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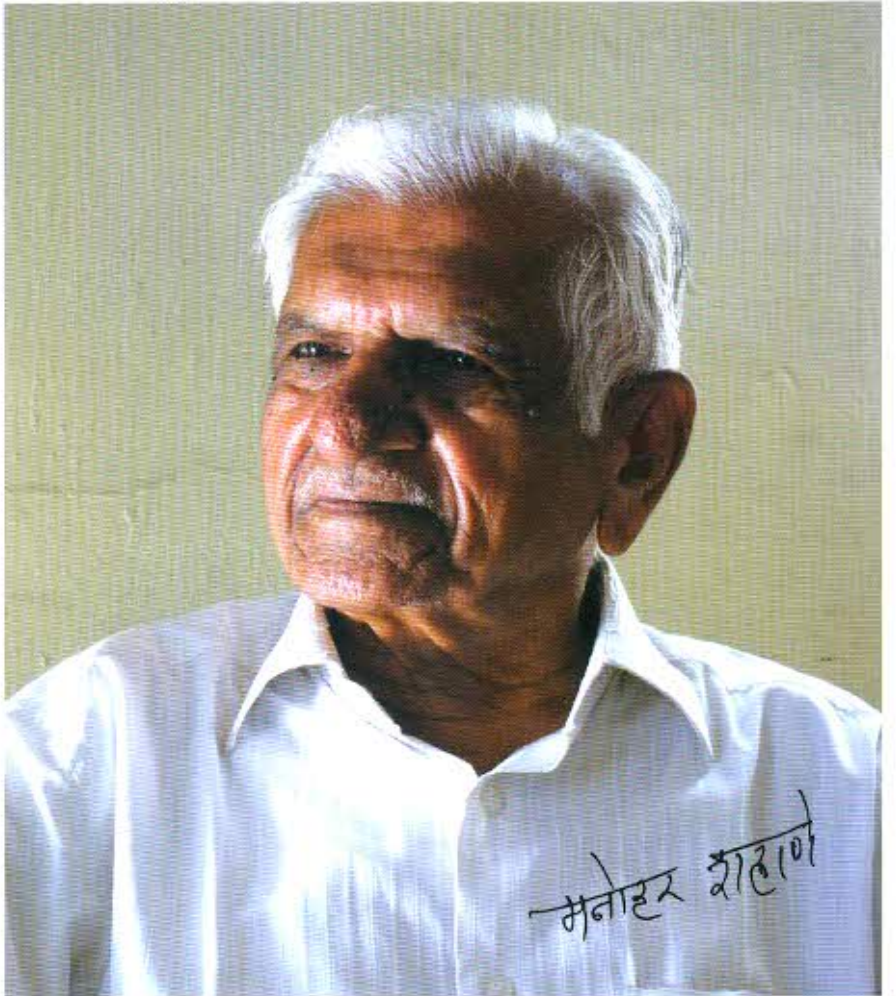
Sahitya Akademi

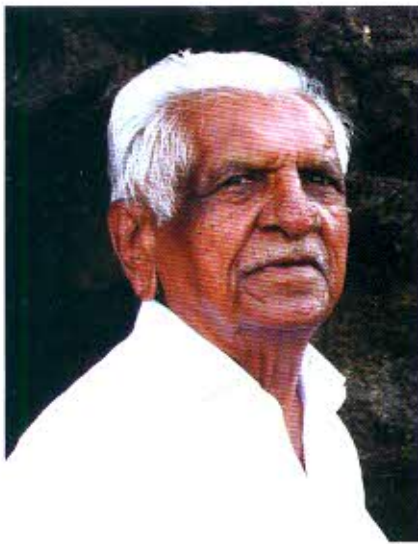


invite you to

meet the author

Manohar Shahane





Iwould ask a basic question: Is man a totally free creature? The moment he is born, he has to carry the heavy burden of his parents, family, conventions and tradition, history and religion. Many a time he is unaware of this burden. He is not aware that every action he performs is not done by him. This burden also forces him to perform many tasks. Just as he has no freedom to choose his parents; he has no freedom to choose his religion as well. Some thinkers claim that man is a master of his life. Like a god, he can make things happen. I have doubts whether he is he so potent, so powerful. Therefore I believe that no protagonist in fiction is like a hero who can move things to push the narrative forward. He is unable to bring about any change. If it is so, who is the prime mover of the happenings that take place around us? My answer to this question is that the activities of this universe happen because of circumstances. Different forces that are active in the universe create those circumstances. Some

people try to figure out whether man can become such a force. I think, he could be but he is a terribly weak force. He is the most vulnerable creature in nature. If he thinks he can do something, it is a mere illusion. Man's will to live is a rebellion against his inevitable death. But how futile is this rebellion. In this sense my protagonist could be called antiheroes. Solutions in works of art are likely to be illusory. My characters tolerate suffering and even crack them because there is no alternative before them, because this is the reality of life. Dependence is the eternal fate of the human race. Therefore it may be fruitful if man lives his life knowing the nature of reality well enough, instead of following ideals. I portray antiheroes, not heroes, because of the blind path of meaninglessness that we call life—whether he likes it or not, he has to walk the same path.

- Manohar Shahane, in one of his interviews

Writing short stories, novels, essays, one acts and full length plays in a career spanning over fifty years, Manohar Murlidhar Shahne is one of the most distinguished Marathi writers who began creative writing around 1960s. He is also known as a keen and accomplished journalist, and Chief Editor of the celebrated *Amrut Digest Magazine*.

Manohar Shahne was born on May 1, 1930. He worked as News Editor of *Gavakari*, a daily newspaper, at Nashik, and later became the Chief Editor of



Addressing a local literary meet at Nashik

Amrut Digest Magazine. Beginning his writing career in 1960, he has twenty two books to his credit including highly acclaimed collections of short stories *Shahanyanchya Goshti, Anitya, Bramhadoh, Udyta*, the novels *Dhakte Aakash, Zakol, Devaacha Shabda, Ihayatra, Putra, Sase, Sanchit, Uluk, Aarse*, the two novellas *Lobh Asava aani Ekhadyacha Mrutyu*, and *Aaropi Anant Ragho*, a play. Some of his plays, such as *Itihasache Daat Karawati, Aakashala Ekach Dola, Putra* and *Bhutachi Pawale Ulati*, are still unpublished.

There are number of

elements that distinguish his fiction from that of typical and conventional writers. It can be said that his fiction has always been ahead of his time, both in conception and execution. Earlier, traditional criticism found it to be little difficult to accommodate his writings, for he was quite modern a writer. His content, rather the way he conceives it, is unusual, and he is experimental in his own way. Apparently a story teller, he simultaneously probes into the inner world of his protagonists while clinging still to the socio-economic circumstantial reality



Receiving appreciation and honour

of the times in which they live. In this sense, his fiction emphasizes psychological as well as sociological issues of universal significance. In executing his worldview, he consciously keeps away the 'author' in him. Issues in his fiction spring directly from the soil, and achieve universal degree through his creative handling.

He has evolved a rare worldview by his wide reading and his literary insights seem to have come to him from the

one find in the vast space of existence that seems to be apparently meaningless? etcetera. We therefore find that he does not present his protagonists as heroes; rather they appear to be anti-heroes and hence resemble common people who look like helpless beings living in the existential swamp.

Manohar Shahane holds that the writer-creator must not get involved in the characters he has created. If the writer falls in love with any of his characters,



Being felicitated

British, European and American litterateurs he read. Primarily Indian, his vision is modern in that he is unconsciously influenced by existentialism and the absurd that he found close to his heart. His characters seem to be constantly living under the shadow of death. As a consequence, he seems to be asking the basic questions about life: What is man? Why is he living when the living is not so enjoyable? What purpose does

he will fail to retain his objective spirit, and consequently will lose clarity and honesty. Not only is this harmful to the work but it also fails to create a complex and heterogeneous impact on the reader's mind. When a writer makes Herculean efforts to be clear, honest and true to the soil his characters he picks up from, he has to carry angst and sorrow in his heart. In this he has to walk on the razor's edge: he should not only fall a prey to the agony but also not

override it. This he refers to as the author's objectivity, a quality that is very much needed for literary excellence. This is a rare characteristic of Shahane's fiction.

He explains, "All my works, consciously or otherwise, grow under the inevitable shadow of death. My attempt has been to examine this man or the groups of such men. In a way, I have a sort of obsession with death. Death seems to be forcibly tied to all the living beings. Or to me it looks as though to live life is to be a slave to death. I think that man's every action or idea is his rebellion against death. At the same, my writings are not tied forever to the principle that there is no meaning in anything, that all is mortal and meaningless. No life can ever deny both decay and destruction. As I live I become restless with the awareness that finally we are mere puppets and that we have no control over anything. But it is out of this awareness that my literary works are created. No wonder that they too feel the threat of inevitable death!"

Manohar Shahane presented life through symbols rooted in reality. For example, his story "Thayatra" contains a symbolic narrative wherein the protagonist Moreshwar is supposed to sort out the problem of danger to his house created by the underground roots of the nearby tree growing under his house. The narrator

tells us that the protagonist is a helpless man who lives his life knowing well that it is a mortal life hung midway between the inscrutable darkness of two worlds: the one before his birth and the other after his death. He has been trying hard to make out its meaning. He wants to know what he was in the darkness before his birth and what he would be in the darkness after. He is a professor caught up in the serpentine coil of these questions. In the light of this life that exists between these two dark worlds, he is growing unfamiliar not only to his wife but also to himself. The wave of this unfamiliarity is so powerful that he would be swept away completely. In this situation, he meets the challenge of erecting his own house and put it in order. He is unable to face it as a cruel force outside is watching his disability. It is alien; it simply wants to record it in a register. Man simply 'moves' physically, like a pawn removed from its square; thus he is 'removed.' He has no freedom of his own to 'move.' Man is uncertain forever. The only certainty is the absurd and meaningless record of his life. This reading easily reminds one of Shakespeare's Hamlet who was asked to set his house in order while Denmark was out of joint! Manohar Shahane's literary contribution lies precisely in his attempts to probe into the basic nature of man and his existence.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Short Story

<i>Shahanyanchya Goshti</i>	1961
<i>Anitya</i>	1984
<i>Brahmadoha</i>	1999
<i>Udyaa</i>	2008

Novel

<i>Dhakate Aakash</i>	1961
<i>Jhakol</i>	1962
<i>Ihayatra</i>	1967
<i>Devacha Shabda</i>	1968
<i>Putra</i>	1971
<i>Sase</i>	1977
<i>Sanchit</i>	1997
<i>Uluk</i>	2005
<i>Aarse</i>	2006

Novella

<i>Lobh Asawa Aani</i>	
<i>Ekhadyacha Mrutyu</i>	1968

Play

<i>Aaropi Anant Ragho</i>	1999
Among the unpublished ones are <i>Itihasache Daat Karawati</i> , <i>Aakashala Ekach Dola</i> , <i>Putra</i> , <i>Bhutachi Pawale Ulati</i>	

A CHRONOLOGY

- 1930 Born on 1st May
1959 Joins as News Editor with *Gavkari* daily
1960 Joins as Chief Editor of *Amrut Digest Magazine*
1961 Receives Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad Award
Receives Maharashtra State Government Award
1970 Receives Rajya Natya Puraskar
2005 Receives Maharashtra Foundation Award
2008 Receives Bhau Padhye Award constituted by *Mukta Shabda*
Publications