Chapter-3

K. A. ABBAS
CHAPTER - III

KHWAJA AHMAD ABBAS

INTRODUCTION:

The present chapter endeavours to study Khwaja Ahmad Abbas as a novelist. He is one of the important Indian English Muslim novelists of the pre-independence period. K. A. Abbas, as the author of twelve novels should be considered when we study his great contemporaries Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Ahmed Ali and Khuswanth Singh. K. A. Abbas was a prolific writer. He was a novelist, dramatist, short story writer, filmmaker and journalist. Patriotism, progressivism and social concern are the hallmarks of his writings.

Like his fellow writers Ahmed Ali and Humayun Kabir, K. A. Abbas was highly influenced by Munshi Premchand, Mahatma Gandhi, Mulk Raj Anand, Hali and Galib. His use of their typical combination of satire and irony, ample use of Indian usages, borrowings from other languages, film presentation and realistic analysis need a new method and technique of appreciation.
K. A. ABBAS’S LIFE AND WORKS:

It is clear that Urdu Guzzles of Hali and Mirza Gaalib nourished the early days of K. A. Abbas’s literary apprenticeship. K. A. Abbas was born in Panipath on 14th June 1914. His father was a businessman and his mother Masroor Khatoon was a lady of literary taste. He was a great grandson of Khavaja Altaf Hussain, otherwise known as Hali. He completed his early education in Hali Muslim High School, established by his great-grandfather of the same name. Abbas’s mother Masroor Khatoon was the daughter of Sazad Hussain, an educationist. K. A. Abbas is proud of his mother as a modern woman. He says, “According to Malist, the most important modern woman was my mother. From the beginning, I was impressed by her independent nature.”1 Abbas’s childhood ambition was to become a sportsman. He completed his matriculation at the age of fifteen. He did his B. A. in English in 1933 and L.L.B. in 1935 from Aligar Muslim University, Aligar.

K. A. Abbas inherited the qualities of non-conformism, humility and secular approach from his father. His father was a man of discipline. The great nationalists Bhagath Singh and Sukhadev were Abbas’s classmates. Abbas was a rationalist and a straightforward man. One may say his grandmother, Hakko played a vital role in shaping of his career. She was a woman who sacrificed her life for safeguarding
her homeland. She was a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi and attended all Congress meetings. Abbas says his grandmother was the first woman in whose image he saw the face of mother India. In shaping of Abbas’s career as a writer she had played an important role. He writes, “She was a grand story teller, wide-eyed with wonder, we would listen to her tales of ‘the three princes,’ ‘the seven princes,’ ‘the giants that were bigger than mountains,’ ‘the ferries that lived in the flowers’ and ‘the horses that had wings’ and could talk.”2

The exact period of K. A. Abbas’s career as a writer cannot be traced out easily as he began to write quite early for his brother Saiya Uddin’s *Aligar University Magazine*. After completing his primary education in Panipath, Abbas came to Aligar and stayed there with his cousin Bhaijan Saiya Uddin who was known for his progressive ideas. It is said Saiya Uddin’s ideas of liberalism, humanism and nationalism influenced Abbas’s way of writing. Writing about Saiya Uddin, Abbas says,

I often wonder what would have been the destiny of India ... and Indian Muslims ... If the communally ...

inclined Muslims had heeded the warning of the youthful idealist, Saiya Uddin on the Aligar University platform. Surely then there would have been no partition, no
Pakistan, no riots, no exchange of population ... and no genocide in Bangladesh.3

These influences made Abbas to become a rational journalist and writer though his father wished him become a lawyer.

K. A. Abbas’s initial career as a journalist helped him greatly in his becoming a writer. Needless to say journalism taught him a lesson in boldness, non-conformism and punctuality. These principles helped Abbas throughout his career as a writer.

Primarily the motto of K. A. Abbas’s writings was communication. This may be seen in his nationalistic and socialistic writings. A study of Abbas’s works is a study of these ideologies. Abbas loved his journalistic career as much as his writing hobbies. Abbas, in his autobiography writes, “I am prepared for death which may come today or after twenty years. I hope it will come (whenever it comes) when I will be still writing the last page for my friend Russy Karanjia of Blitz. Indeed, if there is life after death (about which I am still subject to skepticism.), I will be glad to send dispatches from the other world.”4 Abbas deals with different aspects of contemporary society -- both national and international. His columns from 1941 to 1987 have been collected in two volumes I Write as I Feel and Bread, Beauty and Revolution. These books of his journalistic career are an encyclopedia of art, literature, music, film and the like. They depict
Abbas's social and contemporary involvement. As we know he wrote on fascism, feudalism, imperialism and democracy. He opposed the concept of formation of a separate state Pakistan. Really he thought over the burning issues of his time. He considered mankind as his family. He loved the world. Unfortunately he was condemned as a subjective reporter in journalism and a minor writer in literature.

K. A. Abbas's career as a novelist and journalist is interdependent and inseparable. As for the subjectivity of fiction, Abbas's journalism affected his novels in two ways. According to Ahmed Hasib,

First it has kept his imagination firmly rooted in the social reality of his time and secondly it has trained him to write vivid scenes in a lucid and communicative language of everyday use.5

There are several intellectual forces that have influenced K. A. Abbas as a writer. The new waves of realism, socialism and communism had their own impact upon him. These forces affected literature and society at large. This was rather intense in the 1920s. Broadly speaking all Indian writers thought that literature should serve social purposes. The writings of Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky and Walt Witman illustrate this point of view. K. A. Abbas understood this clearly. His reading of Ralph Fox, Upton Sinclair, Charles Dickens, Premchand and Ratan Nath Sarkar changed his outlook. Fortunately he was a liberal humanist and
democrat. His commitment to the community and country is greater than Ahmed Ali's. K. A. Abbas imitated O. Henry, Somerset Maugham, Pearl S. Buck, Stein Back and Ernest Hemingway. His taste of reading was as varied as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's. Abbas read books on economics, anthropology, politics, film, drama and music. Being a conscious journalist, he was familiar with socio-political developments of his time. Once Ahmed Hussain observed thus:

Abbas has no home, no car, no fashionable furniture, no sufficient dresses, his wife has no gold, jewels of her own but if he has anything, it is only books.6

K. A. Abbas was a public figure. He had a lot of concern for society. The great personalities that are indebted to him are Rajkapoor, the filmmaker, Russy Karanjia, the editor of Blitz, Ahmed Ali, the novelist, Amitab Bachchan, the actor and Meenakumari, the actress. His family was an India in miniature, giving succor to Prem Dhavan, Balraj, Bhishm Sahni and Devanand. Abbas inculcated the values of Sufism, Nehru's liberal humanism and Gandhi's egalitarian outlook.

Just as journalism influenced K. A. Abbas's literary career his literary and journalistic careers influenced his film practices. Still no major change can be found in his outlook of life from his novel to short story, or from his columns to films. It is necessary to study Abbas's novels in order to understand the distinct features of his fiction.
However, his entry into film industry was accidental. Still his cinema criticism is remarkable. Once when he was working as a critic for *Bombay Chronicle*, he said a filmmaker is a shallow producer. Indeed, he was challenged when somebody said, "It is easy to criticize but let us see you write a film story." Abbas’s production of the film *Naya Sansaar* (1940) was an answer to this. The film was a success culminating in silver jubilee celebration. Next came his films *Pardesi* and *Sat Hindusthani* (1955). Even Abbas was an experimentalist. His *Rahi* is based on Mulk Raj Anand’s *Two Leaves and a Bud* and his *Munna* is children’s film. His *Ek Admi* is about a man in cities. He scripted many Rajknapoor films and many of his novels are filmed.

K. A. Abbas was a great social activist as well. He was the founder-member of Indian Peoples’ Theatre Association, Progressive Writers Association and Bombay Cultural Association.

K. A. Abbas’s seventy-three years long career of creativity is full of meaningful events. Abbas had the benefit of associating himself with the contemporary world of Indian writing in English. He was a close friend of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi and a great communist. His was a great progressive voice. Whether it was his film, short story, novel or column, he used them as weapons against feudalism, colonialism, illiteracy, blind beliefs and orthodoxy. He was a writer with a social commitment. As a humanist
he says, "Every writer should be a humanist -- a believer in man, a lover of man as well as a critic of his pettiness and selflessness."8

K. A. Abbas was not worried about highbrow literary critics as he was not one of them. We know that such critics branded him a propagandist. Maybe to some extent he was a propagandist but that of difference. Accordingly he enlists himself with Earnest Hemingway, George Bernard Shah, Charles Dickens, Munsi Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore and Mulk Raj Anand. He says if at all social commitment is a mistake, he wants to commit it times and again. It was Abbas’s credo that a writer should be a humanist first and theorist afterwards.

K. A. ABBAS’S NOVELS:

The birth of Indian English fiction begins almost with the rise of Indian national movement. The spirit of patriotism, progressive ideas and the principles of democracy are the inseparable elements of the writings of the period. Novels in India were written on these values. Likewise the Indian Muslim novelists were a part of Indian culture. As a result, the revolt against tradition, the opposition to British rule and the support to Gandhian Movement are some of the common themes of pre-independence Muslim writers.
K. A. Abbas discusses these topics in his writing. As we know Abbas was an active writer before and after Indian independence. Strictly speaking, he wrote three novels *Tomorrow is Ours* (1943), *Defeat for Death* (1944) and *Inquilab* (1949) before independence. These novels depict the struggle for independence. His other works include *When Night Falls* (1968), *Maria* (1970), *Bobby* (1973), *Boy Meets Girl* (1973), *Distant Dream* (1975), *Four Friends* (1977), *The Nexalites* (1979), *Mera Naam Joker* (1980) and *The World is My Village* (1983). Abbas has written more than a dozen novels. His novels are a depiction of India’s cross-cultural panorama. He focuses on the themes of love, romance, generation gap, poverty and unemployment and women’s issues.

K. A. Abbas was a great admirer of Ernest Hemingway and Stephan Crane. The America’s influence on him could be seen in his first novel *Tomorrow is Ours*. Like Americans Abbas writes against fascism. Stephan Crane and Earnest Hemingway were successful writers during the inter-war period. The fear of the war was felt in India too. So it is well reflected in Indian freedom movement. Abbas’s novel *Tomorrow is Ours* is a document on this. As we know besides the theme of love, anti-colonial and anti-fascist outlook was the fashion of the day.

In this regard, writers, as intellectuals, think over the burning issues of their time. The World Writers’ Organization was established
on 21st June 1935. Abbas was a member of this organization which declared, “All those who are instruments of injustice, irrespective of their complexions are our enemies. We have to write literature with our blood.”9 This rationale is explicit in his Tomorrow is Ours. The novel is centered on Srikanth, a foreign-retumed doctor and Parvathi Premchand, a dancer. Parvathi hails from a democratic Brahmin family. Her father is a nationalist. Her mother is a woman from downtrodden class. Parvathi becomes an orphan when young. She cannot help living with an inhuman uncle Bhagavathi Charan. However, the latter tries to molest and sell her for fifteen hundred rupees. These incidents take place in Banaras, which is Hindus’ so-called holy place. Parvathi leaves Banaras and tries her luck elsewhere as a school teacher. Looking back at Banaras, she says “A woman’s position is particularly intolerable in this city where tens of thousands of widows, with shaved heads, passed their miserable days on the temple ghats.”10 Because,

In Banaras, holy and sacrosanct, the city of a thousand golden temples, men’s minds were still filled with the superstitions and taboos of centuries. Religion, orthodoxy, priestcraft held an unchanged sway and modern ideas were frowned upon as unpardonable heresies. Women’s positions were particularly intolerable in this city, where
Even in her later days of teaching-career Parvati speaks of her bitter experience. Finally she becomes a dancer in Nataraj Ratan's dancing troupe.

One day Dr. Srikanth attends Parvathi's dance programme in Bombay. Her bewitching look makes him fall in love with her. Later he marries her. But his mother Ramadevi is not ready to accept Parvathi as her daughter-in-law. Not to speak of Ramadevi stands for feudal order. So Ramadevi wanted her daughter-in-law to be from an aristocrat family. Because of this the sacred binding between Srikanth and Parvathi collapses. Domestic crisis in Parvathi's life takes place exactly when Germany invades Russia during World War II. Hitler's atrocities ruin the great land of cultural heritage. Later Dr Srikant returns to Lucknow when his separated wife was about to bid him an adieu. Ramadevi's cruelty suppresses her tender, familial notions of love, affection, family and peace. Afterwards Parvati as a dancer visits various places of the country and collects funds for the poor and orphans. She visits Calcutta. Meanwhile she gets the news that Dr Srikanth, because of debt, has decided to sell his house. The corresponding event was Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbour. The novelist coincides the Nazi's havoc with the gloomy atmosphere in
Parvati-Srikant’s life. The novel ends with their family reunion and Dr Srikanth’s bon-voyage abroad.

The novelist, K. A. Abbas tries to depict the theme of war. He depicts the war’s demoralizing and destructive nature. Of course, there is his progressive ideology interfering. An instance of this is the character Ajay Bhose appearing in a digression. Ajay Bhose says to Parvathi Premchand,

Let the groans of the oppressed and the downtrodden be heard in the tinkle of your bells. Let the demons in your dance dramas be the demons of capitalism, imperialism and fascism. Let your heroes and heroines be the common men and women fighting these demons in the great battle for the liberation of humanity.\textsuperscript{12}

Even the dialogue stands isolated from the structure of novel. Here Ajay Bhose is the mouthpiece of Abbas’s progressivism and anti-fascism. The novel throws ample light on Gandhian movement. In fact, no writer of the period is free from this. Still the novel is not a great success.

The novel ends with the launching of a ship carrying five Indian doctors for treating the wounded soldiers of World War II. The event co-insides with the happy re-union of Parvati and Srikant. Srikant leaves his mother under the care of his wife. Abbas depicts war as a
destructive power condemning the diabolical plans of fascism. The concern for peace and individual liberty makes the novel endurable. Still, Govind Prasad Sharma says, "The novel is more concerned with the personal life of a dancing girl in the conservative Hindu society than with the contemporary political scene of the country."13

Metaphorically it may be said that the history of Indian freedom movement is the history of Gandhi's Conflict with Vice. One cannot imagine the creativity of any pre-independence Indian writer without the influence of Gandhian movement. K. A. Abbas, who loved Mahatma Gandhi, has written a novel on Gandhi's concept of non-violence. His Defeat for Death (1944) focuses on Gandhi's important fasting in 1942. As it was a turning point in Gandhi's life it was an important event in Abbas's life.

The novel is one of the smallest of the contemporary period. It has thirteen chapters that depict three different stories. Each chapter deals with an individual character. The first chapter is about a child, the second about an old man and the third, about a city. All are general characters. They are not known by any specific names, still the line of relation being maintained at the end of the novel. The central character is a small Negro boy who is wounded in a racial riot and is undergoing a treatment in a hospital. He loses all hopes of life. He is a Negro boy of South Africa colonized by the imperialist countries of Europe. The boy
can represent an exploited class of India too. The white people, both physically and emotionally have suppressed him. The Negro boy undergoes a state of chaos in the hospital, while a 75-year-old man undergoes a fast elsewhere. The old man can be identified with Mahatma Gandhi in his jail fast in 1942. His fasting gives the little boy a hope for living. He listens to radio about the great man who has, like him, suffered at the hands of the British. Then the boy decides to take medicine, which he had avoided earlier on account of some aversion. As Gandhi's health improves after his 21 days historic fast in 1942, the boy recovers too. The city depicted in the novel represents both India and world at large. *Defeat for Death* is about Indian freedom struggle, which was ravaged by World War II. The direct influence of Gandhian ideologies on the child can be seen clearly. Abbas adheres to Gandhian thoughts. A critic observes, "Though small this book is certainly the best of all the works of fiction by K. A. Abbas in its exposition of theme, seriousness of purpose and in its emotionally charged language."

K. A. Abbas makes use of contemporary themes like nationalism and Gandhism in his most famous novel *Inqilab* (1949). Abbas took nearly ten years to write this novel. *Inqilab* is a historical novel that tells the story of Indian freedom movement. The novel begins with the deadly Rawlett Act and ends with Gandhi - Irwin Pact. Abbas conceptualized the novel when the Quit-India Movement began. Most
of the characters are not fictitious but realistic and historical. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bhose, Bhagath Singh and Irwin are the main characters. The novel is a portrait gallery of political characters of the decade ranging from 1940 to 1950. The novel is entitled *Inqilab*. Inqilab in Persian means 'Revolution.' 'Inqilab Jindabad' was (and is) a popular slogan during the days of Indian struggle for independence. Bhagath Singh used the slogan when bombs were thrown on the Central Legislative Assembly on 8th April 1929. This was done to make the British listen to the Indian cause. Writing about the many-faceted implications of the Mantra, Anwar, the hero of the novel, who is Abbas's alter ego says,

People chanted like a mantra or roared like a battlecry, the two words which held spell-bound that past mile long multitude of Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Parsees, Gujarati merchants and Maharastrian mill workers, fair Pathans from the frontier and dark Tamilians from the South.  

Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Mohammed Ali, Chandrashekhar Azad, M. R. Jayakar and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan are the other important political characters appearing in the novel.

*Inqilab* may be viewed as an autobiographical novel that tells the story of Abbas's personal life. Abbas, besides discussing the theme of
nationalism, throws light upon communal conflicts, castesm and historical incidents like Jalianwala Bagh Massacre and Partition of India. Anwar is an incarnation of the author. Yet Anwar, by birth, is a Hindu, but adopted by a Muslim family. Anwar gets education and in his college days he falls in love with Salmah, a daughter of Prof. Saleem. Prof. Saleem wants his son-in-law Anwar to become a class one officer. But Anwar is ready even to forsake Salmah’s love for the sake of his country. His aim is to become a journalist and revolutionary. No doubt, Anwar, due to his anti-British activities, is expelled from University. Of course, he joins Mahatma Gandhi’s Civil Disobedience Movement, as it was Mahatma’s call to the nation that “students should leave government schools and government servants should resign their posts and employ themselves in the service of the people.”

Like thousands of Satyagrahis, Anwar faces lathi-charge boldly. Finally Gandhi-Irwin Pact takes place disappointing the youth. So Anwar decides to go abroad. He asks his father for money, which Kaka Rameshwar Dayal had left for him. Ideologically he differs from his father. Anwar’s family is of the opinion that Gandhi is a Pro-Hindu. Especially Anwar’s uncle Amjad Ali advocates the view: “We came not as merchants like the British but as conquerors with the sword in our hands. Once again Muslims should unshed (open) a sword of Islam and re-establish the Islamic empire.” However, Anwar does not believe his uncle. He
thinks the sword of Islam could not be used against his own Indian brothers. He says, "The division in India is not between Hindus and Muslims but between those who wanted to see their country free and those who did not." So Anwar quits his home for serving mother India.

Truth is bitter and truth is hard. The truthful should be as hard as the diamond that cuts the hardest of the hard. The writer observes, "Anwar's words at once cut asunder the rock of fanaticism, which was put up by thousands of Amzad Alis for centuries. These progressive ideas of Anwar were a great blow to the whole Islamic separatist group as it was to Amzad Ali."

K. A. Abbas's *Inqilab* is more than an autobiographical novel. It is a political saga. Even it documents progressive and socialistic thoughts. The writer combines Sufism with Nehru's liberalism and Gandhi's humanism. It is an embodiment of Indian culture.

K. A. Abbas is known as a writer for youths. He was a champion of the youth. This is explicit in most of his novels. He did not like youth-power go out wasted. According to him, the youth can herald change and progress in society. His social novel *When Night Falls* (1968) is a clear evidence of this. Here he deals with the ramshackle life of some young boys and girls in the banal days of urbanization and industrialization.
When Night Falls is a story of young boys and girls whom industrialization has victimized. The novel presents an aspect of Bombay youths especially criminals, bootleggers and pickpockets. It is the story of two pairs of lovers Amarkumar – Asha and Jonny – Lily. The youth are social products. There is a clash between Amarkumar, a young journalist of Ajad Qualam and Seth Sonadas Daleria. In fact, the journalist hero, Amarkumar is the mouthpiece of the novelist. Seth Sonadas Daleria is the owner of Daleria Wadi, a Bombay slum. The Seth collects twenty-five rupees per month from every dweller of Daleria Wadi. Amarkumar exposes his inhumanity in Azad Qualam. But Sonadas is above him. He lures Amarkumar’s unhappy wife Asha. He offers Amarkumar two thousand and five hundred rupees per month, a rent-free house, a free car and two air tickets but Amarkumar rejects all this. However, Amarkumar knows slum life vividly as is observed here:

There is something particularly sad and pitiful in the ramshackle huts of this Bastee, and in the face of its residents, which he had seldom encountered elsewhere. Before we knew it he was photographing the skinny necked children playing in a puddle of rain-water, the man beating his shirt at a stone near the solitary tap, the little
girl sitting in the sun and looking for lice in each other’s hair.20

While migrating to New Delhi, Amarkumar witnesses Johnny, killing Sevak Ram, a bank accountant. He knows Johnny is a criminal and he is after money. Of course, he had no parents and his uncle has introduced him to the world of criminals. When the police teach him the art of escaping, he leaves with his uncle with the following observation: “I am going where you had picked me up back to gutter as a matter of fact and I have never been out of it. You saw it that I always lived in the gutter.”21 His uncle had a only daughter Rosy. She is crazy about Johnny but Johnny loves Lilly, a dancer. Finally Johnny decides to purchase this dancer’s love and elopes with her in a car. But Lily suspects his love to be a mere craze for sex. Johny says that he has no rigid ethics in life. He says “The world has taught me to grab what you want, or you will starve. No one gives me anything. They did not even give me a name.”22 On the other side, Rosy leaves her father’s home in search of Johnny and comes to Hotel Raj Mahal. She drinks vodka and somebody rapes her when she gets intoxicated. When Johnny is making a preparation to escape from the place, Rosy arrives there. He takes her with him and drives the car recklessly. Finally they meet with an accident and all the four meet their gracious end.
K. A. Abbas’s novels convey a social message. The present novel aims at advocating equality. Abbas is one of those Muslim English writers who treat the problems of youth sympathetically. That way he was a metro writer.

K. A. Abbas’s next novel Maria (1970) is on the theme of partition, dealing with the liberation of Goa from the Portuguese. The linguistic conflict in India just after the event of independence was quite serious. The novel focuses on a Christian girl called Maria who represents mother India. The novel has seven young Indians who hail from different states of India and fight for the liberation of Goa.

As we know even after independence, Goa was under the Portuguese rule. According to Ahmed Hasib, “The trials and tribulations of people limited by social evils and prejudices are impacted on one of the important themes of the novel.” K. A. Abbas, through the seven personages exposes Indians’ psychological timidity, caste rigidity and lack of love for motherland. We see these seven members fight for the unity and liberty of the country before 1947. On the contrary, the same people, after independence, turn India’s enemies of peace and non-violence. But Maria appears a speck of hope as she tries to re-unite all the members.

When the novel begins to unravel, Maria is seen on deathbed. She is counting her last days in a Goa hospital. Her last wish is to see her six
comrades who fought for the liberation of Goa. So she telegrams them a message. Subodh Sanyal, a Bangali is the first to receive it. Jogendranath, a Panjabi is the second. Now the Panjabi is an anti-Indian, for the Indian Government has carved out a separate state called Hariyana out of Panjab. His question is “Why does it have to be the Panjab that is chosen every time for the divisions.” Mahadevan, a Keralite activist has started an anti-Hindi movement. The irony is that once he was a great fan of poet Iqbal, who wrote ‘Sare Jahan se Achya Hindustan Hamara.’ Ram Bhagath Sharma, a Hindu from Uttar Pradesh is the fourth one to receive Maria’s message. Mr Sharma who had started an anti-Muslim activity says, “For the Urdu speaking people, a separate country called Pakistan has been created and if they love Urdu so much they are wellcomed to go there.” Sakha Ram, a Tamasha player from Maharastra is the fifth one. Ram Bhagat Sharma, who was a great nationalist before independence was a great lover of peace and social harmony. Alas! He has forgotten all that. He observes, “Let storms come, let whirl-winds blow, it matters not, for this is the final test, comrades! Life on one side, death on other side, between them precedes our craven comrades!” He had once loved Maria as his own sister. Now he has become anti-Karnatak. Thus men who fought for the unity of India have themselves become separatists. But the seventh Indian, Maria, a native of Goa, never allows them go astray.
In her youth, Maria was equally terrific like the other six comrades. For fourteen years she was deported to Lisbon (in Portugal) and now she desires to see her friends united once again. When all of them visit Goa Medical College Hospital, they hear the bad news of her death. The doctor says, “She was all the time hoping, they would rush there.”

K. A. Abbas projects Maria as a symbol of womanhood. He wishes every Indian woman should be like Maria. His complaint is that Indian women are not progressive. Women should respect the spirit of nationalism. In fact, Maria advocated this.

Among the Indian English Muslim novelists, K. A. Abbas writes more about the youth. Simplicity and straightforwardness, lucidity and candidness are the basic characteristics of Abbas’s heroes. He says the period between 1940 and 1950 was momentous for the Indian youth. They were witnessing a sea change in India’s socio-political infrastructure. Abbas has focused on the taste of Indian youth. This is seen in his post-independence novels. Some of his novels like Bobby, Boy Meets Girl, Four Friends and Mera Nam Joker have been made films.

K. A. Abbas was a committed writer. His motto was social uplift. He wrote with a purpose. Still the highbrow critics of Indian writing neglected him, branding him a propagandist. But when compared to Mulk Raj Anand, Kushwanth Singh and Bhabani Bhattacharya, Abbas’s themes appear wide in taste. Abbas was also a romantic. His three
novels *Bobby, Four Friends* and *Mera Naam Joker* are about love and romance. According to Abbas, love without a proper background is meaningless.

*Bobby* (1973) is a story of conflict between two generations -- traditional and modern. The hero of the novel, Raj is the only son of a great capitalist Mr. Nath. Even though his parents were alive, Raj grew like an orphan. Mrs. Nath never fed him breast milk thinking that she would lose her breast shape. Mr. Nath never spent his time with him. He was always busy in his business. On the other hand, Mrs. Braganza, a governess was to compensate parental love and affection to Raj. Later Raj falls in love with Mrs. Braganza's granddaughter Bobby. He finds what he wanted in her; whereas Nath dislikes the match. He thinks such a thing is below his dignity. Nonetheless, Braganza is a God-fearing person. They may not be as rich as the Naths but they are rich enough to live happily.

Mr. Braganza is a fisherman. He likes Nath and his family. He is happy about Raj's love for his granddaughter. So one day he asks whether his son could marry his daughter. But Mr. Nath treats him badly and sends his granddaughter to Goa. Later on he decides to arrange his son's marriage with a millionaire's daughter Shanta. Unfortunately Shanta is not healthy. Social status hinders the path of
marriage here. Abbas's criticism of inhuman and non-romantic nature of matrimonial alliance is apt.

However, the events move to a finale when Raj elopes with Bobby. The parents try to chase them with the help of police. They declare twenty thousand rupees reward on them. But when they are at their wit's end the two lovers commit suicide by jumping into a river. Their dying words are worth a mention:

You, with your laws, your society, your values, have never thought of our happiness - never tried to understand us - never helped us to understand you - you always thought that we were your property to be disposed of as you thought fit, well, our life was in your hands but death is ours and ours alone.²⁸

So Raj and Bobby join the rank of immortals like Heer-Ranja and Saleem-Anarkali.

K. A. Abbas understood and respected the youths' feelings and thoughts. He says neglect the youth neglect the nation. So he upheld the causes of youth. He feels the youth should be guided properly and given liberty to make their own career. This should be more so in regard to their marriage.

However K. A. Abbas entered film industry late in life, he made a good name by way of writing enduring scripts and filming them
beautifully. Some of his novels are about the industry too. His *Boy Meets Girl* (1973) depicts the contemporary evils of film industry.

The film media that was once expected to serve the interests of common people, became commercial later. The process of commercialization brought ruthlessness in its trial. Abbas's *Boy Meets Girl* is a story of four characters from different strata of society. The characters Kundan Kumar and Indira represent the lower class of society. Nirmal, the writer represents the intellectual class, while Dada Ganja represents the underground world. Like many young men of the 1950s, Kundan Kumar, the hero, runs away from his village to Bombay. His wish is to join the film industry. In fact, he succeeds in his venture when he joins the field as a light boy. Kundan Kumar works hard when the shooting of the film *Titan* goes on. The film director likes him for his skilled work. So he is promoted as a personal assistant of Seth Sonamal Chandiwala. There is a lady called Indira and she is striving to achieve a position in the industry. Here Indira’s case is nauseating. She sells herself for success. Soon Kundan and Indira become members of Workers Association of Film Industry. They criticize the capitalist system,

> We are poor, weak, unarmed and defenseless, but unity is the strength and strike is our weapon against you all. You earn your profits out of our sweat and blood, you
spend thousands on whisky in one night but you never
stop to think that we, the workers also want the necessities
of life and, therefore, deserve a rise in pay.29

However Kundan is a man of dignity, he degenerates when he works
with The Workers Association. He attacks film industrialists as follows:

You, men of money, came from your Studio Owners
Associations and your Producers Associations. So why
shouldn’t the workers form their unions and the
federations of those unions fight for their rights? Can you
live with your wife and children on seventy-five rupees a
month? Then how do you expect me?30

Consequently one Sethji, a producer purchases Kundan by paying a
handsome salary. The writer says, “Kundan comes out, strike fails and
all the workers surrender again to the deadly stretches of industry.
Indira was disheartened and abandoned Kundan, because her own
lover deceived her. The new world cannot be born without sacrifice.”31

The novel includes a story within a story. There are many
characters. Nirmal is one of them. He is an activist and short story
writer. His wife suffers from tuberculosis. In order to save her Nirmal
sells his story Sukh Savera to a film director but the latter alters his story
to such an extent that its title becomes “Lai Savera.” Unfortunately
Nirmal’s wife dies. Now he decides to rescue at least his story. He says,
"I will not allow this to murder my story. I won't sell my conscience for thirty pieces of silver. They are not making my story. They are only exploiting my name." But nobody listens to him, because the film industry barons are very particular about their business. They tell him on his face: "Mr. Nirmal, you have earned a reputation in literary world. We know that your books are popular. So frankly, we are cashing in on your name."

*Boy Meets Girl* is about capitalists' exploitation of intellectuals. Abbas presents the miserable conditions of scriptwriters and storywriters. According to him, intellectuals' visit to a filmland is like saints' visit to a brothel. K. A. Abbas exposes the nooks and corners of Indian film industry, with which he was associated for about twenty years. He presents the social evils that are associated with silver screen. By this we can understand how the film capitalists misuse talents.

K. A. Abbas's next novel *Distant Dreams* (1975) deals with Gautham Chandra who is an industrialist-capitalist though he speaks against class barriers. Even he lectures like a humanist. No doubt, his father Ashok Chandra was a progressive thinker. He was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He was jailed in 1942's Quit India Movement and married a Harijan girl. Unfortunately his son did not inherit his father's qualities of head and heart. The hero Gautham Chandra is in love with Maya. When he comes to know her affair with another man he feels
heart-broken and makes an accident. The car hurls on a certain lady Asha's brother Anil, a journalist. The accident proves a turning point in Gautham Chandra's life, for it opens his eyes to the poverty of world, establishing a relationship between Asha and himself. When Gautham returns home after spending a day at a pauper's house he hates even his air-conditioned room. No doubt, he changes his way of life. But his kin sends him to a mental hospital. Asha saves both Gautham and his mother from the wicked thoughts of Sharma and Radhabai. Gautham's progressive ideas expressed in the court of law help him from further danger. He argues in the court that,

This world where one man lives in twenty one rooms and twenty one people live in one room, where pet dogs are bathed in marble tubes and millions do not get two drops of water to drink. This world where billions and trillions are spent on atomic weapons while, with the same money, thousands of schools and hospitals could be built, milk could be given to millions of starving babies by spending billions upon billions, man had made the road that goes to the moon but has not yet been able to make the road that connects one human heart with another human heart, the distance between the earth and the sky has been reduced
K. A. Abbas's *Four Friends* (1977) is a novel on the theme of friendship. Abbas believed in the doctrines of liberty, equality and fraternity. The novel begins as a ghost story gradually focusing upon four friends. The beginning is about Rani Poolmati's story. As we know after Independence, the Indian Government decided of the merger of princely states into Indian union. Shortly, the princes lost their importance and the government mortgaged their property. In one place Rani Poolmati kills her husband Vijay Chand and runs away to Rajasthan with her wealth. Unfortunately a robber Shaitan Singh eyes her spoils. He seduces her, in fact. Later Gauri, his sweetheart, on his betrayal of faith, kills him. Poolmati becomes mad and her wealth remains in Rajasthan desert. Kaloo, a toy-seller witnesses these incidents. One day he goes to Bombay and he dies there in an accident. A lady called Sohni gets shelter in the house of three friends, Robert, Kareem and Nirmal. These four friends living in a common house have their own set of rules like friendliness, help and cooperation.

Somehow, the friends come across the news that there is a treasure in Rajasthan desert. And they rush to the desert. But already a certain Prem, an employee of Indian Oil Corporation is in search of the
treasure. Naturally Sohni falls in love with Prem. Soon they succeed in finding out the treasure as well as an oil source over there. The Government of Rajasthan rewards them with prizes. Later Gouri marries Prem and goes to Culcutta.

Like many of his other novels, Four Friends consists of a story within a story. Characterization is well taken care of. The novel is modern in so far it does not have the hero-heroine parameter. Not many contemporary writers have experimented this. The novel resembles Maria in many ways. In Maria, the liberation of Goa and a note of patriotism are dominant. But the major concern in Four Friends is friendship. The novel is set in the post-independence period, echoing the voice of Prime Minister Pandith Jawaharlal Nehru who was a liberal democrat. Abbas proposes to highlight friendship and patriotism.

The Naxalites (1979) is Abbas's another novel. Unlike his earlier novels which deal with the themes of socio-political upheavals in India, his later novels stand out bold in their setting and theme. The Naxalites is about the Naxal Movement in West Bengal. Naxalbari is a small village in West Bengal where a peasant movement began in the 1940s and it spread to the states in the South. The Naxalites have a leftist leaning and in one of the elections, they defeated the Congress leaders badly in some states like Kerala and West Bengal. The Marxist United Front came to power in Kerala and West Bengal. The working class
believed that it was their government and it would solve their problems. Ironically the Marxist United Front Government became one of the ordinary later. Consequently the peasants of Naxal Bari started a movement against the Marxist-led United Front. These rebellious peasants turned criminals and now they are known as Naxalites.

The Naxalites are anti-capitalists and anti-industrialists though they are not anti-human. K. A. Abbas’s novel has many neglected and forsaken people as characters. It is set in Calcutta where Naxalites are very active. The movement began in the 1940s Bengal when famine devastated the land.

Anand, the hero is a police officer’s son. His father Gangooli is a D.I.G. Anand is a man of rebellious nature. He becomes a Naxalite when the police kill his close friend Surendranath barbarously. Anand has fallen in love with Surendranath’s sister Ajeetha. So he thinks that it was his moral duty to take revenge upon the police. The Naxalites dream equality. According to them, “The great turning will be there when the sky will descend to the earth and the earth will reach the sky. The mighty will tumble and fall, and lowly will come into their own. This process is called revolution.”35 Apart from Anand, Surendranath and Ajeetha, there are several characters from different walks of life. Ashok Mazumdar, another character is a farmer and a follower of Gandhian ideology. His landlord exploits him. Amarkaal is another
character exploited by capitalists. Raghu, an auto rickshaw driver is harassed. Ultimately these people decide whether they must shoot themselves or they should shoot their feudal lords. Critics feel the Naxalites represent a wave of frustration in post-independence India.

K. A. Abbas has a soft corner for the young generation. He supports the young peoples' social commitment. He encourages them for a revolution. He admires their gut for martyrdom. However, Abbas is of the opinion that the young Naxalites do not know why they are dying. He says the organization, which is fighting for the re-establishment of an order, is itself dehumanized. According to him, something is wrong with Naxalites' martyr complex. Most of the Naxalites are ignorant of their purpose. They work under some phobia. They do not understand life. For instance, Ajeetha killed her lover because she wanted to obey her boss Dada Comrade. In this regard, Abbas's message is clear when Ajeetha speaks of her mind,

Comrades, think what you are doing - we have killed enough and sufficient number of you have been killed. Some at the hands of Naxalites think whether it has lead us to the goal of revolution. I am not afraid to die - you asked me to kill and I killed even the one I loved! You asked me to die and I am dying - but from the threshold of death I
am sending this message to you to reconsider your methods, Good Bye, and Lal Salm. The novel is an example for Abbas’s human concern. It brings out his clear observation of the society. As we know not many novelists have discussed this issue.

*Mera Naam Joker* (1970) is K. A. Abbas’s filmscript. Raj Kapoor played the lead role in the film. It is about the life of a joker named Raju. He is constantly intrigued by dramatic incidents of life. He loves three girls but all of them leave him for one or the other reasons. The background of the novel is different from those of Abbas’s other novels. *Mera Naam Joker* resembles the background of Shakespeare’s plays. Here one can witness a clash between character and destiny. Of course, Abbas focuses the themes of poverty, unemployment and other social problems. He writes about artists. He writes artists are not a happy lot. Raju, the joker of a circus company is one among them. He loses his father, a joker when he was a child. Raju’s mother wants her son to get a decent job. Anyway she does not like him become a joker. In fact, she provides him a good education. But Raju, an unusual child, follows his father. He speaks like a little philosopher. He loves a twenty-one year old class teacher Mary. Still the nature of his love for her is not clear. The teacher is compassionate to him. Her love for him is not clear too. Finally she marries David. This breaks Raju’s heart. He discontinues his
education. He becomes a joker working on roadsides and roaming from place to place with his old mother. Finally he joins a circus company when he falls in love with a Russian artist. His mother advises him: "Do anything. Sweep this street or carry a load like a coolie but never think of becoming a clown in circus." But Raju is left with no alternative. His lover Marina has a lame father to look-after. Even though she loves Raju, she has to return to Russia. Now the space factor and responsibility hinders his path of progress.

One day Raju's mother visits a circus camp and comes to know that her son has become a clown. She watches him fall from the trapezes into a net. This shocks her and she dies of fright. Raju is disheartened. It is observed: "With Raju, life was a huge joke, a game of alternating light and darkness, day and night, happiness and sorrow- who was playing this game-and why?" After his mother's death and his lover's departure Raju quits the circus.

The third phase of Raju's life begins with Meenu, an actress and Mothi, a dog. Meenu is an ambitious girl. She wants to become a film star. But she is selfish and thankless. She befriends Raju. She decides to live with him. As the days pass Meenu establishes her relationship with film industry. She does not admire Raju's philosophy of life. Meenu is a worst type of woman who never allows her emotions to interfere in
her profession. After some days of despair with Meenu, Raju leaves Bombay once for all.

The novel is full of philosophical speculations. It portrays selfish women. Abbas has made a thematic experiment in *Mera Naam Joker*. Here the hero is not a disheartened nihilist. He continues to walk on human track and sing the song of love and life. He says the game of life never ends. The circus will continue even after his departure. He says man will remain alive as long as the stars glitter in the sky. Abbas’s artistic ability is successfully projected here. He has combined philosophy and realism in a balanced manner.

Abbas’s novel *The World is My Village* (1983) is an extension of the theme of *Inqilab*. As *Inqilab* provides a national picture of pre-Independence period, *The World is My Village* presents the picture of post-independence Indian and international panorama. The novel is very lengthy running into six hundred pages. As Abbas mentions it in his autobiography, *I am not an Island*, *The World is My Village* is about his global vision.

Abbas took fifteen years to complete the novel. As we know Anwar is the hero of *Inqilab* witnessing the urban side of India. The same Anwar meets international leaders and talks about international issues with political ideals. He mocks English racism in America.
The hero is a picaresque. He attends the First World Youth Congress in New York and visits nearly about sixty countries. Anwar's journey is a kind of escape from the hard truth related to his birth. This is explicit in the third chapter. Even he is exposed as a bastard son. Still he feels proud, for he is the real son of mother India in whom the blood of both the Hindus and Muslims is mingled. Indian girls do not like to marry him. One girl from Haiti called Laurala falls in love with him. But her father opposes the match.

Anwar attends a Negroes' meeting and feels a sense of brotherhood. In the meeting he speaks of principles, "Judge a man not by the colour of his skin but by his rational attitude." Then he meets many international leaders and writers like Roosevelt, Stalin, Hemingway, Albert Cartson and so on. He likes the simple life of Kaboolians and later he visits France, Turkey, Italy and Palestine. When he returns from his world tour to India he gets a letter from his old lover Salmah. But Anwar rejects her, for she rejected him seven years ago. Afterwards Anwar meets Mahatma Gandhi in Vardha, Nehru in Delhi and his old friend Subhan in Aligar.

The novel abounds in varied characters from different walks of life. There are film personalities like Satyajeeth Ray, V. Shanth Ram, Devanand, Leela Chatnish, Himansu Roy, Chandulal Shah and Meenakumari. Abbas mentions some of the burning issues of post-
independence India such as anti-Hindi and self-respect movements in Tamil Nadu, the rehabilitation problems of partition and India's fight for the liberation of Goa.

Abbas is proud of the ideology that works behind the Indian movements like self-respect movement and anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu. Periyar is the father of this movement. He popularized the movement in Tamil Nadu and later on, it spread over Andra Pradesh. Periyar says,

The self respect movement is necessary because the Brahmins have sapped the self-respect of the Tamils' and the non-Brahmins. But we, the Dravidians have a civilization, language and culture, which is older and better than Hinduism or Brahminism. Therefore, we believe that self-respect should come before self-rule.\(^{40}\)

*The World is My Village* is a social document. We know Partition made many Muslims leave for Pakistan. But Anwar's father rejects his brother Amjad Ali's idea of migration to Pakistan. He says,

I can't think of leaving Delhi. My ancestors are buried here in Khabrastan. Here is the Jama Masjeed, the Lalquila and the Taj Mahal at Agra. Here died my dearest friend Rameshwar Dayal. Here is the Aligar Muslim University where my son Anwar was educated. Here will
live my son Anwar, I cannot afford to live away from him.41

Once Anwar visits the drought-ridden Bengal he is very sorry about India's poverty. He feels Indians have to work hard and live amicably. In Calcutta, he visits Kalimatha temple and prays Kalimatha to take an incarnation to eliminate the evil for the welfare of mankind.

The novel is overloaded with non-fictitious elements. It is bulky in size, varied in its interests, but loose in its plot-construction. There are as many as three hundred characters. Indeed, the novel is more an item of propaganda than an annalistic piece.

K. A. Abbas was a successful journalist. As a journalist he knew the world better than any other in the field. The period from 1942 to 1970 was known as an age of turmoil in Indian history. A great number of writers, social thinkers, activists, organizers and professional actors like Balaraj Sahni, Bhishm Sahni, Damayanti Sahni, Chaitan Anand, Devanand, Mulk Raj Anand, V.P. Sathe, Utpal Dutt and Anant Kanekar were unforgettable celebrities who had a rapport with Abbas.

K. A. Abbas's fiction aims at portraying the contemporary human reality. For instance, the presentation of trade union movement in Boy Meets the Girl, the problem of film workers in Distant Dreams, the freedom struggle in Inqilab, the world congress of writers held in France in World is My Village, the exploitations of clown and jokers in Mera
Naam Joker, the revolt of fishermen in Bobbey, the liberation movement of Goa in Maria and the Naxalites movement in Tomorrow is Ours are excellent. The ever-happening social issues and events inspired Abbas to a great extent. In fact, he identified himself with the history of the period. He says,

I was primarily interested in the contemporary social reality - how man was changing under the impact of the forces of scientific phenomenon, how a new man - a new Indian - was involving part coward, part brave and dynamic, part superstitious and part a rational creature, part reactionary and progressive.  

K. A. Abbas's depiction of the rural world is better than the same in the works of his contemporaries Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markhandaya. It was possible for Abbas, because he was a journalist with ample scope and he had travelled long and wide in rural India. This strengthened him thematically. Even he had a broad vision of life. The same broadened his world of characters and sharpened his capacity for characterization.

K. A. Abbas was a playwright too. He wrote three plays Invitations to Immortality (1944), Barrister at Law (1977) and Zubaidah. Abbas's interest in theater began with the formation of Indian Peoples'
Theatre Association (IPTA) on 10th May 1942. IPTA took its birth with the purpose of rationalizing Indian society culturally. Abbas was one of the founder members of the association, who used the theater to convey his message of humanism and progressivism. His plays aim at social equality. Though his first play deals with the biographical account of Mahatma Gandhi, it depicts the vagaries of time. In his second play he calls upon a scientist to dedicate himself for the betterment of society. J. N. Sahni, a contemporary critic writes, “In his dramas, Abbas enjoyed exploiting myths, attacking silly prejudices and opposing tyranny of any kind, political or of caste, religion or of tradition.”

CONCLUSION:

Socialistic writings and thoughts were ripened during the days of pre-independence India. K. A. Abbas being an English writer was in constant touch with several Indian movements. He was highly influenced by the intellectuals of the time. Ismut Chugtai, Kishan Chandar and Rajendra Shingh Bedi from Urdu; Yashpal, Premchand and Dharma Veera Bharati from Hindi; Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali and Mahatma Gandhi from Indian Writing in English; Hemingway, Walt Whitman and Charles Dickens from English abroad made a great impact on Abbas’s style of writing. The problems of writers before and after the independence were not the same. If colonialism, illiteracy and
castism were the burning issues of pre-independence India, partition, communalism, industrialization and unemployment were the problems of post-independence India. Abbas's literary career as a novelist though begins in the pre-independence period reaches its zenith in the post-independence time. Abbas modified the themes, characters, background and attitude of his novels to suit to the taste of time. However Abbas’s fiction did not draw the attention of critics, his readers appreciated (still appreciate) his sense of experimentation. The combination of satire and irony, the use of Indian usages, the cinematic presentation and realistic analysis are Abbas’s forte. Moreover Abbas was not a mere imitator. He created his own technique and style. His desire for social change through writing was his great quality. Abbas selected his themes from society. One can say his novels appear to be the vehicles of his ideas and thoughts. He uses realistic technique and mostly he did not like the descriptive one. He uses autobiographical and narrative modes.

Thus K. A. Abbas's use of fundamental consciousness of man, society and moral dilemma and his down-to-earth-approach to Indian life enshrine the structure of literary forms and techniques. As his basic literary endeavour was to portray human instincts of society, caught up in the conflict of a change from tradition to modernity, he made use of literary forms individually.
REFERENCES:


16) Ibid., p. 268.

17) Ibid., p. 337.

18) Ibid., p. 341.


21) Ibid., p. 7.

22) Ibid., p. 149.


26) Ibid., p. 61

27) Ibid., p. 166.


