

CHRONOLOGY of PREMCAND'S LIFE

1880 31 July: Born in Lamhī, a village near Benares: named Dhanpat Rāi [Śrīvāstava], and affectionately called Navāb.

1880-88 Childhood in Lamhī with mother Ānandī and elder sister Suggī, while father Ajaib Lāl, a postal clerk, is always away touring with his job at various small towns.

?1886-88 Begins schooling with a *maulvī* in a neighbouring village: learns Urdū and Persian.

1887-88 Mother dies after long illness at Allahabad.

1889-90 Father remarries. P moves to Gorakhpur to live with his father and step-mother: resumes schooling at Rawat Pāthśālā and Mission School, Gorakhpur.

1893-96 Develops a taste for reading: reads classics of Urdū fiction as well as translations from English and Sanskrit.

?1894-95 Passes 8th standard from the Mission School, Gorakhpur. Moves to the prestigious Queen's College, Benares, for further studies: lives on his own while earning five rupees pm.

1896 Arranged marriage with an 'incompatible' girl: disillusion and repulsion. His wife stays at Lamhī for the next "three or four years" while P is away at Benares and later elsewhere.

1897 Father dies after ailing for several months: P unable to take the Matriculation exam.

1898 Passes Matric exam in the second division: refused free tuition at Queen's College, seeks admission at Annie Besant's Central Hindu College, Benares, but refused.

1899 Stays on in Benares. *Winter*: takes up his first job, as teacher in Mission School, Chunar (near Benares), at Rs. 18 pm.

1900 Dismissed for opposing the school authorities: returns to Benares. 2 July Appointed Fifth master at District School Bahraich, Rs. 20 pm. 21 September. Transferred as First Master to District School, Pratapgarh.

1900-02 At Pratapgarh by himself, while wife and stepmother at Lamhī. More reading; increasing critical awareness of the society around him: attracted by the Ārya Samāj. 6 July 1902: Admitted to the Govt. Teachers' Training College, Allahabad, for a two-year course.

1903 At Allahabad. 8 October. P's first novella *Asrār-e Mā'bid* [Mystery of the House of God] (Urdū) serialized.

1904 *April*: Passes the teachers' training examination (first division) and Vernacular Examination in Hindī and Urdū. 30 *April*: Returns to Pratapgarh. First correspondence with Munśī Dayānārāyaṇ Nigam, ed. Urdu monthly

'Zamānā'.

1905 *February*: Transferred as Headmaster to Govt. Model School, Allahabad. *May*: Transferred as Eighth master to District School, Kanpur: puts up with Munśī D.N. Nigam and joins his literary circle. *Summer*: At Lamhī: languishing marriage comes to a crisis; wife attempts suicide and is escorted back to her parents; P never to see her again. ?*August*: Returns to Kanpur.

1906 *Feb.-March*: P's second marriage to Śivrānī Devī, child-widow and daughter of M. Devī Prasād, author of *Redeemer of the Kayastha Child-Widows*.

1906-07 Growing nationalist consciousness; in 'Zamānā' writes the column "The March of the Times" and other political notes; admires Mazzini, Garibaldi, Vivekānanda and Tilak.

1907 Publishes his first short story: 'Duniyā kā sabse annol ratn', and *Premā*.

1908 11 *August*: Khudiram Bose, aged 15, is hanged by the British govt.; profound impression on P. ?*Mid-year*: *Soz-e-vatan* [Anguish of the Nation], a collection of five stories, published.

1909 10 *June*: Transferred from Kanpur to "backward" Mahoba (dist. Hamirpur) as sub-deputy inspector of schools, with a salary of Rs. 50 pm. ?*Nov./Dec.*: Summoned by the Dist. Magistrate, Hamirpur, and reprimanded for the seditious content of *Soz-e-vatan*; remaining stock of the book surrendered, and P now required to clear all his writings with the govt. before publication.

1910 At Mahoba: acquaints himself with local rural conditions and regional folk-literature, but misses the city and its literary circle. *Oct.-Nov.*: Drops the name 'Nawāb Rāi', under which he had written so far, for the pen-name 'Premcand', suggested by D. Nigam. *December*: 'Barē ghar kī beṭī', his first story under the new name, published.

1910-11 First child, a daughter, born; dies after ten months.

1912 *Jalwā-e-īsar* published [as *Vardān*, Hindī, 1920].

1913 First serious attack of dysentery, which will grow chronic and prove to be a life-long affliction. Second daughter Kāmlā born.

1913-15 Gradually but steadily switches from Urdū to Hindī. His first story in Hindī, 'Saut', publ. in 'Sarasvatī', *June 1915*.

1914 Takes leave to try a job on 'Zamānā' in Kanpur, which lasts only a few weeks. *July*: Transferred from Mahoba to Basti. Health deteriorates: sick-leave for six months, under treatment at Allahabad, Kanpur, Lakhnau and Benares. Yearns to leave govt. service, but

declines offers to work on various papers, seeking a job in a private school.

1915 *April-September*. unsuccessful negotiations with D. Nigam to take over 'Zamānā'. Asks for transfer from his touring job: is allowed to go back teaching. *Urdū Prem paccīsī* published.

1916 Ill-health continues. *March*: Appears in the Intermediate examination (second division). *18 August*: Arrives on transfer to Normal School, Gorakhpur. first son Śrīpat Rāi born.

1916-17 Health improves. Adapts twenty-three stories by Tolstoy under the title *Prem prabhākar*; Hindi *Prem paccīsī* published. Befriends Firāq Gorakhpurī, leading Urdu poet.

1917-18 *January*: Starts *Bāzār-e-husn* [in Hindi as *Sevā-sadan*, Calcutta 1918]. *2 May*: Starts *Goshā-e-āfiyat* [ended in 1920; publ. in Urdu in 1928; in Hindi as *Premāśram*, 1921]. Declines to work on the official *War Journal*. Enthusiastic about reports of the Russian Revolution. Applies unsuccessfully for the post of lecturer in Urdu at the new Osmania University, Hyderabad. *November*: Refuses to take part in the victory celebrations at the end of World War I.

1919 *April*: Takes B.A. examination at Allahabad University (second division). *13 April*: Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar. *August*: second son Munnu born. *November*: Seeks to become Headmaster of Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (D.A.V.) School, Kanpur. *December*: Wants to attend Amritsar session of the Congress, but prevented by ill-health.

1920 *June*: Holiday trip to Dehra Dun, Hardwar and Rishikesh. Second son Munnu, eleven months old, dies of small-pox. Later, P falls ill himself and tries nature cure, with disastrous results.

1921 *8 February*: Gandhi addresses a public-meeting at Gorakhpur to enlist support for the Non-Cooperation movement: P with his family attends. *15 February*: P resigns his govt. job. Tries selling spinning-wheels for a month, declines D. Nigam's offer to join him in Kanpur and explores the possibility to start an Urdu weekly from Gorakhpur. *18 March*: Leaves Gorakhpur for Lamhī. Contributes to a series of pamphlets on Non-cooperation by Kāśī Vidyāpīṭh, a 'national' institution in Benares. Publishes *Vardān* and *Premāśram*. *23 June*: in Kanpur as Headmaster, Marwari School (private). *15 August*: Third son Amṛt born. Starts play *Saṅgrām*.

1922 *22 February*: Resigns as Headmaster, Marwari School; returns to Lamhī. *February-July* Appointed acting editor of 'Maryādā', monthly. *April-June*: Starts to renovate and extend the house in Lamhī while preparing to set up his own press. *July-July 1923* Headmaster, Kāśī Vidyāpīṭh School.

1923 *Saṅgrām* published. *20 July*: Sarasvatī press starts functioning.

1924. Finishes *Caugān-e-hastī* [published in 1927; in Hindi as *Raṅgbhūmi*, 1925, to great acclaim]. *10 April*: Starts *Kāyākalpa*, first novel originally written in Hindi. Financial troubles at Sarasvatī press. *September*. Leaves Benares for Lakhnau, as literary consultant to Dulāre Lāl Bhārgava, Gaṅgā Pustak Mālā, a leading Hindi publishing house. *November*. *Karbalā* (Hindi play).

1925 *Raṅgbhūmi* published. *September*. Completes *Kāyākalpa*. Translates Anatole France's *Thais* as *Ahānkār* [publ. 1926], and Sarśār's Urdu popular *Fazānā-e-āzād* as *Āzād kathā*. *Sept.-Oct.*: 'Śatrañj ke khilāfī'. *1 September*. Job at Lakhnau terminated; returns to Benares to manage the Press. *Nirmalā* serialized in Allahabad women's monthly 'Cād' [until Nov. 1926].

1926 Has to face ridiculous charges of plagiarism.

1927 *Jan.-Nov.*: *Pratigyā* serialized in 'Cād', but not with the enormous popularity of *Nirmalā*. *15 February*: In Lakhnau again as editor of 'Mādhurī', Hindi literary monthly edited by B.N. Bhārgava.

1928 *February*: The Simon Commission arrives in India. P sounded about the award of the title Rai Bahadur; declines. 'Marries off' daughter Kāmlā.

1929 (Co-) translates *The Silver Box, Strife, and Justice* by J. Galsworthy. Starts *Gaban* [*Embezzlement*, publ. in 1931]. Meets Jainendra Kumār. Plans to bring out a "literary-political monthly", 'Hans'.

1930 *March*: First issue of 'Hans' comes out. *June*: As a result of an article by P in 'Hans', Sarasvatī is requested a Rs 1,000 security by the Govt.; 'Hans' closed down. Śivrānī Devī joins the Congress movement; arrested while picketing, is sentenced to two months' imprisonment. *November*: 'Hans' resumes publication.

1931 *18 February*: P moved from 'Mādhurī' to its publication dept., The Book Depot. Plans to attend the Congress session in Karachi. Writes in 'Hans' on the nationalist movement and on Hindu-Muslim riots. First visit to Delhi; stays at Jainendra Kumār's. *21-22 November*. In Patna for a literary gathering.

1932 c. *January*: Seeks job as a translator at the Osmania University, Hyderabad. *Early May*: Returns from Lakhnau to Lamhī, moves to Benares. *August*: 'Hans' asked again to furnish a security. *22 August*: P takes over the weekly 'Jāgaran'. *December*: 'Hans' resumes publication, but 'Jāgran' and Sarasvatī Press asked to furnish a security.

1933 Writes in his magazines about the Round Table Conference, the rise of Hitler, etc. Proposals to set up a Translators' Circle and a

Writers' Union: neither come to much. Both papers in financial trouble.

1934 Writes in his journals on capitalism, international issues, communalism, the zamindars, Soviet Russia, Hindu society, Svarājy, etc. *Bāzār-e-husn* made into a film in Hindī (later also in Tamil). *April*: Second visit to Delhi, to attend the 24th Hindī Sāhitya Sammelan. *21 May*: Arrives in Bombay with a contract to work for Ajanta Cinetone Company, for Rs. 8,000 a year. Writes scenario and dialogues for *Mazdūr*, and makes a cameo appearance. *September*: Workers at Sarasvatī Press go on strike; P tries to find a compromise. Addresses the Rāṣṭrabhāṣā Sammelan, Bombay. *December*: Leaves for Madras to address the Hindī Pracār Sabhā there; tours Triplicane, Adyar, Mysore and Bangalore.

1935 *4 April*: Leaves Bombay as the Ajanta Cinetone winds up; stops en route at Khandwa, Saugor and Allahabad. *October*: Agrees to hand over 'Hans' to the newly-founded Bhārtīya Sāhitya Paṛiṣad, as its organ. Completes *Godān* [publ. 1936].

1936 *January*: Welcomes the founding of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association meeting in Allahabad. Travels constantly to preside and address various literary conferences at Allahabad, Agra, Purnea, Delhi, Lakhnau, Lahore and Nagpur, championing the adoption of Hindustānī as national language (rather than 'pure' Hindi), and the cause of progressive literature. *June*: beginning of his fatal illness. Starts his last novel, *Maṅgalsūtra* [publ. 1948]; writes a long essay on 'Mahājānī sabhyatā'. *July*: leaves for Lakhnau for further treatment. *August*: 'Hans' required to furnish a security, which the Paṛiṣad refuses to put up; P takes 'Hans' back. Returns to Benares; visited by Jainendra Kumār, D. Nigam, Nirālā. Dies 8 October; cremated at Manikarnika Ghat, Benares.