

OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

Introduction

Richness of any culture can be seen and appreciated but when it comes to language and literature it is to be read and heard. We have to appreciate and take pride in this particular aspect of our culture. We must make it a point to read as many books written during those times as it will help us to understand so many things that happened in those times. It will help us to read more books and become familiar with so many things that are happening around us today.

NORTHERN INDIAN LANGUAGES & LITERATURE

We have already seen how languages evolved in India right up to the early medieval period. The old Apabhramsha had taken new forms in some areas or was in the process of evolving into other forms. These languages were evolving at two levels: the spoken and the written language. The old Brahmi script of the Ashoka days had undergone a great change. The alphabets during Ashoka's period were uneven in size but by the time of Harsha, the letters had become of the same size and were regular, presenting the picture of a cultivated hand. The studies have indicated that all the scripts of present northern Indian languages, except that of Urdu, have had their origin in old Brahmi. A long and slow process had given them this shape. If we compare the scripts of Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi, we can easily understand this change. As for the spoken word, there are over 200 languages or dialects spoken in India at present. Some are widely used while others are limited to a particular area. Out of all these, only twenty-two have found their way into our Constitution. A large number of people speak Hindi in its different forms that include Braj Bhasha, and Avadhi (spoken in Oudh region), Bhojpuri, Magadhi, and Maithili (spoken around Mithila), and Rajasthani and Khadi Boli (spoken around Delhi). Rajasthani is another variant or dialect of Hindi. This classification has been made on the basis of literature produced by great poets over a length of time. Thus, the language used by Surdas and Bihari has been given the name of Braj Bhasha; that used by Tulsidas in the Ramacharitmanasa is called Avadhi and the one used by Vidyapati has been termed as Maithili. But Hindi, as we know it today is the one called Khadi Boli. Though Khusrau has used Khadi Boli in his compositions in the thirteenth century its extensive use in literature began only in the nineteenth century. It even shows some influence of Urdu.

PERSIAN AND URDU

Urdu emerged as an independent language towards the end of the 4th century AD. Arabic and Persian were introduced in India with the coming of the Turks and the Mongols. Persian remained the court language for many centuries. Urdu as a language was born out of the interaction between Hindi and Persian. After the conquest of Delhi (1192), the Turkish people settled in this region. Urdu was born out of the interaction of these settlers and soldiers in the barracks with the common people. Originally it was a dialect but slowly it acquired all the features of a formal language when the authors started using Persian script. It was further given an impetus by its use in Bahamani states of Ahmadnagar, Golkunda, Bijapur and Berar. Here it was even called *dakshini* or *daccani* (southern). As time passed, it became popular with the masses of Delhi. Urdu became more popular in the early eighteenth century. People even wrote accounts of later Mughals in Urdu. Gradually it achieved a status where literature—both poetry and prose—started being composed in it. The last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar wrote poetry in it. Some of his couplets have become quite well known in the Hindi and Urdu speaking areas. Urdu was given its pride of place by a large number of poets who have left inimitable poetry for posterity. The earliest Urdu poet is supposed to be Khusrau (1253-1325). He started writing as a poet in the reign of Sultan Balban and was a follower of Nizam-ud-din Auliya. He is said to have composed ninety-nine works on separate themes and numerous verses of poetry. Among the important works composed by him are *Laila Majnun* and *Ayina-i-Sikandari* dedicated to Alau-din-Khalji. Among other well-known poets are Ghalib, Zauq, and Iqbal. Iqbal's Urdu poetry is available in his collection called *Bang-i-dara*. His *Sarejahan se achcha Hindostan hamara* is sung and played at many of the national celebrations in India. No army parade is considered complete without the army band playing this tune. In big Indian cities like Delhi these are many programmes in which famous singers are invited to sing nazams or Ghazals written by famous poets like Ghalib, Maum, Bulley Shah, Waris Shah besides many others. So you can imagine how rich our language and literary culture must have been to continue till today. It has enriched our lives and is central to people meeting and intermingling with each other. Among the best prose writers were people like Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar, who wrote the famous *Fasanah-i-Azad*. Even in the early days, Munshi Prem Chand, who is supposed to be a doyen of Hindi literature, wrote in Urdu. Urdu has given us a new form of poem that is called a nazm. Urdu was patronised by the Nawabs of Lucknow, who held symposiums in this language. Slowly it became quite popular. Pakistan has adopted Urdu as the state language.

Development of Literature during the Mughal Period

There was a tremendous development in the field of literature during the Mughal times. Babar and Humayun were lovers of literature. Baber was himself a great scholar of Persian. He wrote a book known as *Tuzek-e-Babari* which is highly esteemed by the Turkish Literature. Humayun got the treatise translated into Arabic. He too was a lover of learning and had established a big Library. *Humayun Nama*, tops the books written in his times. Akbar was very fond of learning. '*Akbar Nama*', *Sur Sagar*, *Ram Charitamanas* are prominent among the books written during his time. *Malik Muhammad Jayasis Padmavat* and *Keshav's Ram Chandrika* were also written during the same period. Jahangir greatly patronized literature. Many scholars adorned his court. He too was a scholar of a high caliber and wrote his life story. During Shah Jahan's time there was a well known scholar named Abdul Hameed Lahori. He wrote *Badshah Nama*. The literary activities suffered during Aurangzeb's time. Urdu literature started developing during the last days of the Mughal emperor. This credit goes to Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan and Mirza Galib. The language of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan was very simple and impressive. His compositions inspired the other Urdu writer Mirza Galib, who was a famous poet of his time. He made an important contribution to uplift Urdu poetry. There were some other writers also who took interest in Urdu poetry and enriched the Urdu literature. Maulvi Altaf Hussain Ali, Akbar Allahabadi and Dr. Mohammed Iqbal are some famous names. As Persian was the language of the court, much of the literature produced in this period was written in Persian. Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Dehelvi wrote superb poetry in Persian. Historians like *Minhas-us-Siraj* and *Zia Barani* and *Ibn Batuta* who came to India during those days wrote accounts of rulers, important political events and incidents in this language. In the medieval period, Persian was adopted as the court language. Several historical accounts, administrative manuals and allied literature in this language have come down to us. The Mughal rulers were great patrons of learning and literature. Babar wrote his *tuzuk* (autobiography) in Turkish language, but his grandson Akbar got it translated into Persian. Akbar patronized many scholars. He got *Mahabharata* translated into Persian. Jahangir's autobiography (*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*) is in Persian and is a unique piece of literature. It is said that Noorjahan was an accomplished Persian poetess. Quite a fair amount of Persian literature has been produced by the courtiers of the Mughals. Abul Fazl's *Akbarnamah* and *Ain-e-Akbari* is a fine piece of literature. From there we get a good deal of information about Akbar and his times. Faizi wrote beautiful Persian poetry. Several collections of letters of the Mughal period (*insha*) have come down to us. Besides shedding light on Mughal history, they

indicate different styles of letter writing. Another name in prose and history writing is that of Chandra Bhan, a writer of Shahjahan's days. Similarly, we have a work named Tabqat-i-Alamgiri, shedding light on Aurangzeb. Badauni was another writer who belonged during Akbar's time. In the twentieth century, Iqbal wrote good Persian poetry. All this has now become a part of Indian heritage and culture. Among the noted Hindu poets of this period were Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas and Rahim. Kabir's dohas are still so popular today while Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas has become the most sacred book of the Hindus. Behari's Satsai written during Akbar's reign is very famous. Alankarashekhara by Keshav Mishra was produced in Akbar's court. It was a great Sanskrit work on the styles of writing. Akbar also got many Sanskrit books like Bhagwad Gita and Upanishads translated into Persian.

HINDI LITERATURE

There was a tremendous growth of regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Marathi and Gujarati during this time. In the South, Malayalam emerged as an independent language in the 14th century. The emergence of all these languages resulted in the decline of Sanskrit as they came to be used as the medium through which the administrative machinery functioned. The rise of the Bhakti movement and the use of these regional languages by the various saints helped in their growth and development. We have already noted the various dialects that developed in northern and western India. Prithviraj Raso is supposed to be the first book in the Hindi language. It is an account of exploits of Prithviraj Chauhan. In its imitation several other rasos were written. The language went on changing as the area where it was used expanded. New words to express new situations were either coined or taken from areas coming under its influence. Hindi literature looked to Sanskrit classics for guidance and Bharata's Nattyashastra was kept in mind by Hindi writers. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there started a movement in southern India that was called the Bhakti movement. As its influence reached the north, it started affecting the prose and poetry that were being composed in Hindi. Poetry now became largely devotional in nature. Some of the poets like Tulsidas wrote poetry in a language which was of that region only, while others like Kabir, who moved from place to place added Persian and Urdu words as well. Though it is said that Tulsidas wrote Ramcharit Manas based on Valmiki's Ramayana, he also alters situations and adds quite a few new scenes and situations based on folklore. For example, Sita's exile is mentioned in Valmiki's version but it is not mentioned in Tulsidas's account. Tulsidas has deified his hero while the hero of Valmiki is a human being. Hindi evolved during the Apabhramsa stage between the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. and the 14th C. It was

characterized as Veergatha Kala i.e. the age of heroic poetry or the Adi Kala (early period). It was patronised by the Rajput rulers as it glorified chivalry and poetry. The most famous figures from this period were Kabir and Tulsidas. In modern times, the Khadi dialect became more prominent and a variety of literature was produced in Sanskrit. Similarly, Surdas wrote his Sur Sagar in which he talks of Krishna as an infant, a young lad indulging in pranks and a young man engaged in dalliance with the gopis. These poets made a deep impression on the minds of the listeners. If the festivals associated with Rama and Krishna have become so very popular, the credit goes to these poets. Their versions became the source of inspiration not only for other poets but also for painters in the medieval ages. They inspired Mirabai, who sang in Rajasthani language, and Raskhan, who, though a Muslim, sang in praise of Krishna. Nandadasa was an important Bhakti poet. Rahim and Bhushan were a class apart. Their subject was not devotion, but spiritual. Bihari wrote his Satsai in the seventeenth century; it gives us a glimpse of shringar (love) and other rasas. All the above-mentioned Hindi poets, except Kabir, expressed their sentiments essentially to satisfy their own devotional instincts. Kabir did not believe in institutionalised religion. He was a devotee of a formless God. Chanting His name was the be-all and end-all for him. All these poets influenced the north Indian society in a manner that had never happened earlier. As it is easier to remember poetry than prose, they became immensely popular. During the last 150 years, many writers have contributed to the development of modern India literature, written in a number of regional languages as well as in English. One of the greatest Bengali writers, Rabindranath Tagore became the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize for literature (Geetanjali) in 1913. However, it is only with the beginning of nineteenth century that Hindi prose came into its own. Bharatendu Harishchandra was one of the earliest to produce dramas in Hindi which were basically translations of texts written in Sanskrit and other languages. But he set the trend. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi was another author who wrote translations or made adaptations from Sanskrit. Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-94) wrote novels originally in Bangla. They came to be translated into Hindi and became very popular. Vande Mataram, our national song, is an excerpt from his novel, Anand Math. Swami Dayanand's contribution to Hindi cannot be ignored. Originally a Gujarati and a scholar of Sanskrit, he advocated Hindi as a common language for the whole of India. He started writing in Hindi and contributed articles to journals essentially engaged in religious and social reforms. Satyarth Prakash was his most important work in Hindi. Among other names who have enriched Hindi literature, is that of Munshi Prem Chand, who switched over from Urdu to Hindi. Surya Kant Tripathi, 'Nirala', achieves recognition because he questioned the orthodoxies in society. Mahadevi Verma is

the first woman writer in Hindi to highlight issues related to women. Maithili Sharan Gupt is another important name. Jaishankar Prasad wrote beautiful dramas.

Hindi Language Makes Progress in Modern Period

Hindi Language: The development of modern language started at the end of the 18th century. The main writers of this period were Sadasukh Lal and Enshallah Khan. Bhartendu Harishchandra also strengthened Hindi language. Similarly Raja Lakshman Singh translated Shakuntala into Hindi. Hindi continued to develop in adverse circumstances as the office work was done in Urdu

Hindi Language Makes Progress in Modern Period

Hindi Literature: Bhartendu Harish Chandra, Mahavira Prasad Dwivedi, Ramchandra Shukla and Shyam Sunder Das were the main among the prose writers of Hindi literature. Jai Shanker Prasad, Maithalisharan Gupta, Sumitranandan Pant, Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', Mahadevi Verma, Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar' and Haribans Rai 'Bacchan' made great contribution to the development of Hindi poetry. Similarly, Prem Chand, Vrindavan Lal Verma and Ellachandra Joshi wrote novels and enriched Hindi literature.

If we look at the above writers, we find that they all wrote with a purpose. Swami Dayanand wrote in order to reform the Hindu society and rid it of false beliefs and social evils. Munshi Prem Chand tried to draw the attention of the society to the miserable existence of the poor and Mahadevi Verma recipient of Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award highlighted the conditions of women in the society. 'Nirala' became the pioneer of awakening of Modern India.

BENGALI, ASSAMESE AND ORIYA LITERATURE

After Hindi, the next significant literature was the one that developed in Bengal. The Baptist Mission Press was established in Serampore near Calcutta in 1800. East India Company founded the Fort William College in the same year. It provided training to civil servants of the Company in law, customs, religions, languages and literatures of India to enable them to work more efficiently. The growth of the Bhakti movement and the composition of various hymns associated with Chaitanya provided a stimulus to the development and growth of Bengali. Narrative poems called the Mangal Kavyas also grew popular during this period. They propagated the worship of local deities like Chandi and transformed Puranic Gods like Siva and Vishnu into household deities. In this regard, a very important landmark was achieved by William Carey, who wrote a grammar of Bengali and published an English-

Bengali dictionary and also wrote books on dialogues and stories. It may be noted that the grammar and dictionaries are important in the development of a literature. They guide the writers as to the correctness of a sentence and also help them in finding suitable words for a particular situation and idea. Although the aim of the press run by the missionaries was mainly to propagate Christian faith but other presses run by local people helped in the flourishing of non-Christian literature. Scores of pamphlets, small and big books and journals were produced. In the meantime education spread, although at a very slow pace. But after 1835, when Macaulay won the battle against Orientalists, it spread at a faster pace. In 1854 came Sir Charles Wood's Despatch and in 1857 the three universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were established. Besides textbooks for schools and colleges, other literature were also produced. However it was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who wrote in Bengali besides English that gave impetus to Bengali literature. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) and Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820- 86) were two other writers of this early period. In addition to these, Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1834-94), Sharat Chandra Chatterji (1876-1938), and R.C. Dutta, a noted historian and a prose writer, all contributed to the making of Bengali literature. But the most important name that influenced the whole of India was that of Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941). Novels, dramas, short stories, criticism, music and essays, all flowed from his pen. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his *Geetanjali*. However, a few things need to be noted about the influence of Western ideas which permeated Bengal and later on other parts of India. Upto 1800, most of the literature produced was limited to religion or courtly literature. The Western influence brought the writers closer to the man in the street. The subjects were mundane. Some religious literature was also produced but it hardly said anything new. The final years of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century saw a new subject, nationalism, being taken up. Two things were seen in this new trend. The first was the love for old history and culture and an awareness of the facts of British exploitation. The second was a clarion call for arousing the Indians to drive out the foreigners, both by persuasion and force. This new trend was expressed by Subrahmanyam Bharti in Tamil and Qazi Nazrul Islam in Bengali. The contributions of these two writers in arousing the nationalistic sentiments in the readers was tremendous. Their poetry was translated into other Indian languages. Assamese - Like Bengali, Assamese also developed in response to the Bhakti movement. Shankardeva who introduced Vaishnavism in Assam helped in the growth of Assamese poetry. Even the Puranas were translated in Assamese. The earliest Assamese literature consisted of buranjis (court chronicles). Shankardev has left several devotional poems, which people song with rapturous pleasure, but it was only after

1827 that more interest was shown in producing Assamese literature. Two names, Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua and Padmanaba Gohain Barua cannot be forgotten. From Orissa, a couple of names are worth mentioning and these are Fakirmohan Senapati and Radha Nath Ray, whose writings deserve considerable attention in the history of Oriya literature. The works of Upendra Bhanja (1670 - 1720) were important as they ushered a new period of Oriya literature. In Orissa the works of Saraladasa are regarded as the first works of Oriya literature.

PUNJABI AND RAJASTHANI LITERATURE

Punjabi is a language with several shades. It is being written in two scripts, Gurmukhi and Persian. The Gurmukhi script till the end of the nineteenth century was almost limited to the Adi Granth, the holy book of the Sikhs. Only a small number of people tried to learn the script except the granthis, who recited the holy Granth in the gurdwaras. However, the language did not lack literature. Guru Nanak was the first poet in Punjabi. Some other contemporary poets, mostly Sufi saints, used to sing in this language. These Sufis or their followers used the Persian script if they wanted to commit their poetry to writing. In this list, the first name is that of Farid.

His poetry has found a place in the Adi Granth. The Adi Granth also contains poetry of the next four gurus. All this literature belongs to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Amongst the later gurus, the poetry of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur has also contributed to the Adi Granth. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru, was educated in Patna (Bihar), where he learnt Persian and Sanskrit. He has composed two savaaiyyas in Punjabi but these are not a part of the Adi Granth. But it was the love stories of Heer and Ranjha, Sasi and Punnu and Sohni and Mahiwal, which gave this language its theme in the early days. Even the story of Puran Bhagat found favour with some poets. Beautiful poems written by some known and some unknown poets have come down to us. These are being sung by local singers for the last two or three hundred years. There are several other poetic stories which have been composed by the locals. This folklore has been preserved. The most important of these is Heer of Waris Shah. It is the most popular of the early works. It is a landmark in Punjabi poetry. Similar is the popularity of Bulley Shah who was a Sufi saint. He has left a large number of songs. One of his popular forms of compositions was called kafi; it was sung in a classical musical form. Kafis are sung by people with great fervour. In the twentieth century, Punjabi had come into its own. Bhai Vir Singh composed an epic, named Rana Surat Singh. Puran Singh and Dr. Mohan Singh are among the best known writers. Essays, short stories, poetry, novels, criticism and all other forms of writing have adorned the Punjabi literary

scene. Rajasthani, a dialect of Hindi, had its own part to play. The bards (itinerant singers) moved from place to place, providing entertainment and keeping the stories of heroes alive. It was from these ballads that Colonel Todd collected the heroic stories of Rajasthan and put them in the Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan. But the devotional songs of Mira Bai have a place of pride in the history of language as well as devotional music. Mira Bai's love for her lord (Lord Krishna) is sometimes so intense that it transcends this mundane world and transports one to the land of this singer. The development of the Bhakti movement led to the rise of the different regional languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu.

GUJARATI LITERATURE

Early Gujarati literature is available in the form of Bhakti songs of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It still follows the old tradition which is popular in Gujarat. Narsi Mehta's name is the foremost in this respect. The people of Gujarat wove these devotional songs in their folk dances and their religious forms often find expressions in their celebrations. Narmad's poetry gave a fillip to the Gujarati literature. Saraswati Chandra, a novel by Govardhan Ram, has become a classic and has given great impetus to other writers. But probably a name that cannot be forgotten is that of Dr. K.M. Munshi. He was a novelist, an essayist and a historian, and has left a plethora of historical novels. In these books he exhibits his ability to mix fact with fiction. Prithvi Vallabha is one of his finest novels. A special mention must be made of Narsi Mehta whose songs in praise of Krishna not only made him a very popular figure but also made Gujarati language popular.

SINDHI LITERATURE

Sindh was one of the important centres of Sufis, who established khanqahs at various places. The Sufi singers with their devotional music made the language popular. The credit for creating literature in Sindhi goes to Mirza Kalish Beg and Dewan Kauramal.

MARATHI LITERATURE

Maharashtra is situated on a plateau where a large number of local dialects were in use. Marathi grew out of these these local dialects. The Portuguese missionaries started using Marathi for preaching their gospel. The earliest Marathi poetry and prose is by Saint Jnaneshwar (Gyaneshwar) who lived in the thirteenth century. He wrote a long commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. He was the one who started the kirtan tradition in Maharashtra. He was followed by Namdev (1270- 1350), Gora, Sena and Janabai. All these sang and

popularised the Marathi language. Their songs are sung even today by the Verkari pilgrims on their way to Pandharpur pilgrimage. Almost two centuries later, Eknath (1533-99) came on the scene. He wrote the commentaries on the Ramayana and the Bhagawat Purana. His songs are very popular all over Maharashtra. Then came Tukarama (1598-1650). He is supposed to be the greatest Bhakti poet of them all. Ramdas (1608-81), who was the guru of Shivaji, is the last of these hymn writers. He was the devotee of Rama. He inspired Shivaji. The closing years of the nineteenth century saw an upsurge in the Marathi literature. It was a nationalist movement that made Marathi prose popular and prominent. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1857-1920) started his Journal Kesari in Marathi. This helped the growth of Marathi literature. But the role of Keshav Sut and V.S. Chiplunkar was no less. Hari Narayan Apte and Agarkar wrote novels which became very popular. All these prose writers made great contribution to the development of Marathi literature. The name of H.G Salgaokar is remembered for writing inspirational poetry. Besides, the names of M.G. Ranade, K.T. Telang, G.T. Madholkar (poet and novelist) are no less important.

KASHMIRI LITERATURE

Kashmir shot into literary prominence, when Kalhana wrote Rajatarangini in Sanskrit But this was in the language of the elite. For locals, Kashmiri was the popular dialect. Here also the Bhakti movement played its role. One Lal Ded, who lived in the fourteenth century, was probably the first to sing in the Kashmiri language. She was a Shaivite mystic. After Islam spread in this area, the Sufi influence also came to be visible. Haba Khatoon, Mahjoor, Zinda Kaul, Noor Din also known as Nund Rishi, Akhtar Mohiuddin, Sufi Ghulam Mohammad and Dina Nath Nadim wrote devotional poetry in Kashmiri. These people contributed to the growth of Kashmiri literature. The Western influence did not reach Kashmir till the end of the nineteenth century. In 1846, after the first Sikh War, the Dogras of Jammu became the rulers there. The Dogras were more interested in Dogri language than in Kashmiri. There were hardly any schools or education. There was widespread poverty and economic backwardness. All these led to a lack of good literature in Kashmir. Though the list of Modern Indian languages can have many languages, the constitution of India has originally about 15 languages as national languages i.e. Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam. Three more languages i.e. Nepali, Manipuri and Konkani have been added now to the list.

