

## Ram Sarup Ankh

Sahitya Academy Award winner Ram Sarup Ankh has portrayed his own life in and as *Malhe Jhaarhiaan* (Thorny Bushes with Berries). This autobiography was first published in 1988, second revised edition was brought up in 1996 and now we have third version that he extended to seventy-fifth year of his life. It's not mere his art of story telling that mesmerizes its reader; his simplicity, honesty and bluntness are also working as magic.

Content with his living in his native village Dhaula, its surrounding areas and later the city of Barnala, Ankh always sought his themes, locales and characters from this region; and his vast canvas of narratives never required anything from outside. Many may like to see it as limiting factor but he is happy to portray what he can attempt best. He explains how with the passage of time the same landscape has seen a sea change and this transformation is portrayed in his novels like *Kothe Kharak Singh*. Ankh is equally known in Hindi world as his stories were frequently published in magazines like *Sarika* where a note on his story telling termed his genius as of national stature.

Ankh creates the much-desired diversity from dissimilar kinds of people who belong to different literary, economic, sociological and religions backgrounds from a vast gallery of associates, co-villagers and mentors. There are many divergent tendencies and traits in his personal life too; he is Brahmin by cast but Sikh in his appearance, ill-disciplined in his childhood but regimented in his writing, started as a poet but established as a fiction writer, married thrice and yet hungry of compassion of a lady who could really play a harmonizing role in his life.

The first few chapters of book are like a film that focuses the typical Malwa landscape, followed by chapters, which show his hunger to acquire knowledge. His restlessness can be seen from varying angles: not happy with any of his wives though he has been very caring most of the times. These ladies include the brides chosen conventionally and also his fan from Maharashtra, of course his personal choice. Yet he laments that why could not he marry this or that girl. He has also not been very happy with his professional life,

through out his career. The pain and agony of tragedies in his personal life only added to his indifference to his routine living. It is only literary world that gives him moments of elation and satisfaction. This explains his desire to live beyond his physical life through his quarterly Kahani Punjab, which he is continuing since 1993.

Anakhi's personal world may be full of misery but society that he projects is almost ideal. There are scores of people who lent him a helping hand at all stages; from his studies in childhood to his family's fight with diseases, from his patronage by a Pepsu minister to publication of his narratives by his fellow writers. Though very difficult to forget the baseness of a Delhi publisher, at the age of 75, Anakhi is mature enough now to put off his mind the certain differences that he nurtured with some of the fellow writers. Frank acceptance of facts is the sweetest fruit a reader can pick from the thorny bush like life of Anakhi. He has concluded with promise that he may revision this autobiography after 15 years. I think it's worth waiting, the reader shall get some more *berries* and the writer remains with us for two more decades.