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Sahitya Akademi



India International Centre

meet the author

Amritlal Nagar





Nagar receiving Sahitya Akademi Award from Zakir Husain, 1968

Twenty years ago Amritlal Nagar received the Sahitya Akademi Award for *Amrit aur vish* from the Akademi President Zakir Husain. For its wide sweep of imagination, its realistic portrayal, narrative power and vigour, the novel was hailed as an outstanding contribution to Hindi literature. Sumitra Nandan Pant found Nagar's command of language complete. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi compared Nagar to Premchand.

Barely thirteen, Amritlal Nagar burst into verse at the British brutalities on the non-violent demonstrators against the Simon Commission, but poetry did not hold him for long. He turned to fiction, wrote his first story, 'Prayaschit', at the age of fifteen and at nineteen published his first collection of short stories, *Vatika*. The odd, the comic and the ugly stirred him to found *Chakallas*, and its weekly doses of humour and satire entertained and smarted the readers. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi was all praise for this explosive but shortlived periodical.

Nagar read the western masters and translated some: Tolstoy, Chekhov,

Doestoevsky, Balzac, Flaubert, Dumas, Maupasant and Dickens. The Bengal famine provoked the first sustained fictional venture of Nagar and *Mahakal* established his reputation as a novelist. He wrote twelve more novels, ranging from a hundred to seven hundred pages each. The fictional world of Nagar is remarkable for its historical range, imaginative reach and social grasp.

Suhag ke nupur is based on Ilango Adigal's *Silappadikaram*, and is set two thousand years ago; *Ekda naimisharanye* is placed in the Gupta period of the 3rd century; *Khanjan nayan* recreates the 16th century and presents the life of Surdas; so does *Manas ka hans*, the story of Tulsidas; *Sat ghunghatwala mukhda* is set in the late 18th century, *Shatranj ke mohre* in the 19th century; and *Karvat* spans the 19th and the 20th century.

Nagar's imaginative sweep covers time and space, mingles fictional characters and historical personae, seizes the essence and emphasises the universal. The characters of bygone ages come alive and may be seen among the living, and sometimes the living in the fictitious.

He captures love in myriad manifestations: from adoles-



Nagar and Nirala, 1941

cent calf love through wholesome marriage, morbid, forbidden relationships to the repressed urges of the ageing. Whether man or woman, ruler or ruled, rich or poor, urban or rural, ancient or modern, Nagar's central concern is the individual and the society. Their conflict and confluence, the need to retain individual identity and to merge it in an everchanging society, are delineated by Nagar, as no other novelist has done before. It is perhaps for this reason that *Boond aur samudra* has been so widely acclaimed.

Nagar has experimented with form and style and



Nagar at his desk, 1976

achieved a remarkable success. Novel within novel, story within story, episode within episode, link him with the ancient Indian tradition and yet mark him apart. He is known for his vigorous style, which varies from place to place and character to character: *Khanjan nayan* is replete with an amazing variety of Braj, Bhojpuri and Avadhi; *Seth bankemal* uses the typical Agra boli. In fact the language of his fiction is so rich and varied that it is difficult for one who doesn't know him personally to tell what his own is.

Nagar's short stories have been collected in several volumes and present a realis-



Nagar and Bedi, 1963

tic and haunting picture of the middle class life of north India.

He has written over thirty plays and they have been successfully staged or broadcast. He has been honoured by the Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi for his contribution to the Hindi stage.

Gadarkephool, a unique survey of the 1857 revolution and *Ye kothevalian*, an inquiry into the lives of the prostitutes, are among Nagar's significant contribution to Hindi non-fiction.

Nagar worked with producers like Uday Shankar (*Kalpna*) and Kishore Sahu (*Kuanra bap*, *Raja*, *Bahurani*) and wrote dialogues and scenarios for many popular Hindi films: *Uljan*, *Paraya dhan*, *Kisi se na kahna*, *Gunjan*, *Sargam* and *Chor*.

Born in a Gujarati family domiciled in Uttar Pradesh, Nagar has been gifted with a prolific pen and a keen sense of humour. He has published over sixty books so far and earned a secure place for himself in the history of Hindi literature.



Nagar and Rambilas Sharma, 1963

A Select Bibliography

NOVELS

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- AMRIT AUR VISH. Allahabad : Lok-bharati Prakashan, 1966. 716 p. 18 cm. Translated into Malayalam.
- BIKHARE TINKE. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1982. 108 p. 21.5 cm.
- BOOND AUR SAMUDRA. Allahabad : Kitab mahal, 1956. Translated into several Indian languages and Russian.
- ERDA NAIMISHARANYE. Allahabad : Lok bharati, 1972. 576 p. 18 cm.
- KARVAT. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1985. 358p. 22 cm.
- KHANJAN NAYAN. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1981. 233 p. 22 cm.
- MAHAKAL. Allahabad : Bharati bhandar, 1947. 251 p. 18 cm.
- MANAS KA HANS. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1973. 441 p. Translated into Marathi, serialised in *Dharma Bhaskar*.
- NACHYO BAHUT GOPAL. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1978. 345 p. 22.5 cm. Translated into Oriya.
- SAT GHUNGHATVALA MUKHDA. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1968. 155 p. 18 cm.
- SHATRANJ KE MOHRE. Varanasi : Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1968. 434 p. 18 cm. first published 1959.
- SUHAG KE NUPUR. New Delhi : Raj kamal prakashan, 1976. 251 p. 18.5 cm. first published 1960. Translated into Marathi and Oriya.

SHORT STORIES

- ADMI NAHIN NAHIN. Agra : The author, 1947. iv, 41 p. 18 cm.
- ATOM BOMB. Ajmer : Dutt brothers, 1956.
- AVASHESH. Lucknow : Sarasvati pustak bhandar, 1937. iv, 195 p. 18.5 cm.

- EK DIL HAZAR AFSANEN. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1986. 511 p. 22 cm. 75 stories, some of them previously unpublished.
- EK DIL HAZAR DASTAN. Lucknow : Pustak nikunj, 1955.
- PANCHVAN DASTA AUR SAAT ANYA KAHANYAN. Allahabad : Lok bharati prakashan, 1970. 174 p. 18 cm.
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- SIKANDAR HAR GAYA. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1973. 116 p. 18 cm.
- TULARAM SHASTRI. Allahabad : Bharati bhandar, 2nd ed. 1946. iv 127 p. 18.5 cm. first published in 1941.
- VATIKA. Lucknow : Ganga granthagar, 1935. viii, 84 p. 18 cm.

DRAMA

- BAAT KI BAAT. Delhi : National publishing house, 1974. 108 p. Radio plays.



Nagar picking a book



Nagar, Viswanadha Satyanarayana
and Madanlal Nagar

TRANSLATIONS

- ANKHON DEKHA GADAR. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1986. 126 p. 22.5 cm. first published in 1957. Translation of Vishnubhatt godse's MAJHA PRAVAS.
- BISATI. Lucknow : Aravind prakashan, 1935. Stories of Maupasant.
- DO PHAKKAD. Lucknow : N.K. Press, 1955. Translation of three Gujarati plays by K.M. Munshi.
- KALA PUROHIT. Kashi : Pustak mandir, 1939. Chekhov's stories.
- PREM KI PYAS. Kashi : Pustak mandir, 1937. Translation of *Madame Bouary*; abridged.

OTHER WORKS

- CHADHAT NADUORANG. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1982. 54 p. 18 cm. Play for Television.
- CHAKKARDAR SIDHIYAN AUR ANDHERA. Delhi : National publishing house, 1978. Radio plays.
- CHANDAN VAN. Delhi : National publishing house, 1976. 136 p. Radio plays.
- NUKKAD PAR. Meerut : Kalpana prakashan, 1981. 95 p.
- UTAR CHADHAV. New Delhi : National publishing house, 1978. 191 p. 18.5 cm. Radio plays.
- YUGAVATAR. Delhi : National publishing house, 1973. 64 p.

HUMOUR AND SATIRE

- BHARATPUTRA NAURANGILAL. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1971. 162 p. 18.5 cm.
- CHAKALLAS. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1986. 211 p. 22 cm.
- HAM PHIDA E LUCKNOW. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 2nd ed. 1975. 119 p.
- KRIPAYA DAYEN CHALIYE. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1973. 107 p.
- MERI SHRESHTHA VYANGYA RACHANAEN. Delhi : Jnanbharati, 1985. 109 p.
- NAVABI MASNAD. Allahabad : Kitab mahal, 1954. 120 p. 18.5 cm. first published in 1939.
- SETH BANKEMAL. Prayag : Kitab mahal, 1944.

- CHAITANYA MAHA PRABHU. Allahabad : Lok bharati prakashan, 1978. 142 p. Biography.
- GADAR KE PHOOL. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1981. 242 p. 22 cm. Study of the 1857 revolt.
- JIN KE SATH JIYA. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1973. 130 p. Memoirs of literary persons.
- MERA PRAVAS. Bhagalpur : Sarada prakashan, 1947. 18 cm.
- SAHITYA AUR SANSKRITI. Delhi : Rajpal and sons, 1986. 271 p. 22 cm. Essays.
- TUKADE TUKADE DASTAN. Delhi : Rajpal and Sons, 1986. 219 p. 22 cm. Memoirs
- YE KOTHEVALIAN. Allahabad : Lok bharati prakashan, 1969. 213 p. 21.5 cm. On the problem of prostitution.



Nagar and the parrot, 1978

A Chronology

- 1916 Birth
- 1929 Published a poem in the Lucknow daily *Anand*.
- 1933 Matriculation; Meeting with Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya.
- 1935 Published *Vatika*, first collection of short stories.
- 1938 Founded and edited a weekly of humour and satire, *Chakailas*.
- 1940 Left for a seven-year stay at Bombay, Kolhapur and Madras as film dialogue and script writer.
- 1947 *Mahakal*, first novel published; Member, Presidium, I.P.T.A.
- 1948 Return to Lucknow for full-time writing.
- 1953 Drama Producer, All India Radio, Lucknow for three years.
- 1956 *Boond aur samudra* published.
- 1962 Visit to USSR.
- 1963 Premchand Puraskar for *Suhag ke nupur*.
- 1967 Sahitya Akademi Award for *Amrit aur vish*.
- 1970 Soviet Land Nehru Award for *Amrit aur vish*.
- 1971 U.P. Sangeet Natak Akademi Award
- 1972 'Sahitya Varidhi' conferred by the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag; Madhya Pradesh Government Vir Singh Dev Puraskar for *Manas ka hans*.
- 1973 Chairman, Hindi Samiti, Uttar Pradesh.
- 1974 U.P. State Award for *Manas ka hans*. Member, Advisory Committee, All India Radio, Lucknow; Executive Vice-Chairman, U.P. Sangeet Natak Adademi.
- 1976 Visit to Mauritius.
- 1977 AIR Golden Jubilee Award.
- 1978 Dalmia Award for *Manas ka hans*.
- 1980 U.P. Hindi Sansthan Special Award
- 1981 Padma Bhushan conferred by the President of India.
- 1984 Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad Award for *Khanjan nayan*.
- 1985 Publication of *Karvat*; Executive Member, Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sansthan; Vatak Prasad Award and Sudhakar Medal for *Boond aur samudra*.



Yashpal, Nagar and Bhagwaticharan Varma, 1973