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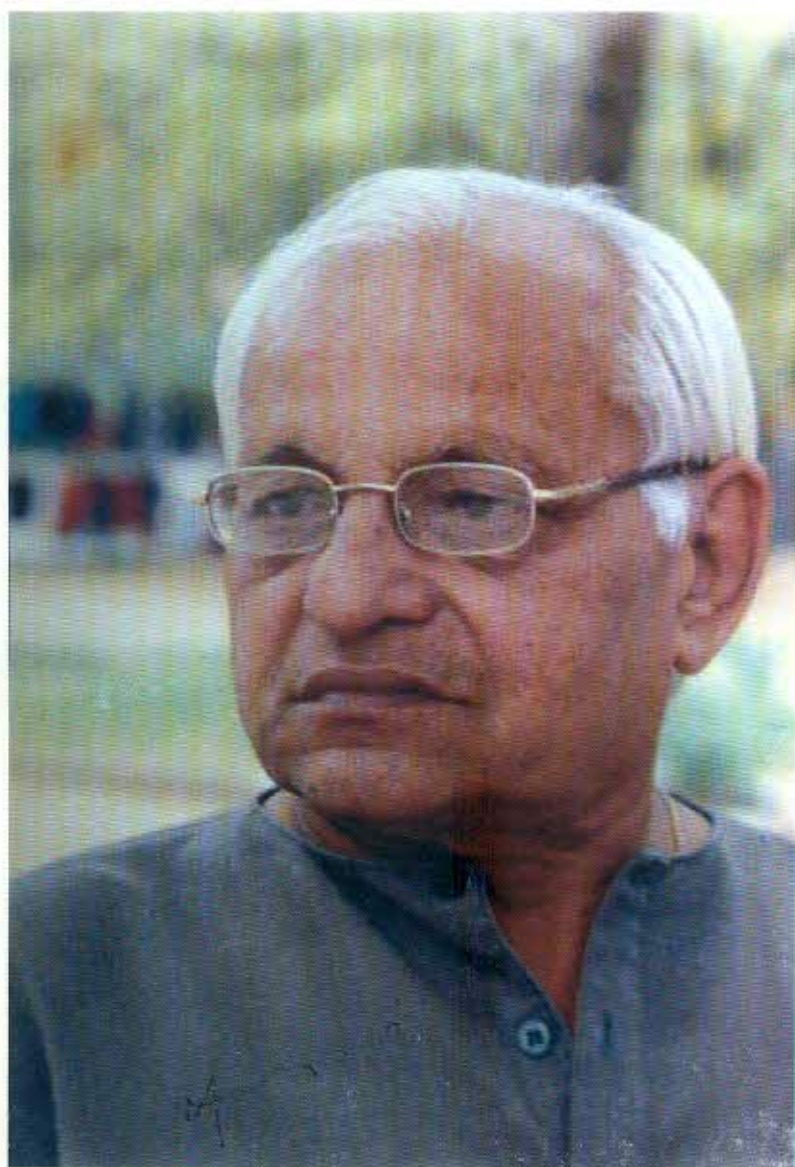


Sahitya Akademi

invites you to

meet the author

Chinu Modi





A rebel in spirit and a master of expressive skills, Chinu Modi (b.30-9-1939) was born to power and grew up to poetry. Heir to a *kasbati* family that held large tracts of land and administrative and revenue powers extending over a *Kasbah* in central Gujarat, he went to his primary school in a Chevrolet car daily! His primary education was in the North Gujarat town of Vijapur and the secondary at Dholka near Ahmedabad, the seat of the family's land-holdings. He earned his matriculation in 1954 and a B.A. with Gujarati and History in 1958. In 1960, he earned his degree in Law and in 1961 took his Master's degree with Gujarati and Hindi from Gujarat University. In 1969, he received the doctoral degree, *Vidyavachaspati*, from Gujarat Vidyapeeth. He is also familiar with Persian and Urdu languages. Through such a range of studies, he taught himself the skills to interrogate

power systems into which he was born. Through his groundbreaking early writings and his participation in some iconoclastic literary movements in the 1960s and 1970s, he found a path to interrogative creativity for himself and some of his fellow writers. Chinu Modi is a quintessential rebel capable of surprising and unsettling expressions in poetry, plays and fiction that have contributed much to contemporary Gujarati literary culture.

Chinu Modi is a pioneering poet and also a courageous and skilled playwright, a perceptive critic, a playful fiction writer and an active participant in literary movements. He has been an important member of two iconoclastic movements in Gujarati literature: the *Re Mathh* experiments in poetry of protest and the *Aakanth Sabarmati* experiments in theatre. These movements triggered new trends in Gujarati poetry and drama of the 1960s and 1970s. His fellow participants in these movements included the eminent writers such as Labhshankar Thakar, Madhu Ray and Adil Mansoori. Instead of inheriting any feudal power, Chinu Modi began to interrogate structures of power and beliefs, and of the literary establishment of Gujarat, emerging as one of the most significant poets and playwrights of our times. The range and the power of his poetry is impressive: from *Vaataayan* (1963) through *Deshvato* (1978), *Irshaad Gadh*



(1979) and *Baahuk* (1982) to *Kaalaakhyaan* (2002), Chinu Modi has ceaselessly and sincerely experimented with themes, genres, forms and meters with sensibility and skill. The rhythmic movements of his poetic diction range from the strictly metrical to free verse, and the poetic forms, in which he worked, range from the medieval *aakhyana* to modern *achaandas* poetry. Chinu Modi/Irshaad is a pioneer in modern Gujarati *gazel*. His breakthrough in this genre came from his ability to bring in crisp modern sensibility and diction to this otherwise romantic mode of poetry. Along with Adil Mansoori and Manhar Modi, Chinu Modi (*Irshaad*) gave Gujarati *gazel* a national standing.

His contribution to Gujarati theatre has been regarded warmly by critics as well as theater-goers. His early one-act plays, collected in the book *Dial-naa-n Pankhi* (1967), explored the possibilities of the verse play and of the theatre of the Absurd. His full-length plays - *Jaalaka* (1985), *Ashvamedh* (1986), *Khalifa-no Vesh yaani Aurangzeb* (1993) and *Navalsha Heerji* (1995) - are some of the landmarks in

Gujarati drama and theatre. These plays explore into different formal aspects of Gujarati theatre, ranging from pre-modern *Bhavai*, early modern *Juni Rangbhumi* (old, the 19th century-early 20th century Gujarati theatre), musical plays, and Sanskrit theatre. The technical richness of his scripts becomes evident in their numerous performances throughout the Gujarati-speaking world. His plays simultaneously explore psychological and political dimensions of their characters, and, through them, of our times. As a playwright, Chinu Modi knows the language of theatre, both auditory and visual, intimately and creatively. The Urdu-close Gujarati in *Khalifa-no Vesh*, Sanskrit-close Gujarati in *Naishadharay*, and the colloquiality of speech in *Navalsha Heerji* demonstrate how this playwright has produced a multi-layered and flexible language of theatre.

Chinu Modi's work in literary criticism is multifaceted. His historical study in the genre of *Khanda-kavya*, i.e. longer lyrical - narrative poems, his



With wife

theoretical writings and editorial work in Ghazal, his critical studies of contemporary Gujarati poets *Maara samakaalin kavio*, (1973) and his early translation (1957) of the medieval poem *Vasanta vilaas phaagu*, give some idea of the vitality of his critical work.

His work in fiction, short stories and novels, is interesting. His short stories combine modern sensibility with pre-modern narrative style and mix prose and verse in an uncanny way. He has explored dimensions of human sexuality and existential anxiety in his fictional works. A rebel, an explorer, an interrogator and an experimenter, this explosively creative author has won an honoured place in the hearts and minds of discerning readers, inside Gujarat and elsewhere in India and abroad. Gujarati societies everywhere, within India and abroad, seek him out for visits, stays and readings. His works have been translated into English, Hindi and other languages and his plays have been staged around the globe, and also into small towns of Gujarat. But Chinu Modi is no darling of the literary establishment, which has for too long sought to marginalize or incorporate him. None-the-less, the inner strength of his poems, plays and fiction, marked by a spirit of defiance and subtlest of creative expressions, as well as the warm reception that his work has generated within Gujarat and in the national



Receiving Narsinh Mehta Award

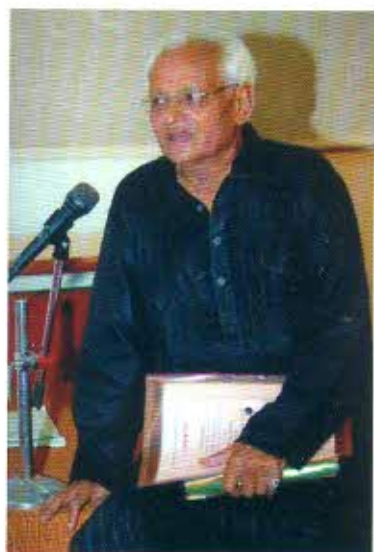
and diasporic spaces, have ensured a place of honour for him as an eminent Indian author.

- Sitanshu Yashaschandra

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 DARPANNI GALIMAN (1975)
 DESHVATO (1978)
 SHAAPIT VANMAAN (1976)
 IRSHAADGADH (1979)
 BAAHUK (1982)
 AAFWA (1991)
 INAAYAT (1995)
 VI-NAAYAK (1996)
 E (1999)
 SAIYAR (2000)
 NAKSHANAN NAGAR (2001)
 SHWET SAMUDRO (2001)
 KALAKHYAAN (2002)
- ### Novel
- SHAILA MAJMUDAAR (1967)
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GAANDHAARINI AANKHE
PAATA (1979)

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Full Length Play

JAALKA (1985)

ASHVAMEDH (1986)

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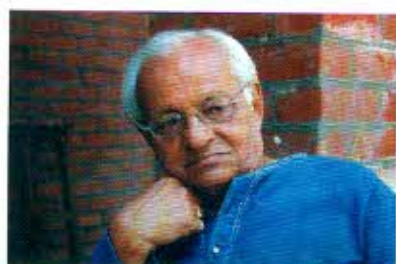
GAMI TE GAZAL (1976)

GUJARATI PRATINIDHI
GAZALO (1996)



A CHRONOLOGY

- 1939 Born on 30 September in Gujarat
- 1960 LL.B.; M.A. in Gujarati Literature (1961), both from Gujarat University
- 1961 Taught Gujarati Literature to Undergraduate, Graduate and Post-Graduate students for more than 35 years
- 1969 Ph.D. in Gujarati literature from Gujarat Vidyapeeth
- 1978 Creative Writer Fellowship of the Dept. of Culture, Delhi
- 1979 Chairman, Kruti Film Co-operative Society, Ahmedabad
- 1984 Rapa Award for Radio & Television Advertisement (thrice)
- 1987-91 Former Member, Gujarati Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi
- 1988 Gujarati Sahitya Parishad Award for the poem *Bahuk*
- 1992-94 Worked as Co-ordinator and officiating Dean of the faculty of Journalism and Communication at M.S. University of Baroda
- 1996 Member of Scrutiny Board (Entertainment) of Gujarat State
Expert, Drama Selection Committee, Sangeet Natak Academy
- 1997 Fellowship, Gujarati Sahitya Academy, Gujarat
- 1999 Gaurav Puraskar from Sangeet Natya Academy, Gujarat
- 2004 Transmedia Award 2004
Managing Director, Bhashantar Bhavan Charitable Trust, Ahmedabad
- 2008 Narsinh Mehta Puraskar



Candid Photographs, really!