

‘Mola’: When History Comes Alive Through the Pen of Dr. Harisuman Bisht



A compelling blend of history, cultural memory and human sensitivity

History often survives in books as a record of rulers, wars and political changes. Theatre, however, has the ability to take that history beyond facts and dates and bring its human dimension before us. Dr. Harisuman Bisht's play **‘Mola’** is an interesting example of this approach. Set against the historical backdrop of the Garhwal region, the play brings

together political upheaval, cultural memory, human relationships and the changing role of the artist.

What makes *Mola* particularly engaging is not merely the historical subject it chooses, but the manner in which Dr. Bisht transforms historical material into a dramatic and accessible narrative. He does not treat history as something distant or frozen in the past. Instead, he looks for the people behind the events—their anxieties, conflicts, aspirations and suffering.

The historical setting of the Garhwal Shah dynasty and the Gorkha expansion provides the framework for the play. Yet the writing does not remain confined to royal courts and political manoeuvring. The consequences of political conflict gradually reach ordinary people, allowing history to be viewed from a more human perspective.

History beyond kings and battles

One of the strengths of Bisht's writing is the way he moves away from a purely ruler-centric version of history. Political events are important, but what matters equally is their impact on society.

The story brings together historical figures and imagined characters, allowing the author to enter spaces that conventional historical records may not fully explore. Through this creative approach, personal relationships, emotional conflicts and questions of identity become part of the larger historical narrative.

This is where *Mola* acquires its dramatic character. History provides the foundation, while imagination and human emotion give it movement.

Rather than simply asking what happened, the play makes us consider **what those events meant to the people who lived through them.**

A sensitive understanding of the artist

At the centre of this historical world stands Molaram, a poet and painter. His presence gives the play another important dimension—the relationship between **art and power**.

Molaram's artistic identity is not presented merely as an individual talent. As the political and social atmosphere around him changes, his sensitivity towards the suffering of people also grows. His journey gradually moves beyond artistic expression and personal recognition towards a larger social responsibility.

This is perhaps one of the most thought-provoking aspects of Bisht's writing. Without turning the play into a direct lecture on art and society, he raises a fundamental question: **What is the responsibility of an artist towards his or her own time?**

Through Molaram, art becomes more than an ornament of the court. It becomes a way of observing society and responding to its pain.

Bringing another voice into history

The character of Soma adds an important emotional and social layer to the narrative. Her struggle introduces questions of dignity, violence and resistance within the historical framework.

Her presence also prevents the story from becoming exclusively male and political. Through her, the author allows the reader to encounter another kind of historical experience—one shaped by vulnerability, courage and resistance.

The contrast between Molaram's response to injustice through artistic sensitivity and Soma's more direct resistance creates an interesting parallel. Their paths are different, but both are connected by a refusal to remain passive before injustice.

The cultural landscape of the hills

Another striking feature of *Mola* is the cultural texture created through language and local traditions. Garhwali, Kumaoni and Nepali linguistic influences, folk songs, local expressions and references to regional customs contribute to the sense of place.

This regional flavour does not appear merely as decoration. It becomes an essential part of the historical world that Bisht is recreating.

The reader is not simply told that the story belongs to the hills; the language and cultural references allow that landscape to emerge organically. The world of the play consequently carries the sound and memory of the region within it.

A writer who understands the visual nature of theatre

Bisht's theatrical sensibility is also visible in the manner in which different spaces and situations are brought into the narrative. The court, the ashram, the settlement, the riverside and the world of the artist create a changing visual landscape.

The use of dialogue, monologue and internal expression gives the characters room to reveal not only what they do but also what they think and feel.

The dialogues are largely simple and accessible, while regional speech adds authenticity. The Hindi translations of regional dialogues also make the cultural material more accessible to a wider readership.

This balance between regional identity and accessibility is an important feature of the writing.

The past speaks to the present

Perhaps the most significant achievement of *Mola* is that its historical setting does not isolate it from contemporary concerns.

Questions of political conflict, internal divisions, external intervention, the suffering of ordinary people, women's dignity and the social responsibility of artists continue to resonate beyond the period depicted in the play.

That is why the work does not feel like an attempt merely to reconstruct a forgotten historical episode. It uses the past to make the present think.

The play quietly reminds us that when a society is divided by internal struggles for power, the consequences are often borne by those who have the least influence over political decisions. At the same time, it asks what role artists and intellectuals can play when society is passing through such turmoil.

A distinctive historical imagination

Dr. Harisuman Bisht's achievement in *Mola* lies in bringing together **historical fact, imaginative reconstruction, regional culture and human emotion** without allowing the historical background to overwhelm the dramatic narrative.

His writing gives history a human face. The past is not presented merely as something that happened long ago; it becomes an experience that can still speak to the concerns of the present.

Mola therefore deserves attention not only as a historical play but also as a work that reflects on the relationship between art, society and power. Through its cultural rootedness and human perspective, it invites the reader to look at history from beyond the throne—to look towards the

people, their struggles and the artists who witnessed their times.

In *Mola*, Dr. Harisuman Bisht does not simply recreate history; he gives it a human voice. And it is through that voice that the past becomes visible, relevant and alive for the present.