

14 March 2001



Sahitya Akademi

invite you to

**meet the author**

**Gurdial Singh**



“THIS child of yours shall one day bring laurels to your family. He will be a man of learning”, predicted a *sadhu* to Gurdial’s father Jagat Singh after curing child Gurdial of a chronic illness. Despite being a school dropout in his sixth standard, Gurdial Singh rose to the level of a Professor of Punjabi and writer of national stature.

After leaving school, he toiled with his father as an apprentice, in his carpenter’s shop for three years and then worked as a skilled carpenter for five years. During this period he passed his matriculation and graduated with honours degree in Punjabi. He got all his education as a private student.

He started his career as a teacher in a primary school in 1954. His literary career as a short story writer began in 1962 with the publication of *Saggi Phull* (The head ornaments), *Chan Da Boota* (The sapling of

the moon) and *Opra Ghar* (The Strange House). Today he is the author of ten short story collections, nine novels, one full-length play and two one-act plays, a dozen books for children and five books of prose including his autobiography. More than a hundred of his articles and essays on the problems of Punjab and Indian society have been published in leading magazines and newspapers. He has also translated about forty books from English and Hindi into Punjabi and vice versa.

Gurdial Singh became a novelist with the publication of *Marhi da diva* (The last flicker) in 1964. It is considered to be one of the best novels written in a regional dialect (Malwai). About *Marhi Da Diva*, Prof. Namwar Singh says, “When Indian novel was on its decline, a novel published in a so called backward language in mid-twentieth century lifted the Indian novel to sublimity”. A



Receiving Soviet Land Nehru Award, 1988



feature-film based on this novel produced by National Film Development Corporation received the best regional film award in 1989. Besides its translations in several Indian languages, the novel has also been translated into Russian:

In his second novel *Anhoe* (Non-existents, 1966) his characters came alive with their lasting appeal comparable to those of the hero of *Don Quixote* and of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Prof. Sant Singh Sekhon had no hesitation in comparing this work of art to those greatest works of world literature.

His subsequent novels are *Rete Di Ikk Mutthi* (A handful of soil, 1967), *Kuwela* (The late hours, 1968), *Adh Chanani Raat* (Night of the half moon, 1972) which won the Sahitya Akademi Award, *Athan Uggan* (The dusk and dawn, 1974), *Annhe Ghore Da Daan* (Alms for the blind horse, 1976), *Pauh Phutale ton Pehlan* (Before dawn, 1992) and *Parsa* (1991).

The novels of Gurdial Singh set a new trend in Punjabi fiction in the Sixties and after. Gurdial Singh has a special mastery over the craft of telling



With his wife and grandsons



With Russian friend in Moscow near Leo Tostoy's house, 1987

a tale and the art of painting rural scenes and delineating the rural characters of his native region. One can also detect in these writings his compassion for the poor and the downtrodden. "His economy of narratives on the treatment of characters" according to Dr. Amrik Singh, "is marked by a degree of restraint and artistic skill which was totally unprecedented in Punjabi."

Gurdial Singh has travelled extensively in Canada and the UK to study the several economic and political problems of Indian migrants there. He has also visited erstwhile USSR including Leningrad, Moscow and Tashkent.

Winner of more than 12 awards and honours, Sri Gurdial Singh received the coveted Jnanpith Award in 1999.

## A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

### In Punjabi

#### Novels

*Marhi Da Diva* (The Last Flicker),  
1964

*Anhoe* (Non-Existents), 1966

*Rete Di Ikk Mutthi* (A Handful of  
Soil), 1967

*Kuwela* (The Late Hours), 1968

*Adh Chanani Raat* (Night of the  
Half Moon), 1972

*Athan Uggan* (The Dusk and the  
Dawn), 1974

*Annhe Ghore Da Daan* (Alms for  
the Blind Horse), 1976

*Pauh Phutale Ton Pehlan* (Before  
Dawn), 1982

*Parsa*, 1991

#### Short Story Collections

*Saggi Phull* (The Head Ornaments),  
1962

*Chann Da Boota* (The Sapling of  
the Moon), 1964

*Opra Ghar* (The Strange House),  
1966

*Kutta Te Aadmi* (The Dog and the  
Man), 1971



With Mulak Raj Anand

*Masti Bota* (The Rebellious Camel),  
1982

*Rukhe Misse Bande* (The Rude  
People), 1984

*Begana Pind* (The Different  
Village), 1985

*Chonvian Kahanian* (Selected  
Stories), 1988

*Pakka Tikana* (Permanent Abode),  
1990

*Karir Di Dhingri* (The Thorn Bush),  
1991

*Meri Pratinidhi Rachna* (Re-  
presentative works), 1992



With actor Balraj Sahani and Punjabi writers, 1970



## Play

*Farida Ratin Wadian* (There are Long Nights O Farid), 1982

*Vidaygi ton Pichhon* (After Saying Goodbye), 1982

*Nikki Moti Gall* (A Negligible Talk), 1982

## Prose

*Punjab De Mele Te Teohar* (Festivals of the Punjab), Publication Division, Delhi, 1988

*Lekhak Da Anubhav Te Sirjan Parkiriya* Punjabi University, Patiala

*Dukhya Das Kabir Hai* by Lokgeet Parkashan, Chandigarh, 1996

## Books for Children

*Bakalam Khud* (With My Own Pen) 1960

*Tuk Khoh Laye Kawan* (The Bread Snatched by Crows), 1963

*Likhtam Baba Khema* (Written by Baba Khema), 1971

*Baba Khema*, 1988

*Gappian Da Pio* (The Father of the Gossips), 1989

*Mahabharat* (An Epic of India), 1990

*Dharat Suhavi* (The Earth Beautiful), 1990

*Tin Kadam Dharti* (Three-Pace Earth), 1983

*Khate Mithe Lok* (Bitter and the Sweet People), 1993

## In Hindi

*Marhi Ka Deeva* (Novel), Adhar Parkashan Ltd., 1966

*Ghar Aur Rasta* (Novel), Adhar Parkashan Ltd., 1968

*Adh Chandni Raat* (Novel), Adhar Parkashan Ltd.

*Panchwan Pahar*, Rajkamal Parkashan Ltd., Delhi, 1988

*Sabh Des Paraya* (Novel), Radha Krishan Parkashan Ltd., 1993

*Mahabharata* (in four vols.) for children Rajkamal Parkashan Ltd., Delhi

## In English

*The Last Flicker*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1993

*Night of the Half Moon*, Macmillan India Ltd., Chennai, 1996

*Parsa*, National Book Trust India, Delhi, 1998



In Moscow, 1987

## A CHRONOLOGY

- |             |   |      |   |
|-------------|---|------|---|
| 1933        | Birth   | 1986 | Soviet Land Nehru Award   |
| 1954        | Took up his teaching career                                   | 1987 | Visited USSR  |
| 1957        | His first short story published                               | 1989 | <i>Marhi Da Diva</i> received the Regional Film Award                 |
| 1960        | Published his children book <i>Bakalam Khud</i>               | 1992 | Shironmani Sahitkar Award   |
| 1962        | Published his first short story collection <i>Saggi Phull</i> | 1995 | Bhai Vir Singh Galp Puraskar Pash Award                               |
| 1964        | First novel <i>Marhi Da Deeva</i> published                   | 1997 | U.P. Hindi Sahitya Sammelan Award                                     |
| 1967        | Took his M.A. in Punjabi                                      | 1998 | Padmashri from Govt. of India   |
| 1975        | Sahitya Akademi Award for <i>Adh Chanani Raat</i> (Novel)     | 1999 | Jananpith award   |
| 1979 & 1989 | Received Punjabi & Sahitya Akademi awards                     | 2000 | Published his first volume of his autobiography <i>Nyan-Mattian</i> . |



With Gyani Jail Singh and other fellow writers, 1975