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Sahitya Akademi



India International Centre

invite you to

meet the author

Padma Sachdev





Photographed by Lata Mangeshkar

A young girl would play a delightful game in her small village in Jammu. She would add stanzas of her own to folk songs and sing them. Everyone was amazed that this little girl could recall so many stanzas so easily. No one imagined that these were her own creations and the girl was too shy to claim authorship — this young girl was later to blossom into Padma Sachdev, a Dogri poetess of national stature.

Born in a family of Sanskrit scholars Padma even before she was admitted to school, was taught the art of reciting Sanskrit shlokas by her father Pt. Jai Dev Sharma. The rhythmic beauty of Padma's verses is a direct outcome of her acquaintance with Sanskrit poetry. The rediscovery during the freedom struggle of the charm of Dogri with its rich oral tradition of folktales and folksongs inspired her growth and shaped her into a poetess par excellence.

Padma lost her father during the partition. The sensitive child witnessed the cruelty and injustice inflicted upon her young, widowed mother. She withdrew from people and turned to nature. Hills, fields, the moon, stars and the sky became her friends. Time and again she found nature reflecting her moods and experiences of joy and pain, of hope and frustration, of love and separation.

Padma had made a reluctant entry into the world of literature. When her first poem was carried by a local daily in 1955, she had to bribe her younger brother not to show the 'outrage' to their mother.

Young Padma migrated from her village Purmandal to Jammu city at a time when the poems of Deenubhai Pant, Ram Nath Shastri, Almast, Deep, Madhukar and Yash Sharma were eagerly heard and enthusiastically recited by the young.

One of her earliest poems, "Raje Diyan Mandian" is considered one of the classics of modern Dogri literature. Conceived through the eyes of a mentally deranged woman the poem made a scathing attack on the feudal system portraying the human torture and the denial of human rights.

Meri Kavita Mere Geet, Padma's first collection of poems published in 1969 shot her into the forefront of national literary scene and also won for her the



Receiving the Soviet Land Nehru Award from Shankar Dayal Sharma, then Vice-President of India



Receiving the Sahitya Akademi Award from Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, former President of the Akademi

Sahitya Akademi Award in 1971. In his preface to this work, national poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar writes, "After reading Padma's poems I felt that I should throw my pen away — for what Padma writes indeed is true poetry".

Padma's marriage with Ved Pal Deep, the rebel poet, failed to work. The resulting unhappiness led Padma to the Chest Diseases Hospital of Srinagar where she battled with tuberculosis for three long years. It was here she met Dr Hafeczullah — her Abbaji, earned the nickname Fatima, read heaps of books brought to her by Sri A.A.A. Fyzee and Begum Fyzee, Vice - Chancellor and learnt to speak Kashmiri almost like a native.

Later Padma moved to Delhi and married well-known singer Surinder Singh, younger of Singh Bandhu duo.

Padma is the first woman poet of Dogri. Her literature depicts the joys and sorrows, moods and misfortunes of Indian womanhood. Even though she is conscious of the social injustices heaped upon woman, her woman characters maintain their dignity at all times. Dr Harbhajan Singh says, "I have not come across any other women writer who is so positive. Modern women's poetry has become the poetry of grievance. Padma, too, has suffered at the hands of men but her poetry projects womanhood in its fullness as beloved, sister or mother. Poetry, says Padma, is the essence of a person and one's mother tongue is its only medium of expression.

Along with producing literature Padma has worked tirelessly for propagating her language and culture. Dr Karan Singh while introducing her as a leading poet of Dogri and bemoaning the non-inclusion of the language in the Eighth Schedule of our Constitution, recalls Padma's commitment and work in that direction.

Her eagerness to introduce her language to wider audiences kindled the flame of prose-writing in Padma. Though she wrote short stories in Dogri, Hindi was to be her language for prose. She gratefully acknowledges her indebtedness to Dr Dharamvir Bharati for her prose-writing.

Padma's prose covers a large canvas — two novels, one collection of short stories, three volumes of interviews with fellow celebrities and a travelogue. She



With her parents and brother Ashutosh



With Ramdhari Singh Dinkar

has composed lyrics for two films and has translated several works from Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Oriya, Hindi and Korean (Sijo poetry) into Hindi and Dogri and lots of Dogri literature into Hindi.

Padma was personally responsible for the first-ever Dogri music album by Lata Mangeshkar for which she scored music and contributed two lyrics. Padma has worked for AIR

and she has also travelled extensively through Asia, Europe, the USA and Canada.

A warm hearted and affectionate person, Padma is famous for her uninhibited laughter—perhaps an indication that the sorrows of life have failed to dim her love for life. Padma Sachdev lives with her husband Surinder and daughter Meeta in New Delhi.

A Select Bibliography

In Dogri

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Pota Pota Nimbai, Anu Prakashan, Jammu, 1987

Uttar Vahini, Anu Prakashan, Jammu, 1992

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Prose

Chith Chethe (Memoirs) (In press)

In Hindi

Sabad Milava (Poetry and a Prose piece), Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1987

Diwankhana (Interviews) Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1988-89

Mitwa Ghar (Interviews) Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi, 1991-95

Amrai (Interviews), Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi (In press)



With Jaidev and Lata Mangeshkar during the recording of songs for 'Prem Parvat'



With her husband Surinder Singh and daughter Meeta

Godh Bhari (Short story collection)
Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi,
1990

Ab Na Banegi Dehri (Novel),
Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1993
(Serialised in *Dharamyug*)

Nausheen (Novel), Kitabghar,
Delhi, 1995 (Serialised in
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*Main Kahti Hun Aankhin
Dekhi* (Travelogue), Bharatiya
Jnanpith,
New Delhi, 1995

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by Padma Sachdev
Sahitya Akademi, 1988

Dola Kunn Thappeya
by Madhukar,
Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, 1991

From Hindi to Dogri

Barasganda di dhupp
by Kedarnath Singh
Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, 1993

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by Sitakant Mahapatra
Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, 1995

From Hindi to Punjabi

Sabad Mlava
by Padma Sachdev,
Punjabi Academy, Delhi, 1988

From English to Hindi

Sishir Raatri Ka Anurag
(Korean Sijo Poetry)
Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, 1991

From English to Dogri

B.P. Sathe (Monograph)
Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, 1987.



With Dharamvir Bharti and Kishanchander



With her writer-brother Jnaneshwar

A Chronology

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|------|--|-------|---|
| 1940 | Born in Jammu | 1987 | Received Soviet Land Nehru Award; visited the USSR |
| 1955 | First poem published | 1987- | Received award from |
| 1961 | Joined AIR | 88 | Hindi Academy, U.P. for <i>Sabad Milava</i> |
| 1966 | Married to Surinder Singh | 1988 | Received J & K Cultural Academy Award for <i>Pota Pota Nimbal</i> |
| 1969 | Shifted to AIR Bombay ; <i>Meri Kavita Mere Geet</i> published | 1989 | Received J&K Robe of Honour; Received Sauhardra Samman of U.P. Academy, Lucknow |
| 1971 | Received Sahitya Akademi Award for <i>Meri Kavita Mere Geet</i> | 1990 | Received Harmony Award |
| 1973 | Visited London; wrote lyrics for Hindi film <i>Prem Parvat</i> | 1993 | Received Raja Rammohun Roy Kalashri Puraskar; Convener, Dogri Advisory Board of the Sahitya Akademi |
| 1974 | Visited Europe; wrote lyrics for Hindi film <i>Aankhin Dekhi</i> | 1996 | Received Mata Kusum Kumari International Hindi Award |
| 1977 | Compered concerts of Lata Mangeshkar in Canada and the USA | | |
| 1983 | Received J&K Cultural Academy Award for <i>Naherian Galian</i> | | |



Receiving Raja Rammohun Roy Kalashri Puraskar from Karan Singh