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Yadi Sadasiva, a genius par excellence

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Recently felicitated with honorary doctorates, Samala Sadasiva is celebrated as a pioneer in literature, music and philosophy.



Multi-faceted personality Samala Sadasiva.

Could anyone imagine a scholar, cultural activist, and connoisseur who is also a creative writer, a chronicler of personal and social histories, a critic who cultivated the 'sensibility' of more than two generations, a linguist, and a translator who re-created some classical Urdu and Persian texts for Telugu readers? Add to that his profound knowledge of Hindustani classical music, depth of Indian philosophy, and pioneering work in comparative literature. How would we describe him if he also happens to be one of the finest practitioners of the dying arts of conversation and letter-writing?

The multi-faceted personality of octogenarian-Adilabadi, Samala Sadasiva, better known as 'Yadi Sadasiva', goes beyond simple descriptions: he is all these and much more. The authorities of Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad and Kakatiya University, Warangal, did themselves proud by



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bestowing on him honorary doctorates.

Most of Sadasiva's works published in 1950s and 60s are now being reprinted by his enthusiastic admirers and literary organisations. Every generation produces a rare human being, an epitome of our culture. Sadasiva started his literary career in 1949 and for 60 years now he has been a beacon of light and wisdom. The way he introduces an Urdu poet, or a Hindustani raga, all in a distinct style of his own, is as enthralling as the raga itself. Anyone who cared to record all those conversations on his life and times, people and places, literature, culture, society, and music, would have created a mountain of books by now. The letters that he wrote to scholar-critics of the previous and present generations also testify to his expansive views, sharp acumen and profound understanding.

Literary leanings

Sadasiva was born in a village called 'Tenugu palle' (Telugu hamlet) on May 11 1928, in Dahagam mandal of Adilabad, and went on to enrich Telugu literature from the age of 20. The literary forms he handled are many — creative poetry (*Prabhatam* in 1949, *Sambasiva Satakam* in 1950, *Nireekshanam* in 1952, *Viswamitram* and *Sakhinama*, all of which are now collected in an anthology entitled *Sadasiva Kavyasudha*, 2002), novels (*Apashriti*, 1952), historiography (*Urdu Sahitya Charitra* in 1963 and *Parsi Kavula Prasakti* in 1975), biography (*Mirza Ghalib*, 1969), translation (*Amjad Rubayeelu* in 1963, *Moulana Rume Masnavi* in 1967, *Kesava Sut* in 1970), Hindustani music (*Malaya Marutalu* in 2001, *Sangeeta Sikharalu* in 2006), and memoirs (*Yadi*, 2005).

Since 1950 he has taken it up as a mission to convey the finer aspects of Telugu literature to Urdu readers and conversely, introduce the nuances of Urdu, Parsi, Hindi and Marathi literatures to the Telugu-reading public. He has an intimate and inimitable style, much admired by Urdu critics and litterateurs; whereas Telugu-speaking people simply marvel at his use of chaste Telugu idiom, a rarity nowadays. Besides literary topics, his areas of interest in the 300-odd Urdu essays and more than 450 Telugu essays are people and places. The topics are invariably laced with gentle humour, keen observation and compassionate view, with a feel for the detail. That he continued to write through 1980s and 90s to this day speaks volumes of the great man's perseverance, sustained for over 60 years now.

Sadasiva is a complete human being with all the bliss associated with that status. He lives every moment of his life, and more importantly recounts, narrates with relish many of his experiences to enthusiastic listeners. His essays on music and Urdu literature, his close affinity with the Sufi and Bhakti traditions have altered the taste of two generations even as his admirers and ordinary readers watched in wonderment as he re-visualised his times, recollected many people and recreated places in his path-breaking work, *Yadi* (Memories).

In ancient times, a writer was considered a rishi, deerghadarshi, and in ancient Greece he was respectfully called vates, a prophet. The multi-framed genius of Sadasiva's personality makes him one with that class.