FICTION
CHAPTER SIXTH

NOVEL - 1906-1919.

Poetry was almost the only literary form up to the end of the 19th century. Its themes were of a set type and the form conventional. The complexities of thought and the labyrinths of the desires of common people did not find their way in literature. During the 18th century the maelstrom of social, political and cultural currents and cross-currents made it imperative for the litterateurs to use the vehicles of prose for self expression. The development of prose which took place at this stage was a natural result of changed conditions and of new demands upon literature. At the dawn of the modern age, new genres of literature like drama, novel, short story which were unknown in the past appeared on the literary scene. Drama made a rapid progress whereas novel and short story took some time to compete with it.

It was under the Western influence that the mould of novel was broadened. In the earliest stage of its growth the tendency in fiction was chiefly romantic. Devkinandan Khatri in 'Chandra Kanta' (1891) describes how a romantic prince falls in love with a beautiful princess and how obstacles are placed in the way of their love which eventually emerges victorious and they are happily married. In the 20th century the poverty-stricken conditions of the Indian peasants and labourers and the exploitations by the bureaucratic Government and the capitalists, had given rise to the political movements of the Peasants, the Swadeshi, the Boycott, the Non-cooperation and the Satyagraha. The aim of all these political movements was the attainment of Home Rule in India so that the lot of the common man might be improved. Due to the influence
of these movements the tendency towards realism became dominant in literature and specially in fiction. The authors began to write about the real man instead of any imaginary romantic prince or princess. The literature of the 19th century usually wandered in the realm of fancy but the 20th century literature became close to the common man. It began to tell the stories of real life. The Russian Revolution and the Marxist Movement, the scientific and utilitarian outlook of life, and the political movements sponsored by the Congress, paved the way for realism in literature (especially novel and story).

The first novel which can claim to have the tendency towards realism, is 'Prikashaguru'. It portrays the lives of merchants and traders of the age. The author of this novel Shrinivasdas was born in a merchant family and he in his novel represented the ethos of the middle class. Kharatendu Harishchandra was greatly influenced by the political conditions of the time in which he lived. He was a lover of the ancient glory of the Motherland and a patriot who was genuinely aggrieved at the prevailing state of affairs. He has expressed his thought in the form of poetry and drama.

Fiction could not be developed in his period. The primary object of the fiction of that period was the entertainment of the reader. Detective, romantic and didactic fiction was written in that age. Devkinandan Khatri, Kishorilal Goswami and Gopalram Gahmari wrote romantic fiction. All of them created a world of magic, and charm of love and romance, of thrills and adventures. They satisfied the readers' craving for sensation and wonder.¹ The political movements of Jagritikal changed the point of view of the writers. Now they began to

¹ Indranath Madan - Premchand - PP.37-38
think that the object of fiction was not merely to entertain the readers but also to instruct them. The aim of the novel was to throw light on human character and reveal its relation to the social and political conditions of the age.

Premchand was the first great novelist who was influenced by the political movements of the time. His fiction captures accurately the zeitgeist of India. They are, in fact, a sort of historic record, expressed in literary terms of that period. The Patriotic Movement was going on in the country during the first decade of the present century and it attracted Premchand. Anirtrai writes, "Premchand wrote his first novel named "Shyama" near about 1901. The novel is not forthcoming but I am told that in that work Premchand had criticised to a great extent the maladministration of the British Government. Similar thoughts are found in his short stories of that period."¹

After "Krishna" and "Prema", two novels of minor importance, "Vordan" (1912-13) seems to be greatly influenced by patriotism. The plot of the novel is that Sawama, a mother, daily prays to the Ashtabhuji Goddess that her heart's desire be fulfilled.² When her prayers are heard, she is asked by the Goddess, "What do you want? Riches of Kubera; strength of Indra or the knowledge of Saraswati?" Sawama replies, "A son who will do good to his country."³ Accordingly she gives birth to a son and names him as Pratapchandra. At this stage the reader thinks that the novel's plot will be a story full of patriotism. He expects that novel's hero - Pratapchandra (afterwards called Balaji) - will grow into a great patriot. But in the following pages the hero proves to be

¹ Hemadun Gupta - Premchand aur Gandhivad - P.107
² Premchand - Vordan - P.4
³ Do - Do - P.5
an ordinary young man, who falls in love with Birjan and is very jealous. But when he cannot have her, he becomes a Sadhu and devotes himself to the service of the public.

Baneraj 'Pahar' is of the view that the story of this novel is full of patriotism but when fully analysed it is only a love story, with stray patriotic touches.

"Sewa Sadan" (1914) is his first extent novel with vivid character studies. Though the main theme of the novel is the prostitute problem and the dependence of women of India, yet the author has presented the atrocities and the excesses inflicted on the Indian peasantry. Chetu represents an Indian peasant. Mahant Fandass who does all his business in the name of Banke Behariji represents the moneyed class. He charges interest at the rate of 32%. In the name of performing oblation ceremony, he imposes additional tax on every tenant. Every tenant some how pays, but Chetu refuses to pay the additional tax. The result is that the poor fellow is beaten to death.1 Besides the description of Hindu-Muslim dissension, the author has described the oppression by the English. Preferential treatment given to the English in every day life had moved Premchand and he has described such unjust incidents in "Sewa Sadan".2

Premchand admitted that he was influenced directly or indirectly by Mahatma Gandhi, Leo Tolstoy, Galsworthy and Karl-Marx and his works show these influences.3 He is considered as the pioneer of realistic tendency in Hindi fiction. He was the first novelist who had reflected in his novels the poor rural

1 Premchand - Sewa Sadan - P.8
2 -do- -do- - PP.265-266
3 Sushama Bhawan - Hindi Upanyas - PP.10-11
classes of India. The language used by him in his novels is simple and his characterisation is realistic. He can claim to rank with 'Heymont' who was awarded the noble prize in literature for writing 'The Peasants'.¹ Premchand in his best novels has painted, with superb skill, the life of the exploited peasants - their stoic indifference to sufferings, imbecility and cruelty. The rest of his novels are a study in contemporary middle class life. The hardship and suffering of the poor peasants in the country-side arising from the thoughtless tyranny and greed of zamindars who were mere parasites was well represented by him in his novel "Premasharem". Though it was published in 1922, yet it had been written by Premchand under the influence of the Peasant Movement of the Congress and the repercussions of the October Revolution in Russia. It describes with marvellous fidelity and sympathy the miserable plight of the Indian peasantry during the years immediately following the first World War. Indian peasantry suffered enormously at the hands of the machinery of the British Government, zamindars, taluquedars, money lenders and priests. No body spared the peasant.

"Premasharem" is really an agrarian epic representing a minute analysis of the struggle between the peasants and the landlords. The landlords supported by Government officials came into conflict with peasants in a village named Lakanpur. Syamshanker, Premshanker, Kamalanand and Gayatri belong to the class of landlords. Nanohar, Balraj, Kadir and others form the second group. They represent the exploited peasantry. Nanohar and Balraj represent the spirit of revolt against the exploitation of peasants.² They do not yield to the threats of petty officials who institute forced

1  Indranath Madan - Modern Hindi Literature - P.163
2  -do- - Premchand - P.63
labour. Manohar refuses to pay the additional tax in the form of ghee. At this the whole village is subjected to ruthless treatment by Government officers and their henchmen. Geus-khan—the agent of the landlord provokes the wrath of poor villagers by disgracing Manohar's wife. At this Manohar kills Geus-khan and then ends his own life. Premshenkar becomes the spokesman of the village. He mobilises and organises them in a manner that they present a united front to the landlord.¹

Premshenkar, had received his education abroad in the scientific methods of agriculture. On his return home, he becomes a spokesman of the peasants and devotes himself wholeheartedly to their cause. He is a product of the national and political movements which inspired thousands of well placed and rich young men to quit their homes and hearths and join hands with the poverty stricken toiling masses. He wants to establish an ideal farm, where cattle-breeding, crop-raising and research may be carried on. He is successful in doing it and names it 'Premasaharam' (hence the title of the novel). This ideal farm is the ideal village of Mahatma Gandhi. Kadir's voice in 'Premasaharem' is Premchand's voice who wholeheartedly supports the peasants in their struggle.

During the First World War the toiling masses had imbied a revolutionary spirit and they were being drawn into the national struggle through it. Manohar's attack on Geus Khan and Sukhu's blow on the head of Faizullah symbolise the destructive influence of the Revolutionary Movement. Faizullah imposes a reign of terror. He gets the properties of all the villagers attached. Sukhu comes out with cash, but Faizullah demands a fantastic sum in order to pay the court fees. Chowdhri lifts the poker and
gives Rajju a piercing blow on the head. "Rascal Robber!" he
screams "Here are your court fees. You can have more if you like.
Wretched, pimping agent".  

The influence of Marxist Revolution also can be seen in
'Pramashram'. Balraj reads newspaper. He takes the side of the
villagers against the oppressive Government servants and declares,
"In Russia workers and peasants have established their own rule.
They do whatever they want. Adjacent to Russia is Bulgaria.
The peasants of that country have dethroned their King and the
panchayat comprising of peasants and workers rules over there."  

"Satyagraha" a novel written by Rishabcharan shows the
influence of the Satyagraha Movement. In addition to a description
of the circumstances which compelled Mahatma Gandhi to start this
movement, the author has in this novel given a detailed definition
of word Satyagraha.

The characters in this novel are the real living men like
Mahatma Gandhi, General Smuts and Abdulla Tyabji. During the first
Satyagraha Movement which was started by Mahatma Gandhi in South

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1 Hansraj 'Robber' - Frenchend - His life and work - P. 73

(2) कराज - तैर पास तो पत्र वाता है। उस में रखा है कि व्यास देश में कास्त-
कारों ही राज है, वह जो चाहे है करती है। उसी के पास कोई देश
लगाता है। वहां कोई बाह्य का बात है, कास्तकारों ने राजा को गद्दी
के उतार किया है और वह लिखा है और वह लिखा है और पूजा की पंचायत राज करती
है।

प्रेमचंद - प्रेमचंद - पृष्ठ: 40
Africa, Hindus and Muslims participated jointly. Mahatma Gandhi trusted the English and helped them in the Boer wars. He was of the firm opinion that the Satyagraha Movement can only be run in its real sense if confidence is reposed in the other party. He ran the Satyagraha Movement in the most non-violent manner. He opined that the independence or rights achieved by shedding the blood of others, cannot be lasting. Success lies in the forbearance and peace. The battle of satyagraha is the most difficult of all the battles. It is very easy to take the revenge upon the enemy by a sword or a gun but it is very difficult to bear insults and bullets. Victory lies in tolerance and forbearance. Violence; excitement and anger lead to defeat.

The novel "Raktamandal" is based on the Revolutionary Movement. Raktamandal was established for the sake of making the country independent. The leader of this institution, Nagendra, was a great scientist who invented death ray. With the help of death rays and bombs, this society plans to kill many British officers and loot big treasuries. A number of spies do their best to trace this secret society but all of them lose their lives. In the end a spy Gopal Shankar in the guise of a villager, reaches the laboratory of Nagendra and with his intelligence brings an end to the Raktamandal and makes its leaders prisoners.

1 Rishab Charen - Satyagraha - P.81
2 -do- -do- - P.87
3 Krishanlal - Adhunik Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas - P.208
SHORT STORY.

Premchand as a story writer was also greatly influenced by the political conditions of the times in which he lived. He was a lover of the ancient glory of his motherland and a patriot who was genuinely pained at the existing state of affairs. He expressed great regret over the departed glory of the land. The poverty of the people, social injustice and maladministration of the Government were the topics on which Premchand wrote. His first start 'Duniya ka sab se anmole Ratna' (The most precious possession in the world) published in Urdu journal 'Zamana' in 1907 had a highly patriotic theme. The subject of the story was that the most precious thing in the world is the drop of blood shed in defence of one's motherland.¹

In 1907 was published his first collection of short stories in Urdu script named "Soz-E-Watan". All the stories contained therein were full of patriotic sentiments.² This book was proscribed and 300 copies of the book were burnt by the orders of the collector. In 1906 Premchand wrote historical stories of 'Raja Hardaul' and 'Rani Sarandha' in which he has portrayed the past glory of India. The theme of these stories is the Rajput chivalry and valor and the characters belong mostly to the kshatriya Rajput clan of Bundelkhand. He wanted to apprise his readers with the ancient bravery, especially the Rajput tradition of making sacrifice and owning allegiance to a political cause.³ The stories 'Patri ne Pati' and 'Holi ka Upar' contained in "Samaryatra" and 'Suhag ki Sari' contained in "Prem Pachisi" are

1 Indramath Madan - Premchand - P.24
2 Ramdin Gupta - Premchand sur Gandhi vad - P.107
3 Hansraj 'Rahbar' - Premchand - His life and work - P.41
affected by the Swadeshi Movement. The main characters of
tese stories are husband and wife. Wives in these stories
like to wear the swadeshi, but husbands bring foreign clothes
for them.

The hero of the story 'Patri se Pati' is Mr. Seth and its
heroine is Godawari. Mr. Seth dislikes all the indigenous
goods while Godawari never liked imported articles. One day
on the Holi festival a procession of patriots ends in a ground
in front of Mr. Seth's house. The processionists are commemorat-
ing the festival of Holi by burning foreign clothes. Godawari
is watching all this through her window. She wishes that she
should also take part in it.¹

On so many occasions there crop up differences between
the husband and the wife on the question of swadeshi and videshi.
Once the husband intends to go to see a flower show, but the
wife does not like it and goes to attend the meeting of the
National Congress instead. In that meeting she comes across
a blind beggar who donates to the Congress fund one pice which
he got while begging. He proceeds on his way while singing,
'Let people see as to when the fate of the country is changed'.²
The one pice which the beggar put in the collection box was
given to him by Godawari. This incident greatly effects Godawari.
She buys that pice from the Congress for two hundred rupees.

The next day the boss of Mr. Seth comes to know about this
help rendered by Mrs. Seth and he admonishes Mr. Seth saying
that he is a cheat. Mr. Seth protests that he is most faithful
and loyal to the Government. Seth's boss threatens him saying,

¹ Premchand - Samar Yatra - P.28
² Premchand - Samar Yatra - P.35
"Shut up, you recalc! The Government do not pay you Rs. 500 a month so that you give subscription to the Congress through your wife." During this exchange of hot words, the Sahib tries to strike Mr. Seth with his stick but Mr. Seth wards off the blow with his hand and slaps the boss. He resigns from that hateful service and joins the Congress.

Similarly the story of 'Holi ka Upchar' is, that the hero Amar Kant goes to the Hashim's to purchase a silken saree for his wife. The Congress volunteers are picketing the shop. He enters the shop from the back door but when he comes out after purchasing the saree, the Congress volunteers catch hold of him. During the discussion with the volunteers, he comes to know that his wife Sukhadasdevi is one of the volunteers who are picketing the shop. At this he burns that saree. The next day he joins the picketers with national flag in his hands and clothes of khadi on his body. The police van comes at the spot immediately and the sub-inspector police arrests the volunteers. Amar Kant is seen leading all. When the police van is going to start, Sukhada drops at the spot with a garland of flowers in her hands, gets in the lorry and puts the garland round the neck of Amar Kant. Her eyes are filled with tears of love and pride. The lorry goes away carrying the volunteers and Sukhada takes the place of picketers. ¹

The story of 'Suhag ki Sari' in 'Prem Pachisi' has also the impression of the Swadeshi Movement. In this story the author has described that numerous weavers will get rid of curse of service as it will give them enough work in case people use swadeshi cloth.²

¹  Premchand - Samar Yatra - P.114
²  Premchand - Prem Pachisi - P.55-57
Sudarshan's story 'Haar Jeet' deals with one of the incidents which were going on in the day to day life during the prevalence of the Swadeshi Movement. Lakshmi Chand is the son of a big merchant Narottamdas of Bombay who was dealing in imported cloth. Lakshmi Chand during the Swadeshi Movement pickets the shop of his own father and thus changes the mind of his father, who gives up the trade of dealing in foreign cloth. Similarly in 'Antim Sadhan', Sushila, wife of Rai Bahadur Devichand, wants to burn all her clothes but Rai Bahadur does not allow her to do so. In the end her death changes the heart of Rai Bahadur Devichand and he burns her as well as his own imported clothes and sticks to swadeshi.1

'Updesh' contained in 'Sapt Saroj' by Premchand depicts the struggle between the peasants and the zaminder. In this story Premchand is of the view that the miserable wretched condition of the Indian peasantry is not due to the set up of the society but due to the fact that zamindars are not dutiful and well read. The author through the medium of Bebulsal in this story shows that if zamindars do not depend upon their agents but look after their land and tenants themselves, the condition of the peasants will soon improve. The excesses of the police are also described in this story. The police rob the poor illiterate peasants by accusing them of one crime or the other, is well portrayed in this story.2 The condemnation of the police department is in reality a condemnation of the British Government.

1 Sudarshan - Suprabhst - Pp.106-121
2 Sudarshan - Suprabhst - Pp.136-137
3 Premchand - Sept Saroj - P.83
The story of 'Balidan' in 'Prem Purnima' (1920) also deals with the poverty of the farmers. Harkhchandra Purmi, who was a farmer about twenty years back turns a labourer. His grandson is compelled to become a labourer and work on a brick kiln at k.20 p.m. This story forms a basis for Premchand's novel 'Godan'. In his story 'Shikari Rajkumar' Premchand has described many human beasts who live upon the flesh and blood of the masses. Premchand tells the prince to kill these parasites instead of the innocent animals.

'Dil ki Rani' contained in 'Mansarover', has the impression of the movement of Hindu-Muslim unity. It is in reality a message of non-violence, love and toleration for the religion of others. The author has well described that the religion means the service of the mankind and not loot and massacre. The meaning of 'Kafir' is also given by the author. He says that Kafir is he, who snatches the right of others; who exploits the poor; who is a selfish and a cheat. He who worships God and sees the image of God in the idols and in the nature cannot be termed as Kafir.

'Dhagna Hyidya' is the story dealing with the police atrocities at the time of Jallianwala-Bagh-tragedy. How the innocent people like Chhajju Mal were arrested resulting in the tragic end of his son and daughter-in-law, is portrayed in it.

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1. Premchand - Prem Purnima - P.151
2. Premchand - Prem Purnima - P.164
3. Premchand - Mansarover Part I - P.203
4. Premchand - Mansarover Part I - P.210
5. Sudarshan - Suprabhat - Fp. 74–90
Jaishankarprasad's story of 'Pursekar' is written under the influence of patriotic movement. Madhulika is the heroine of the story. She is depicted as the daughter of Singhmitra who laid his life for his country - Kaushal. Arun - the prince of Magdha - falls in love with Madhulika. He manages to invade the fort of Shravasti from the most strategic point where victory was sure. Madhulika was to become the Queen of Kaushal. But the heroine did not like that the fort of Shravasti should fall in the hands of a foreigner. She sacrifices her love for her country and leaks out the secret to the King of Kaushal thus making the invasion of her lover void.