



Prabha प्रभा

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation Chronicle

September 2020 | Issue 18

The idea of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is eternal, his message universal.

In this issue, 14 writers from all walks of life share their experience of encountering the Mahatma's legacy in their everyday lives



The Mahatma and Me

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Prabha
खैतान



MANISHA JAIN
Communications & Branding Chief,
Prabha Khaitan Foundation

Musings about the Mahatma and More

Unprecedented" is a word we've all heard many times in the past few months as the pandemic wreaked havoc through the world. However, the spirit of the festive season bears the fragrance of happiness and hope for better times. I take this opportunity to urge everyone to celebrate responsibly, in a scaled-down fashion that curbs the spread of the coronavirus, and helps reduce the risk of infecting the ones you love.

A few months back, I had read about an organisation in South India that appealed to people to undertake voluntary fasting for a day from 6 am to 6 pm as atonement towards the migrants and the marginalised. It was clearly a Gandhian approach to bring about social reform. According to Gandhi, "What the eyes are for the outer worlds, fasts are for the inner". The philosophies and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and his vision of India have taken on a special relevance in today's circumstances, whether it is his adherence to truth or non-violence. This issue is our humble homage to the Mahatma where authors share with us their personal experience of him in his various avatars.

The past month has had an array of interesting sessions featuring everyone, from music stalwarts to intellectuals. The stimulating conversations have been appreciated throughout the country and beyond. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our associates and our **Ehsaas** Women, who are the pillars of the Foundation. We hope to have your continuing patronage and participation.

Once again, while you read about the sessions you can also watch them with a simple click of the red 'play' button on the pages. This feature is available on the digital version on our website and on the PDFs sent across.

As always, your feedback and acknowledgement pushes us to strive harder to explore ways in which to make a difference. Your contribution to the newsletter is truly appreciated. You may write to us at newsletter@pkfoundation.org.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition. Stay safe, stay healthy!

[**SNAPSHOT
OF THE MONTH**]



#Throwback to the inauguration of the first **Shabd - Where Literature Meets** conference, which was hosted as part of the 42nd Kolkata International Book Fair in 2018. The three-day conference, organised jointly by Kolkata Literature Festival and **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**, included seminars and sessions where key stakeholders in various literary activities, from publishing houses to literary festival organisers, brainstormed possibilities to promote regional literature and culture.

Happy Birthday

Prabha WISHES **EHSAAS** WOMEN BORN IN OCTOBER

4th October



Vedula Ramalakshmi

9th October



Piali Ray

12th October



Ruhi Walia Syal

16th October



Ramanjit Grover

20th October



Anvita Pradhan

26th October



Monica Bhagwagar

27th October



Shrishti Trivedi

30th October



Gouri Basu

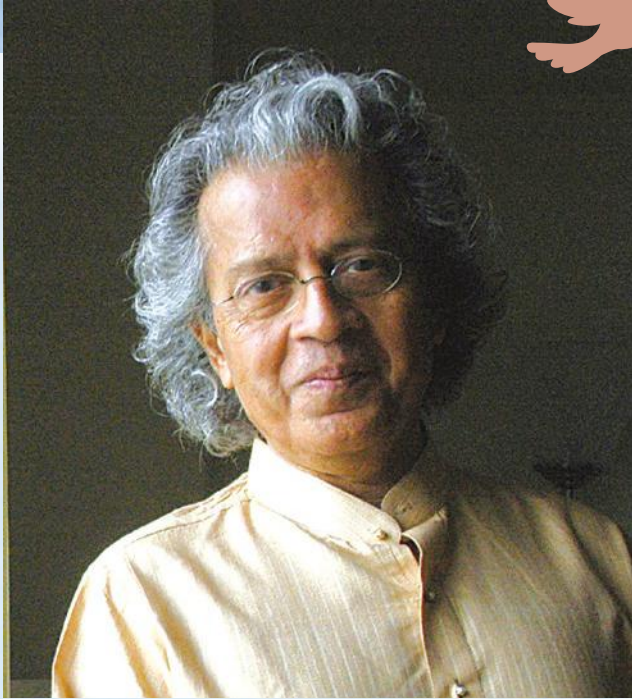


The Relevance of Gandhi

"A coward is incapable of exhibiting love; it is the prerogative of the brave."

— Mahatma Gandhi

The philosophies and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi's and his vision of India have taken on a special relevance in today's circumstances, whether it is his adherence to Satya (Truth) or Ahimsa (Non-violence). To commemorate his birth anniversary, 14 authors share with us their personal experience of Gandhi — as a concept, as a saint, as a freedom fighter, as a visionary, as a man and even as a nutritionist.



Mahatma Gandhi's Genius

Anil Dharker

Imagine not too many people have been directly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi in what they write, but many — and I include myself — have subconsciously been affected by his thoughts and philosophy, and his constant striving for honesty and truth. Very few of us have his willpower and single-mindedness, but I am sure he has instilled in us a still, small voice that tries to keep us on the right path (more often than not, unsuccessfully! But that's our failing).

My book *The Romance of Salt* deals at length with the Dandi March, and while researching it, I was struck by Gandhi's genius to find just the right symbol, a symbol that would strike a chord with a vast multitude of people. Take the Dandi March itself. The Congress in the late 1920s decided that a major event was called for to draw the world's attention to the freedom struggle. As I wrote in the book's prologue: "The Dandi Salt March of 12 March 1930 need not have happened at Dandi, it need not have been about salt and it need not have been a march. What made the event a landmark in India's freedom struggle was the synthesis of these disparate elements into a unit which was so breathtaking in its simplicity that it captured the world's imagination. But then, Mahatma Gandhi always had a gift for striking imagery."

Many ideas were discussed for the event by the Congress luminaries: one was the burning of foreign cloth (an old Gandhi idea) on a mass scale. Another was the boycott of law courts. Non-payment of land tax was appealing but Gandhi feared that the Government would use that as an excuse to seize property and not return it. Jawaharlal Nehru suggested forming a parallel

government, which was rejected because it might have become no more than a debating club. The man of action, Vallabhbhai Patel wanted a mass march to Delhi. Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, wanted a symbol which was universal, something the poorest of people would identify with, so he decided on salt. He also saw its easy accessibility throughout the country as a big plus as it would enable a large number of people to break the British-imposed Salt Law, which prohibited Indians from making salt.

When you think of the originality of Gandhi's idea, you think of the other powerful symbols Gandhi invoked during the freedom struggle. There was the charkha, the common and easy-to-use but discarded symbol of mass empowerment. There was his loincloth, the just-enough cover for nakedness, again something the poor could instantly identify with. Or there was his insistence on travelling in the railways' third class, which most Indians used.

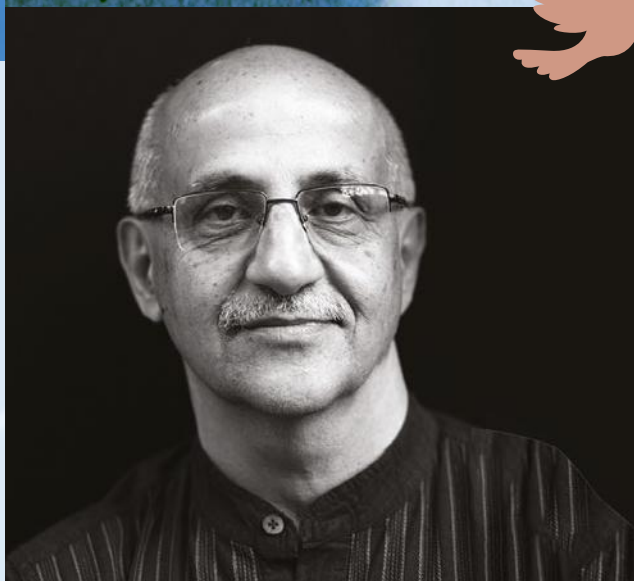
Aren't there lessons in this for writers? To find simple and direct symbols that will have an immediate impact on the reader, and find resonance with a large number of people. It's easier said than done, of course, because very few of us have Mahatma Gandhi's uncanny ability to get things spot on, but we can at least try, can't we?

Anil Dharker is the founder and director of the Mumbai International Literary Festival, now in its tenth year. He has been editor of India's oldest magazine, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, as well as of newspapers like *The Independent* and *Mid-Day*. He has been a columnist for publications like *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Economic Times*, *Gulf News*, *Khaleej Times*, *Asian Age* and *Financial Chronicle*, and is currently a columnist for *The Huffington Post*, *Open Magazine* and *On Stage*, the NCPA journal. He is the author of six books. He also headed the National Film Development Corporation and was instrumental in NFDC co-producing Richard Attenborough's multiple Oscar-winning film, *Gandhi*. Dharker has been a creative director for Zee TV and was involved in starting a new TV channel for the Dalal Street Journal group



Learning from Mahatma Gandhi

Harsh Mander



This world today has much to learn from Mahatma Gandhi.

Many young people, born in free India, are indeed rediscovering Gandhiji. He towered over the twentieth century, for his epic leadership to the non-violent struggle against colonial subjugation, but even more for the intensely moral foundations of his politics. The world in the twenty-first century is vastly different from the one which preceded it. It witnesses the global triumph of market economics, the retreat of the state, and the generation of unprecedented wealth. It also sees a planet torn apart by staggering inequalities, and by simmering conflict — centred often around religious identity — within and between nations. Gandhiji's relevance is perhaps even greater to this century than to the ones in which he lived.

There are many things that Gandhiji lived for. But what he died for was the secular democratic idea of India. The struggle for India's freedom was not just a battle against imperialism. It was also a bitter contestation about the kind of nation India would be when it was reborn into freedom. Central to Gandhiji's imagination of India was of a nation of unparalleled diversity in which it would not matter which god you worshipped — or if you chose to worship no god; it would not matter if you were a man or woman, of this caste or that, rich or destitute, whether you spoke this language or lived in that region. You would be a fully equal human being and citizen, assured of equal rights and protection to pursue your beliefs and chosen way of life. What is important is not just that Gandhiji had this dream for India, but that the majority of Indians — Hindu, Muslim and of other faiths — rallied behind this ideal.

Gandhiji was a deeply devout Hindu, and

simultaneously was profoundly respectful of other faiths. His secularism never entailed a denial of faith. Instead it demanded equal respect for every faith (including indeed the absence of faith). Today in France and many parts of Europe, the ideals of secularism are currently being invoked to ban women from wearing veils in schools and public places. Elsewhere, Sikhs are barred from wearing turbans. But the secularism that we learnt from Gandhiji required the opposite: to defend the right of each person to follow their religious and cultural persuasions. I may oppose the veil, but must fight for your right to choose (and my right to oppose). This "Indian" ideal of secularism is at variance even with hard atheism, which is intolerant of the faith of others. I may personally choose to reject faith, but equally I must respect the faith of others.

This ideal was one for which Gandhiji was ultimately killed. But free India has repeatedly failed him in so many ways. The blood of innocents is spilled relentlessly because of their religious or caste identity; governments have been voted to power because they pulled down a place of worship; Dalit children in between a third and half our rural schools are still seated separately; temples are still barred to Dalits; and millions of women still carry human excreta on their heads.

To battle for their vision for a more just world, many dispossessed and idealistic men and women today continue to pick up the gun. But Gandhiji reminded us that it is impossible to build a just and humane society by means which are unjust and inhuman. He taught us ways to resolutely fight injustice without hate or bloodshed, but instead with timeless instruments of truth, love, self-restraint, voluntary self-suffering, courage, peaceful mass mobilisation, and indeed on occasion recourse to law and the courts. These instruments of struggle need to be reclaimed and refurbished to be compatible with the challenges and possibilities of our times.

Gandhiji taught us also the futility of revenge and anger, with his famous adage of an eye for an eye

ultimately making the world blind. There is so little forgiveness in our public life today. Fasting for communal peace during the Partition riots in Calcutta, Gandhi is said to have been confronted by a Hindu man nearly crazed by grief and hate, because a Muslim mob had killed his young son. Gandhiji gently counselled him that if he really wished to overcome his suffering, he should find a Muslim boy, the age of his son, whose parents were killed by Hindu mobs. And he should bring the boy up like his own son, but in the faith of his parents.

It is a hundred years since Gandhiji wrote in *Hind Swaraj* his stirring critique of modernity, and those who return to it and his other writings discover many ideas to craft new solutions to many of our contemporary world's crises. His economics did not aspire to growth and accumulation, but instead to people's "swaraj" or control over their own destinies. He opposed the deployment of machines if people were out of work. He did not believe in unlimited wants, but instead reminded us that the world produces enough for the needs but not the greed of every human being. His economics was not founded on assumptions of self-seeking accumulation being central to human nature; instead he was convinced that human beings were essentially altruistic. The world would be a fairer, kinder and happier place if it adopted many of Gandhiji's principles of an alternate "economics as if people matter".

Contemporary notions of "good governance" envisage an ideal state to be one which best facilitates markets. Gandhiji instead offered us a "talisman" to be summoned in times of doubt and confusion. He counselled us to recall the face of the most disadvantaged person we know, and reflect on the implications of our decisions for this person's life, well-being and *swaraj*. Applied to State policy, this would mean that the quality of governance should be measured by what the State achieves for its most disadvantaged people. By this measure, if a State facilitates rapid economic growth but dispossesses our poorest people of their livelihoods, lands and forests, the government has abjectly failed its people.

Gandhiji also gave many lessons about how to lead a good life. He taught us to strive always to live and practise our beliefs, to "be the change we wish to see in the world". If we believe in equality, can we try to be egalitarian in

the ways we relate with people around us? If we believe in love, can we fight impulses of hate and revenge? He taught us never to lose touch with our immediate humanity even while fighting lofty battles. In negotiations for India's freedom, he would take time off to tend to a goat-kid's broken leg. He was not coldly rigid in his convictions. Although passionately vegetarian, when Badshah Khan's children visited, he offered to arrange for them meat dishes. And he never lost his playful sense of mischief. When asked why he went to see the King of England in only a loincloth and shawl, he famously responded that the monarch was wearing enough for both of them.

Gandhiji by no means held a perfect vision or led a perfect life. Indeed he was the first to acknowledge his faults, and was preoccupied lifelong to fight these. Most flawed for me was his condoning of caste, even while he passionately opposed untouchability. His notions of trusteeship of big industry clouded ideas of class oppression and class struggle. And in his personal life, he failed as a father, leaving his son tormented and broken. His beliefs in women's equality were imperfectly reflected in his relationship with his wife Kasturba.

We learn from Gandhiji's triumphs, but also from his failures. We go back to him not because he was perfect. We go back to Mahatma Gandhi because, in his own words, he obeyed only one dictator. This was the voice of his conscience.

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Harsh Mander is a human rights and peace worker, writer, columnist, researcher and teacher and works with survivors of mass violence and hunger, homeless persons and street children. He organises Karwan e Mohabbat for solidarity with families affected by hate violence. He convenes the India Exclusion Report. His books include *Between Memory and Forgetting: Massacre and the Modi Years in Gujarat*, *Partitions of the Heart: Unmaking the Idea of India*, *Looking Away: Inequality, Prejudice and Indifference in New India*, *Fatal Accidents of Birth: Stories of Suffering, Oppression and Resistance*, *Ash in the Belly: India's Unfinished Battle against Hunger and Unheard Voices: Stories of Forgotten Lives*



Evolution of the Mind

Janhavi Prasada

professions and communities. For me it was a journey of discovery — of "Peace in Action" — peace as a way of life for thousands of people, less in India but globally galore.

After reading as much literature I could on Gandhi and filling in the blanks in his autobiography, finally my graphic novel, *Tales of Young Gandh*, was published by HarperCollins in 2017. The book's intention was to tickle the minds of the young blood about the Mahatma, the Father of the Nation, who we think is boring and outdated. In my view, he is the original superhero who fought a real war of independence with a frail body, wearing a loincloth, a wooden staff in his hand and almost bare feet; who ate five things in a day, including his medicines. To me, Gandhi is the coolest historical figure I have ever known.

As I was getting into the skin of Gandhi's experiments, somewhere in my ongoing journey I realised that subconsciously his path was impacting the way I was approaching my daily affairs. Choices in dealing with people, decisions about work, food habits, natural home remedies, the power of being soft-spoken, the power of self-introspection and deep observation of the self, my surroundings and others around me, the mysticism of the Himalayan terrain where I live, the idea of what it really means not only to have values but to make them an inherent part of my life without blinking an eye.

My heritage homestay, Abbotsford Estate, is an island in itself, where plastic has been replaced with glass, water harvesting is used for watering the plants, kitchen waste is segregated for manure. Our kitchen garden is pesticide-free. We eat and serve seasonal fresh produce

The turning point in my life was reading *The Story of My Experiments With Truth* by M. K. Gandhi in 2005 when I was 29 years old. Little did I know that this Rs 20 book would open a treasure of insights and inspiration, all from a man who I realised was completely ordinary but who achieved extraordinary feats by sheer faith, self-determination and, above all, by following the path of peace.

The book's impact on me was inescapable. I knew I had to share the path of peace, the inspiration I found in Gandhi's work, with as many people and as many communities as possible.

The next decade, I began to read about Gandhiji in great depth. I travelled across the world from Wardha in India to Naokhali in Bangladesh, to Nepal, London and South Africa to meet veteran Gandhians like Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, as well as ordinary people doing life-changing work on peace, non-violence, social justice, green technologies, climate control, health-hygiene, colour bias, sexism and self-empowerment, all inspired by Gandhi. These people belonged to different

from local farmers in a 30km radius around Nainital. My café, named after my pug Chica, is where all our food experiments on bringing indigenous foods back on our plates happen — from local yam to hand-pounded rice, red kidney beans, *pahari nimboos*, wild fiddlehead ferns (a sister to asparagus), fresh-from-the-earth turmeric, ginger and other roots... the list is endless. Mindful eating and conscious cooking form the heart of our values at Café Chica.

Gandhi was not a sporty child! But what saw him through was his habit of walking. He walked to school as a kid, he walked the streets of London to save extra expense, in South Africa he walked past President Kruger Street where he was battered and bruised, he walked the Salt March, he walked through the burning villages of Noakhali, now in Bangladesh, he walked towards freedom. Walking led Gandhi to the discovery of himself. My walks in the mountains of Kumaon led me to nature, being able to identify flora and fauna, wild flowers, colourful moths and bugs. It led me to the wonders of forest sounds, discovering the often unnoticed avian habitat of this region, walking extensively from one mountain to another, meeting farmers living a life of contentment in remote mountaintops, and that is when I discovered the spice that every village home grew in their little patch of land — *haldi*. The Starbucks turmeric latte is a much recent phenomenon discovered by the West. For us, *haldi* dates back to the 5th century AD in our Sanskrit scriptures and mythology. It is integral to the fabric of Indian tradition and culture, especially in ayurveda, and every village home in India uses it as remedy for cuts, bruises, healing fractured bones, cooking, for wedding functions and festivals. And that led me to another journey of working with *haldi* farmers in Kumaon and creating a spice brand, White Mountain Collectives. Being vocal for local is another of Gandhi's values that fell into my lap.

Two tenets of Gandhi that inspire me at all times are: be the change you wish to see in the world and the

future of India lies in its villages. And for me my roots in Kumaon have given me the inspiration to work here and bring to people a jewel of a festival — Himalayan Echoes: Kumaon Festival of Literature and Arts. It's an intimate gathering for 300 people over two days who come to the mountains to listen, debate, learn and share their thoughts over varied subjects with a strong mountain connect. 2020 is the year of the pandemic. It has led us to embrace technology like never before and the festival this year is going to be digital with "Mountain Paths" as the theme. Six speakers from Nainital, Shimla, Srinagar, Ranikhet, England and Northern Ireland will walk the talk in their pristine surroundings that will be accessible to us via our

screens no matter which part of the world we are in. I wonder at times what impact Gandhi would have had on the world had he the power of technology at hand to spread his message.

So I go by the clock. I don't have Gandhi's Ingersoll pocket watch. I am from the I-watch generation, time is what you make of it! Health is what shapes the mind. So I wake up early, sleep less. Wherever I am, I strive to make myself and my surroundings fruitful. It is truly the small things in life that make you big!

As I was getting into the skin of Gandhi's experiments, somewhere in my ongoing journey I realised that subconsciously his path was impacting the way I was approaching my daily affairs

Janhavi Prasada was born in Delhi, and raised in the Kumaon hills of Nainital and the Terai plains of Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh. She is the festival director for Himalayan Echoes: Kumaon Festival of Literature and Arts and a published author on M.K. Gandhi. She dedicates her time to the conservation and promotion of literature, music, local textiles, local foods, heritage monuments, environment and wellness in Uttarakhand. She also works as a peace activist in the field of technology and is the co-founder of White Mountain Collectives. A former journalist, she began her career with *The Pioneer* then moved on to electronic and new media with ANI/Reuters, BBC and HTV Wales. She now has her own media company, Srijan Media Pvt Ltd



How Mahatma Gandhi Influenced Me

Jawhar Sircar

Strange as it may sound, there was a wave of disenchantment about Gandhiji in West Bengal after Independence and it was passed on to us who were born within a few years of freedom. It stemmed, perhaps, from the shoddy treatment that was meted out to Netaji by a group in the Congress that was close to the Mahatma. Many of us, therefore, began with a negative "opening balance" about Gandhi and that is what makes our turnaround more interesting.

In my closing days in college, I was drawn, quite inexplicably, towards him in a love-hate sort of way that was exacerbated by a youthful exuberance, which jumps quite rapidly to conclusions. This is when a senior retired professor invited me to the Gandhi Peace Foundation that had a valuable library and was quite near to my house. A special attraction was the standing invitation to attend their programmes to listen to well-known erudite personalities. I was keen to learn about new ideas and things and also how to improve my public speaking. No one asked me to read the several volumes on Gandhi but, after some initial avoidance, I started flipping through his *Young India* articles. I discovered gradually that he did make a lot of sense. I stayed with the Foundation and even joined its gentle but firm opposition to Indira Gandhi's autocratic rule, until it was raided and banned immediately after she declared Emergency on June 25, 1975.

Within three weeks of this, I left Kolkata for Mussoorie to join the IAS. Our director of the Academy was a strong

Gandhian who insisted that our "privileged lot" undertake physical labour for the benefit of society — starting with the digging of channels for rainwater to flow on the mountain slopes. Frankly, till then, I felt that Gandhiji was too biased in favour of backward rural India and dead against science and industrial and urban progress. It was only when a know-all city dweller like me went to villages deep in the interior of the Burdwan district next year that I realised that the Mahatma was not exaggerating at all. True, poor villagers in Bengal were not docile victims of socio-economic exploitation like in some other parts of India, but their political or vocal stand did not really help in lifting them from poverty.

Life was, indeed, miserable for them and I soon learnt that unless the poor, especially farmers and landless labourers, picked up some additional income through rural crafts and skills, they would get just one meal a day. Sometimes, not even that. I plunged headlong into assisting them with whatever governmental scheme was available and applicable to them. I heard their stories. One group had to stop manufacturing local soaps that were so popular till a few years ago because mass produced "factory soaps" undercut them. Another group that used to make boards out of straw were out-priced by factory-manufactured ones. There were entire castes like *sankharis* (conch shell goods makers), *kansaris* (brass and bell metal craftsmen), *gharamis* (paddy straw thatchers) that had been thrown out of work by cheaper industrial products. I went back to Gandhi for guidance and I soon realised that economics and profits were not everything and that hungry mouths had to be fed. In any case, traditional skills must not be made to die. Gainful employment of the rural communities was certainly more important in such

a populous poor country like ours. It was a reality that Gandhiji had realised much before we learnt it first-hand. This was 1976, when most anti-poverty government schemes were in their infancy.

With the help of two very dedicated Gandhian workers we could re-energise two dormant societies, one to produce hand-made paper, boards, file covers and assorted items from locally available agricultural waste materials and the other was to help jobless tribal brass artisans. The first one was quite successful especially because all government offices started buying file covers and other products that lasted many years more than mass-produced stuff. We could explain that the higher costs were quite justifiable in the long run. The brass artisans we refer to are known as Dhokras and they are found in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bengal and some other states as well. The members of the tribe used to melt down old broken items of brass, copper and bell metal and then mould the metal into *paus* or open pots of different specific sizes to measure grain, pulses and seeds. When the metric system of measurement by weight replaced this volume-wise or fluid system a decade earlier, they were suddenly thrown out of employment. We set up a camp office at Dariapur village that had a concentration of Dhokra artisans and started training them in better technologies and experimenting with new products. The old *paus* could be reshaped into ashtrays and flower vases while their ethnic deities could also be tried out in the urban market. They were a hit within a few months before I left the district.

But my association with village crafts and employment-intensive production had just begun. I understood then that Gandhiji was not against industrialisation per se. All he wanted was that at least those rural crafts and skills

that provided employment to the poorest should not be steamrolled by capital-intensive, mass-produced goods.

My preferences and world views in this domain were sharpening and a few years later, I felt good to be posted as the head of handicrafts in West Bengal — even though it came to me as a punishment posting for picking up a quarrel with a very senior minister. I enjoyed the work, in spite of what people said about the sector but the next year I was made the director-in-charge of the state's cottage and small scale industries. There is no point in recalling all that we could do — from introducing the scientific flaying, skinning and preservation of leather to a whole range of small scale industrial products.

Over the next two decades, as one moved from place to place and post to post, the sense of mission inspired by the Mahatma and Tagore continued unabated. Suddenly in 2006, I received my promotion order as Additional Secretary to the Government of India and was made the Development Commissioner for small scale industries for the entire country. The mandate was, however, to modernise this rather archaic sector into "micro, small and medium industries" or MSMEs. What had begun as an argumentative journey to test whether Gandhi was right or wrong had transformed on its own into a mission or a guiding compass in life.

I went back to Gandhi for guidance and I soon realised that economics and profits were not everything and that hungry mouths had to be fed. In any case, traditional skills must not be made to die. Gainful employment of the rural communities was certainly more important in such a populous poor country like ours. It was a reality that Gandhiji had realised much before we learnt it first-hand

Jawhar Sircar, IAS (retired), is the chairman of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. He has served as culture secretary, government of India, and CEO, Prasar Bharati (A.I.R. and Doordarshan). Sircar writes and speaks on Indian history and culture, media, human rights and the construction of religion



Gandhiji — A Very Practical Visionary

Laila Tyabji

Gandhiji died the year after I was born, but he was a familiar figure in our family stories. My great uncle, Abbas Tyabji, was a close associate, inspired by Gandhiji to move from being Chief Justice of Baroda State to a freedom fighter, burning his English suits and spinning and wearing khadi; taking part aged 76 in the Dandi Salt March. He led the March once Gandhi was imprisoned, and himself was arrested and jailed later. Gandhi affectionately called him the Grand Old Man of Gujarat, GOM for short.

Gandhi was also close to other members of our family, coming to stay in our family home on Warden Road in Bombay, where he and my grandfather found common cause in opposing Jinnah's plans for a separate Muslim state. My grandmother would cluck affectionately at the paraphernalia required to house this simple man — a goat tethered in the garden for his milk, separate cooking arrangements for his vegetarian meals in our meat-eating household. He was much loved by all — my father and his siblings enjoyed being chased by him round the sprawling lawns, waving his stick and chuckling toothlessly. It was much later that they recognised him as a saintly, extraordinarily wise and venerated figure, and what a privilege it was to have known him.

Today, though Gandhi is given lip service as the Father of the Nation, it's easy for everyone — politicians, economists and bureaucrats — to forget his wisdom and practical common sense. There's not much left of him in the India of today except the image of his spectacles on our municipal rubbish bins. Forging an industrial, urban,

mechanised India is the priority, despite the burden this puts on our already overcrowded infrastructure; despite the exodus it encourages to our cities. Working as I do with crafts and craftspeople, I see how right he was to stress the importance of our rural communities, still 65 percent of our population. As he said: "We are inheritors of a rural civilisation. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilisation... To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilisation seems to me an impossibility."

He is often dismissed as a hopeless romantic whose idea of India as a series of localised rural self-sufficient local Utopias is essentially unworkable. On the contrary, he was extremely practical. He said, "My idea of self-sufficiency is that villages must be self-sufficient in regard to food, cloth and other basic necessities". He added, "But even this can be overdone. Therefore you must grasp my idea properly. Self-sufficiency does not mean narrowness. To be self-sufficient is not to be altogether self-contained. In no circumstances would we be able to produce all the things we need nor do we aim at doing so. So though our aim is complete self-sufficiency, we shall have to get from outside the village what we cannot produce in the village; we shall have to produce more of what we can in order thereby to obtain in exchange what we are unable to produce.

"Today our villages have become a mere appendage to the cities. They exist, as it were, to be exploited by the latter and depend on the latter's sufferance. This is unnatural. It is only when the cities realise the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up."

As India moves forward in the 21st century, we seem to be ready to pour money into every economic

activity that takes us from "developing" to "developed", but forget about the strengths and potential we already have — unsung but unique — matchless in the world. What amazing things other countries like Thailand and Indonesia have done with their much more limited crafts. How short-sighted we are!

Wherever I work, whether Kutch, or Kashmir or Madhya Pradesh, it is vibrant rural communities and traditions that draw visitors and eyeballs.

What's missing is the back-end and forward linkages — investment and support, credit for regular supplies of appropriate raw materials, design and product development that takes traditional skills and motifs into contemporary lifestyles and trends.

Frustrated at the lack of institutional support, craftspeople are leaving the sector in droves. As Gandhi said as long ago as 1946: "The cities are not only draining the villages of their wealth but talent also."

When we started the DASTKAR Ranthambore Project 27 years ago, villagers, already beleaguered and angry at being evicted from their ancestral forest lands in order to turn them into a sanctuary for the tiger, were incredulous that we could possibly offer an alternative. That their rudimentary hand skills, used mainly to cobble together rags as coverlets or make crude baskets from the reeds in the ponds, could possibly have a commercial potential. They were animal herders or agricultural labour, dependent on the forest, land and water for a living. They scorned the idea that their hands had something that could earn a living. Today the women of those villages are the best off in the region, their daughters sought after as brides. Teaching them to hone and diversify their inherent skills has also been an entry point for enlightenment regarding education, health care, family planning, and gender rights. They have *pukka* houses, gas stoves, their own bank accounts.

Like Gandhi, I am not suggesting a return to a primitive life with no mod cons. But India is blessed in having its feet in both East and West, modernity and tradition. Local resources, skill sets and knowledge systems can partner with 21st century technology and become the source of exciting new creative inspiration.

Let's not be brainwashed into thinking that the West is always best, and brand is better than hand!

Let's also remember that the much-vaunted IT

industry only employs three million jobs. That 10 millions young hopefuls unsuccessfully attempt to enter the workforce each year, and 11 million were rendered jobless last year. That unemployment rose to a 45-year high. At our period of greatest growth 2005 to 2010, job creation remained more or less stagnant. The formal sector has been actually shrinking with China and Bangladesh becoming the workshop of the world.

Let us look to our villages as power centres to regenerate new sources of economy and employment. Not just the traditional crafts and textile skills already extant but all the ancillary things that rural communities need. Weavers for instance need storage facilities and packing units, dying, dry cleaning, people to build and maintain looms. Leather tanning, wood curing, silk cultivation, indigo, madder, bamboo, and mulberry plantations, the herbs, roots and other raw materials for herbal medicines and toiletries. New activities and earning sources would curb the rush to our overburdened cities.

Farmers need structural reforms, R&D, and skilling to break out of the rice-sheet-pulses cycle by crop diversification, proper cold storage and transport, and greater public investment rather than subsidies and price support. How horrified Gandhiji would have been to see farmers being greeted in our capital city by water cannons when they came to discuss their problems!

We need to return to Gandhi's practical wisdom, and look at our development paradigms anew.

In the Chinese script, the characters for crisis and opportunity are the same. This, a time of terrible rural distress and crisis, is an opportunity to creatively convert latent potential into strength. Gandhiji was so brilliant at that!

Laila Tyabji is a crafts designer, writer, and the chairperson of DASTKAR, the crafts NGO she helped found. Laila has been working with grassroots artisans all over India for over four decades. Many of her most rewarding projects involve creating new livelihood avenues through crafts for pastoral and marginalised rural communities — bonded labour in Bihar, displaced villages in Ranthambore, tribals in Odisha and Karnataka, victims of insurgency in Kashmir. Laila studied art in Baroda and Japan and has worked as a designer in textiles, graphics, and interiors. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2012

He is often dismissed as a hopeless romantic whose idea of India as a series of localised rural self-sufficient local Utopias is essentially unworkable. On the contrary, he was extremely practical



What We Live By

Leela Samson



To be born into an Armed Forces family in India is a special privilege. One that I greatly value. To grow up in an ashram with traditional Indian values is an equal privilege. For me, it was a double bonus! And not a thing that the world considers "valuable" outside of these, did I ever feel deprived of.

Discipline, as you can imagine, is greatly valued in these systems. This can never come too early. It has to be a way of life. Not be a miserable duty. In my childhood, there were few luxuries. And yet, we wanted for nothing. Every other kid growing up in a cantonment was in a similar circumstance. We shared broken cycles and passed-on clothes. The flats and bungalows we lived in were connected to our schools, which were connected to the infirmary, to the cinema, to the market and to the clubhouse. Your behavior in any one of these places was noticed. We had to follow the rules. What applied to the jawans and officers, applied to their wives and families.

In Kalakshetra, an institute started in 1936 where I studied and became an adult, a gentler but equally firm, if not more persuasive hand of discipline existed. It was understood in the vernacular as *bhakti*, *shraddha*, *sadhana* and *maryada*, which are best not translated, but experienced. Early morning cold baths, yoga and prayers, vegetarian food, hard hours of practice of an art form, strict teachers and enlightened elders who guided the spirit of the institute with a philosophy that was fired by the spirit of nation-building. Simplicity was valued. We slept on mats, studied and ate on the floor. Every child learnt to wash his or her clothes and utensils.

Sharing what we had with those who were deprived was something we looked forward to, both in the defence establishments and in Kalakshetra. Floods, cyclones and even the 1961 war were times of coming together to do for others.

Gandhiji had simple advice for the people of India. He said every man must be able to keep his own environment clean and prepare a fistful of food to sustain himself. Dependency on others is not a virtue if you are able-bodied. It creates hierarchical differences between us. And if someone is doing something for you in an institute or home, it is to be acknowledged with affection. Not as one's right.

Intolerance is an everyday phenomenon in a nation like ours where money, religion, language, custom, caste, beliefs and privilege of one kind or another play a divisive role. These differences test our tolerance to the utmost. But we have sterling examples in all our faiths of those who rose above these forces. In the Services, families lived closely together, as did the men in their ships or battalions or in bunkers at the borders they patrol. Loyalty is fierce — to each other and to the nation. In times of happiness and sorrow, I recall families of different faiths coming together to celebrate, help and comfort each other. Kalakshetra was built up on Theosophical thought that believed in the veracity of all religions. To each his own; with an understanding of all. Our day started with prayers from every religion. It strengthened us, gave us comfort and joy.

What other way is there to live then? The world's misfortune today has renewed the importance of these values. If you can do your own work, why have someone else do it for you? Patriarchal attitudes rupture the family unit. Every member of the household, including children, can do their own work and help the elderly or sick. Finding comfort with family and friends, sharing the burden of everyday life, being responsible citizens with the knowledge that an act of carelessness puts not only your own life, but those around you in danger is a renewed consciousness. A value that is neither old, nor new. But eternal.

Leela Samson is a virtuoso performer and a sensitive interpreter of the nuances of Bharatanatyam. *Spanda*, a body of work choreographed by her 25 years ago, is still celebrated for its innovations in Bharatanatyam traditions. Leela is the author of *Rhythm in Joy and Rukmini Devi — A Life*. She has been the director of Kalakshetra, the chairperson of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, and the chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification. Leela has been the recipient of many awards for her work and contribution to the arts, including the Sanskriti Award, and the Padma Shri



The Scents of His Being Linger On

Saket Suman

of his presence though he customarily guides our logic towards the greater good.

I have often found myself at odds with my own experience and understanding of things as midway into the writing process, he suddenly pops out of the pages and seeks to dictate passages after passages. It is almost involuntary and spontaneous, something that I as a writer have little control over. These do not happen every day but instances when historical inspiration flows naturally out of the pen aren't completely unheard of either.

And it can be quite a task to put up with somebody as persistent as Gandhi. By the time arguments run dry in the head, a mound of didactic passages accumulate in the heart of the copy. These then require the cleaning, to be carefully weeded out so that the essence is retained but the excess is excused. Sometimes none of it remains in the form that it originally emerges and that evokes a sense of remorse for those passages that were penned almost involuntarily but now need to be left behind. As the pen meets the paper and the blank pages become witness to our history, the scents of his being linger on and become the very soul of the entire work, for there can be no imagination of a story of India without its most blessed saint.

Being Gandhian is similar to being in a state of constant interrogation of the self and the ideals that one adheres to and upholds. In that sense, these are unprecedented times when ideals and ethics and moralities and values seem to be losing their shine and a hysterical perception of things is being easily consumed in our society. So, a writer's negotiations with the enigmatic personality that Gandhi was happens at many levels and somewhere in the process, he is also looked at with suspicion and draws the curious attention on some of his personal failings. With that the writer learns as he tells the readers that Gandhiji was not deprived of all failings but in one life he mustered such courage, imparted such values and showed a direction for our great country that continues to remain relevant even today as we stare at an uncertain future.

Saket Suman is an independent writer and journalist. He has worked at The Statesman, IANS and Times Group besides being published extensively on cultural and societal themes. He has a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from Delhi University

There is hardly anybody in India whose life has not been influenced by the stories of a towering personality credited with freeing India from the shackles of the British Empire with his most potent tools of truth and non-violence. So magnanimous is the presence of Gandhiji in Indian life that our very sense of attachment towards the country is associated with his memories. But his ideals are being contested more vigorously today than perhaps ever before. An alternate narrative of Indian history is being constructed, while the nation built on his ideals is fast moving away from them. We are being repeatedly told that much of what we have known or read about Bapu in books and records of history may not be exactly true.

We are also being increasingly reminded of the wounds of Partition and somehow the circumstances of 1947 are making regular occurrences in our national discourse once again. At the same time, the assassination of Gandhiji itself has also come to be seen in a very different manner as has been displayed in public hailing of Nathuram Godse by an elected representative of the people of India. A few years ago, it was almost impossible to imagine that we would land here.

As these ideological conflicts unfold all around us and as waves of misinformation and propaganda are hurled at the ever-anticipating public, our ability to see reason beyond hysteria begins to diminish.

But then, love and gentleness and empathy and belief have not completely perished. There is a greater sense that as a freedom fighter and a human being he has done a tremendous service to our people and has been instrumental in the foundation of the nation we owe our allegiance to. It is in the innermost chambers of the solitary hours that our most rooted conversations with the Mahatma take place. Almost always, we are unaware



The Thoroughly Modern Mahatma

Prasad Bidapa

As young students of fashion, we were often exposed to the wonders of traditional Indian textiles, and in a city like Ahmedabad, we had access to some wonderful collections at the Calico Museum in that lovely city. It was my good fortune to meet and be influenced by great names like Pupul Jaykar, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Martand Singh, who revealed to us the beauty of Indian handloom and heritage textiles.

Mahatma Gandhiji chose khadi as a metaphor, calling it the Fabric of Freedom and it became a powerful tool to fight the British with; encapsulating ahimsa or non-violence and striking a chord with every right-thinking Indian. He called the act of spinning on the charkha one of the greatest of contemplative human experiences, focusing your mind into a stratospheric state of meditation. The concentration it required to spin on this simple device is so great that if any distraction happened, it actually breaks the thread!

All fabrics in ancient times were variations of khadi, and this skill continued undisturbed until Edmund Cartwright invented the power loom in 1785. By the time the British had secured their hold over India, they had ensured that machine-made textiles were the very base of their industrialisation and consequent global domination. Handwoven fabrics were a direct threat to their machine made textiles, and they did everything in their power to ensure the death of the handloom arts of India. Their soldiers smashed the thousands of hand looms in the country, and a popular narrative speaks of them slicing off the thumbs of weavers to prevent them from plying

their trade. This is not strictly true, for they actually cut the long thumbnail the weavers grew which they used to separate the yarn on the loom!

Gandhiji was very successful in getting Indians to return to khadi, and it is to the eternal credit of Indian women, who refused to give up their handwoven saris that the tradition of spinning and weaving continued. Indian men took to the fabrics of Manchester quite easily, which is why you will find many of our ancestral photographs featuring the men in thick three-piece suits while the women are demure in their handwoven cotton and silk saris. As Gandhiji encouraged the population to make bonfires of these imported English fabrics, the women had very little to burn!

With freedom secured, the priority was to revive this moribund cottage industry all over the country. Jawaharlal Nehru tasked an army of revivalists like Pupul Jayakar and Kamaladevi with reviving our glorious heritage textiles in every corner of our country, and this is how the Central Cottage Industries Emporia came into being. We were the first generation after Independence to be influenced by these great women and men who dedicated their life to reviving every variety of the indigenous textiles of India.

However, modern India once again became enamoured of machine-made textiles and the craze for imported fabrics resulted in a decline in popularity of our heritage textiles. The Khadi Board, The Handloom Board and the Craft Council had become monolithic institutions that did little to reverse this decline. The recent closing of these institutions came as a shock to many, though welcomed by a few. I find it troubling that little or no effort was made to revamp these corporations, which needed fresh thinking and new blood to shake them out of their stupor.

Institutions like Dastkar and Seva are far more successful in supporting these ancient arts and making them accessible to the fashion-conscious public by

creating platforms where artisans could find profitable markets. The Mahatma would certainly not be happy with the current state of affairs, where the hand skills of India find no place at the table.

In 2015, under the guidance of the great textile historian Martand Singh, we approached the Government of Rajasthan with a project we called Rajasthan Heritage Week. This was an effort to make khadi and handlooms fashionable and relevant again. The then Chief Minister, Mrs Vasundhara Raje, recognised the potential of this project and at the presentation told me that she wished to see the handmade textiles and processes of Rajasthan in every major designers' collections. The project hinged on creating partnerships between the textile artisans of the State with the top designers of India, and with Mahatma Gandhi's sesquicentennial anniversary fast approaching, the project took on an added urgency.

Soon, designers like Abraham & Thakore, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Rohit Bal, Wendell Rodricks, Rimzim Dadu, Manish Saksena, Little Shilpa, Bibi Russell and many others started developmental work with many of the gifted textile artisans of Rajasthan. This *jugalbandi* was to result in some amazing and significant developments that would have made the Mahatma proud! Rajesh Pratap Singh, for example, would work with the khadi wool weavers of Barmer clusters in developing a refined version of wool. This would rival the finest Italian fabrics in their finesse and comfort factors. Abraham & Thakore worked with the block printers of Sanganer to create new blocks of contemporary designs that were graphic and stunning. Rohit Bal worked with raw khadi, processing it and then creating a beautiful embroidered bridal collection, saying that the khadi he used was a superb and strong base for his elaborate embroideries. Manish Saksena worked with the exquisite Kota Doria saris from the Khaitoon clusters, modernising and recolouring the design principle. Bangladeshi designer Bibi Russell, who is one of the pioneers of khadi revival joined the project. Younger designers in the Indian pantheon welcomed the project, creating modern and youthful collections that resonated with their young customers.

The artisans themselves were encouraged to develop textiles and designs on their own, and Rajasthan Heritage Week became the first to present collections by Weavers, Dyers & Printers as designers in their own right. I felt

a huge sense of pride as I watched them take the stage with the glamorous models as the appreciative audience applauded them! All these events often featured Gandhi prominently as a tribute to the great man.

To me, the khadi and handloom textiles of India represent true luxury, deserving to be called the finest textiles in the world. India is one of the last countries to possess such a wealth of fabrics, woven by hand and reflecting a 3000-year-old history that encapsulates the traditions of our spectacular heritage.

Today, we are firmly set on the road to making Indian textiles be recognised the world over as true luxury, allowing every designer to create an exclusive range that is impossible to copy. For me, the designer who fails to recognise the unique aspects of these fabrics, choosing instead to buy mass-produced Chinese imports is little more than a tailor, contributing nothing towards a sustainable future. In Japan, the great designer, Issey Miyake, partners with India's legendary textile designer Asha Sarabhai who designs his fabrics for a special collection called Haath, which celebrates the handwoven treasures of India at exclusive stores in Tokyo.

An important component of this revival is to sensitise the youth of India to their textile history and inculcate in them a sense of love and responsibility for this aspect of our heritage. We invite many educational institutions and fashion design institutions to send their students to every event that promotes the craft. They should be sensitised to the large variety of textiles we have. We can only hope that when their time comes, they will promote it worldwide.

This is where Gandhi would have liked to see khadi — celebrated globally as the finest of what India has to offer.

With over 40 years of experience in the fashion industry, Prasad Bidapa has seen Indian fashion evolve and develop. His presentations and events have been staged all over this country and in many cities overseas, most recently in Tokyo for the Issey Miyake Foundation and Doha for the University of Qatar. He is committed to the cause of khadi and handloom in India and has developed many projects with both the public and private sector to promote the hand skills of Indian textiles and crafts. He can be contacted at prasadbidapa@gmail.com

Mahatma Gandhi chose khadi as a metaphor, calling it the Fabric of Freedom and it became a powerful tool to fight the British with; encapsulating ahimsa or non-violence and striking a chord with every right-thinking Indian



The Sant of Sabarmati and Spirituality

Sadhguru Rameshji

It is very rightly said that messengers may come and go, but their message lives on forever. And for someone whose life itself was his message, what he left behind is not only a rich legacy of ideologies, it is also an inspiration to embrace his teachings, apply them in our life and spread them all around. We all know Mahatma Gandhi as an ordinary man who led an extraordinary life, the non-violent Indian freedom fighter, Father of the Nation and one of the finest politicians of his time. But a closer look into his teachings gives us an insight into his spiritual nature and highly evolved thought process. His philosophies touch upon and include spiritual, religious, moral, ethical, individual and collective principles. Since my life is all about spirituality and integrating it in people's lives to make them more blissful, through this article I would like to share how the Gandhian philosophy forms the base and directly influences the core spiritual concepts practised and preached by my wife Kusum (fondly called Guruma) and me.

Ahimsa – Non-Violence: Non-violence in spirituality is not only limited to actions, it also includes thoughts and intentions. It extends to not hurting the feelings or family members or others either intentionally or unintentionally. We practise being so full of positivity that there is no scope for negative talks, actions, attitudes, feelings of anger, jealousy, hatred and animosity to enter. It doesn't

matter how right we are and how wrong the other person is, or how oppressed we are and how dominating the other person is — we shouldn't be troubling or hurting the other person in any way as they are just a medium picked to settle our karmic account. Forbearance and patience may seem painful in the short run, but it saves us from a vicious cycle of karma formed due to the chain of actions and reaction. So, ahimsa essentially means absence of destructive thoughts and the presence of love and peace. Practising 100 percent acceptance and 0 percent expectations fills us with patience and tolerance, thereby eliminating all kinds of unnecessary struggles and conflicts.

Satya – Truth: The concept of Truth is of great relevance as it is the source and focal point of all spirituality. Truth is that which is permanent and constant. Pure Consciousness, Supreme Consciousness, Universal Energy, God, *Paramatma* or *Brahman* is the eternal, fixed and unchanging Truth, through the power of which the entire creation functions. The entire creation stems out of this Energy, is sustained in it and finally merges back into it. It's the purest form of energy which Generates, Operates and Destroys its own creation. Accepting this Truth, understanding it completely and establishing ourselves permanently in it, is the ultimate purpose of human life.

Cleanliness Campaign: As the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan launched on the 150th Birth Anniversary of Gandhiji to focus on the sanitation and cleanliness in India, our global campaign named Swachh Brahmand or

Clean the Cosmos aims at world peace and harmony by way of sanitisation of thoughts and vibes. Through our campaign, we aim to educate people about the power of the vibes they emanate through their thoughts, feelings and imagination and guide them towards conscious emanation of positive vibes. Cosmos, which is the space around us, is the container of all our thoughts, vibes and feelings. It is presently dominated by the presence of negative vibes which can be neutralised and replaced by positive ones through the chanting of the following five cosmic affirmations:

May All the Souls Be Happy and Peaceful

I seek Forgiveness from All the Souls of the Universe

I forgive All the Souls of the Universe

I Love All the Souls of the Universe Unconditionally

We are All Children of One Divine God

The conscious practice of the positive statements and affirmations can benefit the entire human kind by eradicating the ill effects of negative vibrations such as fear psychosis of the current pandemic, bleak future, domestic violence, suicides, terrorist attacks, crimes, etc. Also, similar to the 'Sarvodaya' concept of Gandhiji which aimed at welfare of all without any exceptions, Clean the Cosmos campaign too ensures the individualistic as well as collective uplift and benefit of entire human kind without any discrimination.

Practice of Maun: Gandhiji used to observe silence every Monday and has quoted that *"It has often occurred to me that a seeker after truth has to be silent."* In his journal *Harijan*, he further said, *"When one comes to think of it one cannot help feeling that nearly half the misery of the world would disappear if we, fretting mortals, knew the virtue of silence."* In spirituality too, silence holds great importance. However, in our practice, observing *maun* or silence does not mean not talking at all; it simply means abstaining from discussing worldly matters, gossip,

criticism, negative comments, etc. Topics like spirituality, God, devotion, Atma, Parmatma can be discussed freely while observing silence. This would be considered as the best *maunvrat*.

Poorna Swaraj: This principle of Complete Self Rule, closest to Gandhiji's heart, can be equated to the highest state in spirituality, that is, Enlightenment. It means seeing the world with a changed perspective and seeing Pure Consciousness in every form, every being, living, non-living and in self. Such a state can be attained by practising ahimsa, satya and *maun* as discussed above and by having patience, high level of tolerance and unconditional love for everyone. An enlightened soul experiences freedom from the ups and downs of life, mental conditions, bondages, impressions, karmas and the vicious cycle of birth and rebirth. Having attained enlightenment, my life has only one goal and that is to enlighten each and every soul who is interested in attaining this highest state of freedom ever.

'Poorna Ananda – House of Enlightenment' is the abode, the destination where one not only gets enlightened, but also spreads enlightenment all around.

Non-violence in spirituality is not only limited to actions, it also includes thoughts and intentions. It extends to not hurting the feelings or family members or others either intentionally or unintentionally

Sadguru Rameshji's spiritual journey started under the guidance of Rajendra Brahmacharji, through whose grace he mastered Hatha Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Mantra Yoga, astral travel, etc, and eventually, by the grace of Swamiji Sri Poornananda, he and his wife Kusum both attained enlightenment on the same day in the year 1999. He has dedicated his life to enlighten people through regular satsangs and *samagams* at his ashram. He feels eventually everyone will have to add spiritual flavour in their daily life as that alone is the solution for all worldly problems. He is the author of SOUL SELFIE and has also initiated the worldwide campaign #CleantheCosmos for peaceful living among human beings



Finding Gandhi

Sudeep Chakravarti

The discovery and rediscovery of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has for me been a journey of wrong and right, of anger and calm, of doubts about my country and yet, the strongest belief in its democratic intent. This last has remained the underpinning of my work first as a journalist and then as a writer.

Like many of my generation I initially saw Gandhiji as a photograph, often a silhouette. He was nearly everywhere. In the books at school. In newspapers every January when India mourned his death with government-issue advertisements, and then in October as his birth was celebrated. Mr Gandhi was a ubiquitous statue. He was a watermark on my pocket money. He was on the postage stamps that carried letters to my family in Kolkata from my school in Rajasthan. There seemed to be a MG Road in every city, every large town.

Mohandas Gandhi, I was told repeatedly, was the Father of my nation. As a child I recall being perturbed that my 'nation' seemed to have a father but no mother, but that's another story. Here was a man who made the British so uncomfortable that they finally left our land and our future to us. A man whose surname seemed to be so coveted that some political families, as my parents told me, even changed the spelling of their surnames to match Mr Gandhi's.

It seemed I knew Mr Gandhi so well and yet I didn't know him at all. With all the violence and bloodshed in the name of politics and religion that I saw during formative years in school and at university, it was as if Mr Gandhi and his stated idea of non-violence and compassion were meaningless. There were also some accompanying mysteries. South Africa's freedom icon Nelson Mandela would quote Gandhi as an inspiration in his fight against apartheid, to free his country from the prejudice of colour and race — but people in India appeared to have forgotten that application.

I dismissed Mr Gandhi as a person whose time was done, a memory kept alive with his favourite bhajans sung slowly and often out of tune, by the elderly.

In time I became a journalist, a story-teller. I began to travel across India and some parts of the world. I began to see and hear — really see and hear. Read much more. And began finally to get a measure of Mr Gandhi.

I began to understand that he was just a man — a man of stunning courage and conviction, but in the end, just a man, as political as he was fallible. He had his pet peeves and pet projects. His historically proven preference of Jawaharlal Nehru over Subhas Chandra Bose to be his torchbearer and political heir is only one such.

I travelled to Bangladesh to trace a journey of Gandhiji's from the time of Partition. Engineered riots had broken out among Hindus and Muslims. It was a chain reaction that linked the stalled Cabinet Mission Plan, the announcement of Direct Action Day, the Great Calcutta Killings of 1946. I travelled to Noakhali, where

terrible rioting took place a year before India and Pakistan became independent.

And that's how I discovered that, perhaps for the first time in his life, Gandhiji himself was ready to give up.

Even before he reached Noakhali, he had written to Nehru: "My inner voice tells me 'You may not live to be a witness to this senseless slaughter. If people refuse to see what is clear as daylight and pay no heed to what you say, does it not mean that your day is over?'"

But he persisted. In time the rioting abated. As with several lessons since his arrival in India from South Africa in 1915, it was a masterclass in dealing with despair, the power of fortitude, and the importance of legacy.

Visiting Kutch during and after the earthquake in 2001, I saw a legion of horrors. And I saw several thousand people helping others. Doctors and nurses ran clinics round-the-clock even for a week at a time, taking only minutes-long breathers after saving lives and limbs. I met a young doctor in Bhachau who told me that the adversity of others gave him the courage to leave his practice and come to that hell of destruction. He said that he learned his lesson of compassion from Gandhiji, who was assassinated several decades before the doctor was born. Not 'Mahatma'. Just 'Gandhiji'. And the way of just Gandhiji was enough to change this young man's life and work.

It was not about doing *good*, but doing *right*.

Naturally there is the dark side too. I have heard a former chief minister of a state tell a roomful of policemen and security experts to kill dissenters. He described his initiative as a Gandhian campaign. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, or NREGA, sought to provide the very poor with employment at minimum wages. After the initial failure of the scheme — caused among other things by the theft of public money by public servants — the name was amended to M-NREGA. It was as if everything would be solved by adding that magic letter, the magic name: Mahatma. Its use seemed to be automatic, something to tick off in plans and proposals, and then jettison that chosen honorific in the garbage heap of collective

callousness.

What is it about Mohandas Gandhi that obsesses this nation more than 70 years after the man died searching for an ideal country? What is so remarkable about this man that we even tell lies in his name? What is so significant about this man whose greatest fashion statement was to wear a 'loincloth' and a wrap to London, that he is embraced by canny filmmakers for scoring moral points and monetary benefit?

I began to understand that he was just a man — a man of stunning courage and conviction, but in the end, just a man, as political as he was fallible

Perhaps it's because the more wrong we see, the more we yearn for right. Because we need self-belief in our well-being, in our future. Because we need non-violence and liberal, inclusive thought to offset engineered violence and hatred. Alas, we cannot wish for a Gandhi app to instantly download, with which to suffuse our lives and our land. But we can download Gandhiji's higher purpose and make it our own. All it means, as I have learnt in my years of rediscovering Mr Gandhi, is to have the courage of conviction, speak truth to power, and believe in a shared future.

Leave playing god to god.

Sudeep Chakravarti is an award-winning author of several bestselling works of narrative non-fiction. His non-fiction works include *Plassey: The Battle that Changed the Course of Indian History*, *The Bengalis: A Portrait of Community*, *Red Sun: Travels in Naxalite Country*, *Highway 39: Travels Through a Fractured Land*, and *Clear. Hold. Build*. He has written three novels — *Tin Fish*, *The Avenue of Kings*, and *The Baptism of Tony Calangute* — and short stories and essays for several anthologies.

Chakravarti has over three decades of experience in media, working with major global and Indian media organisations, and is among India's leading independent columnists on matters of internal security, conflict and conflict resolution, and the convergence of business and human rights.

He co-founded Coastal Impact, which conducts research for major marine research institutions and evangelises marine conservation to school and university students. He lives in Goa



In School with Mahatma Gandhi

T.C.A. Raghavan

My interface with Mahatma Gandhi was mediated and animated by Dr Raghubhai Nayak, principal of Sardar Patel Vidyalaya in New Delhi, which I joined when I was six or seven years old in the early 1960s. Raghubhai and his wife Jeshibehn had internalised a Gandhian ethic to an extent that seems almost difficult to believe today but also adopted it so that it was seamlessly embedded in the school's functioning in different aspects. So I encountered Mahatma Gandhi's life story almost daily in the morning assembly when one or another episode from it would be discussed. Values that I today regard as intrinsic to Mahatma Gandhi were imbibed — and I realise this now much more than I did earlier — through a set of pedagogic instruments that gave emphasis to the dignity of labour, helping the needy, respect for all faiths, empathy for peasant and rural uplift. So "shramdaan", "village visits", "Friday collection" were a constant part of the school curriculum regardless of which class you were in. This was interspersed with music and crafts, all making for a unique socialising environment that removed Mahatma Gandhi from the pedestal of icons to a living force and factor in your daily schedule. Underwriting all this was a constant reiteration of nationalism and a deep empathy with all things Indian constantly reinforced by

music, drama, etc.

I did my schooling in Sardar Patel Vidyalaya in three distinct tranches — in elementary, middle and secondary school — in all seven years between 1962 and 1973. The periods in between were spent in Bhopal and Jammu as a consequence of my father's transferable job as a civil servant. The contrasts made me understand — vaguely as a student, with greater clarity later — the unique ecosystem that Raghubhai had created in an otherwise traditional school that also never compromised even a little on usual attributes of discipline, punctuality, cleanliness and most important of all, good performance in examinations.

Over the years I have gained other perspectives on Mahatma Gandhi and Gandhian thought. These were often more critical and as a university student and thereafter, I wondered also about the Mahatma's deep conservatism on many issues and how this coexisted with his radical behaviour on others. My personal distillate of Mahatma Gandhi gradually crystallised around three or four postulates of a personal moral philosophy that are standards for judging behaviour. The first of these is some concern for the underdog and those disadvantaged

or less privileged. The second is of the value of coexistence — whether one calls it pluralism, respect for all religions or secularism — and the importance of this as an end in itself. Thirdly, austerity as a kind of personal ecosystem — consume less and waste less, reduce your needs etc. Fourthly and finally, to have an internal idea of India — its diversity, its civilisational ethos and its spiritual core and temper nationalism with this private idea of India.

Do I actually live such a life? No, but I do try to observe it and measure myself against it. These are after all standards, not goals. For instance, try as I might, I will not be able to reduce my personal carbon footprint to that of my teachers. But I do worry about it and there is always a stab of guilt at a transgression. More importantly do these constitute a Gandhian philosophy? Again, obviously not, at least not the whole but perhaps one part of it. Here again my school experience was instructive. Dr Nayak himself, and some of the teachers, had their lives profoundly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi — occasionally personally and directly; but more frequently by the unfolding Gandhi narrative they were contemporary to. This impact was very visible in some cases: a dedication to their students and to teaching that was almost obsessive; a frugality in personal lifestyles that would surprise us even though we were children of the Licence Permit Raj; and, finally, a constant measuring of themselves against some internal private standard of behaviour. How was this the impact of Mahatma Gandhi? Well, they all seemed to think it was and that they too were waging a struggle to live an ethical life and by a code of ethics that was Gandhian.

I will never forget a morning assembly lecture sometime in September-October 1969 by Raghubhai

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Nayak. It was the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi and the school, like the rest of the country, was deep in its observance through different events. Fifty years have passed but I will never forget the tremor in Raghubhai's voice as he spoke about the ongoing communal violence in his native Ahmedabad. Was it some personal failing on *his* part that this visitation was upon the Mahatma's own state in the centenary of his birth Raghubhai seemed to be asking? Making the national personal was, I think now, truly Gandhian.

Am I romanticising my days as a school boy? To some extent perhaps yes; but try as I might it is difficult to disentangle my understanding of Mahatma Gandhi from the lessons that Raghubhai and the teachers of Sardar Patel Vidyalaya instilled in me.

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Imagining Gandhi

T.M. Krishna



Whether you worship, revere, respect, fault or even detest him, the Mahatma, Gandhi, or as his British Indian Passport saw him, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, remains a character of great, if intriguing, relevance.

Among his numerous contributions, one of the greatest is his redefining of the idea of struggle, of revolt and the role in these of violence. Each of these concepts has traditionally invoked hurt, suffering, and even death, very often to the oppressor himself.

In Gandhi, the hurt and the suffering were self-inflicted. In fact, the more the hurt and suffering, the higher the risk of death, the "purer" for him was the struggle, the more justified the revolt.

For Gandhi, his work, his passion, which found such intensity in struggle, was not a question of good vs. evil but a series of battles within the site of the "good" itself. Each mass movement gave a paradigm of change, which was about more than just the immediate objective. Both by intent and method, he left behind an altered scene in which both oppressed and oppressor stood challenged, transformed.

Every January 30, at 5.17pm, we revisit the moment of his "silencing" with silence. At that moment not only was he killed but a wholly new vision that he had created evaporated. The sense of loss that engulfed the nation was about more than the loss of a person. A whole world

crumbled at that instant, something only he represented, something only he was.

Gandhi was a saint, social reformer and freedom fighter, but what intrigues me is why he was different, not just in degree but in his whole being, from the many others who struggled for exactly the same causes. Like many before him he too traversed the country. But Gandhi did not travel to observe or learn from India in the ordinary sense. He became the laughter, tears, drudgery, suffering, friendship, anger and hope. The observer became the observed. Every experience moved him closer to who he was, leading to revelations that were not always pleasant, but were the truth. What he saw as the future was very different.

The difference lay in his imagination, in his visualising sensibility. Yet what he saw as India's destiny was anything but imaginary, it was tangible. It was not just about social inequalities and the depressing conditions, but he saw deep inside these external actualities, the hidden fire of tomorrow, the fire that would burn not to destroy but to recreate. This was the imagination of a master visionary, not a delusion of Mohandas.

He knew that he had to address Today for a Tomorrow. But he also immediately realised that no one can address reality without imagining the future. To imagine something for oneself is one thing, but to make every other person imagine it at the same time is completely another.

What of his own did Gandhi create in the actuality of Indians' lives? The most magnificent "creation" was the possibility of a future in which violence, bloodshed, hurt, and destruction were not part of the edifice. It was not a passive vision, rather an active, dynamic, even aggressive

force that sought to change the weaknesses of a violent today for a morally mature tomorrow.

He made an entire people envision something radically new. They were imagining a future without blood on their hands. This was the creation of the Mahatma. Was the identification of India with Gandhi's vision of India self-deceptive, or, worse, was it false, a dream?

As much as Gandhi may have tried to transfer his imagination to the people, it was essential that they feel his imagination, his vision within themselves as their own imagination and their own impulse and feeling. It was essential that they make Gandhi's vision of the future, their India of the future, for which they took responsibility. They did try to do this, earnestly, emotionally, intellectually, with utmost loyalty. They felt the empowerment, happiness, joy and a possible future in equality in independent India. This was the master at work. This emotional world was charged using created action. The actions were not just about their political or social impact but about creating an emotional anchor. This was not the Mahatma's personal anchor; it was the collective foundation for all. But this left everyone believing that Gandhi's vision was their own.

This connection existed only till the creator of the vision lived. His imagination of a future India was like a painting, which he made with his own life. The painting was his life and his life was the painting. Until he remained, the future as he envisioned was within everyone's embrace. But with him gone, the illusion disappeared; what seemed to be their future, created by him, but collectively owned, existed no more.

The memory of it lingers, of course, but it evokes nostalgia rather than the active, living participation he wanted. So, was his imagination a waste of his energy, of India's time? The problem lies in the fact that everyone else is living in the imagination of these "thought leaders" and not imagining for themselves. Every individual must imagine and work for true change in society. We took shelter within Gandhi's imagination, forgetting that his

greatest gift was the idea of imagination itself, which he did not own.

Gandhi's use of creative imagination is fascinating. He created from his experience and skills a certain vision which, like a piece of art, arose from within him, and then tried to envelop every individual around him. He also gave his personal vision a collective personality, by investing it with an objective quality, like an artist would his work of art.

Was the Mahatma an artist? He would have been happier being called an artisan. What distinguishes the two? Nothing but this, that while an artist hopes to create art, an artisan is untroubled by the thought "Am I creating art?"

But is every one of us an artist? An artist lives within everyone, but we need to have the sensitivity to "receive the world", the strength to question it, and emotions beyond the self to make of our experience what Gandhi did, namely, to present a new imagination that goes beyond the person who is imagining it. For a beautiful world, we all need to be artists in life and not live within the creations of others.

The article was published in The Hindu in 2014

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T.M. Krishna is a vocalist in the Carnatic tradition and a public intellectual who speaks and writes about issues affecting the human condition and about culture. Krishna has started and is involved in many organisations spread across the whole spectrum of music and culture. He has co-authored *Voices Within: Carnatic Music — Passing on an Inheritance*, and written *A Southern Music — The Karnatik Story* both exploring Carnatik music. His essay, *MS Understood*, for *The Caravan* explored the myths and misconceptions around MS Subbulakshmi, and has been translated into Tamil and published as a book, *Katrinile Karainda Tuyar*. He is the driving force behind the Chennai Kalai Theru Vizha and the Svanubhava initiative. His latest book, *Sebastian and Sons*, traces the history of the mridangam-maker and the mridangam over the past 100 years.



I Have Been a Cook All My Life

Zac O'Yeah

I have been a cook all my life. I began experimenting with my diet in my student days," said Gandhi as he lectured residents at the Sevagram ashram in 1935. He'd relocated to the India of villages — a paradigm shift about which he felt strongly: "Now we have embarked on a mission the like of which we had not undertaken before." Then, eventually, he got to the point he wished to make regarding important village reforms: "Let us not, like most of them, cook anyhow, eat anyhow, live anyhow. Let us show them the ideal diet." He proposed that they completely do away with spices and instead eat natural raw food, such as salad, at least once a day while teaching the villagers to do the same because, as he pointed out, boiling vegetables killed their vitamins.

It's interesting that Gandhi talked about vitamins. Their role in preventing illness and building health had been proposed by a Polish chemist only in the 1910s and it took a while longer for vitamin researchers to win Nobel prizes. Already in the 1920s, Gandhi wrote, "Vitamin means the vital essence. Chemists cannot detect it by analysis. But health experts have been able to feel its absence." Yet I can't imagine that everybody was jolly as they listened to Gandhi preaching that day. No masala in the curry? Uncooked food? I virtually see jaws dropping and eyes popping.

This reminds me of how, about 20 years ago, on a train from Delhi to Kanyakumari, I broke journey midway. I had heard that Gandhi founded his ashram at Sevagram for the precise reason that it was located geographically in the centre of India, and so it seemed appropriate to take a break there. The railway station was empty and I was the sole passenger alighting. The only things moving in the quiet heat were dry leaves rustling before a feeble

breeze. Outside, stood a lone cycle rickshaw. No hotel in sight. It was of course an even more unassuming village in the 1930s when Gandhi moved in and he was particular about not making it any more assuming than it was, instructing his helpers — who were building his hut — that "as little expense as possible should be incurred".

The rickshaw-puller took me to the ashram where he directed me to go inside. I thought I'd have a look at the adjacent museum, then carry on to the nearest town, Nagpur, to spend the night, but before I could do so an elderly ashramite spotted me carrying my luggage, told me to follow and we walked past a pipal tree planted by 'Bapu' as per a small sign and Gandhi's simple hut made of eco-friendly materials like clay. Next to it stood the guesthouse where political leaders used to stay when they came to consult with him, and I was shown a spacious room where I could stay for as long as I liked. The cot was of 1930s vintage, there were no mod-cons. But the rent was extremely cheap. I was instructed to make myself comfortable and then join the others for supper.

Despite his asceticism and frequent fasting, Gandhi was by no means against food: he was merely keen on making the most of a precious resource. For example, later in that first year in Sevagram — 1935 — he advocated the daily consumption of soy beans which are more nutritious than meat and has marvellous health benefits, as he pointed out in a series of articles in his journal *Harijan*, describing it as what today would be called a "superfood". He introduced novelties to the area such as sugarcane and papaya cultivation, and bee-keeping, which suggests that sweet teeth weren't frowned upon. Under his leadership, the ashram also produced its own marmalades from seasonal fruits, peanut butter, and bread, which was made from home-ground coarse unsifted wheat in order to keep it fibre-rich. Generally, the fare seems to have been akin to what we'd today encounter in the finest amongst urban India's new-fangled organic stores.

After a bath, I headed for the dining hut — the sun hung low on the horizon and meals were strictly timed

(dinner at 5.30pm as I recall). Food was had together, as Gandhi kept an eye on how much everyone ate — it was his belief that most don't know what's healthy for them and so overeat themselves sick, or as he had written in a series of articles on health in 1913: "All will agree that out of every 100,000 persons 99,999 eat merely to please their palate, even if they fall ill in consequence. Some take a laxative every day in order to be able to eat well, or some powder to aid digestion.... Some die of thoughtless overeating." He pointed out that "we have turned our stomach into a commode and that we carry this commode with us wherever we go."

Therefore, it's not surprising that I wasn't asked for any preferences, but simply served chapattis, a boiled vegetable hotchpotch featuring home-grown beetroots and a modest salad. The only spice I tasted was salt. Basic but edible — and it reflected the Gandhian ideals of eating food as if it were a medicine "to keep the body going." Thanks to the light and early meal I slept well, except for the occasional mosquitoes that buzzed by and whom I didn't dare to swat so as not to break any non-violence regulations. Anyway, the wake-up call was at 4am for prayers, just as when Gandhi was around, so going early to bed turned out to be a sensible strategy. Afterwards, I was told to spend my morning weeding a patch of grass behind the latrines. Following a simple 6am breakfast, there was mandatory spinning for two hours — a calming exercise akin to meditation.

Today, as we're used to health supplements in newspapers, we may note that in this field Gandhi was a pioneer, devoting much space in the journals he published to health advice. Gandhian nutritional principles, were I to attempt to sum them up after reading through all his writings on food, are based on the notion that everybody must know how to cook for themselves or even better not cook at all but eat everything raw — which in turn calls for simplicity and the avoidance of complex culinary methodology. Secondly, by eating wholesome food, one eliminates the need for going to doctors and pill-popping.

Over the years, Gandhi developed a diet, which according to him, would be the best for mankind. Free from external beauty perhaps, compared to the cuteness of pre-plated nouvelle cuisine, unadorned by sumptuous

seasonings and maximised masalas, it was the most functional eating strategy imaginable. The ideal, he calculated, was to cut down the number of ingredients — one itemised sample menu from 1935 for village workers contained the following: wheat flour (baked into chapattis), tomatoes, gourd, soy beans, coconuts, linseed oil, milk, tamarind and salt, and some jaggery and wood apple combined into a "delicious chutney".

He pointed out: "Dieticians are of opinion that the inclusion of a small quantity of raw vegetables like cucumber, vegetable marrow, pumpkin, gourd, etc., in one's menu is more beneficial to health than the eating of large quantities of the same cooked. But the digestions of most people are very often so impaired through a surfeit of cooked fare that one should not be surprised if at first they fail to do justice to raw greens, though I can say from personal experience that no harmful effect need follow if a tola or two of raw greens are taken with each meal provided one masticates them thoroughly."

For any gourmand this may sound off-putting, but culinary experts will agree on the point that a certain frugality might actually heighten the basic flavours. In fact, what Gandhi advocated would nowadays — when most of us are BP-afflicted diabetics — be considered a preferable fare.

But above all, the way he explored the relationship between eating and health in an age when the concept of "health food" was unknown to most, unlike today when we know that food habits can kill or cure, gave me plenty of — what else — food for thought.

Zac O'Yeah is a global writer living in India. His authorial career has included acclaimed travelogues, cult novels and also a biography of Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Mahatma!*. Most recently, he has published the *Majestic Trilogy*, a series of novels set in his hometown, Bengaluru. Over the years, he has written for nearly 100 newspapers and magazines in Sweden, India, China, Russia, France, Germany and other countries. He has published the travelogue, *A Walk Through Barygaza*, the novel, *Tropical Detective*, and the children's book, *The Mystery of the Cyber Friend*. This year, he has focused on writing music for Swedish pop orchestra The Ändå and one of his stories was selected for inclusion in the anthology, *The Best Asian Travel Writing*

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Influence of Gandhi on Me

Sundar Sarukkai

The first conscious influence of Gandhi's thought in my life was about non-violence, when I was studying in school. Although I do not remember the exact circumstances leading to this influence, I remember that at a particular point in my life I started looking at life forms around me very differently. I became more aware that all creatures, including ants, mosquitoes and other insects inside the house, had a right to their life. I somehow associated this way of looking at other life forms as a Gandhian idea. The other Gandhian ideas that deeply influenced me — this through elders in the house — were the notions of being truthful and honest. I remember distinctly that these qualities were transmitted to me not through religion or moral lessons but as Gandhian practices. Gandhi came to life in the many examples of his life that we used to hear about. All three of these qualities came to reside deeply within me and stay with me even now.

Another value that I learnt through Gandhi was dignity of labour and dignity of all work. It became reinforced when I went abroad for my doctoral studies. It was also during this time that I became more aware of the need to speak up and protest where necessary. While doing my PhD in a university in the US, a few of us started a group against racism and apartheid. We became quite active on the campus and organised different forms of protest. My greatest strength for doing this (especially as a foreign student) came from Gandhi's stories of his early life. Members of our group also looked up to Dr Martin Luther King, whose ideas of civil disobedience and non-violent protest were also influenced by Gandhi. That brought me closer to more seriously reading Gandhi.

When I started my career back in India, I had to realise that protest was not as simple as before since I was now a faculty member. But I also realised that I could not keep quiet if there were perceived injustices in the system and Gandhi was again important to help me recognise that I

had a duty to raise my concerns. In this case, I also learnt an important lesson again from Gandhi about this form of protest: protest was directed at problems in the system and never against individuals. And as a general rule, what I fought for were systemic changes and not for changes which would directly benefit me. In coming to this position, I was deeply influenced by stories of Gandhi's actions which sometimes went against the interests of his immediate family. It was also during this time that I had an opportunity to visit various Gandhian organisations as well as meet people who had been inspired by Gandhi to start various social initiatives. My interest in public engagement, outside my professional work, arose largely in part from seeing many dedicated Gandhians at work.

Finally, Gandhi was also an important presence when I occupied positions of power. One of the most important lessons that influenced my everyday actions from positions of power was that of trusteeship. Gandhi's formulation of trusteeship helped me recognise my position of power in the position of a trustee — to do my work on behalf of larger public interest and not my personal interest, or based on personal ego and ambition. This attitude imbibed in me a capacity to decouple my prejudices and self-interests from the conduct of my job. The nature of this engagement with trusteeship is such that it leads to viewing all work as important and all workers to be treated equally with respect.

Like Gandhi and mostly influenced by him, I see one constant quality in all these phases of my life: my attempts to understand the self/ego. Gandhi's experiments with truth became my experiments with self — self not just as an individual but as a social being.

Sundar Sarukkai is the founder of the Barefoot Philosophers initiative. He is the author of *Translating the World: Science and Language*, *Philosophy of Symmetry*, *Indian Philosophy and Philosophy of Science*, *What is Science?* and two books co-authored with Gopal Guru — *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*, and more recently, *Experience, Caste and the Everyday Social*. His book, *JRD Tata and the Ethics of Philanthropy*, was published in July 2020. He is the co-chief editor of the Springer Handbook of *Logical Thought in India*, the series editor for the *Science and Technology Studies Series*, Routledge, and editorial advisory member of *Leonardo* as well as *Marg*. Sarukkai was a professor of philosophy at the National Institute of Advanced Studies till 2019 and was the Founder-Director of the Manipal Centre for Philosophy and Humanities.



The Coastal Charms of Quilon

Named after Quilon, a small city on the Malabar Coast of India that is now called Kollam, The Quilon Restaurant in London is a place of tastefully understated interiors and peaceful ambience. This landmark restaurant is situated at Buckingham Gate, a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace and The Houses of Parliament. The building where Quilon is housed used to serve as a residence for guests of Buckingham Palace and retains the royal touch.

Quilon opened in 1999 and quickly established South-west coastal Indian cuisine on the international food-lovers map, winning a Michelin star in 2008, which they have retained ever since. Executive Chef Sriram Aylur is passionate about the philosophy behind Quilon — a love for modern southern Indian coastal cuisine, a dedication to the freshest ingredients, and a playful desire to blend traditional home-cooking with modern dishes for a thrilling and unique dining experience.

Quilon imports more fresh Indian spices than any other Indian restaurant in Britain and Aylur grinds and mixes them carefully to create special recipes. His goal of creating contemporary South Indian fare, without compromising the soul of the cuisine, has been achieved through a genuine love of food and a real understanding of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the region.

At Quilon, modern healthy dishes are created with flair, style and a deep respect for authenticity. Seafood is, of course, central to the menu, with specialities including Seafood Moilee (cubes of halibut, grouper, tiger prawns and potato gently poached in a moilee sauce), Lobster with Kokum and Mango and Whole Sea-Bass with Goan Green and Red Masala.



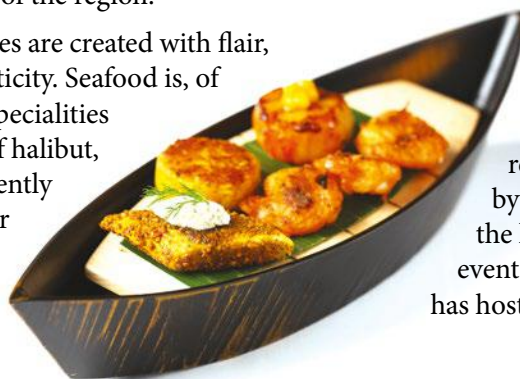
Chef Sriram Aylur



More traditional fare, such as Chicken Roast and Malabar Lamb Biryani, sit happily alongside the chef's more progressive dishes, such as Pan Fried Duck Breast and Venison Coconut Fry, illustrating Aylur's dedication to modern Indian cuisine with a contemporary twist.

The sumptuous food is accompanied by a world-class wine and beer list put together by Aylur himself. He has handpicked a variety of beverages that complement the contrasting flavours and subtle textures featured on the menu at Quilon. Twelve years of faithful patronage prove that Quilon is one of those rare things — a restaurant that suits all tastes, moods and occasions with unequivocal success and distinction.

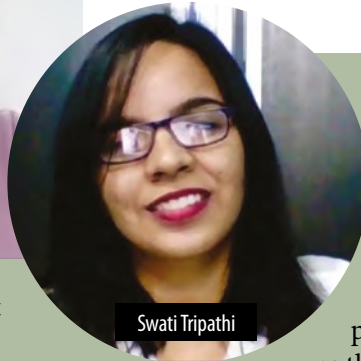
Besides its Michelin star, the restaurant has also won the "Five Star Award" from the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences and has been recognised as the Best Indian Restaurant by *Good Curry Guide*. Quilon has been the hospitality partner for **Kalam** London events and the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** has hosted many eminent personalities there.



The Three Ps of Success



Sonia Golani



Swati Tripathi

In the pursuit of success, people often forget to prepare themselves for what comes after. Fame and money can overwhelm one's instincts and catalyse a fall that is as fast as the rise. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** invited Sonia Golani to provide some guidance in such matters, at the Raipur session of **The Write Circle**. Golani is the founder of Management Consultants Group, an executive committee member of FICCI FLO Mumbai, and a committee member of the Nehru Science Centre. She has also authored four best-sellers, including *Corporate Divas*, which is about 18 women leaders, half of whom hail from a business families and the rest have risen through the ranks in the corporate world.

The event began with a welcome note from Aanchal Garcha, **Ehsaas** Woman of Raipur, who familiarised everyone with the Foundation's literary endeavours. Swati Tripathi moderated the conversation.

Considering the prevalent circumstances, Tripathi started off asking about Golani's thoughts on the pandemic and its consequences. Golani put a positive spin on the question and expressed her conviction that the pandemic would act as a leveller. Stuck within the four walls of our homes, we were persuaded to connect with people through the languages of pain, music, and so on, languages that transgress national boundaries. She believes the experiences of the pandemic will convince people that the path to creating meaningful work is collaborating with talent, irrespective of its socioeconomic origins.

Tripathi then asked Golani about her second book, *Decoding Bollywood: Stories of 15 Film Directors*, which follows the lives of a few prominent directors. Summing up some of the takeaways from the book, Golani shared her three Ps of success — passion, perseverance, and people skills. She believes that youngsters must develop a thick skin if they want to enter the world of glamour, because one day, one may be "pedestalised" for their

successes, but the very next day, they can be punished for their failures. She also stressed on the significance of financial as well as intellectual prudence to sustain oneself — influencers should be correct, not politically correct! Her final piece of advice was against impulsivity, for as the saying goes, good things come to those who wait.

Garcha brought the session to a close, thanking Golani for an enriching conversation.



Millenials are far evolved, they are a generation that is growth-oriented and environmentally conscious. That was the highlight of **The Write Circle**, Raipur, for me.

— Harkaran Singh

It's not often one gets to have such an up close and detailed interaction with a writer of such repute. It was an intellectually stimulating hour. Thank you, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**.



— Kirti Kirdatt

An engaging virtual session with author Seema Golani by **The Write Circle**, Raipur! Life lessons and wisdom were shared with the eager audience. It was a delight to hear her and to organise this virtual session for our beloved city.

— Shrishti Trivedi



Anisha Kalash



Nishi Agrawal



Aanchal Garcha

The Write Circle Raipur is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Hyatt Raipur and Ehsaas Women of Raipur

नया भारत हमारी बेटियां ही बनाएंगी: चित्रा मुद्गल

कलम भुवनेश्वर के वर्चुअल सत्र में अहसास वूमेन की निधि गर्ग ने लेखिका चित्रा मुद्गल का स्वागत किया। अतिथि लेखिका मुद्गल को जनता की लेखिका बताते हुए उन्होंने उनकी उपलब्धियों और पुस्तकों की चर्चा की। जिनमें साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित उनके उपन्यास *पोस्ट बॉक्स न. 203*, *नालासोपारा* और व्यास सम्मान से नवाजे गए दत्ता सामंत के श्रमिक आंदोलन की पृष्ठभूमि और मजदूरों की जिंदगी पर आधारित उपन्यास *आंवा* का खास जिक्र किया। गर्ग ने मुद्गल की लंबी लेखकीय यात्रा में मिले सम्मानों का जिक्र करते हुए अहसास वूमेन की वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी को आगे के संवाद के लिए बुलाया।

रामालक्ष्मी ने बातचीत की शुरुआत मुद्गल के बचपन के सामंती परिवेश से की, जहां हाथियों के लिए रोटियां बनती थीं, पर महिलाओं को पिछले दरवाजे से ही निकलने की इजाजत थी। हरिवंशराय बचन की कविता *दूसरों की वेदना में, वेदना जो है दिखाता, वेदना से निज मुक्ति का, हर्ष केवल वह छिपाता* का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने मुद्गल के लेखन में वेदना और विद्रोह के उल्लेख के साथ हाशिए के समाज पर सवाल पूछा। मुद्गल का जवाब था, "यह सच है। जब छोटी थी तो दादी से घूँघट, परदा करने पर सवाल पूछने के चलते डांट पड़ी। शहर से मैं गर्मी की छुट्टियों में गांव आती थी। बाद में पिताजी का ट्रांसफर हो गया तो चार साल के लिए पूरा परिवार गांव आ गया। उस समय स्कूल में दूसरी लड़कियां साड़ी पहनकर आती थीं। जबकि मैं फ्राक पहनकर आती थी। कोई छोड़ने साथ स्कूल आता था। एक तरफ गांव को आप स्वर्ग बताते थे, दूसरी तरफ वहां कोई सहकारिता भाव नहीं था।" बचपन की एक घटना को याद करते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि कैसे उन्हें डोमिन को काकी न कहने पर डांट पड़ी थी, और वहां का तमाशा, सामंती सोच और दोहरापन देखकर वह दंग रह गई और कक्षा सात-ब में उन्होंने *डोमिन काकी* कहानी लिखी।

आंवा से जुड़े सवाल पर मुद्गल ने कहा, "आंवा एक बिंब है। आजादी के बाद हम अपनी सत्ता के निर्णायक बने थे, स्वायत्ता हासिल की थी। संविधान, समाज, विकास, न्याय, कानून का पूरा का पूरा आंवा खराब हो गया है। देश भ्रष्टाचार में आज भी लिप्त है। नौकरशाही वैसी की वैसी ही है।" मुद्गल ने "मां की कोख कुम्हार का आंवा" और "आंवा का आंवा ही खराब है" जैसी कहावतों का जिक्र करते हुए कहा, "आंवा वस्तुस्थिति को खोलता है।" महानगरों में तरक्की के पैमानों का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने कहा, "एक तरफ तो हैदराबाद और मुंबई जैसे महानगरों में विकास की कोई सीमा नहीं। दूसरी तरफ ऐसी स्थितियां हैं, जहां दलदल में झोपड़पट्टी हैं। मुझे प्रेमचंद का होरी, गांव की डोमिन काकी का बेटा वहीं मिलते हैं।" मुद्गल ने आजादी आंदोलन को याद करते हुए कहा, "हम गुलामी से मुक्ति चाहते थे। अंग्रेज, पुर्तगाल से मुक्ति चाहते थे। नादिर शाह, चंगेज खां लूटकर चले गये थे। मुगल यहीं रह गए। पर आजादी के बाद हमारी स्थिति पहले से भी बदतर हो गई। हमारी अपनी न्यायपालिका, विधायिका के बावजूद, जन-मजदूरों के लिए कोई बदलाव नहीं हुआ। गांव में अन्याय के डर से भागे मजदूरों के लिए महानगरों में सत्तर साल में भी स्थिति जस की तस रही। विकास के दावे थोथे हैं। आजादी के बाद का आंवा इतना टूटा फूटा क्यों निकला?" फकीरमोहन सेनापति, रमाकांत रथ, सीताकांत महापात्र, गायत्रीबाला पंडा आदि का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने *आंवा* को दत्ता सामंत से जुड़ने, देश की, समाज की कहानी बताया।

पुराणकाल का किन्नर, वृहन्नला आज हिजड़ा, ट्रांस जेंडर कहा जा रहा, हृदय का कौन सा तार था, जिससे *पोस्ट बॉक्स न. 203*, *नालासोपारा* लिखा गया?



Chitra Mudgal



के जवाब में मुद्गल ने कहा, "मेरी इच्छा है कि यह पुस्तक पाठ्यक्रम में लगे। यह किताब धर्म, राजनीति, समाज और मनुष्य, इन चार पर आधारित है। यह अपनी संतान को नहीं अपनाने की कहानी है। मैं खुद भी इन लोगों से घृणा करती थी। मुंबई लोकल में कभी उन्हें देखकर मुंह फेर लेती थी कि ये फिर ताली बजाएंगे, मांगेंगे, छुएंगे। वह भी तब जब कि मैं ऐसी सोशल वर्कर थी। मृणालताई गोरे जो पानी वाली ताई के नाम से जानी जाती थीं के साथ जुड़कर काम कर रही थी। जब दिल्ली में जनसंख्या आंकलन के समय मेल, फीमेल के साथ जीरो अदर्स जोड़ने की बात आयी तो मैं चौंकी। एक तरफ विकलांगता को आप स्वीकार सकते हैं, पर यौन विकलांगता स्वीकार नहीं करते, क्योंकि धर्म इनके खिलाफ है। फिर एक दिन दिल्ली से मुंबई की यात्रा में मैं ट्रेन में उस पात्र से मिली और उस रात जो कहानी सुनी उसे मैं भूल नहीं सकी। यह पुस्तक उसी नरोत्तम को मैंने समर्पित किया है। इसका मकसद समाज को जागरूक करना है।"

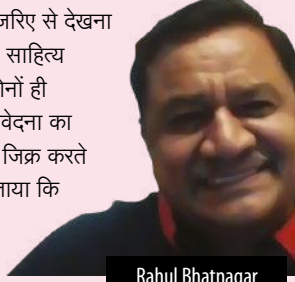
श्रोताओं में शामिल पिकी सिंह के सवाल के जवाब में मुद्गल ने कहा, "लेखन के लिए पढ़ना जरूरी है। पहले लेखकों को पढ़िए फिर अपने गली मोहल्ले के अंधेरो को पढ़िए। यह जानिए कि कहां अन्याय हुआ है। पात्रों के परिवेश के दबाव को समझने के लिए एक मनोवैज्ञानिक बनना जरूरी है।" हिरण्यमयी मिश्रा के सवाल पर भी मुद्गल ने कहा, "आदिवासियों के लिए बदलाव जरूरी है। हम आदिवासियों की बात करते समय कहते हैं, जल, जंगल, जमीन सत्ता ने छीन लिया है। पर क्या आप नहीं चाहते कि ये पढ़ लिखकर कुछ करें, अफसर बनें।" उन्होंने कहा, "आज मां की हिम्मत से बेटी को ताकत मिल रही है। लड़कियों के चलते बदलाव आया है। नया भारत हमारी बेटियां ही बनाएंगी। आज स्त्री बदलाव ला रही है।" निर्भया कांड में उसकी मां की लड़ाई को मुद्गल ने हर स्त्री की जीत बताया।

कलम भुवनेश्वर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। होटल & रिसॉर्ट्स मेफेयर और अहसास वूमेन भुवनेश्वर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की

पाँपुलर लिटरेचर और गंभीर साहित्य में फर्क है: प्रत्यक्षा



अहसास वूमन की कनिका अग्रवाल ने अतिथि लेखिका प्रत्यक्षा का स्वागत करते हुए कहा कि साहित्य हमें चीजों को नजर से नहीं नजरिए से देखना सिखाता है। साहित्य हमें दिमाग से नहीं दिल से जीना सिखाता है, साहित्य जीवन को जीने की कला सिखाता है। प्रत्यक्षा हिंदी और अंग्रेजी दोनों ही भाषाओं में लिखती हैं। उनके लेखन में मानव संबंधों की बारीक संवेदना का जिक्र करते हुए उन्होंने उनकी प्रकाशित पुस्तकों और सम्मान का जिक्र करते हुए संवादकर्ता राहुल भटनागर को आमंत्रित किया। अग्रवाल ने बताया कि भटनागर एक प्रतिबद्ध आईएफएस ऑफिसर हैं, जिन्हें प्रकृति और साहित्य से लगाव है।



Rahul Bhatnagar



Pratyaksha

भटनागर ने प्रशासकीय कार्य के बीच प्रत्यक्षा के साहित्यिक और सांस्कृतिक लगाव की चर्चा की और पहला सवाल किया कि वह कौन सा क्षण होता है, जिसमें आप उन्मुक्त व प्रसन्न होती हैं, और अपने लेखन में उसे कैसे बुनती हैं? प्रत्यक्षा का जवाब था, "कोरोना ने हमें डिजिटल माध्यम तक सीमित कर दिया है। मैं मॉर्निंग पर्सन हूँ। सुबह जब मैं जगती हूँ, तो सोचती हूँ, इस पूरे दिन में कुछ भी कर सकती हूँ। सुबह का वक्त बहुत उर्जा देने वाला होता है। जो भी मैं देखती हूँ, उसे बहुत ईमानदारी से मैं दर्ज करती हूँ। इसीलिए मेरी लेखनी में विवरण ज्यादा होते हैं। मैं बनावटीपन और झूठ से मैं बचना चाहती हूँ।" इस दौरान उन्होंने कुछ दिनों पहले लिखी गई अपनी *मामूली कविताएं* श्रृंखला की चर्चा भी की और कहा, "मामूली चीजों की खुशी क्या होती है, यह उसे महसूस करके ही जाना जा सकता है। लिखने की प्रक्रिया भी अपने भीतर और बाहर देख कर महसूस करके व्यक्त की जाने वाली चीज है। समय को दर्ज करना एक लेखक की सबसे बड़ी जिम्मेदारी। पर हमें उसके आचार-विचार को भी ध्यान में रखना चाहिए। हर लेखक अपनी कहानियों में खुद भी आता है। किसी किरदार को लिखना उसके समय में जाना है। यह एक युटोपिया है।"

अपने उपन्यास *बारिशगर* की चर्चा करते हुए प्रत्यक्षा ने बताया, "मैं अपने चरित्रों को देख पाती हूँ। वे आपके आसपास के ही होते हैं। कई बार लेखन शुरू करते हुए आपका दोस्त आपका दुश्मन हो जाता है। चरित्रों का जीवन भी ऐसा ही होता था।" लेखन की प्रेरणा किससे मिली के सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा, "मेरी मां लिखती थीं। मेरी मौसी भी लिखती थी। उन्हीं से मुझे क्रिएटिव आर्ट और आर्टिस्ट के प्रति सम्मान था। मेरे पिता हम लोगों के लिए खिलौने नहीं बल्कि किताबें लेकर आते थे। मेरी मां चाहती थीं कि मैं लिखूँ, हालांकि मैंने काफी विरोध से लिखना शुरू किया। मेरा पहला लेखन पूर्णिमा वर्मा की *अभिव्यक्ति* के लिए था। वह एक रोमांटिक कहानी थी। पर उसके बाद फिर एक रुकावट आ गई। बाद में *वागर्थ* और *हंस* में जब कहानी भेजी और दोनों जगहों पर स्वीकृत हो गई, तो मेरी लेखन यात्रा शुरू हो गई। मेरी पहली किरदार एक चुप सी लड़की की प्रेम कहानी थी।"

प्रत्यक्षा ने किस्सागोई और हंस कथा सम्मान से जुड़ी कहानी की भी चर्चा की जो कॉरपोरेट जगत से जुड़े भ्रष्टाचार पर थी। उन्होंने अपने लेखन में अपने बचपन और शहर रांची को शामिल करने की बात स्वीकारी। डिजिटल दौर की तारीफ करते हुए उन्होंने कहा, "इसने सभी को समान रूप से मौके उपलब्ध कराए हैं। अब संपादक की जरूरत नहीं है। गंभीर साहित्य में इसी के बीच से लोग आएंगे। पाठकों को यह समझना होगा कि पाँपुलर लिटरेचर और गंभीर साहित्य में एक फर्क है। आप एक त्वरित फेम चाहते हैं या अपनी सृजनात्मक बेचैनी को आकार दे रहे हैं।" *जंगल का जादू तिल तिल और दिलनवाज तुम बहुत अच्छी हो* जैसी रचनाओं को प्रकृति, पर्यावरण, आदिवासी और विस्थापन पर लिखा हुआ बताते हुए प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा, "अगर पर्यावरण को नहीं बचाएंगे तो यह दुनिया, पृथ्वी खत्म हो जाएगी। कोरोना में नीला आसमान दिखना तो शुरू हो गया, पर हमें इसके लिए जागरूक होना चाहिए।" अपने से जुड़े एक सवाल पर

उन्होंने कहा, "मेरे व्यक्तित्व का सबसे बड़ा गुण स्थितियों को स्वीकारना और उनके साथ तालमेल बिठाना है। मुझे पिता से जो संस्कार मिले हैं, उसमें परोपकार का भाव और सही व गलत की समझ है। मेरा सबसे बड़ा दुर्गुण है कि मैं बहुत शांत नहीं रहती।"

सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में रुचिका मित्राल ने पूछा कि बच्चे हिंदी से कैसे जुड़े? प्रत्यक्षा का कहना था कि विजुअल मीडियम के चलते यह दिक्कत है। मातृभाषा को पढ़ने की बच्चों में कोई रुचि नहीं है। नेट का यह डिस्ट्रैक्शन है। स्कूल के स्तर पर किताबें व संवाद अनिवार्य करना होगा। हमें भी खिचड़ी भाषा बोलने से बचना होगा। शार्दूला के सवाल के जवाब में प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा, "पाँपुलर सब्जेक्ट उठाने का मुझ पर कोई दबाव नहीं है। अब छपने का भी लालच नहीं है। पहले था, पर अब लेखन को लेकर मैं निर्वाण वाली स्थिति में आ गई हूँ।" एक सवाल के जवाब में उन्होंने कहा, "स्त्रीवादी होने का कोई अर्थ नहीं है। जीवन का दृष्टिकोण ही ऐसा होना चाहिए। पहले के लोगों को आज के संदर्भ में जज करना बेकार है। उस दौर के लोग अपने समय से आगे थे। आज हम खड़े होकर उनके बारे में नहीं कह सकते।"

प्रत्यक्षा ने विनीत, कौशिक चटर्जी और रिद्धिमा दोषी के सवालों के भी विस्तार से जवाब दिए। उन्होंने अपनी कहानी 'बारिश के देवता' का जिक्र करते हुए कहा कि ऑफिसियल फाइल व कहानी में अंतर होता है। इसी तरह अपने पसंदीदा चरित्र से जुड़े सवाल पर, उन्होंने रांची की पृष्ठभूमि में लिखी कहानी 'शाहरुख शाहरुख कैसे हो शाहरुख' में राफेल टिक्का के चरित्र का जिक्र किया। प्रत्यक्षा ने किसी दूसरे लेखक के पसंदीदा चरित्र पर कुर्रतुल ऐन हैदर, रेणु, राही मासूम रजा, निर्मल वर्मा के पात्रों का जिक्र किया।

वेबसीरीज के लेखन में विविधता की भी प्रत्यक्षा ने तारीफ की। उन्होंने लॉकडाउन से संबंधित अनुभवों की भी विस्तार से चर्चा की और बताया कि मैंने अपने मनोभावों को लिखना शुरू किया है। कुछ चीजें मेरे कंप्यूटर में हैं। मजदूर, उनका विस्थापन, जिनकी नौकरियां खत्म हो गई, जिनका जीवन खत्म हो गया, उनके लिए हम क्या कर सकते हैं? यह एक गंभीर प्रश्न है। **अहसास** वूमन स्वाति अग्रवाल ने काव्यमय अंदाज में सभी का धन्यवाद ज्ञापित किया।

कलम उदयपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। रैडिसन ब्लू उदयपुर पैलेस रिसॉर्ट और स्या और अहसास वूमन उदयपुर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की



Kanika Agarwal

आज की कसौटी पर अतीत को



कसना गलत: प्रत्यक्षा

लेखिका प्रत्यक्षा का कलम पटना & रांची में स्वागत करते हुए अहसास वूमेन की पूनम आनंद ने लेखिका का स्वागत करते हुए बताया कि प्रत्यक्षा हिंदी और अंग्रेजी दोनों ही भाषाओं में लिखती हैं, सोचती हैं, गुनती हैं। पावरग्रिड के वित्त विभाग से जुड़ी हैं। संगीत और लिबरल आर्ट में रुचि रखती हैं; इतिहास और समय के रहस्य में मनुष्य के अस्तित्व का सन्दर्भ खोजती हैं। इनके लेखन में समय और मानव संबंधों की बारीक संवेदना दर्ज है। जंगल का जादू तिल तिल, पहर दोपहर तुमरी, एक दिन मराकेश, तुम मिलो दोबारा, तैमूर तुम्हारा घोड़ा किधर है और बारिशगर जैसी पुस्तकों के साथ ही ब्लॉग और सोशल मीडिया पर भी अपनी भावनाओं को उजागर करती हैं।

रश्मि शर्मा ने संवाद को आगे बढ़ाते हुए पूछा कि सृजन की विधाओं में उन्हें क्या पसंद है? प्रत्यक्षा का जवाब था, "घर व कार्यालय के काम के बीच लिखना और पेंटिंग दोनों ही कर लेती हूँ। पर सबसे ज्यादा आनंद लिखने में आता है। पेंटिंग में करती हूँ, पर मैं लेखन में ही अपने को अभिव्यक्त कर पाती हूँ। लिखने की शुरुआत कहानी से किया और जब ब्लॉग लेखन शुरू हुआ तो कविता लिखने का दौर भी आया। लिखना भी एक रियाज़ जैसा है। जितना आप लिखते जाते हैं उतना ही आप मंजते हुए चले जाते हैं।" अच्छी भाषा से जुड़े सवाल पर उनका कहना था, "भाषा तो एक माध्यम भर है। पर उसके पीछे एक तथ्य भी है। मैं भीतर के भावों, भीतर की दुनिया की जटिलताओं को पकड़ कर अंदर और बाहर की आवाजाही को व्यक्त करती हूँ। मैं मानती हूँ कि पाठक बहुत प्रबुद्ध है, वह उसे समझ लेगा।" आंचलिकता से कथा साहित्य के संबंध पर प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा, "रांची मेरा अपना शहर है। दिल्ली आकर हम सोचने लगते हैं कि हम अलग न दिखें। इस चक्कर में अपनापन छूटने लगता है। जब मैंने लिखना शुरू किया तो जो चीजें मुझसे छूट रही थी, उन शब्दों को मैं पकड़ पाई। दूसरी भाषा के लेखकों के साथ भी यह बात है। स्थानीयता में एक संगीत है।" इस संवाद के दौरान प्रत्यक्षा ने रांची से जुड़ी अपनी कई यादें भी शेयर कीं। उन्होंने कहा बचपन बहुत प्यारा होता है।

आपकी किताबों के नाम इतने अलग क्यों हैं? इस सवाल पर प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा, "किरदारों का नाम मेरे लिए बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है। उन्हें रचते हुए मुझे उनके नाम याद आ जाते हैं।" तैमूर तुम्हारा घोड़ा किधर है की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने कहा, "यात्रा और इतिहास में मुझे बहुत मजा आता है। जब कोई यंत्र नहीं था, तब भी वह यात्रा में निकल जाते थे। दुनिया को देखने और खोजने का उनमें कितना जज़्बा था। यात्राओं में मैं कला, संस्कृति, खान-पान, भाषा पर बहुत ध्यान देती हूँ। उनमें कितनी समानता है, उन्हें जानना मुझे बड़ा मजेदार लगता है। मैं इस बात के लिए आतुर रहती हूँ कि कैसे सारी चीजें जान लूं।" एक सवाल पर प्रत्यक्षा का कहना था, 'फेसबुक ने तमाम तरह की चीजें सामने ला दी हैं। स्टीरियो टाइप बातें हैं। पर मुझे लगता है, अगर आप अपने घर के स्तर पर अपने को सम्मान दिलवा लें, फिर भी समाज बदल सकता है। मेरा मानना है कि स्त्री खेत में, काम पर, घर पर, अपना मान करा पा रही है।" लेखन में स्त्री लेखन, दलित लेखन जैसे विचार पर प्रत्यक्षा का कहना था कि आज के दौर में हालात बदल चुके हैं। अगर आप बाहर निकल जाते हैं और हालातों को हैंडल करना सीख लेते हैं, तो फिर कोई दिक्कत नहीं होती। कार्यालय और लेखन के बीच दिक्कत संबंधी सवाल पर प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा कि मुझे कार्यालय की दुनिया और लेखन को साधने में कोई दिक्कत नहीं होती है।

Rashmi Sharma



Pratyaksha

Meena Sinha



Seema Singh



Poonam Anand

कोरोना काल को साइंस फिक्शन जैसा बताते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि इसने हमारे जीवन की रूटीन को बदल दिया। पहले तो हमें समझ नहीं आया। फिर घर के हालातों से तालमेल में उलझ गए। फिर मजदूरों के विस्थापन ने हिला दिया। मैंने ब्लॉग लिखना शुरू किया। अभी भी हालात बदले नहीं हैं। शायद जीवन में एक पॉज आ गया है। अपनी पुस्तक ग्लोब के बाहर एक लड़की की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने कहा यह एक प्रयोगात्मक किताब है। यह न कविता, न कहानी, न कथा, न डायरी है। यह मन के अरमान हैं।

मंगला रानी के सवाल कि चिंतन पर शहर कितना प्रभाव डालता है? प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा, "इनका बहुत असर होता है। शहर के मिज़ाज में बहुत अंतर होता है। परिवेश और वातावरण का प्रभाव होता है।" प्रमोद कुमार के इस सवाल पर कि आपके लेखन की भाषा क्या है? प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा, "जाहिर है हिंदी।" महिमा श्री ने पूछा बारिशगर में तैमूर लंग को क्रूर की जगह इतना संवेदनशील बताने की सोच कैसे आई? प्रत्यक्षा ने कहा, "हम ऐतिहासिक पात्रों के समय में जाकर उन्हें नहीं देखते। हम आज की कसौटी पर उन्हें कसते हैं।" अन्विता का सवाल था, आप लेखन और नौकरी दोनों कैसे कर लेती हैं? प्रत्यक्षा का जवाब था, "फूल टाइम लिखने से पैसा नहीं मिलता। फिर कई बार सोचती हूँ, शायद व्यक्ति व्यस्त रहने से अच्छा कर लेता है। बहुत खाली रहने से आप बहुत कुछ नहीं कर सकते। अब एक फ़कड़पन जीवन में आ गया है। आप अपने पैशन को अगर एंजॉय नहीं कर सकते, तो लिखने की क्या आवश्यकता है।" अहसास वूमेन की पूनम आनंद व सीमा सिंह की भूमिका उल्लेखनीय है।

कलम पटना के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। नवरस स्कूल ऑफ परफॉर्मिंग आर्ट्स और दैनिक जागरण ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की

कलम रांची के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। दैनिक जागरण और अहसास वूमेन रांची ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की

हिंदी को जीवन की सहजता

का हिस्सा बनना होगा:

गीतांजलि श्री



Geetanjali Shree



Aradhana Pradhan



Shinjini Kulkarni

कलम गुरुग्राम में लेखिका गीतांजलि श्री शामिल हुईं। **अहसास** वूमेन नोएडा से जुड़ीं शिंजिनी कुलकर्णी ने उनका स्वागत किया। अतिथि लेखिका का परिचय देते हुए कुलकर्णी ने कहा कि श्री अपने लेखन में बारीक संवेदना, हास्यभरे अंदाज, अलग भाषाई तेवर, खास शैली और नए प्रयोगों के लिए जानी जाती हैं। उनकी *माई*, *हमारा शहर उस बरस*, *तिरोहित*, *खाली जगह* और *रेत समाधि* नामक उपन्यास और *अनुगूज*, *वैराग्य*, *मार्च माँ* और *साकुरा*, *प्रतिनिधि कहानियाँ* और *यहाँ हाथी रहते थे* नामक कहानी संग्रह प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं। अंग्रेजी सहित विश्व की कई भाषाओं में इनकी रचनाओं का अनुवाद भी हुआ है। इनकी कई पुस्तकें यूरोप और अमरीका के विभिन्न विश्वविद्यालयों में पाठ्यक्रम का हिस्सा हैं। अक्सर अकादमिक और साहित्यिक गोष्ठियों के लिए यात्रा पर रहती हैं और कई राष्ट्रीय, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मान के अलावा फेलोशिप हासिल कर चुकी हैं। रंगमंच के लिए लेखन करने के साथ ही विवादी नामक ग्रुप से भी जुड़ी हैं। आगे की बातचीत के लिए उन्होंने **अहसास** वूमेन आराधना प्रधान को आमंत्रित किया।

प्रधान ने श्री से पहला सवाल उनके अंग्रेजी अध्ययन और ज्ञान के बावजूद भी हिंदी में पुस्तक लेखन को लेकर पूछा। श्री का जवाब था, "यह विचारणीय प्रश्न है कि संभ्रांत होने व पढ़ने लिखने को अंग्रेजी से जोड़ कर देखा जाता है। यह उपनिवेशी समुदाय की दिक्कत है कि हमें मातृभाषा में लिखने के बाद समझाना पड़ता है कि इसमें क्यों लिखा। जबकि यह उलटा होना चाहिए था कि पूछा जाए कि विदेशी भाषा में क्यों लिखा? यह सही है कि मेरी पढ़ाई-लिखाई अंग्रेजी में हुई, पर शिक्षा वही नहीं है, जो स्कूल में मिलती है। मेरे माता-पिता ने अंग्रेजी माध्यम में पढ़ाया, पर मुझे सहजता हिंदी में मिली। हिंदी मेरे भीतर भरी पड़ी है। मेरे किरदार हिंदी के ही थे।" प्रधान ने श्री की हालिया पुस्तक *रेत समाधि* की चर्चा करते हुए उसकी खास लेखक शैली को लेकर पूछा, जिस पर श्री का जवाब था, "हम यह भूल जाते हैं कि किसी भी कला में अपने को अभिव्यक्त करना सिर्फ कथा कहना ही नहीं होता, उसमें एक कहन भी होता है, अपने को बरतना और व्यक्त करना भी होता है। उसकी अपनी एक लय और ध्वनि भी होती है, जिसे नजरअंदाज नहीं किया जाना चाहिए। कलात्मक अभिव्यक्ति चाल, लय ध्वनि खुद चुनती है। जैसे जीवन चलता है, उसी तरह से उपन्यास में एक पूरा संसार व जीवन चल रहा होता है, जो अपने सुर से चल रहा होता है। *रेत समाधि* ने भी अपनी चाल खुद चुनी है।"

लंबी कहानियों से जुड़े सवाल पर श्री ने कहा, "लेखन में जोखिम उठाना पड़ता है। कोशिश करते रहना पड़ता है। यह एक तकलीफ और प्रक्रिया है। पहले से इसकी कोई गारंटी नहीं है।" अपनी एक कृति से जुड़े सवाल के जवाब में श्री ने कहा, "सच तो यह है कि हम कुछ नया करते ही नहीं। व्यक्ति का जो अपना भावना संसार है, उसकी जो नियती है, उसे ही हम नए ढंग से अपने वक्त के हिसाब से व्यक्त करते रहते हैं। मेरे लेखन पर मैंने जिन्हें पढ़ा है, उनका असर तो होना ही था। हम हर पल बदलते हैं। एक

ही जीवन में हम कई स्वरूप लेते हैं। तो अगर हमारे किरदार भी शुरू से आखिर में बदल जाएं, तो अचरज नहीं।"

'जब मैं कलम उठाती हूँ तो चूड़ियां बज जाती हैं,' श्री की इन पंक्तियों के जिक्र के साथ प्रधान ने उनके लेखन में स्त्री के अधिकार और कर्तव्य से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा, जिस पर उनका कहना था, "आजादी हम चाहते हैं, पर हम जिम्मेदारी का अहसास और विवेक भी चाहते हैं। अराजक आजादी कुछ नहीं होती। कट्टरता नहीं होनी चाहिए। मैं अपने लेखन में भी इस बात को ध्यान में रखती हूँ कि सत्य की तलाश व ईमानदारी रहे। इसके लिए मैं जोखिम भी उठाती हूँ।" आजकल हिंदी, उर्दू और अंग्रेजी से जुड़ी इस बहस कि भाषा विशेष के साहित्य में अन्य किसी भाषा के शब्दों समावेश नहीं किया जाना चाहिए, पर श्री का क्या मत है? पर उनका जवाब था, "मैं इस बात से बिलकुल सहमत नहीं हूँ कि साहित्य को भाषाई सरहदों में बांधा जाए। ऐसा करने से साहित्य, साहित्य नहीं रहेगा। किसी भी भाषा में इस तरह की पाबंदियां उसे खत्म कर देंगी। भाषा तो पनपती ही आदान-प्रदान और संवाद से है। दूसरी हवाओं को आने देने से भाषा फलेगी-फूलेगी। हमारी आज की दुनिया में बहुत सी सीमाएं बन गयी हैं, पर सही तो यही है कि केवल अंग्रेजी या उर्दू के शब्द ही नहीं, बल्कि देश की क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं से भी शब्द लेने चाहिए। कई बार अपनी भाषा के शब्द में वह भाव नहीं मिल पाता, जो दूसरी भाषा के शब्द में मिल जाता है। भाषाओं को जोड़ने से बहुत से भाव व्यक्त करने का बेहतर जरिया मिल जाता है। पर मैं यह मानती हूँ कि लोगों के पास समय नहीं है। लोग जल्दबाजी में हैं, लापरवाही भी है। इस तरह की शुद्धता का अर्थ नहीं।"

हिंदी खतरे में है, जैसे सवाल पर श्री ने कहा, "यह सही है कि अंग्रेजी खुल गई है। वह समन्वय की भाषा बन गई है। पर दूसरी भाषाओं के शब्द सहज ढंग से आएँ, जबरदस्ती न डाले जाएँ कि वह व्यर्थ और बोझिल लगने लगे। हिंदी के प्रचार-प्रसार के लिए हिंदी को जीवन की सहज और रोजमर्रा के जीने का हिस्सा बनना होगा। हमें अपनी भाषाओं को केवल सब्जी-भाजी खरीदने की भाषा बनने से बचाना होगा। आखिर अंग्रेजी वाले लोग भी हिंदी में फिल्में बना रहे हैं। रंगमंच पर आ रहे हैं। अंग्रेजी शत्रु नहीं है। हिंदी भी अंग्रेजी की तरह न हो जाए।" श्री ने अपनी पुस्तकों के जर्मन व फ्रेंच अनुवाद पर भी खुल कर चर्चा की। श्री ने इस चर्चा के दौरान रंगमंच से अपने जुड़ाव का भी जिक्र किया और उसे रिलीफ वाला काम बताया। श्री ने अपने लेखन में 'माँ' के बहुतायत जिक्र के साथ उसे मूक माँओं को समर्पित बताया। उन्होंने कहा 'माई' की युनिवर्सल क्वालिटी है। यह किरदार दुनिया भर में सराहा गया। इस अवसर पर उन्होंने कृष्णा सोबती को भी याद किया और अपनी कथा का एक अंश पढ़ कर सुनाया। **अहसास** वूमेन से जुड़ी श्वेता अग्रवाल ने धन्यवाद दिया।

कलम गुरुग्राम के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। दैनिक जागरण और अहसास वूमेन एनसीआर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की

लखनऊ मेरे लिए सुकून की पनाहगाह है: हिमांशु बाजपेयी



Himanshu Bajpai



Sushma Sethia



Preeti Mehta

कलम जोधपुर में अतिथि वक्ता थे लेखक, किस्सागो हिमांशु बाजपेयी। अहसास वूमन की ओर से सुष्मा नीरज सेठिया ने उनका स्वागत किया और परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि बाजपेयी लखनऊ में पैदा हुए और वहीं पले-बढ़े। लखनऊ को अपनी कर्मभूमि बनाकर लखनवी तहजीब, लखनवी अवाग और संस्कृति के तानेबाने बुनते हुए दास्तानगो बन गए। बाजपेयी ने किस्सागोई को नया रूप दे कर कहानी कहने के पुराने अंदाज 'दास्तानगोई' को फिर से जिंदा कर दिया है। सेठिया ने इसके बाद संवादकर्ता फ़ानी जोधपुरी का भी परिचय दिया और बताया कि वह एक मशहूर, शायर और कवि तो हैं ही आकाशवाणी में उद्घोषक भी हैं। आपके कई गज़ल संग्रह प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं।

जोधपुरी ने बाजपेयी से पहला सवाल पूछा, दास्तानगोई क्या है? जवाब मिला, "यह भारीभरकम शब्द जरूर है, पर अगर हम कहें कि यह कहानी सुनाना है, तो सभी लोग इससे वाकिफ होंगे। यह कहानी सुनाने का ही फ़न है, पर इसके कुछ वसूल हैं, रवायत है, आदाब है, कुछ नियम है, शास्त्रीयता है। उर्दू में कहानी सुनाने की एक परंपरा है। दास्तान यानी कहानी, गोई मतलब कहना।" दास्तानगोई कहाँ पैदा हुई और भारत में कैसे आई? के सवाल पर बाजपेयी ने कहा, "माना जाता है यह ईरान में पैदा हुई और वहाँ से भारत आई। खासतौर से खुसरो ने चार दरवेश, बागो बहार सुनाया। हज़रत निजामुद्दीन औलिया साहब जब बीमार हुए तो खुसरो ने यह कहानी सुनाई।" इसके बाद बाजपेयी ने मुगल दरबार और लखनऊ में दास्तानगोई के पहुंचने, मीर अमन देहलवी ने किस्सा चार दरवेश का अनुवाद, अकबर के दास्तानगोई से प्रेम और नवलकिशोर प्रेस की भूमिका की भी विस्तार से चर्चा की। दास्तानगोई की विशेषता से जुड़े सवाल पर बाजपेयी ने बताया, "रिवायती दास्तानगोई के चार बुनियादी अवयव होते हैं। एक रज्म, बज़्म, तिलिस्म, ऐयार... दास्तानगोई का खास अंग है माहौल, इसकी फ़िजा। इसकी शुरुआत साकीनामा से इसलिए होती है कि एक खास तरह का माहौल भी तारी हो।" इसके बाद उन्होंने मुहम्मद हुसैन जाह का 19वीं सदी में लिखा साकीनामा नाजों के उठाने वाले साकी भी सुनाया।

यह पूछे जाने पर कि क्या दास्तानगोई की रिवायत में भी कोई बदलाव हुआ है? बाजपेयी ने कहा, "रिवायती दास्तानगोई 1928 मीर बाकर अली देहलवी की मौत के बाद खत्म हो गई। 2005 में इस फ़न को महमूद फ़ारूकी द्वारा दोबारा जिंदा करने की कोशिश हुई। इसके बाद आधुनिक दास्तानगोई में समकालीन विषय को उठाया जाने लगा, जिसमें नई बातें भी जुड़ीं। भारतीय दास्तानों के साथ ही इसमें नई कहानियों को जोड़ा जा रहा है। इसमें अवधी रंग भी मिलता है।" बाजपेयी ने काकोरी कांड, महात्मा गांधी, आम, कबीर, खुसरो पर अपनी दास्तानगोई की चर्चा की। बाजपेयी ने यह दावा भी किया कि यह विधा साज़ी संस्कृति, प्रातिशाली विचार और क्लासिक लिटरेचर को बढ़ावा देती है। दास्तानगोई में ज़बान की शुद्धता कितनी अहम है? के जवाब में बाजपेयी ने स्पष्ट किया, "यहां ज़बान का ही हुस्न है, इसमें हिंदी और उर्दू विवाद को लाना ठीक

नहीं। दास्तानगोई में शुद्धता का आग्रह वाक्य विन्यास तक ठीक है, पर उच्चारण में इसे लाना ठीक नहीं है।"

दास्तानगोई और किस्सागोई से जुड़े सवाल पर बाजपेयी ने कहा, "इसमें कोई अधिक फर्क नहीं। बस अंतर इतना है कि दास्तानगोई का एक शास्त्र है, यह एक विधा बन गई है। जबकि किस्सागोई में कोई बंधा प्रेम नहीं है।" बाजपेयी के लिए लखनऊ कितना जरूरी है? के जवाब में उन्होंने कहा, "लखनऊ मेरे लिए मां का आंचल सा है। शहर से जब आपका कनेक्शन जुड़ जाता है, तब आप उसे महसूस कर रहे होते हैं। मेरे लिए लखनऊ सुकून की पनाहगाह है, जो अंदर महसूस होती रहती है।" बाजपेयी ने यह माना कि दास्तानगोई में उनके पास जो भी अच्छा है, वह सब अंकित चड्ढा का है और जो सीमा है वह उनकी खुद की है। अंकित उनसे पहले से फुल टाइम दास्तान कर रहे थे और हर चीज में आगे थे। पैसे से जुड़े एक सवाल पर बाजपेयी की प्रतिक्रिया थी, "हर आर्ट फार्म को ग्लैमर चाहिए। हम कलाकारों की अजमत नहीं समझते। उनको अहमियत नहीं देते। अगर कलाकार ही नहीं बचा तो कला भी नहीं बचेगी।"

पुराने जमाने में उनके संरक्षक होते थे। कलाकारों के पास पैसा नहीं होगा तो करेंगे क्या?"

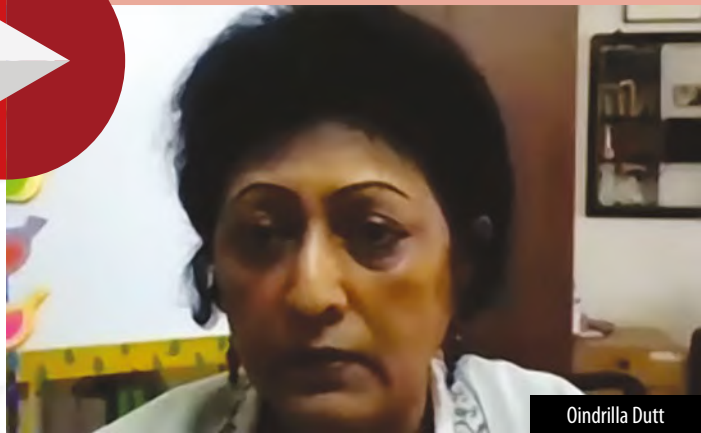
गुटबंदी के सवाल पर बाजपेयी ने कहा कि जहां सामाजिकता होगी वहां गुटबंदी होगी ही। यह इंसान की अपनी दिक्कत है। पारिवारिक सहयोग पर उन्होंने कहा कि असली चीज है आपके अंदर का बल, जो आपको धकेलता है। इस संवाद दौरान बाजपेयी ने माना, "मैं महमूद फ़ारूकी जैसा नहीं। कला और इतिहास की जो समझ फ़ारूकी को है वह अलग है। मुझमें ऐसी गहराई नहीं। दास्तानगोई को लेकर मैंने कोशिश की है सिर्फ। हम अच्छी दास्तान सुना पाएं या नहीं। पर हमें यह सलीका है। गालिब को सुनने और पसंद करने का मतलब यह नहीं कि हम ऐसा कर सकते हैं।" उर्दू-हिंदी के सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा, "भगत सिंह को देश के लिए मुहब्बत दिखानी थी, तो उन्होंने 'इंक्लाब-जिंदाबाद' कहा, पर बंटवारे के बाद उर्दू को पाकिस्तानी करार दिया जाना गलत है। जो ऐसा करते हैं, वह तवारीख से नहीं वाकिफ हैं। हम सब जो हिंदी बोलते हैं, उसमें उर्दू शामिल है। हिंदी-उर्दू में केवल लिपी का फर्क है। आमतौर पर ज़बान एक ही है।" उन्होंने यह स्वीकारा कि वह किताब पर काम करना चाहते हैं। इसी एक सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा, "दास्तानगोई किताब पढ़ना नहीं सिखा सकती। जिस तरह सुनने का विकल्प पढ़ना नहीं हो सकता उस तरह पढ़ने का विकल्प सुनना नहीं हो सकता।" युवाओं से जुड़े सवाल पर बाजपेयी का मत था, "जल्दी उंचाई पाने के चक्कर में युवा भटक जाते हैं। हर इंसान की अपनी यात्रा है। हम अंदर से कितना शांत हैं। हमने खुद को कितना समझा है, आगे की राह इस पर तय होती है।"

कलम जोधपुर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट। ताज हरिमहल और अहसास वूमन जोधपुर ने सहयोगी की भूमिका अदा की



Hindol Sengupta

Sovereignty, Sacrifice and Sardar Patel



Oindrilla Dutt

Looking back through history, one sometimes wonders how things might have turned out if someone had made one different decision. According to historian-journalist and award-winning author Hindol Sengupta, "Kashmir may not have been a part of India had it not been for [Sardar] Patel's decision to send in the Indian Air Force at the right time to Srinagar." Sengupta was in conversation with Oindrilla Dutt at a virtual session of **An Author's Afternoon**.

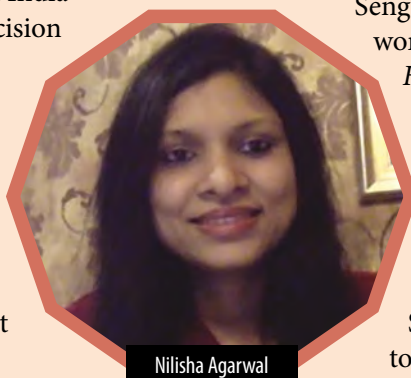
A former journalist, Sengupta is the vice-president and head of research at India's national investment promotion agency, Invest India. He is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and the co-founder of Grin Media, which focuses on telling the civilisational story of India for the world.

The conversation centered around Sengupta's latest book, *The Man Who Saved India: Sardar Patel and his Idea of India*, as well as his views on current political issues. Sengupta said that Sardar Patel was the man who

stitched the country into what it is today and contributed to redefining India's future. He was the man who travelled the length and breadth of India to create a unified country.

Sengupta, who is the only Indian till date to have won the Wilbur Award for his book, *Being Hindu*, in 2017, believes that Sardar Patel was a misunderstood figure in India for a long time. "All historical events or personalities finally are a byproduct of a story that is told about them. If the stories about them are not told the right way, their importance diminishes. In my opinion, one of the problems with Sardar Patel's legacy is that he had neglected to tell his own story after India's Independence, unlike Mahatma Gandhi or Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru," said the author.

Patel believed in creating history and not writing it. So, his version of the story remained untold until some writers took the effort to go through the archives and other materials and write about him. "I feel the geographical sovereignty of India was taken for granted. Reading Sardar Patel really gives us a reality



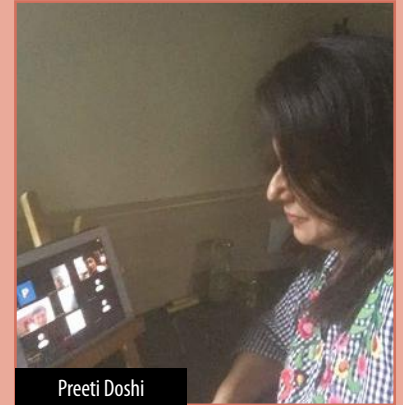
Nilisha Agarwal



Sujata Khan John



Dipali Bhasin



Preeti Doshi

check because we understand how hard-earned this sovereignty really is," said the former senior journalist with stints at the Indian editions of Fortune, CNBC, CNN and Bloomberg TV.

Speaking about the relationships among Patel, Nehru and Gandhi, Sengupta revealed how Patel had once mentioned that Gandhi was like Dronacharya, Nehru like Arjun and he was like Eklavya. Patel's many sacrifices at the "altar of Gandhi's ambition" included the seat of the Prime Minister of India as a sort of "gurudakshina". Illustrating his point, Sengupta explained, "Vulnerabilities in stoic persons like Sardar Patel are not absent but deeply hidden." Patel's vulnerability was Gandhi and Kasturba, because they had become parental figures in his life.

Sengupta said that though we think of Patel and Nehru as simple binaries, they are much more than that. They had known each other for most of their adult lives and were deeply connected to each other. There is no denying that there were conflicts between them, but they were always a part of each other's lives and neither one could have completely erased the other out of their life. Gandhi had realised early on that he wanted the support of the Nehru family, which is why he always had a preference for Nehru over Patel. Patel was more independent-minded and thus more difficult to mould than Nehru.

When asked whether the problems related to Pakistan and China could have been avoided had we taken the advice of Sardar Patel, Sengupta replied, "We have ignored so much from the legacy of Patel regarding the issue of China. I discovered a letter from Patel to Nehru where the latter had said it was not right to close our eyes to Chinese people, suspecting them of being spies." He said that reading those letters in 2020 (when the bilateral relationship between India and China is hostile and volatile) was so eerie.

The discussion moved on to how, if Patel had been

alive, Article 370 would have been abrogated long ago. The special status granted to Kashmir under Article 370 was always supposed to be a temporary reformation for 10 years, yet it was stretched for too long, Sengupta said. Patel was always against the concept of having Article 370. It was the Congress party that drafted and implemented it without consulting him. Patel had always advocated for the rights of minorities, which led to the introduction of the reservation that was needed for them to enjoy their basic fundamental rights.

On the equation between Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Patel and their differences of opinion, the author said that while Patel opposed the non-violence that Gandhi espoused, he was also against the heavy use of violence that Netaji was propagating. The divide between them increased when Netaji was made the President of the Congress, which led to the division in the party. The final rift was caused when Patel's older brother left all his inheritance to Netaji instead of Patel.

Sengupta has devoted a sizeable section of his book on how Patel had merged the princely states with the rest of India. "It shouldn't be forgotten that when a lot of things were happening in the country in the period between 1946 and 1950, Patel was a dying man, but he was crisscrossing the country in very basic aircraft to make this happen. We would not have been able to save Srinagar had it not been for that decision of Sardar Patel to fly in the Air Force," said Sengupta.

The session ended with Nilisha Agarwal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Kolkata, thanking Sengupta and Dutt for the insightful session. Sengupta's concluding remark was that we should not take our sovereignty for granted as we have given up a lot to achieve it.

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

Theatre — A Medium and a Mirror



Kewal Dhaliwal



Nirupama Dutt

The importance of theatre in society took centre stage at a virtual **Aakhar** session in Amritsar with guest speaker Kewal Dhaliwal, a recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Direction in Theatre.

In conversation with translator and poet Nirupama Dutt, Dhaliwal spoke about how theatre works as a commentary on social evils that plague society. Dhaliwal said he believes that theatre is always a medium that "talks" to people, connects with them and holds up a mirror to society. Credited with bringing Punjabi theatre into the national and international spotlight, he has been instrumental in creating a cultural renaissance in Punjab. Dhaliwal spoke about his career and the passion and dedication that he brings to his work, especially his work with children, and how he has taken theatre into the villages of Punjab.

An alumnus of the National School of Drama, specialising in design and direction, he has been associated with the North Zone Cultural Centre, Chandigarh, the Language Department of the Punjab Government, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi in advisory capacities.

Having directed 250 plays and acted in more than 150, he is at present the chairman of Punjab Sangeet Natak Akademi. He has organised theatre workshops to train theatre workers as well as children all over Punjab, and taken his workshops abroad as well, to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Canada, the United States, and Norway.

Theatre is always a medium that "talks" to people, connects with them and holds up a mirror to society.

His theatre group, Manch Rangmanch, has been organising a 10-day all-India theatre festival in Amritsar since 2003.

A prolific playwright, Dhaliwal has published a number of books, including plays for children and adults. His book of plays, Natrang, is part of the M.A. syllabus for Punjabi literature at Jammu University.

Dhaliwal set up Manch Rangmanch in Amritsar after gaining theatre experience in Mumbai and Delhi with stalwarts of theatre like Ratan Thiyam, as well as creative geniuses like Shekhar Kapur.

The hour-long chat ended with a vibrant question-and-answer session with the audience, after which artist, poet and Majha House member Dr Arvinder Singh presented the vote of thanks.



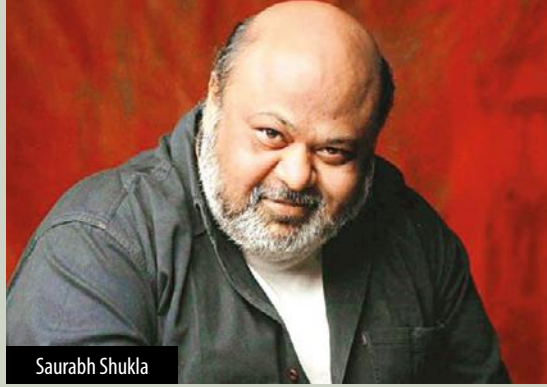
Arvinder Chamak



Jasmeet Nayyar

हिंदी दिवस सौरभ शुक्ला के साथ, हर दिन भाषा-उत्सव मनाता है फाउंडेशन

हिंदी आज भारत में ही नहीं विश्व पटल पर चकमक कर रही है। सिनेमा हो या साहित्य, बाजार हो या कूटनीति हिंदी को हर जगह पहचान मिल रही है। हिंदी सहित समस्त भारतीय भाषाओं को जाज्वल्यमान बनाए रखने में युवाओं, साहित्यसेवियों, कला प्रेमियों, **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** जैसे संगठनों, सरकार व विदेशों में रह रहे हमारे भारतवंशियों की बड़ी भूमिका है। कुछ साल पहले दिल्ली में प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस के दौरान हालैंड से आए भारतीय मूल के युवक नन्हकू ने अपनी टूटी-फूटी डच मिश्रित हिंदी में एक बात कही थी, "यह नया भारत है। यहां के महानगरों की तेज चमचमाती लाइटें, चौड़ी सड़कें और गगनचुंबी इमारतों के बीच अब हम यहां खुलकर हिंदी में अपनी बातें कर पाते हैं। हमें खुशी है कि हमारे बाप-दादाओं की जन्मभूमि में हमारे पुरखों की वह भाषा लहलहा रही है, जिसे कई पीढ़ियों बाद भी सात समंदर पार अब तक हमने बचा रखा है। आजकल हिंदी का मान बढ़ा है।" नन्हकू अठारहवीं सदी में गिरमिटिया मजदूर के रूप में सुरीनाम गए घूरन की पांचवी पीढ़ी के वारिस हैं। सुरीनाम से मारीशस होते हुए 1950 के दशक में उनका परिवार हालैंड पहुंचा, पर परिवार की हर पीढ़ी का विस्थापन उनके दिलों में बस रहे भारत को और भी मजबूत करता रहा। यही वजह है कि स्थानीय वाशियों से शादी-व्याह कर लेने से परिवार की नस्लीय रंगत भले ही काफी कुछ बदल गई हो, पर संस्कृति, परंपरा और बोली में भारत और हिंदी अब भी जिंदा हैं।



Saurabh Shukla

प्रधानमंत्री इन्दिरा गांधी की पहल थी। प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद नरेंद्र मोदी ने भी हिंदी को बढ़ावा देने में काफी योगदान दिया है। अपनी लगभग हर विदेश यात्रा में उन्होंने भारतवंशियों के बीच हिंदी में देश का संदेश पहुंचाने की कोशिश की है। विदेश में बसे भारतवंशियों की नई पेशेवर पीढ़ी, भारत की सियासत और बाजार को बखूबी समझती है और एक खांटी कारोबारी की तरह अपनी तरकी को प्रत्यक्ष या परोक्ष रूप से भारत की सफलता से जोड़कर देखती है। आज विदेश में बसी 312,33,234 भारतीयों की नई पीढ़ी गिरमिटिया मजदूर की छवि से उबर चुकी है।

हिंदी को बचाए रखने में विदेशों में बसे भरतवंशियों की भूमिका को भुलाया नहीं जा सकता। विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन, प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस और हिंदी दिवस जैसे आयोजनों में हर साल शामिल होने वाले विद्वानों की बढ़ती गिनती हिंदी भाषा की मजबूती का परिचायक है। साल 1841 की शुरुआत से आज तक भारतवंशी चाहे जिस भी देश गए, उन्होंने हर दौर में अपनी माटी, बोली, संस्कृति और भाषा को बचाने की कोशिश की। साल 1960 की शुरुआत में जब लंबी दूरी के पसंदीदा आवागमन के साधन के रूप में पानी के जहाज की जगह हवाई जहाज ने ले ली तो दूरियां घट गईं। बाद में संचार के साधनों ने इसमें और सकारात्मक भूमिका अदा की। भारत के सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी क्षमता के केंद्र के रूप में तेजी से उभरने, बढ़ती अर्थव्यवस्था, खेल के मैदान, व्यापार सम्मेलनों, अंतरराष्ट्रीय बैठकों से लेकर अंतरिक्ष की ऊंची उड़ानों और परमाणु शक्ति संपन्न ताकतवर राष्ट्र बनने से भी प्रवासी भारतीयों को अपनी ताकत पर भरोसा जगा, जिसके चलते भी भाषा को मजबूती मिली। विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन हिंदी भाषा के विकास और संवर्धन का सबसे बड़ा अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय मेला भी इसीलिए बना। विश्व भर से हिंदी विद्वान, साहित्यकार, पत्रकार, भाषा विज्ञानी, विषय विशेषज्ञ तथा हिंदी प्रेमी जुटते हैं। हिंदी आज दुनिया भर के विश्वविद्यालयों में पढ़ाई जा रही है।

हमें यह याद रखना चाहिए कि अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर हिंदी के प्रति जागरूकता पैदा करने, समय-समय पर हिंदी की विकास यात्रा का आकलन करने, लेखक व पाठक दोनों के स्तर पर हिंदी साहित्य के प्रति सरोकारों को और दृढ़ करने, जीवन के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में हिंदी के प्रयोग को प्रोत्साहन देने तथा हिंदी के प्रति प्रवासी भारतीयों के भावुकतापूर्ण व महत्वपूर्ण रिश्तों को और अधिक गहराई व मान्यता प्रदान करने के उद्देश्य से 1975 में विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन की शुरुआत की गई। यह तत्कालीन

इन सबके बीच हमें महज दो साल पहले हिंदी दिवस पर राजभाषा विभाग द्वारा आयोजित समारोह में उपराष्ट्रपति एम. वेंकैया नायडु ने माना था कि आजादी के इतने साल बाद भी हम हिंदी को उसके उचित स्थान तक नहीं पहुंचा पाये हैं। आज भी हमारा राजकीय कार्य प्रायः अंग्रेजी में ही होता है। जबकि संविधान सभा ने हिंदी को राजभाषा स्वीकार करते हुए भी अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं की मर्यादा और महत्ता को संविधान की आठवीं अनुसूची में अंगीकार किया था। उपराष्ट्रपति के शब्द थे, "सभी भाषाएं हमारी हैं, हमारे पूर्वजों के ज्ञान की धरोहर हैं। यह प्रश्न भाषाई प्रतिस्पर्धा या वैमनस्य का है ही नहीं।" उन्होंने राजभाषा विभाग से संविधान की धारा 351 में निहित अपेक्षाओं के प्रति सजग रहने को कहा, जिसमें हिंदी और अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं में सौहार्द और सामंजस्य की अपेक्षा की गई है। उन्होंने कहा कि इस धारा की अपेक्षा है, "संघ हिंदी के प्रसार के लिए प्रयत्न करेगा और हिंदी को इस प्रकार विकसित करेगा कि वह देश की मिलीजुली संस्कृति को अभिव्यक्त कर सके। संघ से यह भी अपेक्षा है कि हिंदी को समृद्ध बनाने के लिए संस्कृत, हिन्दुस्तानी और अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं के मध्य सतत संवाद को प्रोत्साहन देगा। जहां तक संभव हो भारतीय भाषाओं के शब्द, मुहावरे, लोकोक्तियों से हिंदी को समृद्ध किया जायेगा।" उपराष्ट्रपति ने राजभाषा विभाग से हिंदी भाषी कर्मचारियों के लिये अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं के छोटे ऑनलाइन कोर्स विकसित करने की सलाह दी।

अच्छी बात यह है कि नई शिक्षा नीति भी मातृभाषा के विकास की उसी सोच को पुष्ट करती है, जिसे पिछले कई वर्षों से **प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन** "अपनी भाषा अपने लोग" की सोच के तहत चलाए जा रहे अभियान के तहत करता आ रहा है और निरंतर कर रहा है। इस वर्ष भी कोरोना के बावजूद फाउंडेशन ने ऑक्सफोर्ड बुक स्टोर के साथ संयुक्त रूप से हिंदी दिवस के अवसर पर अभिनेता तथा लेखक सौरभ शुक्ला के साथ एक कार्यक्रम "एक शाम बर्फ के नाम" आयोजित किया। जिसमें शुक्ला ने कश्मीर के एक सुनसान गांव की एक सर्द रात पर पर लिखी अपनी पुस्तक *बर्फ* पर चर्चा की। इस पुस्तक को लेकर शुक्ला का एक प्रतिनिधि वाक्य बेहद चर्चित है कि बर्फ ठंडी होती है, लेकिन जिंदगी यहां भी तो धड़कती है। खास बात यह कि सौरभ ने पहले इस कहानी का नाट्य-मंचन किया। उनके मुताबिक इस नाटक की कहानी मेरे जेहन में तब आयी थी, जब मैं एक फिल्म की शूटिंग के लिए कश्मीर गया था। मैंने कश्मीर को अपने नजरिये से देखा, महसूस किया। जो कश्मीर इतना सुंदर है, वह सख्ती और डर के माहौल में जी रहा है। उसी वक़्त सौरभ ने सोचा था कि वह इससे जुड़ी एक कहानी लिखेंगे। शुक्ला ने आयोजकों को इस विशेष दिन पर अपनी पुस्तक पर चर्चा कराने के लिए धन्यवाद भी ज्ञापित किया।



Radio, railways and ruminations with Mark Tully

India has a terrible history of going through traumas and then everything goes on as if nothing happened," said veteran journalist Sir William Mark Tully in scathing criticism of today's sensationalist journalism and the constantly falling standards of news channels. In an hour-long *Tête-à-Tea* session, Tully — the face of the BBC in South Asia for three decades — shared his views on the current state of affairs in India. He was in conversation with Lady Mohini Kent Noon, who joined from London to talk to Tully about pressing issues related to journalism, media trials, Indian police, and the plight of women. A large audience from across the globe logged in for the session.

Tully, the recipient of the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, has witnessed and covered several momentous historical events that have shaped the sub-continent in the past few decades. As a BBC correspondent, he had covered the India-Pakistan conflicts, the Bhopal gas tragedy, the Emergency, Operation Blue Star, the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, the anti-Sikh riots, the demolition of the Babri Masjid and

much more. He was the bureau chief of the BBC in New Delhi for 20 years.

About the current crop of news channels in India he said, "I think it is so unfair that you have media trials and very often the person is found not guilty, but we never hear about that at all. I often move away from the news bulletins as you see the same sort of standard coverage presented as tonight's 'big story' with no background, nothing about why it is happening." According to Tully, the problem is that "the owners and proprietors of television channels think what people want to see is breaking news, and to some extent they are right. But they are obsessed with getting the maximum viewers and so they stick by the rule — news is the views of the day."

Tully said he still believes very strongly in radio as a medium. He often chooses to listen to the radio if he desires entertainment, rather than watch television. "I love listening to radio dramas. One of the reasons is that your imagination is at work and you are free to imagine



Indu Aurora



As always, it was nice listening to Mark Tully, who was brimming with anecdotes about the diversity in India. Lady Noon was equally interesting.

— Kamal Uppal



It was a great pleasure, rather an honour, to listen to Mark Tully. I was surprised to learn about Mohini Kent Noon's journey with BBC for five years. A very interesting session, indeed.

— Arvinder Chamak



Bonny Ghosh



Surbhi Jha

for yourself what it was all about, what the picture was like. We, the radio people, would say, the picture is always better because it's your own picture," he said.

On the colonial legacies that are still operational in Indian administration and governance, Tully said, "It is most striking in the police, which is appalling. A senior police officer friend used to say there are two types of police force — the governing and the serving. The governing police force's top priority is to maintain law and order and the serving police force's job is to serve the public. India under colonial rule had a governing police force, which supported the government whether it was right or wrong, legal or illegal. What India needs is a serving police force."

He elaborated on this by referring to the recent Hathras incident. "The police even stopped the family from attending the cremation fearing there would be a riot or problems if they allowed the family to cremate the girl when they wanted to. We saw the way the police were talking to the family and it was a terrible sight, and it was just an absolute governing police force, rather than a serving police force. Well, everyone is afraid of the police in India, no one wants to call the police to help them, which is evident."

Speaking about his days in a Darjeeling boarding school, Tully said, "I did not have the privilege of learning Hindi as a child. We lived an entirely White and English life. I went to school in Darjeeling because it was a school especially for English children. We had a wonderful headmaster who was a Quaker, a liberal who allowed us to go all over the place, and I had much more contact with the outside world."

Tully spoke passionately about the railways and his

fascination with steam engines. "As for my love for railways, a part of it goes back to my childhood days. We used to go from the magnificent Howrah station to Puri, Siliguri, Hazaribagh and other places. So, I did a lot of railway travelling and I loved it. I was always fascinated by the concept of this enormous amount of steel, a huge thing, and the huge distances that it was going to cover. I loved steam engines in particular. And I can boast a little by saying that I am the vice-president of the Indian Steam Railways Society, which is a great honour."

Tully said that steam engines were the nearest thing to a human being in machines. "I think they are like a human, very temperamental, they are very difficult to drive well, you have to worry about so many different things in them. But a steam engine in full speed is a magnificent sight — you see the smoke coming out and puffing its way. In England now, steam railways are a big business. In India we run steam engines occasionally on the mainland but we don't have special rails to run them on and we don't have railways run by volunteers like we have in England. I wish we did have that in India," he said.

Tully thinks that the lot of women has improved substantially in India. He said they are much more prepared to fight for their rights. Though lots of women would say there is still a long way to go, the situation has improved, he feels. "I think that it would be a very good thing to fix a minimum number of women members at the Parliament and all other Assemblies," he said.

On being asked whether there was anything he still wanted to achieve in his life, the author of nine books said that he would like to write another one, because writing, and thereby improving his Hindi, was his dearest wish.

Tête-à-tea is presented by Shree Cement Ltd



H. S. Panag



Arpita Naomi Oliver

Reforms and Romance of the Armed Forces



under a microscope in order to identify the scope for further improvement within the armed forces. To illustrate his point, he argued that there have been

Individuals who truly love their field continue to contribute to it even after they officially retire. **Prabha Khaitan Foundation's** Mumbai session of **The Write Circle** hosted Lieutenant-General H.S. Panag for a free and frank chat on various facets of the armed forces with a focus on improvement at both the individual and institutional levels. After a welcome address by Ketaki Bhatia, Arpita Naomi Oliver engaged Panag in conversation.

Panag is presently a defence analyst and commentator on strategic affairs, and remains active in the discourse through Twitter. He said it is through this particular microblogging site that he understood how to interact with the public. Gradually, newspapers approached him to write columns, which eventually led him to write several books concerning the armed forces as well as national security, including the critically acclaimed *The Indian Army: Reminiscences, Reforms & Romance*.

He revealed that his motivation to write on such topics is aimed at the common people — he wants to tell them about life in the military. But beyond that, he also wants to put the forces under scrutiny, to foster growth. Panag was an outspoken armyman even when he was in service, he said. In fact, he initiated over 120 Courts of Inquiry regarding corruption charges soon after he took charge of the Northern Command in 2007. But there were numerous things that he could not talk about while in uniform. After his retirement, he was able to put his knowledge and experiences

no major modernisation reforms since the 1990s owing to the lack of a National Security Strategy.

In the same vein, he stresses on the strength and spirit that women have demonstrated since their involvement in the armed forces since the 1990s. Although they are yet to be permitted in combat roles, Panag is confident that a gender-neutral army is a real possibility in the near future. But he remains

unwavering in his belief that they should be subjected to the same standards of tests, for it may create severe problems otherwise in the long run.

When the controversial topic of the abrogation of Article 370 was brought up, Panag did not evade the question. He strongly feels that the article was symbolic of the hopes of the Kashmiri people inasmuch as they would always preserve their state's autonomy. Its revocation merely worsened the issue, because it did not hurt the insurgency as much as it staggered the faith of the Kashmiri people in the Indian government. He believes that the violence can only end if the Kashmiri minds and souls are won; force cannot be the answer.

Ehsaas Woman Swati Agarwal concluded the session with a vote of thanks.

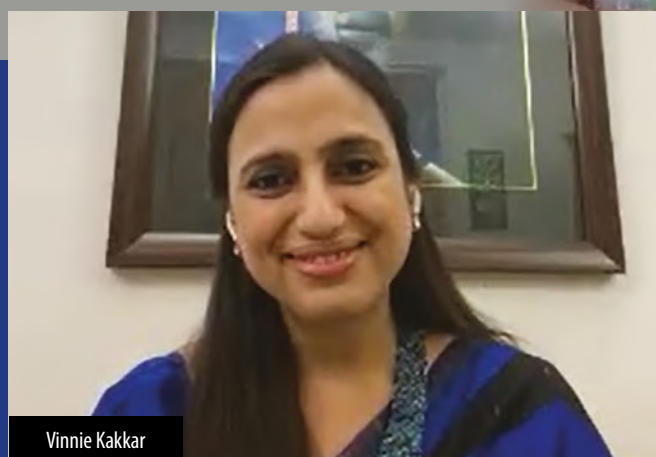
“His motivation to write on such topics is aimed at the common people — he wants to tell them about life in the military. But beyond that, he also wants to put the forces under scrutiny, to foster growth”

The Write Circle Mumbai is presented by Shree Cement Ltd, in association with Lokmat, ITC Grand Central and Ehsaas Women of Mumbai

Love for all Creatures, Great and Small



Khyrunnisa A



Vinnie Kakkar

Education For All hosted a book reading and interactive session with award-winning writer of children's fiction, Khyrunnisa A. The Thiruvananthapuram-based writer who created the popular comic character, Butterfingers, for the children's magazine, *Tinkle*, said she loves reading, writing, arithmetic and kids. Her first book for adults, *Tongue in Cheek: The Funny Side of Life*, was published in 2019. She has written three books of short stories, of which two are collections of animal stories titled *The Crocodile Who Ate Butter Chicken For Breakfast and Other Stories* and *The Lizard of Oz and Other Stories*, and the third is *Lost in Ooty and Other Adventure Stories*. Her stories appear regularly in *Dimdima* and other children's magazines.

The author, who was introduced by Vinnie Kakkar of Spagia Foundation and the national advisor for Prabha Khaitan Foundation, began the session by introducing *The Crocodile...* She taught the children attending the session the word "anthropomorphic", which she defined as giving human attributes to animals. Explaining the idea behind the book she said, "For me it's very important that

we love animals.... They are part of Nature, we should live in harmony with Nature."

Khyrunnisa then engaged the kids in a storytelling session where she narrated the tale of the crocodile who ate butter chicken and other short excerpts from her book. Children and adults alike enjoyed the story of how Arun got a crocodile and the hilarious challenges he faced, as he learnt to take care of the large reptile while hiding it from his parents.

Her book is a charming collection of stories of animals and people, their exciting lives and funny antics. Humorous and at times touching, this collection of bite-sized short stories has something for every kind of reader.

Throughout the session, Khyrunnisa gave the audience fun glimpses into the lives of several other characters in the book, from noisy squirrels seeking fame to animals who went to school!

The storytelling was followed by an interactive session with the children, where they got to ask the author many questions. She revealed how she was an "accidental writer", where she got her inspiration and why she wrote about animals.

"I feel [animals] deserve a place in this world. They should be protected, not destroyed. They have a role to play in our ecosystem. We need them, and this is my small way of giving them some importance," said the writer.

The session is presented in association with Spagia Foundation, Oxford Bookstore and Red Panda



Music in the Heart and Mind



Music is an integral part of human beings. It is something that imparts peace and makes people happy, feels santoor maestro Pandit Shivkumar Sharma. A recipient of numerous awards and accolades, including the Padma Vibhushan, Tansen Samman and Master Deenanath Mangeshkar Award, the santoor virtuoso was speaking at a virtual session of **Ek Mulakat Vishesh**, organised by **Prabha Khaitan Foundation**. He was in conversation with author, biographer and art curator Ina Puri, **Ehsaas** Woman of Gurugram. Shruti Mittal, **Ehsaas** Woman of Bengaluru, delivered the welcome address.

Sharma, who is credited with single-handedly transforming santoor from an obscure musical instrument into one that is an "indispensable" part of Indian classical music today, said, "Some divine force has guided me all through my life and my whole focus was on santoor. Concerts or no concerts, music is here in the heart and mind and goes on all the time."

Introducing the world to a new technique of playing the santoor that produced a more-sustained sound, Sharma gave the 100-stringed instrument an identity of its own and contributed to its global popularity. He added his own touch to the santoor, increasing its range to cover three full octaves and formulating a new chromatic arrangement of notes.

"My father (Uma Dutt Sharma) was a great knowledgeable musician from the Banaras gharana. It was his idea to bring the santoor into classical music. He



Ina Puri



Shruti Mittal



Pt Shivkumar Sharma

had a vision to do so at a time when it was unthinkable as classical instruments like sarod, veena, sitar and others held sway. He did the initial research work and it was a long struggle but was destined to happen," said the octogenarian.

Sharma has composed many musical hits for films like *Silsila*, *Lamhe*, *Chandni*, *Faasle* and others in collaboration with the internationally acclaimed flautist Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia. Sharma was the first to introduce the santoor in Indian cinema. "I was at a concert in Mumbai in 1955 and film director V. Shantaram's daughter Madhuraji came up to me and introduced me to her father. Later, I played the santoor for the first time in my life for his film, *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje*, and the santoor came into Indian films," he said.

Talking about his friendship with Pandit Jasraj, a doyen of Indian classical music, the maestro said it had been a deep, lifelong connection. The legendary vocalist's demise in August 2020 has left him shocked and speechless. Sharma said he had spoken to his friend merely two or three days before his death and Jasraj had been in good health then. Ustad Zakir Hussain, the tabla virtuoso, composer and percussionist, is also one of Sharma's lifelong friends. Sharma used to perform with Hussain's father Ustad Allah Rakha Khan, and later started playing with Hussain.

Sharma harbours an open-minded approach towards music, never compromising on its purity. He recollected initially being offered a job at All India Radio Jammu. He had turned it down, wanting to freelance as a musician. While initially upset with him for rejecting the job, his father had later encouraged him to go to Mumbai and build a career. The santoor master believes without hard work, there is no luck. His advice to aspiring artistes is to build their careers on hard work, focus and dedication.

On being asked how the audience has changed over the

years, Sharma said: "Audiences and the reaction of people change according to changes in society. Till the 1950s, we used to play for long durations as people had more time and tickets were not so expensive. I remember I used to travel to America and play for four hours, with a half-hour break. And now, even in India, a concert's duration is one or one-and-a-half hours, because of many factors. I would not say the quality has changed but the quantity has changed."

Sharma, who practises meditation, recounted one of his many spiritual experiences in life while playing the instrument. "I played the santoor at the Osho Ashram in Pune for an hour. At the end, there was no clapping. All the people sat with closed eyes. I left without disturbing them," he said.

Talking about the pandemic, Sharma said it was a good time for looking inward and analysing one's own self. One must move away from the body and towards the mind, get back to Nature and the environment, and keep them clean. The maestro, who is teaching his grandson online during the pandemic, believes keeping children occupied and engaged is important because it keeps them entertained in these tough times. While he does accept virtual concerts are the need of the hour, Sharma feels they can never create the kind of feeling live concerts bring. The energy of a live audience and the attention and love they shower is something that cannot be matched virtually.

The first thing the octogenarian wants to do after things get back to normal is go back to his homeland, Jammu, and meet his people. He misses the place, his sister and the food. The session drew to a close with Ina Puri thanking Sharma for a riveting and insightful discussion on music, friendship and his life, how the maestro had changed with the times yet kept his music close to the heart — making music lovers fall in love with his music all over again.



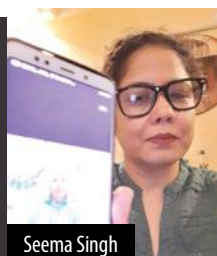
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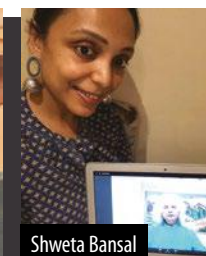
Deepali Bhasin



Harsha Parekh



Seema Singh



Shweta Bansal

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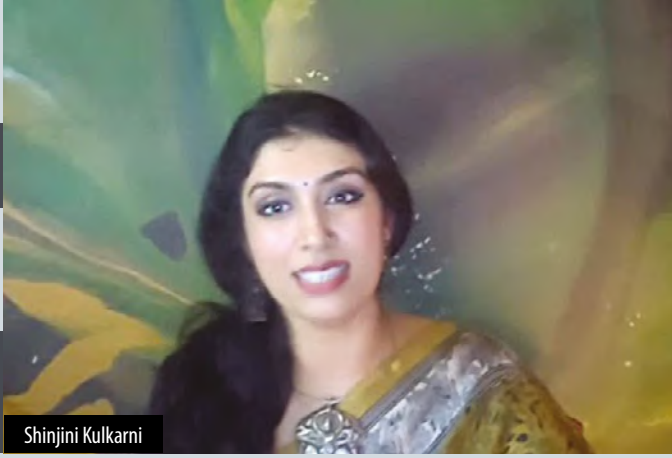
शास्त्रीय संगीत की ओर युवाओं का रुझान बढ़ रहा है: पं. राजन मिश्र व पं. साजन मिश्र

प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन ने एक मुलाकात कार्यक्रम में इस बार पद्म भूषण से अलंकृत शास्त्रीय गायक बंधुओं पं. राजन मिश्र और पं. साजन मिश्र को आमंत्रित किया। युवा कथक नृत्यांगना, **अहसास** वूमैन शिंजिनी कुलकर्णी ने उनसे संवाद किया, जिसमें शास्त्रीय संगीत जगत की कई महत्वपूर्ण बातें सामने आईं। आरंभ में **अहसास** वूमैन की श्रद्धा मुर्दिया ने प्रतिभागियों का स्वागत किया।

अपने ही कार्यक्रमों का उदाहरण देते हुए शास्त्रीय गायक बंधुओं ने कहा कि सुधी श्रोताओं की कोई कमी नहीं है और वे अच्छे संगीत की तलाश में रहते हैं। उन्होंने महाराष्ट्र और संगीत परंपरा से समृद्ध अन्य क्षेत्रों का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि वहां तो कोई भी संगीत कार्यक्रम ढाई-तीन घंटे से कम के नहीं होते। छोटे शहरों से आने वाले बहुत से प्रतिभाशाली कलाकारों को उनकी योग्यता के अनुरूप सफलताएं प्रायः

न मिल पाने के सवाल पर पं. राजन मिश्र ने कहा, "जब हम अपना काम करते हुए कर्ता भाव से मुक्त हो जाते हैं, तभी ईश्वरीय कृपा मिलती है।" अपनी सफलता के बारे में उन्होंने कहा, "हमने अपनी यात्रा और शिक्षा आदि को हमारे गुरुओं, बुजुर्गों, मां सरस्वती और श्रोताओं का आशीर्वाद समझ कर ग्रहण की। यही भाव हमें आगे ले गया और अभी भी हम इनके आशीर्वाद की खोज में लगे रहते हैं।"

अपने गायन में विविधता के बारे में बंधुद्वय ने कहा, "हमारे गुरुओं, प्रख्यात सारंगीवादक पिता पं. हनुमान प्रसाद मिश्र और चाचा पं. गोपाल प्रसाद मिश्र ने अपने दौर के सभी बड़े कलाकारों के साथ संगत की थी। इसीलिए उनमें इन विविध घरानों के बड़े कलाकारों का रस समाहित हो गया था। फैयाज खां साहब, केसर बाई, रोशन आरा बेगम, ओंकारनाथ ठाकुर जी आदि सभी के साथ उन लोगों ने संगत की थी। उन सभी के



Shinjini Kulkarni



Shraddha Murdia

भाव उनके अंदर आ गए थे और उन भावों को वे हमें बताते थे। वे चाहते थे कि हम किसी एक घराने के गुलदस्ते के बजाय बगीचा बनें। उन लोगों के इस खुलेपन ने हम लोगों को भी बहुत खोल दिया। इसीलिए हम विविधतापूर्ण गायन का ही प्रयास करते रहे हैं।" बहुत कम उम्र में ही बनारस छोड़ कर दिल्ली आ जाने और फिर यहां सफल होने और आगे की यात्रा के बारे में पं. साजन मिश्र ने कहा, "हमारे पिताजी, चाचाजी और दूसरे बुजुर्गों का सहयोग और आशीर्वाद तो हमारे साथ हमेशा था ही, लेकिन श्री सद्गुरु जगजीत सिंह जी महाराज और आकाशवाणी ने हमारे जीवन में बहुत बड़ी भूमिका निभाई है।" उन्होंने बताया कि वे दोनों भाई 1973 में ही स्थायी रूप से दिल्ली आ गए थे। उस समय वे बीस वर्ष से कुछ ही ऊपर के थे।

ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म पर शास्त्रीय संगीत को लेकर मिश्र बंधुओं ने कहा, "अभी समय की मांग है, इसलिए ऑनलाइन कंसर्ट हो रहे हैं और सफल भी हो रहे हैं, लेकिन इसमें इंटरनेट के कारण बाधाएं भी पड़ती हैं और संगीत का असली माहौल भी नहीं बन पाता। ऑनलाइन कंसर्ट में लाइव कंसर्ट का आनंद संभव नहीं है।" व्यस्तता के बावजूद शिष्यों को प्रशिक्षित करने के तरीके के बारे में कुलकर्णी के प्रश्न पर पं. राजन मिश्र ने कहा कि शिष्य-गुरु संबंध अत्यंत संतोषप्रद संबंध है। यह ऐसा माध्यम है कि जब तक आपके शिष्य परंपरा को जिलाए रखते हैं तब तक कलाकार जिंदा रहता है। शरीर न रहे तो भी... गुरु शिष्य से प्रायः मंत्र रूप में बात करता है जिसका बड़ा असर होता है... मैं अपने शिष्यों से कहता हूँ कि तानपूरा सुनो.. जो ध्यान से सुनता है, वह सजग होने लगता है, उसका सुर पक्का होने लगता है।" अपनी निरंतर सीखने की यात्रा के बारे में बंधुद्वय ने बताया, "हम सारंगी, नृत्य, तबला या दूसरी विधाओं के कलाकारों के काम से भी लगातार सीखने की कोशिश करते हैं। हम कोई कार्यक्रम सुनने-देखने जाते हैं तो इस इरादे से जाते हैं कि उससे कुछ सीख कर आएंगे। ओशो कहते हैं कि जहां झुके, वहीं गुरु खड़ा मिल जाएगा। बस झुकने की कला सीख लो।"

मौजूदा दौर में संगीत में कॉरपोरेट संस्कृति के दखल और संगीत की

आध्यात्मिकता के बीच संतुलन के बारे में कुलकर्णी के सवाल पर उन्होंने कहा, "कोई कार्यक्रम हो, हमारा भाव हर जगह आध्यात्मिक ही होता है। हम शुरू करने के पहले मां सरस्वती और गुरुओं का आह्वान करते हैं। हम अपने अंदर के परमात्मा के लिए गाते हैं। हमने भी कॉरपोरेट शो किए हैं, लेकिन अगर आपका भाव अच्छा है, अभिव्यक्ति अच्छी है तो चाहे स्पिक मैके के कार्यक्रमों में आने वाले बच्चे हों या कॉरपोरेट जगत के महारथी सभी उससे जुड़ते हैं।" दोनों भाइयों के एकल के बजाय युगल गायन पर ही केंद्रित रहने के प्रश्न पर उन्होंने कहा, "हमारे बुजुर्गों की सोच थी कि

हम युगल गायन ही करें। यह सहगान है, प्रतिस्पर्धा नहीं... *वी कॉम्प्रीमेंट ईच अदर।* पिता जी और चाचा जी ने हमें युगल गायन में रखा और हम आज भी ऐसे हैं।" संगीत में फ्यूजन के बारे में बंधुद्वय का मानना है कि इसमें कुछ भी नया नहीं है। बॉलीवुड में तो बहुत पहले से फ्यूजन हो रहा है और बहुत से इतने मधुर गाने बने हैं कि आज 50 साल बाद भी लोगों की जुबान पर हैं। लेकिन फ्यूजन के नाम पर शोर और कन्फ्यूजन ठीक नहीं।

श्रोता अनन्या गौड़ के इस सवाल पर कि गुरु का चुनाव कैसे करें? पं. राजन मिश्र ने एक बनारसी कहावत दोहराई 'गुरु करे जान के, पानी पिए छान के।' मतलब गुरु के पास जाने के पहले उसके बारे में जानकारी करें। दूसरी बात यह भी है कि गुरु भी शिष्य को तलाशता है। जब गुरु को कोई शिष्य होने लायक लगता है तभी वह उसे स्वीकार करता है। अपने जीवन के बारे में दोनों भाइयों ने बताया कि हमें हंसना पसंद है। पं. राजन मिश्र ने कहा, "मैं ओशो भक्त हूँ और कहता हूँ कि 'लाफ्टर इज दि ओनली रिलीजन आफ दि अर्थ।' हम जब हंसते हैं केवल तभी हम वर्तमान में होते हैं।" उन्होंने अपने मित्र उस्ताद लतीफ अनवर खां से जुड़े किस्से भी सुनाए कि कैसे वे लोग लतीफों के चक्कर में ऑडिशन तक छोड़ देते थे या कैसे वह पं. साजन मिश्र की शादी के दिन एक कार्यक्रम के लिए मुंबई जाने से पहले आकर गिफ्ट के तौर पर लतीफा सुना कर गए थे।

एक मुलाकात कार्यक्रम के प्रायोजक थे श्री सीमेंट

शिष्य-गुरु संबंध अत्यंत संतोषप्रद संबंध है। यह ऐसा माध्यम है कि जब तक आपके शिष्य परंपरा को जिलाए रखते हैं तब तक कलाकार जिंदा रहता है। शरीर न रहे तो भी



H E Arif Mohammad Khan



Amish Tripathi



Shazia Illmi

हम सभी हिंदू हैं, भारतीय संस्कृति की पहचान आत्मा से होती है: आरिफ़ मोहम्मद खान

हमारी सभ्यता जब तक आत्मा से परिभाषित होती रहेगी, इसके खत्म होने की संभावना नहीं है। पंडित दीन दयाल उपाध्याय को इस बात के लिए श्रेय देना चाहिए कि उन्होंने मानवकेंद्रित सोच और मानववाद पर बल दिया। यह सोच राजनीतिक नहीं बल्कि भारत की पुरातन सभ्यता में निहित थी।" यह कहना है केरल के राज्यपाल और चिंतक आरिफ़ मोहम्मद खान का। वह प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और नेहरू सेंटर लंदन द्वारा आयोजित Tête-à-tea के तहत 'द आइडिया ऑफ़ इंडिया - कुछ बात है कि हस्ती मिटती नहीं हमारी' चर्चा के दौरान चर्चित लेखक और नेहरू सेंटर के निदेशक अमीश त्रिपाठी के सवालों का जवाब दे रहे थे। मॉडरेटर की भूमिका में थीं, शाजिया इल्मी। इल्मी ने आमंत्रित अतिथि और संवादकर्ता का परिचय और स्वागत किया। इस दौरान खान पर बना चित्र-परिचय जिसके बैकग्राउंड में अमिताभ बच्चन की आवाज में गाया गीत, मैं उस माटी का वृक्ष नहीं, जिसको नदियों ने सींचा है...भी प्रस्तुत किया गया।

इकबाल के मशहूर शेर कुछ बात है कि हस्ती मिटती नहीं हमारी, सदियों रहा है दौरें दुश्मन जहां हमारा के जिक्र के साथ त्रिपाठी ने सवाल किया कि जैसे तो यह एक बयान था, लेकिन वाकई हमारी संस्कृति में ऐसा क्या था, जिसने हजारों वर्षों तक हमें जिंदा रखा? खान ने जवाब में इन पंक्तियों यूनान-ओ-मिस्र-ओ- रोमा, सब मिट गए जहाँ से, अब तक

मगर है बाकी, नाम-ओ-निशाँ हमारा, कुछ बात है कि हस्ती मिटती नहीं हमारी, सदियों रहा है दुश्मन, दौर-ए-जमां हमारा, को जोड़ा व कहा कि इसमें बयान के साथ भारतीय संस्कृति का गुणगान भी है, लेकिन इसमें यह नहीं बताया गया कि वाकई हमारी हस्ती जिंदा कैसे रही।" गुरुदेव रवींद्र नाथ टैगोर का उल्लेख करते हुए खान ने उन्हीं के शब्दों में कहा, "I love India not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her children। सत्यं ज्ञानं अनंतम ब्रह्मा, शांतम शिवम अद्वैतम। यह है भारतीय संस्कृति। डॉ बृजेंद्र नाथ शील ने कहा है भारत पुरातन और नीत नूतन है।"

खान ने कहा, "हमसे पुरानी सभ्यता हो सकती है, उनके अवशेष भी मिले हैं, पर हमारी संस्कृति के बुनियादी मौलिक सिद्धांत भौतिक चीजों से परिभाषित नहीं होते। वे आज भी वैसे ही हैं, जैसे सभ्यता के आरंभ में थे। शंकराचार्य जी ने गीता के इस श्लोक न जायते प्रियते वा कदाचि- त्रायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः से भारतीय संस्कृति को परिभाषित किया है। अर्थात् भारतीय संस्कृति आत्मा से परिभाषित होती है।" खान ने व्यास जी

और नारद जी के संवाद से जुड़ी एक कहानी भी सुनाई। जिसका संदेश था कि अगर आप चाहते हैं कि आपके दर्शन की गूढ़ बातें, ज्ञान, प्रज्ञा की बातें लोग समझें तो उन्हें कहानी सुनाकर बताएं। खान ने अलबर्ट आइंस्टाइन के इस वाक्य का भी उल्लेख किया। If you want your children to learn wisdom, read them story। If you want them to be more wise, read them more stories। उन्होंने स्वामी विवेकानंद की भी एक कहानी सुनाई। जो सिकंदर की जिज्ञासा से जुड़ी थी। सिकंदर जब भारत पहुंचा तो उसके दिमाग में एक बात थी कि भारत में ऐसे योगी, बौद्धिक, सन्न्यासी हैं जो जीवन के रहस्यों को ही नहीं बल्कि अमरत्व तक को जानते हैं। सिकंदर उन्हीं में से किसी एक से मिलकर उन्हें यूनान ले जाना चाहता था। पर जब सन्न्यासी से मुलाकात हुई तो उन्होंने मना कर दिया। सिकंदर ने बंदी बनाने की धमकी दी तो जवाब मिला मैं चैतन्य आत्मा हूँ। उसे कौन बंदी बना सकता है। आनंद रामायण में भी ऐसा ही एक वर्णन है। लक्ष्मण क्रोध में थे कि बनवास मैं ये शरीर वह अविद्या में है, चैतन्य आत्मा जो है वह नष्ट नहीं होती, उसे कष्ट नहीं होता।

खान ने एक बार फिर गुरुदेव का उल्लेख किया और कहा कि भारत की असली समस्या यही है कि हमारी संस्कृति जो आत्मा से परिभाषित होती थी, उस पर लंबे समय तक उन लोगों ने शासन किया, जिनकी सभ्यता परिभाषित होती थी उनकी आस्था से, उनकी भाषा से, उनकी नस्ल से। भारत तो इन चीजों को मानता ही नहीं था। हमारी सभ्यता का आधार समझे बगैर जो हमारे शासक थे, उन्होंने हिंदू, यानी सनातन जो एक जीवन शैली थी उसे Religion के खांचे में रख दिया। हम पराधीन थे और मध्ययुग में सफलता दूसरों पर प्रभुत्व स्थापित करके मिलती थी। जबकि भारत के संस्कारों में तलवार के जोर पर, ताकत के जोर पर प्रभुत्व स्थापित करना शामिल नहीं था। इसलिए उन्होंने हमारे देवों, धार्मिक आस्था और कर्मकांड को अपने तरीके से स्थापित करने की कोशिश की। अफसोस कि आजादी के बाद भी हमारे ऊपर वही मानसिकता हावी थी। खान ने आगे कपिल मुनि और देवहुति संवाद का उल्लेख करते हुए पूछा, Knowledge क्या है? शब्द बनते हैं, अक्षरों के मेल से, और अक्षर को समाप्त नहीं किया जा सकता। तो जिन अक्षरों को समाप्त नहीं किया जा सकता उन्हें आप कैसे समाप्त कर सकते हैं। तप की व्याख्या करते हुए उन्होंने कहा, तप अनुभूति का मामला है। स्वाध्याय और प्रवचन से यह बनता है। हमारी संस्कृति में दान का अर्थ चैरिटी नहीं है। यहां दान का अर्थ है शेयर करना। हमारी सभ्यता की परिभाषा ही अलग है। शब्द चैतन्य हैं, जो भारतीय मनीषा के मानस से निकले हैं। इन्होंने ही भारतीय संस्कृति को अक्षुण्य रखा है।

त्रिपाठी ने पूछा कि ऐसा क्या किया जाए जिससे अतीत में भारत मां को लगे घावों, दरारों को ठीक किया जा सके? खान का जवाब था, "भारत के सनातन सिद्धांत के अनुरूप हमारा आचरण नहीं रहा। हमारी सभ्यता

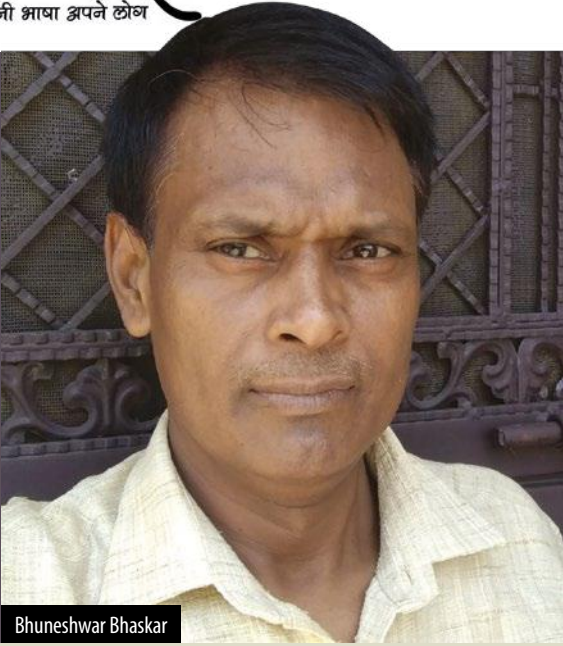
अपनी ज्ञान व प्रज्ञा के लिए जानी जाती थी, वह इतिहास में क्रूर पहचान क्यों बनी? यह प्रश्न मुझे भी परेशान करता था, जिसका जवाब मुझे स्वामी विवेकानंद और स्वामी रंगनाथ नंद जी के यहां मिला। स्वामी विवेकानंद जी का कहना है, हमारी पहचान ज्ञान था। हमारी पहचान स्वाध्याय और प्रवचन था।" इसके बाद योरोप के रेनसां, प्लेटो के विश्वविद्यालय, अरब सभ्यता का विस्तार से जिक्र करते हुए खान ने दावा किया कि लैटिन किताबों के अनुवाद से पहले संस्कृत किताबों का अनुवाद अरबी में हो चुका था। पंडित कनक ने अब्बासी सुल्तानों में द्वितीय स्थान पर रहे मंसूर को ब्रह्मगुप्त की पुस्तक सूर्य सिद्धांत सौंपी थी, जिसका सिंध हिंद नाम से अनुवाद हुआ। आर्यभट्ट, सजारी, बगदाद के खलीफा, स्पेन के खलीफा का जिक्र करते हुए खान ने बताया कि सूर्य सिद्धांत का अनुवाद हर भाषा में हुआ, और यह आज खगोल विज्ञान का मूल आधार है।

सर सैयद के सम्मान में पटियाला में आर्य समाज द्वारा किए गए सम्मान के दौरान उनके भाषण का जिक्र करते हुए खान ने कहा कि सर सैयद नाराज थे कि आप हमें 'हिंदू' क्यों नहीं कहते। उनका कहना था हिंदू कोई धार्मिक पहचान नहीं है। यह शब्द हमारी जीवन शैली था। हमारे यहां दूसरे की गुंजाइश ही नहीं है। हमारी एका 'दिव्यता' की भावना पर आधारित है। इसलिए हमें इन तथ्यों को एड्रेस करना होगा। हमारे ऋषियों ने कल्पना की थी, भारत ज्ञान का ऐसा केंद्र होगा जहां एक ईसाई क्रिश्चियानिटी पढ़ने, एक अरब इस्लाम पढ़ने के लिए भारत आएगा। उन्होंने इस बात पर संतोष जाहिर किया कि अब वह माहौल बन गया है। सबको साथ रहना हमारी आवश्यकता है। इसके लिए बहुत सारे लोगों को मेहनत करनी होगी। 'अहं ब्रह्मास्मी, त्वं अस्मी' से कुरान की एक आयत को जोड़ते हुए उन्होंने फिर से स्वामी विवेकानंद का जिक्र किया।

एक सवाल के उत्तर में खान ने कहा चाहे जाति हो या धर्म, हर भारतीय को यह तय करना होगा कि हमारा संपर्क दुनिया के साथ कैसा रहे। अगर हम केवल अपनी संस्कृति से प्रेरणा ले लें तो हमारी समस्या दूर हो जाती है। भारत की परंपरा टालरेंस की नहीं स्वीकार्यता की परंपरा है। स्वामी विवेकानंद भी यही कहते थे कि परम सत्य जहां से भी मिलेगा मैं ग्रहण करूंगा। **अहसास** वूमन की देश भर से जुड़ी प्रतिनिधियों में अंशु मेहरा, मोनिका भगवागर, आराधना प्रधान, प्रणीत बब्बर का नामोल्लेख करते हुए इल्मी ने लड़कियों के प्रति सम्मान से जुड़ा सवाल पूछा तो खान ने उत्तर में महाभारत की युद्धिष्ठिर से संबंधित कथा सुनाई। उन्होंने कहा परंपरा जड़ता नहीं है। यहां तक कि हमने चार्वाक को भी महात्मा माना। मैं रस्मो – रिवाज की नहीं बुनियादी सिद्धांत की बात कर रहा। हमें हमारे आचरण की तरफ ध्यान देना चाहिए। खान ने सत्यम वद, धर्मम व और मार्टिन लूथर किंग का भी जिक्र किया।

टेटे-ए-टी नेहरू सेंटर लंदन के सहयोग से आयोजित किया गया था

“
हमसे पुरानी सभ्यता हो सकती है, उनके अवशेष भी मिले हैं, पर हमारी संस्कृति के बुनियादी मौलिक सिद्धांत भौतिक चीजों से परिभाषित नहीं होते। वे आज भी वैसे ही हैं, जैसे सभ्यता के आरंभ में थे
”



Bhuneshwar Bhaskar

कला और लोक संगीत के संरक्षण में महिलाओं की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण है: भुनेश्वर भास्कर

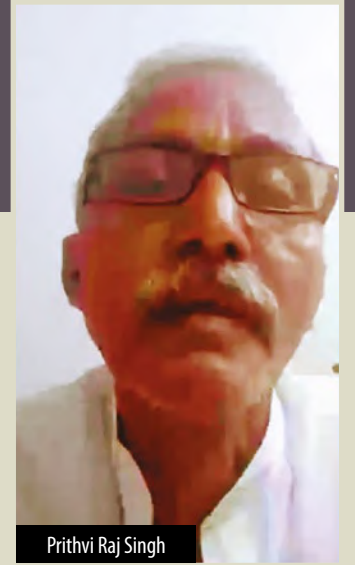
कला अपनी अभिव्यक्ति को व्यक्त करने का सरल और सशक्त माध्यम है। कला का जुड़ाव जीवन और समाज से होता है। समाज के प्रति कलाकारों का भी अपना दायित्व होता है। आखर बिहार कार्यक्रम के दौरान स्वतंत्र चित्रकार और लेखक भुनेश्वर भास्कर ने यह बात कही। इस कार्यक्रम का प्रसारण फेसबुक पेज पर लाइव हुआ। कार्यक्रम के आरंभ में आराधना प्रधान ने अतिथियों व श्रोताओं का स्वागत किया। अतिथि वक्ता भास्कर का परिचय देते हुए आपने बताया कि आपकी भोजपुरी लोक संस्कृति, परम्परा और कला संवाद पर पुस्तकें आ चुकी हैं। आप एक सम्मानित चित्रकार, रंगकर्मी और लेखक हैं। आगे के संवाद के लिए उन्होंने भोजपुरी साहित्य और कला की पहचान के लिये निरंतर प्रयासरत रहने वाले पृथ्वी राज सिंह को बुलाया। उन्होंने भोजपुरी साहित्य, लोक कला, संस्कृति, परंपरा पर विस्तार से चर्चा की।

उनका पहला सवाल भास्कर से भोजपुरी कला में उनकी रुचि और रचना यात्रा पर था। भास्कर का जवाब था, "परंपरा के प्रति बचपन से ही रुझान थी। 13 साल की उम्र में ही सस्ता खून, महंगा पानी नाटक में प्रस्तुति देने का मौका मिला। उस नाटक के दौरान काम करते हुए मैं नाटक के पोस्टर भी बनाया करता था। वे उतने अच्छे नहीं थे, पर लोग तारीफ करते थे, इससे भी चित्रकला की ओर लगाव बढ़ा। लोक कला के रीति-रिवाज, परंपरा की तरफ भी उत्सुकता थी कि पीड़िया क्यों बनती है, कोहबर कैसे बनता है? जो समझा उन्हें चित्रों में उकेरा और शब्दों के जरिए इसकी महत्ता को बताने का प्रयास किया। इसी उत्सुकता के चलते जब मैं आगे की पढ़ाई के लिए आरा आया, तो आर्ट लिया। वहां मैंने पेंटिंग के साथ ही नाटक करना शुरू किया। मेरा पहला नाटक कबीरा खड़ा बाजार में था। उसी दौरान जो बातें चर्ची उसी से लिखना भी शुरू कर दिया। इस तरह पेंटिंग, नाटक और लिखना जारी रहा। बाद में मुझे स्कॉलरशिप मिली तो इस विधा को और बढ़ाया। मैंने अपनी पेंटिंग में लोक तत्व को रखा।"

अपनी एक पेंटिंग दिखाते हुए भास्कर ने बताया कि इन चित्रों को बनाने के साथ ही जब वह अपने रीति-रिवाज और लोक कलाओं के लिए लिखने लगे तो उन्हें इसमें महिलाओं की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका का भान हुआ। हर लोक गीत में एक संदर्भ था, गूढ़ बातें थीं। मैंने उसे ग्रहण करके लोगों को बताने की कोशिश की। पहला लेख कोहबर पर छपा। इस तरह मेरी यात्रा आगे बढ़ी। एक सवाल के जवाब में भास्कर का कहना था कि कला अपने समय, समाज की अभिव्यक्ति का माध्यम है। वह जीवन का प्रतिविंब है। समाज के



Aradhana Pradhan



Prithvi Raj Singh

प्रति लेखक व कलाकार का दायित्व है। भास्कर ने लोक तत्व पर बल देते हुए बताया कि इसके लिए लोक कला को ठीक से जानना बहुत जरूरी है। अगर हम उसे सही ढंग से नहीं जानेंगे तो कई ऐसे प्रतीक चिन्ह इस्तेमाल हो जाएंगे जिसके अर्थ अलग हो जाते हैं। प्रकाशन विभाग से प्रकाशित अपनी पुस्तक की चर्चा करते हुए भास्कर ने बताया कि यह पुस्तक भोजपुरी लोक संस्कृति, परम्पराएं और कला संवाद पर थी। इस संस्करण में 44 लेख हैं। जिसमें विवाह, बादल, कृषि, जाति, परंपरा, पूजा, गंगा, रोपनी, छठ मैया, खिलौना, आभूषण, वस्त्र, पान, मेला, वाद्य यंत्र, रंगमंच, नौटंकी, जाति, प्रकृति, प्रवृत्ति आदि से संबंधित रीति-रिवाजों और परंपरा पर लेख शामिल हैं।

भास्कर का कहना था कि गांव में गाये जाने वाले गीत की लय किसी पेंटिंग से कम नहीं है। हमें अपनी परंपराओं को कला के रूप में कैसे विकसित और संरक्षित किया जाए, इसपर काम किए जाने की आवश्यकता है। इसके लिए तकनीक की आवश्यकता है। यह काम अकेले नहीं हो सकता। इसके लिए समन्वित प्रयास की समान सोच वाले समूह की जरूरत है। इसी तरह लोक संगीत व कला का निर्माण महिलाओं के बिना नहीं हो सकता, इसलिए उन्हें भी जोड़े जाने की भी आवश्यकता है। कार्यक्रम में सत्यम कुमार, ब्रज भूषण मिश्र, सुमन कुमार सिंह, कुमुद सिंह, मुंबई से सोनी श्रीवास्तव, पटना से पद्मश्री डॉ उषा किरण खान, भोजपुरी के विद्वान ब्रजभूषण मिश्र सहित कई अन्य लोग भी जुड़े थे। विनिता सिंह ने गीत भी सुनाया, जिस दौरान उनकी बेटे ने भी साथ दिया।

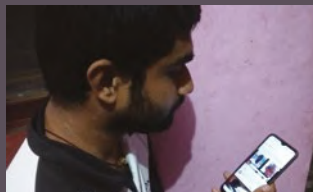
प्रभा खेतान फाउंडेशन और मसि इंक के सौजन्य से आयोजित आखर के प्रायोजक हैं श्री सीमेंट।



Brij Bhushan Mishra



Dr Usha Kiran Khan



Shubham Upadhyay



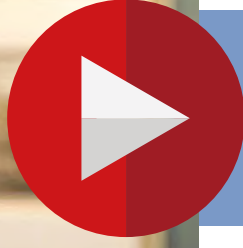
Ranjan Kumar Jha



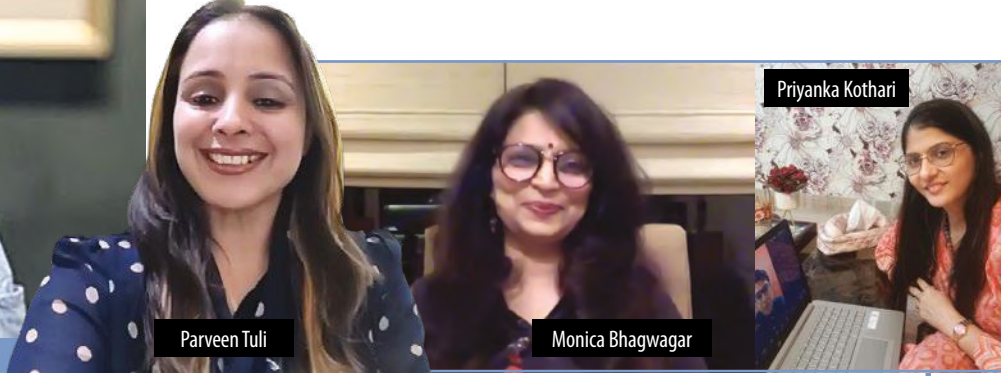
Soni Shrivastava



Divya Prakash Dubey



लेखन जंगल में लालटेन लेकर चलने जैसा है: दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे



Parveen Tuli

Monica Bhagwagar

Priyanka Kothari

माँ को हम श्रद्धा, पूजा के रूप में ही देखते हैं। पर हम यह भूल जाते हैं कि यह कभी कॉलेज भी जाती थी। कभी इसका कोई दोस्त भी था, जो मेरे पिता नहीं थे।" अपनी नई पुस्तक *इन्नेबतूती* में इस बात को उठाने वाले लेखक दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे कलम नागपुर में इस बार अतिथि लेखक थे। इससे पहले वह चार बेस्ट सेलर किताबें, *शर्तें लागू*, *मसाला चाय*, *मुसाफिर कैफे* और *अक्टूबर जंक्शन* लिख चुके हैं। युवाओं के बीच लोकप्रिय दुबे *स्टोरीबाजी* नाम से कहानियां सुनाते हैं। *अहसास* वूमेन की परवीन तुली ने संवाद का दायित्व निभाते हुए पहला सवाल लेखकीय यात्रा पर किया। दुबे ने बताया, "लेखक बनने की सोचा नहीं था। हालांकि घर का माहौल पढ़ने-लिखने का था। पिताजी प्रशासनिक अधिकारी थे। मैं मानता था कि लिखना बड़ी चीज थी। इंजीनियरिंग से निकला तो नौकरी मिली नहीं। पहली बार लिखने की तारीफ हुई, एक हजार रुपए भी मिले तो चल पड़ा। तुकबंदी से मैं लिखने में आया। लखनऊ में एडवर्टाइजिंग के लिए लिखा। वहीं मैंने एक फिल्म के लिए लिखा। कॉरपोरेट में मार्केटिंग में था, तो बताना आता था। फिर कहीं न कहीं अपनी बात बताने की भूख आ ही जाती है। चिट्ठियां इसलिए गाती हैं कि उसके पास बताने के लिए कोई चीज है।"

हिंगलिश लैंग्वेज का इस्तेमाल, हुमर व प्रैक्टिकल अप्रोच आपके लेखन में कैसे आया? पर दुबे का जवाब था, "कॉलेज में माहौल अंग्रेजी वाला था। हिंदी में इंग्लिश डालने के लिए नहीं डाला गया है। अगर नोएडा की हीरोइन होगी तो वह जैसी हिंदी बोलेगी, वही लिखा। कैंटीन, कॉलेज की, चाय की टपरी की भाषा। जैसे हम कहते हैं अरे यार आज बॉस ने दिमाग की दही कर दिया, शाम कि इसे चार्ज करना होगा। मैं हिंदी को पकड़ने के चक्कर में कहानी को गंवा नहीं सकता।" *संडे वाली चिट्ठी* की चर्चा करते हुए उन्होंने कहा, "इसका आइडिया रैंडम आया। कोटा और बैंगलोर में जो आत्महत्या करता है वह चिट्ठी इसलिए छोड़कर जाता है कि उसमें तब भी उम्मीद होती है कि लोग उसे समझेंगे। मैंने यह सोचकर लिखा कि पहले हर महल्ले में एक भैया होते थे, जो हमेशा फेल होने या परेशानी में होने पर कहते थे कि कोई बात नहीं यार कल ठीक हो जाएगा। हममें से बहुत कम लोग हैं, जो साधारण इमोशन को नहीं पकड़ते। इन चिट्ठियों में मैं खुद से चिट्ठियां लिख रहा होता हूँ। वजह यह समाज दिनभर में हमें डिस अपवाइंट करने के हजार मौके देता है।"

आप को जब तक मजा आता है, आप लिखते हैं, फिर छोड़ देते हैं? *स्टोरीबाजी* की शुरुआत कहाँ से हुई? के जवाब में दुबे ने कहा, "हिंदी के लेखक को अटेंशन की आदत नहीं है। मैं बोल पाता था। जब लोग मुझे बुलाने लगे, तो मैंने झूठमूठ की कहानियां बनाने लगा। बतौर लेखक अपने आपके बारे में कहानियां बताना बहुत बोरिंग है। कहानियां हमेशा पढ़ने वाले की होती हैं, सुनाने वाले की नहीं होती। इससे पहले जो कहानी होती थी वह एकतरफा होती है। मैंने सुनने वाले से शुरू किया। *स्टोरीबाजी* में सामने वाले को बुलाकर ही शुरू करता था। इसी से बात जम गयी। यह एक तरह का आर्ट ऑफ कम्युनिकेशन है।" अपनी किताबों के अलहदा नामों पर उनका कहना था, "मेरी कहानियों में जिंदगी के जितने रंग हैं, उन्हें मैं समेटना चाहता था।"

जब आप प्रोफेशनली लिखते हैं, उसमें कितना दबाव रहता है? के सवाल पर दुबे ने कहा, "पूरी दुनिया में किताब लेखन पर अब भी कोई सेंसर नहीं है। पुस्तक लेखन में जो आजादी है, वह कहीं नहीं है। किताब अपने होम ग्राउंड पर खेलने जैसा है। अमेजन के साथ मैं एक सीरीज कर रहा। उसमें अलग-अलग कहानियां हैं। अभी किताब से प्री हुआ हूँ। हिंदी में दिव्य प्रकाश दुबे प्रजेंट्स करके एक कार्यक्रम कर रहा, जिसमें कई नए लेखकों को प्रस्तुत कर रहा। मेरे पसंदीदा लेखक राही मासूम रजा और मनोहर श्याम जोशी हैं। इन दोनों को मैं आदर्श मानता हूँ। मैं यह मानता हूँ कि आप ऐसी बात कहो, जिसे सब लोग सुनकर समझ सकें और कर सकें। मेरा लक्ष्य है कि मैं ऐसा कर पाऊँ।"

सवाल-जवाब के सत्र में दुबे ने कहा, "मैं फिल्म के लिए ऐसी कोई चीज क्रिएट नहीं करना चाहता, जो आप अपने परिवार के साथ न देख सकें।" डॉ वेदुला रामालक्ष्मी के सवाल कि आप मस्तमौला लेखक हैं। कोई ऐसा पात्र है, जो डंट कर खड़ा हो गया हो, पर दुबे ने *मुसाफिर कैफे* की सुधा का नाम लिया। यह *गुनाहों के देवता* के सुधा की एंटी है। मैं चाहता था कि मैं जो चाहूँगा करा लूँगा, पर उसने अपने ढंग से करा लिया। दुबे ने कहा, यह भी ध्यान जैसा है, आपको पता नहीं होता कि अचेतन से कौन सा विचार आ जाएगा। *इन्नेबतूती* में भी ऐसा हुआ। यह जंगल में लालटेन लेकर चलने जैसा है। पूनम मिश्रा का सवाल था, मैं जल्दी नहीं लिख पाती थीम को बनाने में ही मुझे बहुत समय लग जाता है। दुबे का जवाब था कि थीम में समय लगता है। अगर आइडिया आ जाए दिमाग में तो उसे नोट करके रखना चाहिए। जैसे दवा के लिए आप वीपी नोट करते हैं, लेखन भी ऐसे ही है। लेखक को समय का सोचना नहीं चाहिए।

आशीष तायल के सवाल पर कि पढ़ने की आदत लोग भूल रहे हैं। क्या इंटरनेट के चलते ऐसा हुआ? दुबे का जवाब था, पढ़ना हमेशा से व्यक्तिगत होता था। पुराने समय से ऐसा होता आ रहा है। पढ़ने वाला आदमी आपको बोर नहीं करेगा। एक सवाल पर दुबे ने कहा किताब बेचने के लिए डिस्प्रेट नहीं होना चाहिए। आज के समय में लेखक के पास बहुत चुनौती है क्योंकि लोगों के पास बहुत सारे ऑप्शन हैं। यह इनपुट की प्रॉब्लम है। किताब पचास हजार रुपए में छप जाती है। किताब से आप इंटेलिक्चुअल बन जाते हैं। पीवी खुबालकर ने पूछा, लेखक परकाया प्रवेश करता है? दुबे ने कहा हां। मेरी कोशिश है कि हम समाज बदलने की कोई कोशिश करें। रिया चावला के एक सवाल पर दुबे ने कहा नौकरी से दुनिया नहीं बदलती। छुट्टियों को मैं छुट्टी की तरह देखता था। मेंटल ब्लॉक मैंने रखा ही नहीं। दुबे ने यह भी कहा कि लेखन के लिए स्टेबल रिलेशनशिप का होना जरूरी है। लेखन के दौरान आपको दुनिया की कोई फिक्र नहीं होनी चाहिए। सुश तोलानी ने भी सवाल पूछे। बेस्ट क्रेश्चन पीवी खुबालकर का था। *अहसास* वूमेन की ज्योति कपूर, मोनिका भगवागर, परवीन तुली और प्रियंका कोठारी ने सक्रिय भूमिका निभाई।

कलम नागपुर श्री सीमेंट लिमिटेड के सौजन्य, रेडिसन ब्लू, लोकमत और अहसास वूमेन नागपुर के सहयोग से प्रस्तुत किया गया।



Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia

मैं अभी भी सीखता रहता हूँ: पंडित हरिप्रसाद चौरसिया



Kaushiki Chakraborty



Vandana Singh

सुर और साज कार्यक्रम में अतिथि थे बांसुरी वादक पंडित हरिप्रसाद चौरसिया। उनका स्वागत स्वर से जुड़ी वंदना सिंह ने किया। पंडित चौरसिया का विस्तार से परिचय देते हुए उन्होंने उनके संगीत नाटक अकादमी और पद्म विभूषण से सम्मानित होने का जिक्र किया। संवादकर्ता कौशिकी चक्रवर्ती

का परिचय देते हुए सिंह ने कहा कि यह एक जुगलबंदी है क्योंकि चक्रवर्ती स्वयं एक अच्छी संगीतज्ञ हैं। चक्रवर्ती ने कहा यह जुगलबंदी नहीं बल्कि तालीम है। यह एक गुरु और शिष्या के बीच संवाद है। यह एक भगवान से उनके भक्त की बातचीत है। जवाब में पंडित चौरसिया ने चक्रवर्ती की भी तारीफ की और

कहा कि कभी-कभी सुनता हूँ तो लगता है कि मम्मी के पेट से ही तुमने गाना शुरू कर दिया था।

चक्रवर्ती ने पहलवानी से बांसुरी तक की चौरसिया की यात्रा के बारे में पूछा। चौरसिया का जवाब था, "हर व्यक्ति का एक सपना होता है। माता-पिता अलग सोचते हैं। जो सोचें वह मिल जाए यह सौभाग्य की बात है। जो न मिले वह दुर्भाग्य है। पिता पहलवान थे। मैं पिता की इच्छा के चलते अखाड़े में जाता था। लेकिन कभी भी मेरा लगाव कुश्ती की तरफ नहीं रहा। मेरी मां पांच साल की उम्र में ही चली गई। पिताजी गुस्सा करते थे अगर उनकी इच्छा न पूरी होती। मेरे एक मित्र जो वैद्यराज के लड़के थे, वह तबलावादक थे। उनका परिवार संगीतप्रेमी था। संगीत की बारीकियां वहीं सीखीं। वहां खाना भी मिलता था और प्रेम मिलता था। यह काम सालों चला। मैट्रिक पढ़ रहा था, जब पिता चाहते थे कि मुझे जॉब मिल जाए। किसी ने कहा म्यूजिक से लगाव हो, या तकनीकी ज्ञान हो तो काम मिल जाएगा। मुझे 85 रुपए में टाइपिस्ट की नौकरी मिल गई। मेरे पिता खुश हो गए। बाद में मैं प्रैक्टिस करने लगा। मैंने पहली बार बांसुरी बजाई, लोगों ने तारीफ की तो मैं खुश हो गया। उस जमाने में बड़े-बड़े उस्ताद आते थे। मुझे आज भगवान से डर नहीं लगता पर पिताजी से आज भी डर लगता है।

"इसके बाद बांसुरी सीखने के लिए वाराणसी के पंडित भोलानाथ प्रसन्ना के पास गया। संगीत सीखने के बाद काफी समय ऑल इंडिया रेडियो में काम किया। इसके बाद रेडियो स्टेशन के डायरेक्टर पीवी कृष्णमूर्ति थे उन्होंने मुझे काम दे दिया। 57-58 के बीच की बात है। वहां लड़कियां सीखने के लिए आती थीं। गाने के लिए आती थीं। वहां कंपोजीशन का आइडिया मिला। अफसरों को यह पसंद नहीं आया कि यह बांसुरी बजाकर लड़कियों को घुमाता रहता है। मेरी शिकायत हुई पर कृष्णमूर्ति जी ने मेरा समर्थन किया। उस जमाने में कोई गुरु नहीं था। कोई आता भी था तो प्रोग्राम करके चला जाता था। जब भी मैं फ्री हो जाता था, जाकर रिकॉर्डिंग लेकर सुनकर सीखता था। मुंबई आया तो एक से बढ़कर एक लोग मिले। नौशाद, मदनमोहन का घराना मिला। इन लोगों से बहुत कुछ सीखने को मिला। आज के लोग केवल चिल्लाते रहते हैं। आज भी मैं वही कर रहा। मैं अभी भी सीखता रहता हूँ।"

चक्रवर्ती ने उनसे लगातार रियाज से लगाव के बारे में पूछा कि आज के लोगों में यह सोच कैसे आएगी? चौरसिया का जवाब था, "किसी चीज को पाने के लिए कुछ खोना पड़ता है। मैं बांसुरी बजाता हूँ। कोई फ्लाइंट में पूछता है इसे बजाकर क्या मिलता है? संगीत को लोगों ने इस नज़र से देखा ही नहीं कि इसे देखने सुनने के लिए लोग अपने आप आ जाते हैं। मैं भी चाहता था कि मैं सुंदर पैदा होऊँ। कुछ लोग नाराज भी होते थे। पर ये सभी लोग कुछ न कुछ सिखाते हैं। संगीत में उत्कृष्टता हासिल करने की खोज मुझे बाबा अलाउद्दीन खां साहब की सुयोग्य पुत्री और शिष्या अन्नपूर्णा देवी की शरण में ले गयी, जो उस समय एकांतवास कर रही थीं और सार्वजनिक रूप से वादन और गायन नहीं करती थीं। अन्नपूर्णा देवी की शागिर्दी में मेरी प्रतिभा में और निखार आया और मेरे संगीत को जादुई स्पर्श मिला।"

अपने बांसुरी वादन की लयकारी और ताल से दुनिया का मन मोह



Seema Singh - Ehsaas Ranchi

Shradha Murdia - Ehsaas Udaipur

लेने वाले चौरसिया भविष्य में संगीत को लेकर बहुत आश्वस्त दिखे। उनका कहना था, "आजकल घर-घर में ऐसे बच्चे पैदा हो रहे हैं, जो संगीत सीख रहे, गा रहे। कलकत्ता में तो लगता है म्यूजिक हास्पिटल है।" चक्रवर्ती ने 'गुरुकुल' मुंबई और भुवनेश्वर के सौम्य वातावरण को सुरीला और सात्विक बताते हुए पूछा कि क्या आपके मन में इसकी धारणा पहले से थी? चौरसिया का जवाब था, "मेरी गुरु मां ने मेरे सिर पर हाथ रखा तो उन्होंने मैहर की बात की। मुझे लगा कि कितने महान लोग वहां से संगीत सीखकर निकले। गुरुकुल की परंपरा अगर बन जाए तो इससे बहुत कुछ सीखने को मिल जाएगा। मैं गुरु नहीं हूँ, पर उन्हें सुनकर मैं कर सकता हूँ। हर काम को भगवान मैनेज करता है। उन्हीं की कृपा से आप दुनिया की आंखों में बस जाते हैं और आपको दुनिया प्यार करने लगती है।" उन्होंने उल्टे हाथ से बांसुरी पकड़ने को लेकर वह घटना बताई कि कैसे गुरु मां को कन्विंस किया।

शास्त्रीय संगीत की शिक्षा में शुद्धता पर लोग बहुत जोर देते हैं, पर आपने जो भी किया चाहे फिल्म में हो या इल्लैया राजा के साथ, आपने यह कैसे किया? पर चौरसिया का जवाब था, "जब आदमी को किसी से प्यार होता है, तो आप अपने आप कर ले जाते हैं। मैं अपने माता पिता और गुरु से सीख लेकर करता हूँ। शुद्धता क्या है। जो दिल में शुद्ध है वह सही है। जिसको लाइट म्यूजिक का आइडिया नहीं है तो आप सीख नहीं सकते। कई फिल्म गायक और गायिकाएं सीखते नहीं। इतना बड़ा आकाश है वह नीला है, उसमें सफेद है वही तो अच्छा है। हर चीज का आनंद लें। सीखें और जानें। सा से गा पर जाना है।" पंडित चौरसिया की बातों में इतना रस था कि वक्त का पता ही नहीं चला। आभार प्रणीत बब्बर ने दिया।

सुर और साज को भारत सरकार के संस्कृति मंत्रालय के ईस्ट जोन कल्चरल सेंटर और स्वर का सहयोग हासिल था

Stories of Identity and Belonging



Prajwal Parajuly

Prajwal Parajuly, who describes himself as an "almost full-time author", brought a gust of cool mountain breeze to the virtual session of **The Write Circle**, Jaipur. Parajuly, who hails from Gangtok, Sikkim, is the author of titles like *The Gurkha's Daughter* and *Land Where I Flee*, which revolve around Nepali-speaking people who live outside Nepal and the crisis of cultural identity that they face. After a warm welcome by Urvi Bhuwani, Parajuly dived into the literary world with Swati Vashishtha.

Growing up in Sikkim, Parajuly never thought of becoming an author. Instead, he followed the conventional path and landed a nine-to-five job, which he then left to pursue a career in writing. His very first project was *The Gurkha's Daughter*, a short story collection that explored the identity crisis and deep-rooted frustration of Nepali-speaking people around the world, and especially in India, where their nationalism is put to the test time and again.

According to Parajuly, as an amateur litterateur he was completely oblivious that he had picked one of the hardest forms, the short story, for his debut. He soon realised his folly and switched to writing novels and that is how *Land Where I Flee* came to be. Continuing his exploration of the complexities of identity, the novel depicts the protagonist, Rathwa, as someone who has to prove himself to his own people through a variety of personal and professional hurdles. Parajuly shares a special connection with Rathwa, who is also a writer, but says that he wouldn't want to face

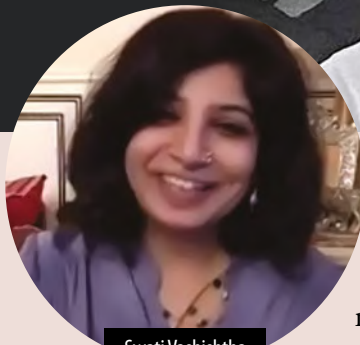
the personal and professional hurdles the character faced!

Even after all this time in the shoes of a writer, however, Parajuly admits that he has not developed the habit of writing every day at an appointed hour. Instead, he is at the mercy of his heart: whenever it finds a muse, he immediately sits down to write, be it for hours on end. Although he thoroughly enjoys writing, he feels that it's a lonely profession: he never really steps out for work unless it is the season of literature festivals. Unfortunately, during the pandemic, even these festivals have gone digital. He said he hopes that things go back to the way they were before very, very soon.

The session was then opened up to the audience and numerous budding writers asked the young author for writing tips. Earlier, Parajuly had expressed his belief that aspiring writers should experiment with different genres and forms, for it drives them out of their comfort zones and broadens their horizons. Building on this, he answered all the viewers' questions, providing them with concrete advice that they can implement. He also reflected on several anecdotes from his own life, which gave the audience another peek into his journey.

As the event drew to a close, Parajuly thanked the audience for their participation, and Urvi Bhuwani expressed everyone's gratitude for an enriching and riveting session.

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



Swati Vashishtha



Amrita Singh



Lata Kaku



Pramudith



Prem Kaku

Art Against Corona



Sudipta Kundu

Prabha Khaitan Foundation's in-house artist, Sudipta Kundu, won an award for Best Artist in the professional category of Contemporary Art in the Global Art Competition — "United Against CORONA — Express Through Art", a contest organised globally by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, Government of India. The event was organised in an attempt to encourage artists to present their emotions, feelings, ideas and innovative thoughts in the fight against COVID-19. The competition had received an overwhelming response from across the world. More than 8,000 artworks were submitted. ICCR is planning to launch an online exhibition shortly, featuring all the selected artworks, so that art aficionados across the world may enjoy these artistic expressions.



Caring in a Crisis



Shraddha Murdia

These hard times have been particularly difficult for the underprivileged sections of our country, who are struggling to survive. As part of the **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** Click of Care initiative, Shraddha Murdia,

Ehsaas Woman of Udaipur, has undertaken to provide much-needed help to the less fortunate members of

society. Every alternate day, 50 packets of meals are distributed to ragpickers, hawkers and the homeless. Children are given the first preference always as they are the most dependent and helpless among us. Sanitary and hygiene bags are also distributed once a month to girls and women. Our **Ehsaas** Women across India, like Shraddha, are the harbingers of change. They truly make a difference and inspire others to work for the betterment of society.



Inside an Intellectual Mind

In July 2017 and March 2018, **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** had hosted special screenings of *An Argumentative Indian*, a documentary film by Suman Ghosh, at Nandan III and Tollygunge Club respectively.

The hour-long film traces the life and work of Nobel Laureate and Bharat Ratna Amartya Sen, one of the greatest living economists and philosophers of the world, and explores the argumentative Indian's formative years and their influence on his worldview, past and present. Ghosh had filmed the documentary over 15 years and structured it as a free-flowing conversation between Sen and his student, Cornell University professor, Kaushik Basu.

The events were attended by eminent personalities

like Soumitra Chatterjee, Sugata Bose, Jawhar Sircar, Barun Chanda, Russian consul-general Alexey Idamkin, Srijato, Tanushree Shankar and others. Actor Jisshu Sengupta said, "I was really moved. I am no way near academics but this film kept me intrigued.... Films like these are much needed in our country."

"If we are not being able to achieve something it is because we aren't trying. It is not because we can't try.

— Amartya Sen

"Professor Sen is a towering intellectual giant whose life and work can influence and inspire a whole new generation of youngsters all over the world. The documentary by Suman Ghosh is a very laudable initiative to provide an insight into the mind of a living genius," said Sundeep Bhutoria, Trustee, PKF.

We bring you some *#throwback* moments from the screenings.

2 0 1 7



Amartya Sen's younger daughter Nandana Sen (centre) with her husband John Makinson and mother (Late) Nabaneeta Dev Sen

(L-R) Soumitra Chatterjee, Amartya Sen, Suman Ghosh and Sundeep Bhutoria

2 0 1 8



Tanusree Shankar



Ronen Roy



Oindrilla Dutt



Indrani Paul

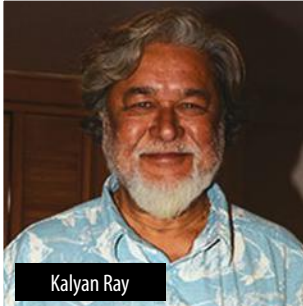
Supratim Paul



Abhishek Dutta



Chandrima Roy



Kalyan Ray



Esha Dutta



Saibal Roy Chowdhury, Suprobo De, Anil Mukerji, B.K. Repswal, Gautam Nandy



Deepak Atal

Sudha Kaul



Suman Ghosh, Nilanjana Sengupta and Jisshu Sengupta



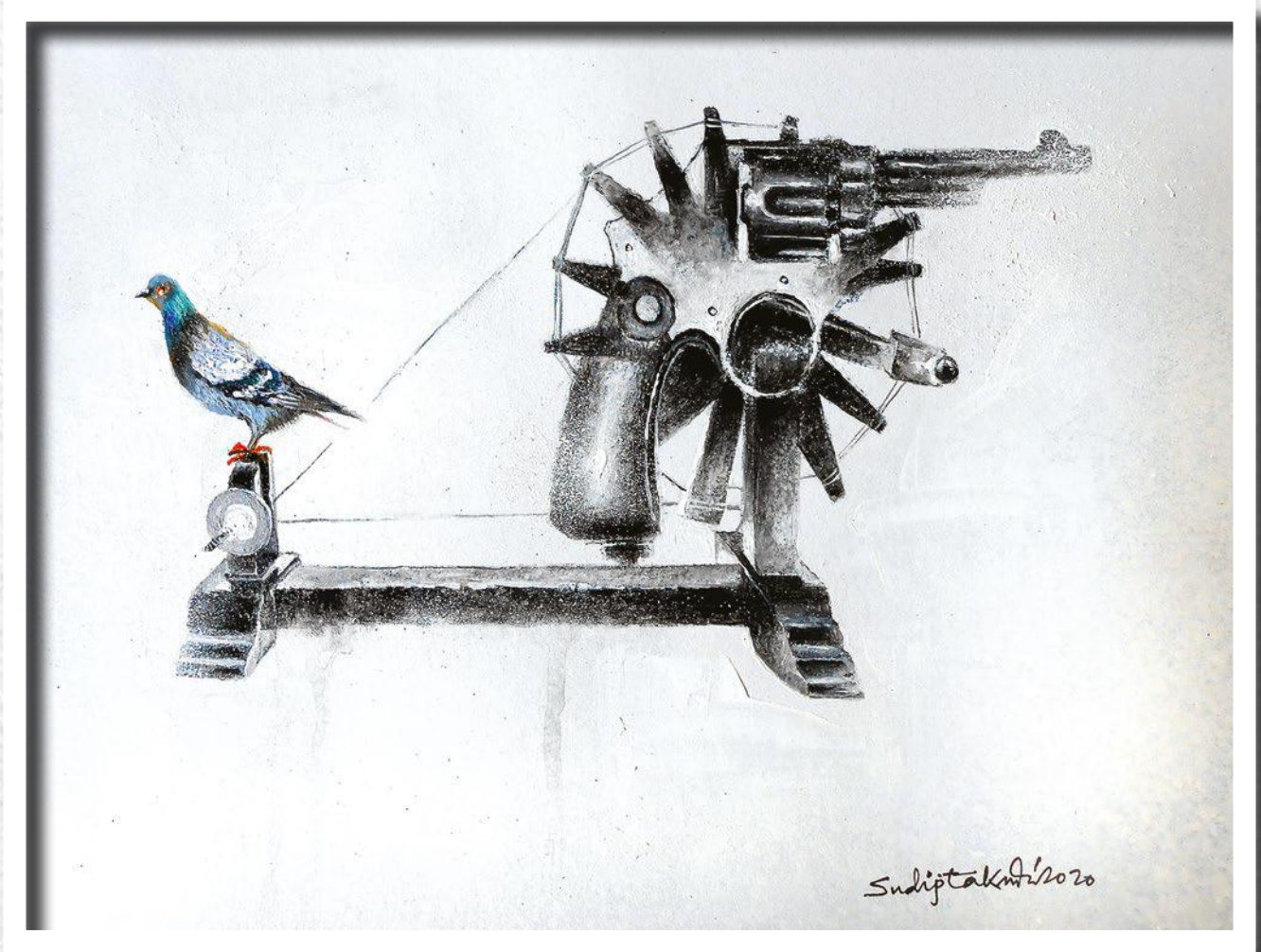
Kiran Thomas

Renji Thomas



Indrajit Mookerji

Sushmita Mookerji



ARTWORK BY **SUDIPTA KUNDU**

Non-Violence: A Sword that Heals

"I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance."

— Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India*, Oct 8, 1925

In January 1915, when Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa after 21 years, he was a transformed man. No longer a meek, soft-spoken lawyer but a confident political activist, he introduced India to the concepts of non-violence and

satyagraha — weapons that were eventually going to become instrumental in the country's fight for independence.

Derived from the Sanskrit words, *satya* (truth) and *agraha* (to hold), *satyagraha* to Gandhi was a form of non-violent resistance, a "soul force" and a quest for truth. It emphasised that physical force was unnecessary in the fight against injustice. A *satyagrahi* could win over their adversary without aggression, by appealing to the conscience of the oppressor and persuading them to see the truth. Gandhi believed this doctrine of non-violence had the potential to unite all Indians, "Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all — children, young men and women or grown-up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind."

While *ahimsa* or non-violence had always been an important tenet of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism for centuries, it was Gandhi who transformed the religious ethic into a powerful tool for mass social and political change. Regarding non-violence as "an active force of the highest order", he led several civil disobedience movements against the British, one of the best examples of which is the historic Salt March of 1930.

On June 15, 2007, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly designated October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, as the International Day of Non-Violence to commemorate the pioneer of the philosophy and "disseminate the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness".

According to the UN, "One key tenet of the theory of non-violence is that the power of rulers depends on the consent of the population, and non-violence therefore seeks to undermine such power through withdrawal of the consent and cooperation of the populace." The UN recognises three main categories of non-violent action — protest and persuasion, including marches and vigils; non-cooperation; and non-violent intervention, such as blockades and occupations.

Over the years, non-violence has frequently been adopted by many as a means to drive social and/or political change. January 21, 2017, bore witness to the largest single-day protest in US history with three to five million Americans participating in the Women's

March, triggered by President Donald Trump's policies on women's rights, abortion, immigration, climate change and healthcare that many found disturbing and offensive. In India, a wave of peaceful protests was held in December 2019 following the new Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that was denounced by students and activists alike for being discriminatory.

In her article, *The Future of Nonviolent Resistance*, Erica Chenoweth writes, "The year 2019 saw what may have been the largest wave of mass, nonviolent anti-government movements in recorded history. Large-scale protests, strikes, and demonstrations erupted across dozens of countries on an unprecedented scale. While 2011 has been called the year of the protester, 2019 has an even greater claim to that title.

"In April 2019, Omar al-Bashir — the Sudanese tyrant who had overseen the massacre of hundreds of thousands in Darfur, given sanctuary to jihadist groups in the 1990s, and terrorised opponents with mass arrests, torture, and summary executions — fell from power. Weeks later, Algeria's president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was seeking an unconstitutional fifth term in office, also fell, toppled by a popular uprising known as the Smile Revolution. In July 2019, the governor of Puerto Rico was forced to resign after hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans gathered in mass demonstrations and carried out work stoppages... since October 2019, governments have fallen to popular protest movements in places as diverse as Iraq, Lebanon, and Bolivia."

These instances not only highlight the power of non-violence to bring about significant change without bloodshed but also its ability to unite people across countries. Throughout his life, Gandhi remained steadfast in his belief in non-violence, even in the face of considerable opposition. He asserted time and again that "the essence of non-violent technique is that it seeks to liquidate antagonisms but not the antagonists."

We at **Prabha Khaitan Foundation** pay homage to the Father of the Nation and embrace his doctrines that remain relevant even today. Because it is only through peace that we can reconcile, rebuild and restore. As Martin Luther King Jr. had said, "Nonviolence... cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals."

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Guests	Events
Dr Rajesh Kumar Vyas	Aakhar Jaipur
Divya Prakash Dubey	Kalam Agra
Mallika Sarabhai	Ek Mulakat Vishesh
Surendra Mohan Pathak	Kalam Lucknow, Bhubaneswar
Kunal Vohra	Aakhar Gujarat
Neeraj Kumar	The Write Circle Pune, Bengaluru
Sister Shivani	Tête-à-tea
Asghar Wajahat	Kalam Faridabad & Meerut
Karnal Singh	An Author's Afternoon Kolkata
Ananth Narayan Mahadevan	The Write Circle Delhi
Kamal Mohan Chunu	Aakhar Patna
Manoj Muntashir	Kalam Oslo
Dr Shashi Tharoor	Ehsaas Closed Door Session
Shylashri Shankar	The Write Circle Jaipur
Graeme Simson	The Universe Writes
Shazi Zaman	Kalam Jalandhar
Education for All & Muskaan	International Girl Child Day event



Ananth Narayan Mahadevan



Asghar Wajahat



Divya Prakash Dubey



Dr Rajesh Kumar Vyas



Graeme Simson



Kamal Mohan Chunu



Karnal Singh



Kunal Vohra



Mallika Sarabhai



Manoj Muntashir



Neeraj Kumar



Dr Shashi Tharoor



Shazi Zaman



Shylashri Shankar



Sister Shivani



Surendra Mohan Pathak

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