

Rajasthani During 1972-73

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RAWAT SARASWAT

THE PERIOD under review does not speak of any notable publications, other than the posthumous collection of Rajasthani writings by Late Ganeshlal Vyas 'ustad', brought out under the title *Jan Kavi Ustad*. Published by the Rajasthan Bhasha Prachar Sabha of Jaipur, this book contains poems, songs, satirical verses, operas etc., which contain the life-long expression of a poet, folksinger, journalist, political revolutionary and freedom-fighter, all combined into one, and whom the people admiringly named as *Ustad*. Here-in we find eulogies for the glorious past, whipping rebukes for the corrupt and the opportunist, condemnation for the parasites and the exploiters and vigorous songs knitted in folk tunes for the toiling masses.

It is a pity that a poet of an ustad's calibre and potentiality should not have found favour with the publishers during his own life time. The protagonists of Rajasthani movement also failed to notice the standardised form of language he used and the lucidity of his expression, mixed with the rich flavour of his land, with all its traditions and specialities. Though late, the publication is certainly a land mark in the history of modern Rajasthani literature.

Rajasthani poetry is presently passing through a traditional phase. Symptoms of this change are to be seen in the attempts

of the younger generation of poets, headed by Tejsingh Jodha and others. Their poems, published in magazines and their own collections, have not so far succeeded in breaking fresh grounds and catching the attention of literati at large. The movement—Nai Kavita—as they call it, is neither a product of this land nor necessitated by the circumstances. It is quite alien to the soil and has been imported from modern Hindi literature, which itself has copied it from the west. That is why, their expressions are mostly unintelligible, as they lack the exact phraseology befitting the occasion, which is yet to be coined. At times, they make a laughing stock of themselves when they speak of the sea with all its moods and furies, of the glaciers, snow-falls and the fog, of chimneys emitting dark clouds of smoke, milling crowds of cities and air-ripping sounds of sirens and alarms. But for a city or two, the thirty million residents of Rajasthan have no place even to look at such largesize factories, while they can not even imagine what the glaciers, snow-falls etc., mean. Such borrowed expressions are not at all called for by the circumstances prevailing in Rajasthan.

Overlooking this basic drawback, the performance of these poets should be judged on merits. Two collections depicting the trend have been brought out by Krishna Gopal Sharma and Gordhansingh Shekhawat under the titles—*Chetan Ri Dhuni* and *Kirkar* respectively. Krishna Gopal seems to be a promising poet in the sense that his problems are all local and the expressions he has used are not alien to his land as well as to his language. What is new in him is the style, the treatment of subjectmatter and the sharpness of surgical scissors in his phrases. Still, he like others of his clan, lacks lucidity of expression which makes his poems unintelligible at times.

Gordhansingh has still more handicaps. He has failed to define his subject. In an attempt to say something new, he has merely created pairs of paradoxes. Such nonsense can not be termed as poetry. He is quite capable of giving good sensible poems, looking to his originally cultural background. Some of his lyrics in the traditional style have been much admired too.

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His collection—*Kirkar* consists of a few hundred lines and the pieces range between five to twenty lines. These tiny bits are futile exercises in pen-man-ship and can not pass as poems, though there are spots in-between which attract us for a pause and consideration.

Since the fifties, Rajasthani poetry has been primarily wedded to the stage. Stage poets, unlike heroes of the screen, are devoured by their own popularity. Basing on some really good poems, and laying more stress on recitation, that also in a songster way, they manage to capture the stage at the start, but subsequently fail to maintain and keep up the tempo. The main reason of this failure lies with their inadaptability to the changing trends in poetry. Blinded by the clappings and applause from the audience, they forget that it is essential for a poet also, however talented he might be, to keep up his reading and writing practice. As most of them fail to understand and appreciate this basic truth, they die a premature death and can never regain their lost popularity.

We have two such collections of stage poets, one named—*Chandavarni*, by Asha Sharma and the other—*Prit Pir Ri Pal*, by Sitram Maharshi. As usual, both these poets have primarily sung of romance, with every expression hovering around the feminine figure and her adorations and embellishments. Such cheap sexy verses can no more pass as sober poetry.

It was in the late forties that a cultural revival swept the literary field, and the poets, in absence of better understanding and imagination, turned to the folk and its luxuriously rich heritage of songs. Almost every poet borrowed extensively from the treasury of folksongs and sang of the green fields, the bright desert land, the pleasing and life-giving rains and along-with these of the village folk, specially the ladies, depicting them in all their sweet moods and attire. There are poets even now who are harping on the same tunes and have thus made themselves outdated and obscure. The collections mentioned hereabove fall in this very category, and a third to be added is—*Mehndi Ro Rang Nyaro* by Ram Gopal 'Nawal' of Calcutta.

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Apart from established sober and stage poets, there are others too who, with not very natural urge, have tried to create poetry. *Akharmal* by Manak Tiwari and *Taj Aur Tarwar* by Purushottam Pramatta may be taken as such attempts. Both the collections are miscellanies containing a variety of topics. While the latter has sung of the past glories of the land, the former has described the woes and wailings of the lower middle masses dwelling in cities. These versified and prosaic writings are but common place talks of every day life and lack the very essence which goes to make poetry. However, the books deserve a reading so as to give an idea of the trends still persisting and of the new ones emerging from the pangs of modern life.

Of poems written in the lighter vein, Vishwanath Sharma *Vimalesh's* selection under the title *Nav Ras men Ras Hasya* deserves special mention. *Vimalesh* is the only standard poet who has made serious attempts to depict life around the common man, in a lighter and satirical mood. Though his collection contains very few unpublished poems, but he has successfully chased the fast speeding events and forced them to yield to his moods. He happens to be one of the star-poets enjoying wide popularity, who is capable of influencing the masses.

The survey should not be treated as complete unless mention is made of some anthologies of regional poets, prominent among which are *Hadoti Anchal Ke Rajasthani Kavi Vandana* and *Mauktik*, published respectively from Kota, Bissau and Bikaner. One more in this very category is *Mala*, published for the state department of education, containing poems written by teachers. While there are some established poets too in these collections, a majority of them are beginners whose names have scarcely crossed even the Divisional frontiers. Nevertheless, the books introduce some genuinely promising and budding poets for the first time, who may rise to considerable heights, provided they get sincere guidance and encouragement.

A line with regard to the standard of language used by different poets also seems to be unavoidable. Lately, there has been a tendency among regional poets, specially those from Kota Division and Jaipur District, to give undue preference to

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the colloquial diction. By doing so they have singled out themselves from the community of Rajasthani poets of the rest of state. This tendency, if it persists, will certainly tell upon the natural evolution and development of Rajasthani language as an effective literary medium.