containment within recognised and often ritualistic codes and her actions to either affirm or negate her socially constructed identity.

The present project on the representation of women in Rajasthan's literature seeks to examine the patriarchal paradigms within which certain notions of 'womanhood' were created in a feudal society. It questions the legitimising of oppressive customs such as *jauhar, sati* and child mariage which was possible in the context of a hegemony determined by the superior position of men. While there are several points of intervention and critical mediation by which the woman's 'untold story' can be resurrected, I am selecting for analysis a few narratives which have been recorded in myth, history and folklore. The glamourising of Padmini's self-immolation by a series of male poets is an immediate example of how cannonical literature leaves out a subtext of convergence between female power and helplessness.

The engaging discourses of other 'celebratory' tales of female heroism are just as disturbing for a feminist literary interpretation. The story of Mira Bai, born in 1504 in the Chaukari village in Merta district and later eulogised as a 'saint', bears another review. One could focus on her tribulations as a woman who, refusing to succumb to the norms of feudal practice, asserted her individual presence, and more significantly her independent voice.

The links forged by religion, spirituality, female identity and literary expression are complex. Moreover the borderline between the secular and the mythical often disappears. For example, in bardic tales relating to Pabuji-ki-Phar, still extensively recited by the Bhopas, the role played by the women in the story, though recorded, is traditionally marginalised. By contrast, the folk tales from rural Rajasthan are often vignettes attributing inventiveness, vitality, cunning and guile to women.

The cultural diversity of Rajasthan's literature pertaining to women has, to a large extent, remained obscure to English-knowing audiences though social scientists have done commendable work in area studies. My own attempt is to give visibility to texts selected for the purpose of foregrounding the portrayal of women in the narratives. Translation from vernacular to English is a necessary part in this enterprise. But, equally important to me, is an understanding of the gendered context in which the works root their effectiveness.

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Coincidence and Escapism in Prasad's Novels

Jaishankar Prasad, a contemporary of Premchand, whose writing career spans through 1918-1936, was a prominent poet, story-writer, playwrite and novelist of his time. Prasad wrote three novels, *Kankaal* (1929), *Titli* (1934) and *Iravati* (incomplete). In my critical assessment of these two novels, I find

that the element of coincidence and escapism runs prominently throughout the narrative. *Kankaal* is imbued in realism, whereas *Titli* contains much of what I would like to term as 'idealistic realism'.

In *Kankaal*, Prasad makes a factual note of the debasements in human character and social dichotomies for the benefit of his readers. In *Titli* he writes about the power of idealized love and self-restraint. Prasad has explored in *Titli* the strengths and weaknesses of various stratas of society.

Prasad, like Premchand is a writer of distinct social awareness and social concern. But there is a difference between the two. In Prasad's fiction the focus is on some particular individuals, who are social outcasts and social exiles. These characters do not belong to any class, they stand alone and isolated. Prasad succeeds in bringing out the pathos and suffering of these characters, and like a messiah, strives to win for them the readers' sympathy. The psychological exploration of these fictional characters is done with great expertise, and if Prasad had modelled his characters only on the principles of abnormal human psychology, he would have achieved definite success. But first, due to their extremely 'individualistic' presence, and secondly due to an overdose of sudden twists, turns, miracles, chance, unexpected coincidences and dramatic happenings, Prasad's narrative seems to break away from its concern with larger real social issues.

By the term 'coincidence' I wish to imply the sudden, unforessen events, meetings, separations, etc. which bound the characters. In other words, the intervention of the supernatural and the unpredictable is very strong in Prasad's fictional world. Characters remain no more than puppets in the hand of unseen factors.

The term 'escape' indicates that human propensity by which he wishes to avoid responsibility by running away from his home, his work and his social duties. It is indicative of his moral weakness.

'Coincidence' and 'escapism' become, in Prasad's novels, significant features which influence both the work's content and its form. Such elements of 'fantasy' and 'unexpectedness' can be acceptable in folk-literature and popular fiction and can even earn a place in literary history as is illustrated by the novels of Devkinandan Khatri. But in serious fiction, such factors lead to the weakening of the narrative. This is the reason why Prasad, despite his awareness and talent could not produce powerful fictional works such as those written by Premchand. His novels apart, the irony is that Prasad's poetry and drama are considered important contributions towards the explosive circumstances surrounding the country's struggle for independence at that time. His novels, on the other hand, are marred by their repeated use of the 'sudden' and the 'unexpected'. In a work of fiction when certain features occur again and again as 'motifs', it becomes necessary to examine them in detail. Here, I would like to mention the extraordinary use of 'motifs' made in works like *Madam Bovary* and *Doctor Zivago*. An exploration and literary investigation into similar use of 'motifs' in Prasad's fiction, particularly in comparison to the works mentioned above, is one of

the primary concerns in my reading of Prasad. I have attempted, in my study, to explore the role and the significance of the element of rhetoric, imagery, allegory and other usages of literary technique which, like his repeated dependence on elements of 'chance' and 'escape' have lent ambiguity and weakness to his commitment as a socially aware writer.

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Language (In)Equality: a Critique of Language Planning in India

The parenthetical negative marker is a deliberate insertion in the title of the monograph that I hope to write when my research project is completed. Questions of justice, equality and such other 'ideals' become important and come to the surface usually when such ideals are perceived as being denied or withheld by those in power. In such times, injustices and inequalities have to be highlighted, and struggles have to be waged for getting justice and equality. These struggles can be waged through people's movements; they can also be waged through concerted academic efforts to analyse and understand 'how' and 'why' inequalities have come about. This project represents the latter type of effort. It is envisaged as an attempt to critique the whole language planning and language policy paradigm in post-independence India which, while proclaiming to preserve 'unity in diversity', has created more diversities and inequalities than ever before. So much so that whereas we used to have the good old distinction between languages and dialects (*bhasha*, the cultivated and standardised form and *boli*, the natural, spontaneous spoken form), now one gets, thanks to the strategy of naming or labelling, a whole set of distinctions, viz. standard : non-standard, major : minor, majority : minority, national : regional, scheduled : unscheduled and so on. This kind of nomenclature, to my mind, contains the very seed of inequality. This inequality has became more pronounced as a consequence of conscious language policies, the very crux of which is to be found in the constitutional provisions and the VIII Schedule which, as of date, includes eighteen languages that are further sub-categorised as National Official, State Official and other languages. This, when seen in conjunction with the linguistic reorganisation of states, has led to certain anomalies, e.g. Sindhi and Kashmiri are not the official languages of any state, while Sanskrit, the pan-Indian classical language, enjoys a kind of supra-schedule status. The case of English is still more curious – this ex-colonial, exoglossic language is not only the Associate National Official Language, but also serves as an inter-state link language and is promoted,