INTRODUCTION

In the present volume I have attempted to survey the various tendencies of modern Hindi literature of the last fifty years, and in order to form a proper perspective of them, I have written a chapter on the background, describing the cultural and social changes which have taken place in the life of the people. The sociological interpretation and psychological treatment of literature are gradually being employed by the modern critic on account of the new approach to the study of literature. I have tried to bring order out of chaos by stressing on some of the representative tendencies in the realm of poetry, drama, novel, and the short story. The biography, the essay, and a few other forms of literature have been excluded, partly because they are not fully developed to claim a place in this book and partly because they do not reflect the representative tendencies. Some of the authors and their books have also been left out on this ground. I do not thereby mean to cast any reflection on their eminence or on the merit of their works. Their mention will find a proper place in a history of literature and not in a book of this nature. The translations and the scientific literature have not been treated because they are not original and creative art. Again the tendencies which have been
surveyed one after the other do not follow in a chronological order as they are given in the book, but sometimes they are overlapping in the sequence of time. They are given in a historical order for the sake of convenience, emphasis, and clarification.

In the realm of poetry only four main tendencies have been considered at some length. As nationalism, mysticism, and vaishnavism have been expressed in earlier literature, I have traced their background to form a proper link with these tendencies of the previous periods. In the agricultural phase of civilisation, Hindi poetry mostly centred round the personalities of princes and princesses, their victories and romance. The Heroic Poetry contributed to the regeneration of the people by arousing martial sentiments among them. It was also inevitable to stem the tide of foreign invasions. Nationalism has assumed many phases and is an old tendency in poetry. The revival of Aryan culture was the first phase of this new force of tremendous energy. The Neo-Hinduism laid stress on action as the only means to save India. Bhāratendu (H.C.) in his pragmatic appeal aroused the people by writing patriotic songs. As an ardent social reformer, he wrote in favour of sea voyage, widow marriage, and education of girls. Gupta (M.S.), the apostle of protestant Hinduism in poetry, represents the second phase of nationalism. His 'Bharata Bhārati' was a land-mark in the history of cultural revival and nationalism. Although the book is a specimen of 'kettle-drum poetry', it was enthusiasti-
cally welcomed by the readers. Nineteen twenty-one saw the birth of a new nationalism which was a strange mixture of religion and patriotism. A group of poets popularised the new movement. Tripāthi (R. N.) wrote stories in verse to infuse life into the hearts of the people. His poems were inspired by the non-violent concept of nationalism adopted by the Indian National Congress.

Mysticism which is another dominant tendency in modern Hindi poetry was expressed as early as the fifteenth century. Kabir was a powerful personality who revived it as a reaction against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult. It was also meant to bring about a cultural synthesis between the two warring communities, by stressing on their common and essential articles of faith. Jayasi reinforced this tendency by striking a softer and a more delicate note in his poetry to achieve the same object. Rabindra Nath Tagore is the modern mystic poet who has exercised a far-reaching influence on contemporary Hindi poets. Prasada (J. S.) who is the pioneer of mysticism in modern Hindi poetry has voiced his protest against the mechanistic materialism of the age. His art is inwardly mystical and philosophical. ‘Kāmāyanī’ is the consummation of his mystical approach to the problems of life. Panta is essentially a nature-mystic on account of his early predilections for mountains, rivers, woods, clouds, and other objects of nature. Nirala who has deeply imbibed the spirit of ‘vedānta’ and religious mysticism has endeavoured to discover the ultimate power in the objects of nature. Mahādevī
Varmā avoids the every-day reality to find a higher reality in the midst of natural environment. Her mysticism combines primitivism with romantic imagination to produce a vital and purposive creed. All these mystic poets reveal a belief in intuition and revelation as the basis of higher wisdom or higher reality. They also believe in a unity beneath a diversity of life. This attitude is the direct outcome of the nature of mystical experience.

In addition to nationalism and mysticism, vaisnāvism has been a significant tendency in poetry. The vaisnava revival preserved the integrity of society and its culture. Tulsidāsa by embodying the story of the great personage, created among the people a living sense of homogeneity of cultural life. Kṛṣṇa also became a lover to the devotees who began to pine for him with the undying passion of a bride. Mīrā Bāī like a maniac danced and sang in ecstasy as she rushed to meet the Lord with open arms. Her words laid bare to the dreamer the pathos of ages and dawned upon him the highest form of love. Sūrdās sang the Lord’s glory in musical verses of immortal beauty. Bhāratendu (H. C.) revived the poetry of vaisnava writers and wrote songs, anticipating thereby the lyrical tendency in modern Hindi poetry. The human note came to dominate the religious and the spiritual was intimately woven with the human.

A note of despair is perhaps inevitable in the poetry of a race whose civilisation is burdened with the weight of ages. Pessimism as the end of life is a new tendency
in Hindi poetry. In the past, the disappointment in life was accepted either as the stroke of fate or sublimated into the joy of a religious mystic. In the modern age the depressing socio-economic environment has led to this new note in poetry. Čakorí, Tārā, Mahādevī, Hṛdayeśa have contributed their share to the new tendency. In addition to the analysis of these tendencies I have discussed at some length the new experiments which have been tried in verse and the old forms of verse which have been modified to satisfy the poet’s claim to be a free artist, to be guided by his own poetic conscience rather than by the rigid and artificial mould in which all thoughts and passions had to be expressed.

In drama there have been three main tendencies: Romanticism, Idealistic Reaction, and Realism. In the beginning of Renaissance in literature the writers were stirred by Western romantic poets and dramatists. Attempts have been made at original plays with themes from mythology far removed from the exigencies of real life. Romanticism became a definite tendency for three main reasons—(i) a yearning for the remote past as a purely cultural revival; (ii) a reactionary force symbolising the spirit of protest and revenge against the domination of Western civilisation; (iii) the psychology of escape from the present-day life. The Idealistic Reaction has assumed two chief phases of expression in drama. A reaction against the material civilisation of the West which took the crude form of farces and satires. The misrepresentation of Western civilisation
and the exaltation of Indian culture were a negative reaction which did not satisfy the writers. They looked back to the past to derive inspiration for a fresh outlook on life. This was the second phase of this reaction. (i) The revivalist movement was also the outcome of a desire to pick up the lost thread of cultural development. (ii) There was a growing dissatisfaction with mythological tales farther away from real life than themes from history. (iii) The new men who wanted to interpret life in history catered to the increasing demand for nationalism in the country.

The documentation of historical events is less real than the actual observations of contemporary life. The writers have turned their attention to a world susceptible of a realistic treatment. A spirit of enquiry has compelled them to analyse the existing social order. It has led to the birth of realism in drama. The dramatic literature covering all these phases and varieties is not of a high artistic order. The want of a regular stage, the growing popularity of the cinema, the new vogue of broadcasting plays, and the absence of a great writer are some of the chief reasons for the poverty of great productions. In order to complete the picture I have added a chapter on the modern dramatic technique which has been fashioned by three main influences. (i) The dramatic theory and practice of the classical drama. (ii) The crude technique of medieval performances in villages. (iii) The Western influence. In this chapter I have discussed the characterisation in my-
INTRODUCTION

thological, historical, and realistic plays; the use of the 'aside' and the 'soliloquy,' and their gradual disappearance in the realistic plays; the introduction of 'setting' in the last phase of dramatic literature; and the importance of songs and music in the mythological, historical and social plays.

The novel as a form of literature is almost wholly a foreign product. In the earliest stage of its growth the tendency in fiction has been chiefly romantic in content. Khatri wrote the first serial romantic novel in which the hero possesses all the characteristics of a romantic lover. The ingenuity of the writer lies in devising complicated situations, which compels the reader into a mood of wonder and admiration. The historical phase in fiction is not so rich in variety and content as in drama. It is less significant as a continuous tendency from romantic to realistic fiction. The psychological basis of this phase are similar to those in drama. The Rājpūta period has afforded the greatest satisfaction to the writers of the historical novel. Varmā (V. L.) possesses to some degree the gift of an essentially historical imagination. He goes beyond the surface of mere details and endeavours to reach the heart of the age of chivalry and makes it like again in its glory.

The realistic fiction generally portrays the new middle class with all its features. The members of this class enjoy greater individual liberty in social and religious matters. Nationalism is a dominant note of their life. They are more morally earnest about life and they lay
stress on a life of action. Their outlook on life is generally influenced by the nineteenth century rationalistic and positivistic philosophy. Compromise and reform are the essential characteristics of their life. As the general influences of the modern age tend towards pragmatism and a search for truth, realism has become a dominant tendency in prose literature. Realism is also a conscious reaction to the romantic and historical tendency in fiction. Premchand and his contemporaries who belong to the new social group espouse a particular standard of morals and use the novel to express their social purpose and social criticism. I have devoted sufficient space to the study of characterisation, plot-construction, dialogue, and social purpose in his novels. In addition to this I have discussed the characteristics of other novelists who belong to his school.

In the short story which as a distinct form is only of recent growth, there is only one representative tendency i.e., Realism; but the short story is remarkable for its amazing variety. The rush of modern life, the enormous development of the periodical literature, the newness of the literary form, and its claim to replace the novel have made it greatly popular. It has a great future because Indian social life with all its restrictions of social intercourse and conflict is more easily represented on a shortened canvas. It has been thus seen how gradually literature in all its forms has been developing the various tendencies towards realism which has established itself as the enduring phase of Hindi literature.
INTRODUCTION

In the interpretation of the various phases through which literature has passed I have taken great help from eminent critics and writers. I am grateful to each one of them. I have acknowledged this debt of gratitude in the copious foot-notes at the end of every page. Mr. D. R. Malhotra, M.A. deserves my thanks for the valuable suggestions for a chapter on Premchand and Pandit Dina Nath Raina for going through the proofs and for preparing the Index. The Minerva Book Shop, my publishers, have been of a very great help to me in the publication of this book. The Allahabad Law Journal Press Ltd., the printers, have been very helpful in making the get-up of the book neat and its print accurate.

In the end I must express my deep debt of gratitude to Shrimati Premvati Thapar, M.A. (Cantab) without whose help and encouragement I could not have completed this book. She has provided me with an opportunity for pursuing my literary activities for such work in the face of cold and depressing atmosphere outside the academic life of the college.

13 MULTAN ROAD, LAHORE Indar Nath Madan