



# Day and Dastan

## Two Novellas

**Intizar Husain**

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**Alok Bhalla**

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- Features two novellas by a supreme story-teller and writer of Urdu prose
- *Day*, a realistic story, is a meditation on the trauma of migrations
- *Dastan*, a traditional tale of wonder, is a lyrical narrative of adventure, magic and grace

Intizar Husain is the finest writer of Urdu prose and the most brilliant story-teller of the post-partition generation. The two novellas, ***Day and Dastan (Din Aur Dastan)***, his favorite texts, show his versatility and fictional inventiveness. *Day*, a realistic story, is a meditation on the cruellest of events to have scarred our times – migrations. When people are forced to move to new homes or new geographies, they only recall a mix of uncanny facts, streets lost in sad nostalgias, fantasies of lovers, parables of simple things, or an unending romance about a possible life and a world. While physical geographies are redrawn, moral landscapes become so bewildering as to leave one emotionally paralyzed. As in Intizar Husain's other work, India's partition haunts the tale like an inexplicable shadow.

In contrast, *Dastan* is a traditional tale of wonder. Its language is lyrical and exaggerated; its narrative, obsessed with action, weaves dreams and adventure, heroism and mercy, beauty and love, magic and grace. It is located in another time of turmoil and uncertainty when mysterious forces cause havoc in nature, and societies rise up suddenly to avenge old wrongs. The 1857 war of independence is prophesied by a mysterious faqir; rivers suddenly break their banks; an old haveli is left desolate; a princess weeps beside a fountain; a parrot shows a soldier the road to take; and hope of political change is fatally lost. Intizar Husain is neither a social critic nor a preacher; he is a story-teller – a supreme one.

Intizar Husain (1925-2016) migrated to Pakistan in 1947. His published works include seven collections of short stories, five novels, nine plays, travelogues and essays in Urdu and English. His works have been translated into many of the world languages. His novel *Basti* was short-listed for the Man Booker International prize in 2013. In 2012, he was given the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Lahore Literary Festival, and in 2014, he was conferred the French Officer de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Nishat Zaidi (translator) is a Professor, Department of English at the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. A scholar, critic and translator, she has a number of published works to her credit. Alok Bhalla (translator) has published extensively on literature, translation and politics. He was recently a Fellow at Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram and at the Institute for Advanced Study at Nantes, France.