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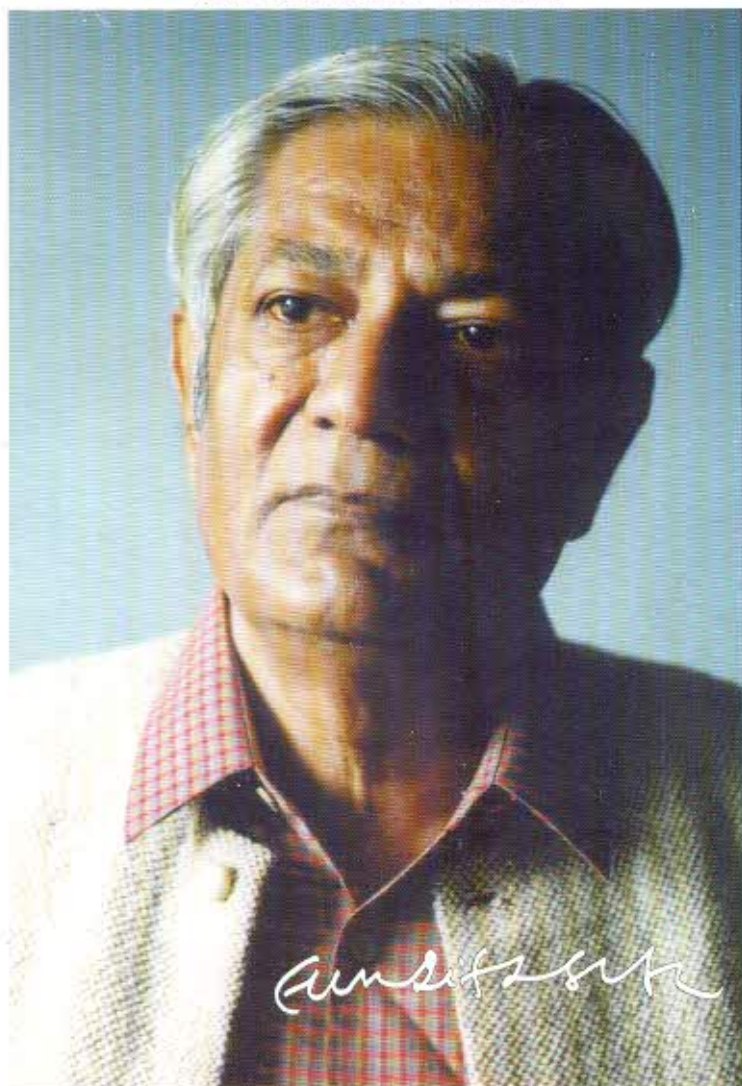


Gujarati Sahitya Parishad

invite you to

meet the author

LABHSHANKER THAKER





From Balvantray K. Thakore to Labhshanker Thaker, the passage of Gujarati poetry has been interesting. B. K. Thakore gave an intellectual, interpretative slant to poetry which was soft and sentimental earlier. Labhshanker Thaker, on the other hand, operated within the limits of a creative artist and yet managed to launch an era of strong, muscular poetry that stood against superficial rhythms and futile innovations of his time. Labhshanker has made an indelible mark on the checkered path of Gujarati poetry. Elements of tenderness and sternness coexist in an unconflicting manner in his poetry. He displays a finely tuned sentience to the melting sunlight in the early morning mist and a patriarchal severity towards the sun in another context. His ability to push the frontiers of meaning with the help of metre and rhyme is quite remarkable. The examination of human anatomy as well as poetry interest Labhshanker. Labhshanker has inherited the ethos of medicine and literature from his family. His father Jadavji Narbheram Shastri (of Patdi) was a writer, well-known also in the field of Ayurved. His not-so-educated mother Prabhavati had a gift for folk-songs and that came very naturally to Labhshanker also. In fact he admits: "My awareness of the word, rhythm and poetry is a gift from my mother."

Labhshanker was born in Sedla, a village in Saurashtra, on 14th January 1935, the day of Makarsankranti. He came to Patdi when he was about two years old and then moved to Ahmedabad at the age of fifteen. Thereafter, he completed his Masters in 1959 with Gujarati and Sanskrit. In 1964, he obtained the degree of D.S.A.C. in Ayurved. In the initial years, he taught Gujarati literature in one of the colleges in Ahmedabad while also practising Ayurved. He has been writing letters and articles on Ayurved regularly under the pen name of 'Punarvasu'. By now, he has over forty books on the subject.

Labhshanker showed signs of a literary sensibility at a very young age. As a student in school and college, he was familiar with a wide range of poets from his reading of 'Kumar' and 'Sanskriti'. When Labhshanker was in the ninth standard, his first poem appeared in a children's magazine 'Ramakund'. He bought himself a copy of Umashankar Joshi's 'Nishithi' with the prize-money. That was the beginning of his creative activity which continues, unhindered, to this day. In 1965 he received the Kumar Chandrak and his first volume of poems 'Vahi Jati Paachhal Ramyaghosha' appeared in 1965. Labhshanker was by then an established poet. Although Labhshanker found his first collection somewhat faded and ineffective in retrospect, some of the poems indicated the future direction of his creative process. Of these poems, 'Tadko' is crucial because it expressed the cracks in the edifice of value-loaded cultural terms. His insistent questioning, examining and interrogating of human expressions has continued in the subsequent collections. The process of observation-examination-contemplation runs as a common thread through all his works. Labhshanker Thaker does not rebel so much against any social discrimination of caste and class as against his own actions and

limitations. His individuality, selfhood and selfcentredness are issues he tries to grapple with. This process gives rise to an emotional turbulence which in turn becomes a source of his creative output. The unique texture of his poetry emerges from a complex interweaving of language, lyric, rhyme, symbols and imagination.

'Manasni Vaat', in the opinion of the poet is "a polyphonic poem of disillusionment." Umashankar Joshi had taken special notice of its rhythmical features. Poetry, so far revolving around the Universal Man now concerns itself with and focuses on the common man. 'Mara Namne Darvaje' and 'Boom Kagalman Kora' map the poet's inner quest. 'Boom Kagalman Kora' is perhaps the first collection of Gujarati poetry where the creative process of a single poet is examined from different perspectives and roles through forty poems.

Labhshanker's long poem 'Pravahan' expresses the tragic-comic inevitability of the poet's existence. The poems of 'Laghro' are a stage-wise account of the deterioration of the creator of a myth and signify the process of demythification. How a poetic sensibility suffers and overcomes problems of articulation from time to time emerges very strongly in Labhshanker's poem 'Kaalgranthi'. The same striving for meanings residing inside human consciousness continues in 'Tolan, Avaj, Ghonghaat' and expresses itself in monologues and soliloquies. A restlessness is pervasive to the whole of Labhshanker's oeuvre.



Labhshanker Thaker with late Dr. Minu Kapadia, Subhash Shah, Manhar Modi and other friends

Labhshanker was at the forefront of literary movements like 'Zreaygh', 'Kruti' and 'Akanth Sabarmati'. He injected a note of contemporary concern into these movements. As a creative writer Labhshanker has been able to strike a balance between experimentation and discipline in poetry. His contribution to long poetry (metered as well as free verse) is very significant.

Labhshanker is perfectly at home in prose and drama, as in poetry. He reveals himself not just as 'La. Tha.' and 'Laghro' but also as 'Dadaji' and 'Sarvamitra'. Besides being a playwright, he is also interested in acting and direction. Even today, he dreams of taking up a camera and directing a film! As 'Manasni Vaat' marked a turning point in Gujarati poetry, so did 'Ek Undar Ane Jadunath' (co-authored with Subhash Shah, 1965) in Gujarati drama. Labhshanker's name is inextricably linked with the wave of Absurd Drama in Gujarat as well as the technique of improvisation. One-act plays like 'Mari Javani Maja', 'Bathub-man Machhli' and 'Pilun Gulaab Ane Hun' as well as full length plays like 'Mansukhlal Majithiya' and 'Kaahe Koyal Shor Machaye Re' are an outcome of his avid interest in theatre.

Labhshanker's contribution extends to realm of short stories, humorous prose, children's stories and biographies as well. 'Akasmaat' is a love story; while 'Kon?' a story of disillusionment. 'Pivari' is a story of the courtesan Pivari located in the Buddhist era. 'Hasyaasan', 'Champakchalis' and 'Anaap-sanaap' are entertaining stories that highlight his finely tuned wit, humour and satire. 'Kagda Uncle Mamravala', 'Nadikanthe Draun Draun', 'Mumbaini Kidi', 'Tadkano Papad' and 'Kankhau Rakshas' are examples of his achievement even in the field of children's literature. 'Maari Baa', 'Bapa Vishey' are unconventional character-sketches of Labhshanker's parents and they throw an interesting light on the biographer himself.



As an actor

Labhshanker's essays are written largely from a journalistic point of view. Works like 'Ek Minute', 'Kshan-tatkshan', 'Sooraj Ugyo Kevadiani Farse' are an evidence of his competence as an essayist and a prose-writer. Labhshanker has co-authored critical works such as 'Inner Life' (1965, with Dinesh Kothari), a study of 'Malela Jeev' (1969, with Chinu Modi and Manhar Modi). He has co-edited with Prasad Brahmabhatt The Akhyans of Premanand's — 'Sudamacharitra' (1991), 'Nalakhyan' (1993) and 'Kunvarbainu Mamerun' (1994). Labhshanker's writings show an assertion of creation and communication and not nihilism. Even his writings on Ayurved are interesting and highly readable. They are invested with his literary sensibility.

Besides being a recipient of the Kumar Chandrak, Labhshanker has also received the Batubhai

Umarwadia Award from the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad for 'Mari Javani Maja' in 1973; Mahendra Bhagat Award for 'Pilun Gulaab Ane Hun' in 1985; Kakasaheb Kalelkar Award for 'Maari Baa' in 1981; and the B. N. Mankad Award for 'Ayurvedni Amrutdhara' in 1991. Gujarat Sahitya Akademi gave him the first prize for 'Laghro' in 1987 and then for 'Kshan-tatkshan' in 1989. Labhshanker has also been the recipient of the Ranjitram Suvarnachandrak from the Gujarat Sahitya Sabha in 1981. His collection of plays 'Pilun Gulaab Ane Hun' received the Narmad Suvarnachandrak for the best play of the period from 1982-86; 'Kaalgranthi' received the Jayant Pathak Award for 1989; 'Tolan, Avaj, Ghonghaat' got an Award from Sahitya Akademi in 1991 while 'Kaahe Koyal Shor Machaye Re' got the Chandravadan C. Mehta Paritoshik for drama. Thus his literary talent has been widely acknowledged.

In his play with poetry, Labhshanker likes to reveal himself in different ways. A sense of wonderment permeates through all his works. It is with the same feeling of wonderment Labhshanker creates, reads and listens to others' poetry and meets various kinds of creative writers. It is worth our while to see how Labhshanker's quest reaps meaning and joy for him.



with his wife Kumud

A Select Bibliography

POETRY

- VAHI JATI PAACHHAL RAMYA-GHOSHA : 1965, 1988, 1990 : Ahmedabad : Parshva Prakashan, p. 104, 18 cm × 12 cm
- MANASNI VAAT : 1968, 1986 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 48, 18 cm × 2 cm
- MARA NAMNE DARVAJE : 1972, 1996 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 112, 21 cm × 14 cm
- BOOM KAGALMAN KORA : 1974, 1996 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 40, 21 cm × 14 cm
- PRAVAHAN : 1986 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 32, 18 cm × 12 cm
- LAGHRO : 1987, 1990 : Ahmedabad : R. R. Sheth & Co., p. 57, 22 cm × 13.5 cm
- KAALGRANTHI : 1989 : Ahmedabad : Parshva Prakashan, p. 48, 21 cm × 14 cm
- TOLAN, AVAJ, GHONGHAAT : 1990, 1995 : Ahmedabad : R. R. Sheth & Co., p. 166, 22 cm × 13.5 cm

PLAYS

- EK UNДАР ANE JADUNATH (with Subhash Shah) : 1965 : Ahmedabad : Publisher : Self, p. 36, 20 cm × 16.5 cm
- MARI JAVANI MAJA (one-act plays) : 1973, 1982, 1986 : Ahmedabad : R. R. Sheth & Co., p. 120, 18.5 cm × 22.5 cm
- BATHTUBMAN MACHHLI (one-act plays) : 1982, 1988 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 108, 18 cm × 12 cm
- PILUN GULAAB ANE HUN : 1985, 1989 : Unjha & Ahmedabad : Asait Sahitya Sabha and Rannade Prakashan, p. 144, 18 cm × 12 cm
- MANSUKHLAL MAJITHIYA : 1993 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 64, 18 cm × 12 cm
- KAAHE KOYAL SHOR MACHAYE RE : 1993, Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p.128, 18 cm × 12 cm

NOVELS

- AKASMAAT : 1968 : Surat : Sahitya Sangam, p. 308, 18 cm × 12 cm
- KON ? 1968 (part I), 1993 (part I & II) : Ahmedabad : Parshva Prakashan, p. 238, 18.5 cm × 13 cm
- HAASYASAN : 1993 : Ahmedabad : Parshva Prakashan, p. 172, 18.5 cm × 13 cm
- CHAMPAKCHALISA : 1993 : Ahmedabad : Parshva Prakashan, p. 202, 18.5 cm × 13 cm
- ANAAP-SANAAP : 1995 : Ahmedabad : Parshva Prakashan, p. 216, 22 cm × 14 cm
- PIVARI : 1995 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 384, 18 cm × 12 cm

BIOGRAPHIES

- MAARI BAA : 1989, 1991 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 59, 18 cm × 12 cm
- BAPA VISHEY : 1993 : Mumbai : Image Publications, p. 152, 21 cm × 14 cm

ESSAYS

- EK MINUTE : 1986 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p. 95, 18 cm × 12 cm
- KSHAN-TATKSHAN : 1986 : Ahmedabad : R. R. Sheth & Co., p. 267, 18.5 cm × 12.5 cm
- SOORAJ UGYO KEVADIANI FANSE : 1993 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p.216, 18 cm × 12 cm

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

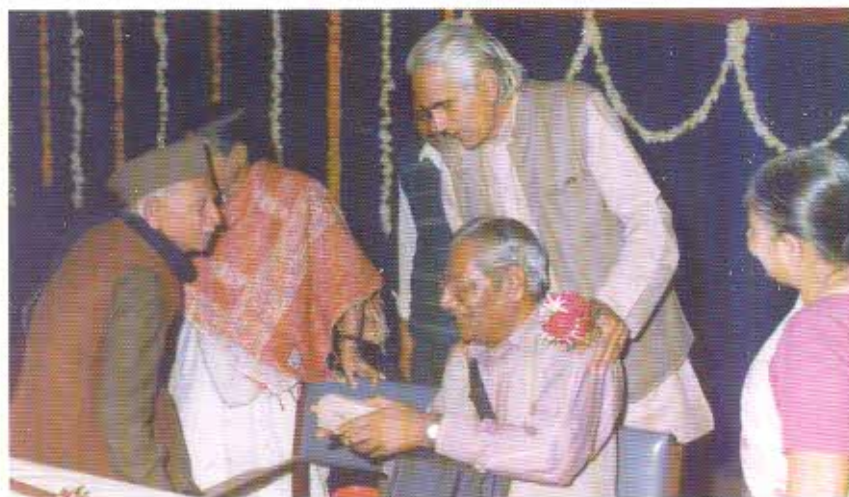
- A collection of five story-books : 1994, 1995 : Ahmedabad : Rannade Prakashan, p.16 × 5 = 80, 24 cm × 18 cm

BOOKS ON AYURVED

- There are more than 40 Books on Ayurved, which includes 'AYURVEDNI AMRUTDHARA', 'AROGYARATNAKAR' 'SARVA-MITRA' etc.

A Chronology

- 1935 : Born 14 January in village Sedla, Dist. Surendranagar.
- 1945 : Started writing poetry.
- 1953 : Matriculated.
- 1957 : Married Kumudben Amrutlal Trivedi (b. 1940) in Ahmedabad.
- B. A., Gujarat University.
- 1959 : M.A., Gujarat University.
- 1962 : Awarded the Kumar Chandrak for poetry 1964.
- 1964 : Completed D.S.A.C. (a four and a half year course in Ayurved).
- 1965 : First collection of poems "VAHI JATI PAACHHAL RAMYAGHOSHA" published.
- 1971 : Visited London, Paris.
- 1973 : Publication of "MARI JAVANI MAJA" and the Batubhai Umarwadia Award of Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
- 1981 : The Ranjitram Suvarna-chandrak. Accepted on 31.12.1994.
- 1982-86: The Narmad Suvarna-chandrak for "PILUN GULAAB ANE HUN", the best play of the period.
- 1985 : The Mahendra Bhagat Award from Gujarati Sahitya Parishad for "PILUN GULAAB ANE HUN".
- 1987 : Gujarat Sahitya Akademi award for "LAGHRO".
- 1989 : Kakasaheb Kalelkar Award for "MAARI BAA" — Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
- Gujarat Sahitya Akademi Award for "KSHAN-TATKSHAN"
- Jayant Pathak Award for "KAALGRANTHI"
- 1991 : B. N. Mankad Award for "AYURVEDNI AMRUTDHARA" — Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
- 1991 : Gave a lecture on 'Rahasyamaya Gudh Andhakarna Kanthe Kavitan Kefiyatno Avaj' in the 36th conference of Gujarati Sahitya Parishad at Colmbatore.
- 1991: Sahitya Akademi Award for "TOLAN, AVAJ, GHONGHAAT".
- 1993: Chandravadan C. Mehta Paritoshik for "KAAHE KOYAL SHOR MACHAYE RE".



Receiving the Ranjitram Suvarna-chandrak