

Regional and local colour in ...

THE GOAN NOVEL



B.B. Borkar

Regional novel while concentrating on a particular part depicts the life of that region in such a way that the reader is conscious of the characteristics which are unique in that region and differentiates it from others in the common motherland. These features are seen predominantly in the novels written around 1950.

Earlier, there were a few attempts to depict the life in the region of Goa. Orlando de Costa's fiction in Portuguese, R.P. Barve's novel in Marathi and Joseph Furtado's work in English had the regional flavour. Around 1950, the authors almost without exception started turning away from the past by focusing their attention instead on contemporary problems.

The arrival of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia on the political scene in Goa was the immediate cause of the changed social and political situation. After 1950 one notices the emergence of the writers depicting social and political questions, taking broadly a humanitarian stance.

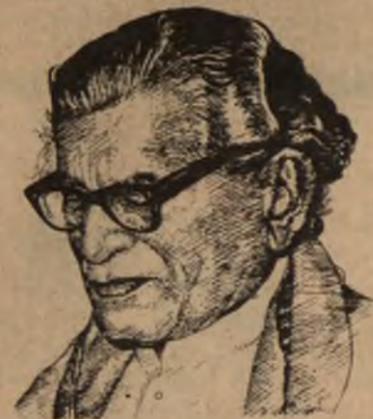
The poet B.B. Borkar offers trenchant comments on ethical practices and the social patterns in the region in his Marathi novel *Bhavin* (The Temple Prostitute, 1950). This novel is deeply rooted in the Goan soil. It narrates a tragic tale of an unfortunate young woman and her unconventional love. The class



V. J. Borkar

struggle in the region with the use of photographic technique is depicted by one of the pioneers of short story in Marathi Laxmanrao Sardesai in his novel *Mandavi Too Atalis*.

A significant work in regional literature before the liberation was the novel *Sorrowing Lies My Land* (1955) by Lambert Mascarenhas. It depicts a major political event in the history of Goa. It tells the melancholic story of the break up of a Goan Christian family under the strain of an



B.D. Satoskar

alien dictatorial rule. This regional novel presents a large array of characters of the various shades in society.

The writer describes the typical village fairs in Goa, bull fights, and the favourite pastimes of many Goans -- dancing, singing and drinking. He captures all the colours, sounds and aroma of the land. He is fully alive to the historic character of the region that he has chosen as a background. It is rich in local colour. The beliefs and customs of the people are described in great detail.

The writer occasionally sprinkles the dialectical usage in Konkani and Portuguese. Portuguese words like Regdor, Senhor and Konkani words like Babush, Battcar, Bai, Pai, though they help to create an atmosphere, sometimes obstruct the reader. The entire region of Goa smells of fish and feni. No wonder the writer makes use of apt imagery

to create the atmosphere. Here are a few examples:

"When she got angry her cheeks became red and her nostrils quivered like the gills of a fish".
"..... they came by land, packed like sardines in a train....."

Lambert Mascarenhas' novel is not in any limiting way regional. He has the serious artist's gift for achieving representativeness by concentration. It is a story of almost any oppressed people's growing awareness of its heritage.

The number of regional novels in Marathi since 1960 has been increasing. After the liberation, the main thematic concern has been the common man and his commonplace life in Goa. The prominent Marathi short story writer B.D. Satoskar depicts the fascination of Goans for music in his novel *Menaka*.

The life of the Christian community is described in great detail by V.G. Borkar in his *Anahat*. His later novels of the 1970's deal with urban life in the city of Panaji. It is infused with the feeling and atmosphere of the region. This trend gathered variety and strength during the next few years in the work of several novelists such as Subhash Bhende, Dnyaneshwar Kolawekar and Arun Heblekar.

Subhas' Bhende's novel *Amache Gaon Amaka Jai* is rich in local colour though the local dialect is rarely used. Dnyaneshwar Kolawekar's *Desperate* and *Prashnachinha* present the heart-rending despair at the state of things after liberation.



Subhash Bhende



Arun Heblekar

He makes use of Konkani words in the dialogue to create an effective atmosphere.

Arun Heblekar's short novel *Oh Johnny* describes the Goan's craze for football and *Rudra-*

By F. A. FERNANDES

mukhi deals with the transformation in contemporary society. In this novel the physical geography is never dealt with as a set piece but allowed to reveal itself beneath and between the

What is so attractive about the regional novel in Goa is the charm and authenticity of its local colour. What makes it immediately recognisable is that it seems to belong to a substantial human nature.

events and one comes to have a strong feeling for the place's identity.

R.K. Barve has successfully attempted the delineation of mining and its ill-effects on farming in Goa in his novel *Homkand*. Other writers whose work display some of the features of the regional novel are Munir Shaikh, V.S. Vaidya, Suresh Walimbe, Kumud Bandodkar, Indrayani Sawakar, etc. But many a time their writing is merely a documentary. It lacks the fictional appeal.

Literature in Konkani has flourished only after the liberation. Many renowned writers in

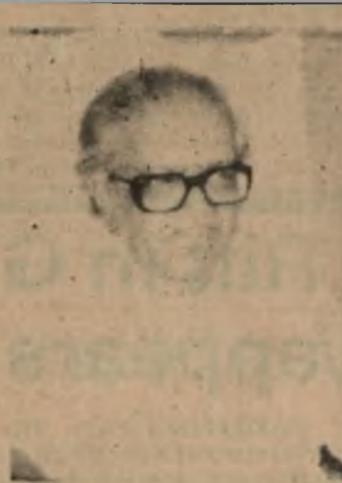


Laxmanrao Sardesai

Marathi turned to Konkani which was hitherto not much developed. Talented writers emerged on the literary scene around 1970. Much of the writing of this time is provincial.

The first Sahitya Akademy winner in Konkani Ravindra Kelekar presents a realistic picture in *Tulasi*. It is rooted in Goan tradition, thought and sensibility.

Regional novels that concentrate on bringing into focus the way of life in a limited area or in a particular community without sacrificing the fictional appeal, include the outstanding work *Achcheva* by Pundalik Nayak, another Sahitya Akademy winner. The environment chosen by him is socially backward and by and large undeveloped. The novel is based on the distinct change in life of Goan



Ravindra Kelekar

peasantry in the last 25 years since the exploration of iron and manganese mines. The farmers

have suddenly changed into factory workers. The peace of quiet village life has been shattered. Pandhari and his family is ruined in the whirlwind of the new way of fast life!

The turmoil in the life of these village folks in this part of Konkani, depicted in this novel is universal in characterisation.

The writer describes the minute details of farm-work, the village fairs in winter, dancing sessions of Dhalo and the changing nature scene from one season to the other. The novelist is adept at making his characters speak in rustic dialect with a heavy folkloric accent. It is very rich in local colour.

S.R. Desai a well-known critic in Konkani, has perceptively observed in his article on Konkani literature in *Indian Literature* 1, (Vol.XXI NO.6 1978: "This



Pundalik Nalk

writer of great potentiality has risen from the soil and his writing smells strongly of the cattle-pen, rice farms, and fish curry that he consumes with gusto".

In his second novel *Bambar* Nayak aims only to depict the true life of vice and sex in the lately established slum areas of Goan cities. The colloquialisms, eccentricities, vulgarity and primary urges of the unlettered are faithfully recorded in a naturalistic manner by the writer in his novels. Indeed Pundalik Nayak is a voice of great distinction. He is a trustworthy guide to the heart and mind of Goa.

Damodar Mauzo's Sahitya Akademy Award winning novel *Karmelin* cannot be called a regional novel. It describes the fate of Goans outside the country. A significant novel that displays the distinctive features of the regional novel is *Pakhlo* by Tukaram Seth. (Paklo is a Konkani word for the Europeans or the white skinned). It deals with psychological and social issues. Born of rape by a Portuguese soldier, young Vithu is ill-treated by everyone. He is asked to go to Portugal in search of his father. The agony of the young man is described by the writer. He has been successful in recreating the life in a Goan village. The language reflects the rustic modes of speech. The novel sets a trend of reconciling the claims of individual consciousness and social awareness.

As far as the question of the native idiom is concerned the following layers can easily be discerned in the regional novel in Goa.

- i) In the novels in Marathi one notes the use of Konkani words.
- ii) In the novels in English one notices the sprinkling of Portuguese and Konkani words.
- iii) In the novels in Konkani the employment of Konkani language differs from author to author, some use words and phrases as spoken by the common people in Goa; some use the phrases used by the villagers with frequent employment of proverbial saying. This use of language indicates the authors' intentions to lend an exotic regional flavour, to their writing.

The novels discussed above depict the life in the region of

Goa -- a small but beautiful corner of the Indian sub-continent. Many writers reflect their own urban and or rural background thus separating themselves from the experiences of life of the majority of their countrymen. Their concerns consequently must be understood as those of a very small minority in India.

This in itself is not necessarily a shortcoming of their act. What is so attractive about the regional novel in Goa is the charm and authenticity of its local colour. What makes it immediately recognisable is that it seems to belong to a substantial human nature.

Dr. Fernandes is a staffer in the Department of English at the Goa University.

book world
EXHIBITION
CUM SALE

VENUE: Institute Menezes' Braganza Hall, Panjim.

Date : 4th July to 14th July 1988

TIMING: 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. & 2.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

BOOKS ON

Electrical, Electronic, Civil & Mechanical Eng., Big range of Computer Science books, Medical books, Books on various subjects for Arts, Science and Commerce Faculties. Novels, Classics, Children books etc. etc.

DISCOUNT 10%

BROADWAY