

## **Progressive Writers' Movement in Hindi (1930s-40s): Conflicts and Debates**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is a broad study of the debates around the Progressive writings in Hindi during the 1930s and 1940s. Many Hindi authors joined the Progressive Writers' Movement during its early stages to explore its potential, but some of them, like Agyeya, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Jainendra, Sumitranandan Pant, dissociated themselves from it very soon because their aesthetic principles and political ideologies were different. Progressivist and Modernist tendencies were increasingly being brought together in fiction, despite some major differences which often led to conflicts about the content and form of literary works. Efforts were being made to appropriate the literary space for presenting certain political realities from specific ideological perspectives; while some Hindi writers took this development very positively in their contemporary historical-political circumstances, others considered it dangerous as it could lead to the manipulation of literature for political propaganda. Bhagwaticharan Verma

presented anxieties about the excessive influence of Communist politics on literature and the inability of some authors to negotiate their politics and aesthetics in *Tedhe Medhe Raaste* (1946) (*Zig-Zag Ways*; translation mine). Ram Vilas Sharma and Rangeya Raghav wrote 'Tedhe Medhe Raaste' (an essay) and *Seedha Saada Raasta* (*The Linear-Simple Path*; translation mine) respectively to critique Verma's presentation of the Communist movement and the relationship between politics and literature.

The direct dialogue between these texts and their authors is ample indication of the varied reactions to the Progressive Writers' Movement according to the authors' personal opinion regarding the influence of Marxism or political theory on literature and the role of literature in presenting politics and social reality. This paper analyzes the conflicts and debates among Hindi authors about the appropriation of literature for presenting personal political opinions as well as national social reality and about negotiating the relationship between political theory, international politics, national socio-political movements, and the literary space.

*Keywords:* Modernism in Hindi; Progressivism; Ideological Representation; Politics Vs. Aesthetics; Post-Premchand Hindi Novels

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The Progressive Writers' Movement is often perceived to be more closely associated with Urdu literature, but there has been no simplistic, uni-dimensional 'Progressivism' represented in just one language; with different versions and local associations of it in many Indian languages and regions. Given the historical and social context of India in the 1930s and 1940s, writers from most regional languages were grappling with the phenomenon of Progressivism. The formulation of Progressive Writers' Association (from hereon, PWA) on an all-India level and

the intense involvement of writers from most regions have often been neglected in mainstream discussions about Progressive literature. In a recent book on Progressive writing, *Anthems of Resistance* (2006), Raza Mir and Ali Husain Mir write,

This book grows out of a desire...to reclaim the legacy of the progressive poets in an age when their words, insights, and politics continue to be relevant.... It is an attempt to retrieve the spirit of resistance that once roamed so freely in the landscape of Urdu literature during the Progressive writers' movement. In that sense, this book is more than a recounting of a bygone age; it is our own political project (xviii).

It is clear that the "political project" is to reclaim the Progressive history of Urdu poetry while the writers do not mention the progressive movement on a larger Indian scale in their Preface. The author of this paper also encountered a similar misconception in the classes of a course on the Progressives. Most of her fellow researchers initially assumed that Progressive literature was synonymous with Urdu literature and a mention of Hindi Progressives was met with a patronising and lukewarm response.

This paper attempts to present the passionate debates around Progressivism in Hindi though it is by no means an exhaustive study of Hindi Progressive Movement but an assertion of the fact that Hindi literary zone was abuzz with discussions on 'Progressivism', especially during the 1930s and 1940s. Hindi writers engaged with 'Progressivism', the Movement and the concept, and presented their perspectives on it, not only through their critical and theoretical works but also through their fiction. Rigorous debates and conflicts about Progressivism in the Hindi circles and the attempts of Hindi intelligentsia to define 'Progressive literature' share some parallels with Urdu Progressive writing and also indicate some independent perspectives on Progressivism.

## I

Realistic regional literature in Hindi was focussed on relevant socio-political issues even before the formation of PWA. Bhartendu Harishchandra had moved away from the literature of fantasy to a kind of social realism which brought literature close to common life during the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. He attacked superstitions and

conservatism of his times to take literature to a more contemporary and modern presentation. Similarly, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi was emphasizing the need for a literature which inspired not only social reform but social revolution. Authors were swiftly moving away from *Chhayavaad* (loosely translated as Romanticism in Hindi literature) to realism, social realism and critical realism. The formation of PWA gave this trend a stronger impetus and provided writers with a fresh platform to discuss literature, society, politics and revolution. Authors like Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', Sumitranandan Pant, Makhanlal Chaturvedi, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Ashq, Agyeya and many more associated themselves with the Progressive Movement with much enthusiasm initially. A common national literary agenda was being formulated and writers were trying to contribute to it in their own ways.

Premchand's presidential address at the first official meeting of PWA in India is indicative of this agreement of Hindi authors with this larger literary movement. As he called for a literature where 'truths and experiences of life... find expression', which is a 'criticism of life' and which 'instils in us a dynamism and restlessness', most authors agreed with him. During this initial phase, a majority of Hindi writers agreed with the Progressive Manifesto which called for a focus in literature on peasants, farmers, working classes and exposing those who exploit the labour of others, a literature that inspires the masses to fight against pessimism and oppression, represents an active participation in active politics, opens debates about the place of literature in society, and establishes a direct contact with the masses. These agendas, as put in the Manifesto and later recalled by Sajjad Zaheer in *Roshnai* (Urdu) or *The Light: A History of the Movement for Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (English), were commonly accepted and heralded as the future of literature in India.

Yet, the initial euphoria could not be sustained, most prominently with Hindi authors who refused to align themselves with a literary movement that was swiftly getting transformed into a narrow political one according to them. Dissent was evident in languages like Urdu as

well where writers like Ahmed Ali chose to move away from what they considered a narrow space and language for literature, but it came out most strongly in Hindi where authors had a very long tradition of literature to fall back upon, and also many upcoming directions (like Modernism) to channelize. The most significant point of contention for Hindi authors dissenting against Progressive Movement was the proximity between Communism and Progressivism. They were getting increasingly uncomfortable with this large literary and socio-political movement being gradually co-opted by the Communist Party. Agyeya, Jainendra, Pant, Dinkar, all dissociated from the PWA because they felt that the national social and literary cause was being betrayed for a global Communist affiliation. Dissociation from the Association though never stopped them from appropriating and re-defining the concept of Progressivism. Manifold definitions of progressive writing were being expressed by various authors. This paper presents these multiple perspectives and debates about Hindi progressive writing through four major figures, Bhagwaticharan Verma, Agyeya, Rangeya Raghav and Ramvilas Sharma.

## II

Bhagwaticharan Verma's *Tedhe Medhe Raaste* (1946) (*Zig-Zag Ways*; translation mine) depicts the nationalist movements of different political parties during the 1930s and alongside, presents some scenes depicting a group of Hindi authors discussing the role of literature in society and the role of politics in literature. The scenes are Verma's take on the meetings of PWA. He presents Communist leaders through a character like Umanath, a manipulator who plans to get the support of literary personalities to promote Communist ideology and plan of action. In an ironically humorous fashion, Verma depicts some Hindi authors discussing issues like the position of Hindi literature in Indian society, the relationship between beauty and reality, the 'ugliness' of songs of labour, the Hindi-Urdu debate, the Progressive and Reactionary trends in Hindi and the influence of politics and Marxism on literature. While some of them vociferously support the importance of social-realism and a depiction of the

working classes in literature, others are equally vehement in promoting the depiction of 'pristine, abstract, other-worldly beauty' in literature. Verma characterizes each author in great detail which indicates their similarities with the Hindi authors of the times. The scene where Umanath visits these authors and listens to their discussions makes a mockery of meetings that were held in the name of promoting Hindi literature. Debates are shown to be turning into petty fights as authors demean each other for using incorrect English or getting influenced by women. Discussions about literature become increasingly superficial as writers convert them into personal duels. While some authors rue the absence of social issues and political consciousness in Hindi literature at a time when literati all over the world is engaged in the literature of 'social problems', others direct energy in denouncing 'bourgeois mentality' and encouraging a study of Karl Marx. An even greater tirade is launched against reactionary literature which is being written in the name of revolution.

Each author presents his personal problems with his contemporary literature except his own writing. Extreme superficiality of approach is revealed with some authors claiming that their personal upper-class status prevents them from writing about working classes, peasants, the poor and the needy. Moreover, some become guardians of a certain 'beauty in literature' that needs to be protected from the ugliness of songs of labour. Rani Shashiprabha (another fictitious character in the novel) completely separates the figure of the social revolutionary from the literary figure as she believes that literature is meant to take humankind to a 'higher universal beauty', an imaginative utopic world beyond the ugliness of life. Most of the authors present at the meeting nod in agreement and escape from any kind of social responsibility that needs to be represented through literature, even as one of them angrily says, "Are we responsible for solving every social problem" (Verma 203). This prolonged sequence on the issues of Progressive writing in Hindi exposes all kinds of misunderstandings and misrepresentations of 'Progressivism'. The hypocritical assumptions and petty feuds among

writers depict the inadequacies of the Hindi literary scene and also the unwillingness of many authors to take on any kind of social responsibility.

The sequence opens a window to the variegated opinions on PWM and shows its strengths as well as weaknesses. It ironically presents the need of a socially realist literature. Verma's critique is not directed at the movement but at certain literary figures which stand in its favour or opposition without adequate knowledge about it. His criticism is directed at a certain direction which the movement might take and not the general idea of Progressive literature. Umanath, who visits these writers to involve them in his promotion of the Communist ideology, goes back with a feeling of disenchantment with the Indian intelligentsia. Most of them are shown to be rigid in their attitudes, concerned more about personal comforts than literary excellence. Hence, Umanath's plan to 'use' literature for the promotion of Communism fails, but Verma successfully directs his satire at the debates that engulfed the Hindi literary scene of his times and that limited the scope of progressivism. He presents a more detailed critique of the same in his journal, *Vichaar* (Idea, translation mine), which had articles discussing the contemporary Hindi literary scene.

Verma exhibits his close association with such literary meetings as well as his disillusionment with them. Through the sequence in *Tedhe Medhe Raaste*, he presents three tendencies in his contemporary Hindi literature which were being discussed by many other authors and critics as well, (1) an adherence to traditional narrative forms and issues and a sort of mysticism in content, (2) depiction of contemporary social reality, specifically the reality of India's villages, peasants, and working classes, and (3) experimentation with the available literary forms, restricting literature to the presentation of individual consciousness and preserving the autonomy of art. Verma was severely attacked not only for a degrading presentation of Hindi authors but also for a falsification of Indian social and historical reality in his text. Ram Vilas Sharma and Shivdaan Singh Chauhan accused him of aligning with the feudal upper classes in the guise of Gandhian values, maligning Communist ideology and the

Progressive Writers' Movement and dehumanizing the masses and their consciousness with this novel.

In his vituperative article 'Tedhe Medhe Raaste', Sharma alleged that the novel manipulates facts to mislead people about the Communist movement, presents the working classes and peasants in a demeaning way, promotes feudalism and capitalism, and produces disillusionment about a social revolution. Also, he accuses Verma of deliberately using psychological realism to promote a selfish individualism. The criteria for Sharma's analysis are clearly inspired by the tenets of the Progressive Writers' Association manifesto and Marxist ideology. He aggressively lays an emphasis on the positive presentation of working classes and peasants in *Marxvad aur Pragatisheel Sahitya* (Marxism and Progressive Literature; translation mine). Any literature that moves away from this focus is regressive for him. This extreme focus on one section of society, though essential in some ways, betrays a danger of limiting literature instead of expanding its reach. Most authors who dissociated from PWA gave this 'narrowing' of vision as a major cause for their dissociation. They felt that they were being straight jacketed into a regimental idea of Progressivism. Sharma's efforts at protecting 'progressive' literature and denouncing anything that was 'non-progressive' reveal how contested the concept had become and how quickly and forcefully sides were being taken to defend or denounce it. It was being claimed by members of PWA but it was also being claimed, negotiated and redefined by people who were not members of PWA or who had consciously dissociated themselves from the Association, as evident through Verma's text.

### III

Authors and critics like Ram Vilas Sharma, Shivdaan Singh Chauhan, Ramvriksha Benipuri, Sumitranandan Pant, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, Narendra Sharma, Rangeya Raghav were actively involved with the Progressive Writers' Association and their idea of 'Progressivism' was a reflection of Association's concept. Initially, Premchand's *Hans* (Goose,



translation mine) was the primary journal presenting the developments in PWA and the debates around Progressivism not only in Hindi but other languages as well. Within a span of five years a number of other journals were also published. Some of them continued for a long while but some closed within one-two years of their first production. This mushrooming of journals also indicates the intensity with which these debates around Progressivism were being pursued. Pant and Narendra Sharma started the publication of *Rupaabh* (Physiognomy, translation mine) in July 1938. Amritlal Nagar started *Chakallas* (Discussion, translation mine) in 1938 which directed irony and satire at the dissenters of PWA. Narottam Nagar's *Uchrinkal* (Desolate; translation mine), Shivdaan Singh Chauhan's *Prabha* (Glimmer; translation mine), Ramvriksha Benipuri's *Janta* (Masses; translation mine), Acharya Narendra Dev's *Sangharsh* (Struggle; translation mine) and Yashpal's *Viplav* (Uprising; translation mine) were all journals supporting the PWM and publishing 'Progressive' works (Chauhan 34-37). These journals were significant for authors who wanted to spread their ideas on Progressivism to a large audience and wanted literature to reflect social reality critically, to present the lives of the working classes and peasants and to actively engage with national as well as international politics. A clear influence of Marxism and Communism was evident in their literature as well as their criticism.

In fact, on the basis of these influences, Ram Vilas Sharma and Rekha Awasthi have made valid claims about the presence of Progressive tendencies in Hindi literature since the late 1920s. Both of them have indicated that the works of Premchand and some of his contemporaries depicted a progressive attitude even before the PWA was formed. Sharma mentions Premchand's *Seva Sadan* (*The House of Service*), *Rangbhoomi* (*Playground*) and *Godaan* (*The Gift of a Cow*), Jaishankar Prasad's *Titli* (Butterfly; translation mine), Nirala's *Devi* (Goddess; translation mine) and *Chaturi Chamar* (Chaturi, the leather weaver; translation mine) and Balbhara Dikshit's *Padhees* to depict the rising social realist tendencies in Hindi literature (Sharma 54-55). He emphasizes that the presence of such texts before 1936 show that

'Progressive' tendencies were already present in the authors and they just needed a common platform. Sharma's criteria for 'Progressivism' is similar to some of the authors and critics discussed above, freedom of literature from traditionalism and Romanticism, movement towards social realism, a clear and optimistic presentation of class struggle, and an exposé of capitalists and imperialists. Similarly, Rekha Awasthi mentions the discussions of 'Hindi Sahitya Sabha' (Hindi Literary Society) to elaborate her point about the progressive nature of Hindi literary circles during the 1920s. She points out that Progressivism was not a Western/international influence on Indian literature. After 1929 Hindi Sahitya Sabha was already providing authors a platform for realistic literature dealing with contemporary issues, according to her. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and Ramvriksha Benipuri's rise to significant positions in Hindi Sahitya Sabha led to a literary revolution of sorts in Hindi literature. Young authors got opportunities to present their works to a larger audience. This development could not continue because conservatives and traditionalists took over the leadership again but the brief period had reflected signs of significant changes in the Hindi literary scene and the movement of Hindi literature towards social and political consciousness and representation.

It is interesting that both Sharma and Awasthi mention Premchand quite prominently in their critical-theoretical writings. While no one can deny Premchand's presentation of contemporary social reality and his awareness of political issues and ideologies, no one can take these as his call for a complete elimination of literature not representing the working classes. Premchand's position on Progressivism and Sharma and Awasthi's appropriation of Premchand also reflect the tensions within the movement. Premchand's literature reflects his understanding of the life of the Indian masses, his awareness of the importance of literature for social reform and social progress and his dissatisfaction with capitalism and imperialism but it is never reflective of an exclusive politico-ideological stand. Even in his presidential speech of the 1936 PWA meeting, he emphasizes the significance of truth, critical realism and a new

outlook towards beauty. He brings the Indian masses to the forefront through his works but he does not limit himself to only their presentation. In fact, Sharma's accusation of a utopic idealism that he directs against many authors can be directed against Premchand as well. His works are grounded in reality but they also sometimes point towards a romantic utopia. Would Sharma accuse him of escapism, falsification of facts or unnecessary idealization of reality like he does in the case of Rangeya Raghav? (Discussed later in this paper).

The non-organizational idea of progressivism was being promoted by authors like Agyeya, Dharamvir Bharti, Ilachandra Joshi and Bhagwaticharan Verma who had dissociated themselves from the Association yet, considered themselves 'Progressive'. They were negotiating with the relationship between society, politics and literature in a different way than the official 'Progressive' vision. Their concept of 'Progressive' literature was actually more Modernist as it included experimentation with the already available forms in literature, like psychological realism, Freudianism, individualism and a presentation of class struggle rather than an upholding of a particular class. Like Progressivism 'realism' had also become a conflicted and controversial form. Independent experimentation and exploration were not possible with the dominance of any one politico-literary ideology. These authors opined that truth in art was not about capitalism or egalitarianism but rather a persistent representation of their complex interaction. Also, some of them believed in creating art for art's sake, something that could possibly prevent the overriding influence of politics on literature. They did not presume to liberate art/literature from socio-political engagement but they also did not want ideological differences to take over artistic expression. Their radicalism wished to liberate the individual from the bounds of social convention of all kinds. The official Progressive idea of active engagement with society was not completely acceptable to them because they believed that such a political involvement would never let the individual think independently. In 1943, Agyeya called '*Pragativad*' (Progressivism) 'a political tag' which is dead. Upendranath Ashq called any literature that is new, experimental, different from the usual, that analyses its

context in depth, attacks the problems of the society, and that helps in reaching an understanding about its context as 'Progressive' (Awasthi 34).

Agyeya's novel *Shekhar: Ek Jivani* (1941, 44) (*Shekhar: A Life*) can be taken as an example of such literature. It is a semi-autobiographical, psychologically realist novel about a rebellious young man, Shekhar. As Agyeya writes in its Preface, "Shekhar is undoubtedly a record of the personal suffering of one individual, yet, it is also a reflection of the struggle of his times" (viii). Agyeya's protagonist is an upper-class young man who explores nationalist movements of various political parties, and struggles with social norms. Critics like Devraj Upadhyay, Mohan Rakesh and Rekha Awasthi have criticised the author's focus on an individual and his deliberate ignorance of the class struggle that is contextually specific to India. Sharma is completely against individualism because it narrows the approach of literature but an expression of real experiences is often missing in his analysis. These critics dismiss *Shekhar: Ek Jivani* as a novel which could be seen as coming out of any historical and social context and which does not do any justice to the Indian background by its limited focus on one individual. While members of PWA dismissed it as an apolitical and confused presentation of India's reality, the definition of a 'truly Progressive Indian text' remained absent.

#### IV

Disagreements between the Progressives and Modernists were obvious, but authors like Shivdaan Singh Chauhan, Prakash Chandra Gupt, Rangeya Raghav, Sumitranandan Pant reflect the internal conflicts within the official Hindi Progressive Association. Shivdaan Singh Chauhan who headed the Movement for a while and wrote about the self-conscious use of 'propaganda' in his article 'Kya Sahitya Propaganda hai?' (Is literature Propaganda?; translation mine) became weary of the 'politicization' of literature and the danger of a narrow propagandist vision of some of the authors. In that article he had emphasized that Progressive

literature is not propagandist but politically conscious literature. He believed that earlier authors did not take sides with political ideologies but Progressive authors are ready to choose between and favour ideologies while presenting them. He considered this a positive development but he was also not comfortable with Sharma's emphasis on a fixed agenda for literature. While Chauhan was comfortable with a movement beyond time and context, Sharma pressed upon the importance of immediate context. He attacked Shivdaan Singh Chauhan for what he thought was Chauhan's agenda against the political aspect of literature and also for his escape from a fixed programme. He violently opposes Chauhan for calling Progressivism a 'Marxist perspective on literature and not a movement of literature'. He considers such critics and authors as 'international socialists' who are not grounding their theories or literature in the Indian context. It is ironic that these critiques betray his effort at maintaining a strict code for literary presentation though politically he is a supporter of 'freedom of expression'. His emphasis on a fixed agenda betrays the sense of suffocation which writers could have experienced while working with the PWA.

That was one of the reasons for authors like Sumitranandan Pant to swiftly move away from the PWA after 1946. Such authors have often been critiqued for their abandonment of the Movement because of their reformist tendencies and their greed for government jobs but the reasons for their decision are more varied than that. Many of these authors wanted to have a more holistic presentation of society in their literature rather than limiting it to one political ideology. The demand for presenting only the struggle of the exploited classes and that too with an inspirational and optimistic vision was becoming increasingly difficult for authors who were uncomfortable with the excessive interference of politics in literature and were also getting disillusioned with the changes in Indian society. Partition of the country had disenchanted large sections of society and authors were struggling to represent this new reality with an optimistic vision. The dream of national independence had been achieved but the achievement of individual freedom was still a far cry for common people as well as writers.

Some of them chose to alienate themselves from the Progressive movement while others attempted to redefine its parameters.

## V

Authors like Rangeya Raghav continued their association with the movement and tried to take it forward through their literature and criticism. He wrote *Seedha Saada Raasta* (1967) (The Linear-Simple Path; translation mine) to critique Bhagwaticharan Verma's *Tedhe Medhe Raaste* and to present the working class and peasant movements in a more realistic manner. He included Sharma's critique of the novel as the Preface to his text, an act which shows his agreement with Sharma's political ideology and aesthetic principles. The novel itself is a direct engagement with Communist politics and the working classes. It takes the story of *Tedhe Medhe Raaste* forward only to expose the hypocrisy and hollowness of the feudal upper-classes and to exhibit the strength of the Indian masses. But Sharma does not seem to agree with Raghav's Progressivism or realism as he critiqued Raghav for presenting Indian reality in a superficial and fantastical way, harking back to the Indian past and traditions in a nostalgic and 'reactionary' manner, and for depicting the Indian class struggle in an extremely pessimistic or idealistic style. On the one hand, he criticises Raghav for imaginative and illusory presentations and on the other he expects an optimistic presentation of the class struggle even in the worst situations. It becomes very difficult to follow his idea of a balance between optimism, idealism and realism. He does not appreciate a presentation of the masses as downtrodden or fatalistic because it is too pessimistic and neither does he applaud their presentation as radical revolutionaries who are ready to fight till the end, because that is too idealistic.

In his article 'Rangeya Raghav: Pragatisheel Sahitya mein Chaayawaadi Pravrittikon ka Adhyayan' (Rangeya Raghav: A study of the Romantic tendencies in Progressive literature; translation mine) he cites Raghav's works like *Bhartiya Punarjaagan ki Bhumika*, (India's re-

awakening: An Introduction; translation mine) *Bhartiya Itihaas ka Rekhachitra*, (A sketch of Indian History; translation mine) (*Saarnath ke khandaron mein* (In the ruins of Sarnath; translation mine) and *Medhaavi* (Brilliant; translation mine) to show his displeasure with literature which aims at being Progressive but ends up being 'reactionary' because of excessive focus on imagination, linguistic detail, obsolete metaphors, indirectness of speech and superficial or hyperbolic emotions. He critiques Raghav for the lack of 'literary quality' in his works. He does not consider it great literature because it does not have rhythm, it is indirect and too verbose in linguistic detail, and it is too passionate to be rationally understood. He expects the quality of literature to improve through an improvement in its content. But his contradictory expectations of literary writing make the concept of Progressivism more convoluted. He expects a control over language and content so that the literary quality of the work is not compromised, he expects the author to focus on a very specific context and he expects the author to strike a balance between the two. These demands about a politically conscious and artistically beautiful literature convolute the idea of Progressivism for many.

His critical engagement with Raghav's work betrays a strong desire for direct, politically pro-active, hopeful social realism, nearly bordering on political propaganda. Most of his articles in *Marxvad aur Pragatisheel Sahitya* (Marxism and Progressive Literature; translation mine) reveal his struggle with the two kinds of literature he is discussing in the book. Though he clearly supports Marxist social realism and tries to be cautious about the critique turning into political propaganda, at various points his work becomes not a literary critique but a political analysis of literary texts and personalities. The book starts reading like a political or historical text discussing Marxist theory and Communist ideology while Sharma explains the nature of true literary 'Progressive' writing, yet, he continues with his project of presenting the right kind of Progressive literature as do so many others.

Sharma, Chauhan and Awasti are but a few examples of critical-theoretical engagement with progressivism, and similarly, Premchand, Verma, Agyeya, and Raghav are specific literary

examples from a large body of work revolving around concepts of progressivism. The sheer variety in this small sampling reveals clearly though that attempts at finding a truly Progressive literature are bound to be unsuccessful because Progressive literature found various manifestations in the artistic and literary experimentation of the 1930s-40s. The rigorous debates about Progressivism in the Hindi literary circles and the attempts of the Hindi intelligentsia to define 'Progressive Literature' also show that Progressivism as a movement was not limited to Urdu, English or any other specific language or a particular political party. Literati from most Indian languages were debating about its forms and content, and producing 'Progressive' works, evidenced in various regional and *bhasha* chapters of the movement and the continued presence of progressivism in today's literary debates as well. The idea of a singular form of progressivism is a super-imposition by certain later critical works that present one linguistic variant as *the* definitive representation of the progressive movement and divide it into isolated linguistic groups. As delineated in this paper though, right from the beginning of the movement, there were complex parallels, interactions, and conflicts among different linguistic-political ideologies about understanding and representing progressivism.

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## BIO-NOTE

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