

# Maria, A Tragic Romance of Adventure And Exploitation

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**Abstract:**

*Maria*, a tragic romance of adventure and exploits, narrates the participation of Satyagrahi volunteers in Goa's struggle for freedom from the Portuguese rule. The novel ends tragically for the central character, Maria and the country after independence. The seven Indian characters represent seven regions of India: Goa, West Bengal, Punjab, Madras, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra. Before Independence, all of them were patriots and fighters for freedom; after independence most of them get involved in an atmosphere of anti-national parochial activities. Abbas seems to have been fascinated by the symbolic significance of the number seven. The importance of choosing seven characters belonging to seven different regions of the country is obvious; it gives him an opportunity of presenting the human condition in the country in seven vivid scenes in a fairly representative manner. The cinematographic technique of montage, employed in the novel, shifts the focus of our attention from the situation in one region of the country to that in another.

**Keywords:** Maria, Tragic, Freedom, Patriots

*Maria* (1970), a tragic romance of adventure and exploits, narrates the participation of Satyagrahi volunteers in Goa's struggle for freedom from the Portuguese rule. The novel ends tragically for the central character, Maria and the country after independence. The seven Indian characters represent seven regions of India: Goa, West Bengal, Punjab, Madras, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra. Before Independence, all of them were patriots and fighters for freedom; after independence most of them get involved in an atmosphere of anti-national parochial activities. Abbas seems to have been fascinated by the symbolic significance of the number seven. The importance of choosing seven characters belonging to seven different regions of the country is obvious; it gives him an opportunity of presenting the human condition in the country in seven vivid scenes in a fairly representative manner. The cinematographic technique of montage, employed in the novel, shifts the focus of our attention from the situation in one region of the country to that in another. Commenting on the use of the number seven, Abbas has remarked: "There is something mythical about the number seven. There are seven basic colours in the rainbow. The Ultimate Truth is supposed to be hidden behind seven veils of mystery and no Hindu marriage can be solemnized without "Saat Pheray" or seven rounds of the sacrificial fire. In the fairy tales the king always had seven daughters, seven sons or seven wives...snow-white had seven dwarfs!"

It seems Abbas has deliberately exploited this recurrent numerical motif in literature and culture to give his narrative a design and shape. “The novel is lit up with a set of values which characterize all the works of Abbas: hope, noble aspirations, perseverance and nationalism. It dramatizes the ups and downs in friendly and patriotic sentiments and suggests certain desirable values in the face of current parochial tendencies. India, the novel suggests, needs unity, not uniformity. Hindi occupies the status of national languages, but all other languages and dialects should have the opportunity to flourish in the different regions and communities. The linguistic unity of the country implies the flourishing existence of linguistic diversity. The principle of unity in diversity is a desirable thing at other cultural levels, too. The major post-independence problem that the novel deals with is the separatist tendencies generating narrow parochialism.

The technique of montage in *Maria* presents seven situations and actions occurring simultaneously in the different regions of the country. Some of the fighters for freedom become involved, after independence, in activities which are a satire on their earlier noble aspirations. While Subodh, the football referee was receiving a serious head-injury from the stone-pelting and chair-gutting students in Calcutta; Jogendra Nath, the prosperous Punjabi farmer was lamenting the proposed partition of the Punjab; Mahadevan in Madras was enthusiastically dumping his Hindi sign-board into a bonfire in Hindi books and refusing to receive a telegram till it was translated into Tamil although this Tamilian was once a Hindi Pracharak; the Hindi Sena of Ram Bhagat Sharma the editor of a Hindi daily in Benares, was breaking the glass-panes of shops with English sign-boards; Anwar Ali was ridiculing Hindi from the view-point of the Urdu purism and his house was being burnt in Ranchi by the Hindi fanatics; Sakharam in Maharashtra was being dragged into the Maharashtra-Mysore border agitation-all leaving Maria’s telegrams unattended; and the seriously ill Maria was waiting for them in a Panjim hospital. They came too late to see her Dr. Hangal’s remark, “Perhaps you were too busy or pre-occupied” explains why they failed promptly to respond to Maria’s SOS while she waited for them before undergoing an operation of the heart, in which she died.

Abbas imparts a touch of “Mother India” to *Maria* and hopes that the disruptionist tendencies will disappear from the country. The author indulges in wish-fulfillment by making the six comrades of *Maria* respond at last and arrive and become her pall-bearers as Indians rather than Hindu, Muslim, Tamilian, Punjabi, Bengali or Maharashtrian. Kobita Sarkar has remarked that “The final arrival of the six to act as *Maria*’s pall-bearers looks contrived, unless one accepts it as a symbolic re-union.” The final scene is certainly symbolic of a re-union, but it is also ironic; it involves *Maria*’s death. The symbolic re-union elevates the humdrum lives of the six to a moment of dignity. The memory of their patriotic past is evoked and they feel guilty over their present involvement in anti-national activities: “Guilty, they looked at each other, then the light of fraternal recognition appeared in their tear-filled eyes. Shyly, hesitantly, then hopefully their hands groped for each other’s hands.”

This scene marks the climax in Abbas’s patriotic wish-fulfillment in the novel. On the one hand, *Maria* is crowded with satiric scenes exposing the anti-national activities of the educated and articulates Indians; and on the other, it moves towards an enactment of the feeling for joining hands for national unity. Wish-fulfillment is a romantic drive and the opposite of a desire to satirize and expose. The relation between romantic idealism and satire in this novel is that the former provides the moral norm for the latter. It is from

the point of view of national unity which brought about our freedom from slavery and exploitation that the novel satirizes the sectarian activities of present day Indians, for “freedom is one of the deepest, most persistent of all the goals man seeks” and national unity alone can guarantee our political freedom today. We have already experienced, during the last 35 years, the Chinese invasion and two wars thrust upon us by Pakistan. The message of the novel is urgent in the international context today.

The Indian chose the struggle long and untired fought for liberty and won it. After our struggle for political independence, a struggle dramatized by Abbas in all its complexity in *Inqilab*, the forces that hindered the struggle now seem to be having a field day. They are now hindering our struggle for social and economic freedom. The country’s struggle for political freedom in the past and for social and economic freedom today has its trials and tribulations with which the novel deals. It has “a universal interest, but it also has many moments of suspense, without much overt moralizing.” Whatever statement embodying a message the novel has it is fully justified by the concrete images, scenes and situations, presented. The form of Maria is mimetic and artistic not didactic.

The character of Maria, an ordinary woman like many others, has been transformed to something dignified, rich and noble by the glorious cause for which she worked, suffered and laid down her life.

As a fighter for the cause of national freedom, she reminds of G.B. Shaw’s *Saint Joan* who defied the British power and fought valiantly for the freedom of her country, France. She is the most important person in the novel. She grew up as a child at a time when the momentous struggle for freedom was going on against the British rulers. After the country shook free from the British rule, there still remained parts to be liberated from the French and the Portuguese rule. The French respected our urge for freedom and left with good grace, but the Portuguese rulers adopted the attitude of die-hard imperialism and a policy of repression and terror. The freedom movement in Goa, Daman and Diu continued amid Portuguese repression and Maria joined the group of active workers for freedom.

A woman has to work as a comrade of fighters for freedom under limitations in addition to those under which men have to struggle. It is to Maria’s credit that she joins the band of men-patriots on an equal footing. Whenever her being a woman seems to stand in the way of her work as an activist, she has recourse to disguise as man like many of the female characters in Shakespeare’s comedies. Disguise becomes Maria’s protection against lewd and obscene men in society and in the Government machinery. Though a woman to the core, she knows that the violent rulers can understand only violence. She is not satisfied with mere symbolic participation of her comrades in the movement and asks them for suitable equipment for action: “What have you brought with you? Dynamite to blow up bridges? Bombs? Hand grenades? Pistols? Revolvers Rifles?” She knows whom to trust and enlists the sympathy and cooperation of the local labourers and workers. The working classes are more trust-worthy in a national cause than the common run of middle-class people, who are prone to betray for petty gains. The workers cooperate fully in her plans to free the imprisoned fighters from their confinement in jails. At last she is caught by the Portuguese and imprisoned in Lisbon on the charge of working in league with the revolutionaries and indulging in “subversive activities.”

The Portuguese exploit her in the prison and she develops heart trouble. After the liberation of Goa she is released from her imprisonment in Lisbon. She returns to India and is admitted into a hospital in Panjim. Knowing that she may not survive the operation, she has the operation postponed by a few days, calls her six comrades by sending them telegrams and waits for them. But they arrive too late to see her alive. She dies while being operated upon. Maria emerges in the novel as the very image of patriotism, love and friendship. She is above petty jealousies, regional prejudices, linguistic chauvinism, caste animosities, communal hatred and provincialism which have been eating into the vitals of Indian life. She serves a point of contrast to her comrades who relapse into parochialism after the great cause has been served. Maria is an idealized character with consistency and continuity of her principle which are a source of human dignity. The novel's interest seems to be "divided (almost impartially) unconsciously by Maria."

Of the other characters in the novel Subodh Sanyal has concern for the country's honour, integrity and unity. As a referee, he has a highly developed sense of justice, uprightness and fairplay. He manifests these qualities when he acts as a referee in a football match between an All India Eleven and the Bengal Team: "Subodh, the referee running from here to there, repeatedly blew on his whistle, trying to restore some kind of order in this chaos, but he or his whistle was of little consequence against the clash of tribal loyalties and jealousies, pent-up frustrations and hatreds and bitternesses manifesting themselves in a sporting conflict."

Being free from narrow Bengali provincialism, "Subodh was hit on his head by a flying stone aimed by an excited youth." Nirad Chaudhary has aptly commented on our "set of provincial vanities chanting self-praise at the expense of all the rivals. I regret to say as a Bengali that this egregious provincial vanity is at its worst in Bengal."

Subodh has professional integrity as referee and as patriot he shows concern for the country's territorial and cultural integrity. Mulk Raj Anand has remarked that "Any shape which the novel can take can only come from the life-force of the character." This is true of Maria, in which characters provide an insight into the human situation.

When participating in the freedom movement in Goa, Subodh undertakes a mission involving a long journey: "I guess my legs are tough enough for long-distance walks." He accomplishes the task assigned to him. Whether he "rained a series of Karate blows on the Sentry who soon collapsed unconscious" or he adopted a guerilla strategy for penetration into the enemy strong-hold, he acquitted himself with credit as one dedicated to the great cause. He possesses indefatigable will power and courage as well as stoical endurance in the face of tortures and beatings he receives in the Panjim jail. Years later he finds himself living and working in an atmosphere of Bengali parochialism. The SOS call from Maria makes him relive his glorious past in memory.

Jogendra Nath, a patriot, feels ill at ease with the Punjabi provincialism which comes into its own after independence. A hefty, well-built man, he is extrovert and restless by nature. A man of action, he is

given to a direct and forthright manner of expressing his views and ideas. He had “been in the Army. Emergency Commission. Did commando course. Saw action in Kashmir.” He was entrusted with the commando work for imparting training for the struggle for freedom, which he did by both example and precept. His story is marked by suspense, fear, apprehension, silence, grimness and tension; and his daring deeds are characterized by promptness of action in the face of danger. He pushes the Portuguese spy out of the running train for his spying on them and slaps the Gandhian Anwar Ali for his tortured thoughts about the killing of the Portuguese spy disguised as a masseur during their train journey to Belgaum.

The influence of the Punjabi dialect on Jogendar is immense. By force of habit he speaks Punjabi, even while espousing the cause of Hindi. This produces humour. The conversation between him and his daughter is an instance of this: “Eh, kudiye,” addressing her in Punjabi, he asked, “What are you doing?” “I am reading my Gurumukhi book.” “Gurumukh? Why Gurumukhi? When we clearly mentioned Hindi as our mother tongue in the last census, why are our children compelled to study Punjabi and that too in the Gurumukhi script?” The daughter was familiar with her father’s strange habit of speaking in Punjabi and advocating the cause of Hindi....”

Jongendra feels unhappy over the partition of the Punjabi for communal and linguistic reasons: “Why does it have to be the Punjab that is chosen every time for these divisions and partitions?” As a hard-working farmer, he takes rightful pride in the contribution of the Punjab to the country’s agriculture: “The wheat that we grow in the Punjab feeds you all.” He feels sore about the divisions and partitions of the state he belongs to and yet he is utterly helpless in the face of unscrupulous politics of communalism. His hysterical outburst signifies this helplessness; his idealistic sensibility has been grossly outraged.

Mahadevan, a nationalist made efforts to awaken patriotic feelings in his compatriots through words and action. His ideals are subjected to great stress and strain by the forces that were unleashed after country’s independence. His career outlined in the novel is representative of the course the life of many men of his generation took through the complex of problems and events. He believed that Goa could be liberated by making sacrifices and meeting violence with violence if needed. He was full of a sense of service, sacrifice and commitment to freedom and unity of the country. In the event of an emergency, he did not hesitate to deliver karate blows: “Mahadevan used his elbow to deal a deadly karate blow to the orderly who fell down unconscious.” This was more than an act of self-defence; it enabled him to help further the action in Goa. He played an important part in Goa’s turbulent history and its liberation.

When Mahadevan was being exploited by the Portuguese in the prison, he diverted his mind from bodily pain by reciting verses of Subramaniam Bharati. While recounting this incident. Abbas gives a rounded portrait of Mahadevan as a socially underprivileged person who seeks fulfillment in the country’s ideals and aspirations: “For Mahadevan, it was difficult to think of something amusing in his childhood; born in a Harijan family, he was subjected to petty oppressions and humiliations which tended to sap his sense of humour. But a new world had opened out to him since as a youth he had joined the national movement gone to jail as a Congress volunteer learnt Hindi from his fellow-prisoners and came out to

become a Hindi Pracharak. He had translated the Tamil poetry of Subramaniam Bharati and he could recite it in Tamil to Hindi and his trick was to close his eyes and start reciting the resonant lines of Bharati switching from Tamil to Hindi and Hindi to Tamil switching languages as the pain became unbearable and it helped. He thought with a smile that his torturers never knew the beauty of the immortal verses he was reciting to resist the pain they were inflicting.”

This socially oppressed person had only the painful memories of his childhood which could offer him no consolation, no escape from the tortures in the prison; but poetry did. The national cause gave him a noble purpose and sense of direction to his life. But when the country and Goa had become independent, he found himself in the midst of confusing scenes. He still had a national cause to live for the propagation of Hindi in the non-Hindi South. But the confusing political scene in the country and the South deprived him of this purpose. Regionalism raised its head in the South and Mahadevan found it hard to pursue his mission. The spirit of the national anthem “*Sare Jehan Se Achcha Hindostan Hamara*,” was replaced by feelings of regionalism. The anti-English agitation in the North provoked an anti-Hindi agitation in the South and Mahadevan was caught in that confusion. He threw away his own Hindi masterpiece entitled *Hindi Sahitya* and his name plate in Hindi into the bonafire made by the anti-Hindi agitators. Fanned up by that regional feeling, he even returned Maria’s telegram in Hindi for an English of Tamil rendering Mahadevan’s predicament is typical of well-meaning persons caught in an atmosphere of confusion and wave of narrow parochialism. His fervent nationalism is contrasted with his violent parochialism.

Ram Bhagat Sharma is a type of Hindu whose prejudices go against the cause he wants to serve, whether it be the freedom of Goa or promotion of Hindi. Abbas has directed the barbs of his satire against these prejudices. Sharma’s character has been shaped by the prejudices amid which he has been brought up. Even in the hour of emergency in action in Goa, he gives expression to his caste prejudice towards his comrade, Mahadevan. Kobita Sarkar thinks that people’s making fuss about drinking water from the hands of a Harijan, Mahadevan, is realistic but raises objection as to the plausibility of such fine distinctions in an hour of crisis: “Again the fuss that is made about people drinking water from the hands of the Harijan Mahadevan (in *Saat Hindustani* film version of Maria) while possible seems unlikely for they were all facing a crisis without the time for such fine distinctions. Sometimes, too open and great emphasis on a problem tends to rebound and produce quite the contrary effect.”

It is true that no useful purpose is served by the fuss made by Sharma, who does at last drink water from the hands of the Harijan Mahadevan even though he had initially remarked: “No, thank you, actually I am not thirsty.” Kobita Sarkar means to say that Abbas’s treatment of his fuss is an hour of crisis is implausible and hence inartistic. It is hard to agree with Kobita Sarkar. Prejudices die-hard and the crisis forced Sharma to drink water from a Harijan’s hand. What Abbas has done is to render the very process through which the caste prejudices of life-time withers away under the stress of a crisis Abbas, the social reformer condemns the caste prejudices, but he does so within the framework of art. He dramatizes his repudiation of a caste prejudice through an objective situation and encounter of personages of diverse upbringing. Abbas’s ideology does not affect the integrity of his art.

The trials and tribulations of people limited by social evils and prejudices are in fact one of the important themes the novel endeavours to express. The Hindu characters appear in the novel with the prejudices peculiar to the group to which they belong. S.V. Ketkar considers Sharma's prejudice realistic: "In the Maratha country a Brahmin will regard water touched by any other caste but his own as polluted." What Abbas wants to underline is the fact that prejudices such as Sharma's are a big problem before the nation; we have to rise above caste and untouchability to achieve something worthwhile. An other prejudice of Sharma as a Hindu is to entertain an unjustifiable doubt about the loyalty of Anwar, a Muslim in regard to their action in Goa. While Anwar with painful and hurt soles was slowly dragging himself along towards the rendezvous, Sharma not finding him there cast aspersions: "Azad's eyes seemed to be searching for someone. He was mentally counting them. With some surprise he said, "I had sent six of you but I find you are only five!" Weak and exhausted, yet Sharma spoke out of the disappointment and bitterness of his heart, "The sixth turned a traitor, Azad Saheb." "Anwar!" whispered Sharma incredulously. "Anwar!" exclaimed Mahadevan excitedly." "Amcha Anwar!" Sakharam exclaimed, lapsing into Marathi.

Repudiation of social evils is a natural artistic drive on the part of an author of ideological slant of leftist orientation. Whether an aesthetic and artistic rendering of evils and an attempt to overcome them will lead of a reform in society is hard to say. All we can say is that Abbas's artistic endeavour is laudable; it arouses revulsion against social evils. An unwarranted distrust of the Muslims in the Hindu mind originated because of the exclusiveness of religious groups after the concept of Pakistan was mooted and has continued sporadically after its creation. The novelist has made Sharma a vehicle of this prejudice.

Sharma has other facets to his personality too. Editor of a Hindi, daily Dainik Hindustan, he is shown sitting in his office and gazing at his editorial secretary Usha's "ripe curves of her breasts disturbingly outlined under the thin material of the blouse." His improper gaze provokes resentment in Usha and he apologizes: "All right. If you say so, I won't look at you like that." His advocacy of Hindi borders on the excess and takes the form of fanaticism. He fails to see that the English language has an important role to play in India, a role complementary to that of Hindi and other Indian languages. His zeal for Hindi takes the form of anti-English agitation. He collects a group of like-minded Hindi enthusiasts and has sign-boards English letter tarred and broken. In this aspect of his character too Sharma is a type of quite a large number of people in the country.

Like the other characters in the novel, Anwar Ali is both an individual and a type. If Sharma is a Hindi enthusiast, Anwar is a typical Urdu enthusiast. Neither of these two varieties of linguistic enthusiasm can help Indian attain her destiny. What we need is not fanaticism but sanity and wisdom. Anwar is not happy with the amount which the government has paid him as compensation for depriving him of the ownership of land exceeding the ceiling under the Zamindari Abolition Act. The Urdu enthusiasts clash with the Hindi enthusiasts and in this riot his house gets burned. Frustration and despair make him think that "existence is primarily a droll affair." The riots take a violent turn over "clamouring for the rights of Urdu in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh." Anwar is reluctant to learn elementary Hindi: "Anwar Ali was

frankly contemptuous of the language that had been adopted at the lingua franca of India. “Old parrots cannot learn the *bhasha* of yours with all its *arantoo* and *parantoo*.”

He expressed disgust for Hindi as the lingua franca and prefers the flowery, fluent, simple and effective Urdu. This aspect of Anwar is realistic but imparts a faint negative strain to his character as a language jingoist of a kind.

Anwar’s character shines with all its brilliance in the course of the action in Goa. A poet of frail body as he is he evinces courage, endurance and loyalty to his comrades and to the great cause for which all of them were working. “Ghalib was not the only Urdu poet.” says Anwar at the time of his selection as a volunteer. There have been other Urdu poets—there was Ram Pershad Bismil who went to the gallows, singing—“Sarfarooshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai.”

Both Ghalib and Bismil were patriots. Even exploited to the extreme given “electricity and water treatment” in the prison. Anwar holds his ground with courage and endurance: “Anwar made no reply as he continued to glare in front of him the water dripping from his mop of hair into his eyes. “Tell me the names of your comrades, Indiano.” “Again Anwar kept silent.” “The officer who had great faith in the efficacy of his electricity and water treatment was getting impatient. Now he shouted: “Who were the local people who helped you?” Exasperated Anwar blurted out, “I don’t know.”

His courage is reminiscent of some great Urdu poets who suffered for a noble cause: “Our favourite poets were first Iqbal and Ghalib, particularly Faiz, because he too had spent many years in jail.”

The seven Indians cooperate in Goa for a noble cause and rise above the narrow prejudices inherited from their exclusive environment. There are moments of tension when these prejudices come to the surface but are finally overcome. Anwar is the type of Muslims who join the main stream when working for a great cause, but like the rest of our people are, on certain occasions, pulled back into a narrow fold of prejudices. This tension between the national and the parochial manifests itself in most of the main characters of the novel. This is a realistic portrayal of the Indian as a whole. But when the Muslims in the absence of a great cause, relapse from the national to the parochial, they are charged of not being in the main stream: “From every platform they heard exhortations that they must mingle with the mainstream of national life. It almost sounded like the old call for Indianization. But what were they supposed to do to qualify for that? They had participated in political forums, including those of the Jana Sangh; they had tightened their belts during periods of adversity and they had fought in the wars against Pakistan. What more were they expected to do? How else could they contribute to the concepts of national life.”

Maria has realistically rendered through Anwar how the dedication and patriotism of the Muslims are doubted by men like Sharma. Jawaharlal Nehru like Abbas clearly perceived the phenomenon in the country and remarked the opinion that it was a duty of the Hindus as the majority to inculcate a sense of



security in the minds of the Muslims: “It was for the Hindus to produce a sense of security in the minds of the Muslims, the majority always owed a duty of this kind to the minority.”

Sanity and wisdom are wanting in the anti-English agitation of Ram Bhagat Sharma, anti-Hindi gestures of Mahadevan and Anwar and anti Punjabi stance of Jogendar. So also is sanity wanting in Sakharam’s involvement in the agitation over Maharashtra-Mysore border dispute. Sakharam’s role in the national cause in Goa is praiseworthy. But later, under the pressure of local environment, he relapses into regional parochialism. His joining the volunteers of the Maharashtra Sena is a disturbing commentary on the failure of the state administration. Inflamed by violent parochialism, Sakharam threatens the state’s economy and endangers peace. Such activities often threaten the internal peace and harmony of this problematic nation of ours. The parochial feelings which agitated Maharashtra and Mysore infect the other states as well. The folk-singer Sakharam attunes his music to the local taste and immerses in the current of local prejudices which threaten the harmonious relation with the neighbouring states.

The style of *Maria* is characterized by directness and simplicity, but it also has complexity and subtlety. Abbas is essentially a satirical novelist with a serious social vision. He exposes the evils of society with a view to stimulating healthy changes. Abbas satirizes the Bengali parochialism as it found expression in the incident concerning a match between the All India Eleven and the Bengal Team: “Both the sides were keen to win for more than the sporting prestige was involved. Bengal would be humiliated if today, playing on the home ground, it lost to the All-India Team.”

This passage renders the Bengali parochial point of view. Hindi parochialism is ridiculed through an instance of dramatic irony. Anwar Ali thinks of writing a letter to Ram Bhagat Sharma to do something as the editor of a Hindi Daily to contain violence and insanity of linguistic riots without knowing that Sharma is now the leader of the anti-English agitation sweeping through-out the North. “And the madness serves the interests of some people. But we will have to stop these crazy outbursts of hate and violence. I will write to my friend Ram Bhagat Sharma-he was with us in Goa-he is now an influential editor, with a very powerful pen.”

Abbas’s humour is genial as it finds expression through the numerous remarks of Anwar Ali. Here is an instance: “Sinha, amused rather than angry at his friend’s ignorance started reading the Hindi text of the letter: “Poojya pitaji, pranam.” “Asha hai ke aap aur mataji kushalpurvak hongay...” “Lahol wa la quwwat-what a jaw-breaking language he has written.”

The prose of *Maria* has been influenced by the practice of Abbas as a journalist. Careful arrangement and balance of parts: use of rhetorical figures use as metaphors, similes, epigrams, exclamations; variation of the sentence-structure; homely illustrations and a swift vigorous rhythm-these make Abbas’s language graceful and dignified. It is full of colour and fired by an impassioned imagination, often rise to the level of high style. The skilful ordering of ideas reveals a careful mind. Sometimes the author alludes to Hindu myths as in his references to Menka and Vishwamitra.

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