
Sindhi Literature in India

Author(s): Gobind Malhi

Source: *Indian Literature*, July-August 1977, Vol. 20, No. 4 (July-August 1977), pp. 80-90

Published by: Sahitya Akademi

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24158696>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Indian Literature*

Sindhi Literature in India

GOBIND MALHI

SINDHI LITERATURE has, over the years, flourished in India under so many disadvantages. The greatest of them all has been the absence of a compact territorial base so essential for the growth of literature itself. Besides, Sindhi language did not find its legitimate place in the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution and this injustice was remedied after seventeen years of peaceful campaign by Sindhi writers, artists and people at large. As the result of Sindhis being a minority in each and every state of India, Sindhi literature is devoid of State patronage and encouragement. The Centre, under the peculiar circumstances, ought to have treated Sindhis as a special linguistic minority and should have instituted prizes and launched Sindhi Akademi for the encouragement of Sindhi literature but so far the long-overdue gesture has not come from the authorities or the ministries concerned. No doubt, Sahitya Akademi has included Sindhi in its programmes for the last twenty years and has awarded eleven prizes to Sindhi authors but that is not sufficient enough for the full growth of literature of the community which has lost its land, Sindh, for no fault of its own. Again, Sindhi language and literature have suffered a lot at the hands of Sindhis themselves. Slowly and gradually Sindhi language is vanishing from educational institutions and Sindhi homes. Sindhis take

SINDHI LITERATURE IN INDIA

pride in talking in Hindi or English (more often incorrect) with their children and prefer, in the name of utility, sending their children to English medium schools and institutions. By and large, educational institutions, under Sindhi managements too are changing over to English medium throughout the country, exceptions being those in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Any other language and its literature would have perished under the heavy weight of adverse forces of history but Sindhi writers, being made of different clay, have all along played heroic role in the preservation and progress of Sindhi literature. Thus has Sindhi language continued flourishing side by side with other Indian languages. The role of Sindhi writers deserves credit for this fact also that none of them has or can earn even a meagre part of livelihood from literary pursuits. Sindhi writers have had literally to burn midnight oil after hard day of routine life to keep the flame of literature alive.

The period under review has seen unusual literary activity among Sindhi writers. Besides holding of various literary seminars and conferences during the two years 1975-76, the flow of Sindhi literature has been quite satisfactory in all its branches—story as usual predominating over others. All categories of Sindhi writers—idealists, progressives, romantists and modernists—have helped that flow, of course modernists have dominated the literary scene these two years.

The form and content of these modernists having been so much a matter of controversy in every literary corner, has been discussed and debated in Sindhi too during the period under review. Two acclaimed protagonists of modernism in Sindhi literature, Hiro Shewakani and Vishnu Bhatia have discussed at length the form and content of modernism in their published works respectively *Jidat jo Mafhoom ain Sindhi Kahani* (September 1975) and *Naen Sahit Ja Suwal* (May 1976). Shewakani has at the very outset in the first paragraph of his book disclaimed originality of thought and ideas while discussing the concepts of modernity and modernism. He has quoted liberally thinkers like Trawling, Spender, Dostoevsky, Sartre and Koffman, to

INDIAN LITERATURE

bring home to readers the characteristics of existentialism. Two-thirds of the book is devoted to analyse Sindhi modernist stories from Mohan Kalpana to Mohan Deep in the light of theories he has propounded in the oretical part of his book. Brij Mohan and others in the issues of *Izahar* (early 1976) have severely criticised some aspects of Shewakani's analysis of Sindhi modernist short story. Lilaram Ruchandani in another article has questioned the originality and authority of Shewakani's views. Vishnu Bhatia in the book mentioned above has discussed existentialism and modernism in literature by quoting certain Hindi thinkers and writers. It is obvious that Sindhi modernists do not think alike on the interpretation and application of existentialism, the core of modernism. Their differences of outlook and approach become quite clear when one reads contradictory remarks of these modernists while discussing writings of Guno Samtani in the book entitled *Guno Samtani* (a collection of critical essays published as the January-June 1975 issue of *Kavita* magazine). The book by itself is a welcome gesture on the part of publishers as a full-length book is devoted to the personality and literature of a Sahitya Akademi Award-winning writer.

The present writer, though a believer in literature for life's sake theory, has all along welcomed modernism as a new trend in Sindhi literature. It is a trend essentially of revolt against all bindings—religious, social, ethical and political; a revolt against yesterday and tomorrow, having belief in today, more precisely in the present moment only. Individual has become the central theme of modernist writings everywhere; luckily Sindhi modernists have not completely ignored the society and its influence on an individual. Therefore, most of them write with a social purpose, though their approach is more negative than positive. But whenever they have been positive in outlook, approach and application, they have produced good and thought-provoking literature. Some progressive writers have recently taken to modernist forms, more so in poetry. And the result has been remarkable. For instance, most of the poems in Lachhman

SINDHI LITERATURE IN INDIA

Komal's *Ji-a-Jharoko* (winner of Sahitya Akademi award in 1976) are really 'new' in form and purposeful in content. Though in many poems the outlook of Komal also has been individualist and his approach is more or less negative, the impact on the reader is not that of pessimism and darkness all around. Some stark realities of life have become more glaring and noteworthy in the 'new' form. Likewise poems of Krishan Rahi, Krishan Khatwani and Arjan Hasid have retained their progressive content in 'new' form—at least there is nothing absolutely individualist and absurd in this sort of modern poetry. Yes, some idealists and progressive writers in the name of modernity have lost sight of their proclaimed ideas. Two glaring examples can be cited in this respect—Popati Hiranandani's most discussed poem, 'Dunahethan Dabli' (*Koonj*, March-April 1976 issue) and Kirat Babani's 'new' poem 'Tun ain Man' in *Koooj's* May-June 1976 issue. In contrast, Harikant, a well-known modernist, is more progressive in thought than many progressives themselves in 'Afrin' (*Koonj*, July 1976). M. Kamal has said adieu to traditional poetry and has tried to be more modern than modernists in 'Garandar Barf ja Nagsh', but he has failed completely to be individualist. *Vijood jo Khandahar* (October 1976) is a representative collection of modernist poetry in Sindhi. Most of the poets are bitter against the present state of affairs in social, economic and political spheres of life but some of them really leave unfailing impression that the atmosphere around us must change for the better. A few among them no doubt talk about nothingness and preach total anarchy of thought, if not of action. Some of the poems by Haresh Vaswani, Krishan Rahi, Mohan Kalpana, Harikant, Vasdev Mohi and Prem Prakash are quite remarkable in content and form. Again Vasdev Mohi's own collection of poems *Tazad* is really a collection of contradictions as the title appropriately suggests. Though positive in some and negative in many he has honestly expressed ambiguity of human mind and confusion in human life. But Mohan Deep in his collection of new poems, *Munhje Pacehhe jo Hiku Hiso* is more absurd and individualist;

and ironically, wherever his individualism is realist, he is more impressive. His obscure thoughts in prose and poetry have never appealed many modernists themselves. Haresh Vaswani, the most versatile modernist writer with clear-cut understanding of existentialism, has, in his collection of poems under the amusing title *4076*, given glimpses of representative modernist thought and attitude towards present-day state of affairs in human society. One may agree to disagree with Harsh's content but one cannot but appreciate some of his poems published in this collection or elsewhere during the past few years for originality of expression. Traditional and progressive poets had their poems published in weeklies, monthlies and other periodicals. Narayan Shyam, Hari Dilgir, Prabhu Wafa, Krishn Rahi, Moti Prakash and Arjan Shad wrote some quite remarkable poems, though quantitatively their poems were few and far between. M.U. Malkani's collection of poetic prose pieces, *Juwani-a-ja Jazba* deserves special mention for two reasons. Firstly, it is the only book of its type published in recent years. Secondly, the veteran writer's random thoughts over the years have touched many aspects of human mind and behaviour. And some of the pieces though talk about sex and smell of sensuousness, none can be termed vulgar or obscene, at least by discerning readers.

The modernists have been quite active in the field of Drama also, during these two years. Ahmedabad Drama Workshop has found its echo heard in Bombay too. Prem Prakash has now a zealous collaborator in Brij Mohan. They have even presented joint shows of their one-act plays in Bombay and Ahmedabad. On their own also they have been presenting experimental one-act plays, though Prem Prakash continues to be most active in this field. His plays, of late, have turned out to be absurd and some of them contain certain folk elements. Average theatre goer has not taken kindly to these plays; but the writers, artists and discriminating audience have rightly applauded these welcome experiments. Influence of Badal Sarkar and existentialists of Gujarat is quite evident on Prem Prakash's symbo-

lism. Two collections of experimental one-act plays have been published during these two years under the same title *Parda*, published respectively from Ahmedabad and Bombay, though *Parda* by Prem Prakash is the only common play in both the collections. *Parda* (Maruee Publication, Ahmedabad) contains some of the one-act plays staged on various occasions by the Drama Work Shop. None of them can strictly be termed absurd, though certain elements of symbolism are present in some of them. Prem Prakash in the bargain has made play presentation simple and direct though some of the plays in the collection may go over the heads of audience, not for absurd content but ambiguity of thought and confusion of images. The present writer has had recently the opportunity of seeing some of the latest one-act plays by Prem Prakash at Calcutta. They suggest quite convincingly the growing maturity of the writer-director so far both content and form of experimental plays are concerned. *Parda* (Jeejal, Bombay) is a collection of four one-act plays. *Undahji Golha* by Shyam Jaisinghani, and *Parda* by Prem Prakash are really experimental plays, while Sunder Agnani's *Chor, Chor* and M. Kamal's *Municipal Councillor* are traditional satirical one-act plays. Again Brij Mohan's *Puchh* (staged and later published) can at best be described as an experimental exercise in one-act play writing. All said, these modernists have taken to playwriting and staging quite seriously; their endeavours in these spheres are worth encouraging. Non-modernists have not given up playwriting altogether. Prof. M.U. Malkani's collection of Radio-plays was published in December 1975. 'Roop ain Kala' is the best play in the collection entitled *Akhrin Bheta*. As Malkani has had in his younger days first-hand experience of play production and intimate knowledge of relationship between the director and his artists, this play portrays feelings of principal characters with depth and understanding. 'Piri-a-jo-Tosho' is the other outstanding play with generation gap as its central theme. Present writer's one-act play *Farsh ain Arshje Vichmen* (Rooh Rihan) has interclass love as the central idea with neo-rich mentality and affluent class sur-

INDIAN LITERATURE

roundings as its background.

After independence, full-length dramas in Sindhi literature have been quite few—two to be exact, till 1975. But during 1976 alone three full-length plays have been published. In the last quarter of 1974, Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Sabha sponsored a full-length drama competition. The best and the second best adjudged scripts, respectively Krishin Khatwani's *Ashiana* and Moti Prakash's *Parde Agian Parde Puthian* are among these three dramas published during the year. *Ashiana* portrays effectively certain types of human characters and the conflict between superfluous Eastern and Western values of life. *Parde Agian Parde Puthian* as the title suggests depicts problems of drama production and inter jealousies of artistes; in short it unveils the masks of artistes in the rehearsal room. Side by side it hits out at the so-called partons of art who believe that art and artistes are also purchasable commodities like other commercial items in the market. Veteran writer G.S. Raisinghani's original Marathi play (a specimen of a Sindhi writer writing in Marathi) *Nirwasat* has now been published in Sindhi as *Nirwasi*. Today its theme is quite outdated. Besides, absence of any dramatic conflict and presence of very lengthy dialogues make it more like a treatise on the problems of Sindhi refugees than a drama. Other ingredients of drama are also conspicuous by their absence. Incidentally, the same author's translation in prose form of Tagore's *Geetanjali* (Sindhi Time's publication 1976) lacks in flow and lucidity one found in the translation of the same masterpiece in poetry form by Prof. M.U. Malkani more than three decades back. Prof. Ram Panjwani's yet unpublished full length drama *Ayo Naon Zamona* is being staged these days by Sindhi Art Theatre. It has proved to be quite popular among classes and masses.

Seven novels of tolerably good standard have been published during the period under view. They are Kala Prakash's *Hayati Hotan Re*, Chandulal Jaisinghani's *Bindi*, *Airport* and *Rohini a jo Roohu*. The present writer published *Mohbat je Rah Te* and *Tuu Man Hua* and Shyam Jaisinghani *Khahi-a-je-Chou-*

tarf, during 1975-76.

Hayati Hotan Re has been written by Kala Prakash with feeling in her usual sentimental style. Its homely atmosphere is quite realistic and the characters are taken from typical middle-class surroundings who are embodiment of both the good and the bad.

Bindi is a social novel with the dual theme of widow remarriage and lustful love. In between this dual theme, the popular novelist has raised a poser through the discussion among the main characters—whether a writer should write from his own personal experience alone or he should rely on imagination. Having taken so many things in one novel, the author, in spite of good story material, does not succeed to impress discriminating readers. Chandulal's other novel, *Airport*, is a detective novel in his *Bagu Barrister* series which has an appeal of its own for teenagers and lovers of light literature as a good pastime. Same author's latest novel *Rohini a to Roohu* talks about ghosts and spirits in the colourful background of Manali.

Present writer's *Mohabat je Rahmen* is an experiment in form, an autobiographical travelogue-type novel with flashbacks thrown in-between; it portrays reactions of real life characters in circumstances created by the author's imagination. The second novel *Tun Man Hua* depicts age-old love triangle with a new angle.

Khahi a je Choutarf deserves special mention for an additional factor. It is from the pen of a typical modernist writer. Shyam Jaisinghani, significantly insists that his duty is to write, and to understand, preferably not to understand what he writes, is the responsibility of the reader. He directly addresses his readers in the brief preface, "If you do not try to understand it, then I have written it for myself." He has not written the novel for any social or political purpose but to satisfy his ego and to ease the burden of his soul. Rightly or wrongly the individual has been the central theme and author himself happens to be the centre of gravity.

During the period under review, Sindhi short story as usual

INDIAN LITERATURE

marched ahead of other branches of Sindhi literature, both in quantity and quality. More than a dozen collections of short stories came out during these two years. Some highlights were also there. Hiro Shewakani, hitherto known as a critic and theorist, had his stories published in a book form entitled *Zindagi ain Cactus*. Hari Motwani, a publisher of quality novels and short stories of other writers, for a change published his own stories under the title, *Hika Lahr*. Four representative collections of post-Independence Sindhi short stories published in India, appeared in a row under the General Editorship of Lal Pushp. The present writer, Krishin Rahi, Guno Samtani and Mohan Kalpana edited and selected stories for one volume each in the series. Stories by all categories of writers—idealists, progressives, romantists and modernists—have been included in the series. Again, selected stories of Sindhi writers of Sind (Pakistan) were recently published in Bombay under the title *Manhun Munh-je Mulk Ja*. Other noteworthy collections of stories were Popati Hiranandani's *Khizan Jo Daur Puro Thio* and *Mun To Khe Pyar Kayo*, Lal Pushp's *Qarz Ji Darkhast* and *Tunhije Munhje Vichmen*, Anand Khemani's *November ji Hika Raat*, Vishnu Bhatia's *Pyar ain Pachhtau*, Prem Prakash's *Villian* and Jetho Lalwani's *Maziaja Dhundhla Aqs*. These and other recognized story writers like Krishn Khatwani, Kala Prakash, Kirat Babani, Shyam Jaisinghani and Mohan Kalpana continued to write short stories for magazines and periodicals. Magazines and periodicals like *Koonj*, *Sangita*, *Maruee*, *Jijal*, *Prihaphuti* and *Rooh Rihan* served the cause of Sindhi short story by publishing stories of recognized and new writers. That more than one hundred short stories were published during these two years, by itself proves the importance of short story in the progress of Sindhi literature on the whole.

It is impossible to take stock of and review such a vast variety of stories here. Suffice it to say that different facets of Sindhi life got reflected in one or another story. Exploration of and probing into the human mind is a common theme of many a short story. The world is moving through a long stretch of

SINDHI LITERATURE IN INDIA

disillusionment, a sense of desolation and alienation. And this is reflected in Sindhi literature mainly through short story.

Modernists have been quite active to portray through their stories the helplessness of the individuals in this decadent society. Some of them, no doubt, are influenced by Kafka and Camus and have tried to introduce symbolism that releases meaning at various levels but the real meaning, if any, is eluding. Even then, the role of modernists in the development of form and content of Sindhi short story cannot be undermined. Some outstanding stories of the period are Krishin Khatwani's 'Pardesan', Hiro Shewakani's 'Portrait Hika Piu jo' Popati Hiranandani's 'Brahma ji bhul', Lal Pushp's 'Jawab jo Maut', Anand Khemani's 'Tukra Tukra', Prem Prakash's 'Villain' Lakhmi Khilani's 'Adhuri Rachna', Kirat Babani's 'Pyarjun Kundun', Vishnu Bhatia's 'Hiku Mashghool Manhun' and Kala Prakash's 'Gul'.

Sindhi Times' publication, *Ram Panjwani—Person and Article* by Baldev Gajra is devoted to commemorate the services of this all-rounder veteran in the renaissance of Sindhi literature and culture after Independence and its off-issue, migration of Sindhi Hindus to India.

Absence of serious and impartial literary criticism can and does hamper the normal and healthy growth of literature. Of late, mainly due to efforts of Modernists some seriousness has come about but appreciation and criticism are still biased and far from impartiality.

Sarat Chandra Chatterji's influence on Sindhi literature and authors has been quite significant from early thirties. Practically all his novels and many of his short stories have been translated into Sindhi—many of them twice and some of them thrice. Sarat Centenary year found a fresh interest of Sindhi writers and readers in the life and literature of the greatest writer of fiction in India. Some of his books were republished during 1970. *Koonj* came out with a special number in honour of Sarat Chandra. Some top ranking Sindhi writers of today paid their homage to the memory of giant litterateur of Bengal, nay, India.

INDIAN LITERATURE

The present writer wrote a special paper in English for Sarat Centenary Seminar organised by the Bombay Regional Office of Sahitya Akademi. The paper later was published in the souvenir issued at the conference of writers organised by Bombay Sarat Centenary Committee. Vishnu Prabhakar's gigantic work on the life and philosophy of Sarat Chandra, *Awara Masseah* also is being published in parts. Two parts covering more than one-third of the original work have been published already in 1976—the translator being Jagat Advani, the renowned translator of many masterpieces of various authors including Sarat Chandra.

In conclusion, Sindhi literary output during the period has been quite encouraging for writers and equally inspiring for readers—though the number of the latter unfortunately is decreasing in India every year.