



# Sindhi and Kashmiri Poetry: A Brief Survey

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## Sindhi Poetry:

Sindhi poetry which originally consisted slightly modified Hindi 'Dohas' and 'Sorthas' was in the course of time, supplemented by Persian forms of prosody like 'Ghazal', 'Mathanavi', 'Rubai' etc. and thereafter in the forties of twentieth century, was further strengthened by Sonnet and Blank Verse. Soon after the partition of the sub-continent, these forms were reinforced by 'Triolet', 'Haiku' etc. At present, these forms continue to co-exist, albeit in a varying degree, with 'Azad Nazm' having an edge over them all. Metres peculiar to 'Rubai' are now generously employed in all kinds of poems, and situations narrated in Sonnets. For the first time in the history of Sindhi poetry woman writers have started composing poems and even participate in the 'Mushairas' occasionally. The trend known as 'Naveen Kavita' in Sindhi, started around 1960.

## Subject:

Emotions are replaced by reason and ideal to the real. The fight against imperialism surcharged the air with the spirit of patriotism and nationalism. Upliftment of the poor and the peasant, emancipation of women, eradication of social evils, solidarity and unity were the main themes which absorbed the attention of the poets. The bloody partition of the country ushered in an era of despair and disillusionment for the Sindhis who found themselves destitute, stateless and scattered. The age-old tradition of Sufistic thought and behaviour which had moulded their life in Sindh, however kept them away from communism. Thus while the reflection of events attendant on uprootment is fairly abundant in the poetry of this period, our tones of bitterness and hatred are absent. Since more importance is being attached to themes, forms are gradually losing their erstwhile importance. In fact some poets of the old guard too have taken to free verse, the formless form of the composition, to show that they also can move with the times.

## Themes:

There is now a new awareness of values – aesthetic and social – accompanied by appropriate sensitivity and sensibility. At present stress is on 'here' and 'now'. This tendency is more and more towards individualistic self expression and introversion in dealing with various modes of human behavior. So quite naturally, the poet analyses and intellectualises situations. It is no more 'gul' and the 'bulbul', nor the 'kisan' and the 'mazdoor' but blinding atomic ray, contraceptives, abortion, male prostitute, venal politicians and a wide range of such daring themes which attract his imagination. This, however, does not mean that New Poetry does not indulge in romanticism or that it is free from escapism. The relationship between man and woman does find a place in it, but the view point is different. The poet takes note of the present day struggle of life in which the woman works hard to preserve her personality and existence. Some sort of intense and implicit satire, created by the bitterness of circumstances, also exists as under-current.

## Language:

The language that the modern poet uses is sometimes unintelligible to the common Sindhi reader. It is contorted, ambiguous and awkward and at times has hardly any appeal to the ear. He brings in images which are unfamiliar, grotesque and gruesome. His metaphors and similes are often jumbled up. No wonder, then the composition, in many cases suffers from obscurity of thought and expression. It also to a certain extent, exposes the contrived nature of this kind of poetry.

Looking to the other side of the picture, we see that the non-observance of rhyme and metre has provided vast opportunities to many an immature and fake poet to palm off any nonsense as New Poetry. Every new simile – good, bad or indifferent – is looked upon as synonym of 'Naveen Kavita'. The art of 'expression through concealment' or 'leaving it to the good sense of the reader to understand' is not sufficiently cultivated.



If we study the attitudes of the modern poets towards certain situations minutely, as also the phrases and idioms they use in describing them, we will be surprised to find that in a large number of cases, these are applicable to European Civilisation, and Western Society. It is high time such poets gave up this alien approach and attitude, and created a new atmosphere and a new faith in the welfare of the nation. They should show appreciation of the vast and rapid social changes that our motherland is going through and evolve indigenous symbols and images.

The present anthology portrays various aspects of Sindhi poetry produced in twentieth century during the last fifteen years or so, written by poets who, fortunately, are all alive.

The first poem 'Music and Beauty' is written by M.U. Malkani. In this poem he says that a beautiful lady is sitting in a hall where the music is being played. The next poem, 'Reverie' is written by Tirth Basant. 'Word Emerging' is written by H. I. Sadarangani, 'Khadim', 'Philosophy of Life' is written by Prabhu Chugani 'Wafa'. He writes:

"Life is like a lamp  
Whose breath trembles in the wind,  
Soon the darkness will swallow it,  
As a gust put out its flame."

Other poems are, "Eternal Youth" by Hari Daryani, 'On the Sea Shore' by Narayan Shyam, 'Husband' by Popati Hiranandani, 'Five' by Arjan Shad, 'The Wall' by M. Kamal, 'Let Not the Night Slip Away' by Krishin Khatwani, 'A Funeral March' by Goverdhan Bharti, 'Hunger' by Arjan Hashid, 'New Civilisation' by Mohal Kalpana, 'On the Cross-roads' by Moti Prakash, 'Day and Night' by Krishin Rahi, He says:

"Night alone breathes in life,  
Distinctive in each living being.  
The world is made not of reality alone,  
Dream too has gone into its making."

'The Feeling' is written by Krishinlal Bajaj, 'The Severed Arm of Ulugbed' is written by Vasdev Nirmal. The other poems are 'The New Civilisation' by Jayant Relwani, 'The Thinker' by Shyam Jaisinghani, 'Dhritarashtra' by Bedi Aziz, 'Rebels Against their Illegitimacy' by Harish Vaswani, and 'Man and Faith' by Vashdev Mohi. The poem 'To Maintain Peace Throughout the World' is written by Prem Prakash. This poem reveals the pain and devastation by a war and how a child is looking for his mother.

"Then he got a photograph  
Which showed a child's body  
Blown to bits in a bomb burst.  
He felt the house should be put in order,  
And the seed of the race saved.  
In pursuit there of  
The agents of peace brigade,  
Brought heaps of resolutions,  
But in vain they sought the child  
The remnant of the race of man,  
Seeing houses and lanes in ruins,  
A lump stuck in their throat."

Prem Prakash was born in 1946. He is a modern poet, play wright and critic and also writes short stories. He is the pioneer of Sindhi Drama Workshop which has come out with many improvisations and experiments in Sindhi theatre. He is co-editor of 'Kavita'.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the new wave or the new trend has liberated the minds of the practitioners of this art from the chains of centuries old forms, figures of speech, stock vocabulary and oft-uninhibited and free expression. One can understand the subjective despair of a poet, provided it is born of a real experience.

**Kashmiri Poetry:**

In the Hindu period, which came to Kashmir valley's culmination towards the close of thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, Sanskrit enjoyed the patronage of the court and elite of the Kashmirian society. Notwithstanding the fact that their mother tongue was Kashmiri, the writers, scholars, story-tellers and chroniclers of Kashmir of this period mastered the Sanskrit language and produced masterpieces of historic, literary and philosophical value.

Persian continued to be there even after the end of the Moghul rule in Kashmir and persisted up to reign of the early Dogra Rajas. But ironically enough, it was during the Moghul rule of Kashmir that the literary and artistic aptitudes of the people received a set-back and the ingenuity of the people and their creative abilities started showing symptoms of decadence.

Right from the Sanskrit period up to the exit of the last Dogra ruler from Kashmir (1947), Kashmiri was regarded as a local dialect, though spoken by all the people of the valley and a considerable number of people living in various areas of Jammu region. That Kashmiri was a dialect and not an independent literary language was biased more than six centuries. This poetry came down to us in the manuscript form, through the tradition of bards and the folk-singers. What looks today unlike the modern Kashmiri, the language of Mahanaya Prakasa could undoubtedly have been the literary language of the period.

Ghazal is a gift of Persian to the Kashmiri literature. Watsun or lyric of love has an important place in the verse literature of Kashmiri language. Like vakya, watsun is also an indigenous form of poetry, and its popularity may be attributed to this. Every stanza of watsun contains four hemistiches, the fourth verse becoming the refrain. Uninfluenced by any alien form and imagery, watsun is nearer the hearts of the people and loved equally by the educated and uneducated populace of the valley.

It may be said that the last thirty years have proved to be the most significant and epoch making years of the Kashmiri poetry. Its journey from worn-out ghazal to the highly modern poem and from sloganism to pure poetry, is both surprising and interesting. No student of Kashmiri literature can ignore the tremendous contribution which the Kashmiri poets made towards the enrichment and development of this poetry during these three decades. They succeeded in revolutionizing the entire verse literature mainly by dint of their personal endeavour, love for the language and great regard for their glorious past. Today's Kashmiri poetry incorporates the cherished aesthetic values. The Kashmiri poet of today is educated and acquainted with all literary and art trends. He is ready to emulate as well as innovate. He knows his language and is fully equipped with the techniques of poetry. He is ready to accept any healthy, worthwhile and new trend which may emerge in any part of the world. Kashmiri poetry is no longer imprisoned in the suffocating cell of the traditional ghazal. It is traversing vaster and wider field of art and literature. The last thirty years indeed wrought a revolution, particularly in the Kashmiri poetry and its literature as a whole. In this collection, truly representative trends and approaches that between adopted during the last three decades, are included.

The first poem in this anthology is 'The Peasant Girl' written by Ghulam Ahmed Mehjur. He writes:

"How many are hearts that it has slain?  
O urn full of wine, beware your own drink!"

This is how he describes the beauty of the peasant girl.

Then his poem 'Ghazal' also deals with the beauty of his beloved. He writes:

"O breeze of love! Why do you tease  
The simple rose of my heart?

You have made the hawk neighbor to the bulbul –  
How shall I tell you."

The river is personified and it says:

"I move on day and night,  
Through rocks, ravines and ditches;  
I do not pause for praise,  
I do not pause for play;  
I am at home with the bats  
As I am with the bulbuls."

'Change' is the another poem written by him. He says:

"What is life but the book of change?  
Change – more change –and yet more change!  
Flux is the living reality;

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"O restless, helpless heart! O shame!  
Rend the veil! Uncover the seething bubbling heart  
Change! Change! Bring a new change!"

"Helplessness" is written by Master Zinda Kaul.



“Disbelief led me onto belief” is written by Abdul Ahad Zargar. He writes:  
“Be yourself, shun the protecting ones  
Thousands labour under the deluding desire.  
Hurl aspersion on angels of the sky  
Disbelief led me onto belief.”

‘The Moon’ is written by Dina Nath Nadim. He also writes ‘The Bitter and the Sweet’. Amin Kamil writes the poem, ‘A Long Bright Highway’. Rehman Rahi writes the poem, ‘The Sepulchre’. He says:

“Time.  
Over took Decins  
And the cave, it destroyed  
Of Dreams  
Of Darkness  
Dragons guarding the cobwebbed cave.”

G. R. Santosh writes the poem, ‘Bahri Taweel’.

The well-known Indian painter G. R. Santosh is also a poet of repute in Kashmir. Santosh, a master of colour and light, blended these into the theme of the poem and gave some highly artistic and original images to his readers. The first poem on the theme of rape written by Santosh created a stir in literary circles of Kashmir. ‘Bahri Taweel’ is incidentally the longest poem so far written in Kashmiri. It is an expression of the poet’s faith of the Shaivist philosophy of life which also forms the main subject of the poet’s paintings for the last several years.

‘Beauty’s Supremacy’ is written by G. N. Firaq. He writes:

“You’re exceedingly beautiful, a forest rose wild,  
Emanating crimson waves as though a pomegranate in bloom,  
Stygian Nights pine for the here of your locks  
Your eyes reflect the sheen of perennial springs.”

‘Poem One’ and ‘Poem Two’ are written by Muzaffar Azim. ‘The Anguish’ is written by Vasudev Reh. He is highly individualistic and has attained proficiency in making his reader partners of his purely personal experience. A simple word and a common expression used by this blind poet of Kashmir sound mysteriously philosophical. Despite his purely personal and individualistic approach, Vasudeva’s verses are very effective and pathetic. He writes:

“Reh, who understands you?  
A long tale,  
That.  
A word brings out the whole meaning.  
A whole life in finding – one.  
Say, do you know  
Who knows that all,  
Shares that all?”

Then there are poems, ‘Hydrophobia’ written by Ghulam Ahmed Gash, ‘AT the Crossroads’ by M. L. Naaz, ‘The Evil Eye’ by Chaman Lal Chaman, and ‘Sometimes’ by Ghulam Mohammad Ajir. Rafeeqe Raaz writes the poem ‘Jealousy’. He is the true spokesman of the younger generation and enriches his verse with references to the modern realities. The sun, the wind, the moon, a rock, the clouds, a highway, a mirror, a lamp post and other things get new meanings and dimensions in Rafeeqe’s verses. In a short period, Rafeeqe wrote some beautiful Nazms and ghazals which have a high literacy merit. He has his own style and diction which are a valuable contribution to the poetry of today. He writes:

“If often so happens –  
The stray dogs of the locality  
Meet by the drain side,  
Drooping their heads, pondering over things  
Unknown.”

Another poem ‘Here’ is also written by him. He writes:

“Here the conception of bubbling brooks  
Dances over the mouth of a volcano,  
A drop, among drops, is a fire.



The meanness of the impetuous sun,  
Plunders the cloudy wastes.”

Sindhi and Kashmiri poetries have one thing in common, the relevance with their Age and the society to which they belong to. The introduction for each of these literature makes it easy to understand them. One can have complete taste of these literature by English translation of these poems.

