it was basically moved by economic issues under the impact of Marx. In India various social issues were being highlighted by the writers under the foreign rule from the very beginning of twentieth century. However, the impact of Russian Revolution and democratic expression of ideas in Europe gave strength to the socially conscious group of intellectuals to bring forth a organized movement. Consequently, the Progressive Writers’ Association in India came into being in 1936 by the efforts of Sajjad Zaheer and Rashid Jahan. We shall discuss the activities and objectives of PWA in detail in the next chapter.

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