CHAPTER I.

LITERATURE AND POLITICS.

Literature is the conscious apprehension of the unconscious ecstasy of all created things. It is one process to perceive this ecstasy, another to be able to communicate it. When a writer tells of something he has experienced, he describes his own experience; but to the reader, it appears that his words represent an experience known and felt by him. It would thus be more appropriate to say that literature represents things which may have been felt by many, but are expressed by a few only. A greater emphasis on expression or representation makes a tremendous difference in the writing as well as evaluation of literature. The literature in which the subjective element is paramount expresses the author’s mind or his mood or temperament and this subjectivity ultimately leads to romanticism wherein what the author felt is the important thing. If, on the other hand, the emphasis is laid more on the objective element and literature is regarded as a method of representing a thing to the reader, it would lead to realism in which the substance exhibited is the important thing. Both aspects - expression of the mood and representation of objective reality - are true, but neither is the whole truth. The function of literature as the communication of certain experiences, inclusive of both the above-mentioned aspects, cannot be over-emphasised. The primary function of art, therefore, is to establish the medium of communication between the author and the reader.

Self-expression, representation and communication being the essence of literature, it is defined as consisting of 'Great Books' which, whatever their subject, are 'notable
for literary form or expression'. In this definition the emphasis is either on aesthetic worth alone, or aesthetic worth combined with general intellectual excellence. In the realms of poetry, drama and fiction, the greatest works are selected on the basis of aesthetic excellence or the beauty of expression. This is a general working definition of literature. When it is said that a book 'is not literature' it generally means that it has no aesthetic value; while when a book on history, politics, religion, etc., is considered as literature, it means that it has got aesthetic value. According to this definition literature consists of that imaginative type of writing in which the writers have made use of all the resources of language and power of words for the expression of various aspects of man's experience. It is appropriate to describe literature as imaginative writing, because it is only through the faculty of imagination that a writer can have all sorts of experiences, and thus be in harmony with the everbeating pulse of life.

Since experience is the substance of literature, everything that can be experienced by man in life, for the sake of expression becomes the subject matter of literature. Thus the scope of literature is illimitable; and wherever there is life, there is the possibility of pure experience, and so of literature. This experience can be intellectual as well as emotional – the main criterion is that it must be satisfying in itself, and not cater to something beyond and outside it. The writer has not merely to give to the reader what he has experienced, or how the experience came to him, but he must also transfer it from his mind to the reader's. His experience may be actual or a sort of day-dreaming, but the faculty of imagination can transmute it into something concrete and definite
and transmit it to the reader. By means of his imagination
the writer can bring his experience to life and communicate
it to the reader as if he has recently plucked it out of the
flux of life.

Literature is not an autotelic activity, it always
has an end in view although a great literary work may not
be conscious of it. 'Noble and profound application of ideas
to life' says Matthew Arnold, "is one of the most essential
parts of poetic greatness". It is truism to say that there is
an intimate connection between literature and life. It is,
in fact, life which is the subject-matter of literature; or,
in other words, life provides the raw material which the writer
moulds into an artistic form. This life which is the raw
material of literature is expressed in a work of art in terms
of characters and those characters cannot be viewed as insular
figures because of the social conditions of the time, the milieu
of the class to which they belong and the level of political
consciousness of the country. Though it cannot be denied that
the idiosyncrasies of the characters and the social and poli-
tical aspects of the time are so closely inter-woven in the
texture of a work of art that it looks like an organic whole,
yet to the vigilant eye all these component parts are separate
identities.

"The true Marxist function of literary criticism is
social analysis. Art is not a driving force, but the compression
of a class viewpoint. To understand an artist is to discover
the social milieu or class which he represents, to analyse
the nuances of interest and attitude within that class which
may be reflected in his writing. Objectivity in historical
analysis is the merit of literary critic". It can be deduced
from this that literature is intimately related not only to life but to society as well. Society influences literature in many ways and the relationship of literature to Society is integral and pervasive. In fact the range of social influences on literature is as broad as the entire range of operative social forces; the prevailing system of social organisation— including the class structure, the economic system, the political organisation and the deeply rooted institutions; the dominant ideas; the characteristic emotional tone; the sense of the past and the pattern of the future; the driving aspirations and 'myths' and their relation to the contemporary realities. There is nothing in the compass of social life that does not play its part — small or large, directly or by deflection, immediately or by varying removes — in giving literature the impress of its surrounding world. Society is itself a very complex phenomenon; it has different aspects and the literature of an age cannot give all the aspects in the unified form. Some aspects of the society are slightly touched, some more elaborately dealt with and the main current of the age becomes the bed rock of the literature of a particular period. Now politics is such an aspect which has its influences on all the sectors of society. It would be recalled that since the dawn of civilization, the political phases of all the periods have found their way into the literature of those periods.

It is not easy to describe as to what constitutes the political factor, since the conception of politics varies from age to age. A foreign power invades a country and the people of that country unite to face the common foe. This

1 Plekhanov: The Aesthetic theory, 1880 'An essay'
struggle is manifested in the literature of that country. Or a country has been subjugated by an alien power; different sections of the people of that country assemble on a common platform and devise ways and means of getting rid of the foreign yoke. These people form associations, societies and parties in order to give momentum to their struggle and bring about political consciousness among the masses. Then there is a third political phase; a country is independent but there is some unrest among the people. In democratic countries like U.K., U.S.A. and India, there are different political parties which have their own programmes and policies. The writers who align themselves with the political (including social and economic) conceptions of these parties, create literature in order to advance their points of view.

Before proceeding to enumerate the political movements in India and to trace their influence on Hindi literature, it would be worthwhile if an effort is made to clear the cob-web which has gathered around the notions of political writings and the writings which bear the political impact. The author of political writings is concerned solely with the popularisation of facts, ideas and emotions with which he is familiar. He uses catch-phrases and slogans to produce the desired effect on the minds of his public. The cause which he is serving may happen to be good or bad, momentous or trivial. Of course efficient propaganda in a good cause does produce a development of experience in the public in the sense that the people become familiar with a new way of looking at things. It is, therefore, in a sense creative. But if in the writer himself, it is not expression of developing experience,
and the activity of producing it does not further develop his experience; however, well he does his job, he is merely using sound advertising technique. But in literature which bears political impact, the idea to be propagated is still alive and growing in the writer's mind. It is a creative influence irradiating and transforming his experience. He is dominated by it, possessed by it. It is a growing shoot which ramifies through his mind. And since he also has an aptitude for verbal expression, he is able to communicate to his public not merely certain ideas, dried and salted and conveniently packed, but a portion which may transform their whole attitude to life.

The literature which shall be dealt with in the following pages is that literature which has mainly been influenced by the political movements but whose primary function is to delight. This literature embodies all such writings which above all, give us aesthetic pleasure and whatever else is derived out of it is secondary to this primary function. And what is it which is achieved after the saturation of the aesthetic sense? It is nothing else but the awareness of life and its many-sidedness. Now life has many facets and a writer is usually fascinated with one or two aspects of life because it is not usually possible to grasp the whole panorama of life. This attitude towards life is determined by the social forces which are current at the time when the writer is in the formative stage. A writer is the creature of social forces before he is able to create literature. His works are therefore the echo of social influences, and who can deny that these social influences embody to a great degree the political consciousness
The belief in art for art's sake arises wherever the artist is out of harmony with his social environments.

In the re-issue of 'The Sacred Wood' T.S. Eliot in his Introduction says that mere literary criticism was ceasing to have the importance it had for him when he first wrote that book; and he went on to suggest that he found it more important, in future, to view literature in its historical and social environment, to consider it as an expression of society. As a result of this suggestion of T.S. Eliot, there is a marked tendency on the part of the younger writers to keep in touch with the significant movements of the present time and none can deny that this is very good thing provided that these sympathies are spontaneous and not dogmatically accepted.