

## Role of Hindi Literature

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*Arun yeh madhumay desh hamara.  
Jahan pahunch anjan kshitij ko milta ek sahara  
Saral taamras garbh vibha par naach rahi tarushikha manohar  
Chitka Jeevan hariyali par mangal kumkum sara.*

– Jaishankar Prasad

**T**o understand any nation and its current contexts, it is necessary to explore the sources present in the folk and rural areas and history. After all, what are these references and sources that help in understanding the makings of the Indian nation? What would be the time for understanding them and their history? What would be the ideology? What would be the theory? These are some of the questions which always trouble history scholars.

Jaishankar Prasad says about India: *arun yeh madhumay desh hamara*. And then, in the collective consciousness of the larger society of the country, the aspiration for national liberation in the form of words resonates all over with the sentiments of national aesthetic as— *jahan pahunch anjan kshitij ko milta ek sahara/ saral tamras garbh vibha par naach rahi tarushikha manohar/ chitka Jeevan hariyali par; mangal kumkum sara*.

Although these feelings in the poetry of Jaishankar Prasad indicate the traditional nationalism of the Indian nation, writers like Bhartendu Harishchandra, Balkrishna Bhatt, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, and Acharya Ramchandra Shukla, Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Ram Vilas Sharma, etc., address it by associating it with national literature. It is also true that these creations inspired the Indians to stand prepared against the British Raj and create a historical form of nationalism in Indian society for which the country and its people are supreme.



The question is how to understand this form of nationalism created between 1857 and 1947. Should it be linked to the peasant movements of Gandhi, the Dalit references of Ambedkar, the revolutionary socialism of Bhagat Singh, or the radical nationalist attitude of Subhas Chandra Bose? It is a complex question, but what is important is the way Hindi writers like Premchand, Ramchandra Shukla, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, etc., see it in caste contexts. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore of Bengal consider it as a hypothetical consciousness. Tagore sees a deep understanding of the civilisation and cultures of the subcontinent in that consciousness, which he tries to understand through his novels like *Gora* and works like *Gitanjali*. Meanwhile, Premchand sees hidden currents of rural civilisation in it, which he tries to understand by associating them with the agricultural way of life.

But the folk memories and the various versions of folk creation imprinted in those memories help to understand the nationalist creations between 1857 and 1947. For example, dividing this form of nationalism and its historical consciousness into the following periods of the history of the Indian Independence movement somewhat helps in understanding the structure of Indian nationalism. First, the Struggle of 1857 and its culmination; second, 1873 and Indian Literature, Press and Journalism; 1885, the Rise of the Congress and the rise of a new intellectual class;

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1905, the Partition of Bengal, the surge of the Independence movement; 1917, Gandhi, Ambedkar and the National stream of the Freedom Movement; 1942, Quit India Movement, Liberation context of Revolutionary Nationalism. Meanwhile, 1936 brought about a different meaning to the world of literature when the economically oppressed and socially exploited sections became the focal point of literature. It can be seen as nationalism of the oppressed and deprived sections, which Premchand alludes to in his novel 'Godan' published in 1936. Godan is a splendid example of peasant nationalism. Premchand, in his novel, has tried to understand the meaning of nationalism for the deprived and exploited society on the pretext of the characters of a farmer, Hori and a labourer, Gobar. An important task will be understanding nationalism and contemporary India based on these contexts and the literary works highlighting them.

### Indian Literature, Press and Journalism in 1873

What were the Rules and Acts that affected India after 1857, especially after 1873, whose resonance is perceptible in the world of literature and journalism and against which the consciousness of an intellectual nationalism in Hindi- and Bengali-speaking society of North India is seen? Among them, two Acts made in 1858 are important: one, the Press Act, and the other, the Arms Act. It was the effect of these Acts that in India, from 1878 to 1947, many works, magazines, and books were banned by the British Raj, including Balkrishna Bhatt's *Hindi Pradeep*, Premchand's *Soz-e-Watan*, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar's *Deshar Katha*, etc. The deep consciousness of resistance against the British Raj can be seen in these works. The biggest role of these works was creating a sense of discontent among the public against the British Raj. The Hindi writer Bhartendu Harishchandra played a big role in this. The poem *Swapn* by Mahesh Narayan, a poet of this period, while igniting a consciousness of resistance against these two Acts, points towards the same form of nationalism that John Plamenatz discusses. One can feel the consciousness of this intellectual nationalism in the following lines of Mahesh Narayan's *Swapn: Mahadev yeh raj swadhin karte* (Mahadev would have made this kingdom free).<sup>1</sup> Here, the poet uses the myth of Mahadev to avoid the clause of the British Press Act against him. It is also important to note that many Hindi writers of that period, including Balakrishna Bhatt, and Pratap Narayan Mishra have tried to understand Indianness through such myth, which sometimes some commentators associate with a particular religion. However, the reason behind using such analogies was that the British Raj's laws and writers were resorting to religious notations to protect them from these laws.

### 1885: Rise of the Congress and Emergence of New Intellectuals

One reason for development of a particular stream of Indian nationalism by poets like Mahesh Narayan or writers like Bhartendu Harishchandra, Balkrishna Bhatt, Pratap Narayan Mishra, etc., was the English education along with the formation of the Congress in 1885. As a counter measure, it gradually developed a deep affection in Indians for the motherland and the native language. It was because of the Congress, that the Indian intellectual class also got a space, the effect of which was that after receiving the English education, this section played a big role in the freedom movement as a middle class, as seen in Amritlal Nagar's novels like *Karwat* and *Peediyan*. Simultaneously, the Dalit renaissance also emerged in Maharashtra because of Savitribai Phule and Jyotiba Phule, which appeared on a bigger canvas in Indian Independence and social movements after 1920 following Ambedkar's arrival. The seriousness with which Hindi writer Radhamohan Gokul wrote on Dalit and women's issues in Hindi around 1890 is significant. One of his works, *Angrez Daku*, published in 1910, was also banned by the British. But it is unfortunate that none of his works find a mention in the history of Hindi literature. Among the critics of Hindi, Ram Vilas Sharma and Karmendu Shishir discuss him and consider his works an important part of the Hindi Renaissance. After understanding the policies of the British Raj, these writers, through their writings, developed a deep consciousness of patriotism in public. One can also say that the nationalist collective consciousness of resistance against the British Raj created by these writers on an intellectual level across the country is significantly visible in later Indian literature.

### 1905: Partition of Bengal and Surge of the Independence Movement

A later example is Rabindranath Tagore's works after the Bengal partition in 1905. The images of the Indian nation Tagore creates in *Gitanjali* and other works deeply affect the entire world, including India. This song composed by Tagore in *Gitanjali* alludes to Indian nationalism which can be called a peasant-centered cultural nationalism and whose development is visible in the works of Hindi writers like Premchand after 1930. It expresses the pain of the agrarian society of being separated from the land that introduces us to a new form of nationalism. The poignancy with which Tagore expresses the sorrow of Bengal in *Gitanjali* is very touching. In this collection of poems, Bengal is mourning after its partition, wishing for a better future, and praying for regaining its prosperity snatched away by the British Raj as follows: *Banglar mati, Banglar jol, Banglar bayu, Banglar*

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phal/ Punyo hauk, Punyo hauk, Punyo hauk, hey bhagoban!/ Banglar ghar, Banglar haat, Banglar bon, Banglar Maath. Purno hauk, Purno hauk, Purno hauk, hey bhagoban!

It is the narrative of the Indian Independence Movement that the masses created with peasant nationalism. Among the nationalist leaders, Gandhi was the first to identify it. But its foundation was laid back in 1905 when the people across the nation, including Bengal, intensified their struggle against the British Raj. As a result, eminent leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, etc., joined the movement after 1905 and infused a new consciousness towards the nation, which gained immense strength after Gandhi's entry in 1917.

### 1917: Gandhian Influence

In fact, after the First World War, Gandhi went to Champaran in 1917 as soon as he returned from Africa and met the indigo farmers there. His meeting with the farmers of Champaran was a national event. The impact of Gandhi's travels on rural society across India was profound. He motivated farmers to join non-violent movements and be an ally in building a free and fearless nation. A folk poet of *Khari Boli* has enthusiastically described this active state of mind of resistance and creation in the following lines: *Sabarmati se chala sant, ek ahimsadhari/ jagti mein sannata chaya ghumi prithvi saari/ kampe kamariya haath mein lathi ek langotidhari/ ...ghar mein ja ja alakh jagaya, azadi ka path padhaya/ Khadi-dhari hamein banaya Bharat tera pujari*. An unknown poet of Bhojpuri has also mentioned Gandhi's similar effect: *Maan Gandhi ke bachanwa dukhwa ho jahiye sapanva/ tan pe utaar kapda videshi, khaddar ke kail dharanwa*. Gandhi's influence on the public reflects in the following folk song by Haipou Jadonang, belonging to the Kacha Naga ethnicity and associated with the Kabui Revolution of Northeast India, in connection with Gandhi's visit to Silchar in 1927: *O Mahatma Gandhi! hamare raja ban jaiye/ aaiye ji aaiye!*

### 1942: Quit India Movement, Liberation Context of Revolutionary Nationalism

What happened to Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 when he was compelled to coin the slogan 'Do or Die'? The famous historian Shahid Amin in his article on Chauri Chaura entitled *Smriti aur itihās: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992*, points out that at times the people or farmers wanted to see Gandhi as a fighter who should not only be a coordinator but also take up arms when the situation demands and confront the enemies. Such hints are also found in some folk poems. For instance, *khwab driver ne jo dekha vah mein karta jahir/ ek bayaban mein kuch gujar raha hai gard-o-gubar/ aa rahi fauj hai us simat se das bees hazar/*

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*aur hai Gandhiji fauj mein aala sardar/ aur sorajya ka is hath mein hai alam/ sare dushman ko vah karte chale aate kalam/ har ek angrez ke jab kaan mein pahunchi ye sada/jaisa socha kiya vah nang dharang bhaga...<sup>2</sup>*

In the above lines, the folk poet's desire that Gandhi had attacked the British as chief of the army of twenty thousand soldiers created a

distinct form of mass nationalism. It depicted him becoming violent for the cause of Swaraj and marching with the native army, attacking the British, and beheading them. On hearing this news, the British army panicked. Everyone ran helter-skelter, in whatever condition they were. Such imagery about Gandhi was rarely seen, but the public aspiration that he can also be violent is unimaginable and presented his image as a warrior.

The character of Indian nationalism seen between 1857 and 1947 points toward the nationalism of the common people, in which there is nothing other than the nation's liberation at the centre. The writings in Hindi literature or folk memories also focus on political emancipation and correspondingly raise the question of social emancipation with aplomb, in which the issue of women and Dalit emancipation comes up prominently. The images of nationalism created during the Indian Independence movement have been deeply discussed and debated by historians and intellectuals in many fields. That is why this period of Indian history is seen as a foundation of the Indian nation on which India, after 1947, was built. This India is as democratic and secular as it should be in the international arena and whose collective consciousness is centred on the Indian tradition of knowledge and thought process. □

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