

Kartar Singh Duggal passes away

SAP Bureau

While India was celebrating its 63rd Republic Day, Punjabi language lost one of its most committed soldiers in the death of prominent Punjabi writer Kartar Singh Duggal. He died at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences due to old age related illness. He was 94. Duggal was born on March 1, 1917 in Dhamial village of Rawalpindi, Pakistan and was brought up there itself. He obtained masters degree in English from Forman Christian College, Lahore, and started his professional career with the All India Radio (AIR).

A master storyteller, Duggal, during a career spanning over four decades, had written 24 collections of short stories and 10 novels weaving the historical strands of the Partition saga and intricacies of human relationships in the modern society. Many of his books have been adopted by various universities in graduation courses and translated into other Indian languages.

From 1942-66, during his job at the AIR in various capacities, including as Station Director, Duggal wrote and produced programmes in Punjabi and other languages. He was the secretary of the National Book Trust of India from 1966-73 before serving as an Advisor in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting from 1973 to 1976.

Duggal was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1988. In 2007, he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, the highest honour given by the Akademi.

As a chronicler of tragic social events in the wake of the Partition, Duggal earned the repute of a naturalistic writer.

In his writings, Duggal never left behind the cultural baggage of his Pakistani province in Punjab. The environs of Pothohar, especially its dialect, became an integral part of his works which were filled with nostalgia and intimacy.

Duggal was honoured with almost all the major literary prizes including the Sahitya Akademi Award, Ghalib Award, Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad Award, Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid Award, and Soviet Land Nehru Award. Apart from his writings, Duggal's major contribution was translating the Guru Granth Sahib into English and penning down 'A History of Punjabi Literature' along with renowned critic Santh Singh Sekhon.