

Modern Indian Writers: Mehr Lal Soni (Zia Fatehabadi)

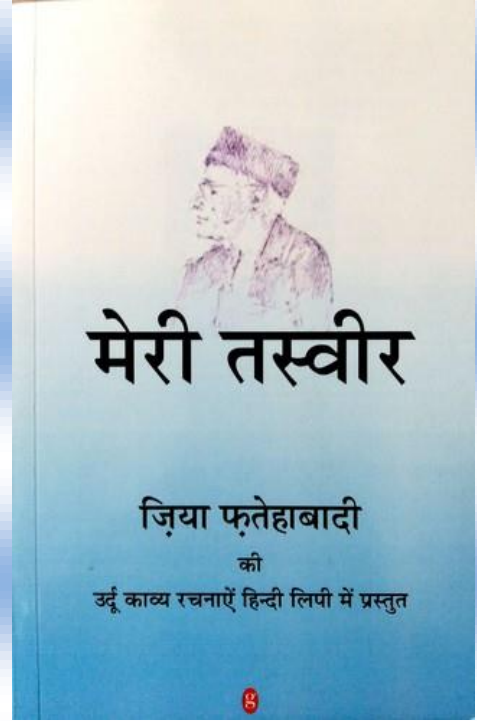


Zia Fatehabadi was born on 9th February 1913 at Kapurthala, Punjab. He was the eldest son of Munshi Ram Soni, a Civil Engineer. His actual name was Mehr Lal Soni. He used the pen name (takhallus) Zia meaning "Light" suggested by his teacher, Ghulaam Qadir Farkh Amritsari.

Mehr Lal Soni tasted success early in life, even before he went to college. He wrote poems in Urdu which was recognized in Urdu poetic circles. Also, he was very good at prose. He was very versatile and kept pace with the changing trends in Urdu literature and this reflected in his ghazals and poems.

Early Beginnings

Mehr Lal's was inclined towards poetry as a 12 year old when he was taught Urdu by Moulvi Asghar Ali Haya Jaipuri, who also introduced him to Urdu poetry. By the age of sixteen, he had become a familiar name in the Urdu literary circles. In 1930, Mehr Lal became a disciple of Syed Aashiq Hussain Siddiqui Seemab Akbarabadi (1882-1951). He completed his B.A. (Hons) degree in Persian in 1933 and M.A. (English) degree in 1935 from Forman Christian College, Lahore.



Mehr Lal's First book that got published was called "Tullu" (meaning dawn) was published, while he was still in college. The book almost made him give up on writing as it received a lot of criticism. Encouragement from his friends and elders made him continue to keep writing. By the time he completed his college education, Mehr Lal had established a name for himself as a respected poet in Urdu.

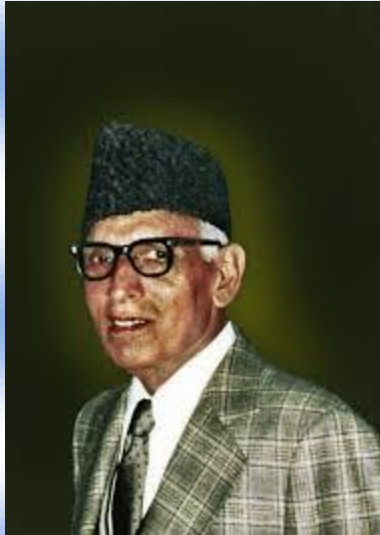
DID YOU KNOW...?

Mehr Lal took up poetry in 1925 under the supervision of his mother, Shankari Devi. While in college, he was the editor of the Urdu section of the college house magazine "The Folio".

His Works

Mehr Lal's career spanned over six decades which saw him produce a handful array of Urdu literature consisting of short stories like "Suraj Doob Gayaa" (1981), essays - Zaaviyaa Hai Nigaah (1984), presidential addresses "Masnad-

e-Sadaarat Se" (1985) and biography "Seemab Akbarabadi- Zikr-e-Seemab" (1985). He also wrote three volumes of letters and eleven collections of poetry.



Many of his works have remained unpublished till date. There are also a few works that have been influenced by English poets. Some of Mehr Lal's other poetic works that were instrumental in giving him fame and renown are "Nai Subah" (1952), "Husn-e-Ghazal" (1964), "Dhoop Aur Chaandni" (1977), "Rang-o-Noor" (1980), "Soch Kaa Safar" (1982) and "Naram Garam Hawaain" (1987).

ACTIVITY

1. List a few of Zia Fatehabadi's literary works. Try and find a Hindi or English translation of one of his works. Share your thoughts below.
2. Make a timeline of Zia Fatehabadi's life and works. You can do a similar exercise about different writers/poets as well.
3. Draw a portrait/sketch of any favourite writer of yours. You can send also send it to us.

References

<http://www.iloveindia.com/indian-heroes/mehr-lal-soni-zia-fatehabadi.html>
www.wikipedia.org