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Sahitya Akademi



Sindhu Youth Circle

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meet the author

Hiro Shewkani






Hiro Shewkani's adolescent years were loaded with the turmoil of Partition. He was pursuing his studies in class six in at Chuhar Jamali, his birth Place, in Thatto Dist., Sindh, Pakistan when he migrated to India in 1948. Like other Sindhis, he too was faced with twofold crisis--anguish in the heart and pangs in the belly. Though steel entered the heart, it could not harm the sensitive writer who lived in the core. His nurturing years as a writer started in the 7th decade of the 20th century. Regular literary meets at the Harishchandra Pathshala, Ahmedabad, groomed his nascent literary potentials and upcoming litterateurs like Vasdev Mohi, Prem Prakash and others benefited from his unconventional insights into literature.

Hiro Shewkani is endowed with exemplary scholarly skills. He passed BA with enviable honours--first class first--from Gujarat University and while passing MA he secured the 2nd rank in the same University. His scholarly bent of mind lured him to adopt an educational career that started from his being a

school teacher, to ultimately retiring as Principal of a college. An unprecedented sash to his academic career is that though he himself was a postgraduate, in recognition of his calibre, he was appointed as guide to Ph.D. students by the University of Bombay in 1981.

He started his literary career in 1954 with his first story published in a Mumbai literary magazine. And after a decade of hibernation, his first literary criticism was published. Thereafter, his literary graph moved only upwards. His first collection of short stories *Zindagi Ain Cactus* (Life and Cactus) was published in 1975. In the same year his first critical work *Jiddat Jo Mafahoom ain Sindhi Kahani* (Concept of Modernity and Sindhi Short Story) was brought out. Both the books were critically acclaimed. His advent on the literary scene was formidable as every important writer took note of him.

According to Shyam Jaisinghani, the noted short story writer and critic, "while playing on the low keys, Hiro Shewkani creates high-sounding stories of surrealistic tones." His recent story "Bashomal's Bathroom" highlights the unfeeling behaviour and vanity of the neo-rich Sindhis. The story unfailingly sums up Shewkani's creative core that feeds on the genes of the community, uprooted and displaced from the soil. The community is flourishing but in the "Akash Ganga". It is the talk only of the sky, away from the soil. "The



Portrait of a Father" heavily relies on the subjective experience. However, his thematic concerns do not marginalize his intense creativity as he has been able to encompass universality in his stories. His authorial objectivity is phenomenal and the narrator in him stands detached from his characters. His stories, therefore, readily win credence and never appear to be distant. New sensitivity helps generate an electrified literary ambience. One may erroneously term such stories a satirical comment laced with cynicism on the community. No way, on the contrary the stories are a vivid reflection of a troubled soul. He does not have any preoccupation with any idea or ideology and this enables him to venture into the exotic greener pastures.

One remarkable feature about Hiro Shewkani's writings is that there is no trace, in whatsoever form, of any reformer in them. He has no utopian world around him wherein a creator lives in a conceited belief that writing or any other art form is slated for man's ultimate good. He holds that literature or any art form is but a stroke of the milieu on the innate keys of the sensitive (who are termed men of letters or artists) and the notes created there from are generally devoid of any telling effect. For a few, however, these notes, for purely personal and illogical reasons, are significant and capable of creating some sort of sensitivity. Hiro Shewkani feels he is one of them. He feels that this

sensitivity sees the unseen, says the unsaid and conceives the inconceivable. For him, this process is endless and inevitable. In a way he has been able to create his own literary paradigms.

Hiro Shewkani's *Jiddat jo Mafahoom ain Sindhi Kahani* (The Concept of Modernity and Sindhi short story) encapsulated tenets of modernity with a vengeance in the first part of the book. In the second part of the book, he extensively scanned the work of storywriters from Mohan Kalpana to Mohan Deep. In his poignant and unfettered aggressive style he shattered many myths around some writers by piercing through their work. For example, he had the audacity to question much-celebrated Guno Samtani's so-called dominating influence on the Sindhi short story and declared that his towering name is due to his being active in some extra-literary activities and not because of his stories. In this zealous vein, he was able to demolish the longstanding mythical castles which boasted of housing some ruling writers claiming to be of blue blood.

Hiro Shewkani's critical works stand out amidst others for their candid pronouncements. His writings like "In Search of a New Truth", "Traits of Sindhi Life in Sindhi Short-stories", "Experiments in Sindhi Literature" etc bear sterling testimony to this approach. Once again, to quote from Shyam Jaisinghani who firmly maintained "Hiro Shewkani is a

dashing entry into Sindhi literature to represent modern literary criticism." Continuing, he unequivocally acknowledges: "Hiro shewkani, with Harish Vaswani, is not only instrumental in changing the genre of criticism but he did historic work in the context of changed literary values."--*Nawa ufaque* (New Horizons)

Even Kirat Babani, well-known short-story writer of the Progressive era, that bore the brunt of Shewkani's acidic criticism, could not resist remarking: "He has displayed his analytical acumen while reviewing the stories of the modern writers and has shown the right spirit by rejecting those who have jumped on to the wagon of modernity with the sole intent of being in the swim and not because of the inner urge". About Hiro Shewkani's comment on the seasoned novelist Gobind Malhi, the eminent storywriter Lal Pushp said that Hiro Shewkani was not encumbered by personal weaknesses.

A creative writer's journey starts from giving a lexical shape to his experience by going through a creative process. A critic's odyssey begins from the lexical shape of the writing and reviewing the nuances of the creative process and reaches the experience which prodded the writer's imagination. The backward journey of a critic is not merely an explanation of a writer's creative process, but while doing so, a critic with the creative calibre, comes out with

another creation-creative criticism. Hiro Shewkani firmly follows the artistic approach of any writer and evaluates his achievement, and while doing so he does not sidetrack the social, political, economic influences and the writer's individual emotive responses. The prominent critic Anand Khemani aptly observed, "Sindhi (literature) needs criticism-prone critics who instead of pursuing a creative piece, bring creativity to criticism".

Mohan Kalpana, the acclaimed short-story writer rightly remarked: "According to my humble view, Sindhi community took three decades to produce a critic of Hiro Shewkani's calibre, to create a critic of the same potent it will take another two or three decades."



*Felicitated by Prof. Gopi Chand Narang:
Sahitya Akademi's Translation Award
Function - 1997*

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With Param Abichandani, Harish Vaswani, Anand Khemani & N. Tarachandani

A CHRONOLOGY

- 1935 Born 6th January at Chuharjamali (Sindh, Pakistan)
- 1948 Migrated to India
- 1954 First short story published in Bombay literary magazine
- 1961 Passed B.A.(Hons) with Sindhi special from Gujarat University
- 1962 Appointed lecturer in Sindhi at Ahmedabad College
- 1963 Passed M.A. securing second position in University
- 1967 Participated in All India Sindhi Sahitya Sammelan, Bangalore
- 1968 Joined as senior lecturer in Sindhi at R.K.Talreja College, Ulhasnagar
- 1975 Published first book of short stories *Zindagi Ain Cactus*
- 1975 Published first book of literary criticism *Jiddat Jo Mafahoom ain Sindhi Kahani*
- 1981 Recognized Ph.D. guide in Sindhi, University of Mumbai
- 1985 Chairman, Board of Studies in Sindhi, University of Mumbai
- 1986-95 Convenor, Board of Studies in Sindhi, Maharashtra State Board of Secondary & Higher Education, Pune
- 1990 Appointed Principal, R.K.Talreja Post Graduate College, Ulhasnagar
- 1992 Nominated as member of Sindhi Advisory Board of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi
- 1992-95 Member of Sindhi language committee of Bharatiya Gyan Peeth Literary Award
- 1995 Retired as Principal, R.K.T. College
- 1995 Joined as Executive Secretary, Gandhidham Collegiate Board, Adipur (Kutch) till 2001
- 1997 Translation award from Sahitya Akademi
- 2000 Awarded 'Gaurav Puraskar' by Gujarati Sahitya Academy
- 2004 Attended international literary conference on 'Shah Sachal Sami' at Karachi
- 2005 Received highest literary award of Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Sabha
- 2007 Published latest book of criticism *Sindhi Novel Kathaghare Mein*



With Shaikh Ayaz & Gobind Malhi



Felicitated by Indrakumar Gujral