

RECEPTION OF TAGORE IN SINDHI LITERATURE

-MOHAN GEHANI.

“He has unsheathed the sword with all his might while the other is sitting silently, unmoved, with head held high like king cobra.”

“Narendra is a person of very high caliber so is Hira. What simplicity! What a sweet nature! I wish he be ever present near me.” (*Sri Ramkrishna Amrit Katha- Sindhi*)

The above observations are of none other than that of a great seer that India has produced- Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He made the above remarks after listening to their spiritual dialogue. In this observation Narendra refers to the Swami Vivekananda and Hira refers to Sadhu Hiranand of Sindh.

It appears both shared the same umbilical cord. So is the case with Sindh and Bengal. It would not be out of place to briefly peep in the historical background that separates as well as binds both the extreme geographical boundaries of this subcontinent.

Sindh has Sindhu River with numerous estuaries as its life-line for survival, whereas Bengal has sacred Ganga spread its veins to enrich it. Sindh has one of the oldest civilizations and Bengal has its magic. Sindh has seen countless hordes of invaders descending on it and Bengal has always been the last post to be coveted by the rulers of Delhi and extent of their ambition. In the desert of Sindh the tinkle of bells tied to camels' ankles and howling winds chasing mirage infuse a man with otherworldly music and philosophy. The breeze of green paddy fields of Bengal whispers in the ears the mysteries of life and its joy. The singing minstrels of Bengal wander along sprawling fields and farms and spread the message of unity of mankind and nature. The wandering bards and fakirs of Sindh spread the message of An-al-Huq (I AM THE TRUTH) and Whadat al wajood (Unity of the same spark of light in the universe) - the truth pervading every atom of the universe and its inherent unity. Bengal cherishes the legacy of Chaitanya and Chandidas and Sindh carries the legacy of Shah Abul Latif, Sachal and Sami as blood in body. The basic core of Vaishnavite philosophy and Sufi thought spring from the same source would be stating the obvious.

Since ages worshippers of mother cult have been visiting temple of Mata Hinglaj nestled in the hills of Bulochistan traversing through Sindh. Thus, in spite of all the differences and distance, Sindh and Bengal have never remained strangers.

British laid the foundation of their Empire in India in Bengal and Sindh was last part to be conquered and occupied by them in the year 1843. At that time great social reform movements started in Bengal. The impact of the winds of change blowing then was felt in Sindh also. Son of the chief of the Hindu Community of Hyderabad (Sindh), which was capital city till British invaded Sindh, was so impressed by the tenets of Brahmo samaj that he travelled all the way to Sri Lanka to meet Keshab Chander sen. On his return he established a branch of Brahmo samaj in Hyderabad (Sindh). Soon a site was chosen and Brahmo temple was constructed which resembled Shanti Niketan in miniature form.

Around that time elder brother of Rabindranath, Mr. Satyendranath Tagore settled in Hyderabad as a sessions judge. Thus close family relations were established between the two families and the children of both the households would be found in company of each other. When Hiranand could not appear for his matriculation examination due to his not being of requisite age, under the advise and guardianship of Keshab Chander Sen, he was sent along with his younger brother Moti to Calcutta to clear his matriculation and eventually graduation from Calcutta University. During his student days he came with finest minds of his time. When Hiranand returned to Sindh he started two news papers- one in Sindhi and other in English as a vehicle of social reform movement. In this venture his friend from Bengal Mr. Nagendranath Gupta joined him. During this period much of literature pertaining to principles of Brahmo samaj was translated and published in Sindhi. When Hiranand found that papers have been established he moved to establish an educational institution to propagate his principles of Brahmo samaj. In this institution also his friends Nandlal Sen and Bhawanicharan Banerji joined him.

Thus the bonds at cultural, intellectual and personal level between Sindh and Bengal were strongly forged and they were not stranger to each other.

Rabindranath Tagore was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his book of songs "Gitanjali". The award went a long way to boost the self image of entire nation. It came at the time of nascent emerging national movement for Independence of country and the rulers were still arguing that Indians were incapable of ruling themselves. Every Indian seemed to be proudly basking in this glory. Rabindranath could actually get the award only after the conclusion of the First World War in 1918. Rabindranath himself visited Sindh in March 1923.

He was welcomed in Sindh as one of its own. There were banner headlines in papers by Doyen of Sindhi literature Jethmal Parsram, himself an important writer, nationalist and intellectual of his times. Poets wrote poems in his welcome and honour. One poem was written by eminent writer Assanand Mamtora.

In Hyderabad ,college students M.U. Malkani and others staged a performance of some parts from his play 'Chitra' which were rendered into English by poet himself. It recorded that he was so much impressed by the performance of M.U.Malkani , who latter was to become a fellow of Sahitya Akademi, and Tahil Advani that he called them for breakfast with him next day. During his stay in Sindh, he was felicitated at various towns and by various organizations. He was very much impressed by absence of caste system and untouchability in Sindhi society which was bane of the rest of the country. It can be said that he fell in love with Sindh at first sight and Sindh reciprocated that love with immeasurable abundance.

Before he set his foot on Sindhi soil his book 'Sadhana' was translated by none other than a freedom fighter and a writer Virumal Beghraj, who was imprisoned along with Gandhiji at Yerwada prison. He translated that book in prison itself and this was published in 1923.

"Nauka Dube", (The Wreck) was translated by another important writer of Sindhi language Parsram Gulrajani as 'Budal Bedi' in the year 1924. His "Rath yatra" was translated by Acharya Assudomal Gidwani and was published in 1924.

Novels of Rabindranath Tagore were also translated in Sindhi and had a lasting impact on Sindhi Literature. Rabindranath Tagore has penned 12 Novels. All his Novels have been translated and published in Sindhi language and many have had more than one reprint. His 'Bo Thakurani Haat'

was translated by Melaram Vaswani as 'Duhagin Rani'. His 'Raj Rishi' was also translated by Melaram Vaswani and Published in 1943. 'Chokerbali', this novel has been translated 3 times by as many writers. Translation of this Novel by Chuharmal Hinduja as "Akh Soor" was published by Sahitya Akademi in 1973. Mr. Chuharmal Hinduja also translated again, 'The wreck' and published it in 1939. 'Gora' was translated in 1938 by none other than Guli Sadarangani (Kripalani) the first female Sindhi writer. Inspired by humanistic ideals of Rabindranath, she wrote her novel 'Ithad' on the controversial issue of inter -religious marriage. 'Ghare Bahre' has been translated by two writers. One by Rochiram Gangaram Sadani and the other by 'Adeeb'. His Novels 'Yoga yog', 'Shsheer kavita', 'Dueen Bhun', and 'Char adhya' also have been published and have proved to be very popular among generations. Some of his long stories also have been published as Novels.

There has been profusion of translations into Sindhi of short stories of Rabindranath Tagore. First translation of stories has been done by none other than Girdhari Vehromal kripalani, Who in 1913 was sent by his parents to Shanti Niketan at the tender age of 13, in spirit of Guru -Shishya Prampara. His collection of stories of Tagore was published in 1927. Translation of 'Kabuliwala' and 'Hungry Stones' have remained favourite with Sindhi readers since inception. Another collection of short stories titled 'Rabindranath Joon Khaniyo' which was originally edited by Somnath Mitra was translated by Fatehchand Vaswani. This compilation has been published by Sahitya Akademi in the year 1963.

Tagore's Plays also have been translated into Sindhi. The first play that was translated into Sindhi was by Jethamal Parsram, was "Rath Yatra". This play was topical as it deals with subject of untouchability. It was translated and published in 1926. 'DAAK GHAR' (Post Office) this play has been translated by 3 different writers. First translation is by a prominent writer Behrumal Meharchand published in the year 1938. Hariram Mariwala and Narayani Advani translated this play in the same year in 1957. Translation by Hariram Mariwala was published by Hindustan Sahit Mala. 'Uma ain Vinayak' is based on Hindu Muslim unity. It was translated by Assanand Mamta and published in 1930. 'Chitra' was written by Gurudev in 1892 and was translated by him into English in 1914. This was translated in Sindhi by Tirth Basant which was serialized

in magazine "Sindhu" and published in book form in 1944. 'Mukta Dhara' (Waterfall) was translated by Chuhamal Hinduja and Published in 1942. His two small plays 'Karan ain Kunti' and 'Balidan' have also been translated into Sindhi. Prof. M.U. Malkani staged three plays of Tagore, 'Malini', 'Balidan', 'The King and Queen' in the years 1924-27 during annual functions of college, under the auspices of New Sindh College Society. 'Post office' was staged in 1937 on the occasion of Golden Jubilee function of the college.

It is as a poet that Rabindranath Tagore walks as colossus and is shining star of literary firmament. His thousands of songs adorn the lips of Bengali speaking people of all generations. They wear his songs as welcome smile of new dawn on their lips. He was awarded Nobel Prize on his book of songs, 'Gitanjali' (offering of songs). In fact this book should have been first to be translated into Sindhi. But the first translation into poetic prose form could see light of the day only in 1927. This translation was done by Dilip Singh Mankani. Translation of Gitanjali in metric poetic form could come only around 1956 which has been rendered by lifelong admirer of Tagore's literature Prof. M. U. Malkani. This translation is considered quite appropriate to the spirit of original 'Gitanjali'. Mr. Gobindram Salamtrai 'Saail' also translated 'Gitanjali' in poetic prose and was published as late as 1976. The fourth translation is done also in poetic prose by Amarjal Sadhwani but this translation could not see light of the day in a book form due to some unknown circumstances. Only a few poems survive in some literary magazines.

Prof. M.U. Malkani translated the poems of Tagore in poetic prose form 'Gardner' which could be published only in 1940. This saw another reprint after partition from Ajmer. In preface to original edition of the book Prof M.U. Malkani writes that he had translated this book way back in 1921 but could be published only after the agonizing delay of 20 years. During same period some of the poems were rendered in poetic prose form by Lalchand Amardinomal which was named 'Sada Gulab'. This found place in the college curriculum as a text book. 'Crescent Moon' was translated by Mr. Arjan Issrani and Published in 1940. Mr. Hariram Mariwala translated selected poems of Tagore from various anthologies and it was published as 'Phool Chund' (Flower gathering) by Hindustan Kitab Ghar in 1956. Similarly Mr. Phatan Purswani translated selected poems of Tagore in Published under the title 'Geet ganga' in year 1955.

Recently Mr. Khiman Mulani has translated 203 poems collected by Mr. Satyakam Vidyalankar in Hindi Book also named 'Gitanjali.' This book is under publication. English version of Gitanjali has only 104 poems which forms the basis of all other translations.

Most of the works of Tagore are translated from English barring some from Hindi or Urdu. Thus translation loss is twice compounded, yet even in such a translation the beauty of expression remains quite impressive. Tagore literature translated into Sindhi has been a source of inspiration to many writers in the last century.

The translation of Tagore's Poems in poetic prose led to a new literary genre of poetic prose. In this genre the contribution by Prof. M.U. Malkani, Mr. Lalchand Amardinomal, Mrs. Kala Prakash and Mr. Phatan Purswani has been quite significant.

A major poet Kishinchnad Bewas who is credited to have changed the course of Sindhi poetry from Persianised content of Gul-Bulbul, Saqui- Maikahna- the caprice of hair style of beloved ,to themes of the weal and woes of ordinary masses and changed the diction of Sindhi poetry, was greatly influenced by Tagore. He used to organize weekly classes to study Gitanjali at Gyan Bagh at Larkana. He composed a memorable and heart rending poem on the demise of Tagore.

On the occasion of Tagore centenary in 1961 most of literary magazines notably Kahani, Tasweer, Naeen Duniyan, brought out special issues on Tagore and his contribution to Sindhi literature. Mr. A J Uttam a prominent 'progressive' critic wrote a book 'Tagore Hika nazar' (Tagore one glance)

However Rabindra sangeet failed to make any impact in Sindh. I now understand that this is the case in other languages also. Here I will quote from a recent book "Rabindranath Tagore *The Singer and His song*" by Reba Som. It says, 'In an *ardhanarishwar* combination the lyrics and the melody work in tandem to create the artistic balance that was Tagore's endeavour.....his songs have to be translated and explained in cultural context.' I feel that it would be an apt tribute to Gurudev on the occasion of 150th anniversary if his songs are translated in all Indian Languages and set to tune in tradition of Rabindra sangeet. It will be a unique gift to the nation and befitting tribute to great songster that India has ever produced. It is hoped that Sahitya

Akademi And Sangeet Natak Akademi will collaborate in this venture.

A significant contribution of Tagore for Sindh has been through Shanti Niketan. Tagore established this educational institution as a continuation of Indian tradition, which held holistic view of the development of an individual in concert with nature and brought out the best potential through inculcation of discipline, as against the Macaulayvian method of education by rote, imitation and imposition of discipline through regimentation.

In the initial years itself Mr. Uttamchand joined Shanti Niketan as a part of its faculty. He was among first four teachers to join this institution. Many more followed as students but those who have left their mark in the society need a mention here. Mr. Krishin Kripalani joined Shanti Niketan in the year 1933. He remained here as Bengal claimed him to be one of its own as he married into Tagore family and remained here for the most part in Bengal. He held many important positions at Shanti Niketan. He was first secretary of Sahitya Akademi when it was established. In 1976 he was invited to participate in commonwealth festival at London and gave an illuminating lecture on 'Gitanjali.' He was considered as an authority on literature and life of Rabindranath Tagore.

First Student from Sindh was Girdharilal Kripalani. His contribution to translation of Tagore's literature to into Sindhi has already been recorded.

Sobho Gianchandani, who came to Shanti Niketan and was fondly called by Gurudev as a person from Mohen Jo daro and he opened up the doors of his personal library to him to quench his thirst for knowledge. Now even in his old age of 92 years he remains on his native soil in Sindh (Pakistan). He carries aloft the torch of humanistic, socialist and secular values and is a beacon of light for his innumerable followers, strangely in a country which is ravaged by Fundamentalist terrorist violence. He remained undeterred by intermittent spells in jail by various successive governments!

Mr. Kishen Khatwani joined Shanti Niketan to study Painting. Partition of the country changed his life and instead of paint brush he had to take up pen for his expression. In his writings he developed his unique lyrical, intense and restrained style. His writings have undeniable

imprint of Bengali ethos. He won Sahitya Akademi award and was member of Sahitya Akademi executive board.

Mr. Methram Dharmani joined Shanti Niketan after partition of the county. He learnt painting and sculpture at Shanti Niketan and today he has privilege to be one of the noted sculptors in the county.

It would be needless to say that Shanti Niketan had an inclusive cultural approach. As for Sindh is concerned the similarity of Sindhi and Bengali ethos or for that reason Indian ethos could be cited from the fact that at Shanti Niketan during year 1932-33 lectures were organised on Sufi saints of Sindh. The lectures were delivered by Prof. Gurdail Mullick and were published in a book for titled "Divine Dwellers in the Desert." This book has seen two reprints.

In tragic aftermath of partition of the country Sindhi Hindus had to leave their land and are now scattered throughout India as dry leaves in the wake of storm. We constitute less than half a percent of Indian Population, yet we are proud inheritors of the legacy of one of the oldest human civilization in the world. We carry in our heart the noblest traditions and values that form the core of culture. We are proud of our language, literature and rich culture. We know that we do not have even an inch of land under our feet in this vast country- yet we live proudly, when we hear the national anthem and we hear word 'SINDH', blood rushes to our hearts ,our heads bow before Rabindranath Tagore. He lives in the very breath of our hearts.

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