**Vatsyayan, Satchidanand Hiranand (1911-1987)**

Nikhil Govind

Satchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan, better known as Agyeya , was one of the key figures of Hindi modernism. Though known primarily as a poet, he wrote two of the most important Hindi novels, *Shekhar: Ek Jeevani* (Shekhar: A Life, Volume 1 in 1941 and Volume 2 in 1944), and *Nadi ke Dveep* (Islands in the Stream) in 1951. His editorship of *Tar Saptak* (musical term for a higher octave) helped bring many new poets into prominence, most famously, Muktibodh (1917-1964) who, in the view of some Hindi literary critics, remains chief ideological and semiotic counter to Agyeya’s sensibility.

It is tempting to think of Agyeya’s ceaseless experimentation through his life as owing something to his eventful youth. He was imprisoned by the British on charges of revolutionary activity, including bomb making. The years of prison and house arrest, which included a large part of his twenties, helped him refine his sense of self and politics. Agyeya is often seen as a proponent of an intense, confessional, emotive and cerebral individualism within the Hindi canon. His work marked a break from the norm of the more didactic social realism and conscientization that the most influential Hindi novelist prior to Agyeya — Premchand (1880-1936) — aimed for.

In later years, Agyeya avoided being part of groups, even when they had aims he admired. This refusal to believe in simplistic group ideologies led Agyeya down unexpected paths in life and work. From fighting against the British and being imprisoned, to joining the British Army as he believed that the war against Fascism was crucial to the future of the world and took precedence over the Indian freedom struggle. He left the army as soon as the war was over and took to editing literary journals as well as, later, more mainstream media journals. He was also a great traveller, within India, and abroad, taking up academic positions in Berkeley in the United States, as well as Heidelberg, Germany.

Though Agyeya is perhaps best known as poet and writer of the two novels mentioned, he remained a prolific writer in a wide variety of genres—poetry and the novel, but also short stories, reportage, travelogues, criticism and translations (from Bengali to Hindi, and from Hindi to English). His cosmopolitan and wide-ranging intelligence illuminated everything he wrote. He lived life on his terms—whether in politics or personal affairs—and thus remained a visible, controversial literary figure. This is of significance as Hindi criticism often did not think personal affairs irrelevant to the literary work.

Agyeya’s chief legacy remains his unique sense of Hindi modernism in it’s encounter with tradition. In his poetry, and his novels (especially *Shekhar*) he often used a highly Sanskritised register of Hindi. This again was in contrast to Premchand’s use of a simpler, livelier, and more colloquial Hindi. But Agyeya cannot be simply put in the camp of Sanskrit revivalism due to his relentless formal and aural experimentation. To read his work is to be challenged again by the question of the precise place of the past in Hindi and Indian modernism.

**Timeline**

1930. Arrested and jailed for his involvement in the Delhi Conspiracy Case.

1933-1936. Edits *Sainik*

1942*.* Organises *Akhil Bharatiya Fascist-Virodhi Sammelan ( All India Anti-Fascist Conference)*

1943*.* In the wake of Japanese threat to India during WWII, joins the Indian Army

1964. Wins the Sahitya Akademi Award for his collection of poems *Angan Ke Par Dwar (1961)*

1979.Wins Bharatiya Jnanpith Award forhis collection of poems, *Kitni Naon Mein Kitni Baar (1967)*

**Poetry anthologies:**

*Bhagndoot (1933)*

*Chinta (1942)*

*Ityalam (1946)*

*Prison Days And Other Poems (1946)*

*Hari ghaas par kshan-bhar (1949)*

*Baawra aheri (1954)*

*Indradhanu raunde hue ye (1957)*

*Ari o karuna prabhamaya (1959)*

*Aangan ke paar dvaar (1961)*

*Poorva (1965)*

*Sunahale Shaivaal (1965)*

*Kitni naavon mein kitni baar (1967)*

*Kyonki main usei jaanta hoon (1969)*

*Saagar-mudra (1970)*

*Pahle main sannata bunta hoon (1973)*

*Mahavriksha ke neeche (1977)*

*Nadi ki baank par chhaya (1982)*

*Sadanira-1 (1986)*

*Sadanira-2 (1986)*

*Aisa koi ghar aapne dekha hai (1986)*

**Novels***:*

*Shekhar: Ek Jeevani I (1941)*

*Shekhar: Ek Jeevani II (1944)*

*Shekhar: Ek Jeevni III (Unpublished)*

*Nadi ke dweep (1952)*

*Apne-apne ajnabi (1961)*

**Stories anthologies:**

*Vipathga (1937)*

*Parmpara (1944)*

*Kothri ki baat (1945)*

*Sharnaarthi (1948)*

*Jaydol (1951)*

*Amarvallari tatha anya kahaniyan(1954)*

*Kadiayan tatha anya kahaniyan (1957)*

*Acchute phool tatha anya kahaniyan (1960)*

*Ye tere pratiroop (1961)*

*Jigyasa tatha anya kahaniyan (1965)*

*Chhorra hua rasta (Sampoorn kahanitan-1, 1975)*

*Lautti pagdandiyan (Sampoorn kahaniyan-2, 1975)*

**Travelogue:**

*Arei Yayavar Rahega Yaad (1953)*

*Kirnon ki khoj mein (Selection,1955)*

*Ek Boond Sahsa Uchhli (1960)*

**Criticism:**

*Trishanku (1955)*

*Atmanepad (1960)*

*Adyatan (1977)*

*Samvatsar (1978)*

**Memoirs:**

*Smriti-lekha (1982)*