

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF HINDI LITERATURE IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY BANARAS

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### Abstract

National languages are semi-artificial and arbitrarily constructed. From the early decades of twentieth century, the discussion on national language in colonial India transformed to a dynamic process for creating national literature and identity. The rise of a popular press, fuelled by expansion in ‘vernacular education’ and by events such as World War I, economic crisis and the new nationalist drive towards popular mass politics, contributed to the growth of publishing market and literary public sphere wider than ever before. Amidst these developments, Hindi literary tradition evolved with the writings of Bhartendu Harishchandra, Jai Shankar Prasad and Premchand in late nineteenth and early decades of twentieth century in Banaras, a prominent city of United Provinces (modern Uttar Pradesh). Viewed in this context, the paper tries to discuss the development of literary production in Banaras.

**Key Words:** Literary, Banaras, Production, Premchand, Hindi

### 1. Introduction

National languages, as E.J. Hobsbawm pointed out, are almost always semi-artificial constructs [1]. From the early decades of twentieth century, the discussion on national language in colonial India transformed to a dynamic process for creating national literature and identity. The rise of a popular press, fuelled by expansion in ‘vernacular education’ and by events such as World War I, economic crisis and the new nationalist drive towards popular mass politics, contributed to the growth of publishing market and literary public sphere wider than ever before. Amidst these developments, Hindi literary tradition evolved with the writings of Bhartendu Harishchandra, Jai Shankar Prasad and Premchand in late nineteenth and early decades of twentieth century in Banaras, a prominent city of United Provinces (modern Uttar Pradesh) [2].

### 2. Methods and Materials

Benedict Anderson has noted that the anti-colonial nationalist struggle depends on creating ‘culturally imaginative unification’ along with the mass mobilization [3]. And in this process of imagined unification of population, the language also plays an important role. As Asha Sarangi describes that modern states have used the “modus operandi” of market to create symbols and

forms to institutionalize the national language and to delegitimize the patois, creoles, pidgins and common non-standard language [4]. In this context, the discourse on 'what would be the language of the nation', became the crux of nationalist discourse and finally Hindi was identified as language of the nation. Thereafter the redefinition of Hindi began through threefold process of- dichotomization, standardization, and historicization [5]. These steps in Banaras started after the emergence of writings of Bhartendu Harishchandra and Nagari Movement in the end of the nineteenth century. But the real transition took place from the first decay of twentieth century when the development of Hindi weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines noticeably started. In Banaras where 90 percent of the population spoke Bhojpuri, a dialect of Hindi, adopted to this change.

To understand the development of Hindi literary production in Banaras, the article has elicited data from sources including Report on the Administration of the N.W.P. & Oudh, census data, writings of Premchand in *Hans*, reports published in contemporary magazines like, *Jagaran*, *Dampati*, *Bharat Dharma*, *Swarth*, *Arya-Mahila*, *Indu*, *Nagripracharini Patrika* and other contemporary writings. The article has applied the method of historical research where the data has been consulted from archives and libraries.

### 3. Result

#### 3.1 Development of Hindi in United Provinces

The development of Hindi in United Provinces took place in the cities like Kanpur, Banaras, Allahabad and Lucknow which were the centres of urban trade. Bayly characterised these urban centres as Hindu corporate towns where Hindu and Jain bankers, traders, merchants, and British civil servants and militant personnels settled in larger numbers [6]. The development of Allahabad as a seat of literature and journalism started during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By then, Allahabad had already become a centre of administration, commerce and political activity. During early years of twentieth century, Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma movement encouraged Hindi literary sphere. Major contribution to the growth of Allahabad as a literary centre was made by the journal *Sarasvati*, started by the Indian Press in 1900. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, who became its editor in 1903 and remained till 1921, made it a unique medium of literary expression. Madan Mohan Malaviya's efforts with English dailies the *Leader* and the *Times of India*, along with *Abhyudaya*, influenced politics and literature. *Abhyudaya* group gave the Hindu wing of the Allahabad Congress a new energy and depth. *Abhyudaya*'s foundation in 1907 was a response to the new direction of Hindu revivalism and from the early years the paper was closely connected with the campaign for the establishment of Banaras Hindu University. Later, the *Abhyudaya* press also produced a Hindi broadsheet in the peasant interest *Kisan* [7].

For developing interest and consciousness on issue of national language, Hindi supporters joined the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Allahabad, an organisation set up to promote Hindi as the national language. For propagation of Hindi language, there were four departments in Sammelan which included a) Working Committee, b) Advertisement Department, c) Examination Department, d) Research Department. Research department had two important

responsibilities. First, to resolve the problem within Hindi literary world on its style, historicity and nature of literature. And the second was to locate old manuscripts in Hindi and their further translation <sup>[7]</sup>. Subsequently, the Sammelan started the publication of its own quarterly magazine.

Kanpur came in limelight with publication of *Pratap* (1913) under the editorship of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi. *Pratap's* office was totally devoted to nationalist politics. It gave full coverage to Champaran's enquiry and supported the Kanpur mill strikes in 1919. In 1920s, the Pratap Pustak Mala published political biographies, socialist propaganda, nationalist pamphlets, and song books. No surprise that Premchand was highly influenced by *Pratap* and Premchand's *Premashram*, and *Rangbhoomi* which were peasant-oriented novels, came in this period. With the growth of denominational schools in the 1920s, Kanpur also became a sizable educational centre and colleges held literary events. With the growth of denominational schools in the 1920s, Kanpur also became a sizable educational centre, and colleges held literary events. The first Conference on the National Language and National Script' was organized under the aegis of the Arya Samaj in Lucknow in December 1916, it coincided with the annual Indian National Congress Session. At the conference, under the Presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi for the first time an array of nationalist leaders such as, Annie Besant, M.M. Malviya, Swami Sraddhanand, Ramaswamy Iyer and others, took an explicit stand on Hindi Rastrabhasa. The Conference resolved that 'in order to increase unity in the country and to spread nationalist feelings, it is necessary to make use of a national script and national language' <sup>[5]</sup>.

Amidst these developments, the special Congress session held in Nagpur in 1920 declared Hindi-Hindustani as the national language of India. Further, a resolution moved by P.D. Tandon at the special Congress in Kakinada introduced a change in the Congress rules which highlighted that the proceedings were to be held in the national language. *Sammelan Patrika* wrote that 'We have reached very near to our aim' and Hindi-Hindustani will be the language of Congress <sup>[5]</sup>. Benares also grew into a centre of the new wave in the Hindi literary production with *Indu*, *Jagaran* and *Hans*.

### 3.2 Hindi Literature in Banaras

Since the late nineteenth century, enterprising Kshatris and Kayasthas had made Banaras into a centre of commercial publishing in Hindi. By the year 1882, Benares had 32 printing presses, just behind Lucknow which possessed 52 printing presses (Table I, II) <sup>[8]</sup>. Two most acclaimed monthly literary magazines *Kavivac Hansudha* and *Harishchandrachandrika* was published from Banaras. After the Vernacular Press Act of 1878, the number of vernacular publications in North-Western Provinces and Oudh decreased from 294 to 218 (139 in Urdu and 79 in Hindi) during the period 1879-80. In this context, only Banaras had shown increase in vernacular publication from 40 to 63 with compare to the other cities of North-Western Provinces, such as Kanpur, Lucknow and Allahabad <sup>[9]</sup>.

**Table I: Printing Press in Banaras <sup>[9]</sup>**

<b>List of Printing Press</b>	
1.	Medical Hall press
2.	Light Press
3.	Ganesh Yantra
4.	Navin Chandra
5.	Sudha Bilas
6.	Sanskrit Mudra Yantra
7.	Siddhi Vinayak
8.	Printing Press
9.	Vidya Sagar
10.	Jain Prabhakar Press
11.	Divakar Press
12.	Hanuman Prabhakar
13.	Ramdan Hind
14.	Kedar Prabhakar
15.	Chandra Shekhar
16.	Prabhakar
17.	Anand Ban
18.	Hari Prakash Press
19.	Arya Yantralaya
20.	Chamatkar Darshan
21.	Lithographic Yantralaya
22.	Husaini Job Press
23.	Jafri Press
24.	Surya Prabhakar
25.	Sudha Nivas
26.	Benares Akhbar
27.	Chintaman Prabhakar
28.	Ferogh-i-Benares
29.	Sapt-Sagar
30.	Gulzar-i-Benares
31.	Prabhakar Benares
32.	Chandra Prabha Press
33.	Kedar Prabhakar

**Table II: Magazines published from Banaras**

<b>Magazine</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>Type</b>
<i>Jagaran</i>	Shivpujan Singh Sahay	Fortnightly
<i>Dampati</i>	Govind Shastri	Monthly
<i>Bharat Dharma</i>	Shanker Yagik	Weekly

<p><i>Swarth</i> <i>Arya-Mahila</i> <i>Indu</i> <i>Nagripracharini Patrika</i></p>	<p>Arya Mahila Hitkarini Mahaparisad Jai Shankar Prasad Nagari Pracharini Sabha</p>	<p>Monthly Monthly Monthly Quarterly</p>
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In terms of languages, Banaras was the most polyglot town in the United Provinces with Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Nepali, Rajasthani and Punjabi speakers. Bhojpuri was spoken by the 90.3 per cent population, while Urdu or some form of western Hindi was spoken by 7.2 percent <sup>[10]</sup>.

Banaras witnessed several literary and religious institutions which acted as a catalyst and shaped the social and literary consciousness. The Old Chamicheal Library (1870), Nagari-Pracharini Movement (1893), and later Banaras Hindu University provided venues for regular literary conversation, learned talks, poetry sessions and other literary events. Some of the important societies, such as the Mitra Goshti, a literary society for the promotion of Sanskrit studies, the Bhadhab and Sangit Samitis, a Bengali club, and the Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, a Hindu religious association headed by the Maharaja of Darbhanga with 6000 members, were also set up in Banaras <sup>[11]</sup>.

Amidst the development of radical national movement, Sanskritized Hindi appeared as an important symbol of Hindu nationalism. Nagari Pracharini Sabha, established in 1893, and Gaurakshni Sabha played a major role in this process. After the year 1894, Madan Mohan Malaviya concentrated on the promotion of Nagari script in the region. Due to the Nagari Movement, the foremost figures in Hindi literature from Banaras, such as Jagannath Das Ratnakar, Lala Bhagvan Din, Jayasankar Prasad, and many organisations got confused with regard to which script should be the medium of transmission. One of the best examples was Kayasthas, for them Persian and Kaithi script were more favourable than Devanagari. Most of the Hindi intelligentsia well into the first decades of the twentieth century belonged to this class. Premchand and Munshi Dayanarayan Nigam, the editor of the famous Urdu literary monthly *Zamana*, were among such Kayasthas. Premchand had started his career in writing from *Zamana* itself. Most of the Premchand's correspondences to Nigam were in Urdu <sup>[11]</sup>. By 1920s, these literary figures started to write in Hindi.

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1 Standardisation of Hindi language

Twentieth century was the very crucial period for the progress of Hindi as a language and as a subject of literature in United Provinces. Between 1891 and 1908, the mode of literary production in Hindi changed. Till the end of the nineteenth century, translation and republication of classic books were the main feature of the hindi magazines and books but by 1908 striking transformation took place and large increment in original works from 723 in 1891 to 1399 in 1908 was witnessed <sup>[12]</sup>. Bhartendu Harishchandra propounded 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan' and asked for standardisation of Hindi language in his short treatise entitled *Hindi*

*Bhasa* (1884). Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi side-lined the colloquial words from newly developed Hindi. *Saraswati*, a magazine edited by Dwivedi, was the first periodical to define a policy regarding matter and language and asked authors to follow strictly. From this process Hindi detached itself from the earthy root. However, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi defended various terms of Urdu and in some places, he finished his letters with Urdu *Shayri*. Even in one letter he wrote to Janardan Jha “I don’t have any problem in the use of Urdu Persian in Hindi writing. Even, some of the Urdu words are more acceptable and more often being used...” [13]. His stress was on ‘pure’ print language and in this process Bhojpuri like dialects and colloquial languages suffered more than Urdu.

#### 4.2 Social Issues in Hindi Literature.

There was also development in the content of literature. Premchand’s writings *Gaban*, *Godan* and others mostly discussed the middle class and urban poor [6]. The rural characters spoke in colloquial language. There was the growing importance of urban mass politics in interwar north India and the role of the poor in urban politics was underpinned by momentous change in the towns. The focus on the poor in the interwar years was also due to the reformist interest, caste uplift movements, militant religious politics and the emerging nationalist discourse on moral, social regeneration and unemployment.

It is very apparent that the educated class coming out of universities, colleges and technical institutes were struggling for employment. This struggle was of two kinds, firstly, the case in which educated men failed to find employment of any kind at all, while the other case comprised a very large proportion of the unemployed who had succeeded in finding employment of a type for which the education which they had received did not constitute a qualification [15]. Amidst the sustained struggle for employment across the professions, the cases of suicide were reported in newspapers. The newspaper *Liberty* published a report, ‘A Woeful Story’ in its issue of 27 April 1931, in which a mother killed his starved son and also unsuccessfully tried to kill herself when her husband was wondering in search of employment and remained unable to find a job. Another story, ‘Sad End of a Man: Sequel to Unemployment’, published by *The Hindustan Times* on 1 June 1931 reported that a young man, Madhusudan Seal aged 22 years, committed suicide as he was unemployed and could not help his father and family at the time of financial need [16]. The issue of unemployment was raised in writings in Hindi as well.

There was one of the important shifts from Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi to Premchand, where Premchand writings were extremely simple and societal and people connected themselves with his stories. Subsequently, Humour column was another important development in Hindi monthly magazines. It firstly started by *Bharat Mitra* under the name ‘Mauji’ and very soon other literary magazines

#### 5. Conclusion

The development of Hindi literary production in Banaras was interlinked with the question of search of a national language and script. Nagri Pracharini Sabha supported the use of standard Hindi in the literary production. Amidst the growth of nationalist movement, Hindi got it support for a national language by 1920s and literary figures of Banaras like Premchand shifted

from writing in Urdu to Hindi. During this change, the characters of prose and short stores depicted the problem of rural India in colloquial words than sanskritized Hindi.

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### **Institutional Review Board Statement**

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### **Informed Consent Statement**

Not applicable.

### **Data Availability Statement**

The current paper is based on the methodology of historical research. The data have been collected from the libraries of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Lucknow University, Lucknow. Subsequently government records have been consulted from National Archives of India, New Delhi and National Library of India, Kolkata. Digital libraries like Internet Archives and Dspace@GIPE have also been used in collection the relevant records and reports.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest attached to this research.

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