

Rajasthani Language and Literature

Rajasthani language refers to the mother tongue of the people of Rajasthan. Marubhasha, which was the language of Western Rajasthan, was also one of the 18 native languages mentioned in Kuvalayamala written by Udyottan Suri in Vikram Samvata 835 (913 A.D).

It was George Abraham Grierson who first used the term Rajasthani in 1912 in the Linguistic Survey of India for the languages of Rajasthan. He used this term as a collective noun for various languages spoken in the region. Now, this term has become popular denoting the languages of the Rajasthan state. Marwari, Mewari, Dhundari, Mewati, Hadoti etc. are the various dialects or sub dialects of this language.

Origin and Development of Rajasthani Language

Till the 10th century AD, the language spoken in the region now called Rajasthan was greatly influenced by the *Apabhramṣa* languages which were spoken in Western India. Though the origin of Rajasthani language dates back to 11th -12th century AD, but after the 16th century, Rajasthani Language developed as an independent language. Regarding the development of Rajasthani Language, it can be said that 'Vedic Sanskrit' is the mother of all Indian languages, which, due to its linguistic intricacies, was later converted into laukik (secular) Sanskrit. When laukik Sanskrit became rigid and jargoned, it was replaced by Pali. When Pali began to deviate away from the people, it got replaced by Prakrit. As it is believed that language flows from simple to complex, so when Prakrit grew abstruse, then Apabhramṣa evolved in different forms in different areas. Rajasthani language also developed from *Apabhramṣa*.

Generally, three *Apabhramṣa* languages– Shaurseni apabhransha, Nagar apabhransha and Marugurjari apabhransha–are referred to vis-à-vis the development

of the Rajasthani language and every scholar interprets the role of Apabhraṃśa in his own way. Among all the interpretations, the one that propounds that Rajasthani evolved out of 'Marugurjari Apabhraṃśa' seems more appropriate. According to this view Marubhasha (Rajasthani) evolved from Marugurjari Apabhraṃśa and Gujarati language evolved from Gurjari. Both these languages, Rajasthani and Gujarati, evince grammatical similarities too.

Regional Dialects

Dr. Grierson has divided Rajasthani dialects in five main groups. But broadly Rajasthani dialects can be divided into two categories-

1. Western Rajasthani: Marwari, Mewari, Bagdi, Shekhawati.
2. Eastern Rajasthani: Dhundari, Hadoti, Mewati, Ahirwati (Rathi).

Important Dialects of Rajasthani

Marwari – Historically and geographically, Marwar holds an important place in the Annals of Rajasthan. Geographical area of Marwar has remained very vast and the dialect spoken in this area is called Marwari. This is the reason why Marwari is very important among all the Rajasthani dialects and relatively more literature has been produced in this dialect. Due to this reason, sometimes, it is regarded as synonymous with Rajasthani. The erstwhile Marwar state occupied the western parts of Rajasthan, which is why Marwari is also called the dialect of the Western Rajasthan.

In present times, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Jaisalmer, Pali and parts of Shekhawati are affiliated to this dialect. Thali and Gorwari are its sub dialects.

Mewari – Broadly speaking, the of the region under the erstwhile Mewar State is Mewari. The literary tradition of Mewari has also been very rich. The literary achievements of the Mewari writers are comparable to those of the Marwari writers.

In modern Rajasthan, the area of Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Rajsamand and Bhilwara can be called the area of Mewari dialect. The dialect spoken in the hilly regions of Mewar is called Parvati Mewari and the dialect spoken in the plains is called 'Maidani Mewari'.

Dhundari – Dhundari is the dialect spoken in the ancient Dhundar region, which has remained associated with the Amber State. An important feature of this dialect is the usage of word, Chhe. The use of this word indicates the Gujarat influence on this dialect.

The area of Jaipur, Dausa, Dudu is called Dhundar. Torawati, Rajawati, Nagarchola etc. are its subdialects.

Hadoti – The dialect spoken in the region that was ruled by the Hada Rajputs has been called the Hadoti dialect. In this dialect also we can see the use of word Chhe (छे) just as in Dhundari.

Hadoti is the dialect of Kota, Bundi, Jhalawar and Baran region.

Mewati – The area of Alwar and parts of Bharatpur is also known as Mewat and the dialect spoken here is Mewati. The scope of this language extends to the areas of Haryana around Rajasthan. In the areas close to Bharatpur we can see the influence of Brij language on this dialect.

Wagadi – The language spoken in the Wagad area of Rajasthan is called Wagdi. This language is spoken in the areas of Banswara, Dungarpur and the nearby hilly areas. A clear Gujarati influence can be seen on this language.

Malawi – Since the ancient times Malwa has remained closely connected with Rajasthan, therefore, the impact of the Malawi dialect can be seen on the dialect spoken in the areas of Rajasthan which were in close proximity to Malwa. It is very difficult to distinguish between the dialects spoken in these areas and Malawi. Therefore, Malawi is also considered as a dialect of Rajasthani. The area this dialect in Rajasthan is Pratapgarh. Ratlam, Jhabua etc. are the areas of Madhya Pradesh where this dialect is spoken. ‘Rangdi and Neemadi’ are its sub dialects.

Shekhawati – The region called Shekhawati was named after Rao Shekha. The dialect spoken in this areas is called Shekhawati. Today the areas of Churu, Jhunjhunu, Hanumangarh, Suratgarh and Ganganagar are the area of this dialect.

Bhili and other Hilly Dialects – In Rajasthan a major part of the tribal population still resides in the hilly regions. Among these tribes, Bhil, Meena, Garasiya are some of the more important tribes. In these tracts, population wise, the Bhils predominate. Therefore, Bhili is the main dialect of this region.

Thus, we may say that languages evolve out of the dialects. And the Rajasthani language evolved out of the dialects of the various communities residing in Rajasthan.

Rajasthani literature

History and Tradition of Rajasthani Literature– The early literature of Rajasthani is available in the form of inscriptions. The literature which is engraved on inscriptions, coins and seals is called archival literature. Though the body of literature available in this form is meagre, but whatever material is available is of great literary and historical importance.

The influence of the oral tradition on Rajasthani literature is clearly visible. It

retains many features of the oral or folk literature. The oral tradition, generally, is an exhaustive repository of the experience of the people of all spheres of life.

The historical tradition of Rajasthani literature may be presented in the following form -

S.No.	Period	Trend	Chronology
1.	Ancient Period	Viragatha Period	1050-1450 AD
2.	Pre-Medieval Period	Bhakti Period	1450 -1650 AD
3.	Post Medieval Period	Shringaar, Riti and Niti Period	1650-1850 AD
4.	Modern Period	Period representing diverse tendencies and rise of new genres	1850 AD - To date

1. Ancient Period – Viragatha Period (1050-1450 AD)

India has faced continuous incursions since the ancient period through its western borders. The incursions affected this region deeply. Its rulers had to contend with these attacks. In such a situation, to keep the morale of the society high, tales of the heroic deeds of its heroes were composed in poetic form. Due to the predominance of the heroic poetry during this period, it came to be called the Viragatha Period. An important work of this period is Rannmal Chhand of Sridhar Vyas. The Jain works of this period are also worth mentioning.

2. Pre-Medieval Period – Bhakti Period (1450 -1650 AD) –

Rajasthan has a long history of conflict and wars and these wars deeply affected its religion and culture. These conflicts gave rise to political expansionism and propagation of religion. The political strife was a challenge to peace and tranquility. In these conditions common man sought refuge in devotion (Bhakti) to God. These were the times when we see rise of Bhakti Movement propagated by the bhakti saints who showed the path to the common man. They tried to give a concrete form to the dream of ideal society by eradicating all discrimination through their teachings. Due to the predominance of the compositions of these saints and the devotees, this period is called bhakti period.

During this period many a saint established their own sects, which became very popular among the masses. The important sects of this period are Ramsnehi, Nathpanth, Alakhiya, Vishnoi and Jasnathi. These sects emphasized on the importance of remembering God all the time (naam smaran), worshipping the God

without attributes (nirguna Ishwar) importance of guru and eradication of caste discrimination. They declared, 'Nobody should care for the caste, one who remembers God, belongs to God.' (jaat-pant poochai na koi, hari ko bhajai so hari ko hoi).

Along with the Nirgun saints, there was another stream of bhakti propagated by the sagun saint-poets, the worshippers of God with attributes (sagun Ishwar) who also invoked and glorified their God through their compositions. The verses of Bhakt Shiromani Meera Bai, Veli Kisan Rukmani Ri by Prithviraj Rathore, Ramraso of Madhudas Dadhwadiya, Harirasos of Isardas, Naag Daman of Devyaan Sayanji Jhoola are some major compositions of the Sagun bhakta poets.

3. Post Medieval Period – Shringar or Riti Period (1650-1850A.D) –

The post-medieval Rajasthani literature dealt with diverse themes. This period was of political tranquility. Rulers gave patronage to artists and authors who developed diverse dimensions of literature and art. In this period works focusing on shringar or riti and niti were composed. The folktales of romance became the subject of many works. Some important works of this period include Raghunath Rupak of Kavi Manchharam, evocative didactic (nitikarak) poetry Rajiya ra Sortha', Chakariya ra Sortha', Bheriya ra Sortha', 'Motiya ra Sortha' etc.

4. Modern Period- Period of different subjects and genres (1850 AD-till date)

After the First Indian War of Independence (1857), a new consciousness arose in the society which impacted almost every class of society and even literature did not remain untouched. A new consciousness developed in literature which marks the beginning of the modern period in literature.

The dawn of the new consciousness in literature was announced by Kaviraja Bankidas of Marwar and Suryamal Misan of Bundi. Their revolutionary ideas awakened the society and this awakening was carried forward by the future generations of writers. This awakening culminated in the achievement of freedom by the country.

In the sphere of modern Rajasthani literature – both in poetry and prose, a lot of writers have been contributing and enriching it.

Genres of Rajasthani Prose and Poetry

Khyat

Rulers of princely states have treasured the accounts of their valour, victories and other important deeds by getting their history written by the chroniclers. These accounts are called Khyats. Many Khyats were written during the medieval period.

Some of the more famous Khyats are Dayaldas ri Khyat' by Dayaldas which is an account of the history from Rao Bika of Bikaner to Maharaja Anup Singh. Bankidas ri Khyat, Jodhpur Rajya ri Khyat etc. are some other khyats Munhta Nainsi ri Khyat by Munhta Nainsi is a preeminent work of the khyat tradition.

Vachnika

Derived from the sanskrit word vachan Vachnika emerged as a genre of literature during the medieval period. Vachnika is written in a rhyming prose-poetry form. The two most famous Vachnikas are Achaldas Khinchi ri Vachnika by Shivdas Gaadan and Khidiya Jagga ri Kahi (as told by) by Rathore Rattan Singh

Dawavait

Dawavait is another form of artistic prose, quite similar to Vachnika. Vachnika was written in Rajasthani, whereas in Dawavait Urdu and Persian words are used as well. The Dawavait sing the glory of the protagonist of the story. Akhmaal Deora ri Dawavait, Maharana Jawan Singh ri Dawavait, Raja Jai Singh ri Dawavait are some major Dawavait texts.

Vaat

Vaat is a genre just like telling and listening a story. The storyteller goes on telling the story and the listener responds with a 'yes' from time to time to show that he is listening to the story with interest. These vaats throw light on the various aspects of life – war, dharma, philosophy, entertainment and so on. Vaats are available in three forms – prose, poetry and prose-poetry. Rao Amar Singh ji ri Vaat, Khinchiya ri Vaat, Pabuji ri Vaat, Kanhad de ri Vaat, Achaldas Khinchi ri Vaat are some important works of this genre.

Jhamaal

Jhamaal is metric verse of Rajasthani poetry. In Jhamaal, first a complete couplet and then at the fifth stage the last line of the couplet is repeated. Rao Indra Singh ri Jhamaal is one of the most famous Jhamaal.

Jhoolna

Jhoolna is written in metric verses. Amar Singh Rathore ra Jhoolna, Raja Gaj Singh ra Jhoolna, Rao Surtan-Devre-ra-Jhoolna are a few important Jhoolna works.

Parchi

The life history of the saints which is available in poetry form in Rajasthani language is known as Parchi. Sant Namdev ri Parchi, Kabir ri Parchi, Sant Pipa ri Parchi, Sant Dadu ri Parchi, -Mirabai ri Parchi, are some important compositions in this genre of Rajasthani literature.

Prakas

The works which throw light on the achievements and incidents of a particular individual and dynasty are called Prakas. Rajprakas by Kishore Das, Mahayash Prakas by Ashiya Mansingh, Suraj Prakas by Karnidan are important Prakas texts.

Marasya

These works were composed to mourn the death of a king or an important person. Marasya described the character, traits and other commendable works of the person. Rane Jagpat ra Marasya was written to mourn the death of Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar.

Raso

According to Motilal Menaria, the poetic text where we find description of the greatness of a king, his conquests, wars, valour is called raso. Among the raso texts, Prithviraj Raso by Chand Bardai, Beesaldeo Raso, by Narpati Nalha, Sagat Raso by Girdhar Asiya, Khuman Raso by Dalpat Vijay, Ratan Raso by Kumbhkaran and Hammir Raso by Jodhraj are worth mentioning.

Rupak

Rupak is the kind of poetry work which describes the great achievements of a dynasty or an individual. Gajgunrupak, Rupak Gogadeji Ro and Raj Rupak are some important Rupak texts.

Vigat

Vigat gives detailed account of the subject it takes up to describe. In terms of history, it refers to the ruler, his family, important persons of the State and their contributions in social and political spheres. The data available in the Vigats is also useful to know the economic conditions of those times. Marwar Ra Pargana Ri Vigat, by Munhta Nainsi gives an account of the population, boundaries, types of soil, types of crops, means of irrigation of each pargana.

Veli

Veli texts are written in 'velio' verses. They deal with diverse subjects—religious and historical. Daidas Jaitawat Ri Veli, Ratanasi Khiwavat Ri Veli and Rao Ratan Ri Veli are some important Veli texts.

Saakhi

The term saakhi originated from the term sakshi. The Saakhis contain the spiritual experiences and knowledge. Saakhis were written in soratha (a popular metre in the medieval poetry) verse. Kabir's Saakhis are well known and widely read poetry.

Siloka

Siloka are the compositions of moderately educated people. Therefore, they may be said to voicing the sentiments of ordinary men. Some important Silokas are Rao Amarsingh Ra Siloka, Ajmalji Ro Siloko, Rathore Kusal Singh Ro Siloko, Bhati Kehar Singh Ro Siloko.

Modern Rajasthani literature

Kaviraj Bankidas of Marwar and Suryamal Misan of Bundi sowed the seeds of national consciousness in the minds of the people of Rajasthan, which later reflected in the poetry of the poets of modern period. Hingalajdan Kaviya and Shankardan Samore should also be mentioned along with them. Modernity is not only related to time, it is also associated with ideas, and the way of looking at the world. Scientific outlook to understand life and realistic approach are the main characteristics of modernity. Poetic compositions of Umardan depict a poignant picture of the people suffering from famine during samvat 1956. It also exposed the hypocrisy of the monks. Ramnath Kaviya through his Draupadi Vinay awakened women consciousness.

Kesari Singh Bareth, Vijaysingh Pathik, Jai Narayan Vyas, Heeralal Shastri, Gokul Bhai Bhatt, Manikyalal Verma, Jan Kavi Ganeshilal Vyas are those poets of Rajasthan who not only participated in the freedom struggle but also made their pen a weapon for this struggle. Ganeshilal is one such poet who himself participated in the struggle for freedom and also strongly expressed his disillusionment post-independence through his poems. The compositions of Rewatdan Charan awakened the common man on feudal exploitation.

Many Rajasthani poets made Kavi Sammelans an instrument to spread their message among the masses. There was a time when Meghraj Mukul's senani was counted among the most popular poems read in the Kavi Sammelans. Satyaprakash Joshi, with his original and unconventional thinking was held in high esteem by the people. His poetic work Radha published in 1960 is remarkable from the point of view that where the Rajasthani poems sang the paeons of war, Joshi, condemns war and sends a message to Sri Krishna through his Radha to prevent the war. Similarly, the compositions of Kanhaiyya Lal Sethia (whose song Dharti Dhoran Ri can be called the iconic song of Rajasthan) have the force to awaken even a sleeping soul. Meenjhar and Lilatans are the major poetry collections of Sethia ji.

The first phase of modern poetry lasted till the middle of the seventh decade. During this phase, many literary magazines and journals of Rajasthani language, Maruvani, Jalambhaum, Jankari, Olamo, Laadesar, Haraval, Rajasthali, Isarlat, Rajasthani – Ek halo, Deeth, Chamal, Aparanch etc. were being published. Through

these publications many new poets came to the fore. This was the period when compositions like *Judaav* of Paras Arora, *Gaon* by Gordhan Singh Shekhawat, *Kathai Kin Vhaigau Hai* by Tej Singh Jodha, *Sojati Gate*, *Pagfero*, of Mani Madhukar, *Bole Sarnaato*, *Bathan Mein Bhoogol*, *Paagi*, *Kavad*, *Marag* by Chandra Prakash Dewal, 'Rindrohi' by Arjundeo Charan, 'Utryo Hai Abhau' by Malchand Tiwari took Rajasthani literature to new heights.

Shiv Chandra Bhartiya may be called the first prose writer of Rajasthani literature. Lakshmi Kumari Chundawat brought the past glory of Rajasthan alive with her stories – *Manjhal Raat*, *Amolak Vataan*, *Mumal*, *Gir Uncha Uncha Garhan*, *Kai Re Chakwa baat* etc. Vijayadan Detha made a unique compilation of folk tales scattered around in Rajasthan in his series *Baataan Ri Phulwari* (14 volumes) that earned him fame. Few important Rajasthani-Hindi story collections of Vijayadan Detha are – *Duvidha*, *Uljhan*, *Alekhu Hitler*, *Sapan Priya*, *Antaraal* etc. A film called 'Paheli' is an adaptation of Vijayadan Detha's *Duvidha*. His work *Choudhary Ki Chaturai* has also been very well received. The stories of Yadvendra Sharma Chandra have been compiled in his collections – *Jamaaro*, *Samand Ar Thar* and some of his novels are – *Hun Gori Kin Peev Ri*, *Jog Sanjog* and *Chanda Sethani*.

Similarly, the story collection of Nathmal Joshi – *Paranyodi-Kanwari* and novels – *Abhaiy Pataki*, *Dhoran Ri Dhori*, *Ek Binani Do Been* are very popular. Dr Nar Singh Rajpurohit, Annaram Sudama, Rameshwar Dayal Srimali, Dr Manohar Sharma and Sanvar Daiya are some other popular story writers.

Literary Journalism

Literary journalism of Rajasthan has a glorious history. These literary, short and occasional journals have given impetus to the writing in Rajasthani as well as provided a platform to the litterateurs of the Hindi speaking regions. *Vatayn* of Bikaner (Harish Bhadani), *Ajmer Ki Lehar* (Prakash Jain), *Bharatpur ki Or* (Vijendra), *Sambodhan* from Kankroli (Kamar Mewari), *Kavita* from Alwar (Bhagirath Bhargava), *Bindu* from Udaipur have provided a high standard forum to many writers. *Sampreshan* (Chandrabhanu Bhardwaj) and *Madhumadhvi* (Nalini Upadhyay) along with *Madhumati*, *Journal of Rajasthan Sahitya Akademi* contributed in creating a literary environment in Rajasthan. Among the Rajasthani language journals, apart from *Jagti Jot* of Rajasthani Bhasha, *Sahitya Evam Sanskriti Academy*, Bikaner, *Harawal* by Satyaprakash Joshi, *Olyun* by Kishore Kalpnakant, *Maruvani* founded by Kavi Chandra Singh are some other prominent Rajasthani journals.

The whole discussion above is a brief introduction of the rich Rajasthani literature. The treasure house of Rajasthani literature is so vast and enormous that it is not possible to present it within the limits of a chapter.

Exercise

Multiple Choice Questions

1. 'Baataan Ri phulwari' is written by-
(a) Malchand Tiwari (b) Laxmi Kumari
(c) Shrilal (d) Vijaydan Detha
2. That poetic text where we find description of glory, wars and valour of a king is-
(a) Rupak (b) Raso (c) Vigat (d) Veli

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. Name two dialects of western Rajasthan.
2. What do you understand by Jhamaal.
3. Name two important poetry collection of Kanahiya Lal Sethia.
4. Rane Jagpat Ra Marasya was written to mourn the death of which ruler?
5. Who was the first to use word 'Rajasthani' for the language of Rajasthan?
6. Bhili is a sub dialect of which dialect?

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Differentiate between Vachnika and Dawavait.
2. Write note on Mewati dialect.
3. Differentiate between Vigat and Veli.
4. Throw light on nationalist poet and his writings in the modern period.
5. Express your views on literary journalism.

Essay Type Questions

1. Describe the various dialects of Rajasthan and their scope.
2. Write a detailed article on modern literature of Rajasthani language.

Project work :

1. Collect and paste the pictures of various writers of Rajasthani language in your scrap book.

Imagine :

1. You are on a journey to the rural areas of Udaipur and Chittor, which dialects you will find people speaking there ?