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Bharatji and Agyeya: Friends, on and off the page

Bindu Agrawal

This is an excerpt from Bindu Agrawal's (1928-2001) biographical memoir Smriti ke Jharokhe Se (National Publishing House, 1999), a path-breaking memoir on Sahitya Akademi Award winning Hindi poet, Bharat Bhushan Agrawal (1919-1975). Written with the inimitable intimate knowledge of a wife, and informed with the perspective of a practiced literary critic, this biographical insight into the life of one of the first Hindi Modernist poets, one of the hallowed seven, the breakthrough literary 'Tar Saptak,' marks a singular moment in Hindi literature. It gives a unique insight into the contemporary literary scene even as her participation in his life makes it a significant example of life-writing. This excerpt showcases the important many-faceted relationship between Bharat Bhushan Agrawal and Agyeya, his 'Tar Saptak' compatriot.

Bharatji came to know Agyeya and Machweji in his college days. But since they were all Tar Saptak poets, their friendship became even stronger. Bharatji always looked upon Agyeyaji as an older brother and would address him as Bhai. Agyeyaji also loved him as a younger brother and as a friend. He respected Bharatji's opinion and, in Allahabad, he would even consult him before taking important decisions. If Bharatji did not like something about Agyeya (whether it was to do with literature or politics), he would mince no words in communicating it to him either verbally, or by mail, because of this feeling of kinship. I have many letters voicing principled differences of opinion. It was Agyeyaji who gave the shortened version of Bharat Bhushan Agrawal, Bharatji. Before that, for the most part, people at home would call him Bharat and outsiders, Bharat Bhushan.