



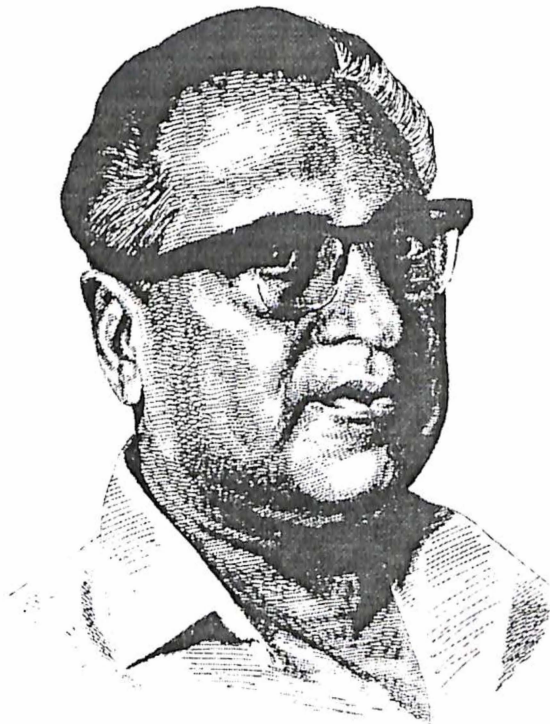
Kusumagraj

Nishikant Mirajkar

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KUSUMAGRAJ

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King – Suddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A. D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

KUSUMAGRAJ

NISHIKANT MIRAJKAR



Sahitya Akademi

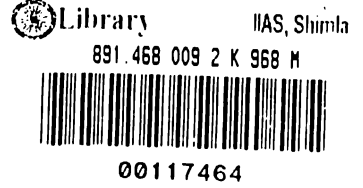
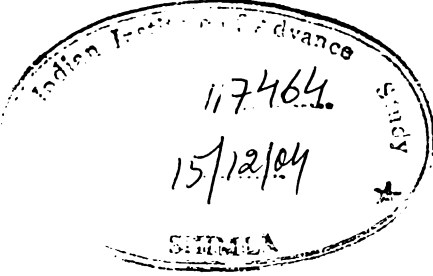
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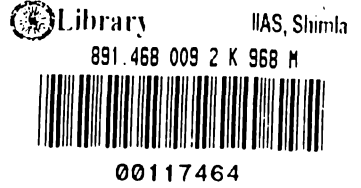
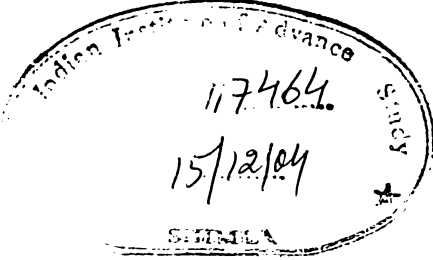
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Preface

V. V. Shirwadkar alias Kusumagraj was a great Indian litterateur, who wrote in Marathi.

Some writers entertain their readers and give solace to their minds agonised due to atrocities of life. Some others enlighten their readers and give them new motivation and inspiration. However, some writers use their pen to express an analytical preview of human life. They have a capacity to reach up to the roots of humanity. Their words can express all the levels of mature experiences simultaneously. Creativity of such writers entertains the readers, motivates them with new thoughts and apart from that, it also enriches them with a deep understanding of human life. In fact, these writers become an integral part of human civilisation. Innumerable readers of different tastes, different ideologies and different faiths can experience unbroken intimacy with such writers. For, these writers can reach to the integrity of human experience existing at the core of superficial differences. V. V. Shirwadkar alias Kusumagraj represents such writers.

Literature produced by Kusumagraj (V. V. Shirwadkar) has remained a part of the world of experience of Marathi readers for more than six decades. When the collection of his poems **Vishakha** was published sixty years ago, it enthralled Marathi readers and the magic of these poems is intact even today. It is impossible to find a lover of Marathi poetry, who does not carry lines of Kusumagraj's poems upon his lips. Kusumagraj's poetry has incorporated within itself all the new motivations and new patterns that have emerged in Marathi poetry. Consequently, three generations of Marathi poets consider Kusumagraj as one of them and respect him. Subjective emotionality and social sensitivity are the two axes presenting the graph of Kusumagraj's poetry. While considering Kusumagraj's poetic style, one has to say that he is the master of diction. Such poignant and splendid words flow from his pen that a reader instantly gives them a permanent place in the treasures of his memory. For, as many times he thinks of them, they keep on revealing some new charm of meaning.

Shirwadkar's plays exhibit the same scenario as his poetry. His

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Kounteya expresses the emotional conflict of Karna, who was suffering from the pang of rejection throughout his life. His **Dusara Peshawa** expresses the conflict of love that created turmoil of passions in the life of the great warrior Bajirao. His **Natasamrat** is an unparalleled tragedy that intensifies at different levels simultaneously. Shirwadkar's plays display a unique fusion of dramatic element and poetry.

Shirwadkar wrote just three novels. However, a discussion of Marathi Novel cannot be complete without the mention of his novels. Even Shirwadkar's personal essays, which portray his rich personality, have become embellishments of the genre of Personal essay in Marathi. Shirwadkar's creative muse has successfully captured different fields like poetry, novel, short story and personal essay like the unchallenged victorious horse of the Ashwamedh Yajna.

The secret of this victorious literary voyage of Kusumagraj lies in his unbounded sympathy. This sympathy reaches to the core of any person, event of situation that comes into the field of observation of this great writer. He understands the agony of the land that is being crushed under the ferocious wheels of the train. When he looks at the earth revolving around the sun, he sights a dedicated beloved sacrificing her life upon radiance. A beggar woman, lamenting over the dead body of her only son, hears the news that a nearby shopkeeper is throwing away heaps of rotten wheat and, keeping the dead body on the floor, rushes there with a bag in her hand. Kusumagraj's sympathy makes the woman topic of his poem. Watching an old tribal woman, this sympathy feels that our parliament is hanging from one of the knots of her dried breasts and our literary conference from the other one. What is more, this sympathy enters the hearts of the "statues" of great persons like Jotiba Phule, Shivaji and Ambedkar and reveals the agonies and frustrations of those statues. It is not surprising then that it enters the hearts of mythological, historical and imaginative personalities like Karna, Bajirao, Vijayanti and Ganpatrao Belvalkar and presents a dramatic portrait of their pains and agonies with utmost intensity. Shirwadkar's entire literature is motivated by this sympathy.

The three characteristics viz. unbounded sympathy, poignant analysis of life and a diction emitting ever-new charm adorn Shirwadkar's literary works. That is why Marathi readers adore his literature with intimacy. Everybody finds a reflection of his thoughts, emotions and problems in his literature. It gives them solace, motivation and untainted pleasure.

Literature produced by such writers is like the Ganges. Some may quench their thirst there, some may bathe and soothe their burns in it,

some may stare at their own reflection in its flow or some observe shadows of the enchanting colours and wandering clouds of the sky in its water. That is why, just like the Ganges, these writers become an integral part of our culture, our identity and our passion. V. V. Shirwadkar alias Kusumagraj is one such writer.

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Life and Personality

Kusumagraj was born on 27th February 1912 in Pune. His father was a pleader at a small place called Pimpalgaon near Nasik in Maharashtra. Though a small village, the place was a rich one because of production of grapes. Not only reputed Marathi journals like **Kesari** and **Manoranjan**, but even English newspapers like **Times** and **Chronicle** etc. were available in the village. People of the village, especially the youth, took fancy in reading editorials of **Kesari** and in debating over the batting of Naidu and Deodhar. Readers of Hari Narayan Apte's novels and Govindagraj's poetry were abundant in the village. People were aware of the circumstances and atmosphere in the nation.

Kusumagraj's original name was Gajanan Rangnath Shirwadkar. His uncle adopted him and the name was consequently changed to Vitthal Vaman Shirwadkar. After completing his primary education in the village, he moved to Nasik, along with his brothers, for his secondary education. Nasik remained his place of abode and the centre of his activities throughout his life, except a few years spent in Mumbai and Pune in the initial stage of his career of journalism.

During his school-life, Kusumagraj was fond of reading books, watching and enacting roles in drama and playing cricket. By chance, in one summer vacation, he came across a treasure of 200-300 books in a cupboard in his aunt's house. This was his introduction to modern writers. Out of these, he was so impressed by Ram Ganesh Gadkari's plays that he memorised long dialogues from them and relished repeating them loudly to himself. He also enjoyed enacting roles in play-performances in the high school and the college. He also enjoyed playing cricket in the school and the college cricket team. History was his favourite subject in the school. He created a hand-written magazine in the school and his first poem, "Narayan Ravancha Vadh" (Assassination of Narayanrao), appeared in it. He was studying in the fifth standard at this time. However, his teacher named Dattopant Purohit conveyed the true nature of poetry to him. Actually, he was not his direct teacher, but came to his class once to engage

an "off period". He taught a poem written by Bhaskar Ramachandra Tambe and explained the poetic nuances with such effectiveness that young Kusumagraj's perception of the poetic creativity became absolutely clear.

During the same period, due to his interest in Drama, Kusumagraj grabbed the opportunities to watch performances of great actors from Drama Companies like Lalit Kaladarsha, Balvant Sangeet Mandali, Maharashtra Mandali and Balgandharva Sangeet Natak Mandali. Especially, performance of Krishanaji Prabhakar Khadilkar's play **Kichakvadh** and the acting of actors like Natasamrat Keshvrao Date, Madhavrao Chitnis and Potnis impressed him. In 1928, Gandharva Natak mandali presented two musical plays, viz. **Ekach Pyala** by R. G. Gadkari and **Swayamvar** by K. P. Khadilkar and Balgandharva's bearing on the stage in both these plays had a spellbound effect on young Kusumagraj.

After completing his secondary education from 1924 to 1929 in the New English School, Nasik, Kusumagraj sought admission in the D.H.P.T. College. He was a student of English and Marathi literature, but in his examination of the first year of the college, he failed in Mathematics. He could have manipulated to pass by pleading his case with the concerned teacher and the Principal; but he did not approve the idea.

Kusumagraj participated in the agitation and the Satyagraha for entry of the untouchables to the famous Kala Ram Mandir of Nasik and he had to suffer a knife-stab wound also.

Before Kusumagraj entered the college, his poems and other writings were published in the magazine **Bal-bodh-mewa** edited by Devadatta Tilak. In 1930, along with his entry in the college, his poems began to be published in the magazine **Ratnakar**. Two of his poems were also published in a collection of poems of local poets entitled **Madhavi**. In 1933, local poets established a group named **Dhruva Mandali** and a small collection of Kusumagraj's poems was published by the group in the same year with the title **Jivanlahari**. At that time, Kusumagraj was also writing as a journalist in the paper **Nava Manu**. In this manner, before he passed his B.A. examination in 1934, his writings were long being published.

Kusumagraj's initial poetry was highly influenced by Govindagraj (Ram Ganesh Gadkari, who was a playwright also) and Balkavi (Tryambak Bapuji Thomre). The period from 1920 to 1930 is famous for contribution of the Ravi-Kiran Mandal in the field of Marathi poetry. The prominent poets of this group were Madhav Julian, Girish and Yashwant. Apart from these poets, Kusumagraj took inspiration from poets like Keshavsut, B. R. Tambe, Govind (who was a physically

handicapped poet from Nasik) and Swatantryaveer Savarkar and continued his endeavours in poetry writing along with his journalist career. From 1935 to 1945, two poets were fully established in the realm of Marathi poetry. One was B. B. Borkar, who was famous for his romantic and Nature-oriented poetry and the other was Kusumagraj, who was hailing social equality and political revolution through his poems.

After acquiring the B.A. Degree in 1934, Kusumagraj also had decided not to go for the Government service, in tune with the contemporary atmosphere. He desired to enter the film-industry on the basis of his writings published so far. He wrote the script and played the role of Lakshmana in the film *Sati Sulochana* produced by **Godavari Cinetone** of Nasik. The film was a flop. Then he went to Mumbai to pursue his dreams along with the director Mama Shinde. They both shared a small room in a dingy building in a narrow lane. His belongings were a chatai, a chaddar and an iron trunk in which he kept his clothes and writing material. After trying in vain for three years, he abandoned his futile efforts and accepted a job in the weekly **Prabha**. There the editor Nanasaheb Parulekar (founder of the leading Marathi newspaper **Sakal**) trained him in journalism and moulded his practical life. Though Kusumagraj lost his job during retrenchment due to financial crunch, the training he got while working in the editorial department of **Prabha** made him an efficient journalist.

The second job was in the periodical **Lokashakti** (with the editor P. W. Gadgil), where he remained just for a week. Then he joined the **Daily Prabhat**, where he worked for three and half years. This job suited his temperament. He was working there as the editor of the night shift. The veteran journalist Valchand Kothari was the Chief Editor and owner of the paper. He was a versatile man with appreciative nature and pleasant personality. His intellect was as sharp as the blade of a sword. He was an expert in attacking others. His bag was full of experiences from the fields of commerce, law, and politics and book publishing. Kusumagraj had full freedom here. He enjoyed encouragement and goodwill from his employer. His poetry writing was his tonic during tedious work at the night shift.

During one such night shift at **Prabhat** in 1929, Kusumagraj received a cable that the condition of the political prisoners, who were on hunger strike in the Damdam prison in Bengal, was pretty serious. While translating the news and paging it, Kusumagraj experienced a storm of emotions in his mind. He returned to his room after the night shift in the same mood. He drew out a paper and started writing lines "Garja Jaya Jayakar, Kranticha garja Jaya jayakar" (Hail ! Revolution, Hail !) The poem

that has been enthralling Marathi people ever since then was born at that moment.

Kusumagraj left the intimate atmosphere of **Prabhat** and left for Mumbai in order to look after the editing of **Sarathi** at the behest of V. S. Khandekar. He remained in this job only for one and half year, but it was here that he was acquainted with the critic W. L. Kulkarni, the painter Godse and the writer Anant Kanekar.

He worked in the weekly **Dhanurdhari** as the co-editor in the company of Prabhakar Padhye, the learned art-critic, as the editor. Here he was exposed to many litterateurs such as Haribhau Mote, Vaman Chorghade, B. S. Mardhekar, P. B. Bhawe, historian R. G. Sardesai and drama-director Dr. Bhalerao. After getting acquainted with Acharya Atre, he began writing a column in his periodical **Navayug** also. He always regarded journalism as an activity of joyful creativity, a thrill.

Kusumagraj's attachment for his native town prompted him to accept the task of the chief editor of **Weekly Swadesh** at Nasik in 1944. After a period of two years, this weekly also became the victim of financial crisis and was closed down.

Thus, from 1938 to 1948, Kusumagraj was involved in the field of journalism. During this period, in 1944, he fell in love and married Ganga, later named Manorama. He also acquired fame as a writer and a poet. His most famous collection of poetry, **Vishakha**, was published in 1942 and in 1946, his first novel **Vaishnav** and his first play **Durche Dive** were published.

In 1950, he established **Lokahitavadi Mandal** at Nasik and was engaged in arranging different literary and cultural projects for the development of the town throughout his remaining life. One of these projects was editing of school textbooks. When there was the linguistic reorganisation of states in India and Maharashtra fell victim to some unrealistic fancy of the Ruling Power denying a separate state for Marathi-speaking people by creating a bilingual state for Marathi and Gujarati, Kusumagraj actively participated in the Samyukta Maharashtra Andolan in 1959, offering Satyagraha. He was the President of the Sarvajanik Vachanalaya of Nasik from 1962 to 1972. He was a member of the Senate of the University of Poona from 1954 to 1975.

Kusumagraj received a number of honours and felicitations in the later phase of his life. He was elected as the President of the Mumbai Upanagar Marathi Sahitya Sammelan in 1956. He received the award of the Maharashtra Government for his collection of poetry **Himaresha** in 1964. The most prestigious honour of being elected as the President of

the All India Marathi Literary Conference was bestowed upon him in 1966. The Conference was held at Goa. In those days, there was a movement within Goa for merger with Maharashtra. Marathi writers considered it their duty to uphold the cause of the movement. Kusumagraj voiced his support for the movement in his Presidential address. In the same year, he received the award of the Maharashtra Government for his play **Yayati Ani Devyani**. Immediately next year, he received the same award again for his play **Vij Mhanali Dharatila** (Thus Said The Thunderbolt To The Earth). In 1970, he became the President of the Marathi Natya Sammelan at Kolhapur. In 1971, he received the Maharashtra Government Award for his play **Natsamarat**. Kusumagraj received a bolt in his personal life in 1972, when his wife died. However, the march of his glory as a litterateur continued further. The year 1974 saw him receiving the Sahitya Akademi award for **Natasamrat**. In 1985, he was felicitated with the Ram Ganesh Gadkari Award of the Akhil Bharatiya Natya Prishad and with D.Litt. of the University of Poona.

In 1987, Kusumagraj completed seventy-five years of his life and the occasion was celebrated in Maharashtra with enthusiasm and affection. He was bestowed with the fellowship of the Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskriti Mandal at Nasik. Immediately next year Kusumagraj reached the zenith of his literary career, when he was declared the winner of the most prestigious literary award in India viz. the Jnanapeeth Award. He also received the award of the Sangeet Natak Akademi in the same year.

The Jnanapeeth Award function was carried out in March 1989 and in August 1989, Kusumagraj became the President of the First World Marathi Conference held at Mumbai. He utilised the money he received from the Jnanapeeth Award in establishing the **Kusumagraj Pratishthan** at Nasik in 1990. Next year, in 1991, the President of India honoured him with the Padmabhushan. Kusumagraj Pratishthan established the prestigious **Janasthan Puraskar** (yearly) and it was awarded to Vijay Tendulkar in that year. In 1992, Kusumagraj received his second honorary D.Litt. from Yashawantrao Chavan Open University, Nasik. Kusumagraj Pratishthan activated the project of yearly distribution of Godavari Gourav from 1993 in the form of a "Gurudakshina" of Rs. 11, 000/- and a memento to one person each from the five fields viz. Music, Sports, Film, People's Service and Science. The first recipients were Smt. Gangubai Hangal, Vijay Hazare, Ashok Kumar, Prakash Amte and Dr. Vasant Gowarikar respectively. Kusumagraj Pratishthan organised the Sahitya Bhushan Examination in Marathi language and literature and the first examination took place in 1996.

Kusumagraj was not only a great composer of words, but also a sympathetic companion of common man throughout his life. The entire Marathi Literary community fondly used to refer to him as Tatyasaheb. He was a fascinated wanderer and enjoyed tours and treks in the company of his friends. He preferred to remain away from the pomp and exhibitionism of public ceremonies, but never shied away from participating in social and political movements of public interest. There used to be a crowd of visitors at his residence and his doors were open for all. These visitors were not only admirers of his literary achievements, but some of them used to be seekers of intimate advice for their problems, and he gave a patient hearing to all. He had strong faith in his values. He regarded people engaged in social service with high esteem and the exploiters of the masses with pungent hatred. He always felt an inner bondage of intimacy for the class of workers and strong repugnance for the sycophants. He was a true worshipper of artistic creativity and a real patriot. Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni writes about him, "There is in him not the prophet who is the poet but also a transcendental philosopher, an atom of divinity that stretches its vision far beyond what ordinary mortals can see. But this vision does not forget ordinary mortals. Compassion is the ruling quality of Tatyasaheb Shirwadkar's character." In 1992, the International Star Society of America named a star as "Kusumagraj" in his honour.

Kusumagraj breathed his last at 12.00 noon on 10 March 1999.

He says in one of his poems,

*"My poetry was never meant for victory
Therefore, she was never scared of defeat
She never aspired to take her birth
Therefore, she is never worried of death"*

These lines are indicative of the nature of his poetry and his personality as well.

Some litterateurs entertain their readers and provide a sort of soothing for their minds tortured by the atrocities of life. Some litterateurs enlighten their readers and provide them a ray of new thoughts and new inspiration. However, some litterateurs utilise their pens to attempt on analytical expression of human life. They have a capacity to reach unto the roots of humanity. Their diction expresses all layers of rich experiences simultaneously. Literary creativity of such litterateurs entertains the readers, inspires them with new thoughts and provides them with an understanding viewpoint regarding human life. Such litterateurs become an integral part of the human civilisation. Readers of different interests,

advocating different ideologies and keeping different faiths can experience a bond of intimacy with such litterateurs. For, these litterateurs touch the inner integrity of human experiences underlying superficial differences. Kusumagraj represents such superlative litterateurs.

Kusumagraj the Poet

When Kusumagraj was flourishing as a poet, the scene in the field of Marathi poetry was dominated by the advent of **Navakavya** (Modern Poetry) of which the major architects were B.S.Mardhekar, Anil and P.S.Rege. All three of these were very different from the traditional development of Marathi poetry, each one had his indigenous peculiarity. The nature of Kusumagraj's creativity was very different from all three of them. Without trying to fall in line with any of them, Kusumagraj explored his own path and established himself. Another poet, who began his literary career just ahead of Kusumagraj, was B.B.Borkar. However, Borkar took pride in following the path of Bhaskar Ramchandra Tambe and went on to achieve new heights in the same direction, whereas Kusumagraj ventured to create his own path. There is a sort of lyricism or romanticism at the base of Kusumagraj's poetic experience; which links him with the tradition and his surrounding. The indigenous element was his concern for the common man, his ability and tendency to relate his experiences to the emotions, aspirations and sensitivities of the common man.

The period from 1920 to 1930 is marked in the field of Marathi poetry as the period of the **Ravikiran Mandal**, a group of poets, the leader of which was Madhav Julian. The other members of the group were Yashwant, Girish, S. B. Ranade and his wife Manorama Ranade. These poets elaborated romanticism in Marathi poetry. They also developed and stabilised **Suneet**, the Marathi incarnation of the English Sonnet. After the grandeur of Ravikiran Mandal's creativity receded, it was mainly Kusumagraj's compositions that kept the throb of liveliness intact in Marathi poetry until the Modern poetry began to be digested by the readers. He leaped over the limitations marked by Ravikiran Mandal's poetry and enriched Marathi poetry with a dimension of specific interpretation of life.

Kusumagraj was writing poetry for more than six decades. During this large period, there were many ups and downs, crests and troughs, and even turmoil in the field of poetry. New currents emerged and stormy

debates took place. New concepts appeared. Some of them took roots, while some withered. New experiments were tried. Some of them were established and some were forgotten. Kusumagraj's creativity witnessed all this with alert awareness. It accepted some of these and rejected some. At times, he changed with the new currents and at times, he remained aloof to them. All the while, he kept on adding his own contribution to the changes. He has his own share in the enrichment of Marathi poetry.

Kusumagraj began writing poetry from his school days. Naturally, his initial endeavour was imitative. Even the pen-name he chose for himself was an imitation of Govindagraj. He writes about his maiden attempt of writing poetry, "In the class, majority of which was sportsmen, I was the only one to have some flirting with literature. Therefore, not only editing but also the entire writing of the hand-written magazine was my task alone. I carried out imitation of the magazines lying on the table of the library, as far I could. Everything else was possible, but I was stuck at poetry. I had never attempted this business of making straight sentences oblique. However, poetry was a must. Finally, I decided to take up the task myself. The poets like Govindagraj and Balkavi, who haunted me in the next four years, had yet to meet me. Poetry was that written by saints and pundits, which was in our text-book. That was the only model before me. History was my favourite subject. Even now it is. I had a good understanding of metre, though not of poetry. I chose the metre Shikharini and filled in it an episode, which was stuck in my mind, viz. the episode of the assassination of Narayanrao, adding some figures of speech, in the same manner as they fill grains in a measure. This was my first poem." (Roopresha, 1984, p.6).

Jeevanlahari (Currents in the flow of life)

Jeevanlahari was Kusumagraj's first collection of poems. Kusumagraj confesses, "In those days, I was specially fascinated by Umar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* (translated as *Drakshakanya* by Madhav Julian). That might have given me the idea of such independent, loose poems." (Kusumagraj's interview in the appendix of *Kavita Kusumagrajanchi* by Akshaykumar Kale, 1986). All the poems in this collection consist of eight lines each. They are written in new lucid metre, which Kusumagraj says, came naturally to him. Each poem contains an independent idea, emotion or thought. However, in some cases, the same content continues through two or more poems. Kusumagraj wrote these poems in his twenties. In this susceptible age, one's mind is haunted by idealism. Kusumagraj is clearly seen as impressed by Tambe and Govindagraj in these poems.

The thoughts about life, expressed in the essence form of two lines in **Jeevanlahari** could never attain the status of an intense artistic creation. Kusumagraj understood this limitation of the form. By this time, his thinking process also became sufficiently mature. Basically, his poetic muse was not introvert. The period between the publication of **Jeevanlahari** and the next collection **Vishakha** was marked with grave struggle, not only from the point of view of Kusumagraj, but from the point of view of world affairs also. This was the period from 1924 to 1941. The Marxist ideology was engulfing the world. Artists throughout the world were being influenced by this ideology. On the other hand, Hitler had propagated Nazi ideology. The period from 1934 to 1941 was the period of growth of Hitler's fanaticism. Entire world was pushed into the flames of war in this period. At the same time, India had reached the ultimate stage of her freedom-struggle. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged to death on 23 March 1931. Their message of revolution was reverberating in the hearts of youth. Sardar Udham Singh was hanged in 1940. The historic elopement of Subhash Chandra Bose happened in the same period. The radiant revolutionary personality of Savarkar was before the people in those days. Gandhiji's movement of disobeying law was in full swing. The entire world was watching this warrior of peace with astonishment and disbelief. Amidst such atmosphere at the national and international level, Kusumagraj's sensitivity was creating poetry, which was finally collected in **Vishakha**.

Vishakha (Alpha Libre)

These poems were first being published in the periodical **Jyotsna** and since then, they had attracted attention of readers. More importantly, contemporary readers were being influenced by these poems. Poet B. B. Borkar has written about this quite openly at several places. Publication of the collection **Vishakha** proved to be an event in Marathi poetry. It is significant that V. S. Khandekar, the first Jnanapeeth awardee, published **Vishakha** at his own expenses.

The poem "Garja Jayajaykar Kranticha" (Hail Revolution !) was published in **Jyotsna** three years ago and it was on everybody's lips in that atmosphere surcharged with patriotism. Patriots belonging to all political parties looked upon it as their own portrait. Those who did not know this young poet thought it to be written by Savarkar and this presumption was, in a way, an honour to this poem. Apart from this poem, many other poems of this collection were embodied with fiery elements of the contemporary content such as challenging Imperialism,

hating inequality, invoking socialism, dreaming of humanity, sympathising with the downtrodden etc. Passions of enchantment, intoxication, frenzy, pathos, sublimation, wrath, valour, promise, enthusiasm that were interwoven with ideas like revolution, struggle, sacrifice, martyrdom etc. emerged in these poems with utmost intensity. These poems reveal the fiery dramatic elements, actions and movements through magnificent metaphors and symbols. Images like the light, the darkness, the yajna, the sacrificial fire, the samidha, the flames, the amber etc, gained novel enchanting effect and solid appeal.

Kusumagraj's poems in *Vishakha* were relevant to the contemporary realities. They portray intense portraits of class struggle. Metaphoric poems like "Agagadi Ani Jamin" (The train and the soil), "Ahinakul" (The snake and the mungoose), "Himalat" (The cold wave) display this class struggle powerfully. Of course, justice for the exploited class was a sincere dream of Kusumagraj and so he depicted scenes of demolition of the exploiters through these poems. The train, which crushes the soil under its cruel wheels, topples down and crashes into thousand of pieces in "Agagadi Ani Jamin": the arrogant chest of the great cobra is shattered into hundreds of pieces in "Ahinakul".

Kusumagraj has portrayed the portraits of the oppressed with a kind sympathetic attitude. In the poems "Malache Manogat" (The soliloquy of a barren land) and "Pachola" (Fallen dry leaves), he has described the lives that have remained neglected throughout. The gloomy barren land, full of dust and slashed by torrential rains, represents the life of anguished people, who are devoid of sympathy, love, companionship. The fallen dry leaves are scattered under a huge tree on a remote, lonely path. They are destined with sorrow and agony throughout their existence. The old leaves are driven away by the wind or burnt to ashes. The tree produces them again. The cycle of the destiny continues. Gloomy, destitute people take birth and die. The situation does not change. However, though Kusumagraj looks at this changeless situation and becomes sad, he does not become frustrated. Because a process of creative change is initiated in his heart, he sights a lamppost of hope in the stormy sea of life. The terror of roaring waves with their scattered mane of surf vanishes. Amidst such whirlwind he utters,

*"But look, in the darkness shines in the harbour
Green light of the lamppost, radiant and calm !
An angel with his open fan of beaming feathers
Carves the sculpture of radiance over the darkness*

*Behold his bright halo in the distant tower
And light, my friends, the wick of hope in your hearts !"*

The content of Kusumagraj's poems is either social or political and its backbone is optimism. These poems throb and pulse with struggle, sacrifice and optimism.

The idealistic social consciousness in Kusumagraj's poetry has its effect on his love poetry.

*"Never did I pause for rest, never looked back
Ties of love and fame could never bind me"*

These thoughts led to the concept that love is a hindrance to one's progress towards duty. On one side, there is worship of the ideal and on the other side, the consciousness that *"Can there ever be fulfilment of the ideal, the love, the hope ?"* Consequently, Kusumagraj's love poetry in **Vishakha** is inclined towards pessimism. Poems like "Avashesh" (The Remainder), "Smriti" (The Remembrance), "Tarihi Kedhava" (Even then some time), "Tu Unch Gadi Rahasi" (You dwell in the fort upon the hill), "Nirmalya" (Dried flowers of the offering), "Kutuhali" (Curiosity) etc. narrate the tale of the extinguished spark of love that was shining once upon a time.

The social consciousness of Kusumagraj confronts with his spiritual consciousness in many poems. Kusumagraj, in the core of his mind, has faith in spirituality. However, his social consciousness dominates his poetic muse and takes his spirituality to the level of satire.

*"They say your compassion has no limits
Saints proclaim your greatness
Sparrows' nests you burn with a torch
What a tremendous compassion !"*

He reaches to the inferences,

*"In my cowardice
Lies your growth
I entertained myself with it
I am the architect of my life
Futile is this call at your door"*

He understands just one truth:

"Finally a new layer will spread upon the soil"

Mansions erupt and collapse, flags of arrogant power flutter and crash down. Haughty charm of a damsel, arms of a warrior pulsating with valour in a battle, learnedness screaming at the top of its voice, crusaders vanquishing the world, genius poets, nobody can stand before the Death. One may be a saint or a sinner, once he is put upon a pyre, nothing but ash remains. One, who has created everything, is also bound to have his ultimate end in the soil. Actually, Kusumagraj has maintained his aloofness from the pessimistic ideology. He has celebrated the worship of the human strength and zeal for conquest. Even then, he has aptly portrayed a shadow of a fearful destruction engulfing all this. He has ably digested the influence of Khayyam.

The one place of rest he finds in this catastrophic experience of life is poetry. It rescues him from this fear of destruction, at least momentarily, and so he recognises the obligation of poets in the poem "Rina" (The debt). An emotion of gratefulness beyond words regarding poetry and poets takes shape in this poem. Feet burning in the soil seek rest in poetry. Poets stand like lampposts amidst towering waves in this cruel storm of life. They light the wicks of hope in hearts. Kusumagraj gratefully says,

*"The burning sand under feet and the fuming wind above
A flock of deer running around in quest of water
When feet get tired and exhausted in the path
O poets, you provided the sweet rest to me
Hordes of memorials do not exist, nor required
Your temples stand in innumerable hearts !"*

Though the central experience in Vishakha is social, a multifarious content emerged in these poems. Here the poet's attitude is abundantly optimistic, but it is aware of the limitations of passions for hope, ideal, love and all other human aspirations. He can easily say,

*"Can Ideal, Love, Hope
Ever be fulfilled ?
Like a fool we worship
These eroding idols"*

The speciality of the poems in *Vishakha* is the style. The main

characteristic of this style is that it dramatizes the conflict between two confronting elements. Since the poet's extrovert nature is predominant in such conflicts, Kusumagraj's poetic muse naturally targets imagery of huge dimensions such as the sea, the ocean, the volcano, the Tandava etc. He usually adds adjectives to these images. The attraction for such images of huge dimensions naturally leads to the fantastic display of imagination. However, this display has a mould of artistic pattern. Therefore, the imagination does not appear to be unrealistic or inclined towards the supernatural. The imagination is useful for depiction of the conflict. Moreover, though these super-images make the poetry dazzling with radiance, it is never inclined to become propagandistic. It depicts the facts of life with a piercing realistic insight. For example, in the poem "Ahinakul", the fight between the dreadful cobra and the mongoose is described with the images as

*"What a fiery combat !
Flames rolling in water !
As if to conquer the sky
Whirlwind is fighting with monsoon clouds !"*

However, what is the consequence of such a super-levelled and fiery fight ?

*"The battle is over, blood trickles away
Grass bathes in it joyfully
Here lays the cobra withered as cotton
Insects have gathered to consume its pieces"*

The mongoose with "Eyes like ambers" and "Lips like flags of blood" has already gone away "like a gash of wind" and insects gobble the benefit ! The dignity of the mongoose (The revolutionist) and the greed of the insects (the masses) are poignantly depicted here.

Kusumagraj's poetic muse empathises with the contemporary fiery content of the mass psyche and at the same time, his creativity gets ready to transform the momentary experience into an artistic pattern. The poem "Jalianwala Bagh" can be cited as an example of this process. Without turning to the details of the gory incident, the poet appeals directly to Jesus Christ and builds the pattern of the poem on a dramatic platform. He juxtaposes the scene of the "Trickles of blood" when Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for the sake of humanity and that of his own gun-

wielding followers drenched in "the blood of unarmed people" waving the flag of that very Jesus Christ. Then follows the line "And one more wound in your heart, O Jesus" creating an unimaginable impact. The entire agony and anger regarding the massacre of Jalianwala Bagh is transformed here into satire and when it is followed by the lines :

*"When you saw the heaps corpses lying like fallen leaves,
God, surely, you must have closed your eyes
Or; it might have been a victory of the Satan over the God
And one more wound in your heart, O Jesus"*

it further transforms into a sort of sublime, Universal pathos.

Whether it is a nationalistic poem or a love poem, it contains a beautiful form, with an unmistakable sense of the weight and the balance of the words. Similarly, since Kusumagraj possesses an awareness of nature and evocativeness of the metre he selects, he carries an artistic consciousness. Consequently, a number of factors congregate in making poetry in **Vishakha** so much evocative. The poems here are dedicated to great humanistic values. The diction is magnificent with the most appropriate use of the choicest adjectives. The images are sensitive and dramatic. The style is full of spontaneous oratory. There is a rhythm, which has full assimilation with the experience. Moreover, there is a distinct awareness of artistic perception. All these factors amalgamate to produce a perfect integrity of form and content.

This poetry revealing the integrity of the content and the form was, in a way, the voice of the impressionable contemporary youth. The effect of the passion of love as depicted in the poetry of the Ravikiran Mandal was receding in the period 1936 to 1942. The combination of love and martyrdom as expressed in the poems of Savarkar and Govind had created the longing for a different kind of love in the minds of youth. They were aspiring to go beyond the passionate love. They aspired for a dream, a maddening dream. Kusumagraj provided them a fantastic dream. The hero of this dream did desire the tender bonds of love, he did long for the delicate arms of his beloved around his neck, but he also desired to go beyond that. The beloved also did not want love under any timid shelter, she longed for her man to be like a fireball worshipping the power. In fact, Kusumagraj gave a lesson of preaching about who should love whom and the wise generation accepted it ably. It welcomed the intense and the great, whether it was love or duty, and discarded the tasteless and the lukewarm. Moreover, there was no attempt by Kusumagraj to

address the generation of a particular time. The relevance of time in his poems crossed the barriers of time and reached the eternal truth. The generation of 1936-1942 vanished in history long back; but the message of **Vishakha** stood firm challenging the history. Kusumagraj the poet transcended the time with the help of his poems in **Vishakha**.

The charm of **Vishakha** over readers, even from the point of view of the poetic beauty, was superb. The poetry contained an unprecedented and effective fusion of elements like the artistic form, dense content, introspective and serious attitude, sparkling diction, intensity of mood, dramatic exposition and evocative imagery. On the background of contemporary poetry, all these elements appeared novel and attractive.

There were two prominent currents in Marathi poetry before **Vishakha**. One was the national poetry propounded by Vinayak, Govind and Savarkar; and the other was the poetry of social consciousness awakened by Keshavsut, Govindagraj and Madhav Julian. **Vishakha** made both these currents more mature and expanded their dimensions.

Samidha (The sacrificial firewood)

This collection contains forty "gadyakavita" (poems in prose). One wonders, why, after writing tremendously successful rhythmic poems, Kusumagraj turned to prose in these poems! The source of inspiration was Ravindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* in English translation. The development of thought in **Samidha** is very similar to that of **Jivanlahari**. The same fantastic idealistic emotions appear to engulf the poet. However, peculiarities of Kusumagraj's poetic muse such as intense imagination, magnificent images and similes mark these poems as well. Kusumagraj's favourite worship of fire appeals right in the second poem entitled "Agnicha Smritidin" (The day of fire). Kusumagraj's creativity proceeds toward the emotional truth and values of life through the depiction of human history, cultural heritage and realistic life. This leads to different patterns of these prose poems. Akshaykumar Kale has discussed three such patterns:

1. Vacant temple: a strange temple constructed by a great sculptor is glorious. However, he does not allow anybody to enter. Many devotional attitudes and faiths come to the door and become frustrated. Ultimately, the guard himself becomes the deity.

2. Chest of dreams: A silver chest full of thousands of dreams appears in the moonlight. A single dream has to be chosen. The night passes away in the enchantment of dreams and the wizard of the chest of dreams disappears along with the chest.

3. Penance: The parijatak with flowers devoid of fragrance and beauty takes to penance for the sake of fragrant and beautiful flowers. He gets them as per his wish expressed in the trance. However, when his penance ends and he opens his eyes, he gets aware of his status and throws away the riches in dust.

Kusumagraj weaves such patterns into a peculiar technique. With the help of his choicest diction, he creates an atmosphere and develops the tension with a couple of images. Then at a particular point, he gives an unexpected twist and the startled reader comes out of the enchantment of diction and imagination and finds that a realistic truth of an eternal value of life is given to him. Moreover, this twist in Kusumagraj's prose poems is never imposed and hence not artificial. It comes from within. "Akashache Oze" (The burden of the sky), "Chitrakar" (The painter), "Saptarshi", "Matiche Ghade" (Earthen pots) are such successful prose poems. However, it is not that Kusumagraj has used this technique in all of these prose poems. He presents a static emotional or imaginative portrait in poems like "Alingan" (The embrace), "Aspashta Hak" (A faint call), "Vridhatva" (The old age), "Nainam Chindanti Shastrani" (The weapons cannot mutilate it) etc. By and large **Samidha** presents a unique type of poetry, never found in any other poet, not even in Kusumagraj elsewhere.

Jivanlahari 2 (Currents in the flow of life-2)

Jivanlahari 2 published in 1949 is not just the second edition of but it is very different from **Jivanlahari** published in 1933 because of large-scale alterations and additions made by Kusumagraj. Out of 65 poems in the former book, only three are retained intact while 35 are altered, 27 deleted and 105 added newly. However, the nature of the content of this second collection is not different from the previous one. The only difference is the refined style and diction. Poems in this second collection also are imitations of the poems of Omar Khayyam.

Kinara (The shore)

Kinara was published in 1952, viz. ten years after **Vishakha**. Kusumagraj's tendency of tuning with the contemporary period is seen in this collection as well. India achieved her freedom. A new age was heralded into the social, economic and political fields. Kusumagraj retained his mindset as it was in **Vishakha** and expressed his reactions towards the contemporary situation.

Marathi poetry was being enriched at this time with new trends and patterns exhibited by poets like B.S.Mardhekar, Vinda Karandikar, Indira

Sant, and Vasant Hajarnavis etc. However, Kusumagraj's poetry in **Kinara** continued in the same vein of **Vishakha**. And since it does not possess the freshness of **Vishakha**, it is not as impressive as it.

There are abundant poems of social concern in **Vishakha**, whereas **Kinara** presents nationalistic poems in abundant number. "Maza Hindusthan" (My India), "Avahan" (Invocation), "Ajinkya Nirdhar" (Invincible Determination), "Jay Bharat" (Hail India), "Mata" (The mother) are some of the notable poems of this type. Kusumagraj assures to himself,

*"Why are you till burning alone, my heart ?
Look, the star of venus advents shining
Extinguish now those fiery lamps within
Console, my friend, the time is slipping away !"*

There is a poem entitled "Tee Sandhyakal" (That evening). It has a reference to the assassination of Gandhiji.

*"The sandalwood boat is moving towards the heaven
Sails of crimson flames are fluttering
It carries the treasure of the sainthood in the world;
But this huge temple is lying now vacant"*

The nature of love-poetry in this collection is the same as before, namely, expression of the pangs of unfulfilled love. Here are some examples:

*"My blue bird has vanished in the vastness of the blue
And now flames of the noon are all around"*

*"You came, sat beside for a while,
Cooed sweetly and departed
Remembering all that even now
Darkness in my life moves a bit"*

In **Vishakha**, we find rejection of the might of God. It goes even up to the level of satire. Here in **Kinara**, spiritual consciousness of the poet tries to understand and appreciate the power of the Almighty.

*"You remain constantly unknown to me
Though I do hear your sound through every particle"*

*At the bank of the river, in the clear water,
I catch your sight just a moment
But a leaf drops suddenly,
And your image is lost in current of water"*

Poems in this collection seem to focus more on the external experience than the poet's internal feelings. They are more inclined toward classicism than romanticism, unlike **Vishakha**.

Meghdoot (Cloud messenger)

Kusumagraj translated Kalidasa's **Meghdoot** in Marathi. His fancy in taking up the task was the result of similarities in the poetic perception of the two poets. Just like Kalidasa, Kusumagraj was also fascinated by the free play of imagination into a dreamland. That is why the translation has become inartificial, lucid and beautiful.

Instead of the Mandakranta metre used by Kalidasa, Kusumagraj has used the Sumatimadana metre for his translation and the choice has proved to be excellent. He has been able to transform the original meaning and the poetic beauty largely, despite the major difference between Sanskrit and Marathi is that the former is rich with compound construction whereas the latter has a tendency to spread the phrases. However, the bold eroticism in Kalidasa has become rather mild in Kusumagraj's translation, perhaps due to the impact of contemporary taste. Compared to other translations of the **Meghadoota** in Marathi, Kusumagraj's translation stands singular due to his poetic muse, his control over the language, his choice of appropriate words and his preference of genuine Marathi words over the Sanskrit words that can be used in Marathi.

Marathi Mati (The Marathi soil)

This collection of poems published in 1960 is in tune with Kusumagraj's tendency of keeping pace with contemporary socio-political movements. The international socialism of **Vishakha** was replaced by the consciousness of freedom in **Kinara** and its place is taken over by the regional identity in **Marathi Mati**. It is likely that the motivation of creativity in **Marathi Mati** might be lying in the political movement of the Samyukta Maharashtra. This was a movement aimed at seeking an independent state for Marathi speaking people when, after the reformation of states in India on linguistic basis only Maharashtra and Gujarat were clubbed together in a bilingual state and every other language had got its independent state.

In the poems of social concern, we do not find the fire of **Vishakha**. However, poems "Yamake" (Rhymes), "Var Ani Shap" (Blessing and curse), "Bandhakam" (Construction) are notable for the social content.

Personal moods dominate over the socio-political content in this collection of poems. Love, Nature and spirituality are at the core of these moods. The love poems depict the emotion of love that remains concealed in the heart without being expressed. "Nahi" (No), "Rahasya" (Mystery), "Devhara" (The abode of the deity), "Ashabda" (Worldless), "Aloukik" (Extraordinary), "Aher" (The gift) are such poems of love. The general attitude towards love as depicted in these poems is:

"Something I want to say, but I won't"

Or

*"Our love is not that of pleasure and happiness, of lyre and guitar
It is of pains, deep sorrow and infinite muteness"*

Or

*"Never do tell whatever is in your mind
The charm of such feelings perishes in words"*

Or

*"That which took its birth in muteness
Let it flourish just in muteness"*

Or

*"My worship of feelings is beyond expression
My union with you is beyond earthliness"*

As regards spiritual consciousness, Kusumagraj was nearing to become a non-believer in **Vishakha**, he was probing the unknown in **Kinara**, and now he appears to have become a firm believer.

*"All the debates are over as the day passes,
Poor words are gone with the wind
I remained with just my existence
Then resonated your call in the loneliness."*

The number of poems dedicated to Nature has increased in this collection. "Saanj" (The evening), "Nilya Gadavar" (Over the blue fort), "Chhaya" (The shade), "Bandhan" (The binding), "Nadikinari" (On the bank of the river) are some of the notable poems of nature. However, poems of Nature were never Kusumagraj's forte like Balkavi or B. B. Borkar.

Svagat (The soliloquy)

Svagat was published in 1962, that is, just two years after **Marathi**

Mati. These poems were written during a period in which free India was not subjected to any struggle of crisis. The mood expressed in **Marathi Mati** and that in **Svगत** are not very different. The only difference is that the number of poems describing personalities and places has increased in the latter. Personalities like Shivaji, Bapu Gokhale, Bajirao and places of historical relevance are described in poems like "Khuldabad", "Agryachya Killyat" (In the fort of Agra), "Sanchi", "Taj", "Kailas lenyat" (In the cave of Kailas), "Aurangabad" etc. The reason of this projection might be that Kusumagraj's tendency to adopt contemporary sensitive issues did not find anything stimulating in the contemporary scenario, compelling him to turn towards history for his inspiration. There is total absence of nationalistic poetry in this collection. However, the poet's social awareness is deeper than the previous collection. Though its nature is reactionary, the charm of its presentation is notable. Poems in this collection are marked with the poet's tendency of detachment towards his own social concern and reactions. Kusumagraj says in a poem entitled "Anolakhi" (Unknown),

*"Tears from thousands of eyes
Gather in my eyes
Slogans from thousands of throats
Resonate in my throat
If thousands of hearts move,
My heart also moves
Thus is my relation
Established with the thousands*

*Yes, It is so, and even then
I have always remained unknown
Away from all those thousands
Is my nest in the loneliness.*

*Wherein my identity is filled
Restricted to myself."*

Kusumagraj's consciousness oscillates between extroversion at the social level and introversion at the individual level. In the poem "Janiv" (Consciousness), he has described how his introvert personality automatically transforms into extrovert one at the time of social agitation. He says, "This gigantic wave is passing over my life without waiting for my consent. My heart is suffocating when that monstrous current flows

over me. My egoism nurtured in keeping distance is tearing at places. The contours of the separated personality are being blurred and when that gigantic wave, like the colourless evening sky, recedes, I look around confusedly. During that intermission, I am aware -for a moment- that I do not exist; I am just one among the many. Just one among the many. Amidst all, belonging to all and for the sake of all." These lines resemble a soliloquy of a drama. The "wave" described in this soliloquy is the wave of radiance, the wave of optimistic activeness, which was also prevalent in poems of Vishakha. Kusumagraj, here, accepts his former principle that a new creation emerges from total destruction.

The quest for the consciousness of the spirituality, which was prevalent in **Marathi Mati**, continues in this collection as well. The conflict between deism and atheism continues further. Atheism is very much desired, but deism cannot easily go away from the mind. One, like an attractive dancing damsel unfolding in a spectrum of colours, enters the mind with her resonant footsteps in the floodlights of a theatrical stage, while the other, like a silent nun, obstructs the way, singing a monotonous song with her lyre. A spiritual conflict develops. At times, while exploring the unknown, the poet loses consciousness of his direction. The inference of the quest is:

*"This speed itself is accomplishment of the spiritual aim
This voyage itself is ultimate valediction of the voyage"*

Himresha (The line of snow)

This collection of poems, published in 1964, presents the natural development of Kusumangraj's poetic personality and the changed scope of his poetic experience. The very first poem of just four lines signals the changed "place" of the poet.

*"I Tell you again and again
I am sitting in the pit
Are you ready to be seated there ?
Don't complain then of being cheated !"*

This small poem carries multiple references of meaning; but the important thing is that the poet has accepted a place "in the pit." While watching the drama of life, he wishes to witness it with the zest of a spectator in the pit. He wants to respond and react freely without any constraint of etiquettes and imposition of mannerism.

After confronting with various experiences of life intensely, a

peculiar sort of detachment dawns upon the poet. This detachment is not the result of any spiritual refraction from life. It is not a product of disinterest. The poet does long for the experiences that he describes. There is no pretension in his involvement. However, the poet's personality has now outgrown these experiences. Consequently, he is not dissolved in these experiences. As if he draws the pattern of the experience with intensity and affinity, and still moves out of it and looks at it with an artist's eye. Such type of artistic detachment is evident in the poems of this collection. The poet is seriously involved in the experiences of life and at the same time, he can appreciate these experiences like a spectator sitting in the pit.

The poem "Chitre" (pictures) is notable from this point of view. The poet is showing walls of a room and asking, "What will you hang on these walls ?" For, these walls can bear everything. They can bear landscapes, pictures of events, strange pictures with mysterious meaning.... anything. There is no limit to the benevolence and power of appreciation of these walls. (The walls now become a symbol of everybody's exhibitionist mind. A symbol of the tendency of a spectator sitting in the pit and appreciating different nuances and vulgarities of life with the same zeal.) These walls can bear everything, but

*"They cannot bear just one thing
They cannot bear to hang the portraits
Preserved in the heart,
Wherein bonds of life are entangled
They cannot bear to hang them"*

Here the poet gets up from the pit and enters the stage. He leaps into the inner core of his attitude from the simple daily reality. The contours of the observation and the experience, the comments and the perception, the objectivity and the subjectivity fuse into each other like the shades of colour in a rainbow.

Different patterns of this process are visible in this collection. In one poem, Kusumagraj, in a conversational style, discusses about the existence of the God, narrates the showy greatness of the intellect, evaluates different causes behind the prayer in a satirical tone and concludes,

*"Let it be, but, (Leave the margin),
We perfectly agree over the question that
The God does not exist."*

Actually, the "margin" here makes one introspect in different

contexts. In another poem, he juxtaposes two soldiers. One, a soldier in a drama, who, eliminating hundreds of enemies, smiles at the spectators in the pit, and the other, a soldier seen in a train-journey, who, relishing curd from a hawker's bowl, yawns and complains about life is an irritated tone. Contradicting these two pictures in a grave tone, the poet emphasises the fact that the same real soldier stands firmly to obstruct the sky collapsing upon the earth. Realistic observation and inspiring idealism fuse into each other automatically here.

Kusumagraj's nationalistic consciousness, which was dormant since **Kinara**, was awakened with a start after the Chinese aggression of 1962 and it gave birth to pro-war battle-songs. He verbalised the fire inflamed in the hearts of Indian people over the Chinese aggression in poems like "Avahan" (Invocation), "Nirdhar" (Determination), "Rakta Tuze Hey" (This blood of yours), "Krodh" (Anger) etc. The splendour of Kusumagraj's language flourished once again after **Vishakha**. Especially, the poem "Avahan" is in perfect tune with the poem "Kranticha Jayajayakar" of **Vishakha**. Kusumagraj favours a direct confrontation of two sides. He identifies himself with the followers of one of these sides and naturally, the other side is the side of the enemy. In the poem "Avahan", he has used select diction, a rhythm of harsh consonants and magnificent display of imagination. The very beginning couplet, namely,

*"The walls of ice are on fire, the abode of Shiva collapses
The blood of our dear mother trickles upon the snow"*

are captivating. Further, while creating the inspiration for the battlefield, Kusumagraj recalls the glory of the past and exhibition of valour in the past. Intensity of the passion thus evoked does not tone down in further lines. It goes on increasing until the end. These battle-songs are so artistically perfect that they have crossed the barrier of contemporary relevance. Instead of remaining on the level of cheap propaganda, they go deep to awaken the eternal feelings of patriotism, heroism and martyrdom. When Kusumagraj conveys the call of the goddess of the battle-field to her pilgrims and describes their personality as

*"Your wrists and arms are made of grinded black rock
Jungle-fires of the mountains are hidden in your chest",*

or when he assures the martyred soldier that

The fierce fire emerged from your heart

*Will spread
A roof of burning sparks
Over the horizens",*

he empathises fully with the pilgrims of the battlefield. His heart is filled with love for the motherland and anguish for the injustice being inflicted upon her.

Kusumagraj's personality has become more enriched in **Himaresha**. It is not one-sided and directionless. It has become so multifaceted that there is no scope to label it. Kusumagraj, who thrills while hailing the freedom and the freedom fighters, resorts to a naughty, but piercing satire when he begins to describe problems of the middle class. He tears apart many masks of hypocrisy. Without adopting any aggressive tone, he just makes fun of the guilty poignantly.

*"Alas, we have become helpless
Jack-of-all-trades
When the horses pull in different directions
The chariot sticks to the place !"*

When he begins to talk about his own poetic muse, he confesses freely,

*"I pour heaps of words around me
And rush towards words when I am wounded
Now the words have become masters of the life
This dervish has been captured by the beast"*

and at times, while describing satisfaction over the love of his readers, he honestly vocalises his doubt whether he is receiving tender flowers in mud-stained hands. When he begins to sketch portraits of Nature, he presents images like horrific pythons of ash-coloured clouds devouring the sun in the sky, the moon descending upon somebody's bed from the roof and entering her eyes softly opening her lotus-petal-like eyelids, lakhs of birdies like bunches of surf over the waves of the sky in the month of Shravana, the entire night hiding in the ketaki when the silvery coat of the moonbeams sieves through the grills, etc. These are all graphs of a developed mind of a sensitive poet looking back at the life after experiencing it in the fullest sense.

Love poetry in **Himaresha** falls in the same line. The expression of love, right from the lyrical ballad "Manat Majhya" (In my mind) to the

mystic experience in "Yatra" (The voyage) remains collectively at a particular level. In the lyrical ballad "Manat Majhya", a maiden from a respected family, who instantly turns back and hides in the shelter when somebody comes signalling her, narrates her story. The narration attains a sweet lucidity due to Kusumagraj's diction. The negations of the maiden, like refraining from touching the perfumed soft ambers of flowers dropped suddenly in the dust, or giving a dark reply to the bold signals by extinguishing lamps in the palace, do possess an intense passion. It charmingly exhibits the sweet emotion from the remote corner of the mind. The heroine of another lyrical ballad "Jaya parajaya" (The victory and the defeat) has determined to watch the celebration of her hero's victory from within the walls of the castle. However, if he returns wounded and defeated through the gate, she is sure to break the barriers of hundred walls and rush through the dust to embrace him to her bosom. Love in both these lyrical ballads is poetic and beyond physicality. However, its expression in "Yatra" (The voyage) is more mystic. The poet unites with his beloved without the support of any established conventions. His experience of copulation without body is synchronised with enjoying the moon without a fullmoon night, composing a song without tunes and burning of self without the sacrificial fire. This sweet, passionate and fiery experience of love is the result on a unique voyage.

Kusumagraj's poetry not only regained his magic touch of **Vishakha**, but it also became mature in this collection. It draws spectacular portraits of the beauty of the Nature, makes one forget earthly bondages in its quest of the unknown and puts the heart of fire while demonstrating evil forces in our daily life. From his own point of view, Kusumagraj speaks of his own poetry.

*"My poetry was never meant for victory
So it never was scared of defeat
It never insisted for its birth
So it does not mind its death"*

Vadalvel (The creeper of the storm)

This collection was published in 1969. The most notable poems of this collection are the poems expressing intensity of passions through powerful imagery. For example, in the love poems, Kusumagraj has maintained the forcefulness of poetic experience of the intensity of love through such imagery. He describes in the poem "Saanj" (The evening) that his beloved built a town of fairyland in her mind with the help of her

dream-rocks, and she collected what sort of material for the purpose from where ! Mystic shades of the evening sky, creative music of the mountainous waves of the blue ocean, sand of the powder of constellations, horror floating over the darkness of the coconut trees, silver-polished contours of the still clouds...! Even then, her lover has already sneaked in through all the rocky walls, with the intention of holding her to his heart! The use of images picked up from the land of fantasy creates an atmosphere of a fairyland here effectively and the entire experience is filled with intensity. The poem "Durg" (The fort) also is a dramatic expression of how the awareness of the status, the control and the appropriateness becomes futile in front of the intensity of love. The poem "Hirwa Khandak" (The green ditch) creates an image of a medieval historical atmosphere for the expression of delicate intensity of love. However, in the poem "Ashabda" (wordless), the poet expresses the consciousness that once that excitement of intensity or that storm of madness is over, the muteness of that period is again compensated by words. The poet expresses an intense attraction for physicality in the poem "Kshanik" (Momentary). He sketches a beautiful display of passion like:

*"When you put your forehead
Upon my helpless feet before departing
These feet had an unabated desire
To turn themselves into lips"*

However, in "Gavalan" (The milk-maid), though the expression of physicality touches the highest point, love appears to cross the boundaries of physicality at the end of the poem. In fact, "Gavalan" is one of the most powerful poems of this collection. An influential mythological image appears to have fused into the poetic experience here. Kusumagraj describes the stream of consciousness in the mind of the disrobed milkmaid with a skilful hand. The milkmaid is engaged in bath, with adoring consciousness of her physical beauty and instantly arrives the Lord of Vraj. The robes have remained afar and the milkmaid experiences:

*"Sensation withered, contours got blurred
My nakedness was spilled upon the mirrors of the skies
You are so naughty- I had heard such curses
I closed the eyes of my breasts and stooped over water"*

He did look; but his look had neither any desire nor love. He drank water cupping his palms and went away. And that charming beautiful

milkmaid is left with a deep pain in her heart.

In order to express continuous currents of ever-new shades of meaning, the poet has achieved a miracle of the use of language in this poem.

*"And then I called you from the core of my heart
My sweet heart, you could never hear that call
I felt you never knew that I too was a Radhika
A dumb drop of love was at the base of my fear
Today I know it wasn't true, I suppressed my desire
I became just a body and suffered its fruit"*

The poem has balanced a dramatic experience that dissolves in a challenging physicality on one hand and in a mature knowingness on the other hand. From the point of view of the fusion of the mythological image in the poetic experience, reference must be made of the poem "Geet" (the song) as well. This poem depicts an unselfish, undemanding, intense but lonely love. This love transcends beyond physicality. It reveals through the submission of a gopi. This gopi lacks in physical beauty, is always scared of public criticism, but constantly showers her love mutely and unknowingly. She nurtures a queer mad hope in her heart, "Would you ever remember me at least for the sake of ridicule ?" Thus, Kusumagraj has created effective imagery for depiction of intense emotions in various poems of this collection.

Kusumagraj's maturity as a poet is exhibited in expressing the facts of life in a forceful and attractive manner. For example, "Koan" (Who) and "Dvandva" (The duel) are two such poems. In the former, the poet has narrated a fantastic experience. At the dead of night, there is a knock at the door and an exact replica of the poet enters. The intruder introduces himself as the ghost of the poet. The poet welcomes the ghost and both are engaged in an intimate chat throughout the remaining night. They revise different remembrances and relish different moods. When the dawn strikes, one of them gets up and leaves. The poem ends with an exclamation that now there will be a single puzzle throughout the life— which one of the two did leave ? This poem comments upon the attitude of the poet (without any direct comment). The other poem "Dvandva" emphatically declares that, basically, the elements are just two-- the soil and the sky. The soil, coming from the earth, enters the body and the sky, descending from the void, stabilises in the mind. Both are constantly struggling and fighting. They even shed blood. The soil dominates throughout the life, but repents at the end and tries to mingle with the

sky. This poem, presented in the style of a story, reveals the poet's awareness of the constant tensions in man's body and the spiritual pull of his mind, domination of worldly aspirations throughout the life and their fusion in the acceptance of spiritual dreams at one stage.

Two poems in this collection express the deep-rooted faith of the poet and divine assurance that he experiences. In the poem "Khant Nahi Tula" (You don't regret), the poet is standing at the door of the God. He is complaining about various injustices and his plight. He is losing his balance at every moment. However, the God is not giving any response at all. He is just staring at the poet with an assuring divine smile. When the poet turns back in despair, the God stands on the threshold holding a lamp for him. There is the same eternal smile upon his lips. The other poem "Maghari" (Back to home) is a confession of an adulterous woman. She has returned repenting and has found that "her home" is forgivingly waiting for her. The repenting sinner is moved by this gesture of compassion. The roots of this metaphor are in the "Viranis" (poems of devotional romance) of the saint-poets; but the levels are reversed. The heroine of the Viranis was attracted to the "Parapurush" (another man, metaphorically the God) and had thrown away the bondages of marital life (metaphorically, the world) for "his" sake, whereas here, an adulterous woman has returned from her erotic frenzy (from the materialistic world) to her forgiving husband (the God).

Kusumagraj's attitude towards life is best demonstrated in the poem "Shart" (the condition). He accepts a condition here with determination. And the condition is not to look back when paths are broken, not to complain when compelled to tread an unknown path, not to keep a serpent in the heart in order to avenge the broken dreams, not to throw away the lamp in the hand into the lake of darkness for anybody sake.

Kusumagraj had confessed in **Himresha**, that he had been captured by words. He repeats the confession in this collection.

*"I am a lecher for the words
Harlots of words, standing in the balcony
Beacon me
All protests melt away
In some fiery potion
And I proceed
Pushing those banned doors
Strait in
Without counting the meaning"*

In **Himresha**, Kusumagraj's poetic muse was outraged by the Chinese aggression. In 1965, India had a war with Pakistan. It was expected that Kusumagraj would demonstrate the passion of valour and victory in his poems, but it did not happen. He remained aloof from this struggle. In a stray poem like "Durgaroop" (the form of Durga), the metaphor of Durga used for the Mother India directs towards that consciousness, but it is an exception.

Thus, **Vadalvel** continues further depiction of Kusumagraj's enthusiastic, optimistic and pro-life attitude in poetry. Despite his optimistic attitude, Kusumagraj expresses eccentric utterances at times. However, after pondering over these utterances we realise that these are the result of a storm in his heart caused by his unbounded sympathy. For example, he begins the poem "Asahya" (Unbearable) with the words:

*"Excuse me, but
I feel that
Such girls
(And boys)
Should die !"*

When the reader gets over the initial shock and reads further, he understands that Kusumagraj here vocalises his responses regarding the unbearable social circumstances in which his most beloved young generation has to live in the present time. Then the initial eccentric utterances become an image of his dejection.

Right from **Vishakha**, Kusumagraj's poetry has been acclaimed for powerful diction and extraordinary skill of description. These adorable characteristics of this poetry are more developed in this collection. The poem : "Vadalvedi" (She is mad for the storm), depicting the debatable and enriched, multifaceted personality of woman and the poem "Ashvatthama", portraying a multidimensional perspective of that warrior of the Mahabharata are examples of this fact.

Chandomayi (Union with rhythm)

This collection was published in 1982. Ten years before that, Kusumagraj had suffered the cruel blow of his wife's death. Traces of the agony of this blow can be distinctly seen, especially in "Karwar", in this collection.

Even in poems like "Hey Gagana" (O, Sky !) and "Virani", Kusumagraj's ability to express the intensity of emotions appears to have

targeted agony of the partition. Here the level of intensity is the same as before, but the focus of the intensity is definitely changed. In place of the maddening passion of love and its leap crossing over the boundaries of physicality, now appears the understanding of the everlasting bondage of love between departed persons, and it emits pathetic tunes.

However, the poet is not totally repelled from the pull of physicality, which he had celebrated in his past experience of love. Awareness of this lingering physicality despite his age and loneliness leads to a disturbing strife in his mind. A remarkable poem entitled "Agatik" (Helpless) gives the unique experience of pangs of physicality in the changed scenario due to late age and loneliness.

*"I do not know how much I owe
Still to this body
Physicality still inflames
With red and scarlet flames.*

*Still the moonlit clouds do burst
Showering sparks over me
Still the ships with red sails
Roam in search of shores of touch*

*Whatever credit I've gathered, slips down
like a string of dew from the grass
How can I fight with this cruel fate ?
When defeat is sure to grasp*

*My helpless tiredness drags its feet
In this vast land of marsh
It tries to rejoin the lost bondage
With the voluptuous soil of the land"*

Kusumagraj had tried his hand at Gazal before. However, in **Chhandomayi**, he has successfully created an excellent specimen of Gazal in the poem "Sparsh" (the touch). All the tender and delicate beauty of the poetic form of Gazal has effectively appeared in this poem.

The intensity of love is not altered in the poems of this collection, but the circumference of the experience of love is tremendously enlarged. Raising the question "What should be the target of love ?" he himself answers, "Anything !" and includes in the targets of love, along with the adorable breasts of Radha, ugly hunchback of Kubja, pathetically holy

feet of Bheeshma and Drona, and proud and undefeated deaths of Duryodhan and Karna. Along with unbounded compassion in the eyes of a cow, he includes the hood of Kaliya poisoning the waters of Yamuna. For, now he regards love as the essence of the human civilisation, the inference of its history and the only hope of its future. (Premayog). In the poem "Megh" (the cloud) also, he is not now satisfied merely in presenting beautiful sketches of different shapes of clouds. He knows that the voyage of the cloud was not meaningless when the cloud empties itself over the earth.

Kusumagraj's understanding of the facts of life has reached the level of maturity in **Chhandomayi**. He can read graphs of greatness upon foreheads of thieves, breasts of prostitutes and wrists of goons. Simultaneously, he can read postscripts of prostitution, vandalism and robbery upon smiles of gentlemen, robes of mendicants and files of secretaries. ("Tatparya") When he presents a portrait of a labourer-woman cutting stones in the sun—

*"The stone turns into ambers in the sun
And refuses to break
The child clings to the bust
And refuses to repel
Blood oozes from the finger
And refuses to stop
The woman keeps on cutting
The woman keeps on breaking"*

Now Kusumagraj's perceptions of nation, society, man and God have become stable. His poetry is not carried away by incidental pleasures and sorrows. He analyses the experience and stares at the crystal of reality in a detached manner. When he observes hypocritical words of people, their palaces, their promises, people in rags collapsing at roadside, beggar-woman, his pen does not emit ambers as his poems in **Vishakha** did at a time. Now he notices a photo frame behind all of them displaying the picture of our gigantic ancestor, the ape.

There is a notable long poem entitled "Kaviprakaran" (a chapter on poets) in **Chhandomayi**. This long poem begins with the parody of Saint Ramadas's famous poem on the greatness of poets. Here Kusumagraj describes the peculiarities of a poet in a satirical and censoring style. Then in the latter part of the poem, accepting the censurable parts of the poet's peculiarities, he highlights the extraordinary glory of the poet's personality. This time also he uses an appropriate language. This poem reveals that

Kusumagraj loves the poet's greatness, but this love is not blind or simpleton. He is aware that not all poets are great. His love towards poets is thus aware of reality.

A dramatic presentation of the determination of man in a poem like "Kana" (The backbone), an expression of understanding sympathy in "Gardi" (the crowd), an explosion of disturbing empathy in "Yamak-Dushkali" (A rhyme in the drought) and an exposure of social dishonesty in "Parvani" (The rare occasion) are expressions of Kusumagraj's social alertness or his humanitarian poetic experience. The portrait of a young man, who has lost everything in the floods, but whose determination and enthusiasm is intact, in "Kana", is heart moving. The poem "Gardi" plunges into the uncontrollable crowd and tries to analyse each person's soft bondages of sympathy, which are lost. A sympathetic portrait of an agnoised woman, who has become a victim of the cruel famine, is seen in "Yamak-Dushkali". "Parvani" presents a portrait of dishonest saints and mendicants exploiting religious people. The most poignant demonstration of social reality appears in the poem "Mhatara Mhanatoy" (The old man is saying). A poor man is telling his wife that alms have arrived. But, he is also warning her how she should learn to surrender to different types of injustices in exchange of the alms. In the poem "Ghrinaspad" (Disgusting), he says that until the condition of "half-naked tribal moving with ant-hills of negligence over their unclothed bodies" does not change, routine political resolutions and seminars are not only meaningless but also disgusting.

It is distinctly evident that, in **Chhandomayi**, Kusumagraj has shifted from the previous romantic-realistic amalgamation of poetic experience towards a realistic and reflective attitude.

Muktayan (The life-story of a free one)

This collection was published in 1984. These poems reflect a mixture of experiences filled with diverse varieties. They reveal the projection of saints active in the contemporary time as well as that of devils. They do demonstrate the faith of the poet, but at the same time, they also demonstrate the occasional eruptions of his disbelief. Kusumagraj has reached the peak of his social awareness in these poems.

From this point of view, the consciousness expressed in the poem "Nat" (the actor) is important. When the actor who is saturated with thousands of colourful words, is alone, he feels that the nuances of words expressed by him are not yet over; they are suspended in the air. They are as delicate as the raindrops placed upon branches of trees. The depression

caused by the completion of the programme is definitely there, but the personality of the actor and roles performed by him have become imperishable in the minds of people. While expressing this confidence the poet says,

*"I was one person
But now I am distributed
Part by part
In the lives of thousands of people
Perhaps in their memory as well"*

The feeling of being distributed among many by means of poetry is genuine. "Muktayan" means an open graph of the consciousness of mind. Poems of this collection express the sensitivity of the poet accommodating the entire society through his sympathy. These poems proclaim that this poet does not close his eyes in order to form the threatening reality, but on the contrary, he is awake himself and awakens others. The poet "fetches some beams from the setting sun" for he wishes to vanquish the darkness of the present. He opines that a poet's words must reach the oppressed and depressed stratum of the society.

A reference must be made to five poems of this collection in this context. These poems reveal that the poet is aware of the centralisation of new thoughts and new social motives in political or social revolutionaries. These five poems are "Anavaran" (Opening), "Shivaraya", "Sant" (The saints), "Jyotirao" and "Akher Kamai" (Gain at the end). The poem "Anavaran" is inspired at the time of the opening ceremony of the statue of Ambedkar. The poem projects a perfect reproduction of the great personality. It demonstrates the poet's feelings intensely without losing awareness of the reality. The poem "Shivaraya" depicts how politicians exploit even an all-time great personality like Shivaji for their own benefit. The poem "Sant" pays homage to the modern saint Baba Amte, who treads on his path alone like Jesus and Buddha, for wiping the tears of unfortunate lives rejected by the society. The poem "Jyotirao" recognises the greatness of the work of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, but it also confronts the cruel reality that the ungrateful society has forgotten this work. The poem "Akher Kamai" also depicts how selfish political parties and castes put on sale the great personalities like Jyotiba, Shivaji, Ambedkar, Tilak and Gandhiji.

Mature interpretation of poignant realities of life is seen in many poems. "Khurchya" (Chairs), "Ashcharya" (Surprise) and "Rajhansa

Maza" (My swan) can be cited for example. How bitterly the following lines describing an old tribal woman become pregnant with meaning !

*"Surprise, surprise—
From the knot of one of her breasts
Was hanging our parliament
And from the other knot was hanging
Our literary conference."*

The poem "Rajahans Maza" has a reference to a poem by Govindagraj. Govindagraj's poem depicted the bewailing of a poor mother shattered by the heart breaking grief of death of her only son. In Kusumagraj's poem also, a poor mother has lost her only child and she is giving vent to her grief by loud wailing. However, when she hears the news that a neighbouring merchant is emptying gunny bags of rotten grains in the roadside dustbin, she places down the dead body of her child and rushes there with empty bags in hand. The poet describes the episode with such poignant words that he tells a lot without commenting upon it.

In **Muktayan**, Kusumagraj turns to Nature to gain motivation for the life. The poems "Nakshatrano" (O, Constellations) and "Nadi" (The river) would explain this point. He appreciates the beauty of the Nature in these poems, but its motivating currents are more important from his point of view.

Of course, Kusumagraj's major forte of expressing intense experiences with the help of appropriate images is not lost in this collection. The poems "Satawa" (The seventh) and "Talaghar" (The basement) are the best creations of this magic touch of his. Images in a number of poems are evidence to the fact that Kusumagraj, as a poet possesses prophetic power of thought. The poem "Kandil" (The lantern) presents the image of King Lear, which has been dominating the poet's muse in his famous play **Natasamrat** as well.

Shravan (The monsoon month)

Actually, **Jaicha Kunj** (1936) was Kusumagraj's first collection of poems written for children. Shravan is the second. These poems are written for slightly bigger children. Kusumagraj's noble intention of making impression of virtues upon children is apparent in the poem "Prarthana" (The prayer). The poet's deep faith in the existence of the God is expressed in this poem and so his effort to make an intense

impression of this faith upon children. Poems like "Priya Ha Bharat Desh" (This adorable nation of India), "Amhi Sare" (All of us), "Dnyanadevate" (O Goddess of learning) etc. are created with the same intention.

It appears that Kusumagraj is trying to empathise with children of the age group of five to ten in this collection of poems. His imagination assimilates with many elements of the world of children. These include family relations prevalent in the minds of the children and the tiny world of Nature which can be seen easily around like the moon, the sun, flowers, the sea, rivers, rain and the stars. It also includes the spicy material for enjoying the world of fantasy like fairies, giants, princes, princesses, magic horses and flying carpets. For inducing valour, he describes innumerable episodes from the Ramayana, the Mahabarata and the life of Shivaji.

Patheya (Food for the voyage)

This collection was published in 1989. Kusumagraj was in his late seventies when he wrote these poems. His mind appears to listen to close and distant bugles heralding the arrival of the messenger from the other world. Some of the poems express agonies and sensations of the process of inevitable elimination. In the poem "Raddi" (The waste papers), when the poet's wife teasingly asks him whether she may include papers of his poems in the raddi, the poet replies that the Time is going to do that tomorrow. This reply brings her to tears and she says, "Not only that I shall do it, but the Time also will never do it." There is another poem entitled "Samaj" (Suppose) written in the style of a dialogue. The poet asks his beloved, "Suppose, you are a flower of Prajakta, which blooms at midnight and falls down in the soil at late night. What shall you say while falling down?" Her reply to this question is: "The touch of the soil turns the entire body into the sky...it is tied with the death. It intensifies the life. I want that touch before I would dry!" Here Kusumagraj, in a very dramatic manner, expresses the traditional view of the Indian psyche that it is man's relation to the soil, which intensifies every moment of life. This is a peculiar stand of looking even at the death with a sort of welcoming attitude in the context of the much-desired life.

The poem "Pahuna" (The guest) presents a celebration of the arrival of death. A crow begins to call beside the window. Traditionally, this is an omen for the arrival of a guest. The poet gets confused guessing who could be this guest. All the probable guests have already visited. Their footprints are there all over the soil of the courtyard and over the poet's

heart as well. So who could be this guest, who had never come before and who would never come again ? This must be the ultimate festival of the arrival of the guest. The poet becomes eager to celebrate the ultimate festival. The call of the crow builds up a shamiana of the sweet tunes of shehnai around his mind. The poet develops a festival mood to celebrate the ultimate guest and the ultimate welcome.

When the life of a man ends, what remains is an unlimited non-existence. The poet cannot resign to this unlimited non-existence even in his age of seventies and eighties. In the poem "Maza jagana" (My living) he says, "My life means millions of relations. God knows what happens to them when the life ends. However, at least in your heart, an unexpressed relation will be lingering for some time. It will draw scratches of darkness upon your full moon night. It will be hissing like a snake in your spring garden and make your consciousness poisonously wounded. It is true that all this thought is violent and cruel, but at least it gives me assurance. For it provides a support of a momentary existence within my unbounded non-existence."

These thoughts about death appear in Kusumagraj's poems written in his late seventies. His style of dramatising episodes, thoughts and imagination is apparent in these poems as well. However, death is not the subject of his serious concern in this collection. The sensation of the awareness of death is limited to his personal experience in these poems.

Mahavriksha (The great tree)

Kusumagraj targets death in many poems of this collection also. When he says that common people "die" from the point of view of the world, while those who can reach the newspapers "leave this world", it appears that he looks at the conventions of the world and at his own death in an oblique satirical manner.

*"So today or tomorrow perhaps even I
Shall leave this world, but won't die
I have earned that much credit"*

While looking mischievously at reactions in the condolence meetings and newspapers after his own death, he infers,

*"The grave tale of life
Has a ridiculous end in death
Crores of particles of the camphor statue
Become a prey of the pyre in a moment"*

Then all social relations become meaningless from this point of view.

Perhaps this is the reason why the poet's mind relates the form of death with darkness and the black colour at least for some time. He receives the news of the arrival of death from the breeze of the dawn—

*"Pitch dark
Man with an axe
Has arrived in the forest
He is roaming
In search of trunks
Of withered trees
Raising the axe
He is coming
Right here now" – "Aaj" (Today)*

He has portrayed the same dark portrait of death in the poem "Nishigandh" (The tuberose) also. The thought of the elimination of his existence from this world gives intense agony to the poet's mind. He presents an evocative imagination of the moment of the death here. The bondages of existence start loosening at that moment. The earth takes her hand away from his back,

*"And in the unbounded vacuum state
Like the black hole
Of the space
The decoration of my existence
Is dissolving
Every moment
Along with its tiny lamps"*

At this moment, the poet deeply longs for some royal fragrance that can defeat the darkness and save his bondage with the earth. Therefore, the mind of the poet requests the "you",

*"Fetch
A flower of the tuberose
Blossomed in the garden
At your door
And keep it at my head"*

The poet believes that the flower will save his bondage with the earth by means of his soft royal fragrance. Another thing that strikes here

is that the "you" here is genderless. It is immaterial whether it is "he" or "she".

The mind of the poet agonises over the state of this existence losing all relations, but slowly it proceeds towards a state of assurance and this journey is effectively depicted in the poem "Sangati" (the companion). The poem begins with a moving description of moments of the descent of life.

*"The sun has set
In the west horizon
The farewell song of colours
Has lost the melody"*

Such patterns of language give us the experience that the charms of colours, fragrance and resonance are fading. Because the sun has set, the radiance has gone. The farewell song of colours has lost the melody. Colours are faded. All these shades fuse into one another and intensify each other.

*"The hordes of shadows
Proceed down
Through every tree
Sprinkling silence"*

Shadow of such silent darkness spreads over the experience. Actually, our loneliness becomes more intense at such time. However, a "lone" star begins to float within a "violet" cloud before the poet in his mind. Now the accounts of benefit and loss are wiped out from the mind and it has become clean. And the darkness of the death has ceased to frighten due to that star. That star appears to be a lamp lighted by "him" for the poet. The poet's mind expresses the faith,

*"The same lamp will become
Companion for me
It will help me to walk,
Holding my hand."*

A beautiful experience that the lamp should become a companion in the other world beyond this earthly world is expressed here. It is the same experience expressed by Tukaram in his famous abhang "Jethe jato Tethe Tu Maza Sangati" (Wherever I go, You are my companion).

Marwa (The song of melancholy tunes)

This is Kusumagraj's last collection of poems. These poems reveal

the departing mood of the poet.

*"The dawn was really beautiful
But more beautiful is
This evening.
This sun
Descended upon the West horizon
Feels fully satisfied
With his gifting of light throughout the day
And is more brilliant, more loving now !"*

These poems reflect the poet's awareness of his existence being dissolved slowly into darkness at the evening of his life and his feeling of satisfaction about having done his duty. He is prepared to welcome the death with the same feeling of satisfaction and contentment.

*"The rising sun
Has reached the setting horizon now,
Treading upon the path
Is stored more in the memory now.
No complaint, no grief,
A journey is meant to be ended,
The heart carries the breath
For the time extended."*
He proclaims the truth of his life and attitude as

*"I shall sing while going,
I shall go while singing;
Through the songs in this sky
I shall ever be ringing"*

In the poem "Umbarathyavar" (On the threshold), the mind of the poet is crossing the threshold of this world and bidding farewell to the dear person addressing her as "Sakhi" (Companion). The world is a sort of a caravansary, one has to stay here for a while and proceed further.

"Finally, you have to stay here in this caravansary,
And I am proceeding ahead..."

And where is the poet proceeding ? His journey is scheduled to be "in the obscure region where there is no road constructed." This region is filled with darkness. This traveller is set out with a bag filled with moonlight given by the Sakhi throughout the life. He is going to tread his

path sprinkling this moonlight around his every step. He is not afraid that the moonlight will be exhausted leaving the journey unfinished; for he is sure that a moment of utmost happiness will arrive during this travel when the "walking" will come to an end. Why ? Because, there is a firm belief that, once the journey begins, a part after a part of the "existence" will go on decreasing and finally

*"My "existence"
with millions of relations—
will automatically dissolve
Into "non-existence" with no relations
Like a wave of the sea in the sand !"*

Therefore, the dear one of the voyager set out for the "great voyage" should not obstruct him by creating an embankment of tears on the threshold ! These "drops of tears" will turn into waves of the sea and obstruct the way !

*"Nobody should bring tears in the eyes
No, this is not void ! It is sacred motion, it is fullness !"*

In the poem "Ugavatica Oon" (Beams of the rising sun), Kusumagraj presents the portrait of his voyage of life saying that the procession of his life has reached the gate of the town with all fanfare; and says at the end that

*"Sky, the old man above the head,
Does not ask questions now,
The earth has shrunk to the size of my footstep
Nothing is visible its either side !"*

However, while crossing "the earth that has shrunk to the size of the footstep," the poet finds that he is going towards that original characterless, shapeless form of the Almighty. Kusumagraj indulges in this quest in the poem "Prashna" (The question).

*"I know,
You have incarnated
From imaginations
Of millions of years.
Saguna and Nirguna
From an atom unto the sky
Everywhere your existence*

*Is established
Just by imagination.
But, after knowing this
Finally
The ultimate question arrives—
From where do the imaginations come ?
This question mark again
Takes me to you."*

The noted Marathi critic V. D. Kulkarni remarks, "Marwa is a Raga to be sung at the transitory time of the evening. Its tunes are melancholy, sad, pathetic. However, the tunes or Taty's (Kusumagraj's) Marwa are peaceful, contented. It is true that these songs are about the ultimate voyage; but here, there is neither a hurry to depart, nor an attachment to stay on... These are not welcome songs of the death, nor are these prayers. Death is now not different from the life. There is an intrinsic dialogue with the death." (Kavitarati, Diwali Special Issue, 1999)

From **Jivanlahari** to **Marwa** Kusumagraj reigned the Marathi poetry for nearly seven decades. During all this period, he remained an ever-fresh poet. He soaked all new currents of poetry within his personality. His poetry grew, blossomed and changed as Marathi poetry passed through different stages of development.

3

Shirwadkar the Playwright

In an essay **First step-Kakasaheb**, Shirwadkar has described how he took to write a play. Right from his school days, he was deeply interested in the theatre. Ram Ganesh Gadkari's Marathi plays and Shakespeare's English plays were his constant source of solace. In his college days, he enjoyed reading plays of Synge, Shaw, Moliere and Galsworthy. During the period of his encounter with the film world, the idea of staging a play gradually took root in his mind. He materialised the idea by writing a play. The play was based on Moliere's play **The Miser**. It contained songs in the tradition of the Sangeet Marathi Natak and the dialogues were designed on the pattern of Gadkari's highly figurative style. Shirwadkar titled his play as **Kakasaheb**. The film company, where Shirwadkar was an employee, started rehearsing the play. However, the company's financial position deteriorated and consequently it was liquidated. Dr. Bhalerao of the Sahitya Sangha took the manuscript of **Kakasaheb** from Shirwadkar; but neither the play was staged nor the script was returned to him. It simply vanished.

Later, Dr. Bhalerao requested Shirwadkar to try an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's **An Ideal Husband**. Shirwadkar accepted the challenge and produced the play **Doorche Dive** (The distant lamps). The Sahitya Sangha staged it in 1964. This is a comedy of marital misunderstandings. It bears the distinct stamp of Oscar Wilde's light fantastic wit. The protagonists are Vishram the husband and Soudamini the wife. Vishram is the ideal achiever as a man having a prestigious status, ample wealth and a beautiful wife. A dangerously seductive woman Taramati enters his life and tries to lure him to commit some manipulation regarding an industrial firm. She threatens to expose the real secret of his success. The play dramatically portrays how Vishram meets the crisis arising from this multiple challenge.

Actually, the play is well ahead of its contemporary time. The crisis encountered by Vishram can arise today in the life of any politician or businessman, making the play relevant to the present time also.

This was followed by Shirwadkar's first independent play **Dusara Peshwa** (The secone Peshwa) in 1947. This is a tragedy based on the historical relationship between Peshwa Bajirao I and Mastani, a beautiful Muslim damsel. Critics have opined that the play reaches the height of Shakespeare's **Antony and Cleopatra**. Raja Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand had presnted Mastani to Bajirao in recognition of his timely help during a military crisis. However, there was a strong opposition from the Brahmins of Pune to the relationship between the two. The play presents the conflict with all its implications. Bajirao's loyal brother Chimaji gives him moral support. However, when a son is born to Bajirao and Mastani, the Brahmins decide to ostracise him. They boycott the planned auspicious thread ceremony of the boy. The tragedy is intensified when Bajirao dies and Mastani becomes a helpless lonely victim of the fate. The play is read and relished even today for its poetic overtones in characterisation and dialogues. It is a fusion of the craft of Kusumagraj the poet and Shirwadkar the playwright.

Shirwadkar's next endeavour was an adaptation of Maurice Materlinck's **Monna Vanna** at the request of Dr. Bhalerao on behalf of the Sahitya Sangha. The title of the play was **Vaijayanti**. It was staged in the annual drama festival of the Sahitya Sangha in 1950. Vaijayanti, the title protagonist, is the queen of Jayapal, king of Roopnagar. Jayapal had picked her from a poor family and made his queen. Ratnakar defeats Jaypal and loots all the food and valuables from his kingdom. When approached for peace, Ratnakar demands that Vaijayanti be sent to him for one night. This dramatic event is at the centre of the play. In order to save the kingdom and its people. Vaijayanti takes the bold decision of fulfilling Ratnakar's demand. Protagonist of the original play by Materlinck is a bold woman, who is nurturing the romantic remembrances of her former lover. However, Shirwadkar's protagonist Vaijayanti is different. Here the former lover Ratnakar desires to revive the lost experiences of love, but finds a faithful married woman facing him. Shirwadkar here propounds a concept of love, which transcends the physical desire and which can induce nobility into all those who are concerned with it. The play is a real tribute to Indian womanhood.

Shirwadkar adapted Shasespeare's **Macbeth** under the title **Rajmukut** in 1953. Marathi had a long tradition of translations and adaptations of Shakespearian plays. **Macbeth** itself had been adapted by Mahadevashastri Kolhatkar under the title **Manajirao**. All these translators had faced many problems. The first problem was to find a parallel to Shakespeare's blank verse. Shirwadkar resorted to the prose

rendering except at rare places like the songs of the witches, where he used the verse form. Then there was the problem of placing the hero and other characters in a historical framework. Shirwadkar has successfully handled this. Shirwadkar's adaptation has a tremendous stage effect. The Sahitya Sngha had commissioned the well-known British director Herbert Marshall for the first performance. He brought out an Elizabethan Theatre reproduction. Nanasaheb Phatak as Macbeth and Durga Khote as Lady Macbeth were superb in projecting the murderous characters instigated by an inhuman ambition. Later, Shriram Lagu played Macbeth in a different production.

In the same year, Shirwadkar wrote **Kaunteya**. It is based on the relationship of two great characters of the Mahabharata, viz. Karna and Kunti. Karna was born to Kunti from the Sun God before she was married to Pandu. Duryodhana befriends Karna and consequently, he has to stand against Kunti's sons Pandavas in the Great War. Kunti breaks the secret to him on the eve of the war. Karna pines for a mother's love, but is not prepared to sacrifice his loyalties. The conflicts of the tragedy are manifold. However, at the centre of all of them is the touching tussle of emotions between a mother and her son. This is a unique tragedy appeared on the Marathi stage and it is perfectly unfolded from beginning to the end in the play.

In 1961, Shirwadkar adapted **Othello**. He marvellously used Marathi free verse for the original elaborate rhetoric. His adaptation aptly projects the noble and valiant protagonist, who falls prey to the false instigation of the villain and kills his own innocent beloved wife.

Shirwadkar's razor-sharp wit is the main feature of the satirical comedy **Amache Nav Baburao** (Our name is Baburao, 1966). The politics of power is dealt with a comic approach in this play. It highlights the common reality how the people who never care about the welfare of all exploit the so-called democracy. The play creates funny situations with the facial similarity between the king and the barber Baburao. The king is just a puppet in the hands of his ministers. He is compelled to leave the palace and Baburao is installed in his place. This brings out a comic exposure of the secret plot in the palace. The satire and the comedy are quite forceful in exposing hypocrisy in our political life.

Shirwadkar's **Yayati Ani Devayani** (Yayati and Devayani, 1968) stands unique among all his plays. The story is picked up from the **Mahabharata**. It is about King Yayati, who is a victim of the tension and rivalry between two women in his life. Devayani and Sharmishtha. Shirwadkar has developed the plot with deep perception. Sharmishtha is

the daughter of the King of Asuras and Devayani is the daughter of the preceptor of the king. Their cunning rivalry leads to the situation that Sharmishtha becomes a bonded maiden of Devayani. Yayati, driven away from his wife Devayani due to her arrogant nature, finds solace in Sharmishtha's love. This leads to a conflicting triangle of love, which is dramatically presented. Infuriated Devayani puts a curse upon Yayati to become an old person. Yayati tries to exchange his old age with his young son Puru. King Yayati's personality, his unabated attraction towards worldly pleasures, his temptation towards beautiful women and his selfish motives are very skilfully depicted in the play. However, the play does not end in a tragedy as Kacha plays a redeeming role in the end and transforms it into a spiritual ennoblement. The play also contains some memorable songs.

Veej Mhanali Dharatila (Thus spoke the thunderbolt to the earth, 1970) is the most inspiring play written by Shirwadkar. The play presents the story of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi in a very poetic manner. Rani's valour and sacrifice of her companions compete each other in their impact. Some long passages in the play are evidence to the fact that Shirwadkar's muse was a unique fusion of poetry and dramatic art. All of the Rani's dialogues are full of radiance and intensity. They aptly project her as a fighting brave queen. Characterisation in the play is highly original. Some poetic compositions interspersed in the dialogue bear high lyrical qualities. For example, Rani's companion Julekha sings,

*"There were four female birds, the night was stormy,
Four dreams were bound together by one chain,
There were two swans, one of which was a royal swan,
And one could not recognise her real tribe"*

In the same year 1970, appeared the Zenith of Shirwadkar's creative muse as a dramatist in the form of **Natasamrat**. This is a unique masterpiece in the sense that, though inspired by Shakespeare's *King Lear*, it is neither a translation nor an adaptation of the latter, but an independent parallel creation carrying a heavy shadow of *King Lear*. Instead of a royal king at the centre of the play, Shirwadkar presents Appasaheb Belwalkar, a great veteran stage-actor of the yesteryears. Just like Lear, he decides to distribute his entire property to his children— a son and a daughter. Both the children are happily settled in their respective lives. After retirement of their father from the stage, they accept their parents in their houses, but the poor old man and his wife have to face

nothing but humilitaion at both the places. Appasaheb's wife dies in illness while they were staying at their daughter's place. The great actor loses his sanity and wanders aimlessly just like Lear at the end of Shakespeare's play. His relatives find him on the footpaths of Mumbai, but he soon dies afterwards. This is a tale of an extraordinarily temperamental person, who, in his attempt to get adjusted with a blunt, practical world around him, becomes ruined in the end.

There is a character resembling Lear's fool in **Natasamrat** also. It is seen in Vithoba, who is a simpleton with a strong passion for the theatre. Amidst all others ridiculing and insulting Appasaheb, he is one man who reveres and respects him. Naturally in the end, it is he, who discovers the mentally imbalanced old man.

The language of the play is enriched with wit and emotionally loaded. There are soliloquies reminding one Shakespeare's command over language in **King Lear**. For example, Appasaheb, in his mentally imbalanced state in the third act, says,

*"Will somebody provide a house
To a storm ?
Will somebody provide a house ?
A storm without walls, without a roof,
Devoid of human affection, devoid of God's compassion,
Is roaming from jungle to jungle
In search of a place
Where no one will drive it away—
Will somebody provide a house ?"*

However, when Appasaheb says,

*"Yes, Yes, Yes
You are young
That means you can copulate
with females of human race
But crows are young
And young are the vultures
Young are the stray donkeys
And also pigs..."*

this soliloquy belongs exclusively to Appasaheb and not to King Lear.

From the professional point of view, **Natasamrat** proved to be a

miracle in Shirwadkar's career as a dramatist. Its stage performances crossed the 1000 mark long ago. Great actors like Shriram Lagu and Datta Bhat played the role of Appasaheb and brought out minutest nuances of the character. The play received the Sahitya Akademi award for the year, and later, the first Ram Ganesh Gadkari award. It also played the key-role in getting the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Jnanapeeth Award for Shirwadkar.

Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni remarks, "The play is great not just because of a personal tragedy. It is great because it is steeped in the theatre culture of Maharashtra. References to great thespians of earlier times such as Ganapatrao Joshi invest the words of Belwalkar with a unique air of reality.**Natasamrat** has created a permanent place in our hearts. It is a case in which the human greatness of a dramatist has been echoed by the greatness of one of his works." (**Shirwadkar: the Great Litterateur**, published in **Kusumagraj**, Souvenir, Felicitation Function, Delhi, 30 April 1989)

Renowned playwright and drama critic G.P.Deshpande writes, "Almost every theatregoer of urban and semi-urban Maharashtra today- and there are millions of them- would almost unanimously name **Natasamrat** as the best Marathi play that he or she has seen over the last quarter of century. It is unlikely that there would be another play at least in this century which is held in higher esteem or owe, if you will, as Shirwadkar's **Natasamrat**." (**The Dramatic Oeuvre of Shirwadkar- An Exploration towards A Tragedy ?** published in **Kusumagraj**, Souvenir, Felicitation Function, Delhi, 30 April 1989). He believes that **Natasamrat** belongs to the age of disintegration of family and perhaps decline of classicism. "It is an important play because it shows a new direction in the construction of the tragedy in the Indian milieu and tradition."

Natasamrat has attained the rank of one of the classics of Marathi theatre. Protagonist of the play, Appasaheb Blewalkar, has become as much part of Marathi cultural heritage as Hamlet of Macbeth of the English culture.

In 1971, Shirwadkar translated Jean Anouilh's **Becket**. The very fact that he turned to this modern play indicates his inclination towards the modern trends in literature. The play had become famous by its film version. However, Shirwadkar's major attraction was its literary qualities, its dramatic tension, its unique characterisation and the poetry inherent in its dialogues. His translation highlights all these qualities. The conflict

between King Henry II and his once darling companion Becket, who rejects his master when he becomes Archbishop of Canterbury, has been brilliantly brought out in the translation. Becket, the young companion of the king, who accompanies him enthusiastically in all his expeditions of drinking and womanising, turns to become a true servant of God. This transformation and the final horrifying climax of his martyrdom are as appealing in Shirwadkar's translation as in the original play. The performance of the play on the stage was also indicative of a true translation. The costumes and the atmosphere were maintained in the original Western style.

Shirwadkar's play **Vidushak** (Jester, 1974) was inspired by Charlie Chaplin's silent film **City Light**. The play focuses on a queer relationship between Bagaram, whose character is moulded after Charlie Chaplin, and a rich capitalist, who behaves quite differently in the intoxicated state than his usual self. He develops intimate friendship with Bagaram under the influence of liquor and scornfully rejects him when the influence subsides. All this is presented as a hilarious comedy. Another dimension is added by relation between Bagaram and a beautiful blind girl Anjali, wherein delicate poetic display of delicate humane concerns is marvellously achieved. Shirwadkar's genuine compassion is displayed sincerely throughout the play despite his exposition of the hypocrisy in our society. However, the actual staging of the play underlined the difficulty in projecting the peculiar mixture of the comic and the tragic elements fused into one another.

Immediately next year Shirwadkar's next play **Ek Hoti Wagheen** (There was a tigress) was staged. This is a different type of play groping into disparities among various aspects of personalities of the same person. Queen Arundhati is the main protagonist of the play. She is the monarch of Sundargad and a disciple of the Mahamuni. Moreover, she was once in deep love with Jaywant and attracted towards an artist, mesmerised by his philosophy. When the artist arrives in her kingdom, all these different aspects of her personality intensely confront conflict and clash with each other. Especially, the fake nobility of the stature of a queen and the natural passions of life clash with each other most violently.

Next year in 1975, Shirwadkar brought out the play **Anand** based on the Hindi film of the same title directed by Hrishikesh Mukherji. The character of the protagonist Anand, who anticipates a certain death due to incurable disease of cancer, but refuses to let down his cheerful spirit and love for the liveliness of life, is effectively captured by Shirwadkar. The character of the doctor friend of Anand, who is amazed by the

latter's undaunted love and zest, is equally remarkable.

In 1977, Shirwadkar turned to political sphere in his play **Mukhyamantri** (The Chief Minister) or **Mee Ek Mukhyamantri** (I, a Chief Minister). The protagonist, a Chief Minister, is entangled in a number of political and personal problems. Actually, Shirwadkar had based this play on a remarkable short story written by him. The expansion of the short story into a full-size play meets all the artistic demands. The most important aspect is that, instead of looking at the character of the chief minister from an easy satirical point of view, Shirwadkar penetrates deep into the internal crisis of the man. The playwright's artistic sympathy and humane compassion make this probe truly effective and worthwhile. Shirwadkar does present the political atmosphere around the protagonist with full honesty and boldness, but the personal problems of the protagonist are even more appealing. Shriram Lagu gave full justice to the character in the stage performance. Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni remarks, "It is indeed a stark tragedy such as one would never come in the shallow water of Indian politics." (**Shirwadkar: the Great litterateur**, published in **Kusumagraj**, souvenir, Felicitation Function Delhi, 30 April 1989).

Shirwadkar wrote **Chandra Jithe Ugavat Nahi** (Where the moon does not rise) in 1981. This is a theatrical adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's epic novel **Resurrection**. The novel takes off from a serious critique of the police system in Czar's Russia. Then it moves on to a tragic affair of love between an ordinary servant girl and an officer of the Czar's Army. The lover never returns to the poor girl, but they meet each other much later in totally different situation. It is a very challengingly delicate work of dramatics. However, the stage performance of the play failed to convey the romantic element of the serious tragedy.

In **Kaikayi** (1989), Shirwadkar explores relationship among Kaikayi, Bharat and Ram. He reviews it in the light of some of the present day concepts on the characters in **Ramayana**. Kaikayi is unaware of the promise given by Dasharatha to her father at the time of their marriage. She is very fond of Ram and is very excited over his establishment as the crown prince. At her marriage, she was 16 and Dasharatha was nearly 60. Incompensation of this age-difference, he had promised to make Kaikayi's son the crown prince. However, though he continued to satisfy his lust with his youngest queen, he planned to make Ram the crown prince and sent Kaikayi's sons away. When Kaikayi learns about the terms of the odd purchase and the deceit, she decides to avenge the insult. Shirwadkar also projects Bharat's rejection of his mother not only as the result of his blind devotion and love towards Ram, but his awareness

and insistence to uphold people's desire to have Ram as the future king. This peculiar triangle of deeds and desires of three major characters in new light proves Shirwadkar's indigenous interpretation of the ancient myths.

Shirwadkar was the president of the Marathi Natya Sammelan held at Kolhapur in 1970. In his presidential address, he highlighted the dynamic tradition of the Marathi theatre. He welcomed the new trends, but insisted upon the preservation of the link between the past and the present. He was of the firm opinion that musical drama was an integral and live past of the Marathi Theatre. This accounts for the inclusion of songs in his plays.

Shirwadkar, as a playwright, shares the tradition of Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar and Ram Ganesh Gadkari. His language is as radiant as the language of these two playwrights, with apt use of highly literary dramatic prose and lyrical verse. Keeping in tune with his poetry, his plays also uphold humanistic values. His choice for adaptation of plays from other sources also reveals this attitude. He probes the depth of human mind in a very subtle manner. While dealing with the tragedy in the life of an individual, he does not forget to include the conflict between the individual and the environment.

4

Fiction writer

Though poetry and drama are the major domains of Kusumagraj/ Shirwadkar's creative muse, he was a prolific fiction writer as well. He has projected a large spectrum of experiences in his short stories. The characters in his short stories present a variety of human specimens from all strata of society. Big Government officers, ordinary priests and Brahmins, women principals, low-class maidservants, rich landlords, workers, labourers, footpath dwellers...various cross-sections are investigated in the world of his short stories.

Some remarkable short stories focus on the passion of love. Stories like **Amaraitil Rambha** (The Beauty in the mango grove), **Mriganakshatra** (Grion), **Shriyut Joshi** (Mr. Joshi) portray illiterate women protagonists from poor class. However, they also display genuine and intense passion of love. Moreover, their love always associates with an urge for sacrifice and renunciation. In fact, these women characters are excellent specimens of delicate characterisation. Critics have equated them with characters portrayed in Sharatchandra Chattopadhyaya's short stories. Shanta in **Mriganakshatra**, for example, develops intimacy with an artist, who is enchanted by her inner serenity. However, Shanta recognises that something in her tragic past will never make their union happy and she takes the decision to go away from her man without caring for her own prosperous future. The heroine of the short story **Nirnay** also moves away from her lover Shekhar because she is suffering from tuberculosis and does not wish to make his life unhappy. Without letting him know the truth, she sacrifices her love silently.

Some of the short stories have an intrinsic relationship with Shirwadkar's plays. For example, there is a striking similarity between Rambha's relationship with her young man in **Amaraitil Rambha** and the relationship of the romantic pair in **Jithe Chandra Ugawat Nahi**. The story **Deedshe mail door** (Hundred and fifty miles away) depicts the character of an adolescent boy, who closely resembles the boot polish boy in **Natasamrat**.

Shirwadkar likes to portray people from some unfamiliar circumstances and situations. His short story **Bha-bha-bhatajicha** (P for priest) presents a pathetic picture of a poor priest, who is the constant target of ridicule for many people. Another story, **Vishwanath Ek Shimpi** (Vishwanath, a tailor) is even more poignant in bringing out the miseries of its poor protagonist. Some of the stories depict the plight and exploitation of spinsters.

Shirwadkar's wit can be seen in his collection of short stories entitled **Prem Ani Manjar** (Love and cat). All the stories in this collection are full of mischievous humour. Shirwadkar has acknowledged in the preface that he took inspiration from P. G. Woodhouse. These stories are based on comic incidents just like those in Woodhouse's stories. Some of these stories also contain sharp satire. The characters are drawn from a variety of social cross-sections. Few of the stories direct their satire towards life in the Hindi film industry.

Shirwadkar's most notable collections of short stories are **Satariche bol** (Tunes of a sitar) and **Bara Katha** (Twelve stories). Since Shirwadkar was a poet, it is quite natural that his short stories bear an impression of poetic perception. He was aware of the new trends in short stories and had adopted them without losing charm of the old style. His craftsmanship rises above the old and new techniques.

Shirwadkar has written three novels, viz. **Vaishnav** (A devotee of Lord Vishnu, 1946), **Janhavi** (1952) and **Kalpanechnya Teeravar** (on the bank of imagination, 1956).

Peculiarities of Shirwadkar's poetry, like his intrinsic passion of patriotism, his volatile urge to sacrifice like a moth upon the flame of his ideal, his poetic aspiration to locate a spark of radiance in the common man and to inflame it, his concern to caress the emotional nobility of man are reflected in **Vaishnav**. This is not a multifaceted novel. It neither contains a broad and multileveled perspective of human life, nor unfolds multifaceted personalities. It just presents a bubble of inspiration in the life of a very ordinary village.

The protagonist of **Vaishnav** is a schoolteacher Vinayakrao working in a tiny village of nearly hundred and fifty houses. He is so ordinary that he had not even passed the training examination properly. He is a quiet man with introspective nature. He does not understand the political situation of the country, but he worships the photo frame of Mahatma Gandhi with the same devotion as he worships the picture of a deity. He has a loving wife and a sweet child. However, his boss is a calculating old villain.

The novel portrays some episodes, which create turmoil in the schoolteacher's life and challenge his sense of values. A widowed daughter-in-law of a crooked Brahmin approaches him for shelter. She is a beautiful young woman, who has been just able to escape from the evil plans of the crooked landlords of the village. Vinayakrao tries to keep up his benevolence and attracts the ire of orthodox villagers. The test of his worth continues through other incidents. The novel points at the moral imprisonment of an innocent man. The plot is full of several dramatic twists and all of these are carried out without the slightest damage to the virtue of the central character. The plot has a background of the Freedom Movement of 1942 and bears impressions of Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement.

Shirwadkar mainly tries to present two facts in this novel. One, how a remote tiny Indian village comes under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, and two, the personality of an ordinary but susceptible teacher can be radically transformed and this transformation is as much as the consequence of Indian Vaishnav tradition as the unparalleled personality of Mahatma Gandhi. Vinayakrao is portrayed as a modern saint. However, his eulogization lacks subtlety at some places. Moreover, despite satirical expression of things like the condition of the school, stand of the authorities, crookedness of the headmaster, conspiracies of the landlords, over dramatisation of the plot cannot be overlooked.

Of course, one feature that supersedes this over dramatisation is projection of Vinayakrao's transformation. A timid, shy and unassuming teacher that he is, comes out of his shell and assumes an identity. When Vinayakrao gives his piece of mind to the education officer and the headmaster, it is the playwright in Shirwadkar displaying a flow of oratory through his mouth. However, this exhibition of courage is not accidental. After providing shelter to a beautiful and virtuous young woman like Padmavati and after enduring the ire of the orthodox world, Vinayakrao's manliness was gradually acquiring radiance in her sweet company. He reaches to its perfection after listening to a discourse by Saint Malojirao. After all, it has been a tradition of Maharashtrian Vaishnavism to remain softer than a flower and, if need arises, to become harder than the Vajra.

After the death of his wife, Vinayakrao leaves his son with Padmavati and proceeds to Mumbai in search of work. Mumbai, at that time, was in the grip of political movement and charged with the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Experiencing the atmosphere, Vinayakrao abandons the thought of his personal liabilities and decides to plunge into the national struggle. This is the second step of Vinayakrao's transformation.

Inspired by the surcharged atmosphere of Mumbai, Vinayakrao determines to free his village from the British. He captures the government buildings with the help of Rambhaji Patil, the local hero. When Rambhaji Patil falls to the shower of bullets, Vinayakrao takes the gun and carries the battle. This is the final stage of his transformation. Before this, he was blessed with the sexual union with Padmavati as well.

This process of transformation is magically associated with the Vaishnavite tradition. Shirwadkar has synchronised the character-oriented medieval Saint tradition with the awakening of the Indian psyche. His romantic attitude is expressed in coalition with idealism. In this context, Vinayakrao is not just an individual, but he represents the Indian people, who have forgotten their Vaishnavite nature. The novel relates Shirwadkar to V. S. Khandekar in his longing to explore greatness within the common man and his sincere desire to sympathise with the common man's grief.

Janhavi is comparatively more enthralling, though its structure often violates the norms of the genre of novel. The problems enumerated in this novel are vital and relevant problems of life. The characters, created in the line of Shirwadkar's attitude, are rather unusual. There is a religious mendicant (Mahant), who, like Aurobindo, was originally an armed revolutionary, but after coming out of the prison, has resorted to the path of personal enlightenment and is living in the mountains. He believes in the duality of the soul and the body, and rejects the demands of the body in preference to the spiritual enlightenment. Janhavi is a young and beautiful child widow from a nearby place. Then there is one Vasudev, who is an armed revolutionary. In his attempts to escape from the police, he has taken shelter with Mahant and has gradually become his true disciple. These three characters encounter each other and develop various conflicts. Initially, Mahant has a clash with Janhavi. The conflicts get a new twist when an artist is drawn towards Janhavi by the common bond of art. He does not believe in the duality of the soul and the body and considers the desires of body as a high moral concept. Finally, Janhavi decides to join her life with this artist. The novel has a time location. Its events take place when revolutionaries assassinated Collector Jackson in Nasik. Mahant has always suppressed the demands of the body whereas Vasudev has enjoyed the sexual pleasure fully in the past. That is why; Vasudev is able to save himself from temptation, whereas Mahant becomes the victim of temptation to seduce the young woman who is like his daughter. In the end, Mahant immolates himself as a self-induced punishment for trying to seduce Janhavi. Though the pattern of the novel is melodramatic, it elevates to the level of sublimation due to noble

aspirations of the characters. Its peculiarity lies in the reflection of moral values from humanistic point of view.

The third novel, *Kalpanechnya Teeravar*, is at a very different level than the other two. It is a charming fantasy and portrays life in an imaginary country named "Shashashringa." The protagonist Vishwanath Vishalgadkar accidentally finds himself in that country and accepts citizenship of this novel country. He is a guest of the king and develops friendship with the princess as well as another young girl. Critics have opined that the novel goes on the lines of Maimonides' *Lost Horizon*. It tries to investigate a sort of platonic society. For that purpose, Shirwadkar has imagined that, in that society, fulfilment of sexual urge is not as much a taboo as satisfying the hunger for food. People feel free to talk about sexual activities; but eating is a strictly private and personal affair. They consider it vulgar to mention about eating, never eat in front of another person and eating at the hands of a woman has a special significance. There is a control over the public health and there is a similarity between a barber and a doctor. The barber occupies the chair in a debate and concludes the debate like a learned person. There is no place for lunch or dinner in a public function. Instead of that, people enjoy perfumed handkerchiefs in the function. There is no violence in the war here. People can go to the heaven for a short time and come back to narrate the pleasures of heaven that are available after death. Therefore, there is no fear of death here. All the equations of social interaction and concepts of human relations are vigorously changed due to this. Consequently, the novel presents interesting comments and leads to introspection about various social prejudices, norms and traditions of today's Indian society. Absence of a well-knit plot is compensated by poetic narration, romantic situations and philosophic overtones. Shirwadkar's poetic imagination has induced him to take a different look at various moral concepts. The use of imagery in describing charms of young women like Rashmini and Kamili is fantastic: Descriptions of the dance hall and the heaven are picturesque and lively.

In fact, there are no basic differences between Indian society and the society imagined to exist in Shashashringa. Yet, there are differences in certain levels and dimensions. This is a unique creation of Shirwadkar's muse. Shashashringa society is more safe, protected and happy as compared to real Indian society at the cost of certain viewpoints and values. The hero, finally, rejects this safer, securer and happier society and returns to his own people though there is no apparent bondage for him to do so. The attraction of one's own soil proves to be stronger than

the temptation of happiness. Perhaps there is an artistically concealed message for all those brain-drained immigrants longing for materialistic happiness in distant lands.

Shirwadkar's fiction was not so well received by Marathi readership. Probably, his tremendous success as a poet and as a dramatist overshadowed his fiction. Especially, the novel **Janhavi** should have been considered as an important novel from the point of view of confrontation of different ideologies and **Kalpanechya Teeravar** for imaginative crativity. Shirwadkar may not be rated as a first grade fiction writer, but still, a review of Marathi fiction cannot be complete without considering his fiction.

5

Personal Essays and Other Writings

The "Laghunibandh" (Personal Essay) was initiated in Marathi by N. S. Phadke and V. S. Khandekar. It was developed and enriched by writers like Anant Kanekar, G. R. Dodke, Kaka Kalelkar, M. N. Advant, Shantaram, Madhav Achwal, Vinda Karandikar, Durga Bhagawat, N. G. Gore, Madhukar Keche and Shrinivas Kulkarni etc. Among all these writers, Shirwadkar occupies a place of honour. Actually, the number of laghunibandhs written by Shirwadkar is not very large. They possess a high literary merit.

Shirwadkar's collection of laghunibandhs **Ahe ani Nahi** (It is and it is not) was first published in 1957. Its second edition was published in 1975 and the third in 1981. Within the span of twenty essays in this collection, various topics are included from Shirwadkar's sphere of experiences. These essays exhibit the reflective moods of the writer, his subjective expressions and different specimens of his peculiar taste and distaste. Here one finds an interesting depiction of the writer's experience while on an errand of purchasing a string for the tanpura in an essay, while another essay presents a sensitive exposition of the writer's mind bent upon having an easy-chair and different thoughts arising in the context of the easy-chair. An essay carries a catchy description of the writer's sympathy and interest about a circus, while another one contains a revealing narration of the writer's inspiration to write a poem on "Anant" (The endless) and hurdles in writing the poem created on account of unending flow of visitors. The topic of an essay is the depiction of the writer's feelings and thoughts related to the unbounded and unending sky, while another essay speaks of his attraction towards dakhnawats and his various experiences of different dakhnawats. Shirwadkar's laghunibandhs, thus, scan a variety of experiences.

Despite a variety of experiences, these essays project the same tender heart of the writer, his poetic and sensitive personality and his vision of life. Shirwadkar has an unbounded love for life. He looks at various experiences of life with an appreciating attitude. He has a tremendous

attraction towards the beauty and magnificence of the Nature. He becomes conscious of the unworthiness of man from time to time. He receives every sort of experience of life with his sensitive mind and these experiences keep on leading him to introspection.

Shirwadkar considers life as a great gift of the divine power. It is a big crime to destroy such life, according to him. He narrates the story of a poor man in the essay **Prithvi Sooryabhovati Phirat Nahi** (The earth does not revolve around the sun). In order to get rid of his poverty, this man murders his wife and small children and finally commits suicide. When the writer learns this news, he is aghast and becomes dumb with grief. He thinks that the man has committed the great crime of murdering the freedom of an individual and the freedom of a woman. He says, "Nobody has the right to destroy the gift so lovingly given by the God. Ambition in the heart and strength in the arms can transform a man into the God. " When the writer is bored working in the office of the newspaper at night and when the silence of the night makes his mind gloomy, he remembers three small kittens sleeping in the basket under the table. A glance at them drives away his gloominess. Looking at them playing and bouncing, he feels that they are showering the fragrance of the unbounded cheerfulness and attachment towards life. For him, they are three blossomed flowers upon the creeper of the joy of life.

Shirwadkar possesses intense love towards Nature. He is so enchanted by the unbounded blue sky that he sets out at midnight just for the sake of observing its beauty. He is fascinated with the hills and the dense foliage, zooming farms and melodious flow of the river near the dakhnagluws and looks for a chance to stay there for a while. He becomes so excited in the company of the Nature that he feels the Nature loves him like a human being and communicates with him. He says in the essay **Shriyut Akash** (Mister Sky), "Yes, I do feel that the sky also loves me. ...The sky does not possess cruelty. Its heart is as big as its vastness. Whosoever goes to it, it draws him to its bosom. It caresses him with its hands adorned with the bangles of the sun and the moon. It wipes his tears with its embroidered silken robes that it wears at the time of the rise and the setting of the sun and the moon. It shows him the Venus reigning over the pitch darkness and gives new life to his dejected and sullen heart. If, because of certain reasons, our mind becomes sad, our intellect becomes dumb and life begins to prick us like a bed of arrows, we cannot find another consoler so definite and so effective. This blue deity staring at us with eyes of stars beacons us with its raised hand to come out. We go to some deserted ground and lie with our head resting in its lap. Some

loving drops of the deep peace filled in the sky from the time immemorial begin to shower upon us and our mind also becomes peaceful." Shirwadkar is very much fascinated with the ever-new nature of the sky. He believes that ever-new petals of beauty and emotions are always blooming in the heavenly garden of the sky and that is why the writer experiences a celebration of unlimited joy in the company of the sky.

Excessive attraction towards Nature leads Shirwadkar to an excursion of the dakbunglows. He appreciates the sense of beauty shown by the British officials in selecting the sights of these dakbunglows. His description of the dakbungalow of Tryambak aptly confirms his love towards the Nature. Due to the high peaks of the Sahyadri, there is an early sunset at Tryambak. The dark shadows of the peaks begin to spread over the earth. That is why in the summer or in the winter, one's mind becomes sad without any reason while approaching Tryambak. However, there is a total change in the rainy season. Shirwadkar says, "This region of excessive rainfall becomes covered with thick greenery. Crystal-clear currents bounce and dance over the shapes of the mountains. Pools of water shine like diamond upon the carpet of the greenery." ... "When we approach near the mountain of Anjanbery, it is the beginning of the reign of the clouds. Caravans of clouds emerge from the mountains and valleys and proceed hurriedly crossing the peaks of the mountains." The writer simply loves the bungalow of Khalghat on the way to Indore. This dakbungalow is situated on the bank of the river Narmada. Dense trees in the front side, deep blue flow of Narmada and picturesque arcs of the bridge enhance the beauty of this dakbungalow. Bunglows situated in such deep forests give utmost pleasure to the writer. Dakbunglows known as "Circuit House" are ultramodern, but they do not attract the writer's mind because of their location in the cities. As the beautiful appearance of the Nature attracts the writer, so its magnificence also makes a deep impact upon his mind. While narrating the greatness of the eagle, he says in the essay **Pakshyancha Raja** (The king of birds), "An eagle will not sit in a mango tree and sing melodiously or will not repeat your words in a cage like a parrot. ... Its speciality lies neither in the sweetness of its voice nor in the colourfulness of its wings. It lies in its inner as well as its physical strength, in its flight piercing the sky."

As the magnificence of Nature enchants Shirwadkar, the exposition of the smallness of man irritates him. In the essay **Hey Lok** (These people), he flays the behaviour of uneducated people lacking self-respect and self-confidence when they try to force their entry into a train compartment and becomes nervous by the behaviour of small but egoistic

people preventing them from entering. In the essay **Nirvasit Neeti** (The morals in exile), he feels repugnance towards the people, who uphold the traditional, blind concepts of morality and consequently do not accept even great persons outside the sphere of these concepts. From his point of view, those who follow the traditional concepts of morality and stay away from liquor and adultery, but indulge in treachery of their friends or shareholders and ruin the life of other persons for their own profit, are immoral. He feels that such concepts of morality are not only shallow but also perverted. According to him, the idea of morality imprisoned in man-woman relationships and addictions is actually harmful for the society. He says, "The morality that we worship is perverted. It blesses the injustice and invasions in the society. The real morality has gone away from the system, it is in exile."

Shirwadkar is fascinated by ordinary incidents occurring in the lives of great personalities. In the essay **Tilak Ani Supari** (Tilak and betelnuts), he takes interest in such ordinary incidents in Lokamanya Tilak's life. Though the incident when Tilak carried the boxes of the printing press over his shoulder when the press was on fire is an ordinary one, Shirwadkar feels that it elaborates Tilak's personality. Some incidents in the lives of great persons are contradictory to their greatness, but their humaneness is embodied in such incidents. Shirwadkar reminds us in this essay that these persons are great, but they are human beings also.

These essays reveal Shirwadkar's minute observation presented in a jocular style. For example, the writer goes for a walk in the night in response to his poetic mood and encounters with a man, who starts asking all sorts of questions. Finally, he learns that, for this man, the most important event in the life is fall of vegetable prices in the market and it is foolishness to tell him "the sky was accompanying me." In the essay **Anantachi Tragedy** (The tragedy of the Anant), the writer has splendidly depicted different peculiarities of persons who cause hindrance in his plan of writing a poem. The account of the failure of his plan to write a poem caused by these people is presented with a deep shade of laughter and simultaneously, the writer's gentle nature also is revealed. The essay contains sketches of interesting personalities. First enters Appasaheb Hinganghatkar, who barges into the writer's house when he had hardly written a couplet in appreciation of the Anant and begins to recite his own poems to the writer. Next, comes Shamrao, who sits for a long time reading the newspaper and disturbs the writer's privacy. Finally, there is Ramrao, who bores the writer with his meaningless babble for a long time and wastes his valuable time.

These essays display the pleasant exhibition of Shirwadkar's humour quite often. For example, the writer feels that playing chess is easier than cricket due to lack of a capacity to take quick decision (**Talahatavaril Resha**, Lines upon the palm). He says, "If you keep on holding your head with one hand and a knight or a bishop with the other hand and sit staring the chess-board for ten full minutes, it does not matter at all." However, in cricket, we cannot glance at the approaching ball with a philosopher's eye and so it becomes very difficult for the writer to take a quick decision while looking at it. Consequently, there follows such a furious battle between the writer and the ball for a few minutes that not only the spectators but even the players forget the play and watch the battle in astonishment. While answering a simple question like "How is the weather", the writer feels it necessary to open the window and observe the sky for a few minutes and then ponder over the question whether he should call this weather good or bad. When Shirwadkar was working in the office of a newspaper, his pen used to attack the news of war in the same manner as brave solidiers attack the enemy. After finishing all the news like this, he enquires about fresh news with the Roiter just like a soldier with a bloodstained sword in his hand searching for a new enemy troupe. All this description becomes interesting due to its humorous style. The description of unexpected visitors barging in when the writer is in a mood of writing is equally humorous. Here is a specimen- "Very rarely anybody can make you uncomfortable and uneasy than these people, who turn your house into a public library. They do not recognise your existence a bit. Their account simply records against your name that newspaper and books are available with this man. When these popole sit in front of you, without caring for your existence, concentrating upon the reading, you feel embarrassed like a guest in your own house." Such episodes also reveal the writer's gentleness and his endurance. The essay **Vatsalya** (Parental love) is a real portrait of the writer's endurance and his sense of humour. The writer visits a friend's house for some important work. Instead of trying to know the nature of his work, members of his family spend all the time in introducing children of the family to the writer. They feel contented in presenting the children's ventures in plays and songs. The description of the writer's uneasiness and his endurance at such a time is exemplary.

These essays also reveal the writer's well-read personality. He has extensively quoted from Marathi, Sanskrit and English literature. His reflective nature is seen abundantly in these essays. Look at his thoughts regarding great personalities—

"Trying to explore their greatness in every shade of their behaviour of speech is like expecting that gold is attached to every particle of rock or soil in a gold-mine." (**Tilak Ani Supari**, Tilak and betel nut).

"A man's greatness is highlighted in small things. He does not become a static marble. His live figure in flesh and bones appears before our mind and readers feel a sort of love and respect for him." (**Tilak Ani Supari**, Tilak and betel nut).

The writer expresses similar philosophical thought even when he is upset because of not getting a string for the tanpura- "The grief of not fulfilling the expectation is small if the expectation itself is limited. However, if the expectation is excessively elevated, then the approaching happiness also looks pale." (**Tamboryachi Tar**, String of the Tanpura).

On seeing the condition of the people, who do not get enough space to sleep even on the footpath and who murder each other for that, the writer says, "The prison is really a favourable, religious and kind institution. The prison should really be recognised as great as a sacred temple where thousands of people cannot get a four arms' length of place to sleep, they have even to lose their life in order to get it and where a piece of bread has more value than a man's life." (**Ekhadi Batmi**, Some news)

As Shirwadkar is a great poet, his language often adopts poetic style in these essays. It creates a lasting impression upon its readers. While describing kittens he would say, "I lifted that heap of silk clinging to my legs." While describing the Nature around the dakhbungalow in Tryambak he would say, "Shadows upon the ground not only enter the eyes, but enter the mind as well and the mountains causing untimely end of light begin to appear fiery and harsh like the palace of death."

It would be proper here to refer to another book by Shirwadkar. Its title is **Ekaki Tara** (The lonely star). Technically, not all the essays incorporated in this book can be called as personal essays. These are mostly pen-sketches and Shirwadkar's own remembrances. Even then, Shirwadkar has written these in the style of personal essays and many aspects of Shirwadkar's personality are revealed in these essays. Shirwadkar has narrated the story of his poetry writing and the creation of his two plays **Kounteya** and **Natasamrat** in the essays **Kavitechya Shodhat** (In search of poetry), **Kounteyachi Katha** (The story of Kounteya) and **Natakachi Katha** (The story of a play). These articles give an experience of the mental oscillations and sources of inspiration of a creative litterateur. Shirwadkar relishes the sweet memories of his childhood in **Chhadi Ani Hiraval** (The cane and the lawn). The articles

Ekaki Tara (The lonely star), **Agnipushpe Phulavanara Kavi** (The poet who bloomed flowers of fire), **Tapaswi** (The ascetic), **Anandvanatil Sant** (The saint in Anandvan), **Sahitya Maharshi** (The sage of literature) and **Satish Dubhashi- Ek Vilobhaniya Vadal** (Satish Dubhashi- an enchanting storm) are pen-sketches created by Shirwadkar. He has analysed the life and personalities of great persons like Charlie Chaplin, the poet Govind, Vinoba, Baba Amte, V. S. Khandekar and Satish Dubhashi respectively. Among these pen-sketches, **Ekaki Tara**, based on Charlie Chaplin is a specimen of great work of art. The correct essence of the acting of this real artist is explored in this article and the important place occupied by Charlie Chaplin in the writer's own emotional life is also intensely depicted. The write-up on Satish Dubhashi vocalises in storm of passions aroused in Shirwadkar's mind after hearing the news of his death. The article such as **Saitanachi Atmahatya** (Suicide of the Satan) is really a personal essay created on the pretext of introducing an English play.

Shirwadkar has a collection of critical articles also to his credit, entitled **Roopresha** (The outline). The topics of these articles include poetry, theatre, nature and meaning of literature, the character of drama, the tradition of musical plays etc. There are notes on poets such as Keshavsut, Balakavi and Narayan Surve. Shirwadkar writes about poetry and drama not from a scholarly position, but from his own experience. He elaborates the role of an introverted imagination in the making of poetry. He insists that drama is not an exhibition of tactics and gimmicks, but it has to base on solid human action. He holds that musical drama is the central tradition of Marathi Theatre. He communes with all poets, dead and alive, with a miraculous communicative power.

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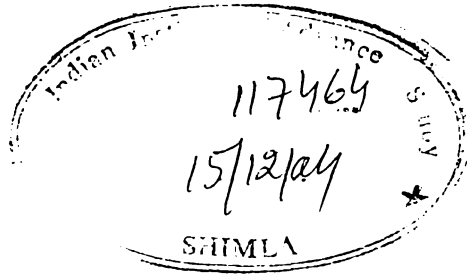
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Vishnu Vaman Shirwadkar alias **Kusumagraj** (1912-1999) was one of the most powerful litterateurs, who influenced the taste of Marathi readership for four decades. Poetry and drama were two major domains of his creative muse. He also wrote remarkable novels, short stories and personal essays. However, his entire literature is dominated by his creativity as a poet. Genuine social concern, revolutionary attitude and mastery over diction were characteristics of his poetry. His deep sympathy induced him to confront realities of life in various strata of society and to explore human aspects in mythological and historical personalities. His inquisitive nature led him to the question of God and the understanding of man in totality. His enriched and mature personality is reflected in his literary creations vividly and pleasantly.

Kusumagraj's poetry is rich in diction and imagery. His poetry is marked with dramatic element and his plays are adorned with poetic style of expression. This fusion of poetry and dramatic element is reflected in his fiction and essays as well. His creativity remained ever-green until the end of his life. Poets and playwrights of different generations consider him as one among them and respect him.

Nishikant Mirajkar (b. 1942), the author of this monograph, is an eminent critic, poet and translator in Marathi, English and Hindi. He works as Professor of Marathi and Comparative Indian literature in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies at the University of Delhi. In this monograph, he evaluates the personality and works of Kusumagraj mainly for the non-Marathi readers.

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