

16 September 2001



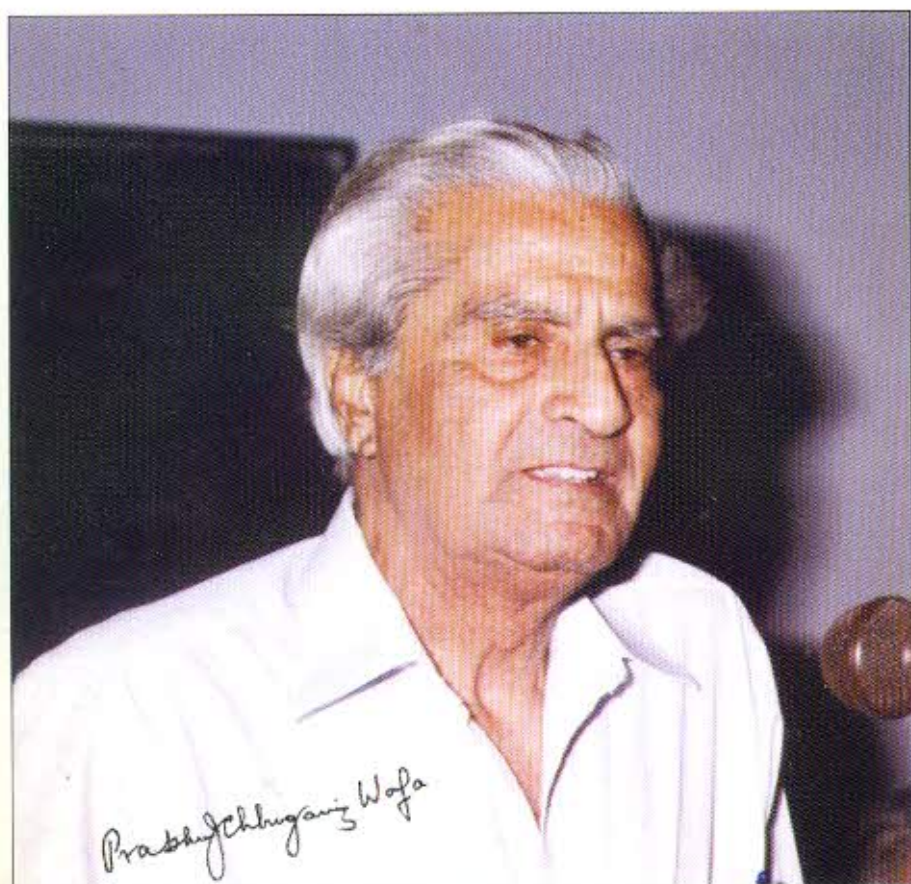
Sahitya Akademi



Ram Panjwani Centre

invite you to
meet the author

Prabhu Chhugani 'Wafa'





In the year 1930, when he was hardly fifteen, Prabhu Wafa read his *ghazal* in a *Mushaira* in his native town Larkana (Sindh). In the gathering were present some very well-known poets like Nawazali Niyaz, Mahmood Khadim, and Ali Mohamad Kadri. Prabhu Wafa astounded everyone with his beautiful *ghazals*. Since then, Wafa has never looked back and today he has come to be recognized as a poet par excellence. He is loved and respected by the Sindhi community which frequently give out cash prizes in the *mehfil*, where popular masters of music and vocalists sing his compositions. His *geets* have been sung by almost all the popular and great masters of Sindhi songs. Be it a gathering of scholars or a religious meet in a mandir. His lyrics always occupy a position of honour and get spontaneous approbation from all sections of the public. His brother Ratan and sister Kamla were accomplished singers and they used to sing Wafa's melodious *geets*, where ever they sang. It is thus that his poems became popular and are sung and broadcast from almost all stations of All India Radio. He is known not only as a lyrical poet, but as a thinker too. Some of his books are prescribed as textbooks by several universities at undergraduate, graduate and post graduate levels. Some of his

simpler poems are included in school textbooks also.

Prabhu Wafa was born on 19th September, 1915, in Larkana, Sindh (now in Pakistan). In pre-Partition days, Larkana was popularly known as a nest of singing birds, because many prominent Sindhi poets were living in this town. Great poets like Kishinchand Bewas, Nawazali Niyaz, Hyderbux Jatoi and Rashtra Kavi Hundraj Dukhayal belong to this town. Prabhu Wafa was born in an affluent family. His father (Diwan) Jotumal Gianchand Chhugani was an important lawyer, who was fond of poetry and music. Prabhu's father and his ancestors, (like many other Hindu families), were followers of the great Sufi and Vedantic Saint and well-known poet Rohal Fakir, whose Dargah was at Kandri Sharif in Sukkur District, Rohiri Taluka of Sindh. They used to visit Dargah at least twice a year, where the fragrance of Sufism and Vedanta enriched the souls of the visitors. It was here that Prabhu came under the influence of Sufism. The pure spiritual atmosphere awakened knowledge in him and gave him a deep understanding into the vicissitudes faced by mankind. He is neither Hindu nor Muslim. He loves every human being from all corners of the world. At the same time he is patriot and loves his country. His patriotic songs are Broadcast

With wife



on the days of national importance, by All India Radio. The poet in him is an optimist and believes in raising gardens even in dry deserts. He believes that India will be the richest and greatest country in the world, despite its present weaknesses and shortcomings.

Prabhu learnt the first lessons of prosody under the able guidance of the master poet Nawazali Niyaz. It goes to the credit of the teacher as well as the student that all intricate lessons were completed in just three days. Prabhu picked up all the nuances of poetry and came out as a mature poet. Today Wafa is considered as an Ustad and younger poets get exact guidance from him.

Prabhu studied at Government High School, Larkana and later in D. J. Sindh college, Karachi. In 1938, he became a graduate of University of Bombay.

Wafa married Sudha Chhugani. It was a love marriage, opposed by the society and the panchayat of the day. The opposition was on account of the fact that his wife was a near relative, coming from the same Chhugani family. But the rebel within him faced everything bravely and swimming against the current reached the destination. Today at the age 86 he is leading a happy family life.

After graduation, he worked as a teacher for a few months in Premier High School, Karachi,

Sindh. From 1939 to 1947 he worked as a Shops and Establishments Inspector in Karachi Municipal Corporation. After Partition, he migrated to Mumbai. In 1948 he joined All India Radio, New Delhi, as a secretarial assistant.

From 1965 to 1973 he worked in the office of the Central Labour Ministry in Mumbai and retired as an Administrative Officer in 1973. He is now settled in Mumbai.

As a person, Wafa is loving, kind and forgiving. By nature he is reserved and does not like to talk about his own poetry, but encourages novices and speaks to them with an open heart about his contemporaries and colleagues. Wherever necessary, he extols and applauds good compositions by other poets. Imbued with Sufi thoughts, he is a citizen of the world, with special love for Sindh and India; he does not consider anyone alien. His life is a placid river without any whirlpools or storms in it. He is neither a politician nor a businessman. He is a poet and a humanist of a high order. He has lust for life and considers this world to be a place to live in. He goes on drinking that cup of life and is satiated. He will continue to cry "One more, still one more". At the same time he does not fear death, which is the sure destiny of all beings. He has a simple religion

With Murli Adnani, Mangaram Sipahi, Malkani, Thakur Chawla & Arjan Shad





With participants of "Sindhi Kavi Sammelan"

and does not believe in rituals. In one of his *haikus*, he says "Do good karma. See yourself in others, and do unto others, which you would like them to do for you". He is an agnostic and is not very sure about rebirth or transmigration of the soul. He believes in good thoughts and good deeds.

Wafa has composed poems in all forms like *ghazal*, *geet*, *baet*, *vaaee*, *rubaaee*, *haiku* etc. He has given to Sindhi the beautiful gift of a new form, which he named *panjkada*. It is a small poem of five lines. Some poets agree with him when he claims that a *panjkada* has the sweetness of *ghazal*, and the depth of *rubaaee* or *doha* or *sortha*. His book of *panjkadas* "Surkh Gulab Ain Suraha Khwab" won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1981. He is a recipient of many other prizes including Gaurav Puraskar from Government of Maharashtra. Some of his poems have been translated into Russian and different Indian languages.

Hari Daryani 'Dilgir', a major Sindhi poet, has written that he cherishes the beautiful language, music and the flight of imagination in Wafa's poetry. He has applauded his poem "The Cuckoo", which, according to him is in no way inferior to

compositions of poets like Shelly and Wordsworth on the same topic. Other contemporary writers have also paid rich tributes to him. His lovesongs are made up of word-pictures, and can be set to muse. Let us enjoy his poetry in his own words. He writes :

*Oh loved one,
I want to hold
your mouth
in my closed palms
gulping down your beauty
and still remain unsatiated.*

*In the charming valleys
of your body
like a deer
I want to graze
and lie down.*

*Rivers mountains and valleys
all beautiful
But I cannot tarry
It is more exhilarating to move on
and on.*

With Family members





With Sundari Uttamchandani & Kamla Goklani at Senior Poet's Meet, Jaipur



In "Mushaira" with Vina Shrirangani, Motilal Jotwani, Mrs. Sagar & Paru Chawla

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Poetry

JHANKAAR (Melody)
Sindhu Kala Kendra,
New Delhi
21.5 cm.

1958

PARWAAZ (Flight)
New Delhi
21.5 cm.

1962

SURKH GULAAB (Panjkadas)
Mumbai
21.5 cm.

1980

MAAN AZAL JI UJJ
(Geet, Gazal, Nazm)
AAHYAN
Mumbai
21.5 cm.

1990

TUN SAAGAR MAAN LEHR
(Geet, Gazal, Nazm)
Mumbai
21.5 cm.

1993

AAEENA AIN AKSA (Haikos)
Mumbai
18.5 cm.

1994

SIJ LAHAN TE AAH
(Geet, Gazal, Haiku, Nazm)
Mumbai
21.5 cm.

1999

Translation in Sindhi

PROPHET (Jibran)
PEGHAM (Central Hindi
Directorate publication)
New Delhi
18.5 cm.

Hindi

1983

Receiving Priyadarshini Award



CHRONOLOGY

- 1915 Born on 19 September at Larkana - Sindh (Pakistan)
- 1928 Started writing poems and participated in *Sindhi Mushaeras* at Larkana at a tender age of 13 years
- 1934 First poem on 'Gautam Buddha' published in *Sindhu* a very prominent Sindhi Literary magazine
- 1934 Joined D.J. Sindh College, Karachi after matriculation
- 1938 Graduated from Bombay University and joined as a teacher in Premier High School, Karachi
- 1942 Married Sudha
- 1947 As a result of partition, migrated to India (Mumbai) from Karachi
- 1948 Settled at Delhi after getting a job in All India Radio
- 1958 First book of lyrics *Jhankar* published. One of these lyrics was filmed in Sindhi movie *Abana*
- 1959 One of the poems (musical feature) *Sasui Punhun* was staged by all women artists, Pusa Institute, Delhi
- 1965 Transferred to Directorate General Factory Advice Service, Labour Institutes, Mumbai
- 1973 Retired as an Administrative Officer
- 1981 Sahitya Akademi Award for '*Surkh Gulaab Suraha Khwaab*' from which one poem *Khushboo* was selected for translation in Russian by the erstwhile U.S.S.R. Govt. for publishing in their *Indian poetry of 20th Century* collection in the year 1990
- 1985 Honoured by the Sindhi Association of New Jersey
- 1990 Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar
- 1990-91 *Maan Azal ji Unj aahyaan* received an award from :
 - Sahyog foundation, Mumbai
 - Central Hindi Directorate, New Delhi
- 1992 Life time Achievement Award by Maharashtra Sindhi Sahitya Academy, Mumbai
- 1993 Sanmaan by Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Sabha at Jaipur
- 1993 Received an award from Ram Buxani Trust for contribution to Sindhi language
- 1995 Seminar on the author's poetry at Lonavala organised by Akhil Bharat Sindhi Boli Ain Sahit Prachar Sabha, Mumbai
- 1998 Presided over the Akhil Bharat Sindhi Kavi Sammelan, Delhi
- 1998 Received Prof. Ram Panjwani Memorial award for life time work from Priyadarshini Academy
- 1999 On 20th June in a *Mushairo* at Thane, title of '*Mahakavi*' conferred by Mukhi Pamandas foundation (India)