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Sahitya Akademi

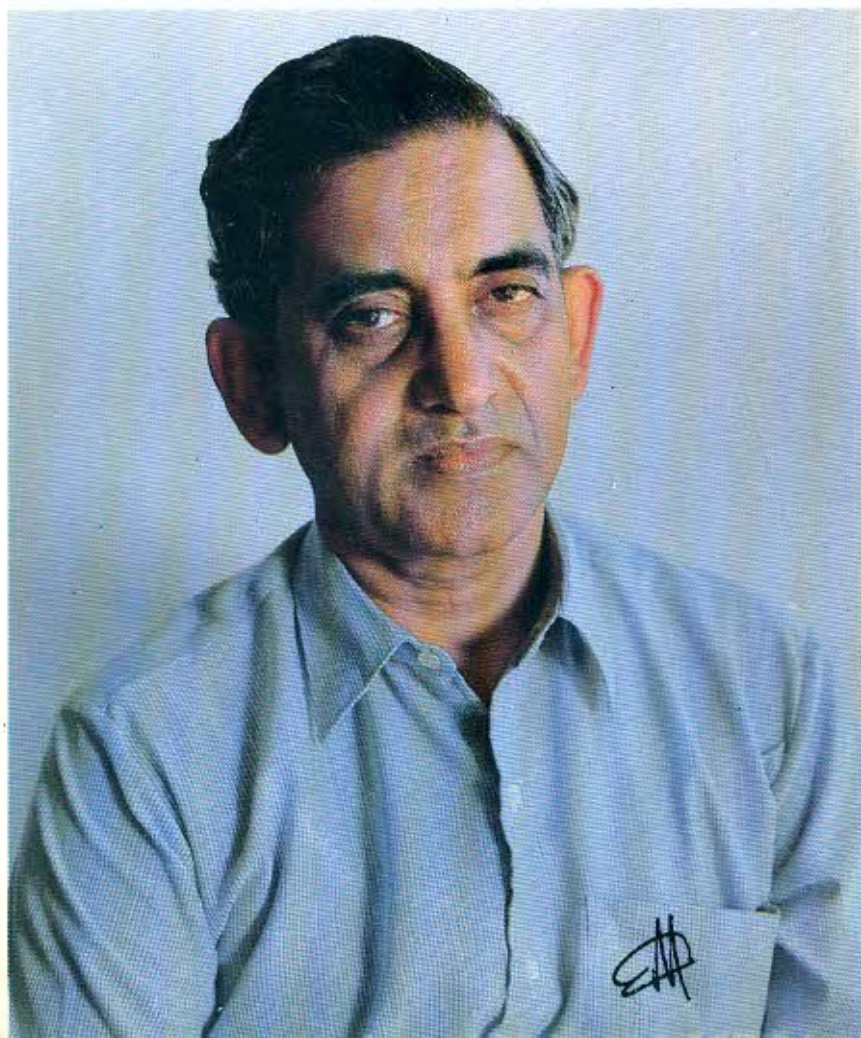


India International Centre

**invite you to**

**meet the author**

**Ramakanta Rath**



**T**he first and most important requirement is that the author must abandon his ego-sense. It is only then that he can perceive what connects one man to another, the living to the dead, .... the dreamer to the dream, echoes to original sound."

— Ramakanta Rath



**R**amakanta Rath, a major poet of the post-independent era of Indian literature was born in a village near Puri on 30 December 1934. After completing school, he studied English Literature at the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and passed his M.A. examination in 1956. In 1957 he joined the Indian Administrative Service and has held several important positions under the Government of India and the Government of Orissa, including the post of Secretary to Government of India and Chief Secretary of Government of Orissa. For about a year he worked as a Consultant for the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in Guyana.

Ramakanta Rath began writing while in college. His literary career covering a period of three decades has found six remarkable collections of verse and a few short stories. His early poems received immediate acclaim for breaking new ground in theme and style.

His first collection of poems *Kete Dinara* (Of Many Bygone Days) which appeared in 1962, is replete with soft romantic emotions and rhetorical statements in a reflective-meditative mood. This significant poetic collection heralded the beginning of the new poetry movement in Oriya literature, which began acquiring a changed diction and syntactic structure.

Rath distanced himself both from the dominant romantic as well as progressive schools and began an exploration into man's experience with his destiny. This experience occurs in a condition of solitude. The protagonist of his poems is therefore almost always related more to himself than to society or to any other person. Perhaps in order that his non-confor-

mity with accepted modes of thinking and feeling is well-defined, the protagonist often adopts a mock-heroic and self-deprecating position and his tone is often ironical.

His next collection, *Aneka Kothari* (Several Rooms), published in 1967, contains eighteen poems including his three longer poems "Bagha Shikar" (Tiger Hunt), "Anant Shayan" (The Eternal Slumber), and "Biman Durghatanara Mrutyu" (Death in a Plane Crash). The poems in this collection raise profound metaphysical issues but one can "hear the voice of the mendicant, which sometimes chokes and is not easily heard."

In his subsequent collections *Sandigha Mrigaya* (Deer Hunt in a Mood of

Indecision) and *Saptama Ritu* (The Seventh Season) published in 1971 and 1977 respectively, the poet's main poetic preoccupations are still there, only the rhetoric which dominated his earlier poems, particularly those in his first volume, is largely eliminated. The result is thematic compactness with an easy and free poetic movement. *Saptama Ritu* is a classic in Oriya literature, abounding in mature sensibility, compactness of structure, and the competent use of the language of symbolism — offering a new world of rich and varied experiences.

*Sachitra Andhara* (Illustrated Darkness), Ramakanta's fifth poetic collection was published in 1982. One can notice a significant change in the rhym-



With other Sahitya Akademi Award winners at the Award-Function, 1979.



With Prof. U.R. Anantha Murthy and Prof. I.N. Choudhury at the Sahitya Akademi Award-Presentation Ceremony, 1993.

ing pattern of the diction and high metaphysical overtones in the content. "The mystical element in Ramakanta's poetry which was latent, now finds expression in overt forms... This change is perhaps the beginning of the conceptualisation of *Sri Radha*, his great masterpiece, published in 1985."

In style Ramakanta's idiom is a peculiar fusion of prose and lyricism. This idiom, relying on the structure normal in prose, became a vehicle of thought and emotion which a purely poetic diction could not express adequately. Over the years, however, the idiom has come to reflect intensity of emotions, moving away from abstractions and argument.

*Sri Radha*, his *magnum opus*, was published in 1985. This unique long poem explores the experience of love that fills the soul with the courage to defy death. The Radha-

Krishna legend is used as a metaphor of love that occupies the whole consciousness. The protagonist, Radha, does not conform to her image in mythology and literature—she moves in a region where the supreme reality is not Krishna but her own intense seeking.

Ramakanta Rath has received several awards for his writing, the foremost being the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for his work *Saptama Ritu*, the Sarala



With his wife, Shanti

Puruskar for *Sachitra Andhara* and recently the Saraswati Samman for *Sri Radha*.

Ramakanta Rath retired from service in 1992. He is

presently Vice-President of the Sahitya Akademi and also Honorary Chairman of the Orissa Maritime Academy.

### A Select Bibliography

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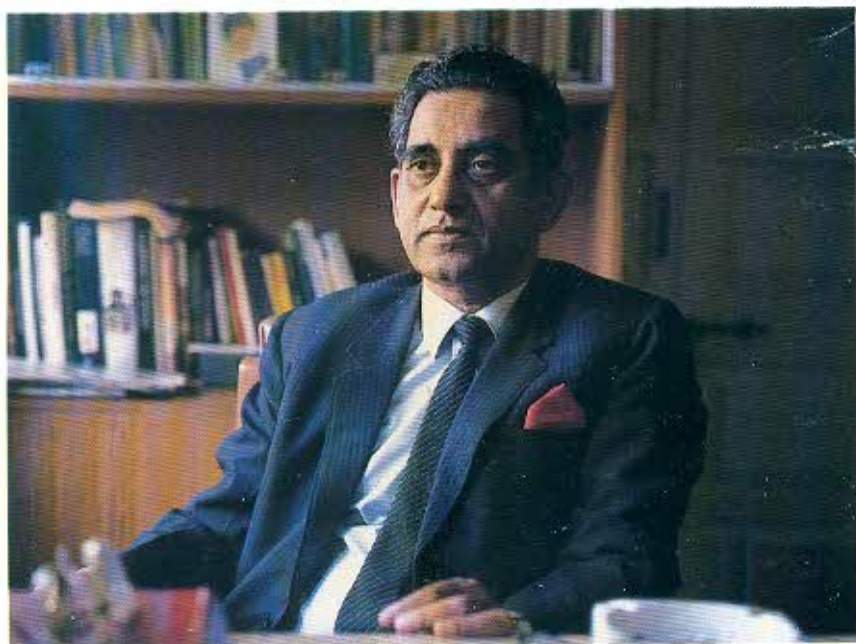
*SAPTAMA RITU*. BHUBANESWAR: LARK BOOKS, 1977, 118P

*SACHITRA ANDHARA*. BHUBANESHWAR, LARK BOOKS, 1982, 126P

*SRI RADHA*. CUTTACK: AGRADUTA, 1990 (Reprint), 134P

#### IN HINDI

*SRI RADHA*. (TR. SRINIVAS UDGATA and RAJENDRA PRASAD MISHRA), NEW DELHI: BHARATIYA JNANPITH, 1990, 268P.



## A Chronology

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| <p>1934 Birth</p> <p>1956 Took his Master's degree in English Literature</p> <p>1957 Joined the I.A.S.</p> <p>1962 First poetry collection <i>Kete Dinara</i> published</p> <p>1978 Received Sahitya Akademi Award for <i>Saptama Ritu</i></p> <p>1984 Awarded Sarala Puraskar for <i>Sachitra Andhara</i></p> <p>1985 <i>Sri Radha</i> published</p> <p>1988 Visited USSR as a member of Indian delegation of writers</p> | <p>1989 Participated as an Asian poet in World Poetry Festival, Bhopal</p> <p>1990 Felicitated with the National Integration Award</p> <p>1991 Honoured by the Orissa Council of Culture</p> <p>1992 Retired from service<br/>Honorary chairman of Orissa Maritime Academy</p> <p>1993 Elected as Vice-President of Sahitya Akademi<br/>Received Saraswati Samman for <i>Sri Radha</i></p> |
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Receiving Saraswati, Samman from Sri K.R. Narayanan, Vice-President of India, 1993.