

Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle



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In this issue, 20 Ehsaas Women from across the country and beyond share their vision of freedom

Freedom का अहसास

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Prabha
खैतान



MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

Of Freedom, Happiness and New Beginnings

We are back with yet another engaging edition of the newsletter. The Foundation has curated and supported a kaleidoscope of events ranging from literary sessions and book launches to talks on life philosophies like “ikigai”, performances by folk artistes and captivating children’s activities.

Our cover story explores what freedom means for our **Ehsaas** Women. From Nagpur to Norway, women poured their hearts out to express their thoughts on freedom and what the word stands for. Meanwhile, our patrons from all over the country had the rare opportunity to join an exclusive session with Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, while another highlight this month was a discussion with Héctor García, the man behind the hugely bestselling book, *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*.

The Foundation has been actively promoting Indian classical music, and from this edition we are introducing a Raag and Gharana section every month. We will soon be introducing a column dedicated to wildlife, too.

Remember, you can always view entire sessions with just a click of a button on the pages of the newsletter. This feature is available on the digital version that is on our website and on the PDFs sent across to you.

Your feedback is as prized as your praise, as they help us improve the chronicle, keep us focused on our work and enable us to deliver a content-rich newsletter every month. Please write to us at newsletter@pkfoundation.org. Hope you have an enjoyable read.

Stay healthy, stay safe!

SNAPSHOT OF THE MONTH

Remembering Amrita Pritam On Her 101st Birthday



इमरोज़ और साहिर की मंजिल... शायद होती भी अमृता!
लेकिन अमृता की मंजिल... यकीनन इमरोज़ और साहिर नहीं थे!
अमृता अपने सफ़र में थी!
अमृता एक मुकम्मल औरत थीं... वो औरत जो अपनी मंजिल अपने दिल के मानिन्द रखती हैं!!
की उसका दिल जहाँ बसता है वो भी वहीं बस जाती हैं!!
बगैर दावा बगैर शर्त किसी को यूँ अपनी ज़िन्दगी का हिस्सा देनाया किसी की ज़िन्दगी का हिस्सा हो जाना!
एक अमृता, एक औरत ही कर सकती है।
जूठी cigarette
और सिर्फ brush stroke से मांग को भर देने जैसे सादा से दस्तखत पे ज़िन्दगी हो जाना ...अमृता हो जाना हैं!

— Written by **Dimple Trivedi,**
Ehsaas Woman of Lucknow

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAAS** WOMEN BORN IN SEPTEMBER

2nd September



Shweta Bansal

2nd September



Priyanka Kothari

4th September



Poonam Anand

7th September



Amita Munot

8th September



Kanika Agarwal

9th September



Neelam Seolekar

11th September



Jasmit Nayyar

17th September



Kirti Kirdatt

23rd September



Shalu Goel

Born to be FREE

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

This Independence Day, tell us

What does
Freedom
mean
to you ?

Freedom is a state of mind and, this year, while we may not be free to leave our homes, we are free to express ourselves in ways we never have before. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** came up with a unique way to celebrate that freedom on Independence Day.

On August 15, 2020, India's 74th Independence Day, the celebrations moved online with webcasts and livestreams of events happening throughout the country. The pandemic couldn't curb the patriotism as citizens brought the joy of freedom right into their homes. On this occasion, **Ehsaas** Women across the world were asked, "What does freedom mean to you?" The coronavirus crisis provided the perfect opportunity for the women to get creative and answers came in the form of poetry, quotes, art and music.

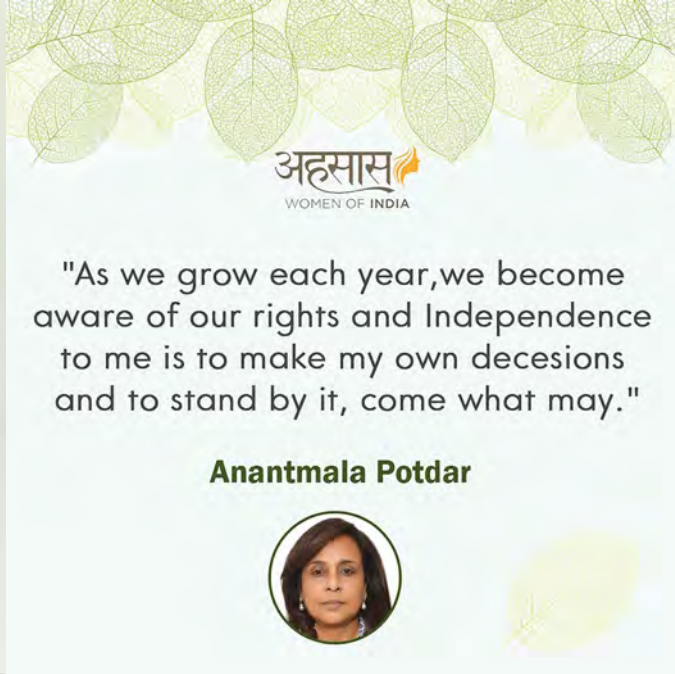
For some women freedom was like a breath of fresh air, essential to life, and for others it meant being like the wind, free to live their lives the way they pleased. Some even echoed today's universally felt desire to be free from the lockdown and be with people again. From Nagpur to Norway, the women poured their hearts out as they conveyed what freedom meant to each of them. Here is a compilation of the **Ehsaas** Women's feelings on 'freedom'.

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

आज़ादी....

लोग कहते हैं कि मैं आज़ाद हूँ
मैंने आज़ाद वतन में जनम लिया है
मेरे देश की फिजाओं में,
यहां की हवाओं में आज़ादी की महक है,
मेरे देश में,
सब को यकसां मुकाम हासिल है
ये सपना है, हकीकत है या महज़ एक भ्रम है
क्योंकि अगर ये सच है.....
तो कुछ बाशिंदे अपने ही घरों में नज़रबंद क्यों हैं?
लोगों को बोलने की
दिलों की गिरह खोलने की इज़ाज़त कहां है?
अगर हम सचमुच आज़ाद हैं!
तो क्यों
हजारों-लाखों लोग दो रोटियों की आस में
दर-बदर फिरते हैं....
और अपने ही देश में पराये करार दिए जाते हैं?
मज़हबों के बीच की दीवारें इतनी ऊंची क्यों हैं?
क्या सब के रब,
उस ऊपरवाले के मज़हब भी अलग-अलग हैं?
अगर सब अपने हैं...
तो फिर कुछ ही क्यों आग में जिंदा झोंक दिए जाते हैं?
क्यों उनके सपने पैरों तले रौंद दिए जाते हैं?
बचपने में
अपनी अम्मा और वालिद मरहूम की जुबानी
सुनी थी मैंने आज़ादी की मुकम्मल कहानी
उनके लफ़्ज़ों में कितना सुरुर और गुरुर था
इस आज़ादी का पुरजोर हिस्सा होने का
दिल सुकून से लबालब भरे थे
कि अब वो सब ख्वाब मुकम्मल होंगे
जो सलाखों में बंद रह खुली आंखों ने देखे थे

Kalpana Chaudhary

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

"As we grow each year, we become aware of our rights and Independence to me is to make my own decisions and to stand by it, come what may."

Anantmala Potdar



For Ehsaas Woman Anantmala Potdar independence is about making her own decisions.

A moving poem written by Ehsaas Woman of Raipur, Kalpana Chaudhary, captures what freedom means to her.

A refreshing perspective
by Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur Jyoti Kapoor
of what freedom means to her.

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

"Freedom is the essence of joyful life.
It's like getting fresh air. It has the
feeling of going beyond and
breaking all the mental barriers."

Jyoti Kapoor



अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

आज़ादी मेरे लिए गौरव का प्रतीक है, एक पर्व है। एक समाज, एक सोच,
एक विचारधारा, न छोटा न बड़ा, बल्कि अपनी प्रतिभा से श्रेष्ठ। आज़ादी
वह अहसास है जहाँ न सिर्फ मैं, बल्कि मेरे आसपास के सभी जीव,
मेरा समाज, मेरा देश स्वस्थ हो, सक्षम हो, निडर हो, प्रतिभावान हो,
उदीयमान हो, साफ वातावरण में खुलके सांस ले सके; निष्पक्षता हो,
जहाँ नवजात बेझिझक अपनी आँखें खोल सके।

Vinnie Kakkar



Motivating all around her
with her words of wisdom,
Ehsaas Woman Vinnie
Kakkar feels pride in the
idea of freedom.

Ehsaas Woman, Apra Kuchhal
expresses what freedom means to her.

Freedom is to admire this beautiful sunset & capture it without any permission

Freedom is something to be exercised and used else it dies.

Apra Kuchhal



अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA



"Freedom to me means to be able to think and act for myself without any pressure, bias and forced actions not manipulated by others reactions or emotions"

Monica Bhagwagar

Ehsaas Woman of Nagpur Monica Bhagwagar pens her thoughts about freedom.

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

"Freedom to me is to make the best of everything, to make my family have comforts that they deserve. It is liberating for me to be the caring one for them. I want them to always feel that hail come storm, I will always be there for them."

Nilisha Agarwal



Ehsaas Woman of Kolkata Nilisha Agarwal shares her liberating thoughts on freedom.

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

Freedom I think is like two sides of a coin,
Circumstances determine intentions which never do join;
For a child labourer, freedom means the load of bag and book,
But a student in class yearns for a carefree outlook!
The youth looks out for freedom from constraint,
About societal norms, there's always complaint.
Aging, we seek freedom from dread, doubt, disquiet, and sorrow,
Above all else, it's equanimity we would like to borrow!

But on a lighter note

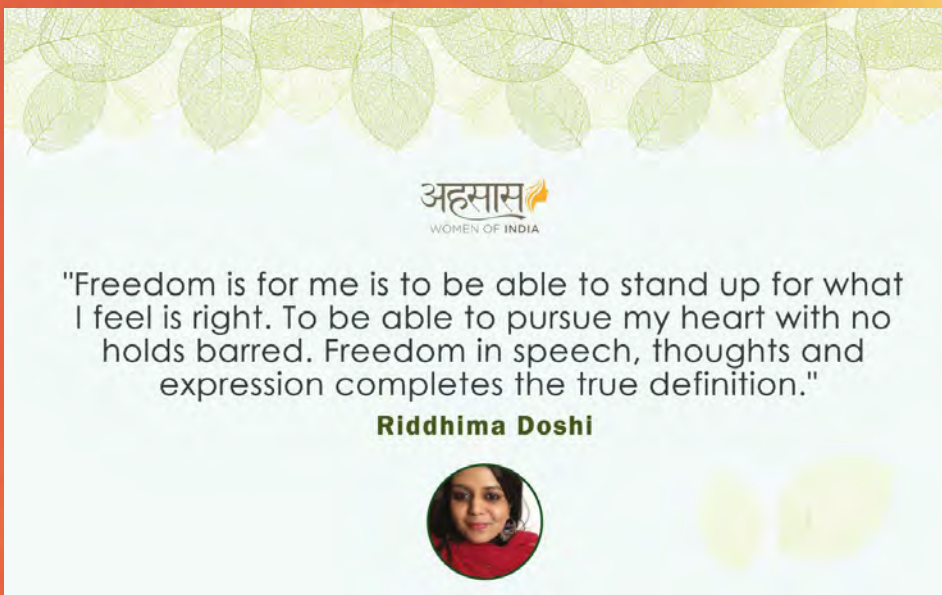
In this difficult time what more can one ask,
Than the freedom to step out without a mask;
Will the shackles of this pandemic ever end?
Now the only freedom we seek is to meet and hug our dearest friend.

Preeti Mehta



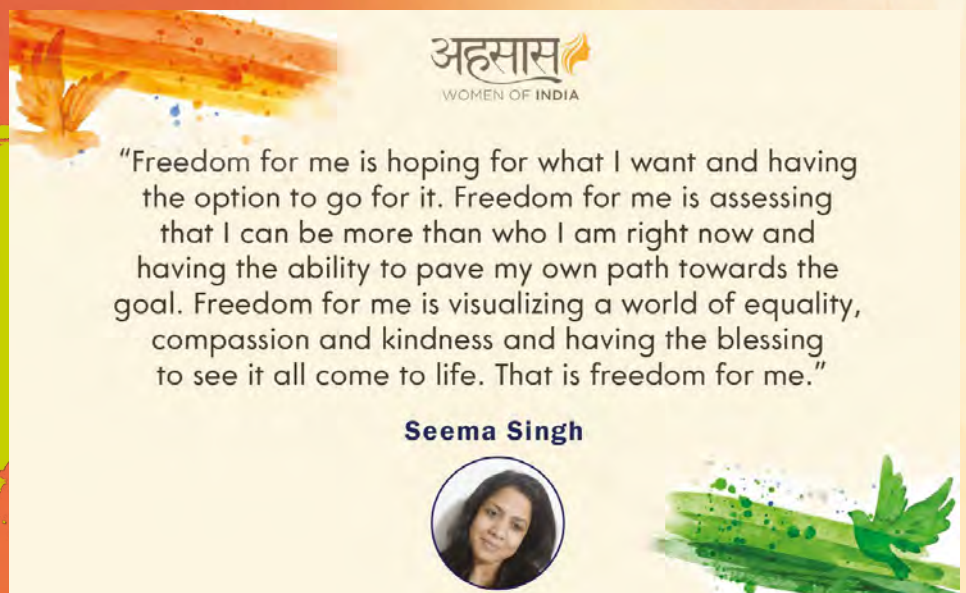
Ehsaas Woman Preeti Mehta wells on the many facets of freedom in our society.

People say a picture is worth a thousand words. **Ehsaas** Woman of Nagpur Priyanka Kothari paints her thoughts on freedom.



Inspirational words from **Ehsaas** Woman of Udaipur, Riddhima Doshi, on what freedom means to her.

When asked what freedom means to her **Ehsaas** Woman of Ranchi Seema Singh sees hope and possibilities in the idea of freedom.



अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

"Freedom is a fundamental right and not a privilege. It plays an integral role in the growth and development of an individual.

An individual without freedom is like a body without spirit. Freedom enables one to act independently, and it is an individual's actions that define him/her."

Sheetal Khanna



Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar Sheetal Khanna bats for freedom as a basic right.

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

Sharing my interpretation of freedom through these lines by an unknown writer:

में जैसी भी हूं, मुझे वैसी ही रहने दो,
मुझे अपने गीत मुक्त स्वर में कहने दो
बेकार के कुछ बंधनों से मुझे मत बांधो,
में हवा का झोंका हूं, मुझे उन्मत्त बहने दो।

Shelja Singh



Ehsaas Woman of Jodhpur Shelja Singh channels the words of an anonymous writer to express what freedom means to her.

अहसास
WOMEN OF INDIA

"Am I really free?

Well, I am; owing to the prolonged struggle of our altruistic forefathers.
They helped build the rock I stand upon today.
I have freedom, undoubtedly! But am I really free?


The answer, more often than not, is in negation. I find myself yearning for true freedom. The freedom I seek is from remorse, I desire a freedom from entitlement, traumas, mistrust, reactivity, depression, expectations, desires, ideals, standards, self-judgment, and above all, fear itself!..."

Shrishti Trivedi






Ehsaas Woman Shrishti Trivedi writes about what freedom truly means.

Ehsaas Woman of Amritsar
Jasmit Nayyar speaks from her
heart when explaining what
freedom means to her.



When you come to a point where there is no need to impress anyone, that is when your freedom begins. When you are your own boss, when you're sitting in society and you're free to make your own decisions for the right reasons, and the right reason has to be you, that is your freedom.

Jasmit Nayyar

Freedom is like oxygen to me, I simply can't do without it. It's all about our shortcomings and how we choose to deal with them in our own way without the approval of others.


हर करम अपना करेंगे
ऐ वतन तेरे लिए
दिल दिया है जां भी देंगे
ऐ वतन तेरे लिए

Arundeeplaha




All the way from Oslo, Arundeeplaha shares her thoughts on what freedom means to her.

For **Ehsaas** Woman Dona Ganguly
freedom means a fearless mind.



Freedom, to me, is the freedom of one's soul when the mind is fearless as poet Rabindranath Tagore put it. It's basically when you are fearless in expressing your thoughts, in leading your life on your own terms, and in being who you are. Of course, freedom differs from person to person. For a student, it could mean the subjects they would like to study, the university they would like to attend, and the profession they would like to have. So the definition of freedom differs and I hope everybody has a wonderful and free life.

Dona Ganguly





Freedom for me is just about happiness. It's the ability to do things that complete me. Doing what I love makes me feel in control

Archana Dalmia



Following her heart and pursuing happiness is what freedom means to **Ehsaas** Woman Archana Dalmia.

For **Ehsaas** Woman of Bhubaneswar Nidhi Garg freedom means living life to the fullest.



Freedom of thought, freedom from mistakes, apprehensions and expectations, the freedom to live every moment as if it were the final moment of life. Living life to the fullest is my idea of freedom.

Nidhi Garg



Freedom is to be able to breathe without a mask. Freedom is oxygen for my soul. Freedom means being yourself without having to take anyone's permission. Freedom, to me, is when you don't care what anybody thinks of you. And you have truly attained freedom when you have the courage to be disliked.

Neelima Dalmia Adhar



For **Ehsaas** Woman Neelima Dalmia Adhar freedom means being yourself.



Héctor García

In Pursuit of Happiness with Héctor García



Ikigai is a mysterious Japanese word which roughly translates to 'the happiness of always being busy' or simply put, the principle of finding and living one's passion," said author Héctor García at a multi-city **Tête-à-tea** session curated by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. The event witnessed a lively conversation between García and author-historian Vikram Sampath on the concept of ikigai and how it contributes to a long and healthy life. García's book, *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*, has been translated into 57 languages, becoming the most translated Spanish work till date.

García, a former software engineer, worked at CERN in Switzerland before moving to Japan, where he developed voice recognition software and technology needed by Silicon Valley start-ups to enter the Japanese market. "I enjoy creating things more than consuming them, I'm a dreamer," he said. Speaking about his initial days in Japan, García described how he adapted to and then became fascinated with simple Japanese ideologies and lifestyle.

Answering a question on whether one could have many ikigai, the author explained that each phase in one's life might call for a different ikigai or reason to live and have happiness. He pointed out that it was very important for a person to persevere in the pursuit of what they wanted to



Vikram Sampath

achieve. He also mentioned that people tend to forget that the struggles and lows at the beginning of a journey set the path for success.

García spoke candidly about his years of suffering with a rare ailment. Prior to his illness, García had believed he was invincible because of his youth and success. Upon recovering, he realised how precious this life was and he decided to make the most of it. "Hardships and sufferings in life, though not desired, make the human spirit more resilient," he said. This realisation led him to seek his *ikigai*, which resulted in the book, *Ikigai*. "I have always been very curious. Writing the book proved therapeutic for me and I found my own *ikigai* over the years," he said, adding that connecting with one's *ikigai* emits positivity and stimulates the mind.

Ikigai, co-written with Francesc Miralles, is an attempt to seek and reveal the secrets of the exceptionally long lives led by the people of the Okinawa island in the Kyushu region of Japan. Often described as one of the world's foremost Blue Zones (a term coined by author Dan Buettner about places where people live the longest) it has the world's highest concentration of centenarians. Not just longevity, the residents enjoy high levels of vitality and suffer from fewer chronic illnesses.

García alluded to several Japanese practices and inter-disciplinary concepts like *moai* (informal social groups looking out for each other), *yuimaaru* (teamwork) and *ichariba chode* (treating everyone as brothers). Longevity depends on various elements in life, explained the author. Mental wellbeing reduces stress and adds years. García shared that he has taken up yoga during the pandemic, which has helped him maintain the physical movement needed by the body to remain healthy.

The writer touched upon the idea of *Wabi Sabi* or the 'Beauty of Imperfection'. He stressed that it was very important to be content with oneself, even one's shortcomings. He confessed that he found it difficult to speak in front of an audience, but had managed to create his unique style to overcome his discomfort.



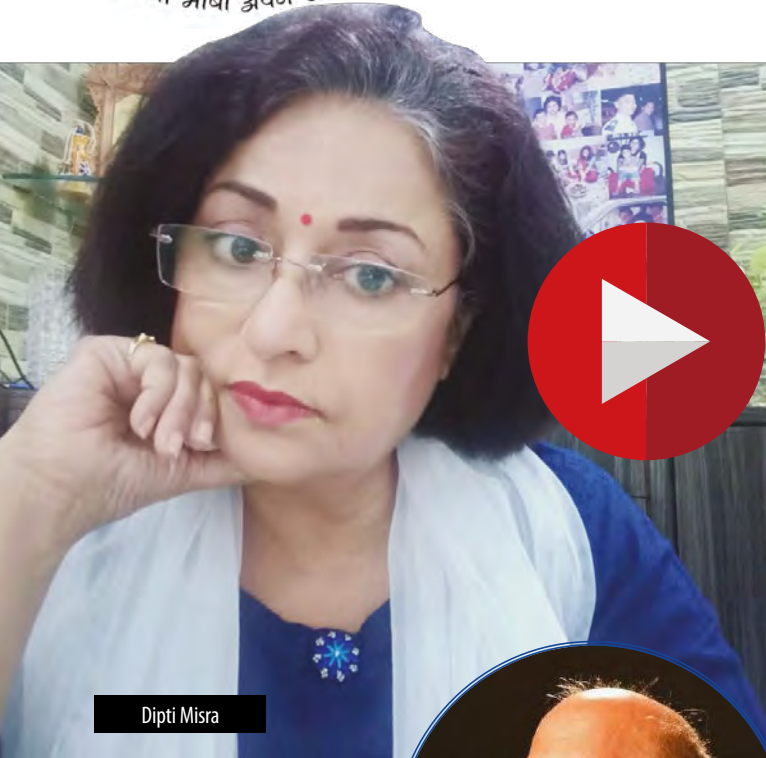
Apra Kuchhal

García hopes to develop his own stream of philosophy one day and believes social networking allows one to be amongst like-minded individuals and enhance the literary space. He also touched upon how some Japanese ways of thinking had their roots in Indian philosophy.

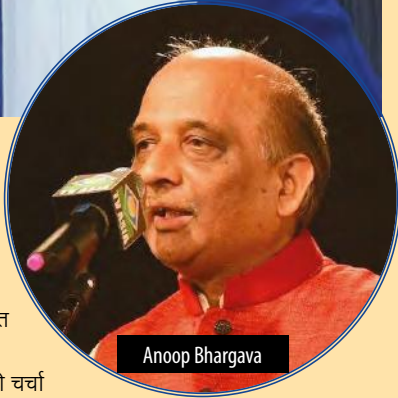
Responding to a question from Sampath on whether the simple things of life are often the most difficult to implement, García said, "I like simplicity and clarity. I have read my book again during COVID. At times you need reminders in life. The little things of life are like reminders of what we should do. Not being stressed is the underlying common factor. There are so many ways of fighting stress, like mindfulness, meditation and others, but you just have to smile. Don't think about retiring, don't think about work all the time, but be active." García's simple manner and humble attitude charmed the audience. Inspired by his positivity, the attendees were motivated to try and find their own *ikigai*.

Apra Kuchhal, honorary convener (Rajasthan and Central India), **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, said, "*Tête-à-tea* is an initiative to bring to the audience a sneak peek into the lives of some prominent personalities. This session with Héctor García touched upon many aspects of his life, inspiration, passion and writings. It was a self-transforming event, where he spoke about many Japanese techniques. He motivated the audience by sharing algorithms of a successful life."

“
At times you need reminders in life. The little things of life are like reminders of what we should do. Not being stressed is the underlying common factor. There are so many ways of fighting stress, like mindfulness, meditation and others, but you just have to smile. Don't think about retiring, don't think about work all the time, but be active
”



Dipti Misra



Anoop Bhargava

जिससे तुमने खुद को देखा, हम वो एक नज़रिया थे: दीप्ति मिश्रा

नहीं कि मैं कौन बोल रहा हूँ, तब मैंने पूछा, तो उन्होंने बताया कि मैं हरिहरन हूँ। उन्होंने जो सम्मान दिया वह बेहद अलग है। अतुकांत कविताओं का जिक्र होने पर मिश्रा ने अपनी लंबी कविता सुनहरी मछली सुनाई, जिसके बोल थे—

बात है तो विचित्र

किन्तु फिर भी है!

हो गया था 'प्रेम' एक पुरुष को

एक सुनहरी मछली से!

लहरों से अठखेलियाँ करती,

बलखाती, चमचमाती मछली

भा गई थी पुरुष को!

टकटकी बाँधे पहरों देखता रहता वह

उस चंचला की अठखेलियाँ!

मछली को भी अच्छा लगता था

पुरुष का यूँ निहारना...

पुरुष, प्रकृति और प्रेम के पारस्परिक संबंध पर आधारित इस कविता के बाद संवादकर्ता भार्गव ने हिंदी कविता, उर्दू ग़ज़ल और मुकम्मल ग़ज़ल तक की मिश्रा से जुड़ी यात्रा सवाल पूछे। उन्होंने कविता की पाठशाला नामक अभियान का जिक्र भी किया। मिश्रा ने यह कहा कि यहां तक पहुंचने के लिए उन्होंने बहुत मेहनत और साधना की है। मैं बस ग़ज़ल लिखती थीं। उर्दू वालों ने मुझे हाथोंहाथ लिया। उर्दू वालों ने ही मुझे कहा कि आप उर्दू की हैं। मैंने कहा हमारी ज़बान बस उर्दू है। मुझे उर्दू वालों से इतना प्यार मिला कि मैंने इसे सीखा। काफिया और रदीफ भी मेरी ग़ज़लों में हैं। मैंने अपनी खोज खुद की है। उन्होंने श्रोताओं के अनुरोध पर एक बार फिर अपनी एक चर्चित ग़ज़ल सुनाई, जिसके चंद शेर यों थे—

वो नहीं मेरा मगर उससे मुहब्बत है तो है,

ये अगर रस्मों, रिवाजों से बग़ावत है तो है,

सच को मैंने सच कहा, जब कह दिया तो कह दिया,

अब ज़माने की नजर में ये हिमाकत है तो है...

सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में भारत में लेखकीय स्तर पर जुड़े सवाल पर मिश्रा ने कहा, "मुझे भी आश्चर्य होता है कि लोग क्यों लिखते हैं। जहां तक मेरी बात है लेखन मेरी मजबूरी है। आज का लेखन डिमांड एंड सप्लाई का है। आजकल कोरोना ने उतना परेशान नहीं किया है, जितना कोरोना पर लिखने वालों ने परेशान किया है।" मिश्रा ने यह भी कहा कि ऑन डिमांड लिखने की मेरी इच्छा नहीं है। अगर कोई मेरे नखरे स्वीकार कर ले तो मैं लिख देती हूँ। मिश्रा ने स्पष्ट यह माना कि लेखन मेरा कारोबार नहीं है। यह मेरी साधना है। फिल्मों के लिए लिखना मेरी चाहत नहीं है। मिश्रा ने अपने पारिवारिक जीवन की चर्चा की और परिवार से मिले सहयोग का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा, "अपनी सफलता का श्रेय मैं खुद को ही देती हूँ। जो कुछ भी जीवन में हमने पाया है वह अपनी मेहनत से पाया है। खुद से सीखने से जो आत्मविश्वास आता है वह है।" श्रोताओं की मांग पर उन्होंने अपनी एक और ग़ज़ल सुनाई, जिसका शुरुआती शेर था—

इनकार करूँ, इकरार करूँ ये इश्क कहां जा छोड़े है

जब जी चाहे ये दिल जोड़े, जब जी चाहे दिन तोड़े है...

कार्यक्रम के आखिर में संवादकर्ता भार्गव ने प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा भारत से बाहर किए जा रहे कार्यक्रमों की सराहना करते हुए आभार प्रकट किया। उन्होंने झिलमिल द्वारा अमेरिका में रह रहे लोगों को भारतीय संस्कृति, कला व संगीत से जोड़ने की कोशिश का जिक्र किया।

कलम न्यूयॉर्क का आयोजन झिलमिल अमेरिका की सहभागिता से किया गया

अमेरिका में चुनावी गहमागहमी और कोरोना के असर के बीच हिंदी ग़ज़ल और कविता की यह अनूठी महफिल थी। अतिथि के रूप में हिंदी और उर्दू ग़ज़ल से जुड़ी कवयित्री, शायरा, कलाकार दीप्ति मिश्रा ने शिरकत की। अमेरिका में कलम का यह तीसरा आयोजन है। अनूप भार्गव ने कोरोना की चर्चा करते हुए कहा कि इसने जो अवसर उपलब्ध कराए हैं, वह है ऑनलाइन संवाद। इसी के चलते मुंबई में बैठी कवयित्री मिश्रा से मैं न्यूयॉर्क में बैठकर संवाद कर पा रहा हूँ। कलम न्यूयॉर्क की यह खासियत रही कि यहां श्रोताओं ने संवाद के साथ-साथ शायरा मिश्रा से उनकी लोकप्रिय ग़ज़लें भी सुनीं।

भार्गव ने मिश्रा से पहला सवाल ही उनकी काव्य-यात्रा के बारे में पूछा, जिस पर मिश्रा का जवाब था, "मुझे पता नहीं था कि लेखक बनूंगी। बचपन में मैं एक्ट्रेस बनना चाहती थी। फिर मुझे बताया गया कि यह बहुत अच्छा काम नहीं है, तो छोड़ दिया। मेरी बदलने की यात्रा लगातार जारी रही। मैं बाहरी गतिविधियों में बहुत सक्रिय रहती थी। साहित्य में रुचि थी। मैं अपने को व्यक्त करना चाहती थी। मेरी मां और पिता से यह मुझ तक आया। साहित्य की पढ़ाई से यह तो होना है।" डॉ कुंवर बेचैन के बारे में मिश्रा का कहना था कि उन्होंने उनको कॉलेज में पढ़ाया भी है। वह मेरी कविताओं नज़्मों को सुधारते भी थे। उन्होंने ही स्थानीय अखबार में मेरी कविता छपवाई भी थी। उन्होंने ग़ज़ल क्या होता है यह मुझे बताया भी। वह मेरे गुरु हैं। कविताओं से शुरुआत हुई। मैंने पहली ग़ज़ल भी डॉ बेचैन को ही पढ़वाई थी। मुझे उन्होंने ग़ज़ल का मतलब बताया। काफ़िए बिठाना, तुकबंदी करना मुझे आ गया था। पर छंदबद्ध होना मुझे नहीं आया था। उसके बाद ग़ज़ल ने मुझे नहीं छोड़ा और मैंने ग़ज़ल को नहीं छोड़ा।

मिश्रा ने श्रोताओं के अनुरोध पर अपनी यह चर्चित ग़ज़ल सुनाई, जिसके चंद शेर यों थे—

जिससे तुमने खुद को देखा, हम वो एक नज़रिया थे,

हम से ही अब कतरा हो तुम, हम से ही तुम दरिया थे।

जिससे हमने खुद को देखा, तुम वो एक नज़रिया थे,

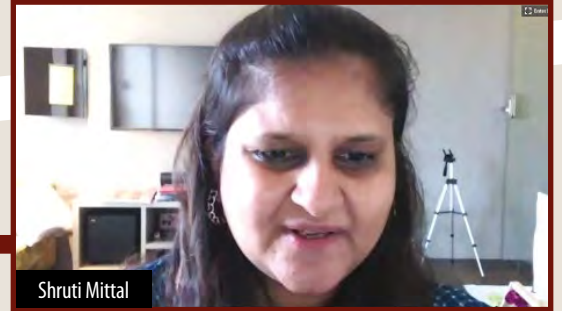
खुद को खोकर खुद को पाया, तुम तो केवल जरिया थे...

गुलाम अली की चर्चा होने पर मिश्रा ने उनसे जुड़े अपने अनुभव शेयर किए। मिश्रा ने बताया कि गुलाम अली की खासियत यह है कि वह जिस तरह से गाते हैं, उन्होंने एक-एक मिसरा गाकर पूछा था, कि मोहतरमा यह कैसा गाया। किसी लेखक के लिए यह बहुत बड़ी बात है। हरिहरन जी का अनुभव भी अनूठा था। उनका खुद से फोन आया कि आपकी ग़ज़ल है तो है मैं गाना चाहता हूँ। मैंने कहा गा लीजिए। उन्होंने कहा आप पूछेगी



Anu Singh Choudhary

जीवन में बेहतरी की तलाश हमेशा जारी रहनी चाहिए: अनु सिंह चौधरी



Shrutti Mittal

कलम बंगलुरु में अतिथि अनु सिंह चौधरी का संक्षिप्त परिचय देते हुए अहसास वूमेन बंगलुरु की सुरेखा प्रहलाद ने कहा कि चौधरी लेखिका, अनुवादक और फिल्म मेकर हैं। रेडियो, टीवी, फिल्म और न्यूज मीडिया के लिए लगातार लिखती रही हैं। कहानी संकलन *नीला स्कार्फ़*, *मम्मा की डायरी* काफी लोकप्रिय रहे हैं। चौधरी अच्छी अनुवादक होने के साथ ही पुरस्कार प्राप्त डाक्यूमेंट्री और वेब सीरीज की लेखक और निर्देशक भी हैं। हाल ही में आयी वेब सीरीज *आर्या* की वह संयुक्त लेखिका हैं।

अहसास वूमेन बंगलुरु की श्रुति मित्तल ने चौधरी से पहला सवाल ही चौधरी के बचपन, शिक्षा और लेखकीय यात्रा पर 'आपकी कहानी आपकी ज़बानी' के अंदाज में किया। चौधरी ने कहा, "बिहार के एक पारंपरिक, रूढ़िवादी इलाके में पैदा हुई। ऐसा समाज, जो पितृ सत्तात्मक था। पर उस व्यवस्था में भी मेरे अभिभावक ऐसे थे, जो यह जानते थे कि दुनिया इसके बाहर भी है। रांची में पली-बढ़ी। पढ़ाई के दौरान लिखना-पढ़ना जारी रहा। साहित्य एक बड़ा माध्यम था, जिससे दुनिया को समझने का और अपने को व्यक्त करने का मौका मिला। किस्सागोई के सभी माध्यमों में काम करने का जुनून और लालच कि आपका नाम छपेगा, लोग जानेंगे, मुझे पत्रकारिता, टीवी और साहित्य लेखन की तरफ ले आया। मुझे मौका भी मिलता गया।" भोजपुरी, हिंदी और अंग्रेजी में अपने को बखूबी व्यक्त कर पाने के हुनर और भाषाओं से तालमेल से जुड़े सवाल पर चौधरी का जवाब था, "हममें से सारे लोग दो भाषाएं तो जानते हैं। जिस भाषा में आप संवाद करते हैं उसके करीब आप हो ही जाते हैं। शुरुआत में आप एक भाषा के ही करीब होते हैं। हिंदी के माहौल में पल बढ़ रही थी, तो वह आ गई। रही अंग्रेजी, तो यह अवसर की भाषा अंग्रेजी है, इससे किसी को एतराज नहीं होना चाहिए। भाषाएं अभ्यास का विषय हैं, अगर आप उनका प्रयोग करते हैं, तो बड़ी सहजता से चली आती हैं।"

रचनात्मकता प्रतिभा से आती है या मेहनत से? इस सवाल पर चौधरी ने कहा, "मेरा विश्वास है कि आपके अंदर हुनर हो सकता है, पर रचनात्मकता बिना मेहनत और अभ्यास के दुनिया के सामने नहीं आ सकती है। लेखक होने का यह मतलब नहीं होता कि एक कविता लिख कर समझ लिया कि हो गया। एक खाली पन्ने को देखना कि आज मैं तुमको भरंगी भी लेखक होने का मतलब है।" सोशल मीडिया पर उनके परिचय और मातृत्व से जुड़े सवाल के जवाब में चौधरी ने यह माना, "मेरी शख्सियत में मां होना बहुत शिद्धत से आता है। मां की मेरे लिए बहुत अहमियत है। इसीलिए मातृत्व मेरे परिचय का पहला हिस्सा है। लेखक के रूप में भी मैं दुनिया को मां के नजरिए से ही देखती हूँ।" चौधरी ने अपनी किताब *मम्मा की डायरी* का जिक्र करते हुए कहा कि मैं यह मानती हूँ कि ऐसी किताब दोबारा मैं नहीं लिख सकती। इस किताब से मैंने ऐसे सवाल का जवाब तलाशने की कोशिश की कि एक महिला

मां, पत्नी और कामकाजी महिला की भूमिका से कैसे जूझती है? ऐसी स्थितियां क्यों हैं? यह हालात क्यों नहीं बदले। *आर्या* में अपने काम का अनुभव शेयर करते हुए चौधरी ने यह बताया, "मैंने पहले भी एक सीरीज पर काम किया था। फिर किसी दोस्त का संदेश आया था कि एक वेबसीरीज के लिए ऐसे लेखक की तलाश है, जो मां की भूमिका को लिख सके। इसके निर्देशक राम आडवाणी थे। संदीप श्रीवास्तव मेरे सहयोगी लेखक थे। मेरे लिए यह एक खुशनुमा अनुभव था। मुझे उसमें मातृत्व वाले हिस्से को लिखना था। यह एक बहुत मजेदार अनुभव था कि आप एक फ्रेम में क्राफ्ट में लिखना सीख रहे होते हैं। इस सीरीज का महिला करेक्टर बहुत स्ट्रॉंग हैं। करेक्टर सारे ग्रे हैं।" बच्चों की प्रोविंग और टीनएज ट्रॉमा पर चौधरी का कहना था, "मैं इसकी अकेले क्रेडिट नहीं ले सकती। यह समन्वित प्रयास था। *आर्या* की कहानी में हमने बहुत सारी बातों का ध्यान रखा। यह दुनिया केवल सफेद और काली नहीं है। हम सबमें खूबियां और खामियां हैं। 'अच्छी जिंदगी जी' का मतलब यह नहीं है कि जिंदगी में सब कुछ अच्छा था ही। यह जीवन के उतार-चढ़ाव के बावजूद आपने कैसे जीया, इस पर तय करता है। आज की पीढ़ी कैसे सोचती है। बच्चों पर उनके माहौल का कैसा प्रभाव पड़ता है, इसका भी ध्यान रखा। सीरीज में इस बात का एडवांटेज होता है कि आप कई तरह के किरदारों को अपनी तरह से दिखा सकते हैं। भारत में नगरीय क्षेत्रों में बच्चे सभी एडल्ट चीजों को जानते हैं। सेक्स अब टैबू नहीं है। हम इन्हें लेकर जजमेंटल नहीं हो सकते।"

अपने उपन्यास *भली लड़कियां बुरी लड़कियां* से जुड़े सवाल पर चौधरी का कहना था, "मैं बीस साल पहले दिल्ली में थी। जो किरदार हमारे इर्दगिर्द थे उनके जीवन से इसकी कहानियां आईं। यह जो यंग फीमेल इंडिया है वह बहुत वाइब्रेंट है, साहसी है, आउट स्पोकेन है। हमें यह मानना होगा कि जीवन में भला या बुरा जैसा ही कुछ नहीं होता। इस पुस्तक की महत्त्वपूर्ण थीम है- बहनापा, जो आपका सपोर्ट सिस्टम बन सकता है।" *नीला स्कार्फ़* की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि इसमें सात सालों में लिखी मेरी बारह कहानियां हैं, जिन्हें मैंने अपने आसपास के माहौल से लिखा था। ये अलग-अलग मिजाज की कहानियां हैं, जो मेरी पहचान की तलाश का किस्सा हैं। एक सवाल के जवाब में उन्होंने कहा, "पहले अपनी इज्जत करना सीखिए। अपने को प्यार करना सीखिए। अपने सपनों को प्यार करना सीखिए। यह केवल जैविक बदलाव नहीं है।" इसी तरह उनका सुझाव था, "हमें हमेशा तलाश करते रहना चाहिए। सीखते रहना चाहिए। बेहतर होने और बेहतर ढूँढने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए। यह बहुत छोटी बात भी हो सकती है और बहुत बड़ी चीज भी हो सकती है।" वत्सला, ललिता आदि श्रोताओं ने सवाल पूछे।

कलम बंगलुरु का आयोजन ताज वेस्ट एंड और अहसास वूमेन बंगलुरु के सहभागिता से किया गया

मेरे मालिक धूप निकाल — शकील जमाली ने पढ़ी अपनी नई कविता



Renu Verma

Shakeel Jamali

सब से पहले दिल के खाली-पन को भरना
पैसा सारी उम्र कमाया जा सकता है
गम के पीछे मारे-मारे क्या फिरना
यह दौलत तो घर बैठे आ जाती है

शायर शकील जमाली की इन्हीं पंक्तियों के साथ लफ़्ज जोधपुर का आगाज हुआ। इस सत्र में अतिथि के रूप में नामचीन उर्दू शायर, कवि शकील जमाली ने शिरकत की। अहसास वूमन की प्रीति मेहता ने उनका स्वागत करते हुए उनका परिचय दिया। फिरदौस, धूप तेज है, कागज पर आसमान और कटोरे में चांद उनकी लोकप्रिय पुस्तकें हैं। आगे की बातचीत के लिए रेणु वर्मा को कमान सौंप दी। वर्मा अध्यापन से जुड़ी होने के साथ ही कवयित्री और शायर भी हैं।

वर्मा ने एक शेर के साथ बातचीत की शुरुआत की और जमाली से उनकी शायरी के बारे में पूछा। जमाली का कहना था, “हमें इज्जत से सुना जाता है, हम खामोशी से सदा करते हैं। आप आलोचक बनके उसी दृष्टि से देखें। मेरे पिता एक शायर थे। इसके चलते एक घर में एक माहौल मिला। घर में किताबें थीं। पिता का कहना था, आदमी का अपने से बड़ा आलोचक कोई दूसरा नहीं हो सकता। मैंने न जाने कितनी बार अपने लिखे को काटा, ठीक किया। तकरीबन पैंतालीस साल से लिखने और काटने का यह क्रम जारी है। इससे मेरी शायरी की संख्या भले न बढ़े स्तर और मेयार बढ़े।” वर्मा ने जमाली के ‘रियायत’ पर लिखे शेर में बारबार बदलाव की बाबत पूछा, तो जमाली का जवाब था, “मेरी कोशिश यह रही है कि समाज का जो आम तबका है वह भी मेरी शायरी को समझ सके। पहला शेर मैंने तब लिखा था जब बाजार में दस परसेंट छूट की तख्तियां लगी होती थीं। पर बाद में मैंने लिखा— ‘रियायतों की चमकदार तख्तियों पर न जा, दुकानदार किसी का सगा नहीं होता...’ मैंने अपने इस शेर से बाजारवाद का एक नेचर है, उसे उजागर करने की कोशिश की।”

मीर और गालिब से शकील जमाली तक की शायरी में आए बदलाव से जुड़े सवाल पर जमाली ने यह माना, “नई और पुरानी शायरी में हर स्तर पर बदलाव आया है। समय के साथ-साथ ग़ज़ल के विषय इसलिए भी बदले क्योंकि हमारे आसपास सब कुछ बदला है। गालिब के जमाने की जो मसाइल थे, समस्याएं थीं अलग थीं... ग़ज़ल के अंदर बला का कमाल यह है कि वह अपने देश, काल और वक्त के साथ खुद को बखूबी से ढाल लेती है।” उन्होंने अमीर खुसरो की, ‘गोरी सोई सेज पर, मुख पर डारे केसा। चल खुसरो घर आपने सांझ भई चहुं देस’ के साथ ही आज के शेर, ‘शाम ढले हर पंछी को घर जाना पड़ता है, कौन खुशी से मरता है मर जाना पड़ता है,’ का उदाहरण देते हुए दावा किया कि आज की शायरी, आज के युग की शायरी है। बदलाव जगत का नियम हैं।

इंटरनेट के दौर में लोग पढ़ना भूल गए हैं। बच्चे कागज की खूशबू नहीं जानते? पर जमाली की प्रतिक्रिया थी, “पढ़ा कम लिखा ज्यादा, होना यह चाहिए कि सौ किताबें पढ़ कर एक निबंध लिखें। आज सारी दुनिया आपकी एक क्लिक पर है। हजारों किताबें वहां मौजूद हैं। चाहे आप इंटरनेट पर पढ़िए लेकिन पढ़िए जरूर।” वर्मा ने जमाली

के ही एक शेर ‘कौन है खादिमे उर्दू साहब, सबने अपनी दुकान लगा रखी है’ का हवाला देते हुए पूछा कि ऐसी शायरी के पीछे उनकी सोच क्या थी? पर जमाली ने कहा, “लोग कहते हैं कि हम ज़बान की सेवा कर रहे हैं। लेकिन सच्चाई यह है कि चीजें एक दूसरे से जुड़ी होती हैं। लॉकडाउन को ही देखें तो यह केवल स्वास्थ्य या अर्थ का मसला नहीं है। इसने पूरी दुनिया को बदल दिया। इसने हमारे विश्वास, तहजीब और संस्कृति को बदल दिया। खादिमे उर्दू और खादिमे हिंदी में बहुत थोड़े से लोग हैं। सब जगह बाजारवाद है। इसमें बुराई भी नहीं, पर मानवता और नैतिकता को थोड़ा ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। सेवा करिए, पर केवल पेट सेवा नहीं होनी चाहिए।”

शायरी में नएपन के इस्तेमाल और रिश्ते, समाज पर तंज से जुड़े सवाल पर जमाली ने कहा, “सच के लिए आदमी को हर कीमत चुकाने के लिए तैयार रहना चाहिए। हम हर बुराई को रोक तो नहीं सकते, पर अपने दिल से सोच तो सकते हैं। व्यंग्य शायरी का एक जबरदस्त टूल है। एक बहुत पुराना शेर था, ‘तेरे सितम की जमाना दुहाई देता है, कभी ये शोर तुझे भी सुनाई देता है?’ तो मैं तो अपने ऊपर भी तंज करता हूँ। बुराई पर आघात करना कवि, शायर की जिम्मेदारी है।” ‘जिसकी आंखों में शरारत है वह महबूबा थी, यह जो मजबूर सी औरत है वह घरवाली है’ का जिक्र करते हुए वर्मा ने पूछा, रिश्तों पर तंज कसने को लेकर क्या आपको घर में जाकर कुछ झेलना पड़ा? पर जमाली का जवाब था, “मेरी इमेज बहुत अच्छी है।” स्वार्थ पर लिखी अपनी शायरी पर जमाली का जवाब था कि हर घर की यह कहानी है कि दूर के रिश्तेदार भी लालच में जीभ निकालते हैं। परवीन शाकिर, बशीर बद्र, गालिब, मीर की जमीन पर तो लोग लिखते ही रहते हैं। पर शकील जमाली ने अपने से जूनियर से लिया और क्रेडिट दिया। पर जमाली का कहना था, “गालिब बहुत बड़े लोग थे। वहां कुछ बचा ही नहीं है। उनकी जमीन पर ग़ज़ल लिखी ही नहीं जा सकती है।”

लफ़्ज के इस संवाद के दौरान जमाली ने अपने कई नए-पुराने शेर सुनाए। उन्होंने यह माना, “पहले वाला मुशायरा और मंच अब बदल गया है। इसलिए लाइव आने में कोई बुराई नहीं है। इसी तरह सोशल मीडिया से आयी नई शब्दावली को स्वीकारने में भी बुराई नहीं है। अपनी भाषा के दामन को फैलाने में कोई बुराई नहीं है, पर यह सलीके से आना चाहिए। जबरदस्ती शब्दों को टूटना गलत है।” एक सवाल के जवाब में उन्होंने कहा, “उर्दू और हिंदी दो आंखें हैं। दोनों एक दूसरे की पूरक हैं। इनसे मिलकर हमारी हिंदुस्तानी ज़बान बनती है। इसमें कोई अंतर नहीं है।” कार्यक्रम में प्रियेश भंडारी, आनंद हर्ष, श्याम भुरानी आदि ने सवाल पूछे। जमाली ने इस दौरान बाद पर लिखी अपनी एकदम नई कविता, ‘मेरे मालिक धूप निकाल, बाढ़ का पानी घर से खेत, खेतों से खलिहानों तक आ पहुंचा है’ भी सुनाया।

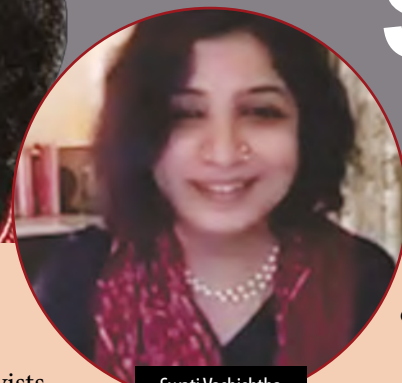
लफ़्ज जोधपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। रेखा, ताज हरि महल और अहसास वूमन जोधपुर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की



Mridula Ramesh



Answering Earth's SOS Call



Swati Vashishtha

environment will not help in fighting climate change.

Her columns and book put into practice her beliefs that simple language is key in helping common people understand the crisis. Ramesh also touched upon the impact of the climate crisis on mental health, taking into account farmer suicides, as well as the consequences for women who are the appointed caregivers of society.

Moving from problems to solutions, Ramesh highlighted the necessity of understanding the crisis at the local level, for which the government must adopt a decentralised approach and collaborate with private organisations. It is also essential to legislate policies, for their implementation has already provided success stories of reduced carbon emissions in cities such as Bengaluru, Indore and Bhopal. Even as people have begun paying attention to the climate crisis, India and the world have a long way to go in terms of taking concrete action.

When Vashishtha opened the session for questions from the audience, one asked if a zero-waste lifestyle was viable only for the rich. Ramesh responded that she did not think so, but also pointed out that the wealthier one is, the higher their carbon footprint. She said she was working on her second book. Compared to the first, it will provide more historical context as she compares water management techniques of the present with the past. Mita Kapur of Siyahi rounded off the session with a vote of thanks as well as a call to action.

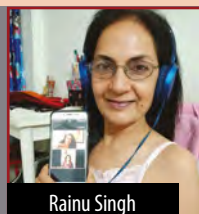
The Write Circle Jaipur is presented by Shree Cement, in association with Siyahi, Spagia Foundation and Ehsaas Women of Jaipur

While the world is hoping fervently that 2020 is an anomaly and everything will return to "normal" next year, environmental researchers and activists have been sounding the global warming alarm for decades now. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** latest session of **The Write Circle**, Jaipur, dwelt on the issue of climate change with activist Mridula Ramesh. Author of the book, *The Climate Solution*, and the founder of The Sundaram Climate Institute, Ramesh is also a columnist with several web portals, newspapers, and magazines. She was in conversation with journalist Swati Vashishtha.

The gravity of the climate crisis often presents itself through mundane tasks, and so it was with Ramesh. After the birth of her second child, a water crisis at her own home shocked her into action. She began writing columns while continuing her teaching job. She spoke about how it was difficult for her in the beginning to make people aware of the reality of climate change, and how people termed her activism as "midlife crisis". Even though people are becoming more aware about the issue and want to be considered "green", many do not wish to pay a little extra for environmentally friendly practices. She pointed out that "liking and sharing" posts on the



Anuradha Puri



Rainu Singh



Nivedita Salam



Kamakshi Chauhan

Of Literature and Liberty



Nilanjana S. Roy

A Kolkata girl who believes she is "built of" books shared a few pages from her life, covering her thoughts on writing, democracy, the lockdown and her love affair with cities. Nilanjana S. Roy, columnist, travel writer, blogger, reporter and journalist, was in conversation with **Ehsaas** Woman and entrepreneur Malika Varma at the 83rd session of **An Author's Afternoon**. Roy is the author of two award-winning fantasy novels — *The Wildings* and *The Hundred Names of Darkness*. *Black River*, her third, will be her first for an adult audience, to be released soon.

The conversation opened with a beautiful chronicle of Roy's life in Kolkata, a place she credits with giving her an experience of cosmopolitanism. She began writing at the age of 15 as an Arts and Books reporter for *The Business Standard*, and went on to cover gender and politics for *The New York Times* before taking a break to write her books. What drew her to journalism was the temptation of being able to meet a wide spectrum of celebrated experts from different fields, to hear and share their stories. Roy, who continues to write for the *Financial Times* as a books columnist, added that Kolkata was responsible for infecting her with the book-loving virus.



Malika Varma

"I will have to confess that my CV says that one who can't stick to a single thing is doomed to be a novelist," Roy said on her career in journalism, blogging and novel-writing. She said being 'Huree Babu' in Kitabhana, India's first literary blog, was the best period in her writing journey yet. The moniker was a take on Rudyard Kipling, she revealed, and it also made her rediscover Hindi and Bengali. "Hindi and Bengali seep into my English," she said.

Roy said every generation assumes that books are dying. She pointed out how in the 18th century, people believed novels had killed literature and now we are worried that the novel is dead. She elucidated that the incessant complaints about the younger generation not reading enough were incorrect, adding that it's just that their mode of reading is different. She lamented that not enough was done to satiate the youth's appetite for reading. She commended digital media and OTT platforms for converting books into films and web series, giving storytelling a makeover, which is the need of the hour.

On democracy, Roy said, "I don't think one can be a



Nilisha Agarwal



Swati Vashishtha



K. Mohanchandran

Thank you so much for the opportunity. I always look forward to the author meets that **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** organises. Roy was so humble, yet she is no less than a stalwart. Her words were infused with a sweet nostalgia of her yesteryears in Kolkata and I loved knowing how that moulded her into what she is today. It was really inspiring for a Kolkata girl like myself!

— Debapriya Sarkar

citizen of a democracy without having a relationship with it and that relationship is as close and personal as a family relationship." She reminded the audience that India was a very young democracy and while people always speak of liberty and equality, they tend to forget that the Constitution was also built on the promise of fraternity. Hailing from a family that revered the freedom struggle, Roy was taught about the years that went into the fight and thus, cannot help being a liberal. She spoke on the role of the media in spreading hate and negative propaganda and said that when the institution of democracy cracks and people are afraid to speak their minds, it is definitely time to do a rain-check on what we need as a nation and reclaim it.

Roy said that her book, *The Wildings*, reflected on her love-hate relationship with Delhi. She described the city as a melting pot, with aggressive weather, soaked in rich historical and cultural heritage and subtle kindness. She has mirrored the essence of the city through the eyes of strays and how they see the city draining away its cultural and environmental authenticity to transform into a concrete jungle. Roy revealed that writing *The Wildings* cured her of her apprehensions and lifted her out of the comfort zone of journalism, leading her into writing fiction fearlessly. The award she received for the book has been special to her since children's books do not usually

get much recognition.

Coming to the lockdown, she highlighted how women are expected to excel in managing work from home as well as the homefront single-handedly and how the men expect to be idolised if they contribute to household chores. The author also shared her alarm over the number of women that have dropped out of the workforce during the pandemic and the patriarchal control that persists even today.

"I have a polycityamorous heart," Roy quipped, confessing that she loves Delhi for its history and because that is where she became a journalist, whilst she loves Kolkata for its feisty and extraordinary women from diverse backgrounds, who have inspired her to find her own ground.

She advised aspiring journalists to read a lot from all kinds of genres. She called herself "old school" because she loves the feel of turning pages over while reading. She ended the engaging session by talking about the need for more English works to be translated into regional Indian languages in order to reach out to a bigger readership.

An Author's Afternoon is presented by Shree Cement in association with Taj Bengal

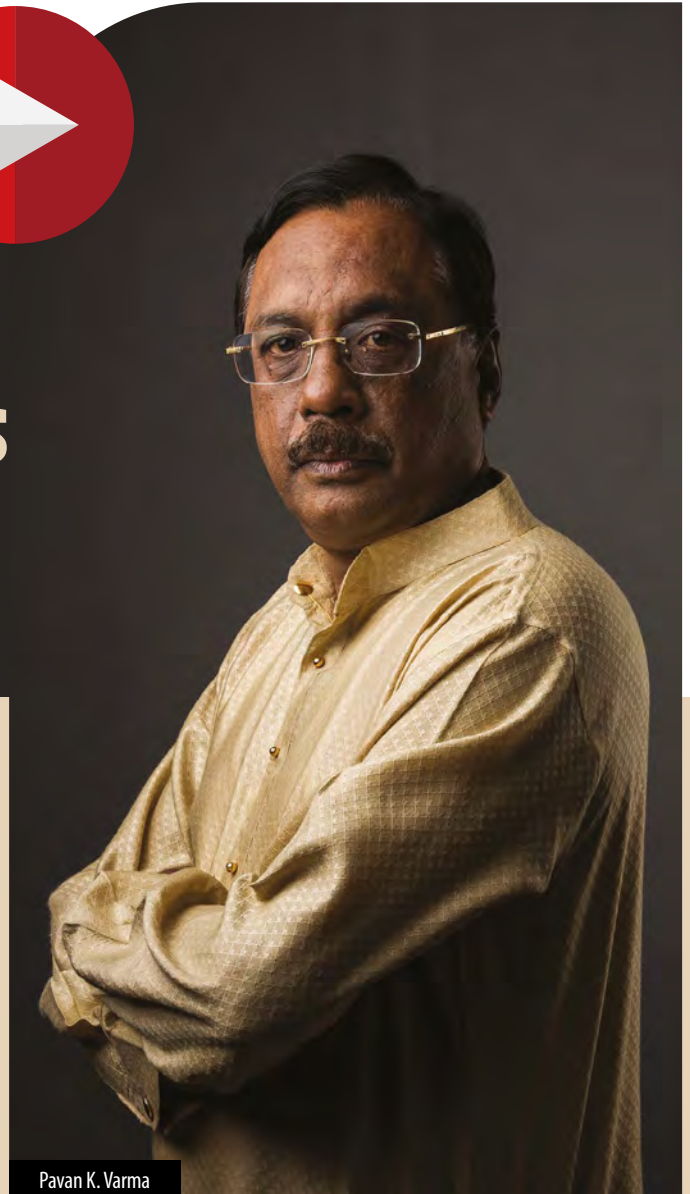
“
Thank you so much for that beautifully choreographed event. Malika Varma did such a fantastic job as moderator, deftly steering the discussion in just the right directions, and the entire team was thoroughly professional and helpful. This series of talks hosted by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has become a treasure trove for me, a rich archive of writers' voices and experiences. My gratitude to your team for creating and hosting these talks, and for everything else you do
— Nilanjana S. Roy
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When a Loss Becomes a Gain

Diplomat, bureaucrat, author and politician, Pavan K. Varma dons many hats. As the guest at **The Write Circle** Birmingham and Oxford virtual session, he spoke about the gift of life, his love of poetry, the challenges of translation, and what being Indian means.

The conversation, which was steered by Titiksha Shah, started with Varma's only work of fiction, *When Loss is Gain*. When asked why he had only written one novel, he said that though he believes a day has 28 hours instead of 24, there are limitations to what all one can do. He quipped that balancing politics and writing was difficult, for politics was a "zealous mistress".



Pavan K. Varma



Titiksha Shah

When Loss is Gain is about "the gift of life" and what happens when it is snatched from you. Varma gave the audience a glimpse into the thoughts of the protagonist after he is suddenly diagnosed with terminal cancer. "He realises then that life had been served to him on a platter and he had never had the time because all of us tend to take life for granted. He had never had the time to pause, to watch a sunrise, to watch a sunset, to just sit with a cup of tea at a roadside store, which we call a *dhaba*, to put his feet up, to listen to music, to just savour the moment." When he learns that his diagnosis was wrong, that he had been gifted his life again, he resolves to live it fully, because "when you lose you gain."

Varma's first published book was on Mirza Ghalib, who lived during an exceptional moment in history — 1797 to 1869. According to Varma, "This era was a period of both light and darkness — of twilight — where history was not

sharply clear, and Ghalib was in the midst of it." The writer feels Ghalib was as much a participant in the times as an observer of it.

The conversation shifted to the works translated by Varma. He spoke of his translation of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's works and how Varma had given the former Prime Minister some conditions: that he would not translate any of Vajpayee's political poems and that he would choose the poems to translate. The original collection had 51 poems and after translation it became 21 poems.

Varma first met Gulzar in Neemrana Fort and he recited some stanzas from his epic poem *Yudhishtar and Draupadi*. Varma has translated four collections of Gulzar's poetry, *Selected Poems, Neglected Poems, Green Poems and Suspected Poems*. Gulzar translated Varma's *Yudhishtar and Draupadi* into Hindi without telling him and surprised him with it. Gulzar even turned the poem into a play, which has been performed all over the world.

When asked about how he managed to translate without losing the essence of the poems, Varma said that it was difficult to capture the essence of one language in another. He had to make sure that they were not literal word-to-word translations, but something that captured the essence, with the same cadence, brevity and metre that the original poem was written in. It is a struggle between translation and transliteration. He said that translation was like transferring perfume from one bottle to another; however much you try, some of the fragrance will be lost.

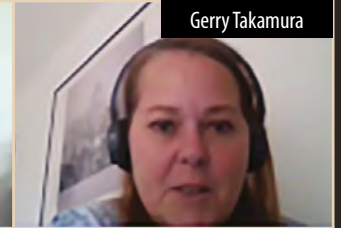
Varma explained that he wrote the book, *The Great Indian Middle Class*, because he was intrigued by the civilisational legacies to which he was heir and had the curiosity to know more. He wanted to highlight the contemporary aspect of India as "an ancient civilisation,



Padmesh Gupta



Virendra Sharma



Gerry Takamura



Piali Ray



Divya Mathur

He realises then that life had been served to him on a platter and he had never had the time because all of us tend to take life for granted. He had never had the time to pause, to watch a sunrise, to watch a sunset, to just sit with a cup of tea at a roadside store, which we call a dhaba, to put his feet up, to listen to music, to just savour the moment

but a young nation in the process of evolving towards its own destiny."

The author clarified that *Being Indian: Inside the Real India* was about who the people of India really are, not who they think they are or who other people think they are. Some people found the book irreverent, but his final inference was that "it is because of who we are that we will ultimately become a nation that will play a key role in the unfolding 21st Century."

Varma said a lot of Indians were adrift from their cultural roots. When he wrote *Adi Shankaracharya*, he discovered many people did not know much. He said that Indians living outside India face a curious existential dilemma as there are some intangible things one can't leave behind at immigration.

The author then answered some audience questions and shared that he was currently writing a book on ancient India. The conversation circled back to

how people should live their lives to the fullest, especially given the trying times we are living in..

The Write Circle Oxford & Birmingham is presented in association with British Council, Kriti UK, Sampad Arts and Oxford Business College

Pages Become Portals to a New World



Lakshmi Iyer

Author Author Lakshmi Iyer's favourite memories of her childhood consist of reading under a lamp in a tiny kitchen when the rest of her family was asleep. She devoured books because young Lakshmi believed every book was a portal to a world she had not explored yet.

A virtual **Education for All** reading session of the US-based author's book, *Why Is My Hair Curly*, led to an enriching exchange of ideas for the author's young and inquisitive online audience. The session was moderated by Vinnie Kakkar of Spagia Foundation, who is also the National Advisor of **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.



Vinnie Kakkar

The author, who is an adoptive parent, began by reading out a few passages from her book, which explores genetics, family dynamics and adoption identity through a heartwarming tale. She discussed how these passages were instrumental in dealing with important issues like adoption, self-awareness and the sense of belonging, as seen through the eyes of a child. She interacted with a group of curious eight to 13-year-olds after the

reading, speaking about the hurdles one can face during the adoption process. She advises an open conversation with an adopted child early on in order to prevent future issues about their identity.

She also touched upon topics like friendship, trust, bullying, challenging stereotypes, dealing with body-image issues and having honest communication with parents and teachers. The author encouraged her young audience to diligently practise journaling their daily lives, seek to broaden their horizon of knowledge through online portals and pursue an endless curiosity about the world.

A banker in her day job, Iyer becomes a wordsmith by night when her children have fallen asleep. The author, who holds an MBA from the LeBow College of Business in Philadelphia and has pursued creative writing at Simon Fraser University and the Yale Writer's Workshop, hopes to pen a memoir on her journey of adoption someday. She lives in Philadelphia, with her husband and three daughters. *Why Is My Hair Curly* is her first book.



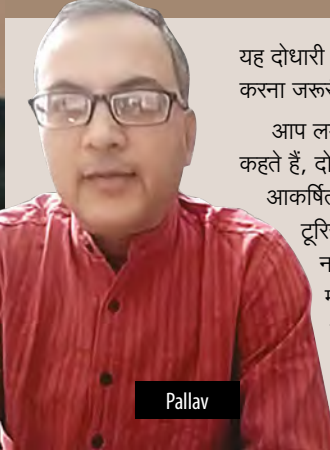
The reading was held in association with Red Panda, Spagia Foundation and Oxford Bookstore



Asghar Wajahat



जो लिखना चाहता था उसे अभी लिखना बाकी: असगर वजाहत



Pallav

यह दोधारी तलवार है। साहित्यिक पत्रिकाएं बची नहीं हैं। इसलिए यहां अपने को व्यक्त करना जरूरी है।”

आप लगातार यात्रा में रहते हैं, पर अपने को टूरिस्ट की बजाय सोशल टूरिस्ट कहते हैं, दोनों में क्या अंतर है? के जवाब में वजाहत ने कहा, “समाज की सच्चाई आकर्षित करती है। जब आप समाज के बारे में जानना चाहते हैं, तब सोशल टूरिज्म होता है। आज जो सफरनामा लिखा जाता है, उसमें कोई इमारत भर नहीं होती बल्कि किसी शहर, समाज के बारे में वह बताना, जो सोशल मीडिया, इंटरनेट पर नहीं है, वह सोशल टूरिज्म है।” पल्लव के इस सवाल कि क्या लेखन में शब्द कम पड़ जाते हैं, जो आप उन्हें रंगों व आकारों में ढूंढते हैं? वजाहत का जवाब था, “यह कठिन सवाल है। इसका सीधा जवाब नहीं है, पर पता नहीं क्यों रंग और आकार मुझे बहुत आकर्षित करते हैं। मैं इनसे संवाद करता हूँ। यह एक तरह की खोज, अपने आपकी तलाश है। रंग बोलते हैं। आकार बोलते हैं। उनकी अपनी भाषा मेरी बात से जुड़ जाती है, तो मुझे लगता है कि मेरी बात पूरी हुई।” एक सवाल के जवाब में उन्होंने यह माना कि नाटक लिखना भी सिखाया जा सकता है, पर उन्हीं को जो सीखना चाहते हैं। यह केवल चाहत से नहीं होगा। इसके लिए समझ, अध्ययन और प्रतिभा होनी चाहिए।

नाटककार और निर्देशक के रिश्ते कैसे होने चाहिए? पर वजाहत का जवाब था, “यह निर्देशक के ऊपर होता है। कुछ लोग चाहते हैं कि लेखक उनके साथ काम करे। कुछ निर्देशक मानते हैं कि लेखक का काम लिखने तक सीमित होता है, उसके बाद लेखक का काम खत्म। तो दोनों पर रिश्ता तय करता है।” जेनरेशन गैप से जुड़े सवाल पर वजाहत का जवाब था कि मेरी हमेशा कोशिश होती है कि मैं नए लोगों को समझूँ। मैं अध्यापन में था तो युवाओं को समझना आसान रहा। युवा

लेखकों को वजाहत की टिप्स थी, “जितना अच्छा पढ़ सकते हैं, पढ़िए। सिर्फ पढ़ना ही आपको आगे बढ़ा सकता है।” जयपुर से जुड़ी श्रोता रेणु व्यास ने पल्लव से पूछा कि आपको असगर साहब की कौन सी किताब पसंद है? पल्लव का जवाब था, *बाकरगंज के सैयदा* वजाहत साहब को लेखन की कौन सी विधा पसंद है? पर उनका जवाब था, “विचार अपने साथ अपनी विधा लेकर आता है। कंटेंट ही तय करता है कि हमें क्या बनना है।” **अहसास** वूमन लखनऊ की कनक रेखा चौहान का सुझाव था कि जिसने लखनऊ नहीं देखी जैसा कोई नाटक लिखिए। वजाहत ने सुझाव देने के लिए आभार जताया। ओम प्रकाश अग्रवाल ने वजाहत के तजुबों से सीख पूछी, तो उनका जवाब था, “लकीर से फकीर होने की कोशिश न करें। अपने आब्जर्वेशन को तेज बनाने की कोशिश कीजिए। साथ ही अपने अनुभव को बढ़ाने की कोशिश कीजिए।”

आर. एस. सोनी का सवाल मंचित नाटकों में संशोधन और नाट्य निर्देशकों से जुड़ा हुआ था। वजाहत का जवाब था, “हां, कई बार काल्पनिक पात्र जिंदा होकर सामने आ जाते हैं, तब आपकी बाध्यता हो जाती है कि आप उन्हें आगे बढ़ाएं। इसी तरह कई बड़े निर्देशकों से भी त्रुटियां होती हैं।” नाट्य निर्देशन से जुड़े एक सवाल पर वजाहत का कहना था कि मैं नाट्य निर्देशक को बहुत झंझट वाला काम समझता हूँ। नए नाट्य लेखकों में कौन पसंद है, पर वजाहत का कहना था, “बहुत सारे लोग अच्छा लिख रहे हैं। ऐसे लोगों को उचित स्थान नहीं मिल रहा। हिंदी रंगमंच की हालत बहुत खराब है।” वजाहत ने अपने पर शोध कर रहे शिवपाल सिंह को दिक्कत होने पर मदद का भरोसा दिलाया। कार्यक्रम में शामिल मनोरमा श्रीवास्तव ने वजाहत को आमंत्रण दिया। **अहसास** वूमन की ओर से डिंपल त्रिवेदी और कनक रेखा चौहान ने भी सक्रिय भूमिका निभाई।

कलम लखनऊ के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। लखनऊ एक्सप्रेस, दैनिक जागरण, हयात लखनऊ और अहसास वूमन लखनऊ सहयोगी रहे

कलम लखनऊ में लेखक, उपन्यासकार, नाटककार असगर वजाहत ने की शिरकत। **अहसास** वूमन लखनऊ से जुड़ी डिंपल त्रिवेदी ने वजाहत का स्वागत करते हुए, प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन द्वारा चलाए जा रहे बहुविध अभियानों की चर्चा की। वजाहत का परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने उनकी *सात आसमान* और *जिस लाहौर नई देखा, ओ जम्या ई नहीं* जैसी कृतियों की चर्चा की और बताया कि आपकी 20 पुस्तकें प्रकाशित हैं, जिनमें पांच उपन्यास, छह नाटक, पांच कहानी-संग्रह, एक यात्रा वृत्तांत, नुक्कड़ नाटकों का एक संग्रह और साहित्यिक आलोचना पर एक पुस्तक शामिल है। आगे की बातचीत के लिए उन्होंने हिंदू कॉलेज में प्राध्यापक, असगर साहब के काम के उत्साही प्रशंसक व *बनास जन* के संपादक पल्लव को आमंत्रित किया।

वजाहत के बहुविध सृजनकर्म का उल्लेख करते हुए पल्लव ने यह जानना चाहा कि आपके लेखन की शुरुआत कैसे हुई और आधी शताब्दी तक लिखने के बावजूद ऐसा क्या है, जो अभी भी लिखना शेष है? वजाहत साहब का जवाब था, “लिखने की शुरुआत सुनने से हुई। जब मैं पढ़ना नहीं जानता था तब मेरी मां बचपन में उर्दू का क्लासिकल, साहित्य सुनाती थीं। वह सुनकर ही लिखने की प्रवृत्ति जगी। पर जो मैं लिखना चाहता था उसे अभी तक लिख नहीं पाया हूँ।” लखनऊ से जुड़े लेखन पर उनका जवाब था, “लखनऊ कई तरह से आकर्षित करता है। कंपोजिट कल्चर का जितना बारीक, मिलीजुली तहजीब की संस्कृति अवध में दिखती है। उस पर काम करना बाकी है। मैं लखनऊ पर जरूर कुछ न कुछ करूंगा। चाहे लिखूँ, फोटोग्राफी करूँ या इलस्ट्रेशन करूँ।”

हिंदी का बाजार बड़ा है, उसे बोलने वाले बढ़े हैं, दूसरी तरफ हिंदी साहित्य सिमट रहा है। इस विरोधाभासी स्थिति पर वजाहत का कहना था, “हिंदी कारोबार की, व्यापार की, बाजार की जबान बन रही है। बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों को शायद पहले नहीं पता था कि इस इलाके में काम के लिए उन्हें हिंदी की जरूरत पड़ेगी। अब उन्होंने इसे समझा है। पर यह सही है कि हिंदी अभी संस्कृति की भाषा नहीं बनी है।” फिल्मवालों से दोस्ती कैसे हुई? पर वजाहत का कहना था कि शुरु से ही मैं नाटक लिखता रहा। अमृत नाहटा, मुजफ्फर अली, विनय शुक्ला और राजकुमार संतोषी के लिए भी लिखा। पटकथा लेखन के हाशिए पर रहने की वजह बताते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि इसकी वजह यह थी कि मैं दूसरे जो काम करता था, उन्हें फिल्म लेखन के लिए मैं प्रभावित नहीं करना चाहता था।” किताब लेखन के साथ सोशल मीडिया पर आपकी सक्रियता का क्या महत्व है? पर वजाहत का जवाब था, “मुझे दूसरा कोई काम नहीं आता, सिर्फ लिखना आता है, इसलिए लिखता रहता हूँ। रही सोशल मीडिया की बात तो



Atul Tiwari

Green Champion Inspires 'River' of Hope



Arushi Nishank

At a time when we have had to sit back and introspect on how we have abused our environment and taken it for granted, this **Ek Mulakat** session with environmentalist, international Kathak exponent, actor, producer and author Arushi Nishank was indeed an enriching one.

A disciple of Pandit Birju Maharaj and a recipient of the Pride of Uttarakhand Award, Nishank has published two books, *Dharti Swarg Banaungi* and *Kalam Mashal Ban Jaye*. She is also the co-founder and chairperson of the Sparsh Ganga Campaign. The wonder woman was



Nilisha Agarwal

featured in *Forbes Middle East* for her contribution to social work and women's empowerment. **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata Nilisha Agarwal steered the conversation.

In 2009, Nishank started an environmental awareness project called "Beautiful Valley" that drew support from the Dalai Lama, other spiritual leaders as well as MP Hema Malini. The Sparsh Ganga Campaign that started off as a very small initiative now boasts of five lakh members across five countries. The initiative undertakes a 'Sunday Cleaning' programme every week, where 'Sparsh Ganga Praharies' embark on a river cleaning mission at various significant points such as Varanasi and Lucknow.

During the pandemic, the campaign went a step further, distributing lakhs of khadi masks to our jawans at the border, the police, as well as civilians. "Khadi is a symbol of Gandhiji's self-reliance. It is environmentally friendly and in tune with the spirit of the Prime Minister's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Thousands of rural women who made these masks developed skills and are gainfully employed," said Nishank. She has trained and engaged over 800 rural women in making masks, incense sticks from discarded flowers and biodegradable jute bags.

Nishank's love for the performing arts is a legacy from her parents, she said. Conversations at home always revolved around art and literature. Both her parents were writers and her father, Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal, has authored several dozen books under his pen name, "Nishank".

Arushi Nishank chose to venture into cinema as she felt that it was a strong medium to get a message across to the masses. She produced *Major Nirala*, a Garwahli film based on a book written by her father, that focuses on the life of a soldier after his return from the line of duty.

When Agarwal asked if she was interested in big-banner Bollywood projects, Nishank said, "Yes! I am in talks with some big directors and producers for OTT platform for two or three web series. I am thankful

to Prasun Joshi for his support. I hope to make an announcement soon." She is working on Bollywood projects too, Nishank said, as well as a book on the circular economy and a movie named *Tarini*.

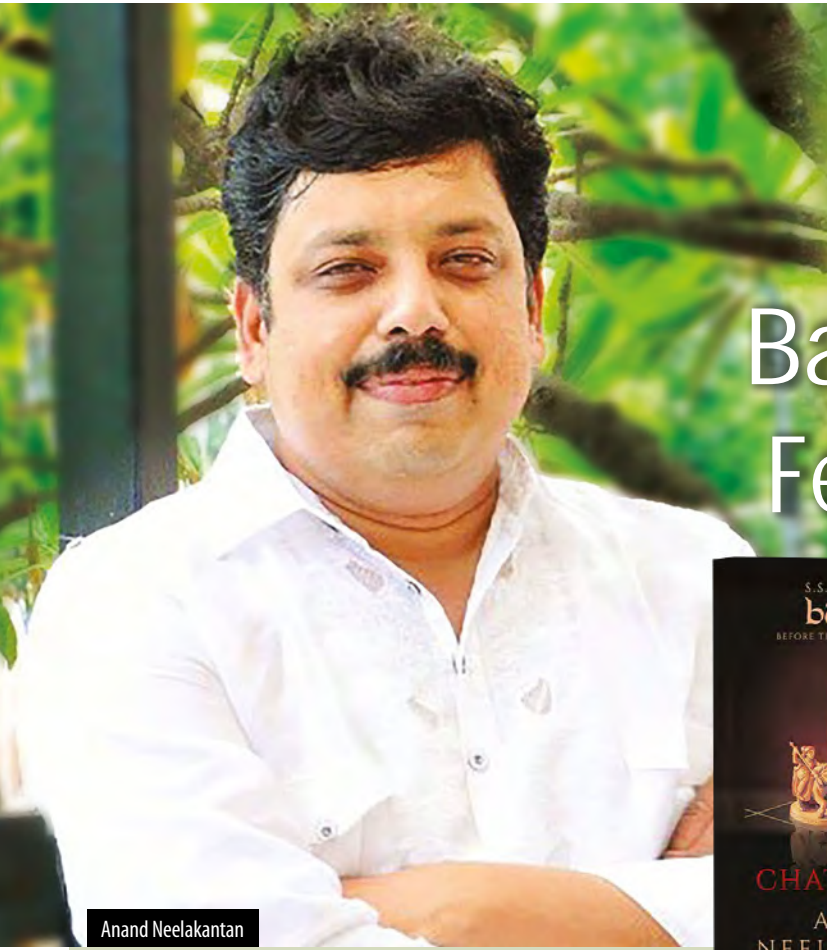
On the inspiration behind her internationally-acclaimed Kathak ballet, *Ganga Avtaran*, she said, "The ballet gave me an opportunity to fuse my two passions — environmental awareness and dance." Through the ballet she has tried to portray the tumultuous journey of the Ganges in the form of a woman. Nishank revealed how she would be kept out of school performances because of her weight. This had a deep impact on her young, impressionable mind. She had wept a lot, but determined to prove herself. Nishank has since performed in over 15 countries

Nishank hopes to inspire the next generation through her words and guide their enthusiasm in the right direction. She feels every youngster is an icon in themselves as long as they have identified their own course. Nishank advised the youth not to get distracted and to channel themselves with positivity. She reminded them that though technology was a big boon they should not forget to relate to their roots.

Speaking about supporting the environment during the COVID times, Nishank said, "First, we should keep our families and the country safe by staying indoors and by maintaining social distance protocols. Second, we should conserve water. There is a water crisis looming over 22 cities in the country. About 70 percent of the water used is wasted, which we should find ways of conserving and utilising in a proper way, like watering plants and so on." Nishank believes the pandemic has brought people closer and has rekindled a genuine community feeling.

"It was great to have a young achiever share her ideas, life experiences and dreams with us. Arushi, who is proud of her Indian heritage, is a source of inspiration for a lot of people. She connects with thousands of people through the Sparsh Ganga campaign to promote awareness about the Ganga and its biodiversity," said a **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** representative.

First, we should keep our families and the country safe by staying indoors and by maintaining social distance protocols. Second, we should conserve water. There is a water crisis looming over 22 cities in the country



Anand Neelakantan

Weaving the *Bahubali* Backstory, with a Feisty Woman at the Centre



While the written word is often adapted for the silver screen, it is rare for a movie to inspire a book trilogy! Bestselling writer Anand Neelakantan has done just that, creating a book series on the backstory of the blockbuster *Bahubali* films.

Chaturanga, the second book in the *Bahubali: Before the Beginning* trilogy, was unveiled by Neelakantan's friend and fellow writer Amish Tripathi, who is currently Director, Nehru Centre, London, at a virtual **Kitaab** Book Launch session. The first book — *The Rise of Sivagami* — continues to be a bestseller.

Ehsaas Woman of London, Sangeeta Datta, steered the conversation between the two popular writers. Neelakantan, who is a screenwriter, columnist, motivational speaker and the author of five fiction titles in English and one in Malayalam, believes that the Puranas have a distinct youth appeal. Neelakantan, who is a screenwriter, television personality, motivational speaker and the author of five fiction books in English and one in Malayalam, believes that the *Puranas* have a distinct youth appeal.

"India is a living culture," he explained, adding that literature continues to evolve with each successive



Sangeeta Datta

generation. Each generation reinvents the classics. He said that the youth of today were drawn to mythology because it was being written in English and Indian English had finally come of age, overshadowing British and American English.

He spoke passionately about the Sivagami saga. His love for characters with shades of grey prompted him to cast Sivagami as a protagonist in the *Bahubali* trilogy.

He was fascinated by her sheer power and courage in a fictional medieval patriarchal society.

Neelakantan, best known for his *Asura* and *Ajaya* titles, said creating one grey character had provided him with the impetus to create numerous sub-characters. The blending of history and mythology that this series required allowed for the evolution of a 'pseudo-history' that is perfectly suited for a web series, he feels.

Neelakantan shared that he had been introduced to mythology and the classics by his parents and grandparents very early in life. Being brought up in the cultural capital of Kerala, a region adorned with numerous temples, he had been exposed to various performing arts that portrayed and illustrated elaborate tales from mythology.

He said that he owed his craft to the "cultural moorings" of his childhood. He added that most of his work was inspired by the many versions and forms of folktales he encountered, rather than the formal written narratives. Oral narratives are the ones which have been passed on as a legacy through several generations, he said.

Neelakantan, who is a recipient of the Kalinga International Literary Award, prefers to tell the tales of the vanquished because he feels that the stories of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have never been a tale of the good versus the evil. It is all about *karma* and *karma phala*. He elucidated that it was only during the Bhakti era and around the Gangetic belt that the classics evolved to contain characterisations of Ravan and Duryodhan



His love for characters with shades of grey prompted him to cast Sivagami as a protagonist in the *Bahubali* trilogy. He was fascinated by her sheer powerfulness and courage amidst medieval oppression



as absolute negatives. The author said that he portrayed mythological heroes along with their flaws as it made them more relatable. He added that he enjoyed giving voice to the lesser-known characters and liked to interpret events from diverse perspectives.

On his journey as a screenwriter, Neelakantan explained that poetry was the most ancient form of storytelling, a craft which has evolved greatly over the years. Visual storytelling came into prominence with the

onset of television and the film industry. "I have acquired English very late in life," he said, adding that his work relied strongly on detailed visual conceptualisation, which is what makes him a favourite with filmmakers. Screenplay is just like an "architect's sketch" that comes easily to him because of his ability to visualise. He described his creative process, which begins with him thinking in Malayalam, visualising the story, and then writing it in simple English, which he feels adds to the fundamental appeal of his books.

Neelakantan's work is driven by research and the knowledge he acquires. He said his work was based



Amish Tripathi

on 43 years of hearing and accumulating stories and varied interpretations of mythology. He spends a lot of time reading and following folk-based performances or documentations. His knowledge of Sanskrit and Tamil enables him to follow tales in different languages and he has recently started dabbling in Urdu as well, he revealed.

Speaking about one of the settings in the *Bahubali* prequel trilogy, Kadarimandalam, he said it was based on medieval coastal Kerala. He pointed out that coastal kingdoms were always more liberal as they were the gateways to foreign schools of thought through trade and foreign invasions.

The conversation left the audience longing to get their hands on the second book in the trilogy.

The event was held in association with Nehru Centre, London, and the High Commission of India in the UK



Neeraj Kumar

Vivek Atray

युवा अफसर समझें की पुलिसिंग एक दायित्व भरा काम है: नीरज कुमार



कलम चंडीगढ़ में अतिथि वक्ता भारतीय पुलिस सेवा के पूर्व वरिष्ठ अधिकारी व लेखक नीरज कुमार का स्वागत करते हुए अहसास वूमैन चंडीगढ़ की शालू गोयल ने कहा कि आप 'मैन ऑफ एक्शन' हैं। आपका जोशीला साहसी करियर 37 सालों में फैला है, जिसमें 9 साल सीबीआई के भी हैं। 1976 बैच के आई.पी.एस. अफसर कुमार ने दिल्ली पुलिस में कई पदों पर महत्वपूर्ण जिम्मेदारियां निभाईं। आप बहुचर्चित निर्भया रेप केस के खुलासे के पीछे भी थे। 1993 मुंबई सीरियल ब्लॉस्ट जांच के लिए बनी सीबीआई टीम की अगुआई, बीस से भी अधिक भगोड़ों की धरपकड़, दुबई से अमेरिकी सेंटर के हमलावर आफताब अंसारी की गिरफ्तारी और निर्वासन आदि का श्रेय उन्हें जाता है। गोयल ने कुमार की उपलब्धियों और उनके रोमांचक, जोशीले अनुभवों पर बातचीत के लिए प्रेरक वक्ता, लेखक, अतिथि प्रोफेसर और पूर्व आई.ए.एस अधिकारी विवेक अत्रे को आमंत्रित किया।

अत्रे का पहला सवाल कुमार की पढ़ाई और शुरुआती जीवन को लेकर था। कुमार का जवाब था, "मुझे पता नहीं था कि मुझे क्या बनना है। मैं सेंट स्टीफेंस कॉलेज का छात्र था। एक दोस्त ने पूछा कि आगे क्या करना है। उन्होंने ही मुझे दस रुपए मांग कर यूपीएससी का फार्म खरीदा। मेरा सलेक्शन हो गया। शुरु में मुझे समझ नहीं आया कि मैं पुलिस में कैसे एडजस्ट करूंगा? पर मैं ईश्वर का शुक्रगुजार हूँ कि मैं पुलिस में रहा। वह दोस्त तमिलनाडु कैडर के आई.ए.एस ऑफिसर आर बालाकृष्णन थे।" दिल्ली पुलिस से जुड़े सवाल पर कुमार ने कहा, "मेरा करियर काफी अच्छा रहा। मेरी दिलचस्पी इन्वेस्टिगेशन में रही। मुझे अच्छे केसेज मिले। दिल्ली पुलिस की ग्रोथ भी काफी अच्छी रही है। बुनियादी तौर पर पुलिस का काम है लोगों की बात सुनना और उसे लॉजिकल तौर पर अंजाम तक पहुंचाना। किसी भी केस में मुलाजिम को पकड़ना ही महत्वपूर्ण नहीं है। कई केसों की चार्जशीट मैंने खुद से लिखी।"

निर्भया केस से जुड़े सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा, "वह मेरे करियर का महत्वपूर्ण केस था। इसका पब्लिक में जो रिएक्शन था, उस पर खाकी फाइल्स में मैंने लिखा भी है। यह ऐसा केस था, जिससे देश का कानून बदला। लड़कियों का पीछा करना या गलत ढंग से छूना पहले अपराध नहीं था। इस केस में मीडिया और लोगों का दबाव बहुत था। मैंने यह सब कुछ अपने पर झेला। पांच दिन में आरोपी पकड़े गए। दस दिन में चार्जशीट दाखिल की गई।" कुमार ने यह माना हर इन्वेस्टिगेशन में लक फैक्टर होता है। आपको क्रिटिकल प्वाइंट पर पहुंचना होता है। पर आपको कठिन प्रयास करने पड़ते हैं। भाग्य उन्हीं का साथ देता है, जो मेहनत करते हैं। लॉटरी केस की चर्चा करते हुए कुमार ने कहा, "1980 के दौर में हर राज्य की लॉटरी होती थी। एक लॉटरी के विजेता को फेक कहकर भगा दिया गया। वह जब पुलिस के पास आया तब जांच में पता चला कि पूरा लॉटरी ट्रेड एकदम फ्रॉड है। इसी तरह दिल्ली पर टेरिस्ट अटैक के भंडाफोड़ में एक आम आदमी ने हमारी मदद की। नौकरी की तलाश में दिल्ली आए एक लड़के ने लव-लेटर की शक में आए मेल में छिपे मैसेज को डिकोड किया, जिससे फरवरी 2002 में इंडिया गेट पर होने वाला बम विस्फोट रोका जा सका। अगर इसे नहीं रोका गया होता, तो निश्चित तौर पर भारत-पाकिस्तान का युद्ध हो गया होता।"

कुमार ने सीबीआई के अपने अनुभवों, अंडरवर्ल्ड, मुंबई ब्लॉस्ट केस, इकॉनॉमिक अफेयर्स विंग के अनुभवों की चर्चा की। उन्होंने अबूधाबी से दिल्ली आए एक एनआरआई की किडनैपिंग की चर्चा की, जिससे श्री मिलियन डॉलर की फिरोती मांगी गई थी। बंधक को जिंदा निकाल लेने से प्रवासी भारतीयों की नजर में भारत की इमेज सुधरी की, देश की पुलिस सक्षम है। कुमार ने सरदार बेअंतसिंह हत्याकांड से जुड़े आरोपी जगतार सिंह तारा के पकड़ने की पूरी कहानी भी सुनाई, जिसका जिक्र उन्होंने अपनी किताब *डायल डी फॉर डॉन* में किया है। अपराध के कई और दिलचस्प किस्सों को उन्होंने सुनाया। मैच फिक्सिंग से जुड़े हैंसी क्रोनिए केस की उन्होंने विस्तार से चर्चा की। बीसीसीआई के अपने अनुभवों से कुमार ने दावा किया कि क्रिकेट में भ्रष्टाचार का बीजारोपण क्लब और जिला लेवल पर ही शुरु हो जाता है। लेखन के क्षेत्र में आने को कुमार ने एक इतिहासक बताया। पेंविन के ऑफर पर *डायल डी फॉर डॉन* और *खाकी फाइल्स* लिखी गयी। ये सेल्फ ग्लोरिफिकेशन की किताब नहीं है। कुमार ने आदतन अपराध करने वाली ट्राइब से जुड़े केस का भी जिक्र किया।

युवा अफसरों को सीख देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि वे अपने काम को गहराई से समझें। सुविधा, लाभ व पद की बजाय समझें कि पुलिसिंग भी डॉक्टर, इंजीनियर की तरह बारीक काम है। सफल ऑफिसर बनने के लिए कुमार की सलाह थी, आप अपने काम को एंजवाय करिए। जहां आपकी रुचि है, उसी में अपने को आगे बढ़ाइए। सुशांत सिंह राजपूत केस से जुड़े सवाल पर कुमार का मत था, "सीबीआई साइंटिफिक ढंग से इन्वेस्टिगेशन करती है। वह पूरे सीन को रिक्रिएट करके देखेगी। सीबीआई के पास फोरेंसिक बैकअप बहुत अच्छा है। सीबीआई इस केस से जुड़े सारे सवालों का जवाब दे सकती है।"

I am glad to have listened to the intricate details of such high-profile cases. My curiosity towards the various incidents of the past has been quenched. The session gave me a different perspective on the state of our forces. Thanks to the Foundation for organising such a knowledgeable session.



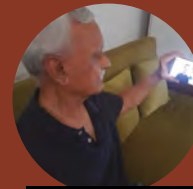
— Manisha Jain

A very engaging session full of enlightening facts about the way cases are handled in our country. It was a pleasure to have been a part of this thrilling conversation!

— Shalu Goel



Anju Helen Jain



K. C. Katoach



Sunita Katoach

अहसास वूमैन की मनीषा जैन द्वारा निर्भया केस से जुड़े सवाल पर कुमार ने विस्तार से उत्तर दिया। उनका कहना था, "हम शरीया लॉ वाले देश नहीं हैं। हमारे पास अलग तरह के कानून हैं। निर्भया केस के बाद बहुत बदलाव हुए हैं। भारत में बलात्कार की घटनाएं दुनिया के कई देशों से कम हैं। यह सही है कि हमारी कई सामाजिक समस्याएं हैं। लड़की का पैदा होना कई इलाकों में खुशी की बात नहीं मानी जाती। भ्रूणहत्या, गर्भपात की समस्या है। पर अब इस मानसिकता में बदलाव हो रहा है। वहां अब बच्चियों के पैदा होने पर उतना दुख नहीं मनाया जाता है। इसी तरह हमारे देश के ही कई हिस्सों में महिलाएं अगुआई भी कर रही हैं।" उन्होंने पाताल लोक वेब सीरीज से जुड़े सवाल का जवाब भी दिया।

कलम चंडीगढ़ का आयोजन हयात रीजेंसी चंडीगढ़ और अहसास वूमैन चंडीगढ़ की सहभागिता से किया गया

मगह का पहला विवरण ऋग्वेद में मिलता है: अश्विनी कुमार पंकज



Aradhana Pradhan



Arun Narayan



Ashwini Kumar Pankaj

भाषा को ताकत उसके बोलने वालों की संख्या से नहीं मिलती, बल्कि उसमें व्यक्त विचार, तत्व और चिंतन से मिलती है। यह कहना है अश्विनी कुमार पंकज का। वह स्थानीय भाषाओं के लिए प्रतिबद्ध आखर बिहार के कार्यक्रम में बोल रहे थे। कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत में आराधना प्रधान ने अतिथियों व श्रोताओं को आखर के बारे में बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि आखर नियमित तौर पर मैथिली और भोजपुरी में कार्यक्रम करता है। अब तक इसकी बाईस कड़ियां हो चुकी हैं। पर मगही में यह पहला कार्यक्रम है। अतिथि वक्ता पंकज का विस्तार से परिचय देते हुए प्रधान ने कहा कि आप रांची विश्वविद्यालय से कला स्नातकोत्तर हैं। अभिव्यक्ति के हर माध्यम-रंगकर्म, कविता-कहानी, आलोचना, पत्रकारिता एवं डॉक्यूमेंट्री में समान रूप से लिखते हैं। झारखंड आंदोलन में शिरकत की है। आदिवासी इनके सृजन के केंद्र में हैं। कई नाटकों का मंचन, पत्र-पत्रिकाओं का प्रकाशन और दर्जनों डॉक्यूमेंट्री फिल्मों का निर्माण किया है। कई पुस्तकें लिखी हैं, जिनमें हिंदी उपन्यास *माटी माटी अरकाटी* और मगही में लिखा *खाँटी किकटिया* शामिल है। संवादकर्ता अरुण नारायण का परिचय उन्होंने एक सांस्कृतिक कर्मी, पत्रकार और लेखक के रूप में दिया।

नारायण ने दो करोड़ मगही लोगों की ओर से आयोजकों का आभार प्रकट किया और बंगाल, झारखंड, बिहार में मगही की भौगोलिक उपस्थिति की विस्तार से चर्चा की। मगध के गौरवशाली इतिहास, धार्मिकता, संस्कृति, राजनीति और सभ्यता का उल्लेख करते हुए उन्होंने मगध साम्राज्य, ब्रह्मद्रथ, लिच्छवी, बुलि, हर्यक, शिशुनाग, नंद, सूर्य वंश, मौर्य और गुप्त वंश का नाम लिया। आधुनिक दौर में 1857 से लेकर देश की आजादी और बाद के किसान आंदोलन, आरक्षण आंदोलन और 984बीसी से आजतक की क्रांति, प्रतिक्रांति में मगध के जुझारू और प्रतिभागी स्वरूप का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने अतिथि वक्ता पंकज से मगध के इतिहास, धर्म और आधुनिक समय में मगही भाषा की स्थिति और उनके उपन्यास पर सवाल पूछा।

पंकज ने जुहार के साथ अपनी बात शुरू की। उन्होंने कहा, “मैं मगही में कमजोर हूँ, पर यह मेरी मां की भाषा है, यह दूध का कर्ज है।” उन्होंने

कहा, “मग से मगह बना है। मगही वो हैं, जो हमेशा नए विचार पर चलता है और खंडन-मंडन करता है। खंडन-मंडन करने वाला समाज ही नए रास्ते पर चलता है। खंडन-मंडन नहीं करने वाला कोई नया पंथ और नया विचार नहीं अपना सकता है। मग का मूल अर्थ है नए विचार पर चलने वाले लोग। मगह का अर्थ यही है।” पंकज का दावा था, “मगह का पहला विवरण ऋग्वेद में मिलता है, जिसे कीकट कहा गया है। जिसका अर्थ यज्ञ न करने वाला, गाय का दूध न पीने वाले के रूप में मिलता है। मकखलि गोसाल, महावीर, भूज जैसे दार्शनिक मगह के समाज में मिलते हैं। गौतम बुद्ध ने जिससे पहली शिक्षा ली, उनके भी गुरु थे मकखलि गोसाल। मगह का साहित्य, भाषा, समाज, आर्थिक नीति, कला कौशल की शुरुआत करने वाला समाज है। मगही भारतीय भूमि की सबसे प्राचीन भाषा है। जिस भाषा में महावीर और बुद्ध बोले वही भाषा मगही है। इसी में बोल वचन है वही मगही का पहला साहित्य है।”

मगही भाषा पर हो रही राजनीति पर पंकज ने कहा कि इस पर कोई विवाद नहीं है। बोलने वाले तो बोलेंगे ही। हमारे पास तो ऐतिहासिक साक्ष्य है। अशोक का शिलालेख पहला सुबूत है। आप चाहे उसे प्राकृत कहें, पाली कहें या मगही कहें। ग्रीयर्सन भी मानते हैं की प्राचीन भाषा मगधी है। तर्क से हम तथ्यात्मक इतिहास को अनदेखा नहीं कर सकते। मुंडा परिवार की भाषा सत्तर हजार साल पुरानी है। आज के बिहार में चार भाषाई क्षेत्र हैं। पंकज ने कहा कि ताम्रपत्र, शिला पर मागधी भाषा है। यह सत्य है कि हम सबसे प्राचीन भारतीय हैं। मगही लोग अपनी भाषा पर घमंड नहीं करते हैं। मगही की पहचान बुद्ध, महावीर हैं, और अब दशरथ मांझी। वर्तमान में बिहार में मगही की दो करोड़ के आसपास संख्या है। भाषा की ताकत संख्या से नहीं मिलती। उसकी संस्कृति और विचार दर्शन से ताकत मिलती है। पंकज ने कहा कि भाषा भावी पीढ़ी के लिए लिखते हैं, यह सिर्फ अपने समय के लिए नहीं लिखी जाती है। आखर के फेसबुक पेज पर इसका लाइव प्रसारण भी किया गया।

आखर बिहार के प्रस्तुतकर्ता हैं श्री सीमेंट, यह प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और मसि इंक के सहयोग से आयोजित किया गया



Challenging Tradition and the Great Indian Tragedy



Lord Bhikhu Parekh

Love gave me the courage to stand up," said leading political theorist, academician and life peer, Lord Bhikhu Parekh, as he shared his life experiences and views with a global audience, at a virtual session of **Ek Mulakat**. Parekh discussed topics like women's empowerment, the English education system in India and parental love, in conversation with Lady Mohini Kent Noon.

Parekh pioneered the concepts of multiculturalism and racial harmony in Britain, taught in the University of Hull and the London School of Economics, and was the vice-chancellor of Baroda University (now known as The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda). He is a recipient of the Global Thinker Award, Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize and the Padma Bhushan, besides writing several books on



Lady Mohini Kent Noon

politics and philosophy.

"There are four important turning points in my life and at each of these, some individuals came along and helped me," said the scholar. Born in Amalsad, Gujarat, in 1935, Parekh was expected to carry on his family profession as a goldsmith. The headmaster of his school suggested that he complete his schooling and then go to college. When he was at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, everyone, including Parekh himself, thought that he would become a bank clerk. One of his professors encouraged him to pursue an MA instead. While doing so, he met Professor Usha Mehta, who believed that he should go to England and even wrote his application for the London School of Economics (LSE).

He got through the elite institution and decided to go. He couldn't speak much English and the people there had a few years of education over him. "Again, an invisible hand in the shape of Professor Michael Oakeshott, one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th Century, who, for some reason, took an interest in me, helped me. The rest is history," said Parekh. He came to see his life as a gift of others and believes that since people helped him become what he is, he should help others achieve their true potential. "True to my past, I have dedicated my life to helping young people navigate their lives in a way I have navigated mine," he said.

Explaining why he chose a life dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, he said that at every stage of his life, it was not enough for somebody to push him to the next level, he was inspired himself. He also said that he was also grateful that his father had not been an authoritarian figure. Challenging various customs and traditions in the family was the vitalising impulse in his life.

On the issue of gender equality in India, Parekh said, "We must remember that the woman as a mother has rights that the woman as a daughter and wife don't have. Mahatma Gandhi was the first to bring the largest number of women into public life by appealing to their motherly nursing instinct. Equality of women, in

all spheres of life, is slowly happening in India." Taking his own mother as an example, he pointed out that the Indian woman was far more complex than what a simple patriarchal analysis could encompass — she was far from a doormat and possessed her own dignity and rights.

As a young man, Parekh had the urge to make sense of the world around him and pushed back against conformism. At the time, he belonged to a village where the practice of untouchability was rampant. Parekh recounted a childhood memory, "A so-called 'untouchable' woman touched me and my mother screamed at me to go and have a shower. I could not understand — why should my mother's touch be okay and this woman's touch require a shower? I could gather the courage to stand up against such questions because I could count on my parents' love."

The relation between India and Bharat is a very complex one. Even today, when you talk about Bharat, you are talking about a 3000-year-old land. Our consciousness is out of pace with the language

Parekh shared another childhood anecdote that left an imprint on his young mind. "Once, a woman came to my father, handed over her bangle and asked for Rs 400. My father said it was worth Rs 200. The woman insisted she be given at least Rs 300. My father threw the bangle at her and went inside for his afternoon siesta. The woman said to me, 'I have a son like you who is ill and I cannot pay the doctor's fee without the money.' I went and woke up my father. As she got the money she held my hand and said 'May God bless you with a good future.'

Since then, my life's work has been on equality."

On the overwhelming influence of English among Indian elites, Parekh said that in India, what seems to have happened is a kind of half-modernity, which has been brought about by the prevalence of the English language. He believes that it is one of India's biggest tragedies that our political system did not spring from our own history, we imported our history and all the terms that go with it. In such a situation, it is very natural for people to use the language that they adopted. "The relation between India and Bharat is a very complex one. Even today, when you talk about Bharat, you are talking about a 3000-year-old land. Our consciousness is out of pace with the language," said Parekh.



Chitra Mudgal

युवा लेखकों के सामने नए मनुष्य गढ़ने की चुनौती: चित्रा मुद्गल



कलम अमृतसर & जालंधर में लेखिका चित्रा मुद्गल का स्वागत अहसास वृमेन जालंधर की ओर से रुही वालिया स्याल ने किया। अतिथि लेखिका की उपलब्धियों का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि मुद्गल अपने उपन्यास पोस्ट बॉक्स न. 203 नाला सोपारा के लिए साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित की गईं तो आंवा के लिए उन्हें व्यास सम्मान मिला। वह भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन यानी इसरो के अंतरिक्ष एवं अणु उर्जा विभाग की संयुक्त हिंदी सलाहकार समिति का हिस्सा भी रही हैं। भारतीय भाषा परिषद कोलकाता के 'कृतित्व समग्र पुरस्कार' और स्टेट बैंक ऑफ इंडिया मुंबई के राज भाषा विभाग द्वारा हिंदी साहित्य के लाइफ टाइम अचीवमेंट अवार्ड से भी सम्मानित हैं। मुद्गल से आगे की बातचीत के लिए उन्होंने लेखिका और कवयित्री अणु शक्ति सिंह को आमंत्रित किया।

सिंह ने मुद्गल से पहला सवाल उनके बचपन व विजातीय विवाह को लेकर पूछा। मुद्गल ने बताया कि उनके पिता नौसेना में अधिकारी थे। उनका स्थानांतरण होता रहता था। चेन्नई में पैदा हुईं। पिताजी विदेश चले गए तो कुछ शुरुआती साल गांव में भी रही। फिर मुंबई में रही। क्षत्रिय खानदान की लड़कियों को पढ़ाकर शादी ही कराना है, ऐसी सोच, समृद्ध परिवार और ऐश्वर्य से अलग जाकर मैं ट्रेड युनियन के दफ्तर में बैठने लगी। मुद्गल का कहना था, "लिखने की प्रेरणा मुझे प्रतियोगिता में शामिल होने के उद्देश्य से मिली। मैंने लिखना कक्षा सात में शुरू किया। स्कूल की पत्रिका में कहानी छपी तो मेरी मां बहुत खुश हुईं। बाद में असंगठित क्षेत्र की घरेलू कामकाजी महिलाओं की लड़ाई के लिए जागरण नामक संस्था से जुड़ीं। कॉलेज में आने के बाद ट्रेड युनियन से उस जीवन को देखने के लिए जुड़ीं, जिसे मैंने प्रेमचंद के गोदान, ताराशंकर बंदोपाध्याय के गणदेवता और निकोस के जोरबा द ग्रीक को पढ़कर



Anu Shakti Singh

जाना था।" पत्रकार, संपादक अवध नारायण मुद्गल से अपनी शादी को उन्होंने वर्ग भेद और वर्ण भेद के प्रति अपना विद्रोह बताया। शादी करके हम एक झोपड़पट्टी में रहे। इसके पीछे मजदूरों के बीच में रह कर उनकी जिंदगी को देखने की हमारी सोच थी। मेरा पहला बच्चा मजदूरों के बीच ही पैदा हुआ। उस दुनिया की विषमता को बिना देखे मैं समझ नहीं सकती थी।

एक सवाल के जवाब में मुद्गल ने बताया, "फिल्म बधाई हो 1976 में प्रकाशित उनकी कहानी दुलहिन से चुरा कर बनाई गई। श्री इंडियट्स में चेतन भगत के साथ भी ऐसा हुआ। लेखक कहानियों की चोरी के विवाद में नहीं फंसता। हमारा हिंदी समाज अपनी अस्मिता की लड़ाई में बहुत बंटा हुआ है।" आज के लेखकों क्या लिखना चाहिए? के जवाब में मुद्गल ने कहा, "आज के लेखकों के सामने आदर्श नहीं हैं। साहित्य जन का इतिहास है। 'जन' चाहे जिस वर्ग का



हो, उसकी लड़ाई लड़ना साहित्य का काम है। पर तकनीक ने विश्व को एक गांव बना दिया है। नई पीढ़ी के लेखक को पुराने संक्रमण के साथ उदारवाद की चुनौतियों से जूझना है। उपभोक्तावाद और बाजारवाद ने परिवार, कुटुंब जीवन और सामाजिक तानेबाने को तोड़ दिया है। अनाथ-आश्रम और वृद्धाश्रम हमारे यहां नहीं थे। इसी तरह आत्मनिर्भरता और शिक्षा के बावजूद आधुनिकता ने लड़कियों के लिए अलग तरह की समस्याएं पैदा की हैं। समाज का दृष्टिकोण बदले बिना लड़कियों को न्याय नहीं मिलेगा। पर लड़के-लड़कियों की समानता के बावजूद युवा लेखिकाओं को बहुत से नए तरह के मनुष्य को गढ़ने की जरूरत है।”

मुद्रल ने युवा लेखक, लेखिकाओं का जिक्र करते हुए कहा, “यह अच्छी बात है कि आज की नई पीढ़ी नए संक्रमणों के बावजूद नया साहित्य लिख रही है। मेरा मानना है कि साहित्य से काफी असर पड़ता है।” मजदूरों के पलायन पर उन्होंने अरुण प्रकाश की कहानी *भईया एक्सप्रेस* के साथ ही कई रचनाओं का जिक्र किया और भरोसा जताया कि नया वक्त आ रहा है, आया। नई पीढ़ी भारत की स्त्री होने की अस्मिता को कायम रखते हुए लगातार लिख रही है। मुद्रल ने सलाह दी कि लड़कियों को बंद होकर नहीं रहना चाहिए। अपने उपन्यास *आंवा* से जुड़े एक सवाल के जवाब में मुद्रल ने बताया, “मेरा उपन्यास *आंवा* दत्ता सामंत पर नहीं शंकर गुहा नियोगी की हत्या के बाद लिखा गया। मैं नियोगी की हत्या को मजदूरों के अधिकारों, मांग और मार्गदर्शक की हत्या मानती थी। मैंने इसीलिए मुंबई औद्योगिक नगरी को आधार बनाया, जहां देश भर से मजदूर आते हैं। इसीलिए मैंने मजदूरों के बारे में, उनके जीवन के बारे में, उनके नेताओं और आंदोलनों में जो अंतर्विरोध है, उसकी बुनियाद पर लिखा। मजदूरों में विभेद,

मुझे नई पीढ़ी के साथ जोड़कर प्रश्नोत्तर के माध्यम से परस्पर संवाद का जो सुअवसर कलम के माध्यम से प्रदान किया वह मेरे लिए बहुत बड़ी संतुष्टि का कारण है। मुझे हमेशा ही कलम के मंच पर आकर अच्छा लगता है, मगर इस बार विशेष खुशी इस बात से हुई कि सुंदर लड़कियों ने मिलकर अपने परिश्रम से इस संयोजन को जो गरिमा प्रदान की वह सचमुच उपलब्धि है कलम की।

— चित्रा मुद्रल

जातिवाद, जासूसी, बिल्डर लॉबी, शिवसेना, दलितों का जो उभार, बिकाऊ मजदूर नेता आदि पर अपने अनुभव से लिखा। दत्ता सामंत हमारे नेता थे। उनसे बहुत कुछ सीखा था। हड़ताल और तालाबंदी के बाद जब मजदूरों के चूल्हे नहीं जलते थे, पर उन्हीं को न्याय दिलाने के नाम पर जो श्रमिक नेता संसद पहुंचे, वहां जाकर चुप रह गए। भ्रष्टाचार और उनके बीच के अनुभव ने मुझे प्रेरित किया। लॉकडाउन में गांव पहुंचने के बाद भी उस मजदूर के पास कोई विकल्प नहीं था। यह समय का ‘आंवा’ था। आज अंग्रेजी समाज से ज्यादा भ्रष्टाचार है, पर मुझे विश्वास है कि यह वक्त बदलेगा।”

मुद्रल ने अपने उपन्यास *गिलिगडु* के लिखने के पीछे वृद्धाश्रम से जुड़े अपने अनुभव का जिक्र किया। उन्होंने बताया कि कैसे चंडीगढ़ के एक समृद्ध वृद्ध व्यक्ति के बेटे ने उन्हें वृद्धाश्रम में लाकर छोड़ दिया। उसी घर से बाहर निकाल दिया जिसे उन्होंने बनाया था। पर आखिरी वक्त में वह उसी बेटे को याद कर रहे थे। युवा पीढ़ी को यह याद रखना चाहिए कि कल उसके सामने भी ऐसा वक्त आ सकता है। क्या उसे यह पता था कि कोरोना होगा। *सुनगुनिया* भी ऐसी ही कहानी थी। **अहसास** वूमन जालंधर की शीतल खन्ना ने आभार ज्ञापित किया।

कलम अमृतसर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंटा। ताज स्वर्ण, दैनिक जागरण और अहसास वूमन अमृतसर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की

कलम जालंधर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंटा। दैनिक जागरण और अहसास वूमन जालंधर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की



Kelly Dorji

The Quest for Peace and Tranquility



Achla Sachdev

It was a journey I wanted to go on for my own understanding of my religion," said model-turned-actor and now writer Kelly Dorji at **The Universe Writes**, a virtual session organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, during an enlightening conversation about his life, career, art and the research for his book, *The Hidden Rainbow*, with moderator Achla Sachdev.

Dorji took his online audience on a riveting journey across time, detailing his first sojourn into the city of dreams, Mumbai, to becoming a model and then an actor, and returning to his homeland, Bhutan.

Dorji spoke about his youthful days when he went to Mumbai with one of his friends, and ended up enrolling at St. Xavier's College.



Mita Kapur

He spoke of the homesickness that he felt towards his beloved Bhutan — a feeling that he had shared with his friend — in the midst of the cacophony of Mumbai.

After his graduation, Dorji went on to study law, but destiny had other plans. Soon, he stepped into the glamour industry.

"I look back to my years of living in Mumbai, the big city, and I just think, 'Oh god, how do they tolerate not just the heat but also being in such close proximity to people!' he said with a laugh. "And the noise is something that I never got used to," Dorji added, revealing how he had to take to meditation to de-stress and channel his sense of tranquility.

Dorji then spoke about his career in modelling. Although his mother had expressed her stern wishes for him to finish his education first and then pursue modelling, life had other plans. While he was completing his third year at college, he got an opportunity to work in an advertisement for Eveready India, which he accepted. "It was my first thousand rupees from doing that work," Dorji smiled. He got himself a portfolio of his photographs and embarked upon a career as a model.

He shared how some two decades ago, the rapport between fashion photographers and debutant models was vastly different from what is prevalent at present. With fond admiration and gratitude, he revealed that he probably did not even pay his photographer for their work.

Soon, Dorji had become a household name, working with eminent designers like Rohit Bal and Tarun Tahiliani, and even won the first *Gladrags* Manhunt Contest in 1994, conducted by founder Maureen Wadia, an event that had occurred in his absence while he was on a holiday! Dorji is also an avid photographer, for which he trained under eminent fashion photographer Chien-Wien Lee.

On Bollywood, Dorji revealed that he was never truly interested in getting into films, being apprehensive about a possible racial discrimination that he might have to face in the process. Furthermore, he revealed how he was constantly heralded as the "next Danny Denzongpa", the

legendary Sikkimese actor who is incidentally married to Dorji's aunt, and was well aware of the discriminatory struggles that the veteran actor had to face in his long career in the movies.

"I look back to my years of living in Mumbai, the big city, and I just think, 'Oh god, how do they tolerate not just the heat but also being in such close proximity to people!' And the noise is something that I never got used to," Dorji added, revealing how he had to take to meditation to de-stress and channel his sense of tranquillity.

Moreover, there was a language barrier. It was due to actor Bobby Deol that his career trajectory changed, despite his resistance, and he ended up acting in 32 films. Dorji also shared how he felt great awe while sharing screen space with celebrated South Indian actor Nagarjuna in 2007 for the film *Don*.

Discussing his book, Dorji spoke about his hectic life of working two-three jobs and writing the manuscript till the early hours of dawn. The book itself is a quintessential account of Buddhist concepts and iconography, alongside his own spirituality, and

expression of his understanding of the same. The actor-turned-author said that he felt it necessary to describe his thoughts that were laden with such profound theological concepts in lucid terminology to connect with his readers and find his inner peace in the process.

The Universe Writes is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Siyahi

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 @theuniversewrites



Meenakshi Parnami



Minul Roy



Nisha Singh

Dance is in her Heart



Shovana Narayan



Shinjini Kulkarni



Kaveri Lalchand

Dance is my *pran*, *atma* and soul. I loved both parts of my life — being a dancer and a bureaucrat. I entered the world of dancing when I was barely three years old, before my formal education started," said Kathak guru Shovana Narayan at a virtual session of **Ek Mulakat**. The protege of Pandit Birju Maharaj and recipient of the Padma Shri is a retired Indian Audit and Accounts Service officer and a passionate researcher-cum-

writer. The online session opened with Kaveri Lalchand, **Ehsaas** Woman of Chennai, welcoming Narayan and Shinjini Kulkarni, **Ehsaas** Woman of Noida, to the conversation.

The session began with Narayan talking about her dual careers in Kathak and the Indian bureaucracy. Taking the audience through her life's journey, she described Kathak as her heart and her academic and

professional career as her mind, emphasising that she was equally passionate about both. Trained first under Sadhana Bose in Kolkata, then Guru Kundan Lal Sisodia in Mumbai and Pandit Birju Maharaj in Delhi, the dancer said Kathak had instilled in her the understanding that power and fame were temporary, filling her with a sense of humility and a desire to help others.

As a choreographer, Narayan has worked on collaborative projects between Kathak and Classical Ballet, Flamenco, Tap Dance, and the performances for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Abilympics in 2003 and the Commonwealth Games in 2010. Narayan revealed that her mother played a pivotal role in her career, providing her constant companionship through her classes, shows and programmes. Later in life, when she needed to strike a work-life balance, especially after the birth of her son — juggling motherhood with her bureaucratic career and, of course, her dance — her mother was always there for her.

Other than the Padma Shri, she has received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and written books like *Indian Classical Dances* and *Folk Dance Traditions of India*.

Despite not being a formal student at Kathak Kendra, she considers herself a spiritual disciple of Pandit Birju Maharaj, and reminisced on the camaraderie among his students, who behave like a big, happy family.

"I will never forget my indebtedness to Guruji Birju Maharaj, who announced my performance prior to his own at Sapru House in Delhi. That was the kind of launching pad I got for my first stage performance!" she said.

Narayan's passion for research shone through as she discussed her explorations of certain Kathak villages in India. Trying to understand the origins of Kathak and how it transformed and adapted itself over the years, Kathak became much more than a dance form for Narayan, it became an embodiment of her life's philosophy. This was a journey that began

17-18 years ago at Bodh Gaya during a performance.

Sharing her research, the dance scholar revealed, "An epigraph from the Kameshwar Archive in Mithila has been confirmed by epigraphists to date back to the Mauryan period, which is in the BC. The inscription in prakrit and brahmi lipi clearly mentions Kathak as devotional

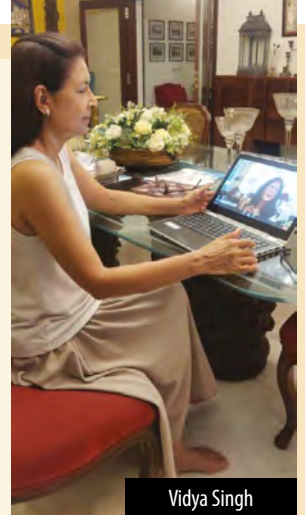
dancing and mentions the region around Varanasi."

Narayan collaborated with Sanskrit and epigraphy scholar K.K. Mishra to document the Kathak villages in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Moreover, the sculptures she discovered in small museums also helped her to understand the evolution and continuity of Kathak across the passage of time.

Regarding her international collaborations, the danseuse said, "We just found commonality in terms of poems, moods and even movements but the emphasis, the field and flow, as in the approach, tenor and flavour, is different. I am careful about using the term 'fusion', which means I lose my identity to merge myself into something. No, I keep my identity, so do they, and it is a beautiful collage of patterns and rhythmic dimensions."

Elaborating further on her philosophy, she pointed out on how the Hindi film industry showcases an admixture of several dance forms that, in turn, have amalgamated into a unique dance genre that is the signature of Bollywood.

Lastly, the dancer also dwelt on how Kathak itself was undergoing innovations but also staying true to its identity and traditions. The enriching session ended with Kulkarni thanking Narayan for sharing her knowledge with the audience and her sustained efforts towards celebrating Kathak and the dance community as a whole.



Vidya Singh

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तहजीब बनने में कई पीढ़ियां लगती हैं: हिमांशु बाजपेयी



Himanshu Bajpai



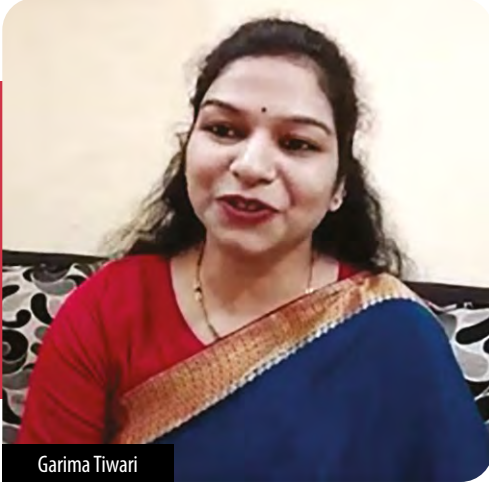
Nandita Bhaskar

कलम रायपुर & बिलासपुर में अहसास वूमन की ओर से गरिमा तिवारी ने दास्तानगो हिमांशु बाजपेयी का परिचय देते हुए कहा कि बाजपेयी ने किस्सागोई को पूरी तरह नया रूप दे दिया है। उन्होंने उर्दू कहानी कहने के पुराने अंदाज 'दास्तानगोई' को फिर से जिंदा कर दिया है। वह अपनी पुस्तक *किस्सा किस्सा लखनउवा* के अलावा वेब सीरीज *सेक्रेड गेम्स 2* में अपने कैमियो के लिए भी चर्चा में रहे हैं। तिवारी ने संवादकर्ता नंदिता भास्कर का परिचय भी दिया।

भास्कर ने बाजपेयी से जनता के किस्से जनता के अंदाज में लिखने का जिज्ञा करते हुए उनसे लखनउवा शब्द के बारे में पूछा। बाजपेयी का कहना था, "लखनउवा शब्द में एक भदेसपन है, एक सहजता है। यह आम लोगों की जिंदगी किस तरह से इस शहर में गुजरती है, इसकी बात करता। इसमें चौक, चौराहे, चौपटिया, नखास, मौलवीगंज, पांडेयनगर आदि के किस्से मिलते हैं, पर

जब हम लखनवी की बात करते हैं, तो उसमें नवाबी, ताल्लुकेदार, पैसेवालों और अमीरों के किस्से मिलते हैं।" किस्सों का इतना सजीव चित्रण कैसे कर लेते हैं? के सवाल पर बाजपेयी का जवाब था, "दो लोग मेरे गुरु हैं। एक से कभी नहीं मिला। पहले अमृत लाल नागर थे। दूसरे योगेश प्रवीण जी हैं। मैंने उन्हें ऐसे पढ़ा जैसे कोई मोहब्बतनामा लिखना है। शहर पर लिखना एक हसीन काम है, यह उन्हें पढ़ कर जाना।" गली और चौक के बारे में बाजपेयी ने कहा, "चौक इसलिए अहम हैं कि यहां पुरानी तहजीब बची है। यहां जाकर आपको लगता है कि यह जगह खास है। शायराना ज़बान, लखनवी तहजीब, कौमी एकता, रंगारंगीन शाम, लखनऊ का सारा हुस्न इस जगह पर इकट्ठा है।"

बाजपेयी ने *किस्सा किस्सा लखनउवा* की चर्चा करते हुए कहा, "जबान पर वहां काफी काम हुआ। वहां टोकने को बुरा नहीं माना जाता, बल्कि माना जाता है कि हमने अपने इल्म में इजाफा



Garima Tiwari



Gaurav Girija Shukla

किया।" उन्होंने अमीनाबाद से जुड़ा एक नवाब साहब और फूल वाली का किस्सा सुनाया। आपने शायर बनने की क्यों नहीं सोचा? पर बाजपेयी का जवाब था, "शायरी के लिए अलग तरह का हुनर चाहिए। शायरी करना एक अहम चीज है। हम उन्हें समझ लेते हैं, यही बड़ी बात है।" आप दास्तानगोई में काकोरी कांड का कैसे इतना सजीव चित्रण कर लेते हैं? बाजपेयी का जवाब था, "कहानी हम वही सुनाते हैं, जिस पर हमारा अकीदा है। जिस पर हमें यकीन नहीं है, उसे हम नहीं सुनाते। हम मजाज की दास्तान अंकित चड्ढा के साथ सुनाते थे। हम फैज अहमद फैज की दास्तान नहीं सुनाते थे, जबकि वह मजाज से बहुत बड़े शायर थे।" बाजपेयी ने यह माना कि किस्सागोई सिखाना एक जिम्मेदारी है। रायपुर पर किस्सा सुनाने के अनुरोध पर उन्होंने कहा कि अगर कोई रायपुर वाला वहां की कहानी सुनाए तो बेहतर होगा।

एक सवाल के जवाब में बाजपेयी ने कहा, "तहजीब बनने में कई पीढ़ियां लगती हैं। जिस लखनऊ को हम अपने तस्सवुर में रखते हैं उसे बनने में समय लगा। मजाज ने लिखा था, *मिटते हुए को देख के क्यों रो न दें मजाज, आखिर किसी के हम भी मिटाये हुये तो हैं।* अमीर मिनाई का शेर है, *खंजर चले किसी पे तड़पते हैं हम अमीर, सारे जहां का दर्द हमारे जिगर में है।* लखनऊ में आप गोलगप्पे खाने जाएं, तो उसे भी खाने-खिलाने का एक सलीका है।" बाजपेयी ने कॉलेज का अनुभव, जवानी के दिनों पर भी बात की। उन्होंने कहा कि जवान आदमी भी बूढ़ा हो सकता है। उन्होंने दावा किया कि पुरानापन ही नएपन को सुनने में मदद करता है। नई पीढ़ी से जुड़े सवाल पर उन्होंने माना कि फिजां बदल गई हैं। पर इसके लिए पुराने लोग जिम्मेदार हैं। पुरानी पीढ़ी ने अपनी जिम्मेदारी नहीं निभाई। उन्होंने न्यूज चैनलों का उदाहरण दिया। अनीस जी के कहानी सुनाने के अनुरोध पर बाजपेयी ने कहा कि मेरी कहानियां काफी लंबी हैं। दो घंटे से अधिक की कहानियां हैं।

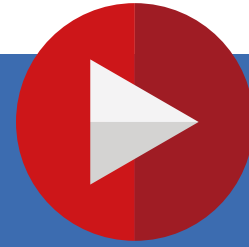
आगे का संवाद गौरव गिरिजा शुक्ला ने किया। नौकरी छोड़कर दास्तानगोई का झंडाबरदार बनने में परिवार का कितना सहयोग मिला? के सवाल पर बाजपेयी ने इस शेर जिसको खुद अपनी

खबर नहीं रहती, उसको सालारे कारवां न बनाएं का जिक्र करते हुए बताया, "जब मैंने नौकरी छोड़ी कि दास्तानगोई करूंगा, तो घर वालों का मुझ पर भरोसा था कि यह कर लेगा। दूसरा वे मानते थे कि इसका जो मन होगा, तो करता ही है। कामयाबी मिल गयी और पैसा आने लगा तो थोड़ा निश्चिंतता हो गयी। मां से सपोर्ट मिला।" कंटेंट से जुड़े सवाल पर बाजपेयी ने कहा, "हर व्यक्ति की अपनी एक यात्रा है। रामदरश मिश्र की कविता है, *जहां आप पहुंचे छलांगे लगाकर वहां में भी पहुंचा मगर धीरे धीरे।* यह जमाना अधिक डेमोक्रेटिक है। यहां बताने वाले लोग हैं। हमारे समय में नॉलेज के उतने स्रोत नहीं थे। तब साइबर कैफे ही था। पर आज तो गूगल पर पानी कैसे उबालें की सीख भी मिलती है। सोशल मीडिया के होने से आपको इंतजार नहीं करना है। पर हर दौर की कुछ खामियां, खूबियां हैं। हमने काकोरी कांड की दास्तान ढाई साल में लिखी। हर चीज में वक्त लगता है। *धीरे-धीरे रे मना, धीरे सब कुछ होय, माली सींचे सौ घड़ा, ऋतु आए फल होय।"*

ऋचा मित्रा ने किस्सागोई से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा। बाजपेयी का जवाब था, "दास्तानगोई क्या है इसे लोगों को समझाने में बहुत समय लगा। थिएटर, फिल्म, आर्ट अब भी एक प्रोफेशन नहीं बन पाया। यह चिंता एक वास्तविक चिंता है, कि क्या आने वाले बीस साल तक इसके साथ ऐसे ही बढ़ा जा सकता है। पर एक विश्वास है, जिसके भरोसे से हम आगे बढ़ें।" अंजली सिंह ने पूछा प्रोफेशन छोड़ने में रिस्क नहीं लगा? बाजपेयी का जवाब था, "पत्रकारिता में रहना ज्यादा रिस्की है। वहां के हालात बहुत अच्छे नहीं थे। वहां एवरेज लोगों की हुकूमत है। अंदर से संतुष्टि नहीं मिली, जबकि जर्नलिज्म मेरा पहला प्यार था।" डॉ जवाहर ने भी सवाल पूछा।

कलम बिलासपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन, नई दुनिया और अहसास वूमन बिलासपुर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की

कलम रायपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। अभिकल्प फाउंडेशन और हयात रायपुर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की



India's Role in the New Normal and its 'Aatmanirbhar' Spirit



Hardeep Singh Puri

It isn't often that one can meet and chat with a Union minister from the comfort of one's home. But a special virtual session of **The Write Circle** organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** allowed audiences to do exactly that.

The session saw Union Civil Aviation and Housing and Urban Affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri in conversation with Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan, a former diplomat, writer and foreign policy analyst. After a welcome note by Praneet Bubber, **Ehsaas** Woman of Amritsar, Puri expressed his condolences for the deaths of Pranab Mukherjee, the former President of India,



T.C.A. Raghavan

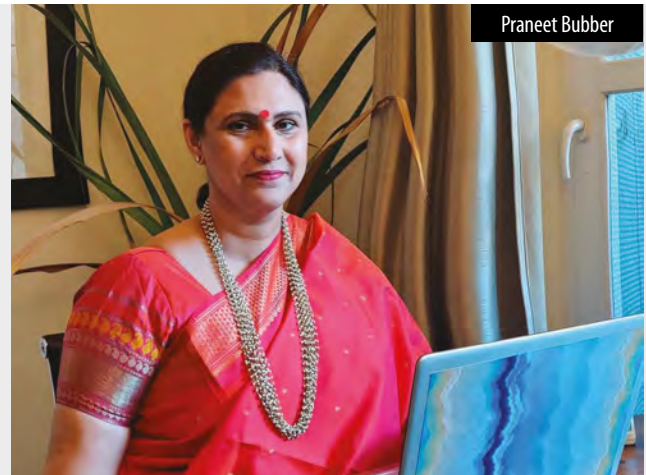
and Ambassador K.S. Bajpai, after which he began answering Raghavan's array of queries.

Considering the country, and the world, is still in the midst of the global coronavirus pandemic, Raghavan felt it was apt to dive straight into India's current status report. He asked the minister what he thought of India's approach to the pandemic, and the government's response in particular. Puri, who in his political career of 39 years has held several important positions, including India's former representative to the United Nations (UN), president of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and chairman of the Counter Terrorism Committee, answered

I can say with a sense of confidence that this is the largest evacuation and repatriation mission undertaken at any point of time in human history, and the rate at which things are moving we shall set a new record

in the context of the two portfolios under him — Civil Aviation and Housing and Urban Affairs. He explained that both ministries have a role to play, not just in the context of COVID and the challenges posed by the pandemic, but also with regards to the formation of a new India.

Puri pointed out that India was one of the first countries to stop air travel from China and other hot spots in the world. It shut down all flights on March 23, and implemented the lockdown from the next day to help flatten the curve. The lockdown itself was essential in building proper infrastructure to



Praneet Bubber

respond to the pandemic, he said, and to plan for the period when the country would begin opening up the economy again. In the meanwhile, the Indian government made use of aviation to transport material from one state to another in order to support the economy.

When the decision to bring back Indians stranded abroad was taken, many of them who had lost their jobs, the number of international migrants expected to return to the country was 1.9 lakh. But that figure has now crossed 1.4 million.

"I can say with a sense of confidence that this is the largest evacuation and repatriation mission

The Aatmanirbhar Bharat spirit will result in India coming out much stronger after COVID-19 because we are unleashing our animus spirits in terms of self reliance and work. Some of this is in reaction to the global trends

undertaken at any point of time in human history, and the rate at which things are moving we shall set a new record. We were able to do it with reasonable arrangements of social distancing and other safety quotients," Puri pointed out about India's Vande Bharat Mission and air bubble arrangements with several countries during the pandemic.

In the domestic sector, the country dealt with roughly 2.5 to 3 lakh passengers every day before the pandemic. When domestic flights were restarted, each flight was allowed to function at 33 percent capacity for safety reasons, which meant around 30,000 people were travelling every day. The government took all precautions necessary for safe travel, keeping in mind not just passengers but also the people working with the airlines and at airports.

"The decision to prioritise life and livelihood is a difficult one. Domestic civil aviation was opened on May 22. In pre-COVID days, India was handling 2.5 to 3 lakh passengers per day. By Diwali we hope to handle 1.5 to 2 lakh passengers per day and hopefully by the end of the year, we would go back to the pre-COVID days," said Puri.

Raghavan asked Puri about India's mission to become 'Aatmanirbhar' or self-reliant. The minister shared with the audience his belief in the power of this vision. "The Aatmanirbhar Bharat spirit will result in India coming out much stronger after COVID-19 because we are unleashing our animus spirits in terms of self-reliance and work. Some of this is in reaction to global trends."

He pointed out that the world could not have even imagined that India would involve itself

so successfully in the production of PPE kits and other safety gear. Yet, the demands of the pandemic turned that mirage into a reality.

Puri also felt that India's approach of self-reliance had been misunderstood and portrayed in a negative light by phrasing it as if India was looking inwards and closing down its borders, when it was quite the opposite. "Aatmanirbhar Bharat is not intended to be an inward-looking excuse to close our borders to the world. It is a spirit and a resolve to make us more productive and better members of the international community and global system," said Puri.

The scheme is for the country to become more productive, in every sense of the word, so that it does not depend on a certain supply chain from a certain country.

The goal is the growth of India through self-dependence, as opposed to the popular narrative of shunning trading opportunities and initiatives with other countries. In fact, the resolve to go through with this entire process will allow India to find its rightful place in the global economic system and community as the nation with complete confidence, he said.

The minister further explained that the government had adopted this approach keeping in mind global trends. The pandemic has shown how reliance on other countries for certain products would allow

them to impose their will on us. Especially if we are dependent solely on one country for something, as is often the case, it is likely to leave India in a vulnerable position.

Thus, he asked people to evaluate India's drive for self-reliance based on the results, and not begin their criticism at the implementation

Aatmanirbhar Bharat is not intended to be an inward-looking excuse to close our borders to the world. It is a spirit and a resolve to make us more productive and better members of the international community and global system

stage itself. He reiterated that all good things take time, and the government has come a long way since 2014. And not just the government, but the people of India, in the wake of the pandemic, have showcased their talent in spite of the unprecedented conditions, and tried their hardest to continue our progress despite the battle against the virus.

Puri said that coinciding with the pandemic, the world is seeing the beginning of the fourth industrial revolution. "We are on the cusp of the fourth industrial revolution with the Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning and artificial intelligence. The spirit is to make sure that we don't become a lego or just nuts and bolts. Aatmanirbhar will resonate strongly because we want to take advantage of the other supply chains in the world."

On the subject of housing, Puri underscored the importance of ridding the country of the practice of open defecation. He pointed out that the construction of toilets at home helps in gender empowerment by providing safety and security to girls and women, who no longer have to step out of the house for the same.

He explained that the government has tried to formulate schemes in which the house is in the name of the woman of the house, thus providing women financial security. Puri emphasised that it was vital to track numbers to determine how many people were actually benefitting from such schemes, because they can be used to understand the efficiency and impact of the implementation. He also said the government was striving towards waste

reduction and improved waste management in a systematic manner.

Towards the end of the session Raghavan shifted his focus to Puri the writer. The minister has published two books — *Perilous Interventions: The Security Council and the Politics of Chaos*, and *Delusional Politics: Back To The Future* — along with numerous other articles that have been printed in academic journals from across the world. Focusing on the second book, Raghavan asked Puri how he had so skilfully predicted two historic events on the global political stage — Brexit and the US presidential victory of Donald Trump in 2016. Puri replied that he had predicted the events based on statistical and other facts that he had come across. He shared that Donald Trump was able to come to power because he had successfully tapped into the angst of the people, be it about jobs, education or safety.

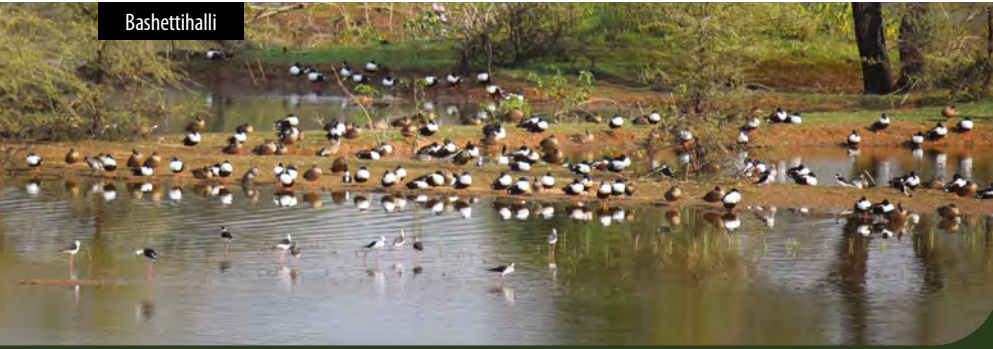
When Raghavan brought up China, Puri clarified that he had focused on three democracies in his book, namely India, the UK, and the US. Although he does not have extensive knowledge about China, he is very keen on writing about its trade policies, especially how China entered the global economic system as an outsider, yet, succeeded in capturing a significant number of supply chains, effectively endowing itself

with the power that it holds on the world stage today.

The session was brought to a close by Anvi Thaker, **Ehsaas** Woman of Mumbai, who expressed her gratitude towards Puri and Raghavan for the informative session.

We are on the cusp of the fourth industrial revolution with the Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning and artificial intelligence. The spirit is to make sure that we don't become a lego or just nuts and bolts. Aatmanirbhar will resonate strongly because we want to take advantage of the other supply chains in the world

Bashettihalli



Grey Wagtail

Bashettihalli Wetland: A Revival Story

India has been blessed with fertile landscapes and bountiful water systems. Over the last decade, however, the country has lost around 50 percent of its wetlands. The recent water crisis across India has issued an alarming wake-up call for its citizens. The Bashettihalli wetland, situated in rural Bengaluru, Karnataka, contained little to nothing by way of water or irrigation possibilities due to degradation of the catchment area and change of land-use in the vicinity. But the wetland has been rejuvenated through three years of concerted effort by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) India, in partnership with Nokia India. The drive to revive the cascade wetland water systems of Bashettihalli was a massive project involving multiple stakeholders — communities, industries, gram panchayat members — under the leadership of the Bangalore Rural District Administration, working together to successfully implement better wetland management.

Even as late as 2016, Anand, a resident of Bashettihalli village, was forced to drill a borewell in the heart of his farmland xxxx, owing to the crippling water scarcity. The wetlands from which he drew water had gone dry for well over a decade. To his dismay, he found that digging a borewell did not solve the problem because the groundwater level was far too low.

Things have only changed very slowly since then — the Bashettihalli wetland received water in 2019 for the first time after 15 years. According to Anand, "All the villagers are finally receiving water for drinking purposes and irrigation! We are hopeful that there won't be water scarcity in the summer."

The three years of conservation efforts by WWF-India — with the support of Nokia and the committee

— followed a multi-pronged approach, including social mobilisation, awareness creation and technical knowhow. The intervention has led to the Bashettihalli wetlands becoming an exception to tragic reports of The Global Wetland Outlook 2018 that says that the loss of wetlands is three times faster than that of natural forests.

"All the villagers are finally receiving water for drinking purposes and irrigation!"

— a resident

The conservation initiative's approach included multi-stakeholder involvement, on-ground practical implementation, policy and advocacy, education and awareness, and community ownership. The project began by

bringing into the fold a varied group of stakeholders onto a common platform, which led to the development of a successful wetland rejuvenation blueprint that could be implemented. Participating committee representatives included members from the Doddaballapur Industries Association, Indena India Pvt Ltd, Jyothy Fabricare Services Limited and Musashi Auto Parts India Pvt. Ltd., the Bashettihalli Gram Panchayat, community members, the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board and the Deputy Commissioner of Bangalore Rural Administration, all determined to do their bit to revive Nature.

Through their combined efforts, the restoration of 1.7 km of channels connecting upstream wetlands of Arrenehalli-Guddhalli with Bashettihalli was successfully implemented. Again, in terms of on-ground practical implementation of the plan, a 5 sq km catchment area was restored through plantation of over a thousand endemic plant saplings. Then 1.9 lakh cubic meters of silt was removed, the wetland deweeded and bunds (manmade banks on either side of flooding rivers) strengthened,



Painted Stork

which commenced on World Water Day on March 22, 2019. The rejuvenated Bashettihalli wetland covers an area of 48.18 acres.

However, the holistic approach to the restoration of this lifeline of the Bashettihalli inhabitants did not end with just collaboration and implementation. In order to ensure the sustainability of the initiative, WWF India ensured policies of advocacy, education, awareness and building a sense of community ownership, where the citizens themselves would come to nurture and treasure the environment around them.

Several workshops were arranged to engage district wetland managers as well as the district administration, along with other relevant stakeholders, all of whom convened to further strengthen the wetland conservation efforts in Karnataka. In the sphere of education, a Water School Programme was added to the curriculum of school-going children in order to foster a relationship between their young minds and Nature, so that the future generation learns environmental conservation and has an understanding of the significance of the Bashettihalli wetland conservation initiative.



District Commissioner's visit to Bashettihalli



Bashettihalli after rejuvenation

WWF INDIA BASHETTIHALLI WETLAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE STRATEGY

Multi-stakeholder involvement: Bringing together a varied group of stakeholders to work on a common cause led to the development of an effective blueprint for the rejuvenation of the wetland cascade system.

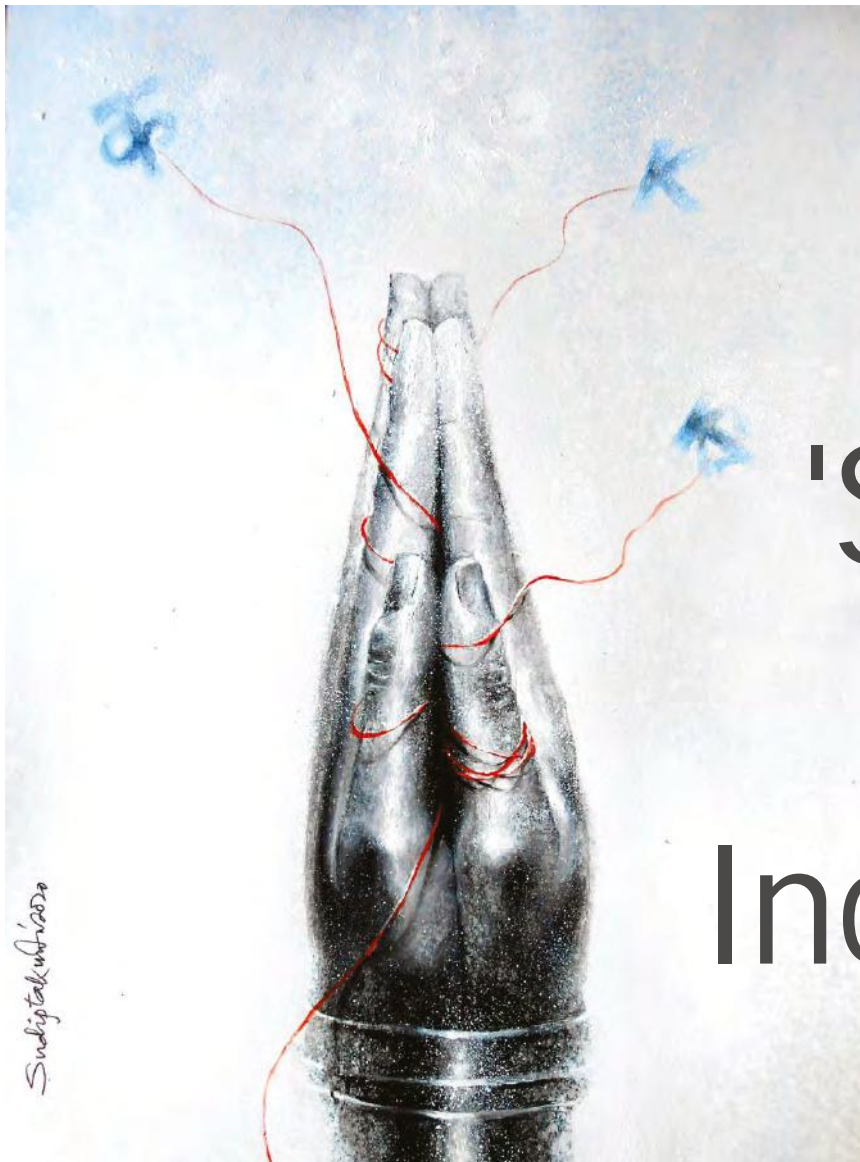
On-ground practical implementation: The rejuvenation process included restoring the connectivity with nearby wetlands and their respective catchment areas, desilting around 1.9 lakh cubic metres, de-weeding the wetlands and large-scale plantation of native saplings.

Policy and advocacy: To ensure lasting awareness regarding the necessity of conserving wetlands for the betterment of the environment and human life itself, state-level training workshops engaging district wetland managers, district administration and other stakeholders were conducted.

Education and awareness: The Water School Programme was developed and added to the curriculum of school children to foster a nurturing relationship between young minds and Nature.

Community ownership: Capacity building and awareness programmes led the local communities to actively participate and monitor on-ground conservation initiatives.

Prabha Khaitan Foundation is featuring this article about their associate, WWF India's effort and achievement



The 'Signs' of Inclusion

ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**

Author Angel Moreira had perhaps said it best: "At times in life we take our blessings for granted." One such blessing is the gift of hearing. Estimates from India's National Association of the Deaf say that 18 million people — almost 1 percent of the Indian population — are deaf. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), by 2050, more than 900 million people in the world are expected to have disabling hearing loss. These figures underscore the importance of sign language as an indispensable tool to bridge communication gaps with the deaf community. Those living with hearing impairment are frequently subjected to unemployment or underemployment. Without early exposure to sign language, hearing impaired children are deprived of cognitive and linguistic development. To "raise awareness on the importance of sign language in the full realisation of the human rights of people who are deaf", the UN General Assembly declared September 23 as the International Day of Sign Languages on December 19, 2017. The day was first observed in 2018 as part of an International Week of the Deaf.

According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "Sign language is inseparable from deaf people's human rights. Without sign language, deaf people are not equal." Vaibhav Kothari throws light on the issue.



Vaibhav Kothari



Not sure if you remember a National Anthem music video where Amitabh Bachchan used his hands along with school children to celebrate Indian Independence Day. The video earned more than 1million views — the way *Jana Gana Mana*, our National Anthem, has been translated in Indian Sign Language (ISL) is remarkable!

It's September, folks — the month of International Deaf Awareness. With it comes a chance, an opportunity to be heard! September 23 is the day we mark the International Day of Sign Languages all over the world annually, along with the International Week of the Deaf. The reason for this celebration is to commemorate the date when the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) was founded in 1951. This day was declared and recognised by the United Nations (UN) xxx, in order to spread awareness about the use of sign language and the human rights of deaf people in every corner of the world.

The WFD's main objective is to spread awareness about recognising sign language and deaf culture in every country, as a "perquisition to the realisation of human rights of deaf people all over the world". The WFD, today, is very active in promoting the rights and use of sign language for deaf people all over the world. This is resulting in a growing sense of unity between the international deaf community and the deaf ecosystem.

The WFD aims to support all deaf organisations on equality, access services, human rights, deaf education and legal services. The WFD's theme for this year's International Week of the Deaf is Sign Language Rights for All. This means every deaf individual and parent of deaf children has the right to use sign language for language access and development, both professionally and personally.

Presently, there are more than 70 million deaf and hard-of-hearing people living in the world. Almost 90

per cent of this population doesn't have any access to understanding their own rights, due to the lack of sign language.

According to the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in the United States, "Unfortunately, throughout the world, the rights of deaf and hard-of-hearing people are being overlooked, especially in [India and other] developing countries. Societal prejudices and barriers prevent deaf people from enjoying full human rights. The major barrier for deaf and hard-of-hearing people is lack of recognition, acceptance and use of sign language in all areas of life as well as a lack of respect for deaf people's cultural and linguistic identity".

This logical reasoning supports the WFD's main theme, Sign Language Rights for All. Hence, the WFD is working to improve the lives of millions of deaf people who face inequality or barriers every day. This, no doubt, holds true for hundreds of deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens in India, who face barriers every day, due to the lack of sign language recognition and acceptance. We believe that India has around 18 million deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens. It is home to probably the largest number of deaf people in the world. Not surprisingly, the International Day of the Deaf and the International Week of the Deaf are celebrated every year by different kinds of Indian stakeholders, that is, non-profit organisations, deaf organisations, deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, hearing signers and several others, at different levels.

For the last one year, the deaf community has been pushing the Narendra Modi Government to make ISL India's 23rd official language. Had it been done, it would have had a significant impact on promoting the rights of ISL at all levels. This beautiful language would empower not only millions of deaf people but also parents of deaf children to build their culture, identity and pride.

For the first time, with the recent introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP), the Government "declared its intent to formalise and promote the use of ISL. [The ISL] will be standardized across the country and National and State curriculum materials developed, for use by students with hearing impairment". This is historically a proud moment for India and its deaf community because these people believe this historical step will not only strengthen their access but also open up a world of opportunities and possibilities.

The NEP move offers hope for the overall growth of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. According to Anuj Jain, "In the absence of the use of sign language by teachers, nearly 98 per cent of deaf children remain illiterate or drop out of school." This shows that the NEP is being appreciated among deaf organisations for inclusive and accessible institutions — be it schools, colleges, government offices, private companies or hospitals. However, there is so much more to be done!

For the last few years, many organisations have been formed for giving access to millions of deaf and hard-of-hearing adults and children all over India. ISH News (<http://indiasigninghands.com/>), India's first news and entertainment platform for deaf citizens, established in 2018, has paved the way for deaf citizens of all ages to enjoy different kinds of entertainment and news services and have full access to all kinds of important news being shared on all the main news shows.

Access Mantra was established in 2019xxx, as an accessible resource, and an innovation and advocacy centre for the deaf. This centre focuses on advocating for equality, opportunities and access services for the deaf community. The Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) was set up in New Delhi by the Union Ministry of Social Justice as a place of research and training for anyone interested in learning ISL or preparing to become ISL signers.

ISLIA, an organisation for interpreters, was formed recently to provide training and other resources to ISL interpreters. These and many other organisations focusing on promoting the rights of ISL are still new and being referred to as the evolution of ISL, a sign language for deaf citizens in India. The NAD, Deaf Women of India, Access Mantra, ISH News, the ISLIA and many other organisations are still fighting for and demanding the recognition of ISL as an official language with the Government of India. This will avoid prohibiting millions of deaf citizens from understanding what is being said or conveyed.

The development of ISL as an official 23rd language by many organisations backs the WFD's main theme — Sign Language Rights for All. Let's make ISL an official language, a long-standing demand of the deaf community!

— **Vaibhav Kothari**

The author is a hearing impaired engineer, traveller, entrepreneur and motivational speaker



Minu Manjari

राग मेघ मल्हार

सा वन की झूमती घटाओं के आगमन के साथ ही मल्हार समूह के मधुर रागों का मौसम भी आ जाता है। ऐसा ही एक सर्व प्रचलित राग है मेघ मल्हार, जिसे राग मेघ और राग मल्हार के मेल से बना हुआ राग कहते हैं। लेकिन कई विद्वान मेघ और मेघ मल्हार को एक ही राग मानते हैं।

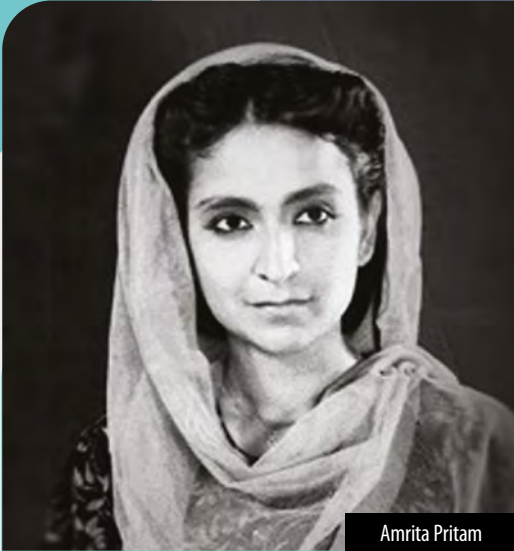
मल्हार समूह के अन्य रागों की तरह इसका थाट भी 'काफी' है। (थाट स्वरों का एक फ्रेमवर्क है, जिसपर राग आधारित होते हैं। पंडित विष्णु नारायण भातखंडे ने 10 थाट बताए हैं।) इसमें दोनों नि, अर्थात् कोमल नि और शुद्ध नि का प्रयोग होता है और गंधार और धैवत वर्जित स्वर (जिन स्वरों का उस राग में प्रयोग नहीं किया जाता है) हैं, हालांकि कुछ घरानों में ध का प्रयोग किया जाता है। इस राग के आरोह और अवरोह दोनों में पांच – पांच स्वर लगते हैं, इसलिए इसकी जाति औड़व – औड़व है। (किसी राग में कम से कम पांच स्वर होने चाहिए, पांच स्वर वाले राग को औड़व, छह स्वर वाले राग को षाड़व और सात स्वर वाले राग को सम्पूर्ण जाति का कहते हैं।) इसका वादी स्वर सा और संवादी स्वर प है। इसका गायन समय वर्षा ऋतु है।

मेघ मल्हार का आरोह है – सा रे म रे प निध नि सा। इसका अवरोह है – सा नि प म रे म रे सा। इसकी पकड़ मुख्य रूप से रे म रे सा, नि प नि सा रे, रे म प, प म रे सा आदि है। राग मेघ के प्रभाव के कारण कई गायक म रे सा में म और रे के बीच कोमल गंधार का कण न लेकर

म से रे तक मींड लेते हैं। (कण का अर्थ है बीच के स्वर तक जाकर आना, जबकि मींड में बीच के एक या दो स्वर छोड़कर सीधे एक स्वर से दूसरे स्वर तक ग्लाइड करते हैं।)

वर्षा ऋतु का एक प्रमुख राग होने के कारण मेघ मल्हार का फिल्मों में भी काफी प्रयोग हुआ है। मेरा नाम जोकर फिल्म का गीत मोरे अंग लग जा बालमा मेघ मल्हार पर आधारित है। मदर इंडिया का प्रसिद्ध गीत दुख भरे दिन बीते रे भैया भी मेघ मल्हार के सुरों से अलंकृत है। 1942 में बनी तानसेन फिल्म में कई ऐसे राग लिए गए हैं, जिन्हें तानसेन द्वारा रचित माना जाता है। इस फिल्म का एक गीत घटा घनघोर मेघ मल्हार पर आधारित है। चश्मेबदूर फिल्म का शास्त्रीय गीत कहां से आए बदरा भी राग मेघ पर आधारित है। कोहिनूर फिल्म का बहुत प्रचलित होली गीत तन रंग लो जी आज मन रंग लो में मेघ मल्हार के स्वर हैं। कई बार फिल्मी गीतों में राग के कुछ अंग ले लिए जाते हैं और शास्त्रीय नियमों का पूरा पालन संभव नहीं होता पर उस राग की छवि गीत में आ जाती है। बूट पॉलिश फिल्म में लपक झपक तू आ रे बदरवा भी ऐसा ही गीत है, जिसमें मेघ मल्हार और मियां की मल्हार दोनों के तत्व मिल जाते हैं। स्वरों के नियम जो भी हों, इन अनूठे गीतों का आनंद तो वर्षा ऋतु में लिया ही जा सकता है।

— मीनू मंजरी



Amrita Pritam

Amrita and I



Kanak Rekha Chauhan

Long ago, I wanted to write about Indian women who had influenced society in more than one way. I shortlisted a few names, including that of writer Amrita Pritam. She was the first woman to win the Sahitya Akademi Award, in 1956, for her magnum opus, a long poem, *Sunehade* (Messages). Later she received the Bhartiya Jnanpith, one of India's highest literary awards, in 1982 for *Kagaz te Canvas* (The Paper and the Canvas). The Padma Shri came her way in 1969 and the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian award, in 2004. In the same year she was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, given to the "immortals of literature" for lifetime achievement.

However, all of the above did not impress hubby dearest and he reacted with a non-approving grumble. My husband, an old-fashioned man, does not approve of bohemian lifestyles — and is uncomfortable even talking to people in 'live-in' relationships — I, however, do make concessions for some people and when I do it, it's a *saat khoon maaf* situation for me.

My Amrita — she smoked, had a drink now and then, was a divorcee and lived with a man nine years her junior without marrying him. We had a long discussion and I dropped the idea of writing the blog. The incident actually left me seething with frustration and I could not vent it or share it with my life partner.

Amrita had always been in my subconscious, much before I even met my husband, and she stays there to this day! I distinctly remember reading the first lines of hers when I was in my early teens and impressionable. I fathom I could appreciate good poetry even then!

The lines go —

Ek dard tha

Jo cigarette ki tarah

Maine chupchap piya hai

Sirf kuchh nazme hain

Jo cigarette se maine

Raakh ki tarah jhaadi hain

These lines prompted me to go through her *Ajj Aakhan Waris Shah Nu*, an epic poem that portrays the pain of Partition and is also an ode to Waris Shah, the writer of *Heer-Ranjha*. It remains the poem for which she is most remembered.

Coming back to my story, every now and then I buy her books and unlike all books that I show to and share with hubby, her books remain on my shelf beyond his vision. And I make a conscious effort never to mention her in his presence.

Last week, almost two years after the incident, hubby was on his way back from Singapore. I went to pick him up at the airport and as soon as he got into the car, he said, check out the books I bought this time. Lo and behold! There were two Amrita Pritam books he had chosen for me. Cherry on the icing, I hadn't read them as yet! I leaned towards him as he drove and planted a thankful kiss on his cheek, he blushed.

Moral of the story? You spend a lifetime with your spouse and yet he is capable of springing surprises! Two this time, the books and the blush.

And then, I told him all that I had kept from him (the Amrita fraction of my life), which was primarily about the visit to meet Imroz. She passed away in 2005, and I had wanted to meet Imroz Sahab and generally be inside her home and sense her presence there and in the man she loved.

In January 2010, along with my younger son, Yashwant, I went to Delhi to meet the elder one, Vikram, who was pursuing a graduate degree. It was a cold, foggy morning and while Chhotu still slept, Vikram and I left in his colder Alto to meet Imroz Sahab. Both the kids were sworn into secrecy not to divulge anything about it to Dad.

Imroz Sahab had been Amrita's friend/companion/

soulmate for more than 40 years. Since Amrita had passed away, I did not want to miss out on an opportunity to meet HER Imroz!

Several calls to the Delhi telephone exchange provided the telephone number that the operator informed me was STILL IN THE NAME OF MS AMRITA PRITAM!

Having spoken to him on the phone prior to my visit, he had requested me to come at 10am. Because after 11, he goes to buy the groceries for the family. 'The family' comprises Amrita's daughter-in-law Alka and her kids. Imroz Sahab drops them off and picks them up from the school, happily, as though they are his own grandchildren. Amrita's son frequently remains out of town for work.

On our way to the house in Hauz Khas, I picked some yellow roses for the painter-writer and hoped he'd like them. As the car stopped in front of the house, I was a tad unsure. However, as soon as I stepped out and looked at the address K-25, the 'K' artistically engraved on a rock, it laid all my speculations to rest. The K is the first letter of my name and 25 is my birth date! A good omen, which reinforced the belief that there was some connection between me and my Amrita.

The black gate, which was left open, led to the driveway and there I saw scrawled in an artistic hand, over a rocky wall — AMRITA PRITAM. I took out my camera to click both — the name and the address — a futile exercise, for they were both indelibly etched in my memory the moment my eyes saw them.

The house with its facade made up of rocks and the bougainvillea creeping to the roof, seemed desolate, as though missing its very soul. It was a three-storeyed house, with as many potted plants as one could imagine. A Gold Mohur tree, morose and barren, loomed over the entire house. It must cheer up the house in summers, when the blossoms brought a splash of red, and when she was still alive!

Together, in this house, the artist and the writer lived in a world of colours, thoughts, words and poems. And I missed out on seeing them both together, living in perfect harmony.

I was overwhelmed with a sense of loss for not having come to this beautiful house when she was still alive.

With my heart pacing fast, I rang the bell and immediately heard brisk but light footsteps on the stairs. It was Imroz Sahab himself! Dressed in white kurta pyjamas and a shawl, he welcomed me with a gentle smile and folded hands.

Right from the stairs to the interiors, Amrita was everywhere! Imroz Sahab had painted her in numerous

moods, profiles, ages, what have you! He took me to her room, her bed neatly made up, as though she would appear at this very moment, come to the room to sit on the bed and write — she always wrote in her bed, never at a table.

Then he took me to his own room, a room full of memories! Glass cubicles with Amrita's paintings, her writings on walls, on canvas with his brush strokes. A low diwan was where he slept and a low table where he wrote and painted. He offered me a chair and asked his *bahu* Alka to bring some tea, which she happily brought, along with biscuits.

I was in a trance-like state. He kept talking softly, smiling, which I mostly did not recall. I was so absorbed in the surroundings that I wondered if this household could be converted into a museum!

I even forgot all that I had planned to ask him. To my horror I heard my own voice asking him candidly, "How did it feel to be the third man in her life". He smiled a slow smile and said, "*Doosra, teesra kya hota hai? Jahan mann mile wahi pehla* (What's this about second or the third man, it is the confluence of the hearts that make the person first and the foremost)!"

So simply expressed! I could only smile and absorb the intensity of the small phrase. So absolute, a complete answer to their love and life in its entirety.

I realised it was already time to leave, I told him that it must be lonely in this house, so full of memories. Again he left me amazed with a response that I shall never forget. He said, "*Amrita ne shareer chhoda hai, mujhe nahin chhoda* (Amrita has left her body, not me)."

I thanked him and requested him to stay upstairs, partly because he had bad knees, and more importantly, because I wanted to have another look at this house where my Amrita spent many cold winters and harsh summers before Imroz came into her life.

Another look at the derelict tree made me wonder if the crimson of this Gold Mohur was the crimson that surrounded her persona — a reflection of his love for her.

I came back a tad happy and a little sad, marvelling at this extraordinary relationship — between colours and words — a relationship that flourished for more than 40 years and continues to blossom in the hearts of people like me in its own unique manner.

Kanak Rekha Chauhan

(The author is the founder-director of the Lucknow Literature Festival and an Ehsaas Woman of Lucknow. She wrote this piece on the occasion of Amrita Pritam's 101st birth anniversary on August 31)



This is a picture from Amrita Pritam's home, with her name carved in stone. It was not merely a house, it was a shrine she built with her hard-earned money, love and courage. Ten years after her death, Imroz Sahab and Amrita's daughter-in-law were compelled to sell it to pay debts and minimise expenses. It was an abode of love, a tribute to her indomitable free spirit that she wasxxx and the extraordinary relationship they shared!

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Himanshu Bajpai	Kalam Jodhpur
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Saurabh Shukla	Hindi Diwas event
Sir William Mark Tully	Tête-à-tea
H. S. Panag	The Write Circle Mumbai
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Prajwal Parajuly	The Write Circle Jaipur



Arif Mohammed
Khan



Bhuneshwar
Bhaskar



Chitra Mudgal



Divya Prakash
Dubey



Geetanjali Shree



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Khyrunnisa A.



Prajwal Parajuly



Pratyaksha



Pt Hari Prasad
Chaurasia



Pt. Rajan Mishra &
Pt. Sajan Mishra



Saurabh Shukla



Pt. Shiv Kumar
Sharma



Sir William Mark
Tully



Sonia Golani

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