

Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi: *Kavi kartavya* (1921/22)

The 'Dwivedi era' of Hindi poetry constituted the watershed between the declining tradition of rhetorical-cum-devotional verse, written mostly in Braj Bhāṣā, and new genres of Khaṛī Bolī poetry showing the literary influence of the English Romantics and the political influence of a new social awareness and Indian nationalism. The era takes its name from M.P. Dwivedi (1864–1938), who came to literature through an unorthodox route including clerical work in the Telegraph Department and the railways; as a result of moving with his employment from place to place he picked up a fluency in Gujarati, Marathi and Bengali as well as Sanskrit and English. From 1903 to 1920 he was editor of the Hindi literary magazine *Sarasvatī*, and during his reign in the editor's chair his pronouncements regarding linguistic and literary conventions were regarded as authoritative.

Dwivedi was anxious to broaden the reference of modern literature by making it more relevant to everyday life; in his editorials he sought to persuade fellow-writers to bridge the gulf between literary and colloquial styles, though this ideal was not always achieved even in his own writings. The essay *Kavi kartavya* or '*A Poet's Duty*', first published in 1921/22, deals primarily with choice of language, vocabulary, semantics, and theme, and represents a distillation of the topics regularly covered at greater length in the editorial columns of *Sarasvatī*. The extract given here is from sections entitled 'language' (*bhāṣā*) and 'subject' (*viṣay*).

The first paragraph argues for an end to the distinction between prose and verse styles, pointing out the fact that prose is a relatively new development in Hindi and underlining the need for a literary register which reflects the language use of 'civilized society'. He notes with approval the increasing use of metaphor and idiom in modern poetry, and looks forward to the confidently predicted day when Khaṛī Bolī will assume the status held by Braj Bhāṣā as the natural style for poetic composition.

The second paragraph makes scornful reference to the ivory-towered world of traditional Hindi verse, showing by contrast to its narrow range the infinite possibilities of theme open to the modern poet. His controversial views challenged long-established traditional values with important religio-cultural overtones; and Dwivedi buttresses his radical argument with an ironic voice. He maintains that the author must not depend upon the grace of his muse, the goddess Sarasvatī, as an automatic reward for the blind pursuit of literary rhetoric.

The text is taken from *Rasajñā-rañjan* (8th ed.) (Agra: Sahitya Press, 1949) pp.19–20 and 23–24.

The background is discussed in P. Gaeffke, *Hindi literature in the twentieth century* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1978), chapters 2–3; and more fully in Karine Schomer, *Mahadevi Varma and the Chhayavad age of modern Hindi poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), chapters 1 and 2.

कविता लिखने में व्याकरण के नियमों की अवहेलना न करनी चाहिए। शुद्ध भाषा का जितना मान होता है अशुद्ध का उतना नहीं होता। व्याकरण का विचार न करना कवि की तद्विषयक अज्ञानता का सूचक है। कोई-कोई कवि व्याकरण के नियमों की ओर दृक्पात तक नहीं करते। यह बड़े खेद और लज्जा की बात है। ब्रजभाषा की कविता में कविजन मनमानी निरंकुशता दिखलाते हैं। यह उचित नहीं। जहाँ तक सम्भव हो शब्दों का मूल-रूप न बिगड़ना चाहिए। . . .

गद्य और पद्य की भाषा पृथक्-पृथक् न होनी चाहिये। हिन्दी ही एक ऐसी भाषा है, जिसके गद्य में एक प्रकार की और पद्य में दूसरे प्रकार की भाषा लिखी जाती है। सभ्य-समाज की जो भाषा हो उसी भाषा में गद्य-पद्यात्मक साहित्य होना चाहिये। गद्य का प्रचार हिन्दी में थोड़े दिनों से हुआ है। पहले गद्य प्रायः न था; हमारा साहित्य केवल पद्यमय था। गद्य-साहित्य की उत्पत्ति के पहले पद्य में ब्रजभाषा ही का सार्वदेशिक प्रयोग होता था। अब कुछ अन्तर होने लगा है। गद्य की इस समय उन्नति हो रही है। अतएव अब यह सम्भव नहीं कि गद्य की भाषा का प्रभाव पद्य पर न पड़े। जो प्रबल होता है वह निर्बल को अवश्य अपने वशीभूत कर लेता है। यह बात भाषा के सम्बन्ध में भी तद्रत् पाई जाती है। पचास वर्ष पहले के कवियों की भाषा इस समय के कवियों की भाषा से मिला कर देखिए। देखने से तत्काल विदित हो जायगा कि आधुनिक कवियों पर बोल-चाल की हिन्दी भाषा ने अपना प्रभाव डालना आरम्भ कर दिया है; उनकी लिखी ब्रजभाषा की कविता में बोल-चाल (खड़ी-बोली) के जितने शब्द और मुहाविरें मिलेंगे उतने ५० वर्ष पहले कवियों की कविता में कदापि न मिलेंगे। यह निश्चित है कि किसी समय बोल-चाल की हिन्दी भाषा, ब्रज-भाषा की कविता के स्थान को अवश्य छीन लेगी। इसलिए कवियों को चाहिए कि वे क्रम-क्रम से गद्य की भाषा में भी कविता करना आरम्भ करें। बोलना एक भाषा और कविता में प्रयोग करना दूसरी भाषा, प्राकृतिक नियमों के विरुद्ध है। जो लोग हिन्दी बोलते हैं और हिन्दी ही के गद्य-साहित्य की सेवा करते हैं, उनके पद्य में ब्रज की भाषा का आधिपत्य बहुत दिनों तक नहीं रह सकता। . . .

कविता का विषय मनोरंजक और उपदेश-जनक होना चाहिए। यमुना के किनारे केलि-कौतूहल का अद्भुत-अद्भुत वर्णन बहुत हो चुका। न परकीयाओं पर प्रबन्ध लिखने की अब कोई आवश्यकता है और न स्वकीयाओं के "गतागत" की पहली बुझाने की। चींटी से लेकर हाथी पर्यन्त पशु; भिक्षुक से लेकर राजा पर्यन्त मनुष्य; बिन्दु से लेकर समुद्र पर्यन्त जल; अनन्त आकाश; अनन्त पृथ्वी; अनन्त पर्वत - सभी पर कविता हो सकती है; सभी से उपदेश मिल सकता है और सभी के वर्णन से मनोरंजन हो सकता है। फिर क्या कारण है कि इन विषयों को छोड़ कर कोई कोई कवि स्त्रियों की चेष्टाओं का वर्णन करना ही कविता की चरम सीमा समझते हैं? केवल अविचार और अन्ध-परम्परा! यदि "मेघनाद वध" अथवा "यशवन्तराव महाकाव्य" वे नहीं लिख सकते, तो उनको ईश्वर की निःसीम सृष्टि में से छोटे-छोटे सजीव अथवा निर्जीव पदार्थों को चुन कर उन्हीं पर छोटी-छोटी कविताएँ करनी चाहिए। अभ्यास करते-करते शायद, कभी, किसी समय, वे इससे अधिक योग्यता दिखलाने में समर्थ हों और दण्डी कवि के कथनानुसार शायद कभी वाग्देवी उन पर सचमुच ही प्रसन्न हो जायँ। नायिका के हाव-भावादि के वर्णन का अभ्यास करने वालों पर भी सरस्वती की कृपा हो सकती है; परन्तु तदर्थ उसकी उपासना न करना ही अच्छा है।

The literary nature of Dwivedi's subject naturally calls for a Sanskritized register; but the use of mostly very short sentences ensures the clarity of expression which Dwivedi was so concerned to maintain in his and others' writing.

3 *tadviṣayak ajñāntā kā sūcak*: 'an indication of ignorance in that subject'. S *tadviṣayak* comprises *tat* 'that', *viṣay* 'subject' + ext. *-k* for adj. sense.

4 *kavijan*: 'poets', *jan* being used as a pluralizing suf. (cf. HU *log*).

7 *prthak-prthak*: this reduplication of the S adjective for 'separate, distinct' reflects the H usage *alag-alag* — a classic example of a loan translation comprising borrowed vocabulary grafted onto H syntax. (Cf. also Indian E 'different-different'.)

7 *hindī hī ek aisī bhāṣā hai, jiske...*: 'H is the only language whose...'. The statement is manifestly untrue, a distinct poetic register being a stylistic feature of many languages — not least U. Cf. 21, where the distinction is described as being 'against the laws of nature'.

8 *sabhya-samāj*: 'civilised [i.e. H-speaking Hindu!] society'; the hyphen buttresses the postulation that such an institution is readily identifiable.

9 *gadya-padyātmak*: a compound in which the adj. suf. *-ātmak* 'of the nature of' relates to both the preceding nouns.

11 *sārvadeśik*: the elements of this adj. are the *vṛddhi* form of *sarva* 'all' + *deś* 'place'; and usage of the H term to some extent reflects the currency of E 'universal'. Dwivedi's statement is rather sweeping: not all pre-modern H verse was in Braj Bhāṣā.

14 *vaśībhūt*: 'subject, brought under control': *vaśī-* (a form of *vaś* 'power, control' used in compounds) + *bhūt* 'become'.

14 *tadvat*: 'similar(ly)'; S *tat* 'that' in sandhi with *vat* '-like'. (611) Cf. 15 *tatkāl* 'at that time, immediately', and 38 *tadarth* 'with that object, for that end'.

15 *milā kar dekhie*: 'bring together and look', i.e. 'compare'.

20 *kaviyon ko cāhie ki ve... ārambh karen*: 'it behoves poets to begin...'. This impersonal construction allows an elegant alternative to the blunter *kaviyon ko... ārambh karnā cāhie* 'poets should begin...'.
 21 *kavitā karnā*: 'to compose verses, to versify'.

21 *bolnā ek bhāṣā aur kavitā meh prayog karnā dūsri bhāṣā*: the word order picks out *ek bhāṣā* and *dūsri bhāṣā* for emphasis, with the sense 'for one language to be used in speech, and a different one in poetry'.

22 *gadya-sāhitya kī sevā*: the 'service' of H and its literature is a frequently aired concept; cf. U *xidmat-e urdū*.

23 *braj kī bhāṣā kā ādhipatyā bahut dinoh tak nahīn rah saktā*: the history of twentieth century H literature has of course proved Dwivedi right.

25 *updeś-janak*: 'bearing a message, edifying', i.e. 'morally improving'.

25 *yamunā ke kināre keli-kautūhal kā adbhut-adbhut varṇan*: 'weird-and-wonderful description of the sports and revels on the Yamuna's bank' — an allusion to the mythology of Krishna which is so prominent in Braj poetry. The extravagant wording of the phrase is in deliberate and effective contrast to the colloquial *bahut ho cukā* 'we've had enough of that'.

26 *parkīyā... svakīyā*: these are the two principal categories of heroine in the rhetoric of Indian poetics, categorizing the woman as being 'the wife of another' or '(the lover's) own wife'. In the context of Krishna and Radha, the distinction has theological implications and is much discussed.

27 "*gatāgat*" *kī pahelī bujhāne*: 'to talk in riddles of the "coming-and going"', i.e. the various romantic contexts which are the stock-in-trade of Braj Bhāṣā poetry. The 'riddles' referred to are the complex rhetorical word-plays which feature so commonly in early H verse.

27 *cihṅī se lekar hāthī paryyant paśu*: 'animals from the ant to the elephant'; formal oppositions of this kind are a commonplace in rhetorical writing. Cf. 34 *sajīv athvā nirjīv*.

28 *paryyant*: the usual spelling is *paryant*, i.e. *pari-* + *ant* in sandhi combination (611). The doubling of a consonant or semi-vowel in a conjunct with preceding *r* is a common tendency in S, though its appearance in H is now somewhat archaic; cf. *dharmmī*, *varmmā* etc. It probably derives from a re-Sanskritization of the Prakrit form from which a dropped *r* had been compensated for by doubling of the consonant (521), thus *dharmi* > *dhammi* > *dharmmi* etc.

31 *chor kar*: the cj. pt. 'abandoning', rather than the ppn. 'apart from'.

32 *meghnād-vadh*, *yaśvantrāv mahākāvya*: 'The Death of Meghnad', a Bengali poem by Madhusudan Datta (1861) translated into Hindi by Maithilisharan Gupta (1886–1964), the leading poet of Dwivedi's time; and 'The Epic of Yashvantrao', an epic poem of uncertain composition.

35 *kabhī, kisī samay*: 'sometime, at some juncture' — the tautology stresses (rather unkindly) the remoteness of the possibility alluded to.

35 *ve isse adhik योग्यातं दिखलाने मेह समार्थ होह*: 'they may be capable of showing greater capacity than this', i.e. than of restricting themselves to *choṭī choṭī kavītāeh* on narrowly defined topics and themes.

36 *dandī kavi*: Dandin, a S poet of the seventh century. (The H *-ī* ending derives from the nominative s. of the S *-in* declension). Dandin's dictum from the *Kāvyaḍarśa*, cited in a note excised from this passage, maintains that Sarasvati (whose epithet *Vāgdevī* means 'goddess of speech') bestows her grace on all those who, even though untalented, persevere with their attempts at poetry through devotion and through study of the *śāstras*; Dwivedi may intend a playful reference to his own journal *Sarasvatī*, whose patronage was commonly sought by aspiring writers of H.

38 *tadarth uskī upāsnā na karnā hī acchā hai*: 'it is better not to worship her with that aim' — a gentle warning, framed with the tactful diplomacy of an impersonal construction, that the grace of the muse should not be relied upon as automatically to be bestowed.