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Bharatendu Harishchandra

Madan Gopal

Makers of Indi... Li...

BHARATENDU HARISHCHANDRA (1850-1885), called the father of 'Modern' Hindi and considered the greatest of Hindi writers since Tulsidas, was described by Grierson as 'the most celebrated of the native poets of the present day, [and one who] has done more for the popularisation of vernacular literature than almost any other living Indian.'

Universally regarded as Hindi's pioneer dramatist, Harishchandra played an equally important part in the development of early Hindi journalism. He was also the first notable Hindi writer of essays, travelogues, biographical sketches and books on history or antiquities. Besides his rich contribution to poetry, he wrote some 3000 devotional songs in all conceivable metres. He was also possibly the first Hindi poet to practise his craft in Khariboli which later swamped Brajbhasha out of existence.

During his brief life-span of thirtyfour years, Bharatendu blazed many a trail, and, regrettably burnt his candle at both the ends in the conduct of his personal life and affairs.

Madan Gopal, author of *Munshi Prem Chand: A Literary Biography* and a pioneer in introducing Hindi writers to the English-speaking world, has made a significant contribution to the history of Modern Hindi Literature by presenting this sensitive study of Bharatendu Harishchandra.

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BHARATENDU HARISHCHANDRA

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

BHARATENDU HARISHCHANDRA

by

MADAN GOPAL

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BHARATENDU HARISHCHANDRA

The nineteenth century in India threw up a galaxy of great minds. Bharatendu Harishchandra is among the most brilliant and the most versatile of these. Apart from being a great social reformer, he was a compaigner and an advocate for measures aimed at widening the mental and intellectual horizon of the people. He befriended such eminent Indians of the age as Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, H. H. Prince Kerala Verma of Travancore, Keshub Chunder Sen and Madhusudan Dutt. Harishchandra transmitted to Hindi the 'new urges' that motivated the renaissance in Bengal. His contribution to the evolution and popularisation of what preceded present-day Hindi, and his enrichment of different branches of Hindi literature, are considered so substantial and significant that Harishchandra is often called the Father of 'Modern' Hindi.

Universally regarded as Hindi's pioneer dramatist—with about a dozen and a half original plays or adaptations from Sanskrit, Bengali and English to his credit—Harishchandra played an equally important part in the development of early Hindi journalism. He was also the first notable Hindi writer of essays, travelogues, biographical sketches and books on history or antiquities. Besides his rich contribution to poetry—he wrote some 3,000 devotional songs in all conceivable metres—he was also possibly the first Hindi poet to practise his craft in Khariboli (which later swamped Brajbhasha out of existence).

Towards the evening of his life, he was encouraging a number of writers to switch over to Hindi novel. No wonder, George Grierson, the first important foreign historian of literature in the Indian languages, described Harishchandra as 'the most celebrated of the native poets of the present day, [and one who] has done more for the popularisation of vernacular literatures than almost any other living Indian.' According to F. E. Keay, another historian of Hindi literature, Harishchandra wrote altogether some 175 works (Keay left out some 63). To have achieved this pre-eminent position at the age of just thirty-four, and to have blazed a trail in so many fields, are no mean achievement.

II

Harishchandra was born in an Agarwal family of Benaras. His great grandfather, Seth Fateh Chand, was one of the nine sons of Seth Amin Chand who, along with his collaborator Mir Jafar, was cheated by (Lord) Clive. The shock thus received led to insanity and, a little later, to the death of Amin Chand. His son Fateh Chand, then migrated to Benaras, to be followed soon afterwards by another of his eight brothers. The two brothers rehabilitated the family fortune, and augmented it by marrying daughters of other wealthy families of Benaras. Soon, their joint family became the financier of the Maharaja of Benaras.

Seth Fateh Chand's grandson Gopal Chandra was a shrewd businessman. He combined this commercial acumen with a considerable poetic talent, and composed some forty works under the pseudonym 'Girdhar Das'. Many of these works embraced the teachings of the Vaishnavite saints whom the family revered.

Gopal Chandra, a talented and charming man, acquired great eminence in the life of India's holy city. Flowers from his garden won prizes at shows organised under British patronage. The annual Budhwa Mangal ('Floating') Fair on the Ganges—which drew almost the entire population of the city to the riverside for a week to participate in festivities, on beautifully bedecked boats, of dancing and music by the most famous nautch girls of the city—was an event with which Gopal Chandra's family was intimately associated. The Maharaja of Benaras himself graced the occasion with not only his presence but also active participation. He is reported to have observed more than once that Seth Fateh Chand's family stood in relation to the Floating Fair as did a bridegroom to the accompanying marriage party. This must indeed be true, for the invitations for participation in the Fair were sent out in the traditional manner of wedding invitations—that is through a barber—and every one invited was supposed to be dressed up in a pink turban and a waistband of the same colour. And if some guests did not have the turban and waistband of the required colour, the host, that is Gopal Chandra's family, gladly provided the same. It could certainly afford to do so.

The patronage exercised by Gopal Chandra's family extended

to writers and artists. Any pretext was good enough. In fact, occasions were frequently found to invite a host of people. There was Basant, when the host and all the guests donned yellow clothes ; then there was Holi when colours were sprayed with incredible gaiety and abandon. Those were the days of gracious living. Life in India moved slowly but gracefully. Patterns of social behaviour were set by cultured and wealthy families like that of Gopal Chandra of Benaras.

Gopal Chandra 'Girdhar Das' had two sons—Harishchandra, born in September 1850, and Gokulchandra born fifteen months later. While the latter, in the years to come, was to carry on the family's traditional business, the former was destined to give, through an astounding outburst of creative energy, new impetus and a new direction to the growth of Hindi language and literature.

Benaras around 1850, the year of Harishchandra's birth, must have been an interesting place to live in. Being the principal pilgrimage centre of the Hindus, it attracted from all parts of India not only devout pilgrims in search of salvation but also merchants looking for customers, and, charlatans, cheats and quacks looking for victims ; also, all types of hangers-on and parasites, deprived of the patronage of the courts of the Moghuls in Delhi and of the Nawabs of Oudh, Lucknow flocked to Benaras of those days. The city also provided succour to talented artistes on the one hand, and to pandits renowned for their scholarship and priestly traditions on the other. Not only the Maharaja of Benaras—a great patron of the arts in his own right—but also some of the wealthy aristocratic families of the city extended patronage to all artists, be they poets or musicians, dancers or prostitutes. Life in Benaras seemed to be generally unaware of what was happening a few hundred miles away in Calcutta, where the Brahmo Samaj, started by Raja Rammohun Roy, was at the centre of a ferment of ideas which was slowly altering the traditional systems of manners and morals in urban India.

The coming of Lord Dalhousie, in 1848, had marked the end of an era. The East India Company had annexed the Punjab, thus completing the process of conquest of the great Indian empire that it had built. A telegraph line was set up from Calcutta to Agra. The first railway line was being laid and the

road from Calcutta to Delhi was newly opened. River navigation too had been taken up. Universities at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were about to be established and Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act was enacted. Aggressive westernisation of the people was going apace.

Every one was influenced. Even Gopal Chandra was. 'Although my father did not have English education', his son Harishchandra wrote later, 'he could clearly foresee the present-day developments. Though deeply religious and having full faith in the Vaishnava way of life, he was a radical and had abandoned the worship of deities and observance of fasts, etc. When the first girls' school was started at Benaras in the regime of Lieut Governor Thompson, my father enrolled my sister in the school. This was a very bold step in those days, for it was looked down upon by most people. Of course, he also gave us all education in English.'

Gopal Chandra's family was indeed so loyal that when the British were in distress in 1857, the British Agent at Benaras sent all the precious belongings to the house of Gopal Chandra for safe custody. And the 48 firearms sanctioned to Gopal Chandra's family must have helped afford protection to individual British officials. No surprise, therefore, that Gopal Chandra's family was as much the favourite of the British as of the Maharaja of Benaras.

III

Born seven years before the 1857 War of Independence, Harishchandra was a precocious child. He was mischievous and proved quite a nuisance to the neighbours, some of whom he would frighten at night by painting the house walls with figures in phosphorus!

As usual with the wealthy families in those times, Harishchandra was put in schools teaching Urdu and Persian. His coaching in English was also arranged. Among his teachers of English were Raja Shiv Prasad, 'Sitara-i-Hind', and Nand Kishore, who later died in England. From all accounts, the child Harishchandra had a phenomenal memory.

Harishchandra also inherited the literary talents of his father

and is reported to have shown ability not only to explain Brajbhasha verses, but also to compose some. Indeed, much more than that ; he is reported to have given a new classification of 'rasas' (essence of aesthetic moods) and the experts of his time agreed with him !

People in those days married early—very early. They died early too. Most of the early ancestors of Harishchandra had married at the age of ten or twelve. So had been the case with Gopal Chandra too. And, as usual, his first wife (Harishchandra's mother) died early. Harishchandra was then five, and Gokulchandra three-and-a-half.

Gopal Chandra married again. Not long thereafter, he arranged for the sacred thread ceremony of his two sons, to be held with great pomp and show. Unfortunately, Gopalchandra, 27, took an overdoze of Bhang, to which he was an addict, and died almost in the midst of ceremonies. Says Harishchandra :

I can still see in my mind's eye the figure of my father with a tilak on his forehead, squatting, his back regally resting against a huge pillow, his face bright with heavenly grandeur. He did not look sickly in the least. . . . Seeing myself and my brother together he said suddenly, 'Sheetala ne bagg mod di hai ; accha ab le jao.'

The children were very young. Their stepmother Mohan Bibi was also young. The supervision of the family's affairs, consequently, was taken over by an older relation.

Harishchandra, who had been put in the Queen's College, was restless. He was not the type who would care for a disciplined life. After Gopal Chandra's death, he left freed from shackles. Little affection was showered on him by the stepmother and others. Extravagance was frowned upon. In fact, there was the proverbial niggardliness of the stepmother who refused to honour his minor commitments even on such occasions as the Floating Fair. Harishchandra, therefore, took recourse to taking loans. For these he had later to pay fantastic amounts. No wonder, he felt lonely.

To add to Harishchandra's difficulties, just when he was about eleven years, he was forced to enter wedlock. The marrige was early, but then his father, his grandfather and his great grandfather too had married early.

Harishchandra left school rather abruptly. However, his marriage brought him a new sense of responsility and also new opportunities.

Soon afterwards, he undertook a pilgrimage to Jagannath Puri. This journey opened out new vistas to him. His appetite for travel became marked, and in subsequent years, we find him travelling avidly.

It was again not long afterwards that he had new realisation of the importance of education. So acute was this realisation that he started a school, in his own house, for the poor. Children attending the school were given free books and stationery. And, of course, there were no fees.

IV

One result of Harishchandra's taking over more of the responsibilities of running the affairs of the family was a little greater freedom to be extravagant. We now find him spending money without much thought.

Harishchandra spent somewhat lavishly on his fastidious tastes. He was fond of scents, gaudy clothes and expensive silks. As we have said above, the vendors of *itra* (scent), denied patronage of the Moghul Court and the durbars of the Nawabs of Oudh, Lucknow, now flocked to people like him, and they never went back from his house empty-handed. According to contemporary accounts he bought *itra* in such huge quantities that it was misused. His requirement of special scents for betel leaves was enormous, because, according to one estimate, his daily consumption of betel leaves stood at the incredible figures of several hundred a day. It is no surprise that those who came in contact with him said that the scents exhaled by him were as powerful as those 'coming out of a distillation plant'. He donned clothes like a prince, and bestowed his patronage freely on all those who catered to his aesthetic sensibilities, be they vendors of *itra* or silk or practitioners of arts.

People from all places came to him to sell rare pictures and albums, old books and manuscripts for addition to the rich library which Harishchandra's father had bequeathed to the sons. Harishchandra paid fabulous sums for such acquisitions.

His extravagence signified nothing more than respect for old traditions and the family's reputation of being connoisseurs and patrons of arts. All important visitors to Benaras, Indian and foreign, called on Harishchandra, and, in keeping with the family's social position, he entertained them all very lavishly.

Anything new aroused his curiosity. He was fond of watches and bought them wholesale and gifted them to his friends and mere hangers-on. Photography, which was then new to India, fascinated Harishchandra who helped many photographers set up independent business. Homeopathy, similarly, was a new science. Harishchandra got interested in it and set up a free dispensary, spending about one hundred and twenty rupees a month on this venture.

Litho-printing, too, had just come to Benaras and Harishchandra published his father's books by this process. He also published a collection of poems by eminent poets under the title 'Sundari Tilak'. Printing press was also a new thing in Benaras. He was duly impressed, and gave money to friends to set up printing presses. Any new venture could presume his patronage, be it the preparation of a dictionary or organizing a wrestling bout, or sponsoring a show of magical tricks. If approached by some needy or indigent person, he would gladly give away everything in his pocket or on his person, including such things as rings or diamonds. He once gave away an expensive shawl to a beggar shivering in the cold. Approached by a needy Brahmin, he gave away his diamond ring. The father of a child who took fancy for Harishchandra's gold box got it as a present.

The handsome young man with plenty of money at his disposal was naturally surrounded by a host of hangers-on, sycophants and procurers, all pandering to his weakness and posing as his well-wishers.

In what perhaps is Hindi's first autobiographical essay, Harishchandra, in a self-portrait of the young artist gave not only an interesting account of the persons surrounding him but also a glimpse of the age he lived in :

I sat close to a window, admiring the spring and the breeze. Dusk had advanced. On one side, there was the sun, and on the other the moon, both of them of somewhat reddish hue. It was all so wonderful.

Vendors of sugarcane pieces, of 'Kaseru' and of flowers passed by on the road, each one announcing his wares. I was lost in my youthful dreams, completely oblivious of the ups and downs of time, and completely intoxicated with romance and love. Though I was young, I understood where resided true love, and I understood this despite the hangers-on, the cronies and the sycophants who sang poems of praise. . . . Said one, 'There is none in the world who's as handsome as you.' . . . Said another, 'I haven't come across a scholar of your attainments.' . . . Said yet another, 'Chameli Jan is absolutely infatuated with you. She cannot live without seeing you.' . . . And there was someone who said, 'God, what a poem you composed ! We were so deeply moved that we wept the whole night'. . . . One added immediately, 'When Pyari sang your so-and-so *ghazal*, the entire audience was provoked into laughter, and they laughed and laughed till their bellies ached.' . . . Said yet another one, 'Blessed indeed, are you. . . . And you are really wonderful. It is so difficult to pour one's heart out'. . . . Said the fourth one, 'What's that stone in your ring ? Is it diamond or a fresh dew drop ?' . . . Mir Saheb, the lover of birds, went off at a tangent : 'None has pigeons of higher pedigree than yours. God, are they really pigeons or are they beautiful fairies ? I am sure, if their shadows fell on the mythical Huma, they would become eagles. . . . In fact, it is in such beautiful creatures that the Christians see the image of God. Seeing them soar high up in the sky, is there one who can curb one's spirit to remain at a low ebb ? I can swear by Almighty God that the experts of Metiabruz haven't seen such beautiful birds, even in the wildest of their dreams'. . . . Came forward a tout, who praised my horses. The jeweller turned his attention to my mules. And the draper was all praise for my flower garden, and said that he plucked flowers there for his offerings to God! . . . The principal focus of all this praise, I know, was my own self. My poor self would, in fact, have been buried under the weight of so many acclamations and praises showered on me. However, all these quickly slipped down. . . . All this talk took place in the drawing room.

Now let us come to the staircase. Four or five Hindus, and as many armed Muslim guards, a Jamadar, two or three job-seekers and about a score of nitwits, gathered together, some standing, others sitting but each one asking for money.

I must add, however, that not all of them were really self-seekers. Some of them, though rarely, were loyal to me, their master. Someone argued with the pimp, 'Give me two annas in the rupees, or else we shall so run you down that Bibi Jan will not succeed in even getting admission to the Durbar here.' Said another one to the draper, 'If you do not present me with that

black shawl, you would be hanging around here for years for realising your bills. Not to speak of your dues, you won't get even a particle of the dust of this place.'

Another one was settling the terms with the go-between. Some one was saturated with happiness over the fact that none else was the master's confidant. ('Whatever loans are taken are taken through me.')

Said another, 'How dare you show your face to me? All the payments to the women folk are disbursed through me.'

Of all these fellows [Harishchandra throws a hint] please do be on the look out for one who would really be useful to you. This one, *Kurmi* by caste, is a dark man, of medium build, with well-formed hands, big moustaches, small eyes. He is scantily clothed. He has a red turban, a green waistband and he puts on a white shawl. His name is Holi. He is my favourite these days. That's why all of them make use of him to communicate to me whatever they have to.

Harishchandra's wife, Manno Devi, bore him two sons and a daughter. The two sons died in infancy, and the daughter, who survived, was sickly, her head reportedly bent on one side. Harishchandra's marital life was not at all happy. A well-known homeopath who used to visit the house of Harishchandra, and had access to the Zenana, felt that the principal cause of Manno Devi's illness was the gloom and depression she underwent because of the indifference and callousness of her husband.

Rather than talk on this delicate point to Harishchandra, the doctor thought it wiser to write to him a letter. The letter (in Bengali) was acknowledged and replied to by Harishchandra in Bengali (Devangiri script), observing that he did not really feel happy at home. However, he added that he did not put his wife to any inconvenience and had provided all that was necessary for her in the house. But he had little control over his heart. That is why he felt 'helpless'.

Incidentally, in the Benaras of the early 1870's every wealthy family prided itself on the possession of garden houses and the number of professional nautch girls. Harishchandra was not to be outdone in this. He went the whole hog, and lived the life of a profligate. The family being a joint one, there were others to

look after Harishchandra's wife and daughter, so as to leave him free to look elsewhere for happiness.

Harishchandra was a regular visitor to the nautch girls' apartments. Women of this profession frequented his garden house too. In addition to casual ones, he seems to have had a permanent sort of arrangement with two mistresses who played an important role in his literary creations. The first one was Ali Jan. She possibly visited Gokulchandra's and Harishchandra's house in connection with a loan—for which she later transferred a house to Gokulchandra—and came into contact with Harishchandra also. In difficult straits she embraced Islam, and became a public woman.

Harishchandra seems to have reconverted her to Hinduism, given her the name Madhavi and kept her as a mistress. From the date of mortgage of the house to Gokulchandra, and the current rate of interest, it has been reckoned that she must have come into contact with Harishchandra and Gokulchandra around 1870 or so. It is, therefore, just possible that he might have got infatuated with her and developed an intimacy that led to his keeping her as a mistress. Harishchandra would hold durbar and also pass the nights in Madhavi's house, where he installed an image of Thakurji and many decorative pieces such as ivory paintings, etc. (After Harishchandra's death, Gokulchandra took most of these away and paid Madhavi ten rupees a month. This amount was stopped when Gokulchandra died.)

A few years later, a Bengali widow, Mallika, also entered Harishchandra's life, Mallika, to whom he was greatly attached, had some literary talent. She wrote poems. She also translated three novels from Bengali into Hindi. She helped Harishchandra in his literary work and started a publishing house where his books were sold. In the preface to one of her books, she wrote that she had done the translation at the behest of her 'lord', to whom she dedicated it. Harishchandra vetted her works and published them.

It was Harishchandra's profligacy that first brought him the prefix 'Bharatendu'. Thereby hangs a tale. When he once made fun of some elderly persons, he was cajoled by one of his friends, who pointed out to him that his own character was not without blemish. In fact, he added, it was like the spots on the moon.

He would call him 'Bharatendu' (Moon of India). Harishchandra said he would not mind it in the least. Thus suggested, the prefix stuck to his name and his friends adopted it. In the late 1870's when his position as a pioneer in many fields of Hindi literature was recognised, leaders of the Hindi world of letters wanted that the British Raj should honour him. When the British Raj took no notice of their desire, his admires felt peeved, especially because his rival Raja Shiv Prasad 'Sitara-i-Hind', was continuing to be the favourite of the Authority. One of them, the editor of *Sarasudhanidhi* of Calcutta, therefore, mooted the idea that even though the British Raj had not showered any honour on Harishchandra the Hindi world would honour him by calling him the 'Bharatendu' (Moon of India). This idea was readily accepted. From then on, the prefix given to him in a lighter vein stuck to him. Even foreign experts like George Grierson and Garcon d'Tassy adopted it. Harishchandra himself liked the prefix and had his letter-heads printed with the rising moon as his crest.

V

Harishchandra was proud of the prefix 'Bharatendu' associated with his name. He was equally proud of the association of the legendary king who bore the same name, and who was known for his unshakable adherence to truth. Bharatendu tried not only to be generous like a king but also to stand by truth at whatever cost. According to an oft-quoted story, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (who later founded the Aligarh University) got promoted to the position of a Judge of the Small Causes Court and transferred to Benaras. Among the cases he was called upon to try was one wherein the plaintiff was the young Harishchandra. The litigation was for the recovery of Rs. 3,000 by a merchant who had reportedly sold to Harishchandra a boat and given him some cash.

The distinguished plaintiff looked different from the others who usually appeared before the Small Causes Court. Judge Sayyid Ahmad Khan called him aside and offered him a seat. . . . 'Now, tell me', he asked, 'what was the real worth of the

boat that the merchant gave you ?' 'What I have stated in the promissory note,' said the youth. . . . 'How much cash had you taken from him?' . . . 'I got the full amount, as stated in the promissory note.'

Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a little taken aback. He raised his eyebrows. . . . 'You perhaps forget, Babu Saheb,' he said. 'Go out, have a little fresh air, and then come and tell me the true facts.'

The youth went out of the court. His friends advised him to avail of this golden chance and pay the few hundreds due and get out of this troublesome commitment. Harishchandra listened to them all, but kept quiet.

When he came back to the court, he repeated what he had said earlier to the Judge.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan was obviously cut up that the young aristocrat had not caught the hint. He again repeated what he had told the youth earlier. But the youth told him plainly that he could not sacrifice his religion and his trutfulness 'for money'.

'The merchant,' he said, 'did not force me to write the promissory note. And when I, of my own volition, then accepted his terms, and admitted his dues, would I now, when I have to pay, break the word given? No, not me. My name is Harishchandra, a byword for truthfulness.'

And says one of the Hindi writers: 'Such was the impression on Sayyid Ahmad Khan that in other cases he would not ask for witnesses and accept what plaintiff said as truth. "We are convinced," said Sayyid Ahmad Khan, "that this person is truthful. In his case, therefore, we shall take his word, and not insist on witnesses."

This is not a solitary instance. Harishchandra always kept his word and paid off enormous amounts as repayment of trivial loans.

When, soon after Harishchandra's marriage, the family decided to undertake a pilgrimage to Jagannath Puri, a 'friend' of Gopalchandra called on Harishchandra and gave him two sovereigns as loan. Told by Harishchandra that he did not really need the money, the 'benefactor' extended lip sympathy to those undergoing a step-mother's tyranny and persuaded Harishchandra to accept the token loan and merely keep it as a 'safeguard against any eventuality'. Only a part of the way on the

outward journey could then be covered by railway ; the other part had to be traversed by such transport as a bullock cart. It was, therefore, a 'long journey'. On the way, the money in his pocket encouraged him to leave in a huff to return to Benaras. The two sovereigns were encashed. This fact became known, and Harishchandra was persuaded to stay back. The sovereigns, once encashed, were spent. Later on, says Harishchandra, as repayment for the two sovereigns, he had to give away a house worth about fifteen thousand rupees.

The trouble was really not so much with Harishchandra's creditors as with himself. He was too generous and too much involved in a life of ease, enjoyment and literary creations to be bothered by thoughts of money and how it was to be saved or spent. His family, known for building a fortune through hard business, now witnessed the spectacle of family coffers being emptied without any return. Relatives and friends of the family approached the Maharaja of Benaras to help stop this meaningless drain on the Maharaja's financier's assets. The Maharaja called Harishcandra over and conveyed to him the feelings of other members of the family over 'wasteful' expenditure.' The young man told bluntly that he was not attached to riches. 'These riches, Sir, have eaten up my ancestors,' he is reported to have said, 'and I have decided that I am going to eat them up.'

The Maharaja's intercession had, therefore, little effect. The drain continued.

No wonder then it was decided to partition the family assets. For this purpose, a formula was evolved after a prolonged discussion in which all members of the family except Harishchandra participated; he was temperamentally unsuited to such situations. He merely put down his signature on the dotted line, without even bothering to know what the document said. Harishchandra's share in the liquid cash assets having been 'adjusted' against what he had already spent during the early years, the partition deed, registered in indecent haste, provided for the partition of the immovable property. A few years later, the will of Harishchandra's maternal grand-mother too was revised to deprive Harishchandra of his share in favour of Gokulchandra.

Partition of the assets, according to the norms of those times, did not, however, mean a break-up of the family. The ancestral house continued to be common. All lived under the same roof

as a joint family. Only Harishchandra's wings were clipped a little. Slowly and slowly he cut through whatever came to be his share. Then he incurred debts. And when his debts mounted, his property was to be sold. His brother, Gokulchandra, who had the first option, paid off Harishchandra's debts and attached his property. This process continued. Gradually, Harishchandra's immovable property was swallowed up. For this he was prepared. What hurt him most was his gradually declining credit and the consequent difficulties he faced. He, however, remained undeterred in his resolve to enrich Hindi, even though members of his family and clan could not comprehend the purpose of 'wasteful expenditure' on such things as books and magazines.

VI

To understand the significance of Bharatendu's contribution to Hindi, it would be better to know the pace of the development of Hindi before his appearance on the literary scene.

Hindi, as known today, has grown out of the vernacular speech of northern India, including, that is, the present-day Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. The dialects spoken in these areas were: Mewati, Marwari, Jaipuri and Malvi of Rajasthan ; Khariboli and Bangaru of Haryana ; and Brajbhasha, Kanauji, Bundeli, Avadhi, Bagheli, Chhatisgarhi, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magadhi, etc., of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. The script popularly used has been Devanagari.

As most of these dialects of Hindi, especially Marwari, Brajbhasha, Avadhi, Maithili, and Bhojpuri, were used extensively by poets, the literature in verse in all these dialects was extensive. Literature in prose, however, was insignificant, certainly so till the medieval period.

A new element came in with the advent of Muslims in India. Arabic, Persian and Turkish words brought in by the invaders got absorbed in the spoken language of the areas where the Muslim rulers came to conquer and dominate, including the Deccan. And to these pockets goes the credit for the evolution of Urdu (which in Turkish means a military camp). This new spoken language, which had an admixture of Arabic, Persian

and Turkish words, was the result of transplantation of words of foreign origin on to Hindi. The contact between the dialects spoken and the language of invaders was indeed very close. While we find many a Hindu adopting Persian, the language of the rulers, there were many a Muslim from all walks of life, ranging from the rulers to the preachers (*aulias*), who patronised the spoken language of the Delhi region, then called Rekhta, or Hindvi. Shah Miran Bijapuri, Burhanuddin Syed Mohammed Gaisudraj, etc., all wrote in Hindvi. Amir Khusru, Malik Mohammed Jayasi and Kabir also wrote Hindvi which is considered to be chaste and beautiful Hindi. The Moghuls, especially Akbar, encouraged the use of Hindvi. In fact, he is the author of some verses in Hindvi under the pen name 'Akbar Ray'. His favourite ministers, Todar Mal, Birbal, Abdul Rahim Khankhana and Abul Faizi, and his contemporaries like Ganga Kavi, Tulsi Das, Sur Das and Kesava Das also did the same. Encouragement to Hindi continued during the reign of Jehangir and Shah Jehan, and in later days it was patronised by the rulers of such provincial satraps as of Lucknow, Oudh, Murshidabad and Hyderabad (Deccan). The last Moghul king was, of course, himself a poet who wrote what many would claim 'good Hindi'.

Poetry during the Moghul period was the main forte. Nevertheless a few prose works were attempted, like Ram Prasad Niranjani's *Bhasha Yoga Vasista* (1741), or Pandit Daulat Ram's Hindi translation of *Padma Purana* (1761). The coming in of the Christian missionaries introduced a new factor. These missionaries aimed at preaching the gospel in the local languages, and, unlike others, they had the facilities of printing presses too. All this gave a fillip to writing in Indian (vernacular) languages, including Hindi. And their attempt was to use a language understood by the largest number of people, which meant spoken Hindi. However, for a variety of reasons, this language was not used much in prose form. In fact, the stray prose works also used Brajbhasha.

The dismemberment of the Moghul empire, and the dominance achieved by the East India Company brought home to the British the importance of the spoken languages of India. The Company itself set up a college (in 1980) to import knowledge of Indian languages to the freshers from the U.K. It was headed by Dr Gilchrist. Greatly impressed by Urdu, he himself

compiled a dictionary from Urdu to English and wrote a book on Urdu grammer too. He collected a galaxy of writers who cashed in on the political stability and encouragement given by the powers that be. The writers so gathered were mostly bilingual. They knew not only the vernacular (Hindvi, or Hindi) but also Urdu and Persian which was then the court language. Lalluju 'Lal', who came from Agra and, therefore, knew the Khariboli spoken in western U.P. and also Brajbhasha, translated a chapter of the *Bhagavat Purana* into Hindi, and published it as *Prem Sagar*; another book entitled *Rajniti* was a Brajbhasha adaptation of *Hitopadesha* and *Panchtantra*, and also such books as *Singhasan Batisi* and *Baital Pachisi* in mixed Urdu-Hindi. Sadal Misra was another important figure who wrote *Nasikethopakhyan* (1803). His Hindi, which was believed to be somewhat more 'Hindised' than Lalluji 'Lal's, was not much favoured by the rulers. Insha Allah Khan wrote his classic *Rani Ketki Ki Kahani*.

The suitability of spoken Hindi for prose, even though not widely used, had been accepted, Raja Rammohan Roy published his *Bangadoot* in four languages, one of them being Hindi prose in Devanagari script. He also used it for some of his pamphlets. It is also significant that the first Hindi journal ever published, *Udant Martand* (1826), used Hindi prose.

Unfortunately, however, the lead given in the field of Hindi literature, as also Hindi journalism, was not followed up for some decades. There was little enthusiasm to take the torch forward. One possible reason could, of course, be the apathy of the East India Company officials whose emphasis naturally was on the language of the court of the Moghul Kings whom they planned to replace. No wonder then that Hindi was pushed into the background.

The first Hindi journal published from the Hindi-speaking areas of Northern India, however, was the one started in 1844 from Benaras. Edited by Bengali writer, Tara Mohan Mitra, this paper, run directly under the patronage of Raja Shiv Prasad 'Sitara-i-Hind', used a language which was so close to Persianised Urdu that its only link with Hindi was the script it used. Although Raja Shiv Prasad is known to have favoured Devanagari script, the language that he advocated was Persianised Urdu. Hindi writers resented this and this resentment led to the publication in 1850 of another journal called *Sudhakar* from Benaras

itself. This journal, surprisingly enough, was sponsored by Tara Mohan Misra himself. It used a somewhat chaste language which could be called Hindi.

The opposition to the Hindi propagated by Raja Shiv Prasad was not limited to journalistic field only. There was opposition to his style as used in such works as *Itihas Timirnashak*. The leader of this opposition was Raja Lakshman Singh (1826-96) who spoke of the 'basic differences' between Hindi and Urdu. The two, according to him, were separate languages. He particularly opposed the tendency to forcibly impose certain Persian and Arabic words when simpler words used in everyday life were available in Hindi.

VII

The controversy over the language to be used in journals and books was in a sense resolved by Harishchandra who, in 1867, started a monthly journal under the title *Kavi Vachan Sudha*. This journal was supposed to publish poetry, old and new. Its earliest issues carried verses by 'Bihari', 'Padmavat' by Jayasi, 'Anuragbagh', etc. Himself a poet of no mean merit, Harishchandra had qualities of powerful recitation. People called him 'Kaliyuga Ka Kanhiya' or Lord Krishna of Kaliyuga, the name given partly because of his darkish complexion and his long wavy hair. His talent of composition and recitation and the contents of the journals brought him a large readership.

The popularity of *Kavi Vachan Sudha* was phenomenal even though its print order was 250: 150 copies for subscribers and 100 for the British Director of Instruction. Soon it became a fortnightly and then a weekly. *Kavi Vachan Sudha* in later years published prose too.

According to a later-day assessment, *Kavi Vachan Sudha* was one of the three independent Hindi journals published in 1867 from Jammu, Sikandarabad and Benaras. The last mentioned one, namely, *Kavi Vachan Sudha*, was being edited by Bharatendu Harishchandra, 'who has been described as Rammohun Roy of Hindi journalism. He was already a writer of repute when he started his monthly magazine, and his enterprise inspired other writers to follow in his wake. It may be said that Hindi journa-

lism was placed firmly on its feet by his efforts. A flood of journals of high literary quality followed, but most of them lived only for a few years, largely because of lack of public support.'

Kavi Vachan Sudha only whetted Harishchandra's appetite for journalistic triumphs. Within a few years (1873), he started another journal called *Harishchandra Magazine* which proved to be more of a landmark. Harishchandra's friends did not particularly like his using the term 'magazine'. He renamed it *Harishchandra Chandrika.* However, the earlier title, 'Magazine' in English, was carried on the back cover.

Harishchandra Chandrika was a new type of journal. It specialised in prose and drama and carried essays, book reviews, and articles on such subjects as chess, humour, etc. In fact, it included articles or essays on anything and everything that concerned the people at large. Its contributors (described as 'assistant editors') included celebrities of the age : Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chunder Sen, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, etc. Like *Kavi Vachan Sudha,* this journal too was patronised by the British authorities in India who purchased a hundred copies of this journal also.

A significant aspect of this journal was the propagation by it of the spoken language of the common people, as against the highly Persianised vocubulary used by Raja Shiv Prasad 'Sitara-i-Hind' and his followers or the Sanskrit-ridden Hindi of the Brahmanical class of Benaras. Harishchandra stood for Hindi as it was spoken. It is significant that even though he belonged to one of the wealthiest families in Benaras, he hobnobbed with the common people of Benaras, including some of the less seemly sections of the population. Passing by groups of Lavani composers along the roadside, Harishchandra, despite his princely attire and demeanour, would sit down with them and compose verses. And it was the common man's spoken language, the real Hindi, that he adopted as his vehicle of communication. According to all accounts, the journal *Harishchandra Chandrika* was a very popular one. Its readers anxiously looked forward to seeing the next issue. Harishchandra himself was immensely pleased with its performance.

The two journals gave a tremendous boost to Hindi journalism. In their wake, came a large number of Hindi journals. A new group of journalists and writers also came to the fore. Known as the 'Harishchandra Mandal' (followers of Harishchandra), it

continued its tradition even after Harishchandra, and always acknowledged the inspiration its members drew from Harishchandra's works. Prominent among them was Badri Narayan Chowdhury 'Premghun' of Mirzapur, who like many others switched over from Urdu to Hindi. He brought out the monthly *Anand Kadambini* and also the weekly *Nagari Nirad.* He was a prolific writer, and Harishchandra reportedly once advised him that a journal required contributions from people from different walks of life and not just one writer filling up the whole volume. Pandit Pratap Narayan Misra, another prominent writer to switch over from Urdu, started by writing in Harishchandra's journals. He edited the *Brahman* of Kanpur. Pandit Balkrishna Bhatta, who returned from Calcutta to Allahabad, started a paper entitled *Hindi Pradip* which later became the official organ of the Hindi Vardhini Sabha of Allahabad. The Sabha, as also its journal, drew inspiration from Harishchandra, who himself wrote the motto of the journal and also went to Allahabad to deliver the presidential address (in poetry), outlining the importance of mother tongue in the task of advancement of the country. Lala Shrinivas Das, who had migrated from Mathura to Delhi and was also an established writer who switched over from Urdu to Hindi, had started a paper *Sadadarsh,* which was later incorporated in the *Chandrika.* Admiration of Harishchandra led another eminent writer, Pandit Radhacharan Goswami, to start a paper under the name of *Bharatendu.* Another journal *Sarasudhanidhi,* was started by Ramshankar Vyas, yet another admirer of Bhartendu.

All these journals and editors owed a good deal either to *Kavi Vachan Sudha* or to *Harishchandra Chandrika.* It is natural that Harishchandra should have felt proud of his own achievements. He is reported to have often said in his later years that the most forceful articles written by him and his friends were those published in the *Chandrika.*

His success in journalism encouraged him to launch two more magazines, namely, *Bala Bodhini* and *Bhagwat Toshini.* The former, *Bala Bodhini,* a monthly journal for women, was an ardent supporter of the movement for women's education and their emancipation. It was a pioneer in its own line, and had the patronage of the British rulers who—as was the case with *Kavi Vachan Sudha* and *Harishchandra Chandrika*—bought a fixed

number of copies of this journal. *Bhagwat Toshini*, the fourth journal that Harishchandra edited, was started to meet the requirements of the followers of the Vaishnavite cult to which he himself belonged. Only a few issues of this journal could come out.

Harishchandra was so devout a Bhakta that he not only founded a society for the propagation of the Vaishnavite cult but also closely associated himself with other followers, especially those in northern India. With Radhacharan Goswami of Mathura, leader of the Vallabhacharya cult, he had very close personal relations. We find him corresponding with the Goswami about little known details of the past leaders of the cult and also their works, in the spirit of a research student writing a thesis. Harishchandra is seen asking Goswami to procure pictures of the great masters and also offering handsome payment for such pictures for his album.

He advocated not only a ban on cow slaughter—for which he invited manuscripts of plays or books to be paid for handsomely —but also a ban on the eating of meat and on drinking. Both these were taboo. It is not clear how long this society, which made its members take an oath in writing, remained in existence. Nevertheless, its objectives were dear to Harishchandra.

It is also significant that readers of his journals and his other friends were made to take a vow to eschew the purchase of foreign-made cloth. He was also closely associated with the widespread demand for the recognition of Hindi as court language in areas which constitute the Uttar Pradesh of today.

VIII

Although Harishchandra started writing poems at the early age of seven and wrote on many social and political themes, the Bhakti cult of the Vaishanavites was the basis of much of his poetry. In fact, he is generally considered to be the last poet of the Bhakti movement.

Harishchandra was a great lover of Brajbhasha in which most of the Bhakti literature about Lord Krishna and his consort Radha, as also the ancillary themes, had been composed. Thanks to Harishchandra, Brajbhasha which is sweet and melodious—

described by some as being 'without bones' as it were—received a new and more refined tone. He brought about a synthesis between sensuousness and the genuinely devotional attitudes. In many of his poems, the erotic becomes charged with spiritual significance, *Shringar,* (the amorous-erotic mood) tapering off into *Bhakti* (the devotional-spiritual mood).

Harishchandra gave Hindi nearly three thousand devotional and love songs—songs in all conceivable metres (perhaps as many as a hundred) such as 'Hindola', 'purvi', 'khyal', 'kalyana' and 'vihaga'. His songs are contained in about twenty works having a direct bearing on the cult he followed.

In 'Bhakta Sarvasva', he describes the many 'signs' of the Lord. In 'Prema Malika', he portrays the childhood of Lord Krishna. The yearning of the 'gopis' (milkmaids) for the Lord, when he leaves his birthplace, provides a favourite theme. The song begins by describing the torment of the gopis at separation from Krishna. Some other songs describe the sermons delivered to the gopis to enable them to have peace of mind after separation. The Lord's 'lila' (play) and the votaries sentiments of helplessness are dealt with in a few other songs. Special 'ragas' have been employed to express the votaries' sense of helplessness. To love the Lord without any ulterior gain and for its own sake is a constant theme. His 'Prema Sarovar' embodies the thirst for divine love. A dozen or so couplets explain the difficulty of the love-path ; another seven describe the beauty of the lake. Seven more exalt the grandeur of divine love. The last four couplets describe the characteristics of True Love. In 'Prema Madhuri' the poet identifies himself with his Lord, believing implicitly that life without him cannot exist. He explains how woman's desire for the love of her Lord verges on madness. 'Prema Phulwari' describe love as a 'purifying' element. 'Prema Pratap' deals with disappointment born out of frustrated love. 'Prema Asru Varsana' is woven round the manifestation of love in the rainy weather. The forty-six 'padas' of this book describe the joys of the season, the joys and pleasures of the swing, of the hide and seek in the wet bower and of the love talk. Enjoyment of the beautiful scene after the monsoon showers constitutes the basic theme of the book. 'Prema Taranga' introduces the human note by bringing love down to the earthly plane ; the poet, in fact, describes the peculiar experience of disillusionment in love.

Herein the Vaishnava poet becomes a poet of love in its human form. The intensity of love without which life is colourless, empty and meaningless, is the consistent theme of 'Prema Sarovar'. By any standard, Harishchandra's contribution to Brajbhasha is indeed weighty. He was really the last of the generation that made use of Brajbhasha forcefully.

It is also significant that, irrespective of his mastery over Brajbhasha, Harishchandra anticipated the needs of the times to come, and made the earliest attempts at poetry in Khariboli which, as we all now know, later completely swamped Brajbhasha. Some of Harishchandra's poems in Khariboli were published in the *Bharatmitra* of Calcutta. While getting his Khariboli poems published, he asked for suggestions on how to encourage poetry in Khariboli. And he went into details of the metres that could be popular.

While Harishchandra's contribution to different branches of Hindi literature is too well known, not so well known, however, is the fact that he was also an eminent writer in Urdu. In 1872, he planned to bring out an Urdu weekly, *Qasid*, and even formally announced its proposed publication. It was because of poor response from readers that the scheme was given up. His poems, prose works and satirical writings in Urdu would easily exceed a hundred printed pages.

A patron and friend of Urdu poets, Anis and Wazir, he himself wrote Urdu poetry under the pseudonym of 'Rasa'. His ghazals are of a sufficiently high quality. Amir Ali, a poet, was a regular visitor to his 'darbar'. Harishchandra compiled two anthologies of Urdu poetry under the title of *Gulistan-i-Pur-Bahar* and *Chamanistan-i-Pur-Bahar*, which are reported to have got acclaim from many literary quarters.

It is charcteristic of Harishchandra that he also kept in close touch with the rising poets and poetesses of Urdu ; for instance, he evinced great interest in the work of the Begum of Bhopal, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Rupratan'. He not only published her ghazals in his own anthologies but also sent her poems to the *Bharatmitra* of Calcutta for publication, with appreciative comments.

Harishchandra also wrote good prose in Urdu. Some of his essays, e.g., 'Panchavan Paighambar' and 'Khushi', are pieces of good standard. His satirical piece entitled 'Qanoon Tazirat-i-

Shauhar', or code for the behaviour of husbands, is written in highly Persianised Urdu and ends with a persian couplet. About this composition, the *Hindusthani Akhbar*, a journal from Lucknow, had this to say: 'In a thoroughly gripping manner, the talented author has portrayed the character of women who are suspicious about their husbands. The piece is highly entertaining. We would now request the Babu Saheb to write a companion volume of a code for wives. Babu Harishchandra has written much in Hindi. It is no exaggeration to say that his works mark the progress of Hindi. We wish he could undertake the translation of all his Hindi works into Urdu. If he would, the Urdu reading public would indeed be beholden. Also, if writers like him could devote some time to write plays in Urdu, it would fill a great lacuna indeed and enrich Urdu. When we see *Neeldevi* or *Satya Harishchandra*, we feel sorry for the plight of Urdu, which today has no such plays to boast of.'

IX

While Harishchandra was a great literary figure who made his mark in many branches of literature, the one single field in which his contribution is most remembered is that of Hindi drama. In his eighteen years of literary career, he wrote nearly as many plays, some of them original, and others, translations from Bengali or Sanskrit or English.

Harishchandra had a talent for drama, and it must be remembered that he not only wrote plays but was also an actor of considerable talent. Both these trends are clearly discernible even in his early years. When soon after his marriage, he went on a pilgrimage to Jagannath Puri, he is reported to have bought a Bengali play at Burdwan. Thanks to the family's connections with Bengal, as also his live contact with Bengalis in Benaras, he could read the drama with ease and was so impressed by the new trend of dramas in Bengali that the idea of doing something similar in Hindi caught his fancy.

His talent for acting was also much in evidence. The Maharaja of Benaras had extended all help for putting on the stage Sital Prasad Tripathi's 'Janaki Mandal', generally accepted to be the first play in modern Hind. Based on an event in the

Ramayana, this play, wrtten in 1867, was to be staged in the presence of the Maharaja himself. On the day of the performance, it appears, the artiste who was to play the role of Lakshmana fell sick. Told of this unforeseen situation, the Maharaja, who had arrived for the performance in advance, said the only way out was to postpone the performance. While this discussion was going on, Harishchandra, then only 17, walked in. Told of the difficulty, he submitted that, given a little time to learn the lines, he could play the role. The Maharaja of Benaras, thereupon, said it would perhaps be difficult for the young man to learn so quickly the lines to be uttered by Lakshmana. Harishchandra, however, submitted that if he be given half an hour, he could do it. The Maharaja was sceptical. He offered an hour's time and Harishchandra quickly read through the play. To the astonishment of almost everybody, he could repeat nearly every word of the book ! The part was given to him and the play staged.

The above account, given by a contemporary journal from the U.K., may have some element of exaggeration, but other accounts too confirm Harishchandra's phenomenal memory and his special aptitude for drama and dramatic performances.

It was also about this time that Harishchandra started writing plays. The very first, *Pravas Natak*, is not traceable now. His second one, *Ratnavali*, was a translation. Says Harishchandra in the preface (which is all that is available to us now): 'Hindi books on different subjects are very few indeed, especially Hindi dramas which could be read for pleasure or considered models of vigorous language. I am, therefore, keen that a few dramas should be translated into Hindi. Next only to *Shakuntala*, I feel that *Ratnavali* provides good reading. Hence my effort to translate this one . . . . Other translations would follow.'

Harishchandra's next drama was *Vidyasundar*, reportedly based on a Bengali drama by Jatindra Mohan Thakur.

The year 1870, when Harsihchandra was devoting time to the writing of dramas, saw the founding of the Pestonjee Framjee's Original Theatre Company, followed some seven years later by that of the Victoria Theatrical Company (which even staged plays in Britain !) of Khurshidjee Baliwala of Delhi, and of Cowasjee Khatau's well known Alfred Theatrical Company. Bharatendu felt that the drama form meets not only the audio-

visual requirements, but also satisfies the five senses by presenting a blending of the five fine arts. That, in fact, is why Harishchandra adopted it as his principal medium of expression. The dramas of ancient times, he felt, were bound by the rules laid down by the old masters and could not be successful in the changed context. He took note of the success of the Parsi Theatre, and decided to incroporate all the desirable features of the Parsi drama, properly blending them with the good features of the dramatic arts of old. Hindi theatrical companies, following the Parsi theatre, now considered the requirements of the stage and put more emphasis on characterisation, as opposed to the purely moralistic themes.

Even though some of the poetical conpositions within Bharatendu's dramas were, generally speaking, in the melodious Brajbhasha or Avadhi, it is in his dramas that Bharatendu used Khariboli, or the standard spoken language, for the first time. While his Brahmanical characters speak Sanskritised language, the characters representing common people use colloquial Hindi only.

Otherwise too, Bharatendu adopted a middle course. He rejected the out-of-date techniques or themes, and adopted new ways which could be acceptable to his own times.

Among Bharatendu Harishchandra's last important works was his book on dramaturgy, *Natak*, which he wrote while on the sick bed. The book is an indication of the importance Bharatendu attached to drama as a branch of literature.

Wrote Harishchandra in his *Natak*, 'Plays written on the lines of European drama, and the many dramas written today in Bengali, are only the precursors of the new trends.'

Bharatendu used Puranic themes, historical themes and social themes, but his injection of contemporary themes was something new to Hindi drama. These included such themes as widow remarriage, ban on the eating of meat, maladministration in the princely States, exploitation by the British administration of the resources of the country with a view to enriching the British people. He spared no pains to expose the evils of Indian society fearlessly. In fact, Harishchandra's close friends and contemporary admirers like Pratap Narayan Misra, Badri Narayan Choudhury 'Premghun' and Balkrishna Bhatta also wrote on contemporary themes.

Harishchandra also gave a modern garb to drama in Hindi. Thus, when he translated *Merchant of Venice* into Hindi as *Durlabh Bandhu*, he gave the (Indian) name of Purshri to Portia, used Shailaksu for Shylock and Vasant for Basanio. In addition to *Vidhyasundar*, which he adapted from Bengali, he also translated or adapted another one entitled *Bharat Janani*. Dramas adapted or translated from Sanskrit or Prakrit were quite a few. These included *Satya Harishchandra, Chandravali, Mudra Rakshas, Ratnavali, Dhanunjaya Vijaya, Karpur Manjari*, and *Pakhand Vidamban*. His famous *Satya Harishchandra* is woven round the eternal conflict between the ideal of Truth, on the one hand, and the attempt to overthrow it, on the other. The hero of the play is the mythological king, upholding the path of truth at the cost of great hardship and suffering. To be able to do so, he forsakes his all and undergoes a life of great suffering and privation. And Vishwamitra, another mythological character, is responsible for the severe ordeal undergone by the king. Harishchandra and Vishwamitra are not affected by normal human motives, but symbolise the ideal of Truth, on the one side, and the attempt to dislodge it, on the other. Harishchandra's rendering of this mythological theme is highly dramatic and very powerful.

In *Chandravali*, another mythological drama, Lord Krishna represents the ultimate principle of spiritual love which sustains the universe. *Chandravali*, symbolising the eternal yearning of man for the realisation of the ideal, represents the devotion to something afar from the sphere of human sorrow.

Prem Jogini is in a different forte. Herein, Harishchandra presents a graphic account of the conditions of Benaras of those days. We find a mention of a large number of prostitutes who obviously came to his 'durbar'. In fact, he justified his association with them on the ground of making his writings realistic. The first two scenes of *Prem Jogini* were serialised under the title of *Two Photographs, Good, Bad or Indifferent*. In *Bharat Durdasha*, a farce, he has presented a grim picture of contemporary India. In this drama, he represented the ills of the country through symbolic characters. 'Disease', 'Indolence', 'Alcoholism', 'Ignorance' and 'Poverty' are the main characters. In this 37-page drama, powerful language (in verse) is used to arouse a passion for self-reformation in the audience.

In another play, *Andher Nagari*, he returns to this theme. The drama is Interspersed with comments on the sad plight of the country. Harishchandra's *Neeldevi* was also in the same patriotic vein. Herein, in this first historical drama, he tried to arouse Indian womanhood. The preface to the drama is remarkable for its forthrightness. This is what he said : 'On this Christmas Day, which to the Christians is more important than any other day of the year, I feel sad and my sadness arises from the contrast between the sad plight of the Indian women as against that of the British women who mingle with their menfolk merrily and freely. This, of course, does not mean that I wish the Indian women to change their ways of modesty and womanly dignity. However, I do wish them to be alert and enlightened, so that they know how to run their homes efficiently, to educate their children, to carefully decide what is good for the Indian society and the country . . . . India's womanhood ought to get out of its shell of family squabbles and make some positive contribution. The most important step in that direction is the removal of the hurdle of rigid traditionalism. In the ancient days, dating back to the Aryans' advent in India, womenfolk were not in the sad plight of today. Women were indeed enlightened. And it is to expose the darkness that has come over them in the recent past that I have written this drama. I place it in their hands . . . . My only request to them is that they should peruse it and give some thought to the heroic deeds of those memorable and remarkable women of India, with a view to emulating their example and marching ahead—in a determined manner.'

Vishasya Vishamaushadham pinpoints maladministration in the princely states. The background of this drama is the deposition of the ruler of Baroda. This is in some ways a satirical drama.

In *Vaidiki Himsa, Himsa Na Bhavati*, he ridicules the advocates of meateating (as a Bhakta he advocated a ban on cow slaughter) and drinking or a Hindu keeping Muslim mistresses.

He also ridiculed those progressives who, with a 'nodding acquaintance with English language', tried to pose as great reformers. Critics have held that the butt of this ridicule were some of his eminent opponents and detractors led by Raja Shiv Prasad 'Sitara-i-Hind'.

X

Belonging to an extremely 'loyal' family, Harishchandra was a traditionalist. Queen Victoria was the sovereign of India and he felt that every Indian owed his completest loyalty to her and the Royal House. At the age of eleven he composed a poem in honour of H. R. H. Prince Albert. There was hardly a birthday of the Queen that he did not celebrate in the school he had started. There were illuminations and all that. When the Prince of Wales visited India in 1869, Harishchandra was deputed to show him round Benaras. This he did. In addition, he invited eminent Brahmins and Pandits of Benaras to compose poems in honour of the Prince. These poems were later printed and presented to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales.

Harishchandra was a favourite of the British. They appointed him a Municipal Commissioner and also an honorary magistrate. The judicial status was conferred on him at a very young age ; he was the youngest of the honorary magistrates in Benaras. Other honours too were showered on him. The purchase by Government of copies of his journals by the hundred was also a favour.

Unlike other writers, Harishchandra attempted to maintain a live contact with St James Palace, London. At the time of the great Empire Exhibition in 1871, he sent some antiquities and rare pieces, and there is a certificate signed by none other than the Prince of Wales, thanking him for his contribution. Harishchandra wrote not only to the Queen and the Royal Princes in London but also to such heads of States as the Czar of Russia and the Kaiser of Germany. He also presented them with his Hindi books and was thus perhaps the first Hindi writer to project Hindi outside India, not only among the orientalists like Garcon d'Tassy, with whom he had close contact, but also among heads of States. A Russian senator's letter from St Petersburg shows that, in the seventies of the last century, Harishchandra was considered to be an authority to be consulted by Russian orientalists. (Acknowledgments for the set of books he sent to Berlin and St Petersburg were, incidentally, received through the British Foreign Office, London, who wrote to the Governor-General of India in Calcutta and then to the Governor of U.P.).

Harishchandra had the unique knack of seizing every opportunity to bring himself close to the Royal House. Thus when it became known that a Prince was to visit India, or landed in India, Harishchandra wrote eulogistic poems. He wrote in jubilation when the Queen escaped an assassin's bullet or the British (or Indian) army registered a victory in Afghanistan or Burma or Egypt. He was personally associated with the visits of members of the British Royalty to Benaras. He cashed in on this too and was able to make quite an impression. This brought him nearer to the British Royal House. And this closeness irked his rivals like Raja Shiv Prasad 'Sitara-i-Hind' and other members of his group. They (the Raja and his friends) lost no opportunity to malign him, or to misconstrue his activities and misreport his writings. By using the occasions provided by the foreign guests' visit to Benaras to project the miseries of the people of India, and the oppression they were subjected to, Bharatendu only provided grist to his opponents' mill. To add to their discomfiture Harishchandra, whose zest for life was well known, provided provocation too. He would stand up in the projection of the living room of his ancestral house and make satirical remarks in regard to the people passing by in the narrow land below. Some of these remarks were amusing. Others were rather in the nature of carping criticism of people and institutions they belonged to. These did alienate some people. Because of his wealth and social position, Harishchandra could ride roughshod. He also could supplement the criticism of his rivals by pungent writing in his journals. Some of these were, however, aimed at arousing the people from their slumber. He, campaigned for the people of India undertaking travels abroad to pick up new techniques of the industrial age, so as to help industrialise the country. He also referred to the continuing drain of India's wealth. One is indeed surprised to see that early in the 1870's he was campaigning for a boycott of foreign goods. In fact, some thirty years before the Swadeshi movement in this country, we find Harishchandra asking people to take an oath to use only Swadeshi. And it is not insignificant that *Harishchandra Chandrika* carried articles on the propagation of scientific theories and machines as the basis for industrialisation, pointing out how India had been left behind in the race for progress

and also how her people must reform themselves and work hard to enrich the nation. The kernel of what he wrote a hundred years ago is true even today.

Harishchandra was also critical of the manner in which the Britons who came out to India, plundered India's resources and went back as wealthy people. He even went so far as to call for the unity of all Indians to ameliorate the lot of the common man.

All this surely could not have endeared Harishchandra to the British officials at the lower levels. They became hostile to him and withdrew their patronage from Harishcandra's journals. Harishchandra took his readers into confidence and appealed to them to come to the aid of the journals. As a mark of disgust with the attitude of the local officials, Harishchandra resigned his municipal commissionership and his honorary magistrateship. He was then barely twenty-five.

Personal loyalty to the British Crown, however, remained an article of faith with him. Nothing pained Harishchandra more than the charge of 'disloyalty' to the Crown. To the very last, we see him going out of the way to rebut this charge, and seek testimonials for the same. 'Loyalty' was an integral part of nationalism in 1870.

Differences in regard to the content of the Hindi to be popularised, between Harishchandra and his admirers on the one hand, and those of Raja Shiv Prasad 'Sitara-i-Hind' (considered to be more faithful to the British) on the other, became aggravated. The Raja, who had served the British in various capacities and had by now become a key figure in the department of public instruction, had written primers in Hindi (which was Urdu in the Devanagari script). The controversy over his Hindi took a serious turn. Some of the articles which Harishchandra wrote in *Kavi Vachan Sudha* or *Harishchandra Chandrika*, wherein he made fun of the titled gentry in general terms, were quickly interpreted as criticism of the Raja and his cronies. At times references in such articles were misconstrued and conveyed to the British officials. The Governor-General of India and the Governor of U.P., it was alleged by Harishchandra's rivals, had been humiliated and the British Raja and even Royalty made fun of. The local British officials, who expected all Indians to kowtow, felt offended, and sided with their favourite Raja

Shiv Prasad 'Sitara-i-Hind'. From this flowed the decision to withdraw support from the *Kavi Vachan Sudha*. The journal, already irregular, was never a commercial success. Now it became a losing concern. The drain was heavy. It was, therefore, transferred by Harishchandra to one of his friends. When similar support was withdrawn from *Bala Bodhini* also, this too had to be closed down. Harishchandra felt pained. He did not wish to admit his failure by closing down this journal, and pleaded with the new editor of *Kavi Vachan Sudha* to incorporate *Bala Bodhini* with the *Kavi Vachan Sudha*. This was done in name only, and nothing really could save *Bala Bodhini* from dying. Eventually, even the *Kavi Vachan Sudha* moved under the influence of Raja Shiv Prasad, and it is indeed ironic that this journal took up towards the end a posture against its founder.

The only magazine left, namely *Harishchandra Chandrika*, continued for quite some time, but one of Harishchandra's friends, who had started a magazine called *Mohan Chandrika*, approached Harishchandra to merge the famous *Harishchandra Chandrika* with his magazine. The new journal became *Harishchandra aur Mohan Chandrika*. Within the next few months it was shifted from Benaras to Udaipur, where Mohanlal Vishnulal Pandya had taken up a job. Still later it was shifted to Nathdwara, where it 'died in the sands of the Rajasthan desert'.

Shortly before his death, Harishchandra revived the *Chandrika*, so dear to him, under the name of *Navodita Chandrika*. Not many issues came out before Harishchandra left the world. Meanwhile, M. V. Pandya objected to Harishchandra's descendants 'taking back' the magazine in this fashion.

XI

Harishchandra had trodden on the corns of quite a few people, especially those who blindly carried out the orders of the British officials, whether these orders suited national interests, or conflicted with the propagation of Hindi. Nevertheless, even the bitterest critic of Bharatendu could not deny the new directions he had shown for the advancement of Hindi Literature. He had been a pioneer in Hindi journalism and the two journals,

Kavi Vachan Sudha and *Harishchandra Chandrika*, had inspired the publication of many other journals by writers who had started with writing for Bharatendu's journals. Harishchandra was their mentor and guide.

The two journals encouraged, among other things, the growth of humour in literature. Writing in a lighter vein is, in fact, a characteristic feature of journalism of this age. Next to Bharatendu's humorous writings were those of Pratap Narayan Misra of Kanpur, who provoked laughter sometimes by using quaint or odd words or expressions from his native dialect of Unnao district. The writing of Balakrishna Bhatta too had a lightness of touch and a gaiety of treatment which made them extremely readable.

It may also be mentioned that, as in the case of Hindi journals, Bharatendu's lead in writing plays too was avidly followed by the group of writers who were closely associated with his journal and his own literary career. For instance, Pratap Narayan Misra wrote several plays, including *Bharat Durdasha, Kali Kautak Rupak* and *Hati Hamir*. Pandit Balkrishna Bhatta wrote *Bal Vivah, Kaliraj ki Sabha* and *Rail ka Vikat Khel*. Pandit Badri Narayan Choudhury 'Premghun' also wrote plays such as *Bharat Soubhagya, Prayag Ramagaman, Varangana Rahasya Natak*. Lala Shrinivas Das too wrote several plays, including *Prahalad Charitra, Sanjogta Swayambar, Tapta Samavaran*, etc. Babu Radhakrishna Das, a cousin of Bharatendu, also took active interest and not only completed some of the works left incomplete by Bharatendu, but also wrote a few plays, e.g., *Dukhini Bala* and *Maharana Pratap*.

It is also significant that, apart from plays, the writers associated with Bharatendu also initiated articles on literary criticism, evaluating individual works and also discussing theories on literary creation and appreciation.

Bharatendu, as we have already seen, wrote poetry in many a metre and also started the tradition of research into various facets of the Bhakti movement. He was, in a large measure, responsible for infusing into Hindi the spirit of renaissance which had characterised Bengali literary movement in those days. Nothing new escaped his notice. In fact he looked beyond—outside India and into the future. When the Franco- German war broke out, Harishchandra invited manuscripts of books on

the subject, and also offered handsome honoraria.

An ardent social reformer, Harishchandra wrote in favour of sea voyage, widow remarriage and education of girls. He presented saris to girl students who passed examinations held by the Bombay, Madras and Calcutta Universities. He opposed polygamy and child marriage.

Harishchandra's journey to Burdwan, on the way to Jagnnath Puri, was possibly the first opportunity he held to trevel by rail. As soon as he came of age, he undertook many tours and travelled to east India, north India and western India. This widened his horizon. The fact that he appealed, through the columns of his journals, for help to the victims of floods in Khandesh or in Gujarat, or himself went round Benaras to secure help for the victims of floods, is in some ways symbolic of his all-India outlook. One result of Harishchandra's travels was Hindi's earliest travelogues. His journey to Udaipur in Rajasthan—which led to his last illnees—arose partly from his zest for travelling.

Rajendralal Mitra, an antiquarian of repute, had taken up an assignment at a well-known educational institute set up for the princes and the sons of the wealthy zamindars. He lived close to Harishchandra's house. The two, who were Vaishnavites, came into contract. Harishchandra got interested in the science of antiquities, and was able to start the very first serious contributions to historical writings in Hindi. Like a research student he went round Benaras and wrote about the ancient temples and the various copper plates found in Benaras. Whenever he visited Calcutta a call at the Asiatic Society was a must. He loaned several manuscripts to the Society.

Harishchandra's articles on different periods of Indian history were also something new to Hindi. While writing articles on history, he read almost all the available literature. His writings, consequently, are interspersed with copious references from many a British or French historian of standing. Among the things that he successfully attempted were a history of such States as Kashmir (drawing, of course, on Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*), or a history of the royal houses of Udaipur, Kotah and other friendly States in Rajasthan. For these books, he avidly studied *Annals of Rajasthan* by Todd. Maharajas of many an Indian State honoured Harishchandra. The Maharawal of Udaipur, a great patron of

Hindi letters, is reported to have invited him to visit his durbar. (It is said by Hindi writers that the Maharawal was so pleased with Harishchandra and his unusual gifts as a poet and writer that he even told the latter that, from the time of his visit to Udaipur, Harishchandra could consider himself a 'partner in the kingdom'.)

In *Kalachakra* Harishchandra even attempted a chronology of world history.

Even though Harishchandra was a Bhakta, he had an open mind. According to present-day standards, his approach was secular. He not only recognised the unity of all religions, but also did everything to bring together the different classes. Criticised once for visiting a Jain temple, he wrote powerfully in defence of his action. Jainism, he maintained, was not to be ridiculed. While in 1870 he participated in a great debate against Swami Dayanand Saraswati, at a time when the founder of Arya Samaj was worsting some of the religious giants in Benaras, later on he enrolled Dayanand among the contributors ('assistant editors') to his journal. In his later-day writing, we see him propagating that all Indians—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians—must consider themselves Indians first, and move shoulder to shoulder with each other for the advancement of the country. In an age steeped in tradition, he was a forward-looking person.

Thanks largely to his own pioneering efforts, Khariboli had been adopted for use in prose. Not so in poetry. Until his emergence on the literary scene, as also during his own lifetime, the vehicle of poetry continued to be the melodious Brajbhasha, in which most of the Bhakti literature had been written. Bharatendu himself wrote in Brajbhasha. But he saw that the future would require the use of Khariboli. It is a measure of his farsightedness that we find him trying out Khariboli for poetry. Sending some poems in Khariboli to the editor of *Bharatmitra* of Calcutta, we find him writing: 'Please go through them carefully and let me know the defects. Also let me have your suggestions on how to make Khariboli compositions beautiful. The three metres attempted herein are only by way of experimentation—to determine, that is, what would suit the genius of this language best. I won't say I am satisfied with the results of these compositions. And for reasons which I am unable to fathom, I had to spend double the effort and time on Khariboli than what I do on Brajbhasha. The

principle difficulty has, of course, been the existence of too many long vowels in Khariboli At some places, therefore, I had to use short vowels in reference to the long ones. If you favour me with your and your readers, reactions, I would attempt more of such compositions.'

Besides poetry in Khariboli, thera was yet another branch of Hindi literature that attracted his attention. This was the Hindi novel. In a letter to one of his admirers, Harishchandra wrote : 'Some dramas have been written in Hindi, but there are no Hindi novels yet. It would indeed be a great service if you, or some of the assistant editors of your journal, such as Radhacharan Goswhmi or Babu Kashinath, could write some novels in Hindi. If you agree to do so, *Deep Narayan* may be translated. This work is something more than a novel ; it is intimately connected with the fortunes of this country.' Harishchandra also asked his Bengali (second) 'wife', Mallika, to translate novels from Bengali. Three of the ones that she translated were *Radharani*, *Saundaryamayee* and *Chandraprabha Purnaprakash*. *Radharani* is aptly dedicated to Harishchandra, her patron. This is what she said in har dedicatory note : 'According to the convention laid down by civilised society, I do not deserve to be introduced, and there is nothing really so remarkable about this translation that I should endeavour to make myself known to, or appear before, the reading public. . . . Suffice it to say that it is dedicated to the great and saintly person, my master, at whose bidding I have undertaken the translation in my own somewhat poor language. My master's satisfaction over this effort of mine would be my only reward.' Mallika's 'master' vetted the translation of these three novels and published them.

Harishchandra himself undertook the translation of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Rajsinha*. (Unfortunately, it remained incomplete, and, after his death, his cousin Radhakrishan Das completed it.) It was also through Harishchandra's inspiration that Radhakrishan Das translated *Swarnalata*, and Pandit Ram Shankar Vyas undertook the Hindi rendering of *Madhumalati*. Similarly, Gadadhar Singh translated *Durgeshnandini* and also *Kadambari*. There is little doubt that Harishchandra would have enriched this branch of Hindi literature if he had lived for some more years. But that was not to be.

XII

While Harishchandra's extravagance led to worries, his burning the candle at both ends ruined his health. Yet he refused to read the writing on the wall, and continued with his profligate ways. He also did not give up strenuous journeys. In fact, he travelled quite avidly and it was during this poor state of health that he undertook the long journey to Udaipur and thence to Nathdwara, to look up his old friend, Mohanlal V. Pandya, who had taken up residence there. His health gave way during this journey. Attacked by cholera, fever and also afflicted with breathing trouble, he managed only to service. On his return to Benaras, he was keen to complete some of the works which he valued. He wrote his work on Indian dramaturgy, and, in compliance with a request from a committee in Britain, he rendered the British National Anthem into Hindi. He wrote a few more dramas and some prose works too. He also kept up his other engagements. Even though he was weak in health, he travelled to Ballia to be present at the performance of his plays, *Satya Harishchandra* and *Neeldevi*. He was publicly honoured and compared to Shakespeare. This journey was not advisable. Within a few weeks of his return, he took to bed again. His malady aggravated. Medical experts could not restrain him from writing. He worked hard. With the passage of days, his energy was sapped and he went down rapidly. At last the end came, and on January 5, 1885, the world of modern Hindi lost its greatest writer since Tulsidas. It lost a sure and steady hand that had led Hindi literature into many new paths, be it poetry, drama, journalism, essay writing or history. He had also endeavoured to bring Hindi closer to other Indian languages.

However, he did have some regrets. For, he is reported to have told his close friends that, if he got another opportunity with the same wealth as he had inherited, he would do the following : (i) set up a university with Hindi as the medium of instruction ; (ii) instal an image of Thakurji in the family garden house, with due honours ; (iii) start an arts college in the North Western Province ; and (iv) visit the USA, France and Britain.

Alas, these wishes were not fulfilled. Nevertheless, he had cleared the way for the development of Hindi journalism, drama, novel, essay, poetry in Khariboli, and had, in fact, inspired a

number of people to carry the message of Hindi forward. For Radhakrishna Das, Santokh Singh, Balkrishna Bhatta, Badri Narayan Chowdhury 'Premghun' and Radhacharan Goswami were only a few among those who carried the torch forward helping to make, within the next few decades, Khariboli the accepted vehicle of prose, poetry and journalism.

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