

Manoj Das of Pondicherry Wins Akademy Award

Prof Manoj Das has been awarded Sahitya Akademi National Award for his "Collection of short stories" in Oriya.

Born in 1934 in Orissa (India), Manoj Das occupies a distinct position among the new generation of Indian writers. "He has an astonishing knowledge of human nature," comments *The Hindu*, India's premier newspaper. And the *Indian Literature*, surveying the recent Indian writing in English, says, "He practises the art of short story almost to perfection."

He was born in an affluent feudal family. But his early memory recorded the horror of a devastating famine in his home area. In quest of some panacea for human suffering he soon turned a rigid materialist. As a radical youth leader he undertook several organisational activities in India and some other Asian countries. His area of experience includes a term inside the prison too.

His sincerity behind his quest, however, revealed to him the Splendour of Spirit behind his nihilism.

His home-state has given him both her highest awards. The Sahitya Akademi Award (1965) and the

Vishuv Milan Award (1971). He is acknowledged today as one of the ablest interpreters of the Indian mind in fiction. In the universities of his home-state his literature is studied at all the levels - particularly at the post-graduate level. One of his books for children, "Stories of Light and Delight", published by the National Book Trust, Govt. of India, has been translated into all the fourteen Indian languages from its original English and has established records in popularity in all the editions.

Manoj Das is a professor of English literature at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry. He has edited several journals including "World Union", an international quarterly. His weekly column in a weekly is widely appreciated.

His explorations in the archives of England and Scotland has brought to light some little-known episodes in India's struggle for freedom in the first decade of the century, led by Sri Aurobindo.

He received Bhikshu Chaman Lal's Indian Award for Journalism in 1971.

In 1972, he has won the national Sahitya Akademi Award.