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Gangadhar Gadgil



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Gadgil in New Delhi

Economist by training and a creative writer by choice and instinct, Gangadhar Gadgil has published over fifty literary works, covering many genres. Short story writer, novelist, playwright and critic, his place in the history of Marathi literature is secure especially as the pioneer of *navakatha*.

He published his first short story at the age of eighteen and soon broke new ground. Unlike his predecessors, he saw the limitations of conventional plot and explored other modes of expression. Beyond the apparent character, he looked into the depths of human psyche and probed the deep urges and hidden motives, complexes and oddities. He made skilful and effective use of unorthodox imagery, setting off widening ripples of suggestion. He varied his technique and style from story to story and scaled a wide range. Soon he became the undisputed leader of the new story in the forties.

Departing from eye-catching and fashionable themes of tyrannical parents and

sundered lovers, oppression of women by men, of the poor by the rich, Gadgil exploits the literary potential of commonplace occurrences in his stories, collected in twenty-seven volumes. In doing so he brings out the social processes at work in their subtlety and complexity. For instance, his story 'Bhaglela Chandoba' is not an overt depiction of the enslavement of women, but reveals the degradation of woman in the society through the starved and stunted personality of the main character.

In his short fiction, Gadgil explores the subconscious—fantasies, dreams, nightmares—but concerns himself with the social strains of his characters and the tangle of human relationships.

Irrepressible experimenter, Gadgil has published two novels, each different from the other, and both from the novels of the time. *Liliche Phool* portrays a chaste woman slipping into sexual laxity and explores the dichotomy between spiritual and physical aspects of love. Beauty and ugliness, affection and cruelty, love and violence, devotion and



Gadgil in his office



Gadgil at the Kakasaheb Kalelkar Birth Centenary Seminar,
New Delhi 1985.

revulsion build up kaleidoscopic patterns of human condition, baffling and haunting at the same time.

His second novel, *Durdamya*, is more daring as it presents the life of Tilak in a fictional framework, in Marathi to readers who adore their hero. Deification of the leader will lose in human terms and any attempt at showing his feet of clay will enrage them. To trace the growth of an ordinary man into an extraordinary leader of men, to yoke the flight of imagination to known dates and verifiable facts, to present the changing society in its myriad manifestations, to draw convincing pictures of other great leaders like Ranade, Gokhale and Gandhi, is a task bristling with difficulties. Gadgil surmounts them all and makes a remarkable contribution to the Marathi literature—the biographical novel. *Durdamya* is a novel of epic proportions and gives an authentic account of the times in which Tilak lived, and presents men, women and events which moulded the destiny of India.

Gadgil is an inimitable humourist and his creation, Bandu, is a household name in Maharashtra.

His *Gopuranchya pradeshat* and *Sat samudra palikade* have enriched the Marathi travel literature. They are known for their lively humour, poetic beauty and philosophic reflection.

Arthic navalkatha is a unique innovation of Gadgil, a sally into economics for the lay reader, an exercise in satire, entertaining and illuminating. His *arthic navalkathas* are extremely popular and have been translated into many other Indian languages.

Gangadhar Gadgil is an eminent literary critic. Founder of the new story in the forties, he fought for similar efforts in other genres, particularly poetry. He believes that a literary theory has to be primarily judged by its capacity to provide a framework of ideas and techniques, which can bring out fully what a literary work has to offer. It must provide scope for a highly developed literary sensibility to react to a literary work in an orderly and meaningful manner.

Gangadhar Gadgil has dominated the Marathi literary scene for over four decades now.



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Gadgil with Eleanor Zelliot in the U.S.A.



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Gadgil at a literary conference in Bombay, 1986.

A Chronology

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| <p>1923 Birth</p> <p>1941 "Priya Ani Manjar" first short story published in <i>Vangmaya Shobha</i>.</p> <p>1944 M.A. in Economics from Bombay University.</p> <p>1946 <i>Manaschitre</i>, first short-story collection; Joined Keekabhai Premchand College of Commerce, Bombay.</p> <p>1948 Taught at Sydenham College of Commerce.</p> <p>1949 Abhiruchi Award.</p> <p>1954 New York Herald Tribune and Hindustan Times National Contest Award for "Poison Ivy".</p> <p>1955 President, Katha Shakha, Pandharpur Sahitya Sammelan.</p> <p>1956 State Award for <i>Talavatale Chandane</i>.</p> <p>1957 State Award for <i>Ole Unha</i>. Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship for creative writing.</p> <p>1959 Joined L.D. Ruparel College, Bombay.</p> <p>1960 State Award for <i>Sai Samudra Palikade</i>.</p> <p>1962 Secretary, All India Writers Conference.</p> | <p>1964 Principal, Narsi Monji College of Commerce, Bombay.</p> <p>1971 Visit to Australia.</p> <p>1974 Vice President, Marathi Sahitya Mahamandal.</p> <p>1976 Honorary Professor of Marathi, Bombay University; Financial Adviser, Premier Construction Company, Walchand Group, Bombay.</p> <p>1980 N.C Kelkar Award for <i>Panyavaril Akshare</i>.</p> <p>1981 President, Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, Raipur.</p> <p>1982 R.S. Jog Award for <i>Aajkalache Sahityik</i>; Visit to U.S.A.</p> <p>1983 President, Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sammelan; Member, Executive Board, Sahitya Akademi; Financial Adviser to Hindustan Construction Company, Walchand Group, Bombay.</p> <p>1986 President, Marathi Sahitya Mahamandal.</p> |
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Gadgil as President, Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, Raipur, felicitated by Dhondo Vithal Deshpande; also in the picture is Shanta Sheike.