



GLIMPSES OF
Mumbai Marathi
Sahitya Sangh



Edited & Compilation :
Ashok Bendkhale

**Glimpses of
Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh**

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Contents

- 1) Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh - A Beginning / 5

- 2) Own Building and Drama Theatre / 9

- 3) Contribution to Drama : Beginning / 13

- 4) And Later... / 17

- 5) Lecture Series / 21

- 6) Platinum Jubilee Year / 25

- 7) Collegiate Literary Festivals . 29

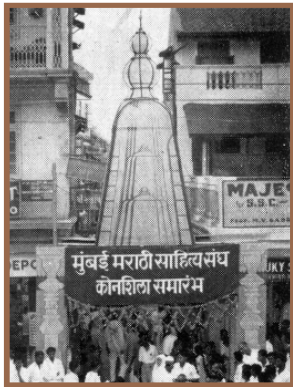
- 8) Mahanagar Literary Fests / 33

- 9) Marathi Language Classes / 37

- 10) The Drama Activities and Amrut Natya Bharati / 41

- 11) 80th year of the Sangh / 45

- 12) Publications of Sahitya Sangh / 49



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

1

Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

A Beginning



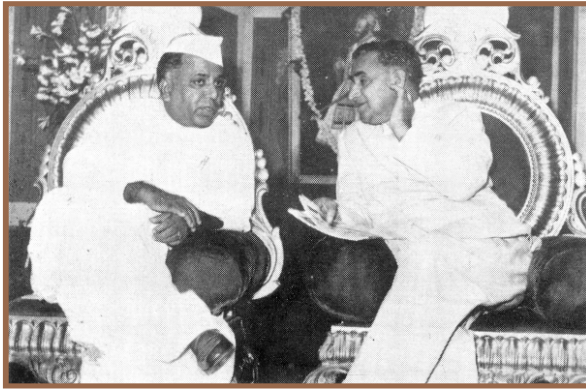
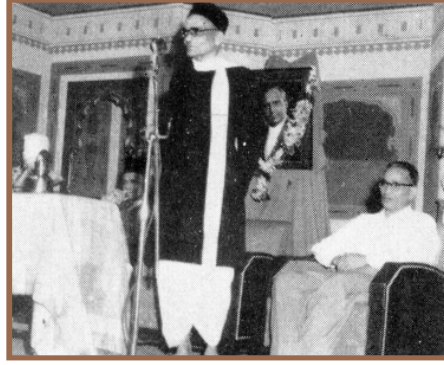
The original stream of modern literature in all Indian languages goes back to the decade of 1930. And that had led to the formation of the Literary Associations which nurtured the Indian languages and literature. Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad came to be established in Mumbai - then Bombay. But soon the office of the Parishad got shifted to Pune from Mumbai. A thought made rounds then that Mumbai too should have the same type of office of a Literary Association in Mumbai. First of all, an idea was floated for organising a Literary Festival (Sahitya Sammelan) in Mumbai. Dr A.N. Bhalerao - a connoisseur of literature and drama - got pulled into the movement at the instance of Mr. Anantrao Gade. Dr. Bhalerao, later, dedicated his entire life to this mission.

The first Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Festival (Sammelan) was held on 6th and 7th October, 1934. This Fest was presided over by revered Mr K.P. Keluskar and Dr. A.B. Gajendragadkar played the host. It was in this convention, a resolution to form an organisation named 'Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh' was passed on 21st July, 1935.

The logo was created and designed underscoring the existence of the Mumbai Marathi Sangh. It was also decided to use this logo in all Sangh's programs and correspondence.

Premises and Drama Theatre of the Sangh

Although now the organisation was formed, it faced several limitations in its working for want of its own premises. Following the resolution passed in the general body meeting held on 13th October, 1950, the Land committee was given the task to locate the land. Accordingly, the Committee searched and identified two plots of land measuring 2300 square yards each located in Kelewadi adjacent to St. Teresa's High School near



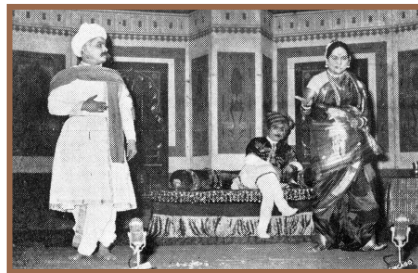
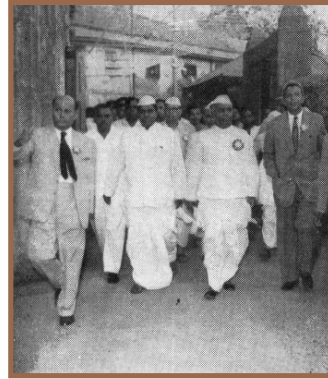
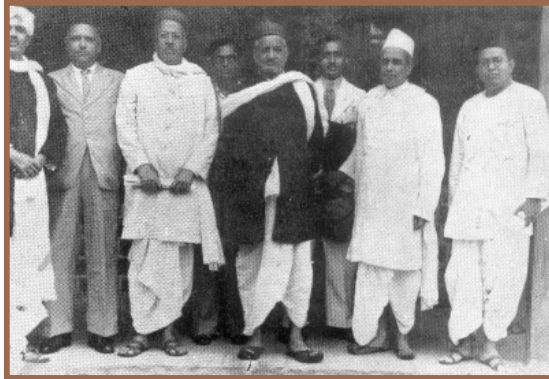
St. Peter Aryenar Church which were zeroed on. The purchase deed was executed by the Association to buy the land for the price of Rs. one lac and ten thousand. The ground breaking ceremony was held at the hands of the then Union Minister Mr Kakasaheb Gadgil on 27th October, 1952.

Initially, south-facing makeshift building measuring 70×40 square yards was built and it was planned to house Sangh's office, a classroom for the post-graduate students and conducting theatre activities in late evenings. It was here in the open drama theatre, the drama fest of 1952-53 was organised.

The significant events in the intervening period: Kannad writers were felicitated on behalf of the Sangh at the Kannad Literary Festival held in Mumbai in 1960. While the famed English actor Norman Marshal and Newton of the British Drama League were touring India along with their co-artistes, they were also felicitated. The delegation of the Sangh, discussed and submitted their representation to the then Home Minister of the State Mr. Moraraji Desai, requesting him to remove entertainment tax as well as regulatory curbs on theaters and drama shows. In the year 1952 (3rd, 4th and 5th May) Mumbai and Sub-urban Literary Festival was celebrated on a boat called 'Jaltarangini' which was presided over by the well-known poetess Ms Indira Sant. It was perhaps the first time a beginning was made to organize such a festival on sea. The last installment amount (Rs 1,27,979.75) to the trustees of the Armenian Church relating to the purchase of the land was handed over in the ceremony presided over by the then Governor of the State Harekrishna Mehtab (13th April 1956).

Thereafter, on 7th January, 1960, the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Sangh Mandir was held at the hands of Mr. Chintamanrao Deshmukh, then the Governor of The Reserve Bank of India. Mr. Deshmukh gave his advise to the Sangh to be self-reliant whether or not it receives government assistance and hoped that it will continue to enjoy solid backing from the lovers of arts and literature at large. Admiring the work of the Sangh in his Presidential address, the then Chief Minister Yeshwantrao Chavan appealed to the writers to carry out their responsibility in guiding the soon to be carved out new Maharashtra state.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

2 Own Building and Drama Theatre



It was decided to hold the inauguration ceremony of Sahitya Sangh Mandir's building on 6th April, 1964. The Drama Theatre was named after Dr. A.N. Bhalerao in a ceremony held which was inaugurated by the then Defence Minister Mr. Yeshwantrao Chavan. Mr. Balasaheb Desai, then Chief Minister of Maharashtra was the chief guest.

Although initially it was thought to invite selected well wishers for the inauguration of the Sangh building, owing to three thousand people showing up against the two hundred fifty seating capacity of the hall, the function had to be shifted to the nearby school ground. The grand stage was erected after cleaning of the school ground. The Sangh building was decorated with colourful lighting and Dr A.N. Bhalerao road was profusely decorated with floral designs and ornamental canopies erected in between. The corner leading to the Sangh too was donned with an attractive floral canopies. Noted playwright, Mr. P.L. Deshpande had done the entire planning.

The guests, who came for the occasion, were received with warm greetings. Mr. N.R. Phatak - the President of the Sangh, welcomed the audience after which Yeshwantrao Chavan, by pressing the button unveiled the name plate of the Sangh and electrical lighting decorations, declared open the Sahitya Sangh. Mr Yeshwantrao Chavan, expressed that the love for arts and literature is the main moving force behind the creation of Sangh and let the cultural life of Maharashtra flourish and overflow to the brim by nurturing Marathi people with the nectar of rich art and literature.

Thereafter, sixteen people, who had made an outstanding contribution in different spheres of life were felicitated by honouring them with the membership of the Sangh on this occasion. After the function, all



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

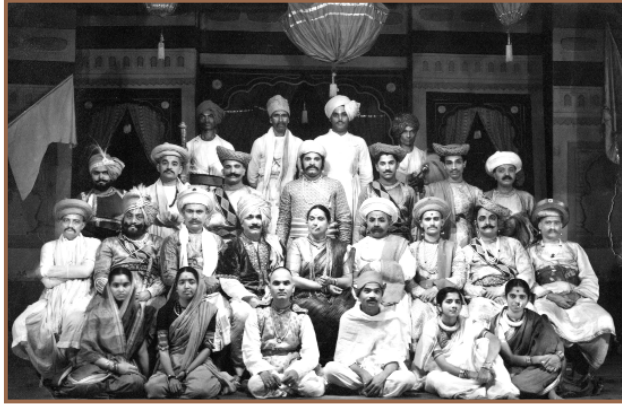
invitees were shown around the Sangh building and with the light refreshment the function was concluded.

As an intimate part of this inauguration, the opening of the drama festival was done on 8th April 1964 at the hands of the then Home Minister Mr. Balasaheb Desai. By creating Sahitya Sangh Mandir and a well-equipped Drama theatre in the cultural capital of Maharashtra, Balasaheb Desai said, it has galvanized the people of Maharashtra for which he paid compliments to the Sangh. Thereafter, with the staging of the drama 'Saubhadra', the festival was opened. In this festival, spanning between 8th April to 28th June 1964, plays of twenty six playwrights were performed on the stage and renowned drama production houses participated in it. The duo Bhimsen Joshi and Kumar Gandharva rendered classical singing followed by the Sitar recital of veteran Pt Ravishankar at this festival.

The festival also included staging of dramas like 'Rajyacha Putra aparadhidekha' by D.G. Godse, based on the life of Sambhaji, V.D. Ghatge written 'Yeshwantrao Holkar' and new play of Vijay Tendulkar written 'Sari Ga Sari'. Other prominent plays which got staged in this festival were -

Ammaldar, Ekach Pyala, Swayamwar, Mruchakatik, HonajiBala, Bhaubandaki, Three Act play Hamlet, Asa Mi Asa Mi, Raygadla Jevha Jag Yete, Varyavarchi Varat, Panditraj Jagannath, Kulvadhu, Mandarmala, Mi Jinklo Mi Harlo, Karayala Gelo Ek, Vedyache Ghar Unhat, Prema Tuza Rang Kasa and Swayamwar etc.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

3 Contribution to Drama : Beginning



Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh was established in 1935. Its activities in the sphere of drama started in the year 1938. During the Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan which was held this year, the play written by S.K. Kolhatkar named 'Maya Vivah' was staged.

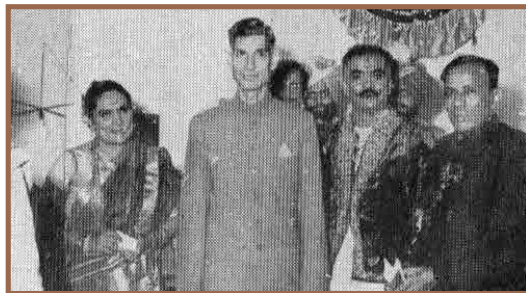
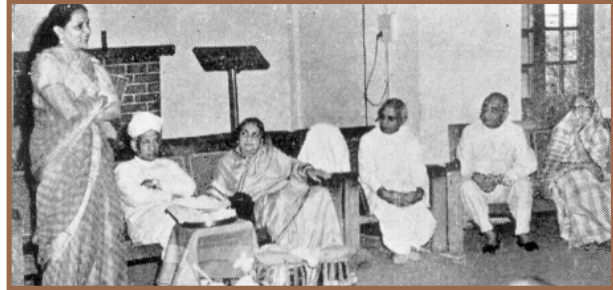
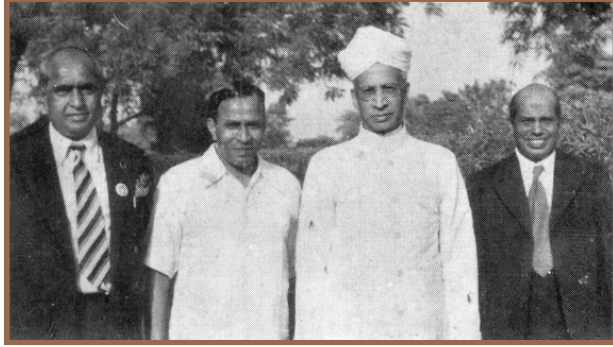
Later, Sangh's Natyashakha staged Anant Kanekar translated 'Gharakul' play and B.V. Varerkar written 'Udati Pakhare' at Natya Sammelan presided over by the versatile author, playwright Acharya P.K. Atre which marked launch of the drama activities of the Sangh.

The centenary of the Marathi stage was celebrated at Sangli in November 1943. Sahitya Sangh participated by producing and staging the drama 'Sharada'.

In April 1944, Sahitya Sangh independently built an open air theatre at Marine Drive and conducted 15-days long drama fest. This Fest witnessed staging of ever-green dramas which had once reigned the hearts of of the drama lovers. They included top- notch dramas like Sangit Sharada, Sangit Subhadra, Sangit Swayamwar, Sangit Satteche Gulam, Bhaubandki. Side by side, it included freshly minted dramas like Sarswat, Janmache Sobti. The most outstanding thing was that a group of writers displayed their acting talent by staging and performing in the drama by the connoisseur of Marathi language Ram Ganesh Gadkari's 'Vedyancha Bazar' proving the point that they are not only good at writing but at acting too.

But the most conspicuous was the presentation of the play 'Shakuntala Swapna' by Prabhakar M. Gupte, marking the beginning of new form of the drama on Marathi stage.

This fest was significantly grand celebration in a sense that it



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

witnessed five to six thousands footfalls every day and such a huge turn up in an open-air theatre was seen for the first time in this country, believe the knowledgeable theatre goers.

In order that the drama activities are conducted on continuous basis on long haul, Sahitya Sangh established its drama wing in 1949. It staged V.V. Shirwadkar written drama 'Vaijayanti' at the 33rd Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan held in 1950 in Mumbai. Towering actors like Durga Khote, Nanasaheb Phatak, Mamasahab Pendse and Master Dattaram had performed roles in this drama.

In 1952-53, Sahitya Sangh organised drama fest in an open theatre at Girgaum in Mumbai.

In 1953, Sahitya Sangh was invited to perform in Delhi by the Indian Railways on the occasion of its centenary celebrations. The Sangh staged two plays - Khadadhtak and Bhau Bandki.

If there is one play which took Sangh to its pinnacle of esteem, it was P.K. Khadilkar's evergreen 'Bhaubandaki'.

Though the play was being staged since 1909 and was receiving accolades, Sahitya Sangh performed it first during the drama centenary year in 1944.

In the drama festival of 1948, Bhaubandaki was performed afresh with Durga Khote playing the role of Anandibai. Thereafter, there were several repeat performances of this play. Performed in the year 1954, at the All India drama competition in Delhi, in which eminent actors like Nanasaheb Phatak played Raghoba, Master Dattaram Ramshastri, Mama Pendse Nana Phadnis and Durga Khote played Anandibai. They were ably supported by young actors like Nana Abhyankar, Anant Vartak, Daji Bhatwadekar, Raja Patwardhan, Shankar Ghanekar, Sudha Karmarkar and Suman Marathe. Produced by Dr. A.N. Bhalerao, the drama so excelled in all the departments of the production that it received for the distinction of the Rashtrapati Award bagging the prize the best all round excellence.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

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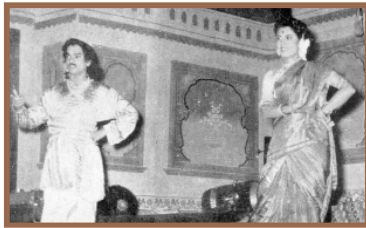
And Later...



Owing to drama fests that Sahitya Sangh organised, several noted playwrights came into limelight. The plays of V.V. Shirwadkar, Anant Kanekar and V.H. Kulkarni got staged during the fests. Even the plays of P.L. Deshpande and Acharya Atre earned popularity on the stage of Sahitya Sangh. P.L. Deshpande's plays like Ammaladar, Tuze Ahe Tujpashi and Atre's Kawadichumbak drew huge public applause. Rehearsals of the plays used to take place at the residence of Dr. Bhalerao and eminent artists like Natwarya Ganatpatrao Bodas, Jayram Shiledar and Jaymala Shiledar came for rehearsals. In Acharya Atre's Lagnachi Bedi, the part played by an ace actress Vanmalabai got huge fan applause and fan-following. The indelible contribution in the drama festival came from veteran actors/directors such as Durgabai Khote, Chintamanrao Kolhatkar, K. Narayan Kale, Acharya Atre, Damuanna Joshi, Mama Pendse, Bhalchandra Pendharkar, Damu Kenkre, P.L. Deshpande, Atmaram Bhende, Herbert Marshal (for Shakespear Drama), Fritz Benevitz of Germany (for Ajab Nyaya Vartulacha).

C.T. Khanolkar translated German playwright Mr. Bertolt Brecht written play called 'the Caucasian Chalk Circle'. This drama was huge success due to an outstanding performance of Bhakti Barve. Directed by the duo - Benevitz and Vijaya Mehta, on special invitation, it was presented at Germany's Berlin Drama Fest. The translator C.T. Khanolkar was present for the show (1974). This play was proclaimed as an 'Outstanding Ever' drama in the fest. It was staged elsewhere later in a number of places in East Germany.

'Mudrarakshas' and 'Mrichakatik', which were in Sanskrit originally, were translated in Germany, sets of which were designed by the noted painter D.G. Godse, also were performed on German stage. Vijaya Mehta had directed the show and Bhaskar Chandavarkar was the music director. German directors also watched the shows. The distinctive genre of the drama was appreciated



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

by these directors. Vijaya Mehta had spared no efforts in displaying native creativity. Vijaya Mehta made most of the opportunity provided to her on the stage of Sahitya Sangh. Not only this, Vijaya Mehta laid foundation of new form of one-act play with her experimentation and paved the way for its respectful entry on the Marathi stage (1975).

The musical plays like 'Dhadila Ram Tine ka Vani' (1978) penned by D.G. Godse and 'Sangit Honaji Bala' (1954) written by C.Y. Marathe, directed by Balasaheb Kale were regarded as a feathers in the cap of the Sangh. The drama 'Dhadila Ram...', had unparalleled performances of singer-actresses Rajani Joshi, Asha Khadilkar and actor Narayan Bodas which became cynosure of eyes of the viewers. The drama 'Honaji Bala' breathed fresh air with novel presentation. With superb acting and singing by Suresh Haldankar, Bhalchandra Pendharkar, Leela Mehta, the drama soared to its peak of the popularity.

The Sahitya Sangh staged some more distinguishing plays like 'Tilak and Agarkar' penned by Vishram Bedekar, (1982), 'Sundara Manamadhye Bharali' and 'Sangit Manapman' (1985) 'Sangit Gora Kumbhar' (2007) and more recent one 'Sangit Mauli' (2022).

The tradition of producing musical plays is carried on uninterrupted even today. The veteran singer-actors like 'Arvind Pilgaonkar, Ramdas Kamath, Narayan Bodas and Rajani Joshi shared the stage. Then new artistes like Pramod Pawar, Sudhark Bhanushe, Neelakshi Pendharkar, Dyanesh Pendharkar, Amol Bawdekar, Sampada Mane, Gauri Pandit and Shreyas Vyas also started shining on the horizon.

The Children's theatre of Sudha Karmarkar (Amonkar) made a start with 'Madhumanjiri' penned by Ratnakar Matkari (1950), and Sudha Karmakar written 'Jaducha Diva's. Sudha Karmarkar's name was synonymous with the children's theatre movement. Her experimental shows, mini musical plays, shadow drama shows were presented on Sangh's stage and deserve special mention.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

5

Lecture Series



A series of lectures were being organised on behalf of the Sahitya Sangh from its very inception period from 1935 to 1942. But after 1942 it came into better shape. It truly made a mark when under the auspices of the Mumbai Granth Sangrahalaya-Sahitya Sangh and Vangmaya Seva Mandal jointlyorganised the first Hemant lecture series in 1942 (Hemant Vyakhyanmala). During this series dignitaries like Appasaheb Karve, poet Anil and critique R.S. Jog had delivered lectures. On this occasion Reverend Appasaheb Karve, prior to his lecture, was felicitated for being awarded Doctorate by the Banaras Hindu University. These lecture series were consistently organised between 1942 and 1985. Many renowned writers, researchers and scientists came to deliver lectures during this period. Giving full account of it may be difficult, but here are some highlights.

1943 - A group discussion on the subject 'In assessing literary work, does the character of the writer matter?' was organised in which M/S A.H. Gadre, Mama Varerkar, Anant Kanekar, Acharya Atre and V.L. Kulkarni participated.

1944 - Mr. Chandravadan Ved delivered a lecture on Gujarathi Stage.

1951 - Discussion on writing in print media. Participants were Acharya Atre, Prabhakar Padhye, P.V. Gadgil and H.R. Mahajani.

1953 - Prof. N.R. Phatak gave a talk on the History of Marathi literature.

1956 - Prof. Narhar Kundarkar delivered a lecture on 'Esthetics of G.E. Moore'.

1957 - Setu Madhavrao Pagdi gave a talk on Mirza Galib and his poetry.

1958 - Prof N.R. Phatak delivered twelve lectures on the Maratha History.

1960 - A debate on 'Gadkari is not the great literature' was participated by M/s S.K. Kshirsagar, V.L. Kulkarni, Madhav Manohar and R.B. Joshi.

1963 - Two lectures on earthen damsns, Transport woes of Mumbai and the Underground Railway, were organised.

1963 - A lecture on Marathi script and typewriting.

1964 - A talk by the Prof. N.S. Phadke on 'Neo-drama'.



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

- 1964** - Haribhau Apate centenary celebration lectures were delivered by S.K. Kshirsagar, V.L. Kulkarni, N.R. Phatak, G.B. Sardar and V.S. Khandekar.
- 1965** - Dr. Gopalchandra Banerjee delivered a lecture on 'Playwright Shakespeare'.
- 1965** - Lt. General Thorat delivered a talk on 'Recent Pakistan War'.
- 1966** - Ten lecture series on the occasion of Keshavsut Centenary which was participated by M/s G.B. Sardar, R.S. Jog, Vasant Bapat, B. Kolte, etc.
- 1967** - On account of the centenary year of Natasamrat Ganapatrao Joshi, M/s Prithviraj Kapur and Keshavrao Bhosle delivered talks.
- 1968** - A debate on the 'Biopic Novel' participated by M/s L.R. Jog, Y.D. Phadke, M.V. Rajadhyaksha.
- 1969** - N.R. Phatak gave a series of lecture on the occasion of the centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi which began from January 26th. Five lecture series were also delivered on the 'Journey to the Moon'.
- 1970** - Shambhu Mitra gave a talk on the 'Bangla Theatre' as well as ten lectures on the 'Modern Western playwrights'.
- 1972** - During the Tamil Literary Fest, well-known Tamil writers Shri S.N. Parthasarathi and Indra Parthdarathigave talks on the 'Modern Tamil Fiction'.
- 1973** - A get-together of German, Russian, American, Rumanian, Polish, Greek, and Bulgarian writers was held and exchange of ideas took place.
- 1973** - On the occasion of Laxmibai Tilak's birth centenary, Dr. Sarojini Shende, Ashok Devdutta Tilak and Sopandev Chaudhary delivered lectures. A debate on the book 'Yugant' by D.V. Deshpande, Laxmanshastri Joshi, writer Iravati Karve etc.
- 1974** - On the occasion of the tri-centenary of Shivaji's coronation ceremony, Narhar Kundarkar delivered two lectures.
- 1977** - Nine lecture series on the subject of 'The work of Marathi Periodicals' was participated by Shri. R.B. Joshi, G.B. Gramopadhye, V.R. Kulkarni, Shrimati Vijaya Rajadhyaksha, Sarojini Vaidya etc.
- 1980** - A lecture by D.Ramchandran on the subject of 'Tamil Mahakavi Subramaniam Bharati'.
- 1982** - Dyaneshwar Nadkarni gave a talk on the 'Modern Marathi Theatre'.
- 1985** - On the occasion of the golden year of the Sahitya Sangh various lecture series were organised namely Death anniversary of Appasaheb Kirloskar, Death centenary of K.R. Mitra, memorial lecture for L.G. Jog, V. M. Joshi, Veteran poet Anil which were held under the joint auspices of Lokmanya Seva Sangh, Vile Parle, and National Library, Bandra.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

6 Platinum Jubilee Year



It may be interesting to go down the memory lane of the Platinum Jubilee Year (October 2009) which marked the memorable events such as celebrating of Mahanagar Literary Fests, College Literary Fests and Lecture series etc.

The Silver Jubilee All India Marathi Literary Fest which was held in 1986, was organised by Sahitya Sangh. Mr. Vishram Bedekar, the noted writer, was the President of the festival. Besides, a get-together of drama critiques (1986), Journalist's Fest (1990), Marathi publishers' Fest and Humorists' Literary Fest (1991), Sister Languages Fest (1992), Silver Jubilee Memorial Year Drama Fest (1994), were too organised by the Sangh. The Platinum Year of the Sangh was celebrated in the year 1996. The beginning of the Sahitya and Natya Seva awards was made in the year 1996. During the period 2001 to 2002 the death anniversary of late Shri Dr. A.N. Bhalerao was commemorated. The beginning of the College Literary Fest was made in the year 2003. The Tri-level platinum One Act-Play competition made a start in the December 2003. In this, the one act play competition at three levels took place - Youth platinum shield (collegian), Platinum Shield (Freshers) and Platinum Karmashri (employees).

In Feb 2005, twelve multi-linguist drama festival celebrations got organised. In this festival, the plays in Urdu, Gujarati, English, Hindi and Marathi languages were staged.

Mumbai Metropolitan Marathi Literary Fest, with a few exceptions, were organised every year. These fests were presided over by noted literary names like Madhav Gadkari, M.P. Rege, Vijaya Rajadhyaksha, Sarojini Vaidya, Keshav Meshram, Shankar Vaidya, Vishwas Patil, Arun Tikekar and Pratibha Ranade. Like the format of All India Literary Fests, several literary events, discussions, debates, poets' get-together were organised.



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

The College Marathi Literary Fests began taking place from the year 2003. First Literary Fest was held on 16th November 2003 which was presided over by the well known writer Veena Gavankar. These festivals came to be organised with a view to develop literary potential of the students and to imbibe love for Marathi language. These festivals were presided over by literary celebrities like Dr Anil Awachat, Ratnakar Matkari, Arun Sadhu, ArunaDhere, Uttam Kamble. These fests included events which were close to the hearts of youths like literary debates, symposium, poet get-together.

During this period, many speeches in the lecture series which had a mix of some old and some new lectures were organised. The old lecture series included - Late Vaman Malhar Joshi Memorial, Late A.N. Bhalerao Memorial, Late Lalji Pendse Memorial, Late Anna Martand Joshi, Late Nath Madhav Memorial, Late L.G. Jog Memorial, Late veteran poet Anil Memorial, Late Kashinath Raghunath Mitra Memorial, Late B.N. Gokhale Memorial, etc. This platinum lecture series started in 2008. This lecture series revealed how Marathi language was enriched and great contribution made by Shivaji Maharaj, Saint Tukaram, Samarth Ramdas, Pandit kavya, Christian poetry and Folk songs in the six lecture series by renowned speakers.

On account of the Platinum Celebrations between 24th October 2009 to 8th November 2009. Many events were organised. The Platinum ceremony was inaugurated by the renowned director Vijaya Mehta. Presiding over the ceremony was the well reputed writer Shri K.J. Purohit. The event was replete with speeches from speakers of other languages, the journey of musical plays, the theatre journey of the Sahitya Sangh, Get-together of the drama lovers, Lecture series on platinum jubilee, Book publications, Platinum memorial jubilee book publication, speeches by renowned stage artists etc.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

7 Collegiate Literary Festivals



The Sahitya Sangh launched a new initiative in 2003 for Marathi students studying in colleges by holding Collegiate Literary Festivals. The first Collegiate Literary Festival was held in the premises of the Sangh. The noted writer Ms Veena Gavankar had presided over it. The second Literary Festival too was organised at the Sangh premises which was presided over by the popular writer Dr. Anil Awachat. Then the string of festivals got organised in and around the vicinity of Mumbai in 15 colleges which included - Ruia College, Vaze-Kelkar College, Chetana, Kirti, Somayya, Patkar, Sathye College, Thane Library, Khalsa, Zunzunwala College, C.K.T. College of Panvel and P.N. Doshi Women's College of Ghatkopar. The well-known literary names like Ratnakar Matkari, Atul Pethe, Aruna Dhere, Uttam Kamble, Ramdas Phutane, Pravin Davane, Pradnya Pawar, Achut Godbole, Mangesh Padgaonkar, Urmila Pawar, Arun Mhatre, Ashok Bage had graced the occasions as Presidents of these festivals. The most popular artists amongst the collegians such as Nishigandha Wad, Chandrakant Kulkarni, Sadashiv Amrapurkar, Sunil Barve, Abhijit Kelkar, Atul Kulkarni, Kaushal Inamdar, Amruta Subhash, Shailesh Datar, Spruha Joshi, Tejasvi Satpute had come to inaugurate the fests.

The most remarkable thing of these festivals was all the events such as to be compering the ceremony, giving speeches, Interviewing, Poet get-togethers were spearheaded by the students themselves, characterising the festival by the students, for the students and of the students. To remove stage fright and enhance ability to speak from the dias, the elocution and poem recital competitions were held regularly in August which used to draw big response from the students.

Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh started organising from 2017 Bal Kumar Literary Fests for school-going children. First such festival was



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

presided by the well-known writer of children literature L.M. Kadu. During the festival held at Swami Muktanand School, Chembur, several programs like President's address, storytelling by the students, the Interview of the child artist conducted by the student, the get-together of the student poets were organised. The students' story telling session was conducted during the first Literary Fest which was presided over by the eminent story writer Madhavi Gharpure. An interview of the child artist Trishnika Shinde was conducted by a student. Similarly, poet get-together of students was held which was presided over by the poet Uttam Kolgaonkar in which many students presented their poems. The Second Bal Sahitya festival was organised at Chikitsak Samuha Shirolkar High School at Girgaon which was presided over by the noted children writer Sanjay Wagh. In this festival, the well-known TV child artist Mayra Waykul was interviewed by some students. In story-telling session, many students presented their stories which was presided over by the writer Vilas Shindgikar and in the poet get-together many students presented their poems in the presence of Shivaji Gawade.

These literary fests organised for college and school going students by the Sangh have been playing crucial role in developing literary talents in students.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

8 Mahanagar Literary Fests



The first suburban Marathi literary festival was organised in the year 1934 in Mumbai. The veteran writer Krishnarao Keluskar had presided over the function. It is in this festival, that the resolution to establish a Literary institution in Mumbai was passed. Accordingly, Mumbai Sahitya Sangh came to be established on 21st July 1935 in Girgaon, Mumbai. Ever since till date this institution has been the pivotal source of inspiration to writers and literature lovers.

Ever since 1935 till today Mumbai Marathi Literary Fests have been regularly taking place in Mumbai. In recent times, in December 2024, 47th Literary Fest was held which was presided over by the noted writer Mukund Taksale. During the intervening period, all those Literary Fests that were held had many ace language experts and writers of repute who presided over these functions. To mention a few are: V.S. Khandekar, Prof. N.S. Phadke, B.V. Varerkar, Acharya Atre, Madkholkar, Acharya Jawadekar, Malati Bedekar, R.S. Jog, Laxmanshastri Joshi, Y.G. Joshi, V.V. Shirvadkar (Kusumagraj), Kusumavati Deshpande, Mahadevshastri Joshi, Indira Sant, G.B. Sardar, B.B. Borkar, Ranjit Desai, Narhar Kundarkar, Vasant Bapat etc. Barring the exceptions of a few, many writers from this later came to grace the All India Marathi Literary Fests as their presidents.

Alongside these renowned writers of yester years, many writers and poets/poetess of the generation that followed like Dr. Vijaya Rajadhyaksha, Veteran poet Shankar Vaidya, Shirish Pai, Arun Tikekar, Pratibha Ranade, Vishwas Patil, Ramdas Bhatkal, Mangaa Godbole, Bal Phondke, Aruna Dhere, Poetess Niraja etc. too graced the Literary Fests as Presidents which came to be held regularly during last 27 years. The presidential address of these veteran writers embraced a variety of literary themes like literary criticism, freedom of expression, freedom of writing, subconscious imprints



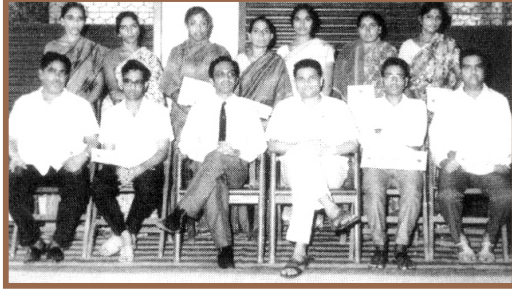
Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

etc. The address encompassed the then emerging social and political milieu and imprints left by the war on the Marathi literature. These presidential speeches also touched the changing paradigm of the writers due to changed circumstances. They are the beacons of the guiding thoughts to the society at large, seeding positive thoughts that could not only touch the upper crust- the erudite class but Adivasis too and not only Sanskrit laden rich language but folk language alike. The addresses bear the testimony of this revelation and is the common running thread of their speeches. The Sahitya Sangh has come out with the book titled 'Presidential address of Mahanagar Literary Festivals' which was published in 2014, and has become the treasure trove of the lovers of the Marathi literature.

The distinguishing characteristic of these fests was quality content it offered. The Presidential addresses undoubtedly were very thought provoking, but programs like Literary discussion, debates and symposium, poet get-together provided immense opportunity for nurturing love and lasting awareness of Marathi language even today.

Some fifty years ago, so many avenues of entertainment as replete as today were absent. Therefore, many programs like literary debates, lectures and literary fests were the only avenues, the literary lovers would fall back upon. It is because of these programs organised by the Sahitya Sangh that many lovers of Marathi literature could enrich the taste for the Marathi language and literature. And the Sangh's contribution in organising them is immense and worth in gold.





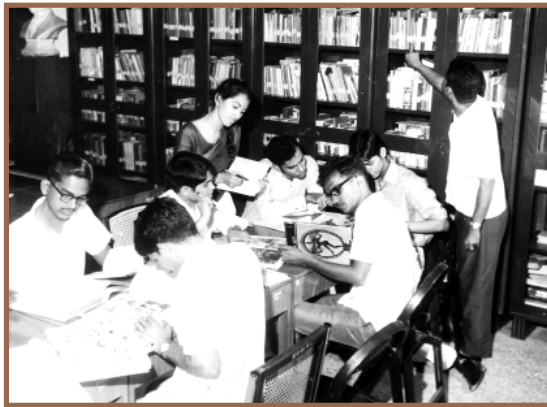
Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

9 Marathi Language Classes



Another noteworthy feature of the Sahitya Sangh is its initiative to start and continuously hold Marathi teaching classes for non- Marathi adult learners. On one fine Sunday, at the instance of the late Shri Tatyasaheb Amonkar and the late Shri V.R. Dhavale, such Marathi classes started a beginning in Chembur, in the month of August 1970 for non-Marathi adults. It was made possible because of an helping hand extended by the Sahitya Sangh, Chembur Tamil Sangham and General Education Academy. By writing 'Sri', Prof. Ram Patwardhan ceremoniously inaugurated the class and ever since it is being conducted till today. For many years, these classes were being held regularly in Borivali, Bandra, Matunga, Sion, Chembur, Ambernath and Girgaon. Until Corona pandemic, these classes were held in three centers at Sion, Chembur and Girgaon. Now these classes are conducted online for those interested.

The teachers who devotedly participated in the teaching, had love for the Sahitya Sangh right from the word go. Nurtured and enriched by mother's milk, teaching our mother tongue to non-Marathi speaking public, through oral transmission, certainly provided an unusual experience. It brought teachers and learners nearer to each other. Those who made invaluable contributions in establishing Marathi language teaching centres during initial years included Shri. Ram Patwardhan, Shri. Malhar Dhage, Shri. Ramesh Tendulkar, Shri. P.N. Paranjape, Smt. Sudha Joshi, Shri. Gangadhar Patil, Shri. Subhash Soman, Shri. Vasant Bhandare, Shri. Arun Kulkarni, Shri. Arun Tikekar and Shri. Sada Karhade. What can be regarded as social work in this initiative of the Sangh, those who contributed their mite subsequently included Smt. Suhasini Kirtikar, Shri. Harichandra Thorat, Shri. Dinkar Barve, Shri. Gajanan Risbud, Shri. Jaywant Chunekar, Smt. Pushpalata Shetye, Shri. Suhas Limaye and Shri. V.S. Chaugule. These teachers remained loyal and dedicated year after year to the Sangh.



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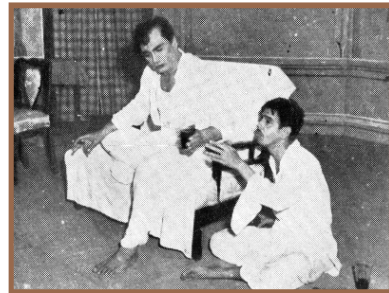
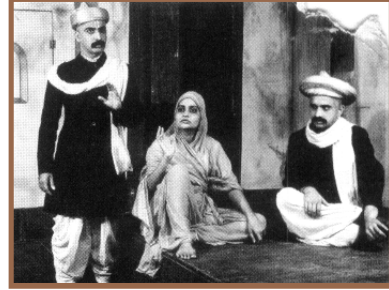
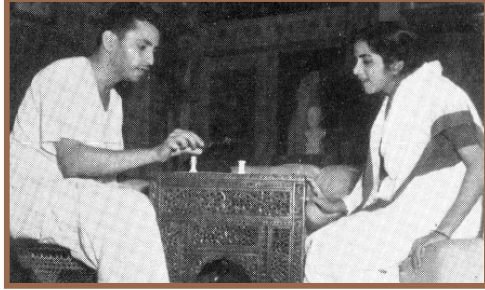
<https://www.mumbai.marathisangha.org>

Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

The special feature of this Marathi class was the workshop which was conducted twice by the education department of the Mahanagar Municipal Corporation for the non-Marathi teachers. As a part of this workshop, Smt. Suhasini Kirtikar undertook the teaching. Besides, the classes of two- three month's duration were organised at Maharashtra Mandal, Bandra. Marathi teaching classes of one month's duration were organised for non- Marathi executives of the Maharashtra Income Tax department twice. Ms Minakshi Jaykar and Shri. Suhas Limaye taught Marathi to the actress Genelia, actor Amir Khan and Dr Vibha Surapa (Head, Deptt. of German Language, Mumbai University) as private tutors. The Mumbai University's German and Marathi departments were prompted to organize debates twice on this subject. It led German department to publish the book on the syllabus of the Marathi. Jaywant Chunekar and Suhas Limaye both as editors, have contributed a lot in bringing out this book.

At present the online class is active at the initiative of Dr Ashwini Bhalerao, in which Smt. Suhasini Kirtikar (Class Director), Smt. Meenakshi Jaykar and Smt. Sandhya Gokhale are actively participating as teachers.





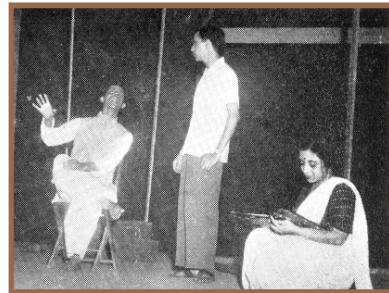
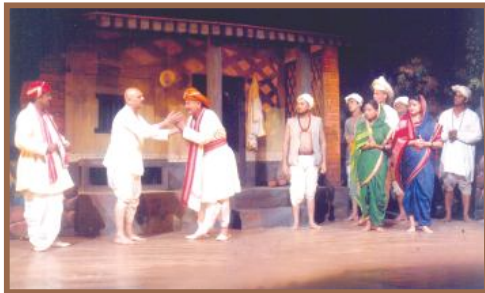
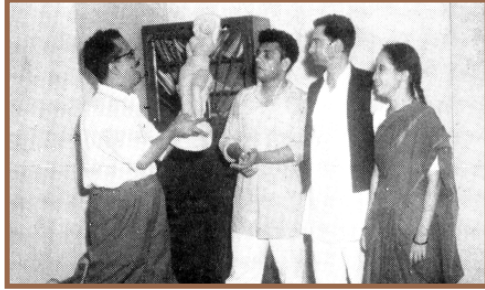
Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

10 The Drama Activities and Amrut Natya Bharati



Sahitya Sangh, after its inception (1935), initially organised at Marine Lines, a grand drama festival. Due to this, many excellent playwrights came into limelight. It is on record that the drama 'Maya Vivah' penned by Mr. S.K. Kolhatkar was staged first time on behalf of the drama wing of the Sahitya Sangh (1938). Thereafter, many dramas came to be staged at the behest of the Sahitya Sangh. Some of the major names of plays and dramatists are: Gharkul (Anant Kanekar), Satteche Gulam (Mama Varerkar), Bhaubandaki (K.P. Khadilkar), Vedyancha Bazar, Premsanayas, Ekach Pyala (Ram Ganesh Gadkari), Udyacha Sansar, Vande Mataram, Kawadichumbak (Acharya Atre), Doorache dive, Kauntey, Dusara Peshwa, Othello (V.V. Shirvadkar), Tuze ahe tujpashi, Ammaladar, Sundar mi honar (P.L. Deshpande), Manus navache bet, Sari ga sari (Vijay Tendulkar), Ajab nyay vartulacha, Sage soyare (C.T. Khanolkar), Mithu mithu popat (Dilip Chitre), Pati gele ga kathewadi (Vyanktesh Madgulkar), Dhadila ram ka vani (D.G. Godse), Tilak Ani Agarkar, Vaje Paul apule (Vishram Bedekar), Madhumanjiri (Ratnakar Matkari), Saujanyaichi aisi taisi (Vasant Sabnis).

Just as all above dramatists were reputed, so were the artists who acted in the plays. To mention a few: Durgabai Khote, Vanmalabai, Ganpatrao Bodas, Chintamanrao Kolhatkar, K. Narayan Kale, Damuanna Joshi, Mama Pendse, Bhalchandra Pendharkar, Damu Kenkre, P.L. Deshpande, Atmaram Bhende, Jayram Shiledar, Jaymala Shiledar etc. The period between 1944 to 1964 was the golden period of the Sangh. The drama movement grew leaps and bounds subsequent to 1960. It expanded its reach.. Due to the tremendous contribution of the Sangh and the growth trajectory, many drama professional producers came forward and shone on the horizon of the Marathi stage. Even



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

the post-1960 period was the richest era of the Marathi drama stage in which Sangh had lion's share in the drama movement.

To honour the memory of the founder Dr. A.N. Bhalerao of the Amrut Natyabharati Sahitya Sangh, a drama wing in the name of Amrut Natya Bharati was started in 1962. And under the guidance of Shri Kamalakar Sontakke, scientific teaching of the drama was started. After Shri. Sontakke, this activity was spearheaded by M/s Vaman Kendre, Jaydev Hattangadi and Madhav Khadilkar. This drama wing continued to boost the enthusiasm of both the experimental and amateur stage alike later for some years.

After 1970 when drama teaching stopped, Amrut Natya Bharti staged some one-act plays along with other activities. It organised acting workshops for the children. Its brief review follows: The Natyabharati, during four year period of 1966 to 1970 presented 9 one-act plays, written by Smt. Madhuri Bhide, Shri. D.M. Mirasdar, Shri. Sachin Mote etc. In 1999, a program of reading of Ram Ganesh Gadkari's wellknown drama scenes from Ekach Pyala and Premsanyas was presented. Atre Darshan program was also presented. Conceived by Jayant Savarkar, the program included reading of some drama scenes, drama songs, ironic songs besides some plays and one-act plays. Get-together of amateur artists was organised. Extempore one act-play competition was held. The drama lover Shri. Shivdas Ghodake conducted acting workshop for children (between 2004 to 2007). Similarly, stalwart drama Guru Satyadev Dubey held acting workshops between 2006 and 2007.

Although, these activities have come to standstill today, the work of Amrut Natya Bharati unquestionably created waves then on the stage for quite some period.





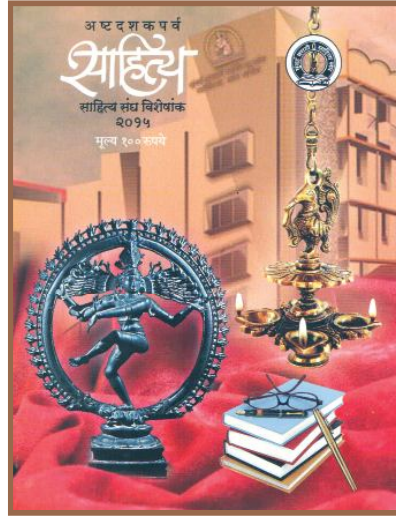
Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

11 80th year of the Sangh



80th year of the Sangh was celebrated in 2015. As a part of the celebration, some programmes were organised. Some special events in the Dr. Bhalerao Theatre were held on 14th and 15th March, 2015. As an integral part of the programme called 'My bolichi Leni', a programme called, 'Days of Ravikiran Mandal' was presented. This programme was the brain child of well-known playwright Mr. Sursh Khare and its music composition of the poems was by Kamalesh Bhadkamkar. The recital of some poems was done by Suresh Khare and Poorva Bhawe. In this programme, poems meant for children were recited which received great appreciation from the audience. On the whole, the programme turned out to be spectacular. On 15th March, a symposium on the topic, 'Freedom of expression and peace in the society' was conducted. The eminent speakers like playwright Abhiram Bhadkamkar, Journalist Sarang Darshane, Media expert Raviraj Gandhe and stage actress Nayana Apatte expressed their views. The symposium was presided over by the noted writer Sadanand More. The symposium, on the whole, was considered to be of great educative value by the audience. Dr. More was felicitated in this programme for being the President of the 88th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan.

Established on 21st July 1935, the Sahitya Sangh completed eighty years of its activities in July 2015 and entered into eighty first year. Taking it as an opportune time, the drama wing of the Sangh, on behalf of Amrut Natya Bharati, inaugurated a new play. It deserves special mention that the brand new drama named 'Shura mi vandile' was penned by Vainatyeya Tulajapurkar who presented it to the Sangh, was none other than the son of the President of the Sangh in 1935, Mr. Dattoba Tulajapurkar. The inauguration of this play took place in Dr Purandare hall and it was directed by the young stage artiste Yash Kadam.

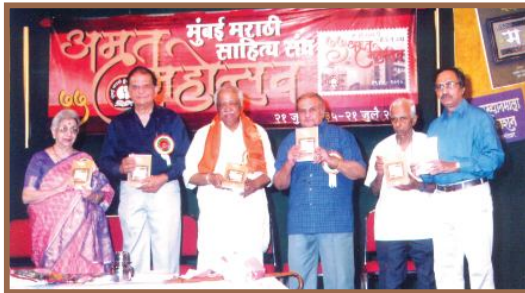
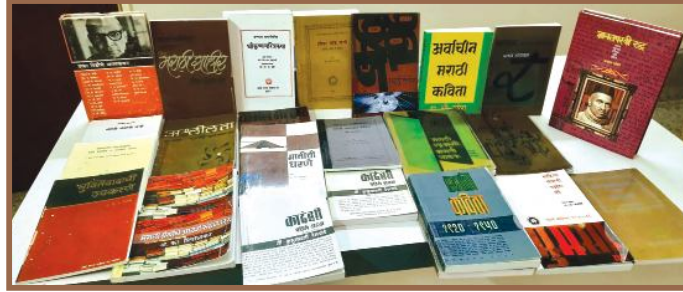


Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

The history of eighty years of the Sangh is spectacular. The Sangh transitioned through several changes during this period. Therefore, the house magazine of the Sangh, in its special edition in 2015, mentioned several historical milestones. Mr. Ashok Bendkhale was the editor of this special number. This special number carries five articles of special importance. Prof Usha Tambe, in her apt review, had captured Sangh's activities during the initial years. Mr Ashok Bendkhale covered the subsequent period of 35 years (from 1950 to 1985), almost up to Silver jubilee, capturing the distinguishing features of the flourishing period. Smt. Suhasini Kirtikar captured the onward march of the Sangh during the subsequent 30 years (1985 to 2015) after the Silver Jubilee. Dr. Ujjwala Mehendale revisited briefly the 80 years of Sahitya Shakha's activities and similarly Shri. Subhash Bhagwat narrated 80 year's of the journey of the Sangh's drama wing. The drama wing had held thousands of shows of more than 175 plays during this long period of eighty years. Several of today's accomplished stage artists were provided initial opportunities by the Sangh and these artists gratefully acknowledge it.

This special number has become specially interesting and readable because of reflective thoughts of renowned director Vijaya Mehta, well-known actress Lalita Kenkre, interviews of Dr. Bal Bhalerao, Padmashri Madhu Mangesh Karnik, pen-picture of S.M. Ghaisas, and also reflective thoughts of veteran artists Arvind Pilgaonkar, Rajani Joshi, Upendra Datye, Asha Mulgaonkar and Rohidas Pange.





Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

12 Publications of Sahitya Sangh

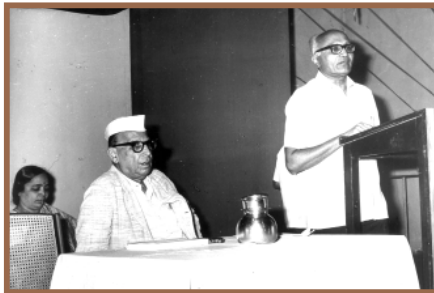


During its first phase i.e. up to 1985, Sahitya Sangh published 23 books. Out of these, most important book for those who study literature, was Shri. V.R. Dhavale edited book on Marathi poetry: the ancient period (1150-1840) and Marathi poetry (1920-1950), besides Kusumavati Deshpande's book on Marathi Novels during the first century. Moreover, 'Vangmay Darshan' by Waman Malhar Joshi, 'Arvachin Marathi Kavya' by V.L. Kulkarni, 'Matichi Dharane' by R.S. Jog, 'Marathi Akhyan Kavita' by S.M. Bhalerao, 'Dr. Bhau Daji - Vyakti, Kala Ani Kartutva', 'Marathi Rangbhumi : Marathi Natak - Ghatana Ani Parampara' by Y.K. Priyolkar, 'Rasaswad : Vangmaya Ani Kala' by K. Narayan Kale, 'Hari Narayan Apate Yannchya Kadambarya' by Madhav Achawal, 'Waman Malhar ani Vichar Saundarya' by Achala Joshi, 'Marathi Shahir' by S.M. Varde, 'Eka Pidhiche Atmakathan' edited by P.S. Rege and others were the significant books published. The oldest book in this lot was of 1946.

During the last fifteen years or so, Sangh brought out new editions of some of the books. Those include books Ujjwala Mehendale's 'Dusarya Pidhiche Atmakathan', 'Marathi Bolu Kautuke' edited by Ashok Bendkhale / Usha Tambe, 'Dyantapaswi Rudra - N.R. Phatak yanche charitra' by Achala Joshi, 'Mahanagar Marathi Sahitya Sammelane - Adhyakshiya Vichar' edited by Usha Tambe, Ujjwala Mehendale, Ashok Bendkhale, Padmakar Shirwaikar, 'Iye Marathiche Nagari' edited by Ashok Bendkhale /Ujjwala Mehendale, 'Tisarya Pidhiche Atmakathan' part 1 and 2, edited by Ujjwala Mehendale, 'Balsahityache swarup ani Vyapti' edited by Ujjwala Mehendale / Eknath Awhad, 'Amrut Kan kowale' by Rekha Narvekar. All these books are available free of charge in the PDF format on the pendrive.

Sahitya Mouthpiece

The inhouse journal of the Sahitya Sangh called 'Sahitya' - the



Glimpses of Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh

periodical, was started in January 1947. Its first editor was literature lover V.R. Dhawale. Mr Dhawale ably spearheaded as an editor of this periodical for five years. The initial years of the periodical carried articles of the outstanding writers like V.S. Khandekar, N.S. Phadke, N.R. Phatak, Anant Kanekar, Kshirsagar, V.L. Kulkarni, Prabhakar Padhye, Waman Chorghade, P.L. Deshpande, Gangadhar Gadgil, Arvind Gokhale, Vinda Karandikar etc. After January 1952, the publishing of this periodical took a break. From April 1995, it resumed regularly publishing as tri-monthly magazine, which continues till today. Diwali special number of the magazine started from 2001. Besides, some special numbers of 'Sahitya' were published such as, two Annuals (1956 and 1957), World Marathi Conference special number, (1989). Humour literature number (1991), Centenary number of Kusumagraj (February 2011), Maharashtra Silver jubilee number (May 2011), Saint Literature (May 2014), Freedom of expression number (May 2015), Sahitya Sangh special number (2015) Novel special number (2016), Translation special number (2017), Colloquial Language number (2021), Post-independence Marathi literature number (2022), etc. The editors of 'Sahitya' since 1947, have been - V.R.Dhawale, Vasant Dawatar, Bhimrao Kulkarni, Keshav Meshram, Ravindra Pinge, Vasundhara Pendse Naik, Padma Gharpure, Malhar Dhage, Ujjwala Mehendale, Ramesh Mantri, Usha Tambe, Niranjana Ujagare, Suhasini Kirtikar, Anupama Ujagare, Ashok Bhendkhale, Surekha Sabnis, Narayan Lale and Narendra Pathak.

On the whole, the contribution of 'Sahitya' amongst the literary magazines can be regarded as remarkable.



मुंबई मराठी साहित्य संघाची अलीकडील प्रकाशने

एका पिढीचे आत्मकथन (दुसरी आवृत्ती), संपादक : पु.शि. रेगे, वा.ल. कुळकर्णी,
रा.भि. जोशी, गं.ब. ग्रामोपाध्ये.

दुसऱ्या पिढीचे आत्मकथन, संपादक: उज्ज्वला मेहेदळे.

मराठी बोलु कौतुके, संपादक : अशोक बेंडखळे / उषा तांबे.

एका मुंबईकराची कहाणी (दीर्घकथा), लेखक : गंगाधर गाडगीळ.

काशिनाथ त्र्यंबक तेलंग (अल्पचरित्र), लेखक : गंगाधर गाडगीळ.

मराठी साहित्य सूर्यमाला, संपादक मंडळ : सुहासिनी कीर्तिकर, चंद्रशेखर गोखले,
प्रतिभा बिस्वास, सावित्री हेगडे.

ज्ञानतपस्वी रुद्र - न.र. फाटक यांचे चरित्र, लेखिका : अचला जोशी.

मराठी नाट्यसंमेलन अध्यक्षीय नाट्यसूर्यमाला : भाग २, संकल्पना : शं.ना.
अंधुटकर, संपादन : सुभाष भागवत.

महानगर मराठी साहित्य संमेलन : अध्यक्षीय विचार, संकल्पना ज.बा. कुलकर्णी,
संपादक मंडळ : उषा तांबे, उज्ज्वला मेहेदळे, अशोक बेंडखळे, पद्माकर शिरवाडकर.

इथे मराठीचिथे नगरी, संपादक : अशोक बेंडखळे / डॉ. उज्ज्वला मेहेदळे.

तिसऱ्या पिढीचे आत्मकथन : भाग १ आणि २, संपादक: डॉ. उज्ज्वला मेहेदळे.

अमृत कण कोवळे, लेखिका : रेखा नार्वेकर.

बालसाहित्याचे स्वरूप आणि व्याप्ती, संपादक : डॉ. उज्ज्वला मेहेदळे, सहसंपादक :
श्री. एकनाथ आव्हाड.

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