

Saraswati Samman for Oriya writer

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New Delhi, February 19

THE SARASWATI Samman, the most prestigious literary award in the country, has been conferred for the year 2000 on Oriya novelist Manoj Das. The award, which comprises a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh, has been instituted by the KK Birla Foundation. Mr Das was selected for his Oriya novel, "*Amrita Phula*" (The Nectar Fruit).

The award is given annually to an outstanding literary work in any

Indian language (mentioned in the eighth schedule of the Constitution) by an Indian citizen which has been published in the last 10 years preceding the year for which the Samman is awarded.

The award is also distinguished by an elaborate selection process. It is done by a high level "Chayan Parishad" presided over by former Supreme Court Judge Justice H.R. Khanna. Works published in 18 Indian languages dur-



Manoj Das

ing the period 1990-1999 were considered before Mr Manoj Das was finally chosen for the honour.

Born in Orissa in 1934, Das has several literary contributions to his credit in many genres. His first collection of poems was published in 1949. His first collection of short stories was published two years later. However, fiction-writing has emerged as his main medium of expression. He has 33 published books to his credit. Das is also recognised today as a

bilingual writer of eminence having written both in English and Oriya. Ever since moving to the Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry in 1963, Das has been a professor of English literature at the Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

The award-winning novel "*Amrita Phula*", was published in 1996. It deals with how much man today differs from his ancestors, his primeval longing for truth, liberty and immortality. The search for an answer to the question comprises the theme of the work.