

6 October 1988



Sahitya Akademi

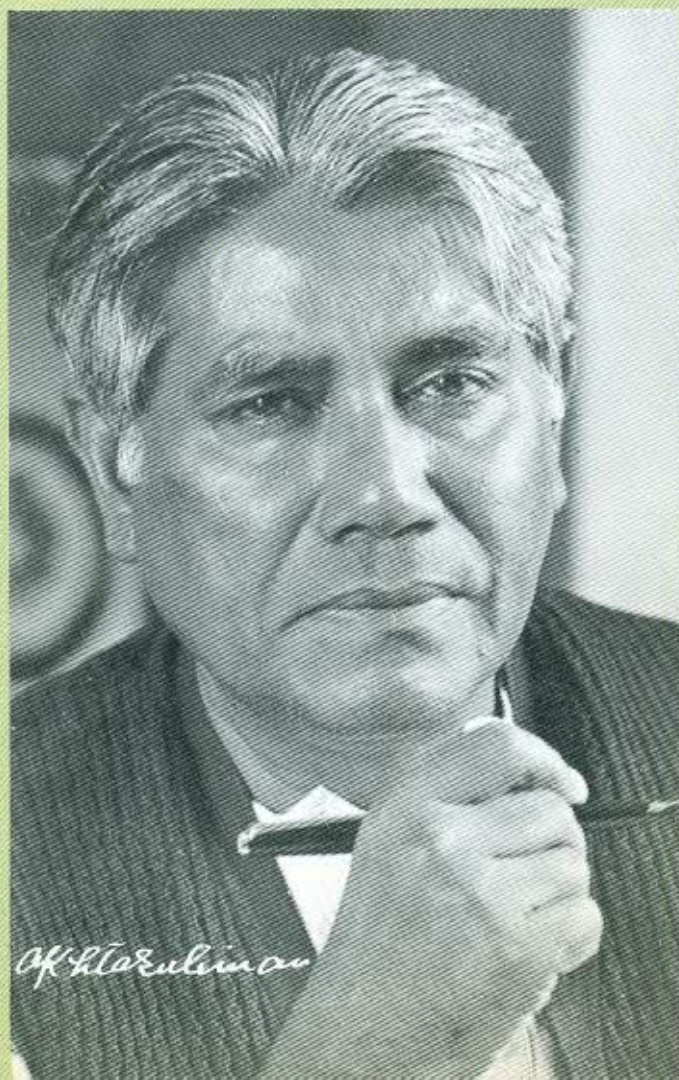


India International Centre

invite you to

**meet the author**

Akhtaruliman





Receiving Sahitya Akademi Award from Jawaharlal Nehru

A hundred film scripts but eight collections of poetry is a success story for a runaway boy landing in an orphanage and reformatory.

Son of an *imam*, young Akhtar was constantly on the move and hardly had any systematic schooling: he passed the eighth class at the age of nineteen. But he did not give up formal education: he graduated at twenty-seven and obtained his M.A. at twenty-nine.



With wife Sultana, daughters Shehla, Asma, Rakhshinda and son Ramish

After doing a brief stint as sub-editor in Saghar Nizami's *Asia*, Akhtaruliman joined the All India Radio and was dismissed from service for daring to question the decision of his superior. In 1944, he moved to the valley of dolls and made a success as story, screenplay and dialogue writer.

Akhtaruliman started writing poetry in his teens, and a steady flow of verse followed, now collected in one volume and published in India in 1983 and in Pakistan in 1987.

In the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*, Gopi Chand Narang writes:

"Although neither Akhtaruliman's themes nor his formal innovations have been dominant sources of his influence on others, he made important contribution to the development of the modern *nazm*. Many of his poems focus on a kind of philosophical quest for serious themes such as oblivion and eternal life, the decline of civilization, the

unavoidability of time, the opposition of good and evil, the conflict between light and darkness, the tension between outer and inner life, and the struggle between dream and reality. In many of his poems, the poet has chosen a symbolic style instead of direct or indirect narrative discourse, allowing the characters and scenes he describes to become metaphors for wider realities. In yet others an interrogative style predominates, which strives to divine the secrets and mysteries of creation.

"A profound humanism characterizes most of his poetry. Even in such early poems as 'Tarik Saiyyarah' and 'Khak-o-Khun', the dialogues of the characters suggest 'the promise of a new humanity'. This humanism is even more characteristic of his later poems, especially those of what may be called Akhtaruliman's *Kulliyat* (Collected Works), his *Yaden* (Memories), published in

1961. The main character of his poem 'Ek larka' (A Boy), for example, is a metaphor for human consciousness, while the poem 'Yaden' might be the universal story of the contemporary age. Similarly, the poem 'Mufahamat' (Compromise) which many regard as one of his best, deals with the fundamental relationship between human sorrow and joy, pleasure and pain.

"Akhtaruliman's humanism is a lifestyle; and his poetry reflects his own suffering as a human being and his discovery of the realities of life and the cosmos. Because of this, in the lyrics a sense of tranquillity and mellowness have replaced the tension and intensity of the earlier poems. Having divined the riddle of life, the poet displays a sense of balance, softness and peace.

"Akhtaruliman's poetry reveals that he has been influenced by Miraji's conscious attempt to create a poetic language different



With President Zail Singh



M.C Chagla felicitating the poet for the screenplay and dialogues of *Kanoon*.

from that of the *ghazal* and to express a peculiarly Indian sensibility through that language. Despite a few classical touches here and there, Akhtaruliman's language is strikingly different from that of the *ghazal*. He has used a conversational language in most of his poems, especially later ones. The language is at once deceptively simple and capable of providing considerable semantic depth. The language and style of 'Ahd-e-Wafa' (Time of Promise) in the collection *Yaden*, for example, approach those of prose. However, the symbolic meaning of this poem and its use of traditional metres allow the simple story it narrates to become a metaphor for contemporary anxiety. Occasionally, Akhtaruliman's language is almost coarse and unpoetic in its simplicity. Rather than detract from the beauty of his poetry, this coarseness usually serves to illuminate his poetic quality at a new level.

"Akhtaruliman has thus bequeathed a substantial legacy to the next generation of *nazm* writers. Along with the acceptance of his poetry by critics and readers, acceptance has been extended to modern poetic trends and modern literature as a whole. Akhtaruliman has set the thematic direction of the contemporary *nazm* with his emphasis on philosophical humanism. In addition, he has influenced others with the suggestion of monologue



that continues to characterise his work and with his oblique expression. Finally, he has consciously used symbols to enhance the meaning of his poems. However, like those of many other modern poets, his symbols have not been so private and ambiguous as to obscure his meaning. For all these reasons, Akhtaruliman may be acknowledged by the succeeding generation as a leading modern poet."

"Men of letters march on

with wounded fingers and blood-soaked pens," feels Akhtaruliman, whom the tinsel of the Bombay movieland has not dazzled. He says that "those who bowed to weak tradition received salvation; those who refused bought intellectual restlessness; this restlessness is the lot of those whom you may call thinkers or poets."

Akhtaruliman's "restlessness" has contributed priceless treasures to Indian literature.



Dilip Kumar presenting the Film Fare Award for Best Dialogue Writer for *Waqt*

## A Select Bibliography

### URDU

- AAB JOO. Lahore : Maktaba Jadeed, 1956. 140p. 22 cm.  
 BINT-E-LAMHAT. Bombay : Rakhshinda Kitab Ghar, 1969, 114p. 22 cm.  
 GIRDAAB. Delhi : Saqi Book Depot, 1943. 80p. 22 cm.  
 NAYA AAHANG. Bombay : Rakhshinda Kitab Ghar, 1977, 132p. 22 cm.  
 SAB RANG. Bombay : Kutub Publishers, 1948. 76p. 22 cm.  
 SARO SAAMAN. Bombay : Rakhshinda Kitab Ghar, 1983. 572p. 22 cm.

- TAREEK SAIYYARAH. Lahore : Naya Idara, 1946. 160p. 22 cm.  
 YADEN. Bombay : Rakhshinda Kitab Ghar, 1960. 350p. 22 cm.

### ENGLISH

- TAKING STOCK. Bombay : Rakhshinda Kitab Ghar, 1987. 146p. 22 cm. Selected Poems of Akhtaruliman edited by Baider Bakht; translated from Urdu by Baider Bakht, Leslie Lavigne and Kathleen Grant Jaeger.

## A Chronology

- 1915 Birth
- 1930 Ran away from home, admitted to Moyyadul Islam, an orphanage-cum-reformatory at Delhi.
- 1942 Graduation in Arts from Delhi University; Joined *Asia* as sub-editor; Worked with All India Radio, Meerut.
- 1943 *Girdaab*, first poetry collection published.
- 1944 Master's Degree in Urdu from Aligarh University; Joined Shalimar Pictures at Poona as a story, screenplay and dialogue writer.
- 1947 Left for Bombay to work as a free lancer in Motion Picture Industry
- 1948 Arrested on allegation of underground political activities and was immediately released for lack of evidence
- 1958 Wrote screenplay and dialogues for *Kanoon*, first songless feature film produced by B.R. Films, followed by other successful movies like *Gumrah*, *Waqf*, *Ittefaq*, *Hamraz*, *Daag*, *Phool Aur Pathar*, etc.
- 1962 Sahitya Akademi Award for *Yaden*; Film Fare Award for Best Dialogue Writer, *Dharmaputra*
- 1965 Film Fare Award for Best Dialogue Writer, *Waqf*
- 1967 Visit to Lebanon and Syria to participate in Afro-Asian Writers Conference; and to U.S.S.R and Europe.
- 1970 U.P. Urdu Academy Award and Mir Academy Award for *Bint-E-Lamhat*.
- 1977 Directed *Lahoo Pukarega*
- 1978 Maharashtra Urdu Academy Award for *Naya-Aahang*;
- 1980 Visit to U.S.A
- 1988 M.P. Urdu Academy Award for *Saro Saaman*; Madhya Pradesh Iqbal Samman



Zakir Hussain felicitating the poet