22 November 1994

Sahitya Akademi - India International Centre

Invite you to

meet the author

Bhalchandra Nemade
Born in 1938 in Sangvi, a tiny village in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra, Bhalchandra Nemade in his formative years grew up in the grass-root culture of two distinct traditions of Maharashtra that his parents had inherited, the Mahanabhav and the Varkari. After doing his matriculation, Nemade moved to Pune for higher education. In a sense, this transition from a remote village to metropolitan space was decisive because it gave him an opportunity to explore the problems of the shift from tradition to modernity—characteristic of the post-independence situation.

Nemade's early attention to this complex dilemma is evident in his involvement with the literary culture of Maharashtra. In the early sixties Nemade plunged into the little magazine movement. He edited a number of little magazines such as Aso, Vacha and established, with the help of a group of like-minded contemporaries, a small amateur publishing house called Vacha Prakashan. The focus of all these activities was on the introduction of new original talent so far ignored by the literary establishment of the period.

Nemade's Kosla, which came out in 1963, may be seen as the summation of a long period of anti-establishment literary career. In dealing with the theme of alienation affecting the grassroot level of a transitional society, Kosla came to represent the mood and experience of a whole new generation which emerged after 1960. In its use of wit, irony and form Kosla dismantled the existing notions and conventions of novel-writing mostly derived from Western aesthetics. Kosla's use of colloquial speech and creative modulations of everyday language opened up new possibilities in Marathi fiction.
The dialectic between the spiritual angst and the social problematic, so characteristic of Kosia, is explored with renewed energy in Nemade's proposed quartet of novels, of which three have come out so far. They are Bidhar (1975), Jareela (1977) and Zool (1979). Using the journey archetype, Nemade has made in these novels a bold attempt to provide a cross-section of contemporary Marathi culture in terms of a moral exploration of caste, religion, sectarianism, education, marriage and a host of other related themes. These three novels thus constitute a critique of contemporary Marathi society caught in the trammels of social change. A remarkable feature of the trilogy is the way in which it has revitalised the conventions of realistic narrative with meticulous craftsmanship.

No less a poet than a novelist, Nemade published his first collection of poems Melody in 1970. Casting off the legacy of romantic idiom and received modernism of the West, poems in this collection experimented with prose rhythm steeped in folk-culture and images. His second collection of poems Dekhni (1991) seeks a variation on the impersonal tone of Melody by using the autobiographical mode reminiscent of medieval Marathi saint-poetry. Dekhni also includes rich experiments with Konkani speech and Goan culture. Equally interesting here is Nemade's use of the surrealistic mode whenever thematic compulsions demand it. Thus, though limited in number, Nemade's poems have made a distinctive impact of their own.

Nemade's contribution as a scholar-critic has been immensely substantial in Marathi literature. Writing for over a period of thirty-five years, Nemade's critical articles, collected in the Sahitya Akademi Award-winning title Teekawayamaara, testify to a bold non-conformist attempt to bring about a reevaluation of Marathi liter-
ary history and criticism. At the centre of Teekaswayamvara is a radical postulation of the concept of nativism. Nemade defines nativism not only as an academic concept but as a cultural experience required to counter the debilitating Westernism inherited through our colonial past. From this point of view, Teekaswayamvara becomes a major intellectual statement in the post-colonial literary-cultural scene in India. Nemade has evolved a whole nativist poetic in terms of an interdisciplinary approach comprising sociology, anthropology, linguistics and comparative literature.

Nemade’s doctoral research work on the influence of English on Marathi is a sociolinguistic and stylistic study of an exemplary nature, with implications reaching out into cultural studies. Nemade’s concerns as a critic are further articulated in his monograph on Tukaram in which we see a modern Marathi writer trying to come to terms with one of our greatest saint poets by examining his tradition of native liberal humanism.

As a poet, novelist, critic and teacher, Nemade has essentially been a non-conformist artist, generating controversies, participating in debates and initiating polemical discussion on significant cultural issues. In playing all these roles, however, Nemade has scrupulously avoided the formidable temptations of journalism and newspapers. Nemade’s reputation today is the product of the literary taste he himself has shaped to a great extent. Although aggressive, uncompromising and polemical, Nemade has always held up the image of the artist as citizen, thereby recovering the ethical role of the writer in modern society.
A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Translation into other languages


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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Karad-Yashwantrao Chavan Award for Zool.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>M.A. (English). Started teaching English at Ahmednagar College.</td>
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<td>1973</td>
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<td>1976</td>
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<td>1981</td>
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