

Kehri Singh Madhukar, eminent Dogri poet, was born at Gura Salathian in Jammu district in 1930. A graduate in arts from Government Gandhi Memorial College, Jammu, he joined the Jammu Station of Radio Kashmir in 1950. From 1962 to 1974 he edited *Shiraza*, a quarterly journal of Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. Besides three collections of his poems, he has written verse-plays for the radio and also one-act plays. During his tenure as Editor in the Jammu and Kashmir Academy, he edited several Dogri publications. He has translated 101 poems of Tagore into Dogri and his own poems have been translated into a number of Indian languages. His *Dola Kun Thappia*, received the Jammu and Kashmir Academy Award for 1964-65. *Main Mela Ra Janun*, which received the Sahitya Akademi Award, is noted for its deep human concern, richness of themes and a mastery over diction and style.

O. P. Sharma is a veteran journalist and a prolific writer. He holds a Master's degree in History from J&K University and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Journalism. He has worked in J&K State Information and Public Relation Department in various capacities. After retirement he was associated with the leading English daily, *Excelsior*, Jammu as Special Correspondent for over one decade. O.P. Sharma has contributed over 600 articles to newspapers and magazines, both within and outside Jammu & Kashmir State. He is currently actively engaged with Radio Station and Doordarshan Kendra Jammu.



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Makers of Indian Literature

KEHRI SINGH MADHUKAR

O. P. SHARMA



MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE
KEHRI SINGH MADHUKAR

by
O. P. Sharma

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi



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A Word

The Dogri language has made great strides in the last decade. It attained a major milestone on 23 December, 2003 when it was accorded its due status by inclusion in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. After a sustained struggle, this language attained equal status with other recognized Indian languages.

In the attainment of its present status, the role of the people and particularly Dogri writers was significant. Of them, Kehri Singh Madhukar (28 November, 1930 - 24 August, 2000) is one of those Dogri literary figures, who contributed substantially towards the enrichment of Dogri language and literature. With his distinct style, idiom, new ideas and unique treatment of the themes taken up, Kehri Singh Madhukar stands out eminently among Dogri writers.

Dogri was already in the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of Jammu & Kashmir (Jammu & Kashmir has the unique distinction of having its own Constitution along with application of Indian Constitution). The State Constitution recognises its own regional languages: Kashmiri, Dogri, Balti, Dardi, Punjabi, Pahari, Ladakhi and Gojri. Urdu is the official language of Jammu &

Kashmir but English continues to be used for all official communications. Dogri is the second largest language in Jammu & Kashmir.

I have had deep interest in the life and culture of Duggar. When invitation came to me from the Sahitya Akademi, to write a monograph of Kehri Singh Madhukar, I was really thrilled. I knew the challenging task ahead in writing about the life and works of one of the outstanding Dogri poets. But at the same time I earnestly took it up as God's will.

All the members of my family and friends provided me with the much needed inspiration as well as support in this onerous task. My colleagues too came forward to assist me in this literary venture.

There were no detailed and authentic documented autobiographical accounts or readily available source material, in organized form, for the systematic and scientific assessment of this Dogri poet who has left an indelible mark on Dogri literature. I had to gather scattered material from various reliable sources including libraries, official records as also from his contemporary poets and writers, friends and many others.

I pieced together the facts and put them in order to place Madhukar in proper perspective in Dogri literature and also his overall contribution to the *Bhasha* (Indian languages) literature. I could lay my hands on some of his published and unpublished or even scattered literary works which threw ample light on this Dogri poet. Many stalwarts of Dogri as well as some of my well wishers lent me a hand in completing this project successfully. I daresay that without their active co-operation and goodwill I would not have succeeded in my mission.

Though it is not possible to mention each one of them, I would fail in my duty if I do not express my sense of gratitude to Prof. Lalit Magotra, Prof. Veena Gupta and many others who offered me useful assistance in completing this work.

I shall consider my job done well if this monograph highlights all important aspects of Madhukar's life and his literary contribution and arouses more interest in Dogri language and literature. I wish this work stimulates further study on this subject. I do give all credit for the good work to Him, to my contemporary literary luminaries and well wishers.

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A Doyen of Dogri Literature

Kehri Singh Madhukar has made a significant contribution to Dogri literature and holds a pride of place among literary luminaries of Jammu and Kashmir.

Born and brought up in Gurah Slathia, a tiny village in the Kandi belt parched dry land with scanty rainfall or irrigation in Samba district of Jammu's Kashmir he grew up to be a Dogri poet with freshness of approach and style.

Coming from a prominent Rajput family whose main vocation was military service, this sensitive young man was gifted by nature with a rare poetic sensibility. The Kandi belt of Duggar has little agriculture produce but has the distinction of having produced such outstanding warriors as General Baj Singh from village Badhori in Jammu region (who fought the Chitral battle in Baltistan). Brigadier Rajinder Singh (saviour of Kashmir during the 1947 tribal invasion by Pakistan) and many others whose daring deeds form a stirring chapter in Indian military history. This Kandi belt in Jammu region has given not only warriors but literary luminaries such as Kehri Singh Madhukar, Kishan Smailpuri and few others as well.

Besides, this part of the country has offered priceless world famous Basoli miniature paintings and other schools

of Pahari paintings which are marvellous and unique. Some of these paintings can be seen in the museums across the globe. The melodious Dogri music also has its own rhythm, unique sweetness and charm which is attractive and popular. The Dogri language is simple and sweet, making rapid strides, especially after its inclusion in the Indian Constitution since December 22, 2003.

Dogri is the major language of the Dogras inhabiting the mountainous and the sub-mountainous northernmost Himalayan region of the country. The language seems to have assumed a distinct character around the eleventh or the twelfth century as evidenced by some inscriptions and pattas (grant deeds) found in Jammu and Kashmir. A reference of this language was found in Amir Khusro's Nuh-Sipihr, a Masnavi written in 1317 which observed: "There is at this time in every province a language peculiar to itself and not borrowed from another-Sindhi, Lahori, Dhurasamundari, Tilangi, Gujarati, Malabari, Gaud Bengali, Avadi, Dehlavi and the language of the Duggar."

Dogri, written in Takari script, enjoyed the status of an official language of the Jammu and Kashmir State during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1865-1885) alongwith Persian. But afterwards Urdu replaced Dogri.

But later in the post-Independence era, the script adopted for Dogri was Devnagari or Persian. Devnagari is now the most prevalent script. The old literature in Dogri was traced and evaluated by pioneers. Dogri literature evolved gradually with the publication of a large number of books of poetry and prose. The people in this part of the country launched a sustained campaign for inclusion of Dogri in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution and ultimately achieved their objective on December 22, 2003.

The major thrust to this language was given, among others, by a literary organization, the Dogri Sanstha, which gave an impetus to literary and cultural rejuvenation since its inception on the Basant Panchami day in February, 1944. It was an eye opener during the pre-Partition era that instead of keeping themselves shut in their narrow world they had to break those shells. Madhukar wrote about the problem of communalism which was then in the air and needed to be fought and eliminated. In the post-Independence era, the socio-politico-cultural scenario changed with the major task of nation building.

The pioneer poets who were Madhukar's contemporaries like Dinoo Bhai Pant, Vedpal Deep and Yash Sharma, expressed their solidarity with the movement for world peace and prosperity. Deep's famous poem "Kal te mein kalla ha, aj mere sathi: nin ganon" (I was quite alone yesterday, but now I have countless friends with me), Dinoo Bhai Pant's line, *Ya iddar ho ya udhar ho* (Take your position to achieve your objective) and *Aimni di lord hai* (Peace is vital for progress and prosperity) by Yash Sharma owe much to Madhukar's outlook.

This Dogri poet also associated with the literary activities of his times and participated regularly in the mushairas organized by the Dogri Sanstha in Jammu and all major towns and villages. This way Madhukar became popular for his poetic compositions as also poetry reading in public places.

The Dogri language got a boost when the Sahitya Akademi recognised Dogri and gave its first Award in 1969 and gave its first Award to Narinder Khajuria for enrichment of Dogri language and its literature. These annual awards enthused and encourage the literary figures to come out

with rich contribution to this language which later was included in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution thus paving the way for further onwards march to rapid strides of Dogri language. Presently, Dogri is making steady progress like all other Indian languages. The media, both print and electronic are making their contribution. This language has to deploy modern technological advances and latest practices to attain speedy and sustainable progress and popularity.

Early Years: Seed Sown

Kehri Singh Madhukar was born on 28 November, 1930 in the tiny village of Rakh Badoi in Gurah Slathia in Samba district, 35 km southeast of Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir. His family was fairly well to do and mostly connected with the army. Being the only son of his parents, Major Kripal Singh and Shrimati Shani Devi (popularly known as Bhouji), he was adored by everyone in the family, especially his mother and four sisters: Sushila, Kushal, Ashutosh and Shashi who were very indulgent towards him. His paternal grandfather, Captain Thakur Mejra Singh, who was a Deodi Officer (manager of royal household) to the ruler of Jammu & Kashmir State in pre-Independence era, brought him up.

Gurah Slathia was a stronghold of Rajputs of the Slathia clan, which had the reputation of being loyal to the king. His father too was a great supporter of the Dogra rulers with whom his family claimed close kinship.

His preliminary education started at home. His first teacher was some one called Munshi Master and after that he went to the local school.

Even in his childhood, Kehri Singh was always in the company of mature and experienced elders of the

family, during the evening gatherings in their Divankhana (spacious drawing room) where discussions went on till late at night. He was always present when the elders, mostly ex-servicemen, narrated stories about their exploits on the battlefield, discussed State politics and shared other experiences. All this broadened the boy's vision and also sharpened his mental faculties beyond his years. This ultimately blossomed into creative expression of high calibre in his poetry written in his mother-tongue, Dogri.

Kehri Singh's childhood experiences and exposure to folk songs and traditions had a deep influence on his psyche at the most impressionable period of his life. He was used to listening to the *dres* (singers) reciting traditional folk songs known as *baran* (ballads) and this left a long lasting impact on his thoughts. The *dres* used to recite these ballads throughout the night in their Divankhana (spacious drawing room) or the *chowgan* (open space for villagers' gathering) in his native village.

He got opportunity early in life to read newspapers which. In addition, he listened to the enlightening discussions by the elders and ex-servicemen on many subjects as well as personal accounts of experiences in battlefields in India and even abroad. The young Kehri Singh also used to take deep interest in these Divankhana gatherings.

In his childhood, Kehri Singh also witnessed women busy on spinning wheels in the *dalan* (hall) where the *trinjan* (the assembly of spinners) would sing Bishanpate songs till late in the night. These songs and tunes inspired and nurtured the poetic talent in this young boy and enriched his imagination with sentiments and new themes. The rhythmical music of spinning wheels and melancholic

songs of girls made young Madhukar sentimental about the women and their domestic problems which later gave shape and substance to his unique poetry. These feelings intensified further with age and experience. At the same time it revealed to him the hollowness of society and impressed on his mind the contrast between the life of a common or exploited man (women included) and that of the feudal lords.

This atmosphere must have led to an awakening in Madhukar's thinking and ingrained a spirit of revolt against the feudalistic and oppressive social system. It grew stronger with the passage of time and day-to-day experiences.

Many other influences worked on him as well to mould his creativity. These had a profound impact on the impressionable young man which was later on amply reflected in his writings.

After preliminary education in his native village, Kehri Singh was admitted to Sri Pratap Memorial Rajput School, Jammu, which prepared youngsters mainly for military service. But his own nature was averse to rigid discipline and regulations, with the result that he was brought to book several times. This aroused a feeling of anti-feudalistic sentiments in him which perhaps also contributed to his dislike for the military service.

After passing the matriculation examination, Kehri Singh attended S.P. College, Srinagar. During his days in S.P. College, young Kehri Singh had the opportunity to come in contact with several renowned poets of India and received enough training and inspiration for composing Urdu poetry in the initial stage. Later, during 1947, Kehri Singh shifted to the Prince of Wales College, Jammu

(presently Government Gandhi Memorial Science College, Jammu) from where he subsequently graduated.

An avid reader, he used to spend a lot of time in the library of his colleges in addition to his course books.

In Jammu too, Madhukar found a conducive literary atmosphere and came under the influence of the progressive Writers' movement being steered by the Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-Pasand Musanfeen, which played a great role in giving a positive shape to Madhukar's Urdu and Hindi poetry.

Madhukar had been brought up in old type feudalistic surroundings and he retained some traits of that upbringing but also showed signs of progressive and forward looking ideas. He was extravagant, careless about his duties and negligent towards his responsibilities. He rarely expressed his views to anyone and never took a note of his own personal failings and faults in worldly matters. But his literary pursuits went on unhindered and without any compromise on creativity of a high quality.

Deep Impact

Fairs had a special fascination and charm for Kehri Singh, who came from a rural background. Along with it what appealed to him most was the recitation of the ballads as also singing of Bhakh-aan (A type of Dogri folk songs in which singers sing in a loud voice while putting fingers over their ears) had deep impact on Madhukar's impressionable heart and mind during boyhood. All this stirred the poetic impulses in him at a very early age with the result that he started composing elementary poems (commonly known in Duggar as Akhar Jodna) even as a student of class sixth or seventh. He wrote his first couplet in Hindustani and went on expressing his sentiments in verses.

His first presentation of a poem was in a Mushaira organized in Sri Ranbir High School, Parade, Jammu and held under the chairmanship of Nawab Jaafar Ali Khan "Asar" Lakhnawi on the modern system of farming. Young Madhukar's Urdu poem on the subject of modern agriculture practices was adjudged the best and he bagged the first prize. He was then a student of Shri Pratap Memorial Rajput School, Jammu. It was a great encouragement for the young boy as well as a matter of pride for his school.

Later, he continued composing Urdu poems. Having tasted success, he would now and then slip away from his hostel to recite his poems in public gatherings in Jammu.

Another participation in a poetic symposium was also quite memorable for him as it left a lifelong impact and proved a turning point in his literary career by making him a forceful revolutionary, progressive poet with a broad outlook.

Kehri Singh Madhukar recited his poem composed especially for the occasion on the birthday of the then ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh on September 23, 1940 at the Amar Kshatriya Rajput Sabha, Purani Mandi, located in the heart of Jammu city. This historical place was known as "Raj Tilak", an important seat of old rajas of Duggar. The poem recited by the young poet generated a lot of heat among the audience. The text of this Dogri poem is as follows:

*Rano-ji ko nahin orhani
Bibi ke lehnga jarjar hai
Phir bli barhi shan se
Kehnte ham Maharaja,
Ham Maharaja ke Bhai hein.
Daftar mein jitne chaprasi
Gad, jagati aur janglati
Chithare vardi, bane barati
Yeh Maharaja ke bhai hein
Bhai Mian ji panch-hazari
Bhitar bibi karmon ki mari*

["The Rano-ji (young girl or princess) has no *orhani* (long veil). Bibi's (wife's) *lehnga* (female dress) is torn. In spite of that they still declare with pride, we are Maharaja's brothers. A number of *chaprasis*, *gads*

(guards), *jagatis* and *Janglati* in offices have worn out uniforms. Publicly the Mian-ji may be Panj-hazari (considered a high official) but at home his bibi-ji (wife) a *karmon ki mari* (luckless lady).]

The gist of the poem is that though the condition of people in the princely State was deplorable, yet the subjects, particularly the Rajputs, had a false sense of pride and loyalty towards the Maharaja. They were merely *chaprasis*, *gads* (orderlies and guards) with worn out uniforms.

Instead of earning any appreciation, the poem led to an outrage as it had mercilessly exposed the truth of the false dignity assumed by the proud members of his (poet's) clan. The loyalists and the time-serving elders present in the gathering picked him up and dragged him out of the mansion and threw him outside. The disgrace which Madhukar suffered for his poem, gave a definite direction to his poetic talent. This insulting incident left a deep mark on Madhukar's sensitive poetic nature. On the one hand, it made him realise the fact that pen is mightier than the sword; on the other, it gave his writings a lifelong direction against social injustice and oppressive system which he now swore to fight. Incidentally, instead of opting for a career in the army, Madhukar developed a revolutionary spirit to which he gave free vent in his subsequent writings in Dogri over the years to come.

Since he had grown averse to army discipline, he preferred the pen to the gun and deviated from the family tradition of loyalist tendencies and military service.

The plight of women had also pierced his heart and some of his best poems paint their agonizing and hapless life. Such experiences came to him directly from his heart as he looked at the politico-social conditions then prevalent.

While looking after his ancestral estate (before the inception of land reforms in the State in 1951-52 which abolished jagirs and curtailed land possession to 182 *kanals* only) he came daily in contact with farm labourers, tillers and *kirt-kameen* workers. Because of this regular association, Madhukar recognised the Manu-Putra Manu, who became the chief character on the stage of his poetry.

Madhukar came on the scene on the eve of Independence with his famous call:

Desa gi banana te mitana tunde hatth ai'.
(You can make or mar the country)

This was an eye opener for the masses to engage themselves with nation building programmes and social awakening. Instead of keeping oneself shut in our narrow world, he pleaded with people to break out of their shells. This was the time when the country needed to be saved and reconstructed after the Partition and tribal invasion with influx of refugees during October, 1947.

His Hindi poem, "Nartaki" was very popular in the Jammu region and even outside the State. He was actively associated with the Dogri Sanstha, a leading literary and cultural organisation participating regularly in its literary programmes and gradually created a place for himself as a Dogri poet.

Starting Career

Kehri Singh Madhukar was now making a mark as a promising Dogri poet. He joined Radio Station, Jammu as an Announcer-cum-Script Writer and worked there from 1950 to 1955. At the time the two radio stations of Jammu and Srinagar were actually functioning under the Jammu and Kashmir Government; it was later in 1957 that these were brought under the control of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. While working in Radio Station, Jammu, Madhukar also recited his poems in Dogri Kavi sammelans organized by the Dogri Sanstha, a literary and cultural organisation in Jammu.

He rendered special service to Radio Station Jammu by writing scores of radio plays, songs, features and Sangeet Rupaks (poetical features). As he read and listened to the Dogri compositions of Yash Sharma, Vedpal Deep and Prof. Ramnath Shastri, he was attracted towards writings in Dogri language. According to his close friends, however, the credit of bringing him entirely to the Dogri fold goes to the credit of his class fellow Jitendra Sharma who was then working in the Radio Station, Jammu. He gave Madhukar an assignment of the *dehati* (rural) programme. Prof. Ramnath Shastri, President of Dogri Sanstha, and noted

Dogri poets Yash Sharma and Vedpal Deep also motivated young Madhukar to write in his mother tongue. Thereafter, Madhukar switched over to use his pen exclusively for writing poetry and prose in Dogri. The Dogri Sanstha provided much scope and space to Madhukar for expressing his poetic genius and make him popular.

During this period, Madhukar wrote a number of sweet poetry, musical plays and radio features on Dogra culture and traditions which got immense popularity among the masses and his prestige as a poet also started soaring.

After resigning from radio service, he was confronted with many difficulties but he re-activated himself in a big way by his association with the Dogri Sanstha. He undertook to carry the message of the new age to every town and village of Jammu region under the aegis of the Dogri Sanstha. During these cultural and political tours, Madhukar got an open and unlimited opportunity to understand the people's aspirations better as also their problems and hardships.

His next assignment with the Jammu & Kashmir State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages as its first Editor of Dogri, *Sheeraza*, (Dogri), *Sarha Sahitya*, besides editing some collections of Dogri folk songs, folktales as also a few anthologies of contemporary Dogri writings.

In the very first edition of *Sheeraza*, Madhukar wrote in the preface: "This is the introductory issue of *Sheeraza*. We have made an effort to render it more and more Dogri. So far as the articles are concerned endeavour has been made to give maximum knowledge on 'Duggar and Dogri'. Much material on folk-songs, sayings, architecture and sculpture, folk literature, etc has been arrayed. Among the

compositions of poets, you will find songs, poems, ghazals and other material".

During his service in the State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Madhukar was instrumental in publication of five volumes of writings in Dogri depicting folk-songs: Badhaiyan, Suhag, Ghorian including folksongs of Dudu-Basantgarh and Bhardarwah areas. These volumes were jointly edited by him and the then Secretary of the Cultural Academy, Prof. Nilamber Dev Sharma. The Academy also made useful efforts in tracing and publishing many other rare Dogri manuscripts during Madhukar's tenure as an editor.

During the period between 1962 and 1974 almost the entire Dogri literature published mostly by the Jammu and Kashmir State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, was done under his supervision. This gave him an opportunity to understand the Dogra psyche and its literature thoroughly.

Madhukar's Dogri translation of one hundred and one poems of Rabindranath Tagore is an important landmark in the history of Dogri literature. *Ekottarshati* was published by the Jammu and Kashmir State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. He transcribed in Dogri all the 101 Bengali poems of Rabindranath Tagore which took him nearly three years. This translation by Madhukar is an important contribution to the Dogri language and literature. In this process, Madhukar got a rare opportunity to assess and understand Tagore's thoughts and the richness of Bengali literature. The Dogri version of some of Tagore's poems like "Nirjhara da swapan Bhang", "Meghaduta", "Chanchala", "Paihli Puja", "Tapabhang", "Gharondi chetna di Godhuli

Bela", Basundhara", "Sukhana" have been rendered beautifully by him.

The publication of *Sarha Sahitya* in Dogri provided a much needed impetus to folk songs and arts during his twelve-year tenure in the Jammu & Kashmir State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

Curiously, during the later years, Madhukar did not attend office for days together at times and kept away from duty without prior permission. Prof. Nilamber Dev Sharma, then Secretary, somehow hesitated to take any disciplinary action against him. He was aware of his domestic problems and his drinking habits but he was appreciative of the fact that Madhukar did his job well. Strangely, Madhukar did not even assert his claim for promotion when his junior Jatinder Sharma superseded him. It seemed that he was content to be the editor of *Sheeraza*. The instances of his prolonged absence from duty continued and affected his working and output adversely.

But when Mr. M.Y. Taing became the Secretary of this autonomous body and noticed that the cause of Dogri language and literature was suffering because of Madhukar's long periods of absence, action was taken and Madhukar's services were terminated.

Mr. M. Y. Taing in his article entitled "Roshni Da Harkara: Madhukar" in the special commemorative volume on Dogri poet Madhukar published by the Academy in 2001, mentions that Madhukar had expressed no ill-will or grouse for his "dismissal" but behaved in a dignified and decent manner with Mr. Taing at a felicitation function held in his honour. Mr. Taing fondly recalled the incident and termed Madhukar "as a literary genius and a noble soul".

In Jammu & Kashmir, the Dogra ruler, Maharaja Gulab Singh, who was the founder of Jammu & Kashmir State in 1846, had also established an endowment called Dharmarth Trust, an organization for the proper upkeep and improvement of the Hindu temples and other religious places in the state. It was started with his personal donation of Rs. five lakh and he nominated his son, Ranbir Singh to administer the Trust. The 'Aain-e-Dharmarth' (its constitution) was also framed. The Dharmarth Trust brought out a periodical called *Dharm Marg* to highlight its activities and also publish religious and spiritual discourses for public enlightenment.

Thereafter, Madhukar got a job as an editor of *Dharm Marg* published by the Dharmarth Trust.

It was Nilamber Dev Sharma, then member of Dharmarth Trust Council, who got Madhukar appointed as the editor of *Dharm Marg* after taking up the matter with Dr. Karan Singh, the sole trustee of Dharmarth Trust. It is worth mentioning that Dr. Karan Singh, who is himself a reputed Dogri writer, accepted the proposal hesitatingly as he too was aware of his irresponsible behaviour at times. Dr. Karan Singh gave his clearance to this Dogri poet's appointment as an editor of *Dharm Marg*, after being assured that he would conduct himself responsibly. But Madhukar worked on this post only for a short period and left soon.

Madhukar changed his jobs frequently; he first served at the Jammu Radio Station, then worked for Jammu and Kashmir State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. Subsequently, he worked with the Dharmarth Trust; but gave that up too. Madhukar used to say: "When I gave up service at the Radio Station I came down an elephant,

when I gave up the Cultural Academy job I dismounted from a horse, while renouncing the service of the Dharmarth Trust I, so to say, came down an ass."

After leaving the State Cultural Academy and the Dharmarth Trust, he did some freelance writing and then worked with the *Dainik Kashmir Times*, a Hindi newspaper published from Jammu, which carried one page in Dogri language as well. After a few years, he went back to his native village Rakh Badoi (Gurah Slathia) to take up farming interests and even opened a general merchandise shop. This too did not prove a good business venture.

Madhukar had rightly observed that though he belonged to a martial family he chose to be in *kalamgiri* (wielder of pen). This *kalamgiri* certainly established him as an outstanding poet of Dogri language.

Literary Journey

The growth and development of Dogri language and culture was pioneered by the Dogri Sanstha and other organizations like the Dogra Mandal, Radio Jammu, Doordarshan Kendra, Jammu/Srinagar as also Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages and also the Sahitya Akademi. Of course, some individual poets and writers too contributed significantly to the growth and popularization of Dogri language and the enrichment of its literature.

The Dogri Sanstha, a literary forum, was founded on the Basant Panchami day in February 1944 in Jammu by Prof. Ramnath Shastri, Dinoo Bhai Pant, D. C. Prashant, Sansar Chand Baru, N. D. Misra and Bhagwat Prasad Sathe. They initially met once or twice a week and read out their literary compositions to each other. Dinoo Bhai Pant's poetic words "*Utth merya desa, Hun lo hoi gai*" (Oh my countrymen awake and see that the light of freedom has dawned) became the watchword of the organization. This literary and cultural body organized programmes for stirring the spirit of renaissance in the Jammu & Kashmir State in general and the Jammu region in particular to promote the Dogri language and also the cultural heritage.

It made an effort to formulate the characteristic cultural high points and also build up a corpus of Dogri literature. The work of the Dogri Sanstha gradually gained momentum. It organized literary meets and poetic gatherings thus giving the much-needed fillip to the growth and development of the Dogri language and also enrichment of its literature by motivating a large number of poets and writers. There was a discernible upgradation in quantity and quality of books in the Dogri language.

In his literary journey, Madhukar initially wrote poetry in Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu, but subsequently switched over to Dogri. He had a great respect for all languages and held the firm view that languages are, in fact, bridges instead of barriers, as evident in the visionary poem titled "Baladar":

*Juban koi bi hoai usi duar mitho,
Juban koi bi kadhe deivar nein hondi.*

[All languages are like bridges and none of them is like a wall that acts like a barrier].

An important work of poetry in Dogri published during 1940s was a collection of seven poems entitled *Guttun* by Dinoo Bhai Pant on Dussehra day in 1948. It became so popular that within just four months another edition of the anthology had to be printed. The most popular poem in the collection, "Shaihr Paihlo Paihl Ge" gained instant popularity which pointed out the potential of the Dogri language.

It inspired the people to read and write in their mother tongue, Dogri. Later, many writers associated themselves with the Dogri Sanstha and also thought of switching over to writing their creative pieces in their mother tongue, Dogri.

In yet another literary publication called *Jago Duggar*, noted Dogri poets and writers spoke of the beauty, simplicity and poverty of Duggar. Dinoo Bhai Pant eulogized the Duggar and preached revolt against the social order which allowed exploitation of workers and farmers. Kishan Samailpuri's poem praised the natural scenery of Duggar and the charming culture full of dance and music. Ved Pal Deep, who had been writing in Hindi, switched over to Dogri and wrote more than fifty poems and songs.

The young promising Madhukar started his association with the Dogri Sanstha in the late 1940s by taking part in Mushairas, reciting the choicest Dogri poetry and winning public appreciation.

Madhukar composed some Hindi poems as well and his poems like "Nartaki" became popular, not only in Jammu but elsewhere as well. So much so, a mushaira in which this poem had not been recited was considered uneventful by the public audience. Later, however, inspired by his colleagues and also his teacher Prof. Ramnath Shastri, young Kehri Singh Madhukar switched over to writing in his mother tongue, and made highly valuable contribution to Dogri.

The first poem in Dogri which he penned had the following verse:

*Dukkh nein mitde royi kari
Mail sada jandi ai dhoi kari*

[Miseries cannot be cured by shedding tears. Dirt can be removed only by washing]

It was the Dogri Sanstha which often carried Madhukar's poems in its periodical, *Nami Chetna*. In 1954, the Sanstha published Madhukar's first book entitled

Namiyan Minjran, a collection of Dogri poetry. This was really a singular honour for any promising Dogri poet.

Madhukar's contribution to Dogri is in this maiden contribution, *Namiyan Minjran*, a collection of sixteen poems. This 80-page book published by the Dogri Sanstha, Jammu was a rare gesture of the Dogri Sanstha to bring out a book of the collection of poems by one single Dogri poet. Prof. Ramnath Shastri, a stalwart of Dogri, edited this poetry book which contains the following poems : "Charkha", "Papa Aali Punna Aali Batt Bakkhari-Bakkhari Aai", "Bhaali Sulia Jind Tangoi Gei Ae", "Chetna De Phull", "Amber Khorota Shara Chup-Chap Dikhada", "Namai Geet", "Madari", "Nami Chetna", "Aman", "Munakkhta", "Tus Kaisi Dhairi Tai Baithe"; "Chann, Tare", "Dhart Saman ik Geet Ai"; "Basant", "Guru", "Surag Is Desa Diya Mitiyan De Tull Nein" and "Banjara".

This very first collection of Madhukar's poetry brought him to the front rank of Dogri poets.

It is noteworthy that Madhukar had his own original ideas and expounded a new ideology though he was still rooted in the soil and carried the old tradition forward. But the major reason for Madhukar's greatness was that while standing on the traditional path, he enlarged its scope, worked for its maturity and also experimented with new ideas. His poem, "Apna Des, Namen Geet" (My Country, New Songs) in *Nami Chetna* are an example of this. He was actually treading on the path charted by Dogri poets of the past, like Hardutt, Dinoo Bhai Pant, Kishan Smailpuri, Ramnath Shastri and Vedpal Deep but he tread his own path in search of new pastures as is clear from his poem "Aimni" (Peace) and "Naman Itihas" (New History). It is not without significance that the titles of a large number

of his poems feature "Namin or Naman" (New), the word symbolising a new spirit in Dogri literature.

Madhukar combines imagination, experiences and feelings in his creative works. The poet himself kept abreast of new trends in the literatures of other Indian languages as well and even ushered in some new ideas in Dogri.

As *Nami Chetna*, a periodical of the Dogri Sanstha gave ample expression of love for the Dogras and Duggar, Madhukar also sang in praise of his motherland (Duggar, land of Dogras) about which he wrote:

Surag is Desha diya mittia de tull nein
[Not even Heaven is equal to the soil of this land].

Madhukar came out with a clarion call to his countrymen at that time with his famous words:

Desa gi banana te mitana tunde hath ai
[You can make or mar the country].

Madhukar condemned the narrow communalism which was eating into the vitals of the nation like a cancer during emotion-charged sentiments in the post-Partition era and mass migration of population, in the following words:

Firqa- prasti di agg jehre lande na
Desa ahli ekta die nihe gi hilande na.
Hathia de pairai khall pair jiyen sare aun,
Is papa aggen sare pap har khai bauh'

[Those who ignite the fire of communalism in the country, harm the foundation of its unity and integrity. As all other feet are covered by elephant's foot, so all the 'paaps' (evils) are covered by this one sin.]

The impact of such a poem was obvious. The readers as well as other poets, moved by such sentiments, also expressed themselves in this tone and tenor for years to come.

Madhukar's important collection include *Namiyan Minjaran* (New Blossoms) published by Dogri Sanstha, Jammu in 1954), *Dola Kun Thappya* (The Bride's Palanquin) published by Dogri Sanstha, Jammu in 1963, *Mein Mele Ra Janu* (I Know the Fairs Well) published by Manvi Prakashan, Udhampur during 1975 and *Padam Gokhroo* published by Duggar Prakashan, Jammu in 1989.

Madhukar's debut collection containing 16 poems were edited by Prof. Ramnath Shastri, a stalwart of Dogri literature and founder member of the Dogri Sanstha. This collection shut Madhukar into prominence and established his unique contribution to Dogri literature.

His another book: *Dola Kun Thappya* got Madhukar a cash prize of Rupees One Thousand from the Jammu and Kashmir State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in the year 1964-65. This collection of thirty-eight Dogri poems was published in 1963. It marks the acme of Madhukar's genius and power with certain novelty of thought and sentiments. One can see refreshing and re-invigorating treatment and approach the themes.

In his own words, the lines of his poems can be compared to the flight of birds: there is a beauty, grace, movement and uniqueness which sets them apart. There are a few poems written in a pensive mood, like "Dhruvatarā", but the general mood of a large number of poems are marked by positive thinking and also a sense of optimism. There is an undercurrent of hope and confidence for humanity. He has a keen eye for lightning,

howling winds and the flickerings of a lamp during a storm, feelings which are evident in poems like "Savan", "Diggal" and "Saun". In his works we often come across the presence of a devotional and spiritual urge to find God and be one with nature as in the poem "Panchhan". Here the poet imagines that he has caught glimpses of his past life and old samskaras in the drizzle of rain and flashes of lightning, the song of the waves and winds from the East, in the rainbow colours or a maiden's *salu* (female's head cover) and the tinkling of her bangles as also in the castles of space and corridors of time. There is an experience of oneness of all life in poems like: "Chhali", "Yuga di Aas", "Machhue di Maya", and "Hamb". Madhukar brought to Dogri poetry a great depth of feelings and wide breadth of vision, a happy fusion of experience and style, a very effective use of rhythm, rhyme and metaphor as also a quality of hope and humanism.

Padam Gokhroo, Madhukar's collection of sixteen poems and his last book to be published is dedicated to his mother. The poems are very deep and thought-provoking.

Shivanath, the Dogri noted writer, observes that Madhukar's *Dola Kun Thappea* contains some of his best poems which experimented with Dogri songs, bhajans and ghazals. His romantic poems and the rainy season strike a new note and a fresh approach which is very different from the way Almast, another poet, looks at them. For Madhukar, a separation from the beloved is not an excuse for weeping, or grieving as he is of the view that love is not a crippling bond for lovers; on the other hand, it is a stirring of the emotion of love, quite like the ripples caused by the fall of a stone in a deep and peaceful pond, causing waves to reach out as if after one's beloved. For

him love which finds no response is like the drying up of rain-bearing clouds of Shravan or flickering of light in the lap of howling wind.

The picture of tender fledglings in the poem "Kavita Di Pangti" is very poetic. The mood of the poem "Dehri" is rather brooding and melancholy. The note of sadness runs through "Dhruvtara" with smoke and darkness spread all round. But the mood of most of his poems is positive and optimistic, with an air of hope and confidence in the future as well as the goodness of human beings.

In *Chann, Tare, Dharat ek Saman*, the poet experiences the same music in the whole universe above the din of society, country and humanity. It is a very fine concept and the poet has delineated it in small word pictures very effectively. *In the stillness of night when the stars go to sleep, the earth seems to sing the song of the unity of the moon, stars and the earth. The clouds of the sky, the tears of the clouds, flowers, bees, streams producing music from the heads of stones, hearts of men full of compassion and love, are all united in one song which is full of joy and the pain of love.*

In the poem "Banjara", the poet becomes a peddler of songs, composed of regrets and hopes as well as cries and pain the memories of which are treasured in human hearts.

In poems like "Doli", "Banjara"; "Chann", "Tare te Dharat" and "Bhali Suliya Jind Tangoi", there is a happy synthesis of ideas, feelings, music, style and word pictures combined with a certain maturity of artistry and thought. Significant features of Madhukar's poetic style are that either he takes up the matter illustrating it with examples like the rippling of the waves caused by the fall of a stone in still waters, or he treats the topic from different

angles and aspects. However, his sentimentality and lack of economy of expression sometimes tends to spoil the effect; the subject gets submerged in a flood of words with images of sentimentality and exuberance go beyond the bounds of literary discipline.

Main Mele Ra Janu, his third collection of 28 Dogri poems, published in 1976 by Manvi Prakashan, Udhampur with an introduction by Balraj Puri, a renowned author, later received the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977. Madhukar's reputation soared high on the literary horizon with this high recognition.

Talking about his style of writing, Madhukar has aptly observed: "I have never written poetry. I have always said, a poem; for in the everyday language of my poem, the exact Dogri words, idioms always occur. Usually poems are composed by me sail in a smooth flow. After composing a verse, I do not revise or render it into one in keeping with my own convictions or my own conscience. I am in favour of rendering word-pictures into real pictures, because the audiences for whom I compose are enamoured of ears, eyes and recitation".

Madhukar certainly had deep feelings and fresh vision; good command over Dogri language, a distinct style with effective use of rhythm as also use of metaphors to express deep sentiments of hope and humanism. Most of his poetry is rich in delicate thoughts with suitable similes. The ornamental style of some of his poems is matchless. Madhukar was always optimistic and most of his poems have a vigour and charm of their own, raising the artistic and intellectual level of Dogri poetry.

Prof. Nilamber Dev Sharma in his book, *An Introduction to Modern Dogri Literature* observes: "Madhukar has been

responsible for widening the outlook and scope of Dogri poetry. The decade between 1940 and 1950 can be called the period of patriotism in Dogri poetry". All the poets sang in almost similar tones about the greatness and glory of Dogri, Duggar and the Dogras. There was a threat to Dogra culture from the forces of disruption and sectarianism. Jammu and Kashmir was attacked by Pakistani invaders and the people were pre-occupied with their own affairs.

"Later, however, Madhukar came out of the shell of narrow regional, religious or other considerations and upheld the lofty ideals of universal brotherhood, compassion and other virtues. By doing so, this Dogri poet enhanced stature of Dogri literature and enlightened the readership."

The books written by Madhukar include *Namiyan Minjran* (1958); *Dola Kun Thappeya* (1963), *Main Mele Ra Janu* (1976) for which he got the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977 and *Padam Gokhroo* (1989). It is believed that some of his other poetic compositions, unfortunately, did not see the light of the day and have remained unpublished to this date. This aspect needs to be thoroughly looked into and possibility explored to also bring them out.

Madhukar's Place in Dogri Poetry

The poetry of Madhukar has a wide spectrum and a vast range of themes which can be broadly categorized as follows:

Idealistic

The tone of idealism runs across most of his poems; the poet generally gives us a message of struggle and a sense of brotherhood as also the inspiration to become energetic and active. In his themes, there is generally no room for blind faith and deception. He conceived of India as a country in which an era of peace, progress and welfare of people would be ushered in and a new history take shape.

Shisha, one of this Dogri poet's unique compositions, looks deep into the nature of man and mirrors factual glimpses of life. Madhukar has used bold and artistic techniques with telling effect in apt words as follows:

Kun Jhanka da shishe andar?

Eh kohda parshama?

Mera ?

Mein eh kaden bi nein hoi sakda I

Mein gyani, dhyani, parakrami,
Duniya da saccha upkari I
Eh neinyon mera parshama !
Eh koi chor lafanga labbhai,

Daaku, dhandu sehi honda ai,
Eh nistej nuhar,
Muhan par kalakh jan thopi di !
Par kamre ander men gai kalla,
Phi kun jhanka da shishe ch,
Eh kodha parshama?
Mera?

Eh naeyon mera parshama,
Eh koi dhokebaz farebi,
Bada jutha fuffardtali,
Akkhi de bich bhari chalaki I
Par kamre andar mein gai kalla,
Phi kun jhanka da shishe ch,

Eh kohda parshama?
o-adhde shisha gai maila,
Par sunya
Koi akhda ai ,
Shishe gi kainh gella karanan,
Gol manai di mail II

In his poetic composition "Shisha" (Mirror), Madhukar gives voice to his imagination saying that the mirror portrays everything in front of it exactly and faithfully. The mirror truly portrays the actual picture of any object faithfully through a true image.

This Dogri poet had the grouse that his friends and the readers did not fully appreciate the depth of his ideas

or understand the flights of his imagination. In the poem "Koari Bheta" he gives vent to the hurt that a poet or a writer experiences if readers do not properly understand and appreciate the compositions that he produces painstakingly.

Eh keh kita narth be s-haba?
Eh keh dhahya kair?
Mere sirjan haar
Apani, is pothi bitiya gi-

[The poet laments that generally speaking, readers are not sensitive to the niceties and accurate meanings of the message in a book. He argues that the writer spends days and nights in composing a literary piece which craves for a discerning readership. It can be really painful for a poet or an author that his or her writings have not been read keenly, assessed properly and given due appreciation].

Madhukar introduced new subjects and trends in Dogri poetry with ideas like universalism, love for all humanity along with a sense of peace and sentiments that would bring in a sense of brotherhood all over the world. His poems "Mana di Vedna", "Gharibi", "Raste Da Pran" are works that echo this sentiment.

Madhukar is a realistic poet who depicts things exactly the way they are. His poetry is outspoken to the extent he recognizes truth, no more no less. He never compromises with disorder and distractions prevalent in our society.

The poem, "Charkha" (spinning wheel) shows that Madhukar's ideas and feelings depict the life of Dogra women, especially widows, through their constant relationship with their spinning wheels. The poet notes that despite the melancholy which pervades among

women; there is no despair and they smilingly face all their misfortunes with courage all their life.

Madhukar took common topics but invested them with new light of life and ideas. He sensed that the times were changing fast and the days of exploitation might be coming to an end. Even a bit of small but united effort of the workers would be sufficient to change the system based on exploitation and misery of the people. This progressive poet had a sensitive and humane heart. He had seen the exploitation of many by a small few; so he strongly felt that this exploitation must be eliminated. The majority of human beings are like the oxen that are yoked, with their eyes covered with cloth, so that they might not see anything nor discern the real designs of exploitation but go on toiling endlessly without noticing who actually gained by their toil.

Why should human beings be forever like the yoked animals? Through the symbols of the yoke, the oxen and the person operating them, the poet cleverly shows the workers and peasants as the yoked oxen and the exploiters as those who lived on the toil of others.

So the poet pleaded that all men endowed with common sense and intelligence should understand it much better. He questioned as to why should people not get together and give a last jolt to the system, in these words:

*Roop Juga da badla karda
Ekkai palta khana,
palen khinen di gall chhari hoon,
bind k jor gai lana,*

(The times are changing now, only one jolt is enough. It is a matter of a few hours and moments; only a bit of effort is required.)

The poet was not jealous of anybody, he was content with his lot, making a common cause with all the people. The exploiters and imperialists had shaped history to suit their interests and blatantly ignored the real builders of society, Madhukar argued.

"Be Charag Bastiyain" draws a picture of the global culture in vogue which is considered advanced but was actually an era of cynicism and falsehood. The way of living was without much substance. The poem given below makes an absorbing reading:

*Eh raiht baihat khokhali
Eh Milan behar khokhala
Eh rit nit kokhali
Eh hirakh pyar khokhala
Trah
Eh bas trah na
Shakuk ge shakuk na
Har ik gi apni hangta,
Niji - niji hukuk na
Adab na lokacharyan-
Shabd ne lipa potiyan-
Muhain par na malahjare
Mane ch jaldi jalan aai-
Eh mere samen da chalan ai*

[These traditions and relationships are hollow, even the customs, attitudes and conscience are false. Moreover, affection and love too are insincere. Terror is prevalent everywhere and doubts cast their shadows which dominate

the atmosphere. Everyone is conscious of only one's own rights. Even literature is made up of common-place writings. Outwardly people show apparent sympathy but inside they have a lot of heart burnings. This is the way of our time.]

Madhukar wondered at the insincerity of society and its loko-chariyan and leepa-potiyen. He posed a question to the social scientists compelling him to ask some questions:

*Eh be-muhar kafilā
Kutai pujjag bhi kute bhala*

[Madhukar expressed the doubt as to whether such a directionless caravan would ever reach any destination?]

Radical Views

Madhukar was a progressive and revolutionary poet who wrote strongly and advocated complete change in the system by the people. He expressed his viewpoint in a typical stanza as follows:

*Samata mane ch ge nein
Dhane ch bhi kare
Sochen de har ik morh ch
Phi jotian dhare
Sanjhe sukhen da surma
Sanjhe hiten da yar
Sanjhe samaj de lei
Hoai jehra nissar
Shaihren di chhattiyen charhi
Deai jehra sadaa
Harchowk gi chaugan gi*

*Adaltan bana.
Darsen di deed bhuliai
Deai naman dastoor jabrai gi
Kare jo chikna choor*

[Equality must not only be in the minds but evidently in a practical shape in the economic and all other spheres. Such sentiments should be in each and every thought and the community; the well being of the public must always prevail. Those who are dedicated to the cause of social justice should give a clarion call from rooftops in the cities and elsewhere to make every public place like courts which, forgetting everything else and above all prejudices, build a new order in society that would do away with fear and exploitation of the common masses.]

The poem titled "Amar Katha" is a classic example of his great hope and expectation in the future of mankind. His firm conviction about achievement of ultimate goal of humanity is amply reflected in the following lines:

*Pralay di ghata ghanoti rehim
Par lo Suraj di mukki nein!
Ajj bi Dunia gai s-hara ai
Iss Aman de lalkaara!*

[Despite pitch darkness and gloom, there is still a ray of hope as the light of sun is limitless and endless. The world has an expectation of peace due to universal call to humanity].

"Mein Banam Mein" is Madhukar's one of the most imaginative poems which deeply analyses human psychology and the conditioning of men (and women)

by the bonds of race, language, geographical boundaries and nationality. This Dogri poet is a votary of universal brotherhood as is evident in the following lines:

*I'nen tanen te banen nai,
Meri aukat tolli ghai
Mere rutbe di bolli lai,
Men mahnai nein
Manu-puttar ne is karan-
Mera koi bi nata nain
Men kaidi ai
Nasal da
Kom da
Jugrafiye di hadbandi da
Eh mera kaid khana ai*

[The intricate compulsions weighed my status and stature. I belong mainly to mankind and am not merely a human being prisoned by the race, language or national borders.]

He has a global outlook and convictions.

In his very first poetic composition titled *Namiyan Minjaran*, Madhukar in tune with his revolutionary spirit writes in the poem "Ambar Kharota Chhara Chup-chap Dikhda" as follows:

*Khetren di chhatti par din-raat chali-chali,
Halla ahle pheren bich painde neinyon mukde
Godi Kari, badhi kari, naja de na dher lande,
Dhikkho dane-dane gi na uhai hath tupde
Amber kharota chhara chup-chap dikhda
Khaddiya di buntare ch, dhage gi paroi kari
Tand-tand jori kari, ik jehka karde-*

*Sitai kanne kambhi-kambi, uhye hath kambde
Amber kharota chhara chup-chap dikhda*

In the above poem, Madhukar has aptly painted the plight of farmers and workers who put in very hard toil and produced heaps of foodgrains but themselves face a starvation like situation. Though weavers and workers tirelessly produce cloth for others, unfortunately they themselves are left to shiver in the cold during the winter. The poet wonders as to why the sky (Almighty) keeps mum on such sheer injustice! Our society has faith that the heaven would not allow injustice to prevail but the poet put a big question mark on it.

Love of Nature

The poet depicts nature in different forms and is acquainted with its dreadful manifestations as well. He is sensitive to the sights and sounds of nature like the buzzing of a bee, chirping of birds and smile of buds.

"Chann Tare Dhart Saman ik Geet Ai" is a poem which depicts the broad view of the universe sketched by this Dogri poet in vivid words as follows:

*Chup jelle raati belle sare therein shai jandi
Nimmojhaan utthi kari tan aun behi jannan
Us belle dharti di chati cha phuhar bani
Balle-balle sare gunjda ik sangeet ai
Chann Tare dhart Saman ik geet ai*

[When the oil-lamp burns silently at night, its light spreads all over. Tired and in a gloomy mood, man pauses or meditates for a moment. At that moment the one and

only one music of eternal unity of moon, stars and the earth echoes in the atmosphere].

He finds the clouds that hang overhead are smiling, he feels the lightning that flashes across the sky is also smiling; he considers each and every flower-bed smiling at the arrival of spring; he imagines the trees, which could be seen in the autumn without leaves like a human torso without hands and feet but looking splendid.

*Eh aadi-ant sarishti da
Eh khedh yugen di k-ahani ai
Eh jaldi jot nurani ai.
(From poem Yug ki Aas)*

[The beginning or end of the universe is an eternal endless story of mankind having glowing divine light.]

Rivers, fountains, deep and beautiful forests are the subjects of his description.

He imagines a crown made of rays on the head of the sun and the rainbow in seven colours in the form of an arched gateway on the sky. The poet also visualises the sky like a veil of moonlight studded with stars.

*Aunde jande raihna. Milde gulde raihna
Asein Sahen da keh bharosa jude.
Asein laggi railmi ai aasa jinde.*

[In this meaningful stanza from his poem titled Vinati, Madhukar pleads for frequent conversation and communications as there is always hope but there is a constant question mark regarding life itself.]

Madhukar sometime feels that the cosmic universe—the force of nature—is against mankind. So many wrongs are being committed and tolerated in this world but the

heavens are silent spectators to all this. He sensitively laments in his poem "Manukhta" in such remorse: Ambar Kharota Chup Chap Dikhda (heaven only silently looks on).

In this respect, Madhukar somewhat reminds one of the English poet Hardy. But unlike the English poet, Madhukar is not a pessimist; his vision is not darkened by the hostile cosmic forces. Rather, he accepts their challenge to humanity as he holds the view that good times are coming when new history will be written, not only of a few despots and exploiters, but of mankind as a whole, including the toiling masses and their sufferings. Madhukar observes this in his poem "Naman Itihas". The poet declares that when man overcomes hostile forces, masters the situation and nature, a new universal order will be ushered in when the earth, stars and sky will seem to be in a symphony of music. Madhukar amply proves that Dogri poets do not lag behind anyone else in their expression of new challenging ideas in "a forceful style".

Patriotism

The poem, "Surg Es Desa Di Mittiya De Tull Nein" (Even the heaven is not equal to our land) in his first collection of poetry, *Namiyan Minjran* has a patriotic fervour that indicates Madhukar's love for his motherland. In very picturesque words he expresses intense feelings as can be discovered in the lines quoted:

*Man mohi lainde na shalaipe ihnen dharen de
Ambra de tare jide agge sharmande na
Bhukkhai kola hariyai ni bind bi basonde mahunu*

*Dukhe aahle mode undi himmtan jagande na
Kusai bhuyan khide kaden ihyai neh phull nein
Surg es desa di mittiya de tull nein*

[The splendour of this beautiful land (Duggar) at once enchants the mind; even the stars in the sky feel charmed. The hungry, starved masses do not stop and sit as their sufferings do inspire among them new enthusiasm. There are no flowers which do not blossom here. Even the heaven is not equal to this land!]

Madhukar, a votary of high sense of nationalism, has in his poem, "Baladar" pleaded for strong bonds of unity and integrity in the following poetic composition:

*Desai di paribhasha keh ai?
Sanjhi sochen, sanjhi reejhen,
sanjhe hirakh pyaren nai.
Sanjhi samta, Sanjhi mamta,
sanjhe kar beharen nai.
Sanji preet jagai je sathi,
Sanjhi preet balai je sathi .
sanjhe sukh-dukhi Sanji kari,
Sanji reet chale je sathi I*

*Sanjhi dharkhan shati dharke, Sanjhai aala jage tan.
Sanja marna, sanja jina, sanjh samhala jage tan.
Tan desai da arth bakhano, tan desai da marm
bakhano,
Tan desai di murat puro, tain dese da d harm
pachano*

In the above poem, Madhukar takes up the matter of the basic definition of a nation and holds that it is made up of common thought, traditions, and common bonds of

kinship, justice and equality. When every citizen adopts the principle of duty of nationalism and brotherhood, the country gets on to the sure path of progress and prosperity.

Philosophy

The philosophy of life has been reflected lucidly in Madhukar's writings. He regards life as a lamp which burns day and night.

He presents a glimpse of life through the analogy of a puppet show. Madhukar accepts the existence of God, who, he thinks, controls the entire universe. He also mentions the relation between God and the soul. Madhukar takes note of the secrets of life but regards death as a fact.

*Suraj ki karnaon ki galian jagmaga uthi hain are
Yeh indredhanush ek sunder satrangi tauran dwar
bane hain.*

(poem-"Tayari")

The poem "Yuga di Aas" is Madhukar's admirable portrayal of philosophical thought and his optimistic outlook.

*Eh bachpan mundhi joani da, eh nami paniri amana di
Eh laiher mila di laihera ne, ik Ganga ik Jamana di
Eh haar charhe da meden da kandhen gi hamban aava dia
Naman dhyara khushyen da, raati gi sambhan aava da*

[Childhood, in fact, is a stage of youth which is fresh like saplings of peace. Just as one wave merges into another, it is like the great water from the Ganga mingling with that of Yamuna and other rivers. Similarly, the new rivers

of happiness are sure to dispel darkness and deprivation. A lot of expectation is in the air.]

The merit of a poet or artist lies in drawing minute, meaningful details of commonplace things. In the poem entitled "Diya Jale", Madhukar makes ample use of word-pictures, similes and sketches. Other features in his distinct style are as follows:

*Diya bale
Ehe raat-raat bhar jale
Diya bale*

*Sanjog na
Bajog na*

*Man ch chhae sog na
Kusai di yaad jaldi ai
Kusai di aas galdi ai
Pran na, bran na*

*Ptang, ang-sang na
Eh jot bi joaan hi
Eh raat bi joaan hi
Gaman ha*

*Tan jivanai ch matak hi, majaj hi
Kiran muskardi
Bhyag geet garadi
Eh jot hun haraan ai,
Eh raat bi bran ai*

*Sama chale
Sama gale
Sama de kannai-kannai bares bi
Ghate dhale*

[The small earthen vessel with the oil and the wick burns the whole night. It symbolizes fate (*sanjog*) and also in a sense painful separation (*bajog*) with a heart full of mourning (*sog*). It makes a bonfire of someone's memories and evaporates someone else's expectations. The flame was youthful and the night too was young with life feeling proud. With the rays smiling and singing, this flame is now in suspense and the night too is truncated. Time is ticking away endlessly and so with time age also declines and decays.]

Madhukar's poem "Machhue di Maya" talks of a boat which ferries people across the river in the following poetic lines:

*Jo khin bite, jo din bitai, khani chlri janda
Chalochali da mela dunya, eh machhue da dhanda
Samaj ni oone ahali bhasha, jag niyane di bolli*

*Kine arth kare koi ehde, gunjal khohlli-khohlli
Bol bidi da banda mheshan duniya da dastur
Bhar bharocha pur oh rahiya bhar bharocha pur*

[The ferry boat charts its way with the passing of every moment, every day. Its work is likened to the ever-changing fair of the world with its unfamiliar language and unintelligible tongue which is hard to decipher and understand. The voice of the Supreme always becomes universal wisdom. Countless travellers ceaselessly come and go. The complications and compulsions weighed on my status as a human being. So far as I have a relationship with mankind. I am not simply a prisoner of a particular race, nationality or bound by geographical boundaries.]

In Madhukar's opinion, death is certain but still life goes on. The life of human beings is like waves of the

sea that rise, fall and then disappear in the horizon. He observes that life is as short as a bubble, so we should lead it with love and affection.

Madhukar's poem, "Shabd" (words) speaks of spiritual power in the word:

*Shabd ha
Shabd pamesar,
Pamesar da Shabd
Paihla te kheerla,
Bhaloka Shabda galanda ai
Shabd gai Brahma ai*

[In a tone tinged with spirituality, Madhukar observes that there is only one word; which really is the God. The Almighty is the beginning and the end of this universe.]

Romanticism

His songs dealing with the outpouring of the heart are simple and touching. But he is at his best in the songs of love which are couched in sweetness and loveliness. He is very fond of describing the rainy season, the eyes of the Gori (a belle) and the beauty of her form and figure as also the beauty of her different clothes.

*Sandhur lapetiai makkhan lapetiai Surriin mane bich
bassiyiin na mokale soka/e
phirnavii de Alare daulatiin jobani khaltiyyiin na.*

[Your face with the redness of vermilion and the softness of butter has made a place in my heart. Behind your wide Pheran (a Kashmiri loose gown) you hide the wealth of your youth.]

Some of Madhukar's poems are inspired by sentimentalism and spiritualism. But even in his first collection, *Namiyan Minjran* the reflection of a separated or unsuccessful lover's heart flutters. A love-lorn youth utters:

*Pattan tupde, bouliyan pucchdiyan na
Gaillan gaillan sunniyaan
Mano dhukhdian na
Ajj goondhian goondhian dharan labbhan
Be-ass namanian bharan labbhan
Baa chale dhabbak jan hoi janda
Meri heekhi ei eyian batoi gei ai
Bhali soolia jind tangoi gei ai
(Namiyan Minjran, 1954)*

[River banks are searching you, springs are looking in askance and every lane seems desolate which is actually making the mind miserable. Now each pasture, on high slopes and the new season too look without hope and expectations. As the new wind blows, it causes much fear. My confidence has vanished, I feel myself entangled in embarrassment as if my life was struck in the balance.]

His collection *Dola Kun Thappea* includes the poem "Manukkhta" which can be considered among the best Dogri compositions. In it, Madhukar emphasises the immortality of mankind which defies all the ravishing aggression of nature which continues since time immemorial. Its external existence in this universe finds a beautiful word painting as under:

*Gasa de madaanai lakkhan bari harh aye kein
Lakkhan bari badlen bi maru geet gaye kein,*

Nhere de toofanen lakkhan bari tumbu laye kein,
 Surja di kirnen di sunailrr ajen hai nein,
 Bhyaga di eh loi ahli nehar ajen oooye nai
 Ambraa ne roha kane bajjar satai kein
 Pralaya machine ahle barhae brai kein
 Mauti dien andhien de gole bi chalaе kein
 Pani ajen preeta ahle saagare bi sukka nei
 Sadhana de dien bichcha tel ajen mukka nei
 Preet-moti dene ahla naint khara pani ai
 Amar ai manukkhta te amar chdi kahani ai.

In *Dola Kun Thappea*, the Dehri poem is yet another composition full of pathos and picturesque portrayal of oppression of women folk especially in rural areas of Duggar in the old times. The poet feels:

O hun paccham geya tihara, o aiyan tarkalan
 Ai kun bei rahi nimmo- chahni, chhori sambh
 sambhalan
 Na aide man chann muskyaayaa, na naine bich tare
 Inn kain hasde hasde aimen, hasde hase mare
 Ai, aasen nain svas chale tan jivan dola chalda
 Ai eekhi da tel jalai tan hirkri Deekap balda
 Na ambari de dwar, na ain sasari da ghar-bar
 Dola kun thappea.
 Na o ghorh swar, na o baki de janear,
 Dola kun thappea.

In another composition, Madhukar says:

Joban de bharen hutti di
 Baddlen di seja di
 Naagan jana meendhi khulli di
 Khabare kis socha bhulli di

Buddhe-baba ise gasa lei
 Dharati varamala lei chali e

[Weighed down by youth, lying on the bridal bed of clouds with her tresses open and waving like snakes, lost in some thoughts, the earth is carrying a wedding garland for this old sky.]

Mark the beauty of the words and sensitivity of thought.

"Charkha" (spinning wheel) is his yet another literary contribution to the Dogri poetry in *Dola Kun Thappea*, which reads as follows:

Apne pyoke di hi jadun migi yaad aundi
 Daiye pasari isi ballen-balleh gandi hi
 Aun nikki nei hi panje-saten baren di

[Whenever I missed my parental home, I used to sit with my Charkha in the Pasari (secluded small room) and sing in a low tone as a girl.]

In "Charkha", Madhukar tells the story of women's lives in a compassionate manner. The spinning wheel in old days always remained an important possession of the women in this part of the country. In the house of her in-laws, a bride was proud of this unique gift received from her parents. She spun yarn on the spinning wheel and at the same time shaped her sweet and sour memories into melodious songs.

"Dehri" another of Madhukar's outstanding poems which portrays the agony and misfortunes of the women in the Duggar society. The mood of Dehri is full of broodings and melancholy.

The note of sadness runs throughout the poem

sea that rise, fall and then die
observes that life is an illusion.
lead it with love and devotion.
Madhukar's poems are inspired by
a love-lost youth

Kehri Singh Madhukar

In the poem "Rasta" (The Way) he looks back at the past and wonders what man has made of his present and future. In the poem "Panchaan", the poet is inspired by a spiritual urge to find God and be one with nature. He imagines that he catches glimpses of his past and the old sanskaras flow in like drops of rain and the flash of lightning. He imagines the songs carried by the breeze from the east or the colourful rainbow in the castles of space and time which fulfill the poet's spiritual needs.

"Chhalia" contains a very touching picture of a girl at

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there are Kikkar trees, youth, love and spring; to the west
there are shady old banyan trees, worries, regrets and
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cross-roads looking at the changing facets of life.

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"Chhalia" contains a very touching picture of a girl at

the threshold of youth, lost in dreams of future. "Hamb" is a song of courage in which the lines appear to dance in a happy mood.

The book *Dola Kun Thappea* is considered to be his finest work. This contains thirty-eight poems which deal with a variety of subjects, different moods, emotions and thoughts of the poet. Some poems show the influence of Rabindranath Tagore, particularly the mystic ones. However, his most beautiful poems in this book, evoking rich images, are those dealing with love, clouds and rainy season. These arouse strong emotions and sketch before the readers presenting some memorable pictures. There is a freshness of approach and something new in the ideas and imagery. For example, his overall treatment is distinct from that of senior Dogri poets like Parmanand Almast and Kishan Smailpuri. For Madhukar separation from the beloved is not a crippling bond; on the contrary, he considers it like the stirring of emotions of love like the falling of a stone in deep placid waters which invariably give rise to waves reaching out towards the beloved. He also says that unrequited love is like the drying up of rain bearing clouds or the dying out of light in a howling wind.

"Diggall" (cloud) "Saun" (month of rainy season, Shravan) and "Saneha" (message) are beautiful poems in which a stanza on clouds goes like this:

*Jaban de bhaaren huti ri
Badalen si seja sutti ri
Khabarai kis socha bhulli ri
Buddhe Baba is gaassan leyi
Dharati var maalaa lei chali ai*

[Weighed down by her youth, lying on the bed of clouds, her hair loose in snaky coils, she is lost in thought

"Dhruvtara" with smoke and darkness all round. But the mood of his poems is mostly positive, optimistic, hopeful with confidence in the future as well as in the goodness of human beings.

The sight of lamps burning in the temple, at cross-roads and inside the home makes this Dogri poet reflect on the secrets of life in the poem "Noor Jhaliaran" contained in the book *Dola Kun Thappea*.

In his poems "Diya Balai", "Amarkatha", "Chhaure" and "Manukkhata", the poet expresses the belief that life goes on forever and there is continuity even after death. In "Kavita Di Pangti" there is an empathetic contemplation of fledgling voices of young birds.

In "Anasambe Painde" (Endless Journey) he sees the march of life, its different stages behind varied aspects of nature; to the east of the village there are berry trees, children, laughter and young growing life; to the north there are Kikkar trees, youth, love and spring; to the west there are shady old banyan trees, worries, regrets and approaching old age while the wayfarer stands on the cross-roads looking at the changing facets of life.

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[Weighed down by her youth, lying on the bed of clouds, her hair loose in snaky coils, she is lost in thought

while the earth is carrying a wedding garland for the old sky.]

Doli, a bride's palanquin, is symbolic of the pain of separation and the pleasure of expected new meetings leading to breaking up of old relationships and attachments to new ones. It stands for a mixed feeling of melancholy and joy, sadness and happiness, hope and vague yearnings, looking back and looking anxiously forward, the business of creative living. "Mela" (fair) is symbolic of the momentariness of getting together with the inevitability of separation, steady movement and constant change.

In a sense, this life is sustained by love and hope; while time is the ocean as well as the moving finger. Shivnath in his book *Makers of Dogri Literature & Other Essays* quotes Kehri Singh Madhukar's poem "Lehra":

*Chali batogan rattari doli,
San San bain bachare kariai !
Mamte is upar atharun barai
Hasen di thali bich bhariai
Door jugein jan lame pained,
Ch Cholian rahien diyan singar
Kadain te potu dharti lagade,
Kadain charian pinghan,
Kehri rachna mar khoai ai
Kehra khin bandi hai sakea !
Phi bi sirjanhara panda
Pani upper roj lakiran.*

Shivnath has himself translated the above stanza of the Dogri poem into English as follows:

*Daily drawing lines on water.
Minutes, hours, months and years,*

*Guests, shining birds in flight,
But the light of Love bespatters
All with rainbow colours.*

Thus from his first collection, *Namiyan Minjran* till his last collection *Padam Gokhroo*, the poet undertook a literary journey of nearly thirty-five years during which he gave to Dogri literature a priceless treasure of verses in new style, depth and thought. There were varied experiments in new expressions and compositions containing typical Dogri words, word-picture, idioms, similies and appropriate vocabulary for the selected themes from common man's life and popular subjects. His experiments with new expressions, themes and a variety of subjects have enriched Dogri literature. His works show him as a progressive; (Chhayavadi) as well as a humanitarian. The basis of his thought is so vast that it encompasses all ideas that one can think of. His poetic contribution to Dogri literature will remain unsurpassed for its appealing expression, choice of subjects and most expressive words and phrases quite distinct from those of other Dogri poets.

His experiments with blank verse were equally successful and artistic.

A writer, poet or artist is the product of his times with some distinctive experiences in life. Such a gifted person is the product of the socio-cultural milieu and other factors which endow them with high creativity to observe things around them and give them proper and meaningful expression. For instance, the keenly observing writer depicts the superstitions prevailing in society and raise these issues for sensitising the people. The work of the

writers and poets is to awaken the society while it is for the leaders/reformists to take over and bring about desired politico-socio-cultural transformation. Madhukar did play his part in creating an awakening through his ideas related to a progressive, revolutionary and universal brotherhood through his poetry.

This short-statured man had a stout and well-built physique with a round face and large, bright eyes and looked more of a wrestler or an athlete rather than a poet. He was mostly well dressed, had a pleasing personality and a sharp mind but was somewhat secretive and shy. His poetry too was strong and robust like his body.

Being the only son in the family of Major Kripal Singh, Madhukar got extra care, affections and even indulgence particularly from his mother who left an adverse impact on his moods and temperament. He was sensitive but careless to the extent of being "irresponsible" towards himself, his duty and lacked discipline. Pampering by his mother, grand-father and other family members had ill-effect on him moulding him as obstinate and extremely carefree.

At the age of twenty two, Madhukar married Nirmala Kumari belonging to a well-to-do Dogra family of Jammu and Kashmir. But because of his carelessness and neglect his married life was adversely affected resulting in estrangement. He neglected his first wife and got re-married without a trace of self-improvement or due consideration to the people at home. He fell in the habit of drinking. Added to it was negligence of his family and other worldly matters which was the negative aspect of his life; yet his literary contribution to Dogri literature was "monumental".

About his style of composing poetry, Madhukar often stated: "I have never 'written' poetry, I have mostly Aakhi

(said) poems in everyday language in my words, idioms and the flow do not matter at all. Usually, a poem is composed in a single sitting. After composing a poem I do revise or render it into my own vocabulary, my own convictions, my own conscience," he held and further added: "I am in favour of rendering word pictures into real pictures, because the audience for whom I compose are enamoured of ears, eyes and recitations". Madhukar often listened to his criticism patiently and made drastic changes or even tore out a portion of his composition that he felt really needed total overhaul.

Madhukar was the youngest and most successful of the poets of the first round of the *Namin Chetna* (new consciousness), a periodical brought out by the Dogri Sanstha during the pre-Independence period.

The publication of *Nami Minjaran* in 1954 was considered an important incident in Dogri literature. It contains only sixteen of his selected Dogri poems. It was this collection of Dogri poetry which brought him in the frontline of Dogri poets. *Nami Minjaran* as the title indicates contains compositions with new trends, fresh ideas and themes, related mostly to life and problems of the common man. However, Madhukar was then deeply rooted in the old soil and carried forward the old traditions. It is significant that standing on the old soil, he enlarged its scope, made it mature and performed new experiments.

His poetry has a vigour and charm of its own. These poems have contributed to a great extent in raising the artistic and intellectual standards of Dogri literature. Most of his poetic compositions are rich in delicate thoughts and apt similes. The ornamental style of some of his poems is simply matchless.

His language, expression, imagination and style were honed in about nine years after which came his *Dola Kun Thappea*, in 1963, which contains 38 poems. Subsequently, Madhukar's *Main Mela ra Janu*, a collection of 28 Dogri poems came out in 1979 and won the Sahitya Akademi award. His last book *Padam Gokhroo* containing 16 long and small poems, few in blank verse also, was published in 1989.

Kehri Singh Madhukar possess the matchless quality of writing chaste and typical Dogri words as per their appropriate meaning, strength and utility for rhyme and rythm in his poetic compositions.

In addition to chaste Dogri words, Madhukar occasionally lapses into Urdu and Hindi in his Dogri poetry in such a way that these do not look odd but seemingly get absorbed in the Dogriat and its language, colour and culture. Such words have become an integral part of Dogri language and have rather enriched Dogri language. The readers face no hindrance or hardship due to the Urdu or Hindi words in his Dogri language writings. In Madhukar's works, one can hardly imagine that Urdu or Hindi words appear out of place in any way. In the poem "Hasa", there is liberal use of Urdu words like: *khatab, shabab, tangdasti, firqa prasti, zakeen, zamin, mashaal, ghulam, sazish, saluk, muftkhor, inquilab, kamgare* etc. Similarly, he used some Hindi words also in his poem, "Baladar" by using words like *Sanjha, Sanjhe* a number of times but with new usage and different meanings. Madhukar had knowledge of other languages too and would make use of suitable words to convey true meaning and environment of what he wants to say.

In his revolutionary or social poems, his language and vocabulary was particularly subject specific, by use

of words from other languages. Madhukar has enriched Dogri and added new flavour with his distinct style. His mastery over chaste Dogri words and their skillful use as also selection of every day topics and themes in his poetry distinctly mark him out as an outstanding poet with a difference, a class apart from other Dogri writers.

His approach is simple, direct and goes into the spirit and colour of the Dogra community.

For instance, the words *sanjha, sanjhi* have been repeatedly used as follows:

*Desai di paribhasha keh ai?
Sanjhi sochen, sanjhi reejhen,
sanjhe hirakh pyaren nai I
Sanjhi samta, Sanjhi mamta,
Sanjhe kar beharen nai I
Sanji preet jagai je sathi,
Sanjhi preet balai je sathi I
Sanjhe sukh-dukh Sanji kari,
Sanji reet chale je sathi I*

The words *sanjha* (common) has been used differently in different contexts.

This Dogri poet also made a fairly good use of similies, metaphors and word pictures which he deploys with unique technicalities in his poetic compositions. His selection of subjects and their treatment with sensibility in a powerful expression was a hallmark of his creative work.

In the poem, *Sanayasi* he has remarkably used similies as evident from the following lines:

*Jiyaan Trehaai Di Badli
Nilai Ambar Dolai I
Dar Daraadai Koi Dukha aa*

Katai Papihaa Bolai I
 Ji' yaan Taapole Thikar Gaalai
 Nur Pavai Ik Daanai
 Luttea Putbaa ik Banjaaraa
 Ji'yaan Letar Chhanai

Ucchari Lammi ah Phakabaari, Heth Khiri Gulbaasi I
 Aashaa Di Akkhien Cha Milakai Jiyaan Dain Doaasi

An exhibition of this craftsmanship is also found as follows:

Eh keh kita narth be-shaba?
 Eh keh dhahya kair?
 Mere sirjan haar
 Apani, is pothi bitiya gi-
 Bhav-shalyen, huben-aasen
 Tahange-rijen, pali-posi
 Te phi
 Deyi kavita jivan
 Upamen de
 Gailne bandhen ne aang sajaye
 Mamta di
 Mehendi ne hath sangari-
 Shade de
 Shalu ch lapeti
 Kalpanya di doli charhi
 Sompi ditta bhent sarupi
 Keh ik be kadre pathak gi?
 Jisne aajtak
 Inni bi te kahl ni kiti
 Je, jhutte muthe
 Meri jild guhardi
 Jhanki mare je "mein" keh" ain

Eh te iyan hoya
 Jiyan lakhiya babal
 Chen-chen, ladaliya gi
 Bade mulharen, daj-dane, gailmen-bhanden
 Shail sajaye
 Appnen athen
 Lad lai dita aye pati npunsak gi

[The poet laments that the reader is not sensitive to the niceties and message in a book by a literary figure. The writer spends day and night in composing the creative work which crave for discerning eyes and due attention. Madhukar using similes and vivid words traces all that goes into penning the deep feelings and sentiments in ornamental style and sweet language. It is really miserable for a poet or writer that his book has not been keenly read, properly assessed and duly appreciated. He compares it symbolically to giving away a well dressed and beautiful bride to an uncaring and worthless bridegroom.]

Madhukar had a grouse that his friends and readers did not appreciate the depth of his ideas and flights of imagination fully. In the poem "Koari Bhent" he gives vent to this feelings.

"Pothi-Betia" at once touches the mind as this Dogri poet compares the book to a daughter while another glaring such example is that as a bride she wears a variety of ornaments in his poetic composition as: "Upma de Gehne Bande ge ang lagai". Yet another example is "Mehndi de kane haath rangae, Salu ch Laepta, Kalpanai gi doli chaari somepe dita bhent sarupi atonce read images in the readers of this poem.

Madhukar had a sense of music and attempted to convey it in his poetry. Take for example these lines:

*Chhatar Chaatera Sama Rache Da
Khin Khin Bani Jai de Tasviraan*

The following lines from one of his poems may be noted for its musical impact:

*Chhupi de beech channaltai milan gahdi di kahni
And also mark the tune in this couplet
Shuplai Shuplai shati andar, hirkhee darkan sarki
Or see the beauty of these wording:
Chetanta da chapel chalai shaali Shoaale da eh tuna*

Among the distinguishing quality and technique of Madhukar is maintaining an uninterrupted flow of his poetic ideas and emotions and use of appropriate vocabulary. An instance can be quoted from his poem, "Khoodal" which demonstrates his technique and poetic imagination:

*Rang te anmukte na,
Rangan de duniya ai,
Kacche na pukhte na-
Jhon chamak apni ai,
Apne suatam na,
Ritten de mailhram na,
Khushiyeen de janu na-
Gamiyen de vakaf na,
Sab de panchhanu na-
Phi bi ki lumki na,
Aadat de bandi na,
Rasmen de kaidi na,
Kasmen de nashak na-
Doben ch dubbe de,
Dogge prahle na,
Raugen di khondhal ai-*

*Rangen di khaudhal ch,
Rang bas ikkai gai,
Tna man jo rangi ja...I*

The poet has expressed a wide range of views on death. On the one hand he argues about the death in his poem, Charcha. Death, he said signifies barrenness, fear, horror and an unknown and endless journey to nowhere. But he also holds the view that the death is defeat of mind or absence of gusto of living or urge for life. This cycle of life and death has been going on for centuries. In his important poem Charcha, Madhukar has dwelt in depth on the topic of death.

Creation of images and use of word-pictures is yet another quality of Madhukar and he has deployed a varied techniques successfully and secured a distinct place in the galaxy of Dogri poets and also in Indian literature.

A feature of Madhukar's poetic work is his abundant use of similies, metaphors, word-pictures, poetical flow and musical rhythm. The verses in "Sanyasi" present a glowing example of similies as follows:

*Desai di paribhasha keh ai?
Sanjhi sochen, sanjhi reejhen,
Sanjhe hirakh pyaren nai I
Sanjhi samta, Sanjhi mamta,
Sanjhe kar beharen nai I
Sanji preet jagai je sathi,
Sanjhi preet balai je sathi I
sanjhe sukh-dukhi Sanji kari,
Sanji reet chale je sathi I*

The feelings of anger have been beautifully expressed by this Dogri poet in following words:

Roh

Bhagyar bhyanak bhara

Sheel

Shanti

Darai

Hushali Kunni

Jislai Ubbalai

Apana

Kandhe- Sarai

His yet another beautiful composition follows:

Shail shlope shelde maisha asai meet bainde ne I

*Chhatar chhatara sama rache da, khin-khin bani ja da
tasveran Chuppi dai bich chhanchaltai mielan gadi de
kahlee*

Chuple-chuple chati andar, hirkhee darkhan sarki

Kehri Singh Madhukar was one of the luminaries of Dogri literature with a multifarious genius and amicable personality. His devotion to poetry was not only exclusive but also was religious which he practised sacrificing every thing for its sake. All his poetic collections are marked by innovation in art and freshness of thought and content.

"Kehri Singh Madhukar's poetry covers a fairly wide spectrum of subjects; ranging from contemporary social-political topics, romantic love, different moods of nature, mystic broodings like that of Tagore, march of time, history and humanity, vignettes of Dogra day-to-day living to the plight of Dogra females, local fairs and festivals, tender-aged girls at play, emotions of a bride and sufferings of a widow and much more. Deep humanism, optimism and hope, love of life, rhythm and music, vigour and energy of rendering, rich imagery mark the best of his poems. There is a certain quality of rushing fluidity in his verses,

arising easily out of a command over the language and a rich repertoire of Dogri vocabulary", opines Shivnath in his book *Makers of Dogri Literature*. Kehri Singh Madhukar has been partly responsible for widening the scope and outlook of Dogri poetry.

Madhukar has brought Dogri poetry at par with the finest poetry in some of the other Indian languages. Yet Madhukar's style, the idiom and similes though influenced by Hindi and Urdu techniques, are unique with vigour and also having a local rural touch. He often touches people's deep sentiments, their problems and also sensitive women's issues raising his strong voice against oppression and exploitation. Sometimes his ideas get the better of his language, and thus cause a setback to his medium of expression.

He has written some free verses and musical features based on different Dogri songs.

Shivnath in his book *History of Dogri Literature* observes: "most of these (poems) are concerned with social and political problems while some others are concerned with subjects like love, humanity, patriotism, festivals, small girls at play, the spinning wheel, palanquin and so on. The first category of poems is full of sentimentalism brimming with words, slogan-mongering and advice-giving while those of the second category show a certain depth of feeling and beauty of expression. In some there is a sad haunting music, in others richness of imagination and still few others have width of vision."

This Dogri poet strongly felt that there was need for rewriting the history books as the existing ones were just a list of genealogical accounts of Rajas and Maharajas with their praises. So far, men have been going on like bullocks

tied to the oil-mill, wearing blinkers faith and superstition. But the renaissance has awakened the whole country and the new songs and the new light will change the old ways. Although the spirit of renaissance has not penetrated fully and the flowers of new consciousness have not yet fully bloomed, the breeze has ushered in a new era. There is a feel of revolution in the air. The poet thinks that there is urgent need for unity and courage for social change. The poet also feels that war is a big scourge and during war the flowers of love turn into flames, mothers forget their cradle-songs and the lamps of humanity are snuffed out. So, deep inside there is always need for peace. Madhukar is optimistic and has faith in humanity. In one poem entitled "Manukhata", he says that humanity is eternal, the ocean of love never dries up and the hope of man remains evergreen. But the forces of sentimentality give wings to his imagination and he sees reflections of deathlessness of humanity in the fold of the sun's rays removing the tents of darkness in the fields of the sky, in the solidity of the Himalayas standing firm in the storm of death, in the flame of devotion or Sadhana, in the light of the moon of hope, in the musical laughter rich with fragrance and in the flame of hope standing up against the anger of heaven. There is an intensity of emotions and exuberance of imagination in his poems dealing with the theme of love. The speech of eyes is difficult to decipher but gestures of love flowing from them make the heart beat faster and when the lover is away in a distant land, the beloved feels very sad. In the pitch dark night, the clouds rain fire and the lightning is frightening. When the wind beats at the doors, it appears that the lover has come back. Falling in love is like filling

one's lap with thorns and contracting a disease of the mind, when the desires turn into frenzies and tears are not enough to quench the fire burning in the heart and the river. Then the cuckoo, papiya and chakor appear stung with love to the person who is lovelorn or separated from the lover. There is a strange sadness and magic in the way small girls play with dolls which is popular in Jammu region and so tenderly pictured in 'Juge di Aas'

Vedpal Deep, a Dogri writer, in his column "Cultural Notes" in the English daily *Kashmir Times*, Jammu on April 28, 1991 wrote : "Madhukar has his own bewitching style, diction, idiom, phraseology, ideological lustre and imagination which no one can snatch from him. One can imitate at the risk of being spurious. This is because it is intimate life experience, his very own inner self that reveals itself through his verses when he is in the state of trance." Deep's observation was absolutely true.

Mohan Singh, another Dogri writer has observed that Madhukar was extremely different in all respects and says: 'One cannot ignore this poet's power of imagination, control over language and realistic approach towards society without deep contact with his poetry. If you are a real admirer of Dogri poetry and want to be acquainted with its depth and height you go through the poetry penned by Kehri Singh Madhukar. No doubt, there are so many other poets of excellence who have made remarkable contribution to the enrichment and development in the field of Dogri poetry. But Kehri Singh Madhukar was and is unmatched till date even a decade after his death in August 24, 2000. The void created after his death has not been filled. The height of Madhukar's poetry is (still) untouchable.'

Madhukar, prominent poet and a leading light of Dogri cultural movement died of cardiac arrest at 6.30 am on 24 August, 2000, at his village Badoi, about 25 kilometers from Jammu. He was 70 then. A very large number of his friends, relatives and prominent literary figures and organizations mourned his demise and paid him glowing tributes.

Madhukar himself had written:

*Kalam gai apna deen ai,
Kalam gai apna eeman ai
Kalam de warso suno
Kalam di apni aan ai,
Kalam di aabru bachai
E manta ai pacchanyo
Samai de rajdaro
Kalam da raj janyo
Koi bhi jhooth kaden khoag nein sachaiyan
Koi bhi haqq hun kaden deg nein dohaiyan
Moorten di sutten gi sathyo nikhareyo
Nirasien doasien gi baharen ch toareyo
Pathren di chhatien cha dharhkana toareyo
Chhainiyen nen, tho'rien nen geet koi bajhaleyo
Mere Saatheyo*

[Kalam (Pen) is my faith, it is also my religion. O inheritors of kalam, mark, it has its prestige and honour. See that the honour of the pen is assured. O confidants of time, recognize the rule of the pen. Now, no lie should be called truth, and no right need now cry hoarse for recognition. Friends, brighten the shape of picture or conceptions. Turn disappointments and sorrows into spring. Make the bosom of rocks and stone throb. Produce a new rhythmical song by hammer and chisel.]

Recognition and Honours

Madhukar's second poetry collection *Dola Kun Thappea* was awarded first prize by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages during 1964-65.

In the year 1976, the Jammu and Kashmir State Academy of Art, Culture and Languages conferred on Madhukar the Robe of Honour for promoting class struggle through Dogri poetry.

His third collection of Dogri poems, *Mein Mela Ra Janu* was selected by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi for its prestigious award in 1977. He was given a cash prize of Rs 25,000, one memento and a citation containing his life and contribution to the Dogri language and literature.

The fourth collection, *Padam Gokhroo* is also Madhukar's good contribution to Dogri literature. His last Dogri publication contains sixteen long and short poems as also a few poems in blank verse.

Prof. Nilamber Dev Sharma says: "Madhukar combines imagination, experience and tender feelings in his poetry. He is in touch with the new trends in the literatures of other Indian languages and has quite successfully combined those trends in Dogri poetry. A certain depth of feelings and breadth of vision, his full grasp over language, a happy combination of feeling and style, effective use of rhythm and rhyme as also metaphors and sentiments of hope and humanism are special characteristics of Madhukar's poems and songs". Madhukar is definitely a class apart for his depth of progressive thought, pragmatism, patriotism and depiction of nature in his poetic compositions."

Selections from Kehri Singh Madhukar

Charkha

Kūn ūn-ūn dina rāta karai charkhā I
 Aun nikki nei hi, panjen satten bar'en dī,
 Rondiya gī mau migī palakī cha pāyā hā I
 Pūniyen te kaudiyen nai isī hā śhangareā,
 Eh bī tadūn mere kannai sauhrai ghara āyā hā.II
 Apne pyoke dī hī jadun migī yaad aundī,
 Dahiyai pasāri isī ballain-ballain gāndī hī I
 Ehde tālain sau-sau tāla hī thoāladī,
 Ehde kannai gallān kari mana paracāndī hī I
 Kūn-ūn-ūn jadun charkhā eh gāndā hā,
 I'yān hā bajhondā mān loriyān sunāndī hai I
 Tandu āhlā hattha mere galai siddhā aundā hā,
 I'yān hā bajhondā mān galai kannai lāndī a I
 Sutarā dī hatthen-kattī tandu gī hā jorī kari,
 Chhaila nehā ikka men rejā bunavāyā hā I
 Lāl merī godā jehkā aya hā palhothī dā,
 Nikkā nehā kuratū men ussa da seayā hā I

Kehri Singh Madhukar

Issai charkhā ne sāth dittā hā solhagā dā,
 Issai charkhā ne sāth ganī dā nabhāyā hā I
 Sirā dā o sain jadūn migī chhorī geā hā,
 Kattanā gai migī tadūn ehdā kamma āyā hā I
 Ehdī kun kun mere sāhen kannai bajjhī dī,
 Sauga i'nne patā nain kiccara nabhānī ai!
 Khabarai eh kadūn ehda kun kun mukkanā,
 Sambhanī ai kadūn mere sāhen āhlī k-hāni ai?
 kūn kūn ūn dina rāat karai charkhā I

[Charkha sings its sweet tune of *koon koon* (a queer sound of the spinning wheel). My mother put me into the palanquin while I was weeping and crying when I was merely six or seven years of age. The spinning wheel was decorated with cotton puffs and small sea-shells. Whenever, I missed my parental household, I used to put my *charkha* in the common room, then slowly sing in tune with spinning wheel invariably which gave out numerous tunes and rhythm with it. It consoled and kept me occupied. When the *charkha* uttered *koon koon* it seemed as if my mother was singing *Loriyan* (lullabys). And when the hand holding spinning thread came straight to my neck, it seemed as if my mother was embracing me. With the hand spun thread I prepared beautiful cloth. When my first son was born, I stitched a *kurtu* (frock) of that cloth. This *charkha* remained my intimate and constant companion when my husband was living and even after his death. After his demise when I was supportless, spinning alone was the only way to sustain me).

This *koon koon* of the *charkha* is linked with the breath of my life, I don't know how long it will live and when it will go with me. God only must be aware when its *Koon Koon* will come to a stop and when my breath will end.

Among the Dogra community spinning wheel used to be given to girls on marriage as a life-long companion to face life with courage in all conditions, joys or misfortunes.]

Nishcha

*Nin raste roka tūn moiye, manā de niśhchen de,
badhī dī gain kaden muradī ai addha-dhātā dā?
usī chhallen te bhauren nai ghulanā paundā ai,
jadūn troradī bandhana ai berī ghatā dā I*

*hirakha neīn, eh jehrī tora carhai lalasā ai,
bajoga hirakhā gī namen suāsa dīnde na I
milana te manjala ai, mauta ai pyārā dī,
eh lāre mahnū gī jīne dī āsa dīnde na II*

*Khushi de khina jehre samajhe he mūla jīne dā,
manā dī bhulla hī, basān hī oh pyārā dī I
manā de jāgade gai kadama phirī taraphe he,
sunī hī bāja Phī manā nai dūr- pārā dī II
tāna gī lobha ai apanā khayāla apanā ai,
manāgi socha ai duniyān de sau jhamelen dā I
gamāna dukkhen gī ai saungalān soāiyān na,
sukhen gī gauh ai apāne rangā melen dā II*

*Kein rukāvatān na jellai j-hārān rokān na,
tūn ain phi dassa, kī bandhana banachai pyārā gī ?
tūn ain phi bola kī bandī banācai jitten gī,
tūn ain phi dassa kī sātī banācai hārā gī ?*

*charhe je tora eh rāhū tān phikara apanā keh,
manjale te sājhi ai majalā dī rīta sājhi ai I
je dukkha sājhe na duniyān de sukha bī sājhe na,
mana je sājhe na jinde, tān prīta bī sājhi ai II*

*phiri kainh rokani moiye, manā de nichchen gī,
badhī dī gain kaden muradī ai addha dhātā dā ?
usī chhallen nai te bhauren nai ghulanā Paundā ai,
jadūn troradi bandhana ai berī ghātā da II*

[The progressive poet says: "once a person starts, he must never stop midway, as a boat faces more turbulence in midstream, encountering many challenges of strong waves.

It is not *lalsa* (fascination) which is something very unique and it gets life even out of separation and sufferings. Though achievement is taken as an objective but it is actually the last breath of the feelings and sentiments. These false expectations give human beings a ray of hope for life.]

Dehri

*Eh anajanai thahra, maru marh marhiyen de hashakara,
Dola kunna thappea?
Ge kutta pasai k-hara, hoin gei tun kuna niggosara,
Dola kunna thappea?*

*Thikara-gala lun lun tapada, nan rukkha nan koi
chaura,
Eh k'una kali namani koi, nan rasa nan koi bhoura.
Eh channana di cauki kusadi rehi gei khal-makhali,
Eh jobana-phulabari kusadi, tarasai di bina mali
Eh tulasi di malan kusadi laiyai akkhiyan tarai,
Manaken de mana duta banaiyai, tupadi thahrai-thahrai.
Taraphai har ssangara, dusakai kusa da eh sansara,
Dola kunna thappea?
Nan laindea koi sara, baithi mana mari ika nara,
Dola kunna thappea?*

Eh dole da tassari jhammana, larajan liran baniyan,
 Palachi ge kainh chhattara jhalara, nettain tandan taniyan
 Ehkusade hatthen di mainhndi, muskandi kamalai,
 Eh kusade cure di runajhuna, moti jana karalai
 Eh shubha-lagana rattara salun kusada sogi hoa,
 Eh k'una catara bapari koi bhare bajara lotoa?

Kaisa nhera-gabara, nan koi tadi nan koi yar,
 Dola kunna thapea?
 Kaisa peya khalaria, rulade dajen bhare patara,
 Dola kunna thappea?

Oh huna pachhama gea dhyara, oh aiyen tarakalan,
 Eh k'una behi rehi nimmojhani, chhori sambha samhlan
 Nan eh dai mana channa muskaya, nan nainen bich tare,
 I'nnen kaihn hasade hasade aihmen, hasade hase mare,
 Eh asen nai soasa calai tan jovana de'la calada,
 Eh hikhi da tela balai tan hirakhi dipaka balada.

Nan ambari da duara, nan eh Sassari da gharabara,
 Dola kunna thappea?
 Nan oh ghorasavar, nan oh baki de janehara,
 Dola kunna thappea

The poem "Dehri" in Madhukar's book *Dola Kun Thappea* is the oral picture of the cruelties the society was committing on women in most of the villages and hamlets in this part of the country.

The plight of females had also pierced his heart and this particular poem, among others, paints their helplessness life and death).

Doli

Ajja kusai ne tãhnga manã di suhe rang rangã,
 Kalĩ khirĩ muskãĩ, phĩ kainh bhauren shã ghabarãĩ !
 Sau aramãnen salu baniyai sohla joãni thãhgi,
 kajalã baniyai painni hĩkhĩ, nainen andara jãgi II

Prĩt-galĩ de morai uppara, aiyai rãhĩ jhũrai,
 jhakadi gain, mana sanghadã kĩ ai, keh ghokhai keh
 ghũrai
 dora namin mana bhãĩ phĩ bĩ pailĩ tãra nin trutdĩ,
 agalĩ manjala ãle mãrai, pichhalĩ tãhnga nin chhutadĩ II

Suhã sãlu bheta chhpailai, sochen pãyã gherã,
 aun paradesana hoĩ seiyo, sambho bãg eh merã I
 chaila kalĩre, gailhne bandhe, bandhana dharma našhãni,
 mana jãne gĩ, mana rukane gĩ, dubidã, nainen pãni II

bhãga bhari ambarĩ bholĩ nai, mamata bicha paletĩ,
 aun khillari dĩ asa hĩ usa nai, godã leĩ sametĩ I
 kĩ lorĩ de gĩta sunãe, kĩ sau lãd hai lãe,
 kĩ mamtã dĩ sira oh sukkĩ, apane hoe parãe ?

jisa bãbala nai goda khadãyã, gala lãyã, paracãyã,
 meri totaliyen gallen hã, mana jisadã bharamãyã I
 kĩ oh hirakha basãre babala, phulla bane kĩ nãre,
 gailĩ de bicha rulade kaisĩ, oh hirakhã de s-hãre?

men bhãiyen dĩ kheda, pyãrĩ, merĩ ambarĩ jãe,
 hasade gãnde dina bachapana de apane tora charhãe I
 hãsen-rosen rãsa rachãĩ, sãnjhe bachapana bĩte,
 sãnjhi mamatã dĩ sira de, sãnjhe amarata pĩte I

Sakhiyen, s-helariyen de kannai, pãle s-helarchãre,
 Kĩkaliyen, gĩten, gĩhten nain sau, sau ranga khalãre I

Pīngha, panghūre, jhūte, raliyai, kitthe, rūhre rahe,
succhi āsen meden ale j-harān maihala sajāe I

chhappana, lukkana, tila-matilo, panjagitre khede,
hasade-gānde chāen-chāen dina khushiye de rehde I
apani maujā sutte mhesān, apani khuśiyā jage,
chāra chabakkhīn ikkai neh he bajjhe hirkhī dhūge I

eh angana saba maiharama mere, eh gailin Panchānū.
eh pattana saba sāthī mere, eh patthara saba janū I
sunne-sunne ajja chugānai, sūnkana, sūnkān jhūre,
dadī kattha sunāgi kusagi, k'una bharagi hūna nhūre?

eh charakhen di ghūnkara suneo, mārāi hirakhī āle,
gīten de sura tarphana dukhiye, bujhade jalo khāle I
kūnja khindī geī dārā kolā, ikkalī gai karalāndī,
sau-sau karai bachhūre moī, gāsai chakkara lāndī II

Pe bachhore, āle mārāna eh rukken diyān chhāmān,
hāmbī-hāmbī raste rokana, eh bellen diyān bāhmān I
nān ambarī jane thamān rokai, nān koīdeai dalasā,
Sāmbho bhāiyo, tusa ghara apāne, S-hārā dūrain bāsā II

ratte chure bandhana banī ge, nattha banī geī dorī,
eh bachanā dī bajjhi calī ai desa bagānai gorī I
bangān eh hathakariyān baniyān, eh kariyen dī beri,
eh jobana gai bairī baneā, hatthen bipatā S-herī II

bissarī ge saba gūhra garāke, bissarī chainchalatāi,
huna dharamā de kota na ucce, huna lājā dī phāhī I
nān kūnā, nān joren hassanā, nīmīn najarāin chalanā.
dai-dai karadā chānana denā, diye āngara balanā II

Patale-Patale oth namāne, lāja sūi nai sīne,
mana motī gī bedhī lainā, sabara katore pīne I
koī, jhirkai, lakha bangārāi mana mārī saba saihnā,
amman, ditti, sīsa migī, eh babala dittā gaihanā II

desa bagāne, lok anajāne, namiyān namiyān ritān,
Sajare sāthī, bikhare painde, meriyān sohla prītān I
k'una jāne men golli bananān, k'una jāne men Rānī,
khabarai ki'yān ki'yān likhī ai, usa bidhanā ne k-hānī II

jhakadī-jhakadī āsā merī, hīkhī kainh sangachoi,
main sainsen de bandī-khāne dī ajja kaidī hoī I
palai cha dubadā, palai ca taradā, eh mana gote khandā,
kaisā ajaba bānayā loko, bhāga dhūen dā mandā II

dhūān, bhainān kanaken āngūn, rahiyān babala hālī,
jammen aunkara atta suhāne, ussarane dī kāhalī I
hoī mathoiyān sau bala paunde, babala bhāga sarahndā,
khūra khalāren dā koī nendā, kohlen kaid kārāndā II

manā cha sau sau āsān medān, sau dara jhakka kasāle,
mana merā eh sohla, darā dā sunī dapāse āle I
ballen ballen chaleo k-hāro, āsā merī atta bholī,
sāhmbī sāhmbī paira takāeo dolai nin binda dolī II

[Doli, a bride's palanquin, is symbolic of the pain of separation and the pleasure of meeting, break in the old relationship and prospects of attachments to forge new ones. It stands for the mixed feelings of melancholy and joy, sadness and happiness, hope, wistful looking back and anxiously looking forward the business of creative living.

'Doli, a fine workmanship of Dogri poetry, vividly sketches the state of mind of a newly-wed bride about to leave her parents' house. The mother who collects her daughter like a lost hope in her lap, the father, the familiar courtyard and street, the shadows of trees calling and the arms of creepers spreading towards her, all come alive in this poem of Madhukar. It appears to him that the bangles and the nose-ring have become chains for the girl and her

youth has become her own enemy. She is torn between pulls of her new relationship and old associations and affiliations:

The domestic touch is obvious in this poetic composition.. A growing girl is like the growing crops, and her mind is filled both with longings and misgivings for the unseen and new world. The condition of the parents is like that of the farmer, but the irony is that the crops do not remain in their houses but are taken away by the outsiders when they are fully ripe. The condition of a growing girl is similar to that of the growing crops; and there is a veiled reference to the feudal set-up when the jagirdars took away the produce of the soil without any toil, whatsoever. And, is not the marriage of the present type a feudal institution?.

But there are wistful longings as well as a romance for the unseen, though not of unheard things. Why does a daughter have to leave her family, her hearth and home for the outside world, and adopt something unknown as her own? There is a duality of situation giving rise to the duality of mind, of feelings mixed with hope and fear. The palanquin-bearers should, therefore, be extra cautious in their steps! There is a delicacy, a sensitivity of feelings conveyed in a sensitive style).

Kohlū

*Jhuramura jhuramura Kohlū chalaḍā,
balada calai ik chāla I
eh Janamen dā rāhī bachairā,
keh mhīne keh sāla II*

*Jajarī jajarī torā turadā,
gala thanakai ghangarela I
danda khichadā bakkhara phisadā,
tān th-hondā phī tel II*

*joren joren chhantā bajadā,
Pindai lāsān paun I
akkhin khope sojha guāchi,
Keh chetar, keh saun II*

*nikka badda deai darandān,
teja karai binda tora I
eh bajjhe dā majabūrī bich,
batta nai sujhadī hor II*

*j-hārān kroh eh paindā karadā I
phī bī uai thān I
telī bechai tel bajāren,
nein dandai dā nān II*

*ik burhai dīn rāt bachairā,
dūā mauja doā I
keh jīne dī shauk bhalā,
Phī Keh jīne dā chā II*

*ik kamāndā dūā khandā,
i'yai sārāi sār I
tela bagānnā khala duen dī,
isī purānā nār II*

*i'yān gai basa esa jugai da,
kohlū chalaḍā roja II
māhnū baneā dānda bachairā,
nein sujhadī kija sojh II*

*majabūrī dā bajjhā turadā,
matthī matthī tor I*

issai kārana banai laphangā,
issai kārana chor II

eh lāren de khope akkhin,
Puthlī chaladā chāl I
bicha lachāri de bajjhe dā,
eh dāhde janjāl II

bekārī dā dandā picchen,
jisagī khichadā jā I
āsa manai dī rūpa tanai dā,
saba kija tela banā II

Phaken āhlā chhantā bajadā,
tān binda tora badhā I
sochī-sochi umara goāndā,
nein labhada koi rāh II

tila-tila kariyai jalai Joānī,
ge jīne de chā I
ehde telī aīsha manānde,
eh bajjhā karlā II

nikke nikke nyane jisalai,
phāken nai karalāna I
tān kohlū de chakkar dahde,
apanī chāla chalāna II

Kinnā chir hun kohlū chalanē
mahnū dānda khoāne I
Kinnā chir hun majabūrī nai,
apanī tora turāne I

Kinnā chir hun jhūthen,
biśvāsen de khope pāne I
kinnā chir hun dānden ahle,
Pahle chakkar lāne II

kinnā chira hun bekārī dā,
danda khichade rauhānā I
Kinnā chira hun meden ahlā,
tela banāna paunā II

Kinnā chira huna julamen āhle,
chānte pitthī khane I
Kinnā chira huna phaken rehiyai,
rajje hore rajane II

Kinnā chira huna ghangarelen dī,
Runajhuna sunde rauhānā I
Kinnā chira hun āsen āhlā,
jāl eh bunade rauhānā II

Kinnā chira huna chakkara ginane,
Sāre Kitthe āo I
isa kohlū dā bakkhara, banane,
Kolā āpa bachāo II

rūpa jugai da badalā karadā,
ikkai palatā khānā I
Palen khinen dī galla chharī huna,
bind k joor gai lānā II

j-hārān kroh eh paindā karadā I
phū bī uai thān I
telī bechhai tel bajāren,
nein dandai dā nān II

(The Kohlu (oil-crusher) when it functions, makes a sound like Ghur-mur-Ghur, Ghur-mur-Ghur. How the ox moves in slow paces, the poet has sympathy with the ox (like persons who have to put in hard labour and face endless exploitation) while the oil-mill owner enjoys the fruit of the labour of others.

With a fixed mind it was in slow steps with necklace with bells always ringing. When the oil-seeds get crushed with hard labour of the ox by pulling the long, thick rod, it produces the oil. During the process, the ox is beaten mercilessly by whips which leave deep marks on his body while both his eyes are also covered by khope (opaque lids) so that his vision is snatched and he is totally unaware of the season, day or any other matters of life. Everyone curses the ox. The animal on being beaten quickens his pace and moves a bit faster. Helpless as he is, the ox finds no way out.

He goes round and round for thousands of miles (kilometers) but still he is at the same spot. The Teli (oil man) sells the oil in the market, but no one mentions the ox. There could be no other condemnation for exploitation by man which is worse. One struggles hard for all the 24 hours but others reap the benefits and enjoy a luxurious life. In this peculiar situation what can be the meaning of life. One earns while the others enjoy. Isn't it a mockery and a great grievance of his toil and exploitation?

The poet argues that while somebody takes the oil, others get the oil cakes but this poor fellow (ox) has to satisfy himself with only the useless husk. The oil-mills of the world are going on similarly. Every human being is struggling like the ox and there is no escape route to get out of it. So, the worker is bound to live without any ray of hope. That is why he turns immoral (Lafanga te Chor). In absence of fair play (justice) he is being exploited by affluent sections with false promises and so finds bound from all sides. Joblessness and hopelessness keep him tied to such sordid situation.

The prime of his life is wasted in sufferings but his expectations to enjoy are spent in crisis or miseries. When his children cry of hunger, then he becomes helpless and eagerly accepts the exploiting situation. How long the human beings will be treated like an ox in oil-mills and how long this helplessness will compel them to compromise with this exploitation? How long will he remain in darkness about empty consolation? How long will this unemployment go on and how long the person has to be contented with false hopes and exploitation?

The poet's call is for everyone to put a stop to such an exploiting position. The time is now taking a new turn and there should not be any delay to change it as the iron is hot and will show desirable results. Only we have to now strive a little more, the poet pleads in the poem, Kohlu.

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Appendix

Sahitya Akademi— Award Citation
Main Mela Ra Janu (poems in Dogri)
by Shri Kehri Singh Madhukar

"Sri Kehari Singh 'Madhukar' distinguished Dogri poet, was born at Gura Salathian in Jammu district in 1930. A graduate in arts from Government Gandhi Memorial Science College, Jammu, he joined the Jammu Station of Radio Kashmir in 1950. From 1962 to 1974 he edited *Sheeraza*, a quarterly journal of Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. Besides three collections of his poems, he has written verse-plays for the radio and one-act plays. During his tenure as Editor in the Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy, he edited scores of Dogri publications. He has translated 101 poems by Tagore into Dogri and his own poems have been translated into a number of Indian languages. His *Dola Kun Thappia*, received the Jammu and Kashmir Academy Award for 1964-65.

Main Mela Ra Janun is considered an outstanding contribution to Dogri literature for its deep human concern, richness of themes and a mastery over diction and style."