

Research Paper—English



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Dilip Chitre
An Eminent Litterateur
(17 Sept. 1938—10 Sept. 2009)



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Renowned English and Marathi poet, **eminent litterateur** and filmmaker **Dilip Chitre** (17 September 1938 – 10 December 2009) was one of the foremost Indian writers and critics to emerge in the post-Independence era, **died 10th December after struggling with a long illness**. It was really a shocking news for all of us. Dilip Chitre is with us and within us as a fiction-writer, poet, playwright, painter and a filmmaker. He was born in Baroda on 17 September 1938. He shifted to Mumbai at a very young age and the vibrant city life inspired him to write his first collection of poems in 1960 which was published subsequently. His paintings have also earned him much respect. He was one of the pioneer of the famous “little magazine movement” of the sixties in Marathi. He started a magazine called *Shabda* with friends Arun Kolatkar and Ramesh Samarth. The success of the magazine inspired many spin offs but none could emulate the success of the original Marathi little magazine.

Dilip Chitre has made a prominent place for himself in the literary world with his commendable works. He was born in the erstwhile princely state of Baroda (Gujarat) in September 1938. As a literary persona, Chitre published his first collection of poems at the age of 22. Some of his well-known works include **Says Tuka, Anubhavamrut, Ekun Kavita and Travelling in the Cage**. His father **Purushottam Chitre** used to publish a periodical named *Abhiruchi*

which was highly treasured for its high, uncompromising quality. Dilip Chitre’s family moved to Mumbai in 1951. He published his first collection of poems in 1960. He was one of the earliest and the most important influences behind the famous ‘Little Magazine Movement’ of the sixties in Marathi. He started *Shabda* with Arun Kolatkar and Ramesh Samarth. In 1975, he was awarded a visiting fellowship by the International Writing Programme of the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa in the United States. He has also worked as a director of the Indian Poetry Library, archive, and translation centre at Bharat Bhavan, a multi arts foundation, Bhopal. He also convened a world poetry festival in New Delhi followed by an international symposium of poets in Bhopal.

Dilip Chitre started his professional film career in 1969 and has since made one feature film, about a dozen documentary films, several short films in the cinema format, and about twenty video documentary features. He wrote the scripts of most of his films as well as directed or co-directed them. He also scored the music for some of them. will be remembered for his remarkable work in the entertainment field. His prominent movies include *Vijeta* (story-screenplay), *Godam* (direction, music) and *Ardh Satya* (theme song). He also has several short films and documentaries to his credit. Many of his works are also translated in foreign languages like French, Spanish and German. Over the years, he also worked as a

teacher in Ethiopia and later as a copy editor in an advertising agency. He has tried his hands even in painting, sculpting and holding exhibitions. Chitre has been conferred with various national and international honours.

Dilip Chitre worked as an honorary editor of the quarterly *New Quest*, a journal of participative inquiry, Mumbai. Among Chitre's honours and awards are several **Maharashtra State Awards**, **the Prix Special du Jury** for his film *Godam* at the Festival des Trois Continents at Nantes in France in 1984, **the Ministry of Human Resource Development's Emeritua Fellowship**, **the University of Iowa's International Writing Program Fellowship**, **the Indira Gandhi Fellowship**, **the Villa Waldberta Fellowship** for residence given by the city of Munich, Bavaria, Germany and so forth. He was D.A.A.D. (**German Academic Exchange**) **Fellow and Writer-in-Residence** at the Universities of Heidelberg and Bamberg in Germany in 1991–92.

Chitre was **Director of Vagarth**, Bharat Bhavan Bhopal and the convenor-director of **Valmiki World Poetry Festival** (New Delhi, 1985) and **International Symposium of Poets** (Bhopal, 1985), a **Keynote Speaker at the World Poetry Congress in Maebashi**, Japan (1996) and at the Ninth International Conference on Maharashtra at Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA in 2001 and **Member of the International Jury** at the recent Literature festival Berlin, 2001. He was member of a three-writer delegation (along with Nirmal Verma and U. R. Ananthamurthy) to the Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia), Hungary, the Federal Republic of Germany and France in the spring and summer of 1980 and to the **Frankfurter Buchmesse** in Frankfurt, Germany in 1986.

Dilip Chitre delivered lectures, talks, participated in seminars and symposia. He conducted workshops in creative writing and literary translation in Iowa City, Chicago, Tempe,

Paris, London, Weimar, Saint Petersburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, Konstanz, Heidelberg, Bamberg, Tübingen, Northfield, Saint-Paul/Minneapolis, New Delhi, Bhopal, Mumbai, Kochi, Vadodara, Kolhapur, Aurangabad, Pune, Maebashi, and Dhule among other places. He travelled widely in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America as well as in the interiors of India; been on the visiting faculty of many universities and institutions, a consultant to projects. He was the **Honorary President of the Sonthheimer Cultural Association**, of which he was also a **Founder-Trustee**.

Dilip Chitre's Works in Marathi : 1] *Kavita* [1960], 2] *Orpheus* [1968], 3] *Sheeba Raneechya Shodhaat* [1969], 4] *Kavitenantarchyaa Kavita* [1978], 5] *Chaavyaa* [1983], 6] *Dahaa By Dahaa* [1983], 7] *Mithu Mithu Porat ani Sutak* [1989], 8] *Tirkas Ani Chaukas* [1980], 9] *Punha Tukaram* [1990], 10] *Shatakaanchaa Sandhikaal*, 11] *Bhau Padhye Yanchyaa Shreshtha Kathaa (Editor)* [1995], 12] *Ekoon Kavita-1* [1992], 13] *Ekoon Kavita-2* [1995], 14] *Ekoon Kavita-3*, 15] *Chaturang* [1995].

Dilip Chitre's Works in Hindi : 1] *Pisati ka Burz: Dileep Chitre ki Chuni Huvi Kavitaayen*, translated by Chandrakant Deotale, Rajkamal, New Delhi, 1987

Dilip Chitre's Works in English : 1] *An Anthology of Marathi Poetry (1945–1965)* (Editor) [1968], 2] *Ambulance Ride* [1972], 3] *Travelling In A Cage* [1980], 4] *The Reasoning Vision: Jehangir Sabavala's Painterly Universe*, Introduction and Notes on the paintings by Dilip Chitre, 5] *Tata-McGraw-Hill* [1980], 6] *Tender Ironies: A Tribute To Lothar Lütze* (Editor) [1994], 7] *Shri Jnandev's Anubhavamrut: The Immortal Experience of Being* [1996], 8] *The Mountain* [1998], 9] *No-Moon Monday On The River Karha* [2000].

Dilip Chitre's Works in Gujarati : 1] *Milton-na Mahaakaavyo*, translated by Yashwant Dashi and the author [1970], 2] *Kavya Vishva*

Shreni: Marathi: Dileep Chitre, translated by Jaya Mehta

Dilip Chitre's Works in German : 1] Das Fallen des Banyanbaums, translated by Lothar Lutze [1980], 2] BOMBAY/MUMBAI: Bilder einer Mega-Stadt (with Henning Stegmuller and Namdeo Dhasal) Translated by Lothar Lutze, 3] Worte des Tukaram, Translated by Lothar Lutze, 4] Lotos Blatter 1 : Dilip Chitre: Aus dem Englischen und dem Marathi, translated by Lothar Lutze [2001]. Dilip Chitre is an **Editor of Shabda** (1954–1960), Mumbai and **New Quest** 1978–1980), (2001), Mumbai. He is also a **Columnist** Free Press Journal, Mumbai (1959–60) Loksatta, Mumbai; Dinank, Mumbai; Ravivar Sakal, Pune; Quest; New Quest; Abhiruchi. Dilip Chitre's internationally celebrated English translation of selected poems of Tukaram (1608-1649); first published by Penguin Books, new and enlarged edition published by Sontheimer Cultural Association, Pune, India. He is well-remembered as a poet, writer, filmmaker, painter, translator, editor and most prominently an author of 26 books. He is widely traveled in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. He is a recipient of many national and international awards, honours, and prizes and he was on the visiting faculty of many international universities. He lived in Pune, Maharashtra, India with wife and grandson aged 22 years. He started writing poetry in the late 1950s and the earliest influences on him were the Marathi Bhakti poets from the 13th to the 17th century, Jnanadev and Tukaram in particular, the French symbolist and surrealist poets, 20th century American poets such as Wallace Stevens, Spanish poets such as Lorca, Alberti, Vallejo, and Octavio Paz, Russian poets such as Mandelstam and Svetayeva. His poetry and other writing gradually resolved the differences between the aesthetic norms and the spiritual concerns of the two different civilizations in whose ways of thinking and feeling he was equally immersed. After a battle with cancer, Dilip Chitre (December 10, 2009) is no longer with us. His first collection of poetry was published in three

volumes as Ekun Kavita I, II and III, but it is as translator that his fame has spread far and wide. Shesha, a collection of his Marathi poems over the decades, was published in 2008.

Chitre was born in Baroda but moved to Mumbai soon after. His association with the city of dreams finds resonance in many of his poems, such as Father Returning Home. My father travels on the late evening train Standing among silent commuters in the yellow light Suburbs slide past his unseeing eyes His shirt and pants are soggy and his black raincoat Stained with mud and his bag stuffed with books Is falling apart . . . (<http://us.geocities.com>)

Says Tuka, his English rendering of the Marathi Bhakti poet Tukaram, is a benchmark of literary translation. He was one of the few people to win the Sahitya Akademi award for literature as well as for translation. Documentarist, director and scriptwriter, he contributed to cinema in other ways too — he wrote the theme poem for Ardh Satya, for instance. He was also a gifted painter, columnist and editor. Dilip Purushottam Chitre translated Tukaram for contemporary generations and brought alive his very essence as a poet-saint, serving a cause greater than his own art. Tukaram, the Bhakti poet of 17th Century Maharashtra “represents the vital link in the mutation of a medieval Marathi literary tradition into modern Marathi literature. His poems encompass the entire gamut of Marathi culture.” (<http://www.tukaram.com>) Tukaram lived and sang his abhangs, devotional songs to Vitthal / Vitthoba, at a time when Maharashtra followed a two caste system—Brahman and Shudra; only the former could contemplate upon God, religion and its intricacies. Tukaram did the unthinkable when he not only talked of God but also sang his famous abhangs, devotional songs. His abhangs spoke to God, his deity, Vitthoba, but he described the words as from a divine source, not his mortal lips. A lot of the original manuscript is lost; what remains, Dilip Chitre has studied over a lifetime and translated for posterity.

Says Tuka is not his only claim to excellence and fame, only the culmination of a lifelong struggle with and dedication to translating the austere, cryptic verses of a poet-saint whose words envelop a literary, social and cultural tradition, mark a break with an ethos that threatened to engulf, indeed strangulate everything that was not Brahman. Says Tuka became immensely popular, making Chitre a household name across Maharashtra and many other parts of the country where reading is not just a regional aspiration alone. An illustrious representative of modern poetry written after 1960, Chitre also won critical acclaim for the poems he penned in English. A multifaceted personality, he made forays into painting with drawings that came close to abstract art.

March 21, 2003 was an extraordinary day in his life when the first volume of my three-volume series of the selected poems of Tukaram in English translation SAYS TUKA-1 was published in Pune, India by the Sontheimer Cultural Association. Chitre writes : “It was in 1956 that I, then an 18-year old undergraduate in a college in Mumbai, decided to translate as much of Tukaram’s poetry into English as I could. It was not exactly a vow, for I was my only witness. But it turned into a lifelong project of translation encompassing not only the work of Tukaram but also of his dazzling forerunner, Jnandev, the 13th century Marathi mystic and poet who pioneered the Bhakti renaissance in Maharashtra. In one go, I was trying to discharge several debts: my debt to Marathi, my mother tongue; my debt to English, my chosen other tongue; to both the poetic traditions I inherited; to two of the great masters of world literature who were virtually unknown outside Marathi; and last, but not the least, to my

contemporaries among whom I lived and from whom I sought sustenance.”(His Home Page : thebuckstopshere@lycos.com)

As a gifted all-rounder, he was able to view human beings in a holistic manner and this was reflected in his writing and poetry. His book Says Tuka in English was translated into multiple international languages and went a long way in popularising Tukaram’s work across the world. Chitre wrote boldly and said, “Poetry as a genre is incomplete without Tukaram!” He was of the opinion that Tukaram was not just a Marathi poet but an international one. Chitre had a fascination for Tukaram who shunned social hypocrisy in a brutal expression while pursuing the path of devotion. His poems reflected loneliness of urban life, at times bordering on cynicism. The three collections of poems, numbering around 800, included Kavitenantarchaya Kavita (post-poetry poems). Chitre, who also wrote a novel, Morphyus, was a constant source of inspiration for young writers. Several prominent personalities condoled the death of the prolific writer. Union Minister and Congress leader Vilasrao Deshmukh described him as a “multi-talented personality”. In his condolence message, Union Minister and former Maharashtra CM Sushilkumar Shinde said “this is an irreparable loss to us.” “In Chitre’s death we have lost a multidimensional litterateur. His literary works, including translation of literature of Marathi poets, were laudable. He had carved a niche for himself in the field of literature,” Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal said. State BJP President Nitin Gadkari said, “Chitre’s writings gave global status to sant literature. His famous translation ‘Says Tukaram’ made history.” “His death is an irreparable loss to Marathi literary world,” the former State Minister said. (Outlook, India.com; Jan 4, 2010).

REFERENCE

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