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Premchand 1915: Moving inside the language continuum from Urdu to Hindi

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Abstract

Premchand (1880-1936) started his career as one of the most prominent Indian authors of the 20th century in Urdu. His change towards Hindi was gradual, and he continued to write in Urdu until his death. His choice of language was pragmatic, and driven by economic needs. Hindi offered him a larger readership. Much more important than the choice of language in his artistic development was the development of his literary style, for which in the crucial years around 1915, he wanted to develop his own narrativity much on the model of Russian literature and Lew Tolstoy in particular. The decade starting about 1908 was a formative phase not only for Premchand, but also for Hindi as well as Urdu prose literature.

Keywords: Premchand, Hindi, Hindi literature, Urdu, Devanagari.

Saut ("The co-wife")[1], Premchand's[2] cherished first short story published in Hindi and in Urdu afterwards, was published in

[1] PR 11: 371-379. For a summary of the story compare Goyankā 1981: 2, 435 (Saut 3). Not to be mixed up with another short story written by Premchand and published

December 1915 in *Sarasvatī*, the Journal of the *Nāgarī Pracāriṇī Sabhā*. This event, marks the starting point of his career as a Hindi author since his earlier publications in Hindi – or, to be clear, in Devnāgarī script – were adaptations from earlier publications in Urdu.[3] The event itself does not mark a fundamental language change for Premchand, since at least for some years to come, Nastālīq script remained to be his preference. In any case, Premchand's primary concern was literature and not the choice of a script, and the language associated with it. Improving his skills of narrative composition meant much more for him than anything else in his literary career. Having started with Urdu, his linguistic skills however spread out towards the other end of the Urdu-Hindi language continuum. Premchand mastered the extremely persianized code as well as the extremely sanskritised, which he occasionally used in his essays.

The Premchand of the years between the publication of his first collection of short stories *Soz-e vatan* (The Dirge of the Nation) (1908) and his first important novel *Sevāsadan* (1918) was an author in the making. In a letter (in Urdu) to his editor of the Urdu literary journal *Zamānā* (published from 1903-1942 in Kanpur) and friend Dayānārāyaṇ Nigam dated 4.3.1914, Premchand writes "I am still undecided what style to adopt. Sometimes I follow Bankim[4] and sometimes Azad. Recently I have read Count Tolstoy. Since then I am under his influence."[5] These were formative years not only for Bengali poetry with Rabindranath Tagore's famous collection *Gītāṃjali* (1910, Nobel price 1913) in spoken Bengali (*calit bhāṣā*),

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16 years later (1931) under the same title (PR 14: 546-552; Goyankā 1981: 2, 435 [Saut 4]), translated by Ruth Vanita, in: Premchand, *The co-wife and other stories*. London 2008, p.124-134.

[2] I spell "Premchand" according to the common spelling without diacritics in European languages in order to avoid confusion.

[3] Different from the message of the main title of Tariq Rahman's book *From Hindi to Urdu* (Rahman 2011), Premchand went from Urdu to Hindi.

[4] Bankimchandra Chatterjee (Bankiṃcandra Caṭṭarjī, 1838-1894), famous Bengali author.

[5] "Mujhe abhī tak yah itmīnān nahīṃ huā ki kaun-sā tarze tahrīr akhtiyār karūṃ. Kabhī to Baṃkim kī nakal kartā hūṃ, kabhī Āzād ke pīche caltā hūṃ. Ājkal kāuṇṭ Ṭālṭāy ke kisse paṛh cukā hūṃ. Tab se kuch usī raṃg kī taraf tabīyat mail hai." PR 19: 34. This letter together with many others to Dayānārāyaṇ Nigam was handed over to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library from the widow of the Premchand biographer Madan Gopal in 2012, compare http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/history-and-culture/new-light-on-premchand/article3750272.ece (21.11.2015).

but for Hindi as well as for Urdu modern literature in general, with the poetry of Maithilīśaraṇ Gupt (starting with *Jayadrath vadh*, 1910)[6] and Muhammad Iqbāl (starting with *Śikhvā*, 1909 and *Asrār-i khudī*, 1915), and in prose Jayśaṃkar Prasād (first edition of short story collection *Chāyā*, 1912)[7] and of course Navāb Dhanpat Rāī (*Soz-e vatan*, 1908), who published under the penname "Premchand" from 1910.

Even though Urdu in Nastaliq script and also Kaithi[8] script for parts of his private correspondence were still close to him, Premchand more and more understood the importance of turning towards Devnāgarī identified with the cause of Hindi in order to establish himself as an author. After the turn of the century, and particularly after the (unexpected) decision of the Government of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh to give Devnāgarī a status equal to Nastālīq in the year 1900[9], Hindi saw a constantly widening readership and was more and more perceived as better than Urdu. Throughout 1914/15 he would start working on his Hindi-adaptions of some of Lew Tolstoy's short stories, which however came out several years later in 1923. In a letter dated 24.11.1915 he informs his editor Nigam that he is writing stories in Hindi, and also translating into Hindi: "I am writing stories [*kisse*]. I'll send them as soon as they are ready. Until now the Hindi collection is not yet ready. These stories will come out in Hindi first. Later in Urdu also."[10]

Saut also forms part of his first collection in Hindi, *Sapt saroj*, published in June 1917, nine years after his famous first story collection in Urdu, *Soz-e vatan*. Parallel to composing the stories collected in *Sapt Saroj* – among them already several of the better known stories of his oeuvre – he started composing the first of his

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[6] Maithilīśaraṇ Gupt's *Jayadrath vadh*, first published in the journal *Sarasvatī* (ed. by Mahāvīrprasād Dvivedī) is believed to be the first considerable piece of poetry in *Khaṛī bolī* Hindi.

[7] Gaeffke 1970: 116ff.

[8] Kaithi, now almost forgotten, had its stronghold particularly in Bihar and the present Eastern UP until the end of the 19th century, when the proponents of Devnāgarī managed to almost eradicate the once dominating Kaithi from educational syllabi. (King 1984: 65ff).

[9] King1994: 153ff.

[10] "Kisse likh rahā hūṃ. Jyoṃhī taiyār ho gae bhejūṃgā. Abhī tak hindī majmūā taiyār nahīṃ huā hai. Yah kisse pahle hindī meṃ nikaleṃge. Iske bād urdū meṃ bhī." PR 19: 48f.

great novels, *Bāzār-e husn* (Hindi: *Sevāsadan*) in Urdu, published first in Hindi 1918. Besides, some of Premchand's editorials and essays written during this time coinciding with the World War I demonstrate, how devoted he worked on translating, editing and composing in Urdu as well as Hindi, in which he strived to deepen his competence. Even though his long editorial for the January 1915 issue of *Zamānā* on the 60th anniversary of the Indian railways illustrates his interest in modern history, the silence on contemporary historical events, the ongoing warfare and its bloody battle fields in Europe and Africa with its hundreds of thousands Indian soldiers is astonishingly not taken up by him. Premchand is neither interested in language ideology nor world politics. His concern is social reform and world literature.His concern is social reform and world literature.

Transitions

Transition is a central element of identity. The negation of change is in itself a conditioned statement that involves change away from a living tradition to a tradition that requires assertion. Identity construction on the basis of a proposed primordial identity is traditionalism, and not to be confused with the living tradition itself. This must also be true in language and literature. Authors make choices of languages for all kinds of reasons. Why does Mohammad Iqbal continue to write in Persian, even though from the time of his composition of *Asrār-e khudī* his former appreciation for Persian mysticism is quickly losing ground? What made Agyey (1911-1987) to choose Hindi as his literary medium, while he was quite fluent in the more prestigious English at the same time? Or, to go to contemporary literature, why does one of the finest living Indian authors, Kiran Nagarkar, change his fictional language from Marathi to English – and what does this mean for himself as a creative writer? What is the effect of the change of language milieus on the composition of literature?

Is the huge bulk of literature written in an elite language in India – be it Sanskrit, Persian or English, for example – an indication of the estrangement of the writing elite, or a demonstration of the domestication of an elitist code in the good sense? One should keep in mind that Hindi as well as Urdu are widely perceived as elite

languages even by those who speak them as second languages, superimposed on the speakers of their so called "dialects", which could for linguistic reasons in many cases easily go as grown-up languages distinct from Urdu/Hindi (or Hindustani). The case of Maithili is particularly revealing in this context, since the 19th century defined it as a dialect of Eastern Hindi, but it has received official recognition as national language according to the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution in 2002.

In any case is the definition of a number of distinct linguistic codes as dialects of Hindi deeply related to the success story of Hindi in opposition to Urdu as national language or, to use the constitutional language, "official language of the union". The linguistic diversity within what is constructed as Hindi since the second part of the 19th century is astonishing. While Gujarati with its separate script escaped the linguistic inclusiveness of Hindi, all kinds of mother tongues were defined as dialects of Hindi, from South-west Rajasthani over the Himalayas towards the Eastern languages bordering with Bengal.

Taking this into consideration, it is all the more astonishing how the conceptualization of the Hindi language and its literature has managed to control any discourse on the national language in India, including an overwhelming dominance in regions ready to agree to claims that their tongues were to be considered as "dialects" and not as languages proper. Even though the linguistic evidence as such may point to a separate identity in terms of "language", the *Khaḍī bolī* continually gained ground as the accepted standard Hindi, a kind of overarching norm in a process that Vasudha Dalmia has described as the "nationalization of Hindi traditions".

"At no time in the history of Urdu did it represent more of a 'composite' literary culture than just before that culture fell apart,"[11] says Harish Trivedi in his profound article on the "progress of Hindi". Premchand's literary identity as a creative writer is sometimes ranked as one of the four pillars of modern Urdu literature as well as the most prominent prose fiction writer in Hindi. Premchand, i.e. Navāb Dhanpat Rāi (1880-1936) was himself very much a product of "the Urdu speaking elite"[12] as it had developed in the last decades of the 19th century, but also personally marks the transition of a whole

[11] Trivedi 2003: 971.
[12] Robinson 1974: 33-34; compare Trivedi 2003: 971.

generation of authors of Hindu fold with a profound Urdu and partly Persian educational background towards Hindi. This development reached its climax in 1947, when the Urdu-speaking authors of Sikh and Hindu denomination from the Western Panjab had to leave and move to independent India.

Late in his life, in an essay and a speech from 1935, Premchand explores the question of the future national language, and clearly argues for Hindi as a distinct language from Hindustani and Urdu.[13] In an editorial to "Hans" in April 1936, however, Premchand welcomes the efforts to bring specialists of Hindi and Urdu literature together (as in a conference at Jamia Millia university, Delhi at the occasion of the foundation of the *Hindustānī Sabhā* in Delhi), since it is a good purpose to "create opportunity to know and understand the thoughts and feelings of the other and develop the Hindustani language"[14], which means, he sees Hindi and Urdu as languages and literatures having different identities, which he would like to be moderated, but continue to be distinct. Curiously, at the same time he wanted to let blossom Hindustani. Even though Premchand was aware of the Hindustani versus Hindi fallacy and the debate of the 1920s[15], a certain ambivalence continued to be at the basis of Premchand's own position.

There was a time – i.e. the time before the nationalist discourses on language and the identity of Hindi and Urdu -, writes Premchand in the editorial of "Hans" from April 1936, when there was love (*muhabbat*) between the two and "no difference in the field of literature"[16], even though there was not so much "progress" (*unnati*) in the arts and "awareness" (*jāgriti*) in politics. In the present time, however, Hindi has become the language of the Hindus, and Urdu that of the Muslims. Two camps (*do kaimp*) have been formed, and language as well as literature have fallen for the divide. The fact that literature has "no relationship to politics, since its subject is man

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[13] Particularly in his essay on "Urdū, hindī aur hindustānī" (PR 7: 447-454, published in Urdu 1935 and in Hindi 1937) and "Hindī rāṣṭrabhāṣā hogī" (PR 7: 454-456, 1935).
[14] "Ek dūsre ke vicāroṃ aur bhāvoṃ jānne aur samajhne kā maukā de aur hindustānī bhāṣā kā vikās kare" (PR 9: 230).
[15] Compare chapter 2.1 in Orsini 2002: 126ff on "the nationalist discourse of language".
[16] "Sāhitya ke kṣetr meṃ to koī bhed hī nahīṃ thā" (PR 9: 230).

himself"[17], is forgotten. At the same time, there is an inherent decline in literature itself going on, since "Hindi and Urdu literature, driven by a tragic fate, go through a period, in which their relationship to simple life has broken down and all their power goes into wailing on the pains of separation and lamentation"[18]. The knowers of literature fail to do what they are supposed to do, "it is the knower of literature himself, who shows the way forward"[19].

Altogether, even though Premchand admits the identities of Hindi-Urdu to be different, he sees the divide as a typical example of the decadence of the present. In an editorial in "Hans" from December 1935, he is even more explicit. "Even nowadays, Hindus in hundreds of thousands in number study Urdu, write in it and see it as their mother tongue."[20] The crucial word is a particle, *bhī* ("even"): He refers to a state that he appreciates, but which is threatened, or simply a kind of leftover from an earlier phase of history with a higher degree of harmony and mutual understanding. Consequently, he relates the language question to religious identities, when he turns towards the Muslim part of the story – and again, the past was better than the present: "In the beginning, Muslims did accept Hindi, but now they see a fault in even just seeing a letter of Hindi."[21] "In the beginning" (*śurū meṃ*) seems to refer back to the beginning of the momentous campaign for the spread of Devnāgarī in the later 19th century particularly through the *Nāgarī pracāriṇī sabhā* and equally minded organizations, which was clearly suffering from a Hindu revivalist bias. The decline notwithstanding, Premchand's ideal continues to be on the one side that both the languages and their scripts should be taught in educational institutions in general, but also that this should ultimately lead to "some day the two languages shall be one"[22]. This sounds like a contradiction in terms: He uses the term "languages" on one side, clearly marking distinct identities not only in script, which is

[17] "Rājnīti se koī sambandh nahīṃ, uskā to insān hī hai" (PR 9: 230).
[18] "Hindī aur urdū sāhitya badkismatī se aise jamāne se gujre, jab sāhitya ne ām jiṃdagī se nātā toṛ-sāliyā thā aur unkī sārī tākat virah aur vilāp ke dukhṛe rone meṃ kaṭtī thī" (PR 9: 230).
[19] "Adīb hī kaum kā path-pradarsak hotā hai" (PR 9: 230).
[20] "Hindū to āj bhī lākhoṃ kī saṃkhyā meṃ urdū paṛhte haiṃ, likhte haiṃ aur usko apanī mātṛbhāṣā samajhte haiṃ." (PR 9: 219).
[21] "Musalmānoṃ ne śurū meṃ hindī ko apnāyā thā, magar ab ve hindī kā akṣar dekhnā bhī gunāh samajhte haiṃ." (PR 9: 219).
[22] "Ek din donoṃ bhāṣāeṃ ek ho jāeṃgī" (PR 9: 219).

not precisely the Gandhian interpretation of the identity of Hindi and Urdu as being one language in two scripts.

On the other hand, Premchand sticks to the rhetoric of unity and falls to the description of the ultimate goal as non-distinctness of Hindi and Urdu – linguistic non-dualism, so to say. To be *one* or to become *one* sounds so attractive that Premchand as author of his editorial cannot avoid it. He ends the editorial with an interesting variant of the classical nationalist statement on displacing English: "As long as both languages [i.e. Urdu and Hindi] will not be brought close to each other, the dominance of English will continue"[23]. This statement relates the conflicting rivalry between Hindi and Urdu to the dominance of English in late colonial India. The title of the editorial is *hindustān kī kaumī zubān* ("Hindustan's national language"), a statement Hindustani style. The statements are contradictory: on one side, Premchand states the distinct character of Hindi and Urdu – and the religious communities somehow related to them. On another occasion, he stresses the unity of the two – an inevitable part of the rhetoric of Hindustani in late colonial India.

Back to the beginnings

These late writings represent altogether a much later stage of reflexivity and echo his long engagement with the freedom movement after World War I, the repercussions of discourses on nation and identity, and a growing concern about future language politics in a more and more complex image of the future independent India. The Premchand of the period before the non-cooperation movement, before and during WWI, was in his formative years, developing his choice of topics, his language and rhetoric. It is amazing how WWI remained to be far away from Premchand. The only direct reference to WWI in his letters, which predominantly deal on publication matters and financial issues, is in a letter dated 4.9.1914: "While the noise of the war is on, it can be doubted that someone is interested to listen to accounts and short stories."[24]

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[23] "Jab tak donoṃ bhāṣāoṃ ko samīp na lāyā jāegā, aṃgrejī kā prabhutv banā rahegā." (PR 9:219).

[24] "Jang kī dhun meṃ śāyad hī kisī ko kisse-kahānī kā śok ho." (PR 19: 39).

There is no equivalent to Gulerī's famous short story *Usne kahā thā* among the 302 short stories in the PR. Astonishingly, there is a complete silence about Indian colonial soldiers suffering in huge numbers in the trenches of the frontlines in Western Europe, or in Africa in Premchand's writings during and after the war. The kind of absence of the pangs of WWI are even felt in the spurious remark in Amṛtrāy's biography of his father, where he goes on the events in 1914-15 on page 153ff ("In July [sic] 1914, the world war broke out"[25] summarizing the (pre-)nationalist movement: "Whatever was the case, Tilak and over there Annie Besant both raised their voice in favour of 'home rule'."[26] The letters from 1914-15 in PR 19 are full of the practical issues of writing, printing, proof-reading, interaction with editors and last but not least, of financial issues. Political or other events are only very occasionally referred to, and WW I is somehow too far away to leave any repercussion.

Several authors have suggested models to divide Premchand's life and writings into phases that correlate to his development as an author. These suggested periods often follow the analysis of the contents of Premchand's fictional writing, or they follow the development of his political ideas (Gopal 1964) (Swan 1969). The changeover from Urdu to Hindi, i.e. from Nastālīq to Devnāgarī, is a shift that started in Premchand's fiction in 1914[27] and manifested itself in his writings in 1915.

The first short story originally written and published in Hindi – i.e. in Devnāgarī – is *Saut* (PR 11: 371-379) published in the magazine of *Sarasvatī*, in December 1915.[28] He reports on writing in Hindi in a letter to Nigam from 2. October 1915, in which he first reports on suffering from Malaria, in the recent past, admitting that he is ok by the time of writing the letter. He then proceeds saying that he has written a story (*kissā*) for the Urdu journal *Zamānā*. He then

[25] "Julāī 1914 meṃ mahāyuddh chiṛā." (Amṛtrāy 1962: 153).

[26] "Jo bhī ho, idhar tilak aur udhar ainī beseṇṭ, donoṃ homrūl kī āvāz uṭhā rahe the" (Amṛtrāy 1962: 154).

[27] According to Goyankā, Premchand started to compose in Hindi "as per rule" in 1914 "…hindī meṃ niyamit likhnā ārambh kar diyā" (Goyankā 2005: 7). I could find no proof for Goyankā's claim that the short story *Parīkṣā* (PR 11: 341-2) was originally written and published in Devnāgarī in 1914. *Parīkṣā* was published in Nastālīq in December 1914. The first publication in Hindi (before the Urdu version) (*Saut*) came out in December 1915.

[28] On *Sarasvatī* compare Orsini 2002: 53-54 etc.

continues: "I am also writing in Hindi. I sent an essay to *Sarasvatī*." Later on, he mentions: "I am writing the 'Fifty stories of love' in Hindi."[29]

However, the shift from Urdu to Hindi is not linear. Over the next couple of years, Urdu language and Nastālīq script continued to be used by Premchand for original compositions that were later transferred into Devnāgarī. The complications are illustrated for example by his first novel of his mature years, *Bāzār-e husn* (Hindi: *Sevāsadan*), composed originally in Nastālīq and in Urdu 1916-17, but published first in Devnāgarī in Kolkata 1918, and in a revised version in Urdu in Lahore 1924. The comparison of Hindi and Urdu versions and their complex relation in Premchand's literary work is a subject of Kamal Kiśor Goyankā's profound writing on Premchand and forms part of a recent study by Christine Everaert (2010), but needs further research. In any case it is quite clear that the change from Urdu to Hindi and back often turns out to be more than just a simple rendering in another script with slight changes in terminology, but often a kind of editorial and narrative remodeling, in some cases a complete transformation of a story. Anyway, "Bāzār-e husn" is taken by the famous critique Dr. Nagendra as an "unpreceded development from [Premchand's] earlier fiction"[30].

I may add, the composition and publication history of *Bāzār-e husn* is not a singular event. One of the most prominent post-independence Hindi novels by Rahi Masoom Raza (Rāhī Māsūm Razā, 1927-1992), *Ādhā gāṃv*[31] is a strong reminder of the earlier case. The original manuscript of *Ādhā gāṃv* is in Nastālīq, but it was published in Devnāgarī in 1966. The first Nastālīq-edition is from 2003![32] The language of the novel and its natural setting in Eastern UP is characterized by a constant code switching between Bhojpuri, Urdu and Hindi with their shared common stock for example of swear words that figure so prominently in this novel. Raza argued all his life that Urdu should not be related closely to the question of script, and

[29] PR 19: 49ff.
[30] "Pūrvavartī kathā-sāhitya kā abhūtpūrv vikās" (Nagendra/Hardayāl 2009: 558).
[31] Published in an English rendering by Gillian Wright under the title "The Feuding Families of Village Gangauli" in 1995, reprinted from 2003 under the more adequate title "Half a Village".
[32] Compare Harish Trivedi in his introduction to Raza, Rahi Masoom, *Topi Shukla*. Translated by Meenakshi Shivram. New Delhi 2005.

actually advocated Urdu in Devnāgarī, with similar arguments as Premchand more than half a century earlier. Devnāgarī makes Urdu much more easily accessible to a wide readership in India than Nastālīq, which quickly loses ground even among the Muslim population in India. Beyond that, the rendering of novels of Nirmal Verma (Nirmal Varmā) and Uday Prakash (Uday Prakāś) by Ajmal Kamal from Hindi into Urdu demonstrate, how close the twin language still are to each other even today. Similar to Urdu text in Devnāgarī, Ajmal Kamal uses footnotes to explain difficult words and avoids translating them by a proper Urdu synonym. Premchand however always renders his text into the other linguistic context, which often leads him into recomposing and reinventing details of the plot itself. Since the 1960s, Hindi literature has seen a great number of Muslim authors. Namwar Singh (Nāmvār Siṃh) has stated that Gulsher Khān 'Śānī' (*Kālā jal*, 1965) was the first Muslim writer to emerge in *Khaṛī Bolī* Hindi after a gap of more than two hundred years. Asghar Vajāhat, Mehrunnīsā Parvez, Abdul Bismillah, Manzūr Ihtiśām followed suit.[33] Raza is in a way different from these and more like Premchand and some of the Hindi authors from Western Panjab, who started composing in Nastālīq and Urdu before independence and changed over to Devnāgarī and Hindi later.

Premchand belonged to the *Kāyasth* caste, a Hindu caste that came into existence together with Persian dominated administration, which explains their close association with Persian learning. "Munshi" (*munśī*) or, in colonial English terms, "writer" was the classical designation of this population group. In colonial India, and particularly from the 1830s onwards, Urdu had gained in importance and the Kayasths came to be associated with this language. The small number of authors of Hindu origin in modern Urdu literature are mostly *Kāyasths*. In the year of the publication of *Sevāsadan*, i.e. 1918, Premchand was busy finishing his BA from Allahabad University with English, Persian and History as subjects. He considered continuing to MA in English literature for a short while and sympathized with the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.[34]

According to a rather brief remark in his autobiographical minute *jīvan-sār*, published 1932 (PR 7: 362-369), Navāb Dhanpat

[33] On Hindi novel writing by Muslim authors compare Stark 1994.
[34] Bandhyopadhyay 1981: 40ff.

Rāī – he had not yet taken his later pen name 'Premchand' – wrote his first *upanyās* in 1901 after having made first experiences in writing Urdu by translating from English prose. According to *jīvan-sār*, this *upanyās* was published 1902, but the "novel" *Asrār-i maāvid urf devasthān rahasya* was actually published from 1903 to 1905[35] in the magazine *Āvāz-e-khalk*, while the second novel *Hamkhurmā va hamsavāb*, composed 1903-1904, was published by the Naval Kishore Press in 1906. Even Shivrani Devi (Śivrānī Devī) is not particularly precise in her dating of the first novel writing of her future husband, but she self-consciously declares the publication year of the second novel to be the year of her marriage with Premchand, i.e. 1906 – but the Hindi version came out only in 1907, the calendrical year after her second marriage.[36] Premchand does not lose many words on these first efforts in writing in his autobiography, even though the editor of the PR, Rām Ānand assures in his introduction (PR 1:15) that Premchand liked his first novel. In the *jīvan-sār* however, Premchand writes: "A novel of mine came out in 1902 and the next in 1904, but I didn't write stories [galp] before 1907"[37]. Obviously, Premchand does not take his first two *upanyās* very serious, and he more or less relates the beginnings of serious writing with his composition of short stories. It is interesting that he uses the term "galp"[38] here, a Sanskrit loanword that was used for "shorter tale" in early modern Bengali and Hindi literature, while *upanyās* would relate to longer prose pieces going back to the narration of fairy tales. Even in a brief essay from 1922, Premchand argues "Actually, the creation of novels is called light literature, because the readers are entertained by it."[39] In other words,

[35] PR 1: 81-160. According to Goyankā, the publication of "Asrār-e maābid" started in the edition published on the 8th October 1903 (Goyankā 1981: vol.1, p.320). The first publication of Premchand altogether came out on the 1st of May the same year, the first part of a biographical text on Oliver Cromwell published between May and September 1903 in the weekly journal "Āvāz-e khalq".

[36] Shivrani 1956: 21: "Merī śādī ke sāl hī āpkā dūsrā upanyās 'Premā' nikalā…". The first "upanyās" is "Kṛṣṇā", according to the later Hindi title, the second "Premā" or according to the name later given to it, "Vibhav" (published in Hindi by Indian Press, Ilahabad 1907).

[37] "Merā ek upanyās 1902 meṃ nikalā aur dūsrā 1904 meṃ, lekin galp 1907 se pahile maiṃne ek bhī na likhī." (PR 7: 366).

[38] As seen above, Premchand also uses "kissā" for the genre of short stories or short fictional prose texts appearantly synomymous to "galp".

[39] "Vāstav meṃ upanyās-racnā ko saral sāhitya (light literature [sic]) kahā jātā hai, islie ki isse pāṭhakoṃ kā manoraṃjan hotā hai." (PR 7: 253).

Premchand's statement in his autobiography confirms what he has already declared earlier.

Some authors go back to the early 19th century for the origin of the long prose in Hindi and refer to the famous *Rānī ketakī kī kahānī* from Inśā Allāh Khān for the beginning of novel writing in Hindi-Urdu, but usually, Gauridatt's *Devrānī jeṭhānī kī kahānī* (1870), Śraddhārām Phillaurī's *Bhāgyavatī* (1877) or Lālā Śrīnivās Dās *Parīkṣā guru* (1882) is taken as the first novel in Hindi.[40] In Urdu, this honour may go a little bit further back in time, i.e. to Nazir Aḥmad's *Mirāt ul'Arūs* (The Bride's Mirror, 1869)[41] – depending on the definition of a *nāvil*.[42] To be on the safe side, we might have to go to Ruzvā's famous *Umrāo jān adā* from 1908.

In the world of Hindi, the landmark *upanyās* or the fairy tale novel in 19th century Hindi was Devkīnandan Khatrīs *Candrakāntā* and its follow-up *Candrakāntā santati* published serialized from 1890. In 1898, Kiśorīlāl Gosvāmī started to edit a monthly journal under the title *Upanyās*, in which he published as many as 65 novels composed by himself. These early novels often were of the *tukbandī* type, i.e. they include simple forms of narrative rhythms and occasional rhymes, which can also be found in Premchand's two early Urdu novels. Didactic tendencies are clearly there in many of these early novels, as Premchand himself complains in 1922[43]. They often consist of episodes within a loose framework of a larger narrative framework related to a main character that goes through all kinds of romances and life events. In comparison with the mature Premchand, the authors of earlier novels in Hindi were "second rank fictional authors"[44]

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[40] Compare McGregor 1974: 99.

[41] Das (1991: 202ff.), the didactical and romantic nature of the "Mirāt ul-Urūs" notwithstanding, sees the works of Nazir Ahmad (1836-1912) as important steps towards the development of realism in Urdu prose. Compare Sadiq 1984: 409, who occasionally calls the Mirat ul-Urūs a "story". He confirms however that "before Nazīr Ahmad there had been no novel, as such, in Urdu" (Sadiq 1984: 415).

[42] If one believes Qurratulain Haider, the first "novel" in India is "The nautch girl" written by a certain Hasan Shah (b.1790) in Indian Persian (translated by Qurratulain Haider as Shah, Hasan, *The nautch girl : a novel.* Delhi 1992) sometime in the early 19th century. Compare Asaduddin 2002.

[43] "The number of novels written with the purpose of some social or political progress is nowadays just too much in all languages." ("koī sāmājik yā rājnaitik sudhār-kisī uddeśya viśeṣ se likhe gae upanyāsoṃ kī saṃkhyā ājkal sabhī bhāṣāoṃ meṃ bahut adhik hai." PR 7: 258).

[44] "dūsrī koṭi ke kathākār" (Nagendra/Hardayāl 2009: 558).

The discovery and the development of the novel and the short story as literary genres is related to colonial literary modernity in Indian languages and literatures in general. It has often been stated that the genre of the short story was more vivid than the novel. Even Rāmcandra Śukla states in his standard history of Hindi literature that the development of *choṭī kahāniyāṃ* (i.e. short stories) was "even more abundant" than novels[45], in the context a statement on quantity and quality as well. At the same time, he admits that the framework of both genres was taken from "the West".[46] Some researchers have stated that the novel is "entirely a Western importation" (McGregor 1974: 98). Sisir Kumar Das (1991) however interprets the introduction of the modern novel in Indian literature in the pattern of "Western impact and Indian response". Similarly, Harish Trivedi (2003) argues that the novel as a literary genre in Hindi is not merely an importation, but a hybrid product, owing its identity to the meeting of a Western long form of prose literature, and indigenous form of narration. A conclusion of this kind was already drawn earlier even by Western researchers, for example by Peter Gaeffke in his study of Jayśaṃkar Prasād's narrativity.[47]

In her article on the development of the news press in 19th century Urdu, Gail Minault sees the indigenous genius in the power of Indian intellectuals to their own choice of what to select for adaptation, and what not: "far from being dominated or overwhelmed by Western ways of doing and thinking, literate Indians maintained continuities…".[48] Rāmdaraś Miśra sees in the modern Hindi novel the Western genre, but also "the great influence … of the Indian narrative literature"[49]. This scope of interpretation is available in the case of the novel. In any case, *upanyās* refers like the Urdu *nāvil* first of all to the

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[45] "Upanyāsoṃ se bhī pracur vikās hiṃdī meṃ choṭī kahāniyoṃ kā huā hai." (Śukla 1986: 368).

[46] "…Donoṃ ke ḍhāṃce hamne paścim se lie haiṃ." (Śukla 1986: 368).

[47] Gaeffke 1970 is a kind of refusal of a position that he refers to on the first page of his excellent analysis: "Vom Standpunkt einer vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft liesse sich dieses Phänomen folgendermassen beschreiben. Alle konstituierenden Elemente der Erzählliteratur finden sich in Indien entweder später und in Nachahmung westlicher Vorbilder entwickelt oder sie erreichen nicht den Grad artistischer Vollkommenheit, den man von einem Meisterwerk erwartet." (Gaeffke 1970: 1).

[48] Minault 2005: 116.

[49] "… Bhāratīy kathā-sāhitya … kā baṛā prabhāv lakṣit hotā hai." (Miśra 1968: 23).

length of a piece of prose literature. Catherine Thomas has tried to define Premchand's shorter narratives in four divisions: "conte", "utopie", "abrégé de roman", "court roman" and "nouvelle".[50] This is not the place to go into the history of literary genres in Hindi and Urdu, but it is clear that the analytical tools for an understanding of this history are still in the making.

Besides *galp*, Premchand also uses the term *kahānī* in the following remark in his autobiography. He writes that he wrote his first short story (*kahānī*) in 1907, naturally in Urdu in Nastālīq script (Jīvansār, PR 7: 366; compare Rai 1962: 91), *Duniyā kā sabse anmol rattan* (The most precious Jewel of the World), which figures among the five stories published in 1908 in his famous first book, *Soz-e vatan* (The Dirge of the Nation), naturally in Urdu. The story contains the famous romantic nationalist and pronounced anti-colonial notion – "the last drop of blood which may fall down for the freedom of the country – this alone is the most precious jewel of the world"[51].

Śaikh mahmūr, another story from *Soz-e vatan*, is on a romantic sense of honour and love to inherited values – a story on a brave king, who after his defeat in battle and in his death bed gives his crown and sword to his son together with a sermon on the honour of a king and his dynasty. Amrit Rai quotes from a description of Premchand's friend and supporter Dayanarayan Nigam, who describes his father as *rājnītik jhukāv garam dal kī taraf thā* ("his political inclinations were hot-minded")[52]. However, in his autobiography, Premchand reports the event when he was called by the *sāhib*, i.e. the British school inspector, after the secret service (*khufiyā pulīs*) had tracked him down: "So you guy [tum] have written this book?" In order to safe himself, he collects the left over 700 copies (from 1000) from the book that still were in stock in the publisher's office (i.e. *Zamānā*) and delivers them "in the service to the Sahib".[53] He even believes – according to his own report - that he was fortunate to have got away with a mild punishment of that sort. I see no reason not to take this statement as an honest account.

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[50] Thomas 1974: 17ff.

[51] „khūn kī vah ākhirī būṃd jo deś kī āzādī ke lie gire, vahī duniyā kā sabse anmol rattan hai".

[52] Rai 1962: 95.

[53] "Śeṣ 700 pratiyāṃ maiṃne 'zamānā kāryālay' se maṃgvākar sāhab kī sevā meṃ apraṇ kar dīṃ." (PR 7: 366) Compare Amrit Ray 1962: 104.

This fate of the first short story collection of Premchand is well known and over and over referred to, but his non-literary writings particularly from this period before his active participation in the freedom movement are not much studied. In the same period, 1907, Premchand published a brief outline of the life of Garibaldi, which must have inspired his early romantic nationalism. In an essay on the different kingdoms of Turkey published in August 1908, he starts off with: "When in the 19th century the breeze of freedom started, it gave Italy, France, Switzerland, the United States of America and other countries its freedom"[54]. In other words "freedom" (*āzādī*) had an air of romantic nationalism for Premchand, even if the time frame and also the collection of countries can be questioned. He adds Persia to this list and finishes the paragraph stating that "news are coming in now that it [i.e. the breeze of freedom] gives spirit even to the old bones of Turkey.[55]

The capital punishment for Khudiram Bose in 1908 left Premchand disturbed, similar to later similar cases in his lifetime, particularly the hanging of Bhagat Singh in 1931. The capital punishment for individuals who were engaged in a violent fight against the British continually raised a sense of solidarity of the colonial subjects and sponsored anti-British sentiments. Madan Gopal, whose biography of Premchand from 1964 contains valuable information particularly from then yet unpublished letters in Urdu and Hindi, makes clear how the capital punishment of the then 15-year old boy Khudiram Bose left a deep imprint on Premchand.

Conclusion

The vocabulary, grammar and stylistics that Premchand developed before the publication of his first novel of importance, *Bāzār-e husn* (or, in Hindi, *Sevāsadan*) points to the fluidity of the language continuum Hindi-Hindustani-Urdu[56], even though the common Hindi-Urdu binary following the choice of script leads to a systematic

[54] "Unnīsvīṃ sadī meṃ ek bār āzādī kī havā calī to usne iṭlī, frāṃs, sviṭzarlaiṃḍ, saṃyuktrāṣṭr amrīkā ādi deśoṃ ko āzād kar diyā", PR 7: 68.
[55] "Ab khabareṃ ā rahī haiṃ ki turkī kī būḍhī-purānī haḍḍiyoṃ meṃ bhī usne rūh phūṃk dī". (PR 7: 68).
[56] Compare Kumar 2015: 267.

ignorance of this fluidity between codes with the extremely Arabized and/or Persianized and the extremely Sanskritized codes at the oppositional ends of the language continuum. "Between the two ends is a continuum which veers towards one end or the other according to the speaker, the occasion and the environment." [57] Premchand maintained this lifestyle as a writer in transition between different codes throughout his life. His attitude towards language remained pragmatic and he abstained from any purism or language ideology in his writing, even though his occasional theoretical considerations may point towards a more biased point of view on language. While Nastālīq and Kaithī were his "natural" ways of writing, being the scripts of his own education during childhood, he more and more developed his Devnāgarī, starting with the writing and publication of his short story *Saut* in 1915.

Premchand's theoretical insights into the identity of Hindi and Urdu don't relate to his decisions on the languages of his creative writing. The Hindi-Urdu controversy was not important for him, even though he is very much aware of it and the fatal "pains of separation and lamentation" that go with it. His early Urdu style does have a certain degree of Persian and Arabic words that are hardly used in common speech, however far less than for example in the writing of his contemporary Muhammad Iqbal. His written fictional Hindi, which he developed around the year 1915 may be marked by occasional Sanskrit neologisms and other terms that are hardly used in everyday speech. The Hindi of his essays, which were much more loaded with technical vocabulary in Sanskrit, demonstrates that he very well mastered this code of Hindi as well.

While lexicon and cultural references are more or less fluid, the script is a visible and clearly identifiable identity marker ascribed to a language. Premchand was of course aware of the broad scope of different codes of the language continuum, and he was able to use them according to the text genre or the characters in his fictional works. Just as a simple example of what this means: A Mullah would speak a rather "Islamized" language, while the Brahman would speak in a more sanskritized code. Premchand not only listened to the contents of speech, but also to its linguistic and narrative form, and he did not see the two as contradictions.

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[57] Rahman 2011: 99.

It is often ignored that any piece of fictional writing by Premchand and other authors in North India and Pakistan until today is anyway a kind of translation. Premchand's language is the result of a successful transformation of the spoken dialect of the people – some kind of language continuum between Bhojpuri and Awadhi spoken in his village Lamhī close to Banaras – and *Khaṛī bolī* (i.e., Hindi and Urdu proper). Premchand's language is not really the language of the people, but it is the product of an artistic operation, which is deeply related to fictional literature and its readers. Being readable by as many potential readers as possible also was the basis of his economic existence as writer as well as editor.

The choice of lexicon, script, and cultural references in Premchand's fiction is related to his unconditioned commitment to fictional literature as such and to his economic existence as an author and editor. Premchand's fiction was supposed to have a meaning in society, it was to unfold a meaningful social message to people of different backgrounds, persuasions and religions. The choices were pragmatic, and in an unbiased search of his readership. He got involved with questions of rhetoric and social reform at the same time, and, a little later, with nationalism and cultural resistance against colonialism, which kind of infused a certain degree of didacticism into his fiction, which he overcame only gradually in the immediate years before his untimely death.

Many authors in Hindi took this turn from Nastālīq towards Devnāgarī, particularly those who had to migrate to India after independence, often by force and under traumatic circumstances. The post-independence generation in Hindi literature is usually not longer educated in Urdu script. A wide spread opinion says that "partition killed Hindustani", even though "lamenting for a lost glory called Hindustani … does not save the cause".[58] On the other hand, the difficult relationship between Hindi and Urdu, often associated with the different relationship between India and Pakistan, or between Hindus and Muslims, is continually perceived as a somehow "artificial divide".[59]

Contemporary Hindi authors continue to be at home with much of the Arabic and Persian lexicon of the Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani

[58] Kumar 2015: 266.
[59] Zaidi 2015.

language continuum. This is also true for the general public, who hardly reads fine literature either in Hindi or in Urdu at all. It can be argued with good reasons that from a linguist's point of view, the language of Bollywood films is closer to Urdu than to Hindi in the language continuum. Beyond that, Muslim authors started to form a considerable component of Hindi literature from the 1960s[60] and infused Hindi literature with some excellent pieces of writing, using the wide range of expressions in the continuing Hindi-Urdu language continuum, which defines the space inside shared by the two.

Nationalism, the trauma of the partition of 1947 and the intricacies of postcolonial history have certainly taken their toll and do contrast continuity with discontinuity. The linguistic and literary space of Northern South Asia, however, still operates in a similar framework in 2015 like in 1915. Religious, cultural and social diversity continue to infuse South Asia's composite literary cultures[61] and emulates South Asian literary modernity as such.

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Names of authors are usually spelt in transliteration, except those that are well known even outside of South Asia, i.e. Nazir Ahmed, Muhammad Iqbal, Premchand, and Rabindranath Tagore etc.

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