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Sahitya Akademi



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invite you to

meet the author

Gulzar



Poetry has been, and always will remain, my 'real' passion. It is in poetry that I find true meaning which urges me on through some turbulent moments in life. Poetry is my life line.

— Gulzar



A man of many facets — poet, lyricist, writer and film-maker, Sampuran Singh was born in Deena, Jhelum (now in Pakistan) in a conservative family of businessmen. By the time young Sampuran had completed his education in Delhi, his love for poetry too had intensified. In a bid to recite poems in the school poetry competition, young Sampuran outdid his rivals by reciting poems composed by himself. By reciting them he started understanding poetry, and then writing prose and later poetry became his temperament.

It was in the ninth standard in school that Sampuran came across the translations of Tagore, Sarat Chandra and Jibanananda Das. Their writings and later those of Subhas Mukhopadhyay deeply impressed him. His fondness for Bengali literature made him learn the language.

Sampuran started writing under the pseudonym 'Gulzar', meaning happiness

experienced in a garden in full bloom. He came to Mumbai in his teens during the mid-50s. He began his film odyssey in the 60s as an assistant to the renowned director Bimal Roy and worked with a host of Bengali artistic geniuses like Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Hemant Mukherjee and Kishore Kumar — this strengthened his confidence and contributed to his later accomplishments.

Simultaneously, the poet in him bloomed. Sensitive to contemporary issues, Gulzar has been closely associated with the Progressive Writers' Movement.

Many influences have together moulded Gulzar's creativity. Migration from Pakistan was one such. Ghalib, Mir and Faiz Ahmed Faiz have also greatly influenced him.

Gulzar has so far published five collections of poems, two collections of short stories and sixteen books for children.

Jaanam, his first collection of poetry in Urdu came out in 1962 and subsequently *Chouras Raat* in 1963. His first collection of poems in Hindi *Kuch aur Nazme* was published in 1980 and *Chand Pukhraj* came out after a span of fifteen years. His most recent collection of poems *Triveni*, in Hindi and Urdu, was published this year.

Gulzar is primarily a poet of pain and solitude, of love and death, striving constantly

to retain his sensitivity to the human condition in a hostile milieu of crass materialism. The pain experienced in his poems has a dimension of its very own. "It leads you to realisation," says the poet.

An inherent silence, pure and evocative, constitutes the core of Gulzar's poetry and cinema. "There is always an inherent silence in a poem. The poet hides behind the silence and yet he is loud enough to be echoed by those who share his heartbeat," says the poet in his preface to *Silences*, an anthology of his poems in English translation (1994). The choice of words in his poems are simple and evocative. He contends, "Words are not solid blocks of meaning. They say much more than their apparent shapes."

The most dominating theme in Gulzar's writings is human relationships. Looking back at his works, Gulzar agrees that human relationships have stirred him the most. Imagery drawn from

everyday life is an integral part of his poetry.

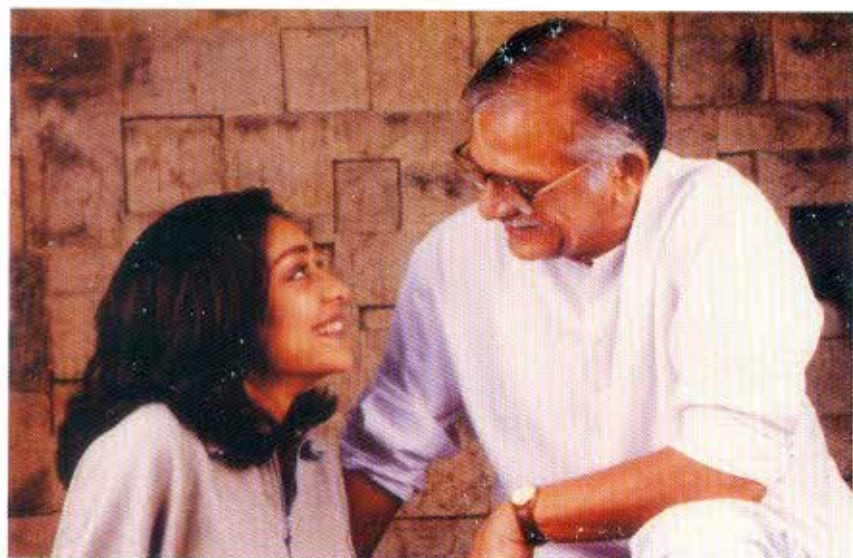
A voracious reader, Gulzar feels that it is important to share one's writings with readers and also writers of other languages. Gulzar is well acquainted with writings in Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Oriya besides Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi.

Gulzar's short stories are brief, evocative and sharply observant and have a cameo-like quality. The English translation of his short story collection *Ravi Paar and Other Short Stories* published in 1997 includes stories around Partition, love, everyday happenings of simple nature, feudal mores, etc.

Gulzar says that only literature brought him to cinema. Gulzar started writing lyrics for films with Bimal Roy's *Bandini*. *Mora goraa ang layee le* from *Bandini* is supposed to be his first film lyric.



Being honoured by Sri Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India in Mirza Ghalib Seminar organised by the Sahitya Akademi at New Delhi



With his daughter Meghna

Besides film lyrics, Gulzar has written scripts for over fifty films, some of the outstanding ones among which are *Anand*, *Guddi*, *Bawarchi*, *Namak Haram*, *Khamoshi*, *Andaaz*, *Gharonda* and *New Delhi Times*. With *Mere Apne*, he started directing films. Some of the most memorable Indian films directed by him are *Mere Apne*, *Aandhi*, *Mausam*, *Khushboo*, *Achanak*, *Kinara*, *Meera*, *Parichay*, *Angoor*, *Ijaazat*, *Libaas*, *Lekin*, *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*.

A child at heart and a writer of several books for children, Gulzar laments that our children lack good books and films. Gulzar strives hard to pass to children the folk culture and traditions of India. He feels that the art of scripting books, television programmes and films for children should be in consonance with their psychology.

He has also made two documentaries, one on the Sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, and the other on renowned vocalist Pandit

Bhimsen Joshi, and also two TV serials — *Mirza Ghalib*, on the life of the legendary poet, and *Kirdar*, based on well-known short stories.

About his experience as a poet and lyricist, Gulzar says, "The only difference between my literary output and my film lyrics is the medium. There is poetry in both."

His literary works and films bear eloquent testimony to his commitment to his art and craft. Film making for him is a way of sharing his thoughts. His films symbolise the way he looks at life. His intention is to get across his point of view or vision and to share it with his audience.

Along with the respect and adulation of his audience and readers, he has also been the recipient of several prestigious awards and honours. He won the National Award seven times including Best Screenplay for *Koshish* in 1972, Best Director for *Mausam* in 1976, Best Lyricist for *Ijaazat* in 1988, Best Lyricist for *Lekin* in 1991 and Best Film of Wholesome Entertainment for *Maachis* in



1996. His documentaries too bagged National awards in 1991 and 1993. His stories for children *Ekta* received an award from the NCERT.

Gulzar has a deep sense of music. A lover of Hindustani classical music, he says that in our country music is all around us in our daily lives. His sense of music, his feeling for sound and rhythm guide his choice of metres, phrases, even images and colours.

Vast and varied, his creative endeavour is still in its spring.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Poetry Collection

Jaanam (Urdu), Chetana Publishers, 1962.

Ek Boond Chand (Hindi), Tomorrow Publishers, 1970.

Kuch aur Nazme (Hindi), Tomorrow Publishers, 1980.

Chand Pukhraj Ka (Urdu), Rupa, 1995.

Pukhraj (Hindi), Rupa, 1994.

Mera Kuch Samaan (Lyrics-Hindi), Radhakrishna, 1994.

Triveni (Urdu & Hindi) Rupa, 2001.

Raat Pashmine Ke (Urdu), Under print.

Short Story Collections

Chouras Raat (Urdu), Chetana Publishers, 1963.

Duan (Urdu), Insha Publishers, 1997.

Ravi Paar (Hindi & English), Rupa, 1997.

Children's Books

Ekta, (Hindi), Tomorrow Publishers, 1997.

Kayada (Hindi), Scholastic India, 2001.

Ek Mein Do (Hindi), Scholastic India, 2001.

Books (13 in all), written as Bosky's Series.

Translation

Silences (Poems-English Tr. by Rina Singh), Rupa, 1994.

Autumn Moon (Poems-English Tr. by J.P. Das), Rupa, 1999.

A CHRONOLOGY

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|------|---|------|--|
| 1936 | Birth | 1989 | Received NCERT Award for his story book <i>Ekta</i> . |
| 1961 | Joined Bimal Roy Productions. | 1991 | National Award for Best Lyricist. |
| 1962 | First poetry collection in Urdu <i>Jaanam</i> published. | 1994 | <i>Silences</i> , an English translation of his select poems, published. |
| 1963 | His first lyric written for the film <i>Bandini</i> . First short story collection <i>Chouras Raat</i> published. | 1996 | National Award for <i>Maachis</i> as the Best Film. |
| 1969 | <i>Mere Apne</i> , first film directed by him, released. | 1997 | English translation of his short stories <i>Ravi Paar and other stories</i> published. |
| 1972 | National Award for <i>Koshish</i> for Best Screenplay. | 2000 | His first ever musical story album <i>Sunset Point</i> with Jagjit Singh released. |
| 1976 | National Award for <i>Mausam</i> for Best Direction. | 2001 | <i>Triveni</i> , collection of poems in Hindi and Urdu published. |
| 1980 | <i>Kuch Aur Nazme</i> published. | | |
| 1988 | National Award for Best Lyricist. | | |



Receiving National Award from Sri R. Venkataraman, then President of India