

**Rajinder Singh Bedi**  
**(Bio for Centennial celebrations)**

Born September 01, 1915 at Lahore Cantonment, Sadar Bazaar;  
Died November 11, 1984 in Bombay.

His father, S. Hira Singh Bedi was a Postmaster. He was very fond of Urdu and Farsi. His Mother Smt. Sewa Dei was from a Hindu family and very knowledgeable of Sikh and Hindu religion, the stories of the Puranas and also of Muslim lore. She was a wonderful painter and had covered the walls of the house with scenes from the Mahabharata. The house had a mixed culture of Sikhism and Hinduism and father took part in Muslim festivals enthusiastically. Rajinder's imaginative skills were developed under their fond care, storytelling and father's witticisms.

He matriculated from the S.B.B.S. Khalsa High School, Lahore and joined the DAV College, Lahore. He passed his Intermediate but could not go for BA studies. Mother had died March 28, 1933 of tuberculosis and father wanted him to marry so that there may be a caregiver in the family. He left his studies and joined the postal service as a clerk in 1933. He got married in 1934. His wife's maiden name was Soman and married name Satwant Kaur. His first son, Prem, was born in 1935. Father who was then working as Postmaster in Toba Tek Singh came to Lahore to celebrate the arrival of a grandson but died there on August 31, 1935. The whole burden for fending for his family, his two brothers and sister fell on him and Satwant. The son Prem also passed away in 1936. Rajinder faced intolerable suffering and privation in life with the deaths of the dearest ones and from poverty. Father had built a house in Sham Nagar in Lahore and all his savings had been spent on house construction and the treatment of his wife. When he died he had left no money and the family did not receive any pension from the Postal Department.

He had started writing at an early age. He was in school when his first story *Nananh Kant* was published in the children's magazine, *Phool*. While in college he started writing for the Sunday edition of the newspaper *Paras*. He took over the editorship of a Panjabi magazine *Sarang*, published in Urdu script. Since the magazine was on the verge of closure for lack of finance he contributed most of the articles and translation of poems himself. It gave him good practice for writing on diverse kind of subjects. Another formative influence was the vast but haphazard reading of books from his uncle, S. Sampuran Singh's press. Not only did he publish a lot of miscellaneous fiction and other material, he also had a great deal of publications from other presses coming to him in exchange. Rajinder was an avid reader. He was regular in taking out books from the Punjab Public Library and read many classics in English or in English translation especially of Russian fiction.

He started contributing to the prestigious Urdu magazines such as *Adabi Dunya* and *Adab-e-Latif* when he was working in the Post Office. He won recognition as a writer of short story. His first collection of short stories under the title *Dano-o-dam* came out in 1940. He was much praised by Sa'adat Hassan Manto and Prof. Alle Ahmed Saroor.

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He left the Postal Service and joined All India Radio as writer artist. He wrote radio plays published later as *Saat Khel*. His second collection of short stories was *Grehan*. By now he was regarded as the foremost writer of Urdu fiction.

When India was partitioned in 1947 he had to leave his beloved Lahore. He was offered the post of Director Jammu Radio by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. When Sheikh Sahib was dismissed (1953) he left the job due to differences with his successor Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammed. He then turned to Bombay for living as a writer of film stories and dialogues, since there was little or no income from Urdu writing. He continued to write short story nonetheless. He did some of his best work while continuing to write for films. His novel *Ek Chadar Maili Si* won great acclaim and was made into a film. Originally it was written in Punjabi as *Ek Chadar Adhorani*. It was translated into Bengali, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada and was made into a play and acted upon the stage in Punjabi and other languages.

He won all the known awards available to Urdu writers such as Sahitya Academy Award, 1965; Padam Shri, 1972; Ghalib Award, 1978 and several Filmfare and State awards.

He died of complications from rectal cancer. Among the many messages of condolences received was one from General Zia-ul Haq, President of Pakistan, stating that his death was not only a loss to India but also to Pakistan. The Russian embassy sent a person to offer condolences. Later a crossing in King's Circle, Bombay (Mumbai) was named after him as Rajinder Singh Bedi Chowk.

The following is a list of his Urdu books most of which were published in Hindi translation by Upendra Nath Ashk through his press Neelabh Prakashan, Allahabad. An English translation of some of his short stories was published by the Sahitya Akademy, New Delhi, in 1989.

Rajinder's wife died in 1977 and his eldest son, Narinder, who was a successful film maker died in 1982. Their deaths were the cause of suffering and great mental anguish. His other surviving children are Surinder, daughter, Jatinder, son and Parminder, daughter.

These are the titles of his published works:

*Dana-o-Dam; Grehan; Kokh Jali; Apne Dukh Mujhe De Do; Hath Hamare Kalam Hue; Mukti Bodh.*

Plays:

*Be-Jaan Cheezen*

*Sat Khel*

Novelette:

*Ek Chadar Maili Si*