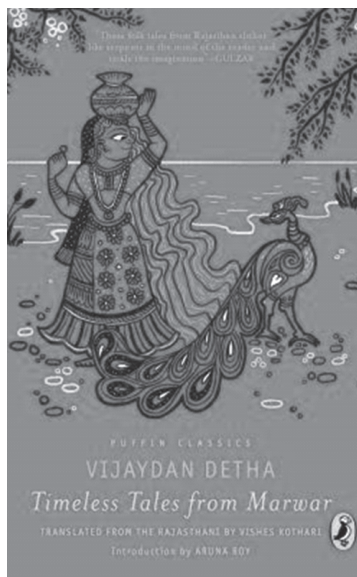


Book Review

Shrutika Methi

Title	: <i>Timeless Tales from Marwar</i>
Author	: Vijaydan Detha
Translator	: Vishes Kothari
Publisher	: Penguin Random House India
Year	: 2020
No. of Pages	: 235
Price	: ₹ 250



Timeless Tales from Marwar is a retelling of Vijaydan Detha's collection of magnificent folktales from the land of Rajasthan. It was originally written in Rajasthani language by Detha in his magnum opus, '*Batan ri Phulwari*' or '*Garden of Tales*' and translated in English by Vishes Kothari. This book consists of seventeen stories enriched with the wisdom and farsightedness of the diversity living in the Thar. These tales are originally part of oral tradition. These stories are packed with wisdom that has proliferated through these folktales into generations through oral culture. This collection of short stories was launched at the inaugural session of the JLF's 2020 edition. The book contains an introduction by Aruna Roy, a social activist.

Vijaydan Detha was a distinguished Indian writer of the Rajasthani language. He is popularly known as 'Bijji'. He was recipient of the *Padma Shri* award, the *Sahitya Akademi* Award, and the *Rajasthan Ratan* Award. He was the co-founder of Rupayan Sansthan. His stories and novels have been adopted in theatre and films also. He transformed the process of storytelling into a creative exegesis. Shakespeare of Rajasthan is his sobri-

quet. His works have been translated into English and Hindi which makes his work accessible to a wider audience.

The short stories are written in an epigrammatic style and have employed magical realism into the narrative style which produces astonishing imagery. There are a gamut of characters from personable Raj Kanwar (Prince), witches, thakars (Landlords), and personified animals and insects and so much more to tickle our imagination. Every character has their space and respect. The tales are rooted in the tradition and culture of Rajasthan. These stories are of commoners and bring forth experiences of their lives. The different social strata of society are represented in this collection. These stories are packed with wisdom and humor. The age-old wisdom is relevant for all the time and ages to come.

The titles of the stories are themselves engrossing. Some of them are 'The Kelu Tree', 'The Joo's Curse', 'Naagan, May you Line Prosper', 'The Thakur's Ghost', 'To Each His Own', 'Jaraav Masi's Tales', 'Jheentiya', 'The Tale of Tell and Don't Tell' and many more. The short stories have minimum space but abundant information to provide. These stories find their source to be the women of Detha's village and nearby surrounding, whom he considers to be the great storytellers.

Detha transports the reader into a fantasy land. These stories are an array of wit, wisdom, emotions, and morals. There are awe and wonder which is woven in the narration that readers find the joys of the bedtime stories. At the beginning of each story, their source is mentioned, to bring home their origin and authenticity. The use of the supernatural machinery is brilliantly coupled with the use of onomatopoeic words that retain the essence of the oral narration. The local dialect along with onomatopoeic words creates a musical effect that attracts the reader's attention most.

'Kiska Jheentiya, kiska tam?

Chal meri dhamki, dhamaak-a-dham!'

'Who is Jheentiya, who are you?

Come on my dhamki, go dhamaak-a-dham!'

(Timeless Tales from Marwar, 26)

The wisdom inculcated in these stories is unknown to the English-speaking world. Many of them are beast fables. Animals and plants talk and behave like humans. They transcend humans in their moral and virtuous instance, their farsightedness and ever-growing relevance. The human and natural environment becomes one with each other in the story. 'The

Leaf and the Pebble' is a story of friendship, love, and loyalty. The inanimate object leaf and pebble are provided life which brings forth the lesson of the bond of friendship.

This short story collection has ecocentrism at its core. From living creatures to non-living aspects in the environment had given equal importance, values, and morals. Stories present the whole spectrum of human-nature binary, both are complementary to each other. This symphony of human – nature depicted by Detha comes as the sharp contrast to contemporary times, where there is no respect and value left for the environment and other living creatures.

The translation of the stories has been done with the utmost precision. The oral culture and regional flavors of the land are encapsulated succinctly, bringing Rajasthan's folk culture alive in the twenty-first century.