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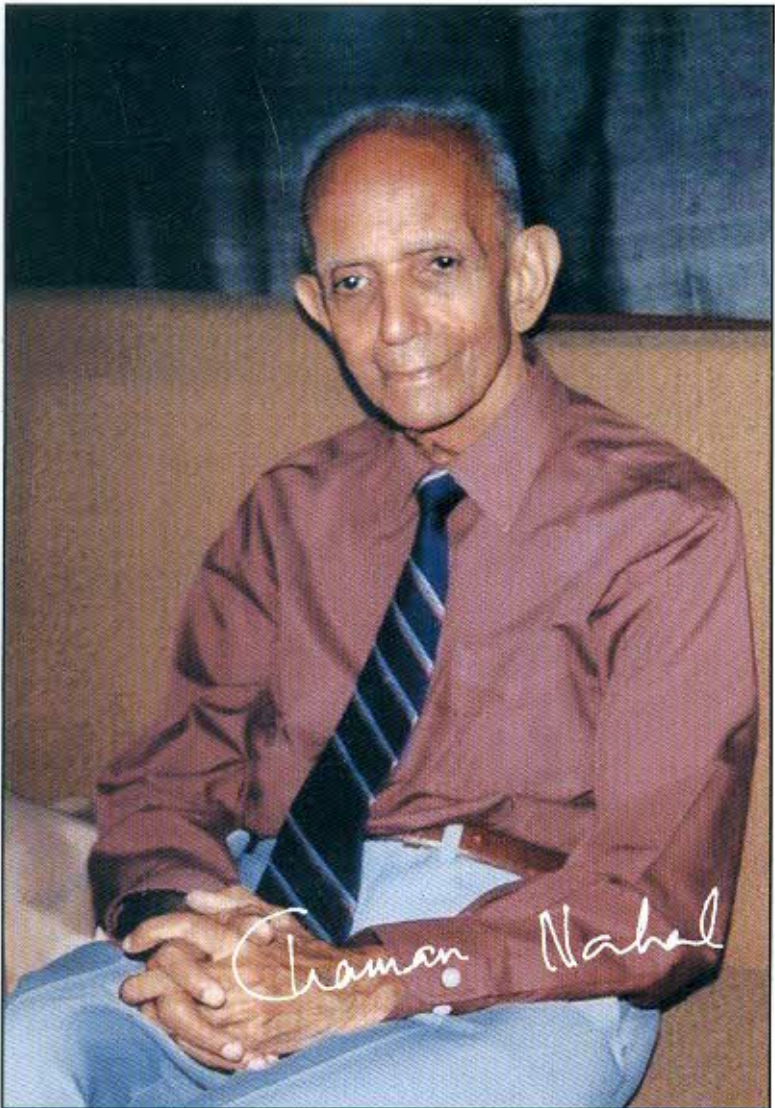


India International Centre

15 June 2005

meet the author

Chaman Nahal





“The study of history is a study of the alternative choices open to a people at a particular time.”

—Chaman Nahal

Chaman Nahal was born in Sialkot, now in Pakistan, in 1927. The family fled to Delhi in 1947, after Partition. In addition, he lost his eldest sister, Kartar Devi, during the Partition riots, who was assassinated along with her husband in the newly created Pakistan. This has given Nahal a perpetual horror of circumstances that force an individual

to relocate and realign himself. It forms the central theme of his fiction.

He met Gandhiji briefly at one of his prayer meetings at Birla House in New Delhi in 1947 and was deeply influenced by what he said to him: the ability of a person to face any threat to his integrity through an inner strength. That adulation took the form of Nahal writing four long novels about India's freedom struggle, a project on which he was to spend twenty-five years of his life.

Nahal took his M.A. in English from Delhi in 1948 and a Ph.D. from Nottingham in 1961. He married Sudarshna in 1955, and they have two daughters, Ajanta and Anita. His wife was Principal of a Senior Secondary School in New Delhi and received the State Award for Teachers in that position. Their two daughters are also now teachers, Ajanta in English and Anita in History. Nahal believes that his wife has been the major source of strength and support in all his writings.

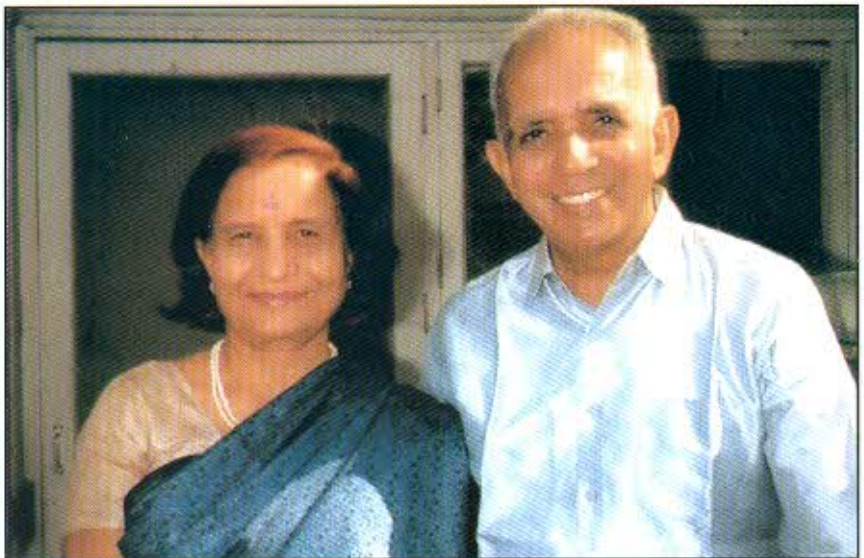


Parents, Gopal Das Saraf and Yamuna Devi, 1947

He became a Lecturer in English in 1949, immediately after his degree from Delhi, and worked in Ajmer, Pune, and finally in Delhi. He was Professor & Head of the English Department at Delhi University from 1981-84. He retired from Delhi University in 1987.

His entire literary work is in English. He began as a short story writer and a columnist. In that capacity, he came in contact with some of the top editors of the time, including C.R. Mandy, Durga Das, and Frank Moraes. He was also deeply influenced by J. Krishnamurti, on whom he

The novel received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977, and the same year also got the Federation of Indian Publishers Award for excellence in creative writing. By now, the novel has been translated into twelve languages, including Russian, Hungarian, and Sinhala. The novel has received special attention in Sri Lanka, where the second edition of that superb translation by Kusum Disanayaka (adjudged as best translation of the year 1995) was released in 2004, when Nahal was also invited by the Sri Lankan government as the Chief Guest for their National Festival of Art



With wife, 1980

wrote a short book. His collection of short stories *The Weird Dance*, and his Krishnamurti book were both issued in 1965.

His best-known novel is *Azadi*, which was published simultaneously in India, England, and America in 1975. The novel was an instant success, was reviewed appreciatively in almost every Indian paper, and in foreign journals like the *London Times*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The New York Review of Books*, the *Time* magazine, and many others. Leading writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Christopher Wricks commented on it in print.

& Culture held in September last year.

Azadi was finally included by Nahal as the fourth volume of his *Gandhi Quartet*, for which edition he wrote a special "Epilogue" to go with it.

Another of his novels, *The English Queens*, a satire on the Anglicized Indians, also received the Federation of Indian Publishers Award in 1979.

In addition to fiction writing, Nahal has had a lifelong interest in mind expansion – the way memory is stored in us and how our mind operates. He edited a book on the subject, *Drugs and the Other Self*, published in New



With their daughters, Ajanta and Anita
in their home in Kalkaji, 1975

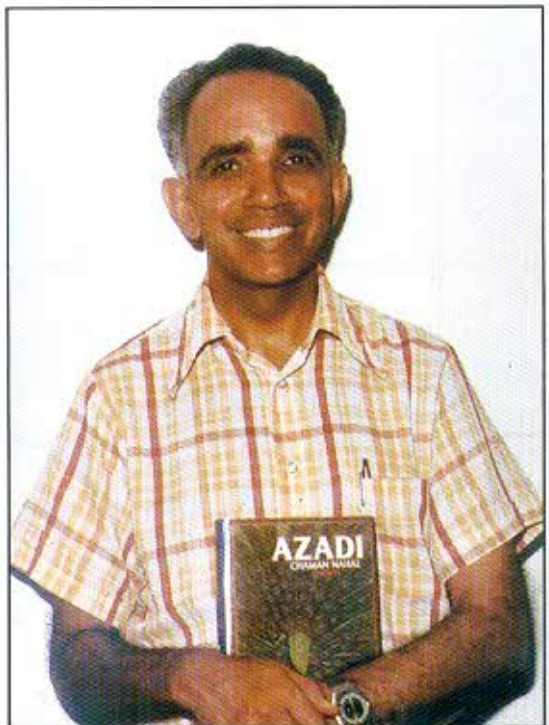
York in 1971. He maintains that no external stimulus can generate in us the kind of peace and joy that a spiritual experience does. He is currently working on a novel, where he describes how once in a while total strangers in our life lead us to a spiritual expansion as nothing else can. The novel attempts to convey the highly meaningful value of entirely accidental encounters.

Nahal has travelled extensively and lectured in various countries. Turin University in Italy conferred upon him a Medal of Honour in 1987. Cambridge University in UK elected him an Overseas Fellow in 1991. East West Center in Hawaii honoured him with its Distinguished Service Award in 1997. His last academic position abroad was as Dai Ho Chun Distinguished Chair at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu from 1998-99.

Nahal is a map collector by hobby and must be having over 200 maps of cities he has visited or has been fond of. He is fascinated by the way

towns are laid out and how they grow; the way people use space for human warmth. A strong sense of place thus is a marked feature of all his work as an author.

His autobiography, entitled *Silent Life: Memoirs of a Writer*, has just been released in New Delhi. His e-mail ID is: cnfoundation@rediffmail.com.



At the release of American Edition
of *Azadi* in New York in 1975

A Select Bibliography

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About

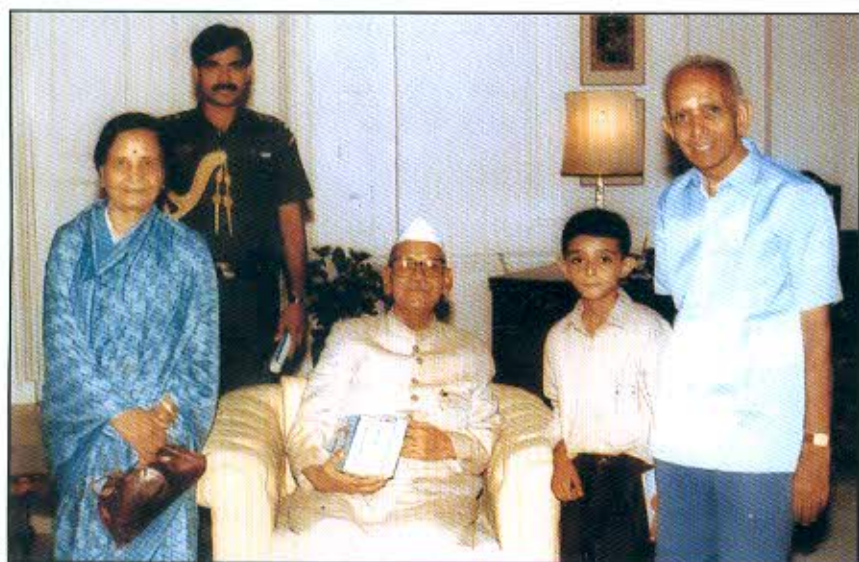
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Dictionary of International Biography, UK

Chronology



Presenting *The Gandhi Quartet* to
President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, 1993.

1927	Born in Sialkot, now in Pakistan	1986	Cultural Exch. Visitor, Singapore
1948	M.A. in English from Delhi University	1987	Cultural Exch. Visitor, New Zealand
1949	Began teaching career as Lecturer in English	1988	Visiting Prof, Turin University, Italy
1955	Marriage with Sudarshna	1990	English Faculty Visitor, Cambridge University, UK
1959-61	British Council Scholar, UK	1990	Chapman Fellow, Commonwealth Inst, London, UK
1967-70	Senior Fulbright Fellow, Princeton University, USA	1991-92	Fellow, Churchill College, Cambridge University, UK
1971-75	Visiting Prof, Long Island University, USA	1993	Cultural Exch. Visitor, Nepal
1971	Visiting Lecturer, Thailand	1995	Cultural Exch. Visitor, Sri Lanka
1971	Visiting Lecturer, Malaysia	1997	Cultural Exch. Visitor, Spark Mat Institute for Peace Studies, Hawaii
1971, 72	Visiting Lecturer, Japan	1998-99	Dai Ho Chun Distinguished Chair, Hawaii University, USA
1979	Cultural Exch. Visitor, Fiji	2004	Chief Guest, National Festival of Art & Cultural, Sri Lanka
1980, 82, 87	Cultural Exch. Visitor, Australia		
1982			
83, 87	Visiting Prof, Penn University, USA		
1983	Cultural Exch. Visitor, Canada		