



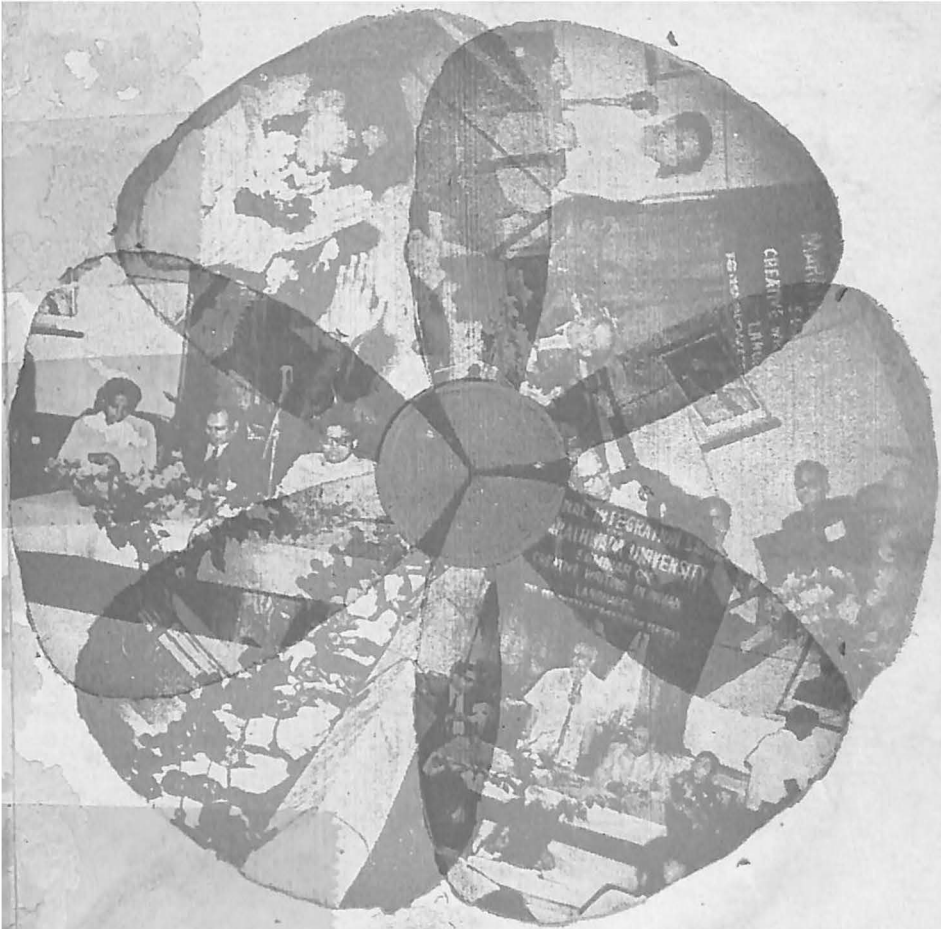
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SEMINAR  
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CREATIVE WRITING  
IN  
INDIAN LANGUAGES

NATIONAL INTEGRATION SAMITI  
MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY  
AURANGABAD (Dn.)

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# SEMINAR ON

*With best compliments from :-*

**Shri R. P. NATH**

Vice-Chancellor  
Marathwada University, Aurangabad.



**SEMINAR  
ON  
CREATIVE WRITING  
IN  
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**November 18 & 19, 1974**



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## FOREWORD

“ National integration through literature ? ” some of us queried, as if suggesting a pungent ‘ No ! ’ as the answer. But if literature is not challenged in its role as the conscience of mankind, its potentials to encourage national integration should also be regarded legitimate. Apart from the rather debatable issue of — what we call — ‘ message ’ in literature, a literary piece with conscience can be recognised distinctively only when it has evidenced its capacity to integrate all its component parts into a single personality.

The National Integration Samiti of the Marathwada University did not believe that the Seminar should seek to commit the writers of our country to a formal literary exercise in the ‘ problems ’ of national integration. The idea was that if the Seminar enhanced our understanding of the diverse peoples of our country **through their literatures, our Indianness** would seem more intimate to us.

Besides, the Seminar afforded us all here a first-hand opportunity of hearing what some of the topnotch creative writers had to say to present an appraisal of their respective contemporary literatures. Involved in whatever they observed, their candour and conviction, unlike the professorial caution, disturbed most of us very refreshingly.

Joginder Paul



National Integration Through Literature	R. M. Gole	1
Indian Literature Today	Prabhakar Padhey	7
Contemporary Marathi Poetry	Vasant Abaji Dahake	26
Contemporary Marathi Fiction	Gangadhar Gadgil	34
Contemporary Hindi Fiction	Kamaleshwar	45
Contemporary Hindi Poetry	Dr. B. M. Varma	50
Contemporary Urdu Poetry	Baquar Mehdi	60
Contemporary Urdu Fiction	Quazi Abdul Sattar	68
Modern Trends in Urdu Criticism	Dr. Mughni Tabussum	73
Report on the Seminar on Creative Writing in Indian Languages		80

## NATIONAL INTEGRATION THROUGH LITERATURE

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R. M. Gole

Let us first clear the decks and find out what exactly we mean by national integration. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word 'integrate' means "complete imperfect things by addition of parts, combine into a whole." But when we talk of national integration, we think more of a uniform way of life for our people, a sense of unity that breaks the barriers of language, community and custom. My friend, the late Dr. Lohia, used to say that three things militate against the unity of India. They are भाषा, भूषा, भोजन. We speak different languages, dress differently, eat different kinds of food. In saying this he implied that these differences must be rubbed out if we wish to build a strong and united India. I completely disagree to this view. I firmly believe that in a land of the size of a continent inhabited by more than 500 million people, this is just not possible. Nor is it desirable. Those who talk of national integration must accept the fact that this country will always be a multi-lingual, multi-racial State which will have to anchor itself to democracy as the most viable form of political arrangement. One need not be frightened by the prospect. Even in countries as small as a district in India, this feeling of local pride is making itself felt. There has been trouble in Yugoslavia over this issue and some of you must have read of the reception accorded to Queen Elizabeth during her recent visit to Scotland. It is against this background then that we have to look at this question of national integration. In doing so, we must keep in mind the size and population of this country, the different ethnic groups which stay here and the different ways of life people pursue living in different parts of the country. In a country like ours, national understanding would be a more relevant subject for discussion than national integration. Some sort of national understanding, but not national integration, can be brought about

to some extent through literature. I am deliberately speaking on a very low key because we in Antar Bharati have, over a period of years, invited writers and authors from different States to come and talk to us about their literature but the impact has been of a very short duration, almost negligible. A good deal could be achieved through translations but for this we must have highly trained men in different languages familiar with the idiom of both. The difficulty here is that every language has a pattern and word forms of its own which are incapable of being translated into another language. A Marathi lady says इश्वर to her Marathi husband. How can you transtate this इश्वर into another language ? Another difficulty with us is that the same words carry different meanings in different languages. When I was working with the Indian Iron and Steel Company my head clerk one morning came and told me that the local Satkar Samiti wanted to see me. I was both surprised and flattered at the thought of my popularity. Now Satkar Samitis in Bengal render a form of social service by helping needy people in the disposal of their dead. The members of the Samiti in question had come to me because they wanted some help from me in the pursuit of their laudable objective.

This barrier of language has been felt by all creative artists at all times. When Wordsworth spoke of "language really used by men" what exactly did he mean ? In the school boy parlance this may mean that one should call a spade a spade and not an implement. What Wordsworth meant was that words often prove a barrier to communication and without communication there can be no understanding.

Let us pause at this word "communication" for a while. Let us presume that when Indian writers write in their respective languages they try to communicate; put across an idea, a thought, a beautiful image. In a country where a large majority of people are illiterate and where another majority admires books from a distance, what will be the scope and extent of this communication ? Will it not be confined to a small coterie of intellectuals and leave out of court a vast majority which is unfamiliar with the written word and quite incapable of comprehending what is presented to them.

If then integration or understanding as I call it, has to cross the boundaries of the urban middle class and spread to our vast rural population, literature, in its conventional form, can achieve very little. But there is a branch of literature in its widest sense which can ideally achieve this purpose. That is folk literature and particularly folk songs. I have heard them in Marathi, in Gujarathi, in Bengali and I have been struck not only by their common themes but sometimes by their similar tunes. Harvest songs, songs of the sea and the seasons, festival songs, songs dealing with the relations and tensions of the in-laws, of warriors returning home from conquest and the wives eagerly awaiting their return are part and parcel of our rich folk lore and provide an ideal means of communication. Let me illustrate. We all think that wars, expeditions and conquests are something unknown to the people of Gujarat. Gujarati folk songs do not think so. A Gujarati warrior conquered parts of Malwa and sent home to his bride the mendi planted there so that she could paint her hands with it. The local bard took up the theme and made a song out of it. *મેંદી તો નાવી માઝવિને એનો રંગ ગયો ગુજરાતરે મેંદી રંગ લાઝ્યો રે* This is an area of communication which can be explored with pleasure and profit and maybe, some enterprising scholar will make a thesis out of it for his Ph.D. What is important here is of course not the thesis but the theme which has a nationwide appeal. While on this theme of folk songs we may think of music in general, the most abiding force which has brought our people together. Using as it does the medium of sound, sound that envelopes the world and travels beyond, it has been accepted as the most sensitive means of communication. The painter quarrels with his paint and his brush and the poet with his words, but the musician just sings and even though we do not always follow the words, the melody and the subtle variation of notes convey the meaning to the audience which is immediately appreciated and long remembered. What is true of folk songs is also true of folk drama. In Bengal there is a variety of this art form known as the Jatra. The audience sit around a raised platform on which the artists perform. There are no scenes, no stage property, just a bright light over the platform. But the performance is vivid enough to grip the audience into an attentive silence. I shall never forget the story of Siraj-Ud-Doula presented on such a stage by a Jatra party during a Puja festival.

Apart from these art forms, the most powerful media of communication are the radio and the cinema. Only the other day I heard on the Poona radio a playlet by R. K. Narayan translated into Marathi and put on the air by the radio artists. The potential of the cinema as a medium of mass communication is too well known to require detailed analysis.

Another effort can be made in a different direction. You all know that University teachers in Europe and America take a sabbatical year. This practice should be made compulsory for both teachers and students of our Universities. They should be made to spend at least one year of their academic life at some university outside their State. This will need many changes in our university administration but the difficulties are not insurmountable and can be removed. In this connection I should like to draw your attention to an experiment successfully carried out in a High School in Poona. Each class in the school is made to adopt one State in the Indian Union and it is the business of the class to collect every kind of information about that State and its people. From the jewellery and clothes they wear to the food they eat, their language, literature, everything. The experiment can be tried out elsewhere.

In the old days before independence the project which I have just suggested was successfully put into practice in, of all places, our jails. Our jails then were our universities with teachers like Vinobaji and Sane Guruji to teach the inmates and make them familiar with the broad spectrum of India's life and culture. Hundreds of political prisoners studied Marathi, Bangali, Gujarati, Urdu. Sane Guruji translated the Tamil epic *Torukkural* while he was in the Trichanapally jail and it was there that the idea of starting the movement of *Anter Bharati* took hold of his mind. Writing about it he said, "Our regional loyalties must not interfere with our national loyalties. *Anter Bharati* and *Vishwa Bharati* are our two ideals. We must put into the perspective of an expanding vision the region, the country and the whole world. There can be no *Vishwa Bharati* without *Anter Bharati* and no *Anter Bharati* without men and women of vision scattered all over the land. Similarly, in the preface to his book "The Discovery of India" Nehru writes, "My eleven companions in Amhednagar Fort were an interesting cross section of India and represented in their several

ways not only politics but Indian scholarship, old and new, and various aspects of present-day India. Nearly all the principal living Indian languages, as well as the classical languages which have powerfully influenced India in the past and present, were represented and the standard was often that of high scholarship."

Here you see national integration and understanding in actual practice. There are many sins for which we can blame the British government but we must thank them for putting so many of us in prison during the freedom struggle.

One last thing remains to be said. In spite of and under the multi-coloured dance of life which is India, there is an unbreakable bond that has held this country together through the ages. We have felt it in our mountains and our rivers, in the easy open spaces, in the desert of Rajasthan and the fertile valley of the Ganga. Our ancestors felt it too. They enjoined every Indian that his life's purpose on earth would not be achieved unless he visited Varanashi and carried the water of the Ganga in a copper vessel and emptied it in the sea at Rameshwar. Don't you see the relevance of this injunction to the recently mooted plan of joining the waters of the Ganga to the waters of the Kaveri. That is how, in this country, the ancient and the modern mix and mingle and live cheek by jowl. We move forward by seeking inspiration from our long and glorious heritage. And we all must preserve that heritage lest it should be said of us that we squandered away a great partimony with the reckless improvidence of a prodigal son.

While thus talking to you I have been thinking of my little grandson and what this country and the world will be like twenty years hence when he attains manhood. This little youngster may by then fly into space or dive into the deep sea or solve the riddle of life. But I like to think that after all his wanderings he will one day return to me and putting his arms round my shoulder ask me to show him the moon and tell him again the story of our ancient hero who once cried for it, because this constant and durable communion of man with nature and the universe around him is the most significant part of our heritage and its recurrent theme. It is my hope that twenty, thirty, even a hundred years hence, our children and our children's children will cherish this heritage and take time

off to listen to the mysterious music of the land and its people. Hard headed intellectuals among you may dismiss this as an old man's dream but so what ? Has not the poet said :

“ Egypt's might is tumbled down,  
Down adown the depth of thought:  
Greece is fallen and Troy town,  
Glorious Rome hath lost her crown,  
Venice's pride is nought  
But the dream their children dreamed.  
Fleeting, unsubstantial, vain,  
Shadowy as the shadows seemed,  
Airy nothing as they dreamed,  
These remain. ”

And has not another poet said with equal confidence.

यूनान, मिस्र, रूमा सब मिट गये जहाँसे ।  
अब तक मगर है बाकी नामोनिशां हमारा ॥

## INDIAN LITERATURE TODAY

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Prabhakar Padhye

What is "Indian" literature? Is there such a thing as "Indian" literature? We know that there is Bengali literature, Hindi literature, Kannada literature, Marathi literature and literatures of other languages in India, but is there such a thing as "Indian" literature? One might say that there is some kind of Indianness about the literatures of these languages in the sense that there is some kind of Europeanness about the literatures of Western Europe, but could we generalise about German literature or Italian literature from what we know of English literature? Would it not be better to say that there are Indian literatures rather than one omnibus category called Indian literature?

Indian literatures belong to distinctly different regions that have their specific traditions, specific tones of culture, their specific ethos, which characterises their literary as their other cultural products.

I am not a linguist, but I am reminded here of the relationship argued by Benjamin Lee Whorf, between language and culture. It would appear that language moulds the *Weltanschauung* of its habitual users. Following this lead, the eminent American critic, George Steiner has suggested in his paper on the "Language Animal" that certain languages are inherently literary. When one considers the sustained glory of English literature for over 400 years one is inclined to give credence to this fascinating view. I am wondering if one can fruitfully generalise about different Indian literatures whose disparate development could be due to the inherent capacities of their languages.

One can perhaps take a perspective view or a panoramic view of Indian literature as has been taken by Mr. K. R. Kripalani, the former secretary of 'Sahitya Akademi' (the Indian academy of



letters), in his book *Modern Indian Literature*. But I am a little sceptical about such a view, not only of the composite Indian literature but even of one Indian language literature, when I remember that a work of art is a monad, and it is perhaps pointless to talk about what truly is a spectrum, spatial, temporal and cultural, in one continuous sweep. (In doing this there is the obvious danger of leaning rather heavily on what you know and ignoring significant aspects, just because you are ignorant about them.)

Regarding this 'monadic' difficulty I remember what T.S. Eliot taught us : the passions of a poem are somehow related to the passions of the society that produces it: and if you can speak meaningfully about the passions of a society you can equally meaningfully speak of the passions of the literature that is produced by it. But I wonder if we can talk of the passions of a literary piece outside that piece. In an important sense the passions of a work of art are *sui generis* and you cannot generalise them. The poetic quality of a poem is in the poem. You cannot force it out of the poem. In this sense, literary criticism must always remain a stranger. What I am supposed to do here is obviously less than literary criticism.

I propose to negotiate these difficulties by just ignoring them. For our purpose they will not exist. If in the process literature ceases to exist, we will ignore that fact also!

Here I must confess that I do not understand any Indian language other than Marathi. My reading of the writings in these non-Marathi languages is nil, except perhaps in stray English translations, which are obviously not of much use here. Therefore, except for Marathi literature, I will have to depend on second-hand and in certain respects on third-hand sources, in this hazardous task of generalising about Indian literature. Again, in this brief survey I will draw upon writings only in four Indian languages, namely, Bengali, Hindi, Kannada and Marathi. Bengali, I suppose, has the best developed modern literature in India. Hindi is spoken by the largest group of people in this country. Marathi I know. And Kannada, unlike the other three Indian languages chosen, which are Indo-Aryan is a Dravidian language, and being a neighbouring language I am a little less ignorant about its literature than about the literature of the remaining Dravidian languages.

But knowing full well that a survey based upon second-hand sources can only be less than satisfactory, I will, in the end, deal with Marathi literature at greater length. Here again, I will not try to take a panoramic view of the entire corpus of literary writings in the language, but deal with the development of Marathi poetry, firstly because of the obvious reason that poetry is the most sensitive sample of literature, and more importantly because Marathi poetry has experienced two meaningful revolutions, the story of which sheds significant light on the course of Marathi literary sensibility.

This will enable me to revert to the technique of panoramic generalisation to wonder if Indian literatures today do present some intriguing common features that may linger in the minds of the readers of this rather tenuous dissertation.

The British impact on the Indian mind produced what is called the Indian Renaissance. It was not strictly a renaissance; more correctly it was a kind of enlightenment brought about by the confrontation between the age-old culture of the Indian people and the young enterprising culture of the alien rulers who sought to infuse it into the Indian mind by means of modern education imparted through English. The principal feature of this renaissance was the consciousness of the individuality of man. Till now the Indian individual was submerged both socially and spiritually. Socially he was submerged because of the rigid caste system. An Indian was born into a particular family of a particular caste and was thereby assigned a position that was fixed for him for life. If he was born into a priestly family he was destined to be a priest all his life and was expected to live up to his appointed vocation. Spiritually he was submerged because the prevailing metaphysics taught him that he was a part of the cosmic consciousness, yet unfree because his soul was captive to the body he was born to, by the law of **Karma**. Most Indians accepted whatever came to them as their divinely ordained fate and mutely submitted to their assigned place in society. The British education came to them as a liberating force. The study of English literature and thought liberated the spirit of the educated Indian, and he was for the first time able to look at the world as a vital individual. He was able to view the world from the vantage point of the primacy of the human being.

This liberating spirit was particularly felt in the sensitive sphere of literature where there were fixed norms of composition and also fixed themes to cherish, and the writer was supposed to adhere to them strictly. For instance, there was hardly any secular literature. Literature was mostly devotional and was written according to traditional mores and meters. Writers strove to display their virtuosity within these confines. Puns and metrical tricks became the stock-in-trade of poets. Their compositions were manifold variations on the eternal themes from Ramayan and Mahabharat. Saint-poets were in some way exceptions, but they dwelt largely in devotional raptures. There was some amount of secular writing—both prose and poetry—but it was not quite prestigious.

Acquaintance with English literature, and through English other European literatures, came as a kind of revelation to the Indian literary mind. (American literature also played some part.) The first compelling effect was to imitate Western modes of writing, wherein we must seek the origins of Modern Indian literature. There was also a number of fecund attempts at translation—but more at adaptations. The idea of translating alien works of literature did not perhaps appeal to the Brahmanic literary mind of India. More happily adaptations of works like Scott's novels, Shakespeare's plays and Wordsworth's poems seem to have proved a welcome endeavour.

This literary enlightenment of the Indian mind could not, in the nature of things, prove a straightforward affair. One must remember that most of the Indian languages had a long tradition of literature and behind these traditions loomed the glorious epoch of Sanskrit literature, and people felt a justifiable pride in it. Almost as a reaction to the growing prestige of alien literature there was revival of the classics through translations of eminent Sanskrit works. There was also, in some cases, the phenomenon of identity crisis. The complex case of Michael Madhusudan Dutt of Bengal can be cited here.

In personal life he bravely sought to assimilate the western modes and values, but in literature he argued that one must write in one's mother tongue, and chose for the exercise of his Miltonic imagination the Ramayanian theme of Meghanad-vadh (The Killing of Meghanad). Scott's historical novels were preferred because these historical romances could be aptly adapted to the glorious

episodes from the history of the relevant regions of India. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the father of the Bengali novel, did this spectacularly for Bengal and Haribhau Apte, the father of the Marathi novel, did this gloriously for Maharashtra. Later Masti Vyankatesh Iyengar did this for Kannada, and Bhagvatsharan Upadhyaya, Rahul Sankrityayan, Rangeya Raghav, Hajari Prasad Dwivedi and Vrindavanlal Varma did this for Hindi.

But there was a more basic change in which some of these writers and others participated. It was an urge from within. It was a flowering of the native sensibility although inspired from across the seas. If one must mention one single work, it was Palgrave's **Golden Treasury** that played a crucial role in this. It proved as some kind of a literary treasure-trove, access to which literally revolutionised poetry in several Indian languages—particularly in the four languages I have chosen for consideration. A whole new world of images was assimilated from the Romantic poets and suitably adapted to the life, and the flora and fauna of the country. (Thus the West Wind became the South-Western Wind and the Nightingale became the Bharadwaj or Kokil.) These poets freely experimented with modes and meters. The lyric, the sonnet and similar forms became the sweet little concerns of the Indian poets. More importantly they adopted the new liberal home-centric attitude, regarding man as the vital centre both of life and the universe. Man was thus spiritually liberated in literature. In Marathi, Keshavsut made this new poetry an emblem of embattled social protest and spiritual probe, not to mention the new consciousness of the almost divine role of poets and poetry. In Hindi the so-called Chhayavad poets combined this romantic revelation with Vedantic realisation. In Kannada the revolution was ushered in more straight forwardly with B.M. Srikanthia's translations from the *Golden Treasury*.

The story of Bengali poetry is a little more complex. For one thing, the British arrived there about fifty years earlier. Modern Bengali poetry, as has been already suggested, had a Miltonic start. But the greatest poet of Bengal, Rabindra Nath Tagore, was undoubtedly influenced by Romantic poetry in his early years. In his remarkable article "On Modern Poetry", he writes : "The poetry to which I was introduced in my boyhood might have been classed as modern in those days. Poetry had taken a new turn, beginning from the

Poet Burns. The same urge had brought forth many other great poets, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats." But one must remember that Tagore was a colossus. He was greater than any school. No particular style could bind his ever-flowering genius. He combined in him the streaks of many schools. First of all, he was influenced by the Vaishnav devotional tradition of Chaitanya. (His Nobel award-winning *Geetanjali* was a kind of *nandadeep* sacred lamp-of devotional poetry.) Truly speaking, he carried in his bones the sensibility of the Bengali folk-art and folk-literature. But when, in the thirties, the Eliotic moderns challenged him, he wrote things which proved that he could out-modern the moderns if he chose to. At the core he was concerned with the sanctity of Man.

For a long time, in Hindi, Kannada and Marathi, the romantic muse went on weaving its alluring fabrics, although after a time these fabrics had to fade and the new ones-imitations of imitations-proved, in certain cases, downright flimsy.

The situation was saved in Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, but only to an extent in Marathi, by the advent of Gandhi and Marx.

Gandhi had the most natural impact -- if only for the fact that Gandhism was a call both to national struggle and social reforms, the two concerns which had by this time gripped the minds of many Indian writers. Gandhi's influence was more profound in Gujarati, where in Umashanker Joshi it found its natural and authentic literary voice. In Hindi, Premchand was its spokesman before he turned to Progressivism. In Marathi it found in Khandekar and Sane Guruji its impassioned voice, but both these very popular writers had an admixture of socialism in their ideology.

One reason why Gandhism did not have the kind of deep profound impact in Indian literature that it had on the national struggle, is that, in spite of the moving romantic hair of his call of "Back to Nature" (Translated as back to the villages), the call is essentially antithetical to the inner care of man's being. This call had its Freudian analogue in the cry of the 'Return to the womb of the Mother' which I think is equally doomed. Man is a part of Nature but he is ordered by the same overriding power to exist (which he is under sentence to desire almost blindly)

by absorbing another part of Nature. This means that human life is made possible by devouring the Mother. This being the basic relation between Nature and her living children, any doctrine that idolizes a kind of unnatural ( Oedipus or Electra ) relation between man and Nature is doomed at its very birth.

Another reason why Gandhi could not very deeply affect Indian literatures is that he was unnecessary. Tagore, as the authentic voice of Indian culture, as the lender of charm to the devotional streak in Gandhi, as the sophisticated spokesman of the innate catholicism of the Gandhian mind, could speak adequately enough for the great man. If the early romanticists (the products of the Indian Renaissance) stood for the natural human right of the individual, Tagore, like Gandhi, stood for the sanctity of the individual. His writings were so many avocations of the sanctity of the human being.

Marx was something different. There is an inner contradiction between the doctrine of Marxism and the nature of aesthetic sensibility. Apart from the fact that Marx's Historical Materialism ( the incredible simplification of the complex of relationships between the forces, the mode and the relations of production ) is vitiated at its very source by a confusion between 'determining' and 'conditioning',\* the very activist, instrumental, spirit of Marxism is antithetical to the intrinsic perceptual mode of aesthetic sensibility. Of course, Marxism represented a powerful mythology of the human future, but this mythology was, in practice, woefully damned by the monstrous distortion of its spirit by the red regime that monopolized the doctrine. The misfortune of the doctrine was that it came to India not as the authentic voice of Marx's, not even of Lenin, but of Stalin whose distortions of Marxism could be felt it always grasped logically by the sensitive Indian writer. In This sense Marxism had the same misfortune as the 19th century literalism of the British. It came not as a philosophy but as an ideology, and produced an identity crisis in sensitive souls. Liberalism had, of course, a long period and congenial means to seek into the Indian mind; Marxism came as a tortured cry, and a powerful blast.

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\* See my paper in *Socialism in India* / edited by B.R. Nanda and published by Vikas / produced out of the Seminars organized by the Nehru Museum of New Delhi.

The Marxian muse affected some Indian literatures strongly and some only slightly. She came in the name of progressivism. Progressivism had a flaming success in Urdu where Marxist writers wrote not with pens but with hammers and sickles. The most sophisticated expression of Marxism came in Bengali, where poets and writers like Bisnu Dey combined the ideology with Eliotic techniques. In Hindi, Premchand, Yashpal and Naresh Metha and in Kannada Dinker Desai, A. N. Krishna Rao and others were concerned not so much with techniques of expression as with the essentially social problems of economic exploitation and social justice. That Bisnu Dey thought of expressing the ideology of Marx through the techniques of T. S. Eliot was significantly original. Eliotic Techniques were admirably suited to the social wasteland which Bisnu Dey sought to portray. But only a writer of Bisnu Dey's subtle insights and imaginative powers could handle the combination successfully. As I have pointed out in the paper on the socialist impact on Marathi literature in Marathi, Marxism had a measure of success not in its heyday but later. Its two authentic voices Sharatchandra Mukhtibodh and Narayan Surve, were heard after the first flush of admiring enthusiasm was over. That in some way was unfortunate. The crude realism which Marxism always brings would have benefited the Marathi literary sensibility and would have purged it of the supine romantic senility which is what Keshavsut's rugged romanticism had degenerated into, some good time before Mardhekar arrived on the scene and delivered the healing blow.

That Freud should have proved a powerful competitor to Marx in the field of literature is understandable. As was pointed out as far back as 1926 by Max Eastman, Freudian analysis has a kinship with Marxian analysis. ( This seems to have been instinctively realised by prof. Vaman Malhar Joshi in Marathi, but his was too refined a mind to gloat over the findings of the mental underworld. But in India Freud came at a time when the post-Marxian experimental stage *a la* T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce had already opened up. Now Freud and Joyce should have nicely teamed up but the Joycean techniques of the stream of consciousness made heavy demands on the understanding of the mind and the handling of the language, and has nowhere produced the kind of masterpieces that were the rare privileges of Joyce alone. In India Freud had some unimaginative stereotype repetitive products, as in the case of Hachandra Joshi of Hindi.

It has been a matter of routine comment in India that the coming of Independence after the holocaust of communal riots ( that were unprecedented in their spread and fury ) has not stirred the literary sensibility of the Indian mind. This, in my opinion, is a wayward remark. Independence has affected our literature deeply, but not in an obligingly straightforward manner. (Art and literature do not take kindly to official panegyrics and shouts of joy.) Before the advent of independence the sensibility of the Indian writer was exercised, and in some cases obsessed, by the problems of freedom and social reform. Independence relieved him of this twin-burden, and he was now free to look within. ( That is how freedom came to him. ) He was, so to say, thrown upon himself. He had to probe the deep recesses of his mind and explore the human psyche. He had now a better grasp of the many experiential riddles which is what the mind is. Through these riddles he was drawn to the mystery of life and even of the mystery of the universe. Society now became a rather complicated factor in the complexity of the human endeavour. The universe within and the universe without coalesced to present a baffling challenge. This had both secular and spiritual expression. In the secular sense the problem now was not what ' man had made of man ' ( as in the case of Keshavsut ) but what man had made of himself (as in the case of Mardhekar.) In the spiritual sense the problem was no more one of lyrical enchantment but of realisation of cosmic consciousness. ( But let me hasten to add that I do not quite understand this latter phenomenon; but undoubtedly it has gripped the imagination of some poets like Bendre of Kannada. Consider this :

I have a longing all the while  
To lie down on the gossamer pile  
of pillowy clouds and disdain  
The very remembrance of pain

Translated by Prof. V. K. Gokak.

This inevitably led to the explorations of the many paradoxes and riddles of what is called the human predicament. This often transcended the more immediate concern of social experimentation that is going on in the country. ( That official spokesmen should



deplore this is understandable; they would otherwise be failing in their job. But when a man like Krishna Kripalani voices the complaint, one must presume that he was doing so in his capacity of the secretary of the Sahitya Akadami and not as an enlightened critic that he is.)

Human predicament is an intriguing concept. Like Eve it has many faces. One is charmed by some and disgusted by others. One can take an exalted view of the problem or a dismal one. Mardheker took both. But a class of writers has appeared in India which has rather specialised in the dismal view. Even so this requires courage. But there are other writers who have sought the therapy of escape. Some have escaped into the past and have jumped on the thing called history. History, however, is not a matter of deep feeling for them, as it was for Haribhau Apte or Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Coleridge said that "deepthinking was attainable by only a man of deep feeling". But these writers were not worried about thinking. They were interested in melodramatic pyro-technics. This tickled their fancy rather than their imagination. For instance, a writer in Marathi has set out to portray some of the acknowledged villains of history as blazing heroes. There are others for whom the detective tale has provided the means of escape that is generally not available to the criminal of the story. There are still others for whom sex (with a loud bang) has provided an easy way out. For yet another class of writers the bravado portraying man as a miserable dreg, as a natural eunuch becomes an exercise in romantic heroism. The failures around them give their pen a certain legitimacy; the thrill (synthetic thought) of participating in the worldwide protest of youth gives it an edge. But all this does not yield literature.

After this prefatory exercise of long-distance generalities, let me be a little concrete, a little specific. I will now talk of the two revolutions in Marathi poetry to which I referred.

The first of these was wrought by **Keshavsut** (1866-1905) whom I have mentioned in the passing. He sought to break the old metrical moulds and the old psychic moulds. He literally blew a new *trumpet* (He composed a poem of that name.)

Bring me a trumpet  
 Let me blow it with the force of life

.....

Let the old die its death  
 Burn it or bury it

.....

Great time the present  
 Like some glorious mound  
 Carve your beautiful sculptures in it  
 And immortalise yourself.

He infused a new revolutionary humanism into his outlook and proclaimed himself as its soldier :

I am the new soldier  
 of the new age  
 of the new spirit  
 Who dares stop me !  
 Neither Brahmin, nor Hindu, nor of any sect.

.....

I see brothers everywhere  
 Everywhere is my home

.....

They are mine, I am theirs  
 The same flow\*courses in us.

Keshavsut had a sensitive consciousness of the privileged role of the new poet and poetry. The poet's ego is, of course, a special thing. But Iqbal, the Urdu poet, gave a rather impersonal expression to it. He told the Creator :

Thou did'st create night, I made the lamp.  
 Thou did'st create clay and I made the cup,  
 Thou did'st create deserts, mountains, and forests,  
 I produced the orchards, gardens and the graves;  
 It is I who makes glass out of stone  
 And it is I who turns poison into an antidote.

(Quoted from K. R. Kripalani's Modern Indian Literature)  
 But Keshavsut's poet did not have even this measure of modesty :

"Who are you?" you ask—We are God's darlings—  
 He has given us the universe to play in  
 We stalk this universe with creative power,  
 We pierce the facade of Time and Space!  
 All your pomp and glory pale before us  
 A mere touch of ours lends brilliance to things  
 Such is the magic of our hands.  
 You only winnow the husk, we pick up the grain.  
 Who created colonies of God in empty space?  
 Who made a heaven out of this earth?  
 We !—whose creations bristle with the glow of  
 nectar;

Yes, We !——who are a divine sanctuary.

Drop us—and the starry firmaments will lose their  
light;

Drop us ——and life will not be worth a damned farthing!\*

But Keshavsut's consciousness had a profounder framework. Like Wordsworth he had the intimations of immortality, which gave us such magnificent products as *Zapurza* and *Harapalen Shreya*.

Some think that this streak of mysticism started with Keshavsut. This is not exactly true. Tambe (who started writing almost contemporaneously with Keshavsut) had this streak— and surprisingly some of his lines breathe the spirit, and sometimes the beauty, of Tagore. They were not borrowed. Tambe, however, lacked the pervasive genius of Tagore. He did not like Keshavsut's poetry; but others with greater strength followed, and they were glad and grateful to acknowledge the debt they owed to Keshavsut.

Later on, however, Marathi poetry degenerated into inane imitations of these poets' creations, boasting only of some metrical innovations. There was perhaps one exception, Madhav Julian who could at times take a satirical view of the middle-class

\*The basis for these translations was provided by Mr. Prabhakar Machwe's from his book on Keshavsut, but a reference to his translations will show that they had to be redone almost entirely.

hypocrisies. The real exception was Kusumagraj; but he was no pioneer. P. S. Rege showed surprising possibilities of sensuous evocation and of sensual charm, but he also could not give the jolt that the complacency of Marathi sensibility so badly needed. We missed the furious Marxists and it was left to Mardhekar to make the necessary revolution.

I will not try to describe all the stylistic and linguistic cracks that Mardhekar introduced in order to convey the dissociation of sensibility. No amount of comment (particularly in a foreign language) can give the tang of such things. I will only say that Mardhekar was a conscious follower of T.S. Eliot and G. M. Hopkins. He was concerned to depict the wasteland that the second world war had created. But this wasteland was not physical; rather it was inner. More particularly it was the result of man's mental dissociation. He strove to catch the rhythm of this aberration—both in style and in spirit. He strove to convey the devastating meaninglessness of all this. Consider the following:

The skeletons laugh, the skeletons laugh  
Watching the flesh rot away  
However well hidden, the glint of the molars  
Is bound to show some day.

Just ask them, even when you fuck,  
Do you really get much kick?  
They'll show you a gaping cavity  
Where should have hung a fleshy prick!

Spring the question. Just how far  
Do the frontiers of your mind extended ?  
Inside their rattle-heads the laugh  
of withered marrow will resound.

And lastly, if you ask them,  
'So, how wide is your domain ?'  
They'll show you something white  
Where meaty buttocks should have been.

Oh Good old honest Bhairav, \*  
 (If you really do exist!)  
 Open your three burning eyes—  
 Reduce these skeletons to dust.

—Translated by Graham Smith.

Even more beautifully —

A forest of yellow bamboos sings  
 Sky's scriblings

Grinds the cosmic cognition  
 And pledges to live  
 (but tomorrow).

The lemon tree carves in the wind  
 sexless staghorns of ancient predictions

Which reveal  
 New but  
 Dead footprints

Innumerable crows dot  
 The pylons of a hundred centuries

Verbs on guard  
 Stand ready  
 But, mere robots.

The pole star falls  
 Urus is non-plussed

Hail falls unfrozen  
 And on the radio  
 An erotic blare.

As he himself says, Mardhekar was "drunk with the acid of circumstances." But his framework was large, almost co-terminus with that of human existence. He often asks questions which are funda-

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\* The formidable Lord Shiva.

mental, which go to the roots of the mystery of life and existence. His poems read like congealed driplets of what existentialists call 'angst'. They point to the meaninglessness of life as he sees it, and reminds you of Camus' *The Outsider*. But one ought to be cautious here—carefully cautious. Camus, in *The Outsider*, is concerned with what he thought was the essential absurdity of life—an absurdity bound up with the very mode of human existence. (It must always be remembered that Camus was no existentialist of the Sartrean type. Sartre tried to overcome the absurdity of life by Commitment. In Camus, Commitment was out of the question.) But Mardhekar has a deep commitment to life, which is beautifully consecrated in a devotional poem :

Let my hardness  
Break, let the mind's  
Acid clear;  
Let my voice bear  
The tunes You love.

Let the dirt  
Of my known intent  
clear; and put  
In the core of my Inspiration  
Your seeds.

Lord, you are the master of meaning  
I am a mere beggar  
Carrying burdens of words....

Still more beautifully Mardhekar's inner faith is revealed in the poem he wrote on the murder of the Mahatma :

“(I fondly hoped)  
The puritan mould  
Of the sky would crack;  
Or the body of the earth  
Would tear asunder.”

No such thing happened:  
 Only stale elegiac words  
 Floated in the air:  
 And  
 A two-minute cold silence  
 Shivered and lapsed on snobs."

— Said January

And then it passed on to February  
 And the Anno Domini  
 Started Time's ruthless march!

-And may some more years pass  
 Let the next Mahatma come forth  
 To help us look at ourselves  
 Without specs, without blinkers! \*

The acid in Mardhekar's heart was softened by a deep faith in man and God. This enabled him to hark back to the mood and sometimes diction of Saint Tukaram. Mardhekar married Eliotic techniques to a deeply felt humanistic belief. In this sense his was no break with Keshavsut. In fact his early poems swam freely in the romantic stream.

I wonder if the general run of poets who followed him (with a few exceptions like Arati Prabhu) ever understood the inner core of the Mardhekarian revolution. They seem to have only its negative aspects. Perhaps they are the authentic voices of the prevailing cynicism. This is how they sound -

- 1) In tubercular expanse between branches  
 Autumns revolve in the fraudulent sunlight

Sunward water-lilies deceitful as tarts  
 The branches fabricate laughter the branches  
 In interior tubercular expanse wear off

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\* These translations from Mardhekar are based on Dilip Chitre's translations from his *Anthology of Contemporary Marathi Poetry*. These also have been substantially altered, as will be noticed by a reference to the book.

Drunk on vaginal darkness the tree spreads  
 A bloated tubercular swelling let someone  
 Chant someone console let someone  
 Get coffin someone fetch a bottle  
 of cynide so the tree turn  
 Black and blue in a mouthful of blood.

– **Sateesh Kalsekar.**

Translated from the Marathi by Vilas Sarang.

- 2) Snake, you were never civilised  
 And you never learned  
 How to live in the city.  
 I would like to ask– (if you will answer)–  
 How, then, did you learn to bite --  
 Where did you get the poison ?

–**Ajneya**, Translated from the Hindi by the author.

- 3) Bedbugs titillate the lovers. The sultry air  
 Makes them sullen...  
 Lovers crush the elementary bedbugs  
 But the eggs laid by light in the seams of their minds  
 Issue pertinently sharp and firebrand neo-bugs  
 Which are hard to switch off  
 And the sultry air too continues unchecked.

–**Arun Kolatkar.**

Translated from the Marathi by Dilip Chitre.

- 4) There is a drop of blood at the tip of my pen  
 Take, oh, take it away !  
 Wash your gods in it  
 Baptise your parents,  
 And go down the Fallopian drain !  
 And with this round little red  
 Make the lunar disc a little more pink :  
 So our solar system may stink  
 — Let bloody **Brahma** wink !

–**Ayyappa Panicker.**

Translated from the Malayalam by the author.



- 5) i am the song raped in the streets  
 bitten brutally naked on the roads.  
 i am the symphony  
 crushed in the concrete thighs of the vested interests  
 i am the breasts that were torn by the cruel breed  
 i am the foetus, deed and decayed  
 of fame-maniacs  
 under the carnal passions of callous poetasters  
 ( that parade others' poems as theirs )  
 scoundrels that want to shape their fiendishness  
 in the pearls of printed letters they raped me  
 beauty left aside-i reflect brutality  
 i am the song raped intolerable .....

—Bhairavayya,

Translated from the Telugu by V. Narayan Rao.

The story will surely not end here. The human spirit will not accept defeat. More importantly poetic sensibility will not. Poetic sensibility is born of wonder and fascination of experience – for its own sake. It is inspired by faith in perception itself– and perception is the foundation of life. It strives to touch deeper rhythms of life– the rhythms of energy that are the root of the evolutionary stream. Its strength and charm consist in this. That is precisely why art refuses to accept the shackles of the practical. That is why– it is able to create a world of its own– the divine colonies of which Keshavsut spoke.

This is the original spring of life–and mere cynicism cannot suppress it, nor can nihilism annihilate it. Poetic imagination is its ambassador who will not rest with a negative credo–a credo that can but seek its expression in obsessed sex, violence or morbid obscenities. A new revolution is inevitable.

I believe the ground for such a revolution is being prepared in the Indian situation itself. Hundreds of communities and literally thousands of individuals who were formerly denied participation in the life of the mind are now being educated in the modern way. A new world is being revealed to them exactly in the way the British-born renaissance revealed a new world to Keshavsut and others. Their eyes are currently scanning the horizons of this new world.

The first awakenings may of necessity be angry and bitter. They are. Theirs are frustrations worse frustrated. But they will, in good time, lead to a positive revolution.

This will also answer a persistent query. Why is Indian literature, by world standards, second-rate? An easy answer is found in the worship of the English language. This was suggested quite early in the day by the late Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade – a great pioneer of the Indian Renaissance. In his report on the Marathi writings in the 19th century he noted that creative writing was more fruitfully done by those who had escaped the grill of university education. This suggestion has been built into the theory, by men like Sardar Panikkar, that excessive dependence on the English language somehow starved the Indian intellect of originality.

Perhaps Panikkar was right. But I think the malady lies elsewhere. It is the caste system and the Brahmanic monopoly of learning that is responsible here. The Indian writers who mostly came from the higher castes were deprived of the magic touch of the life and language of the lower caste masses. There is no free circulation of the linguistic blood through the arteries of the Indian society. Therefore there is a lot of clotting of this life-giving blood. This has sapped the native strength and vigour of the literatures of India.

With the new writers from these long suppressed backward communities, Indian literature (excepting perhaps a narrow strip of it ) will, for the first time, drink at a vital stream of language. This will facilitate the emergence of the revolution I am looking for.



## CONTEMPORARY MARATHI POETRY

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Vasant Abaji Dahake

It is a contradiction that though there are four generations of poets, who have been composing poems at one and the same time, they may not be categorically called contemporary poets. Some of them lack awareness of the objective reality in the world of today. If I am to define contemporary poetry, I should call it the poetry of contemporary consciousness. In this essay, I intend to discuss the salient features of poetry written since 1960.

B. S. Mardhekar's '*Kahi Kavita*' ( Some Poems, 1947 ) created an epoch in Marathi poetry. The harsh tone of ' Some Poems' was a blow to the pseudo poetry of Ravikiran Mandal. The themes of these poems were war, death, mechanical life, lack of faith, shattered ideals, feeling of shame and nausea, the completely disordered life of an individual. Here we find a post-war human being suffering from the sickness of the 20th Century. Mardhekar has portrayed this sick, post-war world in his poems. He has realised the futility, absurdity, resentment and anguish of human existence.

'Life too is a compulsion  
death too is a compulsion'  
'The terror of darkness is vast  
The call of darkness is sudden'

( Translated by Dilip Chitre )

The experience expressed in these lines was new for Marathi sensibility. This was a kind of new poetry.

Mardhekar, besides writing poetry, was writing new poetics also. He formulated new poetry, by saying that its essence lies in new images. The young poets were influenced by Mardhekar's poems and his poetics. But their poetry lacks post-war consciousness. It is mainly of an experimental type. P. S. Rege, Vinda

Karandikar, Mangesh Padgaonkar were making new experiments in poetic expression. P. S. Rege achieved a great success in this field. He created his own language of poetry. Kusumagraj, Anil and Borkar were writing poetry at the same time. They were not influenced by Mardhekar in the least. In fact, there was a deep impact of Kusumagraj and Anil on Karandikar and Padgaonkar. These young poets gave up their socio-political attitude manifested in initial stages of their poetry and developed infatuation with musical rhythm and magic of words temporarily. Nature and love were the themes of most of their poems.

Sharadchandra Muktibodh, a committed Marxist, is another outstanding poet who has been writing socio-political poems in a true sense. In his poems, we see the decay of human condition and a robust optimism. He hopes a new society will emerge through a revolution brought about by the suppressed and exploited miserables.

'Be wounded in your innermost death !  
and the wound alone shall be  
your sun and fulfilment.'

(Translated by Dilip Chitre)

This is the call of his poems.

Arati Prabhu and Dilip Chitre are the major poets of the third generation. Arati Prabhu's 'Jogwa' was published in 1959 and 'Divelagan' in 1962. Dilip Chitre's volume of poems 'Kavita' was published in 1960. The poetry of Arati Prabhu and Dilip Chitre has an inner-relation to the poetry of B. S. Mardhekar. They are also over-shadowed by the post-Mardhekar experimental poetry.

The absurdity of life, a feeling of shame, imagery and rhythmic construction are the characteristics of Arati Prabhu's poetry. Apart from these two collections, the poems which are still lying in the pages of *Sattyakatha*, a literary journal, are remarkable in the context of contemporary consciousness. Most of these poems are lengthy. The thought within the poem has taken a typical form of expression. These poems are like soliloquies. In 'the Prayer' (*Sattyakatha* Nov. 1967) the poet is conversing with his soul. The

soul is the only guard in this decaying world. It is not a fake thing. It is there in the heart of heart, waiting for the awakening of mankind. The poet is not addressing a singular self. The individual is universal. He is connected with the universal humanity as a whole. The poet has a deep understanding of human life. 'I' cannot be separated from the masses. The helpless human being is under the pressure of a mysterious fate, an inexplicable destiny. The world "outside" is ugly. We are alone in the noise and rush of this world. Arati Prabhu in his poems seeks the meaning of life, the relationship between the mortals.

Dilip Chitre has the rare qualities of a genius. His verbal experiments, his dialect of love and death, the mystical atmosphere in his poems, have ensured his achievement as a poet. The poems written after the publication of 'Kavita' (The Poems) have a tremendous flow. The content has its own rhythm. His poetry is self-centred, the outcome of an individual "beingness". He alienates himself from the outer world. The self detached from this incongruous life indulges in its own sensations, feelings and passions. He is aware of the fleeting existence of a human being, its mortality and the logic of destiny. He believes in his physique, and its senses. He has a feeling that his bodily structure is connected somewhere with this gigantic universe. He enjoys touching everything. Through these hands, eyes, ears he feels the cosmic reality. What is significant to him is the experience of identity, of affinity and touch, hence sex stimulates him to identity. His eroticism has a symbolic value.

Mangesh Padgaonkar has been writing poetry since 1950. After 1960 he developed a very different style. His '*Vidushaka*' (The Clown) was published in 1966. This collection and the poems scattered in the periodicals have an important place in contemporary poetry. These poems depict a very realistic picture of the hollowness in the middle-class life. This middle-class man has lost his identity. He has no guts, no place in the present technocratic society. He is crushed under mechanical life. The events on the international scene are out of focus for him. He is limited to his own domesticity of everyday life. He reads about wars, politics, business in the newspapers. But the problems do not affect his

mind. He goes on the beaten track. The life which he lives is not of any worth. But instead of analysing it rationally, he sleeps over it and is lost in the drudgery of life. He never challenges it as a rebel.

In a commercial society, there are murderous competitions, lion-masked lambs, politics in cultural and educational institutions. Any tobacco-merchant or an insurance-agent can open a school or a college, the leaders tell stuffed philosophy, the hero of the crowd begs votes, the so-called "great men" and the cultural bastards of commercial radio- these are the various themes projected in his poems. The common man is lost in this indifferent world. The poet eventually laments over it but the tone underlying it is ironical. The poet feels pity for the common man. He has affection for him because he is also one of them. He is also helpless like others. So he reacts in a satirical tone. He is the only poet criticizing the present politics bitterly. "Lionman", "Hypnotist", "Oh! my lambs", - these poems expose the pretensions of politicians among the people. Padgaonkar tears out the mask of democracy, and shows the ugly reality which is hidden under the layer of people's Raj. Socio-political satire is a remarkable aspect of Padgaonkar's poetry.

After 1960 a new generation of poets emerged. Every poet has his own diction and style. With reservations we can name two main schools, 1) 'the pure poetry' and 2) 'the poetry of social consciousness'. The poetry being written today comes under either title.

'*Jwala Ani Fule*' (The flames and flowers) by Baba Amte was published in 1964. While creating a paradise for the lepers, his vision was grasping the meaning of life, his mind was struggling with the dogmatic thoughts and his hands were working in the service of lepers, the out-caste human beings. The frustrated young generation was dumbfounded and helpless. It was confined to a self-created shell. Amte calls upon the young generation for a total revolution. The revolution is bloodless. Labour is its weapon. In his 'Footprints of Revolution' he compares revolution with Sita. When a new government is established, the revolution is nowhere. Amte is aware of the destruction which comes from a bloody revolution. In 'The City of Skeletons', he has pictured an industrial world. This world has a cemented show face. The iron-hearts, the

paper-brains have only sensuality. Coition is the only cause of their existence. Under this industrial and mechanical world, an enormous drainage is flowing. In that drainage, there is another culture of the have-nots. And there is the third world of insects and vultures. Beyond this city, there is a green valley and a blue sky. In his poems he is constantly in search of that green valley. We have to create a new society from these ruins. We have to shape a new world through human labour. This is the content of his poetry. His prosaic but vigorous language has a prophetic tone.

Narayan Survey, a writer of the working class, has published two collections of poems *Aisa Ga Mi Brahma* (1962) and *Maze Vidyapith* (1966). The hopes and aspirations, the despairs and pleasures of the working class have been captured in a perfect idiom in his proletarian poetry. We find here a realistic picture of the wretched domestic life of the working class. Nourished by Marxist philosophy, the poet visualises the labourers being crushed under the heels of demoniac industry. He does not reconcile himself to their tragic lot, but as a rebel, protests in a language of revolution, and provokes them to take up arms.

In his poem "My Universities" he narrates, the story of his life. As a homeless child, he was reared up on the footpath. Thus, he describes the miserable life of the have-nots with authenticity. The tone is dispassionate and the attitude is purely objective. He moves in a totally strange world of the down-trodden class and familiarises himself with its ways and manners, with a view to making himself an adept at living in this abominably naked world. At times desperate, the poet laments over the loss of the dignity of man and over the curse that has condemned him to survival as there is no escape from life. There is no promised heaven we have been waiting for. Survey hates stereotyped life. He spits on it. Life is unbearable to him, on account of its pitiable compromises. This life which negates his existence every day is intolerable for him. Survey writes in cold blood with all simplicity.

Grace "Writes lyrical poetry. His "*Sandhyakalchya Kavita*" ( Poems of the Evening ) was published in 1967. The rhythmical structure, the feeling of dejection and loneliness, the visual images, myths and a longing for the unknown are the manifest aspects of

his poetic genius. He feels lonely on a quiet and infinite evening. He experiences the stillness of the world, a mystic sandness, and feels the strangeness of an invisible power. The touch of grief through all directions, takes the shape of a poem. The encircling gloom suggests an all-pervading death. The touch of death casts a charm to make his poetry sublime but obscure.

N. D. Mahanor writes pastoral poetry. He has published two collections of poems, "*Ranathya Kavita*" ( Poems of the Greens ) 1967 and "*Vahi*" 1971. Nature is the central theme of his poetry. He has experienced the variety of nature in multiple shapes and shades. He feels its sensations. Mahanor not only personifies nature but also gives existence to it. He does not humanise nature. It is a living identity for him. Nature itself speaks through the poems.

The form of his poetry is different from the traditional pastoral poems. It evolves from the folk songs. Mahanor expresses his experience in an objective lyrical style.

Madhukar Keche, M. M. Deshpande, V. J. Borkar are some other names who have written lyrical poetry. I feel a tone of religiosity in their poems. The disintegration of religion and reality is the theme of Gurunath Dhuri's poems. His "*Gloria*" was published in 1971. In his poem, "*the Voyage*", he asks who has imprisoned him in this huge palace. All the doors are closed. He is struggling against darkness and striving hard to come out but in vain. He experiences cruelty and love simultaneously. He is torn between pleasure and disaster. Though caught up in a dilemma, he feels that human life might emerge out of the ruins.

The world of the "little magazines" is an adequate representation of the agonies and pains, moans and groans, anger and cynicism, monotony and boredom of the younger generation. The young "little poets" - the poets writing in little magazines - have cast away traditional diction and out-moded idiom of poetry. They do not accept the old verse forms and go on juxtaposing words one after another, to weave a peculiar pattern of their own. And still we can understand the immense potentialities of their verse to convey the anguish of contemporary humanity.



Arun Kolatkar has not published his collection. His poems are scattered in the little magazines. About his "black poems" which were published in 'Atharva', Dilip Chitre writes : "Kolatkar feels a strange attraction for the sinister. In fact, it is almost a Kafkaesque mania. He is obsessed with sex, death, disintegration and the strangeness of living things." (An Anthology of Marathi Poetry).

Bhalchandra Nemade writes a poetry of boredom and helplessness. The simplicity and straightforwardness of his poems affect our heart and appeal to our mind. While reading his poems, I visualize a rustic lad who deserts his village, and gets fumbled and embarrassed in the harsh reality of urban life. He senses monstrosity behind the glamour and plunges into deep sorrow and desperation. His collection "*Melody*" was published in 1970.

Manohar Oke, criticizes society in a satirical tone. He has a fascination for the verbal form of poetry. He follows an automatic flow of words to compose his poems.

Vasant Gurjar also uses the same technique in his poem "*Godi*" (The Dockyard), but with a difference. The syllables do not make any meaningful sentence. But each and every word depicts a vivid picture of the dockyard alongwith the miserable life of the workmen. On the other hand, Chandrakant Khot, uses words in his book of poems "*Martik*" (The funeral), in a distinctly absurd manner. He does not approve of the accepted norms of poetry. The conventional views and norms of life do not find any place in his poems. Should we call it a kind of anti-poetry in Marathi? The answer is anybody's guess.

Satish Kalsekar and Namdeo Dhasal, strike a distinctive note of the all-embracing sex. Kalsekar in his "*Indriyopanishada*" is lost in the darkness of passions. In his poem "*Nishasukha*", he is praying for darkness to descend from all directions to envelop him and pervade all over life. The self-created suns are smashed and there is no hope for the light. He can forget his pains and his soul can find solace only in total darkness.

Namdeo Dhasal writes a sort of "Protest Poetry" - the poetry against the Establishment. He moves in a hell of prostitutes and pinps. In his poems, the pains and bitter experiences of the out-

castes and the down-trodden society, become eloquent in a volcanic language. Dhasal does not use sophisticated language. His poetry becomes more expressive by the use of obscene words.

Chandrakant Patil's latest long poem "*Apathy*" is a remarkable political satire. The hollowness of our democratic set-up, cheap social life, intellectual bankruptcy and meaninglessness of franchise-are the aspects through which he aspires to portray the pretensions of the socio-political life of the white-collared society.

Marathi poetry after the sixties, according to me, reveals broadly, these characteristics. Primarily there is a search for a new idiom of expression. for verbal experimentation, a movement towards what we may call 'pure poetry'.

Thematically speaking this poetry is intimately engaged with existence. It is never escapist. It reveals a great socio-political awareness. The poetry after the sixties is against the Establishment. It has also its own obsessions with sex, death and despair. This poetry reflects relevant contemporary situation. It tries to express the tensions of modern life, the struggle for existence, the unbearable despair, the sensitivity of an individual and the eternal cry of human pain.

I am fully aware that there are still some poets, for example, Sharad Satam, Suresh Bhat, Keshav Meshram, Suresh Mathure, Sambhaji Kadam, who need to be mentioned. The canvas is quite large and I have my own limitations.

Before I conclude, I would mention Vasant Abaji Dahake's *Yoghrashta*. I reserve my comments. You know, why ?



## CONTEMPORARY MARATHI FICTION

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Gangadhar Gadgil

Contemporary Marathi fiction has developed into a broad and variegated stream. This development is closely related to the vast social changes that have taken place since Independence.

The spread of literacy and education and the growth of the middle income group have brought about a considerable increase in readership. For more periodicals and books are now being published and the average edition of a book is bigger than it used to be in earlier years. The mortality rate of periodicals and publishing houses has sharply declined and a number of publishers are now enjoying a prosperity which was inconceivable twentyfive years ago. It is not easy even now, except for a successful playwright, to make a living as a professional writer. But there are a few writers who manage to live in a fair degree of comfort on their literary earnings. Slowly but surely writing is becoming a profession and publishing a viable business. Inevitably, this has its effects both wholesome and not so wholesome on the quality of Marathi fiction.

With the increasing professionalization of literary activity, writers find it possible and worthwhile to devote more time and effort to their writing. There is also a keener competition to get published and catch the attention of the reading public. As a result, there is a distinct improvement in the competence with which fiction is written. There is a conscious search for variety in themes and presentation. Such heightened competence does not necessarily result in artistic creation or merit. But it provides a fertile field of rich and varied possibilities in which genuine works of art can germinate and grow. It constitutes a launching pad from which creative imagination can soar high and free. A great writer fashions his masterpieces in his loneliness. Nonetheless, he is greatly indebted to the bustle and wares of the literary market place; and the more active and well stocked it is, so much the better for him.

Inevitably, with this increasing professionalization, Marathi writers of fiction are being called upon to meet the needs of the literary market. There is a growing demand for detective stories and this is being met by a growing tribe of writers. There is similarly a demand for story books for children and for boys and girls of school going age. The historical novel has a growing clientele of its own and the biographical novel has also caught the fancy of the readers. Violence in all forms including war as well as sex are themes with a universal appeal. This appeal waxes and wanes at different periods of time and at the moment it seems to be waxing. There is therefore a spate of novels and short stories dealing with sexual themes with a candour that is often excessive. Marathi writers are writing with blatant frankness about sexual experience (generally extra-marital) in all its forms, the emphasis being on the crude and morbid. The simple love story, rather artless and romanticized, has a perennial appeal and fiction of this genre is being written and enjoyed with a rather monotonous regularity.

I am not suggesting that fiction in Marathi is being written with the sole purpose of meeting the demands of the market. But the preferences of readers do exercise an influence on the kind of fiction that gets written and this influence is often underestimated. Moreover, it is incorrect to presume that the pulls of the market inevitably vulgarize and commercialize literature, although they do have this kind of effect. After all the market reflects the preferences of readers which are born out of their genuine urges, impulses and needs. Moreover, the varied and broad preferences of readers leave enough freedom to the genuine literary artist to express himself without much constraint.

At the same time commercialization does have its unhealthy effects. It results in a lot of writing that is vulgar and debased. Moreover, it is often mistaken for genuine stuff. In fact, deliberate efforts are made for this purpose with obvious intentions. Such efforts do succeed and thereby corrupt literary taste and values. This process is very much in evidence in the world of Marathi fiction today and what is second rate or even fake is being elevated to a high literary pedestal.

One trouble with this process of commercialization is that it has not gone far enough. The readership of literary periodicals has increased but not to a degree where a writer can get a decent fee for contributing a short story to one of them. There is a class of readers who read a large number of periodicals by borrowing them from circulating libraries. The same is true about books. A large number of titles are published and sold; but the sale of each title is limited to two to three thousand copies, which are purchased mainly by libraries. This means that a writer has to write a large number of short stories or novels in order to earn a reasonable income. This has had an unhealthy effect on the quality of writing. Writers in general could not write as well as they would. They are too busy writing far too much.

While readers, who constitute literary markets, are thus exerting their influence on fiction, writers' urge for self-expression is also inevitably determining its form and substance. Both readers and writers, however, are caught in the strong current of social change, which is transforming their attitudes and urges.

It would be convenient to try to understand trends in Marathi fiction in the context of the social changes that are taking place. This does not imply that social forces are the sole determinants of literary trends. The unique vision of a writer cannot be explained or interpreted in such general terms. In fact, to speak of trends in literature is itself not legitimate beyond a certain point. But, provided the limitations are well understood, efforts at generalization, like the present one, have their usefulness; and the social context provides a convenient vantage point from which one can launch into such generalizations.

Liberalization or rather liberation is a basic social trend in Maharashtra today. The rigid hierarchical structure of our society, with a detailed code of 'dos' and 'don'ts' regulating every aspect of human relationship and behaviour, is fast breaking up. This is the consequence of the rapid process of modernization and also of the democratic constitution we have given ourselves. The process started over a hundred years ago. But the process has gathered momentum and is extending itself to all corners of life. This has brought about a distinct qualitative change in attitudes, responses and behaviour, which is inevitably being reflected in literature.

Untouchability was abolished by law quite some years ago. But in recent years, there has been a great and welcome awakening in this deprived social class. They have become conscious of their rights and also of the full extent and ramifications of their deprivation. They are impatient to shed their inferiority and disabilities and to live with dignity and freedom and to enjoy the opportunities to which they are entitled. They, however, find that what has been given to them by law is being denied to them in practice by the society. This has created in them a mood of black frustration and anger. They refuse to belong to a society which rejects them. This mood of theirs is finding expression in a literature of violent protest. A class of impatient and articulate young men among them is trying to fashion a movement very consciously modelled on that of the Black Panthers in the United States. The literature of protest is to some degree an integral part of this movement.

A brutal frankness, pitiless exposure of deep and festering wounds, a burning anger and hatred, an unredeemed frustration, an impatient and total rejection of society, a call for ruthless vengeance are inevitably the characteristics of this kind of literature of protest. It is stark, it hits you in the guts, it is loud, it is shrill like the screech of a wounded and desperate animal, it is so ugly, it makes your stomach turn. It is not content to be just literature. In fact it calls into question the very definition of literature.

To evaluate it as literature may seem irrelevant to those who write it. Yet eventually with the lapse of time when it ceases to be relevant to the contemporary situation it will have value only as literature (apart of course from its significance as an historical record). And in any case in this paper we are concerned with it only as literature.

This literature is not quite as dark and violent as it means to be. Nor does it represent a basic or total rejection of the tradition of Marathi literature. Yet it is different and has extended the periphery of Marathi fiction.

It is possible to write works of literary merit with the kind of ingredients that go into the literature of protest and some of the writers have done so. None, however, has produced a literary masterpiece so far.

Protest can become an obsession. In fact the movement of protest demands that it should be an obsession, a total commitment. Now an obsessed mind, like that of Dostoevsky can produce great works of art. But an obsession can also narrow one's sympathies, inhibit the free play of imagination and blunt one's literary sensibility. A commitment is much more likely to have such an effect. Those who belong to this movement of protest do not seem to be aware of these dangers.

Protest is, however, now confined to this school of writers. It permeates a large body of Marathi fiction. The sense of disenchantment and frustration is widespread in the society and among writers. That this should be so is natural enough. But this general wave of protest enables a lot of poor writing to masquerade as genuine stuff, loudness can pass off as boldness, vulgarity can claim to be realistic insight, sentimentality can pose as deep sympathy, lack of sensitivity can be mistaken as bluntness and verbal tricks can pretend to be stylistic accomplishments. Unfortunately this is happening to a considerable degree and supposedly perceptive critics fail to perceive it. It is possible that some of them do perceive this intended or unintended deception, but consider it politic to remain silent or worse still, to swim with the current.

The process of the liberation of the woman has now acquired a faster tempo, at least so far as the middle classes are concerned. More and more women are being educated and many of them are taking up employment. They are also generally playing an increasingly important part in social life. This has not given rise to a woman's liberation movement, though it might erupt at any time. However, the entire code of marital and sexual morality is being weakened. The moral and sentimental cocoons in which sex used to be wrapped, are being torn up, and sex is being openly experienced and understood as sex.

Not only women but also the youth are being liberated from the old code of obedience and discipline; and their youthful exuberance is finding varied expression including the literary. Now it is the young who have a compelling or even obsessive interest in sex, and this is finding literary expression with all the exuberance and excess peculiar to the young.

There is a general disenchantment with the social code of morality which nobody seems to observe, and a growing awareness of how hollow the expressions of fine sentiment are. This is contributing to the preoccupation with sex. In a situation such as this, only the physical experiences have the saving grace of being genuine. Sex is physical and therefore genuine. There is therefore an urge to experience and understand sex in the raw, shorn of all the moral and emotional aura around it.

All attempts at interpreting literary trends in terms of broad social tendencies are inadequate, and the above attempt to explain the preoccupation with sex in social terms is no exception. But it does offer a perspective and framework which is useful.

Writers of all times have been deeply interested in sex, and the cry of obscenity is heard when every new literary movement bursts on the scene. One should not therefore exaggerate the preoccupation with sex of contemporary Marathi fiction. Yet it cannot be denied that it is there. Writers are handling sex in all its normal, abnormal and morbid expressions with a brutal frankness.

Some of this kind of writing is plain pornography. Writing pornography could be as titillating an experience as reading it and in any case it can be a profitable activity. For, pornography sells. The growing commercialization of the field of literature has made the writing of pornography more profitable and naturally far more of it is being written. This seems to be a cause for worry to many. But pornographic writing creates its own antidotes. The more commercially paying it is to write pornography, the more it is written. And the more it is available to readers, less and less titillating it becomes. Further if pornographic writing is easily accessible reading it ceases to give the thrill of breaking a taboo. The general experience is that pornographic writing occupies only a marginal place in literature. The fears that it would become the main preoccupation of readers is largely exaggerated. To take legal steps against pornographic writing is therefore unnecessary apart from being dangerous to the writer's freedom.

Some of those who write pornography because it sells, try to pretend that what they write is literature. Even significant writers do write pornography and claim that it is literature, either deliberately



or through a genuine inability to discriminate between the two. Such claims are likely to be accepted and result in the corruption of literary taste. It is this effect of pornographic writing that should worry us more.

Pornography apart, sexual experience is being expressed with greater freedom and frankness in Marathi fiction. This has resulted in not only widening the range of experiences which find expression in Marathi fiction, but also in giving greater substance and reality to the entire gamut of experiences with which it deals. For sex is an integral part of almost the entire range of human experiences.

As a footnote to all this, one must observe that although writers are writing boldly and frankly about the physical experience of sex, they are not writing about it observantly enough. Every physical act of sex has its distinctive flavour. The initial titillation that arouses desire, the path followed by growing excitement and the loveplay that accompanies it, the physical sensations of the act of coitus, the frenzied climax, the sense of emptiness and satiety that follows – all these are different in each case. So are the complex emotional responses associated with the act. But Marathi writers seem to be missing these finer points in their excitement over writing frankly about sex.

Sex should be shorn of the fake sentimentality and moral attitudes that are artificially associated with it. But sexual experience is not and cannot be purely a physical experience. Delicate and soft feelings and varied thoughts are associated with it. It does give rise to moral sentiments and questions. To ignore this is as much a distortion of reality as wrapping up sex in sentimentality.

The tendency to reject sentimentality and fine moral sentiments is not confined to the area of sexual experience. It is all pervasive. This has no doubt resulted in a tough and sturdy realism, which is healthy and welcome to a degree. It is one more aspect of the process of liberation that is at work. At times, however, writers seem to forget that delicate and soft feelings as well as fine moral scruples are as much a part of life as raw passions and blind urges. To reject the emotional ingredients of experience as sentimentality and all moral scruples as fake is also a distortion of experience.

There is something common in the worlds of experience of all the outstanding younger writers of Marathi fiction. They convey a sense of chaos, of any lack of order or coherence. Any attempt to interpret life or to seek even a nebulous order in it seems to be irrelevant. Each atom of experience exists in itself or by itself, jostling with others in a confused whirl. The writer views it with a combination of helpless involvement and numbed neutrality. Some describe this as an existentialist attitude. I cannot do so, because the term 'existentialism' seems to lack a definite meaning, or at least I have failed to perceive it in concrete terms.

This sense of chaos—of a total lack of coherence - is only partly a reflection of the contemporary social situation. It is something deeper, and therefore of considerable literary value.

This sense of chaos has affected the language used by these writers. It continues to have a grammatical and syntactic structure. But it is imbued with the feeling that it is trying to express what cannot be expressed. It lacks the minimal substantiality and coherence that are necessary in anything that can possibly be expressed. One gets fooled all the time when one reads the works of Khanolkar because he tries to say something but actually does not. But he writes the way he does, because there is nothing else he can do.

Inevitably, what is a need with a writer like Khanolkar, has become a literary fashion among many lesser writers. It also incidentally provides an easy escape from the responsibility to seek coherence and to articulate what is inchoate. Not all the writers of this sort are dishonest. Some of them are the victims of a sincere illusion. They should gather solace from the fact that some supposedly distinguished critics have been similarly fooled.

Every generation feels the need to relate itself to the past. It can do this only by viewing the past in its own perspective - by reinterpreting it in terms of its own experiences and predicament. This is done partly through the medium of fiction. To meet this need there is a spate of historical and biographical novels in Marathi. Shiwaji, his father Shahaji and son Sambhaji, the Peshwas, the great Maratha Sardars as well as the 19th century builders of modern Maharashtra have provided the themes for such fiction. It is but natural

that most of it should have been written at a popular level. What is sad is that there is hardly any work of significant literary merit in this whole genus of fiction. Apart from lacking in literary merit, there is a wilful and callous distortion of truth in these novels. This is matched by an equal ineptitude in understanding these men and the history they made.

Only two semi-fictional works on the Mahabharat, written by two women scholars seem to be an exception to this dreary and sordid literary performance.

The author of 'Durdamya' a biographical novel on Tilak, also claims to have written a book that is significant. I cannot say whether this brash claim is justified, because I myself happen to be that author.

This survey of contemporary Marathi fiction has naturally concentrated its focus on the new trends that have appeared in the last decade or so. Writers representing earlier literary movements still continue to write. Most of them enjoy a degree of popularity and some of them at least have written works of considerable literary merit. While it is legitimate not to focus attention on them, it is necessary to relate the new trends to those that preceded them.

'Navasahitya' was the literary movement that preceded the emergence of the new trends mentioned above, and in many ways contemporary fiction has moved forward in the direction set by the creators of 'Navasahitya'. 'Navasahitya' introduced a new concept of form: it took cognizance of the irrational and sub-conscious urges and mental processes and brought out the intimate relation of the body and the mind; it extended the range of experiences covered by Marathi fiction both horizontally and vertically; it brought a greater awareness and sensitivity in the responses to events and as a consequence it revolutionized the mode of presentation as well as the literary styles. All these trends have been carried further by writers of the younger or the newer generation. Thus the new literary wave in Marathi fiction does not mark as basic a departure from the past as Navasahitya did.

Yet it is different and the difference is not only of degree. It is also qualitative. The most obvious indication of this is the style. It is more colloquial, relying to a greater degree on ordinary and slang

words and expressions. It is more earthy and almost consciously eschews the neat turns of phrase and the delicate poetic diction of the creators of Navasahitya. It has almost an aversion to fine sentiments which the writers of Navasahitya had not quite managed to work out of their sentiments. A certain, almost unconscious, hold of moral imperatives was a part of the make-up of the creators of Navasahitya. The new wave of writers is more naturally amoral. They also have a lesser tendency to idealise as compared with their predecessors, and their release from the older concepts of form and order is more complete. Their most unique quality is the sense of chaos, of a total lack of coherence and order which they manage to convey. Also unique is their search for a meaning, which constantly eludes and escapes. All literary meaning eludes intellectual formulation. But it can be dealt with in intellectual terms at least to a certain degree. But this seems to be impossible with the best that the new wave of writers have produced.

These distinctive characteristics have not necessarily enhanced the literary value of the work of the new wave of writers. While they have gained in some directions, they have lost in other areas. Fine sentiments and moral imperatives are a part of experience. To eschew them altogether leads to an impoverishment of experience. To stick to colloquial expression and avoid the sensitive, poetic style is also to miss a great deal that is valid and is of value. To omit intellectual responses and ferment that accompany all experience or rather are an integral part of it, is to impose on oneself an uncalled-for limitation. To try to write literature that is not literature can be, beyond a point, a self-defeating effort. It can even become a tiresome trick, a deadening convention. As a result of such efforts, the fiction of the new wave of writers tends to be drab, uni-dimensional and thin in literary content. To make this assertion, however, is not to detract from the significant contribution they have already made.

In the end I must make a reference once again to the increasing commercialization of publishing and professionalisation of literature. Commercialization has its corrupting influence on literary works and, worse still, on literary taste. But there is no escape from it and one need not take an alarmist view of this development. Literature in many other countries has survived commercialization and

it will do so in India. The trouble at the moment is that commercialization has not gone far enough to enable writers to devote all their energies to writing. It has not yet created a large enough market in which all kinds of books, including the esoteric, can have a reasonable sale. Another unhealthy feature is the degree of Governmental influence on the demand of books. This demands stems largely from libraries and these libraries depend in large measure on Government grants. Those holding political power therefore exercise an insidious influence on the kind of books that are bought.

Another very unhealthy tendency is that of literary witchhunting. Any book that causes hurt, real or imaginary, to the feelings of any significant social group arouses wrath. There are resolutions, protests and marches and action at the Governmental or semi-governmental level. This tendency vitiates the literary atmosphere and endangers the freedom of expression which is the essential prerequisite of literary creation. One can only hope that our society acquires the maturity and proper sense of values which are ultimately the only protection from this danger.



## CONTEMPORARY HINDI FICTION

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Kamleshwar

Before Independence Hindi literature represented basically the writer's own voice. What we came across in his writings was the truth of his own soul. There is nothing wrong in giving expression to the truth of one's own soul, but the trouble with our writers was that, in their case, the truth of their soul was just an accumulation of the so-called eternal values which in turn was just a heap of inhibitions, taboos and orthodoxy. That's why, when after Independence, an awakened consciousness of man with his newly-awakened sense of history and truth of time began testing the so-called truth of soul, he found it completely hollow and devoid of depth. On a close scrutiny of these literary creations, we come across a man exceedingly cultured, civilized, meek and philosophical but whose soul is so decrepit and body so decayed that all the wordy edifices erected around him are unable to make him acceptable and relevant. He can in no way be alive and active now and can only embrace death with all the 'good' hidden in him. To put it more bluntly, the man emerging out of the pre-independence Hindi literature was a mythical and Brahminist personality.

When ancient cultures deteriorate into mere message-giving units, they, in the name of human welfare, beat drums of spiritualism and abstract good, but become useless for the very human races that live in their shadow. Almost similarly, a writer becomes obsolete for the man of his time as soon as he becomes great. That is to say that the very basis of literature, i.e., man, gets cut off from them and they drift away from the periphery of man. When such a vacuum exists, the soul disappears and only an unusable truth is left behind. And in fact this residuary 'truth' is never truth at all; it is another name given to the imaginary ideal.

Literature, to-day, is involved in the quest of this soul, and this is not an ordinary task, for, the meaning of this 'soul' ( Please do not interpret this word in philosophical terms here ) cannot be

understood if we cut it from time and space. The nature of soul keeps on changing. It is a unit which is nourished by history and fed by changing traditions. This variability of soul has caused ample bloodshed in the vast world of literature. Indian literature in the last twentyfive years has struggled for this changed soul of man and has acted as a charged medium to bring it out of the vacuum pervading the world of values.

During these last many years, Indian literature has constantly renounced these so-called eternal values. This departure was urgently required for the creation of an absolutely new mentality. Now, whereas the countries which won their independence in or around the year India won hers, kept aloof from the rest of the world, India prepared her consciousness by actively participating in all the burning questions and concerns of the world. As such, there has existed a ring of world-wide concerns around the consciousness of the Indian writer. He has been involved in the truth of man, the truth of the times and the universal truth, all of the same time. Therefore the Indian writer, especially the Hindi writer, had to be fully aware of the truth of his own self, for, he knew that without this awareness, he could never participate effectively in the concerns of his time.

The movement of this process of the recognition of the self, in the case of Hindi writer, has basically been from the unearthly to the earthly. It was the time when man's existence was not being scrutinized in the context of the supernatural forces of the Brahminic concepts. The search now pertained to the regions of man's struggle against imperialistic and colonial forces, new concepts of human welfare, peace, and economic and social justice.

If we go deep into the proclamation of the 'new' being heard in almost all the Indian languages, we will find that these are not the movements of the vested literary interests. These movements are the natural expressions of the recognition that there exists a big vacuum in the world of values and that the soul of man has undergone a change. Hindi poetry got disintegrated in the process of breaking its form. In spite of all his brilliance and talent, the Hindi poet got bogged down by its own traditions and consequently got cut off from the spirit of his times. No doubt Hindi poets were successful in

freeing poetry from poetry, yet entangled in the centuries old cobwebs of semi-religious, semi-philosophic content, new Hindi poetry could not unobtrusively flow to the common man, because much of its creative force was spent in freeing itself from the values of its own inner world and in breaking the shackles of form.

At a time when poetry refused to face relevant questions and concerns of the time, the mantle of this responsibility fell on fiction. And Hindi fiction not only accepted this challenge but met it with tremendous gusto. Hindi fiction, in the post-independence period has not only freed itself from the tale-telling of the pre-independence period, but also from the nostalgia of the bygone. It faces the contemporary period, its questions, problems, concerns and agonies with full responsibility and boldness of a crusader.

Hindi novel, in all these years, has undergone a drastic change, so far as its content is concerned. No more of the escapist romances now. Gone are the times when the novelist went on pouring his adolescent bickerings and dreams and tears on the pages of a book and asked the reader to shed an equal amount of tears over the description of his loss of virginity. Besides, the Hindi novelist of today refuses to accept the conclusions pertaining to values. Instead his conclusions flow from life itself.

During the last two decades, Hindi novel acquired a proud wealth of its own, a wealth one would like to own and cherish. The novels of Mohan Rakesh (*'Andhere Band Kamare'*), Phanishwarnath Renu (*'Maila Anchal'*), Krishan Sobti (*'Mitro Marjani'*) Dr. Shivprasad Singh (*'Alag - Alag Vaitarni'*), Dr. Rahi Masoom Raza (*'Aadha Gaon'*), Shani (*'Kala Jal'*), Hridyesh (*'Ganth'*), Ramesh Upadhyay (*'Dandhveep'*), Kamtanath (*'Ek Aur Hindustan'*), etc., do not escape the realities of the life around; they face them and are fully involved in them.

No doubt novel-writing has reached a high watermark in the last two decades, but it is the short story which has gained the pivotal position in Hindi literature. Without going into the intricacies of aesthetics, the short story has taken on itself the task of fighting for the destiny of man. At a time when politics has gone very deep and maligned the very life of man, the short story has become the medium of protest. Stories now represent the decisions of man facing common truths revolving round the axis of time.



The short story is in fact a continuously changing decision-centred process. A short story writer cannot afford to relax his hold on the ever-changing times. After Independence, short story writers felt that it was very necessary to live and participate in the life and environment around them and search the sources of their stories. In 1950, the Hindi short story made a historic departure from its past. This departure is known as the advent of *Nai Kahani*. Later on it took the shape of a movement. But more than a movement it was a positive outcome of the process of change; it signified a changed creative condition. During this period, the Hindi short story liberated itself from the fateful clutches of make-believe and accepted truthfulness. Thus the short story came out of the narrow sphere of narrative romances and was able to face truth on an intellectual level. Mohan Rakesh's *Uski Roti, Mandi*; Rajendra Yadav's *Tootana, Biradari Bahar*; Nirmal Varma's *London Ki Ek Raat, Lovers*; Renu's *Raspiriya, Table*, Amarkan's *Deputy Collector, Dopahar Ka Bhojan*; Shekhar Joshi's *Badabu, Kosika Ghatvar*; Mannu Bhandari's *Yahi Sach Hai, Dadi Maa Ka Chabutra*; Shani's *Ek Naar Ke Yatri*; Ramkumar's *Sailor, Reva*, Krishna Baldev Vaid's *Uska Dushman*; Dr. Dharmavir Bharati's *Gulki Banno, Yeh Mere Liye Nahin*, Shailesh Matyani's *Do Dukh Ka Ek Sukh*; Harishankar Parsai's *Bhola Ram Ka Jeev*, Sharad Joshi's *Tilism* etc.- these are some of the scores of such stories which attempt to reach truth amidst changing contexts. All these writers tried to understand man's agonizing and irrelevant contexts with reference to his times.

But now, the present day Hindi short story writer has gone one step ahead. He has become a co-traveller of the man walking through the jungle of agonies. Now the story-writer not only walks beside the common man but also suffers what he suffers. Their journeys are parallel. So are their confrontations.

Today the common man finds his life completely paralysed. Politics has played with his ambitions, his aspirations, and even with his desire to lead a normal life. He feels that he has been badly betrayed. In the name of an experiment in democracy, a diabolic experiment has been going on in this country : how to keep millions and millions of humans hungry through decades. Through the dreams of the glittering Taj Mahals, the common man has been

made to sit on a perfumed dunghill. In the name of economic planning, we have been given a bastard economy, which is no more than a dastardly conspiracy to keep the common man divided, so that the revolution may continuously be postponed. The creative unrest is never allowed to express itself. Only the wayward unrest is highlighted and that too to prove that the people of this country think wild. We have been given such a political system where decisions are forced on us from above. The man in the street cannot decide his own destiny. And politics has become a weapon in the hands of the authority to keep the aspirations of the common man postponed as long as possible. That's why the inner man in man is dying a slow death.

It is in the life of this man that the writer of today feels involved in. He is not fighting for himself alone, but for the destiny of the common man. Writers like Kamtanath, Modhukar Singh, Ramesh Upadhyay, Jitendra Bhatia, S. R. Yatre, Ibrahim Sharif and Sudeep have been writing stories of the common man. It is in their stories that we find the writer a co-traveller of the common man.

It is quite amazing that the short story which is a relatively new literary genre has time and again proclaimed its liberation and freed itself from its own self. Still more amazing perhaps is the fact that the liberation of the short story has proclaimed the liberation of man.



## CONTEMPORARY HINDI POETRY : A REVIEW

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Dr. B. M. Varma

It seems important to me to trace briefly, at first, the development of Hindi poetry. I should regard poetry between 60's and 70's as contemporary. The contemporary poetry has emerged as a result of some definite signs of contemporaneity in the poetry written before 1960; or, we could perhaps limit this period between '55 and '60. Hindi poetry, earlier than '55, evinces the trend that flows in two marked streams : one running from 1940 to 1955 and the other, from 1935 to 1945. One phase of Hindi poetry had fully developed by 1935. A reference to all these streams of poetry is important: for the contemporary Hindi poetry is linked with its tradition in one way or another. Let us present this development under acknowledged names. By 1935, 'Chhayavaad' was the only developed form in poetry which shows an obvious impact of English romanticism. After 1935, the Progressive Poetry took birth under the influence of the Marxist school of thought. Simultaneously we come across the emergence of Experimental Poetry between '45 and '55 as a reaction to Chhayavaad and Progressive Movements. From 1955 to 1960, a new form in poetry came into being and the poetry after 1960 presents a newer mode in the development of New Poetry.

When the experimentalists were making an effort to create a new image of personality in their poetry, Hindi poetry had been lost in the colourful illusion of its Chhayavaad. The personality of Chhayavaadi poets had broken its relationship with reality only to get lost in metaphysics. On the other hand, the Progressive Poet was so inhibited with Marxism that his poetry dwindled into an exercise in propaganda for communism. The Progressive Poetry had emerged as a reaction to the airy world of Chhayavaad. The Progressives were also making an effort to picture a prophetic classless society claimed by Karl Marx. The natural human behaviour was overpowered by political principles. It was now almost

inevitable to witness the reaction to Chhayavaad and Progressive movements among the contemporary poets. Thus in 1943, the works of seven new poets were published in 'Tarsaptak' under the editorship of 'Agaya'. In the preface, Agaya indirectly refers to Progressive and Chhayavaadi poetry and observes that none of these seven poets claims to have attained poetic truth : all seem to be making a struggle in search of an identity.

But the search for identity cannot be possible without a conscious effort as such. The poet has to make a deep probe to identify himself in the fluid social consciousness. One cannot but expect one literary experiment after another in such an uncertain social condition. The biggest problem for the poet is to be able to communicate his new experiences with verve and virginity. His inclination to self-assertiveness is understandable enough.

The new urges pushed themselves into a new wave and gathered momentum with the publication of *Tarsaptak*. Under the influence of *Tarsaptak*, Hindi poetry shook off outmoded lingual clichés and introduced new potentials. But later, the so-called experimental poetry became disintegrated and mutilated and, at best, reduced to mere eloquence. The worse followed when the poet started regarding the current fashions as a 'must'. The Experimental Poetry, thus, defeated its own name and became a dogma.

Hindi poetry till then, had been trapped in the web of 'isms'. Some years after 1955, however, have been a period of great significance in Hindi literature. A new trend showed itself in weaving the national and international social relationship. The birth of Independent India severed the chains of ever-so-long slavery on the political level. The New Republican country had procured a seat in the U.N.O. With independence the Indian Society had begun to dream of a new future. It felt that independence was the outcome of its sacrifice and anguish. There was cause for gratification but there was also the accompanying pang of the partition of the country and of the communal riots. As the time passed, democracy with its political and non-political instruments bred a new form of beaurocracy. All our dreams of pre-independence seemed shattered. Disillusionment ruled all over. On the international level, we were getting more and more influenced

by disruptive social attitudes. With the import of scientific attitudes, new social and moral problems came to the fore. Meaninglessness in traditional philosophy, the futility of Indian Culture in the new context, the feeling of the failure of freedom, the state of disillusionment, uncertainty in the ideals of life, the awareness of loneliness and alienation of man— all this gave birth to a new type of poetry.

With the defeat of traditional values and meaninglessness of moral codes of life, a new form of human relationship came to show itself in the new Hindi poetry. The new man was tense and doubtful of the society to which he belonged. The traditional concept of purity in man-woman relationship became a mockery. The old standard of evaluating moral character appeared to have failed. The desire for freedom in sex behaviour became more and more telling. In short, the new poetry echoed the explosion of the accepted ethical values. If you were not a rebel, you did not exist in poetry. A disillusioned man, the poet desired to condemn the society; but, since he too had to live in the same society, he felt tortured and expressed his torture in his poetry. The newborn poetic hero was a condemned, dejected and puny creature. This defeated poetic hero carried with him his new and past relationships and presented such elemental and important questions to which no definite answer could be given despite the fact that these questions were so true and vital. Consequently a disorder blocked the way between the individual and the society. The modern young man was doubtful of the old values but he had no new ones to offer. So, as it were, he was irritated and vexed. He was forced to live a meaningless life, tortured with an awareness of its meaninglessness.

The New Poetry came to be judged by the standards of the poet's sincerity in his expression as related to his experiences. Identification of poetry in terms of authentic experiences was not considered necessary; for, sincerity of expression can even rely on imaginary experiences. As a result, the New Poetry became less convincing, rather artificial.

No doubt, the New Poetry has created a simple and crisp-poetic language but it has not always been successful in establishing unifying relation between expression and experience. But it will be unjust if we forget that the New Poetry made a marked departure

from the earlier unrealistic world and dogmatic outlooks and centred its attention on human complexities. In fact, an effort for the analysis of human life started only from now onwards.

It has already been suggested that the New Poetry and the Modern Poetry are not strictly speaking two separate streams. The Modern Poetry springs out from where the New Poetry ends.

Sometimes the New Poetry seems consciously searching for the content in accord with the times, but the experience of the poet fails to convince. A powerful poet of the New Poetry, 'Agay', breaks off from popular contexts and makes an effort to find the middle-class idiom. But he shows himself as a mere spectator. He does not appear thoroughly involved in the subjects of his poetry. He is preoccupied with mere experiments in language.

Poets like Shri Prabhakar Machvey have been indulging happily in a wordplay. Obviously, such poems cannot be more important than sermons. The problems of the human condition are expressed by them almost mechanically. As a result, the New Poetry initially seems disintegrating. 'Modern' is contemporary, but contemporary is not essentially modern. The poetry which blossomed after 1960, is modern in the true sense of the word.

A distinct trend can be perceived in the poetry written between 1960 and 1970. Here one can see the projection of a personality, defeated and diseased by the terror of its environs. The individual that has emerged in the initial stages of the New Poetry, though obsessed with an anguish of life and fear of death, has got lost into a terrifying vacuum and is disintegrating. Contemporary Poetry stands face to face with the complex realities of life.

It seems that the Old Poetry, having accepted some imposed bookish norms, commented artfully upon its contemporary conditions. But poetry today rebellious to its environs, has become extremely satirical and bitter, and after bitterness, callous; and after callousness, strangely enough, almost compassionate! Although the Modern Poetry in the beginning has been giving us some unexpected and seemingly revolting ideas, it has not been able to come to grips with the meaningful flow of life. Today the poet is at one with the present current. Passing through the crowds he detaches himself from them and unfolds the story of his being, fully involved.

Contemporary poetry does not betray personal inhibitions. Every problem expresses itself through genuine experience. In other words, what the New Poetry used to express at the intellectual level is now being expressed through personal experiences and symbols. Where episodes are narrative and ornamental and ideas knocked out, artificiality in the organisation of ideas is inevitable. We can say that the immediate past of today's poetry has limited itself to the search for experience. Present poetry embodies this search in its expression. Obviously the expression of this search is impossible through either formulae or 'typical' characters.

Some poets of the Middle generation have been contributing significantly to contemporary poetry, for example, Kidarnath Singh, Raghuvir Sahay, Srikant Varma and Mukti Bodh. There are some young poets who have succeeded in exploring the new trends towards Modern Poetry. They have discovered a meaning in the meaninglessness of the contemporary man. The poems by Vinodkumar Shukla, Somitra Mohan, Sarveshwar Dayal, Sahi, Dhumil, Jitendra Kumar, Kirti Choudhari and Ashok Bajpayee deserve a particular reference in this regard. The mode of expression in their poems is not consciously idiomatic. It is obvious from this haphazard list that contemporary poetry cannot be categorized into generations.

At some level contemporary poetry seems to express personal sensitivity rather than formal organisation of images. It will be very interesting to compare their sensitivity to that of Agaya. Agaya appears preoccupied with his own person, while the Contemporary Poetry generally points to the social awareness of the poets. At times this is not fully appreciated with the result that one suspects contemporary poets are scared of the realities of life. Here, we should make a study of another point. The modern man's environs are— shall I say— contaminated with politics. The resultant impact on our poetry is unavoidable. But some purists object to it on the ground that it will turn poetry into propaganda. In fact we are oversimplifying the problem by taking poetry and politics only into account. If our environs are related to politics, are they untouched by any other social disciplines : religion, sex, etc.? To-day, as it were, we cannot but suspect the purity of poetry.

Significant poetry cannot afford flirtation with 'self' all the time. It has got to join the general traffic of life.

But the question of the choice of a subject is not as important as the healthy artistic sensibility of the poet. Experience, void of ideas, has no existence in poetry. Man's woes take the shape of experience only when in harmony with thought. This makes the form so unified that it is not possible to distinguish ideas from their form.

Contemporary poetry has two powerful trends : one, poetry with its socio-political conditions and two, it has detached itself from politics and relates itself to the instinctive human relationship. The poetry of Mukti Bodh is definitely related to its background in terms of politics but nowhere does it seem adulterated. The obvious reason is that Mukti Bodh adopts political environs at the level of 'art experience'. In other words, contemporary poetry takes a departure from the New Poetry at this juncture. In the context of modern life, the existence of poetry with the rejection of politics is impossible. The destiny of contemporary poetry is decided when it has identified itself with a diversity of experiences.

If our contemporary consciousness refuses to be expressed in compact imagery, the candour of language is one of its inevitable conditions. It is not accidental that contemporary poetry is being written in apparently prosaic language. A new relation is being established between language and poetic language because today's poet is in search of a new idiom. The contemporary poet has been able to recognise the limitations of the conventional way of expression through language. Let us see in this extract from Shrikant the living imagery of the mechanisation of life :-

" एक अद्भुत टाइपराइटर पर साफ सुथरे कागज सा चढ़ता हुआ दिन  
तेजी से छपते मकान, घर, मनुष्य  
और पूँछ हिली गली में बाहर आता कोई कुत्ता "

Life is progressing towards rapid automation: the modern poet is neither pessimistic, nor does he declare the coming of a golden future in a prophetic manner. The desire to create a new condition in the existing conditions is natural. Perhaps it would be possible to get involved in the new condition. The modern poet supports the function of creativity in his desire to live :



"तुम म कहीं कुछ है  
 कि तुम्हें उगता सूरज मेमने गिलहरियाँ  
 कभी कभी का मोसम  
 जंगली फूल पत्तियाँ टहनियाँ भली लगती हैं  
 आओ उस कुछ को हम दोनों प्यार करें " ( रघुवीर सहाय )

and

"मेरे इस साँवले चेहरे पर कीचड़ के धब्बे हैं, दाग हैं  
 और इस फीली हुई हथेली पर जलनी हुई आग है,  
 आग्नि विवेक की ।  
 नहीं, नहीं वह- वह तो ज्वलंत सरसिज  
 वक्ष तक पानी में फँस कर  
 मैं वह कमल तोड़ लाया हूँ ।  
 मुझे तेरी विलकुल जरूरत नहीं है । " ( ग. मा. मुक्तिबोध )

and

"चौराहों पर,  
 भीड़ किसी अपभ्रंश का शुद्ध रूप जानने के लिए  
 उस प्रागैतिहासिक कथा की मुट्ठी  
 खोलने में व्यस्त है जहाँ रात,  
 वनैले पत्रों ने विश्राम किया था " . . . ( धूमिल ) . . . .

After listing the merits of Contemporary Poetry, it becomes necessary to describe the other side of the picture too, where poetry includes sloganism, oracles and verbosity. Poetry and poets of this type are not wanting in number. In this age of quantity it is difficult to recognise quality. After '67 there has been a powerful era of categorisation of Hindi poetry. It is not necessary to give a complete index but it is certain that, except for India, no other country has such a variety of categorical poetry. For example, just see some of them :—

'मनातनी सूर्योदयी कविता,' 'अस्वीकृत कविता,' 'अ कविता,' 'एंडी कविता,' 'एक्सडेंड कविता,' 'ब्रीट कविता,' 'टट की कविता,' 'नाजी कविता,' 'नंगी कविता,' 'गलत कविता,' 'मही कविता,' and 'आँख कविता' etc.

Till 1969 there had been about four dozen names in Hindi poetry and one cannot say how many more dozen have been added on. The variety of names does not matter much if these poems present poetry rather than mere names. This information could perhaps be interesting for a research fellow. Here and there, of course, one can sense the helpless restlessness of the poets in their desire to associate themselves with the latest poetic trends. It becomes very amusing to see how a poet changes his labels in poetry every second day. Probably this indicates their being progressive ! In its effort to give a meaning to its label, contemporary poetry is getting astray. The problems of young poets are definitely significant. Their annoyance with the tradition, insistence on the breakaway from the old forms and boldness in their expression perhaps reflect on a passing gusto. The work, despite all this, is significant enough.

Literary manifestos are fashionable on the Hindi scene. Perhaps we forget that the importance of a particular declaration, literary or otherwise, rests on the context of the historical perspective of that country. The fact that Delhi and Chicago can be connected by an airplane, does not mean that both these cities have the same soil. The problems of the group society of England and America are definitely different from those of the population of India. Various social disciplines abroad are making the identity of man complicated. To appreciate the conditions of an alien country on the intellectual level, of course, satisfies one's sense of curiosity. With this, we may probably get a foresight of the future trends. But that is all ! No confusion between these conditions and those in India.

A class of young poets has recently come forward with anti-poetry. They believe that till now poetry has been dishonest in its presentation of language and of experience. Principally they are perhaps right. To disintegrate 'anti-bodh' from the contemporaneity of life and to express it through the play of words is insufficient. So-called 'Anti-ism' is not limited to this only. On one hand it claims to be anti-romantic and on the other, it declares to be irrational. At times their declarations base themselves on formal logicisms and at other times on illogical boldness. Somehow or the other, they manage to present their say. The so-called A-Kavita is nothing more than 'mannerism'. The result is obvious : these

poems show thoughtless woes, flat descriptions, prophetic tone and a conscious effort to do away with taboos. It seems the creative process of these poems can only complete the 'analysis of creative imagination' to some extent, but it cannot complete the last necessary process of creation. Their imaginative power, in the language of Coleridge, dissolves, diffuses and dissipates and nothing more ! It perhaps does not reach the phase of the order to recreate.

Some examples prove this :—

- अ) 'नबी तुम्हारी पोली छाती में यह क्या है ?

थंजर मिट्टी

पंगु तरलता

झूटी ज्वाला

गूँद हवायें

मक्के भीतर

खाली पन है

खाली पन है

मुनो, नबी, मैं तुम्हें चुनौती फिर देता हूँ । '

( विजय देव नारायण साही )

- आ) 'नया प्रकाश चाहिए

पुकारती दिशा-दिशा

मिट्टे तृषा-मिट्टे निशा

बहुत हुआ उदाम पन,

हमें मुहाम चाहिए ।

( प्रभाकर माचवे )

- उ) 'हैदराबाद के म्यूजियम में एक घड़ी है

जिसमें मैं गांधी

हर घंटे पर दरवाजा खोलकर बाहर आते हैं

और लौट जाते हैं

स्वामी दयानंद का सत्यार्थ प्रकाश

और तिलक का गीतारहस्य

अनियों ने खरीद लिया है ।'

( विष्णुचंद्र शर्मा )

- उ) कल आयगी सुबह !  
जो लायगी सुबह, तो मैं जानता हूँ  
और तकलीफ मुझे  
इसी जानने की है  
क्यों जानता हूँ इतनी बहुत-सी बातें

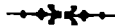
( भवानी प्रसाद मिश्र )

- क) उगल रही है संस्कृति देर सारे  
पिस्सु और गुवरीले ऊदबिलाव  
नंगे ओठोंपर कोढ़ के घाव लिए,  
मानवता चीख रही है  
लगातार  
नीली बडी देह ओर मूजे हुए  
वक्ष लिए स्त्रियाँ  
गर्भाधान से डरती हैं ।'

( जगदीश चतुर्वेदी )

In the end I would like to say that whatever happens, contemporary poetry has ever been changing, progressing, and this is a sign of its long life.

Translated from Hindi by (Mrs.) K. Paul



## CONTEMPORARY URDU POETRY

( A Short Survey of the Last Decade )

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Baqar Mehdi

Poetry is the staple cultural food of the Urdu knowing public. And to cater to the general taste there are Mushairas (poetry recitations) all round the year. Perhaps Urdu is the only Indian language which has uncountable number of poets. This shows the traditional link between the poet and the audience, but this very link has hardly any bearing on the reading public. For cultural entertainment poets have been writing instantly digestive gazals and poems; but serious poetry does not get enough support to make the poet self-supporting; this is not a peculiar quality of Urdu poetry only; it is a feature found all over the world.

The Urdu poets are confronted with a number of problems;

1. There are hardly any publishers of poetry collections.
2. They are under pressure from all sides, that is, culturally, socially and politically.
3. Urdu is not taught in many of the Primary and Secondary Schools in U. P. and Bihar. That means, Urdu in India has a precarious living, perhaps a dim future.
4. As most of the Urdu poets belong to the greatest minority of India—Muslims—, they are frequent victims of communal riots. So they have been suffering from a fear complex.
5. Urdu Poetry is surrounded by walls of tradition and its doors are locked. This means that even the most rebellious poets either write in isolation or compromise with the establishment and thus lose whatever talents they have to change the very mode of expression : language.

If one tries to see contemporary Urdu poetry in this perspective, one is pleasantly shocked to know that, in the last few years, there has been virtually a flood of poetry collections, published by the poets themselves. One would say that, as man could not live without bread, the poet should not be expected to live

without writing poetry and publishing it even if it meant a loss of some precious money. Most of the Urdu poets belong to the accursed middle class and live in small or big cities as they are supposed to be the cultural centres of national bourgeoisie.

The last decade witnessed spontaneous uprising of the young poets against the traditional and so-called progressive poetic standards. The clashes have been more violent than ever. Primarily the clash was between the two generations, the old tradition-bound progressives and the moderns of the new generation. The Progressive Poetry was the main medium of the cultural expression of the C.P.I., backed by a super-power, U.S.S.R. So, when the claims of progressive poetry were challenged by the young poets they were branded as 'reactioneries' just because they wanted to write as they pleased rather than adhere to any political formulations. Moreover, Krushchev had destroyed the sanctity of the great leader, Stalin. As the ideals of the Progressive Poetry were shattered by historical as well as political events, the voices of the young poets echoed in the old ruins of Urdu Poetry, demanding revaluation of poetic values and standards. The uprising was so momentous that the old guards of progressive poetry were forced to take defensive postures. In fact some of them like Mukhdoom even accepted, to some extent, the modern expression, i.e., the supremacy of surrealist imagery, new experiment in forms and expression and the free use of 'verse libre', i. e., free verse.

There were a few organized attempts to change the traditional subjects and forms before the spontaneous revolt of the new generation. Professor A. A. Suroor<sup>1</sup> writes that "Modern trends in Urdu poetry begin actually with Ghalib who is the last of the ancient and the first of the Moderns but they became a movement with Azad and Hali, who sensed the spirit of the times and roundly condemned the narrow range and the stultified language of the poets in their day. They criticised the conventional love poetry as lifeless and meaningless, condemned the prevalent persianised expressions as artificial, recommended new forms from English literature and used a diction which draws its inspiration from Hindi to better suit the genius of the language." But even Professor Suroor concedes in the later part of his article that these attempts were more reformative than revolutionary.

The Progressive Writers' Association was founded in 1936 as the Indian Branch of the anti-fascist cultural front which had the blessings of Tagore and Premchand. But soon after the Second World War it became a cultural platform of C. P. I. Its use of Marxism was so crude that it became a collection of noisy slogans and ended in the pathetic retreat of Ali Sardar Jafri's famous couplet,

the questions are roaming  
stumbling everywhere,  
the answers are hiding somewhere  
like criminals.

If the progressive writers had had the courage to face their dilemma of means and end, thought and action, poetry and politics, they might have been able to retain the influence on the young poets. But as I have said in the beginning, the historical and political events led to its decline and fall all over the world. And its attempt to cling to the Soviet Marxism as a dogma, failed to rescue it. So the first victim of the struggle between the Progressive and the Modern, was the Socialistic Realism as defined and defended by Soviet Writers during the Stalinist regime. Even today the bureaucracy of the Soviet Writers' Union runs wild against all the dissent and rebellious voices of young poets and novelists. It is shocking to read the speech of Sholokhov as quoted in a bunch of articles entitled "Problems of Modern Aesthetics": "The artist is the son of his people and a tiny particle of human race; with all his heart and talent and being, he belongs to the party which is rebuilding the world for the good of mankind. He sees the highest order and the highest freedom in serving the people and the party." This is the voice of an old writer bound to the bureaucracy of his country. Here the dilemma of the modern writer comes up with all its ferocity. When he rejects the traditional standards and values of poetry, he is confronted with the dogma of bureaucratic communism which is as poisonous to his art as the commercialism of the capitalist society; and, of course, when there is no exit, he cannot escape to a "romantic paradise" which he abandoned the day he took the first rebellious step. If he rejects Soviet Marxism then he has to denounce the exploitation of the oppressive mechanism of the society of the consumers. He is in a fix but he cannot remain a silent spectator of the daily drama of life. He is an inevitable part of his society. He has to fight

out his struggle even if it is a frustrating job. There is no retreat for the modern poet. And if despair, death and suicide cast their shadows on his mind, he has to express them as he passes through the hell, and this very expression opens a window for the struggle to continue. Alan Bold<sup>2</sup> (the Editor of 'The Penguin Books of Socialist Verses') is very clear in his statement when he says, "Let no one attempt to discredit Socialism by equating it with Stalinism or Institutional communism . . . (Instead they will find a deeper critique of totalitarianism than will ever come from the bourgeoisie who in times of crisis are all too anxious to support the anti-democratic leader). I have discussed this at length to show that many of the Modern Urdu Poets did reject the progressive standards of poetry and kept on protesting with all sound and fury; only they did not become 'cheer boys' of any political party. The wellknown Urdu critics from Professor Ehtisham Hussain and Sajjad Zaheer to Dr. Mohd. Hasan, have all decried modern Urdu poetry as the creation of perverse minds and reactionary personalities, but they played their cards very crudely, for, they did become the cultural pillars of the present establishment, paying their lip service to Socialism, Democracy and Secularism of the ruling party.

Modern Urdu Poetry is not the creation of a single directed movement; it is the spontaneous revolt of the young voices. Now a decade of modernism has passed. It is a very short time in the history of literature, particularly in Urdu Poetry which is the most traditional poetry even to this day. Dr. Mohd. Sadiq's statement<sup>3</sup> deserves serious consideration :

" In Urdu poetry there is very little of genuine affirmation of life, its themes are resignation, passivity, selfpity, and the tyranny of fate. This poetry with its wistfulness and pathos made a deep appeal to the readers and listeners because it was an image of their own thwarted lives. Strange as it may seem this love of the pathetic and the sentimental for its own sake is as strong as ever and poets are admired because they are tearful. Is this so because old habits die hard ? No, the explanation rather seems to be that beneath their veneer of Western Attitudes and institutions which we have formally accepted, life with us is still running in medieval grooves; the old tyrannies are not dead and we like painful themes because they bring an agreeable feeling of relief. "



Dr. Mohd. Sadiq has pointed out the basic weakness of Urdu language and poetry. It is very traditional and orthodox as is our country-India. There is poverty and filth, ignorance and intolerance and above all a ' philosophical hypocrisy ' to face the sordid facts of life. It is because of this that in ' the Area of Darkness ' there are only few bright spots where cultural activities take place. The revolt of the moderns has changed the static and rhetorical language to some extent. It has brought a new vitality to enrich the 'dying language'; whether it will succeed in giving it a new lease of life, is another difficult question.

Contemporary Urdu poetry is like an art gallery, which has a lot of old paintings hanging on the wall. Firaq and Sardar Jafri are still writing and getting the usual applause from professional critics and listeners though they have become obsolete and orthodox. Firaq is the most over-esteemed gazal writer. His lyrics were fresh about two decades ago. His art consists in love lyrics and a new orientation of traditional gazals with a mixture of Hindu mysticism and myth. He has been writing for the last 40 years, but got his due place after Independence as one of the Masters of Gazals in the 20th Century. 'Makhdoom' Muhiuddin was an active member of the Right C.P.I. and he was almost a broken man though he kept up his bright smile on his face. He was also a lyrical poet of some significance but could not live longer to give full expression to his new found modernism.

Akhtarul-Iman was given instant recognition and love by the younger poets and writers as he was considered the authentic voice of anti-romantic poetry but he failed to live up to expectations and he too joined the chorus to decry modernism as a sexual perversion. Akhtarul-Iman's symbolic use of 'a boy' as the voice of tortured conscience which lives longer than the outer self, was hailed as the best poem of its period. His short poems are still a treat to the discerning reader and critic. In the last decade he published two collections of his poems, " Yadeen " (Memories) and " Binte Lanhat " (Daughter of the moments). Recently he has written a few satirical poems ridiculing the Establishment.

Ali Sardar Jafri has published two collections of his verse and a reprint of his long poem " *Nai Duniya Ko Salam* " ( Salute to the New World). Ali Sardar Jafri's poetry is a poor mixture of Iqbal's

philosophical diction and Josh's rhetorical florid. Rarely has the subtlety of a mature poet. Now he has become very traditional in his composition. In Urdu poetry he is very popular as a poet and an orator and the last stalwart of the Progressive Poetry. Jannisar Akhtar, a contemporary of Majaz and Faiz, has shot into prominence because of his sweet, sad and neoclassical Gazals. In the last few years he has become very popular with the young poets.

The best progressive poet lives in Pakistan: Faiz Ahmed Faiz. His lyricism is a beautiful combination of the Persian poet, Hafiz and the Urdu poet, Ghalib. He is very near to modern poets but, as a member of the right wing C. P. P., he does not want to be called a modernist, for, the word "Modern" is anathema to the supporters of the Soviet Union. His contemporary, Noon Meem Rashid is the first important poet in free verse in Urdu. His first collection 'Mawara' (Beyond) was the most important collection of experimental poetry full of personal symbolism. He was a target both of orthodoxy as well as progressive attitudes. Meeraji is another important poet of symbolic experiments: death, sex, dream and colour play surrealistic drama in his poems. Rashid's diction was a good deal persianised and in contrast to it Meeraji (whose real name was Sanaullah) adopted the folk style of Hindi Poetry. He died premature just after the partition in Bombay, penniless and without fame. But after the revolt of the Modern Poets he was resurrected and called the First experimental poet of the 40's.

Among the young voices there are a number of brilliant poets. Kazi Salim, Ameen Hanfi, Balraj Komal, Mohd. Alvi, Waheed Akhtar, Aziz Quaisi and Basher Nawaz, and others have been widely read and discussed.

As I am part of the present scene of modern poetry, it is rather difficult for me to give an objective analysis of contemporary poets. I have my likes and dislikes and these do influence even the most objective critic. I feel that the last decade of Urdu Poetry has been dominated by the Modern Poets, and some of them deserve serious consideration and analysis.

Kazi Salim is a very sensitive poet who has neo-mystical temperament with an enquiring mind of the fundamentalist. He is a very good craftsman and in the process of selecting, and rewriting

and revision he has rejected at least fifty of his poems. It has been said that he has destroyed two collections of his poems before he brought out a slim volume of his selected poems, 'Najat se Pahale' (Before the Salvation) the book opens with the following lines :

"Life is a short duration of protest  
You too scream  
with such intensity  
that it is remembered for a long, long time. "

But he whispers so softly that his words become almost a soliloquy. He uses Indian Mythology with a new perception; his strongest point is his concrete imagery. 'Mukti' (salvation) illustrates this imagery with a refreshing sadness. He knows that there is no salvation and the torture of living is the only reality. He accepts the raw life as it comes but subjects it to a searching analysis. His hidden desires, disappointments and vision of life are very much of his own.

Ameeq Hanfi is a poet of different dimension. He is a prolific writer, a religious and expert advocate of modernism. His strength lies in a long poem in which he gives full expression through a scholar-traveller. 'Sindabad' is a beautiful poem, bringing out colours of a long journey with modern imagery. Waheed Akhtar has a rare gift of versification. He is a bit traditional in his expression and his diction often echoes the voices of Anees, Iqbal and Josh. In a way he is a classical modernist. He believes that modernism is an extension of the Progressive Movement. Balraj Komal has been writing free verse since the beginning of his poetic career. He is a symbolic poet of some significance. Mohd. Alvi writes like a child-poet expressing wonder rather questioning. He is a poet of outer reality of the self. He is a good gazal writer as well. Aziz Qaisi is another poet whose chief concern is the Fall of Man. His diction also echoes the traditional persianised expression but he is very effective in his recent gazals.

A younger generation of poets has emerged in the last few years: Nida Fazli, Adil Mansoori, Shaharyar, Kumar Pashey, Sadiq, Fuzail Jaffri, Atiqullah, Prakash Fikri, Bani, Yaqub Rahi, Zaidi sisters (Sajda and Zahida) and many others. They did not have to struggle against the traditional and progressive barriers and old taboos. There is no hesitation on their part in the choice of subject and form. Thus, at the moment, modern trends have spread their wings all over the serious Urdu Poetry.

I have given only the glimpses of the last decade; perhaps it is only an outline of what is happening in the contemporary Urdu poetry. Modernism will last long, longer than the so-called progressive poetry. Or, will another wave sweep over it? I do not know. If the Modernists are 'mimic men' of the modern Western literature, they may fade away as the Russian-influenced poets of the 40's but modernism has already left its deep imprint on Urdu Poetry. Of course, the world is becoming a big village and it is no longer safe to remain rooted in old habits and expressions. Now the Urdu poet knows what is happening anywhere on this small planet. But is it a game of middle-class intellectuals and writers too carry on the cultural entertainment for the benefit of the ruling class? I leave this question unanswered, for I know literature is too important to be a mere superstructure of society: It is ingrained in the consciousness of new poets and readers.

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1. P. 190-91 MODERNITY & CONTEMPORARY INDIAN LITERATURE published by Indian Institute of Academic Study, Simla - 1968.
  2. The Penguin Book of Socialist Verses - 1970 (page 56)
  3. A history of Urdu literature, Oxford University Press - 1964 (page 13).
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## CONTEMPORARY URDU FICTION

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Quazi Abdul Sattar

The word ' contemporary ' , like any other word in literary terminology, is abstract. However, a working definition of contemporary literature can be offered : the sum total of all creative writing of a particular literary age. Our literary age covers three generations. The first generation of writers consists of the old guards, established and celebrated. The second generation is that of pretty well-known mature writers. I believe they have not yet presented their masterpieces but their genius will fulfil the promise in the near future. The third generation of the writers is a group which has been struggling for their recognition. A short survey of these three generations will give a brief but clear picture of contemporary Urdu fiction.

The root causes of the failure of Urdu fiction are inherent in the very nature of the Urdu language which is basically the language of poetry. Urdu poetry has, to a great extent, been a poetic expression of a sophisticated and ornamented culture known as the Urdu culture. " Mushaira " was the only platform from where a literary artist could introduce himself to the literary world and reach the people. It is interesting to note that a man of Sir Sayed Khan's stature was forced to compose poems to be recognised in the world of Urdu literature. The poetical nature of Urdu language lends itself easily to poetic composition. Even an average or sub-educated person, can compose Urdu verse with great ease and felicity. That is why the number of Urdu poets is greater than all the poets of the sixteen languages of India put together. The English reached Delhi and Lucknow very late. The industrial progress in these regions therefore remained backward. The press which is the vehicle of the popular literature also entered the arena late alongwith the British. In the meantime the people lived on poetry and romantic tales. Mushaira was a tempting road to success and fame.

A writer of prose took much time in getting recognition in the society. Owing to the popularity of Urdu poets, the prose of the language suffered very badly. Moreover, the craft of Urdu poetry spoiled the psychology of the Urdu language and literature. The basis of Urdu poetry is Ghazal, consisting of "ashaars" (Rhymed couplets). The thought must find an expression within the narrowness of two lines. This had adverse effects on Urdu prose. Our thinking, unconsciously, got bogged down. This is probably the reason of the absence of world-class novels in Urdu though it did produce classic short stories. A poetical language of polished expression and of sophisticated culture, Urdu has been deprived of its locale. It is surprising to note that even before 1947 when Urdu was understood and appreciated from Srinagar to Hyderabad and from Karachi to Dacca its cradles and strongholds like Delhi and Lucknow were using spoken languages other than Urdu. Poetry and sophistication of the Urdu Language could not become a natural mode of expression for them.

After Premchand — the first great prose writer who never composed poetry — the Urdu short story entered its golden age under the banner of the Progressive Movement. The old guards of the movement like Krishnachandra, Ismat Chughtai, Rajender Singh Bedi, are still writing in their inimitable way with genuine social realism. Their vast canvas is beautifully painted with characters and made effective with deft and subtle touches of supreme craftsmanship. Their stories reflect the pain and pleasure, the thoughts and emotions of their own age.

The partition of India brought many tragedies in its wake and the Urdu language was its worst victim. Urdu writers became poor courtiers of a deposed queen. Urdu readership shrank to a tiny dot. There was no incentive to write in Urdu. The Progressive Movement which stood committed to the freedom of the country and had worked for it tirelessly found itself utterly helpless. The supremacy of the founder-writers of the movement became a thing of the past. The certificates and degrees awarded by critics to various authors lost their value. The internal struggle within the movement also came up to the surface. The abolition of Zamindari changed the social and economic structure of the

eightyfive percent population of the country living in villages. But the disintegrating Progressive Movement failed to pay attention to these radical changes. The Chinese aggression on India gave a jolt to the faith of the people in dogmatic socialism. The Soviet power which was considered impregnable received a shock in the Cuban crisis. This indirectly affected the faith of many socialists.

Under the shadow of all these events the second generation of writers, viz., Qurratulain Hyder, Balwant Singh, Joginder Paul, Jelani Bano, Wajida Tabassum, Shakila Akhtar, Ghayas Ahmed Gaddi, Iqbal Mateen, Ram Lall, Ratan Singh, Iqbal Majeed, Balraj Manra, Anwar Azeem and Surindar Parkash were writing at their best. It will not be out of place to mention that all the writers were, directly or indirectly and consciously or unconsciously, influenced by the Progressive Movement. They always had and still have something in their writings which reminds one of the ideal of the movement. The shade of difference between the masterpieces of these writers of the second generation and the great works of the celebrated progressive writers can be seen only in the craftsmanship of story, its depth and dimension, in the depiction of the social content, in the perspective of individual problems and their interpretation, and in the handling of social realism. This difference draws a line of demarcation between the Progressive and the Neoprogressive. Neoprogressive writings are sometimes regarded modern. This just a question of personal belief.

The term 'modern' is not new to Urdu criticism as it was applied to the writings of the mid-nineteenth century. But now some persons seem to think that with the use 'modern', they have found and possessed Aladin's magic lamp.

I do not wish to indulge in the controversy of modernity and modernism. But I do feel very strongly that the vacuum created by the downfall of the Progressive Movement could duly and positively have been filled, had we been sincere and constructive in our approach to Urdu literature. The stale expression "modern" — stale for other languages — was felt to contain marvellous properties by writers who tried to push away the giants of the age, supported with the props of modernism. At the same time some stru-

gling writers conferred the knighthood of 'modernity' on themselves. Some of us who were not content with the quality and quantity of recognition put ourselves on the waiting list for the honour. We should not forget that 'modernity' is not a compliment in itself. Modernity cannot be judged in literature as it can be in science. There is a difference between modern weapons and modern literature, between modern automobile and modern fiction, modern textiles and modern short stories. Modernity in literature cannot live upon imported ideas because these ideas are the product of the problems of an alien soil. The modern Urdu writer will have to confront the problems created by rapidly changing social and economic conditions of our own country. The second-hand thoughts smuggled from foreign markets can attract innocent readers of our language, but the attraction will not last long. Modernity does not consist in the mere use of techniques. Modernity is an insight, an enlightenment, a modified point of view. The young generation of writers, struggling for literary recognition, is fully enchanted by modernity because it is easy for some to write and publish a 'modern' short story in a literary journal. There is no need to weave a plot, or to create characters, or to produce atmosphere. Depth, dimension, novelty of expression, layers of meaning, a sense of the age, a point of view, pattern and design of style - these are not taken to be important in the so-called modern short story. They are just incapable of understanding the difference between a 'Progressive' short story and their own modern short story. In my opinion, if a writer cannot write a classical short story, he just cannot write a modern short story. The abstract and symbolic story needs more artistic consciousness to create colour, depth and dimension and a mastery over prose writing. Yes, there is a sharp difference between a mere beautiful use of words and beautiful creative prose.

Owing to an historical upheaval in the Urdu speaking world, we have no younger generation as we had in the past. Younger writers come from younger generation. But, now, our younger talents try to express themselves in languages other than Urdu, and so we lack an important and essential dimension to contemporary writing, yet there are some promising names who are struggling for literary recognition, such as Mohd. Umar Maiman, Rashida Rizvia, Farkhunda Lodi, Zamir Hasan, Fayyaz Rifat.



Once upon a time the Urdu short story had influenced the short story of this sub-continent. Once upon a time people learned Urdu to read short stories of Manto, Bedi, Krishna and Ismat. But today, when a poor Urdu reader, to patronise Urdu literature, purchases an Urdu magazine, he finds it impossible to read and appreciate and decides never to make that mistake again, never again to pay for new Urdu writings. The writers create the illusion that they are writing for themselves, not for mediocres. They forget that good literature has layers of meanings, both higher and lower levels. And so the contemporary Urdu fiction writers have become a party to the impending death of languishing Urdu. I know we cannot change the course of the wheel of History. But it is always better to die the death of a gaint than to die the death of a buffoon.



## MODERN TRENDS IN URDU CRITICISM

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Dr. Mughni Tabassum

In Urdu, literary criticism as a scientific discipline has but a recent origin. I might be permitted to state that it did not have any systematic basis before the beginning of the present century. What went on in the name of literary criticism was no more than literary polemic. We find some traces of literary criticism in the literary chronicles or Tazkiras but the scope of these chronicles was limited. There would be a few lines on the life and achievements of the poets and a mere expression of judgment on their poetic worth. It is an interesting fact that most of these chronicles were composed in Persian, the language of the culture in those days. A close study of these chronicles reveals an interesting fact: the chronicler was seldom free from his subjective opinion about the poet whom he mentioned in his chronicle. The chronicle gives an account of the life of the poet with a view to either placing him on a high pedestal or lowering him in the eyes of the reader. Technically speaking these chronicles come under the category of literary biographies rather than literary criticism.

I might call it a great event in the history of Urdu literature that Hali wrote his Introduction to Poetry, but like all great events in history it had its own dangerous consequences. Hali, the critic, was a product of the movement called 'Aligarh Movement'. After he came under the spell of Syed Ahmad Khan, he felt a need to apply the sociological and moral doctrine to literature. His great ambition was to see that the poet serves the immediate needs of the society, and in his life-context 'society' meant the Muslim society of the northern part of India facing the crisis of change. It can be called the personal tragedy of Hali that he had a passion but a meagre intellectual equipment to translate this passion into a scientific and methodic language. Moreover, his puritanic temperament was a factor which hindered the growth of literary discipline. Undoubtedly Hali possessed a chaste literary taste which

had the guidance of masters like Shaifia and the later Ghalib, but it seems that the man who was destined to be his real master was Sir Syed. In his 'Muqaddama', Hali abandons all the influences of Shaifia and Ghalib and translates the social and political philosophy of Sir Syed into his literary doctrine. It can be called an ideological approach to literature.

Hali, like all ideological men, studied literature from the point of view of its consequences, and in this case the moral consequence, or social morality. He is not a critic of poetry but wants to use poetry as a critique of the society. Unfortunately it was the first systematic treatise on poetry and hence the ill-informed posterity took it as the last word on poetic criticism. It is an important fact to be noted that Hali did not, or possibly would not apply his critique of poetry while writing his monumental book 'Yadgar-e-Ghalib'. He might have realised that a poet like Ghalib eludes all moral and social criteria of poetry. A very honest person that Hali was, he used his new doctrine in his later poetry and miserably failed in producing good poetry. It was a tragedy that Urdu lost a great poet in the making. Shibli, a junior contemporary of Hali, exhibits a balanced mind but the powerful voice of Hali, the power of which was extraneous to poetry, did not allow Shibli to influence the subsequent development of Urdu literary criticism. It was no less than a literary misfortune that Shibli wrote his poetry in the style prescribed by Hali. In both cases there was a gap in their theory and practice. Iqbal wrote great poetry but preached a pragmatic or utilitarian doctrine of poetry. The political and the historical situation of the country also helped this 'Anti-Literature movement'. The last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the present century can be called an age of revolt. This revolt reflected itself in the field of literature also. The sensitive souls longed for a change and did not know the proper direction. As far as India is concerned, it coincided with the rise of the revolt of the masses. A small group of Urdu poets took shelter in the poetry of 'romance' (I will not call it romantic poetry) but the poets with better poetic gifts were enamoured by the new wave of revolt. The movement initiated by Hali culminated in the so-called progressive movement of the early thirties. In a sense, this was a period of great literary upsurge

but it possessed certain dangerous consequences. The immediate ends of politics were made the ends of literature. The social consequences of literature were given precedence over literature. Moreover, the distinction between different forms of literature was completely forgotten. The same criterion was used to judge fiction, novel, drama and poetry, and this was their social relevance. These judges of poetry knew a little about Marx and Engels, a little more about Lenin; most of their inspiration came from the writings of Stalin, and later from its distorted form presented by Zhdanov. Most of these progressive critics gave prominence to the social and political background of the poets at the expense of their literary achievement. Most of the criticism written in this period was sociological criticism of literature which may be significant but can hardly be equated with literary criticism. This was an age of confusion; literary criticism was confused with the criticism of literature. One can have, for instance, a religious criticism of literature which cannot be called literary criticism by any means. Each revolt has its own dissenting voice. Mayakovsky represents this sort of dissent on the Russian scene and the 'Halqua-e-Arab-e-Zauque' expresses the same voice of dissent in Urdu literature. The poets of this group were not unaware of the political commitments of the writer. What they emphasised was the literary or aesthetic level of production. It was no mere coincidence that Krishen Chander praised Noon Meem Rashid or Faiz called Rashid a poet *par excellence*. Krishen Chander and Faiz found in Rashid a kindred artistic soul. This group of poets and critics exploited the new techniques suggested by psycho-analysis in their literary criticism. They were frowned upon by their contemporary progressive critics but later thinkers like Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse have proved that Marx and Freud have certain common points. The group mentioned also used the modern techniques of symbolism and suggestiveness in their criticism. Hassan Askari and Miraji laid the foundation of psychological criticism in Urdu. Miraji gave prominence to the study of symbols and archetypes in the study of poetry and thus showed a new line of literary criticism. There was, however, a limitation in this study. These critics overemphasised the element of the unconscious in poetry at the expense of the conscious expression. Their revolt reached another extreme. The Progressives overemphasised the social aspect and their rival group gave undue importance to the inward aspect of poetry.

Besides the two groups, there was another group of critics in Urdu which followed the lead given by Walter Pater and Ruskin. This was the group of the 'Impressionistic' critics represented by Niaz, Firaque and Majnun Gorakhpuri. In the writings of these critics, we find an attempt at a critical revaluation of the classical literature, besides an attempt to judge the recent works in the light of the classical. In spite of their scholarship the influence of these writers remained limited. One of the limitations of this group was their unawareness of the recent revolt and its dimensions. The younger section was, however, divided between the progressives and the Arbab-e-Zauque. The latter laid down a new tradition which gave importance to the elements of subjectivity, perfectionism, oblique expression, symbolism and experiments in form.

This polemic was still going on when freedom and partition came. Poets and fiction writers had a new theme in their hands. The age of revolt was followed by the age of disillusionment. Literature, and particularly poetry, needs illusion. The outburst was followed by silence. The progressive critic was baffled. There was the talk of the 'death of literature'.

The death of ideals is never the death of poetry. A new generation of poets emerged on the scene, completely disillusioned with the past ideals, victims of despair, and in search of new ideals. A generation full of passions, but without a clear point of view. This generation knew it had something to say, but did not know how to express it. They were divided in their loyalties: torn between the claims of the progressive and a nostalgic attraction towards the Arbab-e-Zauque. The critics were, however, confused, but the principle that a new creation brings along with it a new critical insight worked here also. The voice of the new poet was so powerful that it attracted a new generation of critics. The impact of the recent western literary criticism was felt for the first time with all its variety. A new relation was sought between literature and modern thought. Psychological criticism, for instance which had not moved beyond Freud and hesitantly Jung, moved towards the neo-Freudians. The archetypal approach was for the first time introduced seriously in the criticism of literature and particularly poetry. My intention is not to mention names in this regard, but a few names which can be mentioned as examples are

of Riaz Ahmed, Wazir Agha, Salem Ahmed, Shabihul Hasan and Shakeelur Rehman. Wazir Agha's book, 'The Genius of Urdu Poetry' can be regarded as the first serious attempt to apply Archetypal approach to Urdu Poetry. Saleem Ahmed's article 'New Poetry and the Full Man', in spite of being onesided and polemical, is undoubtedly thought-provoking.

The recent Urdu literary criticism has also been influenced by contemporary American literary criticism. The serious critics of Urdu have been benefited by the insights provided by T. S. Eliot, Kenneth Burke, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks and R. P. Blackmur. Contemporary philosophical criticism of poetry in Urdu seeks guidance from T. S. Eliot that mere literary standards guide us to judge whether or not particular production is a work of art but the greatness of a work of art depends on standards other than mere literary. The new critics have also exploited the technique of T. S. Eliot in analysing poetry in terms of linguistic structure, imagery and metaphor. It will not be an exaggeration if I submit that recent Urdu criticism is inclined more towards the view that literature is autonomous and is not to be judged by any extraneous standards. It might be called a reaction against the obsession of the progressive with content.

The idea that art represents a unity of subject matter and form seems to be a point of departure for Urdu criticism. The progressive critics had overemphasised the idea of content. John Crow Ransom regards new poetry as the poetry of objects and not of ideas. The poetry of objects starts with an idea but later an image overshadows the object. Ransom holds the view that no poem can maintain its existence without texture and structure. The function of criticism, from this point of view, is to take into account the structural properties of a poem and then turn to texture or the internal meaning of the poem to pass a final judgement upon it. There are, however, two levels of literary criticism: at the lower plane it studies the linguistic structure, the life and conditions of the poet, and his age; at the higher level the critic enters into the speculative area.

Allen Tate emphasises the element of tension in poetry, and considers that the quality of a poem can be determined by its total effect. A poem must become a perfect unity. Cleanth Brook

also gives prominence to the unity of form and content. He is of the opinion that a poem contains ideas and attitudes both but the form has a priority in the sense that one cannot appreciate a poem by divorcing it from its form. The new American criticism has particularly emphasised the idea that literary creation must have a priority over the personality and the environment of the poet. Literary production has its own autonomy and individuality which cannot be reduced to any extraneous factor. Recent Urdu literary criticism is also inclined towards a formal approach and has been influenced by recent American Criticism. The stylistic approach, a product of linguistics, has also contributed to the formalistic study of literature. A linguistic study of a piece of literature takes its start from the phonetic layer and then passes on to the metaphysical through the etymological and syntactical. This approach implies that the formalistic and the philosophical studies can be done simultaneously.

Formalistic criticism, although in its elementary stage, has struck deep roots in Urdu literary criticism. Almost all the significant critics have employed it at one or the other level. Prominent among them are Iftikar Jalib, Mumtaz Hasan, Shamsur Rehman Farooqui, Mahmood Ayaz and Masoodullah Khan. The present writer has also attempted it in his critical studies.

It seems surprising that philosophical criticism is still rare in Urdu. Marxist criticism should have been a philosophical criticism but in the hands of its votaries it degenerated into jargons and cliché. The existential approach, however, compensates for this lack, which is a recent approach in Urdu criticism. No other philosophical school has more influenced literature as the recent Existentialist philosophy, possibly because one of the springs of this philosophy is literature itself. By denying the priority of essence, existentialism has admitted the importance of subjectivity which is the source and the focal point of literary creation. I call it a fact of the destiny of literature that the literature of an epoch has a certain correlation with the philosophic mood of the times. It seems to me that contemporary literature has its roots in the existential mood, if not in the systematic philosophy that goes in the name of existentialism. Urdu literary criticism has suffered from oneness; it has either been too formalistic or too much inclined

towards an analysis of the extraneous cultural and social conditions. Serious attempts have not been made to reach at the meaning implied in a literary form through a study of its exterior. There are a few examples of literary studies which make an attempt to study the philosophical and the metaphysical levels of a literary product. Critical writings of Dr. Alam Khundmiri and Mahmood Sham compensate this lack to a certain extent. In the anti-metaphysical revolt of Waris Alvi one finds a keen philosophic awareness, particularly at the existential level. Shamim Hanli and Mahmood Hashmi have produced good examples of literary criticism, by using the methodology of the symbolists, like Cassirer and Susan Langer. One important trend in the recent criticism is a constant reference to the term modernity. Modernity is often confused with contemporaneity which in my opinion is a confusion of terms. Modernity has no obvious relation with a particular moment of time, but it has often been juxtaposed against progressive movement, the essential features of which are regarded as love of solitude, alienation, sorrow, and disgust. It is obvious that it is in this sense, as Dr. Waheed Akhter calls it, a mere extension of the progressive movement; I would rather call it a hang-over. The so-called upholders of modernity seek in a literary product certain trends which are merely extraneous to literature, for instance, humanism or lack of it, scepticism or its absence, belief in God or agnosticism etc. Interestingly, the question about the origin of modernity is still unsettled; If Dr. Waheed Akhter seeks its origin in Existentialism and particularly in the philosophy of Sartre, Baquer Mehdi, the most bitter enemy of the official progressive doctrine, tries to find the origin of modernity in the ideology of the New Left. To me it looks an ideological polemic; there is no valid argument that Baquer Mehdi is not correct because the present unrest of mankind has found its authentic articulation in the New Left rather than the philosophical pose of Sartre. As this discussion belongs to the realm of the sociology of literature, I would like to suspend my judgement. It is, however, clear from what I have said in my comments that Urdu Criticism is trying to explore new and hitherto unknown ways, which shows its vitality.

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## REPORT ON THE SEMINAR ON CREATIVE WRITING IN INDIAN LANGUAGES

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A Seminar on Creative Writing in Indian Languages was held under the auspices of the National Integration Samiti of the Marathwada University on November 18 and 19, 1972. Eminent writers of Hindi, Marathi and Urdu participated in the Seminar which was attended by teachers and students from the University as well as from the affiliated colleges.

The Inaugural function which was chaired by Prof. R. P. Nath, Vice-Chancellor, took place on November 18, 1972, with Dr. Rafiq Zakaria, Minister for Health and Urban Development as Chief Guest. Principal Joginder Paul introduced the participant writers. The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the Chief Guest and the writers and requested Dr. Zakaria to inaugurate the Seminar. In his inaugural address, Dr. Zakaria stressed the relevance of the Seminar to the problem of National Integration and expatiated on the nature of the challenge that every Indian creative writer has to accept. The vote of thanks was proposed by Shri Pantawane.

The first day of the Seminar had two sessions. The morning session was chaired by Professor W. L. Kulkarni. Shri R. M. Gole presented a paper on "National Integration through Literature". In his paper Shri Gole made a distinction between national integration and national understanding and also stressed the necessity of relating folk-poetry and folk-literature to the general literary tradition with its 'conventional form'. This triggered off a lively discussion in which Principal Paul, Shri Kamaleshwar, Shri Baqer Mehdi and Shri Gangadhar Gadgil participated. Questioning some of the assumptions underlying Shri Gole's paper, they commented on the nature of the ordeal the creative writer has to undergo in his concern with the human condition. Shri W. L. Kulkarni spoke about the language barriers in the context of national integration. Shri Gole's paper was followed by Shri Prabhakar

Padhye's paper on 'Indian Creative Writing Today'. In his paper Shri Padhye analysed a period of modern Marathi Literature in the light of his concept of the uniqueness of a literary work of art. His paper led to a very interesting discussion on the Indianness of Indian Literature in which Principal Paul, Shri W. L. Kulkarni and Shri Gangadhar Gadgil participated. The question of locating commonness in Indian Literatures at the level of imagery came up for a stimulating exchange between Shri Prabhakar Padhye and Shri Gangadhar Gadgil.

The afternoon session was chaired by Shri Prabhakar Padhye. Shri Vasant Abaji Dahake presented his paper on Contemporary Marathi Poetry. Shri Dahake's paper dealt with recent trends in Marathi poetry in a more or less informative fashion. His paper provoked varied comments. Dr. Rasal pointed out the absence of 'Dalit' poetry in his paper, while Shri Gadgil felt that the essay by its very form could only be a partial reflection of what was happening on the contemporary literary scene. While Dr. Verma pointed out the inevitability of all essays being informative in such a context, Shri Saleem and Shri Padhye singled out for discussion certain elements common to almost all Indian literatures. This was followed by Shri Baqer Mehdi's paper on Contemporary Urdu Poetry. Shri Mehdi offered comments on some of the general problems of language and literary tradition confronting the Urdu writer today. Dr. Siddiqui took up for discussion some of the assumptions of Shri Mehdi and said the role played by Iqbal and other progressive poets was neglected by Shri Mehdi. The last paper of this session was by Dr. B. M. Verma on Contemporary Hindi Poetry. Dr. Verma discussed the emergence on the modern element in Hindi poetry in terms of the themes of loneliness, isolation and also certain linguistic experiments. Against this background, he commented on New Poetry in Hindi. He was very harsh on poets who he thought were new first and then poets. His paper provoked comments from Shri Padhye, Shri Baqer Mehdi and Shri Gadgil. The session concluded with an appropriate summing up by Dr. Rajurkar and a vote of thanks by Shri Pantawane.

On the same day in the evening short stories were read by most of the participant writers. This programme was a cross section

of trends in various Indian literary scenes today. Stories were read by Shri Kamaleshwar, Shri Joginder Paul, Shri Borade, Shri Gangadhar Gadgil, Shri Chandrakant Bhalerao, Shri Asar Farouqi and Kazi Abdul Sattar. The function was chaired by Shri Bhagwant Deshmukh.

The second day of the Seminar had three sessions chaired by Shri W. L. Kulkarni, Shri Gangadhar Gadgil and Shri Kamaleshwar respectively. At the first session papers were read by Shri Gangadhar Gadgil and Shri Kamaleshwar on "Contemporary Marathi Fiction" and "Contemporary Hindi Fiction". Shri Gadgil's paper offered an exhaustive analysis of the social forces at work in the field of the Marathi Novel. This analysis was further oriented towards the emergence of the new elements in Marathi fiction. In the discussion that followed, some participants took objection to the anonymity that characterised Shri Gadgil's paper. Prabha Ganorkar felt that the Marathi novel only inadequately represented contemporary Marathi life. Shri Borade discussed some aspects of the contemporary Marathi novel in the light of his own experiences as a novelist. Shri W. L. Kulkarni summed up the discussion by pointing out some of the salient features of modern Marathi fiction, for example, the loss of the concepts of plot and hero.

Shri Kamaleshwar's paper on contemporary Hindi fiction also led to a scintillating exchange of ideas. His paper offered a brilliant discussion of the emergence of the new Hindi short story against the background of a tradition which was interested in romantic idealism, sentimentalism and a genteel self-image. He also summed up the four stages of his development as a creative writer. In the discussion that followed, Dr. B. H. Rajurkar pointed out the lamentable absence of rural element in Hindi Fiction. Shri B. M. Verma stressed the necessity on the part of literary criticism to confront a creative writer's struggle on the plane of language. Shri Kamaleshwar further observed that, in the modern context, the distinction between the rural and the urban was gradually fading. Shri Baqer Mehdi felt that the papers on fiction had neglected important aspects like the stream of consciousness and the abolition of plot. Principal Paul stressed the necessity of relating oneself to one's own times. Shri G. M. Pawar observed that the gap created by the disappearance of the Gadgil tradition in Marathi fiction had not been adequ-

ately filled. Shri Prabhakar Padhye cited some of the stories of Dilip Chitre and said that the modern writer in his commitment to the human condition is thrown back on his own resources.

The afternoon session was devoted to criticism. Dr. Mughni Tabassum presented a paper on Contemporary Urdu Criticism. His paper dealt with various schools in Urdu criticism. It elicited some very relevant comments from Kazi Abdul Sattar. This was followed by Shri Kamaleshwar's brief but inclusive survey of trends in Hindi criticism. He discussed the emergence of a vigilant readership and criticism in Hindi literature. Shri W. L. Kulkarni also made a brief speech summarising the trends in Contemporary Marathi Criticism. He discussed the way in which changes in creative literature had led to parallel changes in criticism thus making the modern critic very cautious in his approach. These brief surveys by Kamaleshwar and Shri W.L. Kulkarni provoked comments from Shri Mehdi who lamented the absence of aesthetic approach, Shri B. M. Verma who said that modern Hindi criticism was shaped by creative writers and Shri Sukharam Hivarale who claimed that the new generation of writers in Marathi was not properly appreciated by critics.

The third session was chaired by Shri Kamaleshwar. Two papers dealing with Contemporary Urdu Fiction were presented by Kazi Abdul Sattar and Shri Ramlal. Shri Sattar's paper made a survey of modern Urdu Fiction and concluded by pointing out that "Writers have become a party to the death of languishing Urdu". Shri Ramlal's paper dealt with foreign influences like Kafka and Camus, at work in Urdu fiction. In the discussion that followed, Principal Paul said that the new story was the consequence of a search for contemporary values. Shri Mehdi pointed out that the dogma of Socialism had lost its force way back in 1956. Dr. Mughni Tabassum protested that Qazi Abdul Sattar was not just to the writers of the second and third generations. Shri Bashir Nawaz mentioned Ghias Ahmed Gaddi's *Narad Muni*, Joginder Paul's *Baaz Yaft and Jungle*, Surinder Parkash's *Rone ki Awaz* and *Bidooshak ki Maut*, Ramlal's *Ek Hairatzada Ladka* and *Ukhde Hooe Log* and Mainra's *Woh*, to try to prove his point that the Urdu short story has travelled a large distance. Kazi Saleem observed that modern Urdu literature was more realistic than the

realism of progressive era. Shri Asar Farouqi objected to Shri Sattar's inclination to the Old Guard at the cost of the new writers. Qazi Abdul Sattar emphatically answered that he had always sided what he had regarded right, irrespective of a move coming from the old Progressives or the New Writers. Finally Shri Kamaleshwar summed up the session by pointing out the valuable contribution Urdu fiction had made to Hindi fiction. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Rajurkar, Chairman of the National Integration Samiti of the University.

This Seminar had its fitting finale in the Poetry Reading Programme arranged late in the evening. At this function, which was chaired by Kazi Saleem, poems were read by Shri Vasant Abaji Dahake, Namdeo Mahanor, Narayan Survey, Chandrakant Patil, Gajmal Mali, F. M. Shinde, Waman Nimbaikar, Harishchandra Dukhi, Ishwarbhai Patel, Bashir Nawaz, Yusuf Osmani, Gangadhar Pantawane, Shola, Baquer Mehdi, Indrarao Pawar, Yaqub Osmani, Qamar Iqbal and Qazi Saleem.

*Consolidated by*  
**C. J. Jahagirdar**



## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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5. Dr. Kazi Abdul Sattar         Reader, Department of Urdu, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (U. P.)
6. Shri Kamaleshwar             Editor, Sarika. Times of India Publication, Bambay
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35. Shri Sukhram Hiwrale      Aurangabad (Dn.)
36. Shri Qamar Iqbal      Aurangabad (Dn.)
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40. Shri Y. M. Pathan      Department of Marathi, Marathwada University, Aurangabad (Dn.)
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## LIST OF DELEGATES

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- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Shri D. A. Kulkarni    | Mahatma Gandhi Mahavidyalaya,<br>Ahmedpur, Dist. Osmanabad                          |
| 2. Shri N. D. Bhande      | —do—  |
| 3. Shri S. R. Hangarge    | —do—  |
| 4. Shri V. N. Dhoke       | Shri Shivaji College of Arts, Science<br>and Commerce, Kandhar                      |
| 5. Shri M. K. Shazli      | —do—  |
| 6. Shri I. D. Arya        | —do—  |
| 7. Dr. S. S. Varma        | Government College of Arts<br>and Science, Aurangabad (Dn.)                         |
| 8. Shri. R. C. Mehra      | —do—  |
| 9. Shri B. D. Sankpal     | —do—  |
| 10. Shri S. G. Gawle      | Nutan Mahavidyalaya, Sailu  |
| 11. Shri P. B. Kamtikar   | —do—  |
| 12. Shri V. N. Ingle      | Karmaveer Mamasahab Jagdale<br>Mahavidyalaya, Washi Dist.<br>Osmanabad              |
| 13. Shri M. S. Joshi      | Vaidyanath College of Arts, Science<br>and Commerce, Parli-Vaijnath,<br>Dist. Bhir  |
| 14. Miss M. M. Shah       | Navagan Shikshan Sanstha Rajuri's<br>College of Arts, Science and<br>Commerce, Bhir |
| 15. Shri Hameed Suhrwardi | —do—  |
| 16. Shri D. N. Mathekar   | Adarsha Education Society's Arts,<br>Commerce and Science College,<br>Hingoli       |
| 17. Shri A. G. Rathi      | —do—  |

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| 18. Shri V. P. Thonte         | Vasantrao Naik Mahavidyalaya<br>Aurangabad (Dn.)  |
| 19. Shri S. B. Puri           | —do—  |
| 20. Shri B. N. Jagtap         | —do—  |
| 21. Shri N. V. Sharma         | Saraswati Bhuvan Education Society's<br>College of Arts and Commerce,<br>Aurangabad (Dn.) |
| 22. Shri T. S. Kulkarni       | —do—  |
| 23. Shri P. R. Baheti         | Maharashtra Mahavidyalaya<br>Naldurg, Dist. Osmanabad                                     |
| 24. N. S. Kunte               | —do—  |
| 25. Shri Mohmed Ahmed<br>Khan | Maharashtra Udaygiri Mahavidy-<br>alaya, Udgir, Dist. Osmanabad                           |
| 26. Shri N. K. Mehra          | —do—  |
| 27. Shri G. G. Kulkarni       | —do—  |
| 28. <i>Mrs. S. P. Ranade</i>  | Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Mahavidya-<br>laya, Aurangabad (Dn.)                              |
| 29. Shri D. W. Naikwade       | —do—  |
| 30. Shri Chandrakant Dhande   | Pratishthan Mahavidyalaya, Paithan  |
| 31. Shri G. T. Kakade         | —do—  |
| 32. Shri C. B. Kawade         | Vivekanand College of Arts and<br>Commerce, Aurangabad (Dn.)                              |
| 33. <i>Miss S. V. Borkar</i>  | —do—  |
| 34. Shri A. J. Jagtap         | Deogiri College, Aurangabad (Dn.)   |
| 35. Shri K. T. Thale          | —do—  |
| 36. Shri S. T. Pradhan        | Milind College of Arts,<br>Aurangabad (Dn.)   |
| 37. Shri P. A. Patil          | Arts & Commerce College, Kanna d<br>Dist. Aurangabad (Dn.)                                |
| 38. Shri C. W. Raje           | Science College, Nanded   |

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| 39. Shri P. D. Choudhary      | Yogeshwari Education Society's<br>Arts & Commerce College,<br>Ambajogai. |
| 40. Shri R. R. Tiwari         | —do—   |
| 41. Shri D. K. Gaud           | —do—   |
| 42. Shri P. S. Sambhus        | —do—   |
| 43. Dr. D. N. Mandhane        | Balbhim College, Bhir  |
| 44. Shri D. G. Bhagat         | People's College, Nanded   |
| 45. Dr. Rajmal Bora           | Department of Hindi Marathwada<br>University, Aurangabad (Dn.)           |
| 46. Shri G. T. Ashtekar       | —do—   |
| 47. <i>Mrs. L. N. Moharir</i> | Mahila Mahavidyalaya,<br>Aurangabad (Dn.)                                |
| 48. <i>Miss S. J. Khan</i>    | Balbhim College, Bhir.   |

## RAPPORTEURS

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