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Sahitya Akademi

Shri Vile Parle
Kelavani Mandal

invite you to

meet the author

Gulabdas Broker
published poems, plays, literary criticism, travel accounts, and essays, but first and foremost, he is a short story writer. And it is as a story writer that Broker is known, not only to his Gujarati readers, but to the many people outside Gujarat and India as well. Broker is well known in the country and beyond, not only through many translations of his works into various Indian and foreign languages, but also through his active participation in various national as well as international literary fora.

When Broker came on the literary scene, Gujarati short story was dominated by stalwarts like ‘Dhumketu’ (Gaurishankar Joshi), ‘Dwire’ (Ranmarnar Pathak), and Jhaverchand Meghani. Dhumketu was extremely popular with his romantic and idealistic stories. Pathak’s stories were more cerebral than emotional and often tinged with subtle humour. Meghani excelled in depicting the life of rural Gujarat. It would have been suicidal for Broker to follow any of these masters. Although he admired them and their stories, Broker charted a different course for himself. His stories were chiefly confined to the urban middleclass life – the life he knew best. And Broker was more interested in depicting the mental state of his characters, rather than their obvious external qualities or actions and reactions. Conceived in a style that is simple, direct, and to the point, Broker’s stories try to encompass the multifaceted human relationships with their constantly changing hues and tones.

Born at Porbander, Gujarat on September 20, 1909, Broker had his initial education there and then moved to Bombay from where he cleared his school leaving examination. He then joined the prestigious Elphinstone College, graduating in 1930. But before graduation, Broker married Suranben in 1927, and since then, they have been living happily with two
sons and two daughters. Broker lost his father at the age of ten and hence in his personal life, was more influenced by his mother, sister, and elder brother. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Broker joined his family business of broking on the Bombay Stock Exchange in 1933 and retired in 1964 in order to devote all his time to literature. Like many other writers of his time, Broker, in his personal life, has been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. An active participant in the freedom movement during 1929-1932, he was imprisoned for sixteen months. And it was while in prison that he wrote his first story. But as a writer, Broker does not wear on his sleeve his Gandhian ideas and ideals.

The first story that Broker wrote while in prison saw the light of day much later. It was only after a few years that he gathered courage to take it to Ramnarayan Pathak, a highly respected Gujarati litterateur, critic, and editor. Pathak not only liked Broker’s story, but readily offered to publish it in his prestigious monthly ‘Prasthan.’ Thus it was with a bang that Broker entered the literary scene of the day, and ever since then, he has consistently remained in the forefront of Gujarati literature. To quote Dr. K.M. Munshi, “Broker’s contribution to the Gujarati short story is both qualitative and quantitative. His stories present a wide range of characters and situations covering the daily lives of modern Gujarati man and woman. No situation is too ordinary and no character too lowly for his art. He has a sure touch in depicting pregnant situations.”

Broker has published two full length plays — Dhumraser (1948) and Mananam Bhoot (1967) and a considerable number of one act plays collected under the title Jvalanta Agni (1955). Dhumraser, based on his own short story and written in collaboration with a leading playwright Dhansukhlal Mehta, has been staged successfully many a time. Written in the background of the independence movement, the play tries to unveil some of the unfathomable recesses of the human mind. Mananam Bhoot too, concerns itself with the ghosts of pride and prejudice haunting its protagonist’s mind. Many of his one act plays were written for the radio and hence may appear to be more verbal than visual. However, many of them have been staged successfully.

Broker’s travel account, published under the title Nava Gaganni Neeche (1950) mainly concerns itself not with the tourist spots of Europe, but with various individuals he met during his visit to these countries. Broker has also published literary criticism, some poems and translations. However, during the past few years, he has been concentrating more on writing what can be loosely termed as essays, where autobiographical reminiscences, pen-pictures, travelogues, and his views on life and letters are all rolled into one.

A voracious reader, Broker is quite familiar with the latest trends and fashions not only of Gujarati literature, but of the Western literatures as well. He has always encouraged young and
up coming writers of talent. But in his own writings, Broker has never tried to imitate their trends and fashions. No doubt, over the years his style and technique have changed to an extent, but Broker has consistently insisted on being true to his own self throughout.

Recipient of many literary honours and awards, Broker has been associated with a number of literary and cultural organisations including the National Sahitya Akademi, Bharatiya Jnanpith, Gujarati Sahitya Parishad, Gujarati Sahitya Akademi, P.E.N. India, Vile Parle Sahitya Sabha, Vile Parle Kelavni Mandal, and many more. In 1973, he was elected the President of the 27th Sammelan of the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad and in 1992 was awarded Padmashri by the President of India. Over the years, Broker has travelled widely not only within the country, but has also visited the U.K., U.S.A., and many countries in Europe as an invitee. Even at his advanced age, he loves to travel, meet people, and talk to them. Reading and writing come next. Though he holds the realm of letters close to his heart, his first and foremost concern is life and love for the humankind. And it is because of this concern for life and love, that his writings enrich his reader while also entertaining him.

A Select Bibliography

SHORT STORIES (Total 12 volumes)
SOORYA Bombay: Jeevan Sahitya Mandir, 1950, 1952, 1959, 180 p. 18.5 cm.
MANASNAM MAN Ahmedabad: Gujar Grantharathna Karyalaya, 1962, 224 p. 18.5 cm.
PREM PALARATH Bombay: Ashok Prakashan, 1974, 256 p. 18.5 cm.
NASTIK Bombay: Navbharat Sahitya Mandir, 1992, 284 p. 18.5 cm.

TRUE STORIES
HARINO MARAG Ahmedabad: Sastum Sahitya Vardhak Karyalaya, 1956, 85 p. 18.5 cm.
PLAYS
DHUMRASER (Jointly with Dhanushkhal Mehta) Ahmedabad: Rekha Prakashan, 1948, 1956
64 p. 18.5 cm.
MANANAM BHUIT Bombay: Chandra Prakashan, 1967
103 p. 18.5 cm.

ONE ACT PLAYS
JVALANTA AGNI Ahmedabad: Ravani Prakashan Griha, 1955, 225 p. 18.5 cm.
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POEMS
VASANTE: Bombay: Chandra Prakashan, 1964, 100 p. 18.5 cm.

LITERARY CRITICISM
ROOPSRISHTIMAM Bombay: B.M. Tripathi Private Ltd., 1962
496 p. 18.5 cm.
ABHIVYAKTI Bombay: Chandra Prakashan, 1965, 376 P. 18.5 cm.
SAHITYA, TATIVA ANE TANTRA Bombay: Chimanlal Literary Trust, 1977, 152 p. 21.5 cm.

TRAVELOGUE

REMINISCENCES
GAYAM VARSHO, RAHYAM VARSHO
Bombay: Navbharat Sahitya Mandir, 1987, 474 p. 18.5 cm.
SMARANONE SATHVARE Bombay: Navbharat Sahitya Mandir, 1993
245 p. 18.5 cm.

BOOKS TRANSLATED (Total 6 books)
BICHARAM SUNANDABAIHEN (World's best short stories)
Ahmedabad: Gurjar Grantharatra Kalyalaya, 1954,265 p. 18.5 cm.
BHUTAVAL (Ibsen's 'Ghosts') New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1960, 126 p. 18.5 cm.

VICHHED (Henry James's novel 'The Americans') Bombay:
Vora & Company, 1967
457 p. 21.5 cm.
Edited 11 books
Broker's works translated into Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam,
Sindhi, English, German, Austrian, Swiss, Hungarian, and other
languages.

BOOKS ON BROKER
SAMVAD (Edited by Ramprasad Bakshi and others) Bombay:
Gulabdas Broker Sanskritik Trust, 1974, 295 p. 21.5 cm.
GULABDAS BROKER by Amrtilal Yajnik Ahmedabad:
Kumkum Prakashan, 1983, 88 p. 21.5 cm.
1909 September 20: Born at Porbandar, Gujarat
1927 Married Suman Sundarji Kapadia
1929 Member, Executive Committee, Bombay Provincial Congress Committee
1930 B.A. (English and Gujarati), University of Bombay
1932 Arrested in Civil Disobedience Movement and sentenced to jail for sixteen months
1933 Join the Bombay Stock Exchange
1938 First book of short stories Lata Shum Bole? published
1951-53 Edited Ekangi (periodical, jointly with Jayanti Dalal)
1953 Dhuramser (play) received First Prize from the Government of Bombay
1956 Nominated to the Advisory Board for Gujarati, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi
1958 Visited Frankfurt, Germany, as a delegate from India to the First International P.E.N. Conference
1962 Visited U.S.A. on invitation from Study Missions International and the Government of U.S.A.
1964 Invited to All India Writers Seminar, Kottayam, Kerala
1966 English translation of short stories Of Life and Love published
1966 Translations of short stories published in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.
1969 Kumar Chandrakar awarded
1972 Awarded First Prize for travelogue Nava Gaganni Neeche by the Government of Gujarat
1973 Elected President, 27th Sammelan of the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad
1975 Guest of Honour, Vishwa Hindi Sammelan, Nagpur

Member, Award Samiti for Gujarati, Bharatiya Jnanapith
1982 Nominated to the Executive Committee, Gujarat Sahitya Akademi
1983 Elected member to Executive Committee, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. Honoured by the Third Vishwa Hindi Sammelan, New Delhi
1984 Nominated to the Selection Board, Bharatiya Jnanapith
1986 Honoured as a freedom fighter by the Indian Writers Union at Kanyakumari
1988 Inaugurated 61st Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, Thane, Maharashtra
1989 Honoured by Sharad Pawar, Chief Minister, Maharashtra, on completing eighty years.
1990 Chief Guest, Indira Gandhi Rajbhasha Award Bestowal Function, New Delhi
1991 Received Balaraj Sahani National Award for the year 1990-91
1992 Awarded Padmashri by the President of India. Received Suo Moto Freedom fighter’s Pension from the Government of Maharashtra
1993 A documentary film made on life and letters by Unit-3/Combines

with Dilip Kumar.