

SK: You are a poet. Could you please tell us about your Kosli poetry collection “Maraguda” and other Kosli language books?

SKM: Maraguda is my first poem collection. The book got published in the year 2006. My another published book is a short story named as Raet sarta Tamar Sange and one more collection of short stories entitled Chere Guda is soon to be published. I can say on my literary works in kosli language that all are serious writings and can be compared with the literature of other languages.

SK: How would you explain the broader significance of your literary work to a layperson from western Odisha?

SKM: The basic purpose of a writer is to connect to his people, the readers. I always chose theme from the locality and most of my characters are also drawn from the region. Its like reflecting back through my memories and experiences with the rural folk. So when I started writing in Kosli it brought the common men closer to my theme and characters. The basic technique to connect to the laypersons is to give them a sense of involvement in the storyline which I do through selection of my theme and language. Apart from these the locales I use is also very much close to the heart of the common persons. They can easily locate themselves with the names, settings, mountains, lands, forests everything and that way they will never feel the sense of alienation or isolation.

SK: Do you know about the research work done by Dr. Dologobind Bishi? Can you tell us briefly about his book “Kosli Bhasa Ra Sankhipta Parichaya”?

SKM: Yes, I heard about that book. But till now not got chance to see that book. Dr Bishi is a very hard working and a person with full of knowledge. Seen other his some works. Recently seen the Koshli dictionary of Narasingha Prasad guru, which is really a very excellent work.

SK: What is your philosophy of teaching in Kosli language at school level? Can you recommend few Kosli poetry books, which can be taught in school and college level?

SKM: Kosli is the mother tongue of the people of this region. Their imagination and sensibility is associated with this language. But ironically they are taught in Odia language right from the beginning. Thus from their childhood we suppress their creativity. We give them a language they cannot express spontaneously. So yes, there should be provision of imparting teaching in Kosli language in addition to Odia and other languages. Not merely language selection of curricula is also important. We impose such curricula to which the children are not very familiar. So this coastal-centric approach needs to be changed.

SK: What is the most significant piece of Kosli book that you have read in the last few years? Please tell us about it.

SKM: The dictionary prepared by Narsingh Prasad guru. Everyone should collect, read and preserve that book.

SK: People from western Odisha are demanding inclusion of Kosli language in the 8th schedule. Do you think it is possible? Who are all contributing towards the Kosli language movement at the grassroots level?

SKM: Yes it is possible. Kosli is a full-fledged language. Research has already proved that Kosli is an independent language and not an off-shoot of Odia as is believed by many. It has directly originated from Prakrut. When people of such a vast land speak in this language with such natural rhythm how can this be underestimated? Another important development during the recent years is that people have started producing literature in Kosli language. There are initiatives at individual and group level. But I do admit that the kind of efforts required to put forth the voice of the region is still lacking.

SK: Recently, Shri Haladhar Nag was awarded Padma Shri for his contribution to Kosli literature. In this context, what do you think about the future of Kosli language? Do you think by awarding Shri Nag, Govt. of India has recognised the Kosli language?

SKM: Very bright. Yes in a way this is a direct acknowledgement of Kosli as a full-fledged language. In the case of Haldhar Nag it is proved beyond doubt that formal language has nothing to do with creativity when it comes to expressing yourself through your mother tongue. But had it been Odia or any other language, Haldhar might not have been what he is today. That is the basic difference between writing in your own language and in an alien one. Another important dimension as I see in conferring Haldhar with the prestigious Padmashri is the inspiration he will give to the youngsters to carry forward the baton of writing in Kosli.

SK: Do young people today have a sense of Kosli language and culture?

SKM: Yes. Young people of our area are well aware of Kosli language and literature. But the problem is not of sense, rather of opportunity and choice. They speak in Kosli in their families and among friends. But when they come out of this orbit they have to twist their role. As far as reading and writing are concerned also they do not have much of a choice. But they have very much a sense of Kosli language and culture. Now a day's young people are writing their love letters in Kosli languages in a beautiful manner. How can they forget their roots?

SK: Is there anything you would like others to know that we have not included here about you or your work?

SKM: I am also a folk researcher. Done a lot of work on folk ballad of western Odisha. Collected two big size ballad also. Undertaking research in folklore, folk-traditions etc. is always revealing. Speaking to the folk, sharing their experience is always insightful and stimulating. I shape my theme and characters through such interactions.

SK: Thank you very much!

SKM: Thanks.