



PEARLS OF WISDOM



RS Agarwal, co-founder of Emami Group, is not only a successful industrialist, philanthropist and connoisseur of performing arts, but also a voracious reader and poet. Urged by his family, he has recently published *Bhavdhara*, his first book of poetry, featuring his ruminations on life and its tenets. We present a review followed by a short tête-à-tête with the author.

Text * **Chitrita Agarwal**

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IKHRE MOTI, some scattered pearls—that is how Radhe Shyam Agarwal describes his first book of poetry, *Bhavdhara*, and like pearls, this book is a collection of disparate but well-formed thoughts. With philosophical verses that reflect the journey of a spiritual man, each page and verse in the book is complete, guiding the reader towards a spiritual, metaphysical plane.

The book ruminates on life and its mysteries, covering a gamut of subjects and emotions. From personal topics such as verses dedicated to his mother and the power he has felt in prayer and study to broader, more general thoughts like the importance of giving, the strength of knowledge, the joy of sharing and the annihilation of ego, all have been explored by the poet. 'Jee Raha Hoon', for example, puts his philosophy of simple living in focus. When translated, the poem reads: I am, so I live. I live to the character born with the characteristics of that character.

The short essence that appears at the end of each poem compels a second read and encourages us to delve deeper. And as we turn the pages, the poems—which illustrate morality and consciousness—affect us, stirring and touching the heart and soul. The graphics interspersed between poems (images of paintings from the collection of Emami Chisel, a collaboration between Emami and Chisel Art) also enhance the sensitivity of the metrical compositions, existing in harmony with his expressions.

The book is written in an exemplary form of *khadi boli* Hindi, a dying language in the face of today's ubiquitous use of everyday English. The crisp rendition and usage of lexical Hindi is a joy to read, reminding one of illustrious poets like Dinkar and Jaishankar Prasad.

Bhavdhara eulogises integrity, righteousness and morality, offering insights to universal truths. Its appeal lies in the fact that Agarwal writes about his experiences with life

as he has lived it without being preachy. His last rendition 'Manva' is reminiscent of Kabir's famous *doha*: "Aisi bani boliye, Man ka aapa khoye, Apna tan sheetal kare, Auron ko sukh hoye" (Speak such words, sans ego's ploy, Body remains composed, giving the listener joy). It incites us to be seekers of knowledge and speak words that shower happiness and wisdom, encapsulating the poet's own work.

Excerpts from the Q&A with R S Agarwal

Tell us about your passion for poetry.

What inspires you to pen verses rather than prose?

I have a passion for writing both prose and poetry in Hindi as well as English. *Bhavdhara* captures the flow of my thoughts, emotions and philosophy of life, as and when it comes to my mind and heart. Whenever there is a proper balance between my mind and heart, I am inspired to write to give expression to my inner feelings.

With your busy schedule as a leading entrepreneur, how do you manage to find time for poetry?

Frankly speaking, for writing poetry one does not really require much time if one is proficient in writing and clear in one's mind and heart about the subject one wishes to write about. If you enjoy something, you will never find yourself to be too busy. Instead, you will experience a lot of happiness and real *anandam* when you write such poetry.

What do you expect the readers of *Bhavdhara* to take away from the book and from your poetry?

Readers may take away from this book whatever appeals to them. I have received hundreds of letters where readers have liked different poems in different contexts. Some find them similar to their life, some find them very close to their heart and some find them spiritual, educative and fresh. When I read these letters, it gives me immense satisfaction. Some of these letters are from topmost industrialists of the country and leading writers in Hindi literature who are award winners and known to be eminent critics.

Apart from your business achievements, you have also been actively engaged in welfare activities as a prominent trustee of many organisations. Please tell us about some of the issues that are close to your heart. Do they hold any personal significance for you?

The blueprint of a nation's development should be based on a strong foundation of inclusive and intrinsic growth. This would only be possible if we can ensure the basic necessities of *roti-kapda-makan* (food-clothing-housing) to each and every citizen of the nation. Every nation has its own set of issues, prejudices and obstacles. It is time for India to break away from all such hindrances and wake up. Apart from basic subsistence, education for all and women empowerment are two other areas that need sincere attention. The time has come when we all need to take a pledge and work towards a day when every Indian will be the rightful owner of all these development prerequisites and take the nation ahead towards prosperity. *