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Sahitya Akademi
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invite you to

meet the author

Ila Arab Mehta





*Presenting a paper at Gujarati
Literary Academy, U. K.*

A moment of pain? Which moment? The moment when Makarand compelled her to throw away the picture she bought from the exhibition? The moment when, despite your not liking it, Shubhangi was admitted to a boarding school? The moment when he stopped you from working for the children in the slums? The moment when he cheated you and went abroad with the other one? Were all those moments of joy?

...Makarand had left her only that? But was she a helpless, suffering weak creature?

-Ila Arab Mehta

Ila was born in Mumbai on 16th June, 1938. That was the year when her father Gunvantrai Acharya, well-known writer, wrote the novel *Purta Janma*. *Putra Janma* can be described as a first feminist novel in Gujarati. Ila inherited her father's legacy of writing, and feminism-equity of

men and women.

Her schooling was done in Jamangar, Rajkot and then in Mumbai. Those were the days when there was no elitism, snobbishness or class consciousness in schools. Ila got firsthand knowledge of social norms, rules and regulations and women's status by mingling with various types of girls in school.

Completing her S.S.C. she joined Ramnarain Ruia College and did B.A. with Gujarati and Sanskrit in 1st Division and won Tulja Gauri Krishnlal Zaveri scholarship. She did her M.A. with same subjects and joined Ruia College as a lecturer, from 1960 to 1967.

She got married to Dr Arab Mehta in 1964. Later on she chose to be at home and devote her time to her children Salil and Sonali. However, life took an unexpected turn when she lost her father in 1965. His death was sudden and swift and he could not finish his book *Ramat Ramade Ram*.

From her student days Ila had begun writing for *Akhand Anand*, *Navneet*, *Stree Jivan*. So it was but natural that the family asked her to complete her father's novel.



Receiving an award from Sitanshu Yashashchandra and Rajendra Shah in 2008

She wrote last chapters in a fortnight and thus commenced her new career as a writer.

Ila also enjoyed teaching and joined St. Xavier's College in 1971 and worked till 2000.

For Ila, writing was a part of her "being". Though she continued to be a mother or a teacher, her mind's workshop was never idle. Her creative mind was full of new stories, characters and new

story lines which demanded on utterances, expression. However, writing is not just inspiration. It requires commitment, discipline and dedication. Ila would get up at four in the morning to write. Many a time she would write with the right hand and correct spelling mistakes of children's homework by the left. It was indeed a "Yajna", "Tap". Since 1966 Ila has written 18 novels, five collections of



With her husband Dr A. M. Mehta and children Sonali and Dr Salil



Addressing the conference at Gujarati literary Academy in London

short stories, a compilation of essays and creative writings on "Death", besides numerous radio and tele plays.

Ila's writing is a journey on the road less traveled. Her novels, short stories always tell "new stories", and have new types of characters and new settings, all weaved in imaginative and artistic presentation. There should be special mention of her novels, *Batris Putlini Vedanao*, *Paanch Pagla Prithvi Par*. *Batris Putlini Vedanao* is acknowledged as a remarkable feminist novel in Gujarati literature. *Paanch Pagla Prithvi Par* examines the social, economical and political reasons for women's subjugation.

Ila is also an accomplished short story writer.

Many of her short stories are included in *Anthologies of Best Short Stories*. Like her novels, her short stories are written on vast canvas of five continents - *Yankipur*, *Vienna Woods*, *Yatna* have Isreal, Africa, Europe as background.

Ila is an excellent speaker. In her student days, she had won many prizes for elocution. Even now listening to her short stories read out by her is a vivid experience.

Household duties, a regular job, writing and reading do not leave much time for other activities. Ila is not associated with various institutions. She does not attend many literary meets. That suits her fine, "...Nothing to distract me from my reading & writing", she smiles.



Being honoured by Gujarati Literary Academy in London

A BIBLIOGRAPHY

NOVEL

- 1969 - *Trikonani Tran Rekhao*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1970 - *Thijelo Aalkar*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1972 - *Radha*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1976 - *Ek Hata Diwan Bahadur*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1976 - *Batris Laxno*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1977 - *Aavati Kal No Suraj*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1978 - *Varsadar*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1979 - *Ane Mrityu*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1981 - *Shabne Naam Hotu Nathi*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1982 - *Batris Putlini Vedanao*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1985 - *Dariyano Manas*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1987 - *Vasant Chhalke*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1988 - *Parpotani Aankh*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1995 - *Paanch Pagalan Prithvi Par*, Gurjar Grantha Ratna Karyalay
1995 - *Nag Pariksha*, Gurjar Grantha Ratna Karyalay
2004 - *The New Life*, Gurjar Grantha Ratna Karyalay
2006 - *Zili Main Kumpal Hathelima*, Gurjar Grantha Ratna Karyalay

SHORT STORY

- 1981 - *Ek Cigarette Ek Dhupsali*, R. R. Sheth & Co.
1989 - *Vienna Woods*, R. R. Sheth & Co.

1991 - *Bhagya Rekha*, Anayas Publication

Balvo Balvi Balvun, Gurjar Grantha Ratna Karyalay

2006 - *Yom - Kipur*, Gurjar Grantha Ratna Karyalay

2009 - *Ila Arab Mehtano Varta Vaibhav*, Gurjar Grantha Ratna Karyalay

OTHER WORKS

1984 - *Mrityu Naam Parpoto Mare*, (Compilation of literary works by various writers on Death), Nav Bharat Sahitya Mandir

IN THE OFFING

Vad

A CHRONOLOGY

- 1938 Born on 16th June in Mumbai.
- 1958 B. A. with Gujarati & Sanskrit in 1st Division and received Tuljagauri K. Zaveri Scholarship.
- 1960 M. A. with same subjects and joined Ruia College as Lecturer in Gujarati.
- 1964 Married Dr Arab Mehta (M. D. F. R. C. S., M. R. C. O. G.)
- 1965 Edited *Samsar Chakra* in *Janma Bhoomi Pravasi*, a prominent Gujarati daily, Mumbai.
- 1966 - 70 Stayed at home to look after her children.
- 1971 Joined St. Xavier's College as a part time lecturer in Gujarati.
- 1973 *Radha* awarded second prize by Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
- 1979 *Ane Mrityu* awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
- 1981 *Ek Cigarette, Ek Dhupsali*, awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
- 1988 *Parpotani Aankh* awarded Bhagwati Nivedita Prize.
- 1989 *Vienna Woods* awarded by Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
- 2000 Visited London on the invitation of Gujarati Literary Academy, U. K.
- 2004 *The New Life* awarded 2nd prize by Gujarati Sahitya Academy, Ahmedabad.
- awarded 1st prize by Maharashtra Gujarati Sahitya Academy.
- 2006 *Yom - Kipur* awarded 1st prize by Maharashtra Gujarati Sahitya Academy.
- 2007 *Zili Main Kumpal Hatheliman* awarded 1st Prize by Maharashtra Sahitya Academy