

B.P. SATHE (1910—73), Dogri short story writer, essayist and translator was a pioneer. He drew his plots and characters from legend, folklore and village life of his times, but invested them with freshness, beauty and universality. Sathe was the first to write personal essay in Dogri, wistful and nostalgic. Before Sathe, Dogri was not considered fit enough for literature. It required courage and vision to start writing in Dogri which Sathe did.

SHIVANATH (b. 1925) is an eminent critic and author of *History of Dogri Literature*. In this monograph, he evaluates the contribution of Sathe to the Dogri literature, mainly for the benefit of non-Dogri readers.

Line-sketch : Avadhesh Kumar

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B.P. SATHE

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha.

Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

**B. P. Sathe**

**SHIVANATH**

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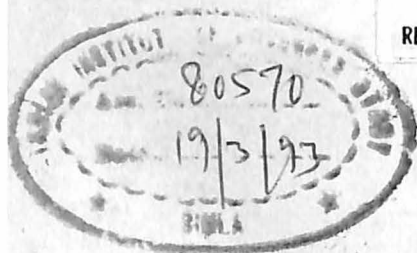
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*For*

**LAKSHMI**

my wife, companion and friend for over 34 years





# Preface

Bhagwat Prasad Sathe was a pioneer among Dogri writers, specially in the field of Dogri short-story writing. He was a multi-faceted personality with a wide range of interests. Besides, he was the product of his times and a son of his native soil, the smell of which perfumes all his work. One approach to the subject could be to deal with his works and, from them, proceed to the man and his life and from there to the milieu which shaped and stimulated his creative genius. I, however, propose to deal with these aspects in the reverse, i.e. the milieu, the man and his work.

I seem to have been tricked into writing this monograph. It was at a meeting of the Advisory Board of the Sahitya Akademi for Dogri that one of the members proposed the name of B.P. Sathe for a monograph in the series 'Makers of Indian Literature' and another member suggested that I should write it and I could not say no. I feel that persons like Ramnath Shastri or Deenu Bhai Pant or D.C. Prashant, M.P., would have done greater justice to the subject as they were the founders of the Dogri Sanstha and the Dogri renaissance movement and knew him from close quarters. Perhaps Jagdish

Chandra Sathe who was a relation of his, was better equipped for the assignment.

I knew B.P. Sathe only casually and from a distance. During the early years of the Dogri literary movement, I had met him a few times at Jammu in the latter half of the nineteen forties and listened to one or two of his stories read out in literary get-togethers. His book *Pehlā Phull* had just then been published. Soon after, he went away to Bombay and I had no occasion to meet him again. As a student of Dogri literature, however, I have read all that he has written and have tried to assess his contribution to the development of Dogri literature. That is my only qualification to write on him and his work.

I am grateful to all those who have helped in the preparation of this monograph, particularly to Sri Jagdish Chandra Sathe who supplied me useful information about B.P. Sathe's early life and Srimati Ratnavali Sathe who not only granted me a long interview but also managed to make available to me a bundle of her husband's published and unpublished pieces of work.

SHIVANATH

K-89 Kalkaji  
New Delhi  
June, 1985

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# 1

## The Milieu

Jammu city is not only the winter capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, but also the cultural capital of the Dogras. Before the integration of the Indian states into the Union of India in 1947, this city was the seat of Jamwal Dogra rulers who were considered as the chief among rulers of 22 Dogra hill states to the north of the plains of the Punjab and were renowned as enlightened patrons of art, scholarship, military skill and prowess. The city has also been an important commercial centre and has been celebrated in Dogri folk-lore. In the famous love song of *Kunju and Chainchalo*, popular all over the Dogra country, there is a piece of dialogue between the lovers:

**Chainchalo:**

*Chhāti Kānnē Chhā:i mat*

*lāndā*

*Kunjuā,*

*Mēṛē ṛuṭṭi jandē beṛē ho*

*Mēṛiyē jindē mēṛē ṛuṭṭi jandē beṛē ho*

**Kunju :**

*Beṛēn dā basos neṛn kar*

*Chainchalo,*

*Jammu beṛē batēhrē ho!*

*Mēṛiyē jindē, Jammu beṛē batēhrē ho !*

Chainchalo tells Kunju not to embrace her lest the buttons of her blouse should snap. Kunju asks her not to worry about the buttons as there was no dearth of them in Jammu.

Another folk-song celebrates the superiority of Jammu Raj over that of Chamba Raj. It speaks of the sounding of drums from the hills of Chamba and the beating of big *nagārās* (large drums) in Jammu:

*Chambe diyā dhārā dholaru bajadā,  
Jammuā bajadā nagārā.*

Service in the armies of Jammu Rajas was considered a matter of pride during the days of Rajas and Maharajas in the Punjab hill states. In another folk-song, the wife asks her husband as to where he was going to serve and on what campaign:

*Kuthān di karani aṛeyā chākari,  
Te kuthān di peyi ai muhim?*

and the husband replies that he would like to join the Jammu forces and go on the Kashmir campaign:

*Jammuā di karani ariye chakari,  
Kashmira di peyi ai muhim.*

A poem by Kavi Rudra Dutt, a contemporary of Maharaja Ranbir Singh of Jammu (A.D. 1856—1885) describes the affluence of trade in Jammu thus:

*Jammuā dū rāj, rājū Bhupati  
sulakkhanā,  
Apanā bapāri jān, tranget māl  
rakkhanā,  
Aunde n' bapāri ghetṛé ānadé  
kandhāri,  
Kesar, duṣālé, manī-hār jārī  
keemkhāb,  
Motin amel āpun chālī aunde  
gakkhanā.*

This points to the traders trading in horses from Kandhār, saffron and shawls from Kashmir and precious stones and gold and silver-threaded cloth from other parts coming to the Jammu court. Jammu provided a trading centre for not only handicrafts and other products of Kashmir and beyond in the north but also for the traders from the plains and places farther off.

People came to Jammu not only for trade and security but also for its picturesque natural beauty. The setting of the city fascinated travellers. Situated on a plateau 300 feet above the river Tawi with a palace built on the very edge of the cliff overlooking the river, numerous temple spires standing out in bold relief, against the dark verdure of the lower hills crowned by the lofty Trikuta (three peaked mountain abode of Vaishno Devi) with the majestic snowy mountains for a backdrop, it cast a strange fairy-land charm over visitors approaching from the plains of Satwari. The view of the plains from the city was equally breathtaking. A foreign traveller Lt. Col. Joshua Duke described it thus:

So utterly boundless to the south did the plains appear that they might have been mistaken for the ocean, had not the silvery windings of the Tawi showed them to be of terra firma. A misty indistinctness was blended over the sky and earth at the place of separation. It was a prospect which was an emblem of infinity. Gradually the horizon became more and more distinct, the sun sank slowly as the earth rose to meet him, and disappeared after lighting up a scene of gorgeous brilliance.

It is a fact of history that Dogra country was for quite some time a country of Rajas and Maharajas related to each other, at times at war with each other, and at other times friendly, sometimes planning and intriguing to expand their kingdoms and at others parting with some land as part of dowry for a daughter given in marriage to another Raja. In the second half of the 18th century, Raja Ranjit Deo of Jammu was acknowledged as the most powerful among Dogra rulers. He was a wise and enlightened ruler. His son Brajraj Deo, more valorous than wise, was a great friend of Prithipal Singh, the Raja of Basohli. He had married one of the daughters of the Raja of Chamba and had led a



successful campaign against Ghumand Chand, the Raja of Kangra. It is around this time that the famous Pahari schools of painting flourished at Basohli, Guler, Kangra and Jammu. It is also during this time that a literary tradition of poetry in Braj Bhasha grew at the Jammu court. Poet Dattu composed his famous *Kamala netra Stotra*, *Brajaraja Panchāṣikā* and *Vira Vilāsa*, a Braj Bhasha verse transliteration of the Drona Parva of the epic *Mahabharata*. This tradition was carried forward by his nephew Shiv Ram and Shiv Ram's son Trilochana who translated the *Shanti Parva* into verse and called it *Nītivinod*.

The scholarship of Jammu Dogras was Hindu Sanātana Dharma-oriented. The Rajas of Jammu had been deeply religious people and they and their queens had numerous temples built, making Jammu a city of temples. Earlier it was called the city of stones, *patthren ālā shehar*, may be due to heaps of beautiful rounded stones brought down from the mountains by the river Tawi which enters the plains at Jammu and on whose bank the city is situated. Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of the Jammu and Kashmir State which included Ladakh, had two big temple complexes with attached Sanskrit Pathshalas established at Jammu and Uttar Behni (Sanskrit: *Uttara Vāhini*) respectively, one on the bank of the Tawi (Sanskrit: Taushi) and the other on the bank of the River Devaka. These centres of learning and the royal court attracted Sanskrit scholars from all over India, particularly Varanasi. Maharaja Gulab Singh's successor Ranbir Singh gave further encouragement to scholarship and extended patronage to Sanskrit learning at Jammu and set up a forum for Sanskrit scholars, i.e., *vidvat parishad* called Vidya Vilas Sabha and the Vidya Vilas Press at Jammu. Among the members of the Vidya Vilas Sabha were Mahakavi Chandidas, Ganesh Pandit, Vidyānidhi, the Dogri poet Ganga Ram, Sahib Kaul, Ashanand, Venkatacharya, Neelkanth and Chhannulal. To start with, they met once a week on Tuesdays at Shri Raghunath Mandir and later at the Mubarik Mandi Palace. The meetings were devoted to reading of papers in Sanskrit followed by discussion, called *Shāstrārtha*. The Vidya Vilas Press printed a number of Sanskrit books, copies of some of which

are available at Shri Raghunath Mandir Sanskrit Library and with some individual scholars who have carried on the tradition of Sanskrit learning at Jammu to this day. Dr. Ganga Dutt Shastri 'Vinod', Pandit Kaka Ram Shastri, Shuk Dev Shastri, Ram Kishan Shastri and Kedar Nath Shastri are some of the products of this tradition. Shuk Dev Shastri composed such works as *Nehru Shatakam* and *Bhārat Sahasranām* and Kedar Nath Shastri composed *Taushi Shatakam*. The tradition of writing in Sanskrit continued into the 20th century.

A new development in the beginning of the 20th century was an upsurge of literary activities in the vernaculars—Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi. Hindi took off from Braj Bhasha. Writing in Urdu owed its origin to the adoption of this language as the medium of instruction in schools and for use in official correspondence. Punjabi was brought in by the Punjabis who came to occupy influential positions in educational institutions in the State and the government. Its growth was also influenced by the development of Punjabi literature in the neighbouring Punjab. Popular Punjabi folk tales in verse such as *Heer-Rānjah*, *Sassi-Punnu*, *Rūp-Basant*, *Pūran-Bhakta* acquired popularity among the literate population. There was also the tradition of Mohammad Baksh's *Kissa Saifulmalook Badiul Jamal Pari* having been composed earlier and considerable literary activity in Punjabi was prevalent in Jammu in the early years of this century. Poet Das Mal who composed *Rūp-Basant* and other works such as *Narasi Bhakta*, *Dhanna Jatt*, *Pendu Jatt*, *Sahukār*, *Krishna Janam* and *Sita Banabās*, inspired a band of admirers and pupils at Jammu. A number of young people came to look upon him as their *ustad* or *guru* and they flocked to him to learn to compose poetry. Gosain Tarachand was yet another popular Punjabi poet of Jammu who had his pupils not only at Jammu but also in the neighbouring city of Sialkot (now in Pakistan). He translated the *Bhagavadgita* in Punjabi verse and wrote hundreds of poems, *dohas* and *kāfis*. Both Urdu and Punjabi dealt a heavy blow to Dogri which was then written in Tākari script and had been the language of official business among the hill Rajas of the Dogra country, of private correspondence

among individuals and of petitions and *farmans*. It had also a strong tradition of folk literature. Gradually, Dogri was relegated into a mere spoken language and used only occasionally for compositions.

In 1944, when the Dogri Sanstha was born and with it a Dogri literary movement was started, Jammu was creatively vibrant, culturally lively and intellectually active, but not in Dogri, the mother tongue of the Dogras, who formed the bulk of the population of Jammu City. The newspapers and periodicals were mostly in Urdu or Hindi. The medium of instruction was either Urdu, English or Hindi. The Prince of Wales College, the premier educational institution of Jammu, published a monthly magazine which had English, Hindi and Urdu sections, but no Dogri section. The college had an English Readers' Forum, an Urdu Bazm and a Hindi Parishad and at their periodical meetings the professors and students read papers on literary subjects. In the city, there was a club known as the Prince of Wales College City Club which arranged lectures in the Ranbir High School Hall on subjects of literary, philosophical, historical, linguistic and scientific interest. At this club, K.G. Saiyidain, the then State Director of Education and later Education Secretary, Government of India, had delivered a lecture on the educational philosophy of the Urdu poet, Iqbal; Padma Bhushana recipient Dr. Siddeshwar Varma had given a talk on his linguistic hunt in the Himalayas; the Hindi writer Shanti Priya Dwivedi had spoken on some aspects of Hindi literature; Prof. Jayalal Kaul had regaled his audience in his inimitable style with the love lyrics of Kashmir and a senior State Government officer had read a paper on the philosophy of Shakespeare's plays. There was a Hindi Parishad in the city with a number of teachers, students and others as its members. There were also literary groups of those interested in Urdu and Punjabi literatures.

In this milieu of literary ferment an organisation named the Dogri Sanstha was born. In fact, a few persons who had been writing in Hindi and Urdu and reading their compositions to each other in their meetings at the temple of Dewan Jawala

Sahai, decided to write in their mother tongue Dogri. B.P. Sathe, Ramnath Shastri, Deenu Bhai Pant and Dharam Chand Prashant were the most prominent and enthusiastic among these. They were soon joined by others, some of them, then students of the local Prince of Wales College. Deenu Bhai Pant used to write poems. Dharam Chand Prashant was a journalist who had tried his hand in short story writing, and Ramnath Shastri and B.P. Sathe had written short stories in Hindi and Urdu respectively. Now they started writing in Dogri using the Devanagari script instead of the Tākari which was the original script of Dogri. Tākari had been given the go-by some fifty years earlier. Deenu Bhai Pant's Dogri poem "*Uṭh Mereya Desā, Hoon Lo Hoi Gayi*" became the watchword of the Dogri Sanstha which drew up a blueprint of its programme to awaken a spirit of renaissance among the community, to develop love for and interest in Dogri culture and Dogri language among its members and to develop the Dogri language and literature. He sang of the beauty of his land in his poem "*Mere Desa Da Chhalaipa Meri Akkhi Kane Dikkh*". His long narrative poem "*Guttlun*" not only became a household word in Jammu but it also titillated, as it were, the dormant literary conciousness of the Dogras to blossom in their native speech. While Deenu Bhai Pant was, in a sense, the pioneer of the new spirit in Dogri poetry and published three slim volumes of Dogri verse one after the other in quick succession, B.P. Sathe became the pioneer of Dogri short story with his first collection of short stories, *Pehlā Phull*, published in 1947.

The emergence of B.P. Sathe as the first short-story writer in Dogri has an interesting background. In one of his essays in Hindi written in 1967, he has described how he burst on the Dogri literary scene with his first short story "*Pehlā Phull*". He had always felt deeply hurt whenever Dogri language was lampooned on the stage in the interludes of Ramlila and other serious plays and, people around felt ashamed to use it as the medium of speech. Dogri Bhajans of Pt. Har Dutta Shastri inspired hope for the future of Dogri literature, but they were mere ornaments on a naked body ; for the language was in dire

need of being clothed with good creative literature. B.P. Sathe himself felt diffident to write in Dogri. He often asked himself, "Will I be able to write a short story in Dogri?" and invariably the answer would be "No". Therefore whatever he wrote in Dogri later, was somehow got written under some provocation or inner compulsion and the main thrust behind this activity was the hurt and grief that he felt at the state of Dogri language in its own homeland where even the Dogra ruler did not extend any patronage or encouragement to it.

B.P. Sathe was the Secretary of the Hindi Sahitya Mandal of Jammu in 1944. Some members of the Mandal decided that a Dogri Sanstha should be established and the occasion should be celebrated with a dinner. Arrangements for the dinner were made at the residence of Sri Narayan Dutta Mishra, another prominent member of the Mandal. It had been announced that Deenu Bhai Pant would titillate those present with his popular poem "*Guttalun*". B.P. Sathe felt an urge to write something for this occasion. He thought that if Deenu Bhai was going to make people laugh, he should try to move them differently; perhaps by presenting some serious social problem or a piece from their cultural past which would touch them. He was convinced that laughter was short lived; it took wings with fleeting moments, but a tale of suffering would strike deep into the hearts of listeners and make a lasting impact. He therefore wrote his story "*Pehlā Phull*" and put it in his pocket before going to the function. Actually, he had woven the subject matter of the story into an Urdu short story earlier which had been published in an Urdu journal and therefore all that he had to do, was to reframe it in Dogri. Dharam Chand Prashant was elected Secretary of the newly constituted Dogri Sanstha and B.P. Sathe was elected as the Publicity Secretary. After dinner, Deenu recited his "*Guttalun*", which made people double up with laughter. Then, B.P. Sathe offered to read a story. As the narration proceeded, the effect of "*Guttalun*" waned and the assembled listeners grew grave and when he read "In the event of denial of one's right, one should snatch it", they became excited. All present were filled with hope about the future of Dogri short-story and Dogri literature.

# 2

## The Man

Bhagwat Prasad Sathe was a Dogra with Maharashtrian ancestry; his forbears were Maharashtrian Brahmins. He was the great grandson of one Bhaskar Rao Sathe who strayed from the Maratha troops and spent his last days in the heartland of Duggar.

Bhaskar Rao Sathe, was a member of the Maratha forces who fought against Ahmad Shah Abdali in the Third Battle of Panipat. He had left his wife and son at Varanasi before joining the battle. The rout of his compatriots at the hands of invaders from the north-west, and the bloodshed and uncertainties of life perhaps turned his heart away from the world and he became a Sanyasin, roaming from place to place in the plains and lower hills of the Punjab. It is during these wanderings that at Dograi near Lahore, he met Raja Suchet Singh, the brother of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of Jammu and Kashmir State and one of the three famous Dogra brothers who rose high in the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by dint of their merit and military exploits.

The three brothers from Jammu were great favourites of the Maharaja who endowed the jagir of Jammu on Gulab Singh

and that of Ramnagar on Suchet Singh. Suchet Singh was fond of horse riding and one day while engaged in practice of tent-pegging at Dograi, he missed his mark and drew an uncomplimentary comment from the Sanyasin Bhaskar Rao Sathe who was watching the practice that day, "You, young man, do not seem to have had a competent guru." Cut to the quick, the young man challenged the Sanyasin. The Sanyasin smiled, but on the challenge being repeated, he girded his dhoti, mounted the steed and riding it like one well-versed in horse riding, hit the mark once, twice, thrice, and as many times as asked and it was a delight to watch him. The young Raja was impressed and pleased and he revealed his identity and invited the Sanyasin to grace his jagir with his presence. The Raja and the Sanyasin seemed to have taken to each other and the soldier turned Sanyasin accompanied the Raja to Ramnagar. But he did not make his residence in the capital. Instead, he chose to live in the outskirts of Ramnagar about two miles away from the Raja's palace, in an old temple of Shiva by the side of a water spout, a natural spring. This became his hermitage to which came not only the Raja and his courtiers, but also the people of Ramnagar for *satsang* and to listen to discourses.

Meanwhile, Bhaskar Rao's son Kashinath Sathe was growing up at Kashi. When he came of age, he set out in search of his lost father. He had learnt that quite a few Maratha soldiers had moved towards the Punjab after the rout of Marathas at Panipat. Purmandal, on the bank of Uttaravahini near Jammu, was a centre of pilgrimage where Sadhus from all over India congregated on festival days, particularly on the fourteenth day of the month of Chaitra. Here Kashinath met his father who had come there with his disciples and accompanied him to Ramnagar. He stayed on in Ramnagar and was given a suitable job. Kashinath was a learned man and he was honoured and respected for his learning, not only at Ramnagar but later also at the Jammu Court when Ramnagar became part of Jammu Raj after Raja Suchet Singh died intestate. Kashinath's marriage into a Brahmin family of Beejbehara near Srinagar is said to have been arranged by Maharaja Ranbir Singh of Jammu.

Beejbehara is on the Srinagar-Jammu highway and to the left of the road, lies an ancient looking temple of Shiva on the banks of the Jhelum. The temple is neglected and much of the land previously attached to the temple has been taken away. An old couple, living on the premises, maintain the temple and do the daily Puja etc. I visited the temple in October 1982 and saw the old priest seated inside the temple facing the deity and doing *japa*. The old lady led me to the temple and offered some *prasad* of fresh walnuts. Both of them looked typical Dogras by their dress and from their speech but on enquiry I was told that they were Maharashtrians and that their ancestors had come to the state during the reign of Dogra rulers and had stayed on. There were few visitors and now theirs was perhaps the only Hindu family in town. Kashinath is said to have married into this family of Maharashtrian priests. He, however, died very young leaving behind three sons—Someshwar Rao, Ramanand and Parmanand.

While Someshwar alias Sonu rose to the position of a major-general in the J & K forces, Parmanand combined a military career with interest in astrology and acquired a name in the latter field. Bhagwat Prasad Sathe was the youngest and the only surviving son of Parmanand and he imbibed from him some of the knowledge of astrology which he practised later and inherited his father's library of books on astrology which he carted from Ramnagar to Jammu, from Jammu to Ayodhya and to Varanasi, Bombay and again back to Jammu.

Bhagwat Prasad was born in December 1910 at Ramnagar, a small town in the lower Siwaliks, about 30 miles to the east of Jammu. Situated on a plateau 2700 ft above the sea level, it has a salubrious climate and a beautiful setting among hills and streams. Ramnagar had been the capital of Bhandral Rajput rulers till the beginning of the 19th century. Then it came under the suzerainty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore who gave it to Raja Suchet Singh in jagir in recognition of his services to the Sikh ruler. Raja Suchet Singh was a patron of arts and military skills. He had the old fort renovated and a beautiful palace built within its four walls. Vigne, the French traveller



who visited these hill states in 1834 described the palace as worth seeing. He also mentioned that the Raja's army had soldiers from different countries; there were dark complexioned tribesmen from Khyber Pass and Kazalbashes from Iran and people from the hills with tall caps and tiger skin belts. For decoration of his palace walls, he commissioned painters who painted scenes from Hindu mythology, Rama and Sita, Krishna and Radha, Shiva and Parvati and Durga and Brahma and also scenes of his campaigns and a marriage scene and another of a queen puffing at a *hookah*.

Bhagwat Prasad was the eleventh child of his parents. They had ten children before him and all of them had died. He was supposed to have been born in answer to the incessant prayers of his parents and several tantric pujas. Afraid that he might not survive, the boy was offered to goddess Bhagwati immediately after birth and touched by a sword by his father. He survived. And he became the darling of not only his parents and other members of the family, but also of the large numbers of retainers and servants. His father was the commandant of the fort and wielded a lot of power and patronage. The little child was showered with love and care by everyone and he was taken on rounds of the bazar in the town in a carriage drawn by two horses. His childhood and boyhood were spent at Ramnagar where he went to school and studied up to middle school examination.

After doing his middle school, he went down to Jammu, to join Sri Ranbir High School for his matriculation. The family of his cousin General Sonu had a house there. General Sonu had passed away in 1924 followed by his son Colonel Gourinandan. The Colonel's son, Captain Devi Sharan, lived there with the family when B.P. Sathe joined them.

Right from his childhood, Bhagwat had imbibed a taste for the good things of life—clothes, shoes, food, drama and music. He was the first from his family to go to college and he got a monthly pocket money of Rs. 50/- which was a lot in those days. He moved about in great style and had a lot of friends and admirers. He smoked cigarettes, put on well-tailored suits and

felt-hat and wore well-polished shining shoes. He was rather dark-complexioned and short in stature, in sharp contrast to his tall and handsome Sikh friend Ajit Singh Chapradia. Chapradia had his hair shaved and started smoking in the company of his friend Bhagwat and was often found singing snatches from popular folk songs to the accompaniment of a harmonium in Bhagwat's room.

'Bhagwatu', as he was then called, participated in Ramlilas and other plays performed in Jammu and played some female roles with remarkable aplomb. His extra-curricular activities were not limited to drama and music only ; they soon extended to politics when the Swadeshi movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi reverberated throughout the country. At the bonfire of foreign goods at the city chowk in Jammu, Bhagwat consigned all his fancy things such as suits, hats, ties, his prized trousers, etc., to the fire. This did not go unnoticed by the authorities, and his guardian at Jammu, Captain Devi Sharan, was pulled up and asked to advise his ward to dissociate himself from any nationalist political activity. Bhagwat Prasad's college education came to an abrupt end. He had done his intermediate and was now studying in the first year of the two-year degree course.

Just about this time, Bhagwat's father died and he was called back home to Ramnagar to look after the family property. Ramnagar could not, however, hold him for long and he went back to Jammu. He tried for a job, but could not get one. He, therefore, gravitated to a group of youngmen writing for the Urdu paper, *Dogra Gazette*. In the group were the late Kishan Samailpuri, the poet who then wrote in Urdu, and later turned to writing in Dogri, Dayakishan Gardish, a veteran journalist, with a powerful pen who edited several journals later and Preetam Zayaye, another well-known journalist, who made his name in that field in Lahore. He also wrote for another paper *Veer*. It is in one of these papers that he wrote a short story in Urdu which may be called the first version of his Dogri short story "Pehlā Phull". This was around 1930-31. In the meantime, he had married a Brahmin girl from Pasr p

in the Punjab. Jammu dogra Brahmins were at that time too orthodox and insular to give away any of their daughters to the great grandson of a refugee Brahmin from Maharashtra. This family of Brahmins at Pasrur was also a refugee family from Africa. The bride, Saraswati, was referred to as Dhoḍheāli, the one from Dhoḍa, a village in Pasrur where young Bhagwat's wedding party had gone from Jammu for the marriage.

Politics and journalism claimed Bhagwat's interest during the period 1931 to 1936. He became the editor of the local Urdu paper *Inkshāf* in 1936 as mentioned in the book *Fifty Years in Journalism* by Mulk Raj Saraf, the veteran journalist of Jammu. He was also the organising secretary of the Dogra Sadar Sabha. He wrote stringent worded articles in Urdu journals pleading the cause of the Dogras. He also took active part in dramatics. His seditious editorials in *Inkshāf* earned him the wrath of the authorities who wanted to send this stormy petrel out of the State and to that end successfully put pressure on the proprietors of the paper. Bhagwat now needed a job badly and got one in the Dharmartha Department, which was responsible for the maintenance of temples in the State and inns and dharmasālās established by the Dharmartha Trust outside the state at places of pilgrimage like Hardwar and Varanasi. The job was one of a manager and in this capacity he served at Katra Vaishno Devi, Hardwar, Ayodhya and Varanasi. At Varanasi, he spent five or six years and had both time and opportunity to cultivate his interest in astrology and creative writing and participate in local social activities. He also came in contact with the local Maharashtri Samaj and Sri Vishnu Rao Paradkar, editor of the Hindi paper *Āj*. He changed his medium from Urdu to Hindi and wrote some short stories and contributed articles to Hindi papers. He was happy now, although he had no issue. Just then orders of his transfer from Varanasi to some place came and this upset him so much that he fell ill and was admitted to Ramakrishna Mission Hospital for treatment. After recovery, he left the job and came back to Jammu. His birth place Ramnagar and Jammu, the centre of activity of his youth, always exercised a strange pull on him.

His eight years with the Dharmartha Trust had been quite fruitful. As a manager at the shrine of Vaishno Devi he got substantial improvements effected in the arrangements and facilities for pilgrims. At Ayodhya, he was honoured with the title of "Sahitya Bhushan" by *Sanskritam Weekly* for his contribution to cultural and literary activities. In Varanasi, Kashi Pandit Sabha conferred on him the title of 'Jyotishalankar': He had been quite active in literary circles and contributed regularly to *Sansār*. In Varanasi, he also founded the Karan Vāgvivardhani Parishad to promote efficiency of speech in senior students and published his Hindi book on astrology *Hastarekha Vigyāna* with an introduction by Sri Paradkar.

His short stories "Kamala Te Suraj" and "Pandit Jamana dhar" are autobiographical works and relate incidents of his sojourn at Vaishno Devi and Ayodhya respectively. The latter is a humorous sketch of an interesting character whom he met at Ayodhya, one who called himself Pandit Jamanadhar *alias* Mahant Jamandas KCSI, KCBO. This man had been directed to our *babu* from Jammu by a girl named Kishori whom he had approached for an anna to buy some *ganja*. Jamanadhar came and sat in front of him, staring incessantly. He looked funny with one eyebrow raised high enough to touch the hair on his head, his lips as if sealed and almost naked except for a towel to cover his loins. Before the writer could ask him anything, he himself spoke up, "You must be wanting to know my name and address, and what I do? Well, do you see that house beyond the field? It is both a house and a temple. Every house in Ayodhya is a temple and every temple is a house because only the priests live there along with their families. I am also a priest. My mother also lives with me there. Actually, she is the owner of it and I am her adopted son. Now you will ask my name. Listen and do not interrupt until I have told you. My name is Pandit Jamanadhar, Pandit because I am a Brahmin boy. How does it matter if I can't read and write? I have every right to prefix 'Pandit' to my name. I am also Mahant Jamanadas because I am a priest at the Rama temple and I perform *pūjas* there as a non-householder. I am both the *pūjari*

and the *mahant*. Now you will want to know the meaning of adding the English titles KCSI, KCBO? Well, my mother lost all her children in their infancy. Then some Sadhu advised her that she should give a half Indian and half English name to her next child. That is how my full name is Pandit Jamanadhar alias Mahant Jamanadas KCSI, KCBO. Now you want to know how I came to you?" And he proceeded to tell the writer about Kishori. "You know Kishori? She is very smart and mischievous. By sending me here she has passed on her problem to you."

"Doesn't matter", replied the author. "I am always ready to take upon myself the problems of others. I'll give you one anna, why even four annas, but what will you give me in return?"

"I shall introduce you to Kishori."

"No, I don't want to be introduced to any girl."

"In that case I shall run your errands, carry your *dhori* to the bathing place and follow you wherever you go."

"Why do you want to do me such a big favour?"

"Because you are the only one who does not want to know Kishori. I shall do anything for you. I shall press your legs and rub oil on your head. You are a wonderful man, for you don't want to meet Kishori."

After the writer had left Ayodhya and gone to Varanasi, he received a letter from Jamanadhar informing him that he had been sued in the court at Faizabad for accommodating more pilgrims in his temple than permissible and while someone else in his place might have been punished with a fine of Rs. 2/-, the judge, in his case, had imposed a fine of Rs. 30/- because of the titles KCSI, KCBO against his name. He was told that he should not use these titles because he had not been authorised by the Government to do so. On his refusal to drop these titles, the judge had got annoyed and imposed the heavy fine. He further wrote about the difficulties he faced in making up the amount of the fine, but he was happy that thirty rupees was not a heavy price for the titles to which he had now become entitled. He asked for help and threatened that if his request was not heeded, he would hang the writer upside down. The writer sent him five one rupee stamps which Jamanadhar could not encash.

Jamanadhar, therefore, hung the writer's photograph upside down in the sun and stood before it saying "Well, I have done what I said I would. What if I have to stand in the sun? I have done what I said I would." The incident shows that B. P. Sathe was helpful and generous by nature and could tolerate even fools.

This streak of helpfulness and concern for others is also seen in an incident described in the story "Kamala te Suraj". The writer was posted as manager of Vaishno Devi temple. These days it draws pilgrims in their thousands all through the year. But in 1936, pilgrims were few and the largest number came during the *Navaratri*s preceding *Vijayadashmi* (Dussehra) festival and [again after the winter snow had melted. During such times, people connected with the arrangements would arrive, a few days before the congregation of the pilgrims. They were the contractors who put up stalls of sweetmeats and other eatables and offerings, Brahmins who guided with torches the pilgrims through the low, dark, craggy tunnel to the shrine, and little girls called *kanjaks* who came from Katra seven kilometres below where the buses unloaded the pilgrims and from where the climb commenced. The pilgrims worshipped these girls after having *darshan* of the goddess, fed them with *puris* and *halwa*, gave them offerings of small coins as *dakshina* and touched and washed their feet. Bhagwat found that the arrangements for attending to the complaints and comforts of pilgrims and their guides were not satisfactory. The girls, for example, had no proper place to sleep at night. Some of them sat crouched beside the fire places at the sweetmeat vendors' shops others collected hay and huddled themselves in it. They made a pathetic sight—bundles with heads joined to knees and shivering. Bhagwat Prasad found that there was a room kept locked and reserved for visiting officials. He got it vacated for the girls by making provision for the stay of officials in his own office room (whenever they came). He made heating arrangements in the room and later got vaseline for the feet of the girls who went about barefoot and developed chapped skin. Kamala, aged 12 was the one who was largely instrumental in getting these facilities.

She was pretty, intelligent and a born leader who commanded respect of all the other girls who often split into factions. The author's first meeting with her is as dramatic as the one with Jamanadhar in the earlier story.

He had taken away her grandfather's room for office and given him another room a few feet away. The grandfather, a light owner, came accompanied by his granddaughter, and started arguing with the manager. "You have converted my room into an office. This sort of thing never happened earlier. You are new to this place, and do not know the practices followed here." The writer explained that he had been given five other rooms but had chosen this one for the office because he wanted to be near and accessible to the pilgrims whose welfare was the paramount consideration for every one. The Brahmin was not convinced but the little girl could understand, she said, "Let us go baba, Sa'ab is right." And she added, that the previous year, the pilgrims had suffered a lot and they had to wait for long to get quilts. And then she led her grandfather to the other room. The author was greatly impressed by her beauty, intelligence and understanding. She had a good complexion and a good figure. She had big eyes and fine features. She looked attractive in her white *dupatta* and deep red *kurta* and *churidar* locally called *suthan*. Once when he had fever, she showed great concern and looked after him. He was deeply touched. One day he told her. "Kamala, I haven't given you anything. What do you want?" She replied, "Even without taking anything from you, I have received quite a lot. I have yet to take much from you, not in this life, but in the next one."

The author felt that by not taking any gift from him, she had put him under a debt. This feeling kept troubling his conscience. Then one night there was heavy snowfall, before due time and the hill tops turned white. At the shrine, there was three feet of snow. Everyone left the place. The author was transferred to Kashi. Four or five years later he learnt that Kamala had been married in a nearby village and that a few months after her marriage, she had died. Years later, when he was at Bombay, and his daughter, Suraj, was twelve years of

age, he was reminded of Kamala. He wondered whether Kamala had been reborn as Suraj. Everything about Suraj reminded him of Kamala. There is a suggestion here of the theory of rebirth. Kamala had told him that she would take many things from him, not in this life but the next. Was she born as his daughter to fulfil her unwitting utterance ?

Back at Jammu, Bhagwat set up an office for consultancy in astrology and agency in advertising. By now, he had acquired enough confidence in his astrological predictions and publicity skills. He was a good astrologer and being an *upāsaka* of Durga Bhagawati in the form of Tripurasundari, he believed that he had some kind of a *śiddhi* which helped him in his predictions. He had a certain reputation and it is said that when some of his relations sent to him the date and time of birth of a calf and asked him to prepare a horoscope, he wrote back to say that the particulars related to some quadruped with hair and not a human born. Astrology and advertising work did not take up all his time and Hindi Sahitya Mandal provided a good diversion. He became the Secretary of the Mandal.

For his residence, he rented a house jointly with one, Balak Ram Shastri, a Sanskrit teacher in a local school. It was a large house. Bhagwat and his wife occupied one portion of it while Balak Ram Shastri and his wife and three small children lived in the other portion. What brought them together was a common interest in astrology. Soon a deep friendship developed between the two. Sathe would spend long hours with Shastri. While Shastri's wife kept herself busy with her kids and even found time to give the men engrossed in their astrological calculations and discussions, glasses of water and tea, Sathe's wife, left by herself, felt lonely, neglected and miserable and greeted her husband's return late in the night with taunts and annoyance. Then, on a summer day in 1948, Shastri returned from school with diarrhoea and rashes all over the body and died after a brief illness, leaving behind a very young and beautiful widow with three sons aged eight, two and one. Sathe had by this time got too involved with his friend's family, being always available for any service, errand or help. He felt that



his friend's family was now his responsibility. He told some friends that Balak Ram Shastri had himself beseeched him to take care of his young wife and the kids before breathing his last.

For Ratnavali, the young widow with three small children, it was a situation of crisis. She went to her parents' house in the village but soon returned to Jammu. She went to her brother (Pandit Uma Datta, the father of the well-known suntoor player Shiv Kumar Sharma) for help but he advised her to go back to the village. She was not welcomed in her parents' house either. She was now completely on her own and managed to subsist by selling away pieces of her gold ornaments, one by one. Sathe continued to visit the family and render whatever help he could. There was curfew in the city for some days and her eldest son was sick. Sathe went with medicines and provisions. She herself fell seriously ill and he went with succour—psychological support, medicines and food. He was the only one to visit her and help her and her children. They were greatly drawn to each other, in spite of all the social disapprobation amounting to boycott. In an orthodox caste-ridden society in the middle of nineteen forties, the relationship of a Brahmin widow with a married man with his wife living was unthinkable. And because it was taboo, the rebel in Bhagwat prompted him to break it and he started living with her openly.

Dogri Sanstha had come into being in the meantime and Sathe functioned as Publicity Secretary of the Sanstha and wrote a few Dogri short stories, starting with "Pehlā Phull" followed by "Kuṛamen da Lāhmā" and "Mangte da gharāt". By 1946 he had written quite a few short stories and was in a position to publish a collection of them under the title *Pehlā Phull* by the end of that year. He had grandiose ideas about popularising Dogri and Kashmiri literature all over India through translations. To give shape to his ideas he founded a publishing concern Mahashakti Prakashan and a publicity concern Kashmir Publicity Service, but partition of the country and its impact on Jammu and Kashmir upset all his plans.

He turned to politics again and joined the National Conference of Sheikh Mohammad Abdulla. Communal disturbances had broken out and he was deputed to organise the people and restore communal harmony in Ramnagar, his birth place. He worked there for about two and a half months, enrolled workers and created the proper atmosphere and forums for peace. On return from Ramnagar to Jammu, he was asked by the party leadership to take over as the Office Secretary of the Jammu Provincial National Conference. But his health was failing and he could not take up the post. He was then sent to Reasi, another town in the interior, to act as Camp Officer at the town headquarters. When he came back to Jammu again, he was invited to write features for the Jammu Station of the All India Radio.

Remuneration from the All India Radio assignment was low and psychological pressures were building up. By 1949, the social condemnation of his relationship with Ratnavali was at such an unbearable pitch that he was compelled to leave Jammu. He left for Bombay with the woman whom he had owned and her small kids. The Dogri poet Hardutt had earlier gone to Bombay and there was the prospect of good business in astrology and the promise of fulfilment of some latent wish to be in the land of his ancestors. He remained in Bombay for nearly 17 years during which period Ratnavali bore him a daughter Suryakumari. He did not have a comfortable life at Bombay contrary to his expectations. Earnings from astrology were meagre and it was difficult to maintain a large family. He registered himself as an author and cooperator with the national publications concern Padma Prakashan Ltd and translated some books from English into Hindi for them. One of these was published under the title *Teen Minute Ki Kahāniyān*. He translated for advertising concerns like J. Walter Thompson and Ajanta Advertisers. He also worked as publicity-in-charge of the Hindi section of the second Swami Haridas Sangeet Sammelan, Bombay, 1954. He kept writing regularly and contributed articles to Hindi journals like *Dharmayug* and short stories and essays to Dogri journals published from Jammu.

He worked hard. In course of time he developed a sizeable clientele and was even able to get good accommodation in Bombay without having to pay *pugree*. Among his clients were rich people, people from the film world and also ordinary people. He had his office in the Fort area and residence at another place. He spent the last two years of his stay in Bombay at Ganeshpuri, in association with Baba Muktanand. He specialised in Gem Astrology and did a lot of research in the efficacy of stones under different astrological influences. He was also able to bring out the second edition of his book *Hastarekha Vigyān*.

There are two stories in *Khāli Gode* which tell something of his life in Bombay as an astrologer and a writer of sorts. There were hard and balmy days depending on the availability of clients and the munificence or niggardliness of his clients. The story "Dāl-bhat" must have been written when he was hard up. There was no work and no money to buy food. Dosing off one afternoon, he dreamt that he was visiting Acharya Ramchandra Shukla for a solution to his problem and help in his difficulties. He saw there Dr. Trivedi and Jayashankar Prasad and Bharatendu Harishchandra, all famous Hindi writers who are no more. He saw them talking of financial problems and heard Bharatendu say "I need a roof over my head and *dāl-bhat* (rice and lentilsoup) to sustain the body." Dr. Trivedi replied without lifting his head, "It is difficult, it is really difficult." The author repeated, aloud "It is difficult? Is it really difficult"? Ratnavali asked, "What are you saying? What is difficult?"

This brought him back to reality and he said, "Prepare some rice and lentilsoup. I want to feed someone in somebody's name."

She replied without looking towards him, "Lentils are finished. There is no rice. And there is no money to buy them from the shop."

The other story "Nakhā da Sog" narrates an experience of his as an astrologer. He is sent to Seth Narayanaswarup by Fazalbai. The Seth welcomes him, and makes him sit by

his side and gives him his horoscope for reading. Sathe makes some calculations and tells the Seth that it might take about a year for his scheme to be accomplished. But the Seth wants results earlier. He says, "I am sure that this work that I have taken in hand will bear fruit but I want that it should show results today. I hope to get about three lakhs of rupees out of this. Even if I get two lakhs it will be as good as four lakhs. We know how to multiply money. We do it in a jiffy. I got my son married and there was lot of expenditure. Our daily household expenses amount to about rupees one hundred. For the last thirty years I haven't had a proper meal; I subsist on milk, buttermilk and citrus fruits. My eldest son is a solicitor. I have to get him an office and it will cost nearly forty thousand rupees. I need that forty thousand. The second son is a doctor, a radiologist, and he is in service in the city. There is enough work for doctors in the city. I need at least fifty thousand for a clinic for him. My third son is a storekeeper in a cinemahouse. He did not do well in studies. Born of my second wife, he was a bit spoiled by our indulgence and was allowed to have a good time, always travelling by air to all sorts of holiday resorts—Kashmir, Ooty. I want to get a cinema house built for him. At least fifteen lakhs will be required for this purpose. His in-laws are saying that if I do not set him up like this, they will do so. You will appreciate that I have my honour and then there is the risk of my son drifting away from us. The fourth son is a spinning-master; he worked hard in the mill and learnt the trade. I do not like my sons to do service. I am, therefore, thinking of getting a textile mill built for him. I shall need another twenty five to thirty lakhs for this. My credit is worth no more than two to three lakhs. You have also come to our place, I must give you twenty to twenty five thousand. You too have needs and expectations. That is why I wish that I should get the money straightaway to start work. Bit by bit, it will grow. My credit-worthiness will increase and new tasks will be taken in hand." At this stage, the bearer brought in a glass of milk and a plateful of hot *jalebis*, and placed them before the astrologer. The Seth added,

with some puff and pride, "It is not our practice to offer two biscuits and a cup of tea to visitors to the house. You have tiffin to your fill. Yesterday we had *balushahi*, day before yesterday it was *gulab-jamun* and the day before that, it was *rasogullas*. I do not take any of these things, but I feel very happy to see visitors eating them."

The Seth had incited a sister-in-law of his, to go to court to get a share of family property which ran into crores and was controlled by the younger brother of her late husband. The Seth had undertaken to bear the expenses of the suit and she had agreed to give a share of the property to him, on her winning the case. This younger brother of the lady lived and worked in New York and the court summons had been despatched to him in New York but the summons had come back unserved. A few days later, when the astrologer went to see the Seth, he learnt that the summons had been served and the Seth promised to give him twenty thousand in two instalments of ten thousand each as soon as the court decided the case. The hearing was 15 days hence and the Seth wanted him to see him in the office on the day of the hearing. The astrologer went to see the Seth in his office on the appointed date and found him in a very bad shape, crestfallen, downcast and inconsolably desolate.

"What happened? He did not come from New York or has the case been postponed to a distant date?" he asked.

"Everything has happened...Now nothing will happen."

"Pray tell me what all has happened and why nothing is going to happen."

"I am ruined, finished, profit apart, even the expenses on the suit have to be written off."

"What happened actually?"

"We were sitting in the court, full of hope, optimistic. Then the lawyer of the other party produced a compromise statement, just ten minutes before the court was to rise for the day. Four days back he came from New York, married his brother's wife, my sister-in-law, and both took a flight to New York."

A few days later, the writer-astrologer went to the Seth's

house again as desired by him. He learnt that the bearer who earlier served him milk and *jalebis* had been sacked. Now the Seth's daughter-in-law brought for him a cup of tea and some fried gram. She said, "You see, we are in mourning over this marriage. That is why we are not making any sweets in the house. My father-in-law has not quite recovered from the shock. Do come again after four or five days."

Dogri and Duggar always exercised a strong spell on Sathe. When in 1966, an invitation came from the Dogri Sanstha, Jammu, requesting him to return to Jammu and offering to pay the railway fare, he wound up his establishment at Bombay and returned to Jammu. Both he and those who called him to Jammu had thought that he would be able to make substantial contribution to the growth of Dogri literature. Some job in the J & K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages was also thought of which would give him a regular income of a few hundred rupees. He, however, did not get the job which he had thought was meant for him. He wrote some short stories but his inspiration was failing and he had very little new to offer. A new generation of younger writers was writing more powerful short stories. He got some assignments from the J & K Academy for translating Hindi novels into Dogri. He translated Prem Chand's *Godan* and Vrindavanlal Varma's *Mriganayani* and in this field he did commendable work. He translated the two novels in record time and the translations were superb. After completing these two assignments he started on the Marathi novel *Krauncavadha* and Gorky's *Mother*, but the assignments did not materialise. This hurt him. His creative spirit felt suffocated and he had an overwhelming sense of frustration and dissatisfaction. He had an attack of bronchial asthma and after a period of illness died, a sad disillusioned-man, on 6 May, 1973 at the Government Ayurvedic Hospital, Jammu, at the age of sixty-two, leaving behind his two wives and four children.

Bhagwat Prasad Sathe was a restless person with a lot of vitality. He seemed to have a bee in his bonnet. He was romantic by temperament and a rebel against social taboos by

nature. He had a certain independence of spirit and was not prepared to compromise. He was prepared to give to others what he had but had very little in the later years of his life. He expected too much from others and finding his friends niggardly and miserly, he got angry and frustrated. But he was a good man with a keen eye for beauty and a sensitive mind and a heart full of love for his Duggar and Dogri and for the downtrodden. He was a worshipper of the female beauty as is evident from some of his stories. He had also great sympathy for women which is borne out by the dedication of his two collections of Dogri short stories. *Pehlā Phull* is dedicated to "the cream of Indian womanhood" and *Khāli Gode* is dedicated to "my mother". Above all, he was very human and almost all his stories reflect his humaneness and love of life.

# 3

## The Writer

### Short Story

B.P. Sathe was basically a short-story writer but he also translated novels and wrote some essays in Dogri and Hindi, and a book on astrology in Hindi. His short stories are collected in two volumes, *Pehlā Phull* and *Khāli Gode*. *Pehlā Phull* was published in 1947. The first edition had only nine stories but the second edition published in 1967 carried two more. *Khāli Gode* was published in 1970; it contained seventeen stories. That makes a total of 28 short stories.

While the stories of *Pehlā Phull* are more objective, describing some legends or dealing with characters and situations drawn from life around, the stories of *Khāli Gode* have a large chunk of the author's personal life and glimpses of his own experiences, recollected as it were after a lapse of time, in the evening of life. There is, therefore, an element of reminiscence and nostalgia in them but without any trace of self-consciousness or sentimentalism.

The stories of *Pehlā Phull* have an old world aroma around them and today, thirty years after they first appeared, they



already look musty and quaint. Three of these stories are legends. That B.P. Sathe had a love for legends about rajas is clear from his essay on Ramnagar where he describes an incident about Raja Suchet Singh, the friend and benefactor of his Maharashtrian ancestor. At a place near Ramnagar called Sāmanā Banj which is cold and salubrious because of its height and beauty and its green meadows, Raja Suchet Singh had a palace built. He had it painted white and it shone like a precious diamond set in green emeralds and was visible from long distances. One day he was with Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore when the latter was scanning the northern frontiers of his kingdom with a telescope. He observed this lovely white palace and spoke to Raja Suchet Singh, "Just see, how beautiful and shining that palace looks! It must be a beautiful spot and we should send our troops to capture it." Suchet Singh took the telescope from the hands of the Maharaja and saw that it was his own palace at Sāmanā Banj that Ranjit Singh was pointing to. He replied, "Maharaj, that is the snow on the mountain that is shining so bright. There is no building there. When the snow melts in a few days, there will be no shining object left there any more." Immediately after, he arranged some trusted servants to go up and plaster the palace with cow-dung to wipe away the white lustre and thus was able to save the palace. The three legends of the stories relate to three Dogra Rajas—Rajas Bhudeo and Suchet Singh of Ramnagar and Raja Ranbir Singh of Jammu. The story "Pehlā Phull" is about Raja Bhudeo. Since the story is historically important, it is reproduced in the following paragraphs.

It happened many years ago when Jammu hills were ruled not by one Raja but a number of petty Rajas. In those days, Bandral rajputs ruled over Ramnagar. The place which is now the town of Ramnagar was a cremation ground then. To the north of what is the parade ground in the town now, there was a small township. Nobody remembers what it was called. There used to be a *kacha* water tank quite close to where there is a *pucca* tank now in the centre of the parade ground. Raja Bhudeo was the Raja of Ramnagar at that time. He made

arrangements for lotuses to be grown in the *kacha* tank. The tank was situated on a land belonging to a Brahmin. The lotuses soon put forth buds. In Ramnagar, people worship even to this day the deity Narsimha. A dispute arose between the Raja and the Brahmin as to who was entitled to offer the first lotus flower to blossom, to the deity. The Brahmin, Dhruvu was obstinate and he asserted that the tank was situated on his lands and therefore it was his right to offer the first flower, grown in the tank.

Next day, during the night itself, Dhruvu got up and plucked the first flower which had not yet fully blossomed (the sun having not risen) and placed it before the deity in the temple. He exercised a right which the Raja did not recognise. It was an act of great courage. One can easily imagine the effect of this act of his on the Raja. How can a person who has power, tolerate such an act of defiance? When the Raja heard about it, he was livid with anger and thundered: "Such insolence on the part of that wretched Brahmin? Produce him here at once."

The Raja's footmen were quick to carry out the command and they seized Dhruvu and his son and produced them before the Raja. The Raja was angry that the Brahmin had snatched *punya* from his hands and carved a place for himself in the other world. When the Raja saw him, his eyes were red with anger and he shouted: "Take these dogs away, bind their legs with ropes and drag them through the streets of the town."

Things happen as gods like them to happen. Dhruvu was old and he died while he was being dragged. No one knows what happened to his son, whether he died or survived.

Facing Ramnagar, across the rainfed water-course full of stones, there is a village called Kheen. One of the ministers of the Raja lived there. Every evening, he used to go to the Raja's palace, to have his evening meal with him. One day, at dusk, as he was slowly coming down the slope towards the water-course, he saw a man coming from the opposite direction with a lighted torch in his hand. As he came near, the minister recognised him. He was Dhruvu Brahmin. The minister gave him a smile and asked, "Maharaj, where are you going at this time of the night?"

"Nowhere in particular, wazirji. Tell the Raja that I am on my way; I shall join him at the evening meal." Saying this, he moved on.

"Welcome, why don't you join me?" replied the Wazir. Meanwhile, Dhruvu was already a long way off.

When the Wazir reached the palace, food was ready. As the Raja and the Wazir were going to sit down for the meal, the Wazir conveyed Dhruvu's message to the Raja. The Raja burst into a loud guffaw. He told the minister how Dhruvu had died and had been cremated. On hearing this, the Wazir was surprised and did not know what to believe—whether what he had seen with his own eyes or what Raja was now telling. He lost his nerve and started trembling. Even the well-lit hall started seeming dark to him. "What will happen now? What will follow this *Brahmahatyā*, killing of a Brahmin?" he mumbled. The plate full of rice lay in front of him, but his vision was blurred. The Raja shook him by the arm and said "Wazirji, start eating. Dhruvu won't come." Saying this he laughed again. The Wazir was a bit startled on being shaken by the arm. His eyes turned, not towards his own plate but the one placed before the Raja. He exclaimed 'Oh' and closed his eyes. The Raja stopped laughing and stretched his hand towards the plate. The wazir caught hold of the Raja's hand and said, "Maharaj". Now the Raja was also in the same state as the Wazir. The plate of rice in front of him was full of worms and the plates of meat and vegetables were full of blood. The Raja's body began to burn and he started rolling on the ground. The whole palace was full of confusion and cacophony. What will happen now? No medication worked. Nothing helped and the Raja continued to suffer. A wiseman advised that the Raja was affected by *Brahmahatyā*: "He can get relief only after he gets a temple built for Dhruvu and is then draggd with his legs tied in ropes in the same manner as he had done to Dhruvu."

This had to be done. A temple for Dhruvu was got constructed in the jungle in the outskirts of the town and a statue of him was installed in it. And the Raja was dragged slowly around the temple, with ropes tied to his legs. While he was be-

ing dragged, he felt relief. The moment they stopped dragging him, he suffered again.

This happened long ago. In a hurry, the temple was built on a spot which was soft, underneath. It is said that the temple gradually sank into the soil below. The statue of Dhruvu was shifted to the Shiva temple nearby where it is worshipped till today.

The subject matter of the story is a legend popular in the folk tradition of the area but the essential elements of the legend have been woven into an interesting story which is beautifully structured. There is suspense and there are short snatches of dialogue which give it a dramatic effect. Above all, the story is in chaste Dogri prose with its cadences, sweetness and fluidity which cannot be conveyed in translation.

The other two legends relating to Raja Suchet Singh and Ranbir Singh are not so well turned into short stories as the one relating to Raja Bhudeo, but they reflect the author's sympathetic treatment of the central characters and their sympathy and concern for their subjects. These three legends encapsuled as short stories also capture in a few strokes the writer's perception of the feudal life of pre-Independence days—the arrogance of Rajas who had all the power and prestige and the matching arrogance of austere Brahmins who were not afraid of Rajas as they had spiritual powers. We also get glimpses in them of palace intrigues, moves and countermoves, relationship between Rajas and their *praja* (subjects), the practice of *begar* under which subjects were required to render free service and bring their farm produce, milk and poultry for the Rajas, their ministers and other state functionaries, as well as the kindness and magnanimity of some Rajas towards their subjects.

The story "Ammān" begins with the local Raja resting under a tree. After travelling through his kingdom on horseback he saw an old woman with a pot on her head coming to rest under the same tree. The old woman looked tired and was mumbling something, as if cursing somebody. The rider asked the woman, "Ammān, where are you going in this scorching heat?"

"I am going to the village chief's place. Every third day his Raja passes through the village as if he has nothing to do at home. I am sick of *begar* for him".

"Ammān, what *begar* has been allotted to you by the village chief?"

"I have to reach him this pot of milk. Don't you see? Who is bothered about the Raja? The village chief's own cows are not in milk these days. He will use this milk for himself."

"Ammān, I am also very hungry. If you give this milk to me, what will the village chief do to you?"

"My son, if you are hungry, you drink up this milk. I'll get another pot for the village chief."

The old woman insisted that he must drink the milk. She was so full of compassion for the hungry stranger. The rider drank the milk, ascertained her whereabouts and rode away.

The next day, Raja's footman came to take her to the Raja's court where she came to know that the young rider who had called her "Ammān" or mother and drank the pot of milk was none other than Raja Suchet Singh who had established a powerful kingdom at Ramnagar.

The Raja said, "Ammān, in future you will have to bring the pot of milk straight to me instead of taking it to the village chief. I hope you will not regard giving milk to your son as *begar*".

The old woman was happy to learn that the Raja had exempted the payment of revenue on land bestowed on her. And whenever the Raja passed through her village, he stopped at her place to have some milk.

The story "Dohri" (marriage by barter) is rather a contrived and laboured piece and is perhaps the weakest in the collection. The author shows how a girl married to a boy much younger to her, who is incapable of consummating the marriage, becomes a hysteric and dies. The story focussing on a social evil is didactic and there are satirical comments on the situation where women, unmindful of the consequences, finalise the marriage of their daughters. Kesari, the unfortunate girl's mother gets a daughter-in-law in Kaushalya in exchange

for her daughter Gyano. She thinks that if one gets a goat in exchange for a goat, one doesn't miss the wool.

Five of the stories present charming cameos of Dogra rural life with touches of sentiment and lot of human appeal. "Haekhi", a one-page story, tells of the sorrow of a couple whose son fighting in the war away in Burma is reported missing. "Sahara" the longest story in the collection (5 pages) describes the predicament of Paro, a child widow, caught between the pulls of tradition and situation. She comes to town to stay with her aunt and study so that she could take up a job and stand on her own feet. Ramu, who helps her, awakens love in her and she starts feeling different but then she remembers her father's advice, "If you were destined to have a husband for support, he would have lived and not died" and she suppresses her love for Ramu. "Kuramen da Lahma" describes another type of predicament before a young girl betrothed to the son of a rival of her father who is skilful in turning away clouds by incantations and the question is one of honour of her father's family and while she is able to save the fields of her father's clients from the rain, she fails to save the fields of the clients of the other man, her father-in-law to be. And she kills herself to save her father from a possible complaint. "Mangte da Gharāt" is a tale of reward of affection. It tells how Mangata gives away his water-mill to Mahamadoo who is not even related to him, for mere affection. "Boobān" is the story of a wrestler soldier and a woman who is fond of *Kundalas* (dark feathers of a bird from Kashmir used by ladies as ornaments for ears).

The plots and characters of the stories are simple, taken largely from the outside but described sympathetically, but there is something new about the expression, the style and there is a certain beauty and vitality in the language employed that makes these short-stories—really short and crisp—interesting reading. With these short stories, B.P. Saithe built a bridge between folk tales and legends on the one hand and modern short story proper in Dogri on the other. He was particularly fond of three of these stories—"Pehlā Phull", "Kuramen da Lahma" and "Mangte da Gharāt". These were his earliest

attempts at short story writing in Dogri. They were based on observed facts that had made a deep impression on his mind during his childhood days and they conveyed a certain social message relevant to the contemporary Dogra society.

In his preface to *Khāli Gode*, Sathé writes that all the stories contained in the book have in them, some moments of his life woven as threads. This is very true—there is a large amount of autobiographical content in them and those which do not have it, have the atmosphere and the characters that were close to him and may have been part of his life or seen from very close quarters. His stories here are thus, in a sense, a social chronicle of the way of life, manners, customs, conventions and habits of the people of the society that he has documented and of his own place in that life.

Ten of the seventeen stories of *Khāli Gode* are explicitly autobiographical, their mode of narration being autobiographical, in the first person and the incidents being drawn directly from his personal life. Five of these relate to his childhood days in Ramnagar, the place of his birth, one to his days in Jammu, one to his stay at Vaishno Devi Katra, one to his sojourn at Ayodhya, one about his journey to Madras and one connected with his professional life as an astrologer at Bombay. Like his earlier stories of *Pehlā Phull* centred round Ramnagar or rural Duggar, the stories of *Khāli Gode* which stream out of his childhood memories, come out the best; there is not only a brooding mist of sweetnostalgia in them, but there is also a quality of directness and depth of experience which makes them beautiful vignettes of life like the Pahari paintings painted with detail and delicateness, from an age that has almost slipped into the past.

“Masahni” is a beautiful story of harmonious community life in which Hindus and Muslims lived in perfect amity and relationship of mutual understanding and affection in the old township of Ramnagar. It is also a story of tender affection between a young boy and the much older bride of his muslim washerman friend. The author’s father, commandant of the Raja’s fort, had brought with him Mahtab Din, the washerman,

from Saruinsar and got him a house built and land allotted and also got him recruited as a sepoy in the army. His sons looked after the washing of the family. When Mahtab Din retired from the army and came home on pension, his son Gulab Din was got appointed in his place and Gulab Din's younger brother Ilam Din did the washerman's job and his son Shams Din helped him. Ilam Din was the author's friend who got married and brought home his bride. The author's mother, aunt and sister-in-law (i.e. the wife of the author's elder brother) went to see her and each of them had to give to the new bride something as a gift to be allowed to see her face. The author's mother gave two silver bangles, his aunt gave her anklets and the sister-in-law gave her silver toe-rings. The young aunt said : "What a beautiful bride : She is like a marble statue carved with care."

His mother said : "How beautiful and black are her eyes and so full of light, burning bright ! The bride is fair and looks tall."

The sister-in-law who thought no end of herself, said, "She is only fair complexioned and there are so many red pimples all over her face. And you saw her sitting, therefore you cannot say if she is lame or suffering from some other defect."

To the elder lady, however, the red pimples on a fair face only added to her beauty. But the daughter-in-law of the Brahmin household who had beautiful eyes but was dark complexioned and short in height could not bear the praise showered on the washerman's bride and retorted, "After all, she is the bride of only a washerman, not the bride of Miyans or Brahmins."

On one occasion when the elderly ladies likened the new bride's gait to that of a peacock, the young sister-in-law spoke out, "Peacock is dark but she is fair."

Whenever the new bride came to fetch water from the water spout near the author's house, she always had her face covered and the young boy approached her hesitantly and said "Rahim bibi, you should show your face to me, I am only a small boy."



She said, "Bhauji, you have to give *masahni* (a gift) to see my face."

She wanted *masahni* out of his own earnings and for many years, he could not have any income of his own. He went to Jammu for higher studies and failed twice in the 9th class. When he got to the 10th class, he went to Ramnagar and told her that he would pass matric that year and get a job and then get her something out of his first month's pay. But she advised him to give his first pay to his father and mother to spend on puja, etc. She also advised him to let his desire to see her face grow deeper and stronger. After matric, he joined college and spent three years there. He left college to return home to look after his father's property after his death. Then he got married, but he still could not see Rahim bibi's face as he was not earning and could not buy her a present. While his own wife's slippers were new and embroidered, Rahim bibi's embroidered slippers had long been gone, replaced by red lac-slippers and then by ordinary leather slippers. But her beauty, gait and figure surpassed the beauty of all the new and young brides of the town.

One day she fell sick and the fever turned into pneumonia and the *hakims* gave up the case as hopeless. She sent for the author and showed him her face and for *masahni* desired to have a handful of earth over her face when she was lowered into the grave, lest her desire to have his *masahni* should keep haunting her in the grave. A rather sentimental story but touching in the simplicity and intensity of a relationship. What is more important in the story than this sentimental relationship, is a description of perfect communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims and sidelights on the various customs and practices of those times subtly woven in the story.

"Panjtare de Phull" is another story in the same category. It describes the adolescent love between Geegan, the village chief's son, and Bhanu, a scheduled caste girl, its awakening and deepening, with the girl putting a garland of *panjtara* flowers around Geegan's neck and Geegan applying oil in the girl's hair, a ritual preceding marriage. But the girl, barely 15, is got married to a widower of 50. Around the simple story

are woven facets of social life and values of a Dogra village society of the 1940s. The village chief is all powerful in the village and everybody looks up to him. He distributes patronage, entertains all the villagers to a feast on Krishna-janam-ashtami day and it is he who arranges Bhanu's marriage with the widower Lala because he had told Lala on the death of his first wife that he should not worry, he would get him a better wife. The chief is conscious of caste differences, is a pucca *sanātani* and he cannot brook any attempts by anybody in the village to rise in social hierarchy. Bhanu's brother Moti who worked as a gardener at Udhampur came in touch with the reformation movement of Arya Samaj and put on a *yajnopavit* and learnt that it was better to accost elders with *namaste* instead of *pairen pauna* (I touch your feet). He thought the Baji, i.e. the chief who was learned, enlightened and a fatherly figure in the village, would appreciate these new things, but instead, he invited on himself wrath and fury and a hail of abuses and a fling of the stick when he greeted him with a *namaste*. Baji's children on the other hand are innocent and carefree and when Baji goes out after his afternoon nap, his two sons play cards with Bhanu and her brother Pyaru who are of lower caste. Although they talk about untouchability, they are not really touched by it. In the beginning of the story Geegan tells Bhanu, "Don't apply spit to the cards. You transmit touchability and thus I shall have to bathe with clothes on." They go to the Baisakhi fair together and ride in the merry-go-round for hours together. Bhanu brings to Geegan presents of wild fruits and every year it is a new fruit which symbolises the growing age 14, 15 and 16. She gets angry with Baji's son Geegan when her brother is upbraided by the Baji for wishing him *namaste* and does not go to his house to play cards. She sulks and hides herself on trees and Geegan goes from tree to bush and bush to tree in search of her. She makes garlands of *panjtara* flowers and hangs them on bushes and Geegan finds them later withered and wilted and one day when she is sitting hidden on a tree, Geegan rests from his search under the same tree and she jumps down and they are recon-

ciled. She puts the garland she has made around his neck and also pricks him with the needle she had used for making the garland.

"Why did you prick me with the needle?" he asks.

"Because I did not hurl the stick."

They talked and touched each other but Geegan does not bathe on going home.

After she gets married, her brother brings her home and Geegan and his younger brother Ram come out to see her. She has put on ornaments and red gold-threaded clothes but her hair is dry. Ram speaks up, "Bhanu, why haven't you applied oil to your hair?"

With her head bent she replies: "What is the use of putting oil—there is no oiliness in the oil."

"You should have pinned the *panjtara* flowers in your hair at least. You loved them so much."

She had moved a couple of steps forward and turning her head, she says, "Ram, *panjtara* does not bloom in deadly rains."

Geegan stood by, with his face enveloped by darkening sadness.

The stories of *Khāli Gode* are longer and in some of them, Sathe uses a judicious mixture of narration, description and snatches of dialogue to build up atmosphere, to make the experience concrete and lend dramatic realism to the subject matter of his stories.

In the story "Panjtare de Phull" he gives details of all the non-cereal preparations made in well-to-do families on the occasion of Janmashtami and the different types of wild fruits that grow in the countryside. In "Masahni" he describes the various vegetables and fruits the washerman Mahtab Din grew in his garden. In "Dhuni da Dhoon" he gives details of all the things that his sixty-year old tenant brought from the fields once a week—bananas, mangoes, lemons, ginger, plums, onions and a local fruit kimb.

In these stories, Sathe's command over language is superb and he uses it effectively to describe a scene, to narrate an inci-

dent, to reveal a state of mind, to etch a character, to build atmosphere, to create humour, to distil emotion, etc. His style is robust and breezy. He does not waste words and with minimum strokes, draws effective pictures of places and persons and social practices which come alive. These pictures have an old world charm about them and a certain historical and sociological interest.

Effective use of language and mixing of modes of expression are the two chief elements of Sathe's technique of storytelling. He uses some other techniques also, usually employed by storytellers to hold the interest of the reader. He introduces a character in the very first sentence of a story and unfolds it slowly but sometimes, particularly in some of his later stories, he lingers on the background and other related matters before bringing the character on the scene. In situation-based stories, he develops the situation slowly, building up suspense which holds the reader but in these stories also, character and human interest are given greater importance. Rahim Bibi of "Masahni" is introduced in the very first sentence—she is seen by the narrator's mother, aunt, sister-in-law and her beauty is highlighted by their comments and reactions and a tantalising relationship of affection develops between the narrator and Rahim Bibi. Rahim Bibi's character is unfolded slowly in her meetings with him. But he is able to see her face only on her death-bed. Mangta of "Mangte da Gharāt" sitting down for a smoke, Boobān of "Boobān di Nuhār" waiting eagerly for somebody, Qasam, the potter, who puts all his love which he could not give to the woman he loved, in his beautiful dolls, Seth Narayanswarup of "Nakah da Sog" who plans to make quick money by manipulation, Raja Suchet Singh of "Ammān" on horse back, Jalloo, the fair, sharp nosed girl who got involved with the local school teacher and drowned herself in the village well, Kuppada-āle and Guddalai-āle the sisters-in-law of "Parokh", one well off and jealous and the other poor and always busy and helpful, and Geegan and Bhanu, the main characters of the beautiful story "Panjtare de Phull" are introduced in the very first line of the respective stories, evok-

ing interest in the readers to follow their fortunes in the stories. The last-mentioned story also brings up the question of untouchability and caste-consciousness in Dogra villages in the very second sentence. The ill-fated adolescent relationship of mutual love between Geegan and Bhanu and the ruthless power of caste and class form the basic strands of the story and they have been beautifully woven into the texture of the story, with details of events thrown in at appropriate places.

In about half a dozen stories, Sathe uses a different technique. He starts building the background and milieu of the action of the story, giving significant details and introduces the characters later and then shows the development of both the situation and the main characters. "Pehlā Phull", "Kamala te Suraj", "Jātra" and "Ek Neeli te ek Saili" are examples of this technique. In "Pehlā Phull", he starts off with describing the geographical location and physical details of the tank in which the first lotus blossomed, the protagonists of the story, Raja Bhudeo and Dhruvu Brahmin are introduced casually. The main theme, viz., retribution of injustice, comes later. In "Kamala te Suraj", the author gives details of the year, place, position, arrangements, etc., made by him at the Vaishno Devi shrine in three pages before Kamala appears to impress him with her presence, intelligence and beauty. Then it is Kamala and the unfolding of her role in the affection and care for the narrator; her passing away and her reappearance in another life as his daughter. In "Jātra", an eleven-page story, the woman whose unfulfilled desire leaps up like a flame and who reveals her situation to the narrator on the Marina Beach of Madras, is introduced somewhere in the middle of the story. And in "Ek Neeli te ek Saili", the author devotes the first page to Daban Chand who was a havildar in the Gurkha Regiment that was reported missing while defending Skardu in the north of Kashmir in 1947. He describes how he and Daban Chand travelled when they were young, from Ramnagar to Udhampur, he on horseback and Daban Chand on foot prodding the horse with a mulberry twig. They see something red far ahead—a red *chaddar*, a woman. They catch up with her in about half an

hour. Thereafter, it is no more Daban Chand's story; it becomes the story of the woman who is given the horse to ride because she is unwell, who gets dimples in her cheeks when she smiles, who prepares *khichdi* for them in the inn where they stop while she is running fever, who suffers from pain in the back throughout the night and leaves them on reaching Udhampur and whom Daban Chand suspects of stealing the narrator's turban because she had told him that at Udhampur she would add two more *chaddars* to her red *chaddar*, one blue and one green. But the narrator thinks otherwise—he thinks he has dropped the turban on the way.

All this shows that B.P. Sathé was a craftsman of merit in the art of storytelling and about a dozen of his stories (out of a total of 28) are very well-made, very readable and interesting and very valuable as socio-anthropological documentation of an era and a certain milieu.

## Translations

While Sathé's originality lay in the field of etching short cameos of fiction in the form of short stories, he found equal joy and satisfaction in translation of the larger canvases of fiction in the form of novel. And in that genre also, themes of rural India and feudal India well represented in Prem Chand's *Godan* and Vrindavanlal Varma's *Mriganayani* respectively appealed to him. These works were in tune with his natural inclination. He knew his Dogra villages and the social system and the values prevalent in them and he also knew the affairs of rajas and had heard about the romance of battle in his native Ramnagar and the neighbouring hill states. He could therefore easily comprehend the life of a U.P. village and the romance of a Madhya Bharat Raja and get into the spirit of the places and the times in which these two novels are set.

In the preface to the translated version of *Godan*, he writes, "Translating *Godan* has given me great happiness. I have lived in the land described by Munshi Prem Chand in the novel for some years. Living in Uttar Pradesh, I always felt that the

farmers, money-lenders and businessmen, the priestly class and women and children followed the same practices and had similar habits as are prevalent in our Duggar society. The characters, villages and towns of U.P. did not, therefore appear unfamiliar. Rather they were my own."

Sathe had occasions to meet and know people from Madhya Bharat also in the course of his travels and sojourns away from Jammu and he found some parallels and echoes of the life of Duggar Rajas and Ranis in the historical romance of Raja Man Singh and the gifted Mriganayani and he enjoyed the assignment of translating the novel.

Both novels were commissioned by the J. & K. Academy and while *Godan* was published in 1969, *Mriganayani* appeared in 1971. The novels afforded ample opportunities to the translator who had equal command over Hindi and Dogri so that the translations read as good as the originals. In the process, Sathe added to the enrichment of Dogri novel.

Dogri novel was a late starter. The first Dogri novels were written and published in 1960. They were more like long short stories or novelettes than novels proper. They were in the nature of experiments with the genre by three Dogri short-story writers, the late Narendra Khajuria, Madan Mohan Sharma and Ved Rahi, and they were marked by a certain in-firmness of hand and idealism of intent and didacticism of social reform. The novels translated by Sathe on the other hand are among the well made and well known novels of Hindi literature. *Godan* is a Hindi classic of realistic fiction and *Mriganayani* is a very absorbing and interesting historical romance. Their translation into Dogri at that stage not only filled a certain vacuum but also provided impetus and served as models to later novel-writers in Dogri.

The theme of *Godan* is well known to Indian readers as the novel has been translated into most Indian languages and also in English. It is the story of an Indian village, the eternal symbol of poverty, of simple homespun faiths and beliefs of its people, levels of exploitation, human warmth and rivalries and petty jealousies of family life. It is also the story of typical

characters—Hori, the poor suffering, timid farmer; Dhania, his wife, courageous, bold and outspoken; Rai Saheb Amaipal Singh with his family pride and lust for money; Khanna the usurer; Tankha the Vakil; the village *panches* and parasites. Semari and Belari are villages of Oudh but they can also be villages of Duggar. There is similarity in the style of living, ways of thinking, values and beliefs, and the types of characters. The city near to the villages could as well be a city of Duggar like Jammu where the rich *zamindar* Raja Saheb lived and had friends in a lady doctor, a professor, a mill manager, a lawyer and so on. Reading the novel, one is led to believe that Hori, Dhania, Gobar, Sona and Rupa are all members of a Dogra family living in a Dogra village and their problems are problems of a Dogra peasant family which has to eke out a precarious living from a very small farm, pay taxes and fines to the village *panchayat* and bribes to the police and *nazar* (gifts) to the Raja Saheb and has to manage marriages and deaths by borrowing and paying heavy interest so that 30 rupees borrowed now becomes 200 in two years and he has to lose his farm and starve his family. There are quarrels between brothers and brothers' wives, affairs of brahmin boys with *chamār* girls and of peasant youth with widows and there is the fear of what people in the village would say and of losing one's *izzat* (self-respect) and image. There are bickerings between husband and wife, and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and between father and son, and then there is reconciliation and life goes on. Hori is patient and all giving without demanding—suffering and bearing like the earth itself. Dhania is harsh of tongue but a woman of strong character who knows how to suffer and forgive and stand by those in need. In them is typified the peasant couple of India who go on working till death. This peasant is *sanskaragrasta*, i.e. full of traditional values. In contrast, there are the city folk with a different style of life, different values and pursuits.

*Mriganayani* is at one level the description of different aspects of life in Madhya Bharat during turbulent and uncertain times, with some interesting sidelights on the lives of Sultan



Berghera of Gujarat, Sultan Khilji of Malwa and his son and their lust for food and girls and greed for more territories. At another level it is the story of love of Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior, and Mriganayani, the brave and gifted Gujarati girl and also of the relationship of Man Singh and his first wife, and Mriganayani and her brother and Lakhi. In the foreground is Raja Man Singh's patronage of beauty and arts and concern for his subjects and in the background a history of the times.

The situations, the characters, the atmosphere, the historical background of the social values found in *Mriganayani* had a close parallel in the feudal Duggar of a hundred or two hundred years ago. There were several Rajas in Duggar, big and small, some indulgent and pleasure loving, some austere and artistically inclined patrons of the arts. They were on the look out to expand their kingdoms and annex territories. They raised armies and fought battles and formed alliances of convenience. They appreciated beauty and some of them married beautiful women from families of status much below theirs. They encouraged art and music. The famous schools of miniature painting—of Basohli, Kangra, Guler and Jammu—flourished under their patronage. While Man Singh of *Mriganayani* was a lover of music and a patron of musicians, Raja Sansarchand of Kangra, Raja Prithipal Singh of Basohli Raja Ranjit dev and Raja Brajraj Dev both of Jammu were patrons of painting and master painters. The Hindu religious atmosphere in the kingdom and the palace and the importance of priests and temples are also common elements. And Sathe, a denizen of Duggar, is on familiar ground in his task as translator.

More than the contents of the novels, however, it is the typical Sathe style and his language that make the two translations interesting reading and show him as a creative writer.

## Essays

Sathe also wrote five essays in Dogri. Three of these were published in journals and the other two were found in manu-

script in the papers left behind by him and have not yet been published. In these five essays, he covers quite a large ground. The essay entitled, "Meri Janambhoomi Ramnagar" recaptures vividly, pictures of his birthplace and the people he came across in his childhood. In "Lok-Katha ch soorbeertā te nyān" he speaks about the charm of folk-tales heard in childhood. Both are essays of childhood reminiscences and show the author's nostalgia for his childhood days and the persons who sweetened and enriched those days, the innocence and warmth of relationship and the charm that was lost with the passage of time and the onslaught of change that overtook the country after Independence. His essay on the Dogri poet Har Dutta, entitled "Dogri Sahitya da Vyaktivishesh—Dogri da Pahla Sahityak amar kavi—Pandit Hardutta Shastri" describes his personal encounters with the elder poet in Jammu and later in the evening of his life in Bombay where he died. Here also the autobiographical element is predominant. In the essay "Meri Kahanien de Trai Pattar", he takes the reader into confidence about the influences that shaped his first three stories. Only in the fifth essay called "Har, Beri, Pattan di naiyka—Kunto", he deals with a subject which is outside of himself and tries to examine the leading character of the novel and in the process, turns out a good essay in literary criticism. All these essays have been written with skill and artistry. Apparently simple and straightforward, they combine different elements drawn from memory, hearsay, legend, fact and observation and ideology. And they make interesting reading.

"Meri Janambhoomi Ramnagar" was published in the J & K Academy annual *Sārḥā Sahitya*, 1965. The essay has a certain air of wistfulness about it as the details are gathered bit by bit as the narration proceeds apace. Life at Ramnagar was well ordered and placid, each person pursuing his hereditary profession with joy and contentment. There was Munshi Nanak Chand, in coat and loose pyjamas, with a turban on his head, the Head Clerk of the Fort office who showed the eight-year-old Bhagwatu around the fort and told him stories about the

Bandarāl Rajas who had ruled there in olden days and had established the old temple of Narasinghaji on the other side of the palace; how Suchet Singh gave a grant of lands to the temple; how, when he was killed at Lahore, his wives performed *sairi* in the parade ground, how their *jagir* passed on to the Jammu Maharaja and how it later on passed on to Ranbir Singh's second son Ram Singh. There was Heeru the carpenter who was also a very good painter, who, with his father, painted the Sheesh Mahal built by Raja Ram Singh outside the old palace and who also made beautiful clay images and brought the images of Durga and Ganesh to the young Bhagwatu; the Raja's ADC's son Permanand, who offered worship to Durga like a Dogra and a Bengali and to Ganesh like a true Maharashtrian Hindu. There were cobblers like Gutta, Heeru and Kamalu who made shoes and sandals for the rajas and ranis and whose wives embroidered silver and gold threads in beautiful flowery patterns on the handiwork of their husbands. There was Rahmat Ali, the tailor who stitched suits which were the envy of the best tailors of Jammu. Bhambru, Ranu and Karamchand were well known goldsmiths who made jewellery as good as the one made in Jammu. There were wrestlers like Bhagata, Radhey, Nantram, Chandu and Masu and shooters like Thakar Nahar Singh, Mahtab Din and Gulab Din. There were expert washermen like Ilam Din and Shams Din and there were good reliable dyers and ironsmiths and utensil makers whose craftsmanship was as good as anywhere else. There was also a dramatic club at Ramnagar—a Ramlila Club—and the performances put up by it with the local talent drew large audiences. To Bhagwat Prasad who later became the President of the Club, nature itself appeared like a beautiful stage—with the high rising hill in front as the back-drop and spreading green hill sides to the two sides as appropriate wings. For the young impressionable boy Bhagwatu, Ramnagar of his childhood was romantic and beautiful. On marriage occasions in summer, the children would sit in the open on *charpoys* and look at beautiful young damsels, bejewelled and decked in their finery pass to and fro and see *phummani* and *rās* danced by the young

girls when one of them would take on the role of a bridegroom and two others would assume the roles of co-wives and fill the atmosphere charged with moonlight, with fun and frolic. Other things that appealed to the young boy were the *bhākh* songs sung by women coming from the fields with bundles of grass on the heads and the sight of these women swaying under the weight of their burdens with hands on their heads. Close to the town of Ramnagar were the hill resorts of Daddu, Basaintgarh and Sāmanā Banja covered with *deodars*. There were plenty of maize and potatoes and milk and butter and the healthy climate and good food worked on young people with pink in their cheeks and twinkle in their eyes, enough to set hearts ablaze.

As mentioned earlier, in the essay "Dogri Lok Katha ch Soorbeerta te nyan", the author describes how he and other children in the family loved to hear folk-tales and while the tales told by his aunt were about animals and birds, they did not excite them as much as the stories of kings and princes and their exploits narrated by his uncle. The children liked particularly the stories which illustrated the values of justice and valour—values dear to Dogras and ingrained deeply in the Dogra folk sensibility.

When Sathe started writing in Dogri, the only living person who had acquired a certain name and reputation for creative writing in Dogri and who read his poems to sizable audiences was Har Dutt Shastri. He was, therefore, held in high esteem by the younger writer. The essay on Har Dutt exudes an esteem amounting to reverence. This is apparent from the title of the essay itself which names him as "the first immortal poet of Dogri" and "the special person of Dogri literature." The author describes how and in what circumstances he met the poet first in Jammu and many years later, in Bombay. The author's love for Dogri coincident with the elder poet's love for the language, shines through the essay and reveals a certain kindredness of spirit and mutuality and affection. The author also mentions Har Dutt's disappointment and despondency at the lack of appreciation of Dogri literature and general apathy

towards writing in the mother tongue in a way that it reflects his own feelings in this matter. The essay also describes how the author got Har Dutt to write the foreword to the first edition of his first book of Dogri short stories.

"Meri Kahaniyan de Trai Pattar" is an essay that is descriptive and explanatory rather than analytical or critical. It appeared in the Dogri journal *Sheeraza* in its first issue of 1970. It describes some of the elements that went into the making of his first three stories. The story "Pehlā Phull" is an amalgam of two elements—a remarkable childhood experience and the author's belief that injustice should never be tolerated and one must fight for one's right. He was barely five years of age when he was nearly drowned, but was somehow miraculously saved, and he had a strong feeling of somebody, some invisible being, a spirit, protecting him and saving him and guiding him through life. With this experience as one thread, he mixes his strong faith in the importance of justice in society. He believes that it is bad enough to do injustice to another but it is much worse to tolerate injustice because if a person allows injustice to be perpetrated on him, he encourages it and tolerance of injustice without fighting back ultimately destroys the social fabric. There are numerous Dogra legends which describe how certain poor Brahmins sacrificed their lives to protest against the injustice of the rajas or zamindars and upheld the principles of right and justice. The most popular legends of this type are the ones about Bawa Jitto and Data Ranu. Such legends point to the importance of this social value in Dogra society and Sathe tells in the essay that he has tried to uphold this value through this story.

His second story "Kurame da Lahma" illustrates another value in Dogra culture, i.e., the responsibility of a daughter-in-law to uphold the dignity (*izzat*) of her parents in the family of the in-laws. Here also, two elements go into the making of the story—an experience of seeing a *jogi* turn back rain-bearing clouds and the value mentioned in the preceding sentence. Some persons in a particular community, called the *jogis*, had powers of incantation with which they could move the rain-

bearing clouds so that if rain was not wanted at a particular time, it could be averted and if a particular cloud was going to shower rain in a particular place, it could be turned to another place. The author had once in his younger years witnessed an incident where the dark rain-bearing clouds threatened to pour and were turned back, and this experience had lodged itself in his consciousness. The main character in the story, a girl of marriageable age, is betrothed to the boy of another family in the neighbourhood and the girl's father could stop the clouds from pouring rain on the fields of clients of her in-laws but since he was bedridden she was required to do this job and because she failed to stop the clouds from pouring in her prospective father-in-law's fields, she killed herself and put herself out of the way, to save herself and her father from the humiliation of being taunted for her failure.

The third story, "Mangte da Gharāi", underlines the importance of a profession on the one hand and communal harmony on the other. Here again there are two elements, Mangta is a Hindu and the owner of a watermill, Mohammadu is a Muslim boy who often visits Mangta. A bond of affection grows between them. When Mangta realises that his end is near, he bequeaths the mill to Mohammadu and not to his own relations because he wants to see that a deserving person gets the mill, a person who is dedicated and interested in it and who will carry on the traditions of honest work.

The fifth essay "Hār, Berī, Pattan di nāyika: Kunto" was published in the January 1973 issue of the Dogri journal *Phulwari* published from Jammu. The author uses a novel method for analysing the principal character of the novelette by Ved Rahi. He projects an imagined encounter between himself and the novel's character Kunto. An attempt is thus made to look at the character from two angles—that of the character herself and that of a sympathetic reader or observer who upholds the point of view and approach of the creator of the character. The woman protests that her creator made her suffer throughout because she stood for some values, values desirable from the point of view of society and she did not

deserve all that suffering and should have been allowed to be human and given the indulgence of having some joy, some happiness. In the novel, she loses her husband. She is persecuted, has to bring up her son in difficult circumstances, is set upon by her relatives who want to deprive the boy of his patrimony and in the end, she has to die. "Why? Why?" she asks. The essayist justifies the creation as seen and projected by the novelist—an ideal Dogra woman, meant to be a light to Dogra women, a lamp that burns itself but shows light to others. That is the destiny of a lamp; it has to burn to give light. The essayist endorses Ved Rahi's conception of an idealised Dogra woman—suffering, upholding what is right and her dignity and facing difficulties but not a real woman of flesh and blood with human frailties and needs and desires. The essayist admits that Ved Rahi, the author of the novel and Kunto the main character of the novel, are actually one and the same and that the novelist speaks through her and uses her as the vehicle of his ideas. It is an interesting piece of prose.

Thus, the five essays throw light on the author's own life and views and ideas and beliefs and also cover a wide ground, from his milieu and folk-lore to Dogri literature, and in the process, add something to the growth of Dogri prose essay, at a time when Dogri prose was struggling to stand on its feet.

## Other Writings

Besides writing in Dogri, Sathe also wrote in Urdu and Hindi. He started with writing in Urdu as it was the medium of journalism in Jammu in the thirties and the early forties. He worked in various papers including *Inkashūf*. His first short story "Pehlā Phul" was also written and published in Urdu. It appeared in an Urdu Weekly *Chand* edited by Preetam Ziaji from Lahore. He rewrote it in Dogri later. He began to write in Hindi when he was at Varanasi and thereafter, he continued to write in Hindi simultaneously with writing in Dogri, after he had been established as a Dogri writer. In 1948, he was editing:

the Hindi paper *Ranbir* from Jammu. The paper, however, closed down soon.

It has not been possible to lay hands on any specimens of his Urdu writings. It has also not been possible to get a copy of his book *Hastarekha Vigyān*. Only five pieces of his Hindi writing could be retrieved posthumously from his records. These are (i) a yellowed page from *Dharmayug*, a Bombay Hindi weekly bearing the date 1st June, 1952, (ii) a copy of *Sheeraza* (Hindi) of April 1967, carrying a short essay by him entitled "Meri Dogri Kahaniyan", (iii) a copy of the souvenir brought out by the Dogra Himachal Sanskriti Sangam, Delhi, on the occasion of its first All India Dogri Writers' Conference which carries an article by him on Dogri short-story called *Dogri Katha Sahitya*, (iv) two sheets of *Duggar Samachar*, Jammu, of 15th May, 1973 which carries the news of his death and also a story "Pandit Jamanadhar" and (v) a copy of *Sheeraza* (Hindi) of January-March 1977 issue which carries a story titled "Bhabhi". "Pandit Jamanadhar" is a translation of his own Dogri story. His posthumous papers also include two copies of issues of the Hindi short story magazine *Sarika*. Each of these issues carries a story of his translated from Dogri—the December 1971 issue carries "Masāhni" (Hindi—"Moonh-dikhāi") and the August 1974 issue has "Mangte da Gharāt" (Hindi—"Mangate ki Panachakki").

"Shukralok" appeared in the 1st June, 1952 issue of *Dharmayug* after "Mangalalok" had appeared in the 18th May issue of the same weekly. "Shukralok" is an interesting essay and describes the types of people living on the planet, their physical features and likes and dislikes and interests, the flora and fauna, soil and atmosphere of the planet and its effect on human beings. It is not known whether there is any life on the planet but the essay conjures up a vision of a very viable world of interesting people and creates a willing suspension of disbelief. The author describes that Shukralok is the abode of beautiful and virile men and lovely women where poetry, music and histrionics are great assets and where, without them, man would be very poor indeed. Women on this planet love the



arts, and men are with artistic accomplishments and are totally emancipated. Men here, consider, women as means of pleasure and things of beauty as valuable as jewels and if a female denizen of the planet decided to take human form of her own free will, it would cause so much pain that those interested in her would die. Women there are fond of heavy make-up and putting on flower garlands and dancing in bowers in ecstasy. Here on the planet, life is a real joy, and men and women, though promiscuous and free, are of unsullied character. Besides being experts in the arts, the persons living on the planet are also skilled in sciences, are great lovers of nature and do not use machinery. They are experts in yoga, can walk on water, fly in the air and pass through fire.

Towards the end of his essay, the author describes the beneficial and adverse effects of the planet on human beings on the earth. Among the beneficial effects enumerated are beauty of form, proficiency in arts, music, poetry, research and expertise in flying, acting, radio, television, etc. The adverse effect include venereal disease, fear of enemies and night blindness. To counter these adverse effects, one should wear diamond, silver and white clothes and use rice, curd and butter. Those who have faith, should worship *Shakti*, offer jasmine and rose flowers, red sandalpaste and *guggal* incense and recite *Shukra bijamantra*.

“Meri Dogri Kahaniyan” is an autobiographical essay and describes how the author came to write his first short story “Pehlā Phull” first in Urdu and later in Dogri. He fishes out some memories of his childhood spent with village folk and farmers and tells how his observation of their day-to-day activities and speech provided him with material with which he wove the plots of his stories. In this essay, he gives expression to his love for Dogri language, literature and culture. He says that the stories that he wrote were born out of the anguish of his heart which wanted Dogri, his mother tongue, to be recognised and respected like other languages. He gives detailed background to the writing of his first three stories which he always liked best—“Pehlā Phull” written for the function orga-

nised in connection with the founding of the Dogri Sanstha, Jammu, "Kurame da Lamha" written for a literary get-together "Sahityak Goshthi" at the local Ranbir High School, by keeping awake till 2 in the morning and "Mangate da Gharāt" to underline the value of Hindu-Muslim unity in the context of communal disturbances of pre-partition days.

When the Dogra Himachal Sanskriti Sangam of Delhi organised its first All India Dogri Writers' Conference in New Delhi in 1970, it approached Sathe for an article for its Conference souvenir. *Dogri Kathā Sāhitya* was written for this occasion. The essay is a quick run-through on Dogri short stories of the previous two decades, covering his own work, works of Lalita Mehta, D.C. Prashant, Madan Mohan Sharma, Narendra Khajuria and Ved Rahi who had published collections of short stories by then and the new and budding short-story writers like N.D. Jamwal, O.P. Sharma, Shrivatsa Vikal, Bandhu Sharma and Om Goswami (who had started writing under the name of Parkash Goswami). The account is, however, too sketchy and there is no attempt to provide a critical appraisal of Dogri works in the genre.

The short story "Bhabhi" is drawn from his experience at Varanasi and centres round the character of a woman (*bhabhi*) who had something remarkable about her and made a deep impression on the author. She was an attractive woman who lived and suffered with self-respect and dignity.

# 4

## Conclusion

B. P. Sathe's total output of Dogri writing is small—just two collections of short stories, two translations of novels and a few prose essays. But these works are very significant and important in the context of the development of Dogri literature and have ensured a permanent place for him in the history of Dogri literature by virtue of their pioneering nature, their motivating implications, social-anthropological and historical value, vibrant and delightful prose style and literary merit.

Before Sathe came on the Dogri literary scene, Dogri was not considered fit enough for literature. There was a vigorous and rich folk literature in Dogri no doubt, but very little written Dogri literature. Dogri was the dialect spoken by the illiterate and it was scoffed at by the literate and educated people. It required courage and vision to start writing serious literature in Dogri which Sathe did. By doing so, he showed the immense possibilities of creative use of Dogri language. He was the first Dogri short story-writer. It was some ten years before really good short-story writers like Narendra Khajuria, Madan Mohan Sharma and Ved Rahi appeared on the scene. But he had shown the way.

He was a pioneer even in presenting full-fledged, well-made novels in chaste idiomatic Dogri, albeit in translation. Although the three short-story writers mentioned above had written a novel each in 1960, these were more in the nature of novelettes, long short-stories, thin volumes, not very well structured and with marks of immaturity. The translated novels of Sathe introduced to Dogri readers two good specimens of novel proper which read like original Dogri novels. At the time they were published they filled a real vacuum and enriched the genre of Dogri novel. Then came original novels like Shri Vatsa Vikal's *Phull Binā Dāli* and Narsingh Dev Jamwal's *Sānjhi Dharati Bakhale Māhnun* and Deshbandhu Nutan's *Qaidi*. And then also came, more translations from Gorki, Saratchandra Chatterji, Rabindranath Tagore, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and Rajinder Singh Bedi.

In Dogri essay also, Sathe was a pioneer and he wrote in a very charming style with a lot of confidence which others lacked at that time. He pioneered the personal essay of wistful nostalgic recollection and the essay of literary appreciation. Literary criticism was non-existent then. The other type of essay was later perfected by Vishwanath Khajuria who gave to Dogri literature a number of delightful essays of this type.

The legend and folk traditions which form the basis of some of his stories, descriptions of social customs and practices, values held by the characters, throw light on the way of life of the people of this area in the earlier decades of this century and they have socio-anthropological value in that sense. The changes that have swept the countryside after the 1940s, had not yet reached the hilly hinterland of Duggar and there was a certain old world charm and contentment in the simple lives of rural folk which some of these stories have captured and which the onward march of change is fast eroding and destroying.

As already mentioned in earlier chapters, Sathe's prose style has a certain flavour and texture of its own — it is pithy, idiomatic, sonorous, replete with local colour and dripping with human concern and empathy. His prose is fresh like home-made cheese, unadulterated and unembellished, simple and precise

and, therefore, vital and vivid with the beauty of rain-washed meadows.

Sathe will be remembered for his prose style and for demonstrating in his writing, the richness, vitality, plasticity and image-making potentiality in prose of what till then was considered no more than a dialect fit for folk-lore and occasional burlesque and parody.

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