

1857 in the Hindi Novel: The Character and the Spirit of the Rebellion

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I would like to refer to the Indian novels based on the 1857 upsurge in India as 'rebellion novels', perhaps as a rejoinder to the colonial coinage 'mutiny novels' applied to the several novels written in England on the subject. The British call the rebellion of 1857 'Mutiny' – an illegal act on the part of the soldiers - because they believe in the 'superior' strength and the philanthropic role of the British empire in India and elsewhere in the colonized world. The Indians, on their part, impelled by an equally natural desire to overthrow the empire, would prefer to view it as a rebellion for freedom.

The term rebellion novel may be applied to not just novels but other fictional narratives based on, and about 1857, written in all the modern Indian languages. The 1857 rebellion had spread over a vast area of the Indian subcontinent but its main focus was the Hindi heartland. The effect of 1857 on Hindi literature, therefore, is expected to be considerable. In fact, it marks the starting point of modern Hindi literature and the Hindi renaissance. At this juncture, one would like to point out a dichotomy in relation to the mainstream fiction-writing and folk literature on this subject. While folk literature about 1857 is rich, varied and available in great number, with a few important exceptions, the mainstream literature makes a passing or a superficial assessment of the rebellion. To put it in other words, the reference to 1857 in mainstream Hindi literature is scattered or insignificant when viewed in relation to the vastness and the impact of the incident.

The beginning of prose genres in India is a phenomenon of the modern period in the country. In contrast to the other literary genres, fiction reflects the events and thought processes of society in a deeper and more incisive manner. Fiction, particularly the novel, has a special closeness with contemporary reality. The novel is considered as an art of realism. Thus, it is hoped that the 'epic of the modern era' as the novel is called would depict the reality of its period. In India, novel writing began two decades after the rebellion. It is an important fact that the first three novels/novellas were written by the authors residing in Delhi and the surrounding areas. Gauridutt, the writer of the novella *Devrani Jethani Ki Kahani* (1870)¹ was from Meerut, the writer of the novel *Bhagyawati* (1877)² Sradha Ram Phillory came from the Punjab, and the writer of the novel *Parikshaguru* (1882)³ Lala Srinivas Das lived in Delhi. But there is hardly any account of 1857 in the Hindi novel of this period. These texts do not indicate any impact of the rebellion. Although a fierce battle had taken place in Delhi between the rebellious Indian forces and the British forces, there is no full-length novel written on the incidents that happened in Delhi. This despite the fact that novels in large numbers were written

in the pre-Premchand era. The detective novel may be exempted but in social and historical novels too, no substantial impact of the rebellion is to be found.

Contrary to the scenario in the Hindi novel, it is surprising that several British writers wrote more than 50 novels/fictional accounts based on the 'Mutiny' between 1859 to 1964.⁴ Gautam Chakravarty includes and analyses 70 novels written on the 'Mutiny' between 1859 to 1947.⁵ After a long wait of 73 years, the first novel on the rebellion, titled *Ghadar* (1930)⁶ was published by a Delhi based writer Rishabh Charan Jain. The novel was confiscated immediately by the British government. This novel is neither easily available now nor does it find any special mention in the history of the Hindi novel. P. J. O. Tailor in his book on the 'Mutiny' gives a reference list of novels/books written on the rebellion in Hindi, Urdu, Bangla, Marathi and other languages.⁷ He makes no mention of this first novel in Hindi written on the rebellion. Dr. Ramvilas Sharma too has not mentioned this novel while analysing the impact of the rebellion on Hindi literature.⁸ I read this novel for the first time when I was a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and made a reference to it in my book *Kranti Ka Vichar Aur Hindi Upayas*.⁹ Scholars who have worked on the modern Hindi prose or political consciousness in fiction have not given any attention to this novel. This indicates a trend of overlooking the fiction based on the rebellion by writers and scholars as well. As late as in 1976, Bhagawandas Mahore in his Ph. D. thesis *1857 Ke Swadhinata Sangram Ka Hindi Sahitya Par Prabhav*, for the first time, makes a special reference to *Ghadar*, accepting its significance as the first novel written on the rebellion.¹⁰ After *Ghadar* came *Jhansi Ki Rani Lakshmibai* (1946)¹¹ by Vrindavan Lal Verma. This novel can be termed as a trend-setter in the sense that an intermittent process of writing novels on the rebellion of 1857 had begun and it continues till today.

This essay attempts to discuss some Hindi novels based on the rebellion of 1857, to analyse firstly, the writers' perception of the character of the rebellion and secondly, the writers' ability to express/comprehend the essential spirit of the rebellion - the inborn human desire to be free. I have also tried to ascertain some factors that have obstructed the delineation of the rebellion in Hindi literature in general and in the Hindi novel in particular.

The first novel *Ghadar*, written on the rebellion, contains only 88 pages. It is printed in small size, is divided into 10 episodes, and contains an epilogue. However, its brevity does not come in the way of its significance. The plot of the novel is based on the incidents that took place in Bithoor and Kanpur during the rebellion. Like many other rebellion novels, the space and time-frame of the novel is confined to a particular slot. This weakness is found in most of the rebellion novels in that they are confined to a particular area, incident or warrior. A novel presenting a comprehensive picture of the rebellion is yet to come. In *Ghadar* too, instead of a comprehensive experience, only a scattered reference to the rebellion is visible. The information of the rebellion-related incidents and actions at Meerut, Delhi, Punjab and Bengal appear only against the Kanpur-Bithoor background. As far as time is concerned, the novel deals with the period

from May 10, 1857, the day of the revolt by the soldiers of Meerut, to July 17, 1857, when Nana Saheb was defeated by the army of Havelock. In this novel, the experience of the rebellion can be called 'limited' in the sense that the point of view and role of the soldiers and the common people is absent. The soldiers are depicted as puppets and the public as mute spectators or victims of exploitation under the British rule. The novel seems to suggest that the middle class of that time alone had prepared the plan of the rebellion and roped the soldiers into it. The novel seems to imply that the rebellion was basically an endeavour of revolutionary youths outside the army. It says, "The work started very fast. Secret committees were formed in every city, campaigns took place in a secret manner. Thousands of youths, full of enthusiastic zeal, dived into the sea of revolution. The members of the committee entered every cantonment in the guise of soldiers and quietly, worked very fast to overthrow the English regime. The campaign in the army was a great success. The soldiers were aroused by all fair/unfair means. The rumour of greased cartridges was also one of the ploys used by the revolutionaries." (pp. 21-22) Since there was hardly any participation of the middle class in the rebellion, this seems to be an afterthought in the mind of a middle-class writer. In addition to the 'middle class' reading of the rebellion, the novel also seems to be influenced by the underground activities of the freedom fighters that happened three decades after 1857. Thus, the spirit of 1857 is not delineated in an accurate manner in this novel.

Azimullah Khan, an important historical character of the rebellion, is depicted as one of the main characters instrumental in the committee which made plans for the revolution. The writer focuses on two characters: Nana Saheb and Azimullah Khan. Therefore, the characters and roles of the other fighters including Tantya Tope are not discussed in a detailed fashion. The character of Nana Saheb too does not emerge in a strong and vibrant manner. He is represented as pro-British and as one who does not have a will to revolt nor has any information about the plans of the revolutionaries.

An interesting point to be noted here is that the Indian novelists even when they portray Nana's character in an indifferent or weak manner, appear to be at pains to undo the injustice that the British novelists and historians seem to have done to him by presenting him as a blood-thirsty devil. Jain's portrayal of Nana Saheb goes against the general Indian perception which views his role as one of the prominent heroes of 1857 but it also questions the British perception that views him as a cruel villain. The author probably intended to present a picture that was very different from the negative or negligible portrayal that was awarded to him in the historical as well as fictional accounts by the British writers. This bias, even abhorrence, against Nana Saheb witnessed in British literature is perhaps rooted in the massacres at Satichaura Ghat and Bibighar in which not only British men but also women and children were killed in cold blood. The responsibility for this carnage, it was believed, lay with Nana Saheb. Jain goes a step ahead in this endeavour. Towards the end of the novel, he writes about a distraught Nana Saheb suffering because he considers himself morally responsible for the inhuman slaughter. The novel concludes with Nana, along with his family rowing down a river and then embracing death voluntarily by sinking into the waters in an act

of moral repentance. Jain, however, adds that the British historians view this as a trick to hoodwink people. In the Hindi novel *Sona Aur Khoon* the repentant Nana Saheb drowns himself in the river along with his horse. This novel is discussed a little later in the paper. In this novel, Acharya Chatusen Shastri writes eloquently about the last letter that Nana dictates before drowning himself in the river. The letter addressed to Major Richardson explains his innocence regarding both the massacres. Nana blames the British and the anti-social elements for the massacre of Satichaura Ghat and Bibighar respectively. A similar portrayal of Nana Saheb is discovered in another novel *The Devil's Wind* (1972)¹² written in English by Manohar Malgonkar. The novel is a first-person narrative in which Nana Saheb does not have any ill feelings towards the British people. The portrayal of Nana Saheb in this light by many Indian writers seems to be a post-colonial effort to correct the wrong that was done to Nana's image.

To return to *Ghadar*, Azimullah Khan is entrusted with the responsibility of making the revolt a success in Kanpur and appointing Nana Saheb as the ruler. In the novel Azimullah Khan believes that once the revolt becomes successful, Nana Saheb would forego his pro-British stance and cooperate with the revolutionaries. In the novel Nana Saheb does not have any information about the rebellion. The incident in the Meerut cantonment on May 10 is not important for him. When Azimullah Khan tells him about the incident, he says, "There is nothing, no mutiny or any such thing. The fear is meaningless! After a long period of Muslim tyranny, Hindustan has got the fortune of coming under the just rule of the company. What is the need of a mutiny? Can the crumb-eating hungry soldiers have such courage?" (p. 8) The most important aspect of the rebellion – Hindu-Muslim unity - is not recognized by Nana Saheb in the novel. Azimullah Khan resents his comments; however, it does not deter him from his duty. His allegiance is to Nana Saheb and he has a firm belief that after the rebellion is successful according to his plans, Nana Saheb will not refuse to occupy the throne of Kanpur. As per his plans, he had invited the British officers with their families from Kanpur to Bithoor for a feast. But, the rebellion in Meerut started one day before the plans and the British officers did not come to the feast. They sent their families to Bithoor to ensure their security. Due to the sudden and unplanned beginning of the revolt in Meerut, Azimullah Khan's entire plan went haywire. After the revolt, the soldiers of Meerut marched to Delhi and nothing happened in Kanpur. In the novel, a youth of "Ghadar Party" comes from Meerut to Kanpur and expresses his disappointment on the inaction in Kanpur. Azimullah Khan places the entire blame on the immature revolt by the Meerut soldiers and blames himself for not thinking in advance in order to deal with such a situation. However, he assures the youth that something in this regard would be done very soon. Thus, it becomes necessary for Azimullah Khan to instigate Nana Saheb against the British and to involve him in the rebellion. The love story of Azimullah Khan and Maina, daughter of Nana Saheb, is interwoven into the story of the rebellion in the novel. Although, no historical evidence is found with regard to such a relationship, in the story it serves to present the cause of the rebellion. Maina gets involved in small talk with an English young man Charles who had come to Bithoor to attend the feast. When Charles wants to touch Maina, she complains against him to Nana Saheb. To avenge his

daughter's dishonour, Nana Saheb becomes restive to fight the British. He offers a tough fight and enters deep in the British ranks to pick up Charles, and then in a gruesome manner tears apart his chest and drinks his blood.

The writer plays safe while writing this novel as there was an obvious fear of the wrath of the British rule. It was a challenging task to write a novel based on the incidents of Kanpur. Kanpur witnessed two 'infamous' incidents - Satichaura Ghat and Bibighar - during the rebellion. These two incidents are described by the British officers and historians as the most barbaric and deceitful acts of massacre by the rebels. However, there are controversial and contradictory versions about the incidents. No clear picture is available about the exact sequence that led to the massacres and the identity of the real culprits though the fact remains that massacres did take place and several British people including women and children were killed mercilessly, particularly in Bibighar. The writer has made a daring attempt when he chooses these two incidents as the subject matter of his novel. In the novel when the flames of the rebellion engulf Kanpur and Nana Saheb accepts the leadership of the rebels, the British take shelter in the Entrenchment with their families. After a one-month encampment, they strike a deal with Nana Saheb. As per their agreement, Nana Saheb agrees to give a safe passage to the British to leave Kanpur for Allahabad by arranging boats for them. As they are about to sit in the boats, firing starts, the boats are set afire, and most people die on the spot including the Army Chief Sir Hugh Wheeler. Somehow, four persons escape to Allahabad in a boat, two of whom, Mowbray Thomson and Delafosse, later wrote about this event. As stated above, the historians are not too clear about what exactly happened that day and who were responsible for the massacre. If the rebels had planned the massacre, why then did they bring them on elephants and 'palkis' to the river bank when they could have killed them outside the Entrenchment? Was it a 'conspiracy' hatched by Nana Saheb; was it an impulsive reaction by the soldiers provoked by the British firing on a boatman; or was it instigated by the mob present on the spot – an agitated mob that had not forgotten General Neil's atrocities?

Jain's fictional version of the causes behind the Satichaura Ghat bloodshed is as follows. In the novel Azimullah Khan compels General Wheeler to accompany him to meet Nana Saheb who was earlier on friendly terms with Wheeler. Nana asks Wheeler the reason why he acquitted Charles when he knew that Charles had dishonoured Maina. Wheeler's reply is that Charles was not at fault, actually it was Maina who had tried to seduce him. Furious on hearing this allegation against his daughter, Nana orders Azimullah Khan to throw Wheeler out of his palace and kill him there. Shocked by this development Azimullah Khan comes out and is further amazed when Wheeler encourages him to go ahead with Nana's command. At this point, a roar of guns on the river side is heard. Azimullah Khan and Wheeler rush to the scene of the massacre. It is discovered that when Wheeler did not return for a long time, the British, despite being warned by the guards, begin marching toward the palace. In the confusion the soldiers begin firing on them. Wheeler weeps as he sees the brutal massacre of his people and kills himself with Nana's sword that is still in Azimullah Khan's hand.

Men, women and children who escaped at Satichaura Ghat were kept in Bibighar. In the novel Nana Saheb is not held responsible for the massacre of the English women and children kept in Bibighar. As stated above in the novel, he is a supporter of the British and initially not involved in the rebellion. As far as the responsibility of the massacre of Bibighar is concerned, in the novel it lies not with the soldiers or Nana Saheb but Azimullah Khan who is spurned by an indignant Maina.

The historian, Surendra Nath Sen, wrote the history of the rebellion on the occasion of the completion of 100 years i.e., 27 years after the publication of the novel *Ghadar*. The request to write an 'objective and factual' history of the rebellion was made to him by the Indian government. The book titled *1857* was published by the Publication Division. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Education Minister of India, wrote the Preface to the book. He emphatically felt that the time had arrived when the Indians and the British both should view the rebellion objectively and factually so that the feelings of hatred on both the sides could be wiped away.¹³ Whether the author of *Ghadar* shared a similar sentiment or not, the novel minimizes the possibility of further provocation for the feeling of hatred between the Indians and the British. In fact, the writer has confessed that he did not want to tarnish his fictional representation of 1857 by commenting on religious-racial revenge undertaken by the British in Kanpur.

Although the writer comments on the defeat and the other consequences related to the Indian side, he does not make any comment on the character of the rebellion whether it was progressive or reactionary. However, to him it was a fight for the political and cultural freedom launched by young patriots along with the soldiers against the alien rule. The word 'Ghadar' used by the British in a negative and derogatory term against the soldiers had found a respectable and positive meaning in the common Indian psyche. In the early years of the 20th century, the revolutionaries of India formed the Ghadar Party in 1913 in America and Canada to overthrow the colonial rule by armed struggle. The newspaper published by them was also given the name *Ghadar*. The title of the novel confirms the fact that the writer considers 1857 to be a natural and befitting act for freedom. An act against hegemonic power for freedom cannot be termed as reactionary by any means. As far as the spirit of the rebellion is concerned, it is absent in this novel due to the writer's tilted and middle-class point of view.

Jhansi Ki Rani Lakshmibai by the famous historical novelist Vrindvan Lal Verma is the second novel on the rebellion in Hindi. *Jhansi Ki Rani Lakshmibai* in comparison to *Ghadar* explores the rebellion much more extensively. It also makes for more lucid reading. Verma was a resident of Jhansi and one of his ancestors had participated in the rebellion with Lakshmibai. He had enjoyed folk songs and stories created in praise of the Rani from childhood. In the Preface to the novel, the writer confesses that the image of the Rani that he had nurtured in his heart since childhood was that of a great patriot. He regrets that this image was placed under attack by Parasneesh's book *Rani Lakshmibai Ka Jeevan Charitra*. Verma's novel is written as an attempt to salvage the earlier image of the Rani. Apart from this personal reason, the novel is a creation of the nationalism that

emerged and developed during the freedom movement. However, Verma by highlighting the role of the deprived groups, also introduces what can be called the subaltern discourse in today's historiography. The heroine of the novel, Lakshmibai, being a woman and widow comes in the subaltern category. Though she was married to Gangadhar Rao, the Maharashtrian Brahmin king of Jhansi, she does not belong to a royal family. In fact, the economic status of her family had been that of a 'Bhikshuk Brahmin' about which Gangadhar Rao speaks in disparaging terms. Although, Lakshmibai's childhood was spent in Baji Rao's palace in the company of Nana Saheb, his younger brother Balaji Rao and Tantya Tope, she does not lose the links with and the affection of the common people. In the novel, as the Rani of Jhansi, she upholds the political and cultural significance of the common men and women. These common people, that include women, support her to their last breath. In *Ghadar* the common people do not have much role to play but in Verma's novel the battle of Jhansi is fought by the common people along with the Rani and the soldiers. The writer has juxtaposed the highest spirit of sacrifice of the common people visa-vis the self-centered feudal lords. Not only a critique of the political impact of the colonial rule is offered but its social-economic and cultural impact is also delineated and analysed in the novel. In fact, the writer poses a cultural opposition to the cultural hegemony imposed on the colonial societies by the British and other Europeans.

In the appendix to the novel, the writer has expressed his views regarding certain facts and incidents related to the rebellion. There is a reference to the excellent library at Jhansi that was set on fire by the British. The Rani faints on being told about this news. By mentioning this detail, Verma, perhaps, wishes to suggest the cultural superiority of the Rani over the British because as one who does not lose consciousness even when her head is hit fatally by the enemies, Lakshmibai loses consciousness on hearing about this senseless and depraved act of burning the library. Verma writes, "The beastliness of those barbarians was registered in no uncertain terms in history – the large library situated in the front of the palace was burnt! This treasure of art was destroyed by the leaping flames of fire in no time. A similar case happened in Rome, Sikandaria and Rajgrah. But that was the barbaric age! And this was the so-called civilized age of science!!" (p. 414) The artistic statutes and idols placed in the temples were taken away by the British to decorate their liquor bars.

The story of the life of Lakshmibai, from childhood to her martyrdom, finds a place in the novel. She is inspired by the goal of self-rule (swaraj) from the beginning. She repeatedly talks with Tantya Tope, Nana Saheb and her colleagues in the novel about self-rule. The clear thought that flashes upon her mind when she is injured fatally is that she is just a brick laid in the foundation of self-rule. (p. 487) Verma has repeatedly underlined that every decision of the Rani was aimed at serving this goal.

In the Preface, Verma states that his views about the rebellion and the Rani are based on historical facts. He refutes the theory that the Rani initially had a tacit understanding with the British. According to the novelist, a definite plan was made for

the rebellion and it was pan-Indian in nature. In the novel, the main protagonist of the rebellion is Tantya Tope. He travels widely in the country and provides information to the Rani about the preparations. Nana Saheb is completely involved in the preparations and the execution of the rebellion. There is no mention of Azimullah Khan in the novel. The novel however focuses on the Rani and the events that took place in Jhansi. Therefore, it is as much about the rebellion as it is about the Rani. Information about important battles fought in other parts is given in the novel but the emphases is on Jhansi and the Bundelkhand region.

Under the leadership of the Rani and Tantya Tope, the nature of the rebellion is suggested as being progressive. However, the weaknesses and drawbacks of feudal elements involved in the rebellion too are clearly mentioned by the author. The character of the common people, in the able leadership of the Rani, is upheld. In Bundelkhand region in particular, the rebellion is a people's upsurge against an alien and oppressive rule. Men and women from all castes and occupations are witnessed making great sacrifices for the Rani and for Jhansi. In comparison to the other rebellion novels, the role of women, dalits and backward castes is a unique feature of the novel *Jhansi Ki Rani Lakshmibai*. Having complete faith in the people's power, the writer has accepted the same as a deciding factor in the struggle. On the other hand, the responsibility for the failure of the movement, Verma implies, lay in the weaknesses of the feudal lords, the errors made by them in the rebellion and the deceitful acts of the traitors.

The struggle for self-rule does not end with the death of the Rani and the defeat of the rebels. The novel ends on a positive note that the struggle would continue in order to achieve the ultimate goal. Writing this novel 90 years after the rebellion, Verma is successful in depicting the spirit of 1857. Some areas of experience may have escaped the canvas of the novel, yet the spirit behind 1857 comes across to the reader in deep and palpable terms.

Bekasi Ka Mazaar (1956)¹⁴ by Pratap Narayan Srivastava derives its title from a line in a ghazal by Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Mogul empor. Srivastava in the Preface to the novel states that he himself was born in a family that fought in the 'first war of independence'. Thus, the novel beside being inspired by the stirring impact of 1857 is also backed by deep personal emotions. Srivastava suggests that the rebellion was the starting point of the contemporary ideals of modernity and freedom. He views the rebellion as progressive in character. According to him, the rebellion was carefully planned and in the novel Shah Hasan Askari is presented as being at the helm of affairs. Like *Ghadar*, *Bekasi Ka Mazaar* too suggests that the 'rumour' of greased cartridges was a trick employed by the planners. The author views the role of the chapattis in a similar light. But the novel speaks about the chapattis being distributed in the cantonments whereas historical sources claim that in the cantonments lotus flowers were circulated; the chapattis were circulated among the common people.

The blueprint of the plans made for the rebellion had reached beyond the Indian towns. The tale of the novel *Bekasi Ka Mazaar* travels through the areas of Delhi, Jhansi, Awadh, Bihar, Bengal and Burma. The characters, historical as well as fictitious abound in the novel. Almost all-important historical characters – Bahadur Shah, Zeenat Mahal, Azimullah Khan, Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah, Shah Askari, Nana Saheb, Tantya Tope, Lakshmibai, Wazid Ali Shah, Hazrat Mahal – who are linked to the rebellion, find a place in this novel. But the author is not successful in handling such a large canvas. As a result of this, the novel appears loosely knit and does not possess high literary merit. In fact, in the treatment of incidents and characters, the writer has given much emphasis to the fantastic. In an obsessive desire to create the strange and the curious, the author has overdone the element of adventure, espionage and romance. This ends up in shifting the focus from the rebellion.

In the novel, the British spread all kinds of rumours about Bahadur Shah but the soldiers are not deterred and take part in the rebellion accepting his leadership. But the Badshah, in his own words, is an "old, weak, helpless and dependent" man. (p. 460) Although, the author has portrayed him as the central character and the hero of the novel, Bahadur Shah Zafar has a limited role in the novel. Begum Zeenat Mahal takes an active part in enthroning him in order to fulfill her own ambitions. Only at a point does he utter inspiring words to the soldiers befitting his role and dignity. He tells the soldiers, "Death can come anywhere, in the battle field and in the palace too. But dying in the battle field is a matter of honour for a soldier. Friends, Bahadur Shah is now with you in life and in death, he would rather die than let go the honour of his forefathers." (465) The novel's focus is upon the events in Lucknow where Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah played a prominent role.

The author continually comments on the reasons for the defeat and expresses his regret for the same. One of the main reasons for the defeat, according to the author, was the help rendered to the British by Dogras, Sikhs and Gorkhas. Srivastava does not stop here. He refers to the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921, the Quit India Movement of 1942 and the Independence of 1947. Many novelists who write on 1857 have attempted a similar mode of expression. Although the novel is written with a progressive point of view and the author has placed special stress on the Hindu-Muslim unity, it lacks the lived experience and the spirit of the rebellion of 1857.

Sona Aur Khoon (1960)¹⁵ by Acharya Chatusen Shastri is a comprehensive historical account of the various incidents that took place during the rebellion. Acharya had originally planned this historical novel in ten parts to narrate the story of India under the colonial rule from 1846 to 1947. The author was deeply involved in the subject while writing this novel. The publisher writes that the author had undertaken journeys to several places like Jhansi, Kanpur, Lucknow and other towns in order to talk to people directly and had attended libraries to collect material. Unfortunately, Shastri passed away in 1960 and could complete only four parts. The novel in consideration here is the final section of the second part of the novel. This is the only rebellion novel

which presents a comprehensive picture of the rebellion in North and central India in the author's own literary style. Elaborate descriptions of the fierce battles fought between the British and the rebels in various places from May 10, 1857 to 1859 have been included. Details like plans, crucial decisions, espionage, betrayals, massacres, loot etc. from both the sides during the rebellion have been mentioned by mingling history with oral sources. All the important battles fought during the rebellion find proper attention by the author. Almost all characters and incidents are real but they are depicted in such a manner that the reader does not miss the fictional colour lent to them by the author. At the end of the novel, all the major players who remained alive after the struggle ended in 1859, are included in an epilogue. For example, according to the author, the person hanged by the British was not Tantya Tope. Somebody else had sacrificed his life for him. Tantya Tope appears later on three occasions in the guise of a sanyasi in 1859 to meet his father and mother, in 1861 to bless his sister on her marriage, and in 1862 when his father was on his death-bed.

The author takes into account the high-level preparation by the British to tackle and fight back the rebels. Prime Minister Palmerston talks to Queen Victoria and a debate on the issue takes place in the British Parliament. The author is of the firm opinion that in spite of their bravery and sacrifice, none among the leaders of the rebellion had foresight and the ability to rise to the occasion. Unlike the other novelists, Acharya has no 'hero' in this novel. He describes the individual characters of the rebel leaders and comments on the reasons of their defeat. As far as the soldiers are concerned, the author presents a picture of both – the plunderers and the starving soldiers. It appears that the novel was written at one go. There are exaggerations and repetitions in most sections of the novel. History, folklores and the writer's own imagination are fused. This creates unusual characters, incidents and situations. For example, in Fatehpur a British army officer Major Duff kills another British officer Tucker to support the Indians and to protest against the British atrocities committed upon them. This is the only novel in which the British are said to be pressurized by the public to embrace Islam in order to save their lives.

Although the author has not declared it as such, it emerges from the novel that the rebels had waged a momentous battle against the empire whose "sun never sets". Acharya, in his novel, also makes a grand attempt to present a comprehensive picture of the revolt. He considers the rebellion to be a people's revolution - 'jankranti', but due to the large canvas, the spirit of the rebellion rarely shines in the novel.

Kranti Ke Kangan (1966)¹⁶ by Amar Bahadur Singh 'Amresh' is another significant novel about 1857. The novel and its author are not well known in literary circles. My research student Niranjan Mahato discovered this novel in the Dr. Zakir Hussain Library, Jamia Millia Islamia University. In the Preface to the novel, the writer has mentioned that prior to the writing of this novel, he had written two books on 1857: *Rana Beni Madhav* and *Kachhar Ke Kante*. I could not trace these two books. The novel's sub-title categorizes it as 'historical' and it is dedicated to those courtesans among whom

Azizanbai is an important name. Some scholars say that Azizanbai had a hand in the massacre at Bibighar. In this novel, Ali Khan, a British spy, blames her for the massacre which she refutes before Tantya Tope. But she bitterly justifies the massacre of the English women and children, saying that as a consequence to the massacre, not only the British tyrants but the tyrants that were unborn or were growing up to be so, were evil and were therefore nipped in the bud. She accepts the moral responsibility of the massacre but without any repentance. She expresses her willingness to face the consequences before Allah and the British authority. Such views expressed by her on such a sensitive occasion damage the fictional character of Azizanbai in the novel, which, otherwise, is presented as exemplary.

It is an average novel as far as its literary merit is concerned. However, vivid descriptions are found at some points. The author has used the fantasy mode in the beginning and at the end of the novel. Apart from presenting her as an individual character, the author depicts Azizanbai as symbolizing history. This aspect of the narrative lends an added dimension to the novel. The author, employing the literary technique of fantasy, sees blood seeping out of her chest. The wound of Azizanbai is a wound in the chest of history. Towards the end the seeping of blood halts momentarily because the country has, by then, achieved freedom. Coincidences and melodramatic situations in the novel steal away its literary merit.

The author views the rebellion from a subaltern perspective in a way which makes Azizanbai the heroine of the novel. After undertaking a good deal of research work the writer unfolds the life of Azizanbai from her early childhood to her death by a bullet fired by a British soldier on the orders of Havelock. Azizanbai is a lesser-known character in the saga of the rebellion who, for the first time, is given prominence in *Kranti Ke Kangan*. Her prominence lies in the fact that she fights a selfless battle for the freedom of the country. Tantya Tope and other revolutionaries visit Azizanbai's house in Kanpur for secret meetings. Tantya Tope presents her a pair of bangles, thus the title of the novel. She joins the army of Nana Saheb and fights against the British with courage and bravery. The author sublimates her character to the highest level. The Sir William committee makes fifteen charges of murder, arson, revolt and instigation of soldiers against her. Havelock wants to forgive her as she is a woman and asks her to apologise for her serious crimes committed against the British. She refuses outright to apologise. Her long speech in front of Havelock establishes her as a great patriot in the novel. At the end of her speech she says, "O firangi, what face will I show to the Himalayas after an apology? What reply will I give to the bounding waters of Ganges-Yamuna? When the waves of the Indian Ocean that wash the feet of Mother India will hold me, what will I say? My country has taught me sacrifice." (p. 391) Shabnam is another such character in the novel who sacrifices her life. According to the author, Shabnam also represents a historical character. Amresh's novel clearly questions the thesis of the imperialist mind that the 'Mutiny' of 1857 was an attempt by feudal forces to overthrow the 'progressive' British empire because people like Azizanbai, Shabnam and many, many others like them are in no way feudal. Azizanbai in her speech says to Havelock, "If I had done such

a deed in your country, that would have amounted to a crime. What I have done here, I have done in my own country and for my country." (p. 390) Although, it is delineated in a melodramatic manner, this novel, to some extent, recreates the spirit of the rebellion. The Hindu-Muslim unity in the rebellion is depicted as a special dimension and it is executed in a highly effective manner.

Pahighar (1991)¹⁷ by Kamlakant Tripathi has a significant place among the rebellion novels. Its treatment of the subject differs from the earlier novels in the sense that its author is not inspired by personal emotions or national reasons while writing this novel. In the beginning, it appears that the novel is written in the subaltern discourse. But soon the reader discovers that this is not the case. The subaltern view of the rebellion is not presented in the novel. In fact, the author traces the locations in the Awadh region linked to the rebellion. In the Preface he writes, "The history of 1857, especially in the context of Awadh, is not confined to books. At least not till now. Even today, its footprints can be traced within the old ruins of forts, havelis and old baghs in this region. The stories related to these locations ... have become indistinguishable with folk literature in the public memory. In the midst of the written material filled in libraries and archives, the vivid memory associated with these historical sites leads to the birth of a rare and amazing imagination. This imagination is the source material for the conception of this novel." The creation of *Pahighar* is a result of a good combination of research and regional colour. For the first time in the rebellion novel in Hindi, the author of *Pahighar* does not seem under pressure of any kind of emotion except for the folk-life of the Awadh region. As far as the character of the rebellion is concerned, the author seems to say that it was not nationalistic but more 'religious' in nature – a feature which the feudal forces try to exploit. In the novel soldiers, the trigger force of the rebellion, are depicted in a poor light. They are presented as unorganized, confused and a lazy lot, devoid of enthusiasm and plans. In fact, the author tries to identify the progressive and reactionary elements/forces active behind the rebellion. He indirectly places the rebellion and its leaders in the category of 'reactionary', whose defeat by the 'progressive' British was inevitable. It is clear from the beginning that the soldiers are fighting a losing battle. Even if they happen to win through some miracle, there would hardly be any future for the country.

However, this novel draw attention to a particular trend found in the mutiny novels – the attempts to tape the white memsahibs by 'brute savages' during the rebellion. The author of *Pahighar* presents a post- colonial critique of this trend. Marjad, an old lady in the novel works in the house of an Office Superintendent Burton Martin posted at Sultanpur cantonment. Marjad while talking to Martin's young daughter Miss Clara voices her fears of the possibility of the dishonour of the English ladies during the disturbances. Scared, Clara asks Marjad whether the soldiers can really affront British women? Marjad replies in the negative, saying that the soldiers come from good families. But, she says further, the Zamindar's men cannot be trusted. This discussion frightens Clara. When she shares her feelings with her friend Miss O'Donnell, daughter of a high official, she replies, "I don't care. I believe in the superiority of our people. That

is all." O'Donnell's mother also shares a similar perception. When reminded of the small number of the British in contrast to the 'natives', she replies, "One white man is enough for a hundred dam pandies." (p. 91) In the mutiny novels the rape narrative is presented to prove the might and superiority of the British male over the 'native' men and to justify the brutal punishment that is meted out to the Indian people. But to her amazement, Clara finds a good man in Durbali, an Indian soldier in the seventh Bengal battalion, who helps Clara during the crisis. He even risks his life for her. After this experience, the fear haunting Clara's mind disappears. She not only feels obliged but has a tender feeling in her heart for Durbali. Later Durbali is killed while fighting against the British forces.

There is not a single episode in any of the rebellion novels where British women are assaulted by the Indian soldiers. In *Kranti Ke kangan* Ali Khan takes away Jeniya, the younger daughter of Wheeler, from the site of Satichaura Ghat massacre on horseback. He travels from Kanpur to Lucknow for several days and shelters Jeniya in his house in Lucknow. In the novel Ali Khan does not have a good moral character, but as far as Jeniya is concerned, his intentions are never dishonourable. In *Ghadar* Nana Saheb punishes Ramchandra Rao, his confidant and friend, although the allegation leveled against him by the British ladies, that he showed disrespect to two young girls, was totally false. He reminds Wheeler that while he took his dearest friend to task simply because the British ladies complained against him, Wheeler on his part, instead of punishing Charles, sends him away to Allahabad.

In Rajive Saksena's *Ramaini* (1998)¹⁸ incidents related to the rebellion have found a place in the last 26 pages only and that too in the form of information. In the last chapter, the author adds his comments and judgment, particularly in relation to the reasons for the defeat, with the clarification that "This book is a novel and not history. Yet, this chapter has been added to understand the background of the plot of the novel. Simultaneously, it will help in understanding our society." (p. 187) The author makes the claim in the Preface that he has conducted a good deal of research work. This does not seem to be true as far as the 1857 uprising is concerned. The same however could be said about the historical background, particularly the disputes on Hanuman Garhi and Babri mosque in Ayodhya. Muslim jihadis from various parts of Awadh region reach Ayodhya and assemble in the Babri mosque on the call given by Imam Ghulam Hussain Shah of Lucknow to demolish Hanuman Garhi. The incident takes place one year before the rebellion. For this, the author blames the British who sow the seeds of hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims as per their policy of divide and rule. But they could not succeed because the prominent citizens understood the designs of the British. The main characters in the novel like Munshi Ramnarayan, Ram Murari, Maulana Asghar Hussain, Maulvi Mir Ali and even Wazid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Awadh, are fully aware about the expansionist designs of the British.

The title of the novel is based on the name of a woman character Ramaini, a distorted version of Ramayani (a person who reads the *Ramcharit Manas*). She is the wife of Brijraj Singh, a small king of Rajpur under the Faizabad riyasat. Brijraj Singh fights against the British during the rebellion. But Ramaini, after whose name the title of the novel is taken, does not have any connection with the rebellion. She decides to leave Brijraj Singh to live with a priest of Hanuman Garhi, Ram Murari, just before the break out of the rebellion. They come to Lucknow and Ram Murari becomes a priest in a temple. Later on he joins the army of Maulvi Ahmedullah Shah, a legendary figure of 1857. Neither Ramaini nor Ram Murari come in the picture after that. In fact, the novel brings forth the cultural-religious milieu of the Awadh region where Hindus and Muslims live with understanding and harmony. However, the author seems more interested in making a repetitive and superfluous critique of certain religious myths and practices, particularly 'niyog', rather than understanding the true foundation of the harmony. It is important, though, that he emphasizes the inter-faith harmony during the rebellion. Yet, he believes that the two religious groups could not carry on that spirit for long and they continuously face the problem of a communal divide which resulted in the demolition of the Babri mosque in a much later context. In the Preface he writes, "The main inspiration of the novel came from the Babri mosque dispute which culminated in the demolition of the mosque by the RSS in 1992." Thus, the main concern of the author is to depict the fact of the Hindu-Muslim unity before, during and after the rebellion. The author has his own views on the character and the spirit of the rebellion. For him, the rebellion is a fight for freedom by the patriots. But his views are stated and not delineated in a creative mode. In this sense the novel is not very well focused.

Virangna Jhalkaribai (2003)¹⁹ by Mohandas Naimishrai, a dalit writer, highlights the role of the common people, particularly shudras in the rebellion. In the Preface, the author states that he wrote this novel in order to teach a lesson to the high caste writers, journalists and critics and to inspire the new generation of dalits so that they can know their heroes. Jhalkaribai belongs to a backward caste, named kori and the novel is a product of Dalit discourse. Jhalkaribai, a korin by caste, happened to be a close associate of Lakshmibai. She fought for the Rani with bravery against the British invasion on Jhansi. There is much scope for writings on the role of oppressed people in the rebellion, particularly about women like Jhalkaribai, Uda Devi (a pasi), Avantibai (a lodh), Mahabiri Devi (a bhangi) and Asha Devi (a gujar). But this itself does not elevate the novel as 'great'. It is an ordinary novel written in haste without understanding the character and spirit of the rebellion. The author is more interested in expressing his dalit concerns and credentials than doing justice to the subject. In fact, his dalit discourse is also faulty. In the present dalit discourse by dalit writers, only untouchables are counted as dalits, not shudras and atishudras (backwards and most backwards). Although he uses the phrase "dalit-pichhda" here and there, he unfolds the story of Jhalkaribai as if she was a dalit woman. The rest is taken care of by the comments that the author makes on Varna system, caste system, even on "navjagran". Because the stream of rebellion novel had matured by now, any new efforts in this direction would require a certain level of creative strength. The novel by Naimishrai lacks this level.

Main Apani Jhansi Nahin Dunga (2004)²⁰ by Ravindra Verma is a sensitive and significant novel on the subject with good literary merit and strength. It is perhaps the most important rebellion novel in Hindi in more ways than one after Vrindavan Lal Verma's *Jhansi Ki Rani Lakshmibai*. It is the first novel of its kind for it depicts the post-rebellion scenario upto 1921. The novel starts with the collapse of Jhansi and ends with Khilafat/Non-Cooperation Movement. In this time-span the novel puts on record how the Indian economy and the people's mind fell into the clutches of capitalist imperialism and how a new consciousness and struggle for freedom emerged. This theme is delineated through a story of one Ramgulam of Jhansi, a soldier in the British army who changes sides and joins the Rani and fights for Jhansi. The battle of Jhansi acquired a special feature among all the battles fought during the rebellion. It is true that in the battle of Jhansi the common people fought not only for the Jhansi that was the province that belonged to the Rani but also for the Jhansi that was home to the common man. It is with this feeling of attachment with the common man's Jhansi that Ramgulam echoes the title of the novel, "I will not surrender my Jhansi".

Ramgulam is described as a legend in Jhansi who fought bravely at the gateway to Orchha, killing many soldiers in the British army. According to the author, the people in Jhansi say that Ramgulam uttered the words, "Main apani Jhansi nahin dunga" before his death. The story of Ramgulam and his family attains a symbolic meaning in the novel. The story suggests that there could have been several other similar stories in Jhansi and in other areas affected by the rebellion. The novel begins by a narration of the loot, plunder and killings by the British forces in Jhansi after the defeat of the Rani. The dead body of Ramgulam is hung upside down on a peepal tree outside his house. His younger son Lakshmi Prasad, shocked by the horrific sight, runs away from the house. Two white soldiers rape his wife Bai. Ramgulam's elder son Ram Prasad, being the son of a 'baghi', faces the wrath of the British administration. The thanedar of the city tortures him and he is forced to walk naked in the city. Being physically and emotionally drained by the torture, he tries to earn his livelihood by selling chholas but has to give it up. Bai manages to earn some money by spinning. But this too becomes difficult because foreign cloth is brought into India from England. Then comes the famine. Ram Prasad works in the stone quarry outside the city where he breaks stones. But here too he is beaten up mercilessly by the thanedar and he has to come back to the city empty handed. Somebody suggests that he could go to a charity house for a free meal. Ram Parsad, still an adolescent, refuses to go there saying that he will not accept charity from the British. He has a meal at the house of Champa who is a neighbour and his beloved. He asks Champa to take care of his mother and then goes away and is never seen after that. His mother offers the explanation that her elder son has gone to trace her younger son. But people discuss about him as if he were a ghost wandering in places that were his old haunts.

Lakshmi Prasad, the younger son of Ramgulam, after seeing the dead body of his father hanging from the tree, flees from Jhansi to Bombay. He is under the impression that after killing his father the British have killed his mother and brother too. He stays there with Mangal Mama, a resident of Maurani Pur, a place near Jhansi, works hard in a cloth mill, and then gambles by investing his earnings in the share market. He becomes rich by participating in the new imperialist-capitalist economic order and begins his own business of importing foreign cloth and builds a house in Bombay. Mangal Mama, who had offered him shelter in Bombay, sticks to his old business of swadeshi cloth and gradually loses all his money. After 40 years, Lakshmi Prasad is compelled to come back to Jhansi with two small sons after his wife dies in the plague. In Jhansi he discovers that his old mother is alive and also comes to know about the fate of his elder brother. He builds a magnificent house and opens a big shop of foreign cloth in the main market. His business flourishes in Jhansi as well. His elder son Kanhaiya studies in an English school and follows the English etiquette in his life style and business. But his younger son Murli Manohar is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's swadeshi movement. Prakash Bhaiya, the son of Mangal Mama, who runs a swadeshi cloth shop, becomes his ideal. Economic hardships do not deter Prakash from the path of swadeshi for which he is jailed. Lakshmi Prasad realizes that by selling foreign cloth he has placed himself in the enemy camp and is therefore equally responsible for the hardships faced by his mother and for the death of his elder brother. He attends a meeting of Mahatma Gandhi who comes to Jhansi to preach swadeshi. Gandhi asks all present in the meeting to burn their foreign cloth. Lakshmi Prasad throws his turban in the fire. Murli Manohar goes to the extreme: he burns his shop. In narrating this story, the author presents a critique of globalization which started with the ascent of the British rule in India. In the story, Verma explains how the imperialist designs succeed in India by dividing the Indian families and hearts. Verma applies the critique to the present-day globalization. The novel implies that the Indians who cannot resist the temptation of imperialist capitalism are responsible for the slavery of India – then and now. This is evident by the two epigraphs at the beginning of the novel. The first is by Bhartendu, "All Indians view their own goods as alien/they imitate others, foregoing their own way of life." The second is a quote by Mahatma Gandhi, "I feel that with the coming of the Swadeshi Raj in the form of a swaraj, the spirit of swadeshi is vanishing. If this happens on a large scale, I fear that our dear freedom will not last for very long."

Mahimamayi (2005)²¹ by Kantidev expands the frontiers of the Hindi rebellion novel beyond the Hindi belt. The novel is based in the Southern part of Orissa. The blurb of the novel links it to 1857 by mentioning the sacrifice of Mangal Pandey, Tantya Tope, Nana Saheb, Lakshmibai and Begum Hazrat Mahal. But there is no pointed reference to the rebellion of 1857. In the Preface to the novel, the author states that she has written this novel in order to pay tribute to her ancestors who, according to her, had fought against the British and become legends in folklores. The novel is basically about the Mahuri riyasat's familial and political affairs. Mahimamayi and Sandev fight against the expansionist designs of the British to save their riyasat. The scope of the novel is restricted only to the affairs of the Mahuri and its relative riyasats. There is no mention

of the legendary figures from Orissa like Chandan Hazuri alias Chakhi Khuntia, Veer Surendra Sai, Raja Arjun Singh, Madho (Madha) Singh and Dewan Jagu. The characters depicted by the author in this novel are not mentioned in the history of rebellion in Orissa.

To sum up, then, the character and the goal of the rebellion have been described from different perspectives by novelists and historians. It is evident from the fact that this unique upsurge in India has been awarded different names like Ghadar, mutiny, revolt of the feudal, revolution, war of independence and so on, by scholars. In spite of the several novels that were written in India, the fact remains that a novel depicting the 1857 rising in its entirety and recreating its spirit is yet to be written. The rebellion could not catch the imagination of the Indian middle class the way it had caught the imagination of the British middle class in England during and after the rebellion. The novels *Jhansi Ki Rani Lakshmibai* by Vrindavan Lal Verma and *Jhansir Rani* (1956)²² by Mahashweta Devi²³ are two of the very few exceptions. However, these two novels came after almost a century. Thus, the distance and the time-gap of 100 years could be one reason that the spirit of the rebellion is not translated fully into fiction.

Like most historians, who have written about 1857, the novelists too trace the reasons of the upsurge in a biased or casual manner. The above-mentioned novels might have succeeded or failed in offering a comprehensive study of, and complete empathy with the 1857 rebellion. But most of the authors view it definitely as the first war of independence waged against the empire by Indian people, refuting the thesis propagated by the British that it was a mutiny by the sepoys only. When it is considered as the war of independence, the character of the rebellion is viewed as progressive in most of the novels. It is also true that the writing of the rebellion novels is limited in terms of numbers and merit in contrast to the gigantic stature and significance of the upsurge and its impact on the Indian life. The 100th anniversary of the rebellion celebrated by the Indian government in 1957 could not inspire writers further in this direction. For the 150th anniversary of the rebellion, although the government has spent a large amount on the celebrations, it seems unlikely that writers on their part have, even now, tried to attempt novels on the subject. It is consequently important to look for reasons, conscious or otherwise, why, after all, the rebellion has failed to catch the imagination of modern Indian writers.

It is not that the sensibility and consciousness of the post 1857 writers remain static or that it did not undergo any transformation. It has experienced changes to the extent that after 1857 the modern period in the history of Hindi literature opened in a big way. While singing songs in praise of the Queen Victoria, writers also depict the condition of the Indian public caused by the colonial regime. But they shut their eyes towards 1857. It is not just that 1857 does *not* become a subject of their literature in significant way, but it is equally true that fictional characters in the Indian middle class that emerged after 1857 are implicitly advised not to discuss 1857. This could be due to two reasons. Firstly, it could be because of a fear of the wrath of the colonial masters

who committed atrocities even after the rebellion was crushed. The second reason could be that the middle-class perspective, values and priorities underwent a sea change. This can be illustrated through the following examples.

In *Main Apni Jhansi Nahin Dunga* Lakshmi Prasad (the younger son of the 1857 martyr Ramgulam) carefully avoids mentioning Jhansi when he is confronted by the police in Bombay and is asked to identify himself. He replies that he belongs to Datiya, a pro-British state near Jhansi. In fact, he was cautioned not to mention Jhansi by his friend's grandfather before he left for Bombay. Mangal Mama, after listening to his experience, warns him not to disclose his identity and background ever to the police. In another novel *Shekhar Ek Jivani* (first part 1941, second part 1944)²³ by Agyeya, the father of the protagonist Shekhar after completing his gurukul education at the age of 18 decides with three-four friends to throw the British out of the country and to re-establish pure Aryan culture by organising the 'Hindu Rashtra'. After four years, they realise the futility of their effort. They walk towards the Himalayas to see a mahatma in their search of peace but discover an insane man in the jungles who has been firing from clay guns for the past 40 years. They come to know that he was a rebel soldier of 1857 who had come there to hide and to escape the inhuman revenge taken by the British after the rebellion was crushed. (Second part, pp. 141-43) The friends decide to return from there and enter the grahast ashram. The maddening after-effect of 1857, as it is manifested in the 'insane' man, terrifies them. Shekhar's father now becomes a high official in the British administration and admits his children to English schools.

Awadh Bihari Sharan, in the Preface to a novel *Lal Cheen* (1916)²⁴ by Brijnandan Sahai, makes a political 'suggestion'; revolution does not prove beneficial for a country. He writes that though revolution, initially, could appear to be a successful venture, the old system returns eventually to hold the country once again in its vicious grip. Therefore, those who consider themselves to be the well-wishers of the country should aim at 'evolution and not revolution'.

The fear of the wrath of the colonial regime is only one aspect of the reasons why writers hesitated in writing spiritedly about 1857. A more important reason was that in the years after the 1857 rebellion, more so in the post-independence years, the middle class, including the writers who emerged from this class, revised the concept and the meaning of patriotism. There can be several justifications that explain the "ways" of the intelligentsia, the artists and the writers to the average man in the street, but the 1857 rebellion which was reduced to labels such as mutiny and feudal uprising by the imperialists was, and is, even now, being abandoned by the 'modern' middle class. The origin and development of the novel genre is linked to the emergence of a middle class in a capitalist system whereas the 1857 rebellion was *against* capitalism. The novel form as the epic of the middle class perhaps due to these reasons was unable to empathise with the spirit of 1857.

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