



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**A BRIEF OUTLOOK: SAADAT HASAN MANTO AS A PROGRESSIVE WRITER**

Shakila Bhanu Sk

*(Associate Professor of English, VFSTR Deemed to be University.)*<https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2023.10402>**ABSTRACT**

In the nineteenth century, Indian novels were more directed towards the social interest with political consciousness as the younger generation was more aware of social and political happenings. Indian novels in English originated from different regions of the country by different vernacular writers. Despite geographical, cultural and social differences, themes depicted in the novels shared a common thread of nationalism, colonial rule and post-colonialism. The Progressive Writers' Movement was majorly instrumented by authors like Mulkraj Anand, Syed Sajjad Zahir, Ahmed Ali, Rashid Jehan, Attia Hosain and Mahmuduz Zafar etc. They were the trendsetters for modern writers in Indian writing in English. This current paper discusses briefly the literary contribution of Saadat Hasan Manto, a noteworthy Progressive writer.

**Article history:**

Received on : 20-09--2023

Accepted on : 18-10-2023

Available online:22-10--2023

**Keywords:** *Saadat Hasan Manto, Progressive writers' movement, themes of Progressive Writers*



## INTRODUCTION

Progressive writers have indeed played a crucial role in shaping the landscape of Indian writing in English. Their works have brought about significant changes and introduced new perspectives in the Indian literary scene. They have addressed issues like practising not-so-necessary social, political and cultural norms.

Progressive writers have used their literary platform to address a wide range of social issues prevailing in India, such as caste discrimination, gender inequality, poverty, communalism, and the impact of colonialism. By raising awareness through their writings, they have contributed to social reform and highlighted the need for change. Their writings hold the Indian society that has been bound by various norms and stereotypes. Progressive writers have been instrumental in challenging these norms and breaking stereotypes through their characters and narratives. They have portrayed strong, independent female characters, questioned rigid societal structures and encouraged readers to question established beliefs.

## INFLUENCE OF PROGRESSIVE WRITERS ON LITERATURE

The works of progressive writers have influenced subsequent generations of Indian authors. Many of these writers, have significantly contributed to India's literary landscape and left a lasting impact with their progressive ideologies and thought-provoking works. Most of the contemporary Indian writers have been inspired by the themes, ideas, and storytelling techniques used by progressive writers. These writers have experimented with language and narrative

styles, and their works often reflect a fusion of Indian idioms, colloquialisms, and English, creating a unique linguistic style that captures the essence of the Indian experience. Several progressive writers have gained international acclaim, bringing Indian literature to the global stage. Indian writing in English has been enriched by the inclusion of regional and cultural diversity.

Progressive writers have brought stories from different parts of India, exploring various cultures, languages, and traditions, giving readers a broader understanding of the country's vast diversity. These prominent writers have given voice to marginalized communities and individuals who were often overlooked or underrepresented in mainstream literature. They have shared the stories and struggles of the marginalized, bringing their experiences to the forefront.

## SOME OF THE PROMINENT PROGRESSIVE WRITERS IN INDIA

Writers, who represented colonial and post-colonial India enriched their writings with new thoughts and themes. Munshi Premchand Considered one of the greatest Hindi writers, Premchand's works explored the lives of common people and highlighted social issues, including poverty, gender inequality, and the struggles of the underprivileged. Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a renowned Urdu poet, Faiz's poetry resonated with themes of love, freedom, and social justice. His work often reflected his progressive and leftist ideologies. Ismat Chughtai was an Urdu writer, Chughtai was known for her bold portrayal of female characters and her exploration of gender and societal norms in her stories. Mulk Raj Anand was an English-language



writer, Anand's novels delved into the struggles of the marginalized and oppressed sections of society during British colonial rule. Sadat Hasan Manto was a prolific Urdu writer, Manto's writings were known for their realism and boldness. He fearlessly depicted the social issues of his time, such as partition, violence, and the human psyche.

Saadat Hasan Manto was born into a Muslim family of barristers on 11 May 1912 at Paproudi village of Samrala, in the Ludhiana district of the Punjab. He was an Indo-Pakistani writer, playwright and author. He was often compared with D.H. Lawrence because he wrote about taboos of Indo-Pakistani Society. Saadat Hasan Manto was indeed a prominent and influential figure in South Asian literature, known for his progressive and groundbreaking approach to writing. Manto became one of the most celebrated Urdu short story writers of the 20th century. He was counted among the greatest writers of short stories in South Asian History. Twenty-two collections of short stories, one novel, five series of radio plays, three collections of essays, and two collections of personal sketches are to his credit of authorship. He started his literary career translating the work of literary giants, such as Victor Hugo, and Oscar Wilde and Russian writers such as Chekhov and Gorky. His first story was *Tamasha*, based on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar. Ayesha Jalal in her prelude to Manto given in *Pity of Partition* holds that:

The life and literature of Saadat Hasan Manto form a particularly good point of reference. He is best known internationally for his partition stories, notably "Toba Tek Singh," in which non-Muslim patients of

mental asylum in Lahore agitatedly await relocation to India because of their religious ..... Manto deftly questioned the wisdom of partition and the sheer madness it had let loose. (3)

According to Jalal, Manto was one among many authors who opposed the partition of India and depicted the same through his writings. His noteworthy work *Toba Tek Singh*, in the end, displays the stupidity of the partition plan and with heart touching conclusion.

### MANTO'S PROGRESSIVE THEMES

Manto's writings were deeply rooted in the social realities of his time. He explored the lives of ordinary people, often depicting the harshness of society, poverty, and the struggles faced by the marginalized sections of society. Some of his notable works and themes include *Dhuan* (Smoke): This collection of short stories was published in 1941. It contains some of Manto's early works and showcases his evolving style. The stories in this collection often delve into the lives of prostitutes, reflecting Manto's empathetic portrayal of marginalized individuals and his critique of societal hypocrisy. *Manto-Nama* is a collection of essays and sketches in which Manto provides candid and insightful observations about the people he encountered, including fellow writers, intellectuals, and friends. These pieces offer a glimpse into Manto's sharp wit and keen observations of human behaviour.

*Siyah Hashiye* is a collection published in 1944 and features Manto's stories that primarily revolve around the partition of India in 1947. Manto's partition stories are known for their stark portrayal of



the violence, trauma, and human suffering caused by the partition. *Thanda Gosht* is the collection published in 1950 and includes some of Manto's most controversial and daring stories. One of the most infamous stories from this collection is "Thanda Gosht" itself, which explores the psychological impact of violence and is often considered one of his finest works.

*Khol Do* is a powerful and heart-wrenching story that revolves around the theme of the partition of India. It tells the story of a father desperately searching for his daughter during the chaos of the partition. "Khol Do" is widely regarded as one of Manto's masterpieces. *Toba Tek Singh* is another significant work by Manto, this short story reflects the absurdity of the partition by telling the tale of inmates in a mental asylum who are caught between India and Pakistan during the exchange of lunatics.

Manto's works were often subjected to censorship due to their explicit content and criticism of societal norms. He faced numerous trials and legal issues for his bold writing. Despite the challenges, Manto continued to write fearlessly, and his legacy as a progressive, socially conscious writer endures to this day. His work has been translated into several languages and continues to influence writers and readers alike across the world.

Recognition of these stories has contributed to a greater interest in Indian writing in English among readers worldwide. Writings by Manto have delved into questions of identity, nationhood, and belonging. They have examined the complexities of being Indian, both historically and in a modern context.

Overall, the contributions of progressive writers have been trans-formative, shaping Indian writing in English and allowing it to evolve beyond the colonial and post-colonial influences. Their legacy continues to inspire contemporary authors and readers, making Indian literature in English a dynamic and vibrant field.

## REFERENCES

- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The lies that bind: Rethinking identity*. Profile Books, 2018.
- Jalal, Ayesha. *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Print.
- . "Secularists, Subalterns and the Stigma of 'Communalism': Partition Historiography Revisited." *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 30, no.3, (1996): 681-689. Print.
- . *Pity of Partition: Manto's Life Times, and Work across India and Pakistan*. Oxford shire: Princeton University Press, 2013. Print.
- . *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*. London: Harvard University Press, 2014. Print.
- Joshi, Shashi. "The World of Sa'adat Hasan Manto." (1996).
- Manto, Sa'adat Hasan. *Mottled dawn: fifty sketches and stories of partition*. Penguin Books India, 2011.
- <https://study.com/academy/lesson/saadat-hasan-manto-biography-works.html>
- <https://www.rekhta.org/authors/saadat-hasan-manto/profile>