SINDHI LITERATURE

By

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THE LANGUAGE

The Sindhi Language, as Dr Trumpp observed in his Grammar (1872) ‘is a pure Sanskritical language, more free from foreign elements than any other of the North Indian vernaculars. The old Prakrit grammarians may have had their good reason to designate the Apabhramsha dialect, from which the modern Sindhi is immediately derived, as the lowest of all the Prakrit dialects; but if we compare now the Sindhi with its sister-tongues, we must assign it, in a grammatical point of view, the first place among them.’ Writing earlier than the learned Doctor, Captain George Stack, author of Sindhi Grammar, deprecated the tendency to regard the Sindhi Language as ‘only fit for clowns’ and urged that ‘the Sindhi will to the philologist prove a more interesting study than that of many of the other Indian dialects. The habit of affixing signs to words in lieu of the Pronouns and the Prepositions governing them, the regular form of the Passive Voice, the use of the Impersonals, the reduplicated Causal Verbs, and other points which the learner will mark as he proceeds, give to it beauties distinct from most Indian tongues.’

The Sindhi script, now in use, was devised by British administrators one hundred years ago, and as this script is Arabic in its characters it disguises the fact that Sindhi is derived from Sanskrit, and that it is the eldest among all the Prakrit dialects which have emerged as independent Indian Languages. A Muslim Professor, Abdul Karim Sandelo, in his recently published work on the derivations of Sindhi words bears testimony to the fact that most of the Sindhi words are derived from Sanskrit. At the same time it must be recognized that the vocabulary of the Sindhi language is quite a mixed one containing thousands of words that are of Persian-Arabic origin and not a few that are Dravidian.

1Introduction, p. 1.
3Takiq Lughat Sindhi (1955)
and even pre-Aryan. Sind was the first Indian province to be overrun by the Muslim invaders (A. D. 712) and even before this invasion it had borne the brunt of hordes from Greece and Iran, Scythia and Afghanistan. The Sindhis have in their veins the blood of many races and nationalities and have never known such taboos as untouchability or restrictions on foreign travel. The Sindhi traders have for centuries scoured deserts and seas and planted themselves in lonely outposts where scarcely any other Indian will be found. Naturally, their language has been enriched by accretions from many foreign sources.

It is well known that the Sindhis were a civilized race as far back as history can reach, and one might expect that there would be some records of that civilization in the Sindhi language and literature. A characteristic feature, however, of the history of Sind has been a repetition of Mohen-jo-Daro or Mounds of the Dead burying under their successive layers one civilization after another, leaving not a trace in stone or marble, painting or poetry, of the glories of these civilizations—until, perchance, a Rakhal Das Bannerji appears centuries later to dig beneath the surface and discover some signs of a vanished past. The river Sindhu, with its ever-shifting banks and beds, is responsible for what may be called the March of the Desert.

Poetry: Shah and his Successors

It is therefore not a strange thing that the first authentic name in Sindhi literature is to be found so late as the end of the fifteenth century. Stray verses are attributed to the days of the rule of the Arabs, and tales like those of Dodo Chanesar and riddles in verse such as the Mamui Prophecies were current in the countryside at an earlier period, but the first recorded Sindhi poetry is the verses of Qazi Qazan (end of fifteenth century) cast in doha form and uttering the note that is a constant feature in Sindhi poetry, namely that without a sight of the Beloved (or realization of the Infinite) external accomplishments such as scholarship and piety are so many monsters of the deep to drag one down to perdition. Qazi Qazan makes a grateful mention of the Jogi or yogi who awoke him from mental torpor, and thus bears witness to the most remarkable characteristic of Sindhi poetry—the mingling of the twin streams of Hindu philosophy and Muslim faith to form the swelling waters of what is popularly known as Sufistic Poetry.
The impulse manifested first in Qazi Qazan's verses came to Sind from the great spiritual awakening or movement in India that cast forth such God-intoxicated souls as Kabir and Chaitanya, Nanak and Tukaram. In Sind this movement came to a head in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit (1689-1752) whose Risalo or Poetical Works is one the world's masterpieces and the most precious literary heritage of the Siddhi people. Shah Abdul Latif and many forerunners, chief among them his own great-grandfather Shah Abdul Karim of Buñi (1538-1623), some of whose philosophical verses were incorporated in the Risalo by his illustrious descendant.

Shah Abdul Latif, called simply Shah or 'King', was a nature-poet, a story-teller and a mystic rolled into one. His various Surs or musical chapters bring before the reader the land of Sind and its people—the great river and the fisher-folk, the not-so-far-away desert and the camel-driver, the turrets of the Ruler's palace and the well where village maidens go, the princess in her garden and the pearl-merchant repairing to the (Persian) Gulf, the weaver at his shuttle and the potter at his wheel, the peasant rejoicing in the rain and the warrior springing to arms. Around these scenes he weaves tales of Sindhi heroines which are sublime and pathetic and establishes a kinship through his Sasuis and Maruis, Suhnis and Nuris, Leilas and Moomals, with that other king of poetry of whom it has been said that he has heroines but no heroes. Every one of Shah's Tales has a deep spiritual significance. The desert melodies of Shah conjure up a certain beatific vision wherein all grossness is dissolved and only the Trinity of the Lover, the Beloved and Love appears, finally to be resolved into the One who remains while many change and pass. The simple words of Shah have deluded some foreigners into thinking that he is a humble poet; the Sindhis know better and they place him in the ranks of master-singers and mystics such as Tulsidas and Surdas, Rumi and Hafiz, and draw upon Shah as on an inexhaustible treasury for continuous inspiration and purest enjoyment.

With Shah go two other names of immortal Sindhi poets, the trio forming a constellation not surpassed in the firmament of Sindhi letters. Sachal, surnamed Sarmast or 'the Intoxicated One' (1739-1826), and Sami (1743-1850), so called after his preceptor (Swami), are two other poets with whom no other Sindhi
poets may be compared. Sachal’s was a one-track mind and his gift was that of the lyrist; he had no tale to relate, no scene to conjure up. He was so thoroughly intoxicated with the presence of the Beloved that he could not think of anything mundane. Ritual and routine had no meaning for him; why need he pray or study who had a glimpse of the Lovely One at the window? The Kaafs of Sachal have sweetness, vigour and an ecstatic fervour which place them in a class by themselves. They are sung even to this day by all classes of Sindhis. Sami’s slokas, on the other hand, are characterized by restfulness and the Vedantic urge to cast out Avidya (Ignorance or Illusion) so as to find Illumination of the Spirit. The central point in Shah, Sachal and Sami is the same: quest of the Soul after the Oversoul, the journey of the ray back to the Sun, the bursting of the bubble and the oneness of the drop and the ocean.

The character of Sindhi poetry was fixed by the works of Shah, Sachal and Sami, and has not changed. Sindhi poetry is Sufistic, free from sectarianism and surcharged with the consciousness of the presence of One in the Many. There is no question of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man with the Sindhi poets: their belief is that I, You and He are but one entity. If A hurts B, he is but hurting himself. Separateness of any kind is regarded as detracting from a man’s spiritual progress. As Bedil (1814-1873), perhaps the most distinguished of the successors of Shah, Sachal and Sami, puts it: ‘My (separate) name “Bedil” is so much make-believe or pretence,’ and his only desire is union with the Beloved. He cares not for ritual or propriety; he has lost all feeling of shame. One of the results of the eclecticism and Sufistic tendencies of Sindhi poetry is freedom from bigotry, casteism and sectarianism: the Sufi is ‘la Kufi’ (without a dogma or creed). Rohal (d. 1782) and Dalpat (d. 1841), one Muslim, the other Hindu, have expressed this freedom from doctrine and dogma. Rohal rejects all creeds in favour of the one he calls ‘Rah preen ji’ (The Way of the Beloved) and blames both Hindus and Muslims for evolving what he terms the third ‘Religion of Hate’. Dalpat naively asks: ‘If Kaaba be the House of God, why discard the temple where Deities are lodged?’ and laments that the people of the world should be divided into sects. In this mingling of faiths in Sind it sometimes so happens that the Muslim poet speaks as a Gopi to his Beloved Krishna. A
continuous stream of Sufi poets has satisfied the thirst of the Sindhis for peace and illumination of the Spirit. The most memorable of these poets, apart from the six mentioned above, have been: Hamal Laghari, Murad, Daryakhan, Bekas (son of Bedil) and Jiwatsingh. Many of them have written verses in the Siraiiki dialect of the Sindhi language, giving to their poetry the artlessness and sweetness of the speech of the border-folk.

It must be conceded that the best Sufistic poetry in Sindhi is of pre-British days and bears kinship in content as well as in form (doha form) to the poetry in Hindi, Punjabi and other North Indian languages. This kinship was rudely disturbed when the British took over in 1843. As Persian ceased to be the court language, all the literati turned towards their own tongue for ordinary communication as well as elegant composition. And so dawned the era of Sindhi Qasidas, Ghazals, Masnavis, Rubaiyats, Musadases, Mukhamases and what not. Before the British conquest, a Sindhi poet here and there, such as Sabit Ali Shah (1740-1810), wrote elegies and eulogies in the Sindhi language on the pattern of the Persian poets, but it was not until Khalifa Gul Mahomed (1809-1856) brought out his Diwan or Volume of ghazals in Sindhi that Persian prosody almost superseded the old doha and stanzic forms. Gul can scarcely be called a major poet but his example made Sindhi poets turn to Persian prosody and Persian imagery until at last the Sindhi poetry became interlarded with Persian idiom and allusions—the nightingale and the rose, the thorn and the rose, the moth and the candle, the ruby wine and the cup-bearer, waterfall and the scented garden, gazelle-eyes and cypress stature, and, of course, Yusuf and Zuleikha, Leila and Majnun, Shirin and Farhad, etc. It is doubtful whether the tuning or twisting and turning of the Sindhi speech into Persian prosodic forms brought any substantial gains to the Sindhi language and literature. The hundred years that have elapsed since Gul have not cast up a single poet whose Ghazals, Rubaiyats, Qasidas or Musadases can come up to the Kafs and Beyts, Waits and Surs of even nameless or little-known Sindhis like Moryo (1876) and Laloo (1890) who sing of Sasui Punhoo, Rai Dyach, Marui, Kamsen Kamrup, etc. It is noticeable that major Sindhi poets (e.g. Bedil) who also tried their hand at Persianized poetry in Sindhi are scarcely read for those passages; they are remembered for their Sindhi Kafs or pure lyrics. Sangi (1851-
1924), Khaki (Lilaramsingh), Mirza Kalich Beg (1853-1929), Hyderbux Jatoi (‘Hari Haqdar’ Leader), Shamsuddin Bulbul (whose first book of ghazals was published in 1891), and Lekhrai Aziz (mostly a derivative poet), are some of the names that will occur to the mind while reviewing the Sindhi poetry of the Persian pattern for the last hundred years, but none of these poets can claim to be a major poet or even a popular poet. The number of those who have brought out Diwans or collections of Sindhi Ghazals, Qasidas, etc. is legion, e. g. Kassim, Fazil, Wasif, Kazim, and so on, but their poems are more poetical exercises than anything else. Mirza Kalich Beg’s translation of Omar Khayyam’s Quatrains or Rubaiyat, Masrur’s little masterpiece in Musadas form, Abojho’s Musadas on the model of Urdu poet Hali and Jatoi’s famous address or apostrophe to the river Sindhu, are almost the only poems on Persian models that will survive. Lately, in Pakistan as well as in India, there has been a swingover in favour of light poetry written on the Persian model, Shaikh Ayyaz (author of Bagi) being the principal practitioner of this art in Pakistan, and Parsram Zia in India. But the way Lekhraj Aziz’s recent publication Abshar (Waterfall) has fallen flat is a proof that the Sindhi mind will not react favourably to artificial and heavily-padded imitations of Persian poetry.

Contemporary Poetry

The most remarkable phase of Sindhi contemporary poetry took its rise about thirty years ago when the New Sind was born with the discovery of Mohen-jo-Daro and the building of the Sukkur Barrage, the founding of literary and cultural societies like Sindhi Sahit Society and Sindhi Muslim Adabi Society, and the introduction of Sindhi in the University syllabi. The honour of leading the Sindhi poetry from the wilderness of Persian imitations to homely speech and natural Sindhi idiom and imagery belongs to a humble school-master, Kishinchand Bewas (d. 1947) who sang the annals of the poor, described beauties of nature, and furnished simple songs and lyrics for the children, in his Shirin Shair, Ganga Joon Lahroon and other books and poems. Bewas may not have possessed technical excellence of a high order and he may have mixed up Sindhi traditional verse with Persian prosodic forms, but he is always himself, fresh, original and striking in expression. His great achievement was to find
a school of poets—Hari Dilgir (Kod or ‘Sea-shells’), Hoondraj Dukhayal (Sangeet Phool, ‘countryside melodies’), Ram Panjwani, Gobind Bhatia and others who have not only taken pains to issue their Master’s poems in a handy form (to which publication the present author was privileged to furnish an Introduction) but have continued his liberal tradition.

A remarkable feature of contemporary Sindhi poetry is the part taken in the new movement by students, teachers and professors. N. V. Thadhani’s masterly translation of the Bhagvad Gita (1923) in Sindhi verse written on Persian prosodic model but in language derived from the Sanskrit scriptures, and the memorable translations of the same scripture by Menghraj Kalwani, Mulchand Lala and Chainrai Bulchand, and last but not least, its translation in free verse by T. L. Vaswani, have given to Sindhi poetry treasures in verse. Hyderbux Jatoi’s Shikwah (‘Complaint to God’) written on the model of Iqbal roused a storm at the hands of bigots, but his address to the river Sindhu (mentioned already) and Azadi-i-Qoum (Songs of Freedom, 1947) will continue to be read when much of Ghazal verse is forgotten. Jatoi began as a follower of the Gul and Sangi school and then became a revolutionary in politics as well as in literature, so that he takes the second place with Bewas in the history of New Sindhi poetry. Another poet of the new era worth mentioning is Dewandas Azad whose adaptation of Arnold’s Light of Asia under the title Poorab Sandesh (1937) is a popular reading with all lovers of Sindhi verse.

The recent tendency in Sindhi poetry is not to follow strictly either the traditional verse of Shah, Sachal, or Sami and the Sufistic tradition, nor to cling helplessly or pedantically to the Persian prosody and imagery, but to carve out another path of free verse, mostly on the model of European literature. The writer who originated this movement was one whose name is the greatest in the history of Sindhi culture. Dayaram Gidumal (1857-1927), savant and saint, published about thirty years ago massive volumes of philosophic verse—Mana Ja Chahbook (Whips of the Mind)—and the free form of these verses and their content have effected a revolution in the taste of the more thoughtful and aspiring of Sindhi youth. Another influence is in the way of popularizing free verse in Sindhi by a variety of writers in all kinds of verse, prose and prose-verse, notable among these trans-
lators being Mangharam Malkani, Lalchand Amardinomal, Arjan Israni and Hariram Mariwala (whose Phala-choond or translation of Tagore's Fruit-gathering appeared only last year). Translation of other Indian poets (e.g. Dayo Mansharamani's translation of Nazrul Islam) have also furthered the tendency to free verse movement—Narayan Shyam, part-author of Maka-ja-Phura (Dewdrops) and writer of Sonnets in Sindhi, and Ayyaz, versatile man of letters and perhaps the most notable living Sindhi poet. Other names are those of Anchal and Rahi, Gordhan Mahbubani, Khialdas Fani, 'Gunnam' (Baldev Gajria), Moti Prakash and Arjan Shad in India, and Y. K. Shaikh, Bashir Moriani, Burdah Sindhi and Abdulkarim Gadai in Pakistan. The credit for writing the two most poignant pieces in contemporary Sindhi poetry goes to Ayyaz for his apostrophe to Shah which recalls Wordsworth's 'Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour' and to Khialdas Fani for his not-to-be-forgotten 'O my Land! my land', giving expression to his feelings while forced to quit his native land in the upheaval of the partition of India. T. L. Vaswani's far-reaching sermons in free Sindhi verse have played a great part in freeing Sindhi mind from the slavish pedantry of Persian prosody and imagery. A writer of verse and prose who showed promise of brilliance and power (Tolaram Balani) was cut off by early death.

Drama

In other lands poetry and drama have often gone hand in hand. In Sind, while poetry has forged ahead, drama has lagged behind. Even the Sindhi folk-dances (Bhagats) have produced no plays. Only two Dramatic Clubs have so far functioned in Sind, one, the D. J. Sind College Amateur Dramatic Society which started at the end of the nineteenth century, and the other, the Rabindranath Literary and Dramatic Club, started in the twenties of this century. The first staged translations of Shakespeare's plays (of which Mirza Kalich Beg's Shah Elia or King Lear was the best) and some other select plays, of which Shewasing Ajwani's Kanishk (1902), an adaptation of Sheridan's Pizarro was the best. Some plays were taken from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (e.g. Lilaramsingh's Draupadi, Ramayana, and Harischandana). The R.L.D.C.'s most successful production was Umar Marui of Lalchand Amardinomal, the theme and poetical
passages being taken from Shah. A real ‘find’ of the Club was K. S. Daryani, author of Mulk-ja-Mudabar (Ibsen’s Pillars of Society) and Bukh-jo-Shikar (Victim of Starvation). Manghardam Malkani, author of social plays and originator of one-act plays (Five Little Plays), is the most considerable writer of plays now living. The Shikarpuri Dramatic Clubs gave to Sindhi the Gamtoo ( Pretenders) series of plays by Jethanand Nagrani, but like Ursani’s Bad Nasib Thari ( Unfortunate Thari) these plays are little better than farces.

Of the plays that can be enjoyed in a quiet study the two best undoubtedly are Khurshid of Mirza Beg, a sparkling play with really fine songs, written so far back as 1870, and Lilaram Pherwani’s Hika Raat (1936), a variation on a theme taken from Sur Leila Chanesur of Shah. Dayaram Gidumal’s dialogue in Sata Saheliyum, and Kauramal Chandanmal’s translation of Rainavali (1888) are valuable only for curious readers. Ram Panjwani’s Mumal Rano is a fine play in reading as well as on the stage, which cannot be said for Kalyan Advani’s translation of Shakuntala.

Prose

Sindhi prose has, however, made a considerable headway within the last hundred years. Beginning with tales of the countryside, like Jam Bhambo Zemindar’s Tale (1853) by Ghulam Hussain, imitations of Saadi’s Gulistan such as Kewalram Salamatrai’s Sookhri and Gul series, and caricatures of Arabian Nights like Akhund Lutfallah’s Gul Qand (1882), the Sindhi prose came into its own chiefly with translations. The first half-century 1857-1907, era of translations, was ushered in by grammarians and lexicographers like Trumpp, Shirt, Stack and Grierson in English, and Udharam Thanwerdas (Grammar) and Jhamatmal Narumal (Vaitpati Kosh) in Sindhi. The two great names in the translations of the period are those of Mirza Kalich Beg who began his voluminous and encyclopaedic labours with his translation of Bacon’s Essays (Maqalat al Hikmat) in 1877 and followed it up with the English translation of Chachnama and Sindhi translations of classics like Ghazzali’s Kimayi-i-Saadat; and Kauromal Chandamnal (1844-1916) who, beginning with a tract in favour of women’s education, Pako Paha (1872) translated mostly for children books like History of Columbus, Arya Nari Charitar, and
Radharani (of Bankim). The one translation that was the most popular was that of Johnson’s Rasselas by Nawalrai and Udharam (1870); it led the way to such translations as that of Scott’s Talisman by Navalrai’s brother, Hiranand. A translator who was more an original writer than a translator, was Dayaram Gidumal (Yoga Darshan, Jap Sahib, Gita-jo-Sar, etc.). Among those who translated textbooks (Nandiram, Narayan Jagannath, Bulchand Kodumal and others) the only name that survives, along with those of Mirza Kalich Beg and Kauromal Chandanmal, is that of Bulchand Kodumal for his elegant diction in his translation of the History of England. There was an ambitious attempt made by Vassumal Jeramdas to translate Tulsidas’s Ramayana and by Misir Jaikishin to translate fragments from the Mahabharata.

Four figures must be prominently mentioned in a review of Sindhi literature as Four Pillars on which the edifice of Sindhi prose rests. Three of them have already been mentioned—Mirza Kalich Beg, Kauromal Chandanmal and Dayaram Gidumal—and the fourth remains to be mentioned—Parmanand Mewaram, known as the ‘Addison’ of Sind for his essays and moral apologies. Mirza Sahib (1853-1929) was a translator and pioneer in many fields and an original writer as well. His Zeenat (1890), for instance, was the first original novel in the Sindhi language and shares with Ajib Bheta (1892) of Pritamdas the distinction of first creating characters in fiction and giving pictures of Sindhi life. His Concordance of Shah’s works may also be said to be a pioneering work of scholarship and critical work in Sindhi. He wrote over three hundred works on subjects from Astronomy and Agriculture to Women and Zoology. Kauromal Chandanmal’s great contribution to Sindhi literature was his edition of Sami Ja Slok in 1885, and his sermons in chaste Sindhi. Dayaram Gidumal’s prose introductions to Mirza Sahib’s translation of Omar Khayyam and Kauromal’s Sami Ja Slok are the high watermarks of Sindhi prose because of their eloquence and near-sublimity of language. Parmanand Mewaram’s editorship of Jote, a literary magazine, from the closing years of the nineteenth century to almost the middle of the twentieth, furnished the Sindhi-reading public one of the two best collections of essays in Sindhi, Gul Phul (the other being Vichar, a collection compiled out of the D. J. Sind College Miscellany by the present writer). Parmanand Mewaram’s translation of Imitation of Christ (Krist-
ji-Peravi) is a choice work in prose, and his Dictionary of the Sindhi language (1910) is still the best. Parmanand Mewaram also brought to light another good essayist, Wadhumal Ganga-ram, who wrote essays on social subjects.

The fifty years, 1907-57, have been years of rapid development in Sindhi prose, specially the last ten years. Of these fifty years the first twenty may be called the period of preparation, and the succeeding thirty the period of fulfilment or the era of contemporary Sindhi Literature, coinciding as it does with the rise of New Sind. In the period of preparation, three names of masters of Sindhi prose will occur to the mind, all three scholars of Persian, Islam and Sufism, as well as lovers of Sind. Nirmaladas Fatehchand surprised the most learned Muslims by the extent of knowledge of Persian, Arabic and Islam he showed in his writings in Aina (magazine) and in tales like Sarojini and Dalurai ji Nagri. He is the one ‘high-brow’ writer in Sindhi who cannot be understood except by dippings in a dictionary. His son, Sobhraj, was a milder counterpart of his father. Hindu scholars like Haru Sadarangani (‘Khadim’) and Dayo Mansharamani have carried on Nirmaladas’s tradition. Fateh Mahomed Sewhani, physician and savant, author of Aftab-i-Adab (Sun of Literature), Abul Fazl and Faizi and Sirat-e-Nabi (Traits of the Prophet), was the pioneer of that school of Muslim critical scholarship which was furthered by the founding of Muslim Adabi Society in 1931 and which has seen its culmination in the Muslim Adabi Board scholars of the type of Joyo and Nabibux Baluch, Osman Ansari and Din Mahomed Wafai. Fateh Mahomed Sewhani was a sincere worker for Hindu-Muslim unity in the field of culture and literature and his prose is lucid and trenchant.

A greater name than these in the history of Sindhi prose, a name inferior in importance to that of Mirza Kalich Beg only, is that of Hotchand Gurbuxani, whose monumental edition of Shah (1924), though left incomplete, has set the standard for all subsequent writers. Agha Sufi’s edition of Sachal Sarmast in the thirties, Daudpotas’s edition of Shah Abdulkarim (1937), Muslim Adab Society’s edition of Gul (1933), Shahwani’s edition of Shah (1950), Mulsavi’s edition of Bedil (1954), Nagrani’s edition of Sami (1956), are all sequels to Gurbuxani’s great work and carry prose introductions on Gurbuxani’s model. Gurbuxani’s
prose in *Nur Jehan* and in the Introduction to Shah (*Muqadamah Latifi*) as well as in *Lawari-ja-Lal*, in spite of being interlarded with Persian idiom, is a model for Sindhi writers.

**Contemporary Prose**

Contemporary Sindhi prose sprang to its full stature under the influence of these masters thirty years ago, at a time when the four worthies mentioned above had done their life-work (Mirza died in 1929, Dāyaram in 1927, Kauromal in 1916). The credit of sustaining, stabilizing and popularizing Sindhi prose in our era belongs to Jethmal Parsram (d. 1948), Bherumal Mehrchand (d. 1950) and Lalchand Amardinomal (d. 1954). Jethmal Parsram was a life-long preacher of Theosophy, Sufism and Hindu-Muslim unity, who saw Sufism even in the Sonnets of Shakespeare! He was Sind’s greatest magazine-article writer and expounder of Shah’s mysticism (cf. ‘Tales from Shah’). His enthusiasm awoke Sind to a sense of its mystics, saints and Sufis. He had another side, a piquant side to his personality, which he showed in *Tales of Chamraposh* (Incognito) wherein he exposed the lust and greed of the rich. Jethmal was also the first socialist in Sindhi literature. Bherumal Mehrchand was Sind’s grammarian and historian. He had a sound critical sense, an enormous capacity for work and a love of travelling. He edited *Johar Nazam*, first anthology of Sindhi poetry, wrote on Shah’s travels, composed a novel *Anand Sundrika*, translated a number of books including detective tales, and rounded off his life’s explorations and researches with his masterly *Sindhi Grammar, History of Sindhi Language* (1941), and *History of Sind Hindus* (1947). Bherumal Mehrchand has no mannerisms of style and wrote with ease and elegance. His work has directly or indirectly inspired a number of younger writers. For instance, that great classic of Sindhi prose, *Sair Kohistan* (Travels in Kohistan, 1942) by Allah Bachayo is a result of Bherumal Mehrchand’s *Sind-jo-Sailani*, and writers on historical subjects like Chetan Mariwala (*Tariiki Mazmoon, Sind-jo-Ithas*) or writers of Histories of Sindhi Poetry or Sindhi Literature like Md. Sidik Memon and Lutfallah Badwi, or biographical and critical writers like Kalyan Advani, author of books on Shah, Sachal and Sami, and writers of biographies of Gandhiji, Nehru, etc., have learnt much from Bherumal Mehrchand (as from Gurbuxani also). Bherumal Mehrchand’s son, Pribhadas, in his
translation of Pilgrim’s Progress (Salik-jo-safar), has more than
cought his father’s prose style.

Lalchand Amardinomal was justly regarded, in India,
as well as in Pakistan, as the grand old man of Sindhi Letters;
and his death in 1954 was mourned by all Sindhis. This
indefatigable lover of Sind and Sindhi Literature began his work
as a writer by writing a biography of Prophet Mahomed, a criti-
cism on Shah, a tale of the Hur dacoits, and a bold novel on a new
plan, Choth-jo-Chand (Moon of the Fourth Night). By founding
the Sindhi Sahit Society in 1914, in company with Sarananand
Hassomal, he brought about a change in the taste of Sindhi-
reading public. When he began to write the Sindhis were fascina-
ted by either European literature or Bengali literature and Sindhi
fiction was dominated either by Gul Bakawali (1889) and Mumtaz
Damsaz type of medieval stories or Chandrakanta type novels of
mystery vaults, mystery men and skeleton-in-the-cupboard type.
He purified this taste and interested Sindhis in homely subjects
and homely idiomatic language. He was a pioneer indeed, and
his example inspired widely differing writers such as Assanand
Mamtoras (author of Shair, a romantic novel containing stirring
passages), Shewak Bhojraj (author of Ashirwad and Dada Shyam,
autobiographic novels), Narain Bhambhani (writer of social
novels, Vidya ‘The Widow’ and others), Ram Panjwani (author
of Padma, Qaidi and other sketches of men of artistic temperament
and emotional sensibility) and Mangharam Malkani (who caught
from Lalchand Amardinomal’s Sada Gulab the trick of writing in
the Tagore vein). His influence is seen even in essayists like Narain-
das Malkani (author of Anar Danah ‘Pomegranate Seeds’) and
Tirth Vasant (author of Chingun ‘Sparks’ and associate of Jethmal
Parsram).

Lalchand Amardinomal’s name links the last twenty years of
contemporary Sindhi literature with this decade—a decade which
in many respects is the most remarkable in the history of Sindhi
prose. With the partition of India in 1947, it looked as if Sindhi
literature was throttled, for the Hindus became refugees and the
Muslims of Sind were overrun by hordes of immigrants. But an
astonishing thing took place; young folk, with no experience of
writing, started journals and literary societies, and clung to their
language and literature with a surprising zeal. The output of
literature in Sind as well as in India in the last ten years has been
simply tremendous. In Sind there has been a wholesale movement for research in Sindhi language and literature of which the standing monument is the literary periodical *Mihran*, and in India there has been a remarkable run on the social and psychological novel and the short story. These stories and novels have generally appeared in magazines (which have multiplied out of all proportion). There is at least one Sindhi weekly magazine in India *(Hindvasti)* which has subscribers running into five figures.

A curious feature of the activity in this decade has been the contribution of women to literature. The only Sindhi woman in the literary field in pre-Partition India was Guli Sadarangani, author of a translation of Tagore's *Gora* and a much-criticized novel *Ithad* (which described a Hindu girl marrying a Muslim). Nowadays women are very much to the front. The most popular writer in the Sindhi journals today is a woman-writer, Popati Hiranandani, and one of the two really successful novelists is a lady. Sundri Uttamchandani, author of *Koshan* (short stories), *Kirandar Dewaroon* (Crumbling Walls), a social novel, has a grasp of psychology, knowledge of Sindhi life, and an easy style which make her superior to every other Sindhi writer of prose fiction, except Gobind Malhi, the dominating figure in the literature of this period. The best novel of Gobind Malhi is *Pakhiara Valar Khan Victria* (Birds separated from the Flock), a poignant story of Sindhi refugees, but the list of his novels from *Ansoo* (Tears) to *Lok Ahe Bok* (1957) is formidable. Of the story-writers, Anand Golani is perhaps the best, although there are dozens of other good writers little inferior to him, such as Sugan Ahuja, Kirat Babani, Uttam, Bihari Chabria, Chawla, Gobind Punjabi, Tara Mirchandani, Kala Prakash, Kala Reejsinghani, Ishwari Jotwani, and that versatile critic and writer on literary subjects, Jhamatmal Bhavnani, whose Sindhi rendering of *Dhola Maroo* is a welcome addition to Sindhi Literature. In Pakistan, four story writers, namely, Jamal Abro, Tanweer Abbasi, Shaikh Raz and Ayyaz Kadri, have distinguished themselves as story-writers. The other distinguished writers of this decade are Ram Panjwani, author of 'Ahe na Ahe', an effective story of an artist with faith in God, and Mangharam Malkani, playwright, essayist, and literary historian, the author of *Adabi Usool*, the only guide on literary criticism in the Sindhi language.

The two great things about the literature of the decade 1947-57
are the intense love of every writer for Sind, its language and literature (particularly Shah), and the 'progressive' outlook shown in realistic approach to men and things. For some time there was an unhealthy tendency—natural in young writers—to be 'sexy' but this tendency is now looked down upon. The Sindhi writers of today have faith in themselves, their race and language, and this faith augurs well for the future.

Children's literature in Sindhi is of recent growth. Simple stories and verses for children appeared first in the textbooks prepared for the use of primary classes, the most prolific of these compositions for the juveniles being from the pen of Kauromal Chandanmal. Some verses for children written by Bheruimal Mehrchand attained popularity outside the classroom as well, particularly his rendering of an English poem addressed to Old King Time. The first really distinguished writer of children's literature in Sindhi was Parmanand Mewaram whose Jote was replete with entertaining and instructive reading for children. Some of his simple stories for children were gathered under the title of Dil Bahar. The appearance of works in English like Tagore's Crescent Moon and Post Office and Bankim's stories in the years round about the first World War led to several translations and renderings written in simple Sindhi prose and verse which were enjoyed by children.

The first regular series of articles and poems in Sindhi exclusively for children were the work of the Balkan-Ji-Bari (All India Children's Association) and its 'Dada' (Shewak Bhojraj) which for three decades has kept up its reputation for high class literature written for children—and not unoften written by children. But for this Balkan-ji-Bari many nursery rhymes and children's folklore would not be available in Sindhi today. In the closing years of the thirties an advocate, Rewachand Thadhani, made an enterprising effort to give in Sindhi Nonsense Rhymes, e. g. Bhagat Bambhor Jo, Babo Ahe Chor Jo (There is a Minstrel in Bambhor who is father of a chor or thief), but these rhymes are now all but unavailable. The credit for establishing a distinct department in Sindhi Literature for children goes to a Revenue Official, Fatechand Mangatram Vaswani, who wrote under the name of his brother Melharam what has come to be known as Sunder Sahitya. Fatechand's pioneering efforts have attracted many imitators. High class children's poetry in Sindhi is mainly
the work of Bewas (Kishinchand Khatri) and his pupil Dukhoyal whose songs were current on the countryside in Sind and are now known to all and sundry. In the 'forties and 'fifties a number of distinguished writers in Sindhi turned their attention to writing books for children of whom the most persevering was Lalchand Amardinomal.

Works of a technical or serious nature in Sindhi are few and far between. Only one writer in Sindhi attempted to write such works, namely Mirza Kalich Beg, and his works were mostly translations. Publishers like Harising and Pokardas were enterprising enough to get works of a serious nature, especially those dealing with Medicine and Manufacture translated from the Urdu, but the literary value of these works is small. Government publications (on Agriculture, Economics, Industry, etc.) in Sindhi are of the usual dry-as-dust nature. The first writers of Sindhi Dictionaries were Europeans like Stack and Trumpp and Shirt and were followed by writers of glossaries and lexicons like Narumal and Doolamal Bulchand. So far, the most authoritative Dictionary in Sindhi is the one by that gifted and versatile writer, Parmanand Mewaram, but it was published fifty years ago and requires a thorough revision.

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