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India

Angare: a New Trend in Indian Literature

Angare, a collection of short stories, was published in 1932. Edited by Sajjad Zaheer, with contributions from young writers like <u>Ahmed Ali</u>, Mahmuduzzafar and Rashid Jahan, the book raised a tremendous furore in India. Sajjad Zaheer was the guiding factor behind the publication and he himself contributed five stories. The conservative Indian intelligentsia called it loud and obscene and unacceptable to refined literary tastes.The book was eventually proscribed by the British. Now the question is: Why did a small collection of nine short stories and a one act play, written by young and virtually unknown writers, create such a tremendous impact on the rich literary tradition in India, instead of fading into oblivion for being improper and objectionable?

The reaction can be explained if the general attitude of the writers is taken into account. These writers, residing in England, had been profoundly influenced by the genre of socialist realism as expressed through contemporary European progressive literature. Colonial India, with its inherent contradictions, along with imperial exploitation and the surging nationalist movement, gave them the necessary impetus so that they too, like their European counterparts, began to feel that literature did indeed have a role to play in influencing the society, one that could be used to emancipate the downtrodden from different levels of exploitation. *Angare* was a collection of realistic and often unspoken stories of ordinary men and women, vastly different in their portrayal of society as compared to that in earlier established literature. It was as if their intention was to consciously and deliberately jerk the readers into the realisation that literature was not just romantic and pedantic portrayals of elite thought and life. A new genre of literature thus emerged in India, that of progressivism, its new perspective threatening to replace the old.