

A Virtual Exhibition on Life Journey of
Umashankar Joshi



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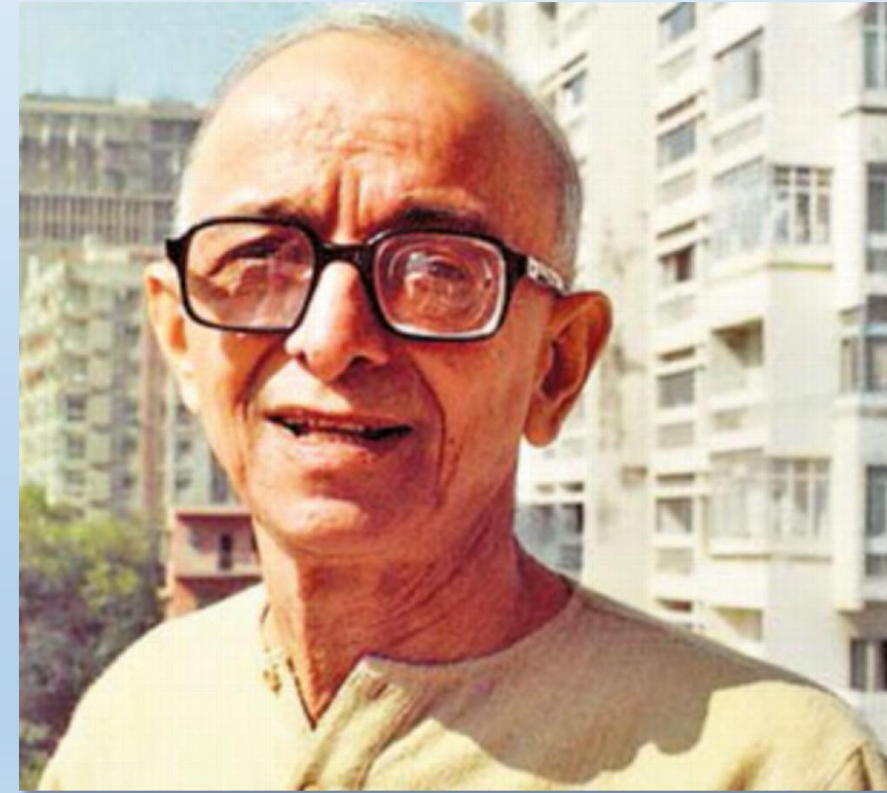


The Great Poet Umashankar Joshi



Umashankar Jethalal Joshi was an eminent poet, scholar and writer. He received the Jnanpith Award in 1967 for his contribution to Indian, especially Gujarati literature.

Umashankar has published 70 books. In 1984, he compiled a comprehensive list of his publications. His noted works include "Ishavasya Upanishad", "Satyakam Jabal", "Gandhijini Shabdashakti", "Vaishnavjan" and "Baa". His powerful words rest on him in writing the immense potentials of the man to make the real world accessible to him. Umashankar Joshi preferred to introduce himself as 'an Indian writer writing in Gujarati' rather than a Gujarati writer. Other noted works include – Mahaprasthan, Gangotri, Vishwashanti, Abhigna, Akho ek Adhyayan and Haveli - collection of dramas.





Introduction of Umashankar Joshi



Born - 21 July 1911

Bamna, Sabarkantha, Bombay presidency, British India

Died - 19 December 1988 (aged 77)

Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Pen name - Vasuki, Shraavan

Occupation - Poet, Novelist, Short story writer

Nationality - India

Alma mater - Gujarat College Elphinstone College

Period - Gandhian Era

Notable awards -

- **Ranjitram Suvarna Chandrak (1939)**
- **Narmad Suvarna Chandrak (1943)**
- **Uma-Snehrashmi Prize (1963-64-65)**
- **Sahitya Academy Award (1973)**

Signature - ઉમાશંકર જોશી





Umashankar Joshi

Early Life & Education



Umashankar Joshi Born in Bamna, a small village of north Gujarat in 1911, Umashankar Joshi received inspiration for creative writing from the beautiful surroundings of the hilly region as well as the social life of villages and fairs and festivals held there. He joined the freedom struggle led by Gandhi and gained an understanding of history. As a creative writer he responded to the challenges of the 20th century ranging from social inequality to the existential anguish of the nuclear age. Concern with the roots of violence manifesting itself in various forms and man at the center of it has been the main site of his work.

Joshi started his education at Primary school in Bamna and spent two years in 4th standard due to the absence of the teacher for a long time. Upon learning this Jathelal joined Joshi in Sir Pratap High School of Idar. As a boy who was raised in an orthodox environment, Joshi always heard "highly sensitive and expressive language" which shaped his future style, especially in writing plays. As a child, he had excursions to Hilly areas of Aravalli and visits to colorful monsoon fairs in and around Bamna. This village life left a profound impact on his language and developed "lyrical vien" in him In Sir Pratap High School, Idar, Joshi continued his studies till 1927 for 6 years. He joined Proprietary High School in Ahmedabad for his matriculation in 1927.

This city also helped raise his social and political consciousness. In 1928, Joshi joined in Gujarat College, Ahmedabad. He continued his studies there until he left British education under National movement influence in 1930.



UMASHANKAR JOSHI PROFESSIONAL CARRER



Throughout his life he published poetry, short stories, one-act plays, essays, travelogues, character drawings, books of critique, as well as numerous writings on education, society, politics, and contemporary events. For almost four decades (1947-1984) he edited the journal Sanskriti. Under the auspices of the Gangotri Trust he established, he published translated books of works in Indian as well as foreign languages.

As a writer, he was associated with the public life of Gujarat and the country for more than half a century. He served as Professor of Gujarati at Gujarat University and later Chancellor, Chancellor of Visva-Bharati University, Member of Rajya Sabha, President of Sahitya Akademi as well as a member of various institutions of literature, culture and education in the country. He had a remarkable role as a concerned and concerned citizen on social, political and economic issues of public life.

Umashankar Joshi preferred to call himself an 'Indian writer writing in Gujarati' rather than a Gujarati writer. This is not the only proof that he fully embraced the diverse Indian literature and culture. But the statement also insists on looking at Indian literature in a diverse whole, freeing it from the narrow confines of provincialism.



Independence activist and Young poet



In January 1929, Joshi participated in a strike called by Gujarat college students and this marked as his first association with ongoing National movement in India. On 26 December 1929 in Lahore sessions, congress declared that Purna Swaraj as their mission. Gandhi and Purna swaraj declaration inspired Joshi to become a Satyagrahi. In April 1930, Joshi joined Viramgam satyagraha camp as a Satyagrahi. British officials arrested him along with other Satyagrahis in November 1930. He was imprisoned initially in Sabarmati jail, and later in Yerwada tent-jail. This initial imprisonment extended up to 14 weeks. As a result of Gandhi–Irwin Pact, Joshi also released with thousands of political prisoners in early 1931. He attended Karachi conference held in March 1931. Joshi attended classes in Gujarat Vidyapith from July for six months. In 1932, Joshi again imprisoned for eight months period at Sabarmati and Visapur jails



Role in Indian Independence Movement



Joshi penned his first poetry work Vishwa Shanti in 1931 in the Jail. Vishwa Shanti is a long poem and it "refers to Gandhi's message and Lifework". This work expresses the poet's idea that "Even if Bapu's visit to the west is directed towards Indian independence, It will bring more effectively the message of peace to the West than Independence to [Indian] Nation". Although Joshi was strongly influenced by Gandhi's life and message, he never tried to be associated with Mahatma Gandhi personally or politically. Joshi briefly met Gandhi in 1936 when Gandhi was presiding over Gujarati Literary Conference as a delegate and member. Even though the meeting was "Exciting" Joshi never tried to meet Gandhi again. Between 1930-34, when Joshi was participating in the Independence struggle, he wrote several poems, plays, articles, novels, and stories in Gujarati. During this period, his jail mate was another contemporary Gujarati poet Tribhuvandas Luhar "Sundaram". Both of them wrote in the same copy book and shared love for nation and being a global citizen. In 1934, Umashankar referred to Sundaram that "We are twin brothers. In the fulfilment of our creative urge, the Gujarati language has perhaps conspired to tie us together at its very root without our knowledge of it". This collaboration has a lasting impact on their philosophy and style. Joshi's father died in 1934. Civil disobedience movement was called off by Mahatma Gandhi. Joshi joined Elphinstone College to continue his studies. By the time he joined in Elphinstone College to pursue Graduation in arts, his works were in the school curriculum and became established writer in Gujarati Literature. In 1934, Gangotri, the anthology of Joshi's poems written during 1932-34 was published. In 1936, Joshi started writing one-act plays and published them in a collection called Sapna Bharathi. These works were popular on stage.



Role in Indian Independence Movement



In Gujarati Literature, Joshi also credited as a writer who initiated Progressive literary movement. He was also an active part of pan-Indian progressive writers' movement. In 1936, he took active part in establishing "Progressive writers' association". Joshi's imprisonment in Yerwada jail during 1931 gave him an opportunity to study Socialism and Marxism as many inmates who were influenced by Socialism gave him books and discussed concepts. In jail, he read Jawaharlal Nehru's account and Tagore's letters on their visit to Russia, Maurice G. Hindus's Humanity Uprooted, and Karl Marx's Das Kapital. According to Joshi, the impact of Marx and socialism on him was emotional and evoked a strong feeling for equality and social justice. Along with Gandhian principles, Joshi's poetry from the early 1930s also reflects his socialistic influences. Joshi considered Jatharagni (1932), Panchali (1932) and Mochi (1933) as examples for his poems those reflect Marxist influence.

Joshi was not associated with Marxism. Joshi stated that "I am not a Gandhian nor a Marxian" and "Thank god! Gandhi was not a Gandhian, nor Marx a Marxist. Initially Joshi even felt that ideals of socialism - Social justice and equality fitted very well with what Gandhi already preaching and living for. In this period, Joshi along with his dearest friend and collaborator Sundaram lead the young generation of writers who were associated with Freedom movement and also concerned towards other social issues



Rise to prominence



In 1954 March, Umashankar Joshi was appointed as Member of the General Council and the executive committee of Sahitya Akademi from its inception. In June, he was appointed as professor of Gujarati Literature at Gujarat University. He was also appointed the head of School of languages in that university. Joshi continued to work in the same university till his retirement in 1972. In 1956, he toured America and England as a member of a committee sent by the Indian Government to study the activities of 'General Education' in American and some British Universities. In 1964, he became a member of a committee appointed by the Government of Gujarat for the establishment of South Gujarat and Saurashtra Universities. In 1964, Joshi presided convention of "Gujarat Sahitya Parishad" in Delhi. From 30 November 1966: he was Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat University and worked in this position till 1972.

His early works have an influence of strong nationalism and Gandhian ideals of peace and non-violence. Although Joshi had a nationalistic background, his works also had themes of "Unity with the world and every human being". In 1956, there was a shift in his philosophy from Gandhian era and its principles to a disparity of modern life. As early as 1945 and 1947, Joshi's poetry started expressing his disillusionment and disparity arising from events of that decade. After the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attack. In 1956, Joshi stated that his collections, Hriday Ma Padelī Chhabio (Images Imprinted in the Heart) and Ishamishida Ane Anya are the character sketches of the literary and historical figures whom he had met.



Scope of work & Creations



Umashankar Joshi was a talented poet and litterateur. His fame as a capable poet became known in the poems compilation 'Vishwashanti' published in 1931. Apart from poetry, he also nurtured other parts of literature, such as story , drama , novels , criticism , essays etc. He holds the top position among modern and Gandhi era writers. Joshiji was a teacher and editor. He was Professor and Head of Department at Gujarat University. He also became the Vice Chancellor there. He was nominated a member of the Rajya Sabha . Was made the president of Sahitya Akademi . In 1979 , he SantiniketanWas appointed vice-chancellor of K University. He has been awarded D.Litt by many universities.

The major works of Umashankar Joshi are - Vishwashanti (in 6 volumes) Gangotri, Nishith, Gulepoland, Prachina, Hospitality and Vasantha, Mahaprasthana (poetic treatise), Abhigna (Ekanki); Sapnabhara, martyr (story); Shravani Meno, Visamo (novel); Tradakajanya (essay); Symposium, Ughadibari, Krantakavi, Maharasonet, Swapnaprayan (Editing). 'World Peace' describes the glory of Gandhi's efforts for non-violence and peace. It is considered the originator of the new era in Gujarati poetry.



List of works



- Nishith (निशिथ) – The God of Midnight (collection of poems)
- Gangotri (गंगोत्री)
- Vishwashanti (विश्वशांति) – World Peace
- Mahaprasthan (महाप्रस्थान) – Great Departure
- Abhigna (अभिज्ञ) – Recognition.
- Sanskruti' – Editor of the magazine
- Visamo – collection of stories
- Haveli – collection of dramas
- Shravani Melo – collection of stories
- Akho : Ek Adhyayan
- "Shakuntal"- translation of Abhigyan Shakuntal of Kalidas
- "Uttar Ramcharit"- translation of Uttar Ramcharit of Bhavbhooti
- "Ishavaya Upanishad"- translation and commentary in Gujarati.
- "Gujarat Mori Mori Re"
- Mahaprasthan in Hindi translated by Mahavir Sinh Chauhan in 1997



Awards & Positions held



- Jnanpith Award – 1968 for Nishith, a collection of his poems.
- Ranjitram Suvarna Chandrak – 1939
- Narmad Suvarna Chandrak – 1943
- Soviet Land Nehru Award – 1973
- Delhi Sahitya Academy Award
- Uma-Snehrashmi Prize - 1963-64-65p
- Vishwa Gurjari Gaurav Puraskar - 1981

- President – Gujarati Sahitya Parishad (1968)
- President – Sahitya Akademi (1978–1982)
- Vice-Chancellor – Gujarat University (1970)
- Member – Rajya Sabha, Upper House of the Indian Parliament[6]
- first president of the Indian National Comparative Literature Association



Old age, awards, Last Days



Umashankar Joshi received the Jnanpith Award for his work Nishanth along with Kannada poet K.V.Puttapa (for Ramayana Darsana) in 1967. In his acceptance speech, Umashankar Joshi reiterated his belief about Unity of national identity and world mindedness by saying "What goes into the making of an Indian poet in the present-day world? His sharing the global anxiety and agony too. Paradoxically enough, the more world minded he is, the more Indian he will be, as one could see in the case of Tagore."

In 1970, Joshi was nominated to Rajya Sabha. Joshi became president of the Jnanpith Award committee in 1976 and Sahitya Akademi in 1978. He continued in the position of president of Sahitya Akademi from 1978 till 1983. During Emergency in India, Joshi showed his courage and commitment to his principles by advocating free speech in such an oppression.

In 1988, he was admitted with lung cancer to Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai. He died on 19 December 1988 at the age of 77



Source of Information References



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umashankar_Joshi

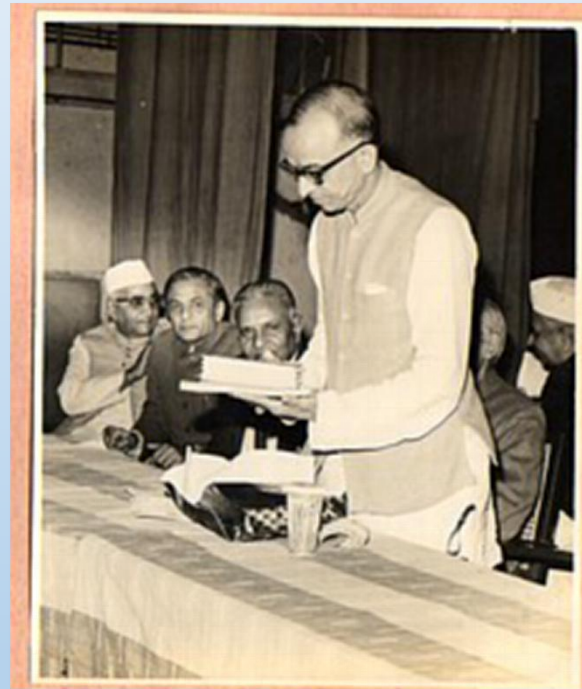
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Some Glimpse of Umashakar Joshi



**Umashankar Joshi (left)
with Chunilal Madia at
Mumbai, 1960**



**Umashankar Joshi
inaugurating Jaybhikhkhu
Commemoration Volume,
December 1970; from left to
second is Dhirubhai Thaker**



**Exhibition of Umashankar
Joshi's books at Gujarati
Sahitya Parishad, July 2018**