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

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

1886-88 Begins schooling with a maulā in a neighbouring village: learns Urdu and Persian.

1887-88 Mother dies after long illness at Allahabad.

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

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

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

1896 Arranged marriage with an ‘incompatible’ girl: disillusion and repulsion. His wife stays at Lamhi for the next “three or four years” while P is away at Benares and later elsewhere.

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

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

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

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

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

1903 At Allahabad. 8 October: P’s first novella Asrār-e Mā’bid [Mystery of the House of God] (Urdu) serialized. 30 April: Passes the teachers’ training examination (first division) and Vernacular Examination in Hindi and Urdu. 

1905 February: Transferred as Headmaster to Govt. Model School, Allahabad. May: Transferred as Eighth master to District School, Kanpur; puts up with Munši D.N. Nigam and joins his literary circle. Summer: At Lamhi: languishing marriage comes to a crisis; wife attempts suicide and is escorted back to her parents; P never to see her again. 7 August: Returns to Kanpur.

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

1906-07 Growing nationalist consciousness; in ‘Zamānā’ writes the column “The March of the Times” and other political notes: admires Mazzini, Garibaldi, Vivekānanda and Tilak.


1908 11 August: Khudiram Bose, aged 15, hanged by the British gov’t.; profound impression on P. 5 Mid-year: Soz-e-vatan [Anguish of the Nation], a collection of five stories, published.

1909 10 June: Transferred from Kanpur to “backward” Mahoba (dist. Hamirpur) as sub-deputy inspector of schools, with a salary of Rs. 50 pm. 7 Nov. Dec.: Summoned by the Dist. Magistrate, Hamirpur, and reprimanded for the seditious content of Soz-e-vatan; remaining stock of the book surrendered, and P now required to clear all his writings with the govt. before publication.

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

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

1912 Jalwā-ever published [as Vardān, Hindi, 1920].

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


1914 Takes leave to try a job on ‘Zamānā’ in Kanpur, which lasts only a few weeks. July: Transferred from Mahoba to Bastī. Health deteriorates: sick-leave for six months, under treatment at Allahabad, Kanpur, Lakhnau and Benares. Years to leave govt. service, but
declines offers to work on various papers, seeking a job in a private school.

1915 April-September: unsuccessful negotiations with D. Nigam to take over ‘Zamānā’. Asks for transfer from his touring job; is allowed to go back teaching. Urdu Prem paccisī published.


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

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


1923 Sangrām published. 20 July: Sarasvati press starts functioning.


1926 Has to face ridiculous charges of plagiarism.


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


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

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

1932 c.: January: Seeks job as a translator at the Osmania University, Hyderabad. Early May: Returns from Lakhnau to Lamhi, moves to Benares. August: ‘Hans’ asked again to furnish a security. 22 August: P takes over the weekly ‘Jāgaraṇ’. December: ‘Hans’ resumes publication, but ‘Jāgaraṇ’ and Sarasvati Press asked to furnish a security.

1933 Writes in his magazines about the Round Table Conference, the rise of Hitler, etc. Proposals to set up a Translators’ Circle and a
Writers' Union: neither come to much. Both papers in financial trouble.

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

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

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